

Overview

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

Population Change and Distribution

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

**Table 1
Historic County Population Levels: 1970 - 2010**

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

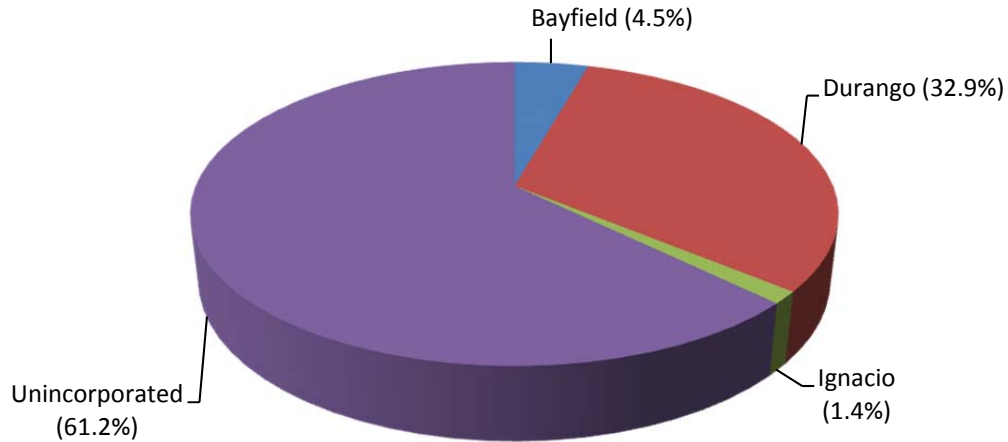
** Includes Tribal and non-Tribal
Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs and U.S. Census Bureau*

**Table 2
Recent Population Levels: 2001 - 2010**

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

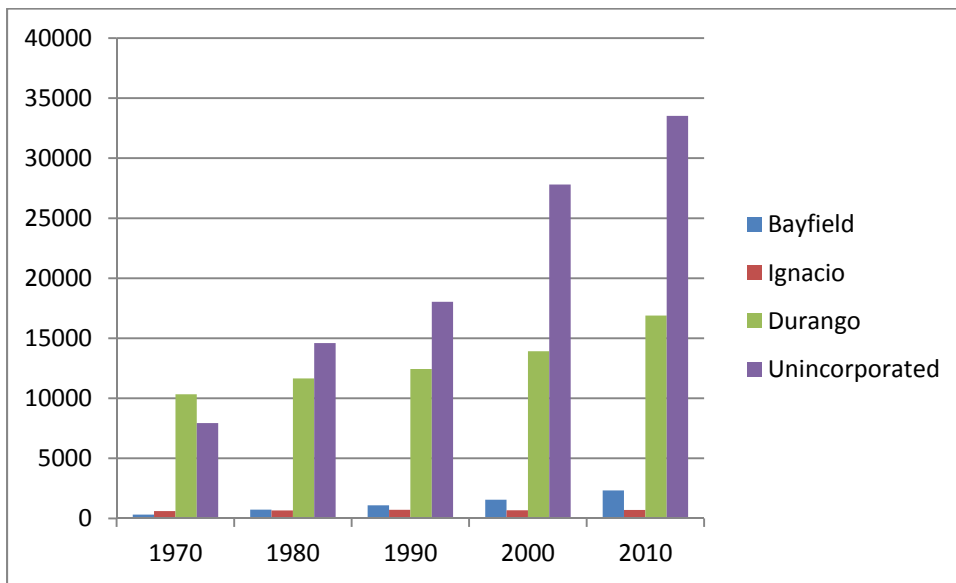
**Includes Tribal and non-Tribal
Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs and U.S. Census Bureau*

Chart 1
Population Distribution: 2010



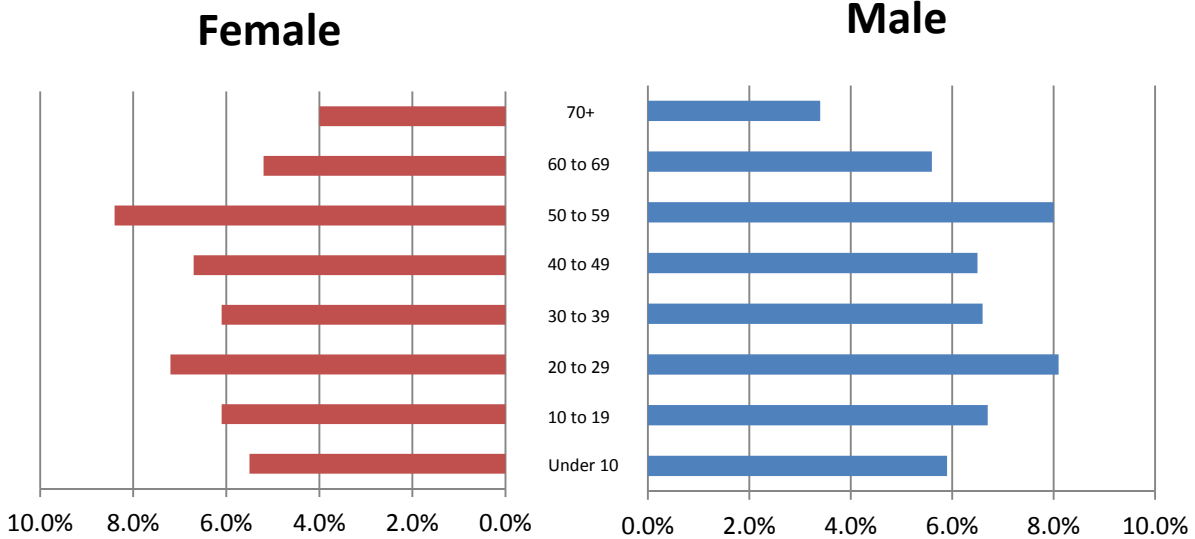
Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs and U.S. Census Bureau

Chart 2
Historic Population Distribution: 1970 - 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

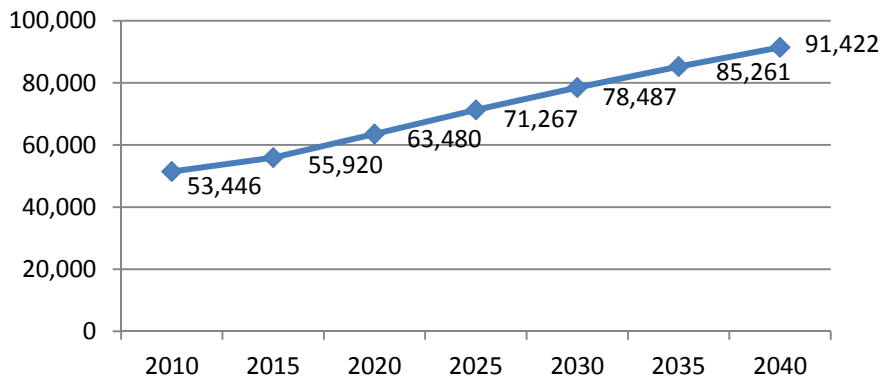
Chart 3
Gender and Age Profile of La Plata County Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

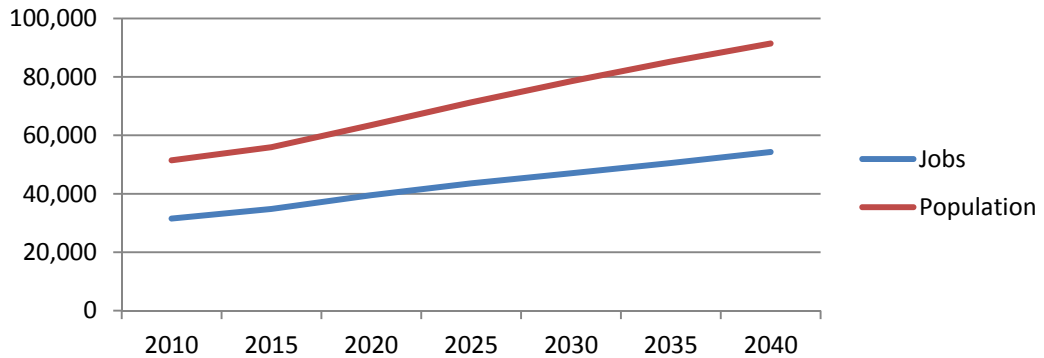
Chart 4 below reflects La Plata County’s population forecast for 2010 to 2040. The County’s total population is expected to grow from the surveyed Colorado Department of Local Affairs figure of 53,446 in 2010 to 91,422 by 2040, a 71% increase (expected average of 2.5% annually). By most accepted standards,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

Chart 4
La Plata County Population Forecast: 2010 - 2040



Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

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

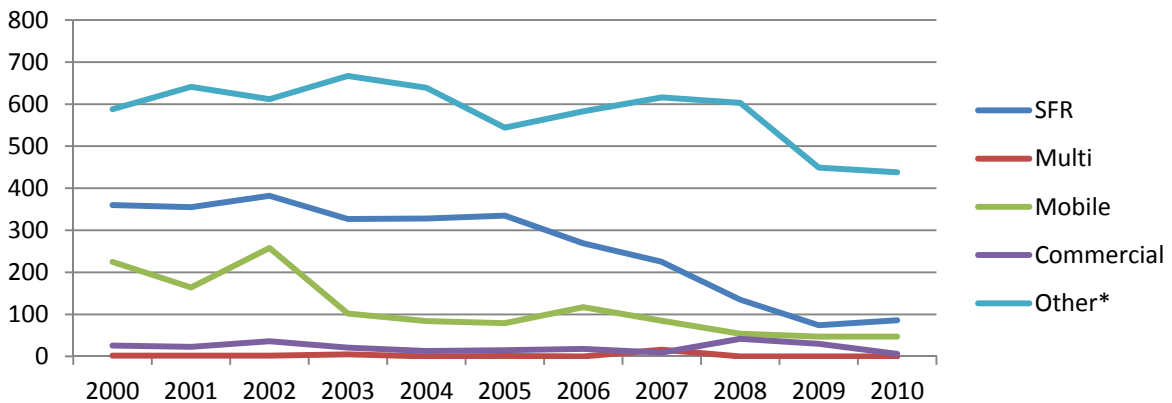


Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Building Permits

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

Chart 6
Building Permit Applications: 2000 - 2010



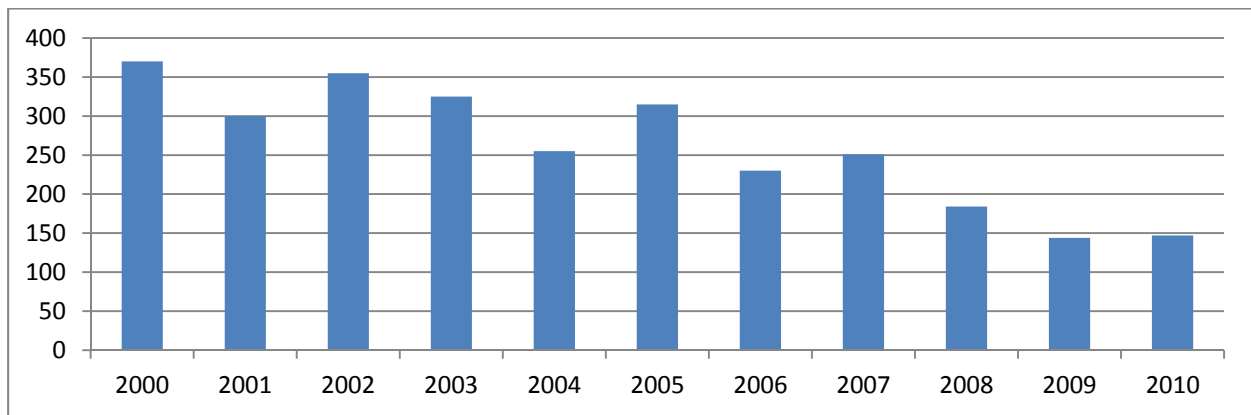
*Includes Remodels, Accessory Structures, and Additions

Source: La Plata County Building Department

Onsite Wastewater Treatment System

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

Chart 7
OWTS Permits Issued: 2000 - 2010



Source: San Juan Basin Health Department

The Changing Economy

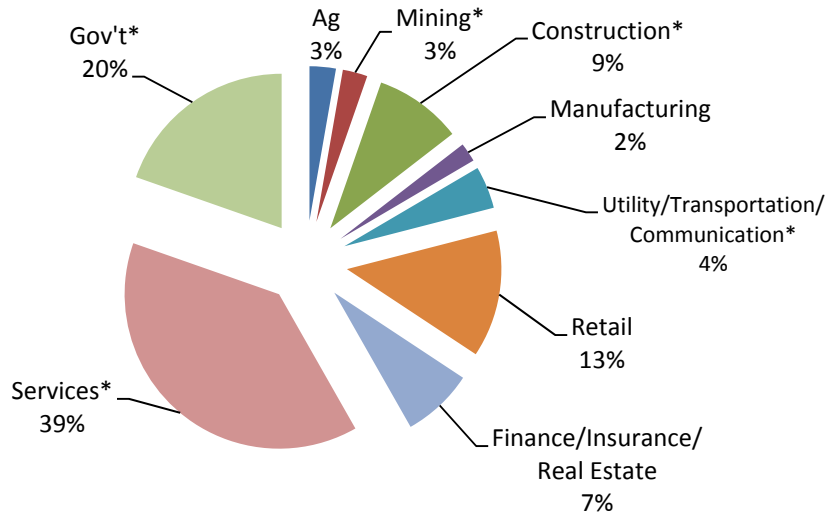
It has been estimated that as much as 60 percent of the County's economy is dependent upon the tourism industry. *Table 3* and *Chart 8* depict the number and percentage of jobs within the nine major employment sectors of the County. During the 1990s, the most significant job growth was experienced in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

Table 3
County Employment by Job Sector: 1980 - 2010

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

Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

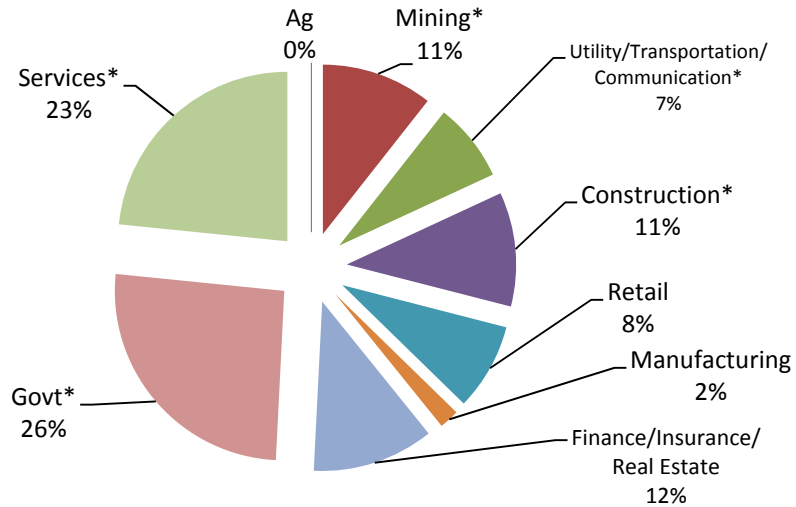
Chart 8
Employment by Major Job Sector: 2010



Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

*Accounts for Oil and Gas

Chart 9
Personal Income by Major Job Sector: 2010



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

Property Valuation

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

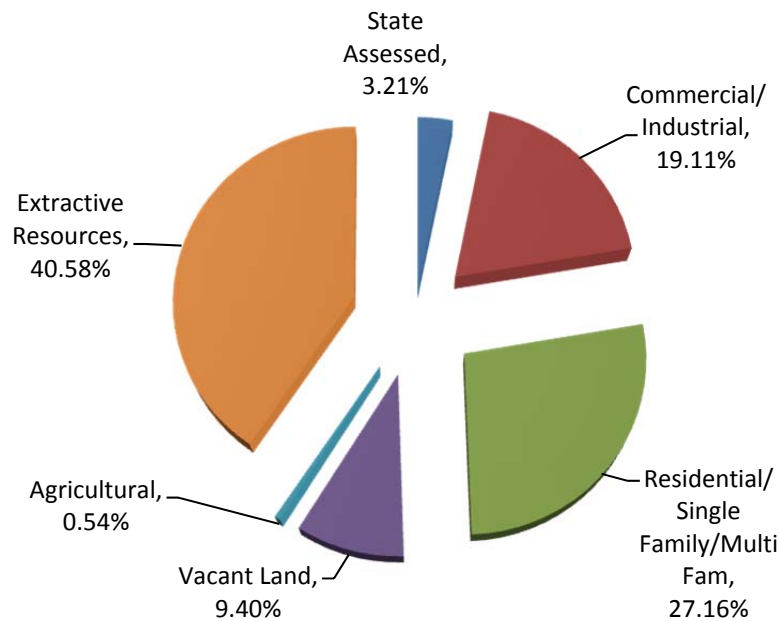
Table 4
County Assessed Property Value: 2000-2010

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

Source: La Plata County Assessor's Office

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

Chart 10
County Assessed Value by Property Class: 2010



Source: La Plata County Assessor's Office