

## Chapter 1: PLANNING PROCESS

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### **Recent Events**

In response to anticipated population growth, potential economic changes, and to plan for the future needs and interests of community members, the Dolores County Commissioners reinstated the Dolores County Planning Commission, appointing five regular and three associate members on March 6, 1995. The newly appointed planning commission was charged with two primary long range planning tasks: to review and update as necessary the subdivision regulations which govern land use in Dolores County, and to develop a comprehensive master plan to guide future development of the county.

Initial meetings were held between the Planning Commission and staff of the Office of Community Services in order to provide guidance on the general role and process of community planning, and on data and information needed to establish a master plan. Opportunities were developed for citizens to become involved in setting general goals for the plan for supporting the objectives and implementation of the plan.

A survey was designed for utilization during the Pick and Hoe July Fourth Celebration in Dove Creek in 1995. The purpose of the survey was to determine community support for establishing a planning process and guidelines for future development in Dolores County. Seventy-two persons completed the survey. Some of the findings of this survey are as follows:

- Seventy-nine percent of the survey respondents had lived in Dolores County over 10 years.
- Seventy-four percent of the respondents favored some form of planning to guide growth in Dolores County.
- Many respondents believed maintaining a rural quality of life, and dealing with crime, drugs, alcohol and economic problems are serious issues facing the county.
- Eighty-three percent of the respondents believed an effort should be made to preserve agricultural lands.

- Of the 72 respondents, 17 persons believed the population of Dolores County should grow to 1,700 over the next 10 years. Another 34 persons selected future populations between 1,900 and 2,500. An average growth of 100 persons per very over the next ten years would result in a population in the year of 2006 of 2,500.

(The county's current population is about 1,500 persons.)

Other public responses from the July 4, 1995 survey will be utilized throughout this master plan in appropriate locations.

The Planning Commission continued to work throughout the summer of 1995, further learning more about its role, reviewing the types of land subdivisions being proposed and existing subdivision regulations and processes, and beginning to gather information and resources needed to develop a comprehensive master plan.

On September 7, 1995, a public meeting was held in Rico to obtain citizens' ideas about the county planning process and to coordinate with the master planning then being conducted by the Town of Rico. A number of important values and perspectives were gathered which will be included in the data, policies, and guidelines of this plan, incorporated in the relevant sections below. In general, there was a desire for greater rapport and improved collaborative planning between the Town of Rico and Dolores County.

Rico has recently completed its master plan, and is working on improving water treatment capacity. There is a considerable concern about growth among Rico residents.

Opportunities were identified for Dolores County to collaborate with Rico on protecting the town's physical gateways at the towns limits, protecting wildlife and scenic resources, preserving the Dolores River corridor, and coordinating on such regional needs as emergency medical services and public land resource management.

During the fall and winter months of 1995-1996, the Dolores County Planning Commission worked on developing the necessary professional and technical resources to

prepare a master plan and a county land use code. Financial resources were obtained from the State of Colorado's Department of Local Affairs, through the Energy Impact Assistance Fund, to hire a consultant to prepare a land use code, with the Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College providing matching staff resources which are being used for the public involvement and master plan preparation phases of the planning process. An arrangement has been made with Montezuma County to have their planning and mapping staff advise the Dolores County Planning Commission about a series of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps for use in preparing the master plan.

On February 12, 1996, a public meeting was held in Dove Creek to obtain the views, values, and goals of persons living in the west end of Dolores County. There was general support for a plan that would put priority on: maintaining the rural character and way of life of the county: maintaining and improving its agricultural economy: and sustaining the safety, security, and identity of the community. In addition, increased community responsibility and pride were desired, rather than greatly expanding the regulatory role of government.

Other values and goals derived from the Dove Creek meeting will be integrated into the policy statements throughout the following chapters of this plan. The Dolores County Planning Commission continued to conduct working sessions throughout 1996, reviewing the master plan and land use code drafts prepared by the Office of Community Services, and Erin Johnson, the land use planning consultant from Cortez.

## **Role of the Planning Commission**

It is the general role of the Dolores County Planning Commission:

- To advise and make recommendations to the Dolores County Board of Commissioners with regard to long range planning processes;
- To assist in the development of a master plan;
- To conduct public hearings on proposed subdivision of land and other developments;
- To review development proposals for conformity to the master plan and land uses code; and
- Then to make recommendations to the board of commissioners for the approval, adoption, or disapproval of planning and land use actions.

In these various responsibilities the County Planning Commission is advisory to the County Commission, serving in a more technical and research role to reflect planning needs and issues within the county, and to recommend possible actions, utilizing the assistance of professional staff and consultants as needed to accomplish these duties. The Dolores County Planning Commission serves as vital and important role to communicate with the public, to reflect the values and concerns of the community, and to protect and sustain all critical natural, social, economic, and aesthetic resources of the county for the long term benefits of the citizens.

## **Roles of the Comprehensive Master Plan**

Each County, government in Colorado has been authorized by the Colorado Legislature (CRS 30-28-101, et seq.) to adopt a county master plan. Master plans serve a number of interrelated purposes. Most importantly, a county master plan describes the future of the community desired by the people who live there. It establishes a set of policy goals that will enable the community through its elected officials and staff to achieve its desired future. It also establishes a descriptive information base, and related analysis that lead to the adoption of certain implementation tools, ordinances, regulations and procedures, that will enable the community and its representatives to achieve its desired goals.

In fundamental terms the master plan asks “what sort of community do we want to be?”. In order to properly answer this question, the plan contains information about the economic and social history of the county. It looks at recent trends and current conditions and basically asks, “how are we changing as a community?”, further identifying, where possible, the causes of those changes.

The Dolores County Master Plan inventories the concerns and issues, as well as the important physical, social, economic, and governmental resources of the county. That is, it identifies the problems being faced by the community, along with the critical resources available or need to solve them.

The master plan essentially lays out a strategy to build and sustain the sort of community desired by the citizens, to make it as healthy, efficient, strong, and sustainable as possible. It proposes both policies and actions that will protect the character, well-being, and common good of the community in the most appropriate and acceptable ways possible. It gives guidance through policies and goals and recommends actions to accomplish them.

The Dolores County Master Plan establishes a picture of “who we are as a community,” and “where we want and ought to be going.” With appropriate community support, it will encourage and coordinate the level of collaborative, mutual action needed to achieve the county’s desired future. It will promote the kind of development which is appropriate for the county. It will guide current and future development in the most efficient, safe, and compatible ways and determined by community members, leaders, and elected officials.

## CHAPTER II. COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND HISTORIC TRENDS

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### **Pre-History and First Contacts**

The role of the physical environment has been prominent in the lives of county residents from the earliest time until today. Dolores County's geography and physical environment have influenced the activities of explorers, visitors, and residents alike.

The earliest inhabitants, nomadic Paleo-Indians, date from 10,000 years ago or earlier. The Desert Culture Indians who appear unrelated to their predecessors came next. The San Juan Anasazi occupied this area from approximately 1 AD to 1300 AD. They disappeared late in the 1200's, leaving evidence of communities and skills that rivaled the contemporaries of Europe. Prior to European contacts in the 1600's, tribes, such as the Utes, Paiutes, Navajos, and Apaches, made this area their home. When the Spaniards first explored this area, this was a portion of the hunting grounds of the Weeminuche Utes. (See references listed at the end of this chapter from which historical references made here are taken.)

Spanish explorers and American, French Canadian, and New Mexican fur trappers marked the seventeenth and early eighteen centuries. The fur trappers carried tales of the region's mineral wealth back to trading posts in Sante Fe. Trappers from the St. Louis Fur Company left St. Louis in 1831, working west from the headwaters of the San Juan River. They spent the summer of 1833 along the valley of the Dolores River.

The mid eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries experienced further Spanish exploration with the Rivera Expedition, dating from 1761-1765. In 1776, the Dominguez-Escalante Expedition crossed through the county seeking a route from Santa Fe to the settlement era missions in California. Known as the Old Spanish Trail, this route eventually carried many fortune hunters and cowboys to this rich area. Still somewhat isolated until after the

Mexican War in 1848 when America annexed these lands, this once bypassed area began to experience an in-migration.

## **Mining and the Settlement of Rico**

Fortune hunters and miners provide the next steps in the settlement of Dolores County. The Pioneer Mine claim was made in 1869, and the first permanent dwelling, a log cabin, was built in the Rico area. A major turning point occurred in 1878, when the Atlantic Cable, Grand View, Phoenix, and Yellow Jacked mining claims were filed. With the discovery of lead carbonate deposits on Nigger Baby Hill, the Silver Rush was on. Rico went from a settlement to a town overnight. Named Rico, Spanish for riches, the town was incorporated October 11, 1879. Rico's population reached 1,200 by 1880. By 1891, the town boasted that 3,000 men worked underground. Mining remained the focal point of the Rico economy throughout the 1880s and 1890s.

Initially there were three routes into the area which were from Lake City, a thriving mining town, via Ouray, Ophir Pass, and Trout Lake; over the Bear Creek trail to a point 14 miles downstream from Rico; and via a trail from Animas City, Rockwood, and Hermosa Park over Scotch Creek to Rico. ("Mining News," Charles Engel, The Dolores Star, December 6, 1974.)

Increasingly there was a need for more and better transportation. The transportation of goods and machinery, as well as ores, was treacherous at best. On September 2, 1880, the roll road from Dolores reached Rico. Another milestone in the development of transportation, and the area with it, was the completion of Otto Mears' Rio Grande Southern narrow gauge railroad. The first train arrived in Rico on September 30, 1891, from Durango on its way to Ridgway. Prior to the railroad, it was not economically feasible to ship any but the richest ores. With the cheaper transportation, ore shipments by rail from Rico greatly increased.

After the silver panic in 1893, only seven mines were left in operation. Population plummeted from nearly 10,000 to 150. Mining remained depressed until the years of World War 1 when once again the mines were worked actively.

On February 10, 1881, the new County of Dolores was created from a part of Ouray County. Rico was voted the county seat.

## **Farming and Ranching—The Founding of Dove Creek**

A new chapter in the history of Dolores County began around 1890. Timber, farming, and ranching developed to provide support to the mining activities and towns. In 1905, the United States Forest Service was established to preserve and manage the national forests. At this time the San Juan National Forest was established, creating a presence that would be felt up to contemporary times. Cattlemen brought their herds over the Old Spanish Trail to provide meat to the growing mining communities. The lush grasses of the open range in the western part of the county attracted cattlemen. In the 1870's grass was "bell deep" to a horse. By 1910 the range was overgrazed and heavily impacted by drought. Sage and other shrubs replaced the native grasses. Sheep were a major factor in bringing in the sage.

When the sage was in bloom, one could stand on a hillside and look as far as the eye would carry and see nothing but huge sage brush. Just at sundown or in the early morning hours, there was a mist about six inches above the sage. It would move in ripples, until the whole country took on a look of a soft purple silk curtain, stretched over the sage brush, waving in the air. ("The Land of Purple Sage," by Keona McAlroy, an unpublished paper p.1.)

Although, the Dominguez-Escalante Expedition had many years before traveled through the Dove Creek area, and it was later traversed by cowboys herding their cattle, the first settlement did not reach the western part of the county approximately 1910-1912, when a general store and post office were built at Dove Creek.

Dove Creek in the very early days was the round up center for the great cattle herds. It became the overnight resting place on the three-day trip for loaded wagons traveling from Dolores to Monticello, Utah. Dove Creek later became a center for incoming homesteaders when the land was opened to homesteading in 1914. Most homesteaders arrived in the area between 1914 and 1919, selecting lands suitable for agriculture. The farming communities

and towns of Dove Creek (1918), Cahone (1912), Northdale (1922), and others sprung up. By 1940, Dove Creek had 400 residents.

Farming and ranching expanded as people moved in to escape the “dust bowl,” in the early 1930s. Farmers arrived in the Dove Creek country from Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Texas.

After World War II, as more powerful farm machinery was built, local farmers were able to enlarge their fields. Snowfall averaging 48” and rainfall averaging 13” provided enough moisture for dry land farming. Crops of winter wheat and beans replaced the sage, pinion, and juniper. However, when the Conservation Reserved Program was created in the 1980s to reverse unfavorable agricultural economics, significant amounts of cultivated lands were planted into grass again.

## Timbering

Timber from the forest lands in the central and eastern portions of the county also played a significant role in economic and settlement. In 1879, the McJunkin Mill was established three miles above Rico. In the summer of 1882, the Bemis Sawmill was set up about one half mile west of Rico, in an area that is still called Bemis Flats. In 1926 J.W. Wilson started a sawmill six miles above Rico, producing mine props and lumber for the Rico area.

The first sawmill west of Dolores River was owned by Ed Baird and (?) Travis. It was located near the Dolores River Outlook. Baird build a reservoir farther south, which is still referred to as Baird Reservoir. He moved the mill closer to the reservoir after buying Travis out.

Travis subsequently started another mill at the south end of the North Pines. When Travis died, Baird took over the mill, and moved his own mill to the same site (as per tape recordings with Ed Baird Jr., Dolores County Historical Society).

Since there was little market for timber in the local area around Dove Creek until the 1930's when population began to increase, lumber was hauled to Cortez, Dolores, Monticello, and other towns even as far away as Gallup, where bricks were brought back on the return load.

Day Knuckles also came in and bought in the south end of the North Pines, eventually moving his mill to the Disappointment Valley area, north into San Miguel County.

Dolores County's tie to the forest lands that are a significant part of its land base began during the early phase of settlement and resource development, and continue today over a hundred years later.

## Uranium and Oil

In 1938 a vanadium mill was built at Slick Rock, just north of Dove Creek. For a period of time, Colorado produced 60% of the world's supply. Western Dolores County's population boomed once again, growing with the increase in mining activity. With the ending of World War II, the U.S. Atomic Commission was created to stimulate and regulate uses of atomic power. From 1955 to 1965, the uranium market remained fairly steady. By 1978-79 fear of atomic power plants and loss of markets for uranium caused a drop in the price of uranium, resulting in operations closing and dozens of employees being laid off.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Aneth oil field in Southeastern Utah was discovered and developed; however, this had very little impact on the local economy. Rich with petroleum resources, Squaw Point was annexed into the southwest corner of Dolores County in the early seventies after Pribble #1 was developed on May 11, 1970 by Cherokee Pittsburgh Coal and Mining Co. Oil and gas revenues have accounted for 20-30% of the county and valorem tax receipts over recent years. See Table A.

**Table A  
Oil and Gas Revenues**

Year	Total Assessed Value	Oil & Gas %
1990	15,851,330	17%
1991	17,133,600	22%
1992		
1993		
1994	21,949,942	36%
1995	22,387,229	30%

During the 1960s and 1970s the energy boom collapsed. By the 1980's, mining of hard rock minerals and metals was practically nonexistent in the Rico area. In the 1980's, the Shell Oil Company CO2 field was developed in Western Montezuma and Dolores Counties. As a result of the decline in the oil field and the closing of the uranium mines in San Miguel, Dolores County lost 9% of its population, going from 1,658 in 1980 to 1,504 in 1990. Eighty-one uranium workers living in Dove Creek were laid off.

There was modest growth in tourism during the 1960s and 1970s. People began moving into the area seeking quality of life and new economic opportunities in the growing "service economy." The population of Dolores County was steady over this period at approximately 1,650 people.

In the mid-1980's McPhee Reservoir was constructed resulting in the availability of 35,000 acres of irrigated land and firm water sources for local towns and rural water companies. Dolores County's allotment of irrigable acres was 7,500.

Dolores County's history since early settlement has revolved around a natural resource economy which has created a deep attachment to the land and its diverse attributes and wealth.

*(The historical materials have been taken from the following publications and sources: Frontier in Transition, Golden Treasures of the San Juan, Colorado Agricultural Statistics 1994, A Statistical Profile of the Four Corners Region, Southwest Colorado Region 9 Economic Development Plan, Crises in the West End, A Historical Touring Guide to the San Juan Skyway, Understanding Rural Americas, Jingle of Spurs and Tramp of Boots, and Dove Creek Chamber of Commerce Publication. History of Dolores County by Jack Kisling, Editor and Publisher, the Dove Creek Press, and information compiled by Audrey Garchar, Dolores County Historian, taken in part from a book entitled, Rico, A Brief History by J. Fleming and Inez Town of Rico.)*

## CHAPTER III. CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

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The historic challenges of physical isolation, archaeological riches, mining, agriculture, ranching, farming, and transportation remain the opportunities of today. This legacy developed an individualistic, hard working people, with a culture and character unique to physical resources and landscape of this place. with proper planning and wise development, this legacy can be sustained. Keeping these traditions in mind, the Planning Commission is looking to the future as it seeks to achieve a plan to meet the community's needs.

### Population Trends

The population of Dolores County as a whole was stable during the 1970s, and began losing about 1% per year during the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

**Table B**  
**Population Trends by Decade in Dolores County 1940-1990**  
**Percentage of Change 1970-1990**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>1940</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>%70-80</b>	<b>1990*</b>	<b>%80-90</b>
Dolores County	1,958	1,966	2,196	1,641	1,658	1%	1,504	-9%
Dove Creek				619	826	33%	643	-22%
Rico				275	76	-262%	92	21%
Unincorporated				747	756	1%	769	2%

\*1990 Census figure from count in year 1980.<sup>1</sup>

The Town of Dove Creek grew by an average of 3.3% per year during the 1970s and declined by an average 2.2% per year during the 1980s, leaving the population in 1990 slightly above its 1970 level. Rico experienced a major population decline between 1970 and 1980 as a result of mine closures, while population in the unincorporated areas of the county remained stable. Over the fifty year period from 1940 to 1990, the county lost a total population of 454 persons, or a decline of 23.2%

While population continued to fall into 1992 due to reductions in employment, the projections below show modest population gains between 1992 and 1995, based on the Assumption of growth from more intensive irrigated farming under the Dolores Project and opportunities from new municipal/industrial water, coupled with some amount of growth due to in-migration of new residents. A noticeable upturn in population began in 1992.

**TABLE C**  
**Dolores County Population Census, Estimates, Projections**  
**With Growth Rate Comparisons 1990-2000**

PERIOD	1990	1992	1992-95	95-2000
Population	1,504	1,295	1,374	1,512
% Change from Previous Period		<b>-6.4%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>

Although in recent decades population and community activities have declined considerably for economic reasons, Dolores County now appears to be on the first step of a new era of change. The older eras were strongly tied to extracting natural resources from the land—especially timber, hard metals, and uranium mining. Today, there is a greater tendency to focus on sustaining the historic patterns of ranching and farming, and retaining the timber industry, while insuring the health and well being of the physical environment.

## **School Enrollments**

The Dove Creek school population is derived from students in Dove Creek, Cahone, Egnar in San Miguel County, and three or four families from Utah. Student counts have varied

largely dependent on the availability of employment in the area. The elementary and high schools are located in Dove Creek and the middle school is located at Egnar, Enrollment increases have mostly occurred in the elementary grades. There were 23 graduated in the 1995-96 high school senior class.

Most significantly, from the 95-96 school year to the 96-97 year, full time enrollment grew by 45 students to 353, or a one year increase of nearly 14%. From 1990 to 1996 there has been a 24% increase, the largest percentage being in the past year. Due to large class size, kindergarten and eighth grade classes were split, requiring the hiring of emergency staff in the 1996-97 school year.

**Table D  
Dove Creek/ Egnar Enrollment Growth 1990-1995**

<b>Enrollments*</b>	<b>1990-91</b>	<b>1991-92</b>	<b>1992-93</b>	<b>1993-94</b>	<b>1994-95</b>	<b>1995-96</b>	<b>#Change 1990-95</b>	<b>%Change 1990-95</b>
<b>Grades K-12</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>+9.27%</b>

\*Enrollment numbers count Kindergarten students as whole numbers rather than 1/2 numbers.

Students from Rico attend school in Dolores and Telluride, Colorado. Enrollment of Rico students in Dolores Colorado in 1996-97 is 18.

**Table E  
Dolores County (Rico) children attending school in  
The Town of Dolores, Montezuma County**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>#OF STUDENTS</b>	<b>%</b>
1994	15	2%
1995	14	2%
1996 (current)	18	3%

## **Housing**

From 1980 to 1990, the number of total housing units increased modestly from 912 units to 947, or a 3.38% increase. Of the 947 units surveyed in the 1990 Census, 116 of them were rental units, 465 were owner occupied, and 366 units were vacant. See table F, showing vacancy reasons.

**Table F**  
**1990 Vacancy Causes**

<b>For Rent</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>For Sale Only</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Seasonal, Recreation, Occasional Use</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>All Other Vacancies</b>	<b>73</b>

## Land Subdivision

Real estate activity has increased significantly in Dolores County over the past several years, 1990-1996.

**Table G**

<b>Year</b>	<b># of Subdivisions</b>	<b># of Lots</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>3 (all in Rico)</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1995</b>	<b>1 (Rico)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1996</b>	<b>7 (2 in Rico, 1 near Rico, 2 west of the river) 2 more waiting approval</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>165</b>

*Pat Huskey, County Assessor – Data obtained 10/18/96*

These figures illustrate a significant increase in the creation of new lots in the western end of Dolores County. Projecting two persons per lot, 165 lots, would produce a population increase of 330 persons, or 21.8 percent.

Further it was reported that the county transferred 221 deeds in 1991, and 339 in 1994, indicating about a 53% increase in the title transactions.

Similarly, lots created by variance have increased between 1994 and 1996.

**Table H  
Variances 1994-1996**

<b>Year</b>	<b># of Variances</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1995</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1996 to date</b>	<b>22</b>

There has been about a five fold increase in variance development. How many lots were created by each variance is somewhat unclear, but we can assume at least one per variance.

Beside increases in population, school enrollment, real estate transactions, and subdivision of lands, a significant measure of growth is the number of septic permits issued.

**Table I  
Trend in Septic Permits Issued**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b># OF SEPTIC PERMITS</b>
<b>1980-1989</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1991</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1992</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1993</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1995</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1996</b>	<b>23</b>

Over the ten year period from 1980 through 1989 septic permits averaged six per year, declining in the early 90's to three per year. In 1994, the year most people sense growth began to significantly increase, they jumped noticeably. Finally, in the following two years, 1995 and 1996, they increased again, practically doubling the 1994 rate. Some

caution is necessary in interpreting this data, since the county has just recently employed an inspector who is requiring septic permits to be formally issued.

Taking a somewhat longer view, the rate from 1994 to 1996 is about 19 permits per year, as compared with 1980-89 when it was six per year. This is over a 300% increase in the issuance of septic permits in the county ( $19 \div 6 = 316\%$ ).

School enrollment increases in the two most recent years, along with the rate of septic permits formally issued are rather dramatic evidence of the growth already occurring in Dolores County. The increased subdivision of land in recent years provides a projection of significant future growth in the next five years.

## **Chapter IV. COMMUNITY VALUES AND DESIRES**

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As has been briefly described in the previous chapter, Dolores County has experienced many economic and social transitions. During the early decades of settlement, from the 1860s through the 1890s, mining created a series of boom and bust cycles. In the 1930s and 1940s, timbering and farming sustained economic activity along with uranium employment and oil production. Similar economic patterns continued into the 1970s with a gradual decrease in resource activity. In the 1980s the carbon dioxide field construction, and the development of the Dolores Project by the US Bureau of Reclamation to store and deliver water from the Dolores River took the place of uranium employment.

As Dolores County faces the future in the mid-nineties and looks ahead to the next century, it will address yet another set of challenges and possible transitions. It will do so based on a set of community traditions, beliefs, and values to sustain it, which most, if not all, residents believe are important. It is these long standing values and beliefs that identify and define the communities and residents of Dolores County and will likely guide it for the foreseeable future:

### **Community Values**

- People who live in Dolores County have a sense of connection to the community, a sense of belonging to this place. There is a sense of warmth among people who live in the county, based on a feeling of belonging and pride.
- Residents believe that Dove Creek, Rico, and the rural areas of Dolores County are nice places to live, and take pride in the quality of the communities and strengths of the people who live there.
- The communities have a sense of neighborliness, where people take care of each other, where they know each other by name and therefore feel safe.

- There is a desire to retain the friendly, quiet, peaceful atmosphere, where people respect each other, where there is control within small towns, and a slower pace of life.
- There is also a desire to retain a balanced community identity, not becoming merely a retirement or tourist community, or any other singularly-oriented type of community.

## **Connections to the Land**

The western end of Dolores County has always been based on agriculture, and there is a desire for this heritage to be sustained.

The central and eastern portions of the county have developed from their linkages to public lands. Maintaining these ties and sustaining the health of public lands is important to the future of all citizens of Dolores County.

Citizens in the western end of the county want to preserve viable farmland for future generations, and correspondingly maintain the equity which families have created in their land as a future safety net.

Citizens in the Rico areas are particularly invested in protecting the Dolores River corridor, its qualities, and scenic attributes.

## **Qualities of the Physical Environment**

The physical landscape, clean water and air, rural vistas and scenery are important to the residents of Dolores County. People want to preserve clean air and water, protect the Dolores River from sewage pollution, and preserve its scenic beauty.

People value seeing wildlife and wish to sustain wildlife habitat and access to public lands for fishing and hunting. There is a desire to maintain open space through low density development in rural areas, thus being able to conserve wildlife migration corridors, natural water ways, and vistas.

## **Economic Values**

Given the differences in the economies of the west and east ends of Dolores County, there are natural differences in the values and orientations which people find important. The west end is more agricultural, and there is not as much concern about increasing tourism and outdoor recreation.

On the eastern side of Dolores County, there are more opportunities for seasonal, mountain residencies. There is also a natural linkage to tourism and related developments in Telluride and along the Dolores River Corridor. However, there is a desire to manage these forms of development in a manner which fits the size and heritage of the community and protects the quality environment of Rico.

Small, owner operated and self employed businesses are predominant in the Dolores County economy. There is a desire that these businesses be sustained in agricultural, retail, construction, and other sectors. People believe that economic growth can best occur by building on the strengths of the economy—on the county's natural resources, agriculture, public lands, and recreational and scenic attributes.

## **Growth and the Future**

There are strong values placed on the heritage and traditions of Dolores County, whether they are the small town values, agriculture, open lands, or personal freedoms. People are generally wary of rapid growth or any form of growth that changes the basic character of the communities.

There is a realization that some growth is needed to sustain and improve the quality of the communities, to retain the local schools, to maintain health services, and to continue the support needed for community centers, volunteer fire departments, the 4H Club, and other community service organizations. People believe that growth needs to be guided so that the communal, environmental, economic, and land-oriented values described above can be protected. Growth should be moderate and steady so that rural integrity, quality of life and personal freedoms can be maintained.

Dolores County residents do not want to promote too much growth as signified by a lot of urban-oriented in-migration. They want planning to guide growth by sustaining the values outlined above, by recognizing the rural character of the communities, by keeping the communities balanced and safe, by addressing road safety, by coordinating county planning with the incorporated areas of Rico and Dove Creek to protect their resources, and by encouraging growth within or close to towns. While citizens want the county to plan for the future in ways that preserve the values and qualities of the community, they also want to protect private property rights and avoid creating an overly intrusive planning process.

In essence the citizens of Dolores County desire a future based on the best heritage and traditions of the past. They do not want tourism and outdoor recreation to overwhelm the rural, small town and agricultural character of the community. They do not want the subdivision of land to overwhelm the public and governmental services of the county and schools. Rather, they desire a process of social and economic transition that fits the way of life, community values, economies, and sense of place and belonging that is the essence of the quality of life in Dolores County. These values and desires can be summarized into the following planning themes which provide a guiding framework for the development of goals for the Dolores County Master Plan.

- A sustainable, moderate rate of growth should occur, but it should not be so great as to overwhelm the community. It should be slow, steady, and controlled so that communities can sustain their identities

- Natural resources including, air, water, and rural views are important and should be protected for the general good of the county.
- The unique differences in the three areas of Dolores County, the west end or Dove Creek, the east end or Rico, and the public lands in the central and western areas, must be recognized.
- Individual and community responsibility needs to be sustained and increased as much as possible.
- The role of government should be kept as moderate as possible while protecting the public resources and improving the common well being of the county.
- Rural lifestyles and integrity of communities should be safeguarded and sustained.
- Future land use patterns should sustain a rural quality of life, with special recognition of unique community histories, traditions, and values.
- Public lands should be preserved while remaining open for a diversity of social purposes and human activities.
- County and municipal governments should work closely together in a collaborative manner to achieve objectives that potentially affect each other.
- Wildlife habitat, natural river corridors, and watersheds should be sustained and improved.
- Human services, including health, education, and recreation, should be available, accessible, and affordable to a diverse range of community members.
- Public services should be provided in a safe, efficient, and affordable manner by governments and community agencies,
- Governments should play an appropriate role in insuring the well being of the citizen's of Dolores County, while encouraging individual, social, and communal responsibility for the good of the citizens and the society.

## Chapter V. PLANNING GOALS

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### Master Plan Goals

The following goals which will serve as the essential framework for the Dolores County Master Plan. They are strongly based on the values, desires, and themes described in the previous chapter.

- The County will seek and will guide *a moderate and steady rate of growth*;
- The County will seek *to preserve its rural traditions, integrity, and lifestyles*.
- The County will work *to maintain and develop a balanced, diverse economy, while sustaining the traditional basis of agriculture*.
- The county will collaborate with the federal land management agencies to *preserve the timber, grazing, minerals and energy, recreational, cultural, and visual resources* of the public lands (BLM, USFS, BOR).
- The county will guide development and related land uses in ways which are appropriate to the *agricultural, geological, cultural, historical, and environmental resources of the county's landscape*.
- The county will work in a *coordinated manner with the ATowns of Rico and Dove Creek* to protect *residential, commercial, and environmental qualities* of these communities.
- The County will assist in *insuring that adequate human, public, and governmental services* are provided to protect the health, safety, and social well being of neighborhoods, families, and individuals, by encouraging collaborative planning and development among educational institutions, transportation, medical services, law enforcement, and other agencies.
- The County will *adopt those administrative, planning, land use, and development ordinances, standards, and procedures* which are needed to insure the implementation of the policies, goals, and objectives as are described and defined in the master plan.

## **Plan Organization**

Immediately following, the master plan is organized into four chapters which describe the four major components of the plan, which guide the future development of the community.

- Chapter VI: Natural Resources, Settings and Public Lands
- Chapter VII: Agriculture and the Economy
- Chapter VIII: Public Facilities and Services
- Chapter IX: Land Use Goals, Proposed Actions and Implementation Strategy

## **CHAPTER VI. NATURAL RESOURCES, SETTINGS, AND PUBLIC LANDS**

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Dolores County encompasses 1,007 square miles or 689,286 acres. The Western portion of the County is made up of high mesas and narrow canyons and valleys with elevations of 5,900 feet in Disappointment Valley to 6,843 feet in the Town of Dove Creek. The eastern portion of the County is high and mountainous with Mount Wilson at 14,046 feet and the Town of Rico at 8,827 feet.

The natural resources in the eastern portion of the county include minerals such as gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc and molibnium as well as substantial timber resources. While these resources were of economic importance in the past, the scenic, wildlife, and recreational attributes of eastern Dolores County are the source of current growth and development trends. Rico's proximity to ski and resort area of Telluride is also have a significant impact on growth and development in Eastern Dolores County. The Dunton Hot Springs and high mountain beauty of the West Fork of the Dolores River are also second home and recreational growth.

Western Dolores County, with an average of 48" of snowfall and 13" of rainfall, has been a major dry land farming area for short season crops adapted to an average of 100-110 frost free days. The Dolores Project expanded the agricultural base by bringing irrigation water to 7,500 acres of farmland. Of the 252,165 acres of privately owned land in Dolores County, crops were harvested on over 60,000 acres in 1994.

Western Dolores County also includes significant oil, gas and CO<sub>2</sub> production. The scenic beauty of the high mesas and canyons are a natural asset that is increasingly attracting settlers that have no stake in the agricultural and natural resource economies.

A substantial portion of Dolores County is in public ownership as reflected in Table A below

**Table A  
Dolores County Land Public and Private Land Ownership**

<b>LAND OWNERSHIP</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>% OF TOTAL</b>
United States Forest Service	333,726	48%
US Bureau of Land Management	87,755	13%
US Bureau of Reclamation	859	0.1%
State Land	13,922	2%
Private Land	252,165	37%
Total Land Base	689,286	100%

With over 60% of the Dolores County land base in Federal ownership, it is extremely important for Dolores County communities and local governments to actively participate in federal land planning, policy development and decision making processes.

**Natural Resource and Ownership Mapping:**

Mapping is an essential tools to effectively applying information about land ownership, natural features, and natural resources in the planning and decision making processes of the County. As described in Chapter 9, a Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping program is being undertaken as a tool for implementing the goals of the plan. Priority overlays will include:

- Productive Agricultural Areas
- Public and Private Ownership
- Natural Hazard Areas (slopes, flood plains, rock slide areas etc.)
- Wildlife Corridors

## CHAPTERS VII. AGRICULTURE AND THE ECONOMY

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### **Current Situation Analysis: Agriculture**

The agricultural sector in Western Dolores County was built on dry land farming with pinto beans as the primary crop. Pinto bean production has been limited by dependence on summer rain, declining production related to soil conditions, price fluctuations and increased competition from other western dry land farming areas that have entered pinto bean markets. These limitations led to increased production of dry land winter wheat and alfalfa which previously served primarily as rotation crops. Wheat is also constrained by moisture, price fluctuations and gradual elimination of farm subsidies. Dry land alfalfa proved extremely high I protein content, creating new openings in the dairy farm markets in central Arizona and southern California, Dry land alfalfa depends on soil moisture from winter snows, with production ranging from slightly over a ton per acre, down to no crop at all following drought winter conditions. As in all farming, price fluctuation is a factor in alfalfa hay market.

New opportunities for sustaining agriculture, have been created by the Dolores (Bureau of Reclamation) Project, which has brought irrigation water to 7,500 acres in Dolores County. As Table A indicates, since 1992, irrigated land has accounted for between 11% and 15% of the total acres harvested in Dolores County.

**Table A**  
**Dolores County Acres Harvested on Irrigated and Non-Irrigated Land 1992-95**  
**Bases on Production of Three Major Crops (Alfalfa, Dry Beans, Winter**  
**Wheat)**

	1992	% of Total	1993	% of Total	1994	% of Total	1995	% of Total
<b>Irrigated</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>8,600</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>6,700</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>7,100</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Non-Irrigated</b>	<b>44,600</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>49,600</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>53,500</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>48,100</b>	<b>87%</b>
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>51,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>58,200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>60,200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>55,200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table A also illustrates the fluctuation in non-irrigated acres harvested, which is most likely attributable to the amount and timing of rainfall. While 1994 was a good year for moisture, the 1996 figures (not yet compiled) will illustrate a worst case drought scenario. While irrigated farming only accounts for 11% to 15% of harvested acreage, the production value of newly irrigated acres is so much mores significant, ranging from 32% to 46% of the value of the three major crops as illustrated in Table B.

**Table B**  
**Dolores County Irrigated and Non-Irrigated Production Values 1992-95**  
**Based on Production of Thee Major Crops (Alfalfa, Dry Beans, Winter Wheat)**

	1992	% of Total	1993	% of Total	1994	% of Total	1995	% of Total
<b>Irrigated</b>	<b>\$1,930,500</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>\$3,152,260</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>\$2,677,750</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>\$2,542,400</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Non-Irrigated</b>	<b>\$4,041,000</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>\$3,891,300</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>\$3,205,315</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>\$4,126,000</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>\$5,971,500</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$7,043,560</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$5,883,065</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,668,400</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Colorado Agricultural Statistics**

Table C and Figure C show production value trends for the three major crops in Dolores County.

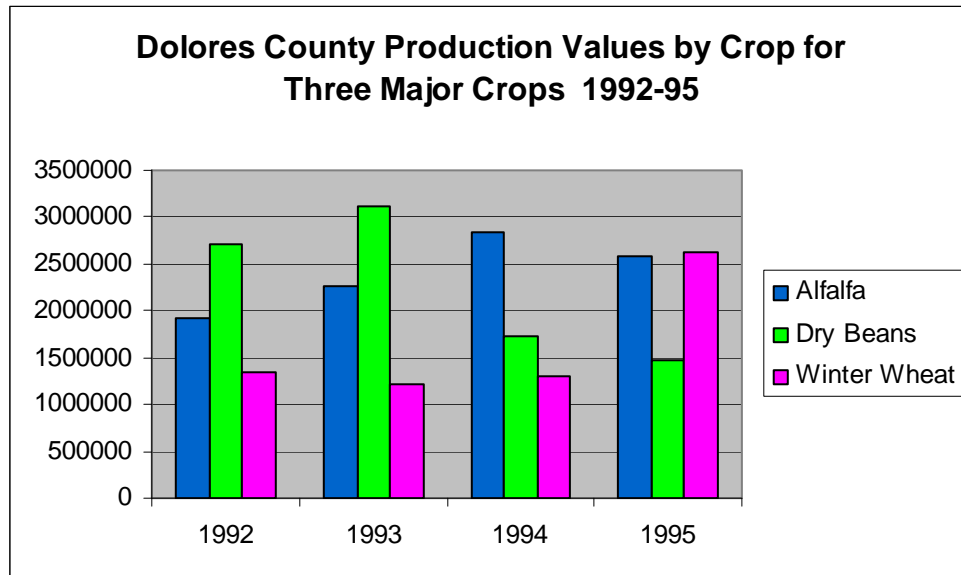
**Table C**  
**Dolores County Production Values by Crop for Three Major Crops 1992-95**

	1992	% of Total	1993	% of Total	1994	% of Total	1995	% of Total
<b>Alfalfa</b>	<b>1,911,000</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>2,259,000</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>2,844,000</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>2,574,000</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Dry Beans</b>	<b>2,706,000</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>3,112,250</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>1,733,625</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>1,480,000</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Winter</b>	<b>1,354,500</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>1,223,010</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>1,305,440</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>2,614,400</b>	<b>39%</b>

Wheat								
Total	5,971,500	100%	6,594,260	100%	5,883,065	100%	6,668,400	100%

Source: Colorado Agricultural Statistics

**FIGURE C**



As table C and Figure C illustrate, alfalfa accounts for a relatively consistent share of annual production values. This is reflective of the fact that most of the irrigated land is in alfalfa, making weather less of a factor. The trend is average alfalfa prices has been upward, from \$65 per ton in 1992 to \$90 dollars in 1994 and 1995. Prices for dry beans are extremely volatile. The high production values for pinto beans in 1992 and 1993 reflect average prices ranging from \$20 to \$30 per cwt. (hundred weight), The pinto bean share of production dropped noticeably in 1994 and 1995 when average prices were around \$16 per cwt. The surge in winter wheat's share of production value in 1995 reflects a \$1.00 jump in wheat prices from \$3.30 to \$4.30 between 1994 and 1995.

The opportunity that the Dolores Project creates for irrigated hay and pasture, combined with grazing allotments on National Forests and BLM lands, provides the foundation for an expanded livestock sector. Another potential factor is the reality that over 21,000 acres of land may be coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program in the next several years, some of which may be suitable for grazing. The county has organized an effort to recruit

cattle feeding operations to the area. Reliable data on livestock is not currently available. All that can be said is that the 1992 Census of Agriculture showed 6,707 head of cattle owned by county residents as compared to 6,120 in 1987. The Dolores County agricultural economy has also benefited from productive diversification and marketing, as in the case of Anasazi Beans and Adobe Mills Hot Sauce. The establishment of fruit orchards is also being tested.

## The Importance of Agriculture in the “Non-Farm” Sectors

While subsequent sections of the chapter will discuss the non-farm sectors of the economy, it is important to recognize the agriculture continues to play a key role in many of the so called “non-farm” sectors. The economic contribution of various sectors of the economy can be measure in “personal income,” or “wage and proprietor earnings” as reported annually by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The way that Bureau of Economic Analysis data is presented drastically understates the contribution of Economic Analysis data is presented drastically understates the contribution of agriculture vis-à-vis earnings in the so-called “non-farm” sectors. For example, bean warehouses are in the “wholesale” sector, agricultural trucking is in the “transportation” sector, and implement dealers are in the “retail” sector.

**Table D**  
**Comparison of Farm and Non-Farm Earnings**  
**in a Typical Analysis Using Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Data**  
**(adjusted for inflation to 1994 dollars)**

..	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994
Earnings (by Place of Work)	11,835,000	15,069,000	11,065,000	16,433,000	13,076,000	12,915,000	14,216,000
Farm Earnings	1,942,000	4,383,000	552,000	3,452,000	1,054,000	4,744,000	2,780,000
Non-Farm Earnings	9,893,000	10,686,000	10,513,00	12,981,000	12,022,000	11,546,000	1,436,000

**Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)**

Table D depicts agricultural earnings ranging between 30% (1984) and 20% (1994) of total earnings by place of work. To analyze the understatement of the agricultural contribution within the so-called “non farm” sectors, a detailed analysis was undertaken (for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 1994) to identify businesses that are nearly or totally dependent on agriculture, while appearing to be “non-farm” sectors. This analysis revealed that 37% of earnings in these non-farm sectors were related to ag-dependent businesses (e.g. bean warehouses, trucking, implement dealers). Table E below illustrates the role of agriculture when “farm” sector earnings are added to ag dependent businesses in the “non-farm” sectors.

**Table E**  
**Dolores County 1994**  
**Comparison of Typical Farm/ Non-Farm Earnings Analysis**  
**With Analysis Adding Farm Dependent “Non-Farm” Earnings**

	<b>1994 Earnings</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
BEA “Non-Farm Earnings”	11,436,000	80%
BEA “Farm Earnings”	2,780,000	20%
Ag Dependent “Non-Farm Earnings”	4,231,320	29%
Farm + Ag Non-Farm Earnings	7,011,320	49%
“Non-Farm”/Non-Ag Earnings	7,204,680	51%

The analysis in Table E raises the agricultural contribution from 20% of work income to 49%. In short, agriculture remains a primary source of work earnings in the Dolores County economy. This should be kept in mind in the analysis of “non agricultural” sectors that follows.

**Total Personal Income Including Work and “Non-Work” Income:**

Table F shows earnings by place of work in relation to “non-work” sources of personal income.

**Table F**  
**Dolores County Personal Income: Total, Non-Work, and Place of Work**  
**(adjusted for inflation to 1994 dollars)**

	<b>1982</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>
Total Personal Income	24,400,000	27,389,000	22,787,000	26,426,000	24,167,000	27,588,000	26,808,000
Non-Work Income	12,565,000	12,320,000	11,722,000	9,993,000	11,091,000	14,673,000	12,592,000
Earnings (Place of Work)	11,835,000	15,069,000	11,065,000	16,433,000	13,076,000	12,915,000	14,216,000

**Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)**

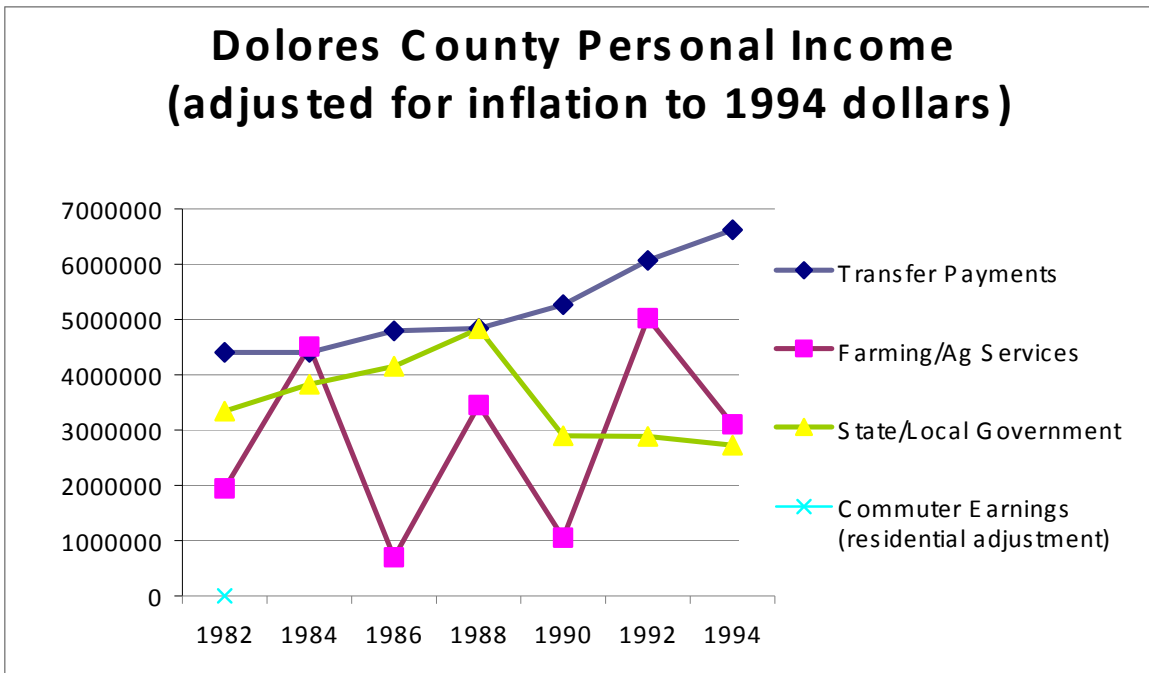
As Table F indicates, total personal income, when adjusted for inflation, has fluctuated between a low point of \$22.8 million in 1986 and a high of \$27.6 million in 1992. Table F also illustrates the reality that earnings from work done in the community and earnings from non-work, or external sources, have been roughly equal proportions over this period. While it is beyond the scope of this Chapter to evaluate “non-work income” (transfer payments, dividends, interest and rent) in detail, it is useful to put the contribution of these “non-work earnings in perspective by looking trends in all sectors that generated more than \$3 million dollars per year (Table G and Figure G below).

**Table G**  
**Dolores County Personal Income: Sources Exceeding \$3 million per year**  
**(adjusted for inflation to 1994 dollars)**

	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994
Transfer Payments	4,403,000	4,408,000	4,793,000	4,841,000	5,266,000	6,068,000	6,625,000
Farming/Ag Services	1,942,000	4,508,000	695,000	3,452,000	1,054,000	5,021,000	3,104,000
State/Local Government	3,344,000	3,826,000	4,154,000	4,832,0	2,896,000	2,884,000	2,726,000
Commuter Earnings (residential adjustment)	3,901,000	2,557,000	2,232,000	1,558,000	1,825,000	1,821,000	2,538,000

**Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)**

**Figure G**  
**Dolores County Personal Income (adjusted for inflation to 1994 dollars)**



As Table G and Figure G illustrate, Transfer Payments, Agriculture, and State/Local Government have been the largest sectors of the Dolores County economy. Farm earnings have fluctuated based on a combination of weather and market circumstances. State and local government earnings dropped dramatically in 1990, a trend related to declining oil and gas property tax revenues, resulting from declining CO2 valuation. Commuter earnings from the high point in 1982 most likely reflects declining employment in the uranium and oil and gas industries. The growth in commuter earnings indicated in 1994 probably reflects a combination of growth in earnings by commuters from Rico to Telluride, and the initial signs that people are living in the Dove Creek area and commuting to work in other Counties.

The sector that has shown the most significant upward trend is “transfer payments,” which includes income from external governmental sources. The make-up of transfer payment revenues need to be carefully analyzed and projected into the future, since it is such a large component of local income.

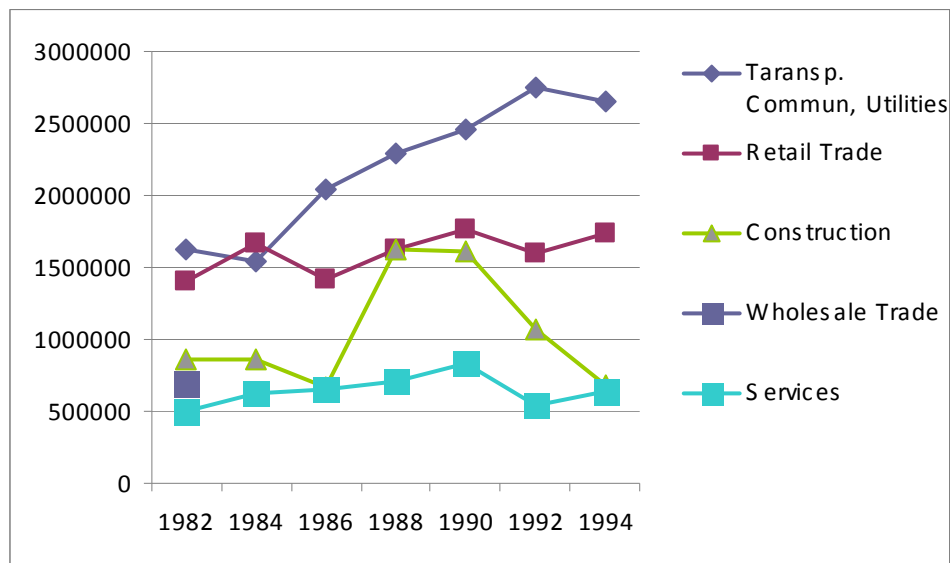
With the exception of agriculture and government, which were addressed above, other sectors of the economy fall below \$3 million dollars in personal income per year when adjusted for inflation. Table H and Figure H presents the “non-farm” private sectors of the economy by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC).

**Table H**  
**Dolores County Personal Income:**  
**Private Sector Sources Less Than \$3 million per year**  
**(adjusted for inflation to 1994 dollars)**

	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994
Transp. Commun, Utilities	1,629,000	1,540,000	2,037,000	2,298,000	2,458,000	2,749,000	2,658,000
Retail Trade	1,406,000	1,666,000	1,411,000	1,620,000	1,764,000	1,591,000	1,738,000
Construction	857,000	865,000	662,000	1,631,000	1,612,000	1,074,000	685,000
Wholesale Trade	694,000	873,000	820,000	960,000	825,000	642,000	904,000
Services	502,000	620,000	648,000	706,000	838,000	543,000	642,000

As Table H and Figure H illustrate, there has been substantial growth in the Transportation, Communication, and Utilities sector. The nature of this growth needs to be examined in more detail. Earnings from retail trade, while fluctuating, have grown by about \$300,00 per year over 1982 levels. Wholesale trade and services have also fluctuated with a slight growth trend overall.

**Figure H**



Construction earnings expanded significantly in the 1988-92 period and return to previous levels in 1994. This is most likely a reflection of Dolores Project construction activities.

## **Land Planning Issues Related to Economic Trends in Dolores County:**

### **Agricultural Issues:**

1. **Irrigated agriculture** resulting from the Dolores Project is an important element in sustaining agricultural visibility in Dolores County. Irrigation adds to the overall production capacity, and offers an important source of stability during drought periods when land production is substantially curtailed.
  - a) **Policy Consideration:** Protect the integrity and productivity of irrigated lands and irrigation delivery systems in Dolores County.
  
2. **Dry land agriculture**, except in extreme drought conditions, continues to generate more than 50% of the agricultural production value in Dolores County. Given the uncertainties of weather and markets, it is likely that some dry land farms will be converted to rural residential development. This is especially likely when rural water is available. When agricultural management of these lands stops, appropriate re-vegetation can reduce problems such as erosion and weed infestations and enhance residential property values.
  - a) **Policy Consideration:** Explore re-vegetation alternative such as grasses planted in connection with the Conservation Reserve Program, and complementary tree species. Provide information and encouragement for re-vegetation of land converted from agriculture to residential use.

## **Economic Diversification Issues:**

3. Historically the Dolores County economy has been driven by agriculture, supplemented by natural resource industries (mining and logging). Recent signs of growth and economic diversification appear to be related to people relocating to Dolores County for its natural beauty and rural quality of life. Growth in Rico has also involved people who are commuting to Telluride to work. Canyons and wooded areas in the central and eastern portions of the County seem to be preferred areas for residential development.
  - a) **Policy Consideration:** Development that is managed to protect the natural beauty and amenities (such as wildlife) of Dolores County will protect the qualities that are foundation for a level of growth the will support the expansion of local business opportunities, goods, and services.
  - b) **Policy Consideration:** Land to support growth in the Rico area is extremely limited. This calls for careful planning so that the future needs of the community can be addressed. Rico need a centralized sewer system in order to protect water quality in the Dolores River.
  
4. **The costs of growth and the affordability of housing and infrastructure** should be considered in addressing the impacts growth. While new money can potentially strengthen the local economy and tax base, it can also result in economic displacement and unintended tax burdens on existing residents.
  - a) **Policy Consideration:** Explore methods of insuring that growth pays it without putting long term residents at an economic disadvantage.
  - b) **Policy Consideration:** Work with the Town of Dove Creek to encourage infill development within Town boundaries and to extend utilities and services to accommodate higher density, more affordable housing near Town borders.

## **CHAPTER VIII. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

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A central issue in planning for and responding to growth in Dolores County is the capacity to provide public facilities and services. Where growth requires the expansion of facility and service capacities, planning and the allocation of public costs must be considered.

### **Domestic and Industrial Water**

The long term capacity to provide domestic water supplies was greatly expanded in Western Dolores County with the allocation of xxx acre feet of municipal and industrial water from the Dolores Project. These water supplies can only be put to use to the extent that water treatment facilities and delivery systems can be expanded or developed. The most significant development in recent times is the availability of rural water from Montezuma Water Company. Sixty-six miles of water line having been installed serving 160 active taps. With the current pump station and tanks, between 500 and 600 taps could be served. Getting on the system requires a \$3,500 tap fee and payment of the costs for water line extensions. The system could ultimately serve up to 3,000 taps. Existing rural water lines will be mapped. The location of current and future lines are likely to be a major factor in future location of rural residential subdivisions.

The water treatment capacities of the Towns of Dove Creek and Rico provided additional residential expansion capacity in and adjacent to the Towns. The town of Dove Creek's current water treatment capacity is 500,00 gallons per day. Current use varies between 125,000 and 350,000 gallons per day. The town is currently upgrading its holding capacity from 500,000 to 800,000 or one million gallons per day. This would appear to represent a considerable capacity for providing water within the town limits, and to potentially annexed areas.

## **Sewage:**

A factor that goes hand-in-hand with water in supporting residential growth is sewage disposal. Where centralized sewage facilities are not available, individual sewage disposal systems (commonly known as septic systems) require lots large enough to support leach fields. The three acre minimum lot size is intended to insure adequate land to support septic systems. Residential development involving smaller lots large enough to support leach fields. The three acre minimum lot size is intended to insure adequate land to support septic systems. Residential development involving smaller lots will require centralized sewage treatment systems. The Town of Dove Creek has a sewer system that could support residential expansion in Town, and in subdivisions at higher elevations near the Town. The Town's current sewage treatment capacity is 115,000 gallons per day, with the current use being at 50,000 gallons per day. Again, it would appear that adequate capacity exists in Dove Creek for increased use in the town and for annexed areas.

The Town of Rico does not presently have a central sewage treatment system, and therefore does not have capacity for growth until a system is constructed.

Lack of a centralized sewer system in Rico is an obstacle to further growth and a threat to water quality in the Dolores River which feeds into McPhee Reservoir, which is water supply for most of the Region. This is a major issue that needs to be addressed in order for Rico to keep pace with expansion opportunities and pressures.

## **County Road System:**

As of the writing of this report there are 561.78 miles of roads in Dolores County that are eligible for reimbursement through the Highway Users Tax (HUT) fund. Of these, 184.29 are considered arterial, while 377.49 are local roads. There are 30.68 miles of roads that are not eligible for HUT fund reimbursement. There are also 25.5 miles of roads that are not maintained.

The County road system was designed to support rural agricultural densities. Continued rural residential expansion will intensify the pressure on existing county roads, and may add new roads to the system. County road maintenance and improved policies, plans, and budgets may need to be formulated, in order to keep pace with growth while attempting to avoid significant deterioration in road conditions.

### **Schools:**

Review enrollments, capacities, and needs/prospects for expanded facilities.

### **Emergency Services ( Fire, Ambulance) and Law Enforcement:**

Address if and as appropriate

### **Health, Human Services and Recreation:**

Address if and as appropriate.

As addressed in Chapter 9, a Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping program is being undertaken as a tool for implementing the goals of the plan. Priority overlays will include County Roads and rural water lines.

## **CHAPTER IX. LAND USE: GOALS, PROPOSED ACTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

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### **Rationale**

The Dolores County's rural and natural resource heritage is tied directly to its land base. If Dolores County's economic heritage and rural values are to be maintained, its land resources will need to be managed to sustain open spaces, vistas, viable agricultural production, and the qualities of small towns. The future use of land is central to maintaining the traditions and lifestyles of Dolores County.

### **Goals**

Three goals have been established to guide land use management in the Dolores County Master Plan.

- The county will guide land use development in ways that protect the rural environment, visual character, and the economic and ecological well being of the landscape.
- The county will guide development and related land uses in ways which are appropriate to the agricultural, geological, cultural, historical, and environmental resources of the county's landscape.
- The county will work in a coordinated manner with the towns of Rico and Dove Creek to protect the residential, commercial and environmental qualities of these communities.

### **Objectives**

The above goals and the values described in Chapter III above suggest an emphasis on the following objectives for guiding land use resources management in Dolores County:

- Protect the rural, ecological, and scenic character of the land;
- Protect prime agricultural land;
- Encourage higher density development within or near municipalities;
- Prohibit building in geological hazard areas;
- Sustain the qualities of water, air, and wildlife;
- Protect sites and building that have historic or cultural meaning and value;
- Insure that the costs of growth are paid for in an equitable and fair manner;
- Maintain the property rights of individual land owners while seeking the best interest in citizens as a whole; and
- Insure coordination between county and municipal governments with regard to common land use management issues.

All land resource management actions proposed in the master plan, or through the ordinances and regulatory tools adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, will be pursued in a manner which, at a minimum, achieves the above listed objectives.

## **Patterns of Growth**

While Dolores County experienced a population decline in the 1970's and 80's and through the early 90's, decreasing from 2,196 (1960) to 1,504 (1990), there has been a gradual population increase in recent years. The following indicators of growth give significant evidence for the need to address long-ranged, comprehensive planning.. One basic indicator is the subdivision process, between 1994 and 1996. Also in the same time period 36 lots were created by variance.

Elatedly, in 1996 the Dove Creek School district enrollment increased by 45 students. While enrollment increased by 28 students from 1990-95, in one year Dove Creek school's full time enrollment (FTE) increased by 45 from 308 to 353, or by nearly 15% (.146). School administration sources report all three schools (high, middle, and elementary) at maximum capacity, if not over.

The Dove Creek Post Office reported an increase in postal boxes from 434 in 1991 to approximately 600 in 1996. Of the 600 boxes currently rented, 590 are to specific persons, and ten are for general delivery. There are currently 103 addresses receiving rural route delivery services.

These trends (supported by data to be added from Rico) give indications of growth and development occurring at a significant rate in Dolores County over that past two years.

## **Proposed Actions**

In order to properly guide land use and further development in Dolores County, the Board of County Commissioners in concert with the Planning Commission will pursue the following actions:

### **General**

1. It will adopt a new Land Use Code which will contain a revised set of Subdivision and Planned Unit Development (PUD) regulations.
2. The Subdivision and PUD regulations will contain standards which prohibit development in areas which will create a hazard to the health and safety of the citizens or future occupants of Dolores County.
3. These same regulations will include provisions to insure that “adequate services and facilities” are available and have sufficient capacity to serve the proposed subdivision or uses of land.
4. These same regulations will include a set of site and development standards to minimize potential conflict between existing and proposed land uses.

5. These same regulations will include standards and guidelines which provide for conservation and preservation of significant vegetative, scenic, historic, cultural, wildlife, and riparian settings and areas.

## **Specific**

Such ordinances, codes, and standards as are adopted will be developed so as to pursue the following specific actions.

6. Development incentives will be provided for the maintenance of productive agricultural land.
7. Higher development will be encouraged to take place in or near municipal areas in order to take advantage of central water and sewer services, and other infrastructure elements.
8. Higher development will be encouraged within the municipal boundaries of Dove Creek and Rico and at other appropriate commercial nodes in order to prevent loss of rural and scenic attributes, and protect the town's gateways.
9. Development proposals will be required to address and meet county road capacity, maintenance and safety standards.
10. Development incentives will be established for those residential subdivisions which provide for affordable housing.
11. Development guidelines will be adopted to protect significant aspects and areas of the Dolores River corridor and its tributaries.

## **Implementation of Proposed Actions**

### **Public Involvement and Adoption of the Master Plan and Land Use Code**

When the Planning Commission was re-established, one of their charges was to update the existing subdivision regulations to provide land use tools that are adequate to the

emerging demands of growth and change in Dolores County. The resulting effort to develop a new land use code has been proceeding concurrently with the development of this Master Plan. Subsequent to public involvement and adoption of the Master Plan, the draft Land Use Code will also be put forward for public involvement and adoption. In the meantime, the Planning Commission will continue to review and shape the Land Use Code in preparation for bringing it forward for community input.

## **Mapping of Infrastructure and Natural Features**

A key tool in linking the long term planning goals of the Master Plan with the ongoing decision making processes of the Planning Commission and the County Commissioners is the development of good maps and spatial information. As part of the Master Planning process, steps have been taken to develop a computerized Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS mapping system is being developed to provide “layers” that depict the natural features, infrastructure and parcel information to support ongoing planning and decision making. Some of the key layers will include:

- County Roads
- Rural Water Lines
- Productive Agricultural Areas
- Public and Private Ownership
- Parcel Boundaries in Subdivided Areas
- Hazard Areas (slopes, flood plains, rockslide areas etc..)
- Wildlife Corridors

The Geographic Information System allows for selected layers to be “overlaid”, and presented at any desired scale to facilitate informed planning, decision making and evaluation of growth and development trends.

While the full development of the GIS system may take several years, activities will be prioritized based on need on feasibility.