



Chaffee County Community Assessment

April 5-7, 2006

Final SWOT Analysis Assessment Report

April 27, 2006

Assessment Team

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US Department of Housing & Urban Development

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Southern Colorado Economic Development District

Bruce Redus, Executive Director

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Governor's Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT)

Chaffee County Economic Development Coordinator

Ellen Olson

Community Action Planning Meetings

June 06

Chaffee County Community Assessment SWOT Report

Session I: Family Supports/Needs

TEAM Leaders: Clarke Becker and Stephanie Steffens

- Schools/education
- Child care
- Transportation
- Cost of living

Attendance: 60

Strengths:

- Elementary school has strong interaction with families
- Business community has stepped up to help fill funding void
- Many healthy alternatives to public schools
- People move here for quality of life
- New school board wants communication
- Only half of shuttle trips last year were for seniors
- 45 non-profits (arts, social services, natural resources)
- Second home owners spend a lot of money in the county
- Successful Alternative High School
- Waiting list for Boys and Girls Club

Weaknesses:

- High school has weak interaction with families
- Business community is getting tapped out from every direction
- Loss of student population due to perceived weakness of Salida Schools
- Salaries for teachers are lower than state average
- High turn over of teachers
- Loss of faith in school system
- Schools losing touch with parents and students
- High cost of living
- More retirees moving to county with less interest in school issues
- School bond lost twice
- Need code enforcement for zoning and safety
- Minimal child care for under 3 years
- City regulations for child care providers are excessive
- Waiting list for head start
- No child care services available for evening or night
- Day care is school year based
- Limited services and facilities for children with special needs
- Lack of day care for children under two years
- Housing costs are high relative to pay scale
- Retirees have increased demand on housing
- No commercial transportation in or out of the county
- All pre-school, including Head Start has a waiting list

- Waiting list for Boys and Girls Club
- Participation in assessment was lacking Seniors and low income population

Opportunities:

- Identify other sources of funding for schools (such as school impact fees)
- School board meetings on public TV
- Educate the community concerning budget cut issues
- Build economic base to fill funding gaps
- Need to expand transportation services
- Development of a not for profit housing production organization
- Improve programs to attract students to public schools
- Develop short term drop-off day care
- Identify alternatives to maintain subsidized apartments
- Expand Boys and Girls Club.

Threats:

- Many things are no longer provided by school district
- Cost of materials and labor drive housing prices higher
- Very few available building lots in towns
- Saguache is becoming bedroom community for Chaffee county
- Chain retail stores raise prices as community is designated a tourist area
- High percentage of second home owners
- Cost of living requires parents to work more jobs resulting in lower school involvement

Recommendations:

- Use the upcoming housing needs assessment to define affordable/workforce housing
 - Include the Colorado Division of Housing Blue Ribbon Panel Report
- Research and develop additional sources of funding for public schools
- Better Utilize the current not for profit housing production organizations (UAACOG) and programs
- Develop or expand additional day care capacity
- Identify and implement alternatives to maintain subsidized apartments
- Support efforts to expand Boys and Girls Club in Salida and facility in Buena Vista

Session II: Business Development

TEAM Leaders: John Galusha and Bruce Redus

- Retaining existing business, making it stronger
- Attracting new primary jobs
- Increasing wages

Attendance: 38

Strengths:

- Colorado Mountain College
- Small Business Development Center – 6 counselors and business planning classes
www.coloradomtn.edu/sbdc
- Rents in Downtown Salida are competitive
- Chaffee County growth projections provide opportunities for attracting good, well planned businesses.
- Quality of life: Beauty, clean air
- Developing market
- Crossroad of three Highways
- There is a “Code of the West” document for new comers
- High speed internet access in Salida and Buena Vista
- Reasonable wage scale to attract employers
- Poncha Springs has a pro business attitude
- Poncha Springs is “De-bruced”
- Fastest growing source of new dollars in the county is passive Income from retirees
- Growth projections support future economic opportunities

Weaknesses:

- Tap fees are an issue
- Building/zoning is a challenge for small/home based business owners
- Lack of a “one-stop shop” for new and expanding businesses
- SBDC/CMC services are not widely utilized
- Lack of coordination among marketing/resource organizations
- Underutilization of Enhanced Rural Enterprise Zone benefits
- Lack of an effective “shop local campaign”
- It appears to take multiple jobs to survive
- Lack of understanding of the definition of “primary” jobs and their importance to the community
- Lack of High speed internet access outside of Salida and Buena Vista
- Lack of a resource inventory for business development
- Big vacant buildings are a negative influence to downtown Salida
- Need for downtown revitalization
- Business hours are selective and not market friendly
- Perception that Salida is not business friendly
- Fastest growing source of new dollars in the county is passive Income from retirees
- If you don’t bring your own significant other and job, you are out of luck
- Average pay scale is below the living wage
- Question of openness of local community to “new business”

Opportunities:

- Research opportunities and appropriateness of incentives for business expansion
- Need to develop a healthy business environment for business expansion and attraction
- Discuss potential for single point of contact for chamber and visitor related organizations
- Active business retention/expansion program
- Hometown Competitiveness model for community development
- Manage the growth that will come to maintain the quality of life in Chaffee County
- There is a perceived demand for a business incubator
- Utilize the results of the leakage study to identify business opportunities.
- Develop and conduct a business resources workshop, on a continuing basis
- Improve the “shop local campaign”
- Climax Mine will reopen by 2009.
- Develop entrepreneurial skills to grow business locally
- Inventory (space) with infrastructure is available for new businesses
- Need to embrace recreational tourism industry
- Consistent and expanded local business hours

Threats:

- CDOT is problem for Hwy 285/50 business expansion/attraction
- Climax Mine reopened by 2009
- No voice messaging with Qwest
- Freight traffic/access is difficult

Recommendations:

- Complete a feasibility study for creation of a business incubator in Salida and/or Buena Vista
 - Providing support services for primary jobs, entrepreneurs and small businesses
- Develop a county wide one stop shop for business development
- Provide education to the communities concerning importance of Primary Jobs
- Develop and conduct on a continuing basis a business resources workshop, on a continuing basis
- Research and implement appropriate incentives for business development
- Develop a downtown revitalization strategy for Salida
- Implement Business Retention/Expansion Program
- Utilize the results of the leakage study to identify business opportunities
- Develop an active “shop local campaign
- Identify natural resources inventory to help target potential industries (i.e. forest, aggregates, altitude, water quality, workforce availability etc.

Session III: Quality of Life

Team Leaders: Steve Eggleston and Cathy Garcia

- Preserving heritage and small town fee
- Transportation (in-county and regionally)
- Recreation (bike trails, recreation programs/centers, etc.)
- Smart growth

Attendance: 31

Strengths:

- There is a "Code of the West" document for new residents
- Knowing your neighbors
- Low traffic congestion
- Diverse Population
- Strong Heritage preservation efforts
- Adequate Physicians in Chaffee County
- Lots of available recreation opportunities
- County Trails Plan
- Visitor Bureau website and center
- Three (soon to be four) Wilderness Areas
- Coloradoheadwaters.com
- Generally good health and family services
- Good interaction among citizens in communities
- Clean Air
- A huge pool of volunteers
- Untapped historical knowledge in long term residents
- Neighbor to Neighbor organization
- Salida's recreation program is expanding
- Expanding Art and Culture programs
- Local citizen talent could be tapped as resources for specific projects

Weaknesses:

- Visitor Bureau website and center is under utilized
- Lack of coordination of volunteer pool
- Lack of agreement on need for a recreation center(s)
- Law enforcement is not "street wise"
- Poor communication and cooperation among communities (Mason Dixon Line)
- Lack of events coordination
- Buena Vista needs organized youth recreation program
- Lack of Medical Specialists
- Lack of public health services in north Chaffee County
- Alcohol and drug problem and lack of treatment facilities
- Lack of nurses
- Lack of mental health services

- Lack of emergency services in BV
- Slow response time for EMS (Are citizens willing to pay for improved service)
- Lack of assisted living for seniors
- Lack of communications between seniors and youth (generational)
- Underemployment
- Skill levels don't match employment opportunities
- Transient component of population
- Lack of affordable/workforce housing
- Entry level job seekers are not workforce ready

Opportunities:

- Viable Downtown - Pedestrian friendly
- Paid event coordinator
- Volunteer coordination program
- Continued improvement of Local Government (?)
- Continued expansion of trails system
- Proposed graduated care facility
- Revisit and update comprehensive plan(s) for the future
- Better local media coverage, county wide
- Business retention and expansion
- Research potential for a county wide recreation district
- Research environment aspects of smart growth

Threats:

- Increasing property tax burden on Seniors and others with fixed incomes.
- Transient trends cause loss of critical citizens, teachers, nurses, police offers, etc.
- Disconnect between communities
- Disconnect between service providers and needs

Recommendations:

- Explore different options for EMS
- Develop (or better utilize existing) not for profit housing production organization to distribute available resources
- Research potential for a county wide recreation district
BV has approached Salida but both are currently proceeding independently
- Continued expansion of multi-use trail system
- Perform a demand analysis for healthcare services
- Coordinate efforts for a full time events and tourism coordinator for the county
Collaboration with Chambers and Visitor Bureaus
- Pursue CDOT hazard elimination funding resources for pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Assessment of diverse needs for public transportation

Session IV: Land Use

Team Leaders: Steve Eggleston and John Galusha

- Residential developments
- Open space
- Ranching
- Smart growth

Attendance: 27

Strengths:

- There is communication and awareness concerning land use planning among citizens
- Common Desire to preserve ranch lands
- Ample supply of rural residential parcels
- Salida has land available and ability to develop workforce housing
- Salida and Buena Vista Waste Water treatment is operating under capacity

Weaknesses:

- Inadequate water storage
- Lack of cooperation and coordination regarding land use between county and communities
- Growing second home market
- Comprehensive plan is five years old and there is a question of currency
- Salida is out of lots for infill development
- Value of conservation easements is in question
- Land use codes that do NOT relate to an economic vision

Opportunities:

- Salida has land available and ability to develop workforce housing
- Development is being encouraged in and near population centers
- Update all comprehensive plans
- Continue research of tools for preservation of productive ag land
- Poncha Springs and BV have land to build higher density residential properties

Threats:

- Disconnect between generations
- Concern about losing ranching community
- Pressure to sell water to outside users
- Declining value of conventional ag practices and products.

Recommendations:

- Cooperatively develop land use codes that preserve agricultural assets by:
 - Setting limitations on the amount of analysis to be included in developing codes
 - Identify land development tools available from all available sources
 - Develop codes / policies / ordinances with input from broad cross-section of the community
 - Incorporate a sunset clause or flexibility into new regulations
- Encourage better cooperation between local governments on land use issues
- Develop a shared vision for ultimate build out.
- Support planning staff in their quest for innovative planning practices and solutions.
- Encourage planning staff to develop policies and codes collectively

Recommendations

Family Support Recommendations:

- Use the upcoming housing needs assessment to define affordable/workforce housing
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Business Development Recommendations:

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Quality of Life Recommendations:

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General Comments/Recommendations:

- Everyone involved in economic development needs to read "Boomtown"
- Develop a county-wide shared vision for future growth and ultimate build out
- Require all future development to provide water rights.
- Mining industry and railroad brought in the ranchers; don't lose this history!
- Have fun with "Salida stole the Courthouse from BV!"
- Quality of life begins with a "good job"
- Develop stronger relationships with the local media to report across community boundaries
- **Celebrate your successes!!!**
- **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!!!**