

# FORT LEWIS MESA DISTRICT LAND USE PLAN

(Abbreviated Version – Full version available upon request or down load at  
[www.http://www.co.laplata.co.us/plan/FLM.htm](http://www.co.laplata.co.us/plan/FLM.htm))

## *I. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN*

The following Charter recognizes the desire of our residents to keep our district rural. This plan also recognizes that this will be a challenge, and has incorporated tools, which we believe will help to achieve this goal.

The Fort Lewis Mesa (FLM) District Planning Committee's charter is a working, living document and should not be viewed as a final plan. We believe that our district must create a working plan that may be modified as our community grows; changes in the economy take place, and as demands to create and increase our infrastructure occur.

The Citizens of the Fort Lewis Mesa Planning District understand that our community is growing. We recognize that this growth, combined with a diminishing ability to make an agricultural livelihood, means that we must stand together to help preserve the uniqueness and values of our community. The following Charter is our statement to those people, either appointed or elected, who will be making the decisions that affect us, the land where we live, and our way of life.

## *II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES, DISTRICT CONCERNS AND OUR VISION*

### **Guiding Principles:**

- We believe that our livelihoods and lifestyles are centered around our rural landscape and our rural lifestyle.
- The diversity of the district must be acknowledged
- We desire to maintain our agricultural heritage to the fullest extent.
- We acknowledge that water restrictions and the declining nature of agriculture threaten our way of life.
- We must highlight the domestic water shortages that impact current and future growth
- We do not wish to create unnecessary barriers to a person's ability to develop their land.
- We wish to encourage appropriate development in Hesperus, Marvel, Kline, Red Mesa and Breen, with a good clean water supply, but not at the expense of prohibiting the ability to develop elsewhere.
- We believe home-based and small businesses should be viewed as essential.
- We believe that County Government should be open and accessible.
- We must demonstrate the shortage of irrigation water and the direct and indirect relationships with domestic water supply.

## District Concerns and Key Issues

As a District we are concerned with the prospect of NEW growth and the potential of unnecessary regulatory controls which may threaten our guiding principles; the disruption of existing agricultural operations; the disruption of irrigation water conveyance and storage facilities; significant impacts to roads and highways; corridor style strip development and the loss of viable agriculture land.

## Fort Lewis Mesa District Vision of the Future

- A landscape with successful farms and ranches that help provide the expansive views and wildlife habitat that we now enjoy where residents and incentive programs provide a foundation of support.
- We enjoy areas of intensive production of food for local use. Water policies and distribution sustain existing practices and encourage home and market gardens.
- Business development emphasizes our rural and agriculture focus with small value-added processing facilities, markets, and retail food outlets all locally controlled and sustained.
- Our homes are built and spaced in harmony with the rural landscape, with appropriate densities surrounding Red Mesa, Marvel, Kline, Breen and Hesperus.

## III. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### PROCESS

#### A. **Goal: Encourage a local development process that reinforces and magnifies La Plata County's openness and accessibility and our community's active participation in that process.**

**Policy 1.** The formalization of a District Development Review Committee is essential to our district plan. A formal committee creates an avenue for our residents to have open communication with our local government. We ask that the County Commissioners, County Planning Commission, and the County Community Development Department give recognition and validation to such a committee.

The Fort Lewis Mesa District Development Review Committee shall consist of 7 members, at least 5 who are owners of real property and at least 4 of which must reside in the District.

The Committee shall be nominated by the citizens in the Fort Lewis Mesa Planning District. Citizens of the District shall present a slate of nominees to be appointed together by the board of county commissioners. Each member shall serve three (3) year staggering terms. Beginning with two with 1 year terms, two with 2 year terms and three with 3 year terms. Diversity in membership is encouraged, as we value critical thought from all sectors of our community. Inclusion of the following stakeholders is encouraged:

1. Ranchers and Farmers
2. Land owners with large parcels of land
3. Irrigators
4. Land owners with smaller parcels of land
5. Business owners
6. Individuals who work in the District

The Committee shall make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners and the La Plata County Planning Commission regarding development and planning within the Fort Lewis Mesa Planning District.

The Committee shall self-appoint a chairperson who has the responsibility of communicating with each of the Committee members regarding the date, time and place of review Meetings. ( The FLM Planning Group has agreed to take the responsibility to develop and oversee the nomination process.)

**Policy 2.** The allowance of a staff person assigned by the Community Development Department as the main liaison between our District Development Review Committee and any applicants coming before us. This will allow for advancing open and consistent communication.

**Policy 3.** The notification distance to adjacent and area landowners on proposed projects shall be at least 500 ft for minor projects and at least 1/4 mile (1,320 feet) for major projects. We recognize that depending on the project the notification distance may be increase. For purposes of this district plan this establishes the minimum requirements.

## **CURRENT WATER STATUS**

### **B. Goal: Minimize the negative impact of increased development on a limited and scarce water supply as well as maximizing the potential of domestic and agriculture based water storage, allocation, and conservation techniques.**

**Policy 1.** Because of the scarcity of water in our District combined with increasing demand we recommend: An independent, comprehensive review of any study or studies that have been done or are ongoing shall commence in 2007, initiated by the Community Development Department, outlining the cumulative effects that the current development pattern and future development will have on our water resources. This review shall incorporate recommendations derived from any independent studies that may provide additional information describing cumulative effects.

**Policy 2.** Because of the critical nature of our water resources, we shall define a standard for development as follows: The division of a parcel of land into two or more lots less than 35 acres shall utilize conservation/cluster design with an established base density of 2 lots per 40 acres\*. (See Section VI Residential/TDR's)

The only variance to this base density, unless this district plan is amended and central water available, may be within existing town sites, Marvel, Red Mesa, Breen, Kline and Hesperus or within a reasonable distance under 1/2 mile of the perimeter of the original town sites. A variance may be requested in accordance to the La Plata County Land Use

**Policy 3.** FLM District Planning Committee believes that our water supply and usages should be quantified, qualified and managed at the county level as per state statute. During the development process we would like the BOCC to not rely solely on the state water engineer, but to allow for staff to have applicants address cumulative impacts in accordance with the law. (See Appendix II)

\*Quarter-quarter sections may have more or less than 40 acres measured in the field. Owners must prove a government quarter-quarter section is a government lot measured on the ground or platted by the US Government. No government quarter-quarter section or government lot shall be less than 35 acres.

- Policy 4.** During the planning stages of a domestic rural water system, the FLM District Planning Committee recommends that the District Plan be amended to include the following:  
A comprehensive impact analysis that assesses the costs and benefits of the short and long term development of a domestic system with corresponding alternative growth scenarios that include:
1. Prioritizing service to our existing town sites;
  2. Efficiencies of location preferences and corresponding calculation of Social Benefit Cost Ratio (The costs/benefits of an activity to society at large, taking into account not only the cost/benefit to the individual, household, firm or government undertaking the activity but also the costs/benefits to all other members of society.)
  3. Analysis of competitively priced water rates.

## LAND

**C. Goal: Build in harmony with the rural landscape, with appropriate densities surrounding Red Mesa, Marvel, Kline, Breen and Hesperus.**

**Policy 1.** The FLM District Planning Committee encourages higher density development in or near our existing towns or other formally designated areas by supporting the following:

- Centralized infrastructure development including water and sewer districts.
- The division of a parcel of land into two or more lots less than 35 acres shall utilize conservation/cluster design with an established base density of 2 lots per 40 acres\*. (See Section VI Residential/TDR's) The only variance to this base density, unless this district plan is amended and central water available, may be within existing town sites, Marvel, Red Mesa, Breen, Kline and Hesperus or within a reasonable distance under 1/2 mile of the perimeter of the original town sites. A variance may be requested in accordance to the La Plata County Land Use Code.
- Public/private approaches and not solely land use regulations, that utilizes the land market to encourage higher densities in appropriate areas, agriculture preservation, and conservation design.

**Policy 2.** We recognize that growth and development will occur and that there are resources and land use tools that may assist in the guidance and management of this growth and development. We recommend: The commencement of a complete analysis of the use of Transfer of Development Rights for the Fort Lewis Mesa District in 2007.

Conservation Development: We believe that Conservation based development is an excellent tool that embraces our core values and principles and: Helps to preserve our rural livelihoods; supports our agricultural heritage; acknowledges a water critical area; creates opportunities for people to develop their land without unnecessary barriers; and supports appropriate development in Marvel, Kline, Breen, Red Mesa and Hesperus

Rather than control development by lot size Fort Lewis Mesa encourages design based on overall density. With this method owners are allowed to develop a fixed number of units regardless of lot size. We recognize that affordability is directly related to lot size and do not want to price people out of the market. We do encourage development that is sensitive to the character of the District, respectful of cumulative water impacts and still profitable to the owner. Development flexibility involves the reduction of lot size in exchange for setting aside significant amounts of open space.