

# MAP OF LA PLATA COUNTY

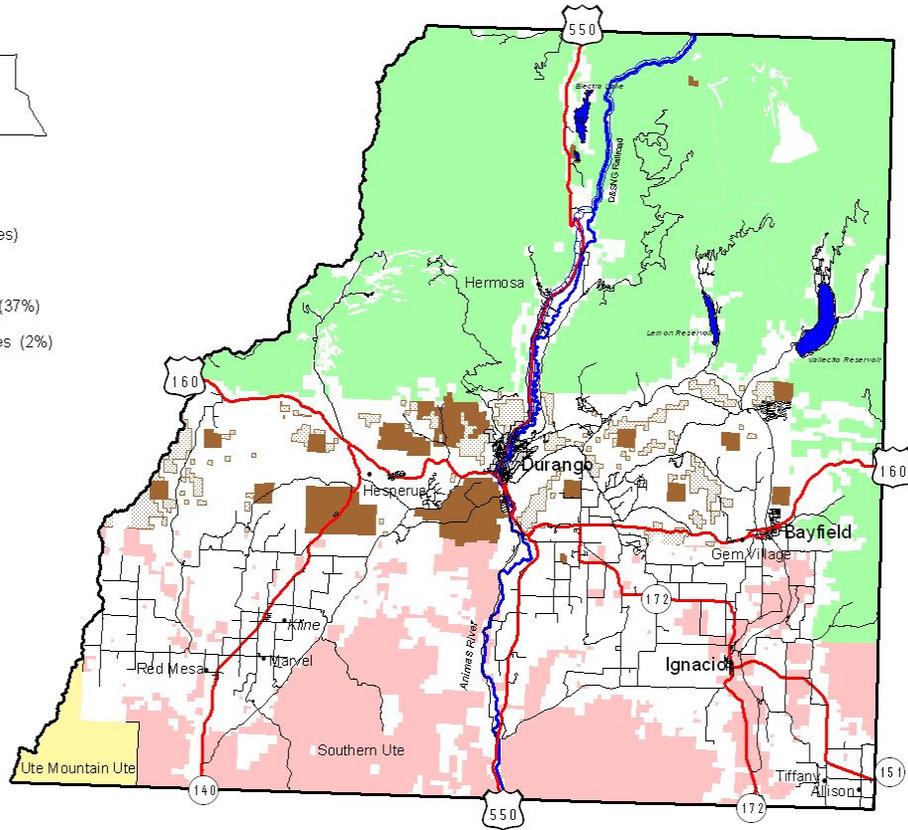


REGION 9

- Land Area - 1,088,541 acres (1700sq. miles)
- Private Lands- 433,929 acres (40%)
- San Juan National Forest- 400,370 acres (37%)
- Bureau of Land Management- 21,824 acres (2%)
- State Lands- 26,988 acres (2%)
- Southern Ute Tribe- 179,055 (16%)
- Ute Mtn Ute Tribe - 1,685 (0.1%)



0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles



La Plata County

## 5. LA PLATA COUNTY

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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 and La Plata County.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Historically, La Plata County developed as a result of "traditional west" commodities such as minerals, cattle and timber. Since the 1970s La Plata County has been in transition from a traditional rural county to a more urban environment in which tourism is the number one industry. People moving in for quality of life issues or "amenity migration" drove population growth in the 1990s, a trend still seen today.

Because of its location within the larger region, Durango has developed as a tourist crossroads and regional trade center, as well as being the county seat. Bayfield has served as a supply town and social center for area farmers and ranchers, and more recently as a bedroom community for Durango. Ignacio is a crossroads for the oil and gas industry, and serves as a supply center for the surrounding Southern Ute Indian reservation. The Southern Ute Tribal headquarters is located just north of Ignacio and provides administration and services to tribal members.

Key issues in La Plata County addressed in this section include agriculture, education, environment, healthcare, housing, livable wages, sustainability, telecommunications and transportation.

Between 2000 and 2010, La Plata County grew from 43,941 to 51,335 people (17%) with most of the growth occurring in Bayfield (50%) and Durango (21%). Ignacio saw slower growth (4%), as did unincorporated areas of the county (13%). The annual average rate of growth is expected to increase, and then slowly decline over the next 20 years, based on local and national trends. A population of about 59,000 is forecast by 2015.

Although there is a relatively low unemployment rate (7.2% in 2010), wages and employment are highly dependent on service sector jobs driven primarily by the tourist and resort industry. The Service sector provides 41% of jobs and 34% of employment income. The Trade sector accounts for 13% of jobs and 11% of employment income. Government is also an important sector, providing 19% of employment and 21% of employment income in 2009. Most La Plata county residents (79%) work in the county, and 21% commute elsewhere for their paychecks, with the highest percentage (4%) going to San Juan County, New Mexico.

In 2009, Total Personal Income (TPI) in La Plata County was \$2,046,678,000. This TPI ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the state and accounted for 1% of the state total. The largest proportion of TPI is generated through employment.

In 2009 La Plata had a Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) of \$39,769. This PCPI ranked 21st in the state and was 95 percent of the state average, \$41,895, and 100 percent of the national average, \$39,635.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Southern Ute Tribe**

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.

The Southern Ute Tribal enrollment is 1,400, with the majority of the members living on the reservation. The reservation land base includes 750,000 acres, seven major rivers, and the Navajo State Park. Tribal headquarters are located adjacent to the Town of Ignacio, in La Plata County.

Over the past 25 years, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe has become a major player in the local, state, and national economy. The Tribe is aggressively creating and operating new businesses both on and off-Reservation in the areas of oil and gas production, natural gas gathering, real estate development, housing construction, sand and gravel products, media, and gaming. The Tribe currently is the largest employer in La Plata County. The Sky Ute Lodge and Casino opened in 2008. Through contributions of a percentage of its annual gaming revenue, the Tribe is a supporter of many area non-profit organizations. The Southern Ute Growth Fund was started in 1999 and has investments spanning America and Canada. The Growth Fund reports a portfolio of over \$1 billion. In summary, Tribal activity, including gaming, generates millions of dollars per year in La Plata County, in direct and indirect economic activity.

### **Durango**

The county seat of Durango was established in 1881. The historic district of downtown Durango was platted by the railroad that established the narrow gauge Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Durango became a rail hub because it had the combination of the Animas River and nearby coal sources needed to fuel a smelter and coal driven steam engines to process ore from the mines in San Juan County. With the dedication of the "Million Dollar Highway" in July of 1924, the transportation of gold, silver, lead, copper and zinc moved from the narrow gauge train to Highway 550 which connects Durango to Silverton. Beginning in the late 1950s, the rail line that had carried ore down from Silverton began, instead, to carry tourists up from Durango to enjoy the spectacular scenery. Train ridership to Silverton was 142,663 in 2010, slightly down from 2009. Durango also developed as a hub for other modes of transportation. Durango is at the intersection of Highway 160, the major east-west arterial in Southwest Colorado and Highway 550 a major north-south arterial in southwest Colorado. Durango / La Plata County also developed the most extensive air hub in southwest Colorado with 165,947 enplanements in 2010, up 12% from 2009. Because of its location within the larger region, Durango has become a tourist crossroads and regional trade center

### **Bayfield**

The early residents of the Pine River Valley were the Ute Indians. Their descendants are still in the area, primarily on the Southern Ute Reservation and in the Ignacio area at the south end of the valley. The Pine River Valley was settled by non-Native Americans in the late 1800s. The first cattle were brought into the valley in 1875. The area gradually opened up as ranchers discovered the fertile valley. Much of the land was homesteaded by squatters rights.

The Town of Bayfield was incorporated in 1906. The town has experienced the tragedies of fire (1902, 1905, 1920, and 1946) and floods (1911, two in 1927, and 1957). After the floods of 1927, a proposal was written for a dam on the Pine River for flood control and irrigation. Vallecito Dam was built in 1939 and its lake now provides recreation as well as flood control and irrigation.

Bayfield has since served as a supply town and social center for area farmers and ranchers, and more recently as a bedroom community for Durango. It has remained a quiet town, riding the booms and busts that are typical of Colorado's economy. In recent years, it has experienced rapid growth and has become the fastest growing municipality in southwestern Colorado.

### **Ignacio**

The early residents of the Ignacio area were the Ute Indians, primarily the Weminuche band. Their traditional territory extended west of the continental divide to the Blue Mountains and canyon lands of southeast Utah, and north of the San Juan River, which generally marked their boundary with the Navajos. Although the boundaries of the Ute Reservation have changed with the passing of various treaties, the original "Ignacio Agency" for the Southern Ute Tribe was founded in 1877 amidst a permanent population of Spanish Americans (Hispanics), Navajos, Paiutes, Anglos and Jicarilla Apaches living in the area. Within a few months of the founding of the Ignacio Agency a greater influx of Spanish American settlers arrived from communities in northern New Mexico and the San Luis Valley to the east. In 1913, Ignacio was incorporated.

At present Ignacio remains a tri-ethnic community, composed of Southern Utes, Hispanics and Anglos. Today the town serves as a supply center for the surrounding reservation and ranches and is a crossroads for the gas and oil industry. The Southern Ute Tribal headquarters is located just north of the town limits and provides administration and services to tribal members. Services and facilities provided by the Tribe are, for the most part, separate from those provided by the Town of Ignacio and are not specifically addressed in this profile.

## **LOCAL ISSUES**

La Plata County has some definite areas of strength and weakness as compared to the region. Key issues include agriculture, education, environment, healthcare, housing, livable wages, sustainability, telecommunications and transportation.

### **Agriculture**

La Plata County is adapting to the changing faces of agriculture. Over the past 60 years, production of certain crops or commodities – hay, cattle/calf operations – has remained relatively consistent. Though as with most sectors of the economy, there are peaks and valleys as well as shifts in emphasis depending on demand, environmental conditions, regulations, or other parameters.

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, in 2007 La Plata County reported 1,076 farms and ranches, an increase of 17% from 2002. These numbers can be somewhat misleading, however, as the USDA has a relatively wide parameter of what a farm actually is: "The census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year". This broad definition is reflected in the relatively low percentage of farm operators that consider their primary occupation farming (approximately 393 out of 1,076 or 37%). This trend of primary income being derived from off-farm sources is not particular to La Plata County – many farming operations across the country rely on other income to help support the farm.

Ninety-eight percent of the farms in La Plata County are classified as family farms, while the average age of farmers is 58 years old. Eighty-one percent of those that responded as farm operators in the Census of Agriculture were male.

[http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online\\_Highlights/County\\_Profiles/Colorado/cp08033.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/Colorado/cp08033.pdf).

Most farms in La Plata County are less than 179 acres in size, and are primarily pasture land. These statistics, combined with the low percentage of operators that consider their primary occupation of farming, tends to lend itself to an ongoing trend of some agricultural lands being parceled off, or subdivided.

Some current challenges facing the agricultural sector in La Plata include: elevated land costs, limited irrigation, an increase in the cost of crop inputs, global competition, a decrease in successional farming, a challenging climate, and large distances to destination hubs. There are also a number of folks within the agricultural community that take note of the lack of diversity within a farming operation. To put this in perspective, in 1945, of the 936 farms, 730 had milk cows, 757 had chickens, 684 grew vegetables for home use, 336 had apple tree(s), and 778 had cattle. This indicates that within one farm there were multiple income sources. We typically do not see that in the present day, as most farming operations tend to focus on one or two crops/animals.

However, CSU Extension Agent Darrin Parmenter is encouraged by the renewed interest in local food production. Many reasons, such as educational awareness on topics of food security, food accessibility, and food quality, have led to this interest, and they should not be discounted. Even though their economic impact globally may be limited, their impact within the community – be it the ‘multiplier effect’, agricultural and open space land preservation, job creation, and crop diversity – is impressive.

## Education

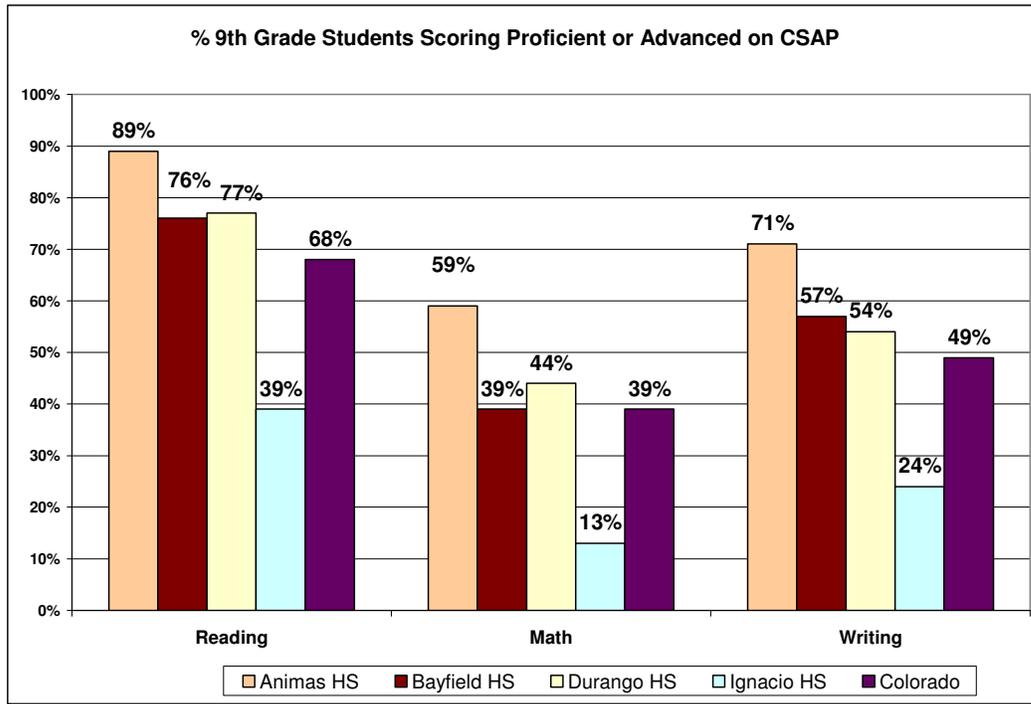
Since the last CEDS report, there have been significant changes in the way Colorado schools are rated, as well as in the State Standards and Assessments. A landmark education reform initiative known as “Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids,” or CAP4K, was signed into law in 2008 to align the state public education system from preschool through post-secondary. The Education Accountability Act of 2009 aligns the accountability system to focus on the CAP4K goals: holding the state, districts and schools accountable on a set of consistent, objective measures and report performance. (See Regional Overview on Education for more detail on these reforms.)

District and school Unified Improvement Plans (UIP) are based on four performance indicators: academic achievement; academic growth; gaps in growth levels for a variety of historically disadvantaged subgroups; and success in preparing students for postsecondary and workforce readiness (based on dropout rates, graduation rates and scores on the ACT college entrance exam). Based on these indicators, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) determines if each district (and in turn, their schools) exceeds, meets, approaches or does not meet the indicators.

According to the 2010 one-year performance reports (first time the UIP format was required), Bayfield 10 JT- R and Durango 9R are Accredited, and Ignacio 11 JT is Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan. (View full reports on all three districts at <http://www.schoolview.org/performance.asp>.)

Of all high schools in La Plata County, ninth-graders at the new charter school, Animas High School, showed the highest percentage scoring Proficient or Advanced in the CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program) subjects of Reading, Math, and Writing. Animas High School utilizes a project-based learning approach and is modeled after High Tech High, a charter school launched in 2000 by a coalition of San Diego business leaders and educators.

All ninth graders in La Plata County, with the exception of Ignacio High School, scored better than the state averages in the 2010 CSAP's.



### Environment and Land Use

La Plata County sits on the second largest field of coal bed methane gas in the country. Called the San Juan Basin, this field covers five Colorado and New Mexico counties and includes the Fruitland, Mesa Verde, Dakota, Pictured Cliffs and Paradox geological formations. In Colorado, mineral rights are generally separate from the surface owner's property rights. This presents a challenge in mitigating the impacts of drilling above ground while balancing the companies' rights to earn profits from their mineral estates. La Plata County government is a state leader in regulating oil and gas company activities on non-Tribal lands, having instituted rules regarding permitting, setbacks, performance standards, buffering, weeds, noise, health, and safety. In 2009, 3,130 active oil and gas wells in La Plata County produced an assessed value of over \$956 million in oil and gas. Oil and gas production paid 40.58% of the county's property tax bill in 2010. This figure has decreased from 61% in the previous CEDS update. The reason for this was a reduction in gas prices – production was approximately the same. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe is also a major leader in oil and gas development, but their drilling is not regulated by either La Plata County or the State of Colorado. The mining and utilities sector offers the highest average annual wage in La Plata County, paying \$111,804 in 2009. This accounts for three percent of the jobs and seven percent of the job income in the county.

The impacts of rapid growth and development are evident throughout the county. The population grew 16.82% from 2000 to 2010. La Plata County is in the process of developing a comprehensive plan that provides a policy framework and direction for the county, taking into account local trends, such as inadequate affordable housing, congested roads, future reductions in oil and gas revenues, and loss of agriculture. The planning process has included extensive public involvement and community visioning. Following adoption of the plan in 2011, the County will prepare a draft Sustainable Development Code that will implement the Future Land Use Plan through a regulatory

framework based on incentives and performance measures. This Sustainable Development Code will focus on best management practices related to livable neighborhoods, green building, greenhouse gas emissions, food planning systems, renewable energy production and water conservation.

With 39% of the lands in this county categorized as public lands, the manner in which these lands are managed ties closely to the local economy. The San Juan National Forest and Bureau of Land Management's management plan revision will outline the types of uses that will occur, and other strategic land management decisions such as: identifying where commercial timber will be harvested, where grazing will occur and at what levels, and locations where motorized recreation is allowed. In public meetings, the following issues were identified as concerns in La Plata County: oil and gas development, wildfire hazards, Durango Mountain Resort's expansion, water rights, winter recreation access around the City of Durango, and wildlife corridors. The San Juan Public Lands Center received over 18,000 comments on the Draft Land Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement that was published in December of 2007. Significant information surfaced during review of public comments and industry feedback, and it was determined that the emerging potential for oil and gas exploration had not been adequately addressed, and the USFS and BLM decided it was necessary to publish a Supplement to the DEIS. The Supplement should be available for public review and it is anticipated that the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Land Management Plan will be published in the summer of 2012.

The long-proposed Animas/La Plata water diversion and storage project (A-LP) southwest of Durango has been constructed. Pumping of water into the 120,000 acre-foot Lake Nighthorse is began in the spring of 2011 and may take up to three years to fill, depending on La Plata River flows. Authorized by Congress in 1968, A-LP has been through various delays, including cost overruns, which are being negotiated by the federal Bureau of Reclamation and the State of Colorado. The A-LP settles Native American water-right claims and provides water for household and industrial uses to three tribes and four non-tribal entities: the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe, the Navajo Nation in New Mexico, the state of Colorado, the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority, the San Juan Water Commission, and the La Plata Conservancy District.

When the A-LP facility is open to the public, the lake is expected to draw 163,000 visitors per year, who will spend an estimated \$8 million per year on food, lodging, gas, and other supplies, according to a recent feasibility report by RPI Consulting. By 2025, the report estimates, Lake Nighthorse could bring 230 jobs and \$10.8 million per year in revenue to the area. Some activities at the lake could include close-to-town camping, swimming, boating, trails, and riding options.

The National Park Service is in the process of developing a recreation plan for Lake Nighthorse. They have made public participation in the process available through open houses, public forums, design workshops, and a website where people can post their comments and view others' input. A concern of many residents is the likelihood of motorized sports on the lake. People who prefer a more tranquil, natural setting are averse to the idea of speedboats and ATV's at the lake. In an effort to resolve this issue, the National Park Service has been addressing individual components of the motorized complaints, which include noise, pollution, and wakes. Some of the options suggested are designing separate areas for motorized sports, restricting engine decibels, banning fueling stations, and inspecting boats for invasive mussels. It appears likely that a boat ramp will be constructed at Lake Nighthorse, as the State of Colorado has provided a \$3 million grant for a boat ramp with the contingency that gas-powered boats be allowed on the lake within three years of completion.

The original A-LP bill included \$20 million for the recreation component, but that was removed in 2001. The reservoir's opening to recreation is subject to Bureau of Reclamation approval and a qualified, non-federal entity to manage it.

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.

In 2006, the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad Smoke Mitigation Task Force was formed and received funding to look at alternatives to coal. In 2007, the railroad owner pledged to spend \$1 million over five years to reduce smoke emissions. One of those improvements was to burn wood pellets in locomotives parked overnight, which has reduced smoke. While the owner is committed to decreasing smoke emissions at the roundhouse where the trains are stored overnight, he is also very committed to preserving the historic nature of the locomotives, and he has resisted making changes to the historic coal-fired locomotives that travel between Durango and Silverton. The railroad company has taken steps to offset environmental impacts, such as planting thousands of trees and buying "green power" from La Plata Electric. In September of 2010, the railroad announced preliminary plans to install an enhanced filtration (scrubber) system to reduce smoke emissions from locomotives idling overnight in the roundhouse. The new scrubber would have twice as much capacity as the existing filtration system and would also collect smoke and ash from areas not currently being served. Fundraising efforts of the Task Force are underway to help cover the estimated \$1.2 million dollar project.

Animal/vehicle collisions are the number one cause of crashes in southwest Colorado, and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) estimates that approximately 70 percent of all accidents are due to collisions with wildlife. In comparison, the statewide average for Colorado is nine percent of all accidents. In 2009, the Western Transportation Institute calculated the average per vehicle cost associated with an animal/vehicle collision to be \$6,617 for deer and \$17,483 for elk (<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art15/>).

In September of 2008, as a pilot project, CDOT installed a \$1.2 million electromagnetic wildlife detection system along a one-mile stretch of US 160, in an important deer and elk migration corridor east of Durango. The system operates on changes in the earth's magnetic field. Cables are buried nine feet deep, 30 feet from both sides of the highway. The cables record movement of animals having the same electromagnetic signature as deer and elk, and when animals of this size are detected in the highway right-of-way, a sign lights up that alerts motorists to the presence of animals.

The system has displayed some false positive results, and CDOT is researching the flaws. The system is the first of its kind to detect large animal movements near the edge of a highway, and the "bugs" are being worked out of this research project. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that there are fewer carcasses found in the detection area than in adjacent areas. If the project is successful, the technology could potentially have widespread use in highway corridors with high animal-vehicle collisions.

During the past decade, public interest concerning environmental sustainability has been increasing in La Plata County, and several groups of local citizens and businesses are promoting sustainability practices and advocating for greater energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts across the Four Corners area.

La Plata County and the City of Durango developed the La Plata Climate & Energy Action Plan in 2010 after pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from their local government operations and throughout their communities. The recommended emission reduction targets are to reduce emissions by 80% below 2005 levels by 2050. Some of the recommended government and community actions are vehicle emission testing, transit-oriented development, and using green energy.

## **Health Care**

Like much of the state and region, notable health care challenges exist in La Plata County. An estimated 25% of residents are uninsured. As the Baby Boomer population ages, it will create additional demand on Medicare providers. The rising cost of health insurance is making it increasingly challenging for businesses to offer coverage; health insurance coverage helps attract and retain employees. However, concerted, collaborative efforts are under way in La Plata County to find solutions.

The Community Health Care Capacity Project (CHCCP), a project of the Citizens' Health Advisory Council (an open coalition of interested citizens and organizations that serves as a central point for healthcare collaboration and communication), released a series of recommendations in 2010 that came from a year-long process of interviewing stakeholders and health care providers. From those recommendations the following actions have occurred:

- The formation of a county-wide Health Care Alliance with high level decision-makers from key organizations to implement projects and reduce duplicative efforts to fill gaps.
- The planning of a Federally-Qualified Health Center (FQHC) which will provide a full range of services to patients regardless of insurance coverage. If approved by Health Resources and Services Administration in August 2011, the facility will open in Durango as early as November 2011.
- Funding for the continuation and expansion of Community Health Care Teams, which provide navigators and home visits for patient-centered care. Such teams, in place currently for small children and seniors, helps connect patients with providers and address imminent issues that could potentially turn into more expensive, long-term problems.
- Researching formalized Donated Medical Care Programs to create one in La Plata County that would keep track of providers who donate care and create incentive for more to join (via tax credits and recognition).
- Initial stages of recruitment for medical and dental providers to participate in the CARES program (Community Access and Referral Enrollment System). A streamlined eligibility process will be developed, and if people learn they are not eligible for Medicaid or CHP+, they will know where to go for reduced-cost care. Individuals and families at 251% to 400% of poverty receive a CARES card and can see providers within the network, who offer a sliding-fee scale.

Several assets in regards to health care service have been added to La Plata County in the last decade: Animas Surgical Hospital opened in 2004, and Mercy Medical Center became Mercy Regional Medical Center with the opening of a new 212,000-square-foot facility in 2006. Mercy also operates a Health Services Clinic for adults, accepting all forms of insurance including Medicare and Medicaid. The clinic served 1,647 patients in 2010. Healthy Lifestyle La Plata is working to educate businesses on worksite wellness programs, which have been shown to elevate employee productivity, reduce absenteeism and significantly reduce health care costs. The Durango Chamber of Commerce offers a basic group health plan for Chamber members aimed at business owners priced out of the market.

Another safety-net clinic available in La Plata County is the School-Based Health Center (SBHC) at Durango High School, which offers preventive and integrated health care services to students during school hours. In the 2009-2010 school year, the SBHC at DHS saw 806 patients and had 1,720 total visits. Another SBHC is scheduled to open at the Florida Mesa Elementary School in 2011. Although the focus is to provide care for underserved kids, the SBHCs are open to all 9R students. The Student Health Center at Fort Lewis College serves enrolled students for nominal fees, providing general medical care, minor surgical procedures, nursing, first aid, and emergency care for most illnesses and injuries. The Health Center at FLC has approximately 6,500 office visits per school year.

Axis Health System also opened the Crossroads Acute Treatment Unit (ATU) in 2006 to serve the mental health needs of the region. Based in Durango, Crossroads operates an Assessment Unit, an Acute Treatment Unit, and a Detox Facility. The program offers short term stabilization and placement with a goal to avoid financially costly and emotionally challenging trips for consumers to long-term inpatient facilities elsewhere. In FY 2009, the number of patient bed days for the ATU and Detox was close to 3,000.

Finally, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe offers health services to its members, including in-home monitoring of clients, non-emergency transportation, medication delivery, patient advocacy, case management, and health education

#### Sources:

- Community Health Care Capacity Project <http://www.chaclaplata.org/>
- Durango Chamber of Commerce (970) 247-0312
- Small Area Health Insurance Estimates 2007  
<http://www.census.gov/did/www/sahie/index.html>
- Health Lifestyle La Plata <http://www.healthylifestylelaplata.org/worksite-wellness/>
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe <http://www.southern-ute.nsn.us/tribal-health/health-services>
- Axis Health System <http://www.axishealthsystem.org/>
- DHS School Based Health Center <http://dhs.durangoschools.org/hs-school-based-health-center>
- Fort Lewis College <http://www2.fortlewis.edu/healthcenter/home.aspx>

## Housing

In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2010, La Plata County had a foreclosure rate of 21% of occupied housing units. Foreclosures in rural resort counties also often reflect 2<sup>nd</sup> homes or time shares. In 2010, in La Plata County the median price for a single family residence was \$300,000; for Durango the median was \$325,000; in Bayfield the median was \$230,000; and in Ignacio the median was \$193,000. Although the median sales price was down for Durango and Bayfield, the number of sales countywide is up 1% from 2009. Data Source: *The Real Estate Watch Annual Summary*

The provision of adequate housing continues to be a concern in La Plata County. The following information was drawn from a recent report prepared for the Southwest Colorado Housing Collaborative, in an effort to create a regional housing strategy (*Southwest Colorado Housing Plan*. Report prepared by Economic & Planning Systems. Draft January 21, 2010. p6).

“The Regional Housing Alliance (RHA) with Enterprise Community Partners completed a detailed Housing Needs Analysis for La Plata County in June of 2007. The major finding of the analysis was that many residents in La Plata County were being priced out of housing in the County. The median income in the County at the time (\$59,200) correlated to a purchase price of \$220,000. However, the median home price in the County at that time

was \$325,000. One of the drivers of this price escalation is non-local buyers. The study found that 26 percent of homes purchased in the County were bought by non-locals.”

\*Note – A study performed by Region 9 in 2006, using 2005 assessors data, found that 17% of single family residences (and 29% of all properties) in the county were owned by non-locals. <http://www.scan.org/2nd%20home%20typology%20summary.pdf>.

“The major efforts identified by the study focused on fair-share housing policies (a form of inclusionary zoning), determining possible tools to create more affordable homes, and providing financing options for homebuyers in need. The RHA assisted the City of Durango in adopting a fair-share ordinance which requires all new developments to provide resources for affordable housing. Specifically, this program helps to create homes that can be sold at affordable and attainable prices. The regulation requires that 16 percent of the homes planned will be priced at attainable (less than 125 percent of AMI) or affordable (less than 80 percent of AMI). So far the program has produced four homes and other projects have paid a fee in-lieu of homes. “Rental housing needs in the County are growing. There is a limited supply of rental units, especially units geared towards families and locals. Affordable rental units in La Plata County managed by Mercy Housing have waiting lists that are fairly lengthy, especially for units that are for renters earning less than 50 percent of AMI.”

### Livable Wages

What level of income is necessary to support a given size and type of household? A livable wage addresses the essential financial requirements for basic living needs, such as shelter, healthcare, childcare, and nutrition. When one earns less than a livable wage, he or she is forced to make undesirable choices such as working two or more jobs, working longer hours, making longer commutes, sharing a residence, or giving up basic items such as a telephone or insurance.

Within our region, Pagosa Springs (Archuleta County) and Silverton (San Juan County) are the least expensive places for a family to live, while Rico (Dolores County) and Durango (La Plata County) are the most expensive places to live. Since 2007, the cost of living in Bayfield has decreased by 9%; this is due primarily to decreasing rents and declines in prices of some consumer goods and services. The cost of living has increased 5% in Durango and 1% in Ignacio. The complete report can be seen at [www.scan.org](http://www.scan.org).

The following tables illustrate the expenses for households in La Plata County in relation to livable wages. Livable wages vary by community. A recent study by Region 9 estimates that in Bayfield a family of four renting a three bedroom unit would need \$31.37 per hour to sustain just the basic needs of a household – including childcare costs. In Durango this hourly wage is estimated at \$35.12, and in Ignacio it is \$33.12.

La Plata County Bayfield	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$490 per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$625 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$750 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 16,270	\$ 30,873	\$ 39,024
2010 Rent Expense	\$ 5,880	\$ 7,500	\$ 9,000
<sup>2</sup> Child Care (\$4.14 x 2080 per child)		\$ 8,611	\$ 17,222
Total Living Expense	\$ 22,150	\$ 46,984	\$ 65,246
<sup>3</sup> Livable wage per hour	\$ 10.65	\$ 22.59	\$ 31.37
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$7.24)	1.5	3.1	4.6

<b>La Plata County Durango</b>	<b>Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$650 per month</b>	<b>Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$1050 per month</b>	<b>Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,400 per month</b>
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 16,270	\$ 30,873	\$ 39,024
2010 Rent Expense	\$ 7,800	\$ 12,600	\$ 16,800
<sup>2</sup> Child Care (\$4.14 x 2080 per child)	\$	\$ 8,611	\$ 17,222
Total Living Expense	\$ 24,070	\$ 52,084	\$ 73,046
<sup>3</sup> Livable wage per hour	\$ 11.57	\$ 25.04	\$ 35.12
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$7.24)	1.6	3.5	5.1

<b>La Plata County Ignacio</b>	<b>Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$701* per month</b>	<b>Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$802* per month</b>	<b>Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,125 per month</b>
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 16,270	\$ 30,873	\$ 39,024
2010 Rent Expense	\$ 8,412	\$ 9,624	\$ 13,500
<sup>2</sup> Child Care (\$4.14 x 2080 per child)	\$	\$ 8,611	\$ 17,222
Total Living Expense	\$ 24,682	\$ 49,108	\$ 69,746
<sup>3</sup> Livable wage per hour	\$ 11.87	\$ 23.61	\$ 33.53
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$7.24)	1.6	3.3	4.9

**Notes:**

The minimum wage for Colorado is currently at \$7.24 per hour, effective January 1, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Tricounty Headstart Early Childhood Programs.

<sup>3</sup> Total Living Expenses/2080 hour work year.

\* Local rent estimates not available. Fair Market Rent provided by HUD.

Family of four assumes two children requiring full-time day care.

## **Sustainability**

Sustainability is a new section in the CEDS and something several communities feel strongly about. There are several groups and initiatives working towards defining their vision. The following text was provided by La Plata County. A more expanded, regional version can be seen in the Regional Overview of this document.

“Sustainable communities within La Plata County consider sustainability aspects relating to development, water, transportation, energy, and waste and materials. Because these communities are diverse sustainable development does not focus solely on environmental issues, but rather they consider the broad ramifications of human interests in, and impacts on, the environment that we live in.”

“Sustainability as it relates to development assures that our agricultural communities including farm operations are economically viable. We recognize that sustainable does not mean that we can grow everything we need. Our food supply varies and feeding all residents is dependent on importing from other growing locations. While supporting agricultural lands, our communities grow around designated parcels of land that integrate new and old neighborhoods.”

“Sustainability as it relates to water is easier when we focus on urban areas. Most urban areas enjoy municipal water supplies which insure both water quality and quantity. Our more rural areas serve a significant share of the population, and rely on a mix of private and public infrastructure, including small central water systems and water wells.”

“Sustainability as it relates to transportation includes multi-modal transportation systems. In urban areas, walking and cycling are methods that work well when the seasons allow. In the more rural areas, there are equestrian routes and adequate road and highway systems that connect our neighborhoods, towns, and provide access to employment areas.

Public transportation is limited, however the systems that are available enable people of all ages and abilities to get around safely, efficiently, and conveniently throughout the counties. All airports connect residents to the rest of the world, contributing to economic vitality. Our region is a vibrant and exciting destination that shows off our natural assets, rich heritage, diverse cultures and excellent recreational opportunities.”

“Sustainability as it relates to energy waste and materials are used to describe infrastructure that facilitates a place or regions progress towards the goal of sustainable living. While this is a worthwhile goal, there are seasonal constraints. In La Plata County, attention is paid to technological and government policy which enables urban planning for initiatives that promote all locally generated energy sources, including traditional fossil fuels and renewable energy, as well as educational components to reuse and recycle within all communities.”

## **Telecommunications**

The fiber optic telecommunications infrastructure and demand for broadband services in La Plata County are concentrated in county offices and community anchor institutions located in the municipalities. The County maintains partnerships with the Towns of Bayfield and Ignacio and the City of Durango to provide many government services. The County retains Information Technology (IT) personnel while working closely with City of Durango to improve the broadband services in the county by investing in infrastructure. The Southern Ute Tribe has it's own IT Department.

The City of Durango is constructing fiber and wireless infrastructure to implement a private, intra-community network. Durango does not plan to operate a comprehensive, citywide network, but will invest in and provide dark fiber to private service providers, who will offer transport and end-user services on the city's physical infrastructure. FastTrack Telecommunications, a private service provider owned by the region's two electric cooperatives, also owns extensive fiber optic infrastructure throughout Durango and La Plata County.

The City of Durango, La Plata County, Durango School District 9-R, and Mercy Regional Medical Center formed a consortium during the original Beanpole project that contracted with FastTrack for services. These entities hope the implementation of city-owned dark fiber on open access principles will allow additional private service providers to enter the market and make telecommunications services more competitive in the area.

FastTrack also owns fiber optic infrastructure between Durango and the Town of Bayfield. The majority of government facilities, community anchor institutions, businesses and residents in the town receive services via wireless facilities. In the Town of Ignacio, community fiber optic infrastructure is owned by the school district and connects the majority of community anchor institutions. The network does not provide intra-community redundancy, but a small investment would provide that capacity. The remaining institutions are within several hundred feet of existing conduit, and a small fiber project was completed in spring 2011 to connect the Ignacio Library to this infrastructure. The Southern Ute Tribe also owns fiber and wireless infrastructure within the town. FastTrack-owned fiber provides the only connectivity out of the town on fiber that run to Durango.

The City of Durango, the Towns of Ignacio and Bayfield, and La Plata County are participants in the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG), and the SWCCOG telecommunications infrastructure development project, the Southwest Colorado Access Network (SCAN). The SCAN project has identified 63 community anchor institutions in the City of Durango, 18 in the Town of Bayfield, and 10 in the Town of Ignacio as potential participants in intra-community private government networks.

These and other institutions in the area are also potential purchasing consortium members for the SCAN project. The County, municipal governments, and community anchor institutions will have input into the type of infrastructure and services that are appropriate for the communities' broadband needs as the development of the network progresses.

## **Transportation**

**Highways** - Traffic congestion continues to increase in La Plata County, due to steady population and employment expansion. The county's area of greatest growth is expected to be in the Three Springs/Grandview area, increasing traffic between Durango and the new Mercy Regional Medical Center/Three Springs development along U.S. Highway 160. The 2030 Transportation Integrated Plan developed by La Plata County and the City of Durango and CDOT's US 160 Environmental Impact Statement, Durango to Bayfield, were both completed in 2006. La Plata County may update their transportation plan following adoption of the County's comprehensive plan, which was in process at the writing of this report.

**Pavement Condition** - The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) rates the condition of highway surfaces with its Pavement Management System, providing a range of years of Remaining Service Life (RSL) of the pavement for specific highway segments. The RSL calculation is based on roughness, cracking, patching, rutting and other indicators of smoothness and structure. A good surface condition corresponds to a remaining surface life of 11 years or more. A fair surface condition corresponds to a remaining surface life of 6 to 10 years, while a poor evaluation represents a remaining surface life of less than 6 years. According to data provided by the CDOT Region 5 Pavement Manager, 23.4 percent of the state highway miles in La Plata County were rated poor in 2010. This compares to 74.2 percent poor in 2001, an improvement of over 50 percent state highways in good and fair condition in the county. Maintaining the existing transportation system is a high priority for the State Transportation Commission, and a large percentage of state and federal transportation dollars are spent on reconstruction and resurfacing projects.

**Intersections** - In 1998, the regional CDOT office first conducted an analysis of intersections needing improvement and has updated the study two times since then. CDOT requests potential study locations from the counties in the region and hires a consultant to perform an objective study, based on parameters such as accident rate, congestion, truck usage, cost/benefit, and local funding participation. A ranking of priorities is made, and projects are basically funded in order of ranking in the study. CDOT has programmed funding for two intersection improvement projects in La Plata County in the next six years: 1) State Highway (SH) 172 at County Roads 311 and 513 in the amount of \$1.75 million in 2014; and 2) US Highway 550 (US 550) at 9<sup>th</sup> Street in the amount of \$1,120,000 in 2015 and 2016.

**US 160 and US 550 Environmental Documents** - Environmental documents for two major transportation projects in La Plata County have been completed by the Colorado Department of Transportation since the last CEDS update. The US 160 Environmental Impact Statement, Durango to Bayfield, was based on the projected increase in travel demands on highway capacity and efficiency and the substandard design that contributes to accidents associated with highway deficiencies, including poor sight distance, steep roadway grades, lack of shoulders, insufficient area for out-of-control vehicles to recover, uncontrolled access, lack of wildlife crossings, and lack of turn lanes. The study proposed extending the existing four-lane highway from the Grandview area, east to Bayfield and constructing three interchanges.

Since the Record of Decision was issued in October of 2006, the following work has been completed in the corridor:

- US 160 at County Road 233. A traffic signal was installed at this intersection that was improved to accommodate development of the new Mercy Medical Center and proposed development north of U.S. Highway 160.
- US 160 at SH 172. A double left-turn lane was added to facilitate turning movements from northbound SH 172 onto westbound US 160.
- US 160, 4th Lane and Interchange. An interchange was constructed on US 160 that may connect to US 550 in the future, pending the outcome of required re-evaluations of various federal environmental statutes. The completed interchange accommodates future projected traffic volumes of 87,000 vehicles a day, facilitates east-west travel and provides safe and direct access to current and future development north and south of US 160. The project cost was \$34.3 million and was mainly funded with Senate Bill 1 money, which was used for 28 large-scale projects around the state. The "Fourth Lane" project added a fourth lane to an existing three-lane section of highway between two four-lane sections, west of Mercy Medical Center, where traffic bottlenecks occurred.
- US 160, Ramp B of the Grandview Interchange described above used \$4.0 million of ARRA funding. The work included construction of a south access to the interchange, as well as retaining walls.
- US 160, Phase 3: This project was in process at the time of the writing of this report. The scope of the project is to complete the Grandview Interchange to a functional level with the construction of a roundabout, south access road, and connecting ramps. The estimated project cost is \$14.2 million.

The US 550 corridor south of Durango provides an interstate travel route between Colorado and New Mexico that enables the transport of goods and services across the western portion of Colorado. US 550 is the only contiguous north/south route in western Colorado, and is a designated truck route, with truck traffic comprising approximately 13 percent of overall traffic. The US 550 Environmental Assessment was initiated to address both local and regional transportation needs, including safe and efficient travel to and from Durango and Aztec, New Mexico, and transport of goods and services. The preferred alternative was to four-lane US 550 from the existing four-lane section at Milepost 1.0 to Milepost 15.4, provide four wildlife crossing structures, and install deer fencing.

Public involvement was an integral part of the planning process for each of the studies, including numerous meetings, workshops, presentations and publications with the public, local agencies, and special interest groups. Since the Finding of "No Significant Impact" was issued in December of 2005, the following work has been completed or is in process in the corridor:

- US 550, State Line North – Phase II. This project added two lanes to the highway, extending the four-lane section from Mileposts 0.5 to 2.75. The project included two new bridges, extensive drainage work, wildlife fencing, and deer ramps. The cost was \$11 million.
- US 550 at County Road 302. This project was in process at the time of the writing of this report. This location was ranked No. 5 on the CDOT Region 5 Intersection Study described above. The scope of work includes turn lanes and a passing lane. The alignment will be constructed to match the final four-lane configuration. The work also includes irrigation and drainage improvements, lighting, deer fence, and a wildlife detection system. The budget is \$6.3 million FASTER funds.

**Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)** - The fiscal years 2012-2017 STIP, CDOT's six-year plan for the region that is developed in collaboration with the Southwest Regional Planning Commission, includes three projects in La Plata County (in addition to the intersection projects described above): 1) intersection improvements and a pedestrian bridge over US 550 at Sunnyside Elementary School, south of Durango, in the amount of \$9.9 million in fiscal years 2013 – 2016; 2) design of a passing lane between Durango and Bayfield in the amount of \$300,000 in fiscal year 2017; and 3) right-of-way acquisition for future four-laning of US 160, between Durango and Bayfield, in the amount of \$2.54 million in fiscal year 2017. The projects are included in the US 550 Environmental Assessment and US 160 Environmental Impact Statement corridors described above.

**Partnerships** - State and local transportation budgets have not kept up with the needs of aging roads and bridges, as well as the need for public transit and bicycle and pedestrian paths. In this time of limited funding for transportation in Colorado, partnerships between agencies are encouraged. Following are some examples of such arrangements.

- The Colorado Department of Transportation constructed a \$9 million safety improvement project to relocate the intersection of US 160 and La Plata County Roads 222 and 223, located at the top of a hill with poor sight distance, to a location approximately one mile to the east. The project will improve the configuration and sight distance, increasing safety for motorists on both US 160 and the county roads. La Plata County contributed \$500,000 to the project.
- An access control plan is underway for State Highway 172, State Highway 151, and County Road 517, in the vicinity of Ignacio. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe is leading the study, partnering with the Town of Ignacio, La Plata County, and the Colorado Department of Transportation. Each partner has agreed to contribute \$75,000 toward the plan, which will identify long-term corridor access and mobility needs and solutions, including specific future access points.
- La Plata County was awarded \$1.8 million in federal Hazard Elimination Program funds for intersection safety improvements at State Highway 172 and County Roads 311 and 513 where numerous accidents have occurred in the past few years. The project will include pedestrian safety and motorist safety and mobility improvements. A 20 percent match is required, and CDOT provided the matching funds.
- Camino del Rio is a section of US 550 in Durango that was constructed several decades ago as a bypass to downtown. The City of Durango and CDOT are pairing up to provide much-needed pedestrian improvements on this four-lane highway. An access to a fire station is located near 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and a traffic signal to facilitate movement of emergency vehicles is in place. The City will contribute sidewalks, ADA ramps, and an upgrade of the signal, and CDOT will provide new signal heads and wiring and maintenance.

**ARRA** - Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, CDOT Region 5 (15 counties in southwest Colorado, including La Plata County) received \$31 million for highway projects and \$1.078 million for transportation enhancement projects, such as construction of multi-use trails. Transportation projects constructed with ARRA funds in La Plata County include: 1) US 160, Ramp B of the Grandview Interchange described above in the amount of \$4.0 million; 2) funding of \$4.0 million toward the relocation of the intersection of US 160 at County Roads 222 and 223; 3) Bayfield US 160 Business Route sidewalks in the amount of \$250,000; and 4) La Plata County Road 501 bike path in the amount of \$216,000.

**Colorado FASTER** - Legislation passed in early 2009, known as FASTER (Funding Advancement for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery), has provided revenue for transportation projects in the region that would not otherwise have been constructed. The purpose of the bill is to provide a long-term revenue source to repair deficient bridges and deteriorating roads around the state. FASTER is funded by an increase on vehicle registration fees, tolling on sections of highway in some parts of the state, and a \$2.00 daily fee on car rentals. The region's four-year FASTER

highway safety plan includes two projects in La Plata County: 1) shoulder-widening for safety on SH 140, south of Breen, in the amount of \$1.65 million in fiscal year 2010, and 2) construction of intersection safety improvements at US 550 at County Road 302, south of Durango, in the amount of \$6.3 million in fiscal year 2011 (this location was included in the intersection study described above).

FASTER funding is also available for regional and statewide transit projects. The Southwest Regional Planning Commission collaborated with CDOT to develop a three-year plan for regional FASTER transit funds. The City of Durango was awarded \$80,900 in fiscal year 2011 and \$135,105 in fiscal year 2012 for capital purchases, including six buses, bus shelters, installation of a pedestrian bridge at 24<sup>th</sup> Street, a snow blade, and electronic communications for buses. La Plata County was awarded \$96,000 in fiscal year 2012 for construction of a park-and-ride at US 160 and County Roads 222 and 223. Southern Ute Community Action Programs (SUCAP) was awarded \$29,345 for a bus in fiscal year 2012 and a tentative \$100,000 fiscal year 2013 award, pending funding availability, for construction of a bus barn.

CDOT Region 5 received \$1.7 million of FASTER statewide transit funding for a project to construct a portion of the SMART 160 Trail connecting two existing sections of bike path that will provide for a continuous, alternative transportation route between the developing Three Springs mixed-use community/Mercy Medical Center and downtown Durango and the Durango Transit Center. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2012. The SMART 160 Trail has been a priority of the community for many years. Existing sections of this multi-use trail have been constructed by Three Springs, Rancho Vedado development, and CDOT.

**Specialized Transit** – Transit continues to be a prominent La Plata County issue. Residents, the county, and area municipalities, all recognize that increasing numbers of people are commuting longer and longer distances to work. The City of Durango is the central point for work and shopping, with the majority of commuters traveling in from Bayfield and Mancos. Many of the county's roads, including US 160 and US 550, are reaching capacity.

*Durango Transit Center* - The Colorado Transportation Commission approved state funding in the amount of \$5.1 million for design and construction of the *Durango Intermodal Transfer Center (known as the Durango Transit Center)* in 2006, and the 7,945-square-foot facility was completed in August of 2009. The building provides offices for 15 full-time and three part-time transit, parking, and code enforcement employees. Fifty parking spaces for bicycles are provided, including 25 covered, secure spaces. Each fixed route and trolley bus is equipped with a rack to carry two bicycles. The Durango Transit Center is certified "gold" by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, an organization that promotes sustainable building practices.

The *Durango T* provides year-round fixed route transportation using buses, trolleys and ADA-compliant para-transit service minibuses. The fixed route buses and trolleys run within the city limits of Durango, and provide the most comprehensive bus service in the region. Trolleys operate on 20-minute headways on Main Avenue, and there is no charge for service. Fixed-route loops offer service within Durango, including Fort Lewis College, US 160 West, Mercy Medical Center/Wal-Mart, Crestview subdivision, and Saturday citywide service, with 30-minute headways. The fare for the general public on fixed-route loops is \$1.00.

The *Opportunity Bus* is for those with ADA-specified disabilities and for seniors aged 60 and over. The *Opportunity Bus* runs six days a week in the winter and seven days a week in the summer, and arrangements for service must be made 24 hours in advance.

*La Plata County Senior Services* provides on-call door-to-door demand-response transportation services to seniors and persons with disabilities throughout La Plata County. The primary service is for medical appointments and to meal sites.

The *Southern Ute Community Action Programs (SUCAP)* offers fixed route and demand-responsive transportation services to the Southern Ute Tribal community and residents of Ignacio. This program, Roadrunner Transit, operates a fixed-route service four times daily between Ignacio and Durango and between Durango and Bayfield. Two runs operate during commuter hours and are designed to link with the Durango T. The two mid-day runs allow two hours in Durango for medical appointments and shopping. Demand/response service operates in the Ignacio area for one and one-half hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. The Roadrunner is considering expanding the hours of demand/response service.

*Durango Transportation* is a private company that also provides on-demand services to locations in La Plata County, seven days a week.

*Durango Mountain Resort* offers winter transit service for employees and the public between the ski area and the Durango Transit Center. They are also considering service during the summer.

**Intercity Bus Service** - As mentioned in the regional transportation section, intercity bus service in the region is provided by Greyhound/TNM&O. The buses, which originate in Albuquerque, stop at the Durango Transit Center twice per day and also make stops in Cortez, Telluride, Grand Junction, and Denver.

**Bicycle and Pedestrian** - As mentioned in the regional transportation report, multi-model solutions to transportation are important to residents in the region. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 4.1% of Durango residents over the age of 16 ride or bicycle to work, over ten times the national average. Many of the communities within the Southwest Regional Transportation Planning Region are developing trail corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists that will link open spaces and provide safe access to schools, shopping, and recreation areas. There are numerous opportunities for mountain and road bicyclists from the Overend Mountain Park, Horse Gulch and Dry Folk trails to Durango Mountain Resort (DMR). Bikers can ride the chairlift (that transports skiers in the winter) to the top of the mountain where they can ride on 50 miles of trails. According to the DMR public relations office, approximately 1,300 bicycle riders purchased uplift (one trip) tickets to use Durango Mountain Resort trails during the summer of 2010.

The Iron Horse Bicycle Classic is a 47-mile race that has run from Durango to Silverton on Memorial Day weekend since 1972. The route includes two mountain passes almost 11,000 feet above sea level. The first year of the race, 36 bicyclists participated. In 2010, the number of racers had increased to over 2,500. According to the director of the Iron Horse Bicycle Classic, research conducted in 2004 indicated that approximately \$175 to \$200 was spent per rider per day on lodging, meals, and other costs. CDOT closes US Hwy 160 between Durango Mountain Resort and Silverton during the event for rider safety.

**Airports** - *Animas Airpark* is located in La Plata County, four miles south of the City of Durango, at an elevation of 6,690 feet. Access to the airport is from County Road 213. It is a privately owned general aviation airport open to the public and operated by Animas Airpark, Inc. The facility has a 5,000-foot-long runway and no terminal building.

*Durango/La Plata County Airport* - This facility is located in La Plata County, 14 miles southeast of the City of Durango. Access to the airport is from State Highway 172. It is a publicly-owned, commercial service facility operated jointly by the City of Durango and La Plata County. The airport is overseen by the Airport Board of Commissioners, and meetings are open to the public. The airport also supports private aviation facilities, air freight operations and an interagency wildfire air tanker base. The primary runway is over 9,200 feet long, and is equipped with lights and navigational aids. The 36,000 square-foot terminal houses five rental car agencies, a deli, and a gift shop. Daily service includes flights to Denver and Phoenix. The number of passengers reached a total of 142,663 in 2010.

# LA PLATA COUNTY PROFILE

## La Plata County Government

La Plata County is one of 64 counties created by the State of Colorado. The responsibilities of implementing state law and managing county business are shared by elected officials, including: Assessor, Clerk and Recorder, District Attorney, Sheriff, Treasurer, Coroner and Surveyor. An elected three member Board of County Commissioners is the chief legislative and executive body of the County. Their duties include overseeing county budget, land use policy, social services, and road maintenance and construction, and public health programs. In addition to these 10 elected officials the county employed a staff of 412 in 2010.

### Expenditures

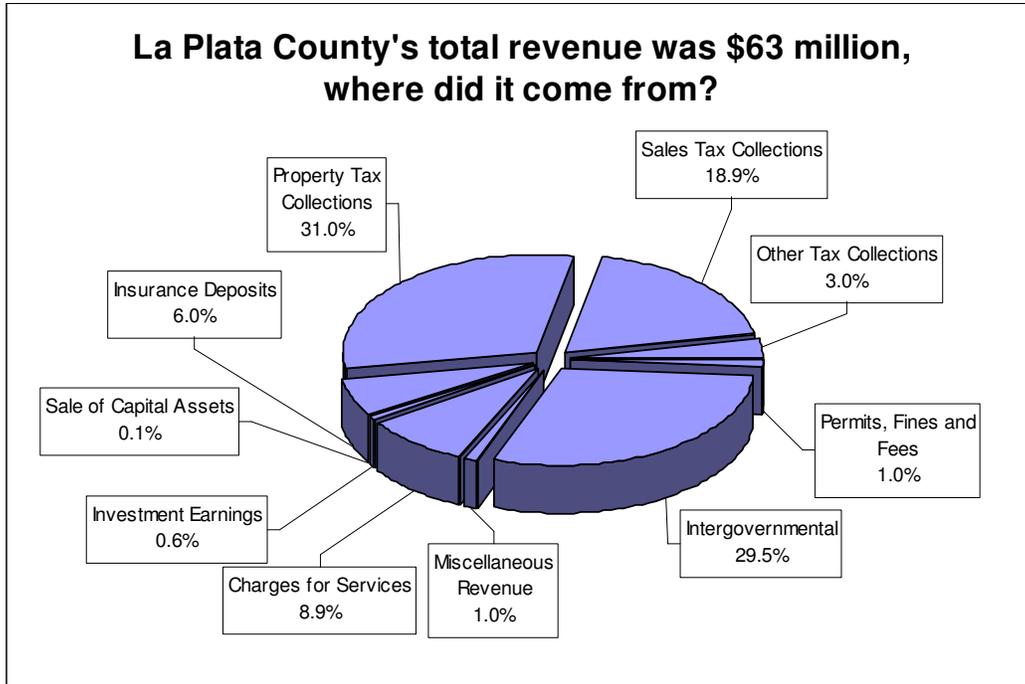
La Plata County provides many different services to its citizens, including public safety, roads and bridges, and health and welfare. Estimated expenditures for La Plata County total \$67.8 million for 2011.

### Revenues

The County expects to receive revenues of about \$63 million in 2011. Approximately \$20.2 million, or 43%, will come from non-local tax sources such as federal and state funding for social service programs, highway users taxes, grants and sales taxes generated by visitors to the county. The balance of \$21.0 million will come from sales and property taxes paid by local citizens.

Property tax revenues are distributed among municipalities, school districts and special districts (i.e. fire protection and sanitation). Special Districts set additional tax levies.

The La Plata County property tax levy rate is 8.50.



Source: La Plata County 2011 Budget.

## **Infrastructure and Services**

**Electric** - The entire county is served by the La Plata Electric Association.

**Natural Gas** - Most of the area is served by Atmos Energy and various propane distributors. The Town of Ignacio owns and operates its own natural gas distribution system.

**Water** - Durango and Bayfield have municipal water systems. Ignacio contracts water through the Southern Ute Tribe. Other residents are served by Rural Water Districts or have their own wells. The proposed Vallecito Water District will cover much of the southeastern portion of the county, including the Florida Mesa and Bayfield areas.

**Wastewater** - Durango and Bayfield have municipal wastewater systems. Ignacio contracts wastewater treatment through the Southern Ute Tribe. Others are served by rural water districts or have their own septic systems.

**Solid Waste** - Most of the area is served by Waste Management and Phoenix Recycling. There are also a variety of private waste haulers. The City of Durango also provides trash pick up and curbside recycling services

**Police & Fire Departments** - Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio each have police and fire personnel. The balance of the county depends on the Sheriff's Department and rural fire departments. The Durango Fire and Rescue Authority (DFRA) also serves Hermosa and Hesperus areas.

**Telephone** - Most of the area is served by Qwest (local service area was just purchased by Century Link). The southeast portion of the county, i.e. Ignacio, is served by CenturyTel.

**Medical Facilities** - Mercy Medical Center provides ICU/critical care/cardiology services that are available 24 hrs. a day, 7 days a week, as well as 135 physicians providing 34-35 other medical specialties. Mercy is a Level III trauma center and is licensed for 82 private beds. The privately owned Animas Surgical Center provides facilities for elective surgeries and outpatient care, and operates an emergency room. There is also an emergency clinic in Durango and numerous family practices in the various municipalities.

**Business Parks - Durango** (Bodo Industrial Park, the Durango Tech Center, and Rancho Vedado Phase I & II {Grandview}). The Airport Business Park is in "preliminary approval" status; the conceptual plan has been approved, but no development agreement has been made. La Plata County, the City of Durango and property owners on CR 213 are studying economic benefits of creating a Business Park on CR 213, east of Animas Air Park. **Bayfield** (54 acres under development): **Ignacio** (No business parks).

**Major Employers** - 2010 Top 10 Employers: Southern Ute Indian Tribe (1,500), Mercy Medical (625), Durango School District 9R (544), Fort Lewis College (535), City of Durango (500), Mercury Payment Systems Inc. (442), La Plata County (412), Durango Mountain Resort (380 - 408), Wal-Mart Stores Inc (353), San Juan Basin Health (226)  
Data Source: Region 9 called employers.

**Recreation Facilities** – (2011) **Durango** community facilities include 7 soccer fields, 9 baseball and 3 softball fields. Facilities at Chapman Hill include a refrigerated ice- rink and a 5000 sq. ft. pavilion, as well as a ski hill. Durango has a 71,560 square foot community recreation center. A skate park and whitewater park. There are 8 access points to the Animas River and 7 miles of hard surfaced river trails with another 2.5 in development stages. Durango has over 80 miles of soft surface trails. Durango has 32 parks comprising 86 acres and 1,575 acres of open space. There are surrounding public lands as well as several school athletic fields including Fort Lewis College.

**Bayfield** community facilities include a community gymnasium and a senior center. There are two new lighted baseball/softball fields. Athletic fields (football, baseball) at the High School. Recent additions include a skate park and trail system. There is also an all purpose field for soccer and football. Bayfield is considering adding some white water rafting features. **Ignacio** community facilities include access to the Southern Ute Tribal Recreation Center, and the Town Park. Ignacio has 2 parks, used for Baseball leagues in the summer and the Youth Football League in the fall. There are picnic tables and grills, a tennis court (being re-built) with a basketball hoop at one end for half court play, a short River Trail, and children's play equipment. Ben Nighthorse Community Park has a large playing field for running, ball throwing, etc, and children's play equipment. There is a stand alone basketball court at the south end of downtown. There are school facilities that include a track, football field, garden & play equipment. Surrounding public lands.

**Housing** – (2010) In La Plata County the median price for a single family residence was \$300,000; for Durango the median was \$325,000; in Bayfield the median was \$230,000; and in Ignacio the median was \$193,000. Data Source: *The Real Estate Watch Annual Summary*

**Child Care Availability** – (2011) In La Plata County there are 1,224 Total Slots (Ages 0-5). One provider offers 24 hour care and 3 providers offer weekend care. Data Source: Childcare Resource and Referral.

**Long term care facilities for seniors** - (2010) There are 3 facilities with a total of 228 beds. Data Source: San Juan Basin Area Agency on Aging

**Estimated number of persons without health insurance** – (2007) 10,942. Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Demographics

Between 2000 and 2010, La Plata County grew from 43,941 to 51,335 people (17%) with most of the growth occurring in Bayfield and Durango. Ignacio saw slower growth, as did unincorporated

	Census 2000	Census 2010	% Change 2000-2010
<b>La Plata</b>	43,941	51,334	16.8%
<b>Bayfield</b>	1,549	2,333	50.6%
<b>Durango</b>	13,922	16,887	21.3%
<b>Ignacio</b>	669	697	4.2%
<b>Unincorporated</b>	27,801	31,417	13.0%

Source: Colorado State Demography Office 3-2011

areas of the county. These population figures, however, do not reflect the large number of seasonal residents in the area. A 2006 local study on 2<sup>nd</sup> homes indicated that in 2005 about **17% of single family residences (and 29% of all properties)** were owned by people that live outside of the county.

The annual average rate of growth is expected to increase, and then slowly decline over the next 20 years, based on local and national trends. A population of about 59,000 is forecast by 2015.

Population Forecasts					
La Plata	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population	51,334	58,921	66,720	73,983	80,772
Avg. Ann. % Change		2.8%	2.5%	2.1%	1.8%

Source: Colorado State Demography Office 3-2011

The **American Community Survey (ACS)** is a large, continuous demographic survey conducted by the Census Bureau that will eventually provide accurate and up-to-date profiles of America's communities every year. Questionnaires are mailed to a sample of addresses to obtain information about households -- that is, about each person and the housing unit itself. The survey produces annual and multi-year estimates of population and housing characteristics and produces data for small areas, including tracts and population subgroups. The following topics are drawn from the ACS, but do not include all available information. For a more comprehensive look at the demographics of La Plata County go to <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>.

**Population:** In 2005-2009, La Plata County had a population of about 50,000 (49 percent) females and (51 percent) males. The median age was 37.3 years. Twenty percent of the population was under 18 years and 11 percent was 65 years and older.

**Households and Families:** In 2005-2009 there were 21,000 households in La Plata County. The average household size was 2.3 people. Families made up 63 percent of the households in La Plata County. This figure includes both married-couple families (51 percent) and other families (12 percent). Nonfamily households made up 37 percent of all households in La Plata County. Most of the nonfamily households were people living alone, but some were composed of people living in households in which no one was related to the householder.

**Education:** In 2005-2009, 94 percent of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school and 42 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Seven percent were dropouts; they were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school.

**Poverty and Participation in Government Programs:** In 2005-2009, 10 percent of people lived in poverty. Ten percent of related children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 6 percent of people 65 years old and over. Five percent of all families and 26 percent of families with a female householder and no husband present had incomes below the poverty level.

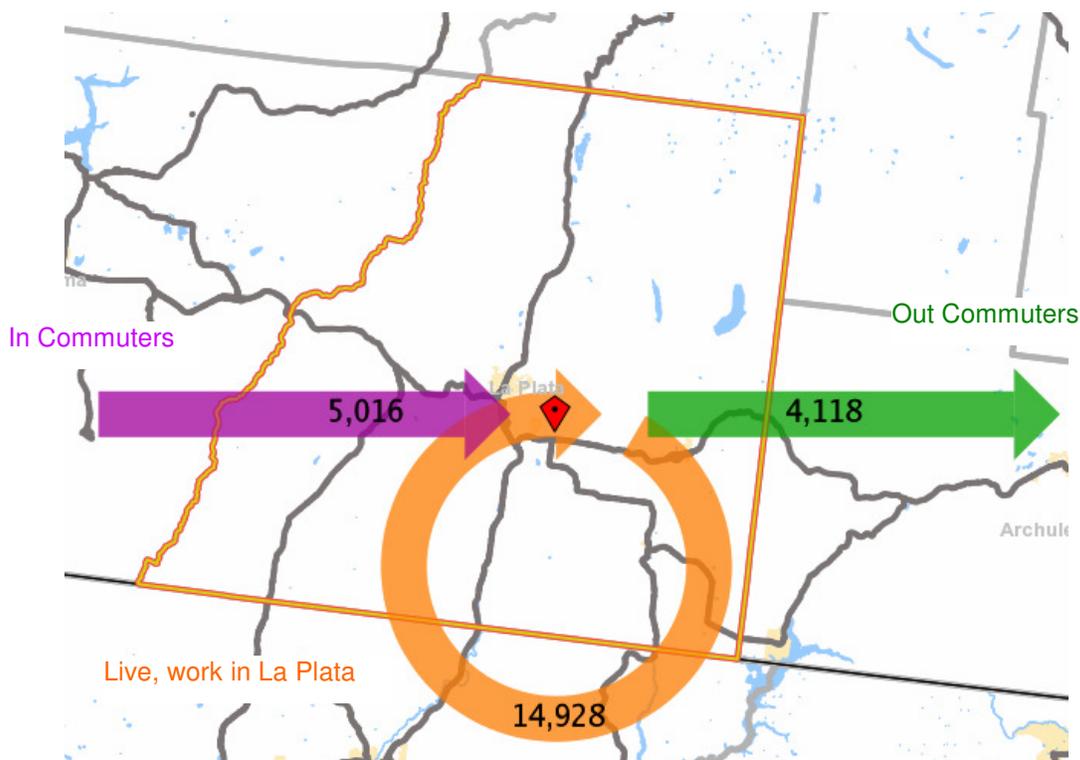
## The Local Economy

### Unemployment Rates

La Plata County generally follows statewide and national trends with regard to unemployment rates. In 2010, county rates (7.2%) are lower than the state (8.9%) and nation (9.6%). The seasonally adjusted labor force was 32,447 in 2010. For a look at how La Plata County compares with the rest of the region from 1999 to 2010 please refer to the Regional Overview.

### Commuting

People commute to where the jobs are, but take their paychecks home. This has an effect on how we evaluate employment, whether by place of work or by residence. Most La Plata County residents (79%) work in the county, and 21% commute elsewhere for their paychecks, with the highest percentage (4%) going to San Juan County, New Mexico.



Who works in La Plata?		Where do La Plata residents work?	
Place	Share	Place	Share
La Plata County, CO	74.9%	La Plata County, CO	78.4%
San Juan County, NM	4.3%	San Juan County, NM	4.4%
Montezuma County, CO	4.3%	Mesa County, CO	2.5%
Archuleta County, CO	2.1%	Montezuma County, CO	2.3%
Denver County, CO	1.8%	Denver County, CO	1.4%
Mesa County, CO	1.3%	El Paso County, CO	1.2%
Arapahoe County, CO	1.3%	Archuleta County, CO	0.9%
Montrose County, CO	1.0%	Garfield County, CO	0.9%
Larimer County, CO	0.9%	Montrose County, CO	0.8%
El Paso County, CO	0.8%	Jefferson County, CO	0.7%
All Other Locations	7.4%	All Other Locations	6.4%

Source: US Census Bureau LEHD

## Employment and Income 2009

The following table includes wage earners as well as proprietors (owners). Total employment refers to the numbers and types of jobs reported by place of work – which may be outside of the county, or even the state. This data is provided by the Bureau of Economic Analysis then is adjusted and reported by the Colorado State Demographer. It lags two years behind the current year, thus 2009 is the latest available data.

La Plata County 2009 Total Employment	# of Jobs	% of Jobs	Income (\$000)	% of Inc.	Avg ann. wage
Agriculture	738	2%	\$ 4,852	0%	*
Mining & Utilities	924	3%	\$ 103,307	7%	\$ 111,804
Construction	3,227	10%	\$ 195,677	13%	\$ 60,637
Manufacturing	621	2%	\$ 23,482	2%	\$ 37,813
Transportation & Warehousing	812	3%	\$ 45,134	3%	\$ 55,584
Wholesale & Retail Trade	4,236	13%	\$ 164,034	11%	\$ 38,724
Information	514	2%	\$ 26,294	2%	\$ 58,823
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	2,178	7%	\$ 116,026	8%	\$ 53,272
Services	13,136	40%	\$ 518,497	34%	\$ 39,471
Government	6,060	19%	\$ 311,747	21%	\$ 51,443
Total	32,446	100%	\$ 1,509,050	100%	

From this table we see that proprietors (owners) form a substantial part of the total number of jobs, especially in agriculture, and finance, insurance and real estate, sectors.

La Plata County 2009 Total Employment	% of Wage/ Salary Jobs	% of Proprietors
Agriculture	34%	66%
Mining & Utilities	82%	18%
Construction	67%	33%
Manufacturing	84%	16%
Transportation & Warehousing	87%	13%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	88%	12%
Information	87%	13%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	60%	40%
Services	76%	24%
Government	100%	0%
Total	77%	24%

The service sector employs about 41% of workers in the county, and represents 34% of the earnings. The service sector is composed of many types of jobs, and very different wage scales. These include highly paid professionals, as well as entry level wage earners. Many of the service jobs in La Plata County support tourism, in recreation, accommodations (lodging) and food services.

La Plata County 2009 Service Sectors	# of Jobs	% of Jobs	Income (\$000)	% of Inc.	Avg. annual wage
Professional, Scientific, Technical	3,614	28%	\$ 179,494	35%	\$ 49,666
Education, Health, Social Assistance	3,615	28%	\$ 167,028	32%	\$ 46,204
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	1,008	8%	\$ 23,738	5%	\$ 23,550
Accommodation, Food Service	3,132	24%	\$ 75,484	15%	\$ 24,100
Other Services	1,767	13%	\$ 72,753	14%	\$ 41,173
Total	13,136	100%	\$ 518,497	100%	\$ 31,994

## Economic Drivers

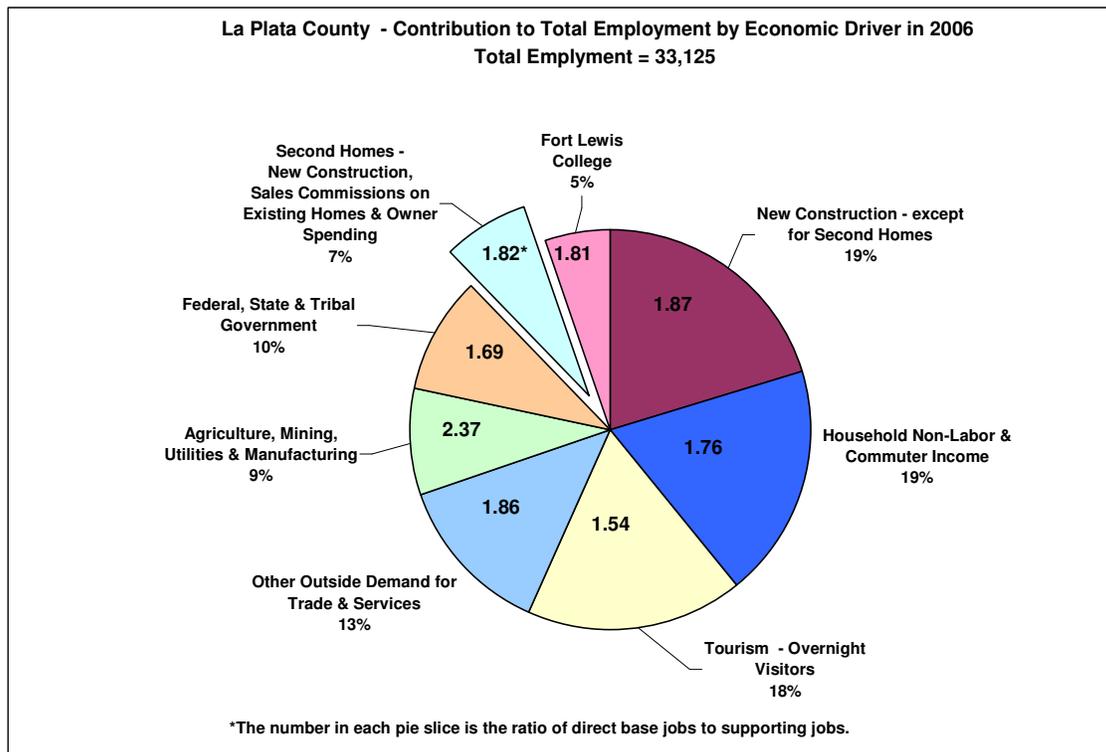
The following narrative is drawn from a report prepared by Lloyd Levy Consulting for Region 9. An explanation of economic drivers and how they function in a local economy is provided in the Regional Overview section of this document. The full report, including multipliers specific to La Plata County, can be found at [http://www.scan.org/regional\\_data.html](http://www.scan.org/regional_data.html). Although the numbers of jobs are down 2% from 2006 to 2009, the proportions of jobs in each sector are very similar, thus we believe the drivers identified here are still pertinent. (La Plata County results were based on an analysis of 2006 data because the study was conducted separately and completed in 2008).

A 2005 study by Region 9 estimated that about 17% of single family homes (and 29% of all properties) in La Plata County were owned by someone whose primary residence was outside of the county (this figure does not include time shares). The analysis applied a common-sense rule: If the County Assessor mails the tax bill to an owner of a residential unit at a non-county address, the unit is counted as a second home.

The Economic Drivers study grew out of a desire to estimate how many jobs are associated with the building, sales and maintenance of these homes. To put this information in context we must also examine the other important parts, or “drivers” of the county economy. This research is designed to give numerical answers to three key questions about a county economy:

- What share of total employment is generated by each economic driver?
- How important is each driver, compared to all the other drivers, in terms of its total employment effect?
- How much total employment is generated in response to one basic job within a given economic driver, or in other words what is the ratio of total to direct employment for each economic driver?

This figure depicts the size, relative importance and total employment ratio for La Plata County's economic drivers in 2006.



## Economic Clusters

The identification of these drivers also allows us to refine our understanding of regional economic clusters. In recent years, “cluster strategies” have become a popular economic development approach among state and local policymakers and economic development practitioners. An industry cluster is “a group of firms, and related economic actors and institutions that are located near one another and that draw productive advantage from their mutual proximity and connections”. Cluster analysis can help diagnose a region’s economic strengths and challenges and identify realistic ways to shape the region’s economic future.

[www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20060313\\_clusters.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20060313_clusters.pdf)

For example, to provide a more accurate picture of the agricultural sector we can expand agricultural industry analysis by linking production to other segments of the economy that directly and indirectly support agriculture. These industries are known as *agribusiness*, and include services such as processing food products, trucking, storage, sales of farm equipment and supplies; as well as impacts on credit institutions and commodity brokers. Similarly, the oil and gas industry employs heavy construction and excavation firms to clear sites, trucking and pipeline companies to transport products, chemists, electricians, welders and a complex supply chain to support that industry. It is hoped that the same labor force and supply chains will feed the “new energy” economy of solar, wind and hydroelectric power.

## Per Capita Income

Per Capita Income 2009		
	PCI 2009	% of USA
USA	\$ 39,635	100%
Colorado	\$ 41,895	106%
Archuleta	\$ 29,344	74%
Dolores	\$ 31,385	79%
La Plata	\$ 39,769	100%
Montezuma	\$ 32,502	82%
San Juan	\$ 38,705	98%

In 2009 La Plata had a Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) of \$39,769. This PCPI ranked 21st in the state and was 95 percent of the state average, \$41,895, and 100 percent of the national average, \$39,635.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

## Total Personal Income

La Plata 2009 Total Personal Income (\$000)		% of Total
Employment Earnings	\$ 1,315,750	64%
Residency Adjustment	\$ (11,754)	-1%
Dividends, Interest & Rent	\$ 496,027	24%
Transfer Payments	\$ 246,655	12%
<b>Estimated TPI</b>	<b>\$ 2,046,678</b>	<b>100%</b>

In 2009, Total Personal Income (TPI) in La Plata County was \$2,046,678,000. This TPI ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the state and accounted for 1% of the state total. The largest proportion of TPI is generated through employment.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

<http://www.bea.gov/regional/reis/>.

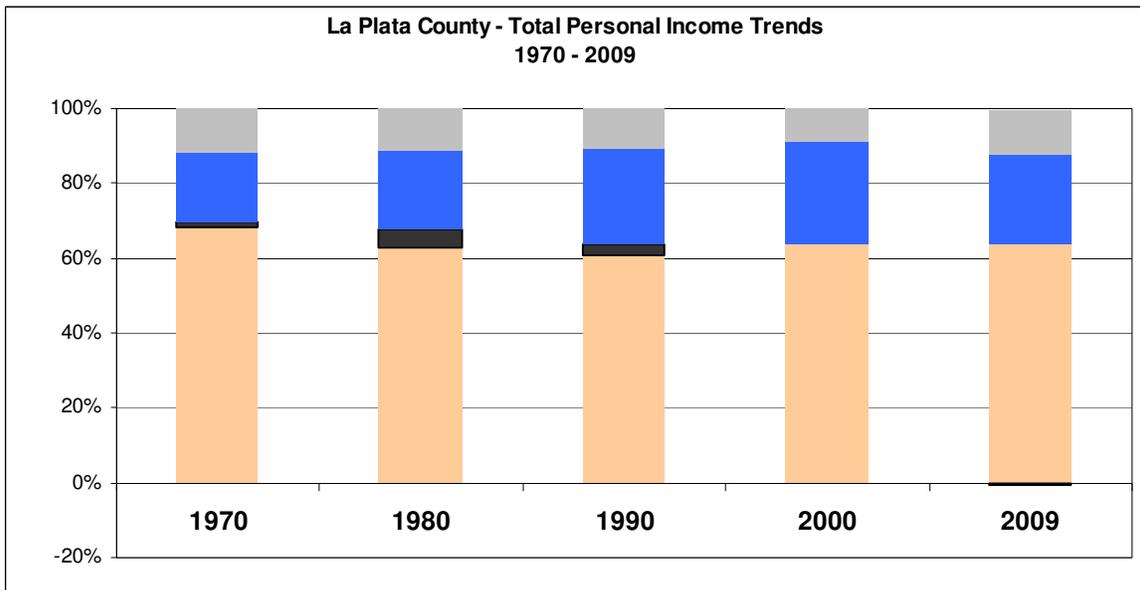
Estimated payments to retirees accounted for almost 14% of the estimated TPI in La Plata County in 2009. That was \$286,534,920!

### Total Personal Income Trends

In addition to employment income, money enters the local economy from other sources. Total Personal Income (TPI) is the sum of all personal income that flows into the county. The following chart examines the components of TPI and how the proportions of this income have changed over time.

- 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.
  
- Earnings are derived by place of work, including farm and non-farm earnings.

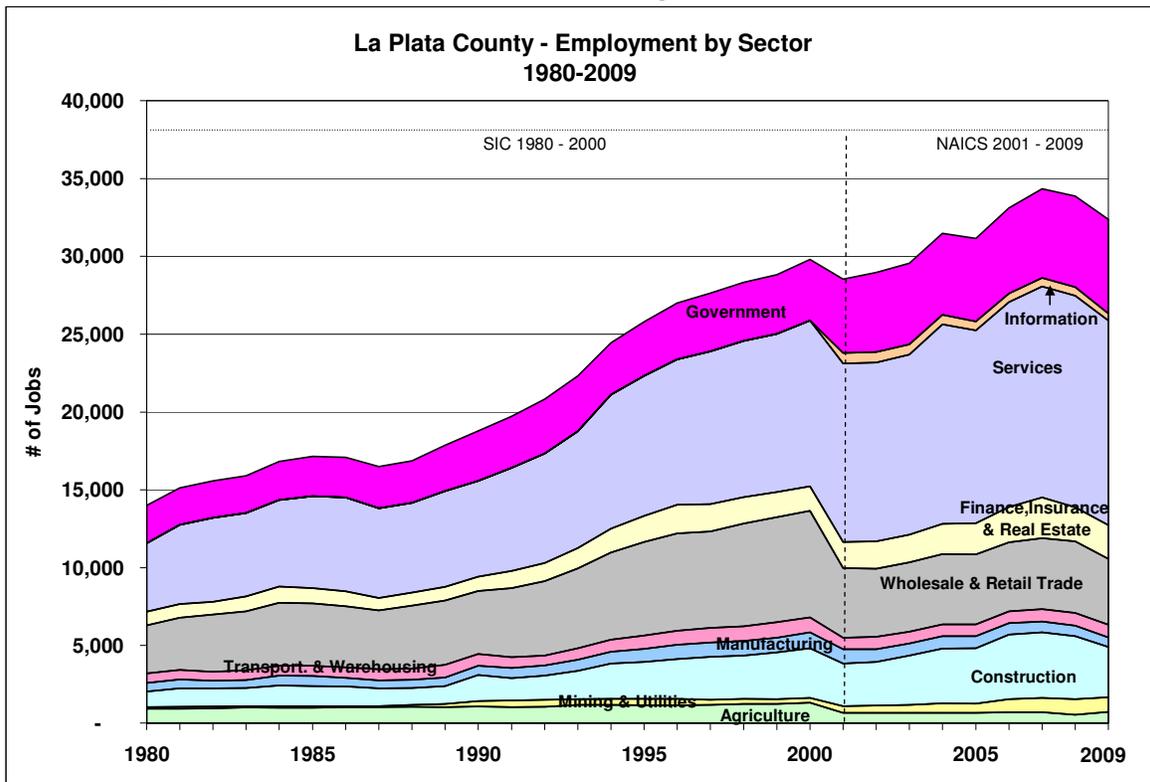
Generally, from 1970 to 2009, we see a trend of decreasing employment income, and increasing income from dividends, interest and rent, and transfer payments. Residency adjustments illustrate how the economy of each county is tied to others as people commute to where the jobs are, but take their paychecks home. <http://www.bea.gov/regional/reis/> (Table CA04)



## Employment Sector Trends 1980 - 2009

An employment “sector” groups jobs into categories that are alike and allows us to measure the relative strength of that industry in the local economy. Using “trend analysis” we can see how those industries have grown or declined within a specific timeframe. The trends presented here reflect the Standard Industrial Code (SIC) job classifications used from 1980 to 2000. In 2001, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) replaced the (SIC) system. NAICS groups the economy into 20 broad sectors, instead of the 10 divisions of the SIC system. NAICS was developed jointly by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to compare business activity across North America.

The primary differences between the two classification systems is that the mining sector now includes utilities; eating and drinking (food services) have been moved from retail trade to the service sector; and the service sector includes new categories



There was a peak in the number of jobs in 2007 (34,337), and subsequent declines associated with the current U.S. recession. The dip in 2002 probably reflects repercussions of the widespread drought, local wildfires and impacts to the national economy from the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01.

When we compare job growth from 2001 to 2009 using the NAICS system, we see that the most growth has been in mining and utilities; and finance, insurance and real estate sectors. There have also been declines in some job sectors since 2001, namely in manufacturing and information.

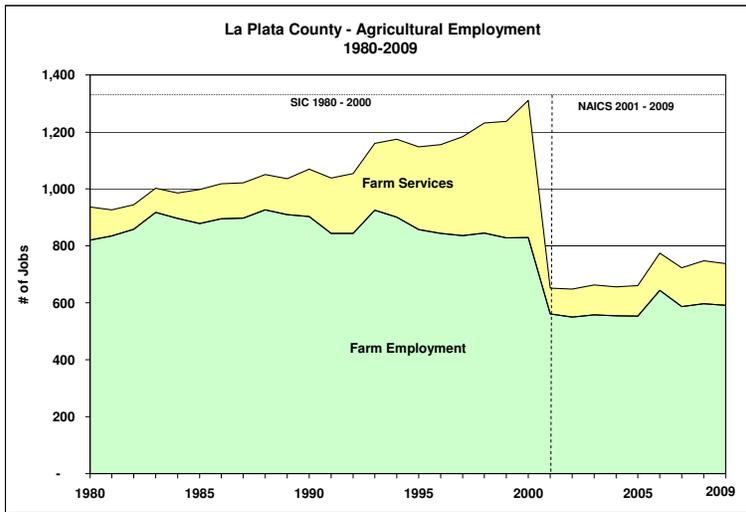
La Plata County	# of Jobs		% change 01 - 09
	2001	2009	
Agriculture	652	738	13%
Mining & Utilities	440	924	110%
Construction	2,732	3,227	18%
Manufacturing	925	621	-33%
Transportation & Warehousing	735	812	11%
Trade	4,478	4,236	-5%
Information	604	514	-15%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	1,691	2,178	29%
Services	11,521	13,136	14%
Government	4,758	6,060	27%
<b>Total Employment</b>	<b>28,535</b>	<b>32,446</b>	<b>14%</b>

To fully understand the ups and downs of each sector, we need to look at them in greater detail. In the following pages each of these sectors is broken into subgroups for further definition of job type. Some sub sectors have been grouped into "other" categories in order to abide by non-disclosure rules. The rule by state statute is that employment can't be disclosed if there are three or fewer firms in a sector or one firm comprises more than 80% of sector employment.

**Remember that the closure of even one business may appear to create dramatic "ups and downs" within sectors in the following charts. Be sure to notice the scale of the numbers of jobs. Differences can also arise from reclassification of jobs within a business over time.**

To provide detail for the intervening years, the following table tracks changes in each sector from 2005 to 2009.

La Plata County	% Change			
	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09
Agriculture	7.9%	-2.7%	-20.1%	33.7%
Mining & Utilities	39.6%	12.6%	4.3%	-5.7%
Construction	16.9%	1.0%	-3.7%	-20.2%
Manufacturing	-6.8%	-3.4%	-3.0%	-8.9%
Transport. & Warehousing	0.9%	5.2%	2.6%	-1.3%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	-1.3%	3.0%	0.9%	-7.9%
Information	-5.4%	0.7%	1.3%	-6.4%
F,I & R E	14.0%	14.1%	-16.3%	0.0%
Services	6.2%	3.0%	0.2%	-3.4%
Government	3.0%	3.9%	2.4%	3.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>-1.4%</b>	<b>-4.2%</b>



While employment and earnings are traditionally used to measure the “strength” of an industry, there are some drawbacks with using employment data to measure the agricultural sector. Employment and earnings in non-agricultural sectors are derived from unemployment compensation reports of average wages and employment, which is supplemented by the sampling of tax returns to estimate proprietor employment and income. Family operated farms and ranches are not required to file unemployment

compensation reports, and it is very difficult to accurately estimate earnings from limited sampling of income tax returns. In light of the shortcomings described above, we see that the agricultural sector had fairly steady growth till about 2000, with sharp declines in 2001. This may be due, in part, to job reclassifications.

Agribusiness is a cluster of industries, and includes services such as processing food products, trucking, storage, sales of farm equipment and supplies; as well as impacts on credit institutions and commodity brokers. Ag inputs and processing are businesses (wholesale trade) that provide products and services to farmers, i.e. chemicals, seed, fertilizer, feed, fuel, machinery and crop processing or marketing.

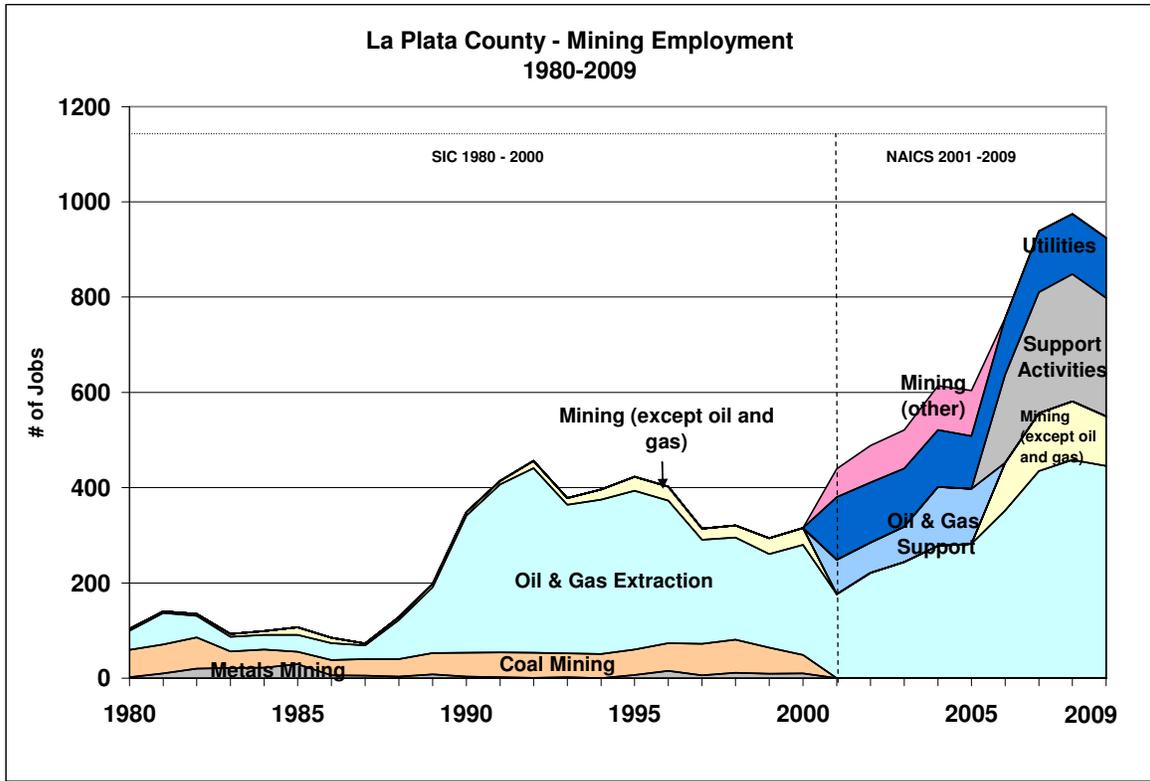
Components of Agribusiness La Plata County 2009	Number of Jobs	Job Income \$(000)
Agriculture-Crops & Livestock	591	\$ 1,482
Agriculture-Farm Services	147	\$ 3,370
Agribusiness Transportation	47	\$ 2,332
Ag related Warehousing and Storage	2	\$ 141
Manufacturing-Food & Beverage Products	259	\$ 8,872
Wholesale Trade-Agricultural Inputs	99	\$ 5,471
Wholesale Trade-Agricultural Processing	131	\$ 6,006
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,276</b>	<b>\$ 27,674</b>

Indicator/Measure	La Plata County			% Change 1997-2007
	1997	2002	2007	
# of Farms	781	923	1,076	38%
Lands in Farms (acres)	580,135	562,664	570,189	-2%
Avg. size of farm (acres)	743	610	530	-29%
Avg. age of Farmer	54.2	54.9	57.8	7%

Source: Census of Agriculture

[http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online\\_Highlights/County\\_Profiles/Colorado/cp08033.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/Colorado/cp08033.pdf)

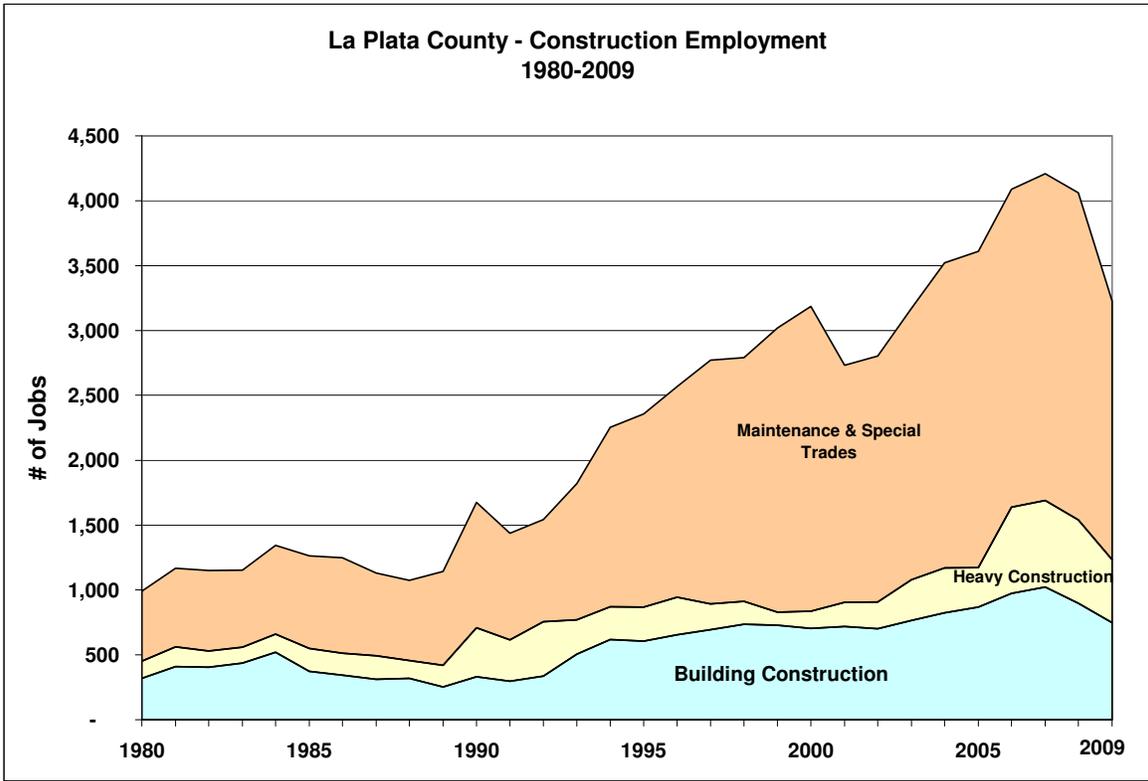
One of the most important sources of agricultural data is the **Census of Agriculture**, which takes place every 5 years (most recently 2007). Overall, a comparison of selected characteristics from 1997 to 2007 shows an increase in the numbers of farms, and a decrease in the size of farms. This may be the result of County subdivision rules in which 35 acres were the smallest portion allowable. Many of these 35 acre tracts remain classified as agricultural lands since land owners report some agricultural activities (agricultural lands are taxed at a lower rate than residential properties). It may also be more economically viable to focus resources on smaller, more productive acreages – depending on the crop. The age of farmers in our area remained fairly constant during this time period.



Utilities have been moved from the transportation sector to the mining sector in the NAICS system and have been declining since 2001. Coal mining, once an important source of employment, pretty much vanished by 2001 (or has been moved to the other mining category). Oil and gas extraction sees periodic booms and busts, dependant upon the national and global economy. Oil & gas extraction support is also a new category in NAICS. Other types of mining, such as gravels and other non-metallic minerals, became an important source of employment as La Plata County rode the development boom of the 1990s and beyond.

Mining & Utilities Sectors	# of Jobs		% change 01 - 09
	2001	2009	
Oil and gas extraction	176	446	154%
Mining (other)	60	118	97%
Oil and gas extraction support	73	249	242%
Other utilities, except water supply and irrigation	131	111	-15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>110%</b>

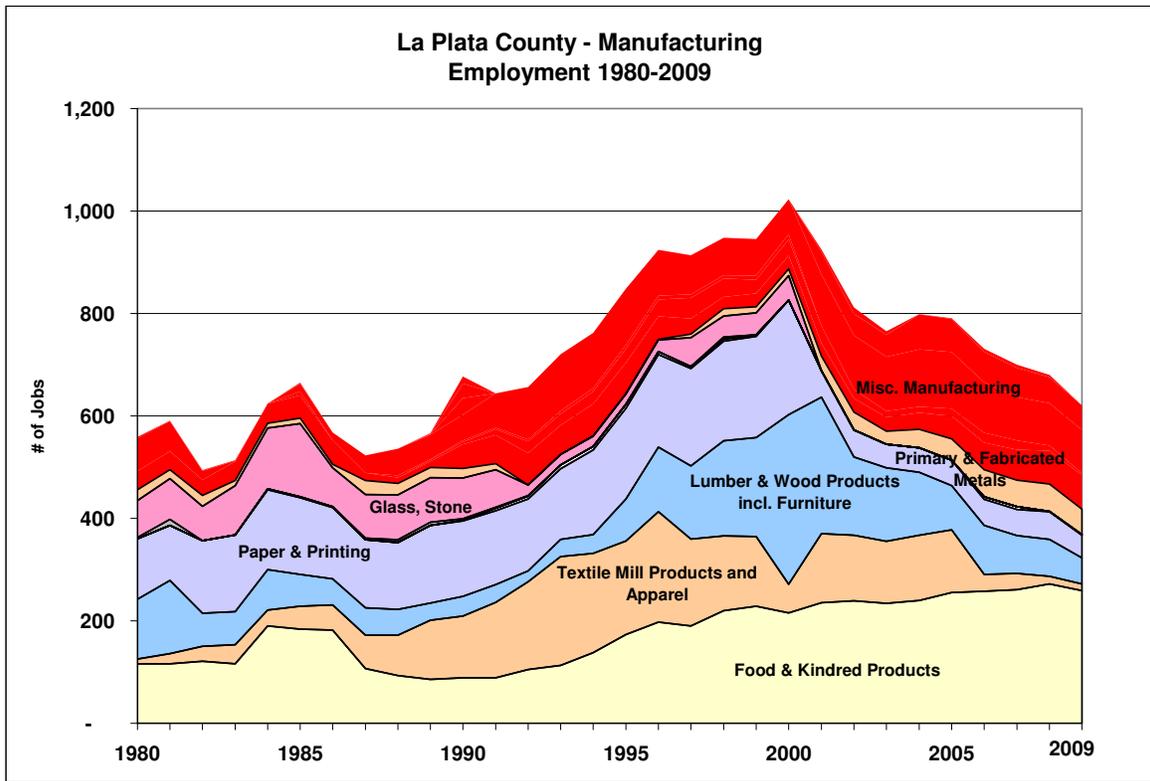
Although the numbers of jobs in the mining sector are relatively low, average annual income in the mining sector was \$111,804 in 2009, the highest wages of all sectors in the local economy. About 18% of employment in the industry is through proprietors (owners).



In the 1990s there was substantial growth in the construction sector, supporting rapid population growth, and providing housing for 2<sup>nd</sup> homeowners who were buying land, building new homes, and taking advantage of the quality of life found in SW Colorado, also known as "amenity migration". A study conducted by Region 9 found that 29% of property in La Plata County was owned by non-locals in 2005. A substantial number (270) of construction jobs are attributed to the building of 2<sup>nd</sup> homes in 2005, according to the driver analysis performed by Lloyd Levy. This sector continues to see strong employment growth from 2001 to 2007, but has declined as the housing industry "bubble" burst.

Average annual income in this sector was \$60,637 in 2009. About 33% of those employed in this sector are proprietors (owners)

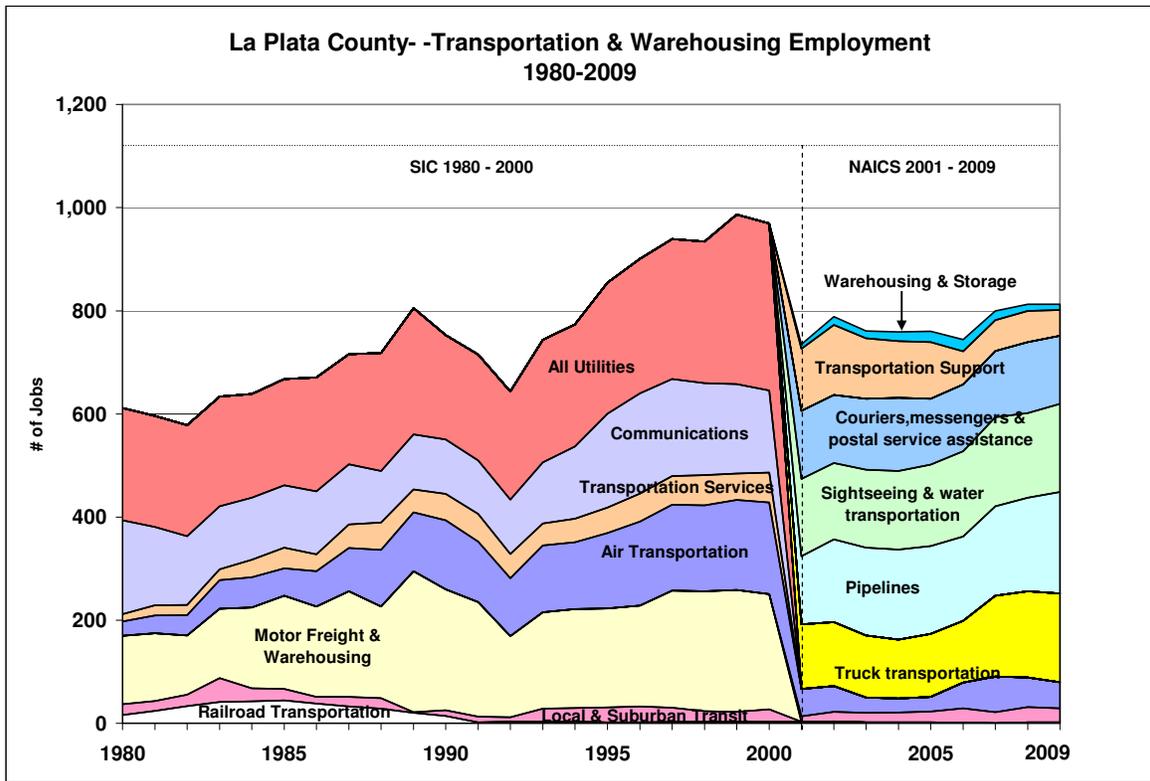
Construction Sectors	# of Jobs		% change 01 - 09
	2001	2009	
Construction of buildings	718	747	4%
Heavy Equipment and civil engineering construction	188	485	158%
Special trade contractors	1,826	1,995	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,732</b>	<b>3,228</b>	<b>18%</b>



Many jobs in the printing industry (i.e. publishing) have been moved into the Information sector in NAICS. Lumber and wood products has fluctuated, and diminished -81% since 2001, probably as a result of the decline in homebuilding. Stone, clay and glass emerged as a strong segment in the mid 90s, but dropped out of the local economy in recent years. Growth industries include machinery manufacturing and nonmetallic mineral production. Overall, there has been about a -33% decline since 2001.

Manufacturing Sectors	# of Jobs		% change
	2001	2009	01 - 09
Wood product and furniture	266	51	-81%
Nonmetallic mineral products	44	48	9%
Primary and fabricated metal	28	50	79%
Machinery	25	67	168%
Transportation Equipment	34	3	-91%
Computer and electrical equipment	5	0	-100%
Miscellaneous	100	85	-15%
Food and beverage product	236	259	10%
Textile mills and product, apparel, and leather	134	13	-90%
Paper and printing	52	44	-15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>-33%</b>

Average annual income in this sector was \$37,813 in 2009. About 16% of those employed in this sector are proprietors (owners).

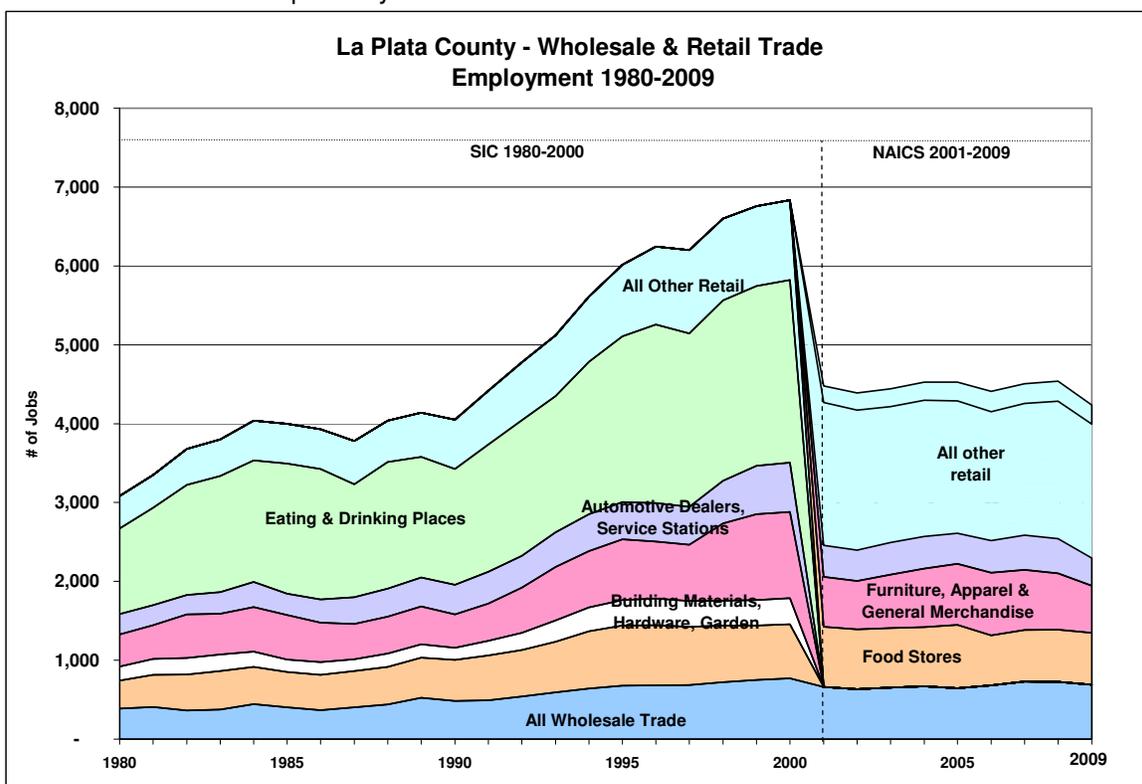


Utilities were moved to the mining sector under the NAICS system in 2000, and many other jobs were reclassified into new categories. The communications segment of this industry is now included in the Information sector. Thus the rapid decline of this sector in 2000 probably does not necessarily reflect job losses. Overall, we see 11% growth in the sector from 2001 to 2009.

Transportation & Warehousing Sectors	# of Jobs		% change
	2001	2009	01 - 09
Air transportation	53	51	-5%
Rail transportation	3	2	-39%
Agribusiness transportation	0	47	
Truck transportation except ag	125	125	0%
Support for transportation	120	50	-58%
Transit and ground passenger transportation	11	27	145%
Pipeline transportation	132	197	49%
Scenic, sightseeing, and water transportation	150	171	14%
Couriers and messengers and postal service assistance	132	132	0%
Ag Related Warehousing and storage	0	2	
Warehousing and storage	9	9	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>11%</b>

Average annual income in this sector was \$55,584 in 2009. About 13% of those employed in this sector are proprietors (owners).

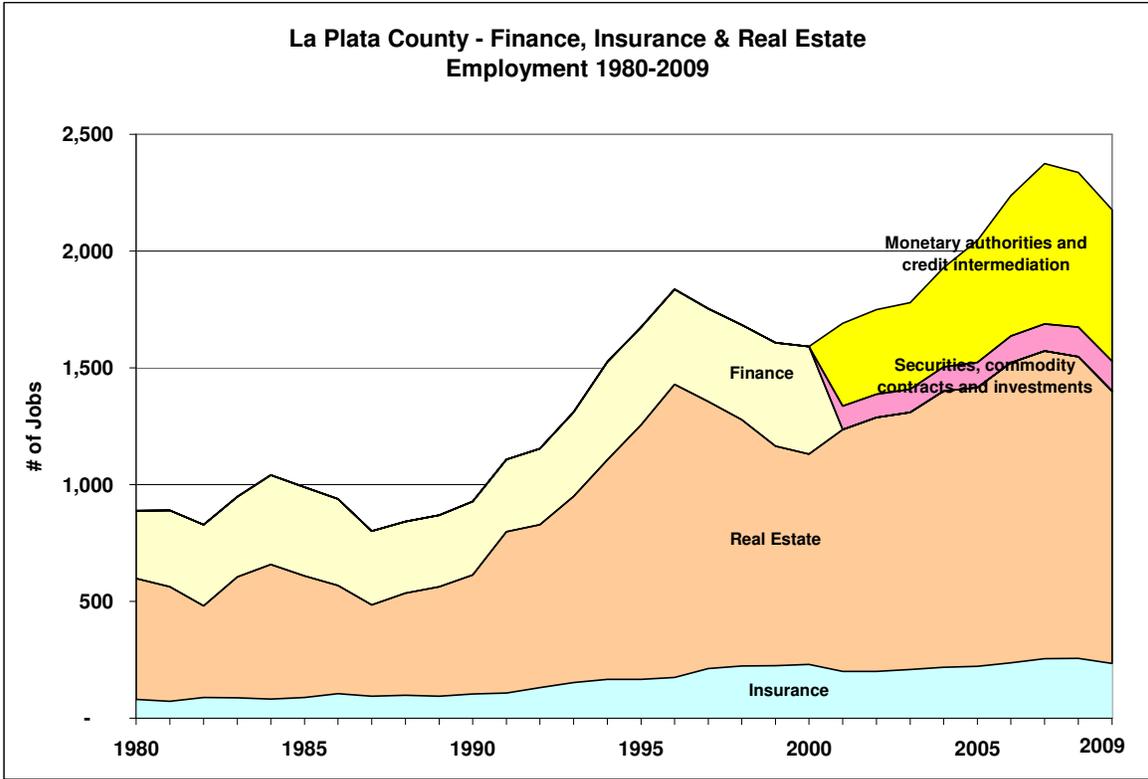
NAICS redefined the boundaries between Retail and Wholesale Trade. The new NAICS definition emphasizes what the establishment does, rather than to whom it sells. The SIC system defined retailers as those establishments that sold primarily to consumers while wholesalers were those establishments that sold primarily to business customers.



The trade sector changed dramatically under the NAICS system. The primary difference is the removal of restaurants from retail trade. Restaurants are now combined with accommodations to form a new sector in NAICS, Accommodation and Food Services. In addition, many of the general groups have been split into finer detail, so it is difficult to compare trends in the various retail sectors. When we consider the newly defined sectors, however, we see a -5% decrease from 2001 to 2009.

Wholesale & Retail Trade Sectors	# of Jobs		% change
	2001	2009	01 - 09
Wholesale	665	689	4%
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	399	352	-12%
Furniture, electronics, appliances, and building materials	634	597	-6%
Food and beverage stores	761	656	-14%
Health and personal care stores	162	193	19%
Gasoline stations	185	189	2%
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	229	244	6%
Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores	291	304	4%
Other merchandise stores	610	494	-19%
Miscellaneous store retailers	335	276	-18%
Nonstore retailers	207	240	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,478</b>	<b>4,235</b>	<b>-5%</b>

Average annual income in trade was \$38,724, in 2009. About 12% of those employed in trade are proprietors (owners).



The large numbers employed in the real estate sector may reflect the way jobs are reported, (i.e. all employees of a resort area).

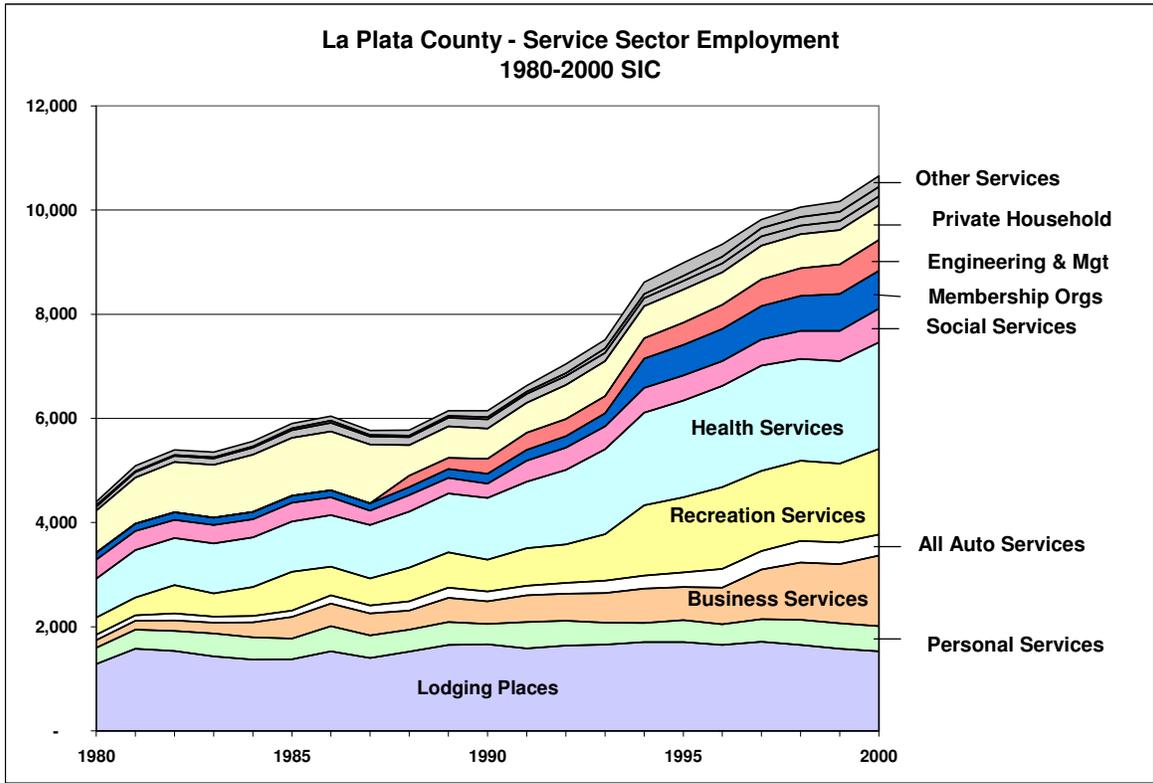
In the 1990s there was substantial growth in the real estate sector, supporting rapid population growth, and providing housing for 2<sup>nd</sup> homeowners who are buying land, building new homes, and taking advantage of the quality of life found in SW Colorado, also known as "amenity migration". A study conducted by Region 9 found that 17% of single family homes in La Plata County were owned by non- locals in 2005. This sector continues to see strong employment growth from 2001 to 2007, especially in the finance sectors.

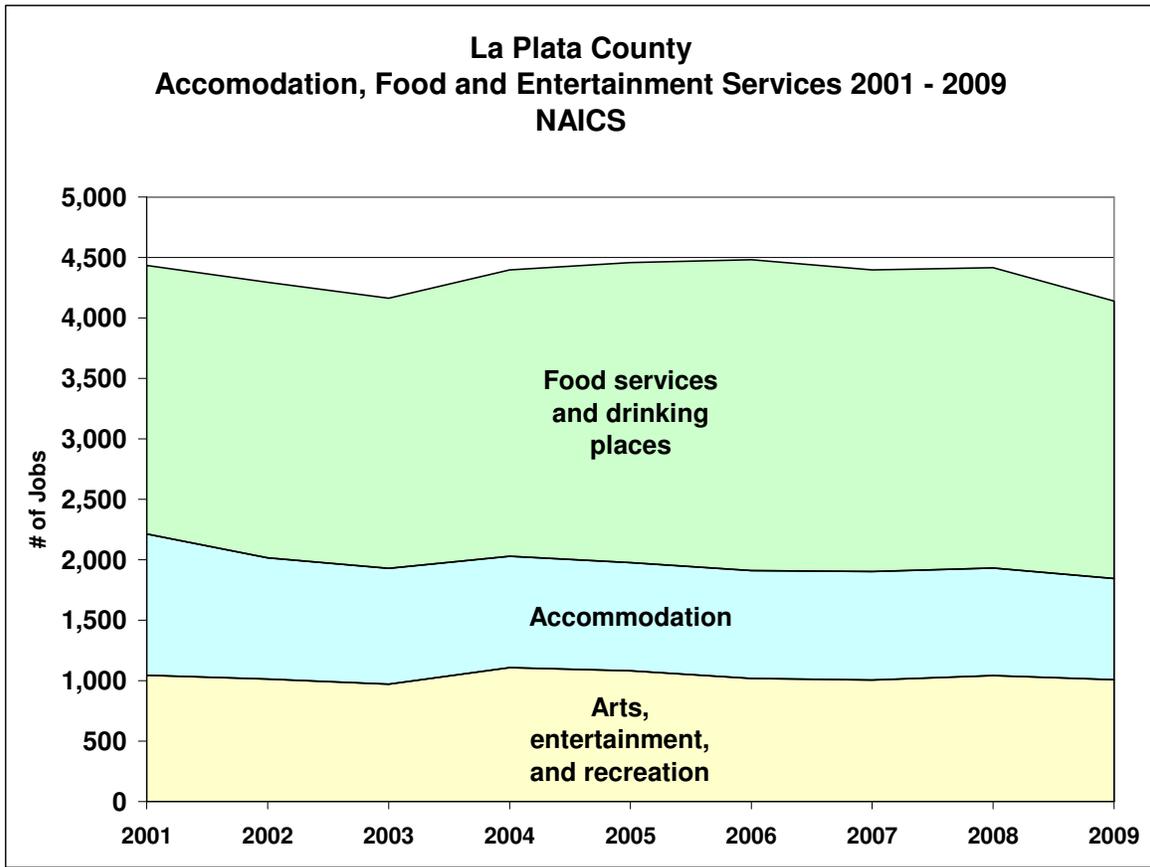
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate Sectors	# of Jobs		% change
	2001	2009	01 - 09
Monetary authorities and credit intermediation	354	650	83%
Securities, commodity contracts and investments	100	127	28%
Insurance carriers, funds, trusts, and other	200	234	17%
Real estate inc rental and leasing services	1,037	1,168	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,691</b>	<b>2,179</b>	<b>29%</b>

Average annual income in this sector was \$53,272 in 2009. About 40% of those employed in this sector are proprietors (owners).

The service sector is the largest single segment of all sectors in the local economy, accounting for 41% of total employment. For historical perspective we have included the SIC system showing trends from 1980 to 2000. The appearance of engineering and management services reflects a new element in the local economy. Membership organizations include members of the Southern Ute Tribe.

The new categories of services under the NAICS system are grouped into separate charts for 2001 to 2005.

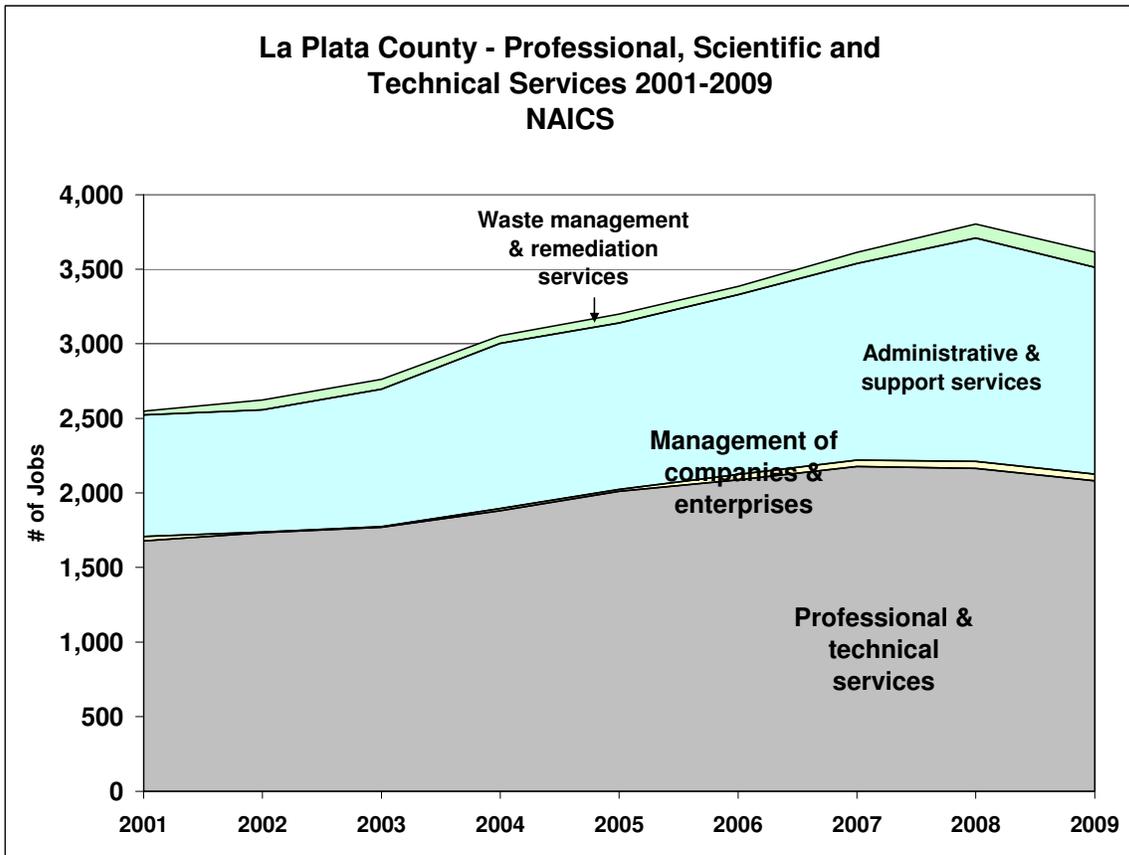




The service sector has undergone a transformation under the NAICS system. The primary difference is that food services (previously included in SIC Retail Trade - eating and drinking), is now in the service sector, and linked with accommodations and entertainment.

Average annual income in the accommodation and food services sector was \$24,100 in 2009. For recreation it was \$23,550.

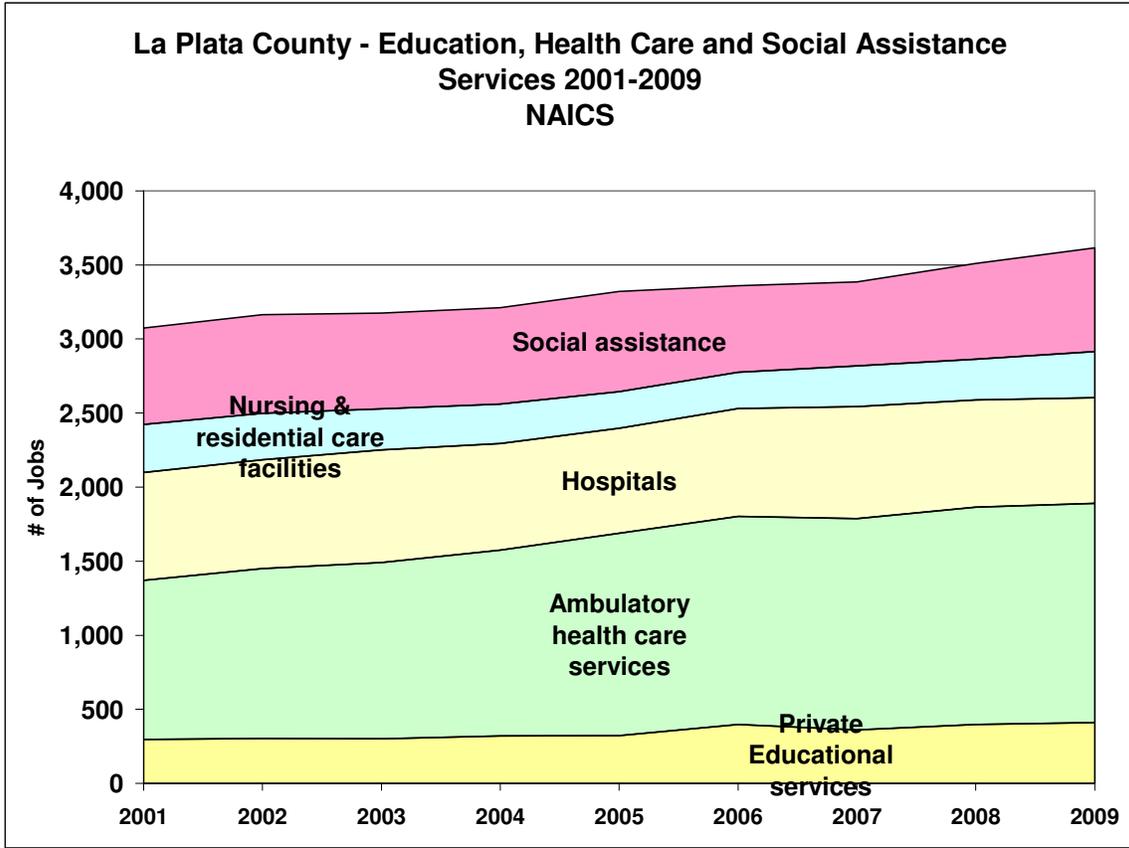
Accomodation, Food & Entertainment Services	# of Jobs		% change
	2001	2009	01 - 09
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	1,044	1,008	-3%
Accommodation	1,170	837	-28%
Food services and drinking places	2,221	2,295	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,435</b>	<b>4,140</b>	<b>-7%</b>



This sector has seen a 43% increase since 2001, and seems to be weathering the recession.

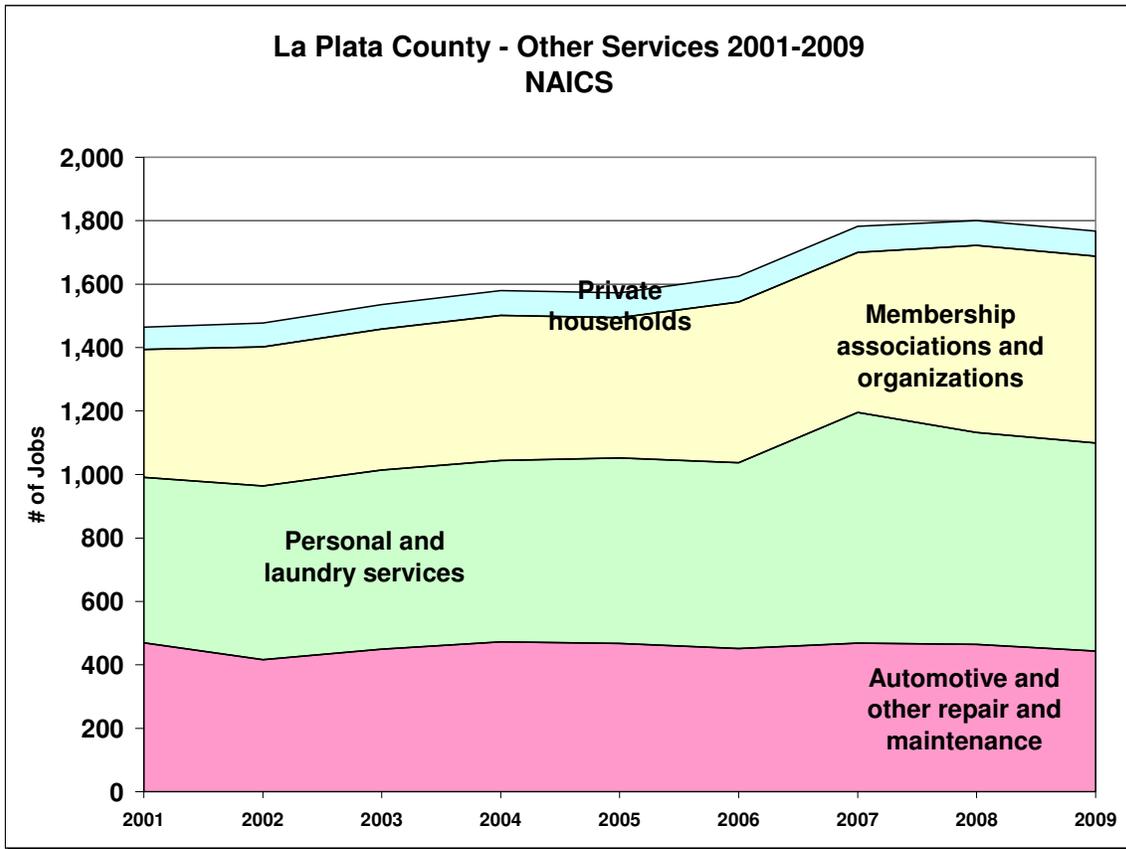
Average annual income in this sector was \$49,666 in 2009.

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	# of Jobs		% change 01 - 09
	2001	2009	
Professional and technical services	1,644	2,082	27%
Management of companies and enterprises	30	45	49%
Administrative and support services	829	1,387	67%
Waste management and remediation services	20	101	405%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,523</b>	<b>3,614</b>	<b>43%</b>



Average annual income in this sector was \$46,204 in 2009. This sector has seen steady, consistent growth since 2001.

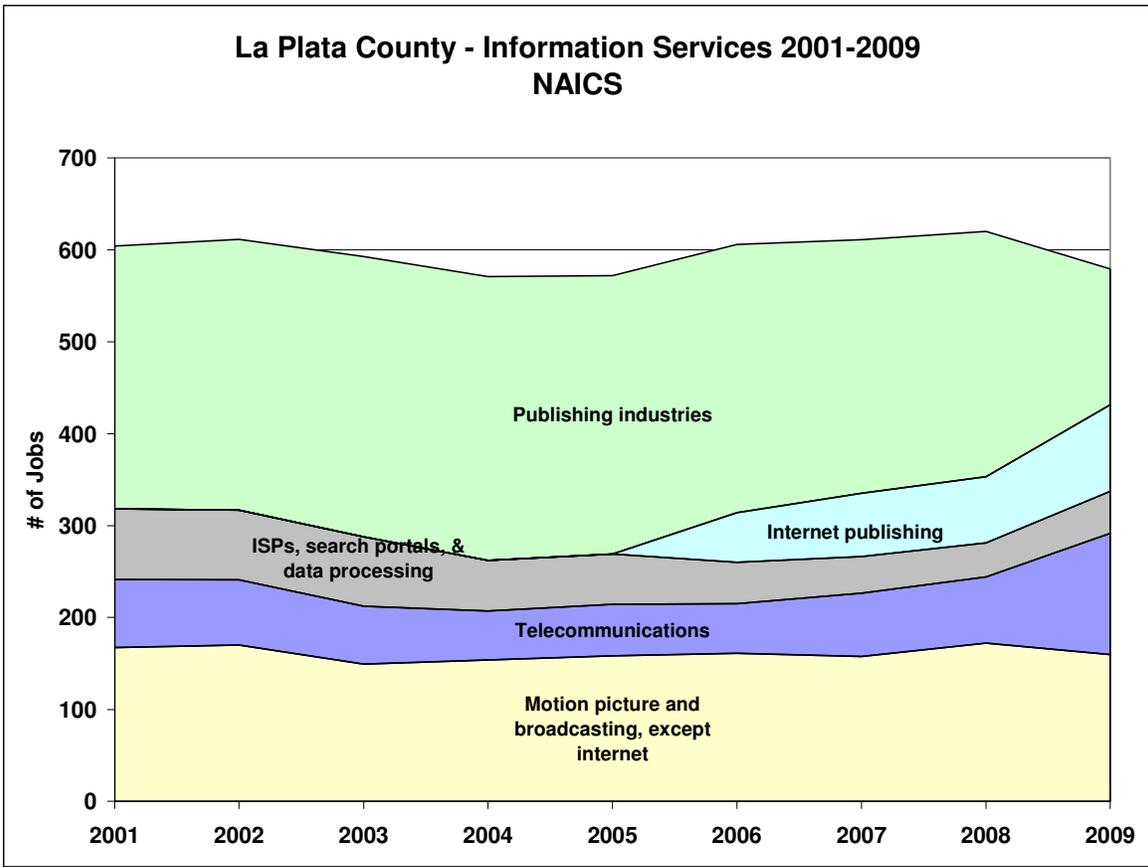
Education, Health and Social Assistance Services	# of Jobs		% change 01 - 09
	2001	2009	
Private educational services	298	410	38%
Ambulatory health care services	1,071	1,480	38%
Hospitals	728	714	-2%
Nursing and residential care facilities	327	312	-5%
Social assistance	650	700	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,074</b>	<b>3,616</b>	<b>18%</b>



This is a growing service sector, showing 7% growth from 2001 to 2005. Membership organizations include unions, chambers of commerce, business and fraternal organizations, humane societies, and in La Plata County, the Southern Ute Tribe.

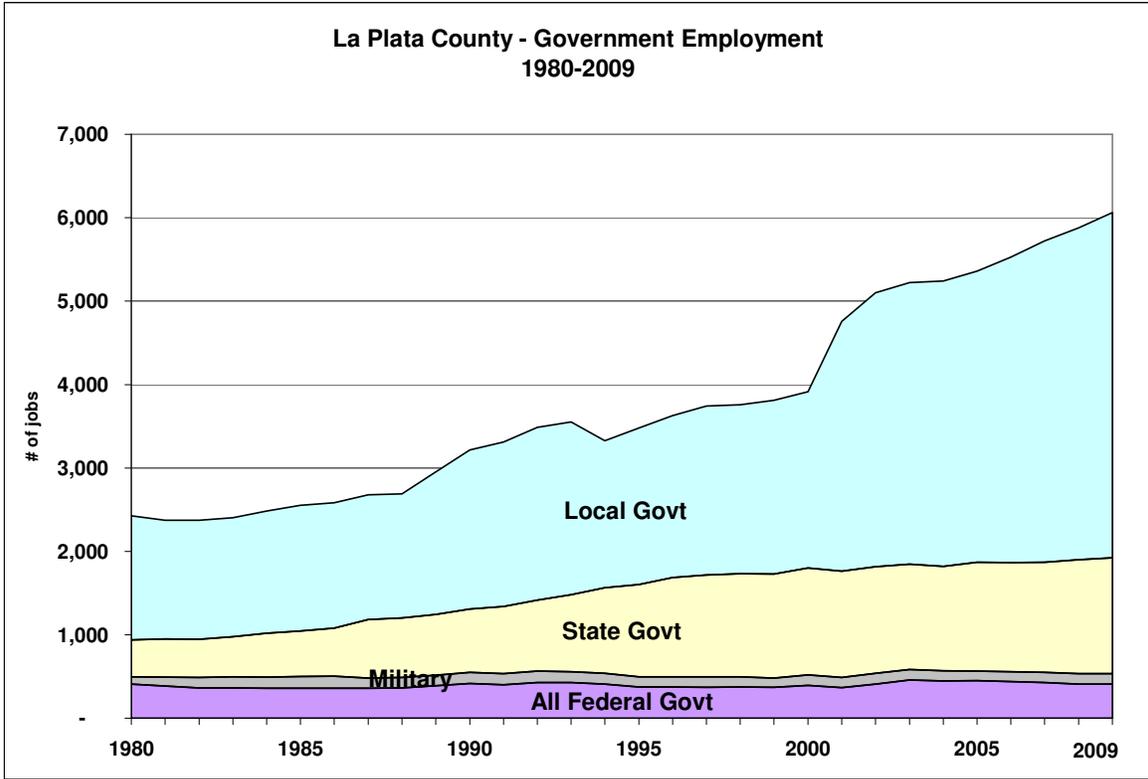
Average annual income in this sector was \$41,173 in 2009.

Other Services	# of Jobs		% change
	2001	2009	01 - 09
Automotive and other repair and maintenance	470	443	-6%
Personal and laundry services	521	656	26%
Membership associations and organizations	404	589	46%
Private households	70	79	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,464</b>	<b>1,767</b>	<b>21%</b>



Perhaps the most important change in NAICS is the recognition of a new Information sector. This sector includes establishments that create, disseminate, or provide the means to distribute information, and establishments that provide data processing services. Average annual income in this sector was \$53,272 in 2009.

Information Sectors	# of Jobs		% change 01 - 09
	2001	2009	
Publishing industries	286	148	-48%
Motion picture and broadcasting, except internet	167	160	-4%
Software publishing	74	94	27%
Other telecommunications	77	111	44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>-15%</b>



Government employment, particularly local government, increases in response to growing population and management needs.

Government Sectors	# of Jobs		% change
	2001	2009	01 - 09
Federal government, civilian	364	408	12%
Military	125	127	2%
State government	1,272	1,387	9%
Local government	2,997	4,139	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,758</b>	<b>6,061</b>	<b>27%</b>

The average yearly income in 2009 was \$51,443.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

### La Plata County Vision and Mission Statements

#### Vision Statement

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 vision statement describes the assets and values and focuses on moving the community toward achieving our goals for the future. Through La Plata County's recent activity on the creation of a Comprehensive Plan, Governor Hickenlooper's Bottom Up Economic Development strategy, and previous community input, the following vision was created for La Plata County:

**“A healthy community that builds upon its natural beauty and civic amenities to create a strong economic environment that will benefit current residents and future generations who will call this place home.”**

#### Mission Statement

If the vision sets the direction for our community and its organizations, then the mission statement should clarify the purpose and function for our community and its organizations in relation to economic development. It is the filter that we use to ensure everything we do is focused on achieving the vision. The economic development mission for the La Plata Economic Development Alliance is the following:

**“Our mission is to create jobs through the retention, expansion, and recruitment of quality businesses.”**

### SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis

The starting point for a credible economic development strategic plan is an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the county. This is the baseline by which a community begins to understand where they are in relation to their vision. Once the SWOT analysis is completed, strategies for solutions can be identified. By working with the La Plata County community, and including input from Governor Hickenlooper's Bottom-Up Economic Development strategy, the following was identified:

#### Strengths

- La Plata County's quality of life (e.g. abundance of recreation, scenic beauty, educational system, Fort Lewis College, Southwest Colorado Community College, small-town living)
- Relatively low property taxes
- Scenic and vast public lands and resources
- Lifestyle - climate/weather, natural resources, sense of community, healthy and active lifestyle, livable communities, high degree of civic engagement
- Highly educated workforce
- Regional center - health facilities and hospital, strong base of goods/services, banking, arts/entertainment/culture
- Tourism assets
- Infrastructure- airport, water, transportation hub

### **Weaknesses**

- Reliance on oil and gas revenues
- Low paying jobs
- High housing costs
- Government inefficiencies- too many special districts and poor county planning processes
- Lack of telecommunications and broadband infrastructure in the outlying areas
- Identification of and cost of land for commercial, and business recruitment and/or expansion
- Improvement of workforce to meet business and community needs
- Proximity to markets and transportation of goods and services
- Economic leakage

### **Opportunities**

- Geographic proximity that serves as a regional “hub”
- Airport: 90% of market share, ease of access and affordability of access to other markets
- Broadband- extend throughout County
- Development of telecommuter businesses
- Widely diverse, well-educated population contributing to sustainability and growth of anchor businesses and institutions in the community (in areas such as education, health care, higher education, agriculture, etc.)
- Educational System- MA/MBA programs, continuing education
- Continuous stream of college graduates who would like to stay in the area
- Lifestyle- outdoors, availability of local wealth, entrepreneurial orientation, new Lake Nighthorse
- Abundant water supply for additional growth
- Health care - Mercy/Axis, abundance of alternative choices, regional medical industries, medical tourism, assisted living
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe/Growth Fund
- Economic Development Alliance- focus on pro-business environment and job creation
- Vital downtown in Durango
- Growing population

### **Threats**

- Decline of oil and gas development
- Funding cuts in higher education, transportation, public health and human service programs
- Aging population
- Natural Resource Management
- Drought and wildfires
- Hostile regulatory environment
- Volatility of business cycle
- Potential for urban sprawl to impact the natural environment and tourism
- Real estate market- second homes, continued high prices, etc
- Erosion of local control/state regulation
- Return to top-down state relationship
- Potential for lack of collaboration locally
- High energy costs making it more difficult to get products to market
- Ability to retain local businesses
- Loss of severance tax

## Key Economic Development Directions

### Goals, Action & Implementation

Ideally, the goals of a community should reflect its vision statement. A goal is a specific statement of what the community 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. Through utilizing the work done by the La Plata County Economic Development Action Partnership, and the new La Plata Economic Development Alliance, the following goals and actions have been established for La Plata County:

#### **Goal 1: Private sector job growth across a diversity of industries and job types.**

***Rationale – Having an adequate number of jobs for the residents of La Plata County is imperative to ensuring a high quality of life. Healthy job growth can also make it easier for people to relocate as it is more likely that they can find another job in the community if necessary, and that both spouses can obtain employment.***

#### **Strategies:**

1. Develop a business retention program.
2. Identify new locations for expansions.
3. Expand support to entrepreneurs and small businesses.
4. Develop a marketing campaign to define the County and promote the County's strengths.

#### **Actions:**

1. Create a retention team that can visit with local businesses regularly, using feedback to identify gaps and improve public and private business services.
2. Identify preferred companies for expansion and recruitment and provide extra resources toward those companies.
3. Develop data that will support retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts.
4. Continue and enhance support of local entrepreneurs, small businesses, and the self-employed.
5. Work with local governments and other organizations to identify and prepare new employment centers.
6. Re-establish rapid response team to respond to retention, relocation, and expansion opportunities.
7. Establish a lifestyle recruitment committee that will develop an active targeted solicitation effort aimed at business segments of the size, geographic location and type of business (lifestyle/outdoors) that has high potential for success, given the County's strengths and weaknesses.

#### **Goal 2: Increase wages to make the County a more attractive place to work.**

***Rationale – Higher real wages for employees are important as this makes living in the community more affordable. Higher wages are driven by business productivity and***

***profitability. Therefore, wages rise as workforce skills and technological innovation increase.***

**Strategies:**

1. Develop the talent pool that will demand and command higher wages.

**Actions:**

1. Develop a committee that reaches out to schools in order to increase business involvement with schools.
2. Establish a central point for all the resources and survey data for workforce development needs.
3. Identify the gaps between future jobs and emerging technologies and the types of companies that are being recruited or expanding, and the current workforce skills. Communicate this to the training and educational programs.
4. Develop a talent identification, recruitment and retention program that gets and keeps talented workers here in La Plata County.

**Goal 3: Make La Plata County an effective and efficient place to do business.**

***Rationale – One key to a healthy business environment is a reasonable regulatory process. This provides certainties in outcomes during the permit process and helps make it less costly to do business here.***

**Strategies:**

1. Reduce permitting time for commercial and industrial applications.
2. Expand information available to businesses.
3. Create a one-stop shop for business inquiries and permitting processes.

**Actions:**

1. Make the Economic Development Alliance the one-stop-shop to help businesses with expansion and relocation needs.
2. Develop a flow chart of the agencies and timeline required to permit a project in City, Townships, and County.
3. Investigate regular meetings with regulatory agencies to address questions that businesses might have.
4. Work with County and municipalities to reduce permitting time.
5. Provide more information on Alliance website regarding sites available and workforce characteristics.
6. Strengthen the collaborative and networking opportunities for local businesses.
7. Develop customized information packets that include site-specific information for businesses looking to expand or relocate.

**Goal 4: Expand public infrastructure, including broadband, to support and anticipate the needs of future growth.**

***Rationale –Businesses cannot grow without access to markets. Access to markets occurs through the internet and transportation such as the regional airport and highways. Just as importantly, businesses need locations in which they can grow, or else a lack of expansion space will force growing businesses to relocate elsewhere.***

**Strategies:**

1. Expand bandwidth available throughout County.
2. Increase access to high speed telecommunication capacity.
3. Enhance reliability of broadband service.
4. Improve airport for passenger air service.
5. Identify new locations for expansions.

**Actions:**

1. Develop partnership that will work to:
  - a. Provide fiber-based high bandwidth access in all communities in County and areas targeted for employment growth;
  - b. Provide high speed coverage in all rural areas;
2. Work to develop an east-west fiber network to complement the existing north-south network.
3. Establish a regional data center for “cloud”-based users and disaster recovery efforts.
4. Support airport efforts to attract new service and lower fares for passengers.
5. Work with local governments and other organizations to identify and prepare new employment centers.
6. Work with CDOT to upgrade roads, improve responsiveness to business expansion.
7. Create a more consistent and timely access planning and approval process.

**Goal 5: Reduce leakage of sales outside the County.**

***Rationale – Sales leakage are symptomatic of services sought either by residents or businesses that cannot be provided in the local community. This reduces sales taxes that could be collected in retail, and can also reduce the business services in a region that are needed for a healthy climate for economic growth.***

**Strategies:**

1. Work to bring retail and professional service firms that are typically sought outside the County.
2. Promote local purchases.

**Actions:**

1. Quantify amount of sales leakage that is occurring.
2. Identify the reasons that sales and business service leakage is occurring.
3. Support Chamber in its efforts to bolster “buy local” campaign.
4. Ensure adequate land is available for retail expansion.

**Implementation Plan**

Strategic planning is an on-going process. As the local economic development organization begins to work with other organizations, towns and county, it is clear that modifications and adjustments are necessary.

The ultimate success of any strategic plan depends on how well the organizations implement the various strategic actions. It is critical, therefore that a solid implementation plan be created to ensure the proper priorities are given to each task, and the suitable owners for each task are assigned. Only then will the vision begin to come to life.

For La Plata County, the La Plata Economic Development Alliance along with Region 9 is charged with ensuring the completion of the plan. This will be done by coordinating, participating and/or overseeing the various committees and organizations working in each of the key areas.

## BOTTOM UP – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



### “Bottom-Up” 2011 County Economic Development Summary Top Five Economic Development Goals & Strategies For La Plata County, Colorado

As part of Governor Hickenlooper’s Bottom Up Economic Development strategy, we are requesting that each county develop or update its economic development plan based on current input from local citizens, businesses and other interested stakeholders. The objective of the county plan is to identify **up to five** economic development goals and strategies of the county, utilizing information gathered from the online public survey, the public county meetings and comments, and the most current economic development plans in the county (town, city, or county). These county plans will be rolled up and incorporated into fourteen regional plans that together will assist in developing an overall statewide economic development plan.

Goal(s) <sup>i</sup>	#1 Private sector job growth across a diversity of industries and job types	#2 Increase wages to enhance affordability and make the County a more attractive place to work	#3 Make La Plata County an effective and efficient place to do business	#4 Expand public infrastructure, including broadband, to support and anticipate the needs of future growth	#5 Reduce leakage of sales outside of the County
Strategy(ies) <sup>ii</sup>	Develop a business retention program;  Identify new locations for expansions;  Expand support to entrepreneurs and small businesses;  Develop a targeted recruitment program.	Promote internship opportunities at the high school and collegiate level;  Increase school and business collaboration to improve workforce preparation and workforce development;  Expand support to entrepreneurs and small businesses;  Develop a targeted recruitment program including a focus on corporate headquarters.	Reduce permitting time for commercial and industrial applications;  Expand information available to businesses;  Create a one-stop shop for business inquiries and permitting processes.	Expand bandwidth available throughout County;  Increase access to high speed telecommunication capacity;  Enhance reliability of broadband service;  Improve airport for passenger air service;  Identify new locations for expansions.	Work to bring retail and professional service firms that are typically sought outside the County;  Promote local purchases.
Action(s) <sup>iii</sup>	<u>Retention:</u> Visit with local businesses regularly, using feedback to identify gaps and improve public and private business services;	Partner with regional schools and other interested private sector parties to develop internship, continuing education, and vocational	Work with County and municipalities to reduce permitting time;  Make the Economic Development Alliance the	<u>Broadband:</u> Develop partnership that will work to: Provide fiber-based high bandwidth access in all communities in County and	Quantify amount of sales leakage that is occurring;  Support Chamber in its efforts to bolster “buy local” campaign;

	<p>Research why firms left, failed, and/or chose not to locate here and attempt to address the issues raised;</p> <p>Continue and enhance support of local entrepreneurs, small businesses, and the self-employed;</p> <p><u>Expansion:</u> Work with local governments and other organizations to identify and prepare new employment centers;</p> <p><u>Recruitment:</u> Provide rapid response to relocation inquiries; Identify select businesses to market potential relocation, based on the fit of the business in La Plata County and the ability of these firms to diversify industry and job opportunities locally.</p>	<p>opportunities to better connect students with career opportunities locally;</p> <p>Continue and enhance support of local entrepreneurs, small businesses and the self-employed;</p> <p>Identify select businesses to market potential relocation, based on the fit of the business in La Plata County and the ability of these firms to diversify industry and job opportunities locally.</p>	<p>one-stop-shop to help businesses with expansion and relocation needs;</p> <p>Provide more information on Alliance website regarding sites available and basic workforce information;</p> <p>Strengthen collaborative and networking opportunities for local businesses;</p> <p>Develop customized information packets that include site-specific information for businesses looking to expand or relocate.</p>	<p>areas targeted for employment growth;</p> <p>Provide high speed coverage in all rural areas;</p> <p>Work to develop an east-west fiber network to complement the existing north-south network;</p> <p>Establish a regional data center for “cloud”-based users and disaster recovery efforts.</p> <p><u>Infrastructure:</u> Support airport efforts to attract new service and lower fares for passengers;</p> <p>Work with local governments and other organizations to identify and prepare new employment centers;</p> <p>Work with CDOT to upgrade roads, improve responsiveness to business expansion, and create a more consistent and timely access planning and approval process.</p>	<p>Ensure adequate land is available for retail expansion.</p>
<p><b>Expected Outcome(s), i.e., Measurable Results<sup>iv</sup></b></p>	<p>Private sector job growth that meets or exceeds population growth: likely 2,500 to 3,000 new private sector jobs (above 2008 levels); Keep County unemployment rate at 10% below state average.</p>	<p>Bring private sector wages to 90% of state average.</p>	<p>Reduce County permitting times for commercial applications by 50% by the end of 2012;</p> <p>Survey results that 60% or more of businesses believe they have the information they need to move or</p>	<p>Increase affordable bandwidth capacity to 10 megs or greater in all towns and growth areas;</p> <p>Ensure that 99% of residents have access to high speed telecommunication;</p>	<p>Reduce sales leakage by 25% by the end of 2015.</p>

			expand in County.	Bring ticket costs at airport to no more than 110% of national average.	
<b>Primary Partners<sup>v</sup></b>	Economic Development Alliance; Region 9; SBDC; Regional Chambers of Commerce; County and Municipal Staff (Planning, Public Works, etc)	Fort Lewis College; SWCCC; Regional school districts; Economic Development Alliance; Business community (including health care providers)	La Plata County; Durango, Bayfield, and Ignacio; Economic Development Alliance; Durango Area Association of Realtors; Region 9; SBDC; Growth Company Initiative; Private companies.	Federal Government; State of Colorado; Private internet service providers (eg- FastTrack, Brainstorm, etc); Durango (airport); Bayfield and Ignacio; Economic Development Alliance.	Durango Chamber of Commerce; Region 9; BID; Economic Development Alliance; Durango and La Plata County.
<b>Available Resources<sup>vi</sup></b>					
<b>Needed Resources &amp; identified issues or barriers<sup>vii</sup></b>					
<b>Timeline<sup>viii</sup></b>	End of 2015	End of 2015	End of 2012	Broadband- End of 2013 Airport- End of 2014	End of 2015

**A few more questions.... When completing this template, please provide a written response to these questions, as applicable**

**1. What current federal, state and local programs or initiatives hinder your local economic development efforts?**

CDOT's state level plan review is inconsistent and burdensome for businesses, federal Davis-Bacon requirements, environmental expenses associated with EIS, air quality issues that result in La Plata County bearing the burden of mitigation for pollution generated in other states, certain import tariffs (related to high tech, making US goods more expensive to export), grant distribution formulas that favor major urban metro areas, TABOR, Gallagher Amendment, measures state is using to balance budget (reducing local revenues and increasing mandated expenses to cities and counties), state formulas for distribution of CDBG and FHWA funding, local planning processes.

**2. What resources/actions do you need from the State of Colorado to assist your effort in implementing a county economic development plan?**

Provide county-level occupational statistics and projections from the Department of Labor and Employment (at the very least, provide them for micropolitan statistical areas and each Region in the state- eg Region 9), return more severance taxes to the source counties, maintain and/or increase funding to SBDC offices, increase incentives for manufacturing clean energy devices and renewable energy systems, better promotional efforts nationally and internationally for tourism, aggressively pursue opportunities for DARPA funding, make more reasonable standards for amending the State Constitution, create an economic response team that is led by professionals instead of political appointees.

### 3. Identify innovative economic development programs and partners in the county or region that can be replicated across the state?

Economic Development Alliance- public private collaboration that involves the County, Durango, Ignacio, and Bayfield as well as leading employers. Designed to create a one-stop shop for businesses, work with local governments on land use and permitting, and coordinate efforts between organizations related to economic development.

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<sup>i</sup>Goals are expressions of the desires of the community; a future condition or state that it's aiming for – a concise statement that articulates the desired future. For example:

“Update and expand marketing efforts for economic development in \_\_\_\_\_County”

<sup>ii</sup> Strategies provide direction and framework for how to go about achieving the goal. For example, “Craft and finance strong, ongoing major marketing promotions.”

<sup>iii</sup> Actions or implementation steps will carry out the strategy in a systematic way. For example, “Brand \_\_\_\_\_County and its communities through the use of an agreed-upon economic development logo and slogan” or

“Develop a focused marketing program which consists of email, social networks, and blogs to promote the county.”

<sup>iv</sup> Expected outcomes and measurable results should reflect a realistic feedback of how well the strategy is working. How do we know we're making progress? This includes building results into the action plans – relating back to the goal. For example, for marketing efforts, “Number of inquiries stating they saw our ad/website/news release/story, etc. etc.”

<sup>v</sup> Identify partners with something to contribute/gain from involvement in this effort – e.g. Chambers, trade associations, non-profits, etc. etc

<sup>vi</sup> Available resources can, and should, include more than funding. Students, volunteers, business sponsorships, strategic grants, can all be considered. Also, ways to leverage resources.

<sup>vii</sup> Needed resources should be based on gaps existing after all available resources have been considered. The more innovative, creative use of resources without requiring additional funding will be the most expeditious in the short run. Issues or barriers are items that need to be addressed in order to realize goal.

<sup>viii</sup> Timeline-some goals may be long-term. These may be broken down into intermediate steps with identified timelines for each action step. Short-term goals or specific projects may have a definite timeline. This is a way of keeping the process on track and reinvigorating efforts if a timeline slips, so that it doesn't get forgotten.