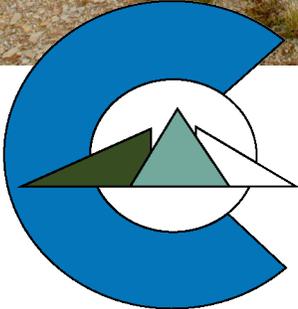


COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2030

2020 UPDATE



GARFIELD COUNTY

Adopted: November 10, 2010

Last Amended: February 26, 2020





Acknowledgements

PLANNING COMMISSION

Bob Fullerton Chairman	Steve Kyle
Eric Rudd Secretary	Keith Lammey
Lee Damuth	Matt Langhorst
Brett Jolley	Greg McKennis
John Kuersten	Jarman Smith
	Michael Sullivan

GARFIELD COUNTY STAFF

Sheryl Bower, AICP Community Development Director	Angela Martell Planner
Glenn Hartmann Principal Planner	Claire Dalby Planner
Patrick Waller, AICP Planner III	Rob Hykys GIS Analyst
Vince Hooper, PMP Planner III	Andrea Grygo GIS Applications Developer

CONSULTANT TEAM

Western Slope Consulting	Canyon Water Resources
RRC Associates	McDowell Engineering

Certification

The Garfield County Planning Commission hereby certifies the Garfield County Comprehensive Plan 2030, as adopted by Resolution PC-2013-06 on October 9, 2013, to the Board of County Commissioners of Garfield County, and to the planning commissions of all municipalities within the county and as amended by Resolution PC-2020-03 on February 26, 2020.



Bob Fullerton, Chair

As witness therein: 

Eric Rudd, Secretary to the Planning Commission



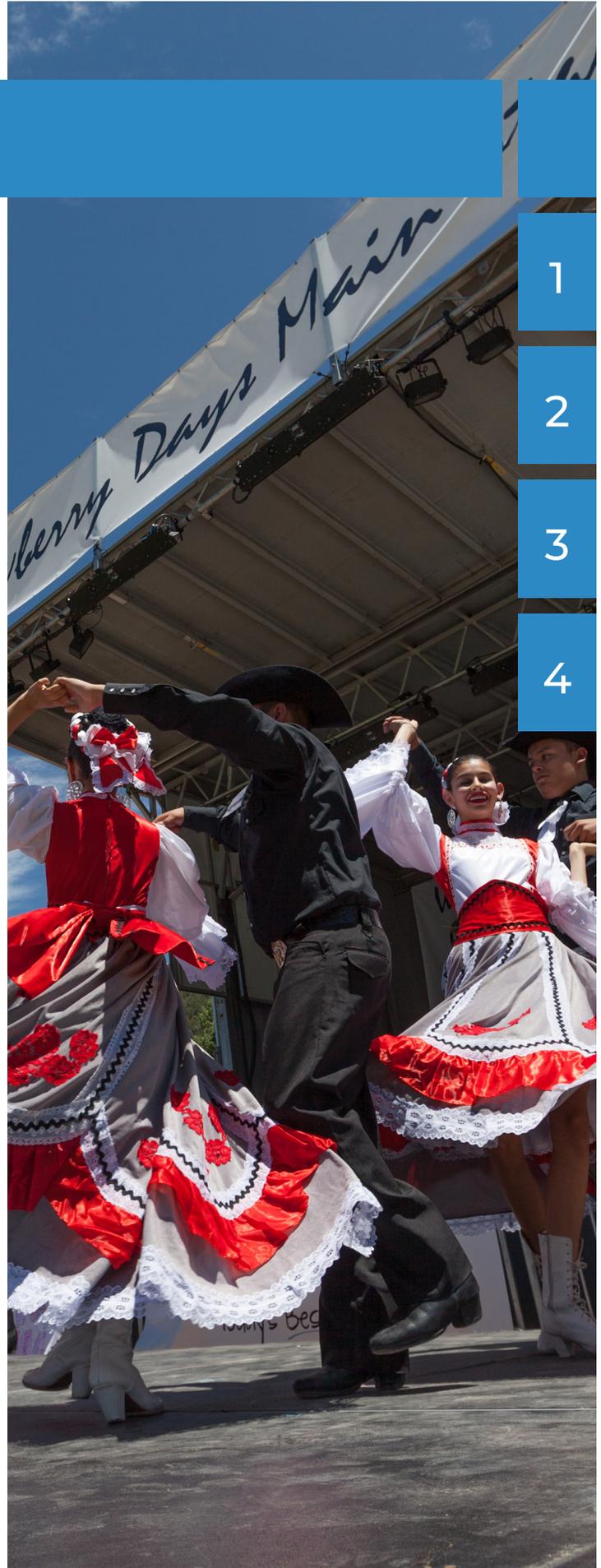
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*The “Comprehensive Plan 2030 | 2020 Update Appendices” is available as a separate document.

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Preface



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Garfield County is at several crossroads, both literally and figuratively. Literally, it contains the confluence of the Colorado and Roaring Fork Rivers. It also contains the intersection of the Interstate 70 (I-70) and State Highway 82 (SH-82). Figuratively, it is at a crossroads between a largely rural county that is slowly moving in the direction of becoming a suburban county.

Garfield County is the 6th largest county in Colorado, encompassing nearly 3,000 square miles. Approximately 62% of the county is public lands under federal, state or local jurisdiction. The remaining 38% of the county is privately owned.

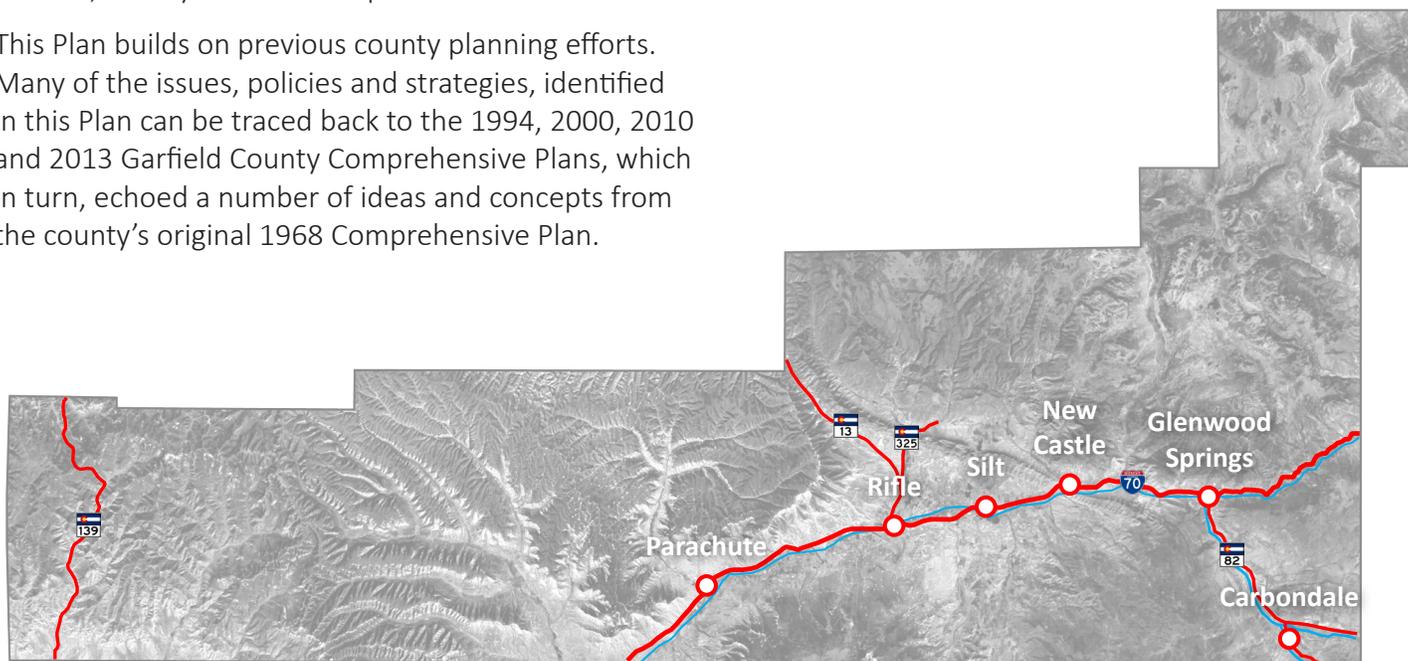
The Colorado State Demography Office projects that by 2030, the population of Garfield County will increase by approximately 30,762 people. This would bring the total population of the county to around 75,000. If this projected growth materializes over the next 10 years, how the county, as well as the municipalities in the county, chose to respond will directly influence the quality of life in Garfield County and the fiscal well-being of the county government.

The Garfield County Comprehensive Plan 2030 (the “Plan”) offers a general statement of direction for land use planning in unincorporated Garfield County. The Plan provides a foundation for decision-making and policies that guide and direct the physical, social and economic development of the county. It focuses on responding to both the immediate and anticipated long-term needs of the county. The Plan is intended to serve as a tool for the county’s elected and appointed officials, county staff and the public.

This Plan builds on previous county planning efforts. Many of the issues, policies and strategies, identified in this Plan can be traced back to the 1994, 2000, 2010 and 2013 Garfield County Comprehensive Plans, which in turn, echoed a number of ideas and concepts from the county’s original 1968 Comprehensive Plan.

GARFIELD COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

February 10th, 1883	Date Garfield County became Incorporated
7	Number of Towns/Cities in Garfield County
62,001	Estimated Total Population of Garfield County in 2020
75,000	Projected Total Population of Garfield County by 2030
+ 35.3%	2000-2030 Estimated % Change of Total Population that is “Gen. Z” or are “Millenials”
- 4.7%	2000-2030 Estimated % Change of Total Population that is “Gen. X”
- 16.3%	2000-2030 Estimated % Change of Total Population that are “Baby Boomers”
- 14.3%	2000-2030 Estimated % Change of Total Population that is from the “Silent Generation”



The Plan is long-term in nature. It projects land use needs to the year 2030. The visions, policies and strategies of the Plan are intended to provide a steady, predictable direction over the next 10 years. And yet, as needs and issues continue to change in the county, the Plan will need to be revisited and updated to be sure that it continues to reflect the public vision and the plan’s realistic implementation.

HOW THE PLAN IS ORGANIZED

The Plan is divided into the following sections:

- Chapter 1:
Introduction** The Introduction presents an explanation of what a Comprehensive Plan is, the legal basis for county comprehensive planning in Colorado, and the role of the Comprehensive Plan relative to the county’s Land Use and Development Code (LUDC).
- Chapter 2:
Future Land Use** Chapter 2, Future Land Use, presents the Major Directions and Themes of the Plan and identifies the future land uses desired in Garfield County (the Future Land Use Designations are to be used in conjunction with the Future Land Use Map, which can be found online at: <https://data-garfieldcolorado.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/compplan>
- Chapter 3:
Plan Sections** The Plan Sections chapter has ten sections that present the specific vision, background information, key issues, policies and strategies for each element (ex. Housing, Transportation, etc.) of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Chapter 4:
Amending the Plan** Chapter 4, Amending the Plan, sets forth specific instructions for considering amendments to the Plan and for updating the county’s Comprehensive Plan.

In addition, the appendices contain data sets intended to support the visions, background information, key issues, policies and strategies set forth in the Plan. These can be found in a companion document titled “Comprehensive Plan 2030 | 2020 Update Appendices.” There are also a number of online maps that serve to support the Plan. Those maps can be accessed at: <https://data-garfieldcolorado.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/compplan>

- Appendix A:
County Overview** The County Overview Appendix provides a summary of the most current information available regarding: (1) demographics; (2) land use; (3) municipal and special district growth areas, requirements, goals and policies; (4) finances; (5) air quality; (6) sensitive habitats; and, (7) natural hazards in Garfield County.
- Appendix B:
Agriculture** The Agriculture Appendix presents the most current information available regarding the state of agriculture in Garfield County.
- Appendix C:
Economy** The Economy Appendix offers historic and current information regarding key components of Garfield County’s economy.
- Appendix D:
Transportation** The Transportation Appendix provides current information regarding transportation systems in Garfield County, including state highways, county roads, railroads, airports and trails.
- Appendix E:
Housing** The Housing Appendix presents the most current information available regarding housing demands and needs in the county. Much of the data included in this appendix was sourced from, and builds upon, the 2019 Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study (<https://www.apcha.org/358/2019-Greater-Roaring-Fork-Regional-Housi>).
- Appendix F:
Water Resources** The Water Resources Appendix presents current data regarding various aspects of water quality and quantity in Garfield County.



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Introduction

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- + Introduction to Garfield County
- + What is a “Comprehensive Plan?”
- + Authority for Comprehensive Planning in Garfield County
- + Difference between the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use and Development Code

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INTRODUCTION TO GARFIELD COUNTY

Garfield County has an extraordinarily diverse geography that ranges from the pastoral fields and meadows of the Colorado and Roaring Fork River valleys, to the dramatic foothills and escarpments that define them, to the distinctive mesas that include the Flat Tops Wilderness Area. The county has access to two major metro areas (Denver and Grand Junction) via I-70, and a regional airport centrally located within the county. The steady draw of premier ski resorts that are within a one hour drive add to the year-round tourism draw of the natural setting.

The county generally benefits significantly from a large natural resource industry in terms of jobs as well as a significant property tax base. The underlying economy of tourism services, government, regional retail and healthcare make this a truly diverse economy.

Additional information about Garfield County can be found in the appendices to this Plan and online at: <https://data-garfieldcolorado.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/compplan>

WHAT IS A “COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?”

The Garfield County “Comprehensive Plan” (i.e. Comprehensive Plan 2030) is an overarching plan for the county that sets forth the community’s shared vision for what the county will look like in 2030. It also identifies key issues, policies and strategies aimed at achieving that vision, as well as supporting a healthy and balanced community. It is often used as a strategic tool to help inform and guide county decision-making, policies and growth and development patterns. Because conditions change over time, it is important for the county to revisit and update its Comprehensive Plan on a regular basis in order to maintain a plan that is relevant to current conditions and trends.

AUTHORITY FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN GARFIELD COUNTY

The foundation for comprehensive planning at the county level is found in the Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) Section 30-28-106 (1977). This statute assigned the Garfield County Planning Commission the duty to adopt a Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory.

Based on state land use law, Comprehensive Plans are to be developed for the general purpose of:

“...guiding and accomplishing a coordinated and harmonious development of the relevant territory, which, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, will best promote the general welfare of the inhabitants.”

Consistent with this direction Garfield County initiated comprehensive planning in 1968, and prepared updated plans in 1981, 1984, 1994, 2000, 2002 and 2010. The Plan was last updated in 2013.

In preparing a Comprehensive Plan, state statute directs county planning commissions to make comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and probable future growth in the demand for county services.

The state statute includes recommendations regarding the contents of a Comprehensive Plan and requires the Plan to include recreation and tourism elements. The contents and direction of a comprehensive planning effort are left to the discretion of the local planning body.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND THE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT CODE

Garfield County gives special importance to its Comprehensive Plan by requiring that land use decisions be consistent with the Plan. In Garfield County, the Comprehensive Plan establishes the broad land uses and density of development (number of units per acre) for a property while the county’s Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) establishes the detailed standards such as specific uses, minimum lot size, setbacks, etc.

THE 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

The bulk of the 2019-2020 update to the Comprehensive Plan included updating the Economic, Transportation, Housing and Water Appendices. The new data (compiled for the updated appendices) was used to inform the updates to the visions, policies and strategies within Chapter 3 of the Plan. Additionally, all maps associated with the Comprehensive Plan were updated and made available to the general public via the county’s website:

<https://data-garfieldcolorado.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/compplan>

Five work sessions were held with the county Planning Commission as part of the 2019-2020 Comprehensive Plan update process. Those work sessions included:

Table 1: Overview of 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update

Work Session	Date of Work Session	Focus of Work Session
Work Session #1 (joint work session with the Board of County Commissioners)	August 28 th , 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing
Work Session #2	September 25 th , 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Agriculture
Work Session #3	October 23 rd , 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economics and Tourism • Natural Resources • Mineral Extraction • Renewable Energy
Work Session #4	November 20 th , 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation, Open Space & Trails • Transportation • Urban Growth Areas • Intergovernmental Coordination • Future Land Use
Work Session #5	January 8 th , 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final work session covering all sections of the Plan

All work sessions were publicly noticed and questionnaires were made available at each session for the public, Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission to provide comments on the information presented. Each section of the Comprehensive Plan was reviewed and discussed individually, with updates from the previous Comprehensive Plan called-out specifically. The update to the Plan is an outcome of the feedback and comments provided at these work sessions.

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2 Future Land Use

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- + Vision for Garfield County
- + Purpose and Applicability of the Future Land Use Map
- + Major Plan Direction and Themes
- + The Future Land Use Table

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VISION FOR GARFIELD COUNTY

Garfield County is dedicated to managing and directing growth to dedicated Urban Growth Areas and other areas that can accommodate growth cost effectively, in order to create thriving communities while promoting a diverse, sustainable and healthy economy, protecting wildlife, maintain or improving the quality of our natural environment, and preserving the county’s rural and western heritage.

PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY OF THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

In Garfield County, the Comprehensive Plan establishes the broad land uses and the density of development (number of units/acre) and the Garfield County Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) establishes the detailed standards such as specific uses, minimum lot size, and setbacks. The LUDC requires that land use decisions be in general conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

This chapter contains descriptions of the Future Land Use Designations shown on the Future Land Use Map for Garfield County. The Future Land Use Map is available online and can be found here:

<https://data-garfieldcolorado.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/compplan>

MAJOR PLAN DIRECTION AND THEMES

Garfield County, through this Plan, is charting how best to accommodate future growth and development (ex. housing, commercial development, industrial development, etc.) in the community. At the same time, the Plan addresses transportation and mobility, open lands, infrastructure and other future needs of the county through policies that aim to guide future growth. Ultimately, the intent of the Future Land Use Map is to preserve the “livability” of Garfield County over the coming years. A “livable” county means different things to different people. For some, it means retaining open space, for others, planning for a range of development densities and for still others, it means allowing flexibility to accommodate economic development in the county. This Plan seeks to achieve a broad range of “livability” in a balanced manner.

The 2020 update of Garfield County’s Comprehensive Plan reinforces a major direction of the county’s previous plan: *Most new growth should occur in areas that have, or can easily be served by, urban services.*

From this simple, yet fundamental direction, emerges five (5) major themes for future land use in the county that are embodied in the Future Land Use Map. Those major themes are:

1. Growth in Urban Growth Areas (UGA) & 3-Mile Areas of Influence
2. Growth in Unincorporated Communities
3. Growth in Designated Centers, including:
 - Town Centers
 - Village Centers
 - Rural Employment Centers
 - Rural Regional Employment Centers
 - New or Expanded Centers
4. Growth of New Major Residential Subdivisions
5. Change in Residential Development Densities

1. Growth In Urban Growth Areas (UGA) & 3-Mile Areas Of Influence

The Plan recognizes the need for the municipalities in the county to be able to gradually expand into immediately surrounding areas. The county supports and encourages orderly expansion of existing communities.

This Plan recognizes existing municipal plans and strongly supports and encourages infill and redevelopment of existing communities. These growth areas are the preferred locations in Garfield County for growth that require urban level services. They are also the preferred locations for commercial and employment uses that can take advantage of supporting infrastructure and a close by client base that reduces travel demands. The most effective way to encourage growth in designated and planned UGA will be by ensuring the following:

Policy 1: Growth in UGA and within 3-Mile Areas of Influence should be closely coordinated with the affected municipality.

Strategies:

- i. Each municipality's plan for its UGA is incorporated into the Garfield County Comprehensive Plan.
- ii. Urban developments in the UGA are encouraged to annex into the respective municipality.
- iii. If there is a public benefit to allowing development within an UGA prior to annexation, the County and municipality will cooperatively endeavor to facilitate such development through such means as:
 - County zoning in the UGA adjusted to a close approximation of the municipality's plans.
 - Development in the UGA is required to obtain a local review with comment (not approval) before submitting for county review.
 - A procedure for municipal/county review and recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners has been developed in an Intergovernmental Agreement with each community.
 - Each community is expected to extend services and infrastructure to development in the UGA that substantially complies with their plan for the UGA (landowners and the respective municipality are strongly encouraged to enter into pre-annexation agreements that provide commitments with respect to extensions of service and infrastructure, densities, etc.).
- iv. Development review within 3-Mile Areas of Influence for municipalities needs to consider the municipality's comprehensive plan, neighboring land uses, future land use designations, and referral comments from the municipality.
- v. Development review within the 3-Mile Area of Influence for a municipality should consider and mitigate for impacts of the development including limitations on heavy and extractive industries that would severely impact adjacent land uses, local economies, wildlife, traffic, view planes, environmental concerns including stormwater and water quality for the neighboring municipalities.

Policy 2: Applications for new or expanded development adjacent to neighboring municipalities should attempt to minimize impacts on municipalities and should not do irreparable harm to existing thriving economies including existing businesses within the neighboring municipalities and unincorporated areas.

Strategies:

- i. Impact Analysis for significant projects may require, as part of the development review process, additional fiscal impact analysis including impacts on local economies and municipal and county budgets.

Strategies (continued):

- ii. Impact analysis for significant projects may require additional studies of environment issues including habitat and wildlife impacts, and related impacts on recreational uses, facilities and economies.
- iii. Impact analysis for significant projects may require additional traffic studies including identification of alternate traffic routes and road/bridge upgrades even when improvements are located within a neighboring municipality. Proposed development should not have unreasonable traffic impacts on local roads, historic roads and trails that provide access to public lands, jeep, hiking, biking, equestrian, ATV, and snowmobile access routes.
- iv. Environmental impacts from significant projects may require additional assessments and studies on geologic hazards, geologic and geothermal resources, air quality and air quality monitoring, water quality and monitoring wells, lighting impacts, and noise with provisions for follow-up compliance testing and verification.
- v. Assessment of impacts shall include overall impacts on neighboring municipalities and unincorporated areas including impacts on existing businesses, public amenities and parks, residential areas, view planes, community character, and gateways to communities.
- vi. In addition to referral comments, the county may consider holding joint meetings with an affected municipality or special meetings/hearings within the affected municipalities.

2. Growth In Unincorporated Communities

The Plan acknowledges the existence of several unincorporated communities that have concentrated development, a mix of land uses and services provided by special districts. Expansion of existing unincorporated communities should adhere to the policy and strategies below. New unincorporated communities in Garfield County are discouraged. However, any new unincorporated communities should also adhere to the following:

Policy 1: Where growth or the development of an expanded community is proposed in unincorporated areas it should meet the following concepts and be developed in accordance with the following strategies.

Strategies:

- i. The proposed development is not located within the UGA of existing municipalities.
- ii. The development is served with urban services by a special district.
- iii. A contract for police from county sheriff may need to be established.
- iv. Connecting county roads are upgraded at developer's expense (or the county is compensated through an impact fee or fee-in-lieu).
- v. Fiscal costs to the public will be considered in the review of new unincorporated communities.
- vi. Any internal commercial is primarily for the convenience of area residents (minimize competition with existing communities).
- vii. Transit opportunities are provided.
- viii. Recreation and other public amenities are provided.
- ix. School sites may be required (these locations preferred over schools in rural areas).

3. Growth In Designated Centers

There are small concentrations of commercial and business uses throughout Garfield County that primarily serve the needs of surrounding rural residents and rural businesses. These centers add to the economic diversity of the county. The ongoing viability of these existing centers, as well as new ones, is encouraged provided they have suitable access and services and that they conform with the policy and strategies identified below for each type of center.

Policy 1: Where growth or the development of an expanded center is proposed in an unincorporated area it should be consistent with the following concepts and be developed in accordance with the following strategies. The asterisks shown on the previous iteration of the Future Land Use Map have been removed and replaced with the Future Land Use Designations noted below.

Strategies:

- i. These centers are small concentrations of commercial and business uses through Garfield County that primarily serve the needs of surrounding rural residents and rural businesses.
- ii. These centers should add to the economic diversity of the county.
- iii. The on-going viability of these existing centers, as well as new ones, is encouraged provided they have suitable access and services and that they meet the general guidelines identified below for the various types of centers envisioned.
- iv. **Town Centers:** Are recognized by the Comprehensive Plan as existing municipalities and are shown on the Future Land Use Map with an Urban Growth Area (UGA) designation. They include a mix of uses: retail, office, residential, and diverse commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.
- v. **Village Centers:** Are recognized as existing concentrations of residential and commercial, intended primarily for the convenience needs of surrounding residential development. May include educational, institutional and civic uses. They are shown on the Future Land Use Map with existing Commercial or Institutional designations on specific parcels.



Figure 1: Downtown Glenwood Springs is an example of a “Town Center” in Garfield County.

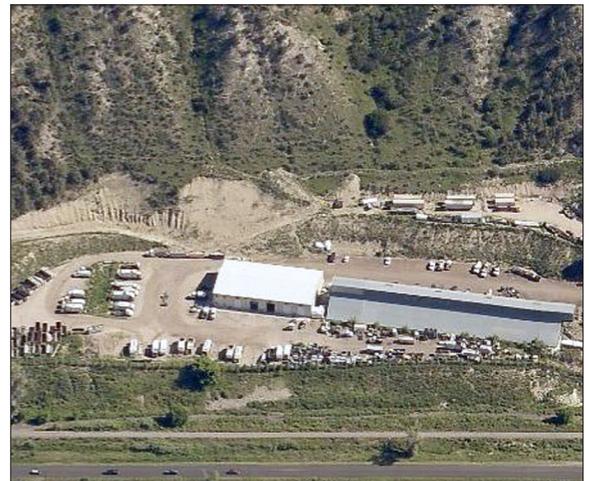


Figure 2: The mix of commercial/light industrial land uses east of the Town of Carbondale represent one of the “Rural Employment Centers” in Garfield County.



Figure 3: The Rifle-Garfield County Regional Airport exemplifies a “Rural Regional Employment Center” in Garfield County.

Strategies (continued):

- vi. **Rural Employment Centers:** Are recognized as geographically consolidated areas where there is a concentration of light industrial and business park uses. Includes construction yards, equipment repair and storage. They are shown on the Future Land Use Map with existing Industrial designations on specific parcels.
- vii. **Rural Regional Employment Centers:** Are recognized as areas that provide economic benefit and opportunity to the entire region. Industrial areas near the Rifle-Garfield County Airport and the heavy industrial/energy processing on Parachute Creek, are designated as Rural Regional Employment Centers. These areas also have Industrial designations on the Future Land Use Map and are labelled by name on the mapping.
- viii. **New or Expanded Centers:** May be considered through a Comprehensive Plan Amendment in locations that make existing subdivisions more self-sufficient, are at intersection/interchanges, have central water and sewer, and are compact and designed to fully utilize the land. They may be located adjacent to or at the edge of an existing center. Rezoning applications for a new or expanded center that meets the rezoning criteria may be considered consistent with the Comprehensive Plan based on proximity to an existing center.

4. Growth Of New Major Residential Subdivisions

There are several major subdivisions (fifteen (15) units or more) in Garfield County that provide their own internal services (road maintenance, water, sewer) through special districts and/or Homeowner Associations (HOAs). However, these subdivisions are typically far from commercial centers and require travel for even convenience needs which increases traffic and requires higher maintenance of county roads. The Plan recognizes that new major subdivisions may occur, but encourages them to be more self-sufficient (having, or being near, convenience services). In order to achieve better self-sufficiency, new major subdivisions should adhere to the following policy and strategies:

Policy 1: Where growth or the development of a new major subdivision is proposed in an unincorporated area it should be consistent with the following concepts and be developed in accordance with the following strategies.

Strategies:

- i. Recognize that major subdivisions may occur, but encourage them to be more self-sufficient with:
 - Safe, reliable access and transit opportunities.
 - Construction or upgrade existing off-site connection county roads and intersections by the developer.
 - Review of the fiscal costs vs. fiscal benefits to the public.
 - Internal roads to be maintained by a special district or HOA.
 - Central water and sewer are provided through a special district (quasi-public, not private).
 - Public amenities, such as trails, open areas, parks, etc., that meet the needs of residents are included.
 - If outside of an UGA, should be served by transit and maintain the community character of surrounding areas.

5. Change In Residential Development Densities

In previous versions of the county’s Comprehensive Plan, there have been different categories for residential development densities in the Colorado River Valley and the Roaring Fork Valley. The 2010 update to the county’s Comprehensive Plan utilized county-wide designations and provided guidelines for assigning the density ranges for the residential categories.

For densities that encompass a range, the maximum density can be achieved through a combined process of land conservation and clustering (refer to Figure 4) in coordination with the conservation framework lands and/or other significant public benefits.

Policy 1: Clarification and simplification of Residential Densities will improve the ease of implementation for the Plan.

Strategies:

- i. In past iterations of the Comprehensive Plan, the two (2) acre lot designation presented a number of challenges and was changed to two (2) to less than six (<6) acres. The two (2) acre lot density:
 - Tended to be too small to farm.
 - Made maintenance (ex. mowing, irrigation, etc.) difficult.
 - Typically did not result in further subdivision and therefore, inhibited further urban growth.
 - Therefore, resulted in many communities requesting less dense designations (ex. one (1) dwelling unit per ten (10) acres and one (1) dwelling unit per twenty (20) acres) surrounding their municipal boundaries.
 - Did not actually preserve rural character when spread over a large area.
- ii. Proposed changes in the Land Use Table will keep the same density range but replace the sliding scale with text that describes higher densities within the range as appropriate for properties with a higher percentage of open space, conservation of areas with special amenities or value such as wetlands, riparian areas, critical habitat, view planes, or properties located in close proximity to Urban Growth Areas and 3-Mile Areas of Influence.

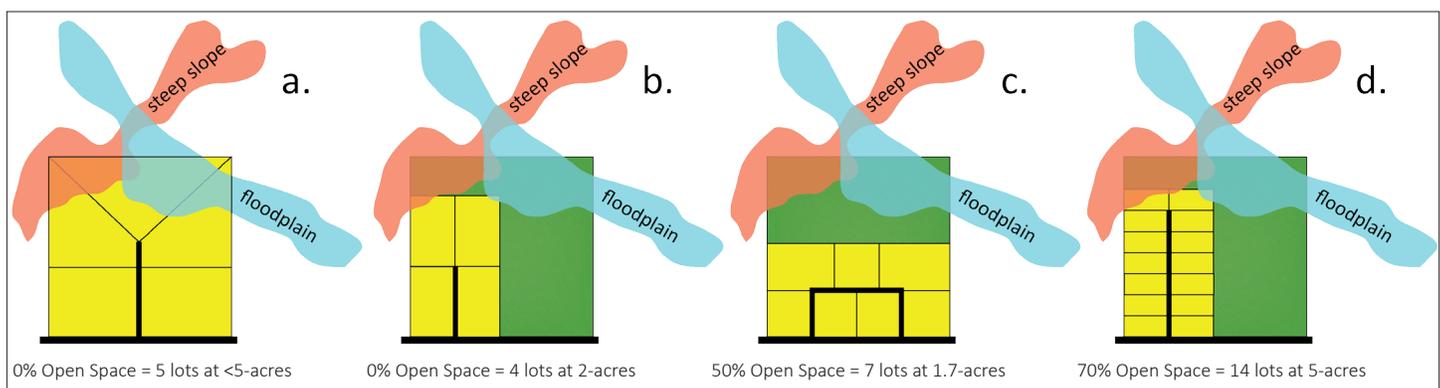


Figure 4: Hypothetical comparison of clustering options on a thirty (30) acre parcel with a Medium High (MH) Future Land Use Designation (one (1) dwelling unit per two (2) to six (6) acres).

THE FUTURE LAND USE TABLE

The following table describes the general characteristics and density (or density range) of the land uses designated on the Future Land Use Map (note that Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are **not** included in the overall density).

The Comprehensive Plan does not regulate the detailed specifics of land use, such as allowed uses, minimum lot size, setbacks, etc. These requirements are found in the Garfield County LUDC.

Table 2: Future Land Use Table

<p>Future Land Use Designation</p>	 Urban Growth Area (UGA)
<p>Description</p>	<p>Areas designated by adjacent community for eventual expansion of services and annexation.</p>
<p>Compatible Zoning District(s)</p>	<p>Annexation with municipal zoning.</p>
<p>Density of Residential Uses</p>	<p>Consistent with the UGA plan of the respective municipality.</p>
<p>Illustrative Example</p>	
<p>Future Land Use Designation</p>	 Resource Production/Natural (RPN)
<p>Description</p>	<p>Agricultural and grazing land used primarily for oil, gas, oil shale, coal mining, gravel mining, and other mining including support buildings and facilities. Development on these lands should address and mitigate for impacts including resource development or mineral extraction locations that would impact adjacent land uses, local economies, wildlife/habitat, traffic, view planes, and environmental concerns including air quality/dust, stormwater, groundwater, and water quality, noise, lighting, and geologic concerns including subsidence, for the neighboring municipalities and unincorporated areas.</p>
<p>Compatible Zoning District(s)</p>	<p>Resource Lands (RLTS, RLE, RLP)</p>
<p>Density of Residential Uses</p>	<p>One (1) dwelling unit per thirty-five (35) acres.</p>
<p>Illustrative Example</p>	

Table 2: Future Land Use Table (continued)

Future Land Use Designation	 Public Lands/Open Space (PLOS)
Description	<p>Federal and state lands and land for which conservation easements preclude or limit further development. These lands include the potential for mineral extraction based on Federal Policies.</p> <p>The county is developing a Natural Resources Coordination Plan for public lands. Development on these land needs to consider the policies to be contained in said plan. In addition, development on these lands should address and mitigate for impacts including resource development or mineral extraction locations that would impact adjacent land uses, local economies, wildlife/habitat, traffic, view planes, and environmental concerns including air quality/dust, stormwater, groundwater, and water quality, noise, lighting, and geologic concerns including subsidence, for the neighboring municipalities and unincorporated areas.</p>
Compatible Zoning District(s)	Public Lands (PL)
Density of Residential Uses	None.
Illustrative Example	
Future Land Use Designation	 Residential Low (RL)
Description	<p>Agricultural and related uses, ranching, low density residential and related uses as well as home occupation uses that can be adequately buffered from adjacent incompatible uses. Other uses may be considered where residential character is maintained and/or special conditions warrant, such as underlying zoning, proximity to transportation routes and 3-Mile Areas of Influence.</p>
Compatible Zoning District(s)	Rural (R); Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Density of Residential Uses	One (1) dwelling unit per ten (10) acres or greater.
Illustrative Example	

Table 2: Future Land Use Table (continued)

Future Land Use Designation	 Residential Medium (RM)
Description	Small farms, estates, residences and clustered residential subdivisions.
Compatible Zoning District(s)	Rural (R); Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Density of Residential Uses	One (1) dwelling unit per six (6) to ten (10) acres. Within this range, density is determined by the degree of clustering and the amount and quality of land preserved in open condition.
Illustrative Example	

Future Land Use Designation	 Residential Medium High (RMH)
Description	Small farms, estates, residences and clustered residential subdivisions.
Compatible Zoning District(s)	Rural (R); Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Density of Residential Uses	1 dwelling unit per 2 to 6-acres. Within this range, density is determined by the degree of clustering and the amount and quality of land preserved in open condition.
Illustrative Example	

Future Land Use Designation	 Residential High (RH)
Description	Criteria for determining RH density determined by the Planning Commission based on the degree of public benefit, including affordable housing, mix of housing types, parks/trail/open space, energy conservation, fiscal impacts, preservation of views, providing for schools and other public needs.
Compatible Zoning District(s)	Residential Suburban (RS); Residential Urban (RU); Residential Mobile Home Park (RMHP); Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Density of Residential Uses	One (1) dwelling unit per 7,500 sq. ft. (i.e. 5.8 dwelling units per acre) to one (1) dwelling unit per two (2) acres.

Table 2: Future Land Use Table (continued)

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation

Mixed-Use (MU)

Description

Suburban and urban neighborhoods including parks, trails, schools, with employment uses and commercial uses intended to serve the surrounding residential areas.

Compatible Zoning District(s)

Residential Urban (RU); Commercial Limited (CL); Commercial General (CG); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Density of Residential Uses

Density of residential uses to be determined by clustering and public benefit: 2 to 12 dwelling units per acre.

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation

Commercial (C)

Description

Commercial intended to serve a regional market.

Compatible Zoning District(s)

Commercial Limited (CL); Commercial General (CG); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Density of Residential Uses

Five (5) dwelling units per acre.

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation

Industrial (I)

Description

Indoor manufacturing, outdoor equipment storage, business parks, energy processing and uses that produce odor, noise, light, and /or emissions. May include residential uses for employees of the business, such as live/work, where uses are light industrial.

Table 2: Future Land Use Table (continued)

Compatible Zoning District(s) Industrial (I); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Density of Residential Uses Refer to description for Industrial Future Land Use Designation.

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation  Institutional

Description Major public, quasi-public, institutional and civic uses such as schools, community colleges, and major health service facilities/hospitals. May include residential uses for employees of the business/entity, such as live work and employee housing.

Compatible Zoning District(s) Rural (R); Resource Lands (RLTS, RLE, RLP); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Density of Residential Uses Refer to description for the Institutional Future Land Use Designation.

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation  Recreation

Description Major parks, major tourist attractions, resorts, rodeo and fair grounds, major campgrounds, and ancillary residential such as employee housing, resort condominiums and homes.

Compatible Zoning District(s) Rural (R); Resource Lands (RLTS, RLE, RLP); Public Lands (PL); Commercial Limited (CL); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Density of Residential Uses Two (2) to twelve (12) dwelling units per acre.

Illustrative Example



Table 2: Future Land Use Table (continued)

Future Land Use Designation	 OR  Village Center
Description	Areas where there is a concentration of residential development and commercial development that is intended primarily for the convenience need of surrounding residential development. This mix of uses may include educational, institutional and civic uses. These areas are identified on the Future Land Use Map with the Commercial and Mixed-Use Future Land Use designations.
Compatible Zoning District(s)	Residential Urban (RU); Commercial Limited (CL); Commercial General (CG); Rural (R); Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Density of Residential Uses	Five (5) dwelling units per acre.

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation	 Town Center
Description	A compact mix of commercial, office, employment, residential uses, industrial, institutional and civic use, designated as municipal Urban Growth Areas.
Compatible Zoning District(s)	Residential Urban (RU); Commercial Limited (CL); Commercial General (CG); Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Density of Residential Uses	Residential density determined by underlying land use designation.

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation	 Rural Employment Center
Description	Small areas adjacent to major roadways that allow light industrial, manufacturing, equipment storage and incidental retail sales. Includes residential uses for employees of the business, such as live/work. These areas are identified on the Future Land Use Map with the Industrial Future Land Use Designation.
Compatible Zoning District(s)	Commercial General (CG); Industrial (I); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Table 2: Future Land Use Table (continued)

Compatible Zoning District(s)

Commercial General (CG); Industrial (I); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Density of Residential Uses

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation



Rural Regional Employment Center

Description

Small areas adjacent to major roadways that allow light industrial, manufacturing, equipment storage and incidental retail sales. Includes residential uses for employees of the business, such as live/work.

These areas are identified on the Future Land Use Map with the Industrial Future Land Use Designation.

Compatible Zoning District(s)

Commercial Limited (CL); Commercial General (CG); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Density of Residential Uses

None.

Illustrative Example



Future Land Use Designation



Unincorporated Community

Description

Self-contained subdivisions that contain centers primarily to serve their own populations.

Compatible Zoning District(s)

Residential Urban (RU); Commercial Limited (CL); Commercial General (CG); Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Density of Residential Uses

Residential density is determined by underlying land use designation.

Illustrative Example





1

2

3

Plan Sections

4

Section 1: Urban Growth Areas (UGA) & Intergovernmental Coordination

Section 2: Housing

Section 3: Transportation

Section 4: Economics, Employment and Tourism

Section 5: Recreation, Open Space and Trails

Section 6: Agriculture

Section 7: Water and Sewer Services

Section 8: Natural Resources, Habitat and Wildlife

Section 9: Mineral Extraction

Section 10: Renewable Energy



Each of the following sections describes an element of the Comprehensive Plan (housing, transportation, etc.). Each section contains the following four (4) components:

1. Vision

The vision statement is a broad description of the desired future condition to be achieved between now and 2030. This vision describes Garfield County’s assets and values and focuses on moving the community toward achieving longer-reaching ideals. While the vision statement is the backbone of the comprehensive plan, it is only able to be realized through a well thought out set of background information, key issues, policies and strategies that provide a clear blueprint for where the county would like to go and how it will get there.

2. Background & Key Issues

Each section begins with an outline of the primary issues that have been identified throughout the process. These issues have helped shape the policies and strategies within the Plan.

3. Policies

Policies are defined as: a course of action, guiding principle, or procedure to guide present and future decisions. Policies are established, and then implemented through actions, such as legislation and budget decisions. Comprehensive Plan policies are important to provide on-going guidance for elected and appointed community leaders, developers, the public, and the county staff and administrators to enable consistent decisions over time about development, budgeting, priorities, and investments in the county.

4. Strategies

Strategies provide suggested specific actions and programs that can be taken to implement the Plan. Because priorities and budgets will change from year to year, county staff and officials should consider the potential actions and draw up an implementation plan, or specific tasks and assignments to be accomplished each year, and modified on an as needed basis.

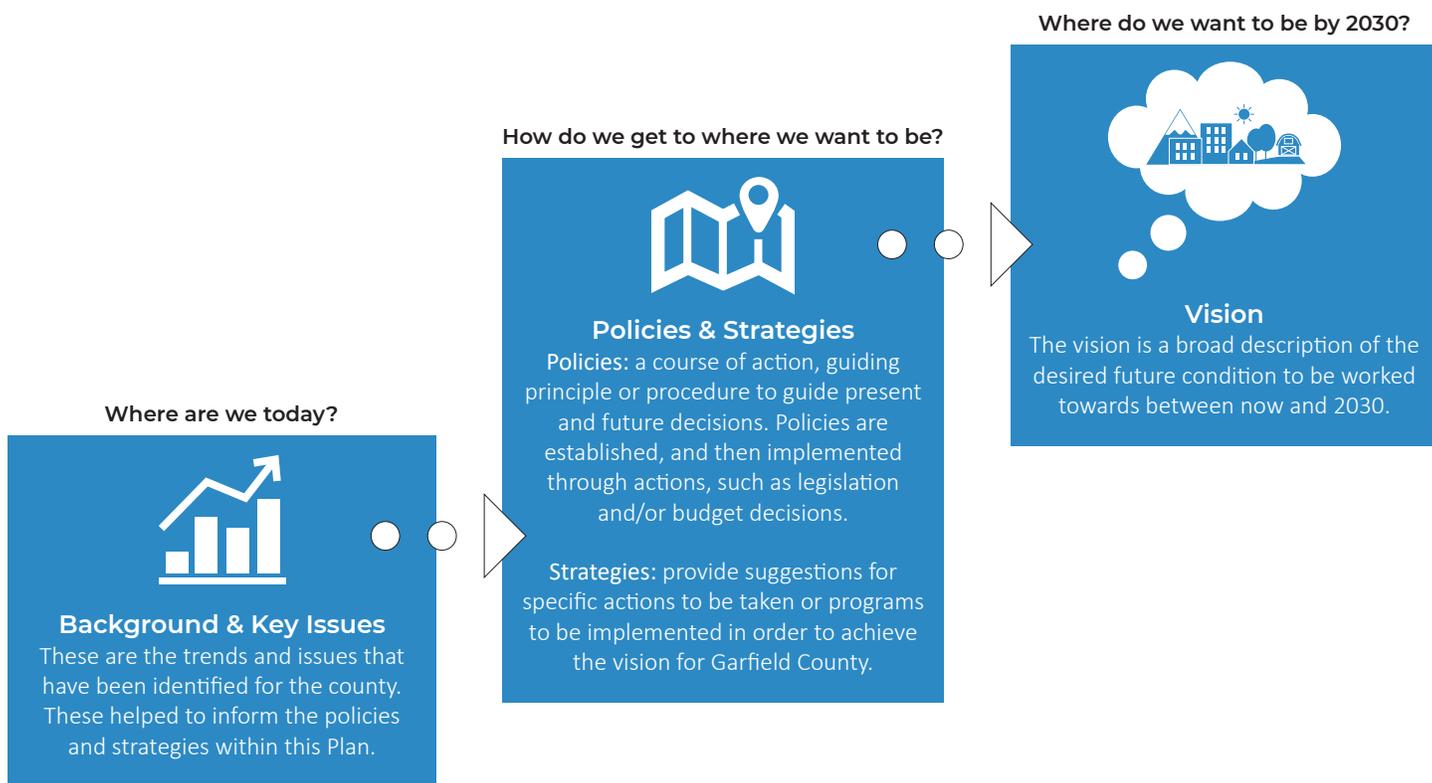


Figure 5: This diagram works to illustrate how the background information, key issues, policies, strategies and visions included in this Plan work together to provide a clear blueprint for where the county is today, where it would like to be and how it will get there.



SECTION 1: URBAN GROWTH AREAS (UGA) & INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

VISION

Intergovernmental cooperation between municipalities and other public agencies has demonstrated successful collaboration and has resulted in the creation of new partnerships on behalf of the residents of the county including the direction of new urban level development to Urban Growth Areas (UGA) where services and infrastructure can be provided in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. There is widespread support in the public for encouraging a significant portion of future growth to occur in and adjacent to municipalities.
2. The county cannot abdicate its land use and regulatory obligations in the unincorporated areas, including areas within an UGA.
3. There are several areas of urban development in the unincorporated county which are served by established metropolitan service or special districts. In these areas, relatively higher density development to serve workforce housing needs should be considered.
4. A municipality's UGA is actually under county jurisdiction but development here can greatly impact town/city plans. County land use decisions, particularly those immediately adjacent to municipal boundaries, have been viewed by local communities, in some cases, as not being compatible and making orderly expansion difficult.
5. Due to the differences between county and municipal land use regulations, it can be difficult to use county land use regulations to achieve objectives of the local community.
6. The county is not well set up to provide urban services organizationally or fiscally. Therefore, another entity is required to provide services if and when urban types of development occur in the unincorporated areas – either a municipality, a special district or metropolitan service district.
7. Because they are difficult to re-subdivide once developed, one (1) acre to five (5) acre lots will generally preclude more dense development. Therefore, it is desirable to avoid this pattern in an UGA.
8. Access to the policy making process must be expanded to ensure public participation from those most affected by land use decisions.
9. The county is very diverse including environment, economy, and geography. All county-wide planning efforts should be responsive to the diversity among subareas in the county.
10. To form strong relationships between the county and its municipalities, it is paramount to respect, adhere to, use and become educated on key policies and goals from existing adopted local plans.



Figure 6: The recent Grand Avenue Bridge replacement project exemplifies a collaborative effort among numerous government agencies.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES (continued)

11. Regional issues should be solved at a regional level and should include issues such as housing, social services, and water.
12. Summary and overview of key issues:
 - i. Increase coordination and communication between the municipalities and the county.
 - ii. Retain rural character outside of UGA limits.
 - iii. Assure that the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use and Development Code are accurate reflections of current county policy and public values.
 - iv. Encourage future development requiring urban services to be located in areas where these services are or can readily be made available.
 - v. Ensure that county land use policies and development approvals are compatible with the existing zoning and future land use objectives of the appropriate municipality.
 - vi. The opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process continues to be an integral part of the county land use planning process.
 - vii. Address regional issues including encouraging the private sector to develop more workforce housing in Urban Growth Areas and areas served by central water and sewer, thereby helping to create more certainty in the development review process.

POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Within defined UGAs, the County Comprehensive Plan, land use code revisions, and individual projects, should be generally consistent with local municipal land use plans and policies.

Strategies:

- i. Maintain and comply with the current Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with each community that stipulates mutual commitments to follow the plans, and procedures for review.
- ii. Review the procedure for efficient coordinated, local municipal input into Planning Commission decisions prior to making recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners.
- iii. Progress toward implementing the Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed annually.
- iv. County and municipal planning staff should meet to update each other on any changes to policies or revisions to their respective comprehensive plans including future land use mapping.
- v. Update Land Use and Development Code minimum lot sizes or density recommendations for certain land use categories to help guide proposals for higher density development and work force housing to adjacent municipalities and Urban Growth Areas served by central water and sewer.

Policy 2: In locating county facilities, the county will consider, where applicable locating future facilities in locations that will help support, maintain and revitalize municipal downtowns.

Strategies:

- i. Annual work sessions with each municipality should include discussion of the status of current and potential future county facilities in each municipality.
- ii. Location of county facilities should be balanced throughout the county consistent with the public's need and anticipated demand for county services.



Policy 3: Projects proposed adjacent to local municipalities requiring urban services will be encouraged to annex into the affected jurisdiction if contiguity exists.

Strategies (continued):

- i. Reserve land areas within UGAs to accommodate growth for the next twenty years, using such tools as Urban Residential Reserve (refer to Figure 7).
- ii. Coordinate regularly with affected governments and agencies as to consistency of their plans with the Comprehensive Plan.
- iii. Annexation to towns and cities should be a priority consideration where municipal water and sewer services are available.
- iv. Where local jurisdictions have implemented strict annexation policies including priority areas for annexation, the county should coordinate development review with the town or city to address the concerns generating the prioritization.
- v. Revenue generating properties such as commercial and industrial areas are often more desirable for annexation than residential properties. Ways to offset this concern should be discussed in joint meetings/work sessions between the county and the municipalities.
- vi. Whenever possible, enclaves surrounded by a municipality should be strongly encouraged to annex into the surrounding municipality.
- vii. County future land use designations, zoning, and standards for compatibility should serve to maintain rural character in the unincorporated County outside of UGAs.

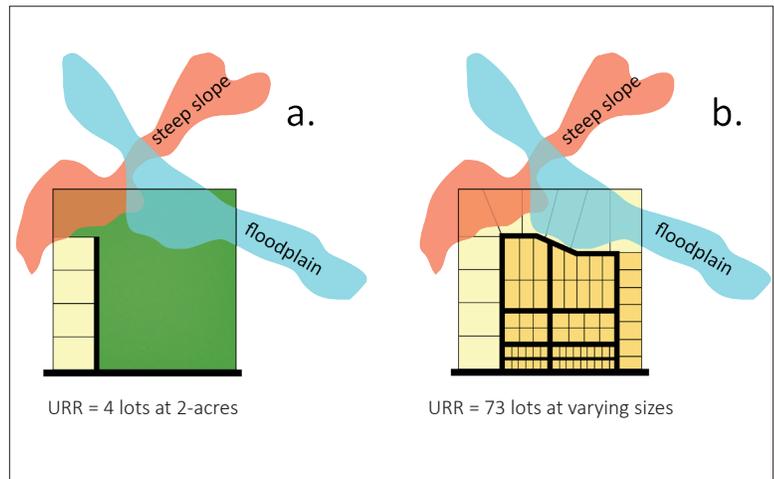


Figure 7: Illustration of the Urban Residential Reserve (URR) concept. Initial development of 4- 2-acre lots reserves the remainder of the property for urban development (not open space) when services and infrastructure are available.

Policy 4: Developments in an UGA are encouraged to have land use and street patterns that are compatible with the affected municipality.

Strategies:

- i. Work with municipalities to adopt a “Major Streets Plan” for its UGA.
- ii. In lieu of developing a streets plan, county referrals to municipalities should specifically request input on streets, access control plans, traffic, and transportation issues of concern to the municipality.
- iii. Where applicable, county development review should require issuance of municipal street access and street cut permits.
- iv. Where traffic impacts from a project will occur primarily within an adjacent municipality, the county could consider adoption of updates to the traffic impact fee section of the Land Use and Development Code to allow conditions of approval requiring payment of additional traffic impact fees to mitigate for impacts on municipal roads and streets serving the proposed development.



Policy 5: Within a locally planned UGA, development applicants for major projects are recommended to obtain project review comments from the local community prior to submitting for county review. The process should be consistent with the executed IGA.

Strategies:

- i. The county should consider increasing the referral time frames for projects affecting an UGA to make submittal of referral comments possible from municipalities well before public hearings, staff report preparation and packet deadlines.
- ii. Pre-Application summaries for potential projects affecting an UGA or located within a 3-Mile Area of Influence should also be sent to the affected municipality.
- iii. For major projects, municipalities should be invited to attend the pre-application meeting.
- iv. In addition to initial comments, affected municipalities should also be referred the application once determined to be complete.

Policy 6: The county will continue to look for creative ways to address regional issues and support projects within or adjacent to municipalities that transcend political boundaries, and those projects that provide services for all county residents including those in unincorporated areas.

Strategies:

- i. Work cooperatively within the region on issues that transcend political boundaries such as housing, transit, economic development, traffic, air quality, wildlife habitat/health, river/watershed protection, and water conservation.
- ii. The county should initiate discussions with municipalities regarding key areas of the county that would benefit from Comprehensive Plan Sub-Area planning in the future and consider initiation of such sub-area plans.
- iii. Continue to support regional trail efforts including but not limited to, the LoVa Trail, Rio Grande Trail, and the Glenwood Canyon Trail connections.
- iv. Continue to support economic development efforts to diversify local economies.
- v. Continue to support regional transportation initiatives including those that provide services to county residents in unincorporated areas.



Figure 8: A driving force behind the recent Grand Avenue Bridge replacement project was the need to better accommodate a commuting workforce. The 2019 Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study found that commuting was the “market” response to affordability challenges.



Strategies (continued):

- vi. The county should participate in the development of local work groups and coalitions with municipalities to address regional impacts from neighboring jurisdictions.
- vii. Continue to support protection of municipal water systems and watersheds through project referrals and conditions of approval and watershed permitting from the affected jurisdiction.



Figure 9: In 2016, the Rifle-Garfield County Airport became home to a new single-engine air tanker (SEAT) base. This base shortens the ground time for pilots battling wildfires in Garfield County and beyond. The SEAT base played a crucial role in battling the recent Lake Christine Fire, near the Town of Basalt. The SEAT base was the result of collaboration among various government agencies, including Garfield County.



VISION



To bring about a range of housing types, costs, and tenancy options that ensure for our current and future residents affordable housing opportunities in safe and efficient residential structures.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. The demand for housing exceeds local supply. As of 2017, there was a shortfall of approximately 3,600 housing units in Garfield County. This demand is projected to increase over the next decade.
2. Municipalities have the capacity to accommodate thousands of additional units but have not been able to do so at the rate needed.
3. Materials and labor costs have risen significantly, resulting in higher construction costs and/or shortages of labor and materials.
4. A significant amount of the county’s employment is found in the upper Roaring Fork Valley, whereas a larger supply of lower cost homes are found in the western part of the county. However, the data collected suggests that when transportation costs are factored in, a majority of people are spending more on the combined costs of housing and transportation than what is considered affordable.
5. Living and working in different communities can have negative impacts on both the commuter and the communities they live and work in, including but not limited to a loss of citizen community involvement, traffic congestion, health impacts, a loss of work/life balance and a general loss of quality of life for commuters.
6. The demographic shift of an aging population will exacerbate the need for additional units and age-friendly design.
7. The county adopted Inclusionary Housing in 2000. In the last 20 years only 43 homes have been deed restricted (only 6 since the last comprehensive plan update) in unincorporated Garfield County. There is a need to determine if this program can be improved.
8. The current development approval process requires a substantial up-front expenditure for developers, yet lacks any certainty that their project will be approved. This is a disincentive to the market playing a role in addressing the need for workforce housing.
9. There are opportunities for greater collaboration between Garfield County Housing Authority and other involved county agencies.
10. The availability of workforce housing and affordable housing is directly linked to attracting and retaining a qualified work force.



Figure 10: The 2019 Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study found that as of 2017, there was a shortfall of roughly 3,600 housing units in Garfield County. The study identified a need for units ranging from < 60% Area Median Income (AMI) to > 160% AMI (refer to Table 2).



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES (continued)

11. Vacation rentals can have both a negative and positive impact on the housing issue. Vacation rentals limit the supply of affordable housing, can create nuisances and change the character of residential neighborhoods, can contribute to rising rents and as currently permitted are not required to meet the same standards for safety and commercial uses, nor pay their share of commercial property taxes as hotels and other lodging facilities (thereby providing an unfair advantage). On the plus side, homeowners that do short term rentals of a room or an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) have the ability to offset their housing costs, making home ownership more affordable.



POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Ensure that current land use planning objectives promote affordable housing.

Strategies:

- i. Review and revise land use regulations to augment current inclusionary zoning requirements for new development. This could potentially include basing the affordable housing requirement on number of units instead of lots, and allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as an accessory to all uses.
- ii. Consider either incentives or requirements for new non-residential development to contribute to the creation of workforce housing.
- iii. Revise land use regulations to allow for variations to development standards such as height bonuses, parking requirements, etc. for developments that include affordable/workforce housing units.
- iv. Explore allowing additional dwelling units on large property holdings consistent with Comprehensive Plan densities for deed-restricted housing.
- v. Hold a workshop on vacation rentals to determine the need to better regulate vacation rentals and potential fees for impacts.
- vi. Work with Home Owners Associations (HOAs) within Planned Unit Developments (PUD) to encourage amendments of PUD regulations that will create opportunity for more housing options within the PUDs such as allowances for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and density requirements.
- vii. Approach the Colorado Division of Water Resources (DWR) to consider mechanisms that would better facilitate affordable housing development such as well permitting requirements by square footage and bathrooms/rooms instead of by unit.
- viii. Reduce, waive, or defer fees for development review, building permits and impact fees for workforce housing.
- ix. Explore changes to the approval process to provide more certainty to developers wishing to develop workforce housing.



Strategies (continued):

- x. Continue involvement with the Regional Housing Steering Committee.
- xi. Explore land use/building code revisions to increase the utilization of tiny homes to meet workforce housing needs.

Policy 2: Encourage affordable workforce housing to be located near regional centers.

Strategies:

- i. Incentivize the development of workforce housing in areas that are adjacent to or in close proximity to:
 - Incorporated Garfield County
 - Employment centers
 - Bus stops
 - Key amenities such as grocery stores, schools, recreation facilities
 - Central water/wastewater

Potential incentives could be density bonuses, reduction in setbacks and simplified approval process.

Policy 3: Support efforts by both the private and public sector to reduce land costs, housing construction costs and carrying costs.

Strategies:

- i. Explore the possibility of public/private partnerships in the production of workforce housing.
- ii. Work with water and sewer providers to change fee structures so that they are assessed to reward small-scale, highly efficient units and possibly reduce or waive tap fees for workforce housing projects.
- iii. Organize educational workshops for the public in collaboration with industry experts, Garfield County Housing Authority (GCHA), lenders and realtors to encourage methods to increase residential construction productivity (i.e. factory-built modular housing) in order to bring more supply to the market.
- iv. Review existing vacant lot analysis and determine areas that are suitable for factory-built housing. Make this list available to the public.
- v. Hold a workshop with lenders, developers, contractors and others associated with housing construction to seek input on potential mechanisms to reduce the cost or regulatory burden on developing housing.
- vi. Explore potential mechanisms to generate funding to assist with the development of workforce housing, including but not limited to an impact fee to fund housing programs and fees on vacation rentals.

Policy 4: Encourage local governments to accommodate the majority of their workforce housing needs and to contribute to improving regional jobs-to-workforce attainable housing imbalances.

Strategies:

- i. Share technical housing information between involved entities.



Strategies (continued):

- ii. Develop a coordinated regional housing strategy in collaboration with the municipalities and special districts.
- iii. Continue involvement with the Regional Housing Steering Committee.

Policy 5: Assure that adequate housing options for Senior Citizens are available.

Strategies:

- i. Monitor census data and other available indicators to assess on-going and future housing needs for senior citizens.
- ii. Provide incentives, including but not limited to density bonuses, and parking space reductions for projects geared toward our aging population.



Table 3: Summary of Estimated Housing Needs by Area Median Income (AMI) by Area in Garfield County | 2017 & 2027

	Carbondale Area		Glenwood Springs Area		New Castle to Parachute Area	
	2017	2027	2017	2027	2017	2027
Less than 60% AMI	591	615	1,126	483	-	-
61%-80% AMI	-	128	107	688	-	-
81%-100% AMI	-	-	-	403	-	-
101%-120% AMI	-	52	169	-	-	-
121%-140% AMI	-	264	157	597	136	-
141%-160% AMI	-	-	381	436	321	457
Greater than 160% AMI	-	-	301	-	334	65
TOTALS	591	1,059	2,241	2,607	791	522

Source: 2019 Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study (<https://www.apcha.org/358/2019-Greater-Roaring-Fork-Regional-Housi>)



SECTION 3: TRANSPORTATION

VISION

Garfield County has a safe, efficient, well-maintained and balanced transportation network that accommodates multi-modal uses and effectively links all communities throughout the Colorado River and Roaring Fork River corridors.

BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. Significant numbers of county residents commute from the Colorado River Valley to employment in the Roaring Fork Valley. This forces a significant amount of traffic through Glenwood Springs which is seeing increased traffic congestion on Highway 82. As more housing is built in Garfield County commute times are expected to increase. Longer commute times have negative impacts economically, environmentally, and to the quality of life of many citizens of the county.
2. Development in unincorporated areas of the county will continue to place demands on roadways initially designed to carry traffic related to agricultural uses.
3. Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) procedures allow development proposals to avoid contributing to intersection improvements by showing less than 20% increase in traffic. This may result in the lack of funding for improvements to many inadequate intersections on a county-wide basis.
4. Heavy truck traffic related to extractive industry causes the roads to deteriorate much faster than normal. The roads were not built for heavy truck traffic and the life of the road is severely shortened due to the truck volumes.
5. The county's Road and Bridge Department revenues are adequate to provide continuing maintenance, but not sufficient to reconstruct roads due to the truck damage, to correct safety deficiencies, or to provide additional capacity.
6. The current road impact fee program bases impact fees on traffic generated from building square footage. This fee system does not account for activities that have significant traffic impacts, but which are not associated with structures. The impact fee system sometimes struggles to address required road upgrades, particularly with regards to CDOT intersections.
7. Without additional funding, the county should anticipate that road conditions will gradually deteriorate and congestion will increase.
8. Many county/state intersections will need improvements to accommodate future development.
9. Concentrating future development will reduce the improvements needed on county roads and allow improvements to be concentrated on those roads directly impacted by development. As a result, it may be possible to maintain some county roads with little or no major improvements.



Figure 11: RFTA is the second largest transit system in Colorado and the largest rural transit system in the United States. Garfield County contracts with the Roaring Fork Transit Authority (RFTA), to provide service from Glenwood Springs to Rifle. RFTA services also extends from Glenwood Springs to Snowmass and Aspen.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES (continued)

10. If a Land Use application triggers a 20% increase on a CDOT roadway an access permit is required. This often leads to required improvements and expensive upgrades that can have a substantial impact on a proposed project.
11. Garfield County contracts with the Roaring Fork Transit Authority (RFTA), to provide service from Glenwood Springs to Rifle. RFTA service also extends from Glenwood Springs to Aspen/Snowmass.
12. Dedicated bicycle transportation in the Roaring Fork Valley is provided by RFTA via the heavily-used Rio Grande trail, and by the CDOT managed Glenwood Canyon bike path. The Colorado River trail is also planned to provide inter-city bicycle travel options from Glenwood to New Castle and potentially beyond. Bicycles are sometimes required to use county, state and local roads either via shared lanes or paved shoulders. The County currently requires 8' shoulders on arterials and 6' shoulders on secondary access roads. However, in some locations topography, a lack of Right-of-Way, and/or site conditions make adequate shoulder widths impossible to achieve.
13. Additional transit options and connections are provided by the Bustang, Ride Glenwood Springs bus service, Greyhound bus service, and Amtrak.
14. The Garfield County Regional Airport near Rifle is an uncontrolled airport (no local tower control) with a 7,000 foot runway that can accommodate up to a 737 airliner.
15. The oil/gas industry has voluntarily made significant financial contributions to the County for maintenance and construction of county roads.
16. The western end of Garfield County has the fewest wildlife impacts from both transportation and urban development; with the anticipated growth projected in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, more people will be drawn to western Garfield County, thereby increasing the potential impacts on wildlife populations.



POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Ensure that county roads are constructed and maintained on a safe, and fiscally sustainable basis.

Strategies:

- i. Examine possible updates to Road Impact Fees. This could include changes to account for traffic based on land uses and updating traffic fees and numbers to Equivalent Single Axle Loads.
- ii. Investigate grant funding opportunities, including from the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) and Safe Routes to School (SRTS).
- iii. Investigate funding options for industrial activities that have major impacts on roads to contribute to maintenance of the county roadway system.
- iv. Assure the interconnectivity of the county roadway system, to provide multiple routes to reduce congestion and provide for emergency access.
- v. Focus infrastructure improvements (and road maintenance) in a cost-effective pattern and in areas where growth is appropriate.



Strategies (continued):

- vi. Support the county's Road and Bridge Department and County Attorney's Office as they continue to create and maintain a map of existing road conditions and ownerships and establish road standards.
- vii. The county does not typically support the creation of new county roads or the extension of existing county roads, however if considered in the future the following criteria should be considered:
 - Logical extension of existing roadway.
 - Presence of existing land uses adjacent to the project.
 - Consistent with future land uses based on the comprehensive plan and the county zoning regulation.
- viii. Maintain historical rights-of-way and access to public lands.

Policy 2: Support public transit services as well as alternative modes of transportation, when and where feasible.

Strategies:

- i. Garfield County will encourage regional public transit systems.
- ii. Garfield County will participate and cooperate with regional/statewide transportation planning efforts to promote access to all available transportation modes for county residents.
- iii. Continue to work with local school districts in support of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs.
- iv. Garfield County will support proposed multi-modal transportation projects, including the LoVa trail, a multi-use trail from Glenwood Springs to New Castle. Once complete, the trail will provide increased access to federal lands and recreational facilities.
- v. Support opportunities for Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

Policy 3: Explore options to address transportation and access issues.

Strategies:

- i. Explore options to further refine the Road Impact Fees to address future upgrades to CDOT intersections.
- ii. Develop area plans or an overlay for development in the Highway 82 (SH-82) corridor. Any options should address Access Permit requirements and improvements.
- iii. Explore mechanisms for the county to address increased traffic from new development.
- iv. Work with CDOT to help address traffic congestion on SH-82.
- v. Work with CDOT to help prioritize intersection updates within the county.
- vi. Continue to support efforts by the City of Glenwood Springs (and all municipalities) for the creation of alternative routes for enhanced safety and connectivity, such as the South Bridge project.



Strategies (continued):

- vii. In the review of future land use amendments, rezoning and land use change permits, consideration shall be given to transportation/development impacts on big game migration corridors, movement patterns along with critical habitat. Staff will coordinate with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to review potential impacts of traffic along with increased intensity of development and determine/implement avoidance strategies.



Figure 12: The paved trail systems in Garfield County, which include the Rio Grande Trail, the Glenwood Canyon Trail and Lower Valley (LoVa) Trail, enable residents of, and visitors to, the county opportunity to travel throughout the county on a bicycle.



VISION



The county has encouraged economic opportunity and diversity to develop in strategic locations by designating a variety of areas as employment and commerce centers. Designated areas have encouraged business clusters to develop in incubators, entrepreneurial and existing business have expanded into these areas. The county has played a key role in providing traditional and communications infrastructure to specific commerce centers.

Light industrial and commercial uses are strategically located within and adjacent to cities and towns by encouraging growth and employment centers to be developed within planned urban growth boundaries. Mixed-use residential and commercial development has been encouraged and the county has required development to pay for a fair share of its impacts.

Industrial uses (including mineral extraction) are located in areas where they do not negatively impact (through visual, traffic or environmental impacts) nearby tourist amenities, quality of life resources and community character.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. The Colorado State Demography Office (CSDO) projects that Garfield County will experience substantial growth in both jobs and population over the period from 2017-2040. This growth is anticipated to exceed the average growth rates experienced between 2001-2017.
2. Garfield County has a strong relationship between job growth and population growth. From 2001 to 2017 the county experienced 30% cumulative growth in jobs and nearly 29% cumulative growth in population. This represented an annual average increase of approximately 491 jobs per year and approximately 829 persons per year.
3. The percent of total households with children will decrease over the coming years.
4. Garfield County’s population is aging. By 2030, the percent of total households ages 65 and older will grow by 12.2%. The percentage of total households ages 64 and younger will experience a slight decline. The number of people in the “working age” cohort (16-64 years old) will shrink, while the number of people in the retirement age cohort (65 years old and older) will grow.
5. Rural areas of the county, including areas with significant growth potential, may have challenges in acquiring adequate water resources. Often these resources have legal and regulatory restrictions on their availability and limitations associated with quantity and quality issues for their use.



Figure 13: Garfield County has been one of the leading producers of natural gas in Colorado for a number of years. In 2018, oil and gas production in the accounted for 31.6% (\$752,029,270) of the total assessed value in Garfield County. The total assessed value in the county, in 2018, was \$2,377,611,310.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES (continued)

6. The CSDO projects that from 2017 to 2040 the county will add an average of 785 jobs per year. This is a 60% increase from the annual average between 2001 and 2017.

The CSDO also projects that from 2017 to 2040 the county's population will increase by an average of 1,287 persons per year. This is a 55% increase from the annual average between 2001 and 2017.

7. The county's population center is shifting to the western part of the county. The area from New Castle to Parachute is projected to account for about 54% (approximately 9,559 people) of the total population growth between 2017 – 2030. The Town of Carbondale and City of Glenwood Springs are projected to account for 21% (approximately 3,793 people) of future growth. The unincorporated areas of the county are projected to account for 25% (approximately 4,460 people) of future growth.
8. These CSDO projections highlight important planning considerations concerning where and how to accommodate the future growth, and how to ensure that public infrastructure and services will accommodate this growth.
9. Garfield County's total annual revenue is highly dependent upon sales and property tax revenues. In 2018, tax revenues accounted for 52.6% (i.e. \$43,512,050) of the county's total annual revenue. Out of the total 2018 tax revenues, 67.1% came from property tax, 26.5% came from sales tax and the remaining 6.4% came from specific ownership tax and other/severance tax.
10. In 2018, the City of Glenwood Springs, the unincorporated areas of the county, the City of Rifle and the Town of Carbondale were the top (4) four contributors to Garfield County's sales tax collections:
 - The City of Glenwood Springs contributed \$4,622,420.28.
 - The unincorporated areas of the county contributed \$2,271,893.04.
 - The City of Rifle contributed \$1,892,020.28.
 - The Town of Carbondale contributed \$1,146,871.89.

11. Oil and gas remains an important component of property tax revenues in the county. Garfield County has been one of the leading producers of natural gas in Colorado for many years. In 2018, oil and gas production accounted for 31.6% (\$752,029,270) of the total assessed value in Garfield County. The total assessed value in 2018 was \$2,377,611,310.

12. Economic Risks: The county has experienced two significant boom/bust cycles in the past 20 years, the "Dot-Com Crash" (2000-2004) and the Great Recession (2007-2009). As of 2017, the total number of jobs in Garfield County stills lags behind its peak employment from 2008.

The 2013 Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan contains the following statement; "Notwithstanding the role of mining, there is also a realization that mining employment is subject to strong external forces (price of oil, gas/oil technology, etc.) that make it vulnerable to variations that can occur suddenly (as has recently happened), and that in the long run, oil and gas are finite resources that gradually diminish."

Tourism, particularly the ski industry, is dependent upon weather conditions which are predicted to experience unpredictable conditions in both the near and long term.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES (continued)

13. Diversification: The county has encouraged economic diversification which has helped to build economic resilience and reduce dependencies on the oil & gas industry. Current patterns suggest an evolution towards increased roles for such sectors as tourism, professional services, health services, mining, transportation, agriculture and warehousing.
14. Aging Population: Aging in place creates challenges for new employees moving into Garfield County trying to find housing options. Household-generated employment has been fueled primarily by retirees – projected to expand to 45% of basic jobs by 2040. The projected outsized economic impact of households (and especially retirees) going forward- if in fact realized- could significantly reshape the Garfield County economy. Seniors are disproportionate consumers of medical and social assistance services, likely implying significant future growth in those sectors.
15. The location of new jobs versus location of new housing for employees to fill those jobs will increase challenges for transportation infrastructure and transit services. Increased commuting times and unpredictable delays impacts worker quality of life.
16. Community quality is the most highly considered factor for business owners and community members in selecting a location to live.
17. Garfield County’s tourism industry is dependent upon the perceived quality of the natural environment by visitors. Negative impacts from development to visual quality, traffic, wildlife, air and water quality and other environmental characteristics can degrade the tourist experience and therefor reduce the tourism economy. A healthy tourist economy requires carefully balancing the economic benefits of industrial development (including mineral extraction) with the tourism industry.



18. Outdoor recreation is a significant contributor to the economy of the County. *The Economic Contribution of Recreation in the Middle Colorado Watershed* (2018), prepared by the Middle Colorado Watershed Council, found that the total outdoor recreation activities in the Middle Colorado River Watershed amounted to \$139,127,151 annually. The study also found that 972 jobs were supported by outdoor recreation in that watershed of the county.
19. “Healthy Lands, Thriving Economies- Maintaining healthy lands and waters is key to attracting outdoor recreationists, who in turn contribute to sustainable local economies.” *The Economic Contribution of Recreation in the Middle Colorado Watershed* (2018).
20. Tourism and outdoor recreation sites adjacent to and/or within close proximity to major transportation corridors and communities represent unique opportunities for enhancing the economy.
21. While there are vast amounts of oil shale resources in Northwest Colorado, at this time there is no technology available, nor none expected to be developed in the foreseeable future, to viably produce oil from the shale. As a result, oil shale development is not anticipated to be a factor in the county’s economy for the foreseeable future.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES (continued)

22. In 2015, the Rifle Garfield County Airport was selected as the Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting. The majority of the properties immediately surrounding the airport, including the privately held Airport Industrial Park, have been annexed into the City of Rifle.
23. Garfield County's agribusiness has trended up moderately over the past several years. The agribusiness sector generated approximately 1,191 jobs in Garfield County in 2017, according to the CSDO. Agribusiness accounted for 3.5% of total jobs in the county, and 4.9% of basic jobs. Agricultural employment has exhibited a relatively high degree of stability year to year in contrast to the booms/busts of some industries such as oil & gas.
24. On April 16, 2019 Senate Bill 19-181 was signed into law, which significantly expanded the potential for local governments to regulate the location of oil and gas facilities.
25. Affordable, reliable and quality broadband service has become a critical utility. The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) determined that broadband internet access is a utility, as necessary to contemporary life as electricity, roads, and water systems. Advanced broadband infrastructure has the potential to: create jobs; increase a community's ability to compete on a global scale; catalyze and support innovation and new technologies; increase opportunities for a region's companies; enhance public safety; provide better and less expensive health care; and, provide greater educational opportunities.
26. The Colorado 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) indicates that wildlife recreation supports the following numbers, annually, in the Northwest Region of Colorado (Garfield County's land mass represents approximately 13% of this region):
 - 4,701 jobs.
 - \$173,000,000 in salaries and wages.
 - \$287,000,000 in GDP contribution.
 - \$436,000,000 in total economic input.

POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Support the economic viability of oil and gas extraction and transport in Garfield County.

Strategies:

- i. Track the development of regulations by the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC), the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) and other regulatory agencies to advocate for rules that better reflect the characteristics of the County and Piceance Basin/Rural geology and operations so as to be more cost-effective and not unduly burdensome or economically punitive to responsible gas development and production.
- ii. Pro-actively identify key issues applicable to Garfield County and develop positions on those issues for each of the specific COGCC and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) rule-makings.
- iii. Actively participate in the COGCC stakeholder process leading to rule-making which reflects Garfield County's interests.

Policy 2: The county recognizes that the tourism industry is an important part of the regional economy and the county recognizes that the tourism industry is enhanced by: (1) open space and scenic vistas; (2) public trails and other recreational opportunities; (3) public access to public lands; (4) a healthy environment and habitats for hunting and fishing; (5) green belts and open area between communities; (6) clean air and water; and, (7) local foods and local produce.



Strategies:

- i. Evaluate the potential impact of proposed new or expanded economic development opportunities upon the overall quality of the existing community.
- ii. Identify historic trails near communities and I-70, such as the Transfer Trail, which have recreational and historic value. Take steps to preserve these trails for their recreational and historic value. Avoid impacts whenever possible and mitigate when necessary.
- iii. Define and preserve the visual resources and natural features which support the historic context of identified historic trails.
- iv. Ensure that commercial/industrial developments are compatible with adjacent land uses and preserve the visual quality and natural environment of the county.
- v. Where appropriate, encourage diverse tourism related development in order to sustain it as an economic and employment base in Garfield County.
- vi. Ensure that tourism development is compatible with adjacent land uses and preserves the natural environment of the county.
- vii. Encourage commercial development in areas where existing infrastructure (water/wastewater facilities) are currently available.
- viii. Encourage tourism development in areas where natural resources are suitable and appropriate levels of infrastructure are available to support the activities.
- ix. Evaluate the future impact of Garfield County's projected demographic trends of an aging and increasing retirement population and the reduction in working aged population to the county's economy.

Policy 3: Careful consideration will be given to the visual, traffic and environmental impacts of new or expanded industrial development upon tourism, quality of life resources and community character.

Strategies:

- i. Ensure that impacts from industrial development (including mineral extraction) are adequately mitigated to minimize negative impacts on tourism, quality of life resources and community character.

Policy 4: Strengthen Garfield County's economic resiliency for employment and income generation by continuing to diversify the economy.

Strategies:

- i. Promote a strategy which implements an interconnected approach between economic sectors to broaden the economic base of county.
- ii. Encourage the development of a diversified industrial base recognizing physical location-to-market capabilities of the community, and the social and environmental impacts of industrial uses.
- iii. Promote the growth of institutions that educate the county workforce.
- iv. Encourage expansion of industries such as health care and education which provide both new jobs and expanded community services.



Strategies (continued):

- v. Strengthen cooperation with local communities through partnerships that promote regional economic expansion.
- vi. Promote the expansion of broadband services throughout Garfield County which will expand the opportunities for “location-neutral” businesses.

Policy 5: Direct commercial and industrial development to locations which possess the appropriate physical features and community facilities and services.

Strategies:

- i. Encourage the retention and expansion of viable commercial uses that meet the convenience shopping needs of county residents.
- ii. Encourage commercial development to locate in urban growth areas and incorporated municipalities.
- iii. Coordinate with local transit entities to ensure that transportation modes and nodes are directly linked with existing economic centers through the development review process and inspection.
- iv. Ensure that there is an adequate amount of land zoned for industrial/commercial development, consistent with long-term economic development objectives.
- v. Ensure that commercial/industrial developments are compatible with adjacent land use. Consideration should be given to all potential negative impacts including but not limited to visual quality, traffic impacts, air quality impacts, water quality, wildlife habitat, etc.
- vi. Reduce the discrepancy between the location of jobs and the housing necessary to accommodate the employees to fill those jobs.
- vii. Encourage commercial/tourism development in areas where affordable housing is convenient.



Figure 14: Coordinating commercial and industrial development with local transit entities could help to create more opportunities for Garfield County’s workforce to make their daily commute via transit services provided by entities such as the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA). This in turn may reduce the number of workers commuting in their personal vehicle.



SECTION 5: RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

VISION

Open spaces, recreational trails and parks are available throughout the county and access to public lands and river corridors have been increased, preserved and enhanced. Recreational/outdoor tourism industries are an important and growing part of Garfield County's economy and recreational facilities are encouraged and supported in appropriate locations throughout the county. Improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities are also encouraged throughout the county to promote public health and well-being.

BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. The county has traditionally supported (contributed to) the efforts of other organizations to create recreational trails and provide public access to the Colorado and Roaring Fork Rivers.
2. Zoning, Subdivision and Planned Unit Development (PUD) regulations must be consistent with general county open space and recreational objectives.
3. A number of conservation easements exist in Garfield County and are under the oversight of non-profit organizations.
4. There are no bicycle or pedestrian facilities connecting Glenwood Springs and New Castle through South Canyon. In order to provide access CDOT allows bicycles to use I-70.
5. Acquisition of open space (land and/or easements) is the surest method of compensating land owners fairly.
6. Recreational opportunities are an important part of tourism in Garfield County.
7. Garfield County does not currently have an open space and/or trails program.
8. In 2016, Garfield County through a LiveWell grant had prepared the Garfield County Needs Assessment with a focus on improving public health through the provision of improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Where appropriate, new residential development should provide recreation opportunities for residents that are appropriate to the density and type of development or that contributes land and/or funding to county-wide trail and recreation system. Large developments should provide recreational/transportation facilities internal to the development and connections to external recreational/transportation facilities as appropriate.



Figure 15: The Rio Grande Trail is one of the many outdoor recreation amenities that supports the high quality of life in Garfield County. The Rio Grande Trail is a paved trail system that travels between Glenwood Springs and Aspen.



Strategies:

- i. Work with municipalities and other organizations to collaboratively develop a Colorado River trail and preservation plan.
- ii. Open space and recreation areas approved in subdivisions and PUDs must include provision for maintenance in perpetuity.
- iii. Any actions regarding open space and trails must respect the property rights of land owners in the county and must be based on the concepts of just compensation or mutual benefit for landowners, residents and visitors.
- iv. Proposed development adjacent to streams/rivers with rafting or fishing potential are encouraged to dedicate easements for public access to these areas, where compatible with wildlife habitat.
- v. Update the subdivision regulations to specify appropriate pedestrian and bicycle facilities to ensure multi-modal connectivity within developments and to adjoining networks.

Policy 2: Support the protection of public access to rivers, streams and public lands along with the preservation of valuable outdoor recreation and open space lands.

Strategies:

- i. Create incentives, such as density bonuses, for the provision of public access to rivers and streams.
- ii. Support the efforts of organizations and towns to establish public access to rivers, streams and public lands.
- iii. Continue to coordinate with existing land conservation organizations in their efforts to provide tools for land owners and the public to conserve property.
- iv. Coordinate with Colorado Parks and Wildlife on proposed or expanded river access, public land access and trail planning processes.

Policy 3: Provide opportunities for the tourism industry to utilize recreational resources as well as to preserve and enhance recreation resources for local access.

Strategies:

- i. Encourage development that contributes to the continuation and enhancement of commercial tourism in or near recreation areas.
- ii. Continue to provide funding and in-kind services as they become available, to municipalities and local outdoor recreation organizations promoting the development and expansion of recreational trails and facilities.
- iii. Continue to work with the BLM and USFS through Garfield County federal land planning efforts to maintain public access and utilization of public lands for outdoor recreation.
- iv. Protect existing public recreational facilities from negative impacts of development.



Policy 4: Support the development of the Lower Valley (LoVa) Trail connecting Glenwood Springs to Parachute as a facility that will improve the safety of those choosing alternative modes of travel, increase tourism to the area, enhance our economies, promote connections to public lands and recreational facilities and provide additional recreational facilities to improve the health and well-being of Garfield County residents.

Strategies:

- i. Continue to support the development of the LoVa trail through in-kind services and funding as it becomes available.

Policy 5: Promote public health and well-being through the promotion and support of recreational facilities.

Strategies:

- i. Continue to support efforts to preserve valuable open space, unique ecological and archeological features, and recreational facilities.
- ii. Continue to work with the Garfield County Public Health Department and the school districts to identify improvements, projects and programs that will benefit the health and well-being of students and the residents of Garfield County.



Figure 16: Trail systems, such as those in South Canyon west of Glenwood Springs or those on Red Hill just north of Carbondale, are important to the quality of life in Garfield County, as well as the county’s tourism and outdoor recreation industries.



VISION

Promote and protect local agriculture through the adoption of policies designed to strengthen the agricultural sector of the economy, conserve agricultural lands for agricultural uses, protect the natural resources that sustain agriculture in Garfield County and preserve Garfield County's rural character.

BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. Agricultural enterprises and activities are an important sector of the Garfield County economy as well as a key aspect of Garfield County's current and historic character. The Comprehensive Plan fosters and promotes a diverse and sustainable agricultural economy as an integral part of its activities to conserve and preserve agricultural lands in the county.
2. The protection and preservation of agricultural lands is important to continued agricultural uses in the County. The Comprehensive Plan calls for urban growth to be located within or adjacent to existing communities to eliminate sprawl and to preserve agricultural lands for continued agricultural use. The preservation of water resources for agricultural purposes is also encouraged through land use regulations and conscientious water use practices.
3. The prime agricultural lands in the county are also those lands which present the least development constraints (geology, topography, water availability) and are therefore potential targets for transition into more intensive uses.
4. With national disruptions in the food supply, costs of transportation, and desire to preserve agricultural lands, there is a growing awareness of the benefits of having a local food supply.
5. As of 2017, the net farm income in the county was \$4,696,000 which is the highest it has been in the last 20 years. Despite this increase in net farm income, the percentage of total farms in the county with net losses has increased by 13.7%. This, along with other farm profitability data, indicates that there are a growing number of farms struggling to become profitable, however those farms that are profitable are experiencing healthy growth in their net gains.
6. Over the last 20 years, the total number of farms in the county with hired labor has increased from 121 to 151 farms. With this increase in labor and a growing need for employee housing, a reevaluation of the County's policy and requirements for agricultural employee housing to better serve farm/ranch operators and laborers is needed.
7. With the legalization of the 2018 Farm Bill and Colorado's Amendment 64, many farmers have begun transitioning from traditional forms of agriculture to hemp cultivation. As the hemp industry is fairly new, the impacts of this conversion are still relatively unknown.



Figure 17: As of 2017, "Beef Cattle Ranching and Farming" was the most prevalent type of farm in Garfield County, accounting for 34.9% of all farms in the county.



POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Ensure that current land use planning objectives protect, support and strengthen both new and existing agricultural uses.

Strategies:

- i. Revise land use regulations to include the provision for limited visitor-serving commercial uses to be permissible in agricultural areas if they promote agriculture and are secondary and incidental to the area's agricultural production.
- ii. Revise land use regulations to better support agricultural related facilities and services within agricultural areas if they are designed to serve agricultural uses within the immediate area and if they are not detrimental to agricultural use of other properties in the vicinity.
- iii. Review and revise the existing Agricultural Employee Housing Affidavit to better serve farm/ranch operators and laborers.
- iv. Consider including provisions for temporary agricultural employee housing facilities, including provisions for recreational vehicles, tiny homes and mobile homes.
- v. Review the effectiveness of the Rural Land Development Exemption (RLDE) and make applicable changes to strengthen program.
- vi. Agricultural uses, along with their accessory and subordinate uses are not subject to traffic impact fees. Changes should be made to the Land Use and Development Code to define/clarify the implementation of this strategy.
- vii. Support programs and implement policies and regulations that promote climate resiliency in agricultural uses.
- viii. To reduce development pressures on agricultural lands, direct higher density development to infill areas, incorporated areas of Garfield County and within urban service boundaries, along with areas serviced by water and sewer.

Policy 2: Encourage the preservation and protection of existing agricultural land.

Strategies:

- i. Evaluate how to make the Conservation Subdivision option (a major subdivision option that allows reduced lot sizes and provides density bonuses in exchange for the preservation of rural lands) more attractive to developers through additional incentives and improved awareness of the option for developers.
- ii. Explore changes to the Rural (R) zone district in order to mitigate issues that can arise between incompatible uses allowed in the district by various levels of review.
- iii. Evaluate various types of incentives to encourage clustered development in areas that present potential incompatibility issues and discourage densities greater than the underlying future land use designation if the proposed development would adversely affect the adjacent agricultural operations.
- iv. Protect agricultural operations from conflicts with non-agricultural uses by requiring buffers between proposed non-agricultural uses and adjacent agricultural operations.
- v. Promote the agricultural community by maintaining existing infrastructure improvements such as roads/bridges.



Policy 3: Work cooperatively with other agencies to strengthen agricultural programs intended to meet the vision of this section.

Strategies:

- i. Work collaboratively with soil conservation districts in their efforts to survey and catalog irrigation ditches throughout the county. Use information gathered for more efficient ditch company notification procedures for Land Use Change applications.
- ii. Work with land trusts, conservation groups and governmental entities, to support their efforts to preserve agricultural lands.
- iii. Support efforts of Garfield County Vegetation Management Division to address regulations and practices specific to noxious weeds and pest control on fallow and abandoned lands.
- iv. Support initiatives that promote the growth and resiliency of agricultural uses, for example agricultural diversification, sustainable farming practices, agri-tourism, farm to table operations, community supported agriculture (CSA), farmer’s market, gleaning, etc.



Figure 18: Cattle ranching and cowboys are an important part of Garfield County’s economy, as well as a connection to the county’s heritage.



VISION

Provide planning direction and tools that address current and future impacts on community and rural water resources to help ensure the provision of legal, adequate, dependable, cost-effective and environmentally sound waste water and water services for existing and future residents and development. Environmentally sound services include consideration of sustainability, impacts on habitats and riparian ecosystems, and long term resilience to weather variability and drought.

BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

- 1. Water is essential to all life in the watershed. Potential threats to the water supply include, but are not limited to, climate change and drought cycles, development pressure including residential and industrial/commercial, and reservoirs, and inter-basin transfers.
2. High water quality and water quantity need to be preserved and enhanced through stringent regulation of waste water treatment and disposal as well as regulation of detrimental surface uses.
3. Protecting local water resources is essential to the vitality of Garfield County.
4. Rural areas of the county, including areas with significant growth potential, may have challenges in acquiring adequate water resources. Often water resources have legal and regulatory restrictions on availability and limitations associated with quantity and quality issues for use.
5. There are significant benefits to locating growth and development in areas of Garfield County where sufficient water resources exist.
6. Benefits to Garfield County's economy from healthy lakes, rivers and streams are significant and should be protected and enhanced.
7. Monitoring and tracking groundwater issues could help Garfield County better understand water quality and quantity in the unincorporated areas of the county.
8. Water hauling may not be a long term reliable solution for water quality and/or quantity issues.
9. Water efficiency measures can help to conserve water resources in Garfield County and can be part of long term solutions to limited water resources and help to extend the life of limited resources.
10. More efficient irrigation practices can be an effective part of water conservation measures but may also have unintended consequences related to aquifer recharge.
11. Water issues transcend boundaries and necessitate collaboration, coordination and partnership among Counties, Towns, Cities, Special Districts, Conservancy Districts, Private Water Service Providers, and State Agencies.



Figure 19: The Colorado River is one of the key water resources in Garfield County. The river is also important to Garfield County's tourism and outdoor recreation industries.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES (continued)

12. Implementing best management practices and resource protection measures will help to ensure the long term viability for water for existing and future developments.
13. Current climate and weather variability trends present a significant threat to our County's character and ecosystems in the near and long-term and should be addressed in the county's land use regulations and policies.

POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Development located adjacent to municipalities or water and sanitation districts with available capacity in their central water/sewer systems will be prioritized and required to tie into these systems where feasible.

Strategies:

- i. Work with existing special districts to coordinate their service area and expansion plans with county policies, future land use plans and mapping.
- ii. New development should be clustered around existing water and sanitation districts and located within their approved service area if feasible.
- iii. Encourage special districts to expand services consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map for new development or growth centers.
- iv. The county should actively monitor water and sewer capacities for special districts through annual reporting and utilize said capacity to potentially identify areas for future development and zoning.
- v. Annexation to towns and cities should be a priority consideration where municipal water and sewer services are available. Updated intergovernmental agreements can be utilized to formalize coordination with the towns and cities.
- vi. Where municipalities have implemented policies limiting out-of-town taps, the county should coordinate development review with the town or city to address the concerns generating the policy and encourage provision of services within the town or city's Urban Growth Area.
- vii. County future land use mapping needs to include water and sanitation special districts and larger private community systems and their approved service areas.
- viii. The county should evaluate the need for code updates to the 400-foot requirement for connection to existing water and sewer facilities along with other potential incentives for connection to central systems.

Policy 2: Development proposals in rural areas without existing central water and/or sewer systems are required to show that legal, adequate, dependable and environmentally sound water and waste water disposal facilities can be provided.

Strategies:

- i. Develop standards for On-Site Wastewater Treatments Systems (OWTS) that will enable them to be used in cluster developments in rural areas such as provisions for shared engineered systems.
- ii. Avoid the proliferation of OWTS, which if not carefully monitored and maintained, have the potential to pollute surface and ground water.



Strategies (continued):

- iii. Engineered OWTS systems or designs by a qualified professional shall be required for all new, replacement or repaired systems.
- iv. The county should actively monitor through the Colorado Division of Water Resources (DWR) data base trends in well depth and production to continue to refine information on areas at risk for low production, dry holes and low water quality.
- v. While water hauling is generally not a long-term reliable solution, the county should coordinate with local municipalities and districts that are selling water for hauling, and identify solutions that could help to ensure water availability, including the potential sale of out-of-town taps.
- vi. Encourage sub-area planning for unincorporated areas and watersheds to tailor policies, zoning and initiatives to location-specific needs.
- vii. Update Land Use and Development Code minimum lot sizes for rural lots with wells and OWTS and clarify the intent of the pre-existing lot exceptions.
- viii. Establish a system for analyzing the adequacy of a proposed water supply for all purposes associated with the development proposal, including all domestic or other associated uses, such as accessory dwelling units, landscaping and firefighting.
- ix. Where appropriate, encourage Water Conservation Districts to expand their service areas to make additional well permits available through their water augmentation plans.

Policy 3: Require new development to mitigate impacts on existing water/sewer systems.

Strategies:

- i. Include in the Land Use and Development Code requirements for water conservation practices for all new development including subdivisions and land use change permits.
- ii. Update the Land Use and Development Code to require consideration of Source Water Protection Plans as part of subdivision and land use change permitting where applicable.
- iii. Work with water and sewer providers to revise fee structures so that they reward small-scale, highly efficient units and possibly reduce or waive tap fees for workforce housing projects.
- iv. Continue to develop and update Source Water Protection Plans and implement applicable best management strategies to protect the quality and quantity of ground water aquifers. Support efforts to increase awareness of domestic water source protection issues.
- v. In addition to surface water protection, land use and development review should consider implications for aquifer depletion, subsurface water quality and impacts to domestic water wells.
- vi. Continue to implement stormwater management provisions of the Land Use and Development Code and periodically review standards to improve protection of surface water resources.



Policy 4: Encourage updates to Division of Water Resources (DWR) Policies and Regulations to address practical issues with well permits, referral review and implementation of the county’s Land Use and Development Code.

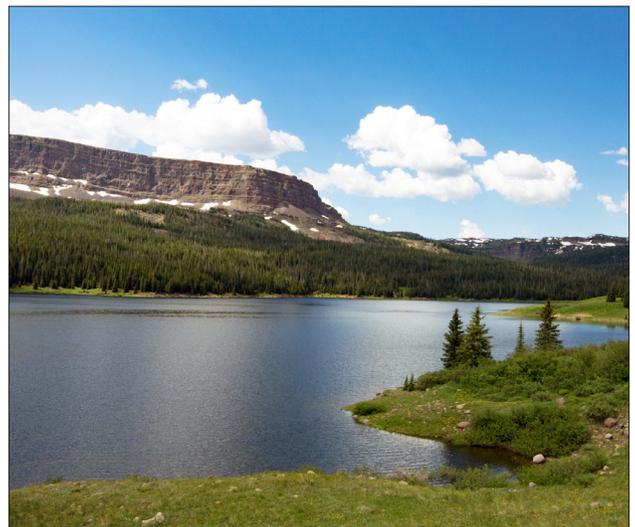
Strategies:

- i. Coordinate with the DWR on updates to DWR’s policies that expand opportunities for creation of workforce housing units in rural locations and locations served by private wells.
- ii. The county should work with the DWR to consider updates to DWR’s policies to address well permit restrictions by the number of bedrooms and not by definitions of units based on kitchen facilities.
- iii. Work with the DWR to address or revise policies regarding leasing of units or portions of units that do not increase the number of bedrooms.
- iv. Encourage coordination between the DWR and local conservation districts to help ensure access to augmentations plans for a majority of county residents and property owners.

Policy 5: Encourage planning for water conservation and drought conditions.

Strategies:

- i. Update the Land Use and Development Code’s landscaping standards and requirements to address drought tolerant species and xeriscape options for landscaping improvements.
- ii. Research, in coordination with an agricultural working group, the science on irrigation ditch operation and potential benefits of maintaining flood irrigation and avoiding piping of ditches in areas identified as critical for aquifer recharge.
- iii. The county should continue to monitor water supply and legal water rights issues in the Colorado River Basin and the potential impacts on water providers including local jurisdictions, special districts, private water systems, and individual wells.
- iv. The county should continue to actively engage in contingency planning for the Upper Colorado River Basin to include work with the Colorado River Conservation District and the Colorado River Roundtable.
- v. Planning for increased probability for drought conditions should include expanded assessment of Water Supply Plans for major subdivisions including improved documentation of physical water supply.
- vi. Planning for increased probability for drought conditions should include expanded requirements for wildland fire mitigation for major subdivision review.
- vii. All special districts and private water systems should include water conservation provisions in operation plans and rate structures. The county should provide technical assistance and facilitation in addressing this issue.



Strategies (continued):

- viii. The county is encouraged to work with private and public individuals and agencies on strategies including renewable energy, drought mitigation, resource management to address forest infestations and degraded habitats, wildfire mitigation, resiliency planning for more extreme weather events, and expanded opportunities for water conservation.
- ix. Efficient use of water by irrigators, homeowners, agricultural users, and other water users to conserve water along with the adoption of appropriate efficiency measures and programs to protect healthy flows in the area rivers and creeks is encouraged.
- x. Support programs and implement policies and regulations that promote climate resiliency as part of water management and watershed planning efforts.

Policy 6: Encourage a holistic approach to address protection of the county’s water resources and impacts from new development.

Strategies:

- i. Preserve, protect, and improve water resources and riparian and wetland habitat throughout the Roaring Fork and Colorado River valleys through development of integrated water management plans and watershed planning.
- ii. Ensure that Land Use Change Permit Applications are referred to the appropriate community resources, with expertise on water issues, as applicable.
- iii. Enhance and protect the Roaring Fork, Colorado and Crystal Rivers including protection of minimum stream flows in these rivers and other important tributaries in order to ensure a healthy aquifer and sustain the fisheries and other recreational activities.
- iv. Through the development review process require Irrigation Water Management Plans for major developments as appropriate, to continue to ensure the sustainability of agricultural resources.
- v. Support Integrated Water Management Plans including strategies to reduce water use, increase water recycling and efficiency, and promote alternative water sources. Work to expand the area of the county covered by watershed master plans and Integrated Water Management Plans and work to implement strategies recommended by said plans.
- vi. The county continues to acquire water rights to ensure the county’s role in future regional planning on stream flow, legal water rights issues, habitat protection and recreational uses.

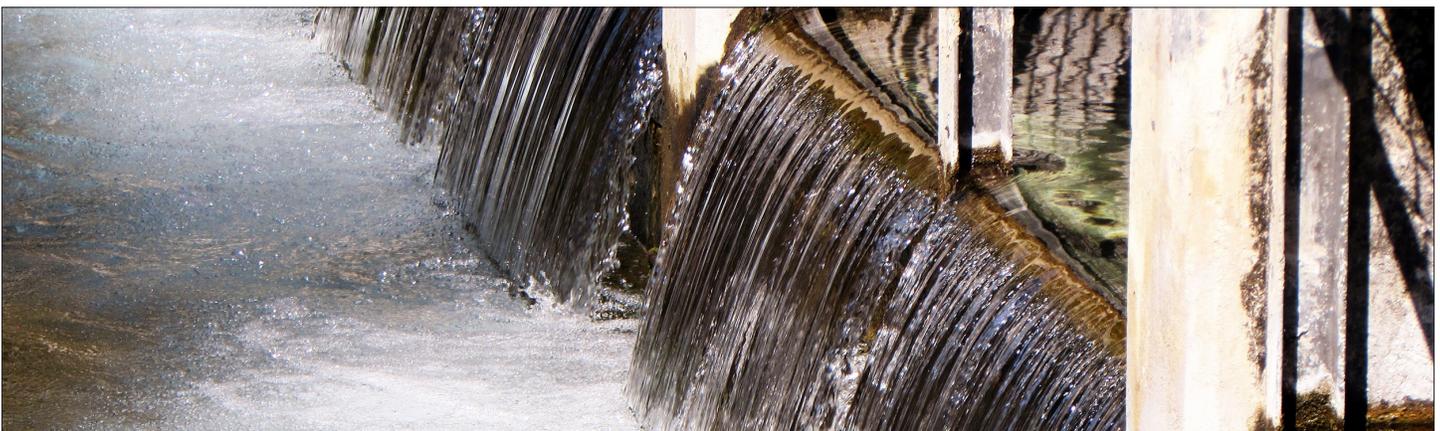


Figure 20: The Rifle Falls Fish Hatchery is a Colorado Parks and Wildlife cold water fish production facility located off East Rifle Creek in Garfield County.



SECTION 8: NATURAL RESOURCES, HABITAT AND WILDLIFE

VISION



Ensure that natural, scenic, ecological, and critical wildlife habitat resources are protected and/or impacts mitigated. Protect existing access to natural resources and ensure appropriate reclamation measures occur after extraction processes. Direct incompatible development away from ecologically sensitive areas. Preserve natural drainage patterns and cooperatively manage drainage that impacts communities.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. Nature-based tourism is an integral component of the county’s economy. Therefore, it is important to respect the natural environment that brings residents and visitors to the Garfield County.
2. Many high-priority wildlife habitat areas and migration corridors exist in Garfield County. Over the coming years, the county will continue to grow, resulting in greater potential for conflict between these important habitat areas and areas targeted for development. In addition, an increase in people participating in outdoor recreation activities will result in greater pressures on these high priority habitat areas.
3. Many of the natural resources in the county are also under the jurisdiction of other agencies and extend beyond county boundaries. Therefore, a coordinated approach between all involved agencies is required.
4. The continuity of wildlife corridors, preservation of riparian and other wildlife habitat, protection of native fish species and water quality and quantity are all important to watershed health. Threats include development pressure in sensitive areas from industry, land use and roads.



Figure 21: Garfield County’s Comprehensive Plan 2030 strives to protect critical wildlife habitat areas in the county.



POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Encourage the protection and preservation of critical wildlife habitat.

Strategies:

- i. Protect critical wildlife habitat from conflicts with development by requiring appropriate buffers between proposed development and habitat area.
- ii. Encourage higher intensity development away from critical wildlife habitat areas and migration corridors as identified by Colorado Parks and Wildlife's High Priority Habitat mapping layers, along with the Colorado National Heritage Program's report "Survey of Critical Biological Resources- Garfield County, Colorado, Volume I". Direct development to infill areas, incorporated areas of Garfield County and within urban service boundaries and areas serviced by water and sewer.
- iii. Through the county GIS Department, regularly update wildlife habitat maps and make wildlife data available to county residents and visitors.
- iv. Support Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) habitat protection efforts and continue efforts to coordinate/cooperate with CPW on all wildlife/habitat matters.
- v. Work collaboratively with land trusts, conservation organizations and governmental entities to support their efforts in preserving critical wildlife habitat.

Policy 2: Avoid disturbance to wildlife habitat; where disturbance cannot be avoided, require development to fully address and mitigate potential negative impacts.

Strategies:

- i. Continue to integrate an environmental review process for the approval of Land Use Change Permits and evaluate the LUDC's overall effectiveness in this review process.
- ii. Coordinate and communicate with applicable federal and state agencies to ensure that appropriate reclamation measures occur after extraction operations through adherence to reclamation plans and bond release requirements.
- iii. Require detailed impact analyses for developments proposed within or adjacent to critical wildlife habitats or migration routes.
- iv. Evaluate how to make the Conservation Subdivision option (a major subdivision option that allows reduced lot sizes and provides density bonuses in exchange for the preservation of rural lands) more attractive to developers through additional incentives and improved awareness of the option for developers.
- v. Evaluate various types of incentives to encourage clustered development in areas that present potential impacts to wildlife habitat and discourage densities greater than the underlying future land use designation if the proposed development would adversely affect wildlife habitat.



Policy 3: Work cooperatively with involved agencies to ensure natural resources are protected and preserved.

Strategies:

- i. Work collaboratively with appropriate community resources such as the Middle Colorado Watershed Council, Colorado River District and Roaring Fork Conservancy in their efforts to protect and enhance the health of watersheds in the county; consider adding the agencies to list of referral agencies for Land Use Change Permit applications.
- ii. Continue to refer all Land Use Change applications to Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) for input on wildlife habitat concerns.
- iii. Discourage development in areas of high or extreme wildfire hazards.
- iv. Continue to monitor air quality issues within the county and respond, if necessary, if negative trends are detected.



Figure 22: Douglas Pass exemplifies one of many natural resources in Garfield County.



VISION



In working with mineral extraction projects, the county will protect the public health, safety and welfare of its citizens. Ensure that mineral extraction is regulated appropriately to promote responsible development and provide benefit to the general public. Ensure that mineral extraction activities mitigate their effects on the natural environment, including air quality, water quality, wildlife habitat or important visual resources.



BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. Garfield County has been one of the leading producers of natural gas in Colorado for many years. The county has significant mineral resources that have, and will continue to have, a considerable benefit to the economic health of the county.
2. The natural gas boom, which spurred the county's economy in the 2000s, was driven in part by a rapid escalation in gas prices. However, prices continue to be low and as of September 2019 are at \$2.55 per Million Btu.
3. As of 2008, nearly one-third of all mineral extraction industry employment for the state of Colorado was located in Garfield and the neighboring Mesa and Rio Blanco counties. Between 2004 and 2005, Garfield County experienced a rapid increase in its share of statewide industry employees, which then leveled off and modestly declined between 2006 and 2009. The industry slowed dramatically in 2009 as gas prices fell and operators began pulling drilling rigs to pursue emerging gas field prospects elsewhere in the U.S.
4. Mining, gravel and hard rock extraction operations can have significant impacts on communities including impacts to visual quality, traffic, environmental health and community character.
5. Beginning in 2019, new state statute (Senate Bill 19-181) expanded the role of government to regulate siting for oil and gas facilities.

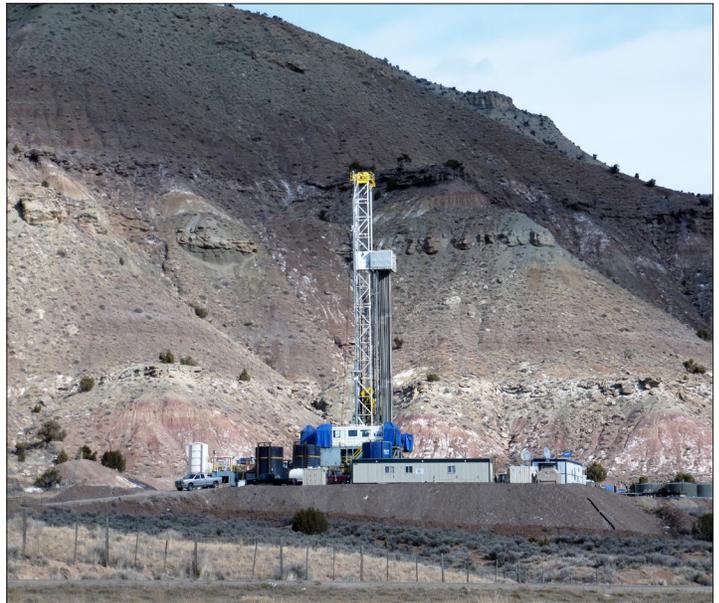


Figure 23: Mineral extraction (ex. mining, oil and gas extraction, etc.) has long been a part of Garfield County's history and economy.



POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Support the legal rights and privileges of surface and mineral owners to extract and develop their interests as well as the legal rights and privileges of private property owners and the general public to have the mineral estate developed in a reasonable manner and to have adverse impacts mitigated.

Strategies:

- i. Adopt a Mineral Extraction Master Plan consistent with Colorado Revised Statute (CRS) 34-1-304.
- ii. Maintain and enhance cooperation with oil/gas industry to maintain relations and monitor market conditions. The objective is to forewarn the county of impending changes in employment and/or well drilling activity.
- iii. Ensure that developers of energy or mineral extraction projects contribute proportionately to the construction and operation of any public improvements which are, or will be, required by their projects.
- iv. Direct large-scale hard rock mining operations away from incompatible uses such as municipalities, tourist facilities, neighborhoods and areas where community character will be negatively impacted.
- v. Maintain an inventory of viable sand and gravel resources in the county using information available from the Colorado Geological Survey and permit data from Garfield County.
- vi. Maintain and enhance cooperation with the oil and gas industry, property owners, state and federal agencies, such as BLM, CPW, COGCC, DRMS and CDPHE, in regard to regulating activity and monitoring impacts.
- vii. Continue to consider the use of facilities that are appurtenances to oil/gas development activities (compressors, etc.) appropriate in all land uses so long as they meet the respective mitigation requirements of the LUCD to maintain compatibility with surrounding land uses.

Policy 2: Mineral resource extraction activities will protect critical wildlife habitat as identified by state and federal agencies and preserve or mitigate natural drainage patterns from the impacts of extraction activities.

Strategies:

- i. Discourage development within critical wildlife habitat designations that cannot be designed, constructed and conducted so as to have a minimum adverse impact upon such habitat or impacted wildlife species.
- ii. Preserve or mitigate natural drainage patterns so the cumulative impact of mineral extraction activities will not cause storm drainage/floodwater patterns to exceed the capacity of natural or constructed drainage ways, or subject other areas to increased flooding, erosion or sedimentation, resulting in pollution to streams, rivers or other natural bodies of water.



VISION

Encourage the development of renewable energy sources throughout the county and ensure that generating facilities are in appropriate locations. County regulations should not be unduly burdensome or difficult to negotiate in regards to the development and location of new renewable energy resources.

BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

1. There are incentives to explore alternative sources to conventional energy for the benefit of individuals, communities, and the county as a whole.
2. Alternative energy production contributes to the diversification of the county's economy.
3. It is likely that the individual and large-scale use of alternative energy will continue to become more prevalent in Garfield County and the county needs to anticipate visual and other impacts.
4. Garfield County does extensive work on energy efficiency and renewable energy through Garfield Clean Energy. The non-profit's work includes energy consulting and issuing energy efficiency rebates.
5. The county government has supported alternative energy options on county facilities, including buy-ins to community solar gardens and the installation of solar on county buildings.
6. Garfield Clean Energy projects have resulted in \$40 million in materials purchased from retailers and work done by contractors. This has benefited 353 businesses and provided more than \$7 million in cumulative energy savings.
7. Since 2009, 340 businesses, churches and organizations, as well as 1,241 households have made energy upgrades with assistance from Garfield Clean Energy. These upgrades deliver energy cost savings of \$1.4 million per year.
8. As of April 2019, there are thirty-two (32) government buildings and facilities, schools and libraries powered by solar energy in Garfield County. These facilities generate 4.6 megawatts of electricity. Additionally, Garfield County has six (6) community solar gardens that generate 6.6 megawatts of electricity.

POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Policy 1: Promote and encourage the development of renewable energy resources within the county.

Strategies:

- i. Revise the Land Use and Development Code to reflect up-to-date requirements and standards for renewable energy technology.

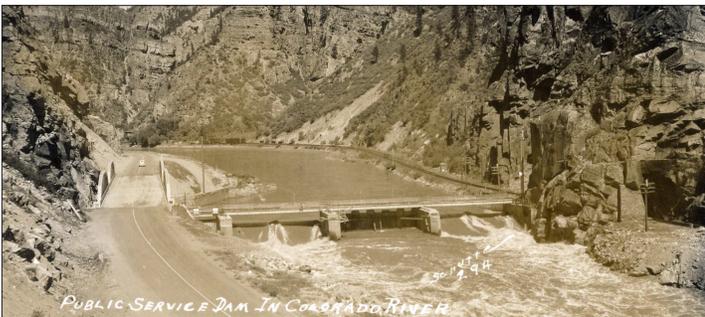


Figure 24: Renewable energies have long been a part of Garfield County. The Shoshone Dam in Glenwood Canyon is an example of one of the first renewable energy projects in the county, while the solar array at the Rifle-Garfield County Regional Airport is a more recent example.



Strategies (continued):

- ii. Continue to pursue renewable energy options for county owned facilities.
- iii. Continue to support Garfield Clean Energy and related groups that provide energy efficiency and renewable energy options and guidance.
- iv. Encourage current, and require future, POA/HOA's to adopt local standards to promote and allow for renewable energy technologies to occur within their subdivisions.
- v. Identify solar reserve areas using available LIDAR data.
- vi. Make renewable energy data and resources available through the county's website.
- vii. Evaluate the viability of various renewable energy resources within the county. Develop appropriate mechanisms to encourage their development.

Policy 2: Encourage the implementation of energy efficient site design and building orientation in development proposals.

Strategies:

- i. Investigate incentives for developers who build solar-ready residential and commercial structures.
- ii. Investigate incentives for developers who build geothermal energy ready residential and commercial structures.
- iii. Provide information to developers and contractors on energy efficiency programs, such as those promoted by Garfield Clean Energy.

Policy 3: Ensure that renewable energy activities mitigate effects on the natural environment, including air quality, water quality, wildlife habitat, and visual quality.

Strategies:

- i. Incorporate additional mitigation requirements into the county's Land Use and Development Code, as appropriate.
- ii. Work with referral agencies to make sure that mitigation requirements are appropriate for the use.



Figure 25: Renewable energies offer economic opportunities for those who live and work in Garfield County. They also serve as a way to further diversify the county's economy.

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Amending the Plan

- + Maintaining Consistency between the Plan, Land Use Regulations and Development Decisions
- + Amending the Comprehensive Plan

MAINTAINING CONSISTENCY BETWEEN THE PLAN, LAND USE REGULATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

The Garfield County Comprehensive Plan (“Plan”) is a document used to guide decision-making within the unincorporated areas of the county. For the Plan to remain relevant over time, the County Planning Commission must be able to be review, revise and update the Plan on an as needed basis to respond to significant trends or changes in the economic, physical, or social conditions of the community.

Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan will be conducted according to two different procedures:

1. Plan Updates
2. Plan Amendments

AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

1. Plan Updates

The purpose of a plan update is to re-evaluate the foundations, and directions of the Plan, to set new directions, if necessary, and to make sure that the Plan continues to be an effective guide for growth and change in Garfield County. It is intended that a review of the Plan be conducted every five (5) years (unless otherwise directed by the Planning Commission) to determine whether an update is warranted. In making a determination of when an update should be initiated, a prime consideration should be the magnitude of the changes that have occurred since the Plan was last updated. For instance, significant changes in the economy, the environment, housing affordability, traffic congestion, or projected growth may require a plan update or an update to a specific section of the Plan.

If an update is initiated, the county will thoroughly re-evaluate the visions, policies and strategies of the Plan, as well as the Future Land Use Map. An update will also include a thorough review of the validity of all background information contained within this Plan and should include broad opportunities for involvement by the public, elected and appointed officials, County staff, and other affected interests.

Once the update is complete, the Planning Commission shall then amend the Comprehensive Plan as required by the Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.), based on its consideration of the public input, recommendations of staff and specialists, and evidence from public hearings

2. Plan Amendments

The Plan Amendment process has been established for amendments to the Plan that may be performed on an as needed basis. Plan Amendments may be initiated by property owners, members of the general public, county staff, Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners.

A Plan Amendment may be processed, pursuant to the standards for approval, submittal requirement, and procedural requirements below.

A) Standards for Approval

Standards for the approval of a plan amendment shall demonstrate that the proposed text or designation addresses errors in the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) or Comprehensive Plan or meets the following criteria:

1. The existing Comprehensive Plan and/or any related element thereof is in need of the proposed amendment.
2. Strict adherence to the Plan would result in a situation that is either unintended, or does not allow for consistency with other key elements and policies of the Plan.
3. The proposed FLUM amendment is compatible with the surrounding area, and the visions, policies and strategies of the Plan.

4. The proposed FLUM amendment will have no major negative impacts on transportation, services, and facilities.
5. The proposed FLUM amendment will have minimal effect on service provision, including adequacy or availability of facilities and services, and is compatible with existing and planned service provision.
6. The proposed FLUM amendment will result in a logical and orderly development pattern and expansion of services and will not constitute spot zoning.
7. The county or the general area in which an FLUM amendment is proposed has changed or is changing to such a degree that the amendment is in the public interest.
8. The proposed amendment has a significant public benefit; will promote the public welfare and will be consistent with the visions, policies and strategies of the Garfield County Comprehensive Plan and the elements thereof.
9. The proposed designation on the FLUM is in compliance with the visions, policies and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan and any applicable intergovernmental agreement affecting land use or development

B) Procedural Requirements

To process a Plan Amendment, the following steps should be followed (all identified sections relate to the Land Use and Development Code (LUDC)):

1. **Pre-Application Conference.** The applicant shall schedule a Pre-Application Conference in conformance with Section 4-101(A) of the Garfield County LUDC.
2. **Submit Application.** The application materials as listed in the Submittal Requirement and any additional materials as determined in the Pre-Application Conference.
3. **Determination of Completeness.** The Director of the Community of Development Department (“the Director”) shall review the application for determination of completeness in accordance with the provisions of Section 4-101(B), Determination of Application Completeness Review, of the LUDC.
4. **Schedule Public Hearing.** Upon a determination of completeness, the Director shall schedule the application for consideration by the County Planning Commission.
 - a. Public hearing by the Planning Commission shall be held within sixty (60) calendar days of the date of determination of completeness.
 - b. Public notice of the hearing shall be made pursuant to Section 4-101(E), Notice of Public Hearing, of the LUDC. At least thirty (30) but not more than sixty (60) calendar days prior to the date of a scheduled Public Hearing before the Planning Commission, the Applicant shall publish notice of a public hearing in a legal publication and provide written notice to property owners within a 200-foot radius of the subject parcel and mineral owners of the subject property, all neighboring jurisdictions within three (3) miles of Garfield County, and all municipalities within Garfield County shall be mailed written notice of the date of the public hearing at which the proposal is to be discussed.
 - c. Neighboring jurisdiction referrals (pursuant to C.R.S. 24-32-3209(2)). A copy of the proposal and notification of the relevant hearing shall be forwarded to all neighboring jurisdictions within three (3) miles of Garfield County and all municipalities within Garfield County for comment. All neighboring jurisdictions and municipalities shall have the right to comment on the proposal prior to the public hearing at least thirty (30) but not more than sixty (60) calendar days prior to the date of a scheduled Public Hearing.

5. **Evaluation by Director/Staff Review.** Upon determination of completeness, the Director shall review the application for compliance with the applicable standards set forth above. A staff report shall be prepared pursuant to Section 4-101(D) of the LUDC.
 - a. The Director’s evaluation of the application may include comment by referral agencies received under Section 4-101(C), Review by Referral Agency, of the LUDC. The comment period for referral agency review shall be 21 calendar days from the date that the complete application and sufficient copies are delivered to the county by the Applicant. In addition, the Director’s evaluation may include comments from neighboring jurisdictions and municipalities within Garfield County as described in C.R.S. 24-32-3209(2)(a).
6. **Review by the Planning Commission.** A Plan Amendment application shall be considered by the Planning Commission at a public hearing, after proper notice, conducted pursuant to Section 4-101(F), Review and Recommendation, of the LUDC. The Planning Commission shall approve or deny, by written resolution, the application based upon compliance with the standards as outlined above.
7. If the Plan Amendment is approved by the Planning Commission, the following shall occur:
 - a. Planning Commission Chair signs the resolution and it is attested to by the Planning Commission Secretary.
 - b. Planning Commission Chair signs letters certifying the amendment to the Board of County Commissioners, municipalities, and surrounding counties.
 - c. If applicable, the Planning Commission Secretary signs the Future Land Use Map, as amended.
8. **Objection.** Any municipality within Garfield County has the right to file a written objection to the amendment within thirty (30) calendar days following adoption of the amendment in accordance with C.R.S. 24-32-3209(2)(b).

C) Submittal Requirements (Plan Amendments)

1. A cover letter containing a detailed narrative describing the purpose of the proposed amendment. This narrative shall also include a response to all of the review standards as outlined above.
2. General Application Materials pursuant to Section 4-203(B) of the LUDC.
3. A vicinity map locating the parcel(s) in Garfield County. An 8-inch by 11-inch vicinity map shall clearly show the boundaries of the subject property(ies) and all property within a three (3) mile radius.
4. A copy of the completed Pre-Application Conference Summary and any required attachments.

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57	Photo of Rifle-Garfield County Solar Array	Clean Energy Economy for the Region
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GARFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ONLINE MAPS

The online maps for the Garfield County Comprehensive Plan can be accessed via the following link:

<https://data-garfieldcolorado.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/compplan>

Click on any map or the “Explore” button to view each map. The online maps associated with the Comprehensive Plan include:

- Current Land Use
- Broadband
- Special Districts
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Environmental
- Wildfire
- Wildlife
- Topography
- Agriculture
- Parks and Recreation
- Water Resources
- Natural Hazards
- Oil & Gas

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Garfield County

Data Download
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Garfield County Comprehensive Plan

The Garfield County Comprehensive Plan (the “Plan”) has been developed to provide a general statement of direction for land use planning in unincorporated Garfield County. The Plan provides a foundation for decisions and policies that guide and direct the physical, social, and economic development for the unincorporated portions of the county. It is designed to serve as a tool for citizens, county staff and elected officials, and focuses on responding to both the immediate and anticipated long-term needs of the county

Interactive Comprehensive Plan Maps

All 15 of the comprehensive plan maps are available as web mapping applications. Search by parcel, address, owner; print a custom map extent; or simply move around the maps to view information. Click on any map below to get started.

Garfield County Future Land Use

Garfield County Future Land Use 2030

Explore

Click on any of the maps below to open an interactive map in a new window

Garfield County Current Land Use

Garfield County Land Use

Explore

Garfield County Agriculture

Garfield County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Agriculture map

Explore

Garfield County Environmental

Garfield County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Environmental map

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Garfield County Parks and Recreation

Garfield County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Parks and Recreation map

Explore

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