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OVERVIEW

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

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

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BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS

TRANSPORTATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

WATER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SEWER / SOLID WASTE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy 2.3.B2: Coordinate with State and other local agencies, such as Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment and San Juan Basin Health

Department, to ensure proposed projects are consistent with minimum solid waste system requirements.

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

UTILITY

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

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

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

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

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

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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