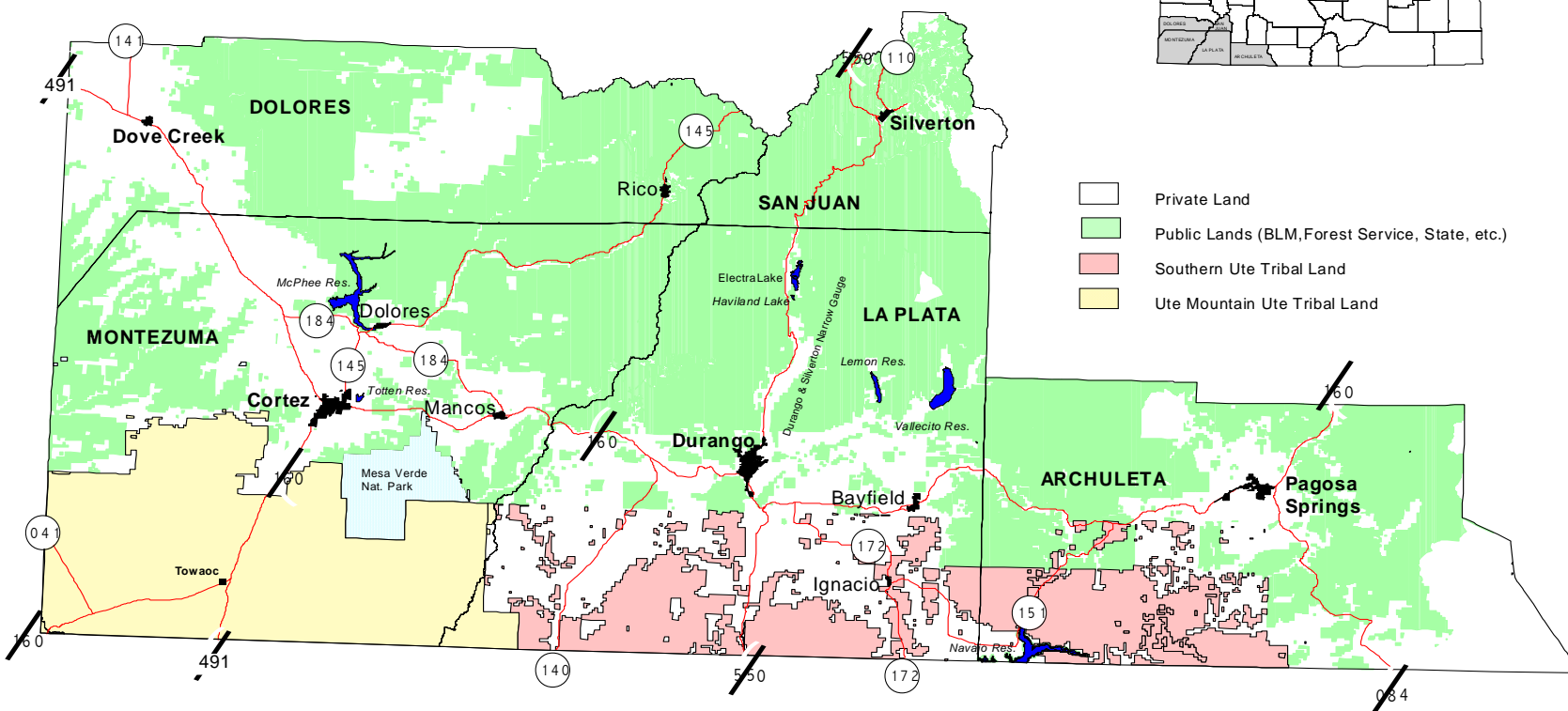
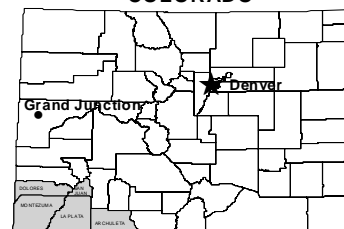


MAP OF REGION 9

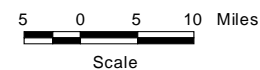
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COLORADO



- Private Land
- Public Lands (BLM, Forest Service, State, etc.)
- Southern Ute Tribal Land
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Land

Region 9



2. REGION 9 OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is to create a plan for retaining and creating better paying jobs, fostering stable and more diversified economies, as well as maintaining and improving the quality of life in Southwest Colorado. The purpose of this section is to provide specific information on the regional economy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section looks at the elements that should be considered from a regional rather than countywide perspective. During efforts of gathering input, several common issues for all the counties surfaced, and are discussed in this section. This section also includes a comparison of each county's population trends, unemployment rates, employment sectors, personal income characteristics, and other factors that affect economic performance. Information on the tribal populations within the region is also provided. Finally, we will look at strategic planning from a regional perspective.

The regional economy encompasses the entire "Four Corners" area, including southwest Colorado, northwest New Mexico, northeast Arizona, and southeast Utah. People in the region often commute long distances to take advantage of better employment opportunities, better shopping opportunities, or lower real estate prices. This pattern has created traffic congestion and transportation safety hazards that will only get worse in the foreseeable future.

Historically, industries such as mining, agriculture and forestry supported the Southwest Colorado economy. Currently these industries provide less than 3% of employment earnings in the regional economy. These base industries have been replaced over time by tourism.

Region-wide, 72% of jobs are wage and salary employment, while 28% are held by proprietors (owners). In 2005 the service sector provided 33% of jobs and 31% of job income in the region. These jobs include highly paid professionals as well as lower paying unskilled labor. Trade is also important in the regional economy, providing 25% of jobs and 18% of job income. The Archuleta and La Plata County economies are based primarily on tourism and retail trade. Agriculture related services and forestry remain significant sources of employment for certain parts of the region, especially Dolores and Montezuma counties, yet provide relatively little employment income. Since the 1991 closure of the Sunnyside Mine in Silverton, San Juan County is almost entirely dependent on income and employment generated from tourism.

Tribal populations in the region include the Ute Mountain Ute and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. They are major economic forces with their diversified tribal enterprises and provide employment for tribal members as well as others within the regional community.

As the CEDS Advisory Committee oversaw the CEDS planning process, they received feedback on our progress as a region and noted the remaining challenges. While some of them are mentioned below, challenges specific to individual counties are looked at in detail in the County Profile sections of the CEDS.

REGIONAL ISSUES

Quality of Life Balanced with Economic Growth

Quality of life concerns were raised many times in the CEDS planning process. Communities want to foster economic development that improves, rather than deters from, Southwest Colorado's quality of life. Quality of life is why many people live here and not in larger urban areas. People are moving here and our economies are, in general, strong because of the unique features and qualities of our region. There is a concern that we not "ruin" the things that make the region special. However, defining "quality of life" varies per community and person. Given the diversity of the five county area, each community has its own set of challenges and solutions. There is not a one-size-fits-all strategy.

While there is no regional consensus on quality of life, or even growth, these topics remain concerns at all levels and in all sectors of the region. The CEDS process and documents explains what each county is doing to address growth and quality of life related challenges, but also recognizes that there are "value" clashes that may impact future economic and community development, and prevent community consensus about how to address key challenges.

Regional Economic Diversification

Communities want to see a greater diversification in income and job sectors. Amenity migration (the jobs and income produced from new residents moving into the area), combined with tourism, make up large portions of the region's employment and income. Tourism continues to grow and is a large part of the economy. There is a concern about "*How much tourism is good?*" "*Is the current level of tourism sustainable and desirable?*" Again, by diversifying the economy, this sector can remain strong while other sectors are strengthened. Too much reliance on one sector of the economy, i.e. tourism, makes communities dependent and vulnerable to their economic fluctuation.

Both new business recruitment and existing business development are desired goals of all counties in the region. Businesses are wanted that fit with community values, pay livable wages and are environmentally clean. Consistently, communities reported that they do not just want more jobs; they want jobs that sustain families, pay benefits and that allow a higher quality of life.

Agriculture

Agriculture received a considerable amount of attention in the input process. Public opinion definitely supports maintaining and strengthening the agricultural sector, however there seems to be a dichotomy between agriculture as an economic industry, and agriculture as a preserver of open space.

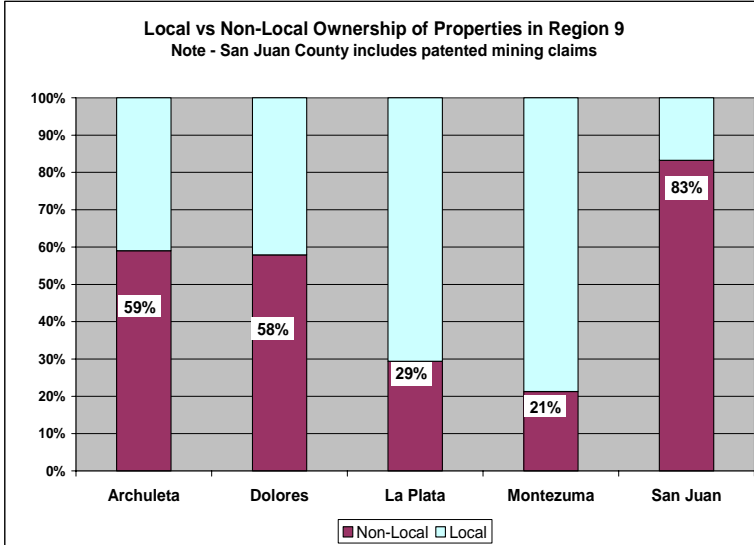
The quantification of agriculture as an economic industry in the region has been problematic. Data on employment and earnings in agriculture is unusually difficult to obtain for several reasons. First, agricultural producers (farmers) are not required to report their employees under the Employment Security program. While some do, the reporting that does occur covers only a small fraction of the actual employment. Second, the industry includes large numbers of proprietor operators (farmers and their families), and there are no good estimates on the numbers of these that represent full-time workers. Finally, farm income fluctuates widely with market prices and changes in inventories. Thus, the income data are not necessarily an accurate measure of activity as they are in other industries. In recognition of these limitations, an effort is underway to get a more detailed picture of the role of agriculture within the local economy by looking at jobs in other sectors that support, or are supported by, agriculture. This is known as agribusiness. Efforts are also being made to refine our view of the other contributions of agriculture to the region. There are un-quantified benefits from agriculture such as open space, wildlife habitat, the attractiveness of a rural landscape, and lower service costs to county government from land remaining in agricultural production.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a significant barrier to economic development. A healthy community is one in which families and individuals of all income levels live in adequate and affordable housing. At present, this is not the case for most of our region. High rents and home prices, coupled with relatively low wages, make affordable housing a prime concern in most of our towns and rural areas. In order to obtain affordable housing many people are forced to commute long distances to their workplaces, which increases transportation costs, adds to traffic congestion and air pollution, and takes more time away from their families.

There are many obstacles to providing affordable housing in Southwest Colorado, including lack of developable land, infrastructure or funds to provide infrastructure; and economic issues such as the rapidly escalating cost of land and construction. Affordable housing cannot really be addressed on a broad scale until overall wages are aligned with housing costs. At the local level, multiple efforts are underway to build affordable housing by groups such as Housing Solutions for the Southwest, Habitat for Humanity, and Colorado Housing Inc. Local governments are also seeking ways to partner with private development to provide housing opportunities. Housing authorities are in place in Archuleta, Montezuma and Dolores Counties. In La Plata County an inter-governmental agreement created a new housing authority (La Plata County Regional Housing Authority) to serve the Durango, Ignacio, and rural county areas.

In addition, existing residents appear to be getting priced out of the housing market in some areas with the influx of new residents and 2nd homeowners. Region 9 EDD is in the midst of looking at the social and economic impacts of second home ownership in Southwest Colorado. This three-part study is designed to assess whether part-time residents are more of a benefit or a challenge to local communities, so that they can evaluate the positive and negative impacts, and the region can be proactive as we plan for the future. The Region 9 study employs the same methodology used in Northwest Colorado to assess impacts of 2nd homes on their area.



One conundrum revealed by the research in Northwest Colorado was that 2nd homes increase the demand for service workers, and at the same time, drive up the cost of housing so many employees cannot afford to live in the area where they work. This relocation of workers effect transportation corridors and the need for transit services.

Phase 1 of the study looked at the numbers and characteristics of second homes, and found that about 33% of residential properties in the region are owned by non-locals (those with a mailing address outside the county in which they own property), though the percentages vary from 21% to 83% depending on the county. Each county profile will summarize their results.

Phase 2 involved contacting all second homeowners and inviting them to participate in a survey. The survey collected more subjective data such as, why they bought property here, how often they use their homes, their views on local issues, infrastructure, community services, and long-term plans in regards to their property. Local residents were also encouraged to respond, and their

results are compared to non-locals. The research results for both phases are available at www.scan.org under Region 9 publications.

How much our communities are affected will be determined when Phase 3 (economic impacts) is completed in 2007. If the percentage of second home owners continues to increase, what impacts might that have on the local economy? Because of this, it becomes especially important for elected officials and community planners to understand and estimate the secondary effects of second homes in tourist based economies. The results of Phase 3 are expected to help guide the plans and policies of local decision makers.

Education

A high quality public education system plays a critical role in a community's economic health by providing an educated workforce, involved citizens, and increased earning power that has a direct effect on business profits and tax revenues. An effective educational program also improves success rates for students from at-risk families to reduce social problems, including crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and welfare dependence. Economic development strategies should ensure that all students receive a high quality education by providing adequate funding for school programs and infrastructure. Although the majority of education-funding decisions are made in the state legislature, local communities can support education through volunteerism with and/or

| 2004-2005 Overall Academic Performance Summary | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| County | High School | Academic Performance |
| Archuleta | Pagosa Springs H.S | Average |
| Dolores | Dolores County H.S. | Average |
| La Plata | Bayfield H.S. | High |
| La Plata | Durango H.S. | High |
| La Plata | Ignacio H.S | Low |
| Montezuma | Montezuma-Cortez H.S. | Low |
| Montezuma | Dolores H.S | Average |
| Montezuma | Mancos H.S | High |
| San Juan | Silverton H.S. | Average |

contributions to non-profit organizations that provide supplemental educational services for our schools.

Furthermore, we should continue to support and assess educational alternatives, including charter schools, home-schooling, and shared-schooling options that will provide an adequately trained local workforce that's supported through continued educational and training opportunities for all its citizens – young and old.

Source: www.cde.state.co.us/reportcard

Higher education facilities include Fort Lewis College in Durango (four year program), San Juan Vo-tech (Mancos), and Pueblo Community College (branches in Durango and Pagosa Springs).

Energy Costs – Regional Comparison

Electricity

Average costs for 500 kWh on the Western slope are \$44.64. There are three suppliers that serve Region 9; San Miguel Power Association, La Plata Electric Association, and Empire Electric Association. Regionally, San Miguel has the highest rates, followed by Empire and La Plata Electric.

| Name of Utility | Location | Cost 500 kWh |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| San Miguel Power Assoc. | Nucla | \$ 53.43 |
| Sangre De Cristo Electric Assoc. | Buena Vista | \$ 56.76 |
| Grand Valley Rural Power Lines | Grand Jct. | \$ 41.17 |
| La Plata Electric Assoc. | Durango | \$ 42.50 |
| San Luis Valley Rural Electric Coop., Inc | Monte Vista | \$ 61.25 |
| Delta-Montrose Electric Assoc. | Delta | \$ 43.16 |
| Empire Electric Assoc. | Cortez | \$ 44.37 |
| Gunnison County Electric Assoc. | Gunnison | \$ 42.32 |
| White River Electric Assoc. | Meeker | \$ 40.68 |
| Holy Cross Energy | Glenwood Springs | \$ 42.26 |
| Yampa Valley Electric Assoc. | Steamboat Springs | \$ 28.07 |
| Mountain Parks Electric | Granby | \$ 39.70 |

Note: All rates are based on general, single phase residential service.

Natural Gas
Atmos Energy serves most of

Region 9, though Kinder Morgan serves portions of La Plata and all of Archuleta County. Natural gas is available in most towns within the region, with the exception of Silverton (San Juan County). Alternative fuel sources include propane, wood and coal. Costs of natural gas have been on the rise – regionally and nationally.

| Atmos Energy* Division | Commodity per CCF ² | Facility Charge |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Northeast Colorado | \$ 1.20829 | \$ 9.00 |
| Northwest/ Central Colorado | \$ 1.26412 | \$ 9.00 |
| Southwest Colorado | \$ 1.21328 | \$ 9.00 |
| Buena Vista | \$ 1.22914 | \$ 5.30 |
| Southeast Colorado | \$ 1.28620 | \$ 9.00 |

Source: Atmos Energy 8/ 2006

*(Formerly Greeley Gas Company)

| Kinder Morgan | Cost per CCF ² |
|--|------------------------------|
| *applies to Archuleta La Plata Mineral | \$0.89006 |

Source: Kinder Morgan 08/2006

Gasoline

Gas prices vary from day to day and by place, but on most days our area sees regular unleaded prices higher than state and national levels. This has been attributed to several factors, i.e. higher labor costs, higher land costs, less competition compared to urban areas, and fewer gasoline supplier options, as well as transportation costs and other cost factors associated with bringing gasoline to the pumps.

| Gasoline Prices 9/6/06 | | |
|------------------------|------------------|--------|
| | Regular Unleaded | Diesel |
| Durango | \$ 3.07 | \$3.15 |
| Colorado | \$ 2.92 | \$3.24 |
| National | \$ 2.72 | \$3.04 |

Source:www.fuelgaugereport.com

Energy Impacts

The extraction of resources such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), natural gas, and oil play a major role in the region, both in terms of fiscal impacts as well as impacts on the physical environment. There are also social impacts to individuals and communities. While the extraction of these resources is mainly regulated by the State, counties do play a role.

In July 2000 the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) approved an application to allow an additional 636 natural gas wells to be drilled in the region over the next 5-10 years. This schedule could be accelerated depending on national fuel prices. The infill well application allows one gas well every 160 acres instead of one every 320 acres. The COGCC, however, has been criticized on the grounds that they represent the interests of the oil & gas industry since, by law, five members of the commission are required to work for the industry. Many groups see this as a conflict of interest, in which the COGCC favors industry interests rather than fairly resolving disputes with private landowners whose property has been targeted for drilling, or who are seeking compensation or remediation measures.

San Juan and Dolores Counties are minimally affected by oil and gas development, and Archuleta and Montezuma Counties are seeing stabilization in the industry. But in La Plata County, the strong presence of the energy industry is in conflict. Oil and gas development allows local governments to provide substantially higher levels of service than they would receive, absent the industry's tax base, but the industry also creates conflict between the landowners that own the surface rights to their property, and the industry that has bought, or leases, the subsurface mineral rights. In 2005, the La Plata County Commissioners signed an MOU with BP America to allow for the infill of wells to 80-acre increments in certain areas of the county.

Regionally, local government, landowners, members of the oil and gas industry, and the COGCC are seeking ways to prevent and mitigate adverse impacts to public health, safety, and the environment. These measures include new technologies to deal with adverse environmental impacts, continued water well testing, and the provision of incentives for well operators to engage in projects and activities that benefit the public interest.

Environment

Environmental considerations play a key role in Southwest Colorado's economic development activities. Go to any community visioning process or meeting and find that participants consistently cite a healthy landscape, scenery, clean air and water, and public lands as important. Some environmental issues are local in scope while others are regional, depending on the watersheds, topography, geology, and the administrative management structures of land management agencies.

Climate

Region 9 is located at the juncture of three distinct physiographic regions; the Rocky Mountains, the Colorado Plateau and the San Juan Basin. This means that there are high mountain peaks and valleys, towering mesas, deep canyons and deserts. Southwest Colorado, like the rest of the state, is intensely seasonal. Snow begins falling in the high country in late September or early October, and by Halloween seasonal closures turn many unpaved roads into routes for snowmobiles. The San Juan Mountains are the snowiest region of the Colorado Rockies, with average annual snowfalls approaching 400 inches in some spots. Skiers and snowboarders treasure this abundance of white gold. Winter lingers well into the season that is called spring on the calendar. In fact, the greatest snowfalls generally occur in March and April. Winter sports usually wind down in early to mid-April. At about the same time skiers are packing up their poles, the snow in the higher elevations begins to melt. Cresting streams offer thrilling, if chilling, white-water rafting and kayaking. Summer is glorious in the mountains, with brilliant sunshine in cobalt blue skies, although even in the warmer valleys the growing season is marginal in length. Spring's last frost often comes in June; the first frosts of fall might come in late August. Late summer brings

brief and often intense showers on many an August afternoon, sometimes accompanied by dramatic thunder and lightning. Summer tourism winds down after Labor Day and shuts down after the last leaf has drifted to the ground in October and the cycle begins again. In the harsh dry climate of the mesa-and-canyon country around the Four Corners, summers are brutally hot, winters can be windy and cold, and spring and fall are the best times to visit.

Air Quality

The Colorado Air Quality Control Commission, the San Juan Basin Health Department and a newly formed Four Corner's Air Quality Task Force (a joint Task Force with Colorado and New Mexico stakeholders) continue to monitor the levels of particulate matter in the air, and promote actions to achieve cleaner air quality. Particulate matter is the minute particles in the atmosphere that are classified as either PM 2.5 or PM 10. These two indicators are monitored because high levels can cause health problems, particularly in the alveolar section of the lungs. Air quality is monitored in La Plata and Archuleta Counties. Both counties record generally good air quality as defined by National Ambient Air Quality Standards. However, one development that has many in Coloradoans worried about future air quality is the possible building of a new power plant in northern New Mexico called the Desert Rock Project. If built, it would be the third power plant in the San Juan Basin joining the Four Corner's Power Plant and San Juan Generating Station. The Desert Rock project has been permitted by the EPA but is undergoing further review and public comment. It has support from the Navajo Indian Tribe but faces opposition from many citizens' groups in Colorado and New Mexico. A fourth plant, the Mustang Project is in the planning phase.

In La Plata County, concerns about the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad's coal emissions, resulted in an Air Quality Advisory Council, formed in 1998. This group is working collaboratively on finding solutions to this air quality threat and others such as oil and gas wells and rapid development. They published "*A Comprehensive Summary of Air Quality in La Plata County*" in August 2005 complete with data, studies, results from a citizen survey and recommendations for improvement. Also in 2006, The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad Smoke Mitigation Task Force was formed and just received funding to look at alternatives to coal.

Cultural Resources

The discovery of the Ancestral Puebloan (formerly known as Anasazi) ruins at Mesa Verde National Park strongly influenced the passage of the Federal Antiquities Act in 1906. The region contains thousands of important archaeological resources that are now protected, and which have become a valuable economic resource as visitors from across the globe visit the region to learn more about our prehistoric and historic past. Various federal land management agencies, such as the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), have implemented a permit system for archaeological studies on their jurisdictional properties (including historic and prehistoric sites). Specific guidelines have also been developed to direct the treatment of human remains found at archaeological sites. Both State and Federal legislation protects Colorado's cultural resources. The Colorado Historical Society (CHS) recognizes thousands of cultural resources in Region 9 as being eligible to the Register of Historic Places, though they are not yet listed. Region 9 also has various cultural resources that are included on the *State and/or Federal Register of Historic Places*, which is maintained by the National Park Service (established in 1966).

In 2000, the Canyon of the Ancients National Monument was established. It is administered by the Bureau of Land Management and covers over 164,000 acres with over 6,000 archeological resources recorded. A management plan for the Monument provides strategies for allowing some historic extractive uses to continue, including grazing and gas development while also managing cultural resources and recreational visits (which are increasing in great numbers each year).

Farmland Protection

Protection of open space is important throughout the region. Projects for which farmland is acquired, or which will indirectly lead to the conversion of farmland, are subject to the provisions of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA).

Floodplains

Floodplains are another critical environmental feature that can have significant impacts on land development. Floodplains are the margins of land adjacent to streams and rivers that accommodate excess water during periods of flooding. Streams and rivers are subject to periodic flooding that can damage or destroy whatever is contained in the floodplain. The presence of a floodplain in a development corridor is important as it may affect the alignment, design, construction and long-term maintenance aspects of the project. Floodplain information is readily available from local, state, and federal government agencies along with guidelines pertaining to the development or modifications of floodplain.

Hazardous Waste Sites

Identifying a community's potential for hazardous waste early in the development planning process can help avoid unexpected time delays, increased costs, and potential danger to both employees and public health and safety. Construction typically involves subsurface activities that may disturb contaminated soils, groundwater, parcels of land and businesses that are sometimes contaminated by hazardous waste. An evaluation will help reduce the possibility of encountering hazardous waste, purchasing contaminated property, and minimize liability. The evaluation should include a review of current and historic land use activities, a review of regulatory agency lists, an inventory of documented hazardous waste generators, and a field survey to assess various physical features on the property that may indicate presence of hazardous waste. In addition to evaluating the property to be acquired, adjacent properties and the surrounding area should be surveyed because contamination can come from off site. An investigation should include the identification of nearby businesses that store or use potentially hazardous materials.

Noise

Development related noise is regulated by federal agencies in response to the Noise Control Act of 1972 (86 U.S.C. 1234-1250). Both the US Department of Transportation and the EPA are involved in noise regulation. In Region 9 noise from the development and operation of oil and gas wells is an unresolved issue. The close proximity of these wells to private homes has created a conflict between the industry and landowners seeking recourse to what they consider to be an annoyance. Currently the industry is experimenting with new technologies that may reduce noise to acceptable levels.

All federal projects must assess highway-generated noise in compliance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) noise abatement criteria. In most cases, the noise from vehicles is not be an issue if the speed limits are less than 30 mph or less, unless large truck traffic is extremely heavy or steep grades are associated with the roadway. Rural highways, roads, non-urban and small urban municipal streets usually have a maximum noise influence area that does not exceed 200 ft. either side of the roadway centerline. Rural Interstate highways usually have a noise influence limit of 300 ft or less on either side of the centerline.

Each military or joint use airfield is required by military regulations to have an Air Installation Compatibility Use Zone study which shows the noise "footprint" associated with its operations. Airports with regularly scheduled commercial airline service have a similar study required by the Federal Aviation Administration. These studies can be used by planners to assess airport noise impacts on the surrounding community.

Open Space

The environmental issue that received the greatest public input was about the impact of growth on open space. Population increases are driving development particularly in the unincorporated areas of each county. From 1993 to 2004, over 6,000 residential lots were created by major and minor subdivisions. While not all of these lots will be built on now or in the near future, notable trends of rural sprawl and rapid land development are occurring.

Four non-profit conservancy organizations are active in the region and are members of the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts (CCLT). These conservancy organizations have assisted land owners in voluntarily preserving 23,993 acres of land from 1993 to 2004 via conservation easements. While this protected open space represents only .006% of all land in the region, the effort is important because parcels are placed under easement based on values such as view sheds, public lands access points, wildlife corridors, and farm land preservation. The practice of conservation easements was made more attractive by the State of Colorado's tax credits granted in the early 2000's that allows the landowner to sell the value of the easement for cash rather than a tax write off. Each county government in the region has locally-defined land use policies, comprehensive plans and codes and thus, this wide-ranging topic is also covered in each county's CEDS section.

Paleontology

The State Antiquities Act (24-80-401) seeks to protect all fossils on state-owned lands and lands controlled by any subdivision of state government. Protection is provided by requiring a permit to collect, damage or destroy fossils on state-owned lands. Similar laws and regulations protect fossils on federally owned lands. The majority of Colorado remains un-surveyed for fossil remains. Areas not requiring examination for fossils of scientific importance are those areas where the rocks are older than 600 million years or younger than 7,000 - 8,000 years. The remaining areas could potentially contain fossils of scientific significance.

Parklands

Federal regulations protect publicly owned parks and recreation areas from federal actions, such as transportation or other infrastructure, wherever prudent and feasible alternatives exist. If publicly owned parklands or recreation areas will be impacted by a transportation improvement, a mitigation plan is required. These lands should be identified early in the planning process.

Public Lands

Public lands play a decisive in southwest Colorado's economies. The region is characterized by vast lands including the following acres: 1,618,741 - United States Forest Service; 318,920 - Bureau of Land Management; 47,524 - State of Colorado; and 48, 689 National Park Service. The breakdown of public land acreage per county can be found in the county sections of this report. The prosperity of rural western communities is directly tied to designated wilderness areas, national parks and other public lands. A report, *Prosperity in the 21st Century West*, published by the Sonoran Institute, analyzed economic statistics from 400 western counties and found that new businesses, investments and residents tends to locate near public lands. The better managed and protected those lands are, the more they contribute to the economic well-being of local families, communities and businesses.

The San Juan National Forest and Bureau of Land Management's (working together as the San Juan Public Lands Center) Resource Management Plan Revision is underway. The plan will outline the types of uses that will occur, locations, and other land management decisions such as: identifying where commercial timber will be harvested, where grazing will occur, and locations where motorized recreation will be allowed. A unique aspect of this planning process is that it combines the BLM and USFS into one document. In public meetings, key issues were identified as concerns and are presented in each county's CEDS section. The Office of Community Service at

Fort Lewis College is leading the planning process and a draft document is expected by September 2006.

In 2005, a new rule was issued by the USFS that gives state governors the right to petition the United States Secretary of Agriculture to establish or adjust management directions that exist in forest management plans for roadless areas in their state. Towards this end, Colorado established a 13-member Colorado Roadless Area Task Force, which has been taking comments since November 2005, and will make recommendation to Colorado's Governor about roadless areas. Roughly 522,000 acres in the San Juan Public Lands are currently inventoried as roadless.

With the traditional land uses such as mining, grazing and logging declining in the region, the stewardship, management, and protection of our public lands is a complex topic deserving of ongoing public, community and governmental involvement and action.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Development can be harmful to plant and animal species. Extinction of a species represents an irretrievable loss of a biological resource and biodiversity. In addition to its aesthetic value, this resource may have yielded powerful medicines, new genetic stock for agriculture, or provided new scientific insights. The loss of a species reduces the resilience of the environment to respond to climatic or environmental crises. Consequently, the protection of threatened or endangered species is an essential component in any long range planning effort, and a review should be made prior to the undertaking of any economic development project to identify these species. A list of endangered species in Colorado can be found at the Colorado Division of Wildlife Web site: www.wildlife.state.co.us.

Water Quality

The Federal Clean Water Act established of programs aimed to control non-point sources of pollution, and to supplement programs addressing pollution from discharge at specific identified sites (point sources). The quality of water in primary rivers and streams are tested for point source pollutants such as metals, bacteria, sediments, nutrients, and salinity. There are several categories of non-point source activities, including: agriculture, silviculture, construction runoff, urban runoff, resource extraction, land disposal and hydrologic modification.

Region 9 is contained within two river basins. The Colorado River Basin includes the Dolores and the San Miguel Rivers. The San Juan River Basin includes the San Juan River and its principal tributaries, the Piedra, Los Pinos, Animas, La Plata, and Mancos Rivers. Although the population in the basin is sparse compared to other parts of the United States, increased growth and tourism are placing demands on the resources of several communities to provide adequate wastewater treatment. Several year-round resorts are proposed in the upper San Juan River region, which could significantly impact future water quality.

There are several drainages in the region with water quality issues. In 1998, southwest Colorado reported 11 impaired river sections totaling 226 miles. Because of strides made to clean up these waters, in 2004, eight of the 11 river sections were upgraded to being "an impaired water body with an approved Total Maximum Daily Limit". Four reservoirs in the region, McPhee, Narraguinnep, Navajo and Vallecito have all experienced problematic mercury readings in fish populations. These elevated levels are thought to be occurring mostly because of emissions from northern New Mexico's coal fired power plants.

In the upper reaches of the Animas River, a relatively extensive mine remediation project has been going on since the early 1990s involving the plugging of mine tunnels and the relocation of mine waste. A stakeholder group of mining interests, local citizens, and government interests are helping to direct and oversee the activities. Lower in the Animas drainage, the long-proposed Animas/La Plata water diversion and storage project is in the process of being built. This project, scaled-down from initial plans, involves pumping water from the Animas River over to the La Plata drainage

(Knighthorse Reservoir). Projections indicate that the project could impact threatened or endangered species. In lower elevations of the basin, there is a concern about methane in ground water.

Another facet of water quality is stormwater discharge and regulation under the EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of these regulations.

Wetlands

Wetlands are a critical natural resource, and as such, have come under federal protection. Wetlands can vary greatly in appearance. They include riparian wetlands that are dominated by cottonwoods and willows that are adjacent to rivers and streams and montane wetlands such as beaver ponds, wet meadows, and other boggy areas. There are several types of wetlands in the region depending on the elevation, topography, and water source. Every practical effort should be made to avoid, minimize or mitigate for impacts to this resource.

Sources:

- "A Comprehensive Summary of Air Quality in La Plata County." San Juan Basin Health Department. August 2005
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- "Task Force Tackles Four Corners Air Quality." *Cortez Journal*. April 29, 2006.
- Durango Herald Web Site: www.durangoherald.com Archive reports on air quality.
- Operation Healthy Communities – *Pathways to Healthier Communities* (2005)
- San Juan Citizens Alliance, conversation with executive director Mark Pearson and Web Site: www.sanjuancitizens.org
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- *The Southwest Colorado 2020 Transportation Plan*. August 1, 1999.
- USFS Roadless Areas Web site: www.roadless.fs.fed.us

Health Care

Health care is as critical to community economic vitality as roadways, water and sewer, and telecommunications. In Colorado, a 2002 survey of small businesses showed 69% saw insurance premiums increase 20% or more. The national health care crisis affects local jobs, income, and residents' quality of life. Nationally, roughly 46.2% of those who filed for bankruptcy in 2001 cited costly illnesses. Without a sustainable health care infrastructure, local businesses are unable to provide adequate health insurance that helps attract and retain employees.

Health care is a region-wide priority. There are obviously many reasons that access to health care is a problem and in Colorado, 89% of uninsured people are employed. Businesses are affected because:

- Companies wanting to relocate to the region evaluate the availability of local health care and generally find it lacking.
- Many companies are unable to provide health care insurance, which jeopardizes their employees' health, productivity, job retention and morale.
- Employees who are uninsured often seek care later in their illnesses, costing businesses and the public unnecessary and inflated costs.
- Prescription drugs are getting more expensive.

A number of other specific regional challenges exist:

- Costs to deliver care to southwest Colorado are higher than in urban areas.
- Population is increasing and aging in southwest Colorado, which is taxing the health care network.
- The high cost of housing is a prohibiting factor in attracting new health care providers.
- The number of providers taking Medicaid and Medicare continues to decline due to inadequate reimbursements in relation to costs.
- The number of insured in each county in Region 9 is steadily on the rise.
- The four hospitals in the region (Mercy, Southwest Memorial, Animas Surgical Center and San Juan Regional Medical Center in Farmington) have yet to find ways to collaborate, avoid duplication and identify ways to reduce costs.

The good news is that several groups are active in the region and progress is being made. Since 2001, Archuleta County has passed a bond issue through the Upper San Juan Health Service District to build a Critical Access Hospital working with Mercy Medical Center. Several transit systems are in place to transport seniors, lower income persons, and those with disabilities to appointments. The Community Summits in La Plata and Montezuma/Dolores Counties have netted many feasible ideas and spawned several projects. A new regional inpatient mental health acute treatment unit opened in October 2006, a service that has not existed here since 1999. In 2002, a Veteran's Clinic opened in Durango serving those who previously had to travel to Denver or Grand Junction for treatment. Valley Wide Health Systems began operating a dental clinic in 2002 that sees approximately 2,000 adult patients annually and Southwest Smile makers is serving children in the region. Finally, in November of 2005, Referendum C passed which directed 30% of Colorado's budget surpluses for five years to health care and to restoring some of the cuts experienced in the '01-05 State Budget crises.

Sources:

- *A Picture of Health Care in La Plata County*. Citizens Health Advisory Council (CHAC). September 2002. www.chaclaplata.org.
- *Operation Healthy Communities - Pathways to Healthier Communities report*. 2005.
- *Primary Care Access Study Group Final Report*. July 2005. The Tiber Group Community Needs Assessment.
- *Service Plan for Formation and Operation of the La Plata County Health Service District*. Missy Rodey and Marsha Porter-Norton. February 2006.

- “Study find most pulled into bankruptcy have jobs and health insurance.” Mark Jewell. *The Associated Press*. 2005.
- *Durango Herald* Web site – archive stories on health care and Mercy Regional Medical Center at www.durangoherald.com.
- United States Census Data

Homeland Security

Since 2001, homeland security has become a local, state and national priority. If an event were to happen in this region, it is clear the regional economies would be adversely impacted. While Southwest Colorado is not a high risk urban area, homeland security concerns do exist. There are potential acts of terrorism towards communities, intentional wildfires, water or food contamination, damage to major infrastructure (dam or transportation), and public health disasters. Also, with many of our regional jobs related to energy production and tourism, first responders are challenged to protect our identified critical infrastructures and the traveling public. Critical infrastructure includes multiple pipeline corridors, gas wells, refinery, and a hydroelectric plant.

Homeland Security in Colorado is organized through a complex layer of federal and state governmental entities, programs and funding streams. Through what is called an “All Hazards Planning Approach”, Colorado has organized itself into nine regions. Southwest Colorado’s “All Hazards Region” is the same as the counties and two tribes, which comprise Region 9 EDD and is known as “Region IX.” The Southwest Region All-Hazard Advisory Council oversees homeland security activities in Region IX, and is staffed by a full time regional coordinator funded through a Department of Homeland Security grant. The advisory council includes representatives from law enforcement, fire, public health, public works, agriculture, emergency management, and both the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes. The primary function of the Council is to coordinate, complete and update regional needs, capabilities and threat assessments. Every year the Council also works to write and prioritize equipment, training, planning, and exercise grant applications. This Council and the Regional Homeland Security Coordinator serve as the primary liaison to the Colorado Division of Emergency Management (CODEM), the designated State agency that coordinates homeland security activities and distributes grant funds to local agencies.

In the event of a disaster, emergency first responders, such as fire department personnel or police officers, must be able to communicate. Thus, one of this region’s highest priorities is a need to secure the proper communications equipment and ensure that all entities can work together if an event occurs. This concept is known as interoperability. Currently, this region has only a 20% capability for interoperable communications. Completion of this region’s conversion to a State’s Digital Trunking Repeater (DTR) communications system will raise our interoperability capabilities to 40%. The system will enable public safety and first responders to have instant and disruption-resistant communications throughout our mountainous area. This communication system is a critical tool in the State’s overall effort to safeguard the citizens of Colorado and our region’s key resources.

Another regional priority is increasing the emergency first responders’ capabilities through training and enhanced equipment. Since 2001, Region IX has utilized a substantial amount of allocated grant dollars to provide self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for many of the fire, hazardous materials response, and law enforcement agencies, as well as enhancing equipment for hazardous materials, public health response, and law enforcement surveillance.

Sources:

- Mark Quick, Durango Fire and Rescue Authority
- State of Colorado Home Page

Infrastructure

Infrastructure remains a very important and vital challenge to overcome. The region's roads, highways, sewer and water systems, fire departments, law enforcement, and public facilities simply are not keeping pace with growth, especially given the Tabor and Gallagher Amendments (which put limits on tax accumulations). Communities are struggling with how to pay for this growth and are in need of grant funds and technical assistance.

Telecommunications

The ability of regional businesses and residents to access new technologies and telecommunications services is key to fostering economic growth. All forms of telecommunications are important including cell phone coverage, broadband Internet access, and the range and speed of services offered by phone, wireless providers and cable television companies. A "Digital Divide" does exist within our region because there is a gap between communities with regular, effective access to digital technologies and those without. This Digital Divide can be linked to the socio-economic status of a community, its population, and geographic location. Adequate telecommunications coverage requires substantial investments from both the private and governmental sectors to bring services to areas where private companies cannot (or will not).

Advancing the telecommunications infrastructure throughout the region has been a priority of Region 9 EDD for over a decade. Citizens, local governments, businesses, and regional community development groups, have spent many collective hours in meetings discussing telecommunication service/infrastructure problems and solutions. Over the past few years, great strides have been made in bringing more telecommunications to the region through public investments. This network, part of which is now in place, will link Region 9's incorporated cities and towns to each other and to the national telecommunications backbone via the Colorado Multi-Use Network.

This region's telecommunications goals are:

- To see new infrastructure built that provides redundant, high bandwidth telecommunications capacity and connectivity to public agencies, private enterprise, and the general public of Southwest Colorado and the Four Corners Area
- To have the same level of services as the urban areas at comparable costs
- All partners work for the common good of the region knowing that providing services to the rural communities will benefit the larger communities
- The system, as it is service oriented, would be interoperable and scalable with the State's Multi-Use Network system as well as private telecommunication providers and compatible with fiber optic or wireless infrastructure
- To base the program on services we expect it to be able to migrate so the system can be upgraded to newer technologies including DSL
- To provide the private sector with adequate telecommunications capacity and services to create and attract new high paying jobs
- To provide the public with access to Distance Learning and Video Conferencing through the schools and library systems
- To improve health care delivery by providing Tele-Medicine and access to specialists available in the larger cities

In February 2000, a group called the Southwest Telecommunications Consortium (SWTC) that included the area towns, counties, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, and municipalities, submitted a Community Infrastructure Network Implementation Plan (CINIP) to the State of Colorado for "Beanpole Funds". This funding would assist the region in developing its telecommunications infrastructure. A total of \$1.375 million in Beanpole Funds was awarded and used to help the larger communities of Durango and Cortez develop and deploy community owned networks. These communities were chosen because a business case could be made justifying the capital investment, and it was also thought that the smaller communities could connect to the larger if the groundwork was established.

One result of the Beanpole funding was the formation of FastTrack Communications, Inc., a private company formed through a partnership with private investors and the two local REAs in the area including Empire Electric and La Plata Electric. FastTrack is located in Durango but also serves Northwest New Mexico and Western Colorado using a 420 mile, privately owned fiber optic network between Albuquerque and Grand Junction to deliver major bandwidth and Internet transport services for this region. This provides some true infrastructure based competition.

FastTrack laid fiber from the Southern Ute Indian Tribe up through the City of Durango. The City of Cortez worked with Montezuma County, other municipalities and school districts to build a fiber network, and used Beanpole funds for contracts with telecommunication providers. In Montezuma County, the area surrounding the City of Cortez is well-connected with fiber and functioning well. The Town of Mancos has been a challenge. The Town contracted with a telecommunication provider that has proven out not to perform on financial obligations. Though Fast Track fiber lines run by the community, the connection costs are more than Mancos can afford. Currently Mancos has an arrangement with Qwest to carry the traffic to the Cortez aggregated network access point that collects the local government traffic to the State network.

The outlying areas of the region, including Silverton, and Dove Creek, did not receive much benefit from the Beanpole Funds, but did see an expansion of services to their communities through the implementation of the State Multi-Use Network. In San Juan County, the microwave connection was upgraded but fiber connectivity remains a goal. San Juan County is one of a few areas in the state still not connected by fiber lines. Initially, US WEST received the contract to put fiber into every government seat, but QWEST bought US WEST during this time period and balked at bringing fiber lines to a community so small and costly to reach. QWEST currently provides wireless coverage, but there is a movement in the community to push for fiber.

The Colorado Multi-Use network (MNT) was an initiative of the State to connect all state and local government agencies. This network was supposed to reduce various state agencies from leasing their own lines for communication. This initiative has not been successful as some agencies continue to lease line outside the multiuse network. The project has already identified specific extensions to public offices outside the proposed community owned networks when more funds become available.

Telecommunications will remain a high priority economic development goal in this region for a long time given the gaps in service that still exist.

Source: Southwest Telecommunications Consortium (SWTC)

Transportation

Regional transportation efforts are coordinated by the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC), which includes appointed representatives from all governmental jurisdictions including the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Indian Tribes, the counties of Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, and San Juan, and the municipalities within those counties. This geographic area makes up the Southwest Transportation Planning Region (Southwest TPR), and the SWRPC oversees the planning and implementation of the Southwest Colorado Transportation Plan. Currently the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (2004) plan is being updated with the 2035 Transportation plan for the region expected to be complete in 2007. The Southwest TPR receives administrative support from the Region 9 Economic Development District.

In the Southwest TPR, the highway system is recognized as the most significant element of the regional transportation system. However transit, aviation and other modes of transportation are playing a more important role in planning.

In setting the goals and objectives for the transportation plan, quality of life issues were the driving forces. These issues, which are expressed in the Region's Mission Statement, underpin the region's many transportation decisions. The issues include access to jobs, livable communities, preserving the region's natural, cultural, and recreational resources, as well as clean air and water, and safe streets and highways.

Transportation System Inventory

Within the SWTPR there are no interstate highways. The surface condition of the 509 mile regional highway system is generally poor (60%) to fair (16%), with 25% of the total system rated as good. Region wide, annual daily traffic is expected to increase by almost 44% by the year 2016 with the greatest increases projected for Archuleta and La Plata Counties. Given current capacity levels, traffic volumes are expected to reach forced or breakdown of flow conditions within 20 years, primarily on stretches of US Highway 160 between Durango and Pagosa Springs.

Transit services are recognized by the public as a large gap in the region's transportation infrastructure. The growing population is finding affordable homes predominately in the rural areas, and thus residents are commuting longer distances between these communities for work. There are currently no designated park-n-ride facilities, and three of the five counties offer no public transit. Transit providers generally serve special populations, i.e. elderly or disabled persons, within limited service areas, though there is new service between Ignacio, Bayfield and Durango in La Plata County. For the first time, the 2035 Transportation Plan will incorporate transit, rather than producing a separate transit document.

Intercity bus service in the region is limited to Durango and Silverton along US Highway 550 on a north/south axis, with inter-regional connections available in Grand Junction and Albuquerque, N.M. There are no intercity bus routes along the Highway 160 corridor (east/west), providing service to Archuleta, Dolores, or Montezuma Counties.

Noticeably absent from the SWTPR are freight and passenger railroads, though the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (D&SNGRR) is a nationally noted historic asset to the SWTPR. This 45-mile railroad runs between Durango (La Plata County) and Silverton (San Juan County), roughly paralleling U.S. 550. The D&SNGRR is not considered part of rail freight service for the SWTPR.

In fact there are currently no freight distribution centers in the region. Freight movement is limited by mountainous terrain and seasonal road hazards that create safety hazards. The cost of importing materials by truck is very high, which limits export of locally manufactured products. Freight distribution is also limited by air. Aviation facilities include four airports. Of these, only two provide commercial service in and out of the region, while the other two are classified as general aviation facilities with few services.

Multi-modal solutions to transportation are becoming more popular in the region. Many of the communities within the SWTPR are developing trail corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists that will link open spaces and provide safe access to schools, shopping, and recreation areas. An effort is also underway to revamp a regional “rideshare” program that includes an Internet site where those needing a ride can find commuters willing to take a passenger.

SW TPR 2007-2012 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

The Southwest TPR prioritizes all the highway projects in the region. The final fiscally constrained project list, in priority order, is presented in the following figure. The prioritization is based on many factors including safety, mobility and system quality. This list is ever changing, but it contains all projects eligible to move into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and thus the 2035 Transportation Plan. The STIP is the capital improvement program document that shows transportation projects which are implemented on the state transportation network over the next three years. The STIP uses funds identified as “Other Regional Priorities.” Modifications to the STIP may be made by the Southwest TPR, to support changes in priorities as a result of emerging or unforeseen issues. Amendments must be forwarded to CDOT, for amendment of the Statewide Plan prior to new or substantially changed projects being added to the STIP. The SWTPR 2007-2012 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is as follows.

| SWTPR 2007-2012 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) | | | |
|--|---|--|--------------|
| ROUTE | DESCRIPTION | PROJECT TYPE | COST |
| | REGIONAL PRIORITY PROGRAM POOL | | |
| 550 | Roosa Ave.* | Improve Intersection | \$640,000 |
| 160 | US 160 & CR 222 / 223* | Improve Intersection | \$4,925,700 |
| 160 | US 160/US491 South of Cortez | Design & construction of passing lane | 2,000,000 |
| 160 | US 160 & US 491 in Cortez | Design for intersection improvements | \$110,000 |
| | 7th POT PROJECTS | | |
| 160 | Additional lane through Farmington Hill * | Roadway Improvements | \$13,500,000 |
| 550 | New Mexico State Line North * | Reconstruction project and construction for bridge | \$8,900,000 |
| | SURFACE TREATMENT USING 07 HB-1310 FUNDS | | |
| 160 | US 160, Four Corners to US 491 | Reconstruction of roadway | \$8,010,000 |
| | | | |
| *Several projects get funding from more than one source | | | |
| | | | |

Land Use

In Southwest Colorado, the vast majority of land ownership, 66%, is public: United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State of Colorado, National Park Service, Ute Mountain Ute or Southern Ute. According to a 2004 Sonoran Institute report, the prosperity of rural western communities is directly tied to designated wilderness areas, national parks, and other protected public lands. They report that new businesses, investments and residents tend to locate near public lands, and the better protected these lands are, the healthier the local economies.

There exists a great deal of dialogue and controversy over appropriate uses of the public lands. Tensions occur between traditional uses such as grazing, logging, oil and gas drilling, and “New West” uses such as recreation, conservation, and wilderness. And, a new debate has emerged around the appropriate uses and locations of motorized recreation on the public lands with the phenomenal rise in sales of motorized equipment such as ATVs (all terrain vehicles). Thus, the San Juan National Forest Plan Management Plan (revision currently underway), as well as the Travel Management Plan, are high priority endeavors for Region 9.

Each county's private land use policies vary widely and are based on local economies, politics and community values. Since the last CEDS document was published, virtually every town and county in Region 9 has updated and otherwise re-tooled its land use plans, policies and/or codes. For example, Archuleta County now has a zoning map. La Plata County has an extensively updated draft Land Use Code. The City of Durango is updating its 1997 Comprehensive Plan through a year-long public involvement process. Montezuma County has the nation's only Landowner Initiated Zoning (LIZ) plan but a local citizen group has formed to take a new look at LIZ. While each of these county plans and codes are unique, a common theme is that *local governments desire a wider array of tools to manage the rapid land development that is occurring*. Many are asking if it's time for a more coordinated regional planning approach(es) since growth in one county affects what goes on neighboring counties.

For land use in this region, there are no easy answers but many citizens, non-profits, governments and community groups are engaged in data gathering, collaborative problem solving, public education, policy work and/or litigation. A discussion of each county's specific land use issues is included in this document.

National/International Economic Context

According to Dr. Robert Sonora (Economics Professor at Fort Lewis College in Durango) Region 9 is affected, both adversely and positively, by the national and international economies in a variety of sectors. The most obvious is in the energy sector, particularly in La Plata County. With the large reserves of natural gas and its increasing world price, 32% in the last year and averaging 12.75% over the last decade, La Plata County has seen its tax base rise considerably. In addition to the improving the county tax base, this has also had a positive impact on local residents and businesses, which have seen improved local services without a corresponding increase in property and business taxes.

Historically low national mortgage rates, kept in check by increasing national mortgage competition and low bond rates; an aging population seeking retirement homes in the area; and/or local residents either looking to upgrade or purchase second rental units have increased local real estate values by an average of just under 10% since 2000.

Given Region 9's natural beauty; popular sights, such as Mesa Verde, Durango Mountain Resort, and the Durango – Silverton Railroad; and location in the Southwest, Region 9 is able to attract tourists from around the nation and world. However, while enplanements were up over 2005, visits to Mesa Verde and railroad were down, as were lodger's taxes. Given the relatively weak dollar, especially the UK Pound and Euro, anecdotal evidence suggests larger number of European tourists have been visiting the region.

Though agriculture and husbandry play a relatively small role in Region 9's economy, less than 3%, and falling, of regional income and about 20% of the workforce, it is susceptible to volatile global market forces. We should see global, particularly in developing countries, demand for agricultural goods rise and with it commensurate rise in prices. On the other hand, if real estate values continue to rise, current agricultural land may be converted for development.

Finally, the majority of employment is not nationally and/or internationally competitive, resulting in relatively low incomes for Region 9 residents. The exceptions are education, natural gas, health, and state and national government, though in some cases, wages and salaries are below the national average.

Pre Disaster Mitigation and Emergency Management

Southwest Colorado has a number of risk factors related to disasters that could dramatically impact local economies (and residents' lives) including: wildfire; floods; severe weather i.e. avalanches; hazardous materials spills or accidents; dam failure; agriculture disasters such as drought and flooding; pandemics; lack of highway and medical facilities to adequately handle mass casualties and human care. In addition our regional isolation makes receiving disaster supplies such as food, water and medicines challenging. While there is no statewide ranking of this region's risk, the Missionary Ridge fire of 2002 and the massive 1993 snow storm demonstrate that this region is vulnerable and that disasters hurt local businesses and people in many ways.

By State of Colorado Statute, emergency management functions are under the jurisdiction of the chair of the Board of County Commissioners in each county. This chair assigns the person and entity to lead and manage the effort. As is typical in this region, each county has devised what works best for them. For example, this function in La Plata County operates through County Government with the staff person reporting to the Sheriff. In Montezuma County, the staff is located within the City Police Department as a joint position with the city and county. Dolores County is set up through their County Emergency Management Services Department and San Juan County's local position also serves as County Coroner working under the County Sheriff. Finally, Archuleta County is changing their structure so the staff person reports directly to the County Administrator. Each of the Tribes (Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute) in the region also

has emergency management personnel. These staff positions, in most counties, are supported through Emergency Management Performance Grants awarded annually by FEMA, and are usually augmented by local contributions of cash and in-kind resources. Each local staff person does planning, public education, coordination and disaster preparedness and readiness. Plus, this person is the key point in the case of an emergency. The State of Colorado Division of Emergency Management, through the Department of Local Affairs, funds Regional Field Managers who coordinate with each county's Emergency Management staff and infrastructure (e.g. law enforcement, fire fighters, etc.)

Local organizations such as the Southwest American Red Cross and Salvation Army play significant roles and are considered very effective partners. A Pre Disaster Mitigation Plan (PDMP) goes beyond basic emergency management plans and completing one is required by FEMA. This type of plan helps secure federal dollars faster in the event of an incident. Dolores County has completed a PDMP and Archuleta County has started the process. Other counties will hopefully follow.

With a recent national focus on terrorism and homeland security, many local emergency management systems state they are feeling pinched financially. Many experts in the field note that regions such as southwest Colorado are much more likely to be struck by a natural disaster than an act of terrorism. Yet nationally there is a \$287 million dollar shortfall in adequately funding local disaster planning, preparedness and mitigation efforts.

Sources

- Patricia Gavelda, Regional Field Manager for DOLAs Division of Emergency Management
- Colorado State Web Site: <http://www.dola.state.co.us/oem/>

Wildfire

Since the 2001 CEDS publication, catastrophic wildfires have happened in Montezuma and La Plata Counties including Mesa Verde National Park. These fires have affected local property owners, tourism, and damaged entire landscapes. A full 66% of the land in southwest Colorado is United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Tribal and/or State Lands making wildfire prevention, education and action an economic development issue deserving of attention.

Wildfire industries are a job growth sector including companies that identify profitable uses for forest slash/debris, bio mass technologies, and products arising from small diameter timber harvesting (e.g. wood paneling). And, there is a notable proliferation of wildfire mitigation companies as thirty-nine are listed on the Colorado State Forest's web site for La Plata County alone.

This region is recognized nationally for its inter-governmental and organizational planning, collaboration and action around this topic. In May of 2002, the Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College, San Juan Public Lands Center (USFS and BLM), and the Colorado State Forest Service unveiled Community Fire Plans for each county in Region 9 (find them at: www.southwestcoloradofires.org). The plans outline measurable action steps to improve wildfire safety, prevention and preparedness. These plans are now being updated to reflect new priorities outlined in the Healthy Forests Act of 2003, and have been re-named to Community Wildfire Protection Plans or CWPPs. Since the Colorado State Forest Service ranks southwest Colorado as one of the three most at-risk areas of the state for wildfire, the full implementation and funding of the CWPP is imperative to improving county-wide safety and preparedness.

Three county plans are complete including Montezuma, La Plata and Archuleta with the remaining two expected by the end of 2006. Other regional efforts include:

- *10-Year Strategy*: In March of 2004, the San Juan Public Lands Center released “A 10-Year Strategy to Reduce Fuels and Restore Watersheds.” This document accompanies the CWPPs by providing important background information and establishing a framework for setting priorities.
- *Web Site*: After the Community Fire Plans were released in May of 2002, a web site was established in partnership with the San Juan Public Lands Center, Colorado State Forest Service and Fort Lewis College - Office of Community Services: www.southwestcoloradofires.org This locally-maintained site enjoys high usage and directs visitors to everything from wildfire news, post fire recovery information, and downloadable documents such as the CWPPs, Firewise Council brochures and maps, to information about mitigation, and a list of local mitigation contractors. *Communities at Risk Inventory*: Local federal land and fire managers from the San Juan Public Lands Center (USFS and BLM), using national guidelines, have produced a list of Communities-At-Risk. This document outlines priorities for fuel treatments until the year 2010. This tool is an important document in working to secure federal dollars to mitigate wildfire hazards on public lands especially in high-risk WUI areas.
- *Wildfire Prevention and Education Month*: In 2002, a strong region-wide education program was launched called: *What are You Waiting For?* April Wildfire Prevention and Education Month. Over 20 partners have joined together to produce an annual month of events, forums, education, tours to demonstration sites, video production, and events at local fire houses.
- *Firewise Council of Southwest Colorado*: Launched in 2003, the Council: hosts and operates a Neighborhood Ambassador Program, distributes a locally produced five-part brochure series, organizes regular educational programs, and advocates for policies that improve community safety.
- While southwest Colorado is not at risk for hurricanes, tornados or floods, catastrophic wildfire is a well-documented phenomenon. As growth and development reaches further and further into the WUI and as extended drought and overgrown forests become the norm, regional attention needs to continue to focus in this important economic and community development area.

Sources:

- *Community Wildfire Protection Plans and Community Fire Plans*, Archuleta, Dolores, Montezuma and San Juan Counties, Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College, 2002 and 2006. Dietrich, James Dietrich; Porter-Norton, Marsha; and Preston, Mike.
- Operation Healthy Communities - *Pathways to Healthier Communities Report*. 2005.
- *Fire in the Sky, Colorado's Missionary Ridge Fire*. *The Durango Herald*. 2002.
- Web site: www.southwestcoloradofires.org

REGIONAL PROFILE

Population Trends

Everyone agrees that our region is growing, particularly Archuleta and La Plata Counties. From 1990 to 2000, our region's population grew 37 percent. Using the percent of population change from 1990 to 2000, Archuleta County was ranked 5th of 63 counties in the state (14th nationwide). Dolores County was ranked 37th, La Plata County was 22nd, Montezuma County was 33rd, and San Juan County was 63rd statewide.

| Average Annual % Change | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1970-1980 | 1980-1990 | 1990-2000 |
| Archuleta | 3.4% | 4.6% | 8.5% |
| Dolores | 0.1% | -0.9% | 2.3% |
| La Plata | 4.2% | 1.9% | 3.6% |
| Montezuma | 2.7% | 1.4% | 2.7% |
| San Juan | 0.0% | -1.1% | -2.5% |
| Region 9 | 3.3% | 1.8% | 3.7% |

From 2000 to 2005 the growth rate slowed down in most counties, except San Juan County, which welcomed slow growth rather than the declines seen in the prior decade.

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | Avg Annual % Change 2000-2005 |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------------------------------|
| Archuleta | 9,898 | 10,548 | 10,942 | 11,196 | 11,464 | 11,716 | 3.7% |
| Dolores | 1,844 | 1,844 | 1,881 | 1,848 | 1,836 | 1,846 | 0.02% |
| La Plata | 43,941 | 45,614 | 46,239 | 46,790 | 47,173 | 48,019 | 1.9% |
| Montezuma | 23,830 | 23,999 | 24,282 | 24,551 | 24,826 | 24,862 | 0.9% |
| San Juan | 558 | 560 | 565 | 570 | 576 | 580 | 0.8% |
| Region 9 | 80,071 | 82,565 | 83,909 | 84,955 | 85,875 | 87,023 | 1.7% |

Source: Colorado Demography Section estimates 8-06

Some people move here for economic reasons, such as the availability of jobs. Others cite quality of life issues, such as clean air and water, and outdoor recreation opportunities. Growth isn't going to stop in the coming decades, although predictions are that it will eventually slow down. As a community we must find ways to plan for and manage growth. The challenge is to align economic growth and development in ways that will enhance the quality of our lives and protect our natural environment and rural lifestyles.

| Population Forecasts 2005 - 2035 | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Region 9 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 |
| Region 9 | 87,023 | 99,147 | 111,890 | 124,918 | 137,921 | 150,783 | 162,536 |
| Avg. Ann. % Change | | 2.6% | 2.4% | 2.2% | 2.0% | 1.8% | 1.5% |

Estimates from the Demography Section (8-06)

The Regional Economy

Unemployment Rates

When unemployment rates are compared, we see that Archuleta and La Plata Counties were below state and national levels in 2005, and that all counties showed improvement from 2003. These rates are seasonally adjusted because unemployment rates are generally much higher during the winter months than they are during the summer.

| Unemployment Rates Compared 2000 - 2005 | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
| Archuleta | 3.9% | 3.7% | 4.3% | 5.7% | 5.5% | 4.9% | 4.8% |
| Dolores | 8.2% | 9.3% | 6.8% | 11.0% | 10.6% | 7.7% | 6.9% |
| La Plata | 3.8% | 3.8% | 3.7% | 4.4% | 4.5% | 4.1% | 3.9% |
| Montezuma | 5.0% | 5.4% | 4.8% | 5.9% | 5.5% | 5.3% | 5.3% |
| San Juan | 11.5% | 12.7% | 16.0% | 16.0% | 15.7% | 11.1% | 7.5% |
| State Unemploy. Rate | 2.9% | 2.8% | 3.7% | 5.7% | 5.7% | 5.2% | 5.0% |
| National Unemploy. Rate | 4.2% | 4.0% | 5.3% | 5.8% | 6.0% | 5.5% | 5.1% |

Source: Colorado Dept of Labor

Employment and Income 2005

In 2005 the service sector provided 33% of jobs and 31% of job income in the region. These jobs include highly paid professionals as well as lower paying unskilled labor. Trade is also important in the regional economy, providing 25% of jobs and 18% of job income.

| Region 9 2005 Total Employment | # of Jobs | % of Jobs | Income (\$000) | % of Inc. |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Agriculture | 1,985 | 5% | \$ 2,638 | 1% |
| Mining & Utilities | 923 | 1% | \$ 89,240 | 2% |
| Construction | 5,761 | 12% | \$ 242,730 | 15% |
| Manufacturing | 1,386 | 4% | \$ 38,891 | 4% |
| Transportation & Warehousing | 1,053 | 3% | \$ 54,240 | 6% |
| Trade | 7,518 | 25% | \$ 207,783 | 18% |
| Finance, Insurance & Real Estate | 3,307 | 4% | \$ 144,090 | 6% |
| Services | 19,600 | 33% | \$ 567,827 | 31% |
| Government | 9,480 | 12% | \$ 405,151 | 17% |
| Total | 51,013 | 100% | \$ 1,752,590 | 100% |

Source: Colorado Demography Section Sept. 06

Includes proprietors as well as salary and wage labor

Region-wide, 72% of jobs are wage and salary employment, while 28% are held by proprietors (owners).

Retail Sales Trends

This analysis is patterned after a series of studies done by the Office of Social and Economic Trend Analysis at Iowa State University (available on the web at www.seta.iastate.edu). These studies use trade statistics, business numbers and retail sales data to provide insights for decision making regarding business expansion, relocation, marketing, government finance, and community development. We have used their definitions of terms, calculations, and methods of analysis. Retail sales data was provided by the Colorado Department of Revenue – Office of Research and Analysis. The Colorado Demography Section provided population estimates as well as adjustment factors to convert current dollars into constant dollars. Current dollar sales are sales as reported by the state, no adjustment has been made for price inflation. Constant dollar sales reflect changes in price inflation by adjusting current dollar sales with the Consumer Price Index (Denver-Boulder CPI). This is a more realistic method of evaluating sales over time as it converts all sales to a base year, in this case 2003. Individual reports for each of the five counties can be seen at www.scan.org.

Pull Factors - This table includes each county's "pull factor" for 1999 to 2005. A pull factor shows the relative strength of the retail sales sector in the county and serves as a proxy for trade area size. Pull factors are good measures of sales activities because they reflect changes in population,

| Calendar Year | County Pull Factors | | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | Archuleta | Dolores | La Plata | Montezuma | San Juan |
| 1999 | 0.76 | 0.37 | 0.96 | 0.73 | 1.15 |
| 2000 | 0.77 | 0.38 | 0.95 | 0.70 | 1.17 |
| 2001 | 0.75 | 0.42 | 0.95 | 0.73 | 1.16 |
| 2002 | 0.71 | 0.40 | 0.97 | 0.74 | 1.11 |
| 2003 | 0.67 | 0.46 | 1.00 | 0.81 | 1.10 |
| 2004 | 0.65 | 0.49 | 1.08 | 1.01 | 1.13 |
| 2005 | 0.71 | 0.62 | 1.06 | 1.06 | 1.09 |

inflation, and the state economy. The pull factor is derived by dividing the county's per capita sales by the state's per capita sales. Per capita sales are calculated by dividing constant dollar sales by the population. In Archuleta and Dolores Counties we see that per capita sales have been consistently weaker than state per capita sales from 1999 to 2005.

Pull factors greater than 1 represent retail sector strength, while pull factors less than 1 show sector weakness.

Potential Sales - Potential sales are an estimate of the amount of money that could be spent on retail goods and services by residents of the county, based on the county's income and population. Potential sales are the product of the county population, state per capita sales, and the index of income. The index of income is county per capita income divided by state per capita income (\$36,113).

| Calendar Year | Surplus or Leakage as a % of Potential Sales | | | | |
|---------------|--|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | Archuleta | Dolores | La Plata | Montezuma | San Juan |
| 1999 | 26% | -48% | 15% | 3% | 47% |
| 2000 | 34% | -37% | 15% | 4% | 59% |
| 2001 | 28% | -37% | 14% | 7% | 54% |
| 2002 | 21% | -38% | 13% | 6% | 35% |
| 2003 | 14% | -28% | 15% | 16% | 34% |
| 2004 | 9% | -29% | 23% | 46% | 56% |
| 2005 | 18% | -11% | 20% | 54% | 50% |

If the estimate of available money (potential sales) does not match what is actually spent, then the county has a "surplus" or "leakage" of retail sales. This is calculated by subtracting potential sales from actual sales. If we divide the difference by potential sales for that year we can find surplus or

leakage as a *percent of potential sales*. According to this analysis, Dolores County is not meeting its potential for retail sales, while the other counties are consistently achieving a surplus of retail sales.

If the result is a negative number then there is leakage (sales are leaving the county); if the result is a positive number then there is a surplus (people are coming in from outside of the area to buy goods and services).

Total Personal Income

When all sources of income in the local economy are combined, we can estimate Total Personal Income (TPI). As this table illustrates, the five counties in Southwest Colorado vary in their composition. Most income is job based (employment), though significant amounts of income enter our economy from other sources, such as transfer payments and dividends, interest and rents.

| Region 9 - Total Personal Income Components by County 2004 (\$000) | | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| | Archuleta | Dolores | La Plata | Montezuma | San Juan |
| FARM EARNINGS | \$ (4,986) | \$ 246 | \$ (3,990) | \$ 608 | \$ - |
| NON-FARM EARNINGS | \$ 127,377 | \$ 19,000 | \$ 986,279 | \$ 311,211 | \$ 7,272 |
| RESIDENCY ADJ. | \$ 8,225 | \$ 7,273 | \$ (9,001) | \$ 70,289 | \$ 1,684 |
| DIV., INT. & RENT | \$ 79,768 | \$ 8,993 | \$ 360,320 | \$ 120,723 | \$ 3,868 |
| TRANSFER PAYMENTS | \$ 40,844 | \$ 9,624 | \$ 152,976 | \$ 113,148 | \$ 2,333 |
| TOTAL PERSONAL INCOME | \$ 251,228 | \$ 45,136 | \$ 1,486,584 | \$ 615,979 | \$ 15,157 |

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Transfer payments consist primarily of retirement and disability benefit payments, medical payments (i.e. Medicare and Medicaid), income maintenance benefits, unemployment insurance, veteran's benefits and payments to nonprofit institutions.

Dividend income is income that is paid in cash or other assets to stockholders by corporations in the U.S. or abroad. Interest income consists of monies received from money market mutual funds and interest from other sources. Rental income consists of income from the rental of real property, the net income of owner - occupants of non-farm dwellings, and the royalties received from patents, copyrights, and from the rights to natural resources.

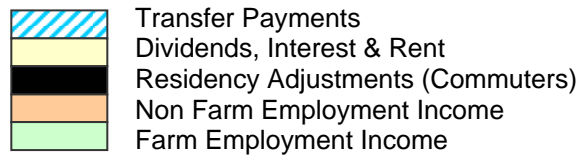
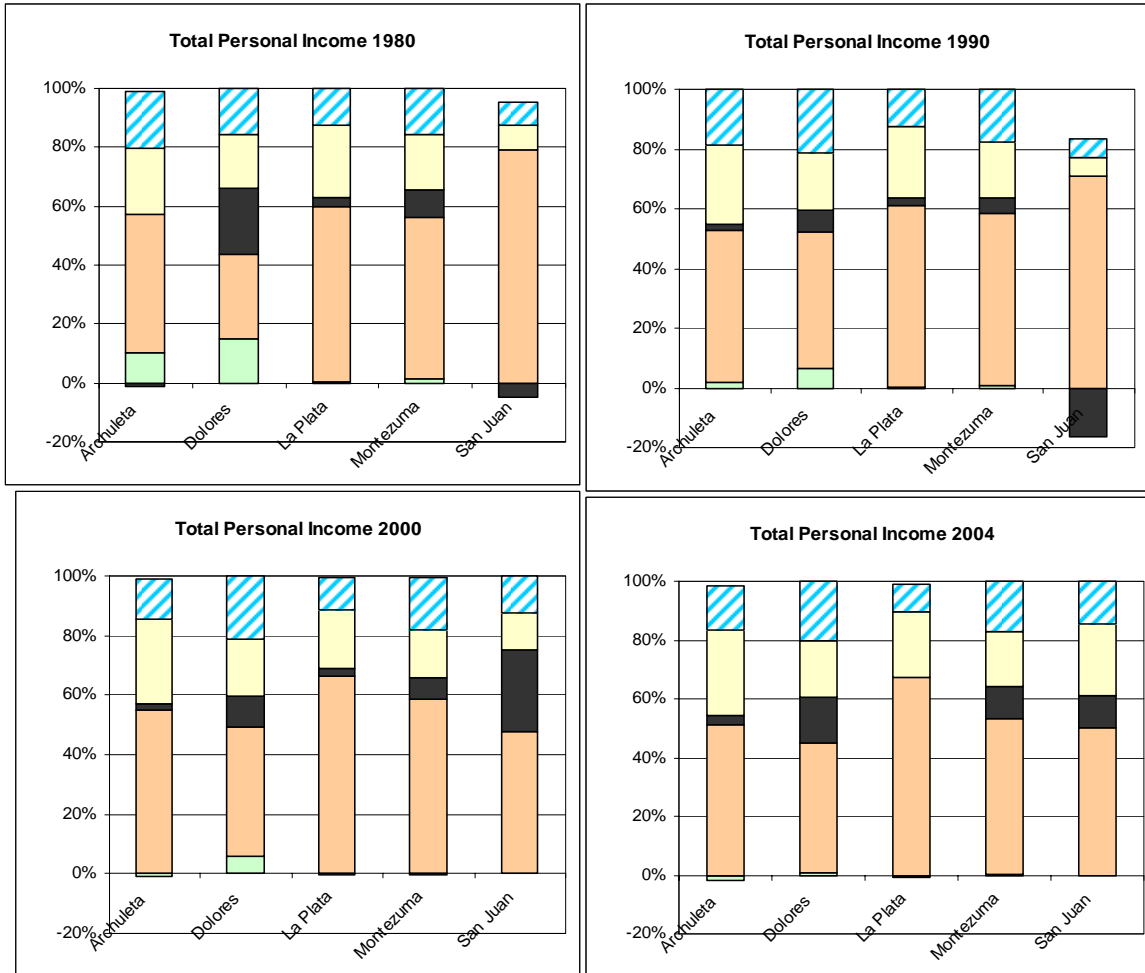
Residency adjustments are made when a person receives income for work performed and paid for from outside their place of residency, (i.e. commuters). Negative numbers mean that more people were coming into the county for work than were commuting out.

Non-Farm earnings are derived from (non-agricultural) employment within the region.

Farm earnings are from agriculture production within the region (farming, ranching).

Total Personal Income Trends

These charts allow us to see how the components of Total Personal Income have changed over the long term in each of the counties. Generally, we see a trend of decreasing employment income, and increasing income from dividends, interest and rent, and transfer payments. Residency adjustments illustrate how the economy of each county is tied to the others as people commute to where the jobs are, but take their paychecks home. For more information regarding commuter patterns go to <http://dola.colorado.gov/demog/WorkerFlow.cfm>.



TRIBAL POPULATIONS

The planning and management area of Region 9 includes two Indian reservations, including the Southern Ute and the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes. Historically, the Utes roamed throughout the Four Corners and Western Colorado in several distinct hunter-gatherer bands. The Southern Ute divisions were the Muache, Capote, and Weeminuche. As a result of the Dawes Act in 1887, and the subsequent Act of 1895, the previously defined Southern Ute reservation lands were broken into two distinct units. Most of the Muache and Capote Utes accepted farming allotments in the eastern portion, which became known as the Southern Ute Indian Reservation with agency headquarters at Ignacio, in La Plata County. The Weeminuche Utes, led by Chief Ignacio, refused to accept allotments and moved to the western portion, which became known as the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation with agency headquarters at Towaoc, in Montezuma County.

Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe

The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe's land is located in southwest Colorado and eastern Utah, and covers 993 square miles. The land is held in trust by the United States Government. The Tribal enrollment in 2002 was 2,012 with the majority of the members living on the reservation in Towaoc, Colorado (Montezuma County), and in White Mesa, Utah. The Tribal census shows the largest percentage of the members are in their early twenties and younger.

The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is a major contributor to the regional economy. In 2005, the Tribe was one of the largest employers in Montezuma County with 1,130 jobs in all aspects of tribal government and operations, and at their Ute Mountain Casino and RV Park. The Weeminuche Construction Authority has become one of the most successful and largest construction companies in the Four Corners area. The Colorado Ute Water Settlement Act of 1988 mandated, through the building of the Dolores Project and McPhee Reservoir, that drinking and irrigation water be provided to the reservation. This has dramatically expanded farming and ranching operations. Other tribal resources include income from oil and gas wells, and tribal enterprises that revolve around tourism such as the Tribe's Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Park and pottery factory. The Tribe has just updated a *Ute Mountain Ute Tribe Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (2006).

Southern Ute Indian Tribe

The Southern Ute Tribal enrollment is 1,305; with the majority of the members living on the reservation. The 2000 census shows the largest percentage of the members are in their early twenties and younger. The reservation land base includes 750,000 acres, seven major rivers, and the Navajo State Park. More recently, the Tribe purchased land near Durango (La Plata County) and is building the Three Springs housing and commercial center on 681 acres, which will have 2,283 homes and many thousands of square feet of new commercial/office space.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe is a significant economic player in La Plata County and the region. Tribal headquarters are located adjacent to the Town of Ignacio, southeast of Durango (in La Plata County). The Tribe is one of the largest employers in the county. Their oil and gas operations, gaming enterprises at the Sky Ute Lodge and Casino, land and housing development, and tourism-related businesses bring jobs and income to Tribal and non-Tribal residents. A new casino hotel and convention center is slated to open in 2008. The Southern Ute Growth Fund was started in 1999 and has vast investments spanning America and Canada. The Growth Fund reports a portfolio of over \$1 billion.

Natural resources on the reservation include extensive gas reserves, coal, timber, and agriculture. These resources provide the basis for a diversified Tribal economic base. Tribal energy resources, particularly in the form of natural gas, have played the largest role in the reservation economy over the past decade (more than 90% of Tribal revenues came from energy resource development in 1998).

Sources:

- *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)* – 2001. Region 9 EDD.
- *Durango Herald*. Archive reports: www.durangoherald.com
- La Plata County Economic Development Action Partnership (LEAD).
- *FOUR CORNERS REGIONAL STUDY ECONOMIES AND ISSUES. Final Report*. Donna K. Graves – Information Services, January 2003.
- Mountain Studies Institute Web Site: www.mountainstudies.org
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe Web Site: www.southern-ute.nsn.us
- United States Census.
- Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe Web Site: www.utemountainute.com

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Community Values

During the CEDS process we discovered that each county is at a different place in terms of whether they have a mission or even goals and objectives around economic development. This is an area where growth and improvement can definitely occur in future CEDS updates. However, throughout the region, many of the same community values surfaced during the visioning process, including:

- Appreciation for the heritage and landscape upon which the communities of Southwest Colorado have been built
- Diverse and sustainable economies that pay livable wages, offer meaningful work, and create diverse, well-balanced economies
- Building the capacities of the local economic development groups Housing and health care that are affordable, accessible and efficient
- Effective telecommunications infrastructure and technology training services that will make our region competitive and a participant in the global marketplace
- Business parks that attract new businesses, help existing businesses, and are in keeping with local land use policies and community values
- Balancing ecological and economic needs, encouraging problem-solving, constructive dialogue and solution finding between all sectors
- Adequate infrastructure that is fairly paid for by communities, developers, and business entities
- A strong agriculture sector so that our open lands and small-town living can be preserved
- Transportation systems that allow us to travel in a safe, efficient and cost-effective manner
- Effective education systems that are preparing students to meet the academic and technological challenges of tomorrow.
- Appreciation for community enhancements such as the arts, cultural attractions, recreation opportunities, and recognize these enhancements are tied to economic development success
- An accessible and adequate supply of community services including human service resources and law enforcement.

Vision Statement

An examination of these shared values led to the creation of an economic development vision statement that could be applied region-wide. A vision statement must encompass a shared vision - one that is a broad but concise description of what we as a community want to be in the future in regards to economic development.

The following vision statement describes the assets and values and focuses on moving the region toward achieving our goals for the future.

“We strive to encourage economic development that preserves our small-town and traditional heritage, takes care of our natural resources, and provides opportunities for our children to stay in Southwest Colorado.”

SWOT Analysis

The starting point for a credible economic development strategic plan is an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the community in regards to economic development. This is the baseline by which a community begins to understand where they are in relation to the vision. Once the SWOT analysis is completed, strategies for the solutions can begin to be identified. By working with the communities in the region the following SWOT analysis and strategies were identified:

Strengths

- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Diversity of landscape
- Scenic beauty (agricultural and public lands)
- Local cultural, historical assets
- Small-town living and lifestyle
- Recreational opportunities
- Fort Lewis College & other institutions of higher learning
- Climate
- Retirees with skills
- People want to live here

Weaknesses

- Not many opportunities for jobs, higher wages
- Economies that are highly dependent on one or two sectors or seasons
- Loss of open space and a decline in the agriculture sector (related issues)
- Lack of telecommunications infrastructure in the outlying areas
- Lack of available, trained workforce, housing, health care and childcare could challenge existing businesses and new business relocation
- Inadequate public infrastructure in some areas
- Lack of resources to deal with the most challenging issues (e.g. housing and transportation)

Opportunities

- Tourist destination with major attractions
- Availability of air service
- Value-added marketing, strategies for enhancing agriculture
- Development of business incubators
- Healthy Lifestyles of residents
- Amenity migration ~ people want to live and work here
- Development of telecommuter businesses
- Widely diverse, well-educated population
- Development of Region 9’s EDD Growth Company Initiative to provide equity capital

Threats

- Growth could ruin or compromise the qualities that make the region where people want to live
- Transportation & public infrastructure's capacity unable to meet demands of growth
- Natural resource management
- State funding cuts of Human Service programs

Regional Goals, Actions & Implementation

Ideally, the goals of a region should reflect its vision statement. A goal is a specific statement of what the region would like to be or achieve. Goals should be focused on the priority issues impacting the development of the community. The actions should then reflect the steps needed to accomplish the goal. By applying goals and actions, we can begin taking the steps towards the vision. The regional goals and actions cover 17 areas required by the Economic Development Association.

Economic and Community Technical Assistance

Goal: Build the capacities of county-level economic development groups that are working to accomplish prioritized, locally defined economic development projects.

Actions:

1. Build the capacity(ies) of the county-level economic development groups by providing organizational, technical and financial assistance, where possible and needed.
2. Assist county-level economic development groups in accomplishing specific priority projects.

Work Force Issues

Goal: Better understand Southwest Colorado's workforce so as to match employers' needs with qualified employees. Improve retention, promote employees' skills, provide "new economy" training opportunities. Address personal needs such as child care, affordable housing and transportation.

Actions:

1. Be an active participant of the Southwest Workforce Center Board and assist in identifying workforce issues, needs and action steps.
2. Analyze opportunities and partnership networks, and utilize state employment programs (Colorado First, Small BIZWorks grant) to develop and improve technology training facilities and programs.
3. Develop training for employers and employees on better understanding the needs of the current workforce and available programs for assistance.
4. Increase utilization of workforce centers, and state programs by area employers.

Infrastructure

(sewer, water, roads, fire and emergency services, electricity and telecom)

Goal: Ensure that Southwest Colorado has the adequate physical infrastructure needed to plan for and meet its future economic development and workforce needs.

Actions:

1. Ensure that infrastructure systems that are at capacity are identified and plans are made to address future expansion issues in a timely manner.
2. Region 9 EDD will work with the Southwest Colorado Transportation Planning Commission to take the lead in updating and maintaining the 20 year Inter-Modal Transportation Plan.

3. Ensure that community needs are considered in decision-making involving infrastructure planning done by any relevant state agencies such as the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT).
4. Through the Regional Resource Coordinating Committee (RRCC), Department of Local Affairs and other mechanisms, offer assistance, where possible, in helping communities secure adequate infrastructure by providing loans, technical assistance and grant sponsorship with a particular focus on economically distressed areas and those with few community planning resources.

Telecommunications

Goal: Ensure that Southwest Colorado has the telecommunications infrastructure and information technology training needed to meet the demands of a competitive global marketplace.

Actions:

1. Continue to work developing improved telecommunications infrastructure including: redundant fiber connectivity to the national "backbone", adequate bandwidth for new technologies, affordable rates, and services in rural areas.
2. Ensure that once the necessary telecommunications infrastructure is in place, adequate training and other services are available that will help businesses use the new technologies.

Recruiting New Jobs & Businesses

Goal: Strengthen and diversify the regional economy by recruiting diverse businesses that strengthen the job market(s), and are compatible with community goals.

Actions:

1. Establish business incubators working with state, county, regional and higher education partners.
2. Continue to support technology and telecommunications infrastructure and services.
3. Increase technical assistance services for businesses locating to Southwest Colorado through an "entrepreneurial garden" to facilitate access to capital, marketing, business planning, help with bookkeeping knowledge, etc.
4. Continue to assist communities in the region in carrying out community-wide action steps and processes for bringing in new businesses.
5. Continue to offer the Business Loan Fund.
6. Partner with the State Enterprise Zone program, the Office of Economic Development and local economic development groups on trade shows, prospecting trips and statewide marketing/advertising campaigns to attract new businesses to the region.
7. Ensure that communities have adequate infrastructure for new business development (see related goals/strategies).
8. Seek methodologies and projects that improve the downtowns and main streets making them attractive locations for new businesses.
9. Develop improved technology training facilities and programs to meet the workforce needs of businesses moving to the region.
10. Work in partnership with the Southwest Colorado Travel Region to create marketing programs that inform tourists of business opportunities in the region.
11. Capitalize on the amenities of the region in creating new jobs.

12. Support the development of Convention Centers and facilities in communities that desire to support such infrastructure.
13. Continue to assist communities in expanding, starting or "filling up" their business parks by providing development, marketing and capital assistance.

Strengthening Existing Jobs & Businesses

Goal: Improve, diversify and strengthen the regional economies by helping existing businesses to be more effective, to expand, and to attract and retain a viable, competitive workforce.

Actions:

1. Establish business incubators working with county and regional partners that can grow and provide training for existing businesses.
2. Continue to build technology and telecommunications infrastructure and services.
3. Increase business technical assistance for existing businesses through the Small Business Development Center at Fort Lewis College. This includes expanding the Business Advisor Group, developing CEO and CFO networks, and creating an "entrepreneurial garden" to identify and support potential growth companies.
4. Continue the Business Loan Fund and the provision of loans that provide low-interest funding for businesses expansion. Coordinate the Micro-Enterprise loan program with business technical assistance.
5. Help businesses with trade leads, new market(s) identification and other specialized businesses opportunities.
6. Develop improved technology training and education facilities and programs that can train or re-train workers and employers in the region for emerging technology jobs (a.k.a. the training of "knowledge workers").
7. Develop specific strategies to reduce "retail leakage".

Enterprise Zone Program

Goal: Continue to operate the Enterprise Zone program as a tool for improving the economies of qualified areas.

1. Operate and promote the program as per the State's guidelines.
2. Advocate policy changes when appropriate.
3. Establish benchmarks to measure program progress.

Tourism

Goal: Maintain, develop and diversify the tourism industry in the region.

Actions:

1. Develop innovative, participatory and educational tourism initiatives that involve: heritage tourism projects, agri-tourism, and cultural tourism.
2. Support the tourism efforts done directly by the Native American cultures and tribes in the region.
3. Continue to work in partnership with the Southwest Colorado Travel Region to carry out marketing programs that promote the attractions and cultural amenities of the region. Including those that expand the marketing of special events; that ensure the development of adequate infrastructure for cultural activities; and that assist communities in developing "shoulder season" tourism attractions.
4. Maintain the quality of life features that attract tourists to the region such as open space, public access to trails, a clean environment, and ample recreational opportunities.
5. Utilize direct base economic analysis to better understand the components of tourism based employment and target marketing efforts to areas of tourism that are more sustainable.
6. Conduct Retail Study for the region.
7. Conduct a study on the Social and Economic Impacts of 2nd Homeowners in order to evaluate the primary and secondary impacts of this industry on the economy.

Agriculture

Goal: Support and assist the agriculture sector to become more viable.

Actions:

1. Develop data gathering strategies that will accurately portray the agriculture sector. Work with farmers and ranchers, and other interested parties, to identify, gather and disseminate agriculture economic data that is complete and can accurately measure the value of the sector in our region.
2. Keep the agriculture resources viable so farmers and ranchers can earn a living in the industry by:
 - a. supporting the eradication of noxious weeds
 - b. ensuring an adequate agricultural water supply
 - c. promoting stewarding initiatives
 - d. encouraging land use practices that keep the resource viable
 - e. working in concert with the DOW and ranchers to manage wildlife concerns
3. Give farmers and ranchers tools for estate planning and reducing their taxes including implementation of such tools as conservation easements and incentives for agricultural lands preservation (e.g. the transfer of development rights).

4. Increase awareness of and utilization of value-added agricultural marketing and production strategies.
5. Support the development of local markets for locally grown products, including Farmer's Markets.
6. Support the businesses that can "dovetail" with crops grown by local farmers and ranchers.
7. Encourage stronger leadership in the sector as well as increased cooperation and communication.

Affordable Housing

Goal: Increase the supply of affordable housing in Southwest Colorado.

Actions:

1. Advocate that each county works on affordable housing strategies to meet the ever-growing needs of the workforce, giving increased regional attention and organization collaboration to the issue.
2. Encourage and support the development of private/public partnership for bringing new affordable housing units to the region.
3. Provide incentives for affordable housing development that could include tools such as:
 - a. density bonuses
 - b. free or discounted provision of infrastructure
 - c. fee waivers
 - d. direct financial support
 - e. variances that reduce costs (e.g. on lot sizes and building plans)
4. Ensure that local land use plans do not discourage affordable housing.

Land Use Issues

Goal: Keep our public and private lands viable and economically and ecologically healthy so as to foster improved economies in each county, and adequately plan for the future.

Actions:

1. Complete the San Juan National Forest - Forest Plan with a focus on balancing the economic, ecological and social needs of the region.
2. Develop or continue to implement locally-created and defined land use policies and comprehensive plans that help manage growth, and plan for transportation, services (fire, water, sewer), infrastructure, housing, recreation and economic development needs and priorities.
3. Support the development of projects that meld economic and ecological goals together so that land-based jobs are maintained and the environment is improved.

Health Care

Goal: Ensure adequate health care services are available and accessible.

Actions:

1. Work with existing groups to find solutions to the funding crises that the health care industry faces.
2. Ensure tax credits and loans are available.
3. Ensure that the current level of services can be provided for our growing region.

4. Encourage regional solutions in health care strategic planning and resource distribution, including addressing the issue from a Four Corners perspective.
5. Assist each community in meeting the facility needs of its primary health care facilities.

Education

Goal: Assist with improving the quality and availability of K-12 and higher education programs.

1. Develop strategies for tele-technology training to meet the future telecommunications industry's workforce needs and provide opportunities for young people to stay in the region after high school and/or college.
2. Work to increase collaboration and service enhancement between education institutions.

Child Care

Goal: Expand the availability, affordability, and quality of childcare.

Actions:

1. Provide information on tax credits and/or loans for eligible applicants who are expanding or starting child care centers.
2. Make available information regarding potential childcare funding resources.
3. Support on-site childcare centers in businesses where such centers can be feasible.
4. Support the provision of training programs, services and policies that increase the quality of childcare in the region.
5. Assist in the development of non-traditional-hour child care (e.g. 24-hour care, 12-hour care, weekend care).
6. Help with administering grants for childcare projects.

Community Enhancements

Goal: Facilitate the creation, enhancement or expansion of various "community amenities" which make Southwest Colorado an attractive place to live for current and future residents.

Action:

1. Assist communities in implementing historical, recreational, artistic and/or cultural preservation projects through:
 - a. providing technical assistance
 - b. assisting with grant support
 - c. providing loans to implement projects
 - d. offering information and referral resources

Networking

Goal: Improve Region 9 EDD's effectiveness through expanded networking with other organizations.

Actions:

1. Continue convening the CEDS Regional Advisory Council to address focused economic development issues, monitor implementation of the CEDS and tackle issues that can be better addressed through regional collaboration.
2. Continue the Regional Resource Coordinating Committee (RRCC), a group of regional organizations that provide financial and technical assistance towards accomplishing projects listed on the Community Development Action Plans (CDAPS).

3. Work with the Small Business Development Center and county economic development groups to collaborate resources and expertise to meet needs and priorities of the region's communities.

Evaluation and Measurement

Goal: Improve the region's ability to monitor economic vitality and the attainment of goals and strategies outlined in the CEDS.

Actions:

1. Continue to work with the State Demographer to refine and use the Base Analysis methodology. Establish targets utilizing direct base analysis.
2. Support the continued development and distribution of community indicators and regional statistical documents, and track their data trends.
3. Utilize professional expertise for regional research projects.
4. Reestablish Enterprise Zone benchmarks.