

# RIO GRANDE COUNTY JOINT MASTER PLAN

Rio Grande County  
City of Monte Vista  
Town of Del Norte

## **RIO GRANDE COUNTY**



## **JOINT MASTER PLAN**



***DEL NORTE \* MONTE VISTA \* RIO GRANDE COUNTY***

ADOPTED 2004

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## INTRODUCTION

### Plan Purpose

Rio Grande County, with support from the City of Monte Vista and the Town of Del Norte, applied for and received an Energy Impact Assistance Grant in 2003 from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to develop a joint master plan. The Rio Grande County Joint Master Plan Project updates the 1989 Rio Grande County Master Plan, the 1980 Monte Vista Comprehensive Plan, and the 1978 Del Norte Comprehensive Plan.

The 2004 Rio Grande County Joint Master Plan (Plan) is a broad public policy tool for guiding decisions concerning land use and future growth. The Plan serves as a guide for the physical, social and fiscal health and well being of the county. As such, its goals, policies and recommended actions are to be used to guide the future growth and change of Rio Grande County, the City of Monte Vista, and the Town of Del Norte.

The Plan is prepared in accordance with state statutes that authorize the Rio Grande County Planning Commission to develop a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory within Rio Grande County. Per C.R.S. 30-28-107, the purpose of the Plan is “guiding and accomplishing a coordinated and harmonious development of the relevant territory, which, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, will best promote the general welfare of the inhabitants” of Rio Grande County.

Creating an atmosphere of intergovernmental cooperation is an important component of the planning process. Thus, the Plan is also prepared for Monte Vista and Del Norte in accordance with C.R.S. 31-23-207, “guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs”.

Although advisory in nature, the Plan is the basis for regulatory measures inclusive of zoning and subdivision code updates, as well as project review recommendations. The Plan serves as the foundation for intergovernmental agreements, capital improvement programming, and detailed studies and programs coordinated by public jurisdictions.

### Plan Jurisdiction

Rio Grande County includes three incorporated cities and towns: Monte Vista, Del Norte, and South Fork. A small portion of Center is located in Rio Grande County, with the majority of its incorporated area within Saguache County.

The Plan has jurisdiction within unincorporated Rio Grande County, the City of Monte Vista, and the Town of Del Norte. The Plan does not have jurisdiction within the incorporated communities of Center and South Fork. The Town of South Fork updated their master plan in 2001, and Center is predominantly located with Saguache County.

Unincorporated Rio Grande County is governed by a Board of County Commissioners. The Commissioners appoint a Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment, and adopts land use regulations for the unincorporated areas of the County. Rio Grande County does not have building codes, but does require a zoning permit administered by the County Land Use Administrator.

The City of Monte Vista is governed by a City Council and City Manager. The City Council appoints the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Adjustment. The Building Inspector/Land Use Manager is charged with the interpretation of and the enforcement of land use regulations.

The Town of Del Norte is administered by a Town Board and a Town Manager. The Town Board appoints the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment and Tree Board. The Town Manager is responsible for the administration of the provisions of the Town's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. A contract Building Inspector enforces the Uniform Building Code and some zoning regulations.

## Planning Process

The Rio Grande County Joint Master Plan project began in the summer of 2003, guided by a steering committee comprised of Rio Grande County, City of Monte Vista and Town of Del Norte elected and appointed officials, and a consultant team led by HNTB.

The Plan Frameworks, goals, policies and recommended actions all are created as a result of an inclusive public participation program that included nine public workshops. Publicity for the public workshops included press releases and paid advertising in local newspapers and a project poster distributed to area businesses and organizations.

### PUBLIC WORKSHOP SERIES 1: OCTOBER 2003

The first set of public workshops was designed to educate the public about the planning process and to identify key concerns and issues within Rio Grande County and its incorporated communities of Monte Vista and Del Norte. Meeting participants were asked to categorize information into eight major topic areas: Land Use and Growth; Population and Housing; Transportation and Mobility; Environment and Natural Resources; Parks and Recreation; Economic Development, Tourism and Identity; Public Involvement; and Infrastructure and Services. A summary of issues was prepared following the public workshops.

### PUBLIC WORKSHOP SERIES 2: JANUARY 2004

Using information from the first set of workshops and the results of a planning analysis outlining environmental, land use, and service and infrastructure conditions, Plan Frameworks were prepared for Rio Grande County, Monte Vista and Del Norte. The Plan Frameworks were then refined after Steering Committee review and presented to the public during the second set of workshops. In an effort to garner additional public input, a Plan Framework exhibit was displayed at various locations on successive days from February 2, 2004 through February 12, 2004. During this time, the general public completed questionnaires expressing preferences for Plan concepts.

### PUBLIC WORKSHOP SERIES 3: MARCH 2004

The draft Plan was presented to the general public in a third series of public workshops. Following these meetings, copies of the Plan document were available for further review prior to the scheduling of public hearings before the planning commissions and elected officials of Rio Grande County, Monte Vista and Del Norte.

## Plan Organization and Use

The Plan is organized is divided into six sections to be “user friendly” for each jurisdiction:

- Section 1 Introduction
- Section 2 Trends
- Section 3 Rio Grande County Plan Element
- Section 4.Monte Vista Plan Element
- Section 5 Del Norte Plan Element
- Section 6 Appendix

The Trends section is structured to serve all three jurisdictions with historical and demographic information, the majority of which is based on 2000 Census data. Population, housing and economic data are presented in tables and graphs.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 are designed to provide each jurisdiction with a stand alone Plan element. Each Plan Element contains two subsections: Plan Influences and Plan Direction. The Plan Influences include the fundamental background information and mapping that influence the Plan goals, policies, and recommended actions found in the Plan Direction subsection.

Note that the Environmental Conditions discussion found in Section 3 (Rio Grande County Plan Element) applies to the entire Plan area, including Monte Vista and Del Norte. Plan Influence subsections on Land Use and Infrastructure are specific to each jurisdiction.

The Plan Direction, also established for each jurisdiction, consists of two subsections: 1) Plan Framework and 2) Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions.

The Plan Frameworks and their accompanying maps serve as the land use plans for Rio Grande County, the City of Monte Vista and the Town of Del Norte. Each Plan Framework consists of several planning areas. The planning areas provide a structure for Plan goals, policies and actions.

Plan goals, policies and recommended actions are preceded by a vision statement. The vision statement, goals, policies and actions are each briefly defined with its symbol below:

- ❖ The Vision statement is an expression of plan intent.
  - ◆ Goals are broad statements of the Plan direction, describing objectives to be achieved.
    - Policies relate to the goals and are the official position to guide decision-making. As such, policies include the word “shall”.
    - Actions are specific steps that can be undertaken to implement the Plan and ultimately achieve goals in accordance with official policy. Recommended actions are coupled into on-going, short-term (one to three years), mid-term (three to five years) and long-term (more than five years) timeframes for completion.

Together, each Plan Framework and its vision, goals, policies and actions serve as the Plan Direction for each jurisdiction, providing guidance for future land use decisions.

Information important to the planning process can be found in Section Six, the Appendix. The Appendix includes questionnaire results from the second set of public workshops and the Plan exhibit, summary descriptions of funding sources, and a project bibliography.

The Plan should be consulted by elected and appointed officials when considering development proposals, updating land use regulations, working on intergovernmental issues, outlining work programs, preparing annual budgets, and reviewing progress toward meeting identified goals.

The Plan should also be used to guide residents, land owners, and project applicants concerning land planning and community development objectives. The Plan is a database, and can be used as supporting documentation for pursuing grants for community development activities.

The Plan should be reviewed annually and revised as specific actions are achieved and new strategies are identified. Plan goals should also be reviewed periodically when new circumstances or changing conditions warrant reconsideration. The entire Plan should be updated within ten years, ideally after 2010 Census information is released.

## TRENDS

### Historical Perspective

Native Americans and early Spanish explorers established encampments in what is now Rio Grande County. The first archeological finds in the region date back to 8000 B.C. Early inhabitants of the area include the Yuma culture (5000 B.C.), the Upper Rio Grande Culture (pre-dating the birth of Christ), the Utes (800 A.D.), Hogan Builders (1100 A.D.) and the Pueblo Indians (1300 A.D.). Other early valley residents included Ute, Jicarilla Apache, Pueblo, Kiowa and Comanche tribes, as well as Spaniards such as Juan de Onate and Juan de Bautista Anza.

In the early 1800's, Americans including Zebulon Pike and John Fremont explored the area. Between 1829 and 1848, the Old Spanish Trail, a section of which crosses Rio Grande County, was a major trade route linking Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Los Angeles, California. The trail evolved from ancient Native American trade routes, some of which were in use for nearly 1,000 years.

In 1846, Rio Grande County became a territorial possession of the United States. Between 1849 and 1865, settlements were established in what are now Garcia and Monte Vista. In 1870, gold was discovered at Summitville, and the following year Del Norte was platted. Del Norte was incorporated in 1872 and became the county seat in 1874 when Rio Grande County was created. The narrow gauge train was extended from Alamosa to Del Norte in 1878.

In 1882, the original town site at the current location of Monte Vista was platted, and was called Lariat. The town was renamed Monte Vista (Spanish for "mountain view") in 1886 when it was incorporated. In the late 1890's the State of Colorado established an experimental farm in Monte Vista, and in 1897, the Soldier's and Sailor's Home, now the Colorado State Veteran's Center, was established. The Ski Hi Stampede, the oldest continuous rodeo in Colorado, began in 1897 in Monte Vista.

With the influence of the railroad, the area flourished as a center for agriculture, ranching and mining throughout the 1900's. South Fork developed as an area of timber production and tourism. In 1992, South Fork was incorporated.

## Population

Rio Grande County is comprised of three municipalities, a small portion of a fourth incorporated town (Center) and a large unincorporated area.

As the table below indicates, the county's population increased steadily from 1880 through 1950, when it reached its peak. Between 1950 and 1970 population declined and then stayed relatively stable until 1990. From 1990 to 2000, Rio Grande County experienced significant growth.

Year	Population		
	Rio Grande County	Monte Vista	Del Norte
1880	1,944	N/A	729
1890	3,451	780	736
1900	4,080	556	105
1910	6,583	2,544	840
1920	7,855	2,484	1,007
1930	9,953	2,610	1,410
1940	12,404	3,208	1,923
1950	12,832	3,272	2,048
1960	11,160	3,385	1,856
1970	10,494	3,909	1,569
1980	10,511	3,902	1,709
1990	10,770	4,324	1,674
2000	12,413	4,529	1,705

*Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Demography Section; October 2003*

The following table indicates the population change from 1990 to 2000. The majority of growth was in the unincorporated area, primarily around South Fork.

	1990	2000	1990-2000 Percent Change
Rio Grande County	10,745	12,413	15.3%
Monte Vista	4,324	4,529	4.7%
Del Norte	1,674	1,705	1.9%
Unincorporated Area	4,747	5,575	17.4*%

*Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Demography Section; October 2003*  
\* Note: South Fork incorporated in 1992

Population estimates prepared since the 2000 Census indicate that population growth is stabilizing.

	Population Estimate		Annual Growth Rate	
	July 2001	July 2002	2000-2001	2001-2002
Rio Grande County	12,518	12,593	.7%	.6%
Monte Vista	4,568	4,554	.7%	-.3%
Del Norte	1,694	1,683	-.5%	-.6%
Unincorporated Area	5,613	5,703	1.0%	1.6%

*Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Demography Section; October 2003*

Preliminary population projections indicate that population will continue to increase slowly but steadily through 2030.

Year	Average Percent Annual Change	Projected Population		
		Rio Grande County	Monte Vista*	Del Norte*
2000		12,434	4,529	1,765
2005	0.5%	12,767	4,552	1,774
2010	0.9%	13,359	4,593	1,790
2015	1.0%	14,071	4,639	1,808
2020	0.9%	14,691	4,681	1,825
2025	0.7%	15,189	4,714	1,838
2030	0.4%	15,532	4,733	1,846

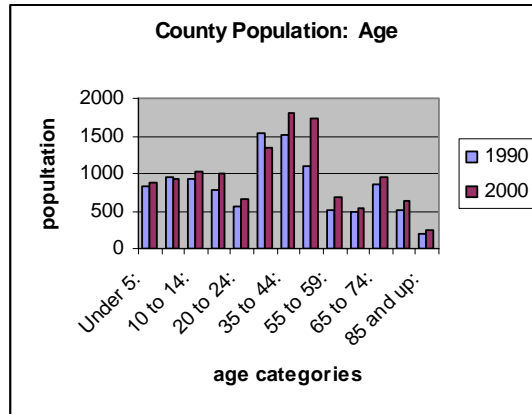
*Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Demography Section; October 2003*  
*\*Note: Monte Vista and Del Norte projections assume same average % annual change as Rio Grande County*

As shown on the table below, the majority of the population is white, with a significant portion Hispanic/Latino.

	Rio Grande County	Monte Vista	Del Norte
White	76.5	65.6	70.3
Black/African American	0.4	0.4	0.1
Amer. Indian	2.1	2.2	2.4
Asian/Pacific Island	0.5	0.6	0.5
Other	23.5	34.0	30.7
Hispanic/Latino	41.7	58.2	57.4
Not Hispanic or Latino	58.3	41.8	42.6

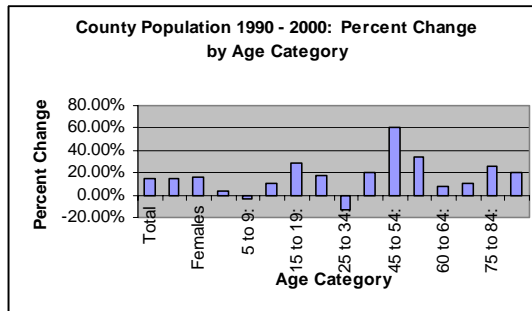
*Source: United States Census Bureau*  
*Note: figures do not add up to 100 percent due to reporting of more than one race.*

The following chart shows the change in population by age category within the County between 1990 and 2000. The largest population group is with the 35-44 age range, yet the greatest increase was in the 45-54 age range.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

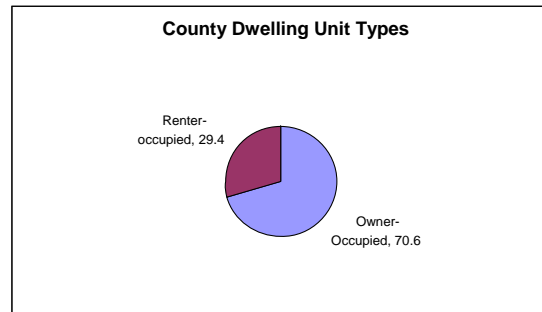
The chart below confirms the increase in population for the 45-54 age range.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

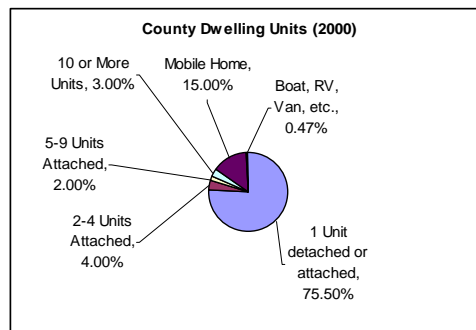
## Housing

There are approximately 6,003 housing units in Rio Grande County, with just over 4,700 of those units occupied. The average household size is 2.59 persons per unit consistent with the national average of 2.59 persons/unit, and slightly higher than the state average of 2.53 persons/unit. Approximately 70.6 percent of the occupied housing units in the county are owner-occupied, which reflects an increase of 23.7 percent since 1990. There are three times as many seasonal homes in Rio Grande County as in the State (12.7 percent to 4.0 percent).



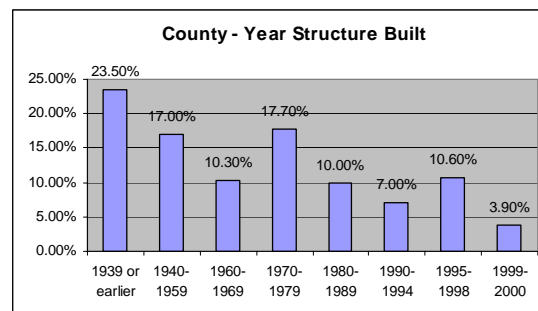
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

A wide variety of housing units exist in Rio Grande County, ranging from single-family units (75.5 percent), mobile homes (15 percent), and multiple attached units such as duplexes, triplexes, town homes, and apartment buildings (approximately nine percent of housing stock).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Rio Grande County has 40.5 percent of its housing stock made up of houses 40 years old or more. 23.5 percent of the residential structures were built before World War II. The largest single decade for residential construction within the county was 1970-1979, accounting for 17.7 percent of all housing units.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The following table shows residential building permit activity for the last four years in Rio Grande County:

Table 6: Residential Building Permit Activity 2000-2003				
	2000	2001	2002	2003 (thru 10-31)
Permit Type				
Residential - Stick Built	41	48	52	45
Residential - singlewide / modular	39	43	32	27
Garage / Barns / Storage	32	38	45	52
Additions	17	17	25	20
	129	146	154	142
<i>Source: Rio Grande County</i>				

Garage, barn and storage construction has increased steadily over the last four years. Residential construction activity has been steadily increasing, although 2003 totals are not for a complete year.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Generally, when households spend no more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing, their costs are considered affordable. Under this definition, 76.6 percent of homeowners and 69 percent of renters in Rio Grande County have affordable housing. Agencies providing housing assistance in Rio Grande County include:

*The SLV Housing Coalition.* The SLV Housing Coalition provides home rehabilitation, housing development, down payment assistance for first time home buyers, and Revolving Loan Funds for home rehabilitation.

*Colorado Rural Housing Development Corporation.* The Colorado Rural Housing Development Corporation provides self-help housing and new construction programs along with home ownership classes.

*Habitat for Humanity.* Habitat for Humanity provides volunteer home building for one or two low income families per year.

*Monte Vista Community Center Housing Authority.* The Monte Vista Community Center Housing Authority provides rental units for low income families and the elderly, along with Section 8 voucher programs.

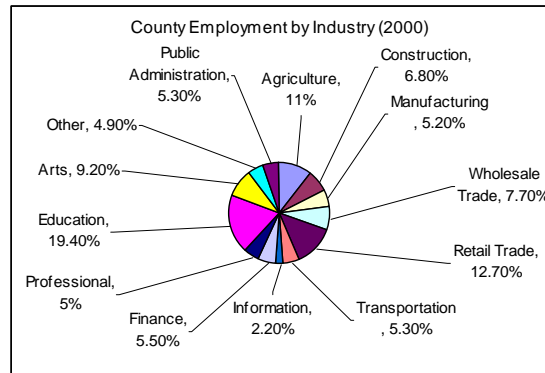
*Del Norte Senior Housing, Inc.* Del Norte Senior Housing provides rental units for the elderly, along with Section 8 voucher programs.

*Center Housing Authority.* The Center Housing Authority provides rental units for low income families and the elderly, along with Section 8 voucher programs.

*Tierra Nueva Migrant Farmworkers Housing Project.* The Tierra Nueva Migrant Farmworkers Housing Project provides dorms and family units for migrant workers in the agricultural areas near Center.

## Economy

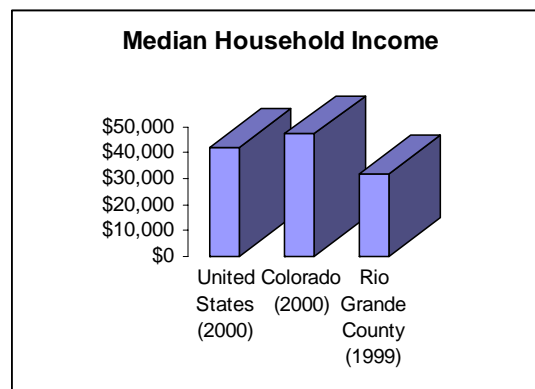
Historically, the county's economy has been heavily dependent upon agriculture. As shown in the chart below, the county's economy has diversified. Almost one in five jobs (19.4 percent) are in the education sector, with the second highest number of jobs (12.7 percent) in the retail sector. Only 11 percent of the county's employment is now in the agricultural sector.



Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

In 2002, a labor force of 5193 persons with an employment base of 4811 persons accounted for an unemployment rate of 7.5 percent.

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, Rio Grande County has a median household income of \$31,836, 67.5 percent of the statewide median household income of \$47,203, and 75.8 percent of the national median household income of \$41,994.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The poverty levels for the county population are shown in the table on the following page. The category of "female householder, no husband present, with related children under 5" is particularly notable at 80.8 percent. This is considerably higher than the statewide percentage of 38.9 percent.

Families	Families	11.3
	With Related Children Under 18	16.6
	With Related Children Under 5	18.4
Females	Female Householder, No Husband Present	43.0
	With Related Children Under 18	48.8
	With Related Children Under 5	80.8
Individuals	Individuals	14.5
	18 and Over	12.8
	65 and Over	11.2
	Related Children Under 18	18.4
	Related Children under 5	18.5
	Unrelated Individuals 15 and Over	27.9
<i>Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Demography Section</i>		

Preliminary employment projections indicate that employment will increase slowly but steadily through 2030.

Year	Average Percent Annual Change	Projected Employment		
		Rio Grande County	Monte Vista*	Del Norte*
2000		4,824	1,738	659
2005	7.7%	5,196	1,871	745
2010	5.7%	5,492	1,977	787
2015	6.8%	5,869	2,111	840
2020	6.9%	6,279	2,256	897
2025	6.5%	6,691	2,402	955
2030	6.5%	7,125	2,558	1,117
<i>Source: HNTB; Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Demography Section; October 2003</i>				
<i>*Note: Monte Vista and Del Norte projections made assuming same average % annual change as Rio Grande County</i>				

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The San Luis Valley Economic Development District is a six county region established by the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration that includes Rio Grande County. The San Luis Valley Development Resources Group administers EDA programs. In 2002, SLCDRG prepared a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, a regional action plan that outlines goals, objectives and strategies in ten categories: agriculture; industry; tourism; business recruitment; financial and business assistance; infrastructure; capacity building and communications; community services and facilities; natural resources and environment; and data collection, management and research.

## RIO GRANDE COUNTY PLAN ELEMENT

## Rio Grande County Plan Influences

### LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Rio Grande County covers 913 square miles, or 584,382 acres. Rio Grande County is located in south central Colorado, in the west-central portion of the San Luis Valley.

The San Luis Valley is the largest high mountain valley in the world at approximately 80 miles north to south and 50 miles east to west. The San Luis Valley floor is approximately 8,000 feet above sea level, and is nestled between two mountain ranges with 14,000 foot peaks. The San Juan Mountains border Rio Grande County to the west, with the Sangre de Cristo Range across the valley to the east. The Rio Grande River has its headwaters in the San Juan Mountains, and flows generally west to east through the county, passing through the communities of South Fork, Del Norte and Monte Vista.

### Steep Slopes

As slope increases, land becomes less suitable for development. Slope is the most limiting factor to be considered in the design of access roads and residential subdivisions. Steep slopes generally have the following increased risks: wildfire, unstable soils, road construction and maintenance problems, and difficulty with access by fire protection equipment.

Steep slopes are located primarily within the western portion of Rio Grande County, in the San Luis Mountain Range. The slope analysis found on the Environmental Conditions Map classifies slope into four categories:

*Slopes between 0% and 8%*

Most road design standards and building codes allow construction within this range.

*Slopes between 9% and 15%*

Some mitigation may be necessary, with possible structural reinforcement along with undesired cut and fill activity.

*Slopes between 16% and 33%*

Significant mitigation is necessary, with need to evaluate proposed construction on a case by case basis.

*Slopes greater than 33%*

No construction is recommended due to risk of hazards.

### CLIMATE

Rio Grande County has a semi-arid climate. Winds are typically from the southwest and strongest in the spring and early summer. Summer is moderate, with average daily maximum temperatures in the mid-eighties, and daily minimums in the low forties. Average winter temperatures range from the single digits to the high thirties, with snowfall between 25 and 35 inches per year.

About 80 percent of the county's precipitation occurs between April and October. The highest levels of rainfall are in the western portion of the county, with South Fork receiving an average of 12 inches of rain per year, decreasing to 9.9 inches in Del Norte and only 7 inches in Monte Vista.

Air quality in Rio Grande County is considered excellent and meets all federal standards. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment does not currently maintain air quality monitors in Rio Grande County, but does run tests periodically. The lack of permanent test stations is a positive indication of the air quality.

## GEOLOGY

Geologic occurrences over millions of years have given Rio Grande County a tremendous geologic variety, including pumice- and sandstone-sculpted formations, alluvial terraces, and precious metal deposits.

During the Laramide Orogeny 65 million years ago, heavy volcanic activity and the uplift of the ancestral Rockies occurred. Additional volcanic activity 30 million years ago filled the valley with ash and lava. Water and wind have eroded the landscape to its current form.

Examples of this geologic activity abound, such as the Rio Grande Palisades, a canyon just west of South Fork comprised of welded volcanic tuff. Also of interest are the volcanic outcrops that dominate the landscape around Del Norte. Typical is Lookout Mountain, located on the south-western edge of the town, which is composed mostly of lava flows and breccias comprised of andesite and quartz.

Another example of volcanic remnants is Elephant Rocks, located in north central Rio Grande County. Elephant Rocks are a weathered remnant of the Fish Canyon tuff (late Oligocene, about 28 million years old). In 1994, the Colorado Natural Areas Program designated 575 acres as the Elephant Rocks Natural Area. Colorado Natural Areas preserve fine examples of Colorado's original and unique landscapes for the benefit of present and future generations. Sites qualify as Colorado Natural Areas when they contain at least one unique or high-quality feature of statewide significance, such as geologic formations.

### Mineral Resources

Mineral resources in Rio Grande County include gold, silver, lead, copper, alumina and pumice. Mining for precious minerals is not presently economical.

Sand and gravel deposits also exist, predominantly along the Rio Grande River corridor. Approximately twenty active sand and gravel pits are currently operating in Rio Grande County. The potential exists for sand and gravel mining to increase as needed to support construction demand.

About a half dozen oil and gas wells are located in southeastern Rio Grande County. The potential exists for future oil and gas exploration. With no major coal deposits, coal bed methane exploration is not an issue in Rio Grande County.

### Geologic Hazards

As defined by House Bill 1041 in 1974, a geologic hazard is “a geologic phenomenon which is so adverse to past, current or foreseeable construction or land use as to constitute a significant hazard to public health and safety or to property.” The term includes, but is not limited to avalanches; landslides; rock falls; mudflows; unstable or potentially unstable slopes; seismic effects; radioactivity; and ground subsidence. There are several geologic phenomena that qualify as geologic hazards that are not named in the statute. These include debris flows,

expansive soil, heaving bedrock, corrosive soil, eroding soil and rock, and coal-bed methane seeps.

Potential geologic hazards in Rio Grande County include ground subsidence in old mining districts, and avalanches, landslides, rock falls, mudflows, debris fans, and unstable slopes.

## SOILS

Soils in Rio Grande County were categorized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service) through a Soil Survey completed in 1980.

Two groups of soil types were established: 1) nearly level and very gently sloping soils in the valley, and 2) very gently sloping to steep soils in the foothills and mountains.

*Nearly level and very gently sloping soils.* These soils are excessively drained to poorly drained, shallow to deep, and coarse textured to moderately fine textured. They are found at elevations of 7,600 to 8,300 feet, where the annual precipitation is five to 11 inches, and primarily in the northeast, north central and southeastern portions of the county. These are the primary agricultural areas of the county, where potatoes, alfalfa, and small vegetables are grown with the help of irrigation.

*Very gently sloping to steep soils.* These soils are well drained and somewhat excessively drained, shallow to deep, and medium textured or moderately coarse textured. They are found at elevations of 7,700 to 11,100 feet, where the annual precipitation is 8 to 20 inches, generally in the northwestern, western and southwestern sections of the county.

Soil types can influence design, construction and maintenance of buildings, structures and roads. The soil properties most important for these uses are permeability to water, water-holding capacity, shear strength, compaction characteristics, drainage, shrink-swell characteristics, dispersion characteristics, grain size, plasticity, and reaction. Other influencing factors include depth to water table, depth to bedrock and topography.

Based upon these factors, constrained soil types are delineated on the Environmental Conditions map. These soils constrain development due to high water, bedrock conditions or unstable gravel.

Rio Grande County also has alkaline soils, which creates problems for farmers that must be addressed through agricultural management practices.

Rio Grande County has areas of both prime and unique farmlands surrounding Del Norte and Monte Vista. The largest clusters of prime farmland are near Del Norte, whereas the majority of farmland categorized as unique or of statewide importance is in the eastern portion of Rio Grande County.

## VEGETATION

There is a wide variety of vegetation in Rio Grande County. Coniferous plants such as spruce, fir, pinon pine, and juniper are found predominantly in upland areas, along with, and aspen and cottonwood trees. Wild herbaceous plants such as Indian ricegrass, western wheatgrass, alkali sacaton, blue grama, saltgrass, foxtail barley, and alkali cordgrass provide food and cover for upland wildlife. Shrubs including saltbush, rabbitbrush, sagebrush, and greasewood are typical throughout the county. Domestic grasses such as tall wheatgrass, meadow foxtail, Russian

wildrye, reed canarygrass, and timothy are found predominantly in the valley. Wetland plants include smartweed, tufted hairgrass, spikerush, sedges, cattails, and northern redgrass.

Narrowleaf cottonwoods are the dominant tree along the Rio Grande River corridor, providing a habitat for birds, elk, mule deer and cattle. Multiple species of willow are found in the river corridor, providing habitat for birds, beavers, rabbits, mule deer and elk, while also providing bank stabilization for the river. In the upstream portions of the river corridor, understory vegetation includes a variety of shrubs, such as Bebb willow, dogwood, and golden currant. The understory in the downstream portion of the river corridor is dominated by grasses, often used for grazing.

The Elephant Rocks Natural Area supports the rare parsley *Neoparrya lithophila*, (rock-loving neoparrya). An interesting mixture of shortgrass prairie and foothill shrubland vegetation also occurs on the site.

#### WILDLAND FIRE

Generally, the potential for wildland fire exists on dry, vegetated hillsides. The fire hazard and potential for loss of human life and property from building and development in forest areas is a serious concern. The wildland-urban interface (WUI) is considered the area where increasing numbers of homes, businesses and other forms of urban development are intermingled with high-risk forest fuels. The Colorado State Forest has performed the Colorado WUI Hazard Assessment for Colorado's 64 counties. Rio Grande County has areas of wildland fire risk ranging from low to moderate to high, as shown on the Environmental Conditions Map.

The Colorado Wildland/Urban Fire Annex to the Colorado Multi-Hazards Mitigation Plan reported a total of 67 wildfires between 1990 and 1994. This 1995 study identified that Rio Grande County had one interface subdivision with 1,062 acres of interface. Since 1995, 91 subdivisions with 14,842 additional acres of interface have been developed in the WUI.

In June 2002, the Million Fire began two-miles south of South Fork, and spread to 6,000 acres in the first day under extreme fire conditions. Ultimately consuming 9,346 acres, the Million Fire threatened four subdivisions, destroyed 11 homes and two outbuildings, and damaged seven other homes. The cost of this fire was estimated to be \$9.4 million.

The State Forester is available to work with homebuilders in rural areas to mitigate wildland fire hazards using "defensible space" and other techniques.

#### WATER

Rio Grande County is within the Rio Grande River Drainage Basin. The Rio Grande River Drainage Basin drains approximately 8000 square miles in south central Colorado, and accounts for 7.2 percent of Colorado's surface area.

Major tributaries to the Rio Grande River in Rio Grande County are the South Fork of the Rio Grande River and the Alamosa River. Streams with water rights include Alder Creek, Bear Creek, Beaver Creek, Bennett Creek, Burro Creek, Cross Creek, East Bellows Creek, East Fork Pinos Creek, Elk Creek, Embargo Creek, Kelly Creek, Lost Mine Creek, Middle Fork San Francisco Creek, Park Creek, Pinos Creek, Race Creek, San Francisco Creek, Trout Creek, West Alder Creek, West Fork Pinos Creek, and West Fork San Francisco Creek.

Individual water rights determine the amount and availability of water for parcels throughout the county. In unincorporated Rio Grande County, water is used primarily for crop irrigation. Domestic water use is limited to individual wells.

Rio Grande County has been irrigated with a system of ditches and canals since 1866. The Rio Grande Canal was constructed in 1881 north of The Rio Grande, followed by the Monte Vista Canal south of the river. Additional irrigation is handled by the Empire, Farmers Union, Travelers, Centennial and San Luis Valley canals, and the Prairie Ditch.

Groundwater is generally obtainable on the valley floor, but its availability varies in the mountain area. The San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District transports water through a ditch over the Continental Divide to a storage reservoir to cover deficiencies from well withdrawal in the Rio Grande drainage.

The Statewide Water Supply Initiative, commissioned by the Colorado legislature and the Colorado Water Conservation Board is currently exploring several issues, including:

- Improving water management
- Recharging aquifer levels
- Additional storage capacity
- Financial support to enhance and protect the water supply
- Public education
- Recreation and tourism

### Water Quality

The water quality in the Rio Grande River basin is generally good. As evidence of this, a portion of the Rio Grande River and its tributaries above Del Norte are gold medal fisheries.

The water quality of a Rio Grande River tributary, the Alamosa River, has been significantly impacted by mining activities. In the 1980's Summitville Consolidated Mining Company, Inc. (SCMCI) started a large-scale surface gold mining operation using the heap-leach process. Through this process gold-bearing ore was extracted, and a solution of sodium cyanide was used to leach gold from the ore. This mining process greatly increased the acidity and dissolved metals in the surrounding streams, eventually reaching the headwaters of the Alamosa River, damaging aquatic life and threatening downstream irrigated farmland. In 1992, SCMCI filed for bankruptcy and ceased operations that prevented the discharge of heavy metals and cyanide from the Summitville Mine. This triggered an emergency response from the Environmental Protection Agency, which subsequently declared the Summitville Mine a Superfund site.

The environmental clean-up of the Summitville mining site is almost complete, with one outstanding measure: the construction of a water treatment plant. The plant is scheduled to be constructed in 2004, depending on funding availability. Ongoing monitoring of water quality in the Alamosa River will be part of the reclamation and cleanup process.

### FLOODPLAINS

The Environmental Conditions map shows the areas of the county lying within Federal Emergency Management Agency floodplain areas. The areas located within the 100-year floodplain present development constraints, as flooding is likely in these areas. (Note: The floodplain shown on the Environmental Conditions map is intended for planning purposes only and should not be used for exact floodway delineation on a parcel-by-parcel basis).

Construction of new permanent structures should be discouraged within floodplains. If permanent structures should occur, they should be raised at least 1-foot above base flood

elevation. Floodplain areas do have significant potential for open space and recreational development.

The Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project Final Report completed in 2001 identifies areas within Rio Grande County that contain structures in the floodplain. Del Norte has the highest number and highest density of structures, representing a mix of residential and commercial structures within the floodplain.

The Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project report also indicates that Del Norte has the single largest risk to personal safety and severe damage of any location in the study area (the river corridor from west of South Fork along the Rio Grande to a location east of Alamosa, outside Rio Grande County.)

The majority of structures located in the floodplain in the South Fork area are residential. The Gunbarrel Road (Colorado 285) area immediately north of Monte Vista also contains many structures in the floodplain.

One of the draft planning tools of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project is a stream buffer ordinance for Rio Grande County. The draft ordinance proposes a setback and review process for uses and activities within a buffer area adjacent to the river. The stream buffer ordinance is currently undergoing a public review and comment period.

#### WETLANDS

As indicated by National Wetland Inventory mapping shown on the Environmental Conditions map, Rio Grande County has scattered areas of wetlands, predominantly along the Rio Grande River corridor and south of Monte Vista.

Wetlands are an important environmental resource for Rio Grande County. Wetlands not only act as a sponge to absorb floodwaters, but also as a kidney that cleans water. Wetlands also provide habitat for wildlife and attract a number of bird species. The annual Monte Vista Crane Festival and other bird watching activities contribute significantly to the tourism economy.

#### WILDLIFE

Rio Grande County is home to excellent hunting, fishing and wildlife watching opportunities. Particularly unique to Rio Grande County is the annual Monte Vista Crane Festival.

Sandhill cranes have been making an annual trek from south to north, stopping off near Monte Vista for millions of years. Ancient evidence of this phenomenon is a six-foot long petroglyph in the form of a sandhill crane, etched into a cliff face southwest of Monte Vista. The crane migration brings 20,000 or so greater sandhill cranes through the San Luis Valley area. The Crane Festival also brings thousands of people to the Rio Grande County for workshops, bus tours, a craft fair and a variety of other activities.

Rio Grande County is home to several federally listed threatened and endangered species. Species identified as federally endangered include the southwestern willow flycatcher and the whooping crane. Species identified as federally threatened include the lynx, Mexican spotted owl and the bald eagle.

Wildlife is impacted by reduction of habitat and barriers to movement, generally resulting from land subdivision, building, road and fence construction. For example, the forced movement of deer or elk into concentrated areas where forage is inadequate could result in dwindling herd

sizes through starvation, and destruction of remaining habitat by overgrazing. Problems associated with wildlife displacement can be significantly reduced if the potential for wildlife impact is addressed during the development review process.

### Wildlife Areas

The Colorado Division of Wildlife maintains existing easements and leases that protect wildlife across in Rio Grande County. The DOW properties also provide the public with opportunities to hunt, fish and view wildlife in their natural habitat. Descriptions of each of these wildlife areas are provided below.

#### *Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge*

The Monte Vista Wildlife Refuge, located south of Monte Vista, was established by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in 1953. The Refuge is a major stopover for the sandhill cranes that are celebrated in the annual Monte Vista Crane Festival. In addition to cranes, the refuge is a host to nesting ducks, geese, ibis, herons, egrets, pheasants, bald eagles and rough-legged hawks. A few endangered whooping cranes join the sandhill cranes in their migration. In addition to feathered wildlife, a herd of several hundred elk visit the refuge seeking winter food and a sanctuary from hunting activity in the surrounding forests.

#### *Beaver Creek Reservoir State Wildlife Area*

Beaver Creek Reservoir is on 120 acres located southwest of South Fork at an elevation of 8,763 feet. Hunting is not permitted in this wildlife area, but lake fishing for rainbow, brown, brook, cutthroat, and kokanee is allowed. Boating that does not create a whitewater wake is also allowed.

#### *Coller State Wildlife Area*

The Coller State Wildlife Area is on 579 acres located northwest of South Fork. The area offers hunting for deer, elk, grouse and small game. Stream fishing is also available.

#### *Rio Grande State Wildlife Area*

The Rio Grande State Wildlife Area is on 935 acres located east of Monte Vista at an elevation of 7,630 feet. The area offers hunting for cottontail rabbits, deer, doves, and waterfowl. Stream fishing is available for largemouth bass, channel catfish and northern pike.

#### *Home Lake State Wildlife Area*

The Rio Grande State Wildlife Area now includes the former Home Lake State Wildlife Area. Home Lake offers fishing for northern pike, channel catfish and rainbow trout, and permits motorboat activity during limited hours. The area is closed from February 15th through July 15th to avoid interference with nesting birds.

#### *Dry Creek State Trust Land*

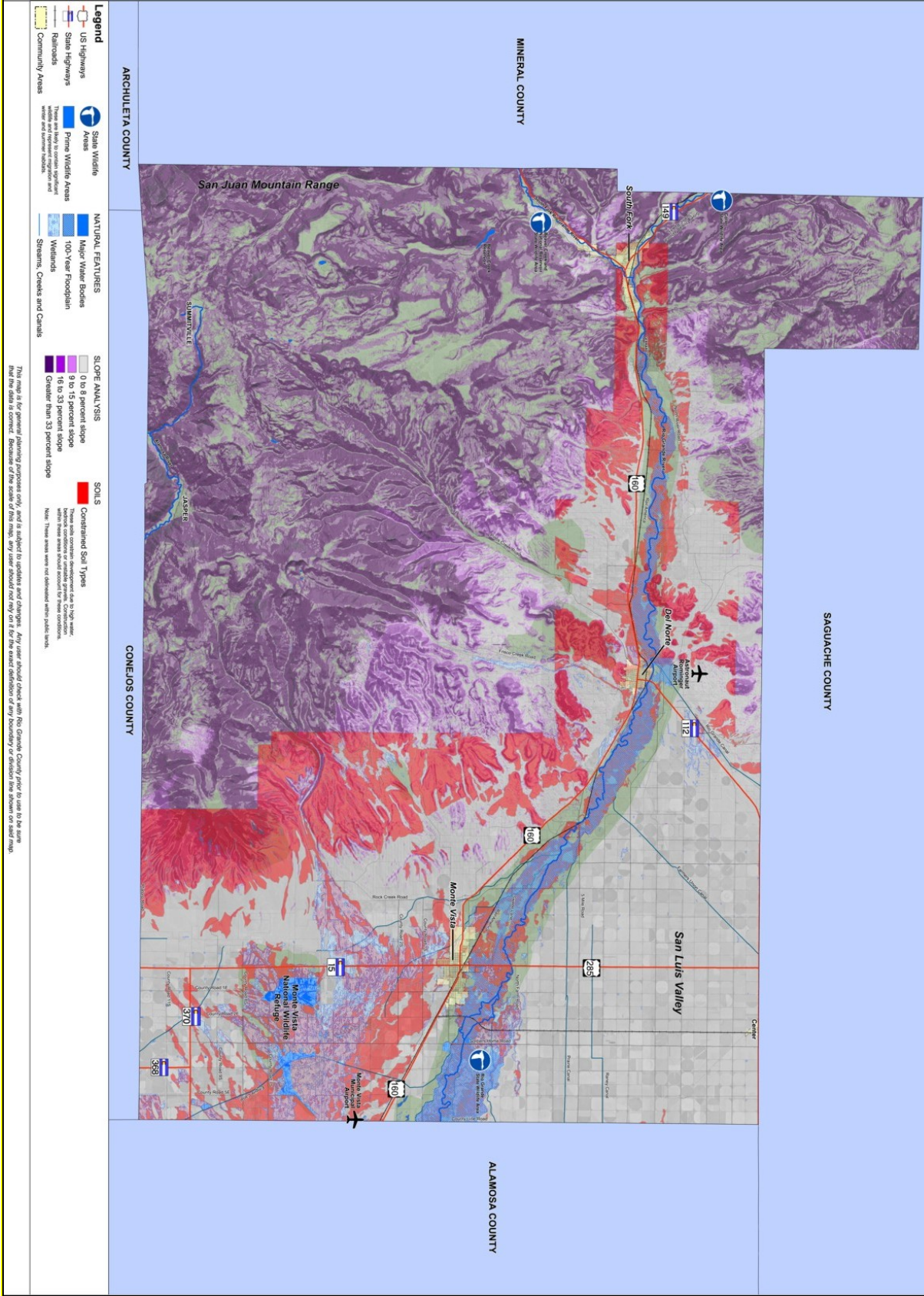
The Dry Creek State Trust Land is on 1,280 acres located southwest of Monte Vista. The area offers hunting for elk, deer, antelope, coyote, bobcat, mountain lion, and small game. Stream fishing is available in Rock Creek.

#### *Rio Grande River-Del Norte Vicinity*

The DOW has easements for fishing the Rio Grande River in the vicinity of Del Norte. Anglers are encouraged to respect private property in these limited areas.

# Rio Grande County Environmental Conditions

Projection: UTM COORDINATE SOUTH  
 Datum: NAD 83  
 0 25 50 100  
 Miles



**Legend**

- US Highways**: Represented by a blue line with a shield icon.
- State Highways**: Represented by a blue line with a shield icon.
- Roads**: Represented by a thin blue line.
- Community Arterials**: Represented by a dashed blue line.
- State Wildlife Arterials**: Represented by a blue line with a bird icon.
- Prime Wildlife Areas**: Represented by a blue line with a bird icon.
- 100-Year Floodplain**: Represented by a light blue shaded area.
- Wetlands**: Represented by a light blue shaded area.
- Streams, Creeks and Canals**: Represented by a blue line.

**NATURAL FEATURES**

- Major Water Bodies**: Represented by a blue shaded area.
- 100-Year Floodplain**: Represented by a light blue shaded area.
- Wetlands**: Represented by a light blue shaded area.
- Streams, Creeks and Canals**: Represented by a blue line.

**SLOPE ANALYSIS**

- 0 to 8 percent slope**: Represented by a green shaded area.
- 9 to 15 percent slope**: Represented by a yellow shaded area.
- 16 to 35 percent slope**: Represented by an orange shaded area.
- Over 35 percent slope**: Represented by a red shaded area.

**SOILS**

- Constrained Soil Types**: Represented by a red shaded area.

**Note:** These areas were not delineated within public lands.

**This map is for general planning purposes only, and is subject to updates and changes. Any user should check with Rio Grande County prior to use to be sure their use is correct. Because of the scale of this map, any user should not rely on the exact definition of any boundary or delineation shown on this map.**

## LAND USE

### Public Lands

Rio Grande County has an abundance of public lands with access to trails and open space. Sixty percent of all land in Rio Grande County is managed by a public agency. Almost half of Rio Grande County (47 percent) is comprised of the Rio Grande National Forest, which is under the jurisdiction of the US Forest Service (USFS). Other public lands are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Colorado State Land Board, and Colorado Division of Wildlife.

The following table identifies each public land management agency and the amount of land under management:

Table 15: Public Lands		
Public Lands	Acres	Percentage
USFS	273,002	47
BLM	54,804	9
USFWS	12,868	2
State	11,632	2

*Source: San Luis Valley GIS Authority*

Table 16: State Lands		
State Lands	Acres	Percentage
State Land Board	10,532	90
State Wildlife Areas	1,100	10

*Source: San Luis Valley GIS Authority*

While the entire 1.8 million acre Rio Grande National Forest contains 1,280 miles of trails, of recreational interest to Rio Grande County is Crater Lake Trail, Burro Creek Trail, Tewksberry Trail, Big Creek Trail and numerous USFS roads. To varying degrees, these access routes provide hiking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking, snowmobiling and other outdoor recreational opportunities.

Other passive and active recreational opportunities are available on public lands maintained by the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and Colorado State Land Board. The Land Use Map depicts public lands, and the Services and Infrastructure Map identifies existing trails in Rio Grande County.

The Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Plan, completed in 1996, included a trails and recreation plan for Rio Grande County. The plan recommended five "rails to trails" projects, a trail to connect the wildlife refuges, several bicycle routes, snowmobile trails and a community park at Sargent Schools.

An obvious opportunity to provide a regional trail system within Rio Grande County is through the various "Rails - to - Trails" projects. The Rio Grande River offers another continuous corridor for a trail system to connect South Fork, Del Norte and Monte Vista. However, these projects would require significant funding and cooperation with existing landowners.

## Agriculture

The economy of Rio Grande County is dependent upon agriculture, and the agriculture in Rio Grande County is dependent on irrigation. The main cash crops are potatoes, wheat and barley, both malting and feed. Other crops include 7,700 acres of spring wheat; 1,300 acres of oats; and 33,400 acres of alfalfa and native hay. Smaller acreages produce other vegetable crops, including spinach, cabbage, carrots and lettuce.

Ranching, including cattle, hogs and sheep, are also a major contributor to the County economy.

### *San Luis Valley Research Center*

The San Luis Valley Research Center, located nine miles north of Monte Vista, is a part of the Colorado State University Agricultural Experiment Station system and provides research information and cooperates in extension education programs. The cooperative extension is a service provided by Colorado State University to provide information to county residents including but not limited to gardening, consumer and family, agriculture, and natural resources.

The Research Center's programs are designed to meet the needs of the San Luis Valley agricultural community and the many affiliated industries that comprise the agricultural production and marketing system in the area.

## Mining

Mining has historically been of economic importance to Rio Grande County. Gold was discovered at Summitville in 1870, and the resulting mining boom fueled growth in agriculture and ranching as farmers and ranchers worked to supply food for miners. Although most of the mines that are scattered throughout Rio Grande County had closed by the late 1890's, the Summitville mine, located about 25 miles southwest of Del Norte, operated until 1992.

Subsequently declared a Superfund site, redevelopment of the Summitville area is not likely to occur for two reasons. First, any development would have to be coordinated with the EPA and the State of Colorado per an agreement stipulating that any future land use within the 1,231 acre mining boundaries would have to be done in conjunction with the clean-up effort. The second factor deterring redevelopment is the site's isolated location, 15 miles from a paved road at an elevation of 11,500 feet.

## Rural Residential

These areas are comprised of residential lots generally between two to ten acres in size, with several rural residential subdivisions having larger lots ranging up to 35 acres in size. Traditionally, a majority of the rural residential areas occur along US 160 on the fringes of the incorporated municipalities. However, over the past ten years, rural residential growth has proliferated in the western portion of Rio Grande County along the Rio Grande River, especially in the South Fork area. Many residents of the South Fork area are part-time, with the area hosting a number of retirement and vacation homes, seasonal homes and RV parks.

## ZONING

There are eight county zoning districts:

- Rural
- Rural Estate
- Residential
- Mobile Home
- Commercial Resort/Tourist
- Commercial Business
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial

The majority of Rio Grande County is zoned Rural. The Rural designation allows a multitude of uses ranging in intensity from large-lot single-family to agricultural uses. Rural Estate district zoning occurs primarily along US Highway 160 in the South Fork area. Residential and Mobile Home zoning is designated on the fringes of incorporated communities with access to municipal services including water and sewer.

The Commercial Business uses also occur on the fringes of the communities on major transportation routes such as US Highway 160, US Highway 285 as well as Colorado 15, 112 and 149. The Commercial Resort/Tourist designation allows tourism supported commercial uses, usually in areas with access to federal and state lands.

There are a few Light Industrial areas that support the processing of locally grown produce including potatoes. The vacant mill site, now incorporated into the Town of South Fork, had the only Heavy Industrial zoning designated within the county; there is no land currently zoned Heavy Industrial within Rio Grande County.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

Historic resources in unincorporated Rio Grande County include the following:

*Keck Homestead* (Mid 1870s)

This collection of log buildings located on County Rd. 15, particularly the two-story log house and barn, are noteworthy for quality construction and a high degree of integrity.

*Sargent Consolidated School District* (1917)

This collection of 14 buildings, seven of which were constructed between 1917 and 1921, is located on N. County Rd. 2E in the Monte Vista vicinity. Designed by John Huddart, the 1917 elementary school and the 1921 high school are the two largest buildings.

*St. Francis of Assisi Mission Church* (1881)

This church in the Del Norte vicinity is an unusual example of an Hispanic adobe church with a cruciform plan and an apse.

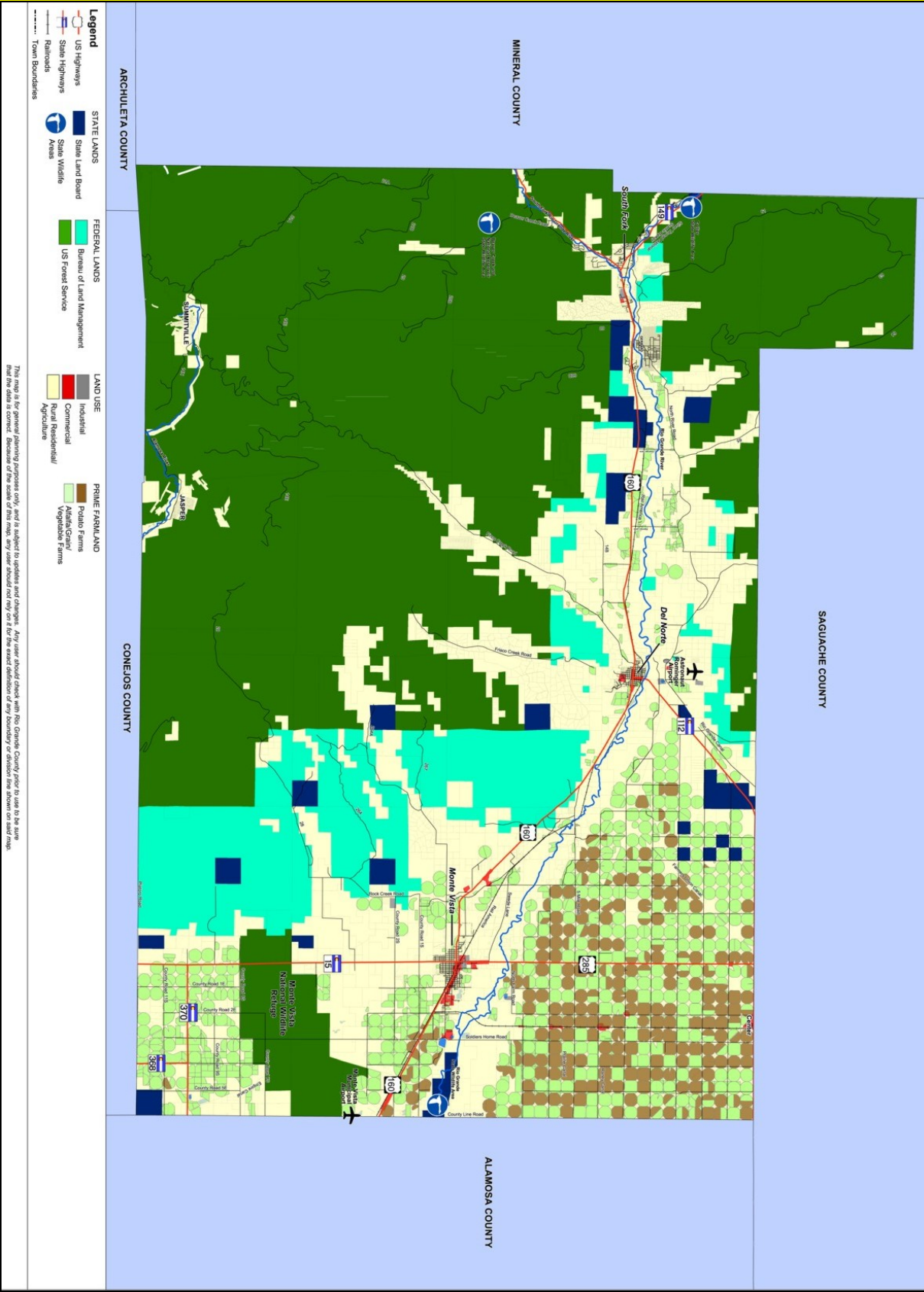
*Sutherland Bridge* (1924)

The use of timber in this bridge off US Highway 160 represents an unusual adaptation of the Warren truss.

*Wheeler Bridge* (1924)

This bridge, also off US Highway 160, is one of the longest and oldest examples of the Howe pony truss configuration.

# Rio Grande County Existing Land Use Patterns



## TRANSPORTATION

### Airports

There are two limited service airports within Rio Grande County, and an airport offering scheduled airline service, the San Luis Valley Regional Airport, located in nearby Alamosa.

Airports within Rio Grande County are the Monte Vista Municipal Airport and Astronaut Rominger Airport. The Monte Vista Municipal Airport, located approximately five miles east of Monte Vista, offers fuel services. Astronaut Rominger Airport, located three miles north of Del Norte, also has limited services. Both airports have runway lights activated by pilot control.

### Rail Service

Rail carrier service has, until recently, been provided by the Southern Pacific Railroad and the San Luis Central Railroad. In 2003, Rail America Inc. purchased the railroad tracks stretching across the San Luis Valley from Walsenburg in the east to South Fork in the west, passing through Monte Vista and Del Norte.

### Transit

Bus service is available in Alamosa, just east of Rio Grande County. General public transit service is not currently provided in Rio Grande County, except for limited transportation options via private agencies, specialized agencies for seniors, and for those with disabilities.

In Rio Grande County, the Tri-County Senior Citizens Center provides transportation for seniors, and Blue Peaks Developmental Services, Inc. provides transportation services for the developmentally disabled. Red Willow, Inc., d.b.a. San Luis Valley Transportation (SLVT) provides service to Rio Grande / Mineral Options for Long-Term Care Agency. The primary population served by SLVT is Medicaid clients. San Luis Valley Mental Health Center provides service to clients of the Center, transporting them between their homes and the treatment centers in Del Norte and Monte Vista. Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. serves adult day care clients in Rio Grande County.

A transit study currently underway titled the "San Luis Valley Regional 2030 Transit Element", identifies public transit demand for Rio Grande County. The total estimated transit trip demand in 2002 for Rio Grande County is 29,240 trips. The study concludes that "approximately 8 percent of the existing transit need is being met, with 92 percent of the transit need for the region unmet."

Transit demand is expected to increase in Rio Grande County. Following are the 2010 and 2030 public transit trip demand estimates for Rio Grande County:

Elderly	Disabled	General Public	Total
18,130	3,690	9,860	31,680

*Source: San Luis Valley Regional 2030 Transit Element*

Elderly	Disabled	General Public	Total
19,560	4,030	10,750	34,340

*Source: San Luis Valley Regional 2030 Transit Element*

Red Willow Incorporated will start providing public transportation in 2004. The transportation agency will provide limited flex-route service for Rio Grande County. Increased service is expected to be phased in as demand and funding increases.

The draft transit study also includes recommendations for proposed park and rides and a proposed transit authority study. The park-and-ride recommendation calls for regional park-and-rides in Del Norte, Monte Vista and South Fork, which could be as informal as a few parking spaces in an existing retail or hotel parking lot to facilitate carpool and vanpool activity.

A second long-range recommendation is a study to consider the feasibility of establishing a Rural Transportation Authority (RTA) for the San Luis Valley in the next ten to twenty years.

### Roads

Within Rio Grande County, there are approximately 838 miles of roads. Paved roads account for 382 miles, or 45 percent of the roads; 177 miles or 21 percent are bladed roads, 279 miles or 33 percent are gravel roads.

Rio Grande County has jurisdiction over the greatest portion of roads, with 579 miles and 70 percent of the roads; the US Forest Service has 111 road miles, or 13 percent; municipalities maintain 51 miles or six percent of the roads, and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) are responsible for 88 miles or 11 percent of the roads in Rio Grande County.

### US Highways

US Highways 285 and 160 are within Rio Grande County. US Highway 285 runs through Monte Vista, and is a primary route to Denver, Colorado to the north, or Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico to the south.

US Highway 160, also known as The Navajo Trail, extends west over Wolf Creek Pass to southwestern Colorado and east to Interstate 25 and Colorado's Front Range.

CDOT is currently preparing the Alamosa Mobility Study to identify transportation issues and develop recommended improvements along US Highway 160 from the eastern edge of Monte Vista to a point approximately five miles east of Alamosa.

CDOT has completed Phase I of a Wolf Creek Pass tunnel construction project that will facilitate access to South Fork, Del Norte and Monte Vista from the west. The final phase is scheduled to be completed in 2004.

Another recent improvement for Wolf Creek Pass involved adding 1.5 miles of shoulders and auxiliary lanes, bringing the roadway up to federal safety standards.

### State Highways

State Highways within the county include Colorado Highways 15, 112, 370, 368 and 149. State Highway 15 runs south from Monte Vista to the southern edge of Rio Grande County. Colorado Highway 112 connects Del Norte with US Highway 285. Colorado Highway 370 connects State Highway 15 south of the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge with US Highway 285 in Alamosa County. A short stretch of Colorado Highway 368 extends south of Colorado Highway 370 into Conejos County. Colorado 149, also known as the Silver Thread National Scenic Byway, begins at US Highway 160 in South Fork and runs northwest through Creede and Lake City to Blue Mesa Reservoir in Gunnison County.

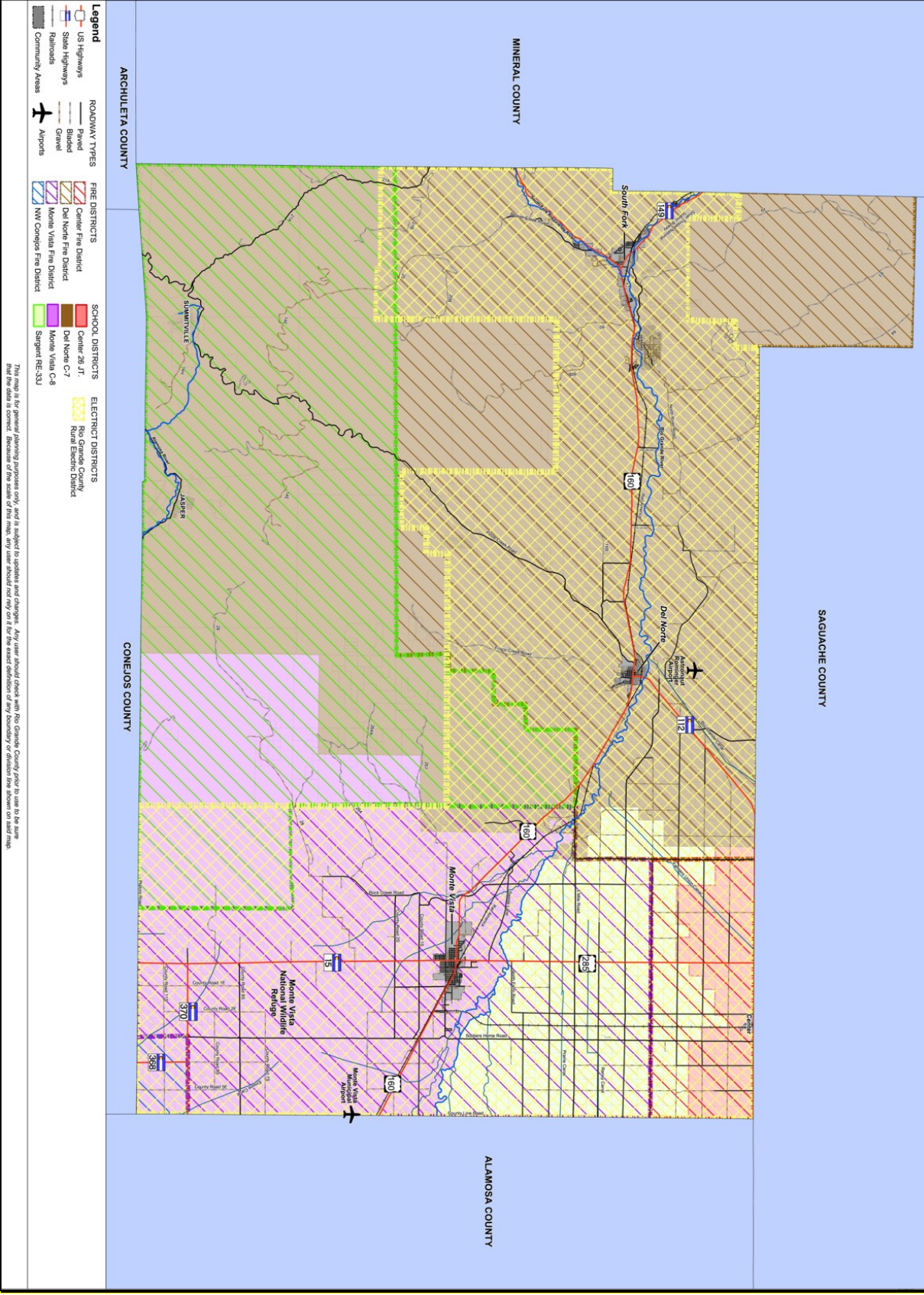
### County Roads

County roads provide connections from large farms, ranches and rural residences to the improved county roads which provide access to the major state and US Highways.

Improved county roads are paved two-lane rural sections with a gravel or unimproved shoulder. These roads cover approximately 259 miles of linear roadway and comprise 45 percent of total county roads

Unimproved roads are gravel two-lane and sometimes one lane roads with no shoulder. These roads cover approximately 320 miles of linear roadway or 55 percent of total county roads.

# Rio Grande County Transportation and Infrastructure



Projection: UTM COLOMBADO SOUTH  
 Datum: NAD 83  
 Scale: 1:25,000

This map is for general planning purposes only, and is subject to updates and changes. Any user should check with Rio Grande County prior to use to be sure that the data is correct. Because of the scale of this map, any user should not rely on the exact definition of any boundary or division line shown on this map.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Qwest Communications and Blanca Telephone provide telephone and internet service to most areas in Rio Grande County. Vanion provides telephone and internet service to predominantly business customers in Monte Vista, and Amigo.net provides internet service for Monte Vista.

Rio Grande County, along with the rest of the San Luis Valley, is connected by one fiber optic line that extends to Walsenburg. The line is owned by Qwest Communications. Rio Grande County participated in the planning phases for the Beanpole Project, which is an effort to connect schools, libraries, hospitals and other community facilities. Rio Grande County is also participating in the Multi-Use Network, a statewide initiative to link the county to State offices via Aggregated Network Access Points.

Wireless telephone service is also available in Rio Grande County, although coverage is incomplete. The Colorado Rural Technology Project may be a source of future funding for wireless T-1 connections for communities in Rio Grande County.

## SOLID WASTE

Property owners are responsible for taking solid waste to the county landfill, located south of US Highway 160 between Monte Vista and Del Norte. There is no recycling facility in Rio Grande County.

## EMERGENCY SERVICES

### Fire Protection

Three volunteer fire protection districts in Rio Grande County: the Del Norte Fire Protection District, the Monte Vista Fire Protection District, and the Center Fire Protection Fire Protection District. All three districts operate under mutual aid agreements, and are part of the San Luis Valley Firefighters Association. The Colorado State Forest Service and the US Forest Service also provide fire protection to lands within their jurisdiction.

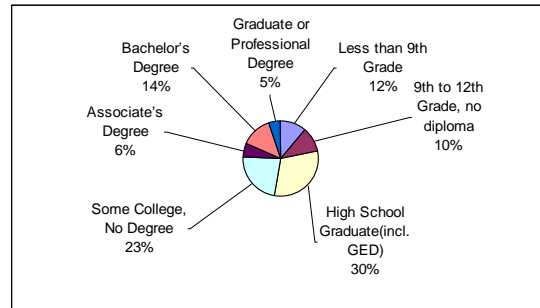
The Del Norte Fire Protection District serves the largest area in Rio Grande County, with two stations, one in Del Norte and one in South Fork. The South Fork station operates under the name of South Fork Fire and Rescue. The Del Norte Fire Protection District has 27 firefighters for the Del Norte station, and 11 firefighters for the South Fork station. By Charter, the maximum staff for the district is 35 for Del Norte, and 24 for South Fork. Monte Vista has a volunteer fire department of approximately twenty firefighters, with one fire station located in Monte Vista. The Center Fire Protection District is also a volunteer department, with one fire station located in Center.

### Ambulance

Rio Grande County is divided into three ambulance service areas, as shown on the Services and Infrastructure Map. Funding for the service is from County tax revenues and from billing individuals and insurance companies. The Monte Vista Ambulance Service has 24 EMT's and four ambulances, Del Norte Ambulance Service has 16 EMT's and two ambulances, and South Fork Ambulance Service has 12 EMT's, three ambulances and one four wheel drive vehicle.

## EDUCATION

The figure below illustrates population based on education level. An estimated 30 percent of the population has a high school diploma; 23 percent has some college, 14 percent has a bachelor's degree; and 5 percent has a graduate degree.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Secondary Education

Adams State College in Alamosa is within a short drive of Rio Grande County. Trinidad State Junior College also has a campus in Alamosa, and offers courses at the Del Norte Middle School and the Sargent School.

### Primary Education

Rio Grande County has three public school districts: Monte Vista C-8, Del Norte C-7 and the Sargent RE-33-J\_School District. Private schools are limited to St. Peter's Lutheran School in Monte Vista offering education for Preschool through fifth grade students. The Headstart Program has an enrollment of 97 students.

Overall Academic Performance is reported ranging from Excellent, High, Average, Low or Unacceptable. Information is derived from accountability reports prepared by the Colorado Department of Education for the 2000 - 2001 School Year.

### Monte Vista C-8 District

The Monte Vista C-8 District had a total student enrollment for 2002 of 1,382.

School	Enrollment	Performance
Marsh Elementary School	213	No rating
Bill Metz Elementary School	360	Average
Monte Vista Middle School	282	Average
Monte Vista Senior High School	332	Average
Monte Vista On-Line Academy	89	No rating
Byron Syring Delta Center	106	Unacceptable

Source: Colorado Department of Education

The Byron Syring Delta Center provides adult basic education, GED and high school completion programs for adults, English as a second language instruction, alternative programming for high school aged youth, and community education programs. Monte Vista ON-Line Academy offers high school diploma services via the internet.

Del Norte C-7 District

The Del Norte C-7 District had a total enrollment in 2002 of 699 students.

Table 12: Del Norte C-7 School District Enrollment and Performance		
School	Enrollment	Performance
Mesa Elementary School	98	No Rating
Underwood Elementary School	208	Low
Del Norte Middle School	187	Low
Del Norte High School	203	Average
<i>Source: Colorado Department of Education</i>		

Sargent RE-33-J District

The Sargent RE-33-J District had a total student enrollment in 2002 of 403.

Table 13: Sargent RE-33-J School District Enrollment and Performance		
School	Enrollment	Performance
Sargent Elementary School	207	High
Sargent Junior-Senior High:	196	Average
<i>Source: Colorado Department of Education</i>		

Overall Rio Grande County public school enrollment has declined in the past several years, down from 1998 enrollment by the following percentages:

Table 14: School Enrollment Percentage Change 1998-2002	
Monte Vista C-8:	-4.2%
Del Norte C-7:	-4.2%
Sargent RE-33-J:	-2.90%.
<i>Source: Colorado Department of Education</i>	

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Rio Grande County Department of Social Services serves as a countywide resource for families with special needs. This office oversees a number of different programs including, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Colorado Works Food Assistance; Medical Assistance; several adult programs including old age pension, home care, food stamps, and LEAP fuel assistance. Social Services also provide a fraud and recovery unit, and a Child Support Enforcement Unit.

Currently, there are no facilities for homeless or domestic violence assistance in Rio Grande County. The closest shelters are located in Alamosa.

## Rio Grande County Plan Direction

### *Plan Framework*

The Rio Grande County Plan Framework consists of Stable Areas, Opportunity Areas, Joint Consultation Areas and Community Areas, described as follows:

*Stable Areas* represent portions of the County that are not anticipated to change significantly. These areas are predominantly comprised of public lands and agricultural uses, with rural residences typically on lot parcels 35 acres and larger. Land that is constrained by an environmental condition, such as very steep slopes, is also included within Stable Areas. Policies within Stable Areas are geared toward conserving natural resources, sustaining the traditional agricultural economy, and appropriately integrating new development into rural areas.

*Opportunity Areas* represent portions of the County where new rural growth is anticipated and can potentially be accommodated. These areas include rural residential subdivisions on lots less than 35 acres in size and accessible vacant parcels that are not environmentally constrained. Other Opportunity Areas are existing development with available infrastructure that has potential for reuse or expansion. Policies within Opportunity Areas are geared toward diversifying the economy, providing a range of housing choices, and enabling harmonious development.

*River Corridor Areas* represent portions of the County within the Rio Grande River floodplain. Policies within the River Corridor Areas are geared toward mitigating potential flood hazards and protecting the natural character of the river corridor.

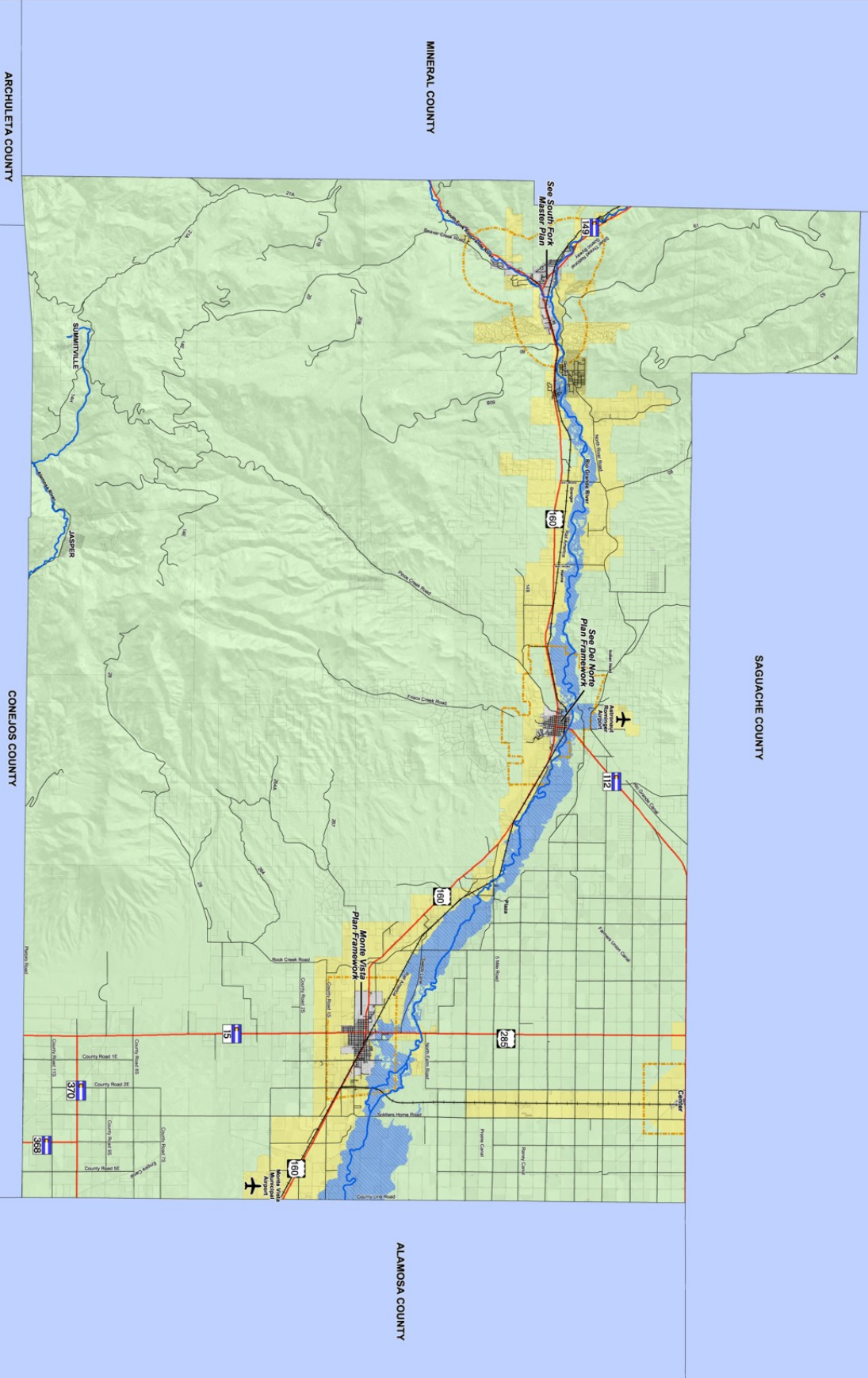
*Joint Consultation Areas* include Stable Areas, Opportunity Areas and/or River Corridor Areas. Joint Consultation Areas are located outside the communities of Monte Vista, Del Norte, South Fork and Center. Joint Consultation Areas provide the opportunity for cooperation and joint planning between the County and adjacent municipalities. Policies within Joint Consultation Areas are geared toward intergovernmental coordination on land use issues and ensuring the adequate provision of services and infrastructure.

*Community Areas* are the incorporated towns of Monte Vista, Del Norte, South Fork and Center. The Rio Grande County Joint Master Plan includes framework plans with concepts for Monte Vista and Del Norte. The South Fork Community Area is covered by the 2001 South Fork Master Plan. Policies within Community areas are geared toward fostering the harmonious development of municipalities.

Current Population	12,593
2010 Population	13,359
2020 Population	14,691
Current Employment	5,193
2010 Employment	5,492
2020 Employment	6,279
<i>Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs</i>	

# Rio Grande County Plan Framework

Projection: UTM COLOMADO SOUTH  
 Datum: NAD 27  
 0 2.5 5 Miles



**Legend**

**COUNTY FRAMEWORK**

- US Highways
- State Highways
- Other Roads
- Roads
- River Corridor
- Stable Areas
- Opportunity Areas
- Joint Consultation Areas
- Community Areas

**Stable Areas**  
 Stable Areas represent portions of Rio Grande County that are considered to be in a long-term, low-growth state. These areas are typically rural, agricultural, or forested lands that are not expected to experience significant population growth or development in the future.

**Opportunity Areas**  
 Opportunity Areas are designated for future growth and development. These areas are typically located near major transportation corridors, existing urban centers, or areas with high potential for economic development.

**Joint Consultation Areas**  
 Joint Consultation Areas are areas where Rio Grande County has a shared interest with neighboring counties. These areas require coordination and consultation between the involved counties to address common concerns and develop a unified plan.

**Community Areas**  
 Community Areas are designated for specific community development or preservation. These areas may include historic districts, cultural resources, or areas with unique characteristics that warrant special attention.

This map is for general planning purposes only, and is not intended to represent any specific plan or project. Any user should consult with Rio Grande County prior to use of this map. Any use of this map is subject to the terms and conditions of the Rio Grande County Plan Framework.

## *Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions*

### VISION STATEMENT

- ❖ Rio Grande County will balance the protection of its agricultural, rural residential and outdoor recreational economy with the direction of new growth and development into appropriate areas.

The Rio Grande County Plan Framework Map incorporates this vision with prescribed goals, policies and actions for five planning areas: Stable Areas, Opportunity Areas, River Corridor Areas, Joint Consultation Areas, and Community Areas.

*Stable Areas (SA)* comprises 518,220 acres and accounts for approximately 89 percent of Rio Grande County. These areas are not anticipated to change significantly over the next 5-10 years. Stable Areas are intended for uses that will support Rio Grande County's agricultural, recreational, and rural residential economy.

#### SA Recommended Land Uses

- Agricultural and related uses.
  - Public lands and recreation.
  - Very low density single family residences (1 dwelling per 35 acres).
  - Clustered subdivisions with a gross density of 1 dwelling per 35 acres.
  - Existing legal nonconforming residences on lots less than 35 acres.
- ◆ SA Goal 1: To conserve natural resources and preserve the cultural heritage of Rio Grande County for future generations.
    - SA Policy 1.1: The County shall encourage the protection of historic places, archeological sites, and mineral and timber resources.
      - SA Action 1.1: Work with the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority and others to prepare and analyze updated maps that identify historic places, archeological sites, and mineral and timber resources. Time frame: Ongoing
      - SA Action 1.2: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to include standards for the submittal, review, and approval of development in areas with historic, archeological, mineral and timber resources. Time frame: Short-term
  - ◆ SA Goal 2: To sustain the traditional agricultural economy of Rio Grande County.
    - SA Policy 2.1: The County shall encourage the long-term sustainability of the agricultural economy.
      - SA Action 2.1: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group and others to attract businesses that add value to the agricultural economy. Time frame: On-going
      - SA Action 2.2: Work with the State Division of Water Resources, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, landowners and others to defend against water exportation. Time frame: On-going

- SA Policy 2.2: The County shall encourage the use of innovative land use techniques to protect agricultural and environmentally significant lands.
  - SA Action 2.3: Work with the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority to use GIS technology to identify large agricultural land holdings and designate prime agricultural land. Time frame: Ongoing
  - SA Action 2.4: Work with the Rio Grande Headwaters Trust, landowners and others to establish conservation easements using the Colorado Conservation Tax Exchange Program. Time frame: Ongoing
  - SA Action 2.5: Create a new zoning district in the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to recognize agricultural uses on parcels greater than 80 acres in size. Time frame: Short-term
  - SA Action 2.6: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to include a conservation subdivision process for clustering lots in areas that are agricultural in character or environmentally significant. Time frame: Short-term
  - SA Action 2.7: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to discourage the subdivision of corner areas less than 35 acres in size on land that is irrigated with center pivot systems. Time frame: Short-term
  
- ◆ SA Goal 3: To support the tourism and outdoor recreation economy.
  - SA Policy 3.1: The County shall encourage the expansion of the tourism and outdoor recreation economy.
    - SA Action 3.1: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, the Rio Grande County Tourism Board and others to capture a greater share of tourism markets. Time frame: On-going
    - SA Action 3.2: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, the US Forest Service and others to implement the Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Time frame: On-going
  
- ◆ SA Goal 4: To appropriately integrate new development into rural areas.
  - SA Policy 4.1: The County shall endeavor to ensure public health and safety in environmentally constrained and sensitive areas.
    - SA Action 4.1: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to incorporate defensible space techniques for rural residential subdivisions that protect life and property from wildfires. Time frame: Short-term
    - SA Action 4.2: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to include access road standards for rural residential subdivisions that will accommodate fire trucks and emergency equipment. Time frame: Short-term
    - SA Action 4.3: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to require percolation tests for septic systems, and include state of the art techniques for

installing wastewater collection systems in areas with excessively poor soils.  
Time frame: Short-term

- SA Action 4.4: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to prohibit construction on slopes greater than 33 percent, and require slope stabilization techniques and standards for construction on slopes greater than 16 percent.  
Time frame: Short-term
- SA Policy 4.2: The County shall encourage the protection of significant natural areas, wetlands and wildlife habitat.
- SA Action 4.5: Work with the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority and others to prepare and analyze updated maps that identify significant natural areas, wetlands and wildlife habitat. Time frame: Ongoing
- SA Action 4.6: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to include subdivision guidelines that protect significant wildlife habitats and migration corridors. Time frame: Short-term

*Opportunity Areas (OA)* comprises approximately 45,168 acres and accounts for approximately eight percent of Rio Grande County. These areas represent portions of the county where rural growth is anticipated and can potentially be accommodated within the next 5-10 years. Opportunity areas are intended for uses that will expand and diversify the county economy.

#### OA Recommended Land Uses

- Agricultural and related uses.
  - Rural commercial and industrial uses.
  - Recreation and tourism-related uses.
  - Single family residences on lots a minimum of two acres in size.
  - Manufactured and mobile homes on lots a minimum of two acres in size.
  - Recreational Vehicle (RV) Parks.
  - Airports
- ◆ OA Goal 1: To diversify the County's economy by attracting new non-agricultural businesses.
  - OA Policy 1.1: The County shall support non-agricultural business development.
  - OA Action 1.1: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group and others to attract non-agricultural businesses into OA's. Time frame: Ongoing
  - OA Action 1.2: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group and others to encourage cottage industry, e.g., redevelopment of vacant potato sheds as startup business incubators. Time frame: On-going
- ◆ OA Goal 2: To provide housing choices for all income groups.
  - OA Policy 2.1: The County shall endeavor to ensure the availability of a diverse range of housing choices.

- OA Action 2.1: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, the SLV Housing Coalition, local housing authorities, and others to improve the availability of affordable housing. Time frame: Ongoing
  - OA Action 2.2: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code and Zoning Maps to allow a more diverse range of housing types, including stick built single family, manufactured housing, and mobile homes. Time frame: Mid-term
  - OA Action 2.3: Prepare a Zoning Transition Program for the update the Rio Grande County Zoning Maps that provides for Mobile Home Park and Recreational Vehicle Park zoning. Time frame: Mid-term
- ◆ OA Goal 3: To enable the harmonious development of unincorporated Rio Grande County.
- OA Policy 3.1: The County shall adopt and/or update land use planning tools that reflect best development practices.
    - OA Action 3.1: Adopt a Uniform Building Code. Time frame: Short-term
    - OA Action 3.2: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to include standards for shielding new outdoor lighting. Time frame: Short-term
    - OA Action 3.3: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to more clearly distinguish the Rural zoning district for development of 35 acre lots and larger, the Rural Estate zoning district for development of lots between 5 and 35 acres in size, and the Residential zoning district for development of lots less than 5 acres in size. Time frame: Short-term
    - OA Action 3.4: Prepare a Zoning Transition Program for the update the Rio Grande County Zoning Maps. Time frame: Mid-term
  - OA Policy 3.2: The County shall coordinate the provision of infrastructure and services to developing areas.
    - OA Action 3.5: Prepare and update a Capital Improvements Program on an annual basis. Time frame: Ongoing
    - OA Action 3.6: Work with CDOT, property owners and others to address highway speed, local access, and other safety and improvement issues along US 160. Time frame: Ongoing
    - OA Action 3.7: Update the Land Use Code to include access management principles, including but not limited to the provision of frontage roads and cross access easements between multiple properties. Time frame: Short-term
    - OA Action 3.8: Work with the fire protection districts, ambulance services, utility providers and others to coordinate planned improvements. Time frame: Ongoing
    - OA Action 3.9: Update the Land Use Code to discourage duplicate street names in rural subdivisions. Time frame: Ongoing

- OA Action 3.10: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, service providers, and others to improve telecommunication infrastructure and service. Time frame: Ongoing
- OA Action 3.11: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, local haulers and others to select a site and develop a regional recycling facility. Time frame: Mid-term
- OA Policy 3.3: The County shall consider the character, density and scale of surrounding existing land uses when reviewing new development proposals.
- OA Action 3.12: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to require a minimum rural road standard for rural subdivisions. Time frame: Short-term
- OA Policy 3.4: The County shall designate airport districts and support airport master planning for the Monte Vista Municipal Airport and the Astronaut Rominger Airport.
- OA Action 3.13: Coordinate the preparation of airport master plans with Monte Vista and Del Norte. Time frame: Mid-term
- OA Action 3.14: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to conform with airport master plans and include an airport overlay district. Time frame: Mid-term
- OA Action 3.15: Update the Rio Grande County Official Zoning Map to identify airport overlay district designations. Time frame: Mid-term

*River Corridor Areas (RCA)* comprises 17,120 acres and accounts for approximately three percent of Rio Grande County. These areas represent the portions of the County within the Rio Grande River floodplain. The intent of the River Corridor area is to preserve a valuable environmental resource, provide for appropriate residential development and recreational opportunities, and ensure public safety.

#### RCA Recommended Land Uses

- Agricultural and related uses.
  - Recreation and tourism-related uses.
  - Single family residences on lots a minimum of five acres in size.
- ◆ RCA Goal 1: To minimize the risk of potential flooding and to maintain the natural character of the Rio Grande River corridor.
  - RCA Policy 1.1: The County shall support activities that address the safety of residents in designated floodplain areas.
  - RCA Action 1.1: Work with FEMA, the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority and others to prepare updated flood hazard mapping. Time frame: Short-term
  - RCA Action 1.2: Work with FEMA, the Rio Grande Headwaters Trust and others to prepare a Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan. Time frame: Short-term

- RCA Policy 1.2.: The County shall discourage new developments within the 100 year floodplain so as to minimize the risks of potential flood hazards.
  - RCA Action 1.3.: Update the Rio Grande Land Use Code to require that any new permanent structure within the 100-year floodplain be certified by a professional engineer that it will not alter stream flow or create a flood hazard for downstream properties. Time frame: Short-term
  
- RCA Policy 1.3.: The County shall promote land use practices that protect the natural character of the Rio Grande River.
  - RCA Action 1.4.: Update the Rio Grande Land Use Code to require that any new subdivision within the RCA have a minimum lot size of 5 acres. Time frame: Short-term

*Joint Consultation Areas (JCA)* comprises 23,600 acres and accounts for approximately four percent of Rio Grande County. These areas include Stable Areas, Opportunity Areas and/or River Corridor Areas located outside the communities of Monte Vista, Del Norte, South Fork and Center. JCA's provide the opportunity for cooperation and joint planning between Rio Grande County and its incorporated municipalities. The intent of the Joint Consultation Areas is to foster intergovernmental coordination, encourage the efficient provision of services and infrastructure, and ensure compatibility between rural and urban uses.

- ◆ JCA Goal 1: To foster consistency between future County land use objectives and future municipal annexation objectives.
  - JCA Policy 1.1: The County shall establish and update intergovernmental agreements with each municipality as necessary to address future land use and growth issues of mutual interest.
    - JCA Action 1.1: Update the Monte Vista intergovernmental agreement to modify the JCA boundaries to be consistent with boundaries established in the Monte Vista Three Mile Plan and Major Street Plan. Time frame: Short-Term
    - JCA Action 1.2: Update the Del Norte intergovernmental agreement to modify JCA boundaries to include Astronaut Rominger Airport. Time frame: Short-Term
    - JCA Action 1.3: Update the South Fork intergovernmental agreement to modify JCA boundaries to include rural subdivisions east of town along US 160 (e.g. Willow Park), and exclude areas within National Forest Service Lands. Time frame: Short-Term
    - JCA Action 1.4: Update the Center intergovernmental agreement to modify JCA boundaries to include the area around the intersection of US Highway 285 and Colorado 112. Time frame: Short-Term
  - JCA Policy 1.2: The County shall provide for land development compatible with municipal objectives within the JCA.
    - JCA Action 1.5: Update the Rio Grande County Land Use Code to encourage the development of RV Parks outside of municipalities. Time frame: Short-term
    - JCA Action 1.6: Update the Rio Grande County Zoning Maps to enable the orderly transition of residential densities, and provide for the provision of compatible commercial and industrial development. Time frame: Mid-term
- ◆ JCA Goal 2: To ensure that adequate public facilities and services are available and in place as development occurs, and that development patterns reflect an efficient, equitable, and effective use of public and private dollars.
  - JCA Policy 2.1: The County shall coordinate infrastructure and service investments with municipal and special districts to ensure orderly growth and development within each JCA.
    - JCA Action 2.1: Establish a quarterly meeting with each municipality and special district to coordinate infrastructure improvements and service provision needs within each JCA. Time frame: Short-Term

*Community Areas (CA)* comprises approximately 3,874 acres accounting for slightly less than one percent of Rio Grande County. Community areas are intended for urban uses. Please refer to the 2001 South Fork Master Plan, Del Norte Plan Direction and Monte Vista Plan Direction.

- ◆ CA Goal 1: To foster the harmonious development of Community Areas.
  - CA Policy 1: The County shall work cooperatively with communities to encourage sound land use planning.
    - CA Action 1.1: Update the Rio Grande County Master Plan to include any revisions to the Plan Direction and Framework Plans by either Monte Vista or Del Norte. Time frame: On-going
    - CA Action 1.2: Work with the Monte Vista, Del Norte and South Fork to explore the feasibility of creating a recreation district. Time frame: Short-term
    - CA Action 1.3: Update the Rio Grande County Master Plan to include a Plan Direction with Framework Plans for South Fork and Center. Time frame: Mid-term
    - CA Action 1.4: Update the Rio Grande County Master Plan to include 2010 Census Data for each Community Area. Time frame: Long-term

## MONTE VISTA PLAN ELEMENT

## Monte Vista Plan Influences

### LAND USE

Monte Vista, elevation of 7,666 feet, is located at the intersection of US Highways 160 and 285. The City of Monte Vista was founded in 1884.

Historical development patterns are reflected in the location of commercial development near the railroad. The city's major commercial corridors and downtown occur to the south of the railroad and along US Highway 160. The downtown "core" occurs between Broadway to Madison Street on US 160. This core goes approximately one block to the north and two blocks south. Other major commercial areas include the Highway Commercial to the southeast along US Highway 160. The city's industrial area occurs to the north of the railroad and to the east of US Highway 285 referred to as "Gunbarrel Road".

A majority of land uses within Monte Vista are comprised of single-family neighborhoods, although there are a few multi-family complexes including assisted living facilities. A large percentage of the new housing is occurring to the east and west of the city. To the east, residential development is occurring along Sherman Avenue between the Ski Hi Stampede and the State Veterans Center near Sherman Lake. To the west, areas are currently being platted for single-family development between US Highway 160 and County Road 27. Other growth areas include a proposed affordable housing development south of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

### ZONING

There are ten Monte Vista zoning districts:

- RU Rural
- RE Residential Estate
- RL Residential Low Density
- RM Residential Medium Density
- RH Residential High Density
- Mfg-H Manufactured Housing
- MH Mobile Home
- CH Commercial Highway
- CB Commercial Business
- I Industrial

A large portion of Monte Vista is zoned Residential Low Density to provide for single-family detached housing. Residential Estate zoning allows large-lot single-family development and occurs primarily to the west of the city, north of Prospect Avenue. Residential Medium Density allows single-family detached residences as well as two-family duplexes and occurs in small pockets south of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Residential High Density zoning allows attached multi-unit apartments. These uses are generally comprised of assisted living facilities.

Mobile Home zoning provides for mobile homes as well as single-family detached and manufactured housing. The Mobile Home district is zoned in several areas, including south of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue between the city limit line and Colorado 15, and in pockets north of Sickles Street. The Manufactured Housing districts allows single-family residences and manufactured products but not mobile homes, and occurs south of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Jackson Street and the city limit.

The Commercial Highway zoning districts allows auto-oriented commercial and occurs along US Highway 160 on the southeast and on Gunbarrel Road. Commercial Business zoning for a wide

range of commercial uses and occurs primarily within the Downtown Core. The Industrial zoning provides for manufacturing and processing of goods, and occurs north of the railroad to the east of Gunbarrel Road.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Monte Vista Downtown Historic District that encompasses much of Monte Vista's downtown core is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the State Register of Historic Properties.

The eleven buildings in the district were constructed between 1889 and 1921, and are good examples of late 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture. Many of the buildings listed below are constructed of locally quarried stone, a material that is present in several buildings scattered throughout the city.

- State Bank, 800 First Avenue (1890)
- Legal Office, 810 First Avenue (1892)
- Utility Office, 806 First Avenue (1892)
- Ditto Jewelry Store, 809-811 First Avenue (1902)
- Roughton Sheet Metal, 813 - 815 First Avenue (1903)
- Town Hall, 823 First Avenue (non-contributing) (1903)
- Correll-Dunker Candy Kitchen, 819 First Avenue (1905)
- Hunter Mercantile Company 747 First Avenue (1906)
- Monte Vista Journal 37 - 39 Washington Street (non-contributing) (1908-1910)
- Monte Vista Bank and Trust, 803 First Avenue (1919)
- Monte Vista Armory, 15 Washington Street (1922)

Monte Vista properties that have received individual listings on the National or State Historic Register include the following:

### *State Soldier's and Sailor's Home (1891)*

This home at 3749 Sherman Avenue offered housing, recreational and religious facilities and medical care to veterans who served from the Civil War through Vietnam War.

### *Monte Vista Library (1895)*

This stone building at 110 Jefferson Street, which measures just 16 by 22 feet, housed the town's library until the completion of the Carnegie Public Library in 1919. This building is currently the home of the local historical society.

### *Fassett Department Store (1898)*

Monte Vista's first store, originally located in a smaller wood frame structure, was built in 1898 at 102 Adams Street and supplied farmers and miners with groceries, furniture, and dry goods under Fassett family management for ninety-nine years.

### *Monte Vista Cemetery Chapel (1912)*

Designed by Denver architect George Harvey, this building off CR 27 represents one of the few examples of the Craftsman Style in Rio Grande County.

### *Carnegie Library (1919)*

Located at 120 Jefferson Street, the Carnegie Library represents the Colonial Revival style. An addition which doubled the size of the library was completed in 2000.

### *El Monte Hotel (1930)*

A combination of Mission and Pueblo Revival styles, the building now known as the Monte Villa Inn at 925 First Avenue served as a center for community activities, and contains Monte Vista's first elevator.

*Monte Vista Post Office and Federal Building (1933)*

This building at 150 Washington Street represents the community's finest example of Beaux-Arts-influenced architecture.

*Central School Auditorium and Gymnasium (1938)*

Designed by architect Charles E. Thomas, this building at 612 First Avenue incorporates Mission, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Romanesque elements. The school's auditorium is the largest auditorium in the San Luis Valley that continues to serve as a location for school and sports functions, as well as public gatherings.

The Transportation of the West Museum is also in a renovated historic building, and features exhibits regarding the early modes of transportation in the San Luis Valley.

PARK SYSTEM

Monte Vista has seven parks, with most of the park acreage functioning as passive park space.

Ski Hi Park is a regional facility, with rodeo grounds, a swimming pool, volleyball and basketball courts, and restrooms. Chapman Memorial Park and City Ball Park serve as community parks. Chapman Memorial Park City has a volleyball court, four basketball hoops, playground equipment, picnicking facilities with BBQ stands, and restrooms. City Ball Park has two tennis courts, two multipurpose, lighted fields, restrooms and a concession stand, with plans for a future bike track. Montez Park and Fullenweider Park are linear community parks on land leased from the railroad. Montez Park is a small linear neighborhood park, undeveloped except for basic landscaping and picnic tables. Fullenweider Park has playground equipment, picnic tables, and a walking path. Marsh Park has picnic tables, a playground, a tennis court and two basketball hoops. Sanchez Park is a neighborhood "pocket park", with playground equipment, barbeque pits and two basketball hoops.

Table 18: Monte Vista Park Acreage	
Park	Acres
City Ball Park	5.0
Chapman Memorial Park	9.0
Fullenweider Park	1.8
Marsh Park	2.1
Montez Park	3.0
Sanchez Park	.4
Ski Hi Park	24.3
Total Acreage	45.6
<i>Source: City of Monte Vista</i>	

A recognized standard for public parks is 10 acres per 1,000 residents. With an estimated year 2000 population of 4,529 persons, Monte Vista has 9.9 acres of park per 1,000 residents, consistent with the national standard.

Monte Vista also offers a city-owned municipal golf course, the Monte Vista Country Club. Opened in 1928, the Monte Vista Country Club Golf Course is a regulation nine-hole course. The municipal golf course also has two tennis courts.

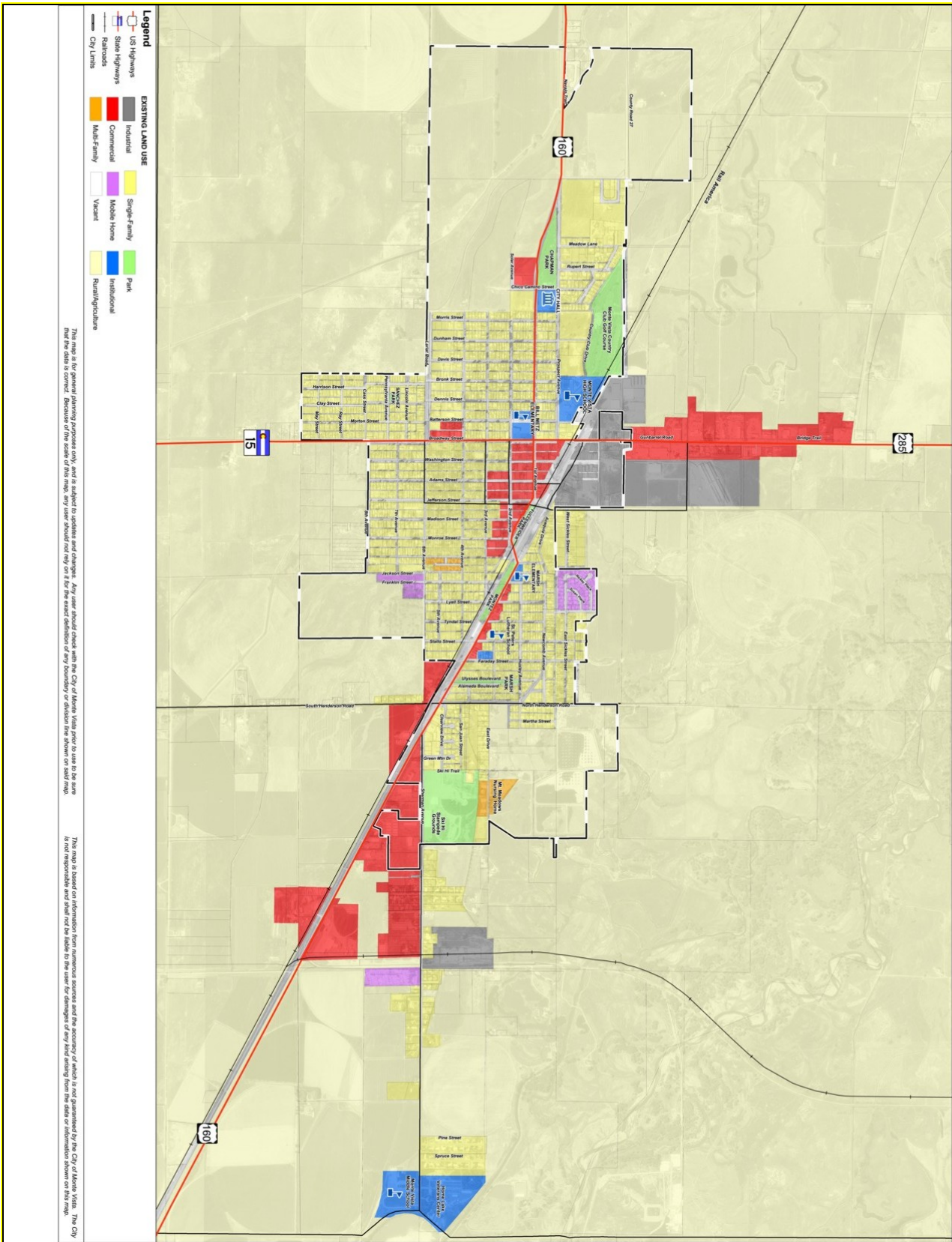
Monte Vista does not currently have a community or recreation center. Facilities such as the Ski Hi Stampede and a private health club provide some of the amenities typically offered in a community center.

#### TRAIL SYSTEM

Pedestrian connectivity with Monte Vista could be enhanced by providing more trail connections between parks, schools, the downtown business district and other community nodes. Trail connections would also increase the functionality of the park system by facilitating bicycle and pedestrian access.

The Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Plan identifies several potential trails, including the Greenway Trail, Chapman Park Trail, Lariat Ditch Trail, Bridge Trail, River Loop Trail, Soldiers Trail, Wildlife Refuge Trail, and Swede Trail. To highlight one opportunity, a connection to the Home Lake State Wildlife Area and the Rio Grande River corridor could be provided via the proposed Greenway Trail (along Sherman Avenue) and Soldiers Trail (along Soldiers Home Road).

# Monte Vista Existing Land Use



## STREET SYSTEM

Monte Vista contains about 24 miles of paved and four miles of unpaved streets.

### *Arterial Streets*

Arterials provide a network of high-volume streets designed to carry the bulk of traffic through the city. In some cases, these streets have partially limited access through a divided median. Limited or partially limited high-volume arterials are referred to as primary arterials. Arterials within Monte Vista include:

- US Highway 160 (1<sup>st</sup> Avenue)
- US 285 (North Broadway, a.k.a. Gunbarrel Road)
- SH 15 (South Broadway)

### *Collector Streets*

These streets “collect” traffic from local streets and distribute it to arterials. Like arterials, collectors are designed for relatively high volume and speeds. However, collectors do provide accessibility within the city to neighborhoods and activity centers. As such, both mobility and access issues should be addressed with these streets. Major collectors within the city include:

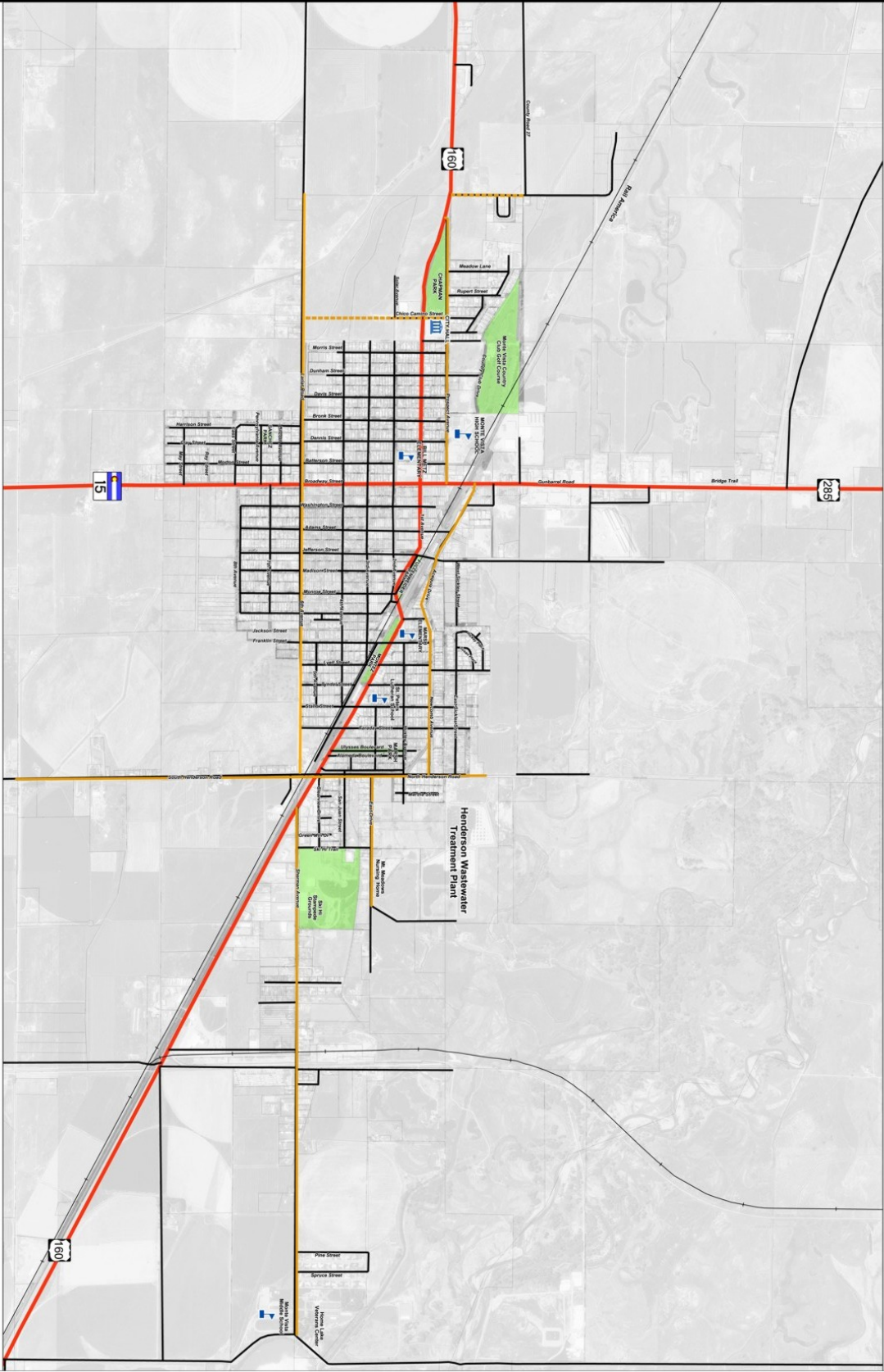
- Acequia Drive
- 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Lariat Road)
- Henderson Road
- Prospect Avenue
- Sherman Avenue

### *Local or Residential Streets*

Local or residential streets comprise the balance of the streets within Monte Vista. These streets provide access to adjacent properties, in most cases residential neighborhoods. Traffic volumes and speeds on local streets are very low with frequent stops.

# Monte Vista Existing Transportation and Infrastructure

Projection: STATE PLANE COLORADO SOUTH  
 Datum: NAD 27  
 0 0.1 0.2 0.3 Miles



- Legend**
- US Highways
  - State Highways
  - Railroads
  - City Limits
  - City
  - Schools
  - Parks
- ROADWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION**
- Arterial
  - Collector
  - Local (Fronted)
  - Local (Unpaved)

This map is for general planning purposes only, and is subject to updates and changes. Any user should check with the City of Monte Vista prior to use to be sure that the data is correct. Because of the scale of this map, any user should not rely on it for the exact delineation of any boundary or division line shown on said map.

This map is based on information from numerous sources and the accuracy of which is not guaranteed by the City of Monte Vista. The City is not responsible and shall not be liable to the user for damages of any kind arising from the data or information shown on this map.

## WATER SYSTEM

The City of Monte Vista provides water service within its municipal limits and some outlying areas. The distribution system consists of 4 inch to 12 inch pipe.

Potable water is supplied from five wells and pumped directly into the distribution system without being treated or moved into storage tanks. Typically, water needed to meet a two to three hour fire flow demand is stored in reservoirs. The capacity of the pumping system is considered insufficient to meet fire flow demands.

In 1998, a Master Infrastructure Plan prepared by Integra Engineering recommended that the City construct new pumping stations, loop water mains, and collect pump flow data for future planning.

## WASTEWATER SYSTEM

The City of Monte Vista's wastewater collection system consists primarily of 6 inch to 30 inch vitrified clay pipe. The wastewater system has high infiltration and inflow due to high groundwater during the irrigation system.

Monte Vista operates two wastewater treatment facilities, the Henderson wastewater treatment plant and the Veteran's wastewater treatment plant.

The 3.09 MGD Henderson wastewater treatment plant handles the majority of wastewater flows generated in Monte Vista. The multi-cell lagoon facility was upgraded in 1997 and consistently meets effluent discharge limits.

Located on the east side of Monte Vista adjacent to the State Veteran's Center, the 1.96 MGD Veteran's wastewater treatment plant employs an activated sludge treatment process to treat both municipal and industrial wastewater. Approximately 90 percent of the wastewater treatment capacity for the Veterans plant is allocated to Staley's Potato processing facility.

## STORMWATER SYSTEM

Monte Vista is presently within four major drainage basins. Storm water facilities are comprised of 12 inch to 48 inch vitrified clay pipe, with several areas of the city not serviced.

According to the 1998 Master Infrastructure Plan, approximately 80 percent of the storm drainage system is inadequately sized to handle a two-year storm event. Plan recommendations include improving the outfall system to meet minimum service levels and to provide adequate facilities for future growth.

## Monte Vista Plan Direction

### *Plan Framework*

The Monte Vista Plan Framework consists of Neighborhoods, Districts, Corridors and Edges, described as follows:

Neighborhoods are predominantly residential areas that include destinations within walking distance, such as schools, parks, churches and public buildings. *Low Density Neighborhoods* are comprised primarily of single family detached homes on average size lots. Policies within Low Density Neighborhoods are geared toward protecting residential character. *Mixed Density Neighborhoods* are comprised of single family detached and attached homes, manufactured housing, and multi-family structures on a variety of lot sizes. Policies within Mixed Density Neighborhood are geared toward compatible infill development. *Rural density neighborhoods* are distinguished by single family detached homes and manufactured housing on large lots, typically five acres and larger in size. Policies within Rural Density Neighborhoods are geared toward providing a transition to agricultural and open lands.

Districts are large activity centers of concentrated, non-residential uses. The *Downtown District* is the commercial and employment center of the community. Policies within the Downtown District are geared toward promoting its economic potential and preserving historic character. *Commercial Industrial Districts* are areas of light industrial uses and mixed commercial uses. Policies within Commercial Industrial Districts are geared toward economic development.

Corridors are linear areas that connect neighborhoods and districts. *Transportation Corridors* are areas along arterial roads and highways provide a link between major destinations, and are comprised primarily of highway commercial and transitional uses. Policies within Transportation Corridor are geared toward road improvements. *Recreational Corridors* link streams, trails, parks, and natural areas to neighborhoods and/or districts. Policies within Recreational Corridors are geared toward the expanding the parks and trail system. *River Corridor* represents the portions of Del Norte within the Rio Grande River floodplain. Policies within the River Corridor are geared toward mitigating potential flood hazards and protecting the natural character of the river corridor.

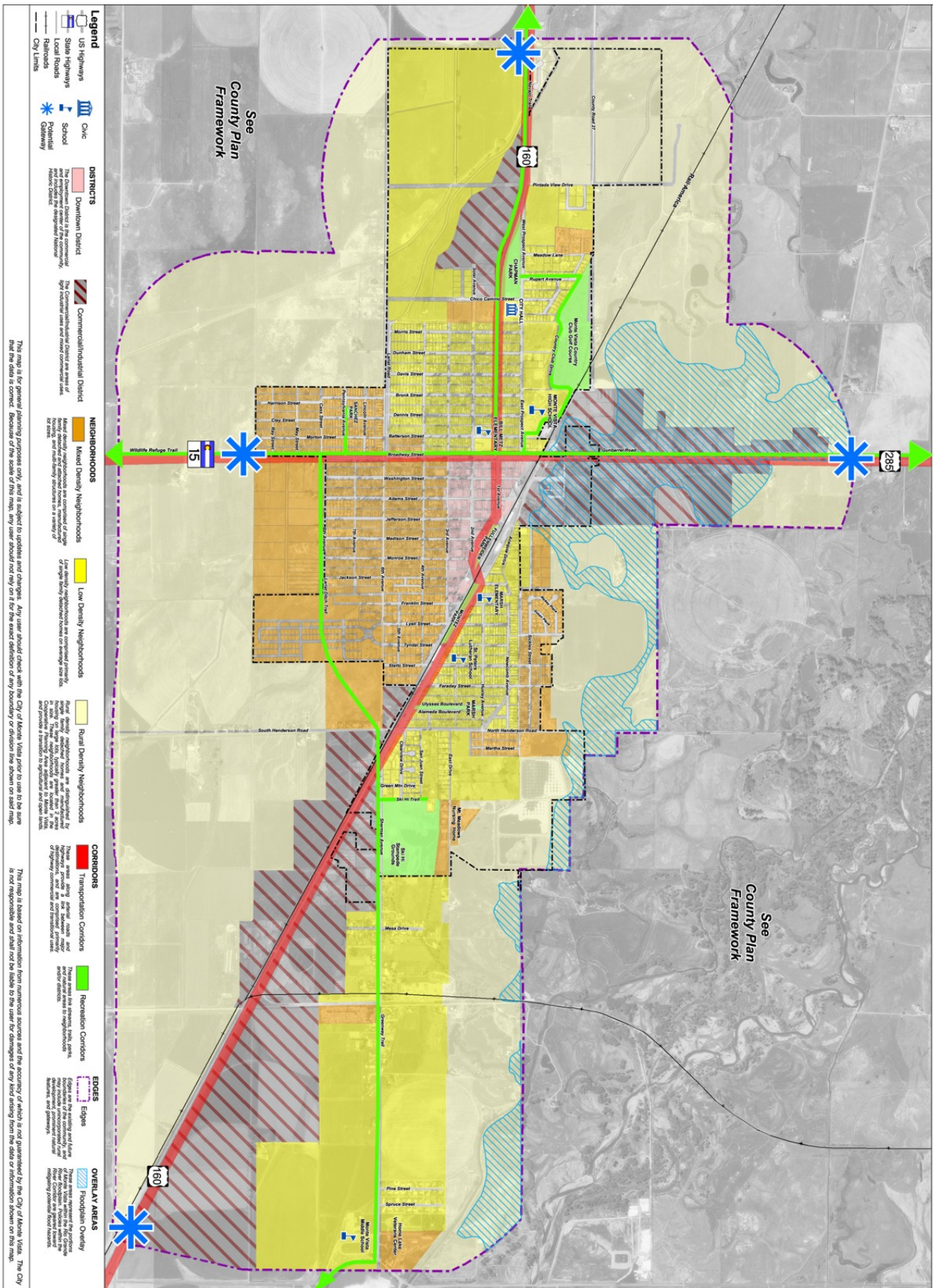
Edges are the existing and future boundaries of the community, and may include unincorporated rural development, prominent natural features, and gateways. Policies are geared toward expansion, compatible land use, coordinated services and attractive entries.

In addition, a Floodplain Overlay is designated that may include portions of the four planning areas, with policies geared toward public safety.

Current Population	4,568
2010 Population	5,023
2020 Population	5,524
Current Employment	1,738
2010 Employment	1,977
2020 Employment	2,256
<i>Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs; HNTB</i>	

# Monte Vista Plan Framework

Projection: STATE PLANE COORDINATE SOUTH  
 Datum: NAD 27  
 0 0.2 0.4 Miles



**Legend**

- US Highways
- State Highways
- Local Roads
- Roadways
- City Limits
- City
- Chick
- School
- Potential Gateway

**DISTRICTS**

- Downtown District
- Commercial/Industrial District

**NEIGHBORHOODS**

- Mixed Density Neighborhoods
- Low Density Neighborhoods
- Rural Density Neighborhoods

**CORRIDORS**

- Transportation Corridors
- Recreation Corridors

**EDGES**

- Edges

**OVERLAY AREAS**

- Thousand Overlay

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## *Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions*

### VISION STATEMENT

- ❖ Monte Vista will provide a living environment that obtains a safe and prosperous ascent to the future for its citizens.

The Monte Vista Plan Framework Map incorporates this vision with prescribed goals, policies and actions for four planning areas: Neighborhoods, Districts, Corridors and Edges. In addition, a Floodplain Overlay is designated that may include portions of the four planning areas

Neighborhoods are predominantly residential areas that include destinations within walking distance, such as schools, parks, churches and public buildings. Neighborhoods are comprised of three sub areas: Low Density Neighborhoods, Mixed Density Neighborhoods, and Rural Density Neighborhoods.

*Low Density Neighborhoods (LDN)* comprises 641 acres and accounts for 47 percent of Monte Vista. The intent of the LDN is to provide stability to residential neighborhoods comprised primarily of single family detached homes on average size lots.

#### LDN Recommended Land Uses

- Single family detached homes.
- Institutional uses such as churches, schools and public buildings.
- Community parks and trails

- ◆ LDN Goal 1: To maintain the traditional character of single family detached neighborhoods.

- LDN Policy 1.1: The City shall protect the single family residential character of the LDN area.
  - LDN Action 1.1: Update the Zoning Code to reduce potential density, and revise standards for permitted uses, lot area, streets and alleys that are based on existing development patterns. Time frame: Short-term
  - LDN Action 1.2: Prepare residential design guidelines for new development and infill development that are consistent with architectural styles of established neighborhoods. Time frame: Mid-term

*Mixed Density Neighborhoods (MDN)* comprises 407 acres and accounts for 30 percent of Monte Vista. The intent of the MDN is to accommodate single family detached and attached homes, manufactured housing, and multi-family structures on a variety of lot sizes.

#### MDN Recommended Land Uses

- Home Occupations
- Apartments
- Duplexes and townhomes
- Assisted living facilities
- Group homes
- Manufactured homes

- Mobile Homes and/or Mobile Home Parks
  - Single family detached residences.
  - Institutional uses such as churches, schools and public buildings.
  - Community parks and trails
- ◆ MDN Goal 1: To provide a diverse range of available and affordable housing choices to ensure the continued growth of the community.
- MDN Policy 1.1: The City shall promote compatible infill development of vacant parcels.
    - MDN Action 1.1: Update the Zoning Code to revise standards for lot area, streets and alleys that are based on existing development patterns. Time frame: Short-term
    - MDN Action 1.2: Update the Zoning Code to allow for the use of convenience retail, neighborhood office and institutional uses such as churches, schools and parks within designated MDN areas.

*Rural Density Neighborhoods (RDN)* 180 acres and accounts for 13 percent of Monte Vista. These areas are distinguished by single family detached homes and manufactured housing on large lots, typically five acres and larger in size. The intent of the RDN is to expand the diversity of housing stock and provide a transition to agricultural and open lands.

#### RDN Recommended Land Uses

- Low density single family residences (1 dwelling per 5 acres).
  - Recreational Vehicle Parks
  - Trails and open lands
- ◆ RDN Goal 1: To provide a transition to agricultural and open lands.
- RDN Policy 1.1: The City shall promote the development of large lot residential subdivisions in Edge Areas.
    - RDN Action 1.1: Update the Zoning Code to include a zoning district and standards for large lot residential development. Time frame: Short-term

Districts are large activity centers of concentrated, non-residential uses. Districts are divided into two sub areas: Downtown District and Commercial Industrial District.

The *Downtown District (DD)* comprises 30 acres and accounts for 2 percent of Monte Vista. The intent of the DD is to serve as the economic center of the community.

#### DD Recommended Land Uses

- First Floor Retail
- First or Second Floor Office
- Second or Third Floor Residential
- Hotel

- ◆ DD Goal 1: To expand the economic vitality of the Downtown District.
  - DD Policy 1.1: The City shall promote the economic potential of the Downtown District.
    - DD Action 1.1: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group and others to attract new businesses that will improve the availability of local goods and services. Time frame: Ongoing
    - DD Action 1.2: Work with the agricultural community and others to re-establish the Farmer’s Market. Timeframe: Short-term
    - DD Action 1.3: Work with business owners and others to explore options for improving parking in the DD. Timeframe: Short-term
    - DD Action 1.4: Prepare a parking study for the DD. Timeframe: Mid-term
    - DD Action 1.5: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, telecommunication providers, and others to improve cellular signals and/or explore the feasibility on creating a network of wireless fidelity “hot spots” in the DD. Timeframe: Mid-term
    - DD Action 1.6: Explore the formation of a special assessment district such as a Business Improvement District (BID). Timeframe: Mid-term
    - DD Action 1.7: Work with CDOT to coordinate streetscape improvements along the US 160/1<sup>st</sup> Avenue corridor within the DD. Timeframe: Mid-term
    - DD Action 1.8: Work with property owners to extend streetscape improvements along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Broadway and Washington Streets. Timeframe: Long-term
  
- ◆ DD Goal 2: To preserve the historical architectural character within the Downtown District.
  - DD Policy 2: The City shall explore the adaptive reuse of historic structures. Where adaptive reuse is not possible, require that new development, where appropriate, reflect the character and historic references of surrounding historic structures.
    - DD Action 2.1: Work with the Colorado Historical Society and local preservationists to identify additional structures of historic significance and/or potential for inclusion on the National and/or State Historic Register. Timeframe: On-going
    - DD Action 2.2: Work with the Colorado Historical Society, property owners and others to obtain funding for appropriate conversion and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures for retail, office and/or residential uses. Time frame: On-going

The *Commercial Industrial District (CID)* comprises 120 acres and accounts for 9 percent of Monte Vista. The intent of the CID is for light industrial uses, agricultural industrial and mixed commercial uses.

- Light industrial
  - Agricultural industry
  - Business park
- ◆ CID Goal 1: To facilitate new job creation and economic development opportunities.
- CID Policy 1.1: The City shall monitor the amount of land zoned for commercial and industrial development to ensure an adequate supply.
    - CID Action 1.1: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, local businesses and others to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Time frame: Ongoing
    - CID Action 1.2: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, local businesses and others explore incentives for the reuse of underutilized commercial and industrial properties. Timeframe: Short-term
    - CID Action 1.3: Work with property owners to rezone vacant or underutilized non-commercial parcels suitable for commercial and industrial development. Time frame: On-going
    - CID Action 1.4: Analyze the potential for annexation of commercial/industrial properties along US 285, and US 160 southeast of the city. Time frame: Mid-term

Corridors are linear areas that provide a connection between neighborhoods and districts. Corridors are divided into two sub areas: Transportation Corridors and Recreational Corridors.

*Transportation Corridors (TC)* along arterial roads and highways provide a link between major destinations. The intent of the TC is to accommodate highway commercial and transitional uses.

#### TC Recommended Land Uses

- Professional Office
  - Highway Commercial
  - Motels
  - Apartments
  - Assisted living facilities
  - Parks, trails and open lands
- ◆ TC Goal 1: To balance the need to maintain a safe and efficient transportation system with the desire to utilize US Highway 160, US 285, Colorado15 for development.
- TC Policy 1.1: The City shall maintain and improve its road system.
    - TC Action 1.1: Prepare and update a 5 year Capital Improvement Program to pave remaining unpaved streets and add curb, gutter and other drainage improvements. Timeframe: Ongoing
    - TC Action 1.2: Update the City's Master Street Plan in accordance with C.R.S. 31-23-212. Timeframe: Ongoing

- TC Action 1.3: Extend Chico Camino to connect US 160/1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to Lariat Road to open new annexation area south of the Highway for development. Timeframe: Short-term
- TC Action 1.4: Develop an access solution such as a frontage road system south of US 160 (East of Henderson Avenue) to open the development potential in the southeastern portion of the City. Timeframe: Long term

*Recreational Corridors (RC)* link streams, trails, parks, and natural areas to neighborhoods and/or districts. The intent of the RC is to provide a network for passive and active recreational opportunities.

#### RC Recommended Land Uses

- Parks, trails and open lands
- ◆ RC Goal 1: To provide active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
  - RC Policy 1.1: The City shall encourage the development of a regional, community, and neighborhood park system.
    - RC Action 1.1: Work with the County and others to explore the feasibility of creating a recreation district. Time frame: Short-term
    - RC Action 1.2: Investigate the feasibility of renovating or replacing portions of the Ski Hi Complex to include a recreation center for residents of all ages, and consider leasing Ski Hi Complex for revenue generating events. Time frame: Mid-term
    - RC Action 1.3: Investigate the feasibility of securing funding for a new Boys and Girls Club facility. Timeframe: Mid-Term
  - RC Policy 2.1: The City shall encourage the development of a trail system that links parks, institutional uses, commercial areas and neighborhoods.
    - RC Action 2.1: Work with the County to implement the San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Timeframe: Ongoing
    - RC Action 2.2: Working with the Lariat Irrigation Company to explore the feasibility of developing a trail system along the Lariat Ditch. Timeframe: Mid-term

Edges are the existing and future boundaries of the community, and may include unincorporated rural development, vacant land, prominent natural features, and gateways. The intent of Edge Areas (EA) is to accommodate the expansion of City boundaries while ensuring that community character and identity is maintained.

#### EA Recommended Land Uses:

- Commercial agricultural and light industrial uses along US 285.
- Recreational Vehicle Parks
- Rural density uses.

- Low density residential neighborhoods.
  - Highway commercial and commercial agricultural land uses along the US Highway 160 Corridor.
- ◆ EA Goal 1: To ensure that future annexations foster fiscally responsible growth of the community.
- EA Policy 1.1: The City shall base future expansion and annexation upon the best interests of existing and future residents, property owners and business owners.
    - EA Action 1.1: Update the City's intergovernmental agreement with Rio Grande County to modify JCA boundaries to be consistent with boundaries established in the Monte Vista Three Mile Plan and Major Street Plan. Time frame: Short-Term
    - EA Action 1.2: Update the City's Three Mile Plan in accordance with C.R.S. 31-12-105 (e). Time frame: On-going
    - EA Action 1.3: Prepare a model annexation agreement that includes clauses for a fiscal impact study which includes a cost benefits analysis, infrastructure improvements, and land dedications. Time frame: Short-term
    - EA Action 1.4: Work with property owners to annex existing commercial properties along US Highway 160 and US Highway 285. Time frame: Mid-term
- ◆ EA Goal 2: To foster the harmonious development of Edge Areas.
- EA Policy 2.1: The City shall work cooperatively with the County to encourage sound land use planning.
    - EA Action 2.1: Work with the County to zone areas surrounding Monte Vista to be consistent with the Monte Vista Plan Framework. Time frame: Short-term
  - EA Policy 2.2: The City shall coordinate infrastructure and service investments to ensure orderly growth and development.
    - EA Action 2.2: Update the Subdivision Regulations to include adequate public facility provisions. Timeframe: Short-Term
    - EA Action 2.3: Work with the Department of Local Affairs and others to secure funding for improving the City's water system in order to sufficiently meet fire flow demands. Timeframe: Mid-Term
  - EA Policy 2.3: The City shall zone Edge Areas to meet community objectives.
    - EA Action 2.4: Update the Monte Vista Zoning Maps to enable the orderly transition of residential densities, and provide for the provision of compatible commercial and industrial development. Time frame: Mid-term
- ◆ EA Goal 3: To provide a positive impression of Monte Vista to residents, business owners and visitors.

- EA Policy 3.1: The City shall protect and enhance its gateways to provide a positive impression to visitors.
  - EA Action 3.1: Move existing gateways closer to the municipal limits to help define the City's edge. Time frame: Short-term
  - EA Action 3.2: Update the Zoning Code to prohibit new industrial uses such as junkyards, auto-salvage yards and unscreened outdoor storage along US 160 or US 285, and Colorado 15. Time frame: Short-term
  - EA Action 3.3: Work with property owners to relocate, clean up or screen existing junkyards. Time frame: Mid-term

Floodplain Overlay is comprised of the portions of Monte Vista that are within the designated 100 year floodplain of the Rio Grande River. The intent of the Floodplain Overlay is to protect public health, safety and general welfare.

#### FO Recommended Land Uses

- Parks, trails and open lands
- ◆ FO Goal 1: To ensure public health, safety and welfare within designated floodplain areas.
  - FO Policy 1.1: The City shall support activities that address the safety of residents in designated floodplain areas.
    - FO Action 1.1: Work with FEMA, the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority and others to prepare updated flood hazard mapping. Time frame: Short-term
    - FO Action 1.2: Work with FEMA, the Rio Grande Headwaters Trust and others to prepare a Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan. Time frame: Short-term
  - FO Policy 2.1: The City shall discourage new developments within the 100 year floodplain so as to minimize the risks of potential flood hazards.
    - FO Action 2.1: Update the Zoning Code to require that any new permanent structure within the 100-year floodplain be certified by a professional engineer that it will not alter stream flow or create a flood hazard for downstream properties. Time frame: Short-term

DEL NORTE PLAN ELEMENT

## Del Norte Plan Influences

### LAND USE

Del Norte, elevation of 7,884 feet, is located in the north-central section of Rio Grande County at the junction of US Highway 160 and State Highway 112. Del Norte was originally platted in 1871, and incorporated in 1872. Del Norte became the county seat in 1874 when Rio Grande County was created.

Del Norte developed just south of the Rio Grande River along the Railroad in the late 1800s. In 1936, US Highway 160 was extended from eastern Colorado through Rio Grande County transecting Del Norte. Today, the town's major commercial corridor and downtown occur along US Highway 160.

The downtown "core" consists of approximately eight square blocks and is bound by Pine Street to the west, 5<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, Oak Street to the east and 6<sup>th</sup> Street from the south. The Windsor Hotel is the only building in Del Norte currently listed of the National and State Historic Registers and is composed of three major sections: the original 1874 hotel, the 1882 Windsor Block, and the 1888 Foote Block. Currently undergoing renovation, the Windsor Hotel is an example of early community planning to ensure future economic survival and growth.

The commercial strip to the east and west of the downtown core along US Highway 160/Grand Avenue is approximately one half block deep and consists of a mix of commercial, office and residential uses.

A second small commercial/industrial area exists along SH Highway 112 extending north of US Highway 160 to the Rio Grande River. Uses along this corridor include warehouse/storage and agricultural related commercial.

Land use in Del Norte reflects a rural community character, with residential neighborhoods north and south of the US Highway 160 corridor. Residential uses within the community are comprised of a mix of single-family detached residences, manufactured homes and mobile homes.

A majority of the land uses north of US Highway 160 include scattered single-family residences, manufactured homes, mobile homes and vacant lots. Other land uses north of US Highway 160/Grande Avenue include the Town Hall and community parks. The Del Norte Public Library is located along Grande Avenue/US Highway 160 between Spruce and Oak Streets.

A majority of the single-family detached homes occur south of US Highway 160. Land uses south of the US Highway 160 also include the County Courthouse and annex as well as the elementary schools, middle school and high school. In addition, the Rio Grande County museum offers exhibits of the history of Rio Grande County.

The Rio Grande County Hospital is just east of town and north of US Highway 160. Del Norte recently annexed approximately 70 acres southwest of town along Pinos Creek Road for the construction of a new hospital. The new hospital, currently under construction, is planned to be a 38,000 square foot, 20-bed critical access hospital. Funding for the new facility includes a \$10 million loan from HUD, and a \$660,000 Mineral Impact grant for infrastructure costs.

A 45 acre area historically known as "West Del Norte" is proposed for annexation during 2004. West Del Norte is comprised of approximately 250 residents.

## ZONING

There are seven Del Norte zoning districts:

- CB/C: Commercial Business
- MHP: Mobile Home Park
- RVP: Recreational Vehicle Park
- R2-B: High Density Residential/Business
- R-2: High Density Residential
- R1-B: Single Family Residential/Business
- R-1: Single-Family Residential

A large portion of Del Norte north of the highway is zoned High Density Residential. This designation allows multi-family residential, single-family residential, manufactured housing and individual mobile homes (not mobile home parks). A majority of the town south of the highway is zoned for Single Family Residential which allows for single-family residential. There are a few pockets of town north of the highway zoned for Mobile Home Parks and one area near the river zoned for Recreation Vehicle Park.

The portions of Del Norte adjacent to the highway are zoned for Commercial/Business and Single Family/Business. These designations allow for single family residences or commercial businesses. There is one area north of Fifth Street between Spruce and Penasco Streets zoned for High Density Residential/Business. This designation allows for single-family residential, mobile home or commercial uses.

## PARK SYSTEM

Del Norte has four improved community parks. North Park and Centennial Park both have restrooms, playground equipment, picnic gazebos and BBQ stands. Ball Park has restrooms and picnic areas with BBQ stands, and a baseball field with dugouts, bleachers, and a concession stand. West Park has a volleyball court and horseshoe pits.

Park	Acres
North Park	3.0
Centennial Park	2.8
Ball Park	2.3
West Park	2.2
Total Acreage	10.3
<i>Source: Town of Del Norte</i>	

A recognized standard for public parks is 10 acres per 1,000 residents. With an estimated 2000 population of 1,705 persons, Del Norte has 6.1 acres of park per 1,000 residents. Although this is below national standards, this figure does not include the 8 acres of County-owned recreational fields located on the southeast side of Del Norte.

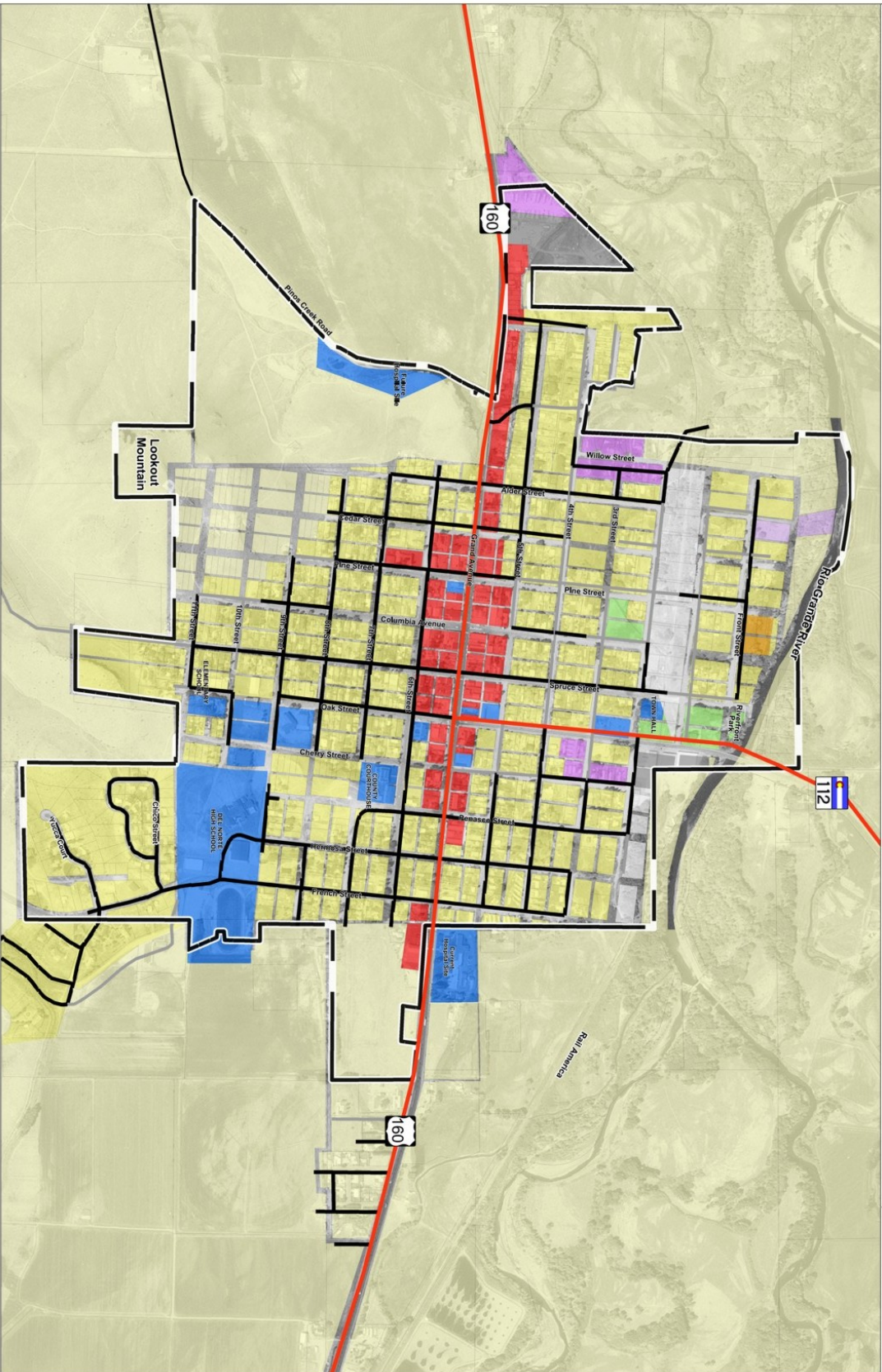
Del Norte does not currently have a community or recreation center.

## TRAIL SYSTEM

The Town recently constructed approximately 2,600 lineal feet of trail along the Rio Grande River, known as the River Walk. The trail has a fishing pier located near Centennial Park, partially funded with a "Fishing is Fun Project" grant administered by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. As noted in the Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Plan, there are opportunities to connect the River Walk on the north end of town with the south end of town via pedestrian improvements to Del Norte's business district along Spruce Street and a trail connection to Frisco Creek Road. From Frisco Creek Road, the Frisco Creek Trail could provide access to the National Forest south of town. Additional trail connections could be made to Lookout Mountain and the new hospital site. An opportunity also exists to link the River Walk, Centennial Park and Ball Park with acquisition of a 100 foot railroad right-of-way west of Town Hall.

# Del Norte Existing Land Use

Prepared: STATE PLANNING COMMISSION SOUTH  
 Date: MAR 27  
 Scale: 1" = 0.25 Miles



- Legend**
- US Highways
  - State Highways
  - Railroads
  - City Limits
- EXISTING LAND USE**
- Industrial
  - Commercial
  - Multi-Family
  - Vacant
  - Single-Family
  - Mobile Home
  - Park
  - Institutional
  - Rural/Agriculture

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## STREET SYSTEM

The Town of Del Norte contains about 15 miles of paved and eight miles of unpaved streets.

### *Arterial Streets*

Arterials provide a network of high-volume streets designed to carry the bulk of traffic through Del Norte. Arterials within Del Norte include:

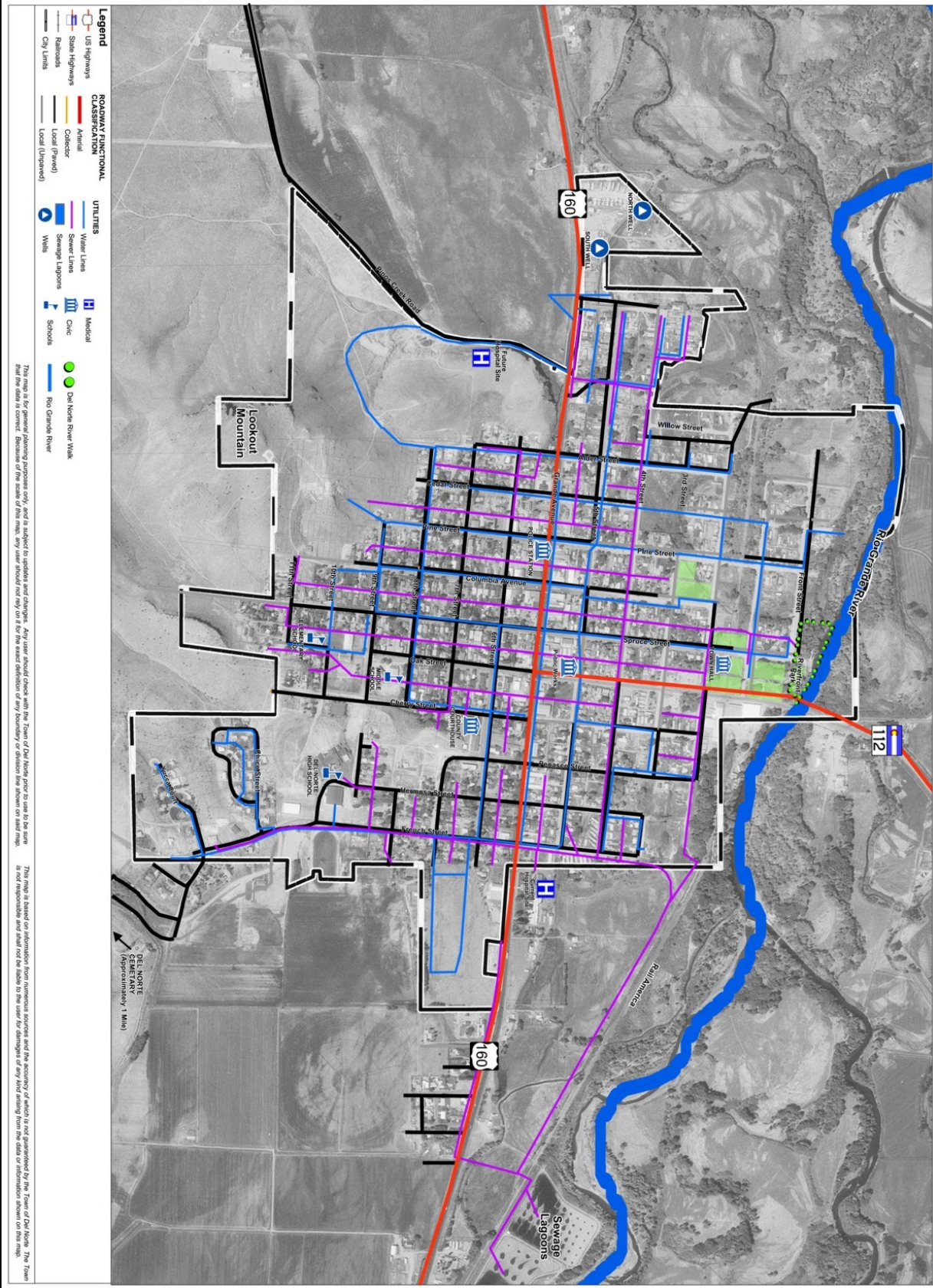
- US Highway 160
- State Highway 112

Major collectors within the town include:

- Cherry Street
- Columbia Avenue
- 5<sup>th</sup> Street

These streets “collect” traffic from local streets and distribute it to arterials. Local or residential streets comprise the balance of the streets within the town.

# Del Norte Existing Transportation and Infrastructure



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## WATER SYSTEM

A Utility Master Management Plan was prepared by Wright Water Engineers for Del Norte in 1997. The study evaluated the Town's water system, which provides water supply, storage, and treatment for approximately 800 homes and businesses within Del Norte and another 65 taps in the West Del Norte Water and Sanitation District.

Treated water is primarily supplied from two wells: the South Well and the North Well. The two wells provide a water supply of 1800 gallons per minute (gpm), slightly less than the summer peak-day demand of 1850 gpm. The study recommends the addition of a third well with a supply capacity of 500 to 800 gpm, and the acquisition of water rights with new development.

Two buried concrete water storage tanks serve two pressure zones within the Town's water system. The majority of the water distribution system is comprised of 4 inch and 6 inch cast iron pipe. Recommended improvements to the water distribution system include the installation of larger pipelines and a pressure reducing station from the lower storage reservoir. The study suggested significant increases in tap fees to pay for system improvements.

## WASTEWATER SYSTEM

As with the Town's water system, Del Norte provides wastewater collection and treatment for approximately 800 homes and businesses within Del Norte and another 65 taps in the West Del Norte Water and Sanitation District.

The wastewater collection system consists primarily of 6 inch to 18 inch vitrified clay pipe installed during the 1930's. An average day flow of .43 MGD is treated at Del Norte's wastewater treatment facility, a three cell lagoon originally constructed in 1957 and upgraded in 1983. The Town's Utility Master Management Plan recommends replacement over time of the vitrified clay pipe with polyvinyl chloride pipe, modifying treatment facility piping, and increasing wastewater system development charges.

## STORMWATER SYSTEM

The Town of Del Norte has very limited defined storm water outfalls or drainage works. The location of the Rio Grande floodplain and a high seasonal water table The 1997 Utility Master Management Plan indicates that the north one-half of town subject to shallow flooding in the event of a 100-year flood.

The Utility Master Management Plan recommendations include the construction of a flood control dike and a series of drainage conduit improvements and outfalls for Del Norte.

The Town recently completed a storm water drainage project consisting of approximately two miles of 42 inch and 24 inch drainage pipe, with some curb drains in paved streets. Additional drains will be installed as needed.

## Del Norte Plan Direction

### *Plan Framework*

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Edges are the existing and future boundaries of the community, and may include unincorporated rural development, prominent natural features, and gateways. Policies are geared toward expansion, compatible land use, coordinated services and attractive entries.

In addition, a Floodplain Overlay is designated that may include portions of the four planning areas, with policies geared toward public safety.

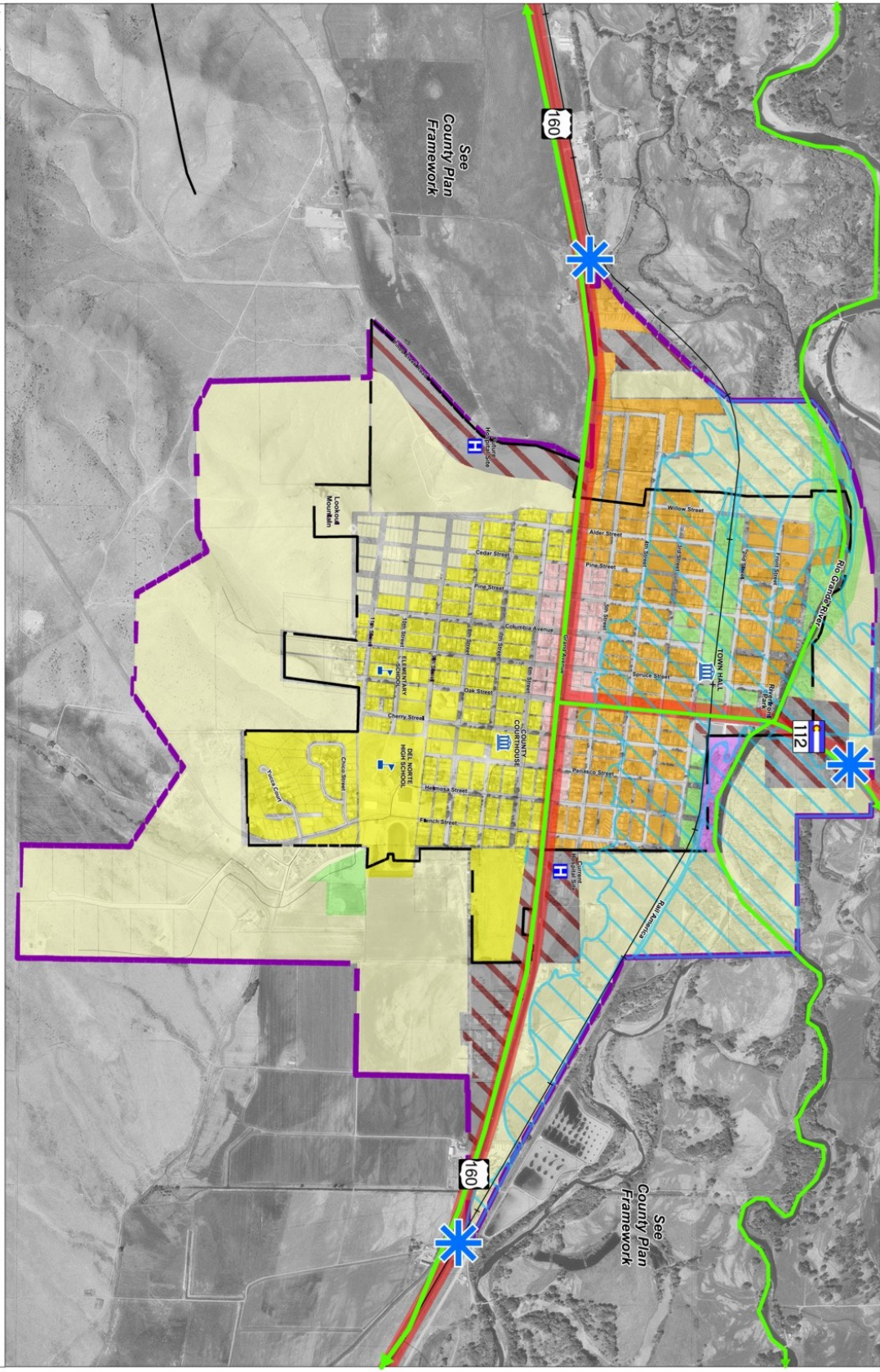
The Table below summarizes population and employment projections for the Del Norte Plan Framework:

Current Population	1,694
2010 Population	1,863
2020 Population	2,049
Current Employment	659
2010 Employment	787
2020 Employment	897

*Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs; HNTB*

# Del Norte Plan Framework

Prepared by: STATE PLANE COORDINATE SOUTH  
 Datum: NAD 27  
 0 0.125 0.25 Miles



- Legend**
- US Highways
  - State Highways
  - Roadways
  - City Limits
  - Local Roads
  - City
  - Hospital
  - School
  - Parade Ground
  - Gateway
- DISTRICTS**
- Downtown District
  - Commercial Industrial District
- NEIGHBORHOODS**
- Medium Density Neighborhoods
  - Low Density Neighborhoods
  - Rural Density Neighborhoods
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- Transportation Corridors
  - Recreation Corridors
- EDGES**
- Edges
- OVERLAY AREAS**
- Feasibility Overlay
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## *Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions*

### VISION STATEMENT

- ❖ Del Norte will balance the retention of its western town community character with the promotion of economic development opportunities.

The Del Norte Plan Framework Map incorporates this vision with prescribed goals, policies and actions for four planning areas: Neighborhoods, Districts, Corridors and Edges. In addition, a Floodplain Overlay is designated that may include portions of the four planning areas.

Neighborhoods are predominantly residential areas that include destinations within walking distance, such as schools, parks, churches and public buildings. Neighborhoods are comprised of three sub areas: Low Density Neighborhoods, Mixed Density Neighborhoods, and Rural Density Neighborhoods.

*Low Density Neighborhoods (LDN)* comprises 205 acres and accounts for 42 percent of Del Norte. The intent of the LDN is to provide stability to residential neighborhoods comprised primarily of single family detached homes on average size lots.

#### LDN Recommended Land Uses

- Single family detached homes.
  - Manufactured homes
  - Mobile Homes (on permanent foundation)
  - Institutional uses such as churches, schools and public buildings.
  - Community parks and trails
- ◆ LDN Goal 1: To maintain the traditional character of single family detached neighborhoods.
- LDN Policy 1.1: The Town shall protect the single family residential character of the LDN area.
    - LDN Action 1.1: Update the Zoning Code to reduce potential density, and revise standards for permitted uses, lot area, streets and alleys that are based on existing development patterns. Time frame: Short-term

*Mixed Density Neighborhoods (MDN)* comprises 131 acres and accounts for 27 percent of Del Norte. The intent of the MDN is to accommodate single family detached and attached homes, manufactured housing, and multi-family structures on a variety of lot sizes.

#### MDN Recommended Land Uses

- Home Occupations
- Apartments
- Duplexes and townhomes
- Assisted living facilities
- Group homes
- Manufactured homes
- Mobile Homes and/or Mobile Home Parks
- Recreational Vehicle Parks

- Single family detached residences.
  - Institutional uses such as churches, schools and public buildings.
  - Community parks and trails
- ◆ MDN Goal 1: To provide a diverse range of available and affordable housing choices to ensure the continued growth of the community.
- MDN Policy 1.1: The Town shall promote the infill of vacant lots in residential neighborhoods north of US 160.
  - MDN Action 1.1: Update the Zoning Code to revise standards for lot area, streets and alleys that are based on existing development patterns. Time frame: Short-term

*Rural Density Neighborhoods (RDN)* comprises 83 acres and accounts for 17 percent of Del Norte. These areas are distinguished by single family detached homes and manufactured housing on large lots, typically two acres and larger in size. The intent of the RDN is to expand the diversity of housing stock and provide a transition to agricultural and open lands.

#### RDN Recommended Land Uses

- Low density single family residences (1 dwelling per 5 acres).
  - Trails and open lands
- ◆ RDN Goal 1: To provide a transition to agricultural and open lands.
- RDN Policy 1.1: The Town shall promote the development of large lot residential subdivisions in Edge Areas.
  - RDN Action 1.1: Update the Zoning Code to include a zoning district and standards for large lot residential development. Time frame: Short-term

Districts are large activity centers of concentrated, non-residential uses. Districts are divided into two sub areas: Downtown District and Commercial Industrial District.

The *Downtown District (DD)* comprises 23 acres and accounts for 5 percent of Del Norte. The intent of the DD is to serve as the economic center of the community.

#### DD Recommended Land Uses

- First Floor Retail
  - First or Second Floor Office
  - Second or Third Floor Residential
  - Hotel
  - Institutional uses such as churches, schools and public buildings.
- ◆ DD Goal 1: To develop an attractive and economically successful downtown.
- DD Policy 1.1: The Town shall focus civic improvements within the Downtown District.
  - DD Action 1.1: Work with business owners and others to explore options for improving parking in the DD. Timeframe: Short-term

- DD Action 1.2: Work with the Colorado Historical Society, property owners and others to prepare an inventory of historic properties. Timeframe: Short-term
- DD Action 1.3: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, telecommunication providers, and others to explore the feasibility on creating a network of wireless fidelity “hot spots” in the DD. Timeframe: Mid-term
- DD Action 1.4: Support the beautification and enhancement of the Downtown District through the incorporation of street banners, new signage and streetscape improvements. Time frame: Mid-term

The *Commercial Industrial District (CID)* comprises 46 acres and accounts for 9 percent of Del Norte. The intent of the CID is for light industrial uses, agricultural industrial and mixed commercial uses with floor area ratios typically less than .50.

- Light industrial
- Agricultural industry
- Business park

◆ CID Goal 1: To facilitate new job creation and economic development opportunities.

- CID Policy 1.1: The Town shall monitor the amount of land zoned for commercial and industrial development to ensure an adequate supply.
  - CID Action 1.1: Work with the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, local businesses and others to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Time frame: Ongoing
  - CID Action 1.2: Work with property owners to rezone vacant or underutilized non-commercial parcels suitable for commercial and industrial development. Time frame: On-going
  - CID Action 1.3: Analyze the potential for annexation of commercial/industrial properties along SH 112 north of town and US 160 east of town. Time frame: Mid-term

Corridors are linear areas that provide a connection between neighborhoods and districts. Corridors are divided into two sub areas: Transportation Corridors and Recreational Corridors.

*Transportation Corridors (TC)* along arterial roads and highways provide a link between major destinations. The intent of the TC is to accommodate highway commercial and transitional uses.

#### TC Recommended Land Uses

- Light Industrial
- Professional Office
- Highway Commercial
- Motels
- Apartments
- Assisted living facilities
- Parks, trails and open lands

- ◆ TC Goal 1: To balance the need to maintain a safe and efficient transportation system with the desire to utilize US Highway 160 and portions of Colorado 112 for development.
  - TC Policy 1.1: The Town shall maintain and improve its road system.
    - TC Action 1.1: Prepare and update a 5 year Capital Improvement Program to pave remaining unpaved streets and add curb, gutter and other drainage improvements. Timeframe: Ongoing
    - TC Action 1.2: Work with CDOT to provide a designated pedestrian crossing at a future lighted intersection west of US 160 and Colorado 112. Time frame: Mid-term
    - TC Action 1.4: Prepare and adopt a Master Street Plan in accordance with C.R.S. 31-23-212. Timeframe: Mid-Term

*Recreational Corridors (RC)* link streams, trails, parks, and natural areas to neighborhoods and/or districts. The intent of the RC is to provide a network for passive and active recreational opportunities.

#### RC Recommended Land Uses

- Parks, trails and open lands
  - Institutional uses such as churches and schools
- ◆ RC Goal 1: To provide active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
    - RC Policy 1.1: The Town shall encourage the development of a regional, community, and neighborhood park system.
      - RC Action 1.1: Work with the County and others to explore the feasibility of creating a recreation district. Time frame: Short-term
      - RC Action 1.2: Identify and secure a site for a future neighborhood park in the LDN south of US Highway 160. Timeframe: Short-term
      - RC Action 1.3: Work with Rail America, GOCO and others to consolidate the railroad right-of-way parcels east of Town Hall for a community park and recreation center. Timeframe: Mid-term
    - RC Policy 2.1: The Town shall encourage the development of a trail system that links parks, institutional uses, commercial areas and neighborhoods.
      - RC Action 2.1: Work with the County to implement the San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Timeframe: Ongoing
      - RC Action 2.2: Work with the Division of Wildlife, GOCO and others to obtain funding for Phase II of River Walk. Timeframe: Mid-Term

- RC Action 2.3: Identify sidewalk and trail improvements necessary to link schools and parks to the River Walk. Timeframe: Long-term

Edges are the existing and future boundaries of the community, and may include unincorporated rural development, vacant land, prominent natural features, and gateways. The intent of Edge Areas (EA) is to accommodate the expansion of Town boundaries while ensuring that community character and identity is maintained.

EA Recommended Land Uses:

- Commercial agricultural and light industrial uses along Colorado 112.
  - Rural density uses along San Francisco Creek Road and south of town.
  - Commercial and institutional uses associated with the new hospital along Pinos Creek Road.
  - Highway commercial and commercial agricultural land uses along the US Highway 160 Corridor.
- ◆ EA Goal 1: To ensure that future annexations foster fiscally responsible growth of the community.
    - EA Policy 1.1: The Town shall base future town expansion and annexation upon the best interests of existing and future residents, property owners and business owners.
      - EA Action 1.1: Update the Town's intergovernmental agreement with Rio Grande County to modify JCA boundaries to include Astronaut Rominger Airport. Time frame: Short-Term
      - EA Action 1.2: Prepare and adopt a Three Mile Area Plan in accordance with C.R.S. 31-12-105 (e). Time frame: Short-term
      - EA Action 1.3: Prepare a model annexation agreement that includes clauses for a fiscal impact study, infrastructure improvements, and land dedications. Time frame: Short-term
      - EA Action 1.4: Work with property owners to annex existing commercial properties along US Highway 160. Time frame: Mid-term
  - ◆ EA Goal 2: To foster the harmonious development of Edge Areas.
    - EA Policy 2.1: The Town shall work cooperatively with the County to encourage sound land use planning.
      - EA Action 2.1: Work with the County to zone areas surrounding Del Norte to be consistent with the Del Norte Plan Framework.
    - EA Policy 2.2: The Town shall coordinate infrastructure and service investments to ensure orderly growth and development.
      - EA Action 2.2: Update the Subdivision Regulations to include adequate public facility provisions. Timeframe: Short-Term

- EA Action 2.3: Update the Subdivision Regulations to require new development to provide water rights or contribute funds for water right purchase. Timeframe: Short-Term
  - EA Action 2.4: Work with the Department of Local Affairs and others to secure funding for improving water system storage capacity. Timeframe: Mid-Term
- EA Policy 2.3: The Town shall zone Edge Areas to meet community objectives.
  - EA Action 2.5: Update the Del Norte Zoning Maps to enable the orderly transition of residential densities, and provide for the provision of compatible commercial and industrial development. Time frame: Mid-term
  - EA Action 2.5: Zone areas adjacent to the new hospital site for future quality commercial development such as medical offices or a hotel. Time frame: Mid-term
- ◆ EA Goal 3: To provide a positive impression of Del Norte to residents, business owners and visitors.
  - EA Policy 3.1: The Town shall enhance its gateways.
    - EA Action 3.1: Work with property owners to relocate, clean up or screen outdoor storage at or near town entries.

Floodplain Overlay is comprised of the portions of Del Norte that are within the designated 100 year floodplain of the Rio Grande River. The intent of the Floodplain Overlay is to protect public health, safety and general welfare.

#### FO Recommended Land Uses

- Parks, trails and open lands
- ◆ FO Goal 1: To ensure public health, safety and welfare within designated floodplain areas.
  - FO Policy 1.1: The Town shall support activities that address the safety of residents in designated floodplain areas.
    - FO Action 1.1: Work with FEMA, the San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority and others to prepare updated flood hazard mapping. Time frame: Short-term
    - FO Action 1.2: Work with FEMA, the Rio Grande Headwaters Trust and others to prepare a Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan. Time frame: Short-term
  - FO Policy 2.1: The Town shall discourage new developments within the 100 year floodplain so as to minimize the risks of potential flood hazards.
    - FO Action 2.1: Update the Zoning Code to require that any new permanent structure within the 100-year floodplain be certified by a professional engineer that it will not alter stream flow or create a flood hazard for downstream properties. Time frame: Short-term

## APPENDIX

RIO GRANDE COUNTY PLAN FRAMEWORK QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Check the box that best represents your opinion about each of the Rio Grande County Plan Framework concepts/options below.	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
1. The Rio Grande County Plan Framework Map provides an appropriate balance between Stable Areas and Opportunity Areas.	28	17	8
2. The County should update its intergovernmental agreements with Monte Vista, Del Norte/ South Fork and Center to address future land development in the Cooperative Planning Areas.	50	7	2
3a. The County should remain rural, with most residential, commercial and industrial development concentrated within Community Areas.	34	3	23
3b. The County should update its zoning map to provide for new residential, commercial and industrial development within the Cooperative Planning Areas.	50	2	4
3c. The County should allow residential, commercial and industrial development in all Opportunity areas.	27	4	25
4a. The County should create a new zoning district to recognize agricultural uses on parcels greater than 80 acres in size.	25	21	13
4b. The County should create a new zoning district to recognize rural residential uses on parcels greater than 35 acres in size.	26	16	18
4c. The County should encourage property owners to rezone to appropriate zoning districts by waiving fees.	19	22	15
5a. The County should provide incentives (such as a Conservation Subdivision process) for landowners to preserve agricultural lands.	37	8	15
5b. The County should consider allowing non-agricultural uses on agricultural lands on a case-by-case basis.	40	9	11
6a. The County should adopt a building code.	48	8	7
6b. The County's zoning permit process is adequate.	14	23	23
7a. The County road system and maintenance is adequate.	32	7	19
7b. All County roads should meet the following minimum rural road standard: two lanes, graded gravel surface with shoulders.	47	6	7
8a. The County should require new rural residential subdivisions to incorporate defensible space techniques that protect life and property from wildfires.	55	2	6
8b. The County should develop access road standards for fire trucks and emergency services within new rural residential subdivisions.	52	2	16
8c. The County should encourage rural residential property owners to obtain information about wildland fire protection.	47	9	5
9a. The County should restrict development that requires septic systems in areas with excessively poor soils.	32	7	21
9b. The County should require percolation tests for septic systems.	39	14	10
10a. The County should restrict development in areas constrained by steep slopes and prohibit construction on slopes greater than 33 percent.	35	15	13
10b. The County should require hazard mitigation in areas with slopes greater than 16 percent.	33	16	12
10c. The County should encourage property owners on steep slopes to obtain information on mitigating slope hazards.	54	7	2
11a. The County should prohibit new permanent structures within the 100-year floodplain.	22	7	32

11b. The County should require that any new permanent structure within the 100-year floodplain be certified by a professional engineer that it will not alter stream flow.	35	7	18
11c. The County should maintain its current requirement that new permanent structures are allowed within the 100-year floodplain as long as they are raised at least 1-foot above base flood elevation.	37	8	19
12a. The County should protect the Rio Grande River by requiring a 100-foot stream setback for new buildings.	36	6	22
12b. The County should protect the Rio Grande River by requiring a 50-foot stream setback for new buildings.	9	7	36
12c. The County should encourage property owners along the Rio Grande River to setback structures at an appropriate distance.	30	7	22
13a. The County should provide subdivision guidelines for land developers to protect significant wildlife habitats and migration corridors.	47	5	12
13b. There are ample areas to support wildlife habitats in the County including the Rio Grande National Forest and State Wildlife Refuges. Additional regulations are unnecessary.	26	8	22
14a. The County should focus on retaining existing businesses.	58	4	0
14b. The County should encourage the re-use of existing vacant potato warehouses as “incubators” for starting new businesses.	38	15	8
14c. The County should attract businesses that add value to the agricultural economy, e.g., potato chips manufactured from potatoes.	59	3	2
15a. The County should try to diversify the economy by targeting/attracting non-agricultural related businesses.	55	3	4
15b. The County should work with telecommunication providers to increase fiber optic line speed/capacity, improve cellular signals and/or add wireless fidelity (wi/fi) “hot spots”.	49	11	1
15c. Cottage/home-based industries should be located within Community Areas and not in the unincorporated county.	11	19	32
16a. RV parks should be located within Community Areas and are not appropriate in the unincorporated county.	23	11	29
16b. The County should update its zoning to allow RV parks in Cooperative Planning Areas outside of Community Areas.	33	11	15
17a. The County should work with Monte Vista, Del Norte and South Fork to create a recreation district.	45	9	8
17b. Each Community Area should provide for its own recreation needs.	19	18	25
18a. The County should encourage land exchanges that result in more public lands.	12	21	27
18b. Rio Grande County has an adequate amount of public lands.	38	13	9

## RIO GRANDE COUNTY PLAN FRAMEWORK COMMENTS

- Need more areas of the County for Industrial and Commercial zoning. Try to eliminate spot zoning and keep zoning areas so they don't conflict with one another.
- More coordination should be given to fire protection in the rural county areas.
- Please address highway safety (speed limit, AC/DC lanes) on US 160 east of South Fork to the rest area. New development should pay its way in terms of access to US 160. There has to be communication between Rio Grande County and CDOT before zoning changes are approved.
- My main objection: too little input from members of the general public. Not enough attention being paid to determining general consensus as to what sort of community we want Rio Grande County and the towns to become.
- Maintain the floodplain integrity! Better interaction between county and towns.
- A New Boys and Girls Club facility. A new Ski Hi type facility.
- Cooperative areas seems fairly large around the municipalities.
- Last comment of presenter #2 at end of describing Opportunity Area – commercial acceptable in future. Speed on Hwy 160 - 65 most areas.
- Over 1 million acres of agricultural land was lost in Colorado in 2003 to development of residential, commercial and industrial uses. The small family farm is becoming a memory of the past as the farms are surrounded by houses, and water once used to irrigate and replace the water in the aquifer is now being sucked up by the developments. Augmentation plans are a farce if they don't include a recharge plan to replace the damage done by dry up and drilling of wells. The county should be doing more to protect the agricultural areas. There are plenty of non-agricultural areas for development and growth. There are other ways of disposing of sewage than the cesspool and leach field method. The County needs to upgrade the regulations to embrace modern technology in this area. What is being done regarding sewage disposal in floodplains and areas along waterways. Before it becomes an issue there should be something to protect groundwater and waterways as a result of industrial and commercial development. Strict zoning regulations should be in place regarding fire wells, access to firefighting and emergency equipment in all areas of Rio Grande County. New development should not be approved unless it is part of the plan for development. Buffer zones for protection from wildfire should be required.
- Agriculture areas should remain ag related. Corners should not be divided off of farm circles; too many people are buying these corners who do not understand the farming and ranching process. Those people make it difficult to continue efficient ag processes. The complain about dust, harvest/planting equipment, pesticides/fertilizer, animal "odors", airplanes and other ag related procedures. The County should preserve farm and ranch areas from development. Every year, acreage is lost to developments. We need the land to support our county's needs as well as the worlds. Everyone wants to leave the city for country living, but they don't want or realize the meaning of county living.
- The plan seems to take into account present directions of growth with realistic projections for the future. I like the idea that agriculture still has a place in this valley, since it is such a strong part of our history, and is one of the things tha have made R.G. County what it is today. I still hope for some sort of industrial growth that is both non-polluting, and that won't be of the boom and bust nature that seems so common now. My biggest concern is balancing tourist growth (which we need), with protection of the quality of life and population density, that can ruin the very reasons people came here in the first place.
- Airport-Industrial-Commercial-sewer/H2O system needed.

- Not too bad at this time but much needs to be done unity, has to come together and voted by the people not all our representatives stand for good causes and don't want change. County needs to look at each town in its County and see what can really benefit everyone this will help the tax base get more tourism not only in one town but spread it out; MV is a great example of tourism stops. Needs more, and county needs to handle the funding because of the expertise. City cannot handle funding right because lack of professionalism people.
- To say there should be no development in the 100 year floodplain would eliminate much of the private land between Monte Vista and Del Norte. I think the current county regulation is adequate. I don't like the strip zoning I see happening along the highway 160 leading into South Fork on the east side. We need some industrial zoning. If by hazard mitigation you mean make those lots with steep slopes large enough to accommodate a home on a site with not more than a 16% slope, I agree. People don't want to build new homes in the towns. They want to be out of town (less regulation-better views.) River homes shouldn't obstruct stream flow. Septic tank shouldn't pollute river. Teach people to be a benefit, not a detriment to river health.
- The Nicholson Ranch in Sec 29 T40N R4E N.M.P.M. should not be in the Stable Area as it adjoins Alpine Village to the west and already has a mini subdivision. The L&S Ranch located on the map just west of Hwy 160 logo is already divided and parcels are being sold.
- The stream buffer groups are absolutely on the wrong track. The biggest problem with the river is the drought. The second biggest problem is the farmers pulling 1250 gallons per minute out of their wells when we have a drought.
- The Nicholson Ranch, approx. 350 acres, located in Section 29, T40N, R4E NMPM should be included in the Opportunity Area because this property ajoins Alpine Village #5 on its west boundary line and would be a consistent continuation for residential development to the east. Also, River Dance Ranch has been granted preliminary approval for (10) 2+ acre River Front lots and is all within the Nicholson Ranch property.
- I believe the county is behind the times and needs to get going on a plan. Also, we need to try and attract business that would help the community and not harm the environment. Also we need to keep our ranch and farm land from being developed in the future. We need to have a structured building code that works for the county and is enforced equally. Large property developers need to pay the upfront cost on roads and utilities and not burden the taxpayer. Fire department access needs to be considered on all new developments along with water source.
- With tax funds being inadequate for all the potential projects it seems wise to put projects of less need even though they would be "fun" to have on "undesired" status. Let's pay for the necessities before we go to recreational projects such as a recreation district. Priority should be necessities (fire protection, police protection, safety, etc.) then environmental care and conservation. If there are funds left blow it on the trivia if it has to be spent by those in control of the county dollars. Nothing wrong with saving and/or reducing taxes. It's too easy to spend someone else's money!
- We need to protect the river corridor + our agricultural lands! I strongly support a river set back of 100 feet or from the 100 year floodplain. The county needs to encourage conservation easements on our ag land. Get advice from Conejos + Saguache counties on language. They both have good language for preserving farmland.
- I feel there is a need for planning & regulations-but too many rules & restrictions will slow or halt growth.

- San Francisco Creek should not be classified as an Opportunity Area. It is stable. No further development will occur as all lots are purchased + about 1/3 are built upon. 18b. - I would like to see more river access. Areas where you can go to enjoy the river, river's edge.
- Need fewer regs, less government
- 1. River bottom development should be controlled because of flooding. It will happen again and the tax payers will have to help pay the expenses. 9a. – The wording “poor soils” means a lot of things. If you mean high water areas then development should be restricted. 18b- More public land means less property taxes. We need less public lands. 12a. A hundred feet set back is not enough the river changes to much.
- Does it go far enough, are there more questions to be asked. Should we join with the other cities/towns mentioned and attempt to get industry. I think the Agri people have had to much say – it seems people are afraid to voice an opinion. The city should have the largest voice but I see no reason why we can't work together with the county as a central focus.
- I encourage the County to plan development instead of allowing it to occur haphazardly. I also encourage the county to restrict development along the Rio Grande to preserve the riparian corridor & for watershed protection.
- We are not counties – we are a Valley & have to include in planning the whole valley – not just county lines.
- The County needs to address jobs for new comers. Water & electricity for new business & residents.
- In regards to all pcs. of framework-there needs to be more diversity – i.e. manufacturing that incorporates more than agri needs. Is the landfill going to be adequate? What about a large scale recycle center, located close to rail & or hwy. systems?
- Need industrial jobs, other than just farm related, but needs to be diversified-where our future generations will want & can afford to stay here.
- Why are we paying to have a picnic. This may not pertain to this questionnaire but it really bothers me.
- Rio Grande County should forget wasteful spending money on improving the airport in Del Norte and take a good look at the Monte Vista Airport which already has a good runway. It just doesn't make sense! We need laws and (or) enforcement of laws concerning trashy sites in the County.
- Would like to have more info on County business to be published in local newspapers. When county business decisions are made inform taxpayers why decision was made. Also improve County's image by creating and enforcing laws on “trashy” properties. It seems that a lot of taxpayers money is being considered to improve the Del Norte airport that is not very safe and cannot be made much safer due to proximity to foothills. Monte Vista has a much better airport that could be utilized by Del Norte and South Fork and taxpayers money spent there.
- Re: 3C: is this wording not really meant? Why would the Co. allow industrial dev. in mtn. areas? 4a. Why? I'd like to know more of rationale.4b Why? 4c. This seems pointless and unneeded. 6a. It's going to happen anyway. Please DO NOT use the most recent UBC-it's way too intrusive and restrictive. 7b. Where do they not now meet standards? Does it really matter? 9a. Please talk with your counterparts at Pagosa. You will find that there are systems (engineered) that work where common septic won't. Therefore, some dev. Id OK & acceptable. 9b. Why haven't you done this before? 10 a. &b. Where do these %ages come from? 11a.-c. 1 ft. might not be enough. Alamosa County requires 4 ft. & that works. 12 a.& b. It's possible in places that 20-25 ft. is adequate. I agree that homes should NOT be built hanging over the river. 14 b. How? You don't own the buildings. 14 c. How many times does this have to be tried when it has failed endlessly? 15 c. Massively stupid idea. Delete this. Do you mean an accountant or computer

programmer etc. can't have a home business on a farm? Why be forced to be in town? Who thought this up? Farming is industrial anyway. This notion is way too restrictive, almost socialistic.

- Concern that riverfront property will degrade river quality, fishery, wildlife habitat and increase siltation and flood potential. If setbacks will not work due to different land stability and relation to steep slopes, set standards for retention of protective vegetation for stream bank stability and protection of habitat. Create a county mindset for river protection and recreation. This will increase property values as well as a sense of stewardship. Ag land must be preserved for future generations, health of river and habitat. The County should extend their responsibility for stewardship of river corridor with landowner agreements and partnership.

MONTE VISTA PLAN FRAMEWORK QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Check the box that best represents your opinion about each of the Monte Vista Plan Framework concepts/options below.	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
1. The Monte Vista Plan Framework Map provides an appropriate balance between residential Neighborhood Areas and commercial Districts and Corridors.	23	10	11
2. The Monte Vista Plan Framework Map provides an appropriate balance between Low Density, Mixed Density, and Rural Density Neighborhoods.	16	14	14
3a. The City should coordinate with the County on land use planning and service provision for the Cooperative Planning Area outside of city limits.	42	3	3
3b. The City should defer to County zoning and land use policies outside city limits.	23	13	13
4a. The existing boundaries of Monte Vista should be expanded via annexations to accommodate future growth.	31	9	8
4b. The City should perform a cost / benefit analysis prior to any annexation to determine if potential tax revenues will offset infrastructure costs.	47	1	1
4c. The City should focus on infill/redevelopment projects and infrastructure improvements within current City limits before pursuing future annexations.	27	6	15
5a. The City should actively rezone vacant and/or nonconforming properties to their highest and best use.	35	3	7
5b. All rezoning requests/proposals should be initiated by the property owner.	21	8	20
6a. The City should balance housing growth with commercial growth by establishing "growth pays its own way" policies.	29	9	8
6b. The City should encourage housing growth to ensure a continued supply of available and affordable housing in a variety of price ranges.	35	4	9
7a. The City road system and maintenance is adequate.	7	8	34
7b. The City should pave its remaining unpaved streets, adding curb, gutter, and other drainage improvements.	41	8	2
8a. There is ample parking for businesses in Monte Vista.	16	4	30
8b. The City should improve access to Hwy 160 businesses.	24	10	7
9a. RV parks and campgrounds should be developed in the Cooperative Planning Area outside Monte Vista.	34	5	5
9b. The San Luis Valley Information Center should either be improved or relocated to a more prominent location to capture a larger percentage of visitors to the Crane Festival.	5	7	37
10a. The City should work with telecommunication providers to increase fiber optic line speed/capacity, improve cellular signals and/or add wireless fidelity (wi/fi) "hot spots".	43	5	1
10b. Monte Vista should focus on retaining existing businesses and attracting retail for residents, such as a clothing store.	50	1	0
11a. Monte Vista should promote its agriculture heritage, and reestablish the Farmers Market.	42	5	2

11b. Monte Vista needs to attract manufacturing jobs associated with the agricultural industry.	45	4	1
12a. The City should improve its water system in order to sufficiently meet fire flow demands.	35	10	4
12b. The City should require all new developments to install sprinkler systems for fire protection.	18	12	18
13. The City should improve its overall storm sewer system to adequately handle existing and future drainage requirements.	32	11	2
14a. The Ski Hi Complex, Monte Vista Golf Course and park system adequately serve Monte Vista's recreational needs.	16	6	26
14b. The City should expand the Monte Vista Golf Course to an 18 hole regulation golf course and market it for tourism.	20	5	20
15a. The City should work with the County and other communities to form a recreation district.	34	7	6
15b. The City should construct a new facility for the Boys and Girls Club.	19	12	18
15c. The City should investigate the feasibility of constructing a community recreation center for Monte Vista residents of all ages.	33	5	12
16a. The City should consider leasing the Ski Hi Complex for revenue generating events such as a private flea market.	41	4	4
16b. The City should work with the County and create a master plan for renovating the Ski Hi Complex that could include a recreation center.	42	2	3
16c. The City should build a new facility to replace the existing Ski Hi Complex.	17	6	24
17a. The sidewalks and trails in Monte Vista are adequate to serve pedestrians and cyclists.	10	9	31
17b. The City should investigate the feasibility of creating a bike/pedestrian trail system along drainage ditches and canals.	33	7	11
17c. The City should develop a bike/pedestrian trail system to connect Monte Vista with Home Lake State Park and the Rio Grande River.	32	7	10
18a. The Town should encourage the listing of additional historic properties on the State or National Historic Register by providing information on tax credits to eligible property owners.	32	10	6
18b. Individual property owners should be solely responsible for determining interest in registering their buildings for consideration on the State or National Historic Register.	17	11	14

## MONTE VISTA PLAN FRAMEWORK COMMENTS

- Monte Vista needs to work on getting new residences and they need to work with the Ski Hi Stampede Committee to utilize all the facilities within the Ski Hi Complex as well as any other organization that can help utilize the facilities to the best level possible.
- There is a need to encourage the redevelopment of lots in the city to remove dilapidated structure and encourage new construction. Make city more attractive to new businesses. Maintain current businesses.
- Monte Vista needs to take on more partnerships in maintaining Ski Park. Also the same for recreational trails. Monte Vista should not annex any more areas until all of the existing infrastructure is brought up to current standards.
- Monte Vista should live within its means. Do not annex without cost benefit analyses.
- Good Idea to renovate existing buildings downtown. Tear down the corner building across from Merit Drug (to the east). Use for parking since spots were taken downtown. Good idea to expand the golf course and attract some of South Fork's crowd who may want to play another course without leaving the valley.
- The MV framework is good already but the city needs to involve more taxpayers input on a lot of these developments. MV needs more mobile home zoning not only housing. MV needs to promote more business growth to generate revenue right now priorities are very mixed up. The water rates are very ridiculous since not much water is used during winter months. MV Ski Hi facility is a good building that needs to be promoted for various functions as well as athletics the update can be generated through grant money. MV & County need to look at getting tourism to stop here, a small casino is a great way, look at Taos and Espanola as a great example that roads are great now & not on the price of the taxpayers but on tourism, we would have more and better security on law enforcement and tourists would come from all over to support the cause, because the majority of people take this as good clean entertainment.
- Don't go into debt with projects that are not necessary. Just wanting something does not make it necessary.
- We feel that housing is adequate because there are many houses for sale, that have been on the market for a long time. Instead of so much new housing, there should be incentives for people who could buy and improve houses that are for sale. The water situation is very strict and expensive for homeowners that want to keep their lawns and gardens going. We should be considerate of homeowners like the city is considerate of the golf course.
- The Lariat Irrigation Company would be interested to make a bike trail beside the ditch work – If – the Company were not liable for anyone injuring themselves while on the ditch right of way. That could be a benefit to both the ditch and people for bike trails through the city.
- How could we stand by and do nothing while Alamosa grows? We need a City Council with nerve, smarts and the balls to shake the City when they have to. I hope the new City Mgr will be aggressive & have the backing of the City Council. We have to do something with our young grown-ups. – they do not want to work. Don't they have any ambition? The City doesn't seem to care about anything! They are 25 years behind the times. There is no growth, it seems like the agri people do what is good for them & don't care if it's good for the City.
- I encourage the city of MV to plan development instead of letting it occur haphazardly. Existing park facilities & Ski Hi need to be updated & improved, possibly with GOCO money. I encourage the City to annex land east of town to increase the tax base.
- Boys and girls club---some think it is for people who can't take care of their own children---I think this is a problem in perception and needs to be worked on before a building is created---isn't there something they can buy and remodel? Put some bike trails in---there is nowhere to ride safely around here!

- I like what was done to Adams St. The City should do the same w/ 1<sup>st</sup> Street/Hwy 160. I also like the fencing around Fullenweider Park & the cleanup of it and Chapman. We think the same should be done to the other two parks across from Marsh School. The entry of M.V. also needs to be improved upon. It's not real inviting. Need to establish a connection between downtown and the "Sonic Area". A recreation center is a great idea. It needs to be year-a-round with several activities (i.e., basketball, volleyball, outdoor rollerblade hockey & fitness center). It would be great to maintain and bring in new businesses (i.e. clothing) so we don't have to go out of town.
- Again you need to think of jobs & water issues if there is an increase in people & businesses.
- Ski-Hi Complex-needs more elaboration i.e.-what types of activities would occur there? Does this also address the long history and tradition of the Ski Hi Stampede? Where does it fit into this plan? Have 4-H activities also been addressed at Ski Hi Park?
- We need more industrial jobs, not only just farm related...it needs to be diversified-need good clothing & shoe stores on main street-good lumber yard-competitive prices in Monte Vista, where people will want to shop here-we need to make Monte Vista stable with jobs, so that future generations will want and can afford to stay here.
- We need more shopping, bigger hardware stores, having the movie theater on Adams to have a 1:00 O'clock movie for \$1 to \$3.00 for mothers during school time. Have a Seniors day once a month and give them big discounts on food & movies and maybe free rides to town. Get rid of half the dogs in town. There's no reason for people to have more than 2 dogs. Crack down on these people. Raise the fines. After 3 calls sock it to them. That's my biggest complaint and I have an inside dog.
- We were told since we were the last to buy a lot on our street (completely filling the street) that our street would be paved. Never happened. We certainly need a working animal control officer, in town. There is more dogs running our streets than there is in the country. There should be sufficient charges assessed to these roaming dogs which would encourage owners to keep them at home. We need laws and (or) enforcement of laws to clean up the trashy properties in the city. We need to keep highway 160 where it is to encourage tourists to visit our wonderful city. We need to find ways to encourage more volunteerism, and better news coverage of city business and happenings.
- The city needs to address the general appearance of existing property. Also needs to try to get more city residents to volunteer for community projects. Does not seem that there is much community pride in the city. Also city needs to encourage local newspaper to start covering local events in a timely matter. Need an effective dog and nuisance ordinance and see that it is enforced. Resident should try to support local business and merchants should try to persuade their supplier to hold down prices. We need a much better lumber yard that wants to do business here. Too many sales tax dollars are going to Alamosa.
- The maps are very difficult to read. Ref. #2: What mixed density? Can't be found on the map. There appears to be NO provision for apartments, only SFR. That's not good planning. #4: Maybe, but where? Forced annexation is not possible under state law, except when the city surrounds an area completely, e.g. East Drive. That was part of the Sherman lawsuit, as rates were raised to force annexation. Annexing is fine IF owners are willing. Flagpole is not legal or acceptable. 5a & b. Rezoning should be with mutual consent and be logical. The city should NOT rezone in ANY way that injures property values or diminishes owners rights. 8b. How! What is inaccessible? 9a. By whom? Does anyone want to. If so, follow county regs. 9b. You just built it! How stupid to consider moving it, esp. to Sherman. There is nowhere to put it, visible & accessible. Send reps to Crane Fest, not the entire blessed building. A truly dumb idea. 12a. What does fire dept suggest? Follow its advice; they know more. 12 b. Commercial yes, homes not. 13. Please do not listen to Black & Veatch, who want you to hire them to do expensive, unnecessary work. The Sherman people have the evidence to prove a new, larger line is unnecessary. The Sherman line is way oversize now. Call xxx- he has lots of info. 14. The golf course is for an elite few. The towns people would be served better by making it a real park, do

golf elsewhere. This is the ONLY town I've ever seen that believes highways and RR strips are parks. They're not. 16a. So that fellow went to see you, too, eh? He has no money; that's why he wouldn't buy a place. Why do you always choose the most downscale ideas to pursue? Sure, events should be scheduled, but not schlock. 16 c. Another truly dumb idea. Ski Hi is structurally OK, but ugly! You can't afford to fix it now. Where's money for a new facility. Suggestions: 1. Put siding or stucco on outside. People do not like to look at ugly bldgs, or go in them. If you have money, spend it on making the bldg. attractive. That would have the added benefit of covering those hideously ugly paintings on the side. 2. Renovate the swimming pool. 3. Inside, cover the walls with something. Concrete block is ugly. 4. Add insulation. 5. Add baffles or something not ugly for better acoustics. 17b. What ditch co. will allow city to use their easements? You can ask them but they don't have to agree. 17c. How pointless. A waste of \$ & energy & city workers time. Until the State aggress to fix Home Lake – meaning dredging the garbage out& deepening & getting a better water right to fill the lake, it's useless. I do agree it could be a wonderful asset as a town park – can you get the State to give you the property? That would be worthwhile.

- Property outside the MV city limits on the Rio Grande should be considered for City recreational paths for hiking, biking, bird watching and connect to the annual Crane Festival events. This land (along river also inside City limits) should be preserved for wildlife, bird corridor, also to maintain waster quality and flows. Development on river should have a setback to maintain a "natural quality". This would increase property value and tax value for city. Agricultural property remain as ag-if property is offered for sale, consider conservation easement as open space along river or adequate setback for contiguous protection connecting with State wildlife areas. Expansion of housing south of Hwy 160 and available lands not in Agric. North, east and west. Keep Hwy access to businesses. Maintain downtown beautification wit consideration of Hwy 160 bypassing downtown (CDOT). Idea to build trails along river and canal would increase access to river and healthy activities for youth and elderly as well.
- The businesses we have downtown jump at me at the front door with " Can I help you"-a person walked in after I did they didn't ask that person a word but they asked me three times within I minute will I go back-No!

**RIO GRANDE COUNTY JOINT MASTER PLAN  
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DEL NORTE PLAN FRAMEWORK QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Check the box that best represents your opinion about each of the Del Norte Plan Framework concepts/options below.	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
1. The Del Norte Plan Framework Map provides an appropriate balance between residential Neighborhood Areas and commercial Districts and Corridors.	9	6	7
2. The Del Norte Plan Framework Map provides an appropriate balance between Low Density, Mixed Density, and Rural Density Neighborhoods.	9	5	8
3a. The City should coordinate with the County on land use planning and service provision for the Cooperative Planning Area outside of city limits.	20	2	1
3b. The Town should defer to County zoning and land use policies outside Town limits.	14	8	1
4a. The existing boundaries of Del Norte should be expanded via annexations to accommodate future growth.	13	8	2
4b. The Town should perform a cost / benefit analysis to determine if potential tax revenues from annexation will offset infrastructure costs.	22	1	0
4c. The Town should focus on infill/redevelopment projects and infrastructure improvements within current Town limits before pursuing future annexations.	14	4	4
5a. The Town should actively rezone vacant and/or nonconforming properties to their highest and present use.	18	3	0
5b. All rezoning requests/proposals should be initiated by the property owner.	12	3	7
6a. The Town should balance housing growth with commercial growth by establishing "growth pays its own way" policies.	18	1	2
6b. The Town should encourage housing growth to ensure a continued supply of available and affordable housing in a variety of price ranges.	16	5	0
7a. The Town road system and maintenance is adequate.	1	3	18
7b. The Town should pave its remaining unpaved streets, adding curb, gutter, and other drainage improvements.	19	2	2
8a. The Town should work with the business community to develop a strategic economic development plan and program.	20	1	0
8b. The Town should work with the business community to promote the special qualities of Del Norte (e.g., antiques, railroad, river).	23	0	1
8c. The Town should work with telecommunication providers to increase fiber optic line speed/capacity, improve cellular signals and/or add wireless fidelity (wi/fi) "hot spots".	19	1	1
9a. There is ample parking for businesses in Del Norte.	10	2	12
9b. The Town should address limited parking for businesses by providing striping for parking spaces.	14	7	3
10a. The Town should attract quality businesses near the new hospital site including but not limited to medical businesses and a hotel.	19	4	1
10b. The Town should limit development around the new hospital site to lessen potential congestion along Pinos Creek Road and retain Del Norte's natural town edge.	10	3	12

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11a. The Town should improve water system storage capacity to serve future development.	18	4	0
11b. The Town should require all new developments provide water rights or contribute funds for water right purchase.	19	4	0
11c. The Town should increase tap fees to pay for water system improvements.	8	8	5
12a. The Town should relocate Town Hall offices from the Train Depot to the Police Station or Town Maintenance building.	6	12	6
12b. The Del Norte Train Depot should be retained by the Town or a non-profit group for community use.	13	6	3
12c. The Town should work with a private developer to use the Del Norte Train Depot for attracting tourism.	15	6	2
13a. The Town should consider acquiring the vacant railroad blocks west of Town Hall for development of a community park and recreation center.	20	4	0
13b. The Town should work with the County and other communities to form a recreation district.	16	3	4
14a. The current parks in the northern portion of the Town along with the County facilities southeast of town adequately serve Del Norte's recreational needs.	1	11	12
14b. The Town should develop an outdoor skate park.	11	7	6
14c. The Town should add more parks on the south side of Del Norte.	14	8	1
15a. The Town should develop a trail system linking its parks and schools with the Riverwalk.	19	4	0
15b. The Town should pursue additional grant funding for the extension of the River Walk along the Rio Grande River.	20	1	1
15c. Properties along the Rio Grande River should be developed for their highest and best use.	14	5	2
16a. The Town should prohibit new permanent structures within the 100-year floodplain.	11	5	7
16b. The Town should require that any new permanent structure within the 100-year floodplain be certified by a professional engineer that it will not alter stream flow.	12	4	6
16c. The Town should maintain its current requirement that new permanent structures are allowed within the 100-year floodplain as long as they are raised at least 1-foot above base flood elevation.	10	7	5
17a. The Town should protect the Rio Grande River by requiring a 100-foot stream setback for new buildings.	13	3	8
17b. The Town should protect the Rio Grande River by requiring a 50-foot stream setback for new buildings.	3	6	13
17c. The Town should encourage property owners along the Rio Grande River to setback structures at an appropriate distance.	11	2	11
18a. The Town should prepare an inventory of historic properties for consideration on the State or National Historic Register.	16	5	1
18b. Individual property owners should be solely responsible for determining interest in registering their buildings for consideration on the State or National Historic Register.	11	5	5

## RIO GRANDE COUNTY JOINT MASTER PLAN DRAFT PLAN

### DEL NORTE PLAN FRAMEWORK COMMENTS

- Del Norte is a sleepy little town that needs to be woke up. Over the years, many businesses have closed or moved. Need to promote new business and zone for commercial, parking. Clean up town and especially the Hwy 160 entrances and Hwy 112 entrance. Attractive approaches help sell the town and stop more people to help the town's economy.
- If it were not for the County offices, Del Norte would not have any business, so to speak. County workers eat at restaurants and patronize some business out of convenience. Del Norte should find ideas for supporting South Fork growth, such as affordable housing for people who work in S.F., affordable gift shops – cater to people who want the S.F. experience without the price, maybe a pro shop, or affordable tourist gifts.
- I think the plan is basically realistic, with possibly the population projections. Del Norte is a small, friendly, town with racial harmony that seems to be the best in the valley. Unfortunately, there isn't much here to encourage permanent residents. And the majority of our young people usually go elsewhere seeking opportunities that we can't furnish. I would like to see more and longer bike and hiking paths; also, over the years our city streets have become a series of poorly paved ditches, connected by even poorer pavement. I realize the problem in Del Norte is the same that dogs small towns everywhere, lack of operating funds. It's also difficult to raise fees and taxes in an economically depressed area. The answer to these and other problems will require much creative thinking, hopefully we have the people who can do that.
- How will you pay for all the various projects. Be certain that growth pays for its self. The people living here at present do not want to subsidize more growth. If taxes go up that is a response to growth which the present taxpayer should not have to finance.
- City needs to do everything possible to get the County to work in concert with the City's short term & long term planning. A decision by the County can effect future growth by the city in a positive or negative way. Decisions by the County to allow a pig farm on the outside of City limits, will grandfather it if & when the city wants to annex that area. It will also determine the desirability of businesses that would be more consistent with the Del Norte Business Community image. The Town and County must work off the same page with the same goals.
- City needs to try to clean up properties and try to eliminate trashy areas. Need to encourage residents to volunteer and participate in community affairs. The county needs to try and meet year around residents and not cater to developers and part time residents. Tax dollars need to be dispersed to areas that need them and quit catering to special interests and the "good old boy" system.
- The plan addresses floodplain issues and protection of property should the city no longer allow building in floodplain. Protection and preservation of river corridor is addressed through river parks and recreational trails. The city can expand south, SE, and SW where water is available. A central water system and sewage system is essential for growth and housing. Infrastructure must first be addressed prior to expansion.

## **RIO GRANDE COUNTY JOINT MASTER PLAN DRAFT PLAN**

### Funding Sources

There are a variety of funding sources which local business owners, developers, and governmental agencies can pursue to meet the financial needs of the proposed recommendations. This plan is a first step towards securing some of the financing needed. Most Federal and State funding programs require communities to undertake planning studies such as these to qualify for funding. The following section provides a summary of the currently available financing techniques that Rio Grande County, Del Norte and Monte Vista could pursue to achieve the vision of this Master Plan.

#### Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA)

Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA) will be the major source of federal funding for all transportation projects in the United States. Authorization is expected in late 2004 or early 2005.

#### Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

The basic concept behind Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is that the redevelopment of the area approved as a redevelopment district will increase the equalized assessed valuation of the property, thereby generating new revenues to a community that can be used to pay for specified costs of a redevelopment project. These costs may include construction of public facilities within a redevelopment area. Property taxes and other revenues generated by the existing development in a legislatively defined redevelopment district are frozen when the redevelopment is approved by the local government and the increased property tax and a portion of other revenues generated by the new development are captured and placed in a special fund to pay for the costs of redeveloping the area.

#### Community Development Block Grants

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) provide eligible metropolitan cities with annual direct grants that can be used to revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing and economic opportunities, and improve community facilities and services, principally to benefit low and moderate income persons. Although the rehabilitation of affordable housing has traditionally been the largest single use of CDBG funds, the program is also an increasingly important catalyst for economic development activities.

In order for any project to be considered for CDBG funding, it must meet one of the three broad "national objectives" established by Congress. A CDBG project must benefit low and moderate income persons; prevent or eliminate slums and blight; or meet an urgent community development need. Primary emphasis is usually placed on the objective to benefit low and moderate income persons. The Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) will be accepting applications for Small Cities (Non-entitlement) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) public facility projects.

Projects designed to remove material and architectural barriers that restrict the mobility and accessibility of elderly or handicapped persons are eligible for assistance with CDBG funds. Acquisition, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation or installation of public facilities that meet community development objectives are also eligible to be

## **RIO GRANDE COUNTY JOINT MASTER PLAN DRAFT PLAN**

assisted with CDBG funds. Public facility improvements may be to publicly owned properties or properties owned by private non-profit entities that serve the public. Examples of public facility improvements include neighborhood facilities, centers for the handicapped, senior centers, utilities, streets and sidewalks, water and sewer facilities, parks, and shelters for persons with special needs.

### Conservation Trust Fund

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) distributes Conservation Trust Fund monies from net Lottery proceeds to over 400 eligible local governments: counties, cities, towns and eligible special districts that provide park and recreation services. Funding can be used for interests in land and water, park or recreation purposes, for all types of open space, including but not limited to floodplains, green belts, agricultural lands or scenic areas and for any scientific, historic, scenic, recreation, aesthetic or similar purpose (CRS 29-21-101).

### Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO)

Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund\_(GOCO) awards grants to projects that preserve and enhance Colorado's open space, parks, outdoor recreation, wildlife, rivers and trails. There are five competitive grant programs: Legacy, Open Space, Local Government Parks, Outdoor Recreation & Environmental Education Facilities, Trails, and Planning/Capacity Building. GOCO also awards grants through the Colorado Division of Wildlife and Colorado State Parks. Matching requirements for local governments range from 25 percent to 50 percent, with a minimum of 10 percent to 25 percent of the total project cost as a cash match, depending on the program.

GOCO applications require project sponsors to meet several of the following funding criteria:

- Partnerships are encouraged to forge strong relationships that will result in maximum leveraging of resources.
- Matching resources for projects - both cash and in-kind -- are required to obtain funding.
- Integration encourages sponsors to encompass as many components of GOCO's four funding quadrants (wildlife, outdoor recreation, open space and local government) as possible.
- Planning is key; projects that are a part of an overall community, regional, or statewide plan will be scored higher.
- Environmental education access and opportunities afforded by projects may also improve scoring.
- Project sustainability requires sponsors to demonstrate their ability to complete and plan for the operation, maintenance, and management of projects.
- Impact of all projects should address a local or statewide need and the benefits to a local community, a region, or the state.
- Environmental impact requires that all projects should minimize any negative impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat and where possible provide beneficial conditions for wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- Urgency and whether or not there is an immediate need for the project is considered.

## **RIO GRANDE COUNTY JOINT MASTER PLAN DRAFT PLAN**

### Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance Fund

The Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance program assists communities affected by the growth and decline of energy and mineral industries in the state. Funds come from the state severance tax on energy and mineral production and from a portion of the state's share of royalties paid to the federal government for mining and drilling of minerals and mineral fuels on federally-owned land.

DOLA administers the program and is assisted by a nine-member Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance Advisory Committee, which meets several times each year, to consider applications for grants and low-interest loans.

Eligible entities to receive grants and loans include municipalities, counties, school districts, special districts and other political subdivisions and state agencies. The kinds of projects that are funded include -- but are not limited to -- water and sewer improvements, road improvements, construction/improvements to recreation centers, senior centers and other public facilities, fire protection buildings and equipment, and local government planning.

### State Historical Fund

The State Historical Fund (SHF) directs a portion of gaming taxes to be used for historic preservation throughout the state. Approximately 28% of the revenue generated from gaming is paid into the State Historical Fund. Of the 28% disbursed to the fund 80% is directed to the statewide grants program SHF.

Approximately \$15 million is available for distribution annually, and funds are distributed through a competitive process. All projects must demonstrate strong public benefit and community support. Grants vary in size, from a few hundred dollars to amounts in excess of \$100,000. The SHF assists in a wide variety of preservation projects including restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings, architectural assessments, archaeological excavations, designation and interpretation of historic places, preservation planning studies, and education and training programs throughout the state.

# RIO GRANDE COUNTY JOINT MASTER PLAN DRAFT PLAN

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*Draft Stream Buffer Ordinance, Rio Grande County CO, 2003.*

*Monte Vista Three Mile Plan and Major Street Plan, Monte Vista CO, Adopted 2001 and Revised 2003.*

*Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan, Prepared by Design Workshop for the San Luis Valley Trails Coalition, 1996.*

*South Fork Master Plan, South Fork CO, 2001.*

*Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project, 2001, Prepared by Montgomery, Watson, Harza in Conjunction with Agre Engineering and SWA Environmental Consultants for the San Luis Valley Conservancy District and Colorado Water Conservation Board, 2001.*

*(Add)*

### DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC INFORMATION

*Municipal Demographic Information (South Fork, Del Norte, Monte Vista and Center)*

- *Historical Census Population, US Census Bureau*
- *Population Estimates to 2001, Department of Local Affairs, Demography Section*
- *Total Assessed Value, Mill Levy, State Sales Tax and Retail Sales, Colorado Economic and Demographic Information System*
- *Vehicle Registration and Miles of Road, Colorado Economic and Demographic Information System*

### GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

*Provided by the San Luis Valley GIS Authority, Rio Grande County, Del Norte and Monte Vista*

#### Aerial Photography

- *Rio Grande County Ortho-photos*

#### Transportation

- *Roads Tiger File*

#### Infrastructure

- *Water and Sewer Lines*
- *County Fire Districts*

#### Environmental

- *County Soils*
- *100-Year Floodplain*
- *Wetlands*

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- *Water Bodies*
- *Rivers, Creeks and Major Canals*
- *Topography – Digital Elevation Model*
- *Wildfire Urban Interface Areas (WUIs)*
- *Major Wildlife Areas*
- *State Wildlife Areas*
- *National Forest Service (NFS) Lands*
- *Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lands*

### Miscellaneous

- *Municipal Limits*
- *County Boundaries*
- *Rio Grande Zoning*
- *Monte Vista Existing Zoning*
- *Parcel-Ownership*
- *Del Norte Existing and Planned Zoning*

### RIO GRANDE COUNTY CENSUS INFORMATION (US CENSUS BUREAU)

- *County Profile (Quick Facts)*
- *Historical Population*
- *Population Forecasts by County*
- *Educational Attainment*
- *Race*
- *Urban and Rural Population*
- *Family Income*
- *Average Wage*
- *Personal Income*
- *Personal Income Change*
- *Per Capita Income*
- *Poverty*
- *Household Income by Race*
- *Household Type*
- *Housing Units*
- *Age of Structure*
- *Units in Structure*
- *Labor Force and Total Employment*
- *Occupancy*
- *Workers by Industry*
- *Means of Transportation to Work*
- *Vehicle Registration and Miles of Road*

### WEBSITES

*Colorado Department of Local Affairs, [www.dola.state.co.us](http://www.dola.state.co.us)*

*Southern Colorado Economic Development District (SCEDD), [www.scedd.com](http://www.scedd.com)*

*US Census Bureau, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)*

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