

# CHAFFEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



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CONSENSUS  
PLANNING, INC.



**CHAFFEE COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
CHAFFEE COUNTY, COLORADO**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan was based on extensive and diverse public participation from residents throughout the County. The Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan was initiated to address several factors concerning growth and development taking place throughout the County. All of these factors and concerns led the Chaffee County Board of County Commissioners in late 1996 to commission a new comprehensive land use plan for Chaffee County. Typically, comprehensive plans are updated every five to ten years, but Chaffee County's plan dated from 1971. This is not all that surprising given the lack of growth in the county during the 1980s. Clearly, the 1971 plan was out-of-date. For example, it foresaw a county population of only 11,000 by 1990. Today, the county's population is over 15,000, and conservative estimates are that the county will have over 25,000 people by the year 2020. These numbers do not include seasonal residents who own second homes or tourists. Moreover, the county's zoning, subdivision, and other land development codes are also dated. The subdivision regulations were last comprehensively revised in 1979. Many tools that are currently being used by other jurisdictions in Colorado are not included in any of the county's land development regulations.

With financial support from the State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs and Great Outdoors Colorado, the county conducted a competitive search process and in late 1996 selected a consulting team led by Clarion Associates and RNL Design of Denver to assist in preparation of the plan. At the same time, the county commissioners appointed a broad-based plan oversight committee to work closely with the consulting team and act as a sounding board throughout the planning process. The committee included representatives from the ranching community, businesses, environmental interests, state and federal agencies, the towns, and others. Following the preparation of the draft plan in 1998, The County hired Consensus Planning, Inc. to assist in revising the draft for adoption.

In brief, the project goals were to:

- Work with citizens to develop a long-range vision for the county and produce key goals and objectives to guide future growth;
- Generate alternative growth scenarios and evaluate the likely impacts on development patterns; and
- Identify and discuss appropriate policies and tools to implement the comprehensive plan.

The Planning Process addressed the following planning areas:

- Economic/demographic trends community character;
- Infrastructure and government services;
- Natural and cultural resources;
- Open space;
- Housing; and
- Intergovernmental policies.

The project kick-off meeting with the oversight committee took place in January 1997 followed by a series of county-wide meetings in March. The public planning process concluded with a major county-wide implementation workshop in November 1997.

This plan was considered officially by the county planning commission during 1998 and 1999 at a series of informal workshops and formal public hearings in accordance with state statutes. Under Colorado law, the Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document and is not regulatory in nature. Its importance is to provide the policies needed to guide updates to Chaffee County's development regulations. For the plan to become reality, the county will need to adopt a variety of regulatory (e.g., new zoning provisions) and non-regulatory tools (e.g., cluster development incentives).

This plan is designed to be used in conjunction with other county and town planning documents. It is an important tool in helping citizens control their future. More specifically, it is designed to serve as a guide for revising local development regulations and review processes, reviewing development and annexation proposals, and making local infrastructure investment decisions.

Following adoption of the plan, it will be important to establish a process that assists the County in implementing the plan in a timely fashion, with annual check points to gauge progress in completing the specific action items recommended in the plan. The plan includes an "Action Agenda" that summarizes the key activities necessary to implement the plan and an index of specific implementation recommendations. It will also be vital to update the plan periodically, its underlying assumptions, and the action elements to ensure that the plan does not become outdated or irrelevant in the face of changing economic and demographic forces.

### **Chaffee County Comprehensive Land Use and Open Space Plan Key Goals and Objectives**

- A. Target most new residential and commercial development to smaller lots (1 acre or less) in and around existing communities. Allow only larger lot zoning in rural areas.
- B. Improve county land use regulations to protect air/water quality, scenic areas, historic and cultural resources, and wildlife habitat. Be sensitive to private property rights.
- C. Use incentives as well as regulations to help protect river corridors, wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, and ranching.
- D. Maintain existing public access to state and federal lands, including river corridors.
- E. Minimize the tax burden on citizens. Require development to assess impacts on public facilities and to pay fair share of costs for necessary services.

- F. Promote economic diversity and economic development based on passive recreation, ranching/agriculture, and “light” industry to lessen the gap between incomes and cost of living in the county.
- G. Ensure that water supply and infrastructure service policies are in accord with the adopted county comprehensive plan. Give priority service to focused residential and commercial development.
- H. In spending ‘tax dollars, give priority to schools, upgrading existing roads, open space development rights purchase, and new water/sewer facilities. Except for schools, little sentiment for new taxes to finance these facilities and services.
- I. The private sector (particularly large employers), with cooperation from local governments, should take the lead to promote affordable housing opportunities through market mechanisms.
- J. Provide a safe and efficient transportation system for all county residents.

### **The Preferred Scenario in Brief**

Based on the refined goals and objectives that emerged from the community workshops and public opinion survey, four alternative development scenarios were presented to county residents for their consideration. (These scenarios are set forth in Appendix C).

Scenario 3 most closely tracked the goals and objectives, as well as the results of the survey. This fact was confirmed by citizens who attended the alternative development scenario workshops or submitted written comments. A significant majority favored Development Scenario 3, but there was a strong desire to add certain features of Scenarios 2 and 4 (described below).

Under the preferred scenario, population growth would continue, but residential and commercial development would be focused around existing communities, in other words, the county would encourage smaller lot residential development in and around Salida, Buena Vista, and Poncha Springs. The County would work closely with these jurisdictions to achieve this. Other unincorporated areas that have already seen development like Nathrop town site, Mesa Antero, and Game Trail could also receive additional growth if infrastructure was available to accommodate it. The county and towns should improve their subdivision and zoning standards to ensure that this focused development was compatible with existing residential neighborhoods and that it retained a small-town character. Regulations and incentives would be used to improve the quality and amount of open space in and around rural residential projects.

Similarly, the plan discourages scattered commercial development outside of the towns as is now often done through a special permit process, except in limited instances (e.g., logging, lodges, and similar uses that

require a rural location). Signage and landscaping standards would be applied to ensure that this development maintained the attractive character of existing communities.

The plan provides support for the creation of a non-governmental program to purchase or acquire, on a willing seller basis, development rights on agricultural lands or critical natural/cultural resources. Steps would also be taken to protect ranches from uses that might interfere with their operations. Additionally, the plan supports the creation and operation of a private land trust and encourages the use of voluntary conservation easements to maintain open space and wildlife habitat.

With regard to the cost of services and infrastructure necessitated by new development, the plan suggests that the county should explore a variety of cost-recovery tools such as impact fees, land dedication requirements, and adequate public facility ordinances to ensure development pays its fair share.

While Scenario 3 was the choice of a clear majority of those who commented, there were a number of important ideas that need to be added to the concept expressed in Scenario 3 and in shaping an implementation system:

- While regulations may be necessary in some instances, incentives and bonuses should be used whenever possible.
- A priority of open space protection efforts should be to keep agricultural lands in production rather than purchasing open space for public use.
- While the concentration of residential development around existing towns may be a good idea generally, overly dense development and creation of unattractive urban projects not in keeping with the small town character of each community should be avoided.
- Recognize the need of ranchers to undertake limited development to realize the development value from their lands.



The overall goal for the county and its citizens is to use this plan to develop implementation tools that are true to the vision of Scenario 3 (with the noted modifications) while addressing these important themes.

Depiction of Scenario 3



## 2. INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of the Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan

The Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan is a response to issues that have arisen as a result of increased growth and development the County has seen in the past few years. While the primary focus of the plan is land use and the impact growth will have on land use decisions, there are many different areas (such as housing, and community facilities) that are also effected. The plan is comprehensive in that it covers an entire geographic planning area, and all the functions that make a community work including;

Land Use;  
Community Character;  
Open Space/Agricultural Land;  
Natural/Cultural Resources;  
Transportation;  
Affordable Housing;  
Community Facilities; and  
Economic Development.



Welcome to Chaffee County

The plan is a guide for decision-makers, whether they are Chaffee County Commissioners, the County Manager, County Planning Staff, and officials of the various County municipalities. It proposes goals, objectives, and implementation steps that address the issues embedded within each of these planning areas. Given the amount of public participation, the goals, objectives, and action steps are all designed to achieve the desires of County residents. While reflecting social and economic values, it guides the physical development of the County by addressing land use, open space, and density issues. There are, however, certain broad issues that provide overarching themes for the entire Plan. These issues are described below.

### Rapid Growth and Change

Chaffee County's rapid growth has brought about much change in land use and community demographics. In a dramatic rebound from the first half of the 1980s when the county actually lost population due to the economic impact of the Climax mine closure near Leadville, it grew at an annual average rate of 3% during the first half of the 1990s. In comparison, during the 1970s, the last big growth spurt for the county, annual growth rates were around 2.7%. Since 1995, the county growth rate has been over 5% annually, and the county's population topped 15,000. Between 1995 and 1997, the statewide growth rate was about



2%, and the national growth rate around 1% annually. Property values have skyrocketed since 1990-doubling, tripling, and more in some instances-thus increasing the assets of those owning homes and land. County sales tax revenues increased by 70% during the same period. Unemployment fell from 6.7% in 1990 to only about 4% today.

### **Nature of the Growth**

Scattered residential developments throughout the county are changing the area's rural and scenic character and in some cases causing conflicts with existing ranching operations. The bulk of new building activity has been in the unincorporated portions of the county. The costs of providing public services to these developments continue to rise and are placing a financial strain on Chaffee County. Many of the citizens worry about the potential negative impact of development on the county's wildlife and natural resources.

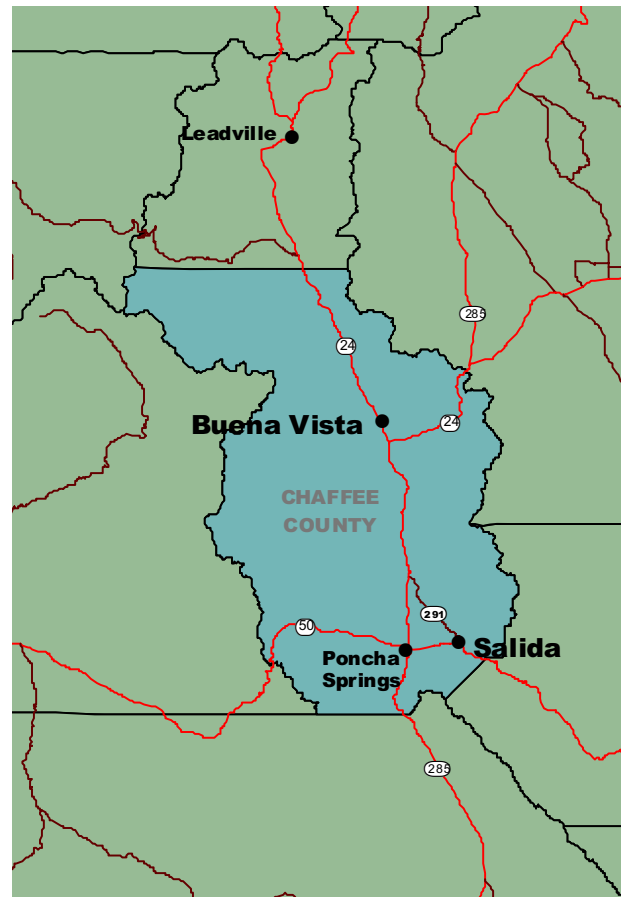
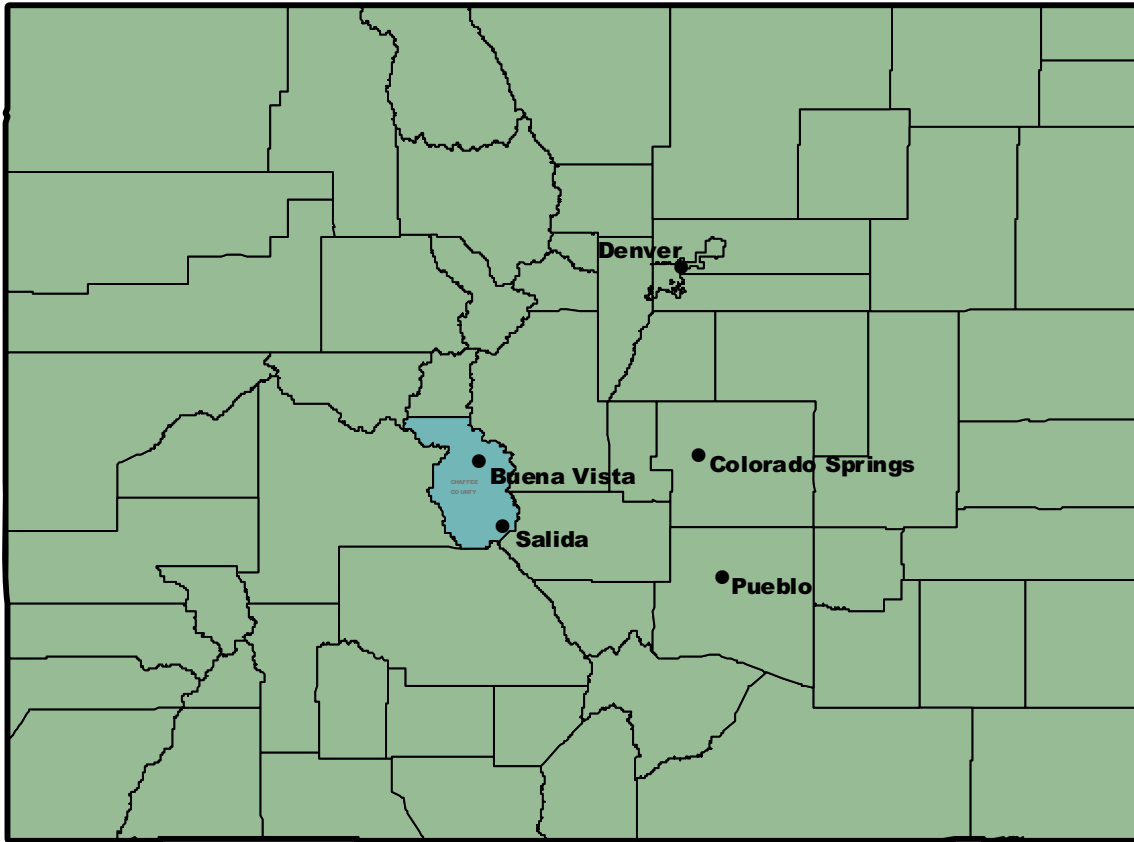
While there was a slight cooling of development activity in the county during 1997, most signs point to continued growth. These signs include:

- The national and state economies remain strong;
- The number of inquiries at the local chambers of commerce by potential new residents remain high; and
- The continued widening of Highway 285, the Denver area's gateway to Chaffee County, will shave more time off the drive from the state's largest population concentration.

The lots to accommodate this growth exist. As of 1998, the County had approximately 2,493 already subdivided, recorded lots, many in rural areas. At least in the short term, the lack of water for development in unincorporated areas has evaporated as a constraint development as the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District has made supplies available on a broad basis in most areas of the county. The district has enough water to allow construction of up to about 1,700 dwelling units (if restricted to in-house use), the equivalent of about 4,400 people. Also the district is continually seeking to purchase additional water rights, which would allow for additional development.

### **Per Capita Income**

Not everyone has shared in the boom. Real per capita income in the county barely grew during the last decade and remains far below the state average. Coupled with rising land and building costs, finding affordable housing has become a real challenge for many residents. Not surprisingly, the number of workers who live elsewhere like in Saguache County where housing is cheaper, and commute to jobs in Chaffee County continues to grow. Real estate professionals recognize that most of the new residential construction in the county over the past few years has been for newcomers or non-residents building second homes.



# Site Vicinity Map



## **Public Process**

The process for creating the Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan was guided by the participation of local residents, property owners, business people, municipal and county officials, and appropriate state and federal agencies. All participated in varying degrees in gathering information, identifying issues, developing goals and objectives, and finally, determining implementation strategies for a preferred land use plan. The planning process also included an oversight committee appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. The committee served as a source of information and as a sounding board for the planning effort.

A key initial step in putting the plan together was to gather background information upon which to build the plan; property ownership and subdivision patterns, location of critical natural and cultural resources, a visual character analysis that identified key open space parcels, a study of economic and demographic trends, current zoning, and an analysis of infrastructure capacity of the county and towns (water, sewer, fire protection, etc.). This information was presented at two county wide public workshops at which citizens were asked what they liked and did not like about their community and other questions related to growth and development.

At the same time, the county commissioned an in-depth public opinion survey. Based on key issues identified at the public workshops, questions were drafted by the consulting team and reviewed and revised by the oversight committee and Board of County Commissioners. The survey was then sent to over 3,700 residents and property owners in the county. The return rate was a very high 36% (1,332 respondents), which ensured a statistically valid response with a low margin of error. Respondents to the survey resembled the populace as a whole in terms of age, incomes, percent of home ownership, and other important indicators. (A summary of survey methodology and results is provided in Appendix A and the survey instrument is located in Appendix B.)

Based on these background studies, the public survey, and two well-attended community wide workshops, the consulting team developed in May 1997 a list of “top ten” goals and objectives to be used as key principles to guide development of the plan. These goals and objectives (set forth on pages 2 and 3, in no order of priority) were revised, refined, and expanded to 11 goals based on comments by the oversight committee and board of county commissioners and then presented to the public at another series of community workshops in the summer. Further changes were made in response to public comment that set the stage for production of four alternative development scenarios. For a full description of the public process, please see the following graphic insert.

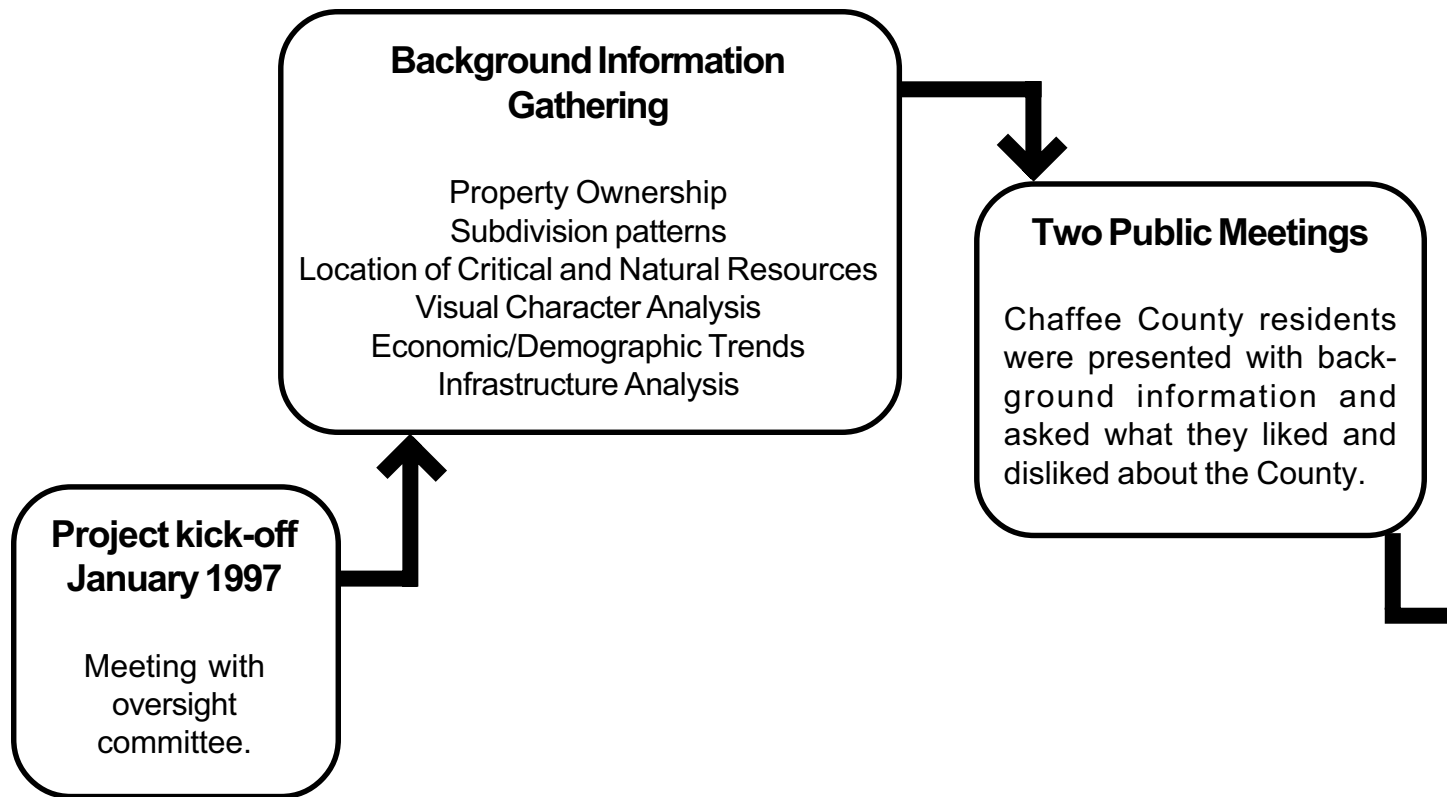
## **Land Use Scenarios**

The four alternative development scenarios are visions of different ways in which Chaffee County could grow over the next twenty years, where

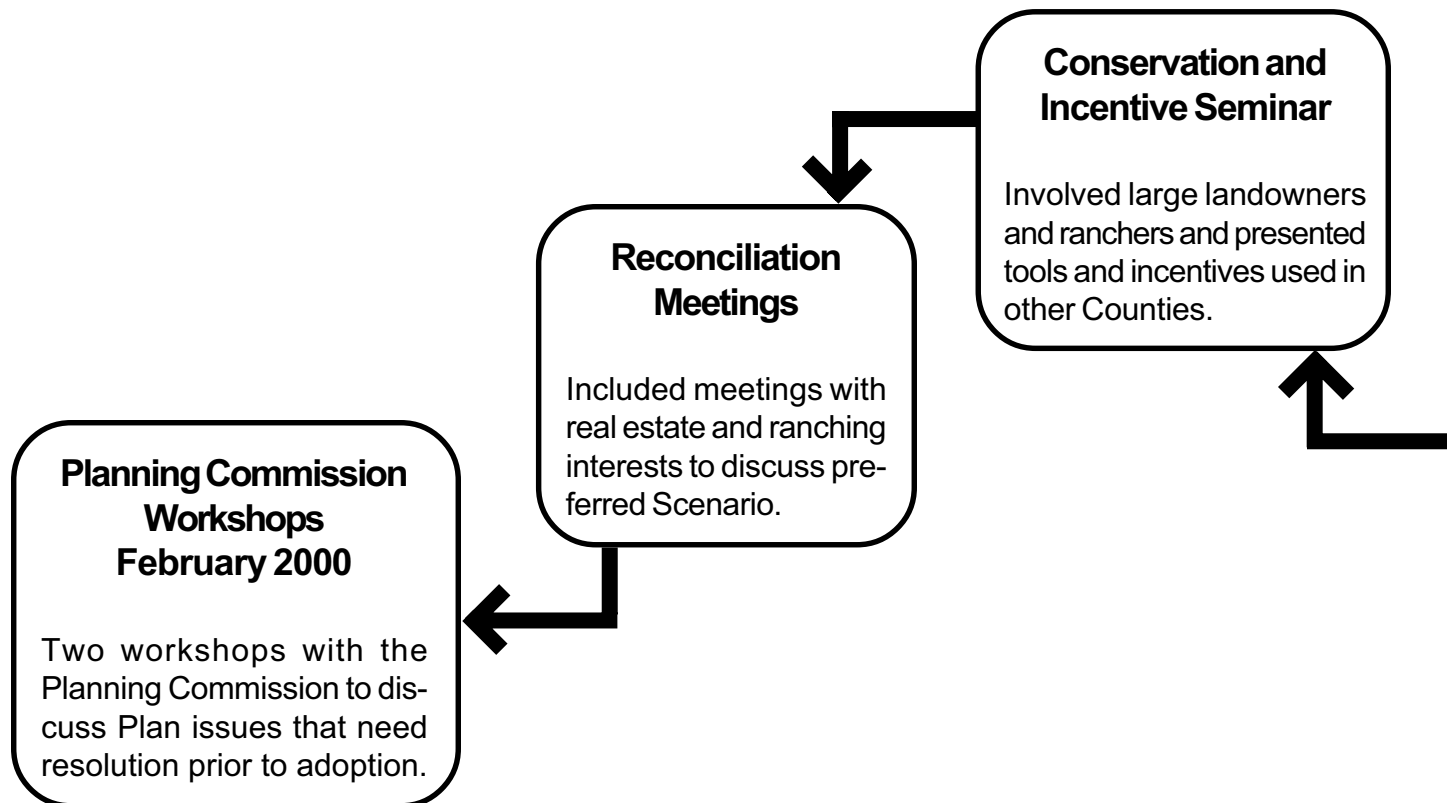
growth might occur, how fast the county might grow, and what will new development look like. (One set of scenarios is depicted in general terms on the following pages. See Appendix C for a full discussion.)

Each of the four scenarios differs in regarding the key attributes of growth such as location, environmental and fiscal impact, amount and rate, and quality. Written descriptions and sketches of each scenario were published in the local newspaper, exhibited in post offices throughout the county, and were the subject of four county wide workshops. Citizens were asked to evaluate the pros and cons of each and to help craft a preferred scenario out of the four alternatives offered. Based on this input and dozens of written comments, a preferred development scenario emerged.

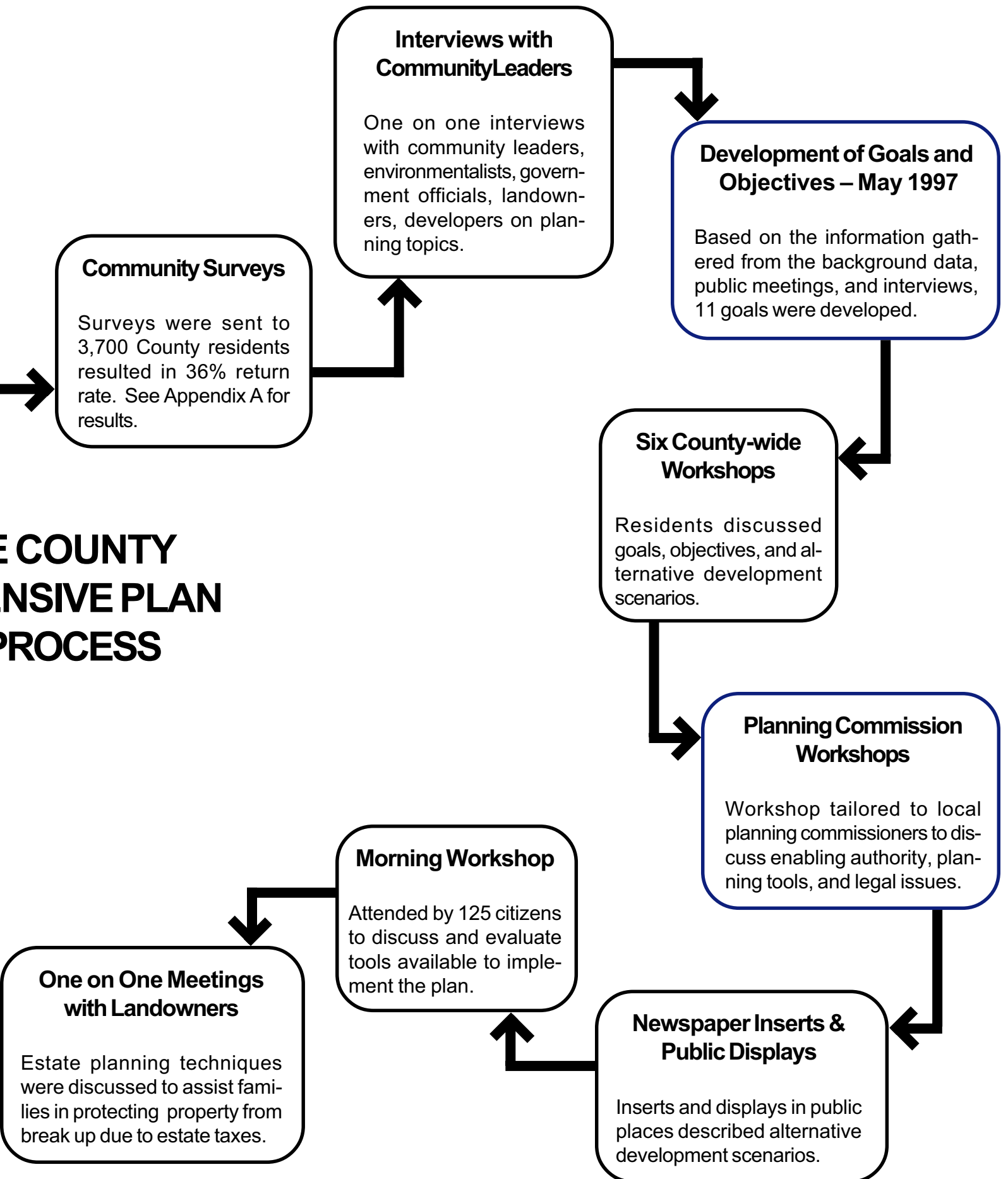
This preferred scenario was then presented at a major county wide public workshop in November 1997 attended by over 125 citizens. After a discussion of key elements of the preferred scenario, participants broke into small working groups to discuss a range of implementation tools and techniques that best fit Chaffee County. The final plan presented here is based on recommendations from these working groups. The following graphic provides an overview of the public process.

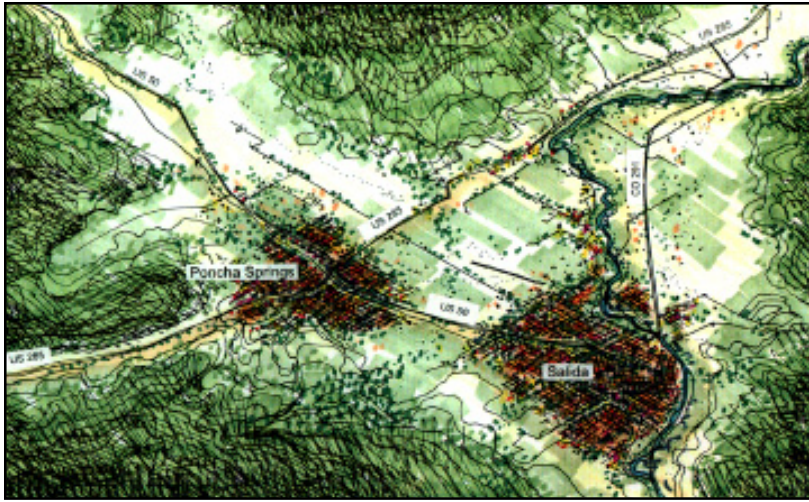


# CHAFFEE COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC PLAN



# E COUNTY NSIVE PLAN PROCESS





Salida/Poncha Springs

Scenario No. 3: Growth and Development focused around Existing Communities and Developed Areas; Acquisition Fund Created to Assist in Protecting Open Space; Development Codes Modernized to Improve Development Quality.



Buena Vista

*These artists sketches are meant to generate public interest and discussion. They illustrate planning concepts only and may not represent actual conditions, properties or roadways.*

Scenario No. 3 most closely represents the preferences of the majority of the respondents to the public opinion survey and reflects the key goals and objectives favored by people who attended the public workshops held to date. Population growth would continue, but residential and commercial development would be focused around existing growth areas - in other words, the county would target smaller lot residential development in and around Salida, Buena Vista and Poncha Springs, working closely with those jurisdictions, and other already developed areas like Nathrop. Incentives would be used to improve the quality and amount of open space in large-lot (5-35 acres) rural residential projects. Similarly, the county would not allow scattered commercial development outside of the towns as is now often done through a special permit process except in limited instances (e.g., logging, lodges, etc. that require a rural location). The county would also create an open space acquisition program to augment its zoning and subdivision codes to protect critical wildlife habitat, river, and stream corridors, and other sensitive natural and cultural resources. Steps would also be taken to protect ranches from uses that might interfere with agricultural operations. More formal steps would be taken to ensure cooperative planning between the county, towns and the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District, including signing intergovernmental agreements, adopting joint plans and development standards in growth areas around the towns.

## DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO NO. 3



### 3. EXISTING CONDITIONS: A SNAPSHOT OF CHAFFEE COUNTY

To set the stage for comprehensive plan goals, objectives, and implementation policies, the consulting team spent several months early in the project documenting the existing physical, social, and economic context of Chaffee County. With the assistance of local, state, and federal agencies and local citizens, the team gathered information about:

- Natural and cultural resources (wildlife habitat, watersheds, historic sites, trails, etc.);
- Infrastructure systems (water, sewer, roads, etc.) and existing government services both in the county and towns;
- Community and visual character;
- Wildfire hazard areas;
- Steep slopes and geologic hazard areas;
- Economic, demographic, and housing trends; and
- Land use patterns and current zoning.

Based on this information, the team produced a number of reports such as a detailed economic/demographic study, an infrastructure assessment, and a variety of planning maps. These documents and maps were reviewed and revised with the assistance of the oversight committee and agency officials. This information, summarized below, helped to frame key issues and establish a solid base upon which to make realistic choices throughout the planning process.

#### Location and Prominent Physical Characteristics

Chaffee County is one of the most stunningly beautiful areas in the United States. Surrounded by high mountain peaks, it is graced with alpine rivers and streams, broad expanses of ranch land and meadows, and landscapes that vary from rolling pinon and juniper forests to rugged wilderness.

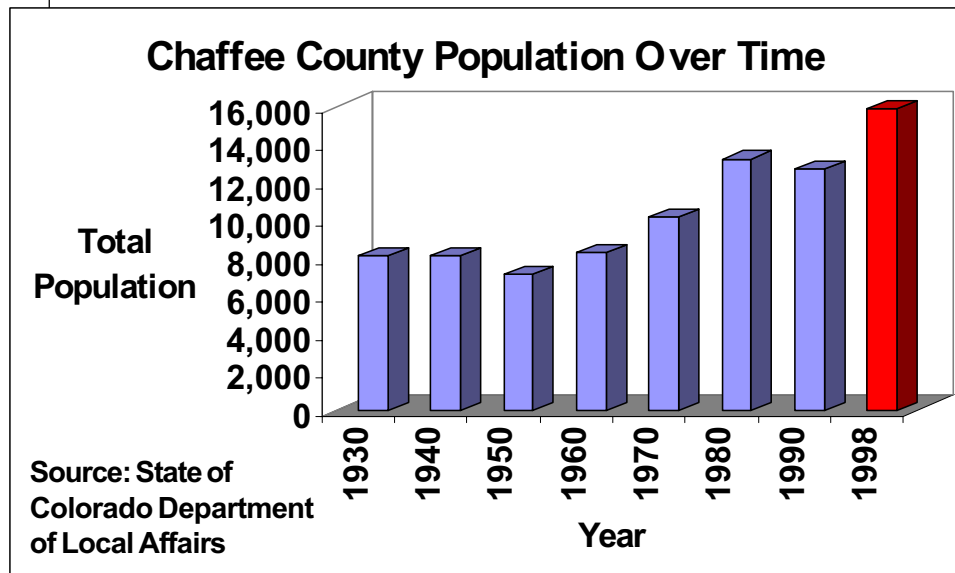


Collegiate Peaks

Chaffee County is located on the eastern slope of the Continental Divide about 120 miles southwest of Denver in a mountain valley with elevations that range from about 6,900 feet to over 14,000 feet. There are reportedly more 14,000 foot peaks here than in any county in the United States. The Collegiate Peaks are the most striking and prominent physical feature in the county, providing a breathtaking backdrop for the county and some of the most important views from venues such as Trout Creek Pass.

The Arkansas River is the other primary physical feature of the county, running roughly through its midsection from Granite to Salida. It has flows that range from 300 cubic feet per second (CFS) in the winter to over 3,000 CFS

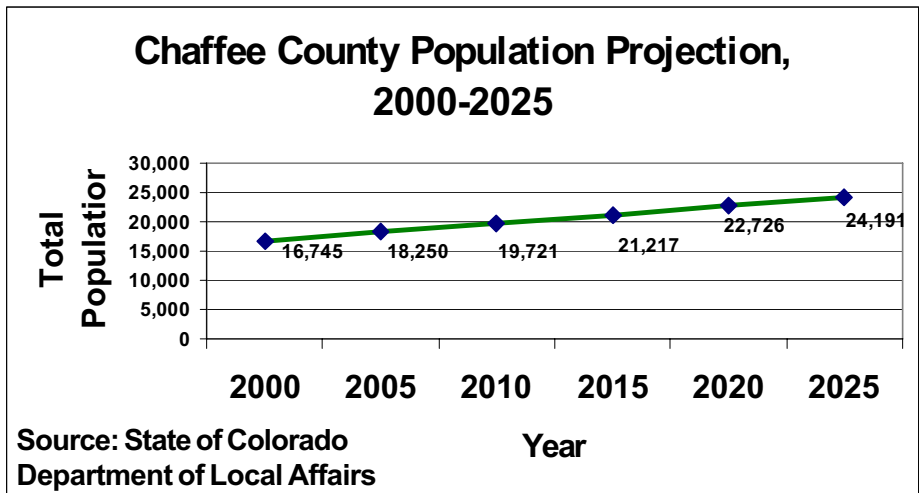
during spring runoff. U.S. Highways 285, 24, and 50, the three major transportation corridors in the county, parallel the Arkansas River as it runs north to south and then west to east in the county. The views from these three highways towards the surrounding mountains and across the Arkansas River and its tributaries do much to establish the rural, scenic character of the county. Most of the county has slopes of over 10% and over one-third has slopes in excess of 25%. The Valley soils are typically thin, rocky, and somewhat alkaline. However, soils in a broad band running along the west side of the Arkansas River are generally suitable for development and agricultural uses.



**FIGURE 1**

**Population/Demographics**

Figure 1 shows that the County's population has grown steadily since 1930. The county's permanent population has grown steadily in the past three decades, with the biggest spurt during the 1970s, a slight loss in the early 1980s, and stronger growth at annual rates of 3% in the 1990s. The 1995 estimated population was 14,868. Based on number of residential building permits issued in 1995 and 1996 (and accounting for vacancies and seasonal units) it is estimated that since 1995, another 1,720 residents have been added. This results in a total estimated population in 1997 of 15,359. This corresponds to an estimated growth rate during the past 2 years of a substantial 6.1% annually. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates Chaffee County's 1997 population at around 14,500 (which is based on estimates of natural population increase and net migration, not building permit numbers.) Figure 2 shows that the county's population is projected by State Demographer to increase by about 7,000 persons over the next 20-25 years, to a total of 24,194 persons.



**FIGURE 2**

Most of the County's new residents come from within Colorado, but a large proportion of recent home buyers are from Kansas, the mid-West, as well as California and Texas. Most are higher-income households than the existing average permanent resident households.

#### *Seasonal Population*

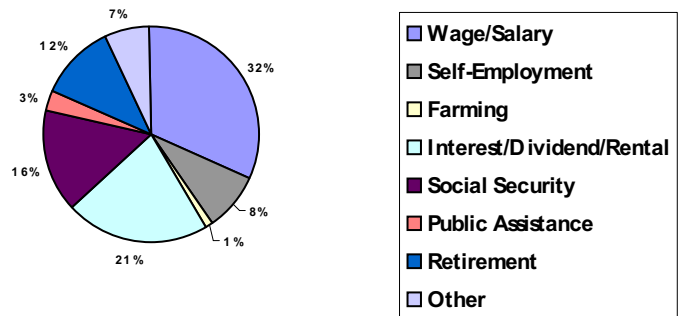
In 1990, the U.S. Census estimated that 16% of housing units in the county were for seasonal or occasional use only, which equals 1,059 units. At an average of 2.4 persons per unit in 1990, that represented an estimated seasonal population of about 2,500 persons. Realtors report that more recent home sales have been for permanent rather than seasonal occupancy.

Personal incomes are significantly below average for the state. The most recent data show per capita incomes in 1994 only about two-thirds of state average: \$11,880 in the county vs. \$17,420 for Colorado, and that they had barely increased in real terms since 1985. (See Demographic report for updates.)

#### *Components of Personal Income in Chaffee County*

In 1993, almost one-half of all personal income was derived from "unearned income" or income from all sources other than participation in labor force (e.g., pensions, interest, dividends, social security & other transfer payments). In the U.S., unearned income percentage is only about 33%. This suggests Chaffee County has enjoyed a large in-migration of retirees and older persons who typically receive the lion's share of such income. There are some substantial benefits from this trend. These funds are a stable source of income and economic support for the local community; and many small-business start-ups are typically financed at least in part from personal wealth of founders and their relatives. In addition, much of that unearned income is transferred to local banks and trusts, where it contributes to a base of financial support for new business investment in the community. Figure 3 shows the distribution of types of income for Chaffee County.

## Types of Income for Chaffee County Residents



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990

FIGURE 3

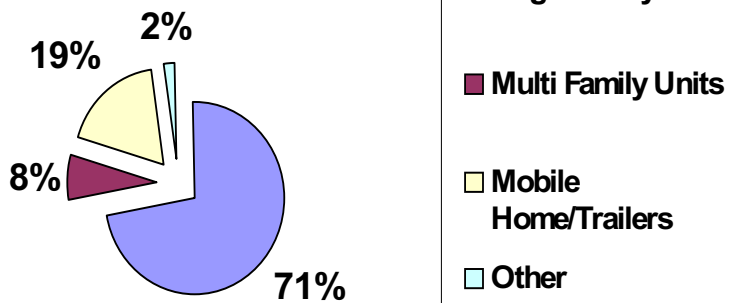
### Age trends in County population

During the 1980s, Chaffee County's population began to age. The median age in 1980 was about 29.9 years. By 1990, it had increased to 37.2 years compared to a state median of 33.1 years. At the same time, the number of persons under 18 years dropped from 7,100 to 2,997.

### Housing

The majority of new housing development has occurred in the unincorporated county, with most in the form of single-family detached homes, including modular homes. Many of these homes have been built on lots in rural subdivisions that average about 2-3 acres in size. In 1990, two-thirds of the county's housing stock was single-family detached. Only 6% were multi-family dwellings and there has been little new multi-family construction anywhere in the county since 1990 until recently. Several multi-family projects have been approved near Salida since 1996. Significantly, 18% of the housing stock is made up of mobile homes. Figure 4 shows the different types of housing units in the County.

## Types of Housing Units in Chaffee County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990

FIGURE 4

The 1990 Census counted 6,547 units in Chaffee County. As of January 1, 1997, this number had increased to about 9,050 units (based on number of building permits issued for residential new construction). This represents a 36% increase between 1990-1996.

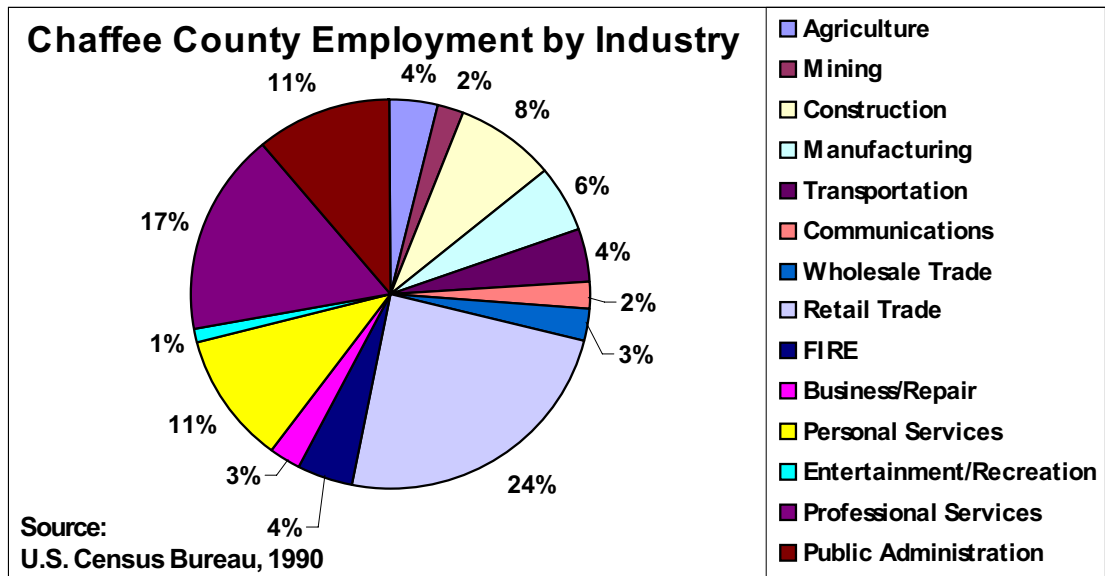
Housing values climbed in the 1970s, fell dramatically during the 1980s, and today are climbing back up to and surpassing earlier highs. Median rents have climbed steadily in the past 10 years. The average 1996 listing sales price for homes sold in unincorporated Chaffee County was \$155,500 (north) and \$159,000 (south). The average price of a new home in one of the towns is over \$100,000, ranging from \$110,000 to \$160,000. A family of four living in Chaffee County in 1994 and earning \$25,000 annually (entry-level salary of correctional officer at BVCF) could have afforded a \$75,000 mortgage, yet homes are selling for an average of \$90,000 and up.

A housing crunch exists for seasonal employees, lower-income wage/salary earners, and family households. Affordability is a major problem, as well as inadequate choice and supply, especially in rentals. High land prices make even manufactured housing development increasingly out-of-reach for the average county resident. Major employers like Monarch Ski and Snowboard Area and the Buena Vista Correctional Facility report that housing affordability problems are affecting recruitment efforts. The shortage of seasonal employee housing has led to over crowded units and "tent cities" set up on BLM land along the Arkansas River.

### **Labor Force and Employment**

Chaffee County's labor force and employment picture reflects a tourist/service economy. In 1995, 74% of all employment in Chaffee County was in government, retail trade, and services sectors. This is typical of outdoor recreation and tourism-oriented areas. Except for the government, these jobs tend to be in lower-wage businesses. Seasonal employment is difficult to estimate. Monarch employs about 300 at the height of ski season. For the rafting industry, there are no official numbers available, but estimates range from 1,000 to 1,200 employees. Other major employers in the county include the Buena Vista Correctional Facility with 390 jobs; the 2 school districts with an estimated 285 jobs; and the Heart of the Rockies Medical Center at 200 jobs. Job growth in the past five years has been primarily in construction, manufacturing, and retail trade, especially restaurants. Unemployment has dropped significantly since 1980, now down to around 3.5% (1998). Additionally, job growth in the County appears strong. For example, Buena Vista Correctional Facility estimates that planned expansions could result in an additional 65 new jobs. Figure 5 shows Chaffee County's employment by industry.

Average annual wages, like household income, are low in Chaffee County. The average annual wage across all sectors/jobs was \$17,500 in 1995, only two-thirds of the state average of \$27,100.



**FIGURE 5**

#### **Economic Trends**

The strength of the county's tourism-based economy is reflected in county and town retail sales tax revenue collections and county lodging tax collections. All have been growing steadily since 1990. The three incorporated towns, especially Buena Vista, are enjoying strong retail sales tax revenue growth. The summer tourist season is still very much the linchpin to the local economy. 42% of all retail sales and tax revenues generated in the county from 1990-96 occurred in the 4 months span from June-September. Winter ski season is next most important. Shoulder seasons, particularly the months of May and October, have been showing steady improvement. Most visitors originate from "drive markets" including Front Range Colorado, Texas, and Kansas, as well as from California and Illinois.

The rafting industry and Arkansas River-related recreational business are enjoying record-breaking success. The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area is reporting increasing visitation across all types of activity. Total high-use season visitation (April-Sept.) increased by nearly 50% between 1991-1996, and total visitation/use for the 1995/96 fiscal year (year ending June 30) was over 560,000. Estimates are that each river rafting customer spends an average of \$68 dollars per day for rafting, food, lodging, souvenirs, etc. For Arkansas River outfitters in 1995, that translated into approximately \$13.5 million per season of direct local expenditure. Applying an economic multiplier of 2.56 (approximately the number of times a dollar is spent in the local area before being spent outside that area), the total local economic impact of commercial river outfitters on the Arkansas River in 1995 was estimated to be \$34.6 million.

Monarch Ski and Snowboard Area visitation has held steady the past several years at an average level of 146,000 skiers. Monarch recently changed hands, and while the new owners have expressed interest in new capital investments, particularly new base development, at this time things are still too uncertain to project future events with any certainty. Recent reports indicate that the ski area may be up for sale again.

Ranchers own a significant amount of the private land in the county and they have a modest impact on the local economy in terms of jobs and income. As the total acres of land in farms/ranches has decreased over the past ten years in the county, the value of agricultural sales (mainly cattle and hay crops) has also dropped. According to federal figures, the total acres of farm land decreased by 20% or 21,100 acres in the five years between 1987 and 1992. The value of agricultural sales dropped 17% during this period. In 1992, agribusiness, which includes actual production, agricultural inputs, and processing and marketing, accounted for only 1.1% of Chaffee County's total labor and proprietor income (compared to 18% in Saguache, 5.6 % in Alamosa, and 2% in Gunnison Counties). The 1990 Census reported that the average farm self-employment income for 104 households that reported such income was \$4,490 compared to the average household earnings in the county from salaries and wages of \$23,985.

#### *Climate*

Chaffee County is known as the "banana belt" to most Coloradans because of its relatively mild climate, despite its mountain valley location. Certainly when compared to the San Luis Valley to the south and Gunnison County to the west, the weather is positively balmy. Typically, temperatures in Salida run only 5-10 degrees cooler than Denver throughout the year, despite an altitude difference of over 2,000 feet. The annual growing season in Salida is 112 days and in Buena Vista, which typically runs a few degrees cooler, about 95 days. The average high temperature in Salida is 84 degrees in July and 33 degrees in January; in Buena Vista it is 70 degrees and 31 degrees respectively. The county only receives about 10-11 inches of precipitation annually at lower elevations, much of it in the form of snow (around 4 feet annually in Salida and Buena Vista). At higher elevations, such as Monarch Ski and Snowboard Area, the annual precipitation is much higher due to heavy snowfalls. Humidity in the county stays low much of the year, and when coupled with the valley's ample sunshine, makes for an attractive place to live, work, and play for residents and visitors alike.

#### *Land Development Patterns*

About half of the county's 15,000+ residents are concentrated in the three incorporated towns of Salida (about 5,500), Buena Vista (about 2,200), and Poncha Springs (about 300), although over the past twenty five years a significant portion of growth in the county has been in unincorporated areas such as Mesa Antero and Game Trail subdivisions. Today 50% of the County's residents live in the unincorporated area.



The City of Salida is a statutory city with a mayor/council/administrator form of government; it is the Chaffee County Seat. It is the county's largest municipality and has seen the most growth of the three incorporated areas since 1970, gaining about 1,200 people. Salida provides water and sewer services for its residents, surrounding unincorporated areas, and sewer treatment for Poncha Springs. The city is a major base for tourists, providing lodging and attractions such as the popular Salida Hot Springs Pool and an attractive downtown historic area. A large portion of the county's retail and commercial base is located in Salida along U.S. 50, including a new Wal-Mart store and many other businesses. The town's economy has been growing steadily for the past several years, as witnessed by a significant increase in sales tax revenues since 1990 from

\$537,00 to \$829,000 in 1996. The city has been working on a comprehensive plan (including a 3-mile plan) for the last several years, but has not as yet completed that process.



Entrance to Buena Vista

The Town of Buena Vista, located in the northern reaches of the county, is a statutory town with a mayor/council/administrator form of government. Buena Vista has its own municipal water system that serves the town and surrounding developments, including the Correctional Facility. Sewage treatment service, is undergoing upgrading and expansion in the next few years, and is provided by the Buena Vista Sanitation District. Like Salida, Buena Vista has witnessed steady growth in sales tax revenues since 1990, nearly doubling from \$330,000 to \$636,000 in 1996. Buena Vista recently updated its comprehensive plan and subdivision regulations, but has no 3-mile plan.

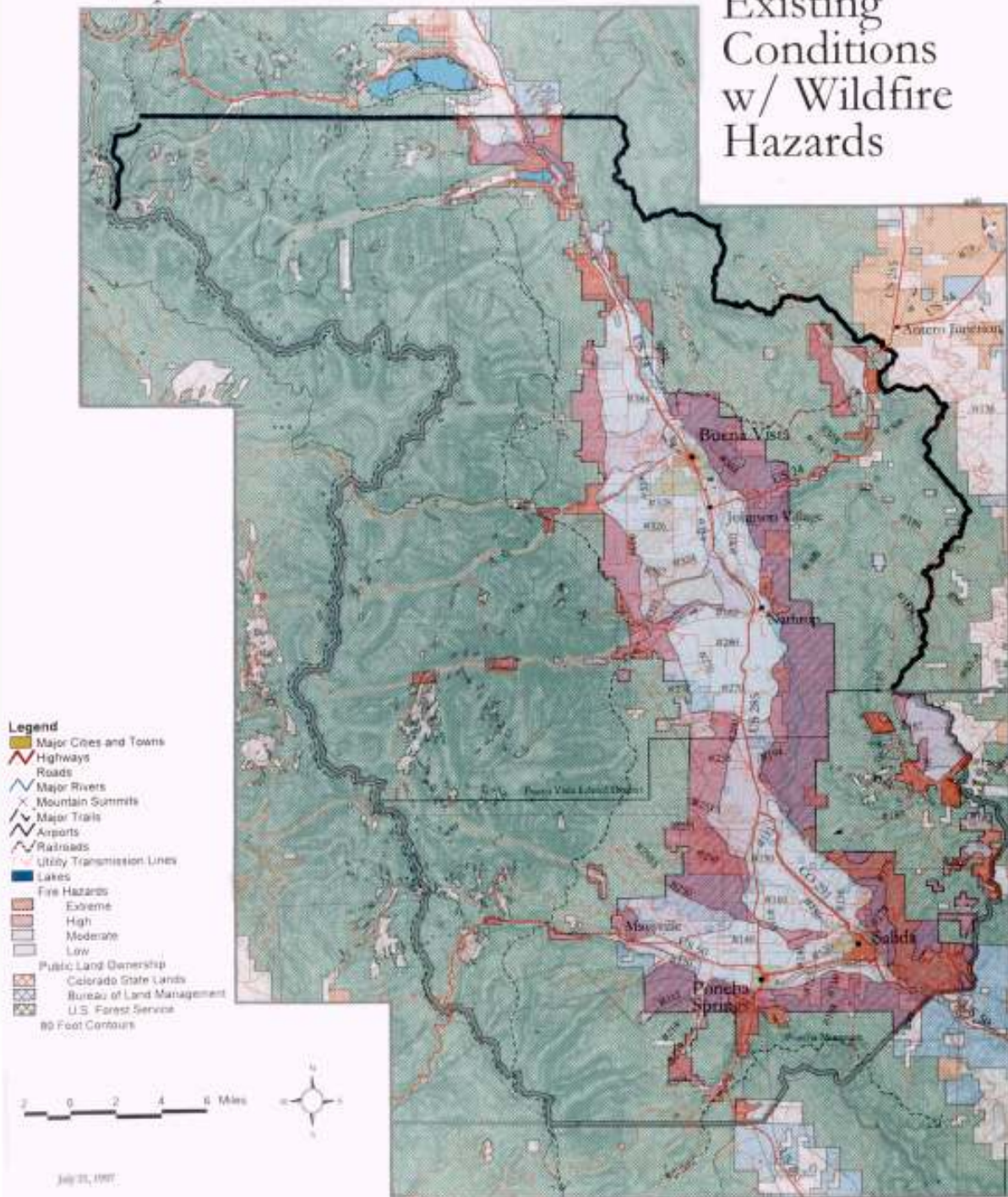
The Town of Poncha Springs is also a statutory town, with a mayor/council/manager form of government. Retail sales taxes generated by the tourist-oriented businesses clustered at the busy intersection of U.S. Highways 285 and 50 are the mainstay of the town's economy, although Poncha does have a substantial industrial park along County Road 120 near the county fairgrounds. The town provides its own water and receives sewer service from Salida. The town has recently updated its comprehensive plan.

The county has several significant unincorporated growth areas including Granite and the Game Trail-area subdivisions north of Buena Vista, Mesa Antero, and Nathrop in the county's midsection, and Maysville and Garfield to the west of Poncha Springs. Scattered low-density rural subdivisions have been approved throughout the county, many of which have subdivided, but unbuilt lots. This equates to a potential of approximately 4,700 units, which, if built out would be more than sufficient to meet projected population growth in the county for the next 20 years.

Chaffee County

# Comprehensive Plan

## Existing Conditions w/ Wildfire Hazards



## Zoning

The county has traditional zoning that divides the jurisdiction into seven basic zones. The county has what is known as “pyramidal zoning.” Pyramidal zoning allows all less intense uses such as residential in commercial zones and residential and commercial in industrial areas. The zoning map following this section illustrates the zoning descriptions below.

**R-1 Residential:** This zone, located mainly around Salida and Buena Vista, is intended for a higher-density residential development where municipal services are readily available. Minimum lot size is 1/2 acre when the development is served by both public sewer and an approved on-site well.

**RR Rural Residential:** This zone, designated primarily west of Buena Vista and west and north of Salida, is intended for single family residences and some agricultural uses in a “country living atmosphere.” A wide variety of commercial uses (hospitals, day care centers, clinics, etc.) are allowed by special use permits. The minimum lot size is 2 acres, but can go as low as 1/2 acre if the site is served by public sewer and an approved on-site well.

**RS Rural Suburban Zone:** This zone is intended to be an intermediate type of district with uses compatible with Rural Residential, Rural, and Recreational zones. It is found all along the western edge of the county bordering public lands and north and west of Poncha Springs along Highways 50 and 285. The purpose is to “provide areas suitable for suburban living on which animals and crops can be raised.” The minimum lot size was originally 10 acres, but the zoning resolution now allows 1 unit/2 acres by right with lots as small as 1/2 acre if served by public sewer and an approved on-site well.

**R Rural Zone:** This zone is intended for all agricultural, farming, ranching, other uses that require large acreages and separation from business, industrial, and urban residential uses. The purpose of the zone is to preserve and protect the best agricultural areas and maintain a desirable “rural and scenic atmosphere.” This zone also allows a wide variety of commercial uses and multi-family dwellings by special use permit. Moreover, the minimum lot size is only 2 acres for rural residential and can go as low as 1/2 acre when served by public sewer and an approved on-site well.

**RC Recreational Zone:** This zone consists of all private land within boundaries of the public domain. Many uses that are “compatible” with public lands are allowed, including residential, hospitals, recreational facilities, dude ranches, business and professional offices, industry, etc. The minimum lot size for residential is 2 acres, although again this may be reduced to 1/2 acre if serviced by public sewer.

**C Commercial:** This zone, mapped along major arterials and highways near incorporated towns, is intended to permit the development of commercial uses and services to serve the county and tourist related needs. A



wide variety of commercial uses are allowed as well as residential and other non-commercial uses. Minimum lot size is the typical 1/2 acre if on public water and sewer and 2 acres otherwise.

I Industrial: This zone provides for a variety of industrial uses and any other use permitted in other zones. Minimum lot size is the same as in other districts. Industrial areas are mapped around the two municipal airports in the county and several other locations near Buena Vista and Salida.

Interestingly, the county land development codes do not permit use of techniques such as cluster development that can help protect open space without affecting a property's overall allowable density. The resolution also provides for few development incentives.

### **Community Facilities, Infrastructure, and Services**

Overall, key pieces of infrastructure in the county and towns are being hard-pressed by growth. For example, the county is in serious need of additional jail capacity, but voters recently rejected a proposal to add space to the county jail. The sewer system in Buena Vista is inadequate to handle additional growth, and plans are now on the drawing board to expand local sanitation district facilities. Salida appears to have adequate

water supply and treatment capacity, but its sewer plant is reaching its limits. Some observers note that while the towns may have an adequate supply of water and valid water rights, they will need additional storage capacity to utilize such water. If new growth is to be accommodated in the county around the towns, these capacity and storage problems must be addressed and methods by which to finance these improvements found. Because the county does not provide urban services such as water and sewage treatment, it is feeling the impacts of growth primarily in services such as road/bridge maintenance, jail/police facilities, and emergency services. Rural residential developments are served either by package water/sewage treatment facilities or by individual wells and septic. This section summarizes the status and capacity of infrastructure and services in the county and three municipalities as of mid-1997, including utilities, fire/police/emergency services, and schools. The respective jurisdictions were asked to evaluate their facilities and services assuming the county's population would grow by 50-75% by the year 2020. As part of this planning effort, the County intends to request current and proposed growth scenarios on an annual basis.



Chaffee County Court House

#### *Water*

The county does not supply centralized water service to any developments. Several major county subdivisions like Mesa Antero and Game Trail have their own private water systems and augmentation plans. Mon-

arch Ski and Snowboard Area also has its own system for the Garfield town site; this system has been made possible through water augmentation by the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District. The City of Salida reports that it has adequate water supplies and treatment capacity at present, but is working to reduce summer consumption to increase the system capacity. However, recently there have been reports that the city may not have sufficient water supply/water rights or the storage capacity to use such water. Poncha Springs reports it currently has two wells serving about 500 residents, and the water supply to serve 500 more. It is currently in the process of drawing up plans to expand its existing plant and purchase additional water rights. Again, some observers maintain that Poncha, which like Salida relies on the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District reservoirs for storage capacity, does not have adequate future storage capacity to accommodate additional growth that is projected. The Town of Buena Vista has upgraded its water storage capacity with tanks that will enable it to serve over 5,000 residents (vs. a current population of just over 2,000). Additional water rights will need to be secured to serve projected population increases as well as storage capacity. Recent water rate increases have apparently led to greater water conservation efforts by citizens, thus stretching the town's existing water supply. The Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District is a statutory water conservancy district which offers augmentation storage water to limited areas within Chaffee County, including the three municipalities. Augmentation storage water sold through the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District offers depletion replacement in the major streams sufficient to qualifying applications to obtain well permits for domestic, commercial, and industrial uses. The district also provides Frying Pan Arkansas project water to qualified irrigators located within the boundaries of the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District. Water appropriators, such as municipalities and developers have available to them, shares of stock from Twin Lakes Reservoir and Canal Company and conversion of irrigation ditch water that can be converted to augmentation water rights.

#### *Sewer*

The county does not operate any centralized sewage treatment facilities, and most rural developments are on septic systems. These systems are serviced by the Salida treatment plant. There are several package treatment plants in the county, one to serve Monarch and another in the Mt. Princeton area. There is growing concern that allowing proliferation of package treatment plants to serve large rural subdivisions will lead to water quality problems because of poor maintenance by homeowner associations. The City of Salida and the Buena Vista Sanitation District currently operate treatment facilities for those respective areas. The City of Salida's treatment plant, which services Poncha Springs and takes septic wastes from unincorporated portions of Chaffee as well as South Park and West Fremont Counties, is near capacity. However, if a new facility is completed in Buena Vista and takes some of this septic load, the city believes that it will have sufficient capacity to handle growth over the next 20 years.

The situation in Buena Vista is less defined. The current treatment facility, which consists only of a series of lagoons, has been cited for water pollution violations. The Sanitation District is fully aware of these problems, and residents of the district recently approved a \$4 million bond issue to upgrade the facility in 1997. The district has moved quickly to draw up plans for a new facility and has initiated discussion with the Buena Vista Correctional Facility for joint participation in the upgrade.

#### *Police/Sheriff*

Both Buena Vista and Salida report that they would have to expand their police forces to cope with additional growth within their communities. Poncha Springs currently is served by the Chaffee County Sheriff. All three jurisdictions utilize the county jail for detention. The current county jail is at or above capacity, but citizens defeated a proposal in 1998 to impose a 2% use tax on building materials purchased outside the county to finance a new jail. The new facility would have covered a 50% increase in current county population. The county is now looking at alternative approaches to housing the growing number of prisoners.

#### *Fire Protection*

The county is currently served by the Chaffee County Fire Protection District that has 58 volunteers and covers nearly 1,000 square miles, including Poncha Springs. It has four fire stations. This district does not serve Buena Vista, Salida, or the area covered by the South Arkansas Fire Protection District that is run under contract by the City of Salida. According to the Chaffee County Fire District's marshal's office, the department has received several parcels of donated land upon which to build fire stations (e.g., Mesa Antero and Game Trail), but that there is currently not sufficient funds for either construction or purchase of necessary equipment. According to staff, the department is currently fighting an uphill battle just to stay even with growing demands, and if the population increases

as projected, there will be a serious need for more volunteers and more funds for stations and equipment. Within the next 5 years, the department will need to seriously consider going to a combined paid and voluntary force to maintain adequate levels of service. This would entail significant costs for the county in terms of personnel, building, and equipment. Buena Vista also has a volunteer fire department, and the town currently has an ISO rating of 5, which is acceptable. Salida currently has a full-time, paid department. An increase in population within Salida would require another station, equipment, and staff.



Poncha Springs Fire Department



Heart of the Rockies  
Regional medical Center

### *Medical Services*

The Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center, located in Salida, is the center of a hospital district that covers all of Chaffee County as well as portions of adjacent jurisdictions. The current facilities are adequate at present, and there are no immediate expansion plans. However, the center has undertaken a facilities plan in anticipation of future growth as the population of the county ages. Outpatient services will also likely be expanded. Emergency medical/ambulance service is provided by the county, which receives between 1,000 and 1,200 calls per year. Facilities are located in the county building and jail. According to the EMS director, the county currently employs 3 full time assistants and 40 part-time employees (who receive only an hourly wage and no benefits). The director foresees a need in the near future to go to a more full-time staff to provide adequate coverage for the county. Much of the districts dispatch equipment and 4 of its 6 ambulances are outdated or inadequate. The county EMS is currently an enterprise operation, meaning that operating and capital expenses must be paid for primarily from fees for service. Thus fees will need to be increased substantially to cover operating costs if the department expands.

However, given the high projected costs of new facilities and ambulances (which can cost upwards of \$100,000), new sources of funding will need to be found.

### *Schools*

The county is serviced by two school districts, one centered in Buena Vista (R-31) and the other in Salida (R-32). Each has an elementary, middle/junior, and high school. Both are feeling the demands of growth. In Buena Vista, a \$7.7 million bond issue was approved by the voters in 1996, and construction has been completed on a new elementary school as well as a remodel and an addition to the combined middle/high school. A recent study for the Salida school district determined a need for a new middle school. The existing high school is also at capacity. However, elementary school enrollment has been declining, making determination of future needs difficult. In November 1997, Salida voters narrowly approved a \$7.3 million bond issue to build a new middle school. Other schools include the Chaffee Alternative High School located in Buena Vista that is administered jointly by the two districts. Additionally, the private Darren Patterson Christian Academy (Grades K-12) is located in Buena Vista. Public libraries are located in Salida and Buena Vista. Voters in Salida approved a tax increase to expand that library in 1996. The Colorado Mountain College campus provides a variety of classes and educational opportunities in the County, with classes in Salida and Buena Vista. Western State College is located 60 miles west in Gunnison, and Adams State College is 80 miles to the south in Alamosa. Both are four-year fully accredited state institutions.



### *Parks/Recreational Facilities*

Unlike many counties in Colorado, Chaffee County does not currently maintain a formal park or recreation system or facilities such as campgrounds. It has constructed and maintains a minimal system of trails, usually associated with county roads. The county has recently undertaken an effort to plan a county wide trails system, a draft of which has been completed but not adopted. In the survey conducted as part of the comprehensive plan process, a majority (56%) of respondents rated the availability of developed indoor recreational facilities as poor. In contrast, 87% were satisfied with outdoor recreational facilities or thought they were good to excellent. Despite the lack of county facilities, citizens have access to large tracts of state and federal lands for recreational purposes and hundreds of miles of developed trails and over 900 private and public campsites in the county. Additionally, the City of Salida and the Town of Buena Vista are working on trails and pathways throughout their communities. While the Buena Vista system does make connections with trails on public lands, the Salida system is primarily internal to the city.

### *Natural and Cultural Resources*

Chaffee County has a tremendous bank of natural and cultural resources such as abundant wildlife, scenic natural areas like the Chalk Cliffs, historic towns and sites, natural hot springs and pools, and blue-ribbon trout rivers and streams, to name only a few. These resources not only play a critical role in the county's tourist economy, but also help define the essence of the area for residents. The county is home to some of the greatest concentrations of wildlife in the United States. It is not unusual to be able to see elk, deer, antelope, and big horn sheep in a single drive through the county, perhaps with a bald eagle or peregrine falcon wheeling overhead. While rarely seen, Chaffee County has a significant number of mountain lions. The Arkansas River is not only a world-renowned white-water river, but also a blue-ribbon trout stream with a growing national reputation.

The county has abundant surface water resources consisting of the Arkansas River and its tributaries such as Cottonwood, Chalk, Clear, and Browns Creek and the South Arkansas River. Generally, the Arkansas and its tributaries have very high water quality, although there is some localized degradation from septic infiltration and sewage treatment facilities outflows. Recent efforts to clean up heavy mineral pollution in the upper Arkansas are already showing results with a major recovery of aquatic insects and larger fish. The county has a number of larger reservoirs such as Clear Creek (surface area of 421 acres) and numerous mountain lakes. There are also over 700 miles of irrigation ditches in the county.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife has supplied the county with detailed mapping of critical habitat for a variety of wildlife species. This information is summarized in the map and wildlife species ranking list in Appendix D. Some of the most sensitive species are the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and western boreal toad. The county also has critical habitat for a variety of other species including elk, deer, bighorn sheep, black bear, mountain lions, bobcat, wild turkey, and others.



Mt. Princeton

The county is fortunate to have a number of unusual scenic and natural features such as the Chalk Cliffs near Mt. Princeton, the rugged backcountry of Browns Canyon, and the hot springs and pools in Poncha Springs/Salida, Mount Princeton, and Cottonwood Creek, with others scattered throughout the area. These all add to the attractiveness and beauty of the county for tourists.

The county has a wealth of sites of historic and archeological interest. A 1975 study commissioned by the county identified 74 sites to be of significant historical interest. These range from mines, to historic cemeteries, to ghost towns such as Turret. Of particular note is the town of St. Elmo, a national historic district. St. Elmo is one of Colorado's best-preserved 1880's mining towns. A number of structures in the town have been renovated or stabilized, some with

funding from the state historical society. Currently, there are no land development or zoning regulations that protect these historic and archeological resources in the county.

*Transportation*

Three major highways serve Chaffee County. U.S. Highway 50 is the primary east/west link providing access to western Colorado and Interstate 25 to the east at Pueblo. U.S. Highways 285/24 are the primary north/south link, and carries the lion's share of traffic that comes to the

county from Denver and Colorado Springs. Traffic on both of these highways has been increasing significantly over the past 10 years. For example, traffic counts at the Highway 285/24 intersection at Johnson's Corner jumped 25% from 3,600 vehicles per day in 1990 to 4,500 in 1995. The increase was even higher on U.S. 50 between Monarch Pass and Maysville, 48.6%. Despite these increases, traffic flows continue to be good throughout the county, except perhaps in the summer months when rafting buses mix with traffic on Highway 285 to cause intermittent slowdowns and congestion. The county maintains approximately 540 miles of county roads. It has 19 full-time road and bridge employees and a road and bridge budget of about \$1.68 million annually. The state highway users tax provided about \$1.3 million in revenues to the county in 1997. Because of changes in the formula for distribution of the highway users tax, the county administrator projects that there will be little increase in state funds for road/bridge maintenance in the coming years. Aside from the increasing cost of road/bridge maintenance in the county and the issue of speed limits on U.S. Highways 24, 285,



St. Elmo Jail and Town Hall

and 50, few road/highway issues were raised during the planning process. Generally county roads are well-maintained and levels of service are high with only occasional congestion.

An exception is the issue of whether the road over Cottonwood Pass should be paved. The east side of the highway which traverses the Continental Divide between Buena Vista and Taylor Park in Gunnison County has been paved for several years. The west side, however, remains a rather rough dirt/gravel road. The Federal Highway Administration, which receives federal funds to pave roads within National Forests, has been considering paving the west side, but intense opposition from Gunnison County, the Town of Crested Butte, and Taylor Park ranchers led the FHWA to decide recently to adopt a “no action” alternative that effectively kills the project for the immediate future. The Chaffee County Board had supported the paving project on the grounds that it would increase tourist traffic in the area. There have also been informal discussions about a by-pass west of Salida running to connect Highway 291 northwest of Salida with U.S. 50 to the south. Such a route would allow traffic to bypass downtown Salida, but would require a major new river crossing and condemnation of a number of existing homes depending on the route. There is no formal planning underway regarding this by-pass.

Chaffee County is also served by two general aviation airports, Harriet Alexander Field located two miles west of Salida and Avery Field/Central Colorado Regional Airport located one mile south of Buena Vista. Harriet Alexander Field is owned jointly by the City of Salida and Chaffee County and is operated by Chaffee County. It has one asphalt runway 7,350 long capable of handling prop planes and smaller jets. There are nine hangars at the airport and a variety of aviation-related services. The field serves a variety of private, commercial, and government users, including area hospitals. Airport use and other aviation-related activities continue to grow at the airport, which has been adding an average one new hangar per year.

Of concern to the county airport commission is the national trend for incompatible residential growth to envelope airports. Residents then predictably mount campaigns to limit operations or close the airports due to noise and safety concerns. Currently, in the Harriet Alexander Field influence area, there are relatively few land uses that are incompatible with airport operations. It is surrounded by agricultural land and drainage ways, with a few single-family homes being located about one mile to the east of the runway.

The 1990 Airport Layout Plan recommends prohibiting new residential development in close proximity to the airport, especially to protect the takeoffs and approaches to the runway. While land to the south and southeast is zoned industrial and would allow light industrial and commercial uses that would generally be compatible with airport operations, land to the north and west would allow residential development under current county zoning, and residential growth is beginning to accelerate in this area. Consequently, the airport commission would like to see land use guidelines for height limitations under takeoff and landing patterns, run-

way clear zones, and use restrictions to protect against noise impacts that are set forth in the airport land use plan. These types of land use limitations are standard for airports around the United States to protect airports from incompatible encroachment and to obviate noise and safety concerns. Future revisions of the county zoning and subdivision resolutions should create an airport overlay zone to address these issues.

A second county airport is Avery Field/Central Colorado Regional Airport south of Buena Vista, which is owned by the City of Buena Vista and operated by Arkansas Valley Aviation, a private firm. The field consists of one asphalt runway that runs north and south. It is 8,300 feet long and is currently 75 feet in width, with plans to expand it to 100 feet. The field is equipped with runway lighting for night operations and a beacon and landing guidance lights. Privately owned hangars provide approximately 25,000 square feet of hangar space. Fuel service is available during daylight hours. The airport serves a mix of private, commercial, and government users, including fire fighting, search and rescue, and emergency medical operations. The Colorado Department of Corrections uses the field as a base for transportation and exchange of prisoners from correction facilities.

The Town of Buena Vista controls approximately 26 acres of land along the taxiways that could accommodate a large additional amount of hangar space plus industrial development. Also, there are approximately another 120 acres of private land abutting the town property that is available for development.

The Avery Field/Central Colorado Regional Airport master plan provides for this land to be utilized for fly-in industrial/business or residential air park use. The plan also provides for a buffer between potential residential growth near the airport. According to the airport operator, the airport advisory board and the town are reasonably comfortable that planning in the immediate vicinity of the airfield has been appropriately addressed by airport overlay zoning in the city, aviation easements, buffer areas, and airport operational rules. The east side of the field are buffered by the Highway 24/285 corridor, a railroad right-of-way, and the correctional facility. On the north, there is over a half mile of publicly owned wetlands between the runway and town limits where residential development has taken place. On the west the airfield is flanked by a county road and extensive business/industrial development land. West and south of the county road is agricultural land except for about 500 acres of industrially zoned land at the northwest corner of the airfield in various stages of development.



## **4. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Residential Development**

Perhaps the most important objective of the plan is to focus new higher density residential development around existing towns and developed areas. An overwhelming majority of the county's citizens, 76%, disapprove of continuing the county's current development pattern of scattered small and large lots in rural areas. An almost equal number favor targeting smaller lot development around towns and allowing only larger lot development in rural areas. If carried out, this goal would help accomplish several things.

First, it would make providing governmental services like fire protection, roads, and water/sewage service, more efficient and cost-effective, helping to keep taxes down. Property taxes, particularly for commercial property, in Chaffee County continue to climb to pay for the costs of new development. Also, as documented in Appendix D, services such as fire protection are being stretched by increasing development in unincorporated areas.

Second, it would make preservation of the county's rural character much easier since rural areas would not be fragmented with more small lot (1 unit/2-3 acres and less) residential development. Today, the county's rural zone districts are rural in name only. They allow development as dense as permitted in residential zones near towns designed to accommodate higher intensity projects. According to county staff, until 1990, the rural zone districts required a minimum lot size of 1 unit/10 acres. This change was made despite the fact that it directly contradicted the then existing comprehensive plan which also called for smaller lot development to be focused around the towns. (Comprehensive Plan of Chaffee County, Yguado Association, April 1971)

Finally, focusing development would help address the affordable housing problem in Chaffee County. Again, it is important to note that the present scattered-lot development pattern is not producing and will not produce affordable housing lots for existing residents of the county.

Landowners within designated growth areas have also expressed concern that they will be forced to develop their property at higher densities. This would not be the case. They would have the ability to develop at higher densities, but could, if they choose, not to develop at all or at much lower densities. Indeed, experience in other communities indicates that there will be a variety of lot sizes within the targeted growth areas, and that lot sizes will be larger the greater the distance from the towns.

#### **Commercial and Industrial Development**

While it is ostensibly the county's policy as reflected in its zoning resolution to encourage commercial and industrial development in or adjacent

to existing towns, in practice special permits have been granted to allow such growth scattered in rural areas throughout the county. The adverse impacts of this practice are four-fold.

First, as with scattered residential development, allowing commercial and industrial growth in rural areas fragments open space and sets a precedent for more of the same. Like scattered residential development, this random commercial and industrial building also is more expensive to provide with public services and can have an adverse impact on adjacent landowners who purchased their property with the expectation that such growth would be confined to more appropriate built-up areas.



Example of Commercial Development

Second, allowing non-residential development deprives the towns of their share of property and sales tax revenues that are a significant source of financing for local governments in Colorado. However, they must often still bear the burden of providing municipal services to the employees of those businesses who often live within their jurisdictions.

Third, scattered industrial and commercial development could have impacts on local roads not intended for heavy truck or employee traffic and complicate transportation planning for the county.

Finally, allowing industrial development to scatter throughout the county undercuts the viability of existing business parks such as those in Buena Vista and Poncha Springs.

This problem has been recognized by the county planning commission, which in 1989 adopted a detailed policy, with support of the board of county commissioners and towns, to

direct commercial development to the towns and to allow such growth outside municipalities “only when necessary for specific location functions, market or service requirements.”

### **Private Property Rights**

Again, while a significant majority of citizens in the county supported strengthening county land use regulations to protect sensitive resources and open space, there was a strong undercurrent in the survey and at public meetings to be sensitive to property rights by utilizing incentives and non-regulatory tools to accomplish plan goals. Thus throughout the plan, alternative implementation approaches are suggested as supplements to regulations where they will be as effective and as efficient as more regulatory approaches.



At the various citizen workshops, a recurrent theme was concern over the high percentage (83%) of land in public ownership. Some property owners asked why any more land should be taken off the tax roles and put in public ownership to preserve open space, when so much was already in the public domain. Others worried that there was not enough private land to sustain a solid economy. Interestingly, since the 1971 comprehensive plan was completed, the amount of land in federal ownership has actually decreased slightly according to information compiled for the Valley Visions Chaffee County Healthy Community Profile in 1995.

A related theme was that as the county continues to urbanize, ranchers are finding it more and more difficult to maintain their operations without various forms of interference from adjacent developments. A particularly important area that ranchers singled out for action was the protection of irrigation ditch rights and the need for convenient access to those ditches for maintenance.

#### GUIDING OBJECTIVE 1.

Focus new higher density residential development around existing towns.

#### IMPLEMENTATION ACTION

1. Amend the county rural zoning regulations to establish a base density specific to the zone for areas outside the designated growth areas to more effectively accomplish the stated objectives outlined in the current zoning resolution and facilitate development toward the designated growth areas. Provide for site specific adjustments and incentives to the base density following criteria to be established.
  - Subdivision regulations will be modified and coordinated to reflect current zoning resolutions as amended. Additional factors which would allow adjustment of the above suggested base density should include:
    - Access to public or private water and sewer systems;
    - Impact to riparian areas;
    - Accommodation of planned trails;
    - Inclusion of facilities accessible to subdivision residents;
    - Level of developer provided improvements (paved roads, water systems, utilities provided, facilities, etc.); and
    - Impact on wildlife corridor.
2. Work in close cooperation with the three municipalities to designate town areas where smaller-lot, more affordable residential development will be appropriate. These areas should take into account such factors as population projections, topography and location of sensitive environmental areas (e.g., do not include critical wildlife habitat), and location of existing and planned municipal services. Potential development densities in these areas adjacent to the towns should be increased to encourage and have compact development near existing housing. As a part of this process, the town and county should

work with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and state agencies such as the Division of Wildlife to avoid locating development in such a manner to adversely affect sensitive resources on adjacent public lands.

Within any particular development, the plan envisions a variety of housing types, including large conservancy lots of 10-35 acres built in areas where sensitive natural lands need protection, (e.g., wildlife habitat, steep slopes, riparian areas), traditional single-family homes at densities common in the towns (e.g., 4-6 units per acre), and where appropriate more affordable, denser multi-family townhomes, apartments, and even well designed trailer parks. Moreover, the developments would be encouraged to provide adequate public and private open space and community facilities such as ball and soccer fields and playgrounds to serve new residents and their families. Neighborhood and convenience commercial space can be an integral part of any major development.

3. Limit the county subdivision exemption process. Like most counties, Chaffee County has adopted an exemption process that allows splits of parcels in certain instances without having to go through full subdivision review. These provisions were put in place to allow ranchers to split off lots for members of the family who would then build houses on them. The purpose was to promote keeping the family ranch unit intact without having to go through unnecessary subdivision review because impacts would be minimal.

Currently the exemption process is being used increasingly to split smaller land holdings into small lots for sale to unrelated individuals. Only four such exemptions were granted in 1992, but the number jumped to 21 in 1995, and 44 in 1997. As a result, the exemption process is becoming a defacto means of subdivision in the county. The result is that scores of lots are being created without adequate review of access and county services, impact on natural areas and open space, effects on neighboring properties and property values, and similar considerations.

The current exemption process in Chaffee County has few effective, enforceable limits on the number of exempt lot splits that can be made. At a minimum, the county should narrow the availability of the exemption process by considering the following limits:

- There maybe one exemption per 35 acres or less creating one additional lot. Sizing of lots depends on zoning. The intent is to also allow the commissioners to overlook the property in question and if sizes of lots are representative of the area then occasionally a lot could be made smaller that allowed by zoning. Special cicumstances need to be present to allow this.
4. Work with the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District to coordinate the water supply policy throughout the valley. The Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District has played an important and positive role in the past by keeping water in the valley available for agri-

cultural irrigation, local businesses, and residences. The district helped keep a number of existing businesses in operation in the 1990s when they were faced with well enforcement orders by the state water engineer. District officials report they have worked with Salida, Buena Vista, and Poncha Springs to help those communities secure adequate water supplies and water storage capacity.

5. Execute an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between the county and towns that adopts a policy, of supporting annexation of land to the town for projects of higher density. Encouraging steps have already been taken by the county in signing an intergovernmental planning agreement with Buena Vista and Poncha Springs. These agreements should be modified and expanded to reflect the objectives of this plan, and renewed efforts made to sign such an agreement with Salida.

The IGA should also address the issue of commercial/industrial development around the towns. Adequate provision should be made to accommodate some additional highway oriented development near the towns, but steps should be taken to ensure that strip development does not occur out along the gateways so that Poncha Springs and Salida and Buena Vista and Johnson Village do not sprawl into one another. Industrial and service oriented commercial development should be concentrated in existing business parks in Poncha Springs and Buena Vista or on infill lots in the towns themselves.

#### GUIDING OBJECTIVE 2.

Focus commercial and industrial development in existing towns, developed industrial parks, and already developed commercial areas in places like Nathrop and other designated areas.

#### IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Review the county's zone districts to modify the number of commercial uses that are allowed in rural areas through the special permit process. Allow only those uses that have an obvious need to locate in such areas such as certain resorts/dude ranches, commercial rafting, and resource extraction activities.
2. Adopt and codify in the county zoning regulations commercial development policies.

#### GUIDING OBJECTIVE 3.

Protect existing private property rights in adopting any regulatory changes based on this plan.

## IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Existing legal subdivided lots should be “grandfathered” in against any locational controls on development that might be adopted to implement this plan.

## GUIDING OBJECTIVE 4.

Use incentives and other non-regulatory tools to accomplish plan objectives where they will be effective and efficient.

## IMPLEMENTING ACTION

1. Utilize incentives and non-regulatory tools to guide development within the County. Tools include density bonuses, the conservation subdivision process, and purchase of development rights, if enacted.
2. Encourage creation of a private land trust for the county and the formation of a privately directed purchase of development rights to preserve open space and ranch land throughout the county.

## GUIDING OBJECTIVE 5.

Maintain the existing stock of private land in the county and encourage continuation of agricultural activities.

## IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Adopt a “no net loss” of private land policy for the county. Work with federal and state agencies to ensure that when private land is purchased and converted to public uses, that where feasible an equivalent amount of public lands are made available for development. For example, if the United States Forest Service purchases land to provide a buffer for resources inside San Isabel National Forest, it should determine if there are equivalent amounts of excess public lands that can be traded or sold without impairing forest resources.
2. Enact strengthened local “right-to-farm” legislation as authorized by state law that will protect ranchers and farmers from nuisance suits and other interferences by surrounding development.
3. Develop specific standards requiring protection of access to existing C.R.S. irrigation ditches throughout Chaffee County per C.R.S. 37-86-

101 to 105.

## 5. COMMUNITY CHARACTER/NATURAL/CULTURAL RESOURCES

### DISCUSSION

#### *Scenic Quality*

The scenic grandeur of the county is obvious to anyone who drives down U.S. 285 or along U.S. 50. Not only is the scenic quality of the area a key to the tourist economy, but it is highly valued by local residents as an essential element of the valley's good quality of life.



Upper Arkansas River

Some of the critical views that came out of the public workshops are the gateway vistas of Mount Princeton coming down from Trout Creek Pass and the expansive meadows and agricultural land that can be seen from Highway 285 along the Arkansas River. The visual surveys produced as part of the planning process should be a starting point in these reviews. For example, setting homes off streams, ridgelines, and clustering homes is recommended.

Another potential problem the county has heretofore been fortunate to avoid is that of signage. There are a few large on-premise signs and billboards in prominent locations throughout the county that have raised citizen ire. However, for the most part, existing signs are of modest size, and few billboards (off-premise signs) have been constructed. But the county's existing sign regulations as set forth in the zoning resolution are weak and should be amended to provide greater protection.

For example, the resolution currently has no controls on the size of signs outside residential areas. Moreover, billboards are allowed in most non-residential districts, again with no size or design limits that are common to codes in most other jurisdictions.

#### *Rural Character*

A recurring and strongly held view expressed in the community survey and at public meetings was the need to preserve and enhance the rural character of the county and to prevent the parcelization of the valley into small, scattered development lots. Of equal importance, citizens voiced their support for policies that would help ranchers stay on the land and keep their property in agricultural production.

While there was significant support for improved land use standards and regulations to preserve open space and agricultural land in the county, there was also a recognition that the ability of ranchers to realize development value from their properties was important if it helped them continue ranching. Moreover, citizens signaled their support for use of incentives over regulations where they could be as effective. Thus the idea of conservation subdivisions that provide density bonuses for developments that preserve significant amounts of open space and agricultural lands had strong support.

Along the same lines, there was a certain wariness of major land acquisition programs by the county; instead, many people expressed their support for private land conservation initiatives that would receive county financial support, for example, the creation of a private land trust that would secure conservation easements on properties or establishment of a purchase of development rights program that would be administered by ranchers similar to the new program recently created in Gunnison County. The only area where public land purchase appeared to have any significant support was in the area of maintaining and securing additional access to public lands.

As a result of these comments and discussions, a consensus emerged that open space, wildlife habitat, and agricultural land protection efforts had to be broadened both in terms of geographic focus and the range of tools to be utilized. Also, there was a recognition that the federal and state land-managing agencies and the private sector needed to be involved in this effort. While regulations will have a role to play, they will need to be augmented by a variety of methods.



Public Road going through Private Land

#### *Public Lands Access*

Some people did question the need for any open space preservation given the statistic that 83% of the county is owned by the public. However, this ignores the fact that elk, deer, and many other wildlife species cannot use the mostly mountainous public terrain during the winter. Also, the private lands in the valley floor contain most of the productive agricultural lands and define the character of the county for most people because they see it up close and personal every day. The public lands, on the other hand, provide an important scenic backdrop. In other words, both are important in defining the attractive character and sense of place in the county. If the private lands are developed in a fragmented and unplanned manner, then the character of the county will surely be altered beyond recognition.

As noted above, 83% of all land in the county is owned by the public, either the federal, state, or local governments. While citizens felt generally that access to public lands was good, they pointed to some examples where public access has been cut off by recent private development and worried that if this trend continued,

large sections of public lands would be, de facto, put off limits. Representatives of snowmobile and all-terrain vehicle groups also expressed anxiety that existing access points and trails open to their members might be reduced in the future. At the same time, other observers voiced fears that uncontrolled access to public lands could cause serious problems such as disturbance of wildlife habitat and destruction of sensitive moun-

tain vegetation.

#### *Recreational Opportunities*

Unlike a growing number of mountain counties, Chaffee County does not provide its citizens with county parks or open space. However, with the combination of federal and state lands and local and private recreational facilities, it is not surprising that many citizens of Chaffee County are generally pleased with outdoor recreational opportunities and facilities. The County should negotiate for school property in order to provide parks through the County.

Moreover, there was little support for the county taking steps to promote more active recreational opportunities such as rafting. The majority of Chaffee County residents support more emphasis on passive recreation, such as fishing, hiking, and snowshoeing.

However, there was significant disenchantment over indoor recreational opportunities. 56% of respondents thought that they were below average to poor. Neither the county nor the three towns have any major multi-purpose indoor community recreational facility. The Salida Hot Springs Pool is definitely an important asset and is heavily used. However, given the fact that efforts to create recreational districts in both Salida and Buena Vista have been defeated during the last decade, the question remains whether citizens are willing to fund such a facility. Also at issue would be whether a public facility would compete with private facilities.

#### *Natural Resources*

As discussed above, Chaffee County is blessed with abundant wildlife, wonderful views, and other natural assets that in a very real way define the community's character. An impressive 77% of survey respondents said wildlife habitat should be given priority in the protection of open space. Even more, 79%, said protection of river corridors and wetlands was critical. 63% of all respondents support stronger county land use regulations to accomplish these goals, and 70% supported economic incentives for ranchers to protect open space.

#### *Protection of Sensitive Natural Areas*

In addition to protection of wildlife habitat and riparian, steps should be taken to protect sensitive natural areas such as ridge lines and steep slopes from incompatible development and to encourage landowners and development, through incentives, to preserve such areas. Development on such sensitive areas, while often very visually intrusive, can also cause serious soil erosion and the potential for safety problems if those areas are unstable. Also, while the county currently has some minimum regulations regarding wildfire protection, with the increasing amount of development scattered throughout forested areas, these provisions need to be



St. Elmo Post Office



more specific reflecting modern practice and protections.

### *Cultural Resources*

The county's important historic and archeological resources are often overlooked because of its great natural assets. However, these areas, such as the ghost towns of St. Elmo and Turret, are not only great tourist assets, but recall the fascinating history of the county for residents and visitors alike. Today, these resources are protected largely by private efforts. The county can help to ensure that these cultural resources are not destroyed.

### GUIDING OBJECTIVE 1.

Give high priority to protecting the scenic and visual quality of the valley.

### IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Using the visual survey maps on the following pages, adopt standards for protection of view corridors from public rights-of way and other designated viewing areas. These standards should be simple and straightforward. Building height limits, appropriate stream beds and wetland setbacks, as well as ridge lines should be considered in commercial and industrial zoning.
2. Allow the conservation subdivision to encourage and provide incentives for preservation of meadows, river corridors, and other visually prominent areas along major highways in the county. Building height limits, appropriate stream beds and wetland setback limits should also be considered in residential zoning.
3. Update the county sign regulations to regulate size of billboards and limit the size and design of on-premise signs in non-residential zoning districts.



Pet Cemetery outside of Salida

### GUIDING OBJECTIVE 2.

Encourage protection of rural areas throughout the county outside designated growth areas. Preserve agricultural land, open space, and wildlife habitat throughout the valley through a variety of nonregulatory and regulatory techniques.

### IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

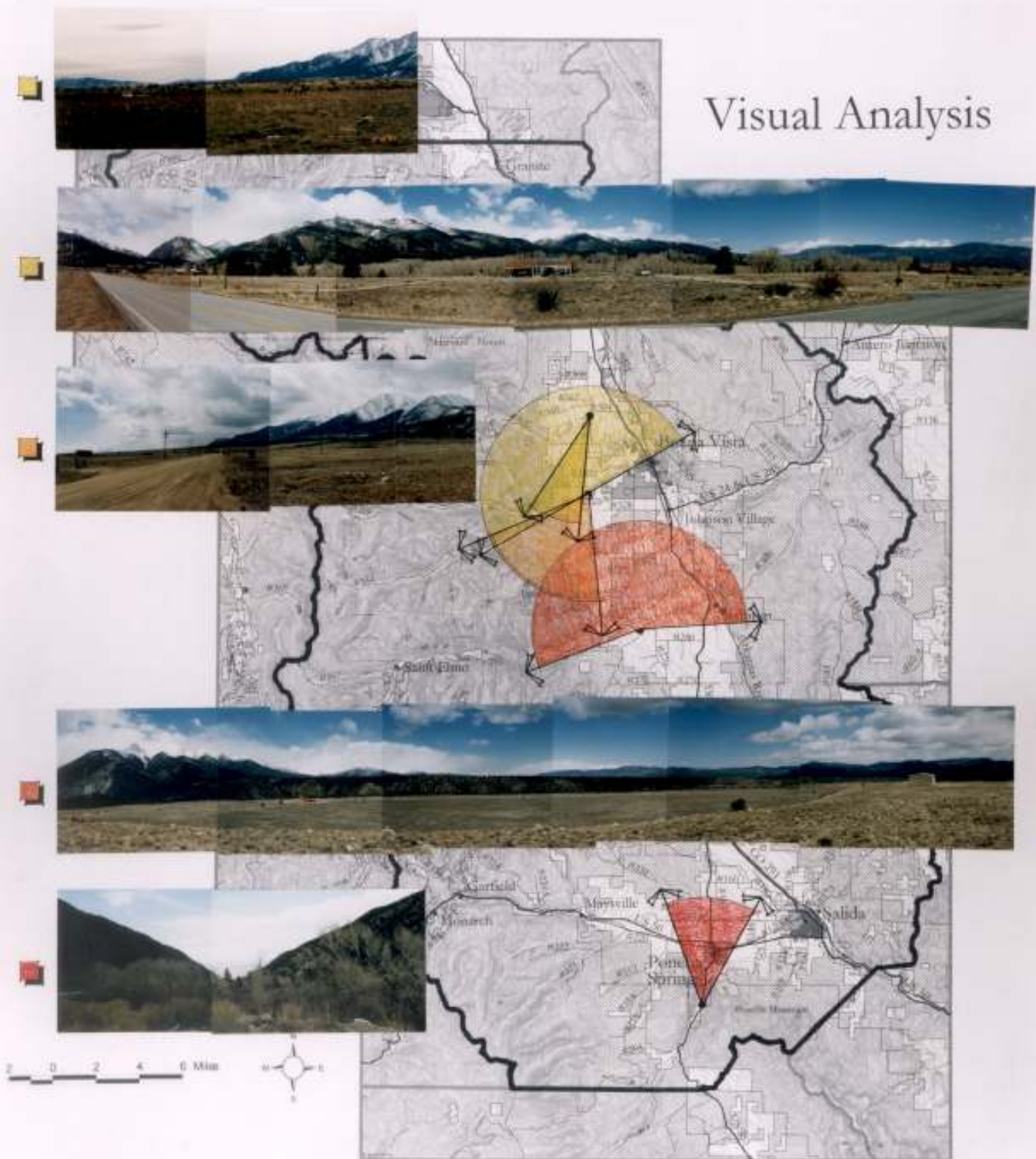
1. Explore a variety of non-regulatory tools to preserve open space and preserve agricultural lands in large-lot rural subdivisions. Develop incentives that would grant additional development densities in exchange for protection of large areas of contiguous open space and agri-





# Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan

## Visual Analysis



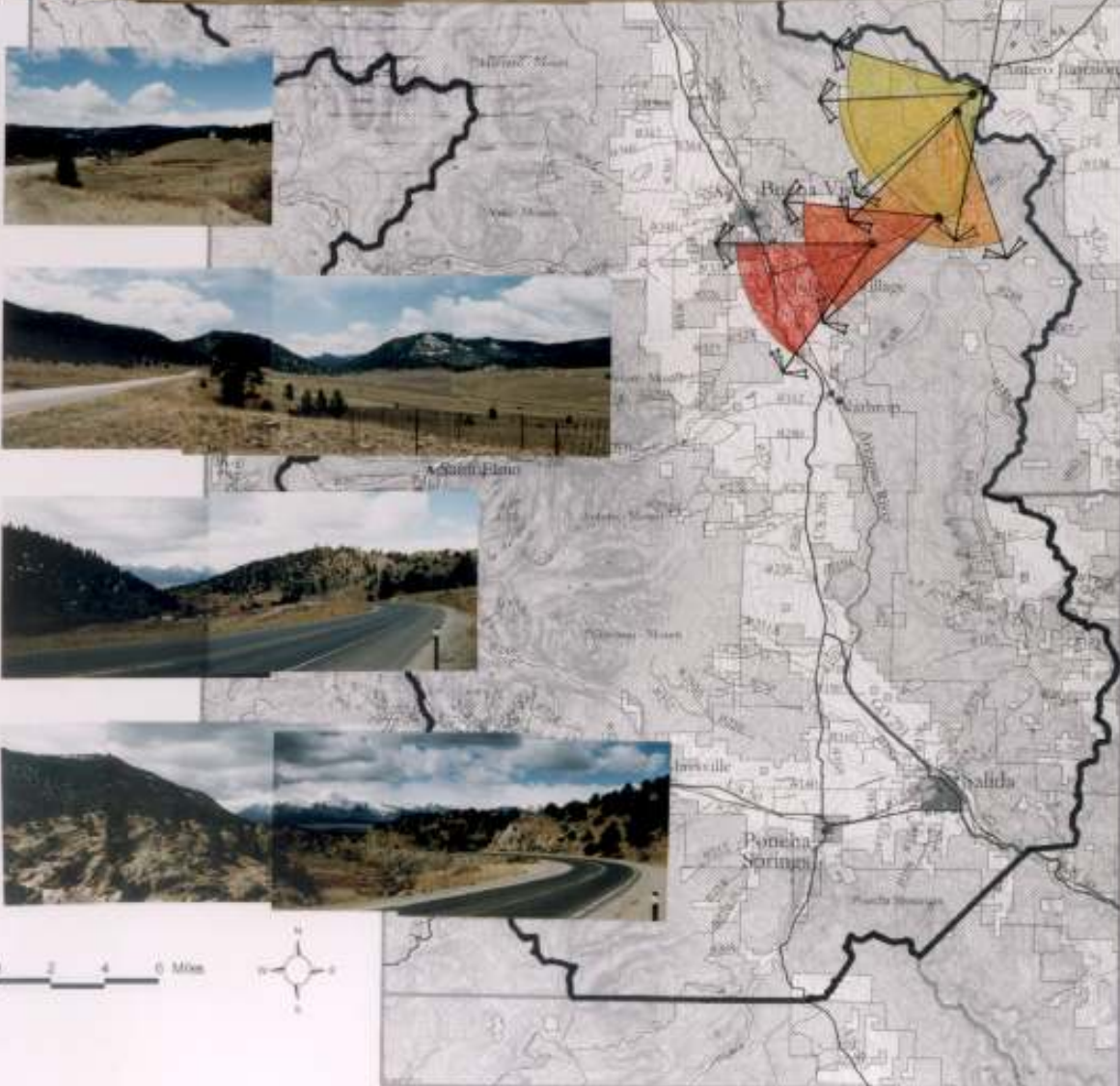
Clarion Associates RNL Design Colorado Open Lands RRC Cherry Street Partners Felsburg Holt Ullevig



# Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan



## Visual Analysis



0 2 4 6 Miles



Clarion Associates RNL Design Colorado Open Lands RRC Cherry Street Partners Felsburg Holt Ulevig

cultural lands.

2. Assist in the creation of a private land conservation organization that can utilize public/private conservation measures such as donation of conservation. Funding might come from the county, Great Outdoors Colorado, and other sources. Purchase would be undertaken only on a willing seller basis with a goal of keeping land in productive agricultural use where possible.
3. A small county fund could be created for public purchase of trail rights-of-way, particularly to maintain and secure access to public lands. This could be funded in part by contributions of money in-lieu of land dedication requirements or impact fees.

### GUIDING OBJECTIVES 3.

Provide access to public lands and river/stream corridors.

### IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Identify key access points to public lands that should be maintained or improved. Use a variety of techniques such as development incentives, acquisition of development rights, or donation of access easements to preserve and enhance such access.
2. Require that all development applications for property adjacent to public lands take special steps to ensure appropriate public access is maintained, improved, or limited as appropriate, including:
  - Pre-application consultation with relevant state and federal land management agencies to discuss issues such as appropriate travel/use restrictions, land tenure adjustments, site development, hunting on public lands, and similar issues that would affect adjacent public lands as well as residents of the development.
  - A written agreement with the land management agencies that contains specific proposals to provide or limit access as appropriate given the existing character, environmental sensitivity, and use of adjacent public lands.
  - Dedication of public rights-of-way, either in-fee or by easement, to ensure public access that is determined to be appropriate.
3. Work with the Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service to amend the applicable resource management and forest plans to reflect the goals and implementing actions set forth in this plan.
4. Complete the comprehensive trails plan for the valley that identifies potential trail corridors, trailhead access points to public lands, and associated sites for recreational activities. Pursue funding for imple-



mentation of such an interjurisdictional trails/open space plan with the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund and similar sources.  
GUIDING OBJECTIVE 4.

Preserve and enhance critical wildlife habitat and river and stream corridors throughout the county.

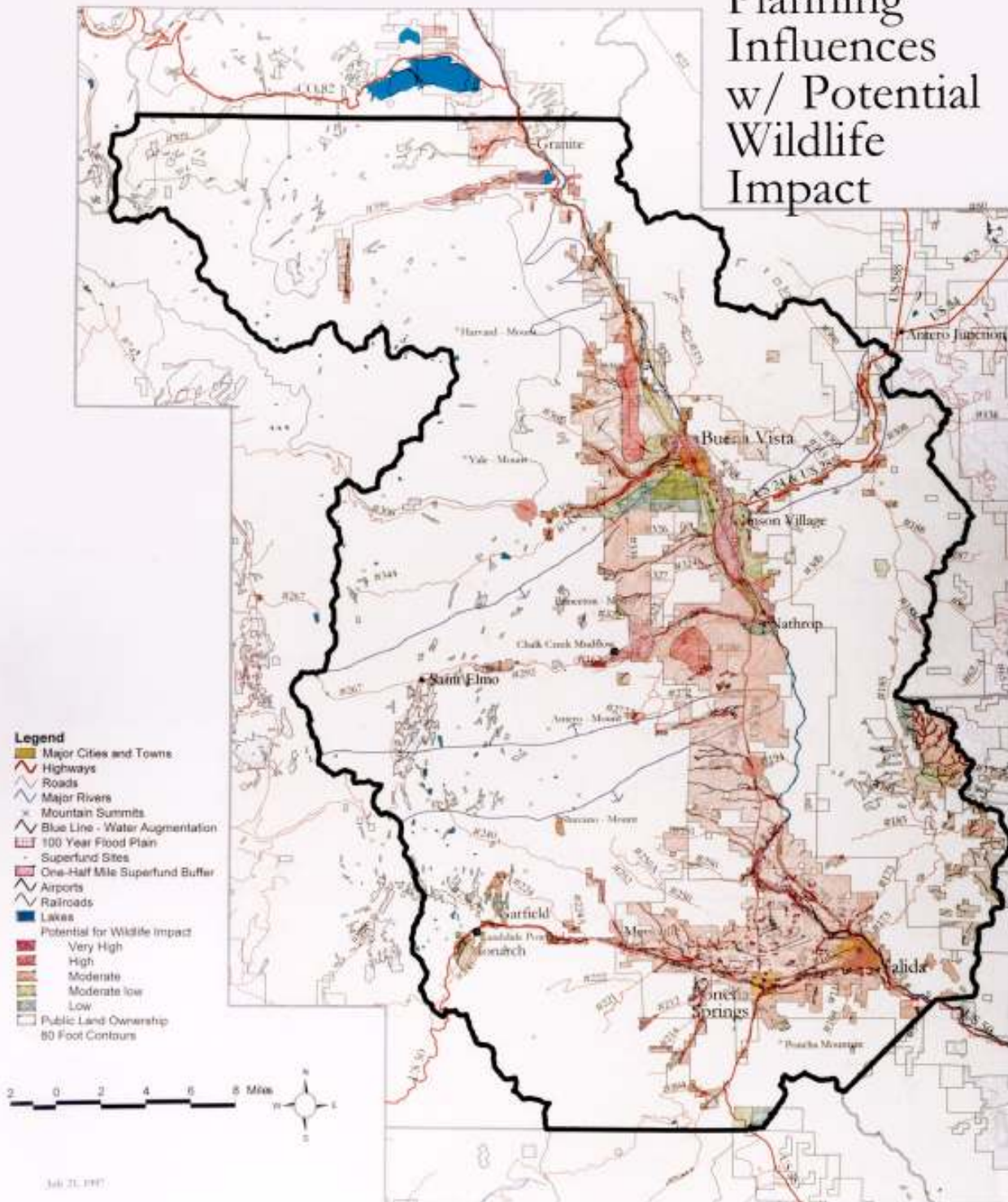
#### IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Develop and adopt special wildlife habitat protection incentives and/or regulations to be applied in the subdivision and zoning review processes. Areas to be protected should include migration routes, breeding areas, critical winter range for big game, riparian zones, and similar sensitive areas as identified by the Colorado Division of Wildlife on its comprehensive wildlife maps. The county should codify a process by which all development requests are referred to the Division of Wildlife for review and comment. Subdivision and zoning regulations should be amended to give the planning commission the ability to consider and impose controls on fencing, keeping of pets (especially dogs) in developments near or within critical wildlife areas, and animal resistant trash receptacles. The Chaffee County Weed Control Officer should be consulted for any vegetation concerns. Also, consideration should be given to the fact that certain public lands are used for hunting so that development should be situated to avoid potential safety problems.
2. In the development review and annexation processes, require that sensitive wildlife habitats be identified and, to the maximum extent feasible, be protected by setting aside such areas.
3. Adopt new regulations to complement existing federal and state laws by requiring development to set back from wetlands, rivers, streams, and other aquatic resources a minimum distance of 100 feet to preserve vegetative habitat and protect water quality by reducing sedimentation from runoff.
4. Consider vegetation and tree protection standards that require developers of larger projects to document the extent and type of vegetative cover on a site and identify steps to be taken to preserve a specified percentage of such cover and mitigate any adverse impacts that cannot be avoided.
5. Explore development incentives such as various subdivision techniques, a transferable development rights, and development rights acquisition to encourage and assist landowners in the protection of critical natural areas.

GUIDING OBJECTIVE 5.

# Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan

## Planning Influences w/ Potential Wildlife Impact



Protect other sensitive natural areas (see map on the following page).

#### IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Augment existing county standards for development on steep slopes and other potential hazard areas, including:
  - More specific standards defining when steep slopes and hazard areas are inappropriate
  - Revegetation of disturbed areas and controls on cutting of steep slopes to provide road access.
2. Develop incentives regarding the location and design of development that would penetrate the skyline and be visible from public rights-of-ways, parks and open space, and subdivisions so as to maintain the natural appearance and character of the study area. Steps to be taken might include special height controls, providing clustering bonuses from landowners who preserve designated sensitive ridge lines, and acquisition of key parcels that are critical to protection of designated sensitive viewsheds.
3. Protect the character of natural areas and the existing “dark sky” by preparing and adopting exterior night lighting standards that ensure that lighting is directed downward in such a manner to reduce, to the maximum extent feasible, negative impact on the night sky.
4. Discourage significant alteration of the boundaries or disturbance of any vegetation within floodplains.
5. Adopt more specific wildfire regulations to help ensure that development avoids areas of high wildfire potential and that steps are taken to protect structures from potential fire damage. Areas to be addressed include restricting the use of wood shingles, requiring deer zones around homes in hazard areas within which vegetation is removed, and similar measures being adopted in many other jurisdictions. See map on the following page.

#### GUIDING OBJECTIVE 6.

Protect cultural resources.

#### IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Pursue an updated survey of significant historic and archeological sites in the county so that developers and the planning commission have adequate information in the development review process.
2. Adopt standards, procedures, and incentives in the subdivision and zoning regulations to encourage the preservation and renovation

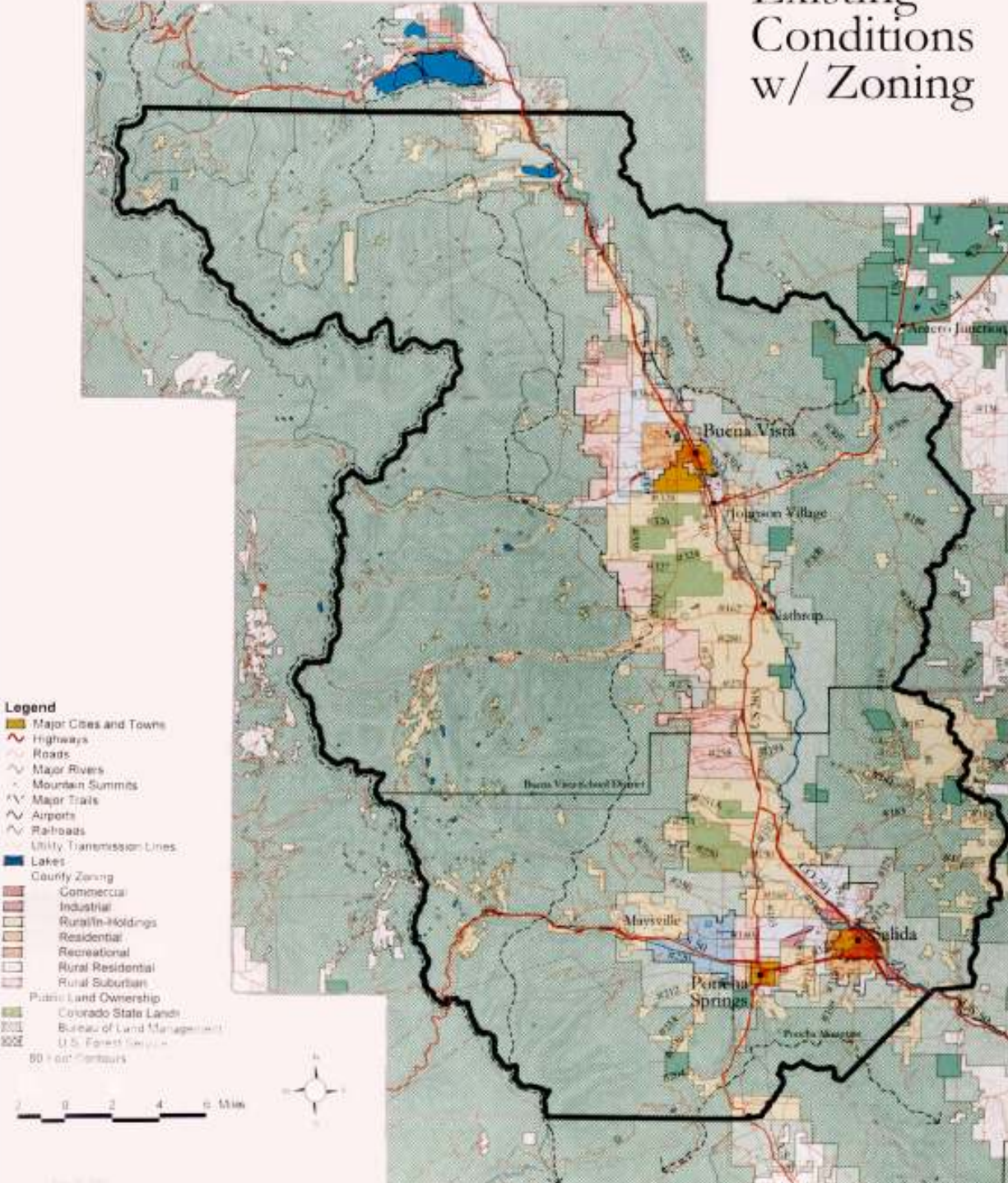






# Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan

## Existing Conditions w/ Zoning





(where appropriate) of historic structures and sites and archeological resources.

## **6. TRANSPORTATION**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Development and Roads**

Perhaps because levels of service are generally excellent and there is little road congestion in Chaffee County, the cost of maintaining existing county roads, culverts, and bridges and construction of new roads to serve new subdivisions were of greater concern.

Citizens who responded to the survey overwhelmingly expressed support for measures that would recoup from new development a fair share of the cost of new facilities that need to be constructed to serve it. Leaders of the real estate community also stated their support for equitable cost recovery mechanisms so that the cost of new development was not shifted to existing residents through higher property taxes or other fees and charges.

#### **Alternative Modes of Transportation**

Although rail and air service is limited, steps should be taken to preserve these transportation options. The success of short line railroads in other states indicates that the county should not assume that additional rail service is impossible. While there is currently no scheduled commercial air service in Chaffee County, increasingly service businesses and those with high value-to-weight products use air service to transport packages and goods in other locales. Steps need to be considered so that existing airport capacity is not constrained in a way that may hamper expansion of service in the future

### **GUIDING OBJECTIVE 1.**

Ensure that adequate roads are available to service Chaffee County's existing and future residents and that development pays the cost of road improvements it necessitates.

### **IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

1. Prepare a roadway plan for the county that identifies road and bridge upgrades and new construction that will be needed for the County over the next twenty years; set priorities among such improvements and projects; and identifies funding sources. This plan should concentrate county capital investments on roads in the growth areas around the three municipalities so that future growth can be accommodated in these preferred development areas. Extension of new roads into sensitive environmental areas should be avoided.
2. Require transportation impact analyses and mitigation measures for all major subdivisions greater than 10 lots and larger commercial de-

velopments (e.g., greater than 25,000 square feet).

3. Revise county subdivision road standards to address drainage, impact on the environment (e.g., soil erosion, cut and fill, etc.), and long term maintenance.

#### GUIDING OBJECTIVE 2.

Preserve options for alternative modes of transportation such as rail and air so that Chaffee County does not become totally dependent on roads for access.

#### IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Amend the county zoning resolution and map to establish airport

overlay zones that protect the airports from encroachment by incompatible development and address noise and safety concerns.

## **7. AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

### **DISCUSSION**

Affordable housing emerged during the citizen participation process and county wide survey as an important issue. Over 81% of respondents to the survey said it was a problem in Chaffee County. Serious concerns were expressed that the growing cost of land and housing in the valley and modest wages were making it difficult for residents to afford a decent home. Additionally, workers are having to live outside the county and commute in from more affordable areas such as Saguache.

Survey respondents and citizens at the public meetings made it clear that the county should not take the lead in addressing the issue. They opted for the private sector (particularly large employers), in cooperation with local governments, to promote affordable housing opportunities through private market mechanisms. Overall, there was only limited support for imposing housing impact fees on employers for fear that such an approach would further limit economic development in the valley. Similarly, there was only modest support for making changes in the county zoning and subdivision regulations to encourage more affordable housing.

Importantly, the plan objective of targeting new residential development around the towns, and ensuring that an ample supply of smaller lots are available in those growth areas can go a long way to providing affordable starter housing and other affordable residential products, including manufactured housing and well-designed trailer parks. In addition, there are other modest steps the county should consider to help ease the housing crunch. A new publication by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs entitled *Reducing Housing Costs Through Regulatory Reform: A Handbook For Colorado Communities*, provides a good checklist for such a review.

### **GUIDING OBJECTIVE 1.**

Work with the private sector to provide a variety of housing opportunities in the county that are affordable to the permanent and seasonal population.

### **IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS**

1. The county, in cooperation with the towns, should convene an affordable housing summit with large employers (Monarch Ski and Snowboard Area, Buena Vista Correctional Facility, and the rafting industry) to discuss an action plan to provide more affordable housing for permanent and seasonal employees.
2. Review the potential amendments to the county zoning code to allow accessory housing units in most residential zones (for example in basements and above garages). These units could be limited in square

footage (e.g., 1,000 square feet) and could not be used for tourist/visitor accommodation.

3. Undertake in cooperation with the three municipalities a county wide assessment of regulatory impediments to affordable housing (such as unnecessary building code requirements, unduly restrictive density regulations, or excessive lot sizes in built-up areas, prohibition of accessory dwelling units, etc.).
4. Provide incentives to developers such as increased densities and set back variances in exchange for making a percentage of units deed

restricted housing in and around existing towns.

## **8. COMMUNITY FACILITIES/FINANCING**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Financing Public Services**

Like other fast-growing mountain communities, Chaffee County has witnessed an increasing demand for public services and increasing need for revenues to finance these services. There is a need for a larger, multi-million dollar jail and increased demands on county road maintenance. Fire protection facilities and emergency services are stretched, with growing response times that are causing concerns among local officials. While revenue associated with new development has paid for some of the new facilities and services, county citizens and property owners are footing a part of the bill through increased property taxes, particularly on commercial property, and other fees and charges.

One of the most strongly voiced opinions during the process was that new development should pay its proportional share of the costs for services and facilities. Seventy-four percent of respondents felt that developers should be required to assess the fiscal impact of their projects in terms of the cost of government services a new project would require, and pay impact fees to cover the associated costs. In Colorado local governments have a wide variety of tools available to them to solve this fiscal impact challenge.

#### **GUIDING OBJECTIVE 1.**

Require development to assess impacts on public facilities and to pay its fair share of the costs for necessary services.

#### **IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS**

1. Chaffee County and the towns should jointly undertake a cost of development analysis that will provide detailed information about the true cost of providing roads, streets, water/sewer, fire protection, parks, and similar facilities/services and current sources of funding. If the county levies impact fees for facilities such as parks, it should consider sharing revenues with the towns to provide open space and recreational facilities that will serve larger population concentrations.

#### **GUIDING OBJECTIVE 2.**

Coordinate the provision of services with cities, towns and the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District to ensure that actions and investment decisions are consistent with this plan and the individual plans.

#### **IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS**

1. The county should pursue an intergovernmental agreement with the town to encourage the development of water/sewer distribution systems in the areas immediately surrounding them, and should work with all communities to develop this infrastructure, which should include water and sewer systems and other municipal services.
2. The county should adopt guidelines for reviewing and approving developer proposed special districts. For those districts that are created or already in existence, the county should encourage the use of a public enterprise (like the present county landfill enterprise) to manage water and sewer treatment facilities built by the special districts to ensure long-term quality operation and maintenance.
3. The county can have a major impact on the location and quality of development through thoughtful investment policies. For example, by providing seed money to help create a private land trust and pur-

chase of development rights program, the county can help ensure the preservation of significant amounts of open space and ranch land.

## **9. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **DISCUSSION**

While an economic/demographic reconnaissance report was prepared to help lay a foundation for a plan based on market realities, preparation of a full-blown economic development plan was not part of the project scope. A number of important themes and issues emerged from that study and were confirmed in the survey and in community workshops.

The main focus was the need to diversify the local economy, which in the county relies significantly on tourism and related development activity. A primary concern, in fact, was that the local economy was tied too tightly to the resort/tourism economy, especially what might be characterized as mass, drive-through tourism.

Many citizens felt that, if the county was to retain its current character distinct from that of other resort-oriented, mass tourism markets then alternative employment-generating businesses should be pursued. Currently, Salida and Buena Vista have business development agencies that are working hard in this direction, but there is a growing realization that the county may be able to play an important role in coordinating a county wide or regional effort to diversify the valley's economic base.

Still others stressed that recreational activities in the area not be mass-market oriented but that low-technology, passive outdoor recreation, fishing, hiking, hunting, snowshoeing, wildlife watching, and similar activities, be the focus of future tourism development activity.

Finally, although ranching contributes only a small and diminishing amount to the local economy, citizens almost universally felt that ranching contributed a great deal to the overall character and atmosphere of the valley. Thus there was strong support for the county undertaking or assisting in a variety of activities such as incentive programs and purchase of development rights to keep ranching families on the land who desire to do so.

Park County and the jurisdictions in the San Luis Valley have already begun taking advantage of the economic development potential associated with watchable wildlife that attracts some of the most affluent tourists in the business. They tend to spend significantly larger amounts of money per day than the average tourist, stay longer in the community, and have less impact on the resources they come to enjoy than others. As discussed in the economic reconnaissance report, Chaffee County has some of the most incredible wildlife resources in the United States. It could be the missing link between Park County and the San Luis Valley in establishing a watchable wildlife circuit that would bring significant economic benefits to the county while diversifying the valley from the mass tourism market that now dominates, particularly in the summer months.

In exploring this option, the county should examine the successful experience in places like Dubois, Wyoming, which has established a national bighorn sheep center.

**GUIDING OBJECTIVE 1.**

Coordinate economic diversity and economic development.

**IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS**

1. The county should continue to participate with the existing economic development agencies in the valley to discuss a more unified, directed approach to economic development in Chaffee County.
2. The county should undertake a joint multi-county effort in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to focus on watchable wildlife for tourism development.
3. In recognition of the growing importance of “lone eagle” entrepreneurs and the arts community to the valley, the county should encourage home occupation uses, but adopt standards relating to number of employees, signage, and similar considerations to ensure that such uses are compatible with surrounding residential development.



## **ACTION AGENDA**

1) Review and Revise Chaffee County Zoning Ordinance to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Specific Issues to be addressed in this effort include, but are not limited to:

- √ Open Space Zone (to facilitate conservation subdivision incentives)
- √ Review density allowances in rural areas
- √ Commercial Development Policies
- √ “Lone Eagle” enterprises
- √ Accessory Housing Units
- √ Respect Private Property Rights

Responsibility: Chaffee County Planning Commission, Staff, and possibly outside consultant.

Time Frame: 6 to 12 Months

2) Prepare a “Dark Sky” ordinance that will regulate lighting and protect the existing dark sky character of Chaffee County.

Responsibility: Chaffee County Planning Commission and Staff.

Time Frame: 2 to 4 months

3) Review and Revise the Chaffee County Subdivision Ordinance to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Specific Issues to be addressed in this effort include, but are not limited to:

- √ Exemptions
- √ View Corridor Design Guidelines
- √ Codify incentives for Conservation Subdivision Design
- √ Transportation Study Requirements
- √ Protection of Historic and Cultural Resources
- √ Mitigation of “fair share” of off-site impacts
- √ Overall Design Guidelines and Incentives

Responsibility: Chaffee County Planning Commission, Staff, and possibly outside consultant.

Time Frame: 6 to 18 months

4) Develop a County Road System Plan.

Responsibility: Chaffee County Roads and Bridges Department Staff

Time Frame: 4 to 6 months



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Access:** A way or means of approach to provide vehicular or pedestrian physical entrance into a property.

**Acre:** A measure of land containing 43,560 square feet.

**Affordable Housing:** Defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, rental or ownership housing whose monthly cost burden represents no more than 30% of the gross income of a low to moderate income of an individual or a family and no more than 80% of the median income of an individual or a family).

**Annexation:** The process by which land bordering the limits of an municipality is incorporated into that municipality.

**Cluster:** A development design technique that concentrates building on a part of the site to allow remaining land to be used for recreation, common open space, and preservation of environmentally sensitive features.

**Cluster Subdivision:** A form of development that permits a reduction in lot area and bulk requirements, provided there is not increase in the number of lots permitted under a conventional subdivision or increase in the overall density of development, and the remaining land area is devoted to open space, active recreation, preservation of environmentally sensitive areas, or agriculture.

**Community Facility:** A building or structure owned and operated by a governmental agency to provide a service to the public.

**Density:** For commercial, industrial, and institutional uses, the ratio of the total floor area of the building to the area of a site. For residential uses, the number of dwelling units per acre.

**Development:** Substantial property improvement and, usually, a change of land use within a site. The act of using land for building, extractive, and/or agricultural purposes.

**Groundwater:** The supply of freshwater under the surface in an aquifer or geologic formation that forms the natural reservoir for potable water.

**Historic Preservation:** The protection, rehabilitation, and restoration of the districts, sites, buildings, structures, and artifacts, significant in history, architecture, archeology, or culture.

**Home Occupation:** Any activity carried out for gain by a resident and conducted as a customary, incidental, and accessory use in a resident's dwelling unit.

**Infill:** Directing new development to built-up areas by creating new parcels through lots splits, filling vacant lots, and/or increasing allowed densities.

**Industrial Park:** A tract of land that is planned, developed, and operated as an integrated facility for a number of individual industrial uses, with consideration to transportation facilities (roadways, airports, or rail), circulation, parking, utility needs, aesthetics, and compatibility.

**Land Use:** Definitions of what current uses are in place, analyzing land developability, and assessing future requirements for various uses. Definitions of what activities are permitted on a parcel of land.

**Open Space:** Land used for recreation and/or the preservation of natural resources, views, scenery, and recreational opportunities. Open Space may include parks, outdoor recreation areas, agricultural fields, scenic views, and/or wetlands.

**Planned Unit Development (PUD):** An area of minimum contiguous size, as specified by an ordinance, to be planned, developed, operated, and maintained as a single entity and containing one or more residential clusters or planned unit residential developments and one or more public, quasi-public, commercial, or industrial areas in such ranges or ratios or non-residential uses to residential uses as specified in the ordinance.

**Plat:** A Plan or map of a specific land area.

**Recreation, Active:** Leisure time activities, usually of a formal nature and often performed with others, requiring equipment and taking place at prescribed places, sites, and/or fields.

**Recreation, Passive:** Activities that involve relatively active or less energetic activities, such as walking, sitting, picnicking, card games, chess, checkers, and similar to table games.

**Scenic Corridor:** An area visible from a highway, waterway, railway, or major hiking, biking, or equestrian trail that provides vistas over water, across expanses of land, such as farmlands, woodlands, or coastal wetlands, or from mountain tops or ridges.

**Subdivision:** The division of a lot, tract, or parcel of land into two or more lots, tracts, parcels, or other divisions of land for sale, development, or lease.

**Transfer of Development Rights:** The removal of the right to develop or build, expressed in dwelling units per acre or floor area, from land in one zoning district to land in another district where such a transfer is permitted.

**Zoning:** The delineation of districts and the establishment of regulations governing the use, placement, spacing, and size of land and buildings.

**CHAFFEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
IMPLEMENTATION ACTION SUMMARY**

	Page
<b><i>Land Use</i></b>	
Amend the County rural zone districts to eliminate high density residential development as a permitted use.	29
Cooperate with towns to create designated growth areas.	29
Revamp the County Subdivision exemption process.	30
Coordinate land use objectives with water supply policy of the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District.	30
Execute intergovernmental planning agreements with towns.	31
Review the County’s zone districts to modify the number of allowable special permit commercial and industrial uses in rural areas.	31
Codify the Planning Commission’s commercial development policies.	31
Encourage the formation of a private land trust and a privately directed purchase of development rights to preserve open space.	31
Adopt a “no net loss” of private land policy for the County.	32
Enact strengthened local “right to farm” legislation as authorized by State law.	32
<b><i>Community Character/Open Space/Agricultural/Cultural Land Preservation</i></b>	
Use visual survey maps and adopt standards for the protection of view corridors.	36
Allow the open space subdivision/clustering process to encourage and provide incentives for preservation of meadows, river corridors and visually prominent features.	36
Explore a variety of non-regulatory land development management tools to preserve open space and agricultural lands.	36
Assist the creation of a private land conservation organization that will utilize public/private conservation measures.	36
Creation of a small County fund dedicated for the purchase of trail rights of way.	37
Consider assessing fees for public recreational facilities.	37

Require new development to provide adequate open space and recreational facilities.	37
Identify key access points to public lands that should be improved or maintained and use a variety of techniques to protect.	37
Work with the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to reflect goals and objectives of the Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan.	37
Develop and adopt special wildlife habitat protection regulations to be applied in the subdivision and zoning review process.	38
Require that sensitive wildlife habitats be identified and protected through open space dedication and preservation.	38
Explore development incentives to promote, encourage, and assist land-owners in the protection critical natural areas.	38
Consider vegetation and tree protection standards.	38
Augment existing county standards for slope development and other potential hazards.	39
Control the building heights on ridgetops/ridgelines.	39
Protect the natural character of natural areas by adopting a "Dark Sky Ordinance.	39
Pursue an updated survey of significant historic and archeological sites.	39
Adopt standards and procedures in the subdivision and zoning regulations to encourage the protection of historic and archeological sites.	39
Utilize incentives to encourage protection and renovation of cultural resources.	39
<i>Transportation</i>	
Prepare a master plan for County roads.	41
Require transportation impact analysis and mitigation measures for all subdivisions greater than 10 lots and large commercial developments greater than 25,000 square feet.	41
Improve County subdivision road standards.	41



Amend the County zoning regulations and map to establish airport overlay zones.	42
<i>Affordable Housing</i>	
The County, in cooperation with the towns and all public and private employers should convene an “Affordable Housing Summit”.	43
Allow accessory housing units in most residential zones.	43
Cooperate with the three municipalities to assess County wide impediments to affordable housing.	44
Provide incentive to developers in exchange for deed restricted housing.	44
<i>Community Facilities</i>	
Delete, as an initial step, a regulatory cost recovery program.	45
The County and towns should adopt an intergovernmental agreement a specific annexation policy requiring the evaluation of fiscal impact of new development.	45
Pursue an intergovernmental agreement to encourage development of water/sewer distribution system in designated growth areas.	45
Adopt guidelines for reviewing and approving developer proposed special districts.	46
Evaluate County investment policies.	46
<i>Economic Development</i>	
Chaffee County should continue to work with Economic Development Agencies.	48
Undertake a joint multi County effort in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to focus on wildlife as a major thrust for tourism development.	48
Recognize the importance of “lone eagle” entrepreneurs and the arts community in the Valley.	48

**APPENDIX A:**

**SURVEY SUMMARY**

**CHAFFEE COUNTY PLANNING SURVEY 1997  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND SURVEY RESULTS**

**Prepared for the Board of County Commissioners  
Chaffee County, Colorado**

**By**

**RRC Associates  
Clarion Associates**

**May 1997**

**CHAFFEE COUNTY PLANNING SURVEY 1997**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**MAY 1997**

**BACKGROUND:**

In March 1997, Chaffee County distributed a survey to citizens to solicit their views on a variety of land use and development topics to help shape policies in a new comprehensive plan that will guide growth in the county. A total of 2,800 surveys were distributed by mail to county residents and 700 surveys were distributed to absentee landowners. (In other words, the sample consisted of about one third of all households and one-third of absentee landowners.) Another 174 surveys were distributed by request directly to residents at the county building and town halls. The survey requests from residents that obtained copies of surveys as "handouts" rather than by mail were compared to the random sampling of mailed surveys. While there were minor differences in response patterns on these surveys to the "overall," they were not felt to be significant and as a result, the overall results (set forth in the attached survey summary) include responses from all respondents. A total of 1,312 surveys were returned. The return rate for those mailed to county residents was 36%, which is considered to be very high for this type of effort.

**WHO RESPONDED:**

Some key facts about respondents include:

- Median age--52
- 64% were male
- 82% had lived in the county for more than three years, but only 13% were natives
- 71% own their homes (vs. 71% county wide as indicated by the 1990 U.S. Census)
- 28% said that retirement funds were their primary source of income.
- Median family income was about \$36,000 for resident respondents (vs. \$34,400 county wide as indicated by December 1996 HUD estimates)
- Overall, respondents were about the same age and had slightly higher incomes than the populace as a whole.

**GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

A slight majority of respondents felt that the county was growing too fast. 35% felt that the county was already too developed compared to 48% who thought the amount of development was "about

right.” 37% thought that local regulations governing growth were “about right;” 43% felt that they were “not strict enough.” Generally, attitudes towards growth among residents and non-residents were remarkably similar. Other salient points include:

- Citizens expressed significant support for economic development strategies based on passive recreation (e.g., fishing, hiking, snowshoeing) and ranching/agriculture. Heavy industrial growth, real estate development, correctional facilities, and resource extraction were at the bottom of the list.
- 75% wanted “directed growth” in the county, and 63% support stronger land use regulations. Favored areas for regulation included river protection, preservation of wildlife habitat, requiring adequate public facilities for new development, and maintaining access to public lands. 70% said they support economic incentives to ranchers keep land in agricultural production, and 65% liked the idea of purchasing development rights to protect open space. Respondents strongly supported focusing new development in or near towns, but were ambivalent about requiring clustered development on smaller lots to preserve open space in rural areas.
- 76% were opposed to the current pattern of development in the county (scattered small and large lots in rural areas). The most favored development pattern was small lots near town and larger lots in rural areas.
- A strong majority favored requiring developers to assess the fiscal impact of their projects and to pay impact fees to cover the cost of government services necessitated by their project.

## **HOUSING ISSUES**

Eighty-one percent of respondents recognized that finding affordable housing in the county was a problem, but many felt that the solution lies with letting the market satisfy demand for year-round housing or the private sector for seasonal housing. However, almost 50% felt the county should be doing more to encourage affordable/employee housing. Respondents felt that large employers such as the rafting/skiing companies and the Buena Vista Correctional Facility should be doing more to provide housing. Interestingly, 57% said they would not support changes in zoning, such as more and smaller lots, to promote affordable housing.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

While a significant number of citizens (39%) believe environmental protection is the most important issue facing the county and that it should take precedence over economic development, a majority want a balance between the environment and the economy. Other key environmental points include:

- Priorities for protecting the environment include air quality, water quality and supply, scenic areas, and wildlife habitat.
- Priorities for protecting open space include wildlife, rivers corridors, and agricultural lands.

Overall, respondents would like to see a more active role for the county in protecting the environment, but they expressed a strong aversion to increasing taxes to finance purchase of open space and sensitive natural areas.

### **WATER STORAGE/DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

Respondents generally support the county acquiring water rights and developing water storage capacity, but expressed strong opposition to selling water rights for second homes, industrial, and commercial development. In contrast, there was strong support for selling water rights for agricultural purposes and for homes for permanent residents.

### **MISCELLANEOUS GROWTH/DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

- Except for outdoor recreational facilities, there is a high level of dissatisfaction with indoor recreational facilities, cultural facilities and road/street maintenance. Both the current development review process and zoning and code enforcement were rated poorly.
- There is little sentiment for new taxes except for school facilities and emergency medical services.
- If they had \$100 of tax revenues to spend, respondents would give priority to funding improvements to existing roads, schools, purchase of open space, and new/expanded water and sewer treatment facilities.
- When asked what single factor would most influence their decision to leave Chaffee County, 18% said growth and change and 12% said disparity between wages and the cost of living.

**APPENDIX B:**

**SURVEY INSTRUMENT**



## CHAFFEE COUNTY PLANNING SURVEY 1997

Dear Chaffee County Resident,

This survey is a crucial part of the comprehensive plan for Chaffee County. Your input is needed on a wide range of land use and development issues. Results from this survey will be one source of public input to shape policies which will guide growth throughout Chaffee County.

We have mailed this survey to a random sampling of postal boxholders in Chaffee County. In addition, we are mailing the survey to a random sample of rural delivery route households and absentee property owners. If you would like additional copies of the questionnaire so that your spouse or other members of your household can also complete the survey, stop by any Town Hall or the County Courthouse and an additional survey form will be provided. Please do not photocopy survey forms.

We ask that you complete and return the survey in the postage-paid envelope **within ten days** of the date you received it. If you were out of town in March and did not receive the survey until your return, please complete it anyway. Your response is important. **ALL RESPONSES WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL BY THE FIRM ASSISTING US IN TABULATING RESULTS.**

As an added incentive to complete the survey we will be conducting a drawing of completed surveys in April. We have a number of attractive prizes including **ski packages, raft trips, Rockies tickets, other attractive items and a GRAND PRIZE of a 1997/98 season's pass courtesy of Monarch Ski and Snowboard Area.**

Please be sure to provide your first name and telephone number in the space provided at the end of the survey if you wish to participate in the drawing for prizes. If you have any questions, please contact Tom Hale, Chaffee County Administrator at 539-2218.

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey.

Chaffee County

### INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

How long have you resided in Chaffee County?

- 1)  Less than 3 months
- 2)  Three to 6 months
- 3)  Six months to 1 year
- 4)  One up to 3 years
- 5)  Three up to 5 years
- 6)  Five up to 10 years
- 7)  Ten up to 20 years
- 8)  More than 20 years

2. What length of time do you spend in Chaffee County each year?

- 1)  More than 6 months per year (year-round local)
- 2)  Six months or less per year (part-time local)
- 3)  Occasionally (second home owner)

3. Where do you live?

- 01)  Unincorporated area north of Buena Vista
- 02)  Town of Buena Vista
- 03)  Unincorporated area south of Buena Vista to Nathrop
- 04)  Unincorporated Nathrop south to Centerville
- 05)  City of Salida
- 06)  Unincorporated Salida area
- 07)  Town of Poncha Springs
- 08)  Unincorporated Poncha Springs area
- 09)  Monarch Valley
- 10)  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you presently work?

- 1)  Yes
- 2)  Yes, but am semi-retired
- 3)  Yes, but am working out of my home
- 4)  Yes, but not in Chaffee County (*I work in \_\_\_\_\_ County*)
- 5)  No

5. Please indicate where you and other members of your household work by inserting the numbers of all job locations from Question 3:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(JOB LOCATIONS FOR YOUR HOUSEHOLD)

6. Do you presently:
- 1)  Own your own home in the area
  - 2)  Rent your home in the area
  - 3)  Live in housing provided by your employer
  - 4)  House-sit/caretake
  - 5)  Own undeveloped land (number of acres \_\_\_\_\_)
  - 6)  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you own undeveloped land are you considering subdividing or selling it for development purposes?
- 1)  Yes (In how many years from now: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - 2)  No

8. Where did you come from?
- 1)  Born in Chaffee County
  - 2)  Moved from elsewhere in Colorado
  - 3)  Moved from another state  
(which one? \_\_\_\_\_)
  - 4)  Moved from another country  
(which one? \_\_\_\_\_)

## GROWTH / DEVELOPMENT

9. How would you describe the development in *your area* in Chaffee County?
- 1)  Already too developed
  - 2)  Just about right
  - 3)  Could use some growth

10. Over the last three to five years, do you think the rate of development (commercial and residential) in Chaffee County has been:
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Too slow    | 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Too fast   |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> About right | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion |

ANY COMMENTS? \_\_\_\_\_

11. In general, the availability of stores and commercial development in your area is:
- 1)  Low – does not serve the shopping and job needs of residents (What services are lacking?  
\_\_\_\_\_)
  - 2)  About right
  - 3)  High – too many stores, too much commercial development

12. How do you feel about each type of future economic development in your area of Chaffee County:

	OPPOSED		SUPPORT			DON'T KNOW
	1	2	3	4	5	0
01) Natural resource based <u>passive</u> recreation (fishing, hiking, snowshoeing)	1	2	3	4	5	0
02) Natural resource based <u>active</u> recreation (rafting, snowmobiling, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	0
03) Real estate development	1	2	3	4	5	0
04) Elementary/secondary educational facilities	1	2	3	4	5	0
05) Post-secondary educational facilities	1	2	3	4	5	0
06) Cultural facilities, galleries	1	2	3	4	5	0
07) High tech information based industry	1	2	3	4	5	0
08) Light manufacturing industry	1	2	3	4	5	0
09) Retail goods and services needed by residents on a regular basis	1	2	3	4	5	0
10) Heavy industrial	1	2	3	4	5	0
11) Custom workshop businesses (furniture making, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	0
12) Resource extraction (mining and timber)	1	2	3	4	5	0
13) Ranching and agriculture	1	2	3	4	5	0
14) Correctional facility/prison	1	2	3	4	5	0
15) Ski resort	1	2	3	4	5	0
16) Small home-based businesses (software development, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	0
17) Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5	0

\_\_\_\_\_ If ONE area of the economy were to be emphasized, which would you prefer? (INSERT NUMBER FROM ABOVE)

ANY COMMENTS ON YOUR RESPONSES? \_\_\_\_\_

13. The most needed new project or type of economic development in your area of Chaffee County is:

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OR  None – no economic development needed

14. Who should be responsible for addressing the impacts associated with growth and development? (CHECK ONE ONLY)

- 1)  The public sector (government)
- 2)  The private sector (business)
- 3)  The public and private sectors together (public sector takes lead)
- 4)  The public and private sectors together (private sector takes lead)
- 5)  Don't know/no opinion

15. In your opinion, are the local government regulations governing development:

- 1)  Too strict
- 2)  About right
- 3)  Not strict enough

ANY COMMENTS? \_\_\_\_\_

16. What should be the position of Chaffee County and the incorporated towns in your area toward growth?

- 1)  No-growth
- 2)  Directed growth
- 3)  Pro-growth

17. Do you support having additional regulations to guide growth?

- 1)  Yes
- 2)  No
- 3)  Uncertain

18. Do you support the hiring of a full-time professional planner to assist the county administrator with development review in Chaffee County?

- 1)  Yes
- 2)  No
- 3)  Uncertain

19. How would you feel about the County and Town in your area adopting land use regulations or policies that would:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE		STRONGLY AGREE			UNCERTAIN/DON'T KNOW
	1	2	3	4	5	0
Require new development to be set back at least 100' from major rivers and streams?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Provide economic incentives to developers or ranchers to keep land in agricultural production?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Require that adequate public facilities (roads, water, sewer) be available before development is approved?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Adopting policies that would <u>restrict</u> special use permits and variances for commercial uses in county	1	2	3	4	5	0
Prohibit or restrict development in wildlife habitat areas?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Prohibit or severely restrict development in flood plains and wetlands?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Prohibit future development on ridge tops that can be seen on the skyline?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Purchase development rights to protect open space?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Require new development near major roads to use screening (earth berms, trees, etc.) to reduce visibility?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Require new developments to maintain public access to public lands, where applicable?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Strictly regulate development in areas along Highway 285 and Highway 24 to protect views and vegetation?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Focus development in or near towns?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Create intergovernmental agreements to ensure cooperative planning?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Require rural development to be clustered on small lots to preserve open space?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Require new development to pay impact fees to cover the cost of government services necessitated by project?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Require developers to assess the fiscal impact of their projects in terms of the cost of government services a new project would require.	1	2	3	4	5	0
Allow increased development density as a trade-off for protection of sensitive environmental areas elsewhere in the county?	1	2	3	4	5	0
Require mitigation measures to offset damage/destruction to wildlife habitat?	1	2	3	4	5	0

Do you have additional comments on the types of regulations or policies you would like to see, if any?

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## HOUSING

20. How do you feel about the problem of finding affordable housing for year-round residents and seasonal workers who live and work in Chaffee County?

	YEAR		
	ROUND	SEASONAL	
1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The most critical problem in this county
2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	One of the more serious problems
3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A problem, but there are others which also need attention
4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	One of our lesser problems
5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't believe it is a problem

21. Who should be responsible for providing affordable year round and seasonal housing? (CHECK ONE ONLY)

	YEAR		
	ROUND	SEASONAL	
1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The public sector (government, including housing authorities)
2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The private sector (the entire business and new development community)
3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The private sector (major employers only-which?)
4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The public and private sectors together (public sector takes lead)
5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The public and private sectors together (private sector takes lead)
6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Let market satisfy demand
7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know/no opinion

ANY COMMENTS ON YOUR RESPONSE? \_\_\_\_\_

22. How do you feel about:

	SHOULD DO MORE	ABOUT RIGHT	SHOULD DO LESS	UNCERTAIN/DON'T KNOW		
1) Chaffee County adopting programs for encouraging affordable/employee housing?	1	2	3	4	5	0
2) Town programs in your area for encouraging affordable/employee housing?	1	2	3	4	5	0
3) Efforts of major employers in your area for encouraging affordable/employee housing	1	2	3	4	5	0
4) Rafting/skiing company efforts to provide housing	1	2	3	4	5	0
5) The Buena Vista correctional facility efforts to provide housing	1	2	3	4	5	0

ANY COMMENTS ON YOUR RESPONSES? \_\_\_\_\_

23. Would you support changes in zoning, such as increased and smaller lot sizes, to promote affordable housing?

- 1)  Yes  
2)  No

## THE ENVIRONMENT

24. Please indicate your priority for efforts to protect the natural environment in Chaffee County.

	LOW PRIORITY					HIGH PRIORITY	DON'T KNOW
Air quality	1	2	3	4	5	0	0
Expanded or new sewage treatment plants	1	2	3	4	5	0	0
Open lands	1	2	3	4	5	0	0
Scenic/visual quality	1	2	3	4	5	0	0
Water quality	1	2	3	4	5	0	0
Water supply	1	2	3	4	5	0	0
Wetlands	1	2	3	4	5	0	0
Wildlife habitat	1	2	3	4	5	0	0
Night lighting/illumination standards	1	2	3	4	5	0	0

25. Which of the following best describes your opinion concerning environmental protection? (CHECK ONE ONLY)

- 1)  The most important community priority  
2)  Important, should take precedence over economic expansion  
3)  Important, but needs to be balanced with healthy economy and human needs  
4)  Too much emphasis is placed on the environment

ANY COMMENTS ON YOUR RESPONSE? \_\_\_\_\_

## OPEN SPACE

26. Please indicate your priority for the type of lands that should be preserved as open space (assuming fair compensation of property owners, if applicable). Are there specific parcels you believe should be protected?

	LOW PRIORITY					HIGH PRIORITY					PARCEL NAME OR LOCATION
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
01) Wildlife habitat	1	2	3	4	5						_____
02) River/stream corridors and wetlands	1	2	3	4	5						_____
03) Active parks and playing fields	1	2	3	4	5						_____
04) Agricultural property	1	2	3	4	5						_____
05) Land separating communities	1	2	3	4	5						_____
06) Land within subdivisions	1	2	3	4	5						_____
07) Visually prominent parcels	1	2	3	4	5						_____
08) Unique landforms	1	2	3	4	5						_____
09) Meadows along highway corridors	1	2	3	4	5						_____
10) Ridgelines	1	2	3	4	5						_____
11) Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5						_____

\_\_\_\_\_ Which type of land do you consider to be the highest priority for preservation? (INSERT NUMBER FROM ABOVE QUESTION)

27. Which agency should be responsible for open space acquisition and management? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1)  Federal land management agencies
- 2)  State land management agencies
- 3)  Chaffee County
- 4)  The incorporated towns within Chaffee County
- 5)  A private, non-profit entity, such as a land trust
- 6)  Homeowners associations
- 7)  Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8)  Don't know

29. As a general matter of policy, would you prefer:

- 1)  The concentration of most development in or near towns on relatively smaller lots
- OR
- 2)  The continuation of the existing pattern of scattered small and large lot rural development
- OR
- 3)  A combination of smaller lot developments near towns and large lot developments (20+ acres) in rural areas

Would you be willing to support efforts to finance purchase of open space or sensitive natural areas through increased:

- |    | YES                      | NO                       |   |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sales tax                               |
| 2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Property tax                            |
| 3) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other taxes                             |
| 4) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Impact fees assessed on new development |
| 5) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Private donations                       |

ANY COMMENTS? \_\_\_\_\_

## WATER STORAGE, DEVELOPMENT, AND SALES

30. Should water storage be developed on the Arkansas River for long range water needs?

- 1)  Yes
- 2)  No
- 3)  No opinion / don't know

31. Should water storage be developed on tributaries of the Arkansas River for long range recreational and agricultural needs?

- 1)  Yes
- 2)  No
- 3)  No opinion / don't know

32. Should the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District purchase water rights as they become available for the following purposes?

- |    | YES                      | NO                       |   |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agricultural                              |
| 2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Commercial                                |
| 3) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Industrial                                |
| 4) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Recreational                              |
| 5) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Augmentation for residential well permits |
| 6) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Augmentation of minimum stream flows      |

33. Should the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District sell water rights for the following purposes?

- |    | YES                      | NO                       |                               |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agricultural                  |
| 2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Commercial                    |
| 3) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Industrial                    |
| 4) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Second homes                  |
| 5) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Homes for permanent residents |



34. Should Chaffee County purchase water rights as they become available?

- 1)  Yes
- 2)  No
- 3)  No opinion / don't know

35. How should the available water rights acquisition be financed?  
(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1)  Sales tax
- 2)  Property tax
- 3)  Other taxes
- 4)  Impact fees assessed on new development
- 5)  Private donations
- 6)  No opinion / don't know

**MISCELLANEOUS**

36. Please rate the following services and facilities in your area.

	POOR		EXCELLENT			UNCERTAIN/ NOT APPLICABLE
	1	2	3	4	5	0
Developed outdoor recreation facilities	1	2	3	4	5	0
Developed indoor recreation facilities	1	2	3	4	5	0
Developed cultural facilities	1	2	3	4	5	0
The development review process	1	2	3	4	5	0
Zoning and code enforcement	1	2	3	4	5	0
Road and street maintenance	1	2	3	4	5	0

37. During the past year, have you or a member of your immediate family called 911?

- 1)  Yes
- 2)  No
- 3)  Don't know

38. As you may know, Chaffee County is considering asking voters to approve a law enforcement measure which would create a new County Jail to house an additional 50 to 75 prisoners. If an election was held today, would you vote "yes" in favor of the law enforcement measure just described, or "no" to oppose it?

- 1)  Would vote **yes**
- 2)  Would vote **no**

*Why?*

- 1)  It is necessary
- 2)  Keep criminals off the streets
- 3)  Support for law enforcement
- 4)  Jail would operate more effectively
- 5)  Stop overcrowding
- 6)  Prisoners serve entire sentence, no early releases

**OR**

*Why?*

- 1)  Tax concerns
- 2)  Money could be spent elsewhere
- 3)  Capacity is not the problem/ will not solve problem
- 4)  Other concerns/problems:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

- 3)  Don't know, need more information

39. There are several methods to finance a jail project. One idea is to charge a use tax on new construction (that is, building materials purchased outside Chaffee County) to have new development/growth fund the law enforcement measure. Would you be willing to support a use tax on new construction to fund the law enforcement measure?

- 1)  Yes
- 2)  No
- 3)  No opinion / don't know

ANY COMMENTS ON YOUR RESPONSE? \_\_\_\_\_

40. Below are listed a series of separate topics that could receive public attention. Please indicate how important each of these topics is to you personally. Then, identify whether you would or would not support this category through increased taxes.

	NOT IMPORTANT TO ME					VERY IMPORTANT TO ME					UNCERTAIN/ DON'T KNOW		WOULD YOU SUPPORT THIS CATEGORY THROUGH INCREASED TAXES? (CHECK BOX)	
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	0	0	YES	NO
Schools	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Affordable housing	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Recreation facilities	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Cultural facilities	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Open space acquisition/protection	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Economic development and diversification	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Protection of wildlife habitat	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
New jail facility	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Stop development on hillsides or visually sensitive areas	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Regional trail system	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Truck traffic management	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Public transportation	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Crime prevention	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Purchase of water rights	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Emergency Medical Services	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Fire Protection	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
City Police	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
County Sheriff	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]
Other: (describe) _____	1	2	3	4	5						0	0	[ ]	[ ]

ANY COMMENTS ON YOUR RESPONSES? \_\_\_\_\_

If you were responsible for budgeting \$100 of taxpayer revenue, how would you spend it? You may allocate the entire amount to a single item or distribute it, based on your personal priorities, to two or more items.

EXAMPLE	YOUR ASSUMED EXPENDITURE	WHERE ALLOCATED
\$10	\$ _____	Purchase of open space
\$5	\$ _____	Development of pedestrian/bicycle trails
\$5	\$ _____	New county jail
\$10	\$ _____	Support of public transport
\$5	\$ _____	Library(s)
\$15	\$ _____	Upgrading existing roads
\$20	\$ _____	Helping provide affordable housing
—	\$ _____	New/expanded water/sewer treatment facilities
\$10	\$ _____	Recreation facilities
\$5	\$ _____	Beautification of existing downtowns
\$10	\$ _____	New schools
—	\$ _____	Purchasing water rights as they become available
—	\$ _____	Other (specify): _____
<b>\$ 100.00</b>	<b>\$ 100.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

ANY COMMENTS ON YOUR RESPONSES? \_\_\_\_\_

42. Over the last five years, would you say that living conditions in your area of Chaffee County have generally improved, stayed about the same, or gotten worse?

- 1) [ ] Improved
- 2) [ ] Remained the same
- 3) [ ] Gotten worse
- 4) [ ] Don't know

WHY DO YOU FEEL THAT WAY? \_\_\_\_\_

43. What SINGLE factor would most influence your decision to leave Chaffee County?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 01) [ ] Do not plan to leave the region in the next three years | 07) [ ] Lack of professional opportunity         |
| 02) [ ] Desire for change in living environment                 | 08) [ ] Locating near family and/or friends      |
| 03) [ ] Disparity between wages and cost of living              | 09) [ ] Return to school                         |
| 04) [ ] Growth and change in the region                         | 10) [ ] Too expensive to live here               |
| 05) [ ] Lack of adequate employment                             | 11) [ ] Long winters                             |
| 06) [ ] Lack of adequate housing                                | 12) [ ] Lack of health care and medical services |
|   | 13) [ ] Other: _____                             |

44. List two things you like and two things you dislike about living here:

LIKE

DISLIKE

_____	_____
_____	_____

45. The phrase "quality of life" means the following to me in the Chaffee County context (attach pages as necessary):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

46. What other issues not addressed in this survey are important to you?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Finally, a few more questions to assist in classifying your responses.**

47. \_\_\_\_\_ Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

48. \_\_\_\_\_ How many of those people are currently employed?

49. \_\_\_\_\_ How many members of your household are under age 18?

50. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

51. Are you:

- 1) [ ] Male
- 2) [ ] Female

54. What is your primary source of personal income? (CHECK ONE)

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 01) [ ] Art/galleries/cultural   | 11) [ ] Medical                           |
| 02) [ ] Agriculture/ranching     | 12) [ ] Mining/resource extraction        |
| 03) [ ] Bar/restaurant           | 13) [ ] Professional                      |
| 04) [ ] Construction/timber      | 14) [ ] Real estate/property management   |
| 05) [ ] Education                | 15) [ ] Retail                            |
| 06) [ ] Finance                  | 16) [ ] Retired                           |
| 07) [ ] Government               | 17) [ ] Service industry                  |
| 08) [ ] High technology services | 18) [ ] Rafting companies/ski corporation |
| 09) [ ] Legal                    | 19) [ ] Parent/relative/inheritance       |
| 10) [ ] Lodging                  | 20) [ ] Other: _____                      |

52. Which of these categories best applies to you?

- |                               |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 1) [ ] Single (never married) | 4) [ ] Separated |
| 2) [ ] Married                | 5) [ ] Divorced  |
| 3) [ ] Living together        | 6) [ ] Widowed   |

53. Approximately what is your total average monthly household income before taxes? (INCLUDE ALL RESIDENTS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD)  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ / monthly

55. Do you own your own business?

- 1) [ ] Yes                      2) [ ] No

(IF YES) About what percent of your total dollar volume of your business is sold outside Chaffee County? \_\_\_\_\_ percent of business

56. (OPTIONAL) For our award drawing, what is your first name and daytime phone number?

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you very much for your participation.**

❖ CHAFFEE COUNTY ❖  
FEBRUARY 1997



**APPENDIX C:**

**ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT  
SCENARIO MATRIX**

**CHAFFEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS**

	<b>No. 1--Current Development Trends/Practices Continue</b>	<b>No. 2--Current Development Trends Continue; Update Development Codes</b>	<b>No. 3--Focused Growth/No Rate Controls; Update Development Codes and Create Acquisition Fund</b>	<b>No. 4--Focused Growth/Rate Controls</b>
		<p><b>Key Concepts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quality</li> <li>● Fiscal impact</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Concepts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quality</li> <li>● Fiscal impact</li> <li>● Location</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Concepts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quality</li> <li>● Fiscal impact</li> <li>● Location</li> <li>● Amount/Rate</li> </ul>
<b>Description</b>	<u>The county and towns would continue their current land use and utility policies--</u> scattered residential/commercial development allowed throughout county.	<u>Current scattered development trends and patterns continue. Focus is on improving development quality and assessing fiscal impact.</u> County land use regulations updated to provide better protection for open space and natural resources and fiscal impact assessment. Development pays fair share of new infrastructure and services.	<u>Residential/commercial growth focused around existing growth areas.</u> No limits on overall density or rate of growth. Regulatory updates as described in No. 2. Create open space acquisition fund to lessen regulatory impact on property owners and protect key open space areas.	Same as No. 3, <u>but undertake significant downzonings to limit overall build out of county to below population projections</u> (22-25,000 by 2020). <u>Moderate rate of growth</u> (current 2- year average is 5%; 3% since 1990)
<b>Overall Population Growth</b>	22,000-25,000 by 2020 (natural growth continues)	22,000-25,000 by 2020 (natural growth continues)	22,000-25,000 by 2020 (natural growth continues)	<u>Reduce below natural growth rate projections</u> (e.g., 18,000-22,000 by 2020)
<b>Rate of Growth</b>	No controls	No controls	No controls	<u>Limit annual increase in population</u> below current rate through residential building permit cap.

<p><b>Residential Land Use Pattern/Density</b></p>	<p><u>Current scattered pattern continues.</u> Poncha Springs and Salida grow together.</p>	<p><u>Current scattered pattern continues.</u> Poncha Springs and Salida grow together. Buena Vista sprawls north into Game Trail and nearby subdivisions.</p>	<p><u>Smaller lot residential development (e.g., less than 5 acres) targeted to existing towns or designated growth areas</u> (e.g., Mesa Antero and Game Trail). Larger lot development allowed in rural areas only with sliding scale density bonuses for good site planning. Limit subdivision exemption process.</p>	<p>Same as No. 3 plus:  1. <u>Reduce potential build out</u> through downzonings or land acquisition.  2. Create system of transferable development rights to compensate for loss of development potential.  3. Require that all residential developments larger than 5 lots use PUD process.</p>
<p><b>Commercial/Industrial Land Use Pattern</b></p>	<p><u>Current scattered pattern continues.</u> Commercial development strips out north and south of Buena Vista and west of Salida and Poncha Springs.</p>	<p><u>Current scattered pattern continues.</u> Commercial development strips out north and south of Buena Vista and west of Salida and Poncha Springs.</p>	<p><u>Commercial/industrial focused around existing communities.</u> No special permits in rural areas except in limited cases (e.g., logging, lodges, etc.)</p>	<p>Same as No. 3</p>
<p><b>Open Space</b></p>	<p><u>No special programs to preserve additional open space/ protect ranches.</u> Opportunistic purchases to complete county trail system.</p>	<p>1. <u>Ensure development provides adequate open space to meet needs of residents.</u> Update development codes to require land dedication for open space/trails; private open space set aside for new residential development.  2. <u>Preserve agricultural lands and wildlife habitat in large contiguous blocks.</u> Provide incentives to encourage clustering and open space preservation.  3. <u>Maintain existing public access to public lands</u> through subdivision regulation update.  4. <u>Mitigate impacts of new development on public lands.</u> New developments must consult with public land agencies to mitigate development impact on public lands.</p>	<p>Same as No. 2 plus:  1. <u>Preserve open lands between existing towns and development areas.</u> Utilize combination of zoning and open space and development rights acquisition fund.  2. <u>Promote private land conservation efforts.</u> County gives financial support to private land trusts and other private conservation efforts.  3. <u>Reduce interferences with existing agricultural operations.</u> Enact regulations to protect agricultural operations from nuisance claims.</p>	<p>Same as No. 3 plus:  1. <u>Acquire key parcels to reduce amount of land available for development.</u>  2. <u>Reduce allowable densities in rural areas to reduce overall population build out.</u>  3. <u>Provide incentives to keep agricultural land in production.</u> County provides funding for technical assistance for alternative agricultural crops/operations.</p>

<p><b>Infrastructure/ Services</b></p>	<p><u>Continue current policies re infrastructure and service provision.</u> No requirement for central/water sewer for larger residential developments in county. No land dedication for public facilities.</p>	<p>1. <u>Ensure development pays its fair share of new infrastructure and services.</u> Require dedication of land for essential infrastructure (schools, open space, roads). Impose impact fees on res. development for essential public services (roads, fire protection, open space, etc.)  2. <u>Require that adequate public facilities be available when new development comes on line.</u> Add fiscal impact assessment to development codes. Prohibit large subdivisions except on central water/sewer. Minimum lot size of 10 acres for well/septic except in designated growth areas or on lots of record.  3. <u>Ensure that new infrastructure built to public standards.</u></p>	<p>Same as No. 2 plus:  1. <u>Do not extend public services/infrastructure outside targeted growth areas.</u> Arkansas Water Conservancy District sells augmentation permits only in designated development areas. Limit creation of special districts unless in accord with comprehensive plan land use policies.  2. <u>Upgrade infrastructure inside towns and targeted growth areas.</u> County assists towns in financing water/sewer plant upgrades.</p>	<p>Same as No. 3</p>
<p><b>Transportation</b></p>	<p>No change in current practices</p>	<p>1. <u>Ensure adequate transportation facilities available to serve new development.</u>  • Require transportation impact analysis for all new developments and land dedication for roads.  • Add basic access requirements to codes to apply to 35-acre subdivisions.  2. <u>Ensure that new infrastructure built to public standards</u> to reduce potential future public maintenance costs</p>	<p><u>Restrict creation of new major roads outside focused growth areas or that will encourage outlying development.</u> Prepare overall county road plan to guide future development.</p>	<p>Same as No. 3</p>
<p><b>Natural/Cultural Resources</b></p>	<p>No changes in current regulations/practices.</p>	<p>1. <u>Improve quality of development and reduce impact on natural and cultural resources by providing additional protection for wildlife habitat, rivers/streams, ridge/lines, cultural resources, etc.</u> Update county zoning/ subdivision regulations and apply revamped regulations to 35-acre subdivisions.  2. <u>Utilize incentives as well as regulations to encourage better quality development.</u></p>	<p>Same as No. 2 plus:  1. <u>Purchase critical natural areas and historic structures.</u>  2. <u>Target development to avoid areas of high resource value.</u> Restrict provision of utilities and services in such areas.</p>	<p>Same as No. 3</p>

<p><b>Housing</b></p>	<p><u>No active county involvement in affordable housing programs</u></p>	<p>1. <u>Encourage affordable housing through development incentives.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide density bonuses for affordable housing in new subdivisions in growth areas.</li> <li>● Permit accessory units in selected single-family areas.</li> </ul>	<p>Same as No. 2.</p>	<p>Same as No. 3 plus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Require private sector (esp. large employers) to address affordable housing issues.</u></li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enact affordable housing impact fee or land dedication requirement for major commercial developments</li> <li>● Adopt joint annexation policies with towns requiring provision of affordable lots.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intergovernmental Policies (Annexation, etc.)</b></p>	<p><u>Continue existing informal cooperation</u></p>	<p>1. <u>Ensure that county/town development standards are complementary in development areas from quality and fiscal impact analysis perspective.</u> Enact common development and fiscal impact standards for 3-mile areas.</p> <p>2. <u>Work to mitigate development impact on public lands.</u> Require new developments to consult with public land agencies and undertake mitigation measures regarding impacts on wildlife, etc.</p>	<p>Same as No. 2 plus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Ensure that county/town land use and annexation policies are complementary.</u></li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop joint land use plans for 3-mile areas. Execute formal intergovernmental agreements adopting joint plans.</li> <li>● Create joint county/town planning commissions for 3-mile areas.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <u>Coordinate county infrastructure service policies with other service providers.</u> Sign intergovernmental agreement with towns, water providers, etc. to adhere to county comprehensive land use policies.</li> </ol>	<p>Same as No. 3 plus:</p> <p><u>Coordinate building permit cap with towns.</u></p>
<p><b>Water Policy</b></p>	<p><u>Continue existing policy of allowing scattered residential development on septic/well systems.</u></p>	<p><u>Limit provision of services to development near sensitive environmental areas.</u></p>	<p><u>Ensure that service providers coordinate provision of services with county land use plan to focus development around towns and in growth areas.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sign intergovernmental agreement with Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District to this end. Give priority service to focused residential/commercial growth.</li> <li>● In the alternative, reorganize Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District. Adopt county policy of mandatory compliance with county comprehensive plan through 1034 and 1041 regulations.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Limit number of augmentation permits or water/sewer taps to moderate pace of development to selected level.</u></p>

<b>Property Rights Protections</b>	Continue existing practices.	<u>Offset impact of new regulations with density bonuses and other incentives</u> such as allowing accessory residential units in agricultural areas.	<p>1. <u>Reduce the financial impact of locational restrictions on new development.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create fund to purchase land and development rights where development restrictions significant.</li> <li>● Explore TDR system to encourage preservation of ranch lands.</li> </ul> <p>2. <u>Reduce interferences with existing agricultural operations.</u> Enact regulations to protect agricultural operations from nuisance claims.</p>	<u>Provide incentives to keep agricultural land in production.</u> County provides funding for technical assistance for alternative agricultural crops/operations
<b>Other</b>				



# Chaffee County Comprehensive Land Use and Open Space Plan Alternative Development Scenarios

Existing Conditions



Scenario No. 1



## Introduction:

The alternative development scenarios depicted in the accompanying sketches and detailed in the matrix are visions of different ways in which Chaffee County can grow over the next twenty years - where growth might occur, how fast the county might grow, and what new development will look like.

The four alternative scenarios are based on detailed background mapping of natural features and critical natural resource areas, an economic/demographic study, interviews with citizens, landowners and developers, as well as series of community workshops in Salida and Buena Vista. Importantly, the county conducted an extensive public opinion survey - over 3,000 people and businesses were contacted that asked a range of questions about growth and development. Over 1,200 responses were received.

Based on this input, the consulting team retained by the county developed key goals and objectives to guide the plan that were tested in several community workshops and with the project advisory committee. Once consensus was reached on these goals and objectives (attached), the consulting team drafted four alternative development scenarios that address key aspects of growth - for example, its location, environmental and fiscal impact, amount and rate, and quality.

What we need now is to hear from the citizens, land owners and business people of Chaffee County about which of these scenarios best fit their vision of the future growth and development in the area. Once a preferred scenario emerges - and it may be a mix of elements from any of the four alternatives - the consulting team will proceed to draft a new comprehensive land use plan for the county.

*These aerial sketches are meant to generate public interest and discussion. They illustrate planning concepts only and may not represent actual conditions, properties or roadways.*

## Scenario No. 1:

### Current Development Trends/Practices Continue

Under this scenario, the county and towns would continue their current land use policies and practices which are resulting in residential and commercial development scattered throughout the county. Overall population growth would reach between 22,000 and 25,000 people by the year 2020 compared to about 15,000 today. Salida and Poncha Springs would grow together as development stripped out along U.S. 50 as would Buena Vista and Johnson Village. Smaller lots (less than 2 acres) residential subdivisions would be allowed by the county on well/septic in rural areas. No special programs would be created to protect or purchase open space. Informal cooperation on land use issues would continue between the county and towns.

*The next meeting is on September 30, 1997, at 6:30 p.m., on the Buena Vista Community Centre, 715 East Mesa Street, Buena Vista, Colorado. If you can not attend this meeting, please send your comments to the Chaffee County Commissioners office at 104 Comstock, P.O. Box 699, Salida, CO 81201 or fax at (719) 538-4642 or email to dberth@co.chaffee.net*

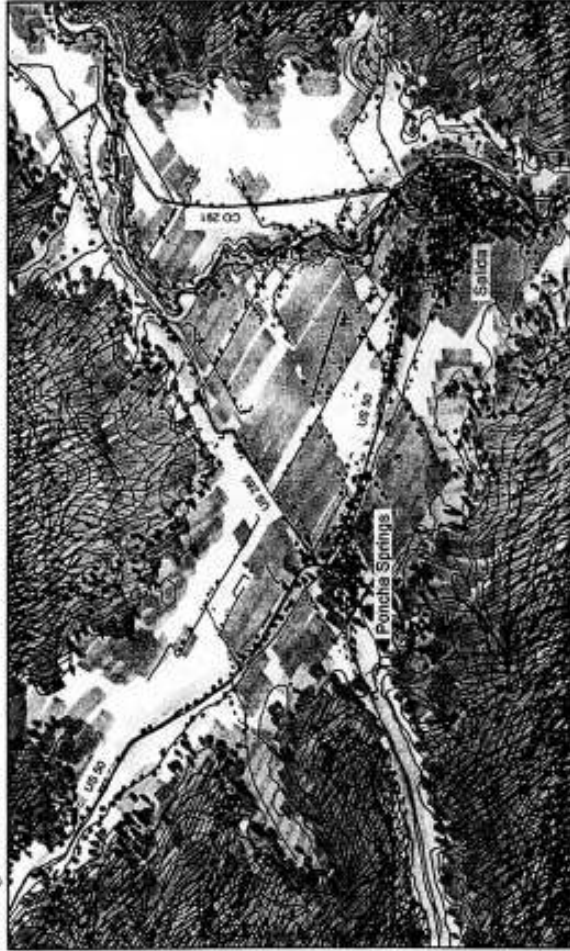
## Buena Vista

Clarion Associates  
RNL Design

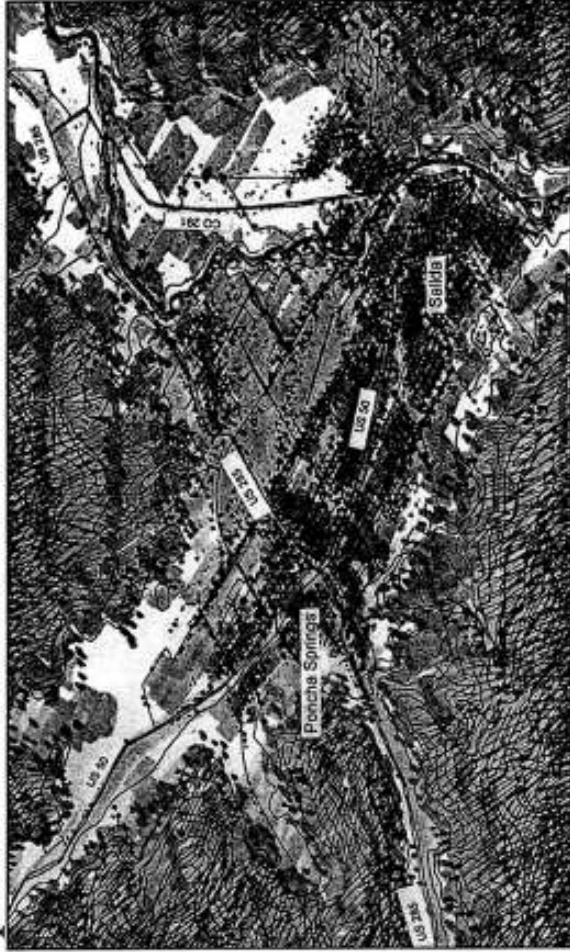


# Chaffee County Comprehensive Land Use and Open Space Plan Alternative Development Scenarios

Existing Conditions



Scenario No. 1



## Introduction:

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*These areas sketches are meant to generate public interest and discussion. They illustrate planning concepts only, and may not represent actual conditions, properties or maps.*

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*The next meeting is on October 1, 1997, at 6:30 p.m., in the Salida Senior Citizens Center, 305 F Street, Salida, Colorado. If you can not attend this meeting, please send your comments to the Chaffee County Commissioners office at 104 Crestone, P.O. Box 690, Salida, CO 81201 or fax at (719) 539-7642 or email to dberbelle@1282716msnet.com*

## Salida/Poncha Springs

Clarion Associates  
RNL Design

# Chaffee County Comprehensive Land Use and Open Space Plan Alternative Development Scenarios

Scenario No. 2



Scenario No. 2: Current Development Trends Continue; Update and Improve Development Codes to Improve Development Quality

The location and amount of development would be the same as under Scenario 2. The major difference would be that the county and towns would update their zoning, subdivision and other land development review codes to provide better protection for open space and natural resources. New standards would also be adopted so that the county would better understand the fiscal impact of development on infrastructure such as roads, schools, fire protection, and emergency services. Development would be required to pay its fair share of the cost of new infrastructure and services that it necessitated. The overall pattern and quality of individual developments would be improved, for example, by providing incentives to cluster houses in rural subdivisions to protect open space.

*These artist sketches are meant to generate public interest and discussion. They illustrate planning concepts only and may not represent actual conditions, properties or roadways.*

*The next meeting is on September 30, 1997, at 6:30 p.m., in the Buena Vista Community Center, 714 East Main Street, Buena Vista, Colorado. If you can not attend this meeting, please send your comments to the Chaffee County Commissioner's office at 104 Crestone, CO, Box 659, Salida, CO 81201 or fax at (719) 539-3342 or email to [bertha@719271@comcast.com](mailto:bertha@719271@comcast.com).*

Scenarios No. 3 & 4



Scenario No. 3: Growth and Development Focused Around Existing Communities and Developed Areas; Acquisition Fund Created To Assist In Protecting Open Space; Development Codes Modernized to Improve Development Quality.

Scenario No. 3 most closely represents the preferences of the majority of respondents to the public opinion survey and reflects the key goals and objectives favored by people who attended the public workshops held to date. Population growth would continue, but residential and commercial development would be focused around existing growth areas - in other words, the county would target smaller lot residential development in and around Salida, Buena Vista and Poncha Springs, working closely with those jurisdictions, and other already developed areas like Nathrop. Incentives would be used to improve the quality and amount of open space in large-lot (5-35 acres) rural residential projects. Similarly, the county would not allow scattered commercial development outside of the towns as is now often done through a special permit process except in limited instances (e.g., logging, lodges, etc. that require a rural location). The county would also create an open space acquisition program to augment its zoning and subdivision codes to protect critical wildlife habitat, river and stream corridors, and other sensitive natural and cultural resources. Steps would also be taken to protect ranches from uses that might interfere with agricultural operations. More formal steps would be taken to ensure cooperative planning between the county, towns and the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District, including signing inter-governmental agreements, adopting joint plans and development standards in growth areas around the towns.

Scenario No. 4: Adopt Controls on the Amount and Rate of Growth

Alternative 4 would be similar to No. 3, with one major difference: The county would undertake significant downzonings to limit the overall build out potential in the county so that total population growth would be less than the 22,000 by 2020 now projected. The pace of growth would also be moderated from its current level of 5% population increase annually to a lower amount - perhaps 1%-2% by placing an annual limit on the number of building permits issued. The county would also acquire prime development parcels to reduce the amount of land available for development and sign an agreement with the Water Conservancy District and towns to limit the number of augmentation permits and water/sewer taps granted annually.

## Buena Vista

Clarion Associates  
RNL Design



# Chaffee County Comprehensive Land Use and Open Space Plan Alternative Development Scenarios

Scenario No. 2



Scenario No. 2: Current Development Trends Continue; Update and Improve Development Codes to Improve Development Quality

The location and amount of development would be the same as under Scenario 2. The major difference would be that the county and towns would update their zoning, subdivision and other land development review codes to provide better protection for open space and natural resources. New standards would also be adopted so that the county would better understand the fiscal impact of development on infrastructure such as roads, schools, fire protection, and emergency services. Development would be required to pay its fair share of the cost of new infrastructure and services that it necessitates. The overall pattern and quality of individual developments would be improved, for example, by providing incentives to cluster houses in rural subdivisions to protect open space.

*These aerial renderings are meant to generate public input and discussion. They illustrate planning concepts only and may not represent actual conditions, properties or roadways.*

*The next meeting is on October 1, 1997, at 6:30 p.m., in the Salida Senior Citizens Center, 305 E. Street, Salida, Colorado. If you can not attend this meeting, please send your comments to the Chaffee County Commissioners office at 104 Crestone, P.O. Box 699, Salida, CO 81201 or fax at (719) 535-7912 or email to Bertha@7120271@comcast.com.*

Scenarios No. 3 & 4



Scenario No. 3: Growth and Development Focused Around Existing Communities and Developed Areas; Acquisition Fund Created To Assist In Protecting Open Space; Development Codes Modernized to Improve Development Quality.

Scenario No. 3 most closely represents the preferences of the majority of respondents to the public opinion survey and reflects the key goals and objectives favored by people who attended the public workshops held to date. Population growth would continue, but residential and commercial development would be focused around existing growth areas - in other words, the county would target smaller lot residential development in and around Salida, Buena Vista and Poncha Springs, working closely with those jurisdictions, and other already developed areas like Nathrop. Incentives would be used to improve the quality and amount of open space in large-lot (5-35 acres) rural residential projects. Similarly, the county would not allow scattered commercial development outside of the towns as is now often done through a special permit process except in limited instances (e.g., logging, lodges, etc. that require a rural location). The county would also create an open space acquisition program to augment its zoning and subdivision codes to protect critical wildlife habitat, river and stream corridors, and other sensitive natural and cultural resources. Steps would also be taken to protect ranches from uses that might interfere with agricultural operations. More formal steps would be taken to ensure cooperative planning between the county, towns and the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District, including signing inter-governmental agreements, adopting joint plans and development standards in growth areas around the towns.

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## Salida/Poncha Springs

Clarion Associates  
RNL Design

**APPENDIX D:**

**INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABILITY  
SUMMARY**

**CHAFFEE COUNTY**

**Infrastructure/Service Demands**

**Projected County Population Growth of 50-75% (8,000) by the year 2020**

Service	Buena Vista	Poncha Springs	Salida	County
Water	<p>The town is working with the State on upgrading the current system. New tanks will serve a population of 5,238 residents. (1995 population 2,039) Town has determined their growth rate to be approximately 3-4% per year and does not expect the same level of growth and believes the improvements to the current system will handle the anticipated growth. Would need to purchase additional water rights. Part of any annexation would include the sale of water rights to the town and hook up to the town's system.</p>	<p>Currently have 2 wells, serving approximately 500 residents. Town is currently in process of drawing up plans to expand the current plant and purchase additional water rights. Town has 45 acre feet of water and wants to purchase 45 acre feet more. With the current plant expansion plans, the plant would probably serve this type of increase. Storage capacity is probably adequate for the plan.</p>	<p>Currently serves approximately 2500 taps, commercial and residential. There are no current plans to increase the system at this time. Working on reducing the summer water consumption. A 1/2 reduction in consumer consumption during the summer months would increase the ability to serve an additional 2,000 taps, which would be the system capacity. A rate structure will be in place by the year 2000, replacing the flat fee currently in use.</p>	<p>Primarily, individual wells, except for the following centralized community systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Garfield Water (managed by Monarch)</li> <li>Mesa Antero Water</li> <li>Game Trail Water</li> <li>Buena Vista Golf Course water system (which is reportedly in bad shape).</li> </ul>

**CHAFFEE COUNTY**

**Infrastructure/Service Demands**

**Projected County Population Growth of 50-75% (8,000) by the year 2020.**

Service	Buena Vista	Poncha Springs	Salida	County
Sewer	Current proposal to build a new facility plant which would provide for the next 20 years in population growth. Current lagoons are insufficient and serve only incorporated Buena Vista. Buena Vista Sanitation District may serve unincorporated Buena Vista.	Served by Salida. Sewer line is located along U.S. 50. Recently renewed IGA extended the term for an additional 10 years.	Currently services the sewage from Poncha Springs under an IGA which was recently extended for an additional 10 years. In addition, Salida takes the septic waste from the north end of the county, as well as south Park County, and west Fremont County, which will cease if the new system for Buena Vista is completed. While the current system is at capacity, it is expected that the current system would be sufficient to handle expected growth over the next 20 years.	Septic systems generally serviced by Salida treatment plant.  Garfield Sewer (managed by Monarch)  Mt. Princeton Resort Wastewater treatment facility (currently serving significantly below capacity).  County would consider forming a county enterprise which would take over developer installed water/sewer systems once they have proven to function well. This would serve to avoid multiple developer Title 32 districts.
Police	Would need to expand the force to serve the projected population at the current levels of service. Use county facilities from Chaffee County and Park County for detention, with juveniles transported to Pueblo.	Uses County Sheriff.	Current staffing is adequate to serve the needs at this time. There is a question if the Walmart will create the need for more staff. Tourist season puts a strain on the department due to the need for more staff and officers. An increase in population would create a need to be able to maintain current staffing levels. Uses county facilities for detention.	Working on plans for a new jail and facility. Building would be designed for additional expansion.  Current plans would allow for expansion of about 50% increase in population. Would need additional staffing to maintain current levels after that point  Supported by several volunteer agencies.

**CHAFFEE COUNTY**

**Infrastructure/Service Demands**

**Projected County Population Growth of 50-75% (8,000) by the year 2020**

Service	Buena Vista	Poncha Springs	Salida	County
Fire Protection	Served by Buena Vista Volunteer Fire Department. Current ISO rating of 5.	Served by Chaffee County Fire Protection District	Currently, the city may not be covered properly. There are plans in the talking stage to increase the force to bring the department up to an adequate standard, with a new station, equipment, and personnel to staff it. Insurance rates may be affected by the level of service being provided. An increase in the population would require another station, equipment, and staff.	<p>County Sheriff is Fire Marshall.</p> <p>Chaffee County Fire Protection District serves most of county except Buena Vista and Salida. South Arkansas Fire Protection District serves area around Salida and is manned by Salida FPD.</p> <p>Possible plans to erect fire station in Granite and near Mesa Antero and Game Trail. Within the next 5 years or so, plans to go to combined paid and volunteer force. Population increase by 50-75% over next 20 years will require more personnel and equipment.</p>

**CHAFFEE COUNTY**

**Infrastructure/Service Demands**

Projected County Population Growth of 50-75% (8,000) by the year 2020

Service	Buena Vista	Poncha Springs	Salida	County
<p>Medical Services</p>	<p>Heart of the Rockies Medical Center - Located in downtown Salida. Hospital district incorporates Chaffee County, NW Fremont County, N. Sawatch County, and Monarch Pass. Currently licensed for 49 beds, with average daily occupancy of 17. No current expansion plans, but about to initiate a facilities plan as they anticipate a higher than average growth with larger retirement, tourism and second homeowner populations. Would be looking to expand outpatient services.</p> <p>Emergency Medical Technician services are provided by the County and are stationed in the County Building and jail.</p>	<p>Heart of the Rockies - See description under Buena Vista</p>	<p>Heart of the Rockies - See description under Buena Vista</p>	<p>Heart of the Rockies - See description under Buena Vista</p>



**CHAFFEE COUNTY**

**Infrastructure/Service Demands**

**Projected County Population Growth of 50-75% (8,000) by the year 2020**

Service	Buena Vista	Poncha Springs	Salida	County
Schools	<p>A recent bond issue was passed which will provide additional space to accommodate growth for the next 5-8 years, assuming the growth rate is 10-15 students per year.</p>	<p>Served by the Salida School District.</p>	<p>Recent study by CSU determined a need for a new middle school as well as a restructuring of all grades. Additional recommendations were to upgrade the lighting, skylights of the current elementary school. Current high school is also at capacity. CSU study recommends after the building of the new middle school that the current middle school be renovated for a new high school. Elementary school enrollment has been declining due to a variety of reasons; unable to determine future need.</p>	<p>Served either by Buena Vista or Salida School Districts.</p>

