

# Crafting Strategic Solutions for Dynamic Times

Afternoon Breakout Session - La Plata Economic Development Summit - 9.21.21

**Objectives:** Introduce & explore a range of innovative techniques and collaborative problem solving frameworks for breakthrough thinking & planning.

## The Flip

**Problem:** There is a lack of affordable/ attainable housing in La Plata County. There is a housing crisis in La Plata County.

**Flipping the Problem into a Challenge Question:** “How might we create 600 more affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County in the next 3 years?”

### **Tips for Flipping the Problem into a Challenge Question:**

- Flips from a “Negative” to a “Positive Opposite”
- Begin with “How Might We ..”
- Cannot be answered by Yes or No
- Does not suggest a solution
- Contains no accusations or blame
- Contains no individual Interest

**Reframing problems as questions gets our minds working in creative ways.**

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Positive Opposite</u>	<u>Challenge Question</u>
Housing crisis in La Plata County <i>Yours below:</i>	More affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County	How might we create 600 more affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County in the next 3 years?

### **Group Norms:**

- No judgement of each other or of ideas
- Build on each other’s ideas to stretch thinking
- Include all ideas
- Go for quantity
- Go for wild hunches, as well as relying on past ideas to build upon
- Look for “aha” moments together!



## **Context of the Challenge**

The current population of La Plata County is 56,000. The cost of living index for housing is over twice the national average. (Google)

*Info below from the 9.16.21 Durango Telegraph article: “Priced Out” by Jamie Wanzek:*

“The median home prices of Durango in-town homes went from \$499,000 in 2020 to the current median of \$650,000, representing a 30% increase. Out in La Plata County, home sales increased 25%, from \$422,500 in 2020 to \$527,100 in 2021. Since July 2020, the housing inventory for single-family homes in the Durang areas has diminished 70% consistently every month. As it stands, it would take one month to sell the current inventory of homes in the Durango area, according to data from the Durango Area Association of Realtors.”

“According to a survey conducted by Local First at the beginning of the summer of 2021, 85 positions remained unfilled among 18 local restaurants.”

Root Policy Research’s regional housing study, and sponsored by Southwest Colorado Council of Governments and Housing Solutions for the Southwest. The initial key findings for La Plata County include:

- La Plata County needs an additional 570 rental and homeownership units by 2024 to meet workforce and seasonal demand, plus an additional 45 units for seasonal demand.
- In the past decade, new housing has favored occupancy by seasonal and vacation owners over workforce. About 80 percent of new households forming in the region since 2010 contained no workers.
- The distribution of households by income has shifted considerably since 2010. The county has 2,540 more households earning \$100,000 and greater—and 1,586 fewer households earning \$75,000 and less.
- The county has grown older (16% of the population is 65 years+ compared to 12% in 2010) and has lost families with children (900 fewer families with children live in the county now than in 2010) despite population growth.
- Median rent has increased by more than 20 percent since 2010—compared to just 5 percent for median renter income.
- The number and proportion of renters who are cost burdened—paying more than 30 percent of their household income in rent—has increased by 524.
- Owner cost burden, by contrast, has declined as higher income buyers, who can afford the county’s rising housing costs, have moved to the county.
- [SWCCOG Regional Housing Assessment Executive Summary August 2021.pdf](#)
- [SWCCOG Regional Housing Needs Assessment August 2021.pdf](#)

**A few Current Opportunities:** *From the 9.16.21 Durango Telegraph article: “Priced Out” by Jamie Wanzek:*

- Durango, Bayfield, Ignacio and La Plata County have joined forces to reactivate the Regional Housing Authority (RHA) to facilitate partnerships between local governments to have more access to affordable/ attainable housing funding
- La Plata County currently has access to \$11 million in COVID relief funds
- City of Durango has about \$4.7 million in COVID relief funds
- City of Durango is pursuing the Best Western hotel on Hwy 160 as an affordable housing solution
- The Town of Bayfield is developing 30 townhomes at Cinnamon Heights for mostly deed restricted housing (from the Durango Herald)

## **Group 1 & 5 - Visioning Success**

### **Breakthrough Thinking Challenge Question:**

**“How might we create 600 more affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County in the next 3 years?”**

You have 20 minutes to complete your task in answering the challenge question above. Have someone write on the flip chart while your table group brainstorms answers following the steps.

**Quote: “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.” - Antoine de St. Exupery**

- 1. Note the current situation on the previous page. Quickly volunteer for roles as a timekeeper, scribe, facilitator & reporter.**
- 2. Now considering the challenge, step into the future of our success 3 years from now and picture what success looks like. Have someone read aloud this visualisation while you close your eyes to more effectively imagine the success: (2 minutes)**

*It is now September 21, 2024. Two thousand affordable/ attainable housing units have been built in La Plata County. Our workforce and their families now have a variety of options for housing throughout Durango, Bayfield, Ignacio and the county. What are all of the options you can imagine? (PAUSE)*

*Visualize the people who now have stable housing in our community. Imagine that you walk up and talk with a few folks. What do they tell you the impact has been on them and their families? (PAUSE)*

*Now, due to the availability of attainable housing, Help Wanted signs have come down, as restaurants, service industry, and many businesses now have the workers they need to stay open and thriving. Consider, how have businesses been part of the solution? (PAUSE)*

*There have been tremendous collaborations and partnerships happening between organizations, local government, businesses, and the State. People are working together like never before to ensure affordable/ attainable housing in our community. What can you imagine that people are now doing together? (PAUSE)*

*What is most exciting to you about what you see happening? Suppose you had a magic wand and could have any three wishes granted on affordable/ attainable housing in the community? What would they be?*

*When you are ready, you can open your eyes and spend a few minutes jotting down on your scratch piece of paper the ideas and images that you envisioned.*

- 3. Individually - jot down your vision ideas on a scratch piece of paper. Star your 3 - 5 most compelling ideas. Everyone shares their starred ideas with the group. (3 minutes)**

Individual Brainstorm



4. **What does success look like in La Plata County? Reflect on the visualization; add other ideas.** Have someone from your group write these success ideas on the flip chart in the vision bubble. There can be a lot of random ideas within the bubble. (5 minutes)



5. **Now, brainstorm together How we got there** – list as many things you can think of that were done to create 600 affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County over the next 3 years. Someone from the group writes on the flip chart, or use sticky notes. (7 minutes)



6. **Circle a few highlights on your group's flipchart,** that you want to draw attention to during the Gallery Walk.



7. **If you have extra time, discuss the quote:** “If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.” - Antoine de St. Exupery

## Groups 2 & 6: Challenging Assumptions

### Breakthrough Thinking Challenge Question:

**“How might we create 600 more affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County in the next 3 years?”**

You have 20 minutes to complete your task in answering the challenge question above. Have someone write on the flip chart while your table group brainstorms answers following the steps below.

**Quote: “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” - Marcel Proust**

### Challenging Assumptions (*Exploring*)

1. **Quickly volunteer for roles as a timekeeper, scribe, facilitator & reporter.**
2. **What assumptions or current beliefs do we have to let go of in order to create 600 more affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County in the next 3 years? (List at least 10) (5 minutes)**  
*Ex: Durango will become the next Crested Butte or Vail. Lack of affordability is inevitable in small mountain towns.*
3. **Look through the postcards** that have been provided to your table. Everyone picks one postcard that exemplifies something our community will need in order to succeed in our task of creating more affordable/ attainable housing. Everyone shares their image and what it means to them with the group. **Draw one image** on your flipchart. (5 minutes)
4. **What are the important assumptions and beliefs we have to adopt to meet the challenge?** Build off of the ideas generated with the postcard activity. **(List at least 10)** (5 minutes)  
*Ex: Our community is capable of finding solutions to this difficult and complex challenge.*  
*Ex: Planning can be streamlined and improved with stakeholder input.*
5. **Circle a few highlights on your group’s flipchart**, that you want to draw attention to during the Gallery Walk.
6. **If you have extra time, discuss the quote:** “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” - Marcel Proust



## Groups 3 & 7: Crafting Strategic Actions

### Breakthrough Thinking Challenge Question:

**“How might we create 600 more affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County in the next 3 years?”**

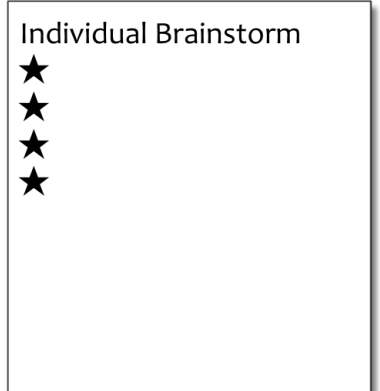
You have 20 minutes to complete your task in answering the challenge question above. Have someone write on the flip chart while your table group brainstorms answers following the steps below:

**Quote: “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” - Albert Einstein.**

1. Quickly volunteer for roles a timekeeper, scribe, facilitator & reporter.
2. Develop a Force Field Analysis – what will help us and what will hold us back from achieving our goal?



3. What specific and strategic actions could we take over the next three years that would minimize the forces holding us back and/or build momentum with the forces that can help us? **Conduct a rapid individual brainstorm on strategic actions.** See who can come up with the most ideas in 4 minutes. Come up with both wild and practical ideas. Everyone writes on scratch pieces of paper. (4 minutes)
4. When time is up, everyone **star their 3 most innovative strategic actions, and share them with the group.** Write these in big, bold lettering on sticky notes and place them on your flip chart. (1 minute)



5. **Circle 3-5 important strategic actions on your group’s flipchart,** that you want to draw attention to during the Gallery Walk.
6. **If you have extra time, discuss the quote:** “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” - Albert Einstein.



## Groups 4 & 8: Prototypes: Building Models

### Breakthrough Thinking Challenge Question:

**“How might we create 600 more affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County in the next 3 years?”**

You have 20 minutes to complete your task in answering the challenge question. Have someone write/draw on the flip chart while your table group brainstorms answers following the steps below.

**Quote: “What we need to envision the future... stop thinking about the present and saying: “Let's put a Band-Aid here.” - Bill Vaughn**

1. Envision: In 3 years, La Plata County has been identified as one of the Best and most Accessible places to live in the US. Describe our accessible housing situation. What did we do to make it happen? **Have one person rapidly record solution ideas on the flip chart,** whatever solution ideas are offered. Build upon each other's ideas. (7 minutes)

Creative Brainstorm
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2. **Choose one or two ideas** representing what we can do to create 600 more affordable/ attainable housing units in La Plata County and **as a team develop a 3-dimensional model** of success using the bag of materials you have been given. (10 minutes)

- Prototype Supplies: solo cups, playdough, pipe cleaners, magazines, scissors, sticky notes, paperclips, string, colorful paper, toothpicks



3. **Write a short description** on your flipchart of what your prototype is all about, that others can read during the Gallery Walk. (3 minutes)
4. **If you have extra time, discuss the quote:** “What we need to envision the future... stop thinking about the present and saying: “Let's put a Band-Aid here.” - Bill Vaughn



## **Workshop Debrief**

- What is the benefit of having varied approaches to creating a solution?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Thinking back over this afternoon's workshop, what stands out for you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How might you apply some of the tools learned in your own work?

***Thank you so much for joining our workshop today!***

*Resources adapted from:*  
*Breakthrough Thinking workshop by Ann Epps*  
*Technology of Participation: Facilitation for Innovation course <https://top-training.net/>*  
*Rocky Mountain Center for Positive Change: Results through Relationships workshop*