

VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

2.1 OVERALL VISION

The vision of the master plan update is to promote prosperity in Delta County for present and future generations through stewardship of the county's resources, and thoughtful, predictable land use regulations. The County will foster a culture that upholds the values of community, quality of life, and respectful, neighborly communication, in which all residents feel heard.

GOALS

Goal 1.0: Cultivate a countywide culture where problems, issues and needs are addressed neighbor to neighbor and where disagreement is handled respectfully, differing opinions are valued and every participant is heard.

Goal 1.1: Work to build trust and faith that local government can balance the needs and values of all segments of the County by developing new land use policies that provide greater stability and predictability while decreasing conflict.

Strategy 1.1.0: Partner with other local governments, civic and education organizations and non-profit organizations to engage in regular community dialogue.

Strategy 1.1.1: Partner with other local governments, civic and education organizations and non-profit organizations to develop a county-wide leadership development program.

Strategy 1.1.2: Update land use regulations to define where all land uses may be located and prosper with minimal conflict.

2.2 AGRICULTURAL LAND AND BUSINESS

VISION

Delta County will remain an agricultural county by protecting agricultural lands and operations and supporting agricultural innovation.

CORE VALUES

Agriculture is strongly supported throughout the county. Residents feel that agriculture connects them to their community and contributes to the quality of life. Agricultural lands set the backdrop to the County's landscape, bringing green open areas to what would



otherwise be dry desert, while supporting wildlife, strengthening the local economy and providing locally produced food.

Agricultural operations and businesses remain one of the top employing industries in the county, employing 15.26-percent of the county's working population. Agriculture attracts revenue from outside the county as it provides the largest number of direct basic jobs. The total acreage of designated farm land in 2012 was 250,761. The average farm size totaled 202-acres; the median farm acreage was 38. The market value of agricultural products in 2012 was \$55,639,000—a 28-percent increase over the past 21 years.

Delta County's agricultural industry is one of the most diverse in the state. The County has a mix of traditional agriculture and organic agriculture, with the highest concentration of organic farms in Colorado. Agritourism and value-added agricultural production bring a greater depth to the agricultural industry. Delta County's wine industry is growing, as are agricultural activities and events that bring visitors to the County. The county produces livestock including cattle, goats, elk, pigs and sheep; hay and alfalfa; row crops such as hemp, field corn, sweet corn, hops, soybeans, onions and potatoes; fruit & vegetables including grapes, peaches, apricots, cherries, apples; pears; and berries; eggs and poultry; and dairy just to name a few. Agricultural operations range in scale from high-acreage ranches and farms to small two- or three-acre farms. Both large and small producers are having success in agriculture with the increased value of locally grown food sold directly to market. Access to locally grown healthy foods supports not only the County's economy, but also helps to address health equity and reduce chronic illness among residents.

Protecting agricultural lands, especially those lands with quality soil, irrigation and that remain largely intact (acreage) is a high priority. Protection of agricultural lands means ensuring the economic viability of agricultural producers. Agricultural producers expressed concerns that future land use and development regulations not impair their ability to adapt and innovate so they can remain economically viable.

While the benefits of agriculture are highly valued throughout the County, less attractive localized impacts such as noise, dust, and odor also result from operations. Residents and producers identified a need to maintain and build good neighbor relations to communicate about issues and solutions that can be handled neighbor-to-neighbor. Defining the range of uses and activities allowed to occur in agricultural areas will help agricultural operators and their neighbors by clarifying what can be expected on and around existing agricultural lands. Future development that occurs in agricultural areas needs to be designed and located to minimize impacts between the development and the nearby agricultural uses and activities.

Residents and agricultural operators have expressed support for better defining where and to what standards concentrated animal feeding operations should be regulated. County officials, residents and agricultural operators would like to better understand the



regulatory implications of concentrated animal feeding operations as well as the “Right-to-Farm” statutes.

GOALS

Goal 2.0 – Continue to expand and diversify agriculture as an economic base.

Strategy 2.0.0 – Encourage value-added agricultural enterprises.

Strategy 2.0.1 – Encourage the use of agricultural lands to support agritourism, research, education and local foods industries.

Strategy 2.0.2 – Explore new options for transporting harvested crops to markets.

Strategy 2.0.3 – Generate innovative agricultural opportunities throughout the county by supporting existing agricultural educational organizations, such as the Colorado State University (CSU) extension office.

Goal 2.1 – Maintain the integrity and functionality of agricultural areas for agricultural business operations.

Strategy 2.1.0 – Encourage communications between agricultural operators and rural residential neighbors about land uses and activities that may affect one another.

Strategy 2.1.1 – List the full range of land uses, activities, structures and infrastructure associated with agricultural enterprises and establish these as allowed and expected uses in agricultural areas while allowing for future innovations.

Strategy 2.1.2 – Create land use tools to address impacts between agriculture and future development in agricultural areas.

Strategy 2.1.3 – Educate landowners, potential buyers and tenants about the uses that may occur on agricultural land.

Strategy 2.1.4 – Create and consistently update an inventory and map of agricultural lands and monitor trends.

Strategy 2.1.5 – Support and facilitate the voluntary conservation of agricultural lands and associated water.

Strategy 2.1.6 – Convene a working group of agricultural business owners, residents, and legal experts to evaluate the County’s “Right to Farm” resolution, evaluate the regulatory environment and best-practices of concentrated animal feeding operations, initiate an education and communication process that is designed to address the issues, tensions, and conflicts surrounding these topics as well as to provide a final set of recommendations to the County Commissioners.



2.3 WATER RESOURCES

VISION

Delta County, within its legal parameters, strives to protect water supplies, delivery systems and water quality by partnering with the appropriate agencies and stakeholders to minimize the potential loss of quantity or quality of its water resources.

CORE VALUES

The importance of water spans most of the highest community values including agriculture, wildlife habitat, recreation and the desire to maintain clean water. Delta is fortunate to have a diversity of water supply for both irrigation and domestic uses and there is strong support to keep this resource in-tact.

Much of the regulatory authority over water lies outside of Delta County's purview. The following agencies oversee water resources and infrastructure:

Division of Water Resources: State Engineer— Oversees the administration of all surface water rights, interstate compacts, records flow and diversion data and regulates dam safety. The State Engineer also issues well permits.

Colorado Water Court— The Colorado Water Court makes all legal decisions about water rights that are in turn administered by the State Engineer. Water rights are a private property right. What someone can or cannot do with a water right is determined by the State.

Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment— Has statutory authority for protecting surface and ground water quality. The Water Quality Control Division implements the federal Clean Water Act, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and the Safe Drinking Water Act in Colorado.

Multiple Water Providers—Delta County has multiple water providers including municipal water providers, irrigation/ditch companies, conservancy districts and private water companies. These entities govern all decisions about the water they supply including rates, fees and ultimately availability for new taps/new customers.

Delta County's authority over water resources is limited, but the county does have authority over land use which interfaces with water resource management agencies and water providers. C.R.S. 30-28-133(6)(a) requires that any subdivision has "a water supply that is sufficient in terms of quantity, dependability and quality to provide an appropriate supply of water". It is incumbent that the County work closely with water providers and the State Engineer to evaluate the adequacy of water supply plans for subdivisions.

The county also reviews land development plans so they do not interfere with the conveyance of water through existing ditches and water facilities. The planning and design



stage for future subdivisions offers the opportunity for lot owners and irrigation water providers to define equitable arrangements for the utilization of irrigation water rights that are available to the development as well as to arrange adequate procedures for protecting and retaining secured water rights from unintentional abandonment. Drainage and erosion development standards address impacts of run-off on water quality.

The Environmental Health Department administers regulations regarding septic systems and floodplains and is continually expanding the knowledge of water systems in the county to inform discussions about water resources management.

Effective planning around water issues requires the County to have clear and consistent communication with water regulatory agencies and providers.

GOALS

Goal 3.0 – Engage with Federal, State and local water resource agencies and land conservation entities to advocate for the continued productive use of established water rights.

Goal 3.1 – Coordinate with appropriate Federal, State and local water resource agencies and water providers to address current and future water sources.

Strategy 3.1.0 – Develop and maintain an inventory of existing domestic water distribution systems that includes the estimated capacity available to serve new customers.

Strategy 3.1.1 – Evaluate the long-term viability and facility needs of existing domestic water distribution systems.

Strategy 3.1.2 – Coordinate with State and local agencies and water providers to ensure that proposed development projects are consistent with domestic water system requirements.

Strategy 3.1.3 – Establish land use and development standards to avoid disturbance of existing ditches and other water infrastructure.

Strategy 3.1.4 – Establish land use and development standards directing future developments to continue to irrigate and maintain existing irrigated lands.

Goal 3.2 – Work with water resource and land management agencies to maintain and improve surface and groundwater quality and quantity.

Strategy 3.2.0 – Continue to study the regional groundwater systems to:

- Better understand the quality and location of groundwater water resources throughout the county.
- Identify land and water resource management practices to protect groundwater quality and quantity.



Strategy 3.2.1 – Develop standards for proposed future land uses and activities to avoid or minimize impacts on ground or surface water quality.

Strategy 3.2.2 – Map groundwater and surface water source areas that supply domestic and irrigation providers.

2.4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VISION

Delta County encourages and welcomes new business and industrial growth by clearly identifying areas in the County where business and industry may locate with processes that are fair and predictable. Growing and diversifying the economy will create needed jobs and increase the tax base that funds critical assets and services.

CORE VALUES

Delta County is in a period of economic transition as the economic activity associated with coal mining is in a period of decline. Additionally, full recovery following the 2008 recession has yet to be achieved. The tax base of countywide governmental entities is at risk as internal and external forces exert downward pressure on the tax base; meanwhile demand for services and maintenance and upkeep of infrastructure is increasing.

The County has always had and continues to have a strong agricultural base and in the face of a declining natural resource extraction sector. Residents see growing opportunities in many other economic sectors. Likewise, it is broadly recognized that Delta County's economic advantage is directly tied to its community and natural resources. To become more competitive, the County must continue to invest in its community, agricultural and recreational assets.

The County's current economy is built on the ingenuity and creativity of many individuals and local businesses across numerous economic sectors. Diversifying and expanding opportunities across the economic sectors will expand livelihoods and boost the tax base needed to provide public infrastructure and services. This master plan recognizes and places the highest emphasis on economic growth that aligns with local values and does not degrade the characteristics that form the quality of life in the county. Local values include a fierce sense of independence, strong support for private property rights, a reluctance for regulation but growing acknowledgement that reasonable thoughtful regulation is necessary, connection to outdoor recreation, personal connection to healthy local food, valuing community input, protection of the region's clean air and clean water and preservation of natural resources. Economic development efforts need to improve predictability for future businesses looking to grow or relocate; foster the entrepreneurial spirit and support home-based business; and promote, strengthen, preserve and build upon the county's strongest assets.



Delta County has an extensive and expanding broadband infrastructure that opens the door to technology-based businesses and to attracting “location neutral” businesses and employees. “Location neutral” refers to business activities that do not require designated, physical spaces (such as an office headquarters) as long as a broadband connection is available. The county also has quality outdoor recreation access, excellent transportation corridors, access to rail, access to an educated and skilled work force, quality business support programs and unique communities. The county has a great opportunity to diversify outside of the traditional economic sectors moving forward to the next generation of economic development, particularly in the areas of creative industries, information and technology, manufacturing, retail trade, wholesale trade, professional services and tourism.

GOALS

Goal 4.0 – Explore options for utilizing incentives to encourage business development that supports the community’s core values and results in improving livelihoods.

Strategy 4.0.0 – Promote the use of the state and federal economic development incentives that are currently available.

Strategy 4.0.1 – Explore additional incentives the county and its economic development partners could feasibly offer.

Goal 4.1 – Align land use and development policies and regulations with core values for economic development by defining where business and industry may locate as a permitted land use.

Goal 4.2 – Continue working with economic development partners county-wide and regionally to refine economic strategies that build on the diversity within the county and on the strengths of its communities.

Strategy 4.2.0– Develop leadership programs to draw more business owners into county-wide discussions about economic development.

Strategy 4.2.1 –Develop a proactive strategy for attracting location neutral businesses and jobs to Delta County.

Strategy 4.2.2 – Work with each community to build collaborative partnerships to strengthen and enhance their economic advantages.

Strategy 4.2.3 – Identify barriers to economic development in Delta County and develop strategies to address those barriers.



2.5 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

VISION

Delta County's land use processes will be fair, predictable, defensible and easily understood. Growth and development in the county supports the community's desired future while enhancing overall health, quality of life and fostering innovation.

CORE VALUES

Residents expressed a desire to be a county where neighbors work with neighbors to address and resolve issues, during the community vision meetings. This spirit was captured in the 1997 Master Plan and in the county's land use regulations and is a guiding principle moving forward. Another guiding principle of the 1997 Master Plan and of the county's land use regulations since has been to limit how and when the County regulates land use. This limited regulatory environment, while intended to protect private property rights, has created an unpredictable system for both applicants seeking land use approval and neighbors. Limited land use and development regulations have advantages and are an important part of what makes Delta County unique. However, the complexity of land use and development applications continues to rise and the land use and development regulations need to be recalibrated to better serve the county.

The existing process for land use and development review needs to be more user-friendly for applicants and neighbors and needs to better implement the community's values and desired future. Revisions to the land use and development standards and procedures need to encourage thoughtful and beneficial development while also preserving the characteristics that form quality of life in the county while maintaining private property rights. Changes to the land and development regulations need to maintain flexibility to allow for innovation and creativity and to balance the needs of the applicant with those of their neighbors. Revised processes should create more meaningful ways for public participation that helps to resolve issues and conflicts as opposed to creating a stand-off between different interests.

Future development needs to fit within the existing carrying capacity of public infrastructure and services or it needs to add the capacity required to accommodate the new development. Development in the County should be directed to areas with adequate infrastructure such as drinking water and transportation and with adequate services such as law enforcement, fire and ambulance. Areas that have special characteristics such as productive agricultural land, wildlife habitat, historic resources, access to outdoor recreation, or natural hazards deserve careful consideration. Revisions to the land use and development standards and procedures are needed to promote long-term economic viability for landowners while protecting the foundational characteristics of the land.



GOALS

Goal 5.0 – Facilitate business and residential development by revising the land use and development code processes and standards to make the code clear, predictable, consistent, timely and cost-effective.

Strategy 5.0.0 – Update the land development codes to clearly answer these questions for any landowner or applicant:

- What can I do with this property?
- What standards do I need to meet to build what I want to build?
- What infrastructure is needed to support my use?
- How will active transport infrastructure impact my use?
- What kinds of infrastructure can be added to my project to promote active living?
- What is the process, start-to-finish?
- What are the definitions of the terms in the code?

Strategy 5.0.1 – Evaluate enforceability and access when considering changes to the land use and development codes.

Strategy 5.0.2 – Establish clear and timely development application procedures that encourage meaningful public participation.

Goal 5.1 – Encourage business, industrial, and residential development while protecting resources that contribute to the economy and that are integral to the health and quality of life in the county.

Strategy 5.1.0 – Identify productive agricultural lands and establish site planning and design standards and incentives that keep agricultural lands in-tact in future developments.

Strategy 5.1.1 – Identify valuable wildlife habitat, natural and cultural landmarks and natural hazards and avoid or minimize impacts on these features in site planning and design of future development.

Strategy 5.1.2 – Identify existing developed residential neighborhoods and rural-residential areas and apply consistent countywide standards for uses and physical development parameters.

Strategy 5.1.3 – Encourage home occupation and cottage industry businesses and set standards for allowed uses and physical development that may occur associated with home-based business.

Strategy 5.1.4 – Encourage a diversity of housing types and allow creativity and flexibility for buildings .



Strategy 5.1.5 – Establish clear standards and procedures for enforcing cleanup of refuse, debris, abandoned and dilapidated structures and inoperable vehicles and explore incentives and programs to encourage voluntary cleanup.

Strategy 5.1.6—Incorporate access and continuity of trails in future development design.

Goal 5.2 – Encourage and direct future development that optimizes access to existing infrastructure and public service capacity and that does not strain infrastructure and public service providers.

Strategy 5.2.0 – Identify locations and create standards for future business/industrial developments and residential neighborhoods where adequate water, public infrastructure and services are in place or can be feasibly expanded.

Strategy 5.2.1 – Develop revenue mechanisms to ensure that new development pays its fair share of the cost of expanding public infrastructure needed to serve that development.

2.6 PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES AND ASSETS

VISION

Delta County provides thoughtfully planned and coordinated infrastructure and services that support the safety, health and wellbeing of County residents. Projects, improvements and maintenance are prioritized to meet the needs of the community, to maintain the physical assets already invested in by the community and to protect those investments well into the future.

CORE VALUES

Public services are provided by governmental and private entities throughout the County. Delta County has 33 separate governmental taxing entities, numerous private water providers and the presence of state and federal agencies including BLM, Forest Service and the USDA. All of these entities share a part in shaping future development and so should communicate and coordinate efforts.

The public assets and public services provided by agencies through the County contribute to the overall quality of life for County residents and to the regional economy. Transportation networks, public lands access and management and core public services such as fire, law enforcement, education, water, sewer and public health are essential to the day to day lives of all residents. Residents look to the County to collaborate with the land managers, local governments and public service agencies to advocate for quality services, ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and ongoing investment in assets and infrastructure. Likewise, residents look to the County to manage and maintain its existing assets and



infrastructure and provide thoughtful expansion of county infrastructure where it makes the most sense.

COUNTY ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

CORE VALUES

The transportation network located throughout the County is an evolving system of rural roads, many of which were not built to handle large volumes of traffic or heavy truck traffic that exists today. Maintenance of existing roads and reconstruction of key roads is an ongoing challenge. The County's limited resources are prioritized year-to-year to meet growing demands.

The County has a lack of multi-modal transportation, although limited regional bus service is provided through All Points Transit, a regional non-profit. Developing multi-modal transportation will be a challenge given the rural nature of the County. However, as we face growing and changing needs of the community such as an aging population and an influx of young families, the County needs to evaluate its transportation plans and policies. Community members have clearly expressed a desire for more bike-friendly transportation routes, such as increasing road width and paving road shoulders. There is likely going to be increased demand for transportation services as the senior population grows.

Community members throughout the county expressed overall satisfaction with the way county roads are maintained, but there were exceptions. Often times, individuals expressed frustration about road networks outside of the County's control. This community sentiment emphasizes the need to work cooperatively to plan for local and regional transportation infrastructure including county roads, state highways and municipal roads.

The County is fortunate to have an active rail system running from Grand Junction south to Montrose and east to Paonia and into Gunnison County. The primary demand for rail activity is from the coal industry, but there are numerous other businesses dependent on access to rail. Maintaining and evolving the role of rail infrastructure for transporting goods and for public transportation will require deliberate and coordinated effort given that a continued decline in the coal industry is anticipated.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.0 – Integrate land use planning with county transportation capital improvements planning and maintenance prioritization.

Strategy 6.0.0 – Inventory county roads and bridges constructed to serve high traffic volumes and evaluate the suitability of these travel corridors as areas to accommodate future development.



Strategy 6.0.1 – Inventory county roads and bridges constructed to serve commercial trucks and evaluate the suitability of these travel corridors to accommodate future development that includes commercial truck traffic.

Strategy 6.0.2 – Delineate areas served by county roads and bridges not designed to serve high traffic volumes or commercial truck traffic and recognize the constraints on future development in these areas.

Strategy 6.0.3 – Map planned county road extensions and capacity improvements to existing roads and evaluate the suitability of these travel corridors as areas to accommodate future development.

Strategy 6.0.4 – Plan for capacity improvements to county roads in areas that are exceptionally suitable for future development but that currently do not possess road capacities to serve future development.

Strategy 6.0.5 – Identify routes for bike lanes and pedestrian paths that would be well-utilized along roads that could be feasibly improved to meet best practice design standards for connected community routes that are wayfinding and have adequate signage.

Strategy 5.1.7 – Continue to refine and adapt the systematic approach to programming county road and bridge maintenance and concurrently plan for maintenance, capital improvements and long-term budgeting.

Goal 6.1 – Establish long range regional transportation policies to articulate the community's vision and goals to regional transportation infrastructure partners.

Strategy 6.1.0 – Continue to advocate for community transportation goals through Colorado Department of Transportation regional transportation planning and during the development of highway access management and corridor plans.

Strategy 6.1.1 – Advocate for sustaining rail infrastructure and evolving its use as a long-term component of local and regional transportation infrastructure.

Strategy 6.1.2 – Explore options with local, regional, state and federal partners for public transportation, especially for children, elders and special needs populations. These options will address access to essential services such as libraries, schools, post offices, medical providers, and grocery stores.

PUBLIC LANDS

CORE VALUES

Delta County residents identify access to public lands and the activities that they participate in on public lands, whether it be for commerce or pleasure, as critical to their overall quality of life. Public lands contribute significantly to the County's economy with



inputs into several sectors such as agriculture, grazing, mining and tourism. Many of the County's ranchers rely on summer grazing on federal lands. Delta County is in full support of multiple use management of public lands and will work with federal and state agencies so that there is no net loss of Animal Unit Months for livestock grazing on public lands.

There is untapped potential to continue to build more economic activity from public lands access in all industries. Recreation tourism supported by public lands, especially the newly created National Conservation Areas, has great potential for the county. This will require careful coordination with public land management agencies to ensure adequate resources are made available to build the infrastructure necessary to support public access. Access to all public lands and waterways is a shared value in the county and is the top priority. Supporting infrastructure such as directional signage, trailheads, parking, restrooms, picnic areas and campground are critical for the long-term viability and attractiveness of our public lands.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.2 – Support and advocate for multiple use of public lands that balances agricultural uses, recreation, habitat preservation, wildlife and natural resource development.

Strategy 6.2.1 – Work with Federal Land Agencies to maintain livestock grazing activity on public lands to achieve no net loss of Animal Units Months.

Goal 6.3 – Work with land management agencies to improve and expand outdoor recreation assets and to maintain and enhance public access to public lands.

Strategy 6.3.0 – Work with Federal Land Agencies to identify federal and state funding to address infrastructure impacts associated with public lands including impacts to roads and other public facilities.

Goal 6.4 – Identify and maintain the legitimacy of existing public easements and other established public access to public lands and waterways.

Goal 6.5 – Engage in active dialogue with land management and mineral management agencies to include community values in natural resource management and development decisions.

HAZARD MITIGATION

[PLACEHOLDER – this section will be revisited as the Hazard Mitigation Plan progresses]

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.6 – Create, adopt and periodically update a hazard mitigation plan.

Goal 6.7 – Secure federal and state funding pursuant to the hazard mitigation plan and complete the capital improvements needed to reduce risk.



Goal 6.8 – Create, adopt and periodically update an emergency preparedness plan.

COORDINATION WITH MUNICIPALITIES AND UTILITY PROVIDERS

CORE VALUES

Delta County has intergovernmental agreements with four of its municipalities that provide guidance for reviewing development applications in currently unincorporated growth management areas around each municipality. These agreements are the foundation for continued adaptive management of land uses and the provision of municipal utilities. The agreements need to be revisited in light of the policies contained in this master plan and the most current municipal master plans. The municipalities play a central part in shaping future development and are the location of core services including water and sewer, fire stations, schools, hospitals/clinics, libraries and police stations. Strategic and coordinated development in the growth management areas around each municipality would yield beneficial development efficiently and cost-effectively. Other utility providers such as natural gas, electricity and communications are equally important players in serving the residents and future development.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.9 – Revisit the adopted intergovernmental agreements regarding development in growth management areas delineated around each municipality and determine the need for updates such as more closely aligning infrastructure standards for new development inside of the growth management area with those adopted by each municipality.

Goal 6.10 – Increase communication with water, sewer and other utility providers to ensure growth is encouraged where adequate services can be feasibly provided.

Strategy 6.10.0 – Revisit land use and development referral procedures to ensure service providers are able to provide an adequate evaluation of proposed developments.

Strategy 6.10.1 – Ensure that access to active transportation routes are not impeded by future development and provide linkages to pedestrian trails and bike lanes to protect connected communities.

PUBLIC SAFETY

CORE VALUES

Public safety agencies including the sheriff, municipal police departments, fire and ambulance services continue to experience increased demands for services. The tax base of all public safety entities county-wide is at risk as internal and external forces exert



downward pressure on the tax base, meanwhile demand for services is increasing. Public safety organizations are already understaffed in the face of increasing demands and are challenged to provide adequate coverage. Likewise, there will be an ongoing need to continue to upgrade equipment and facilities such as the courthouse, jail and dispatch center to keep up with both emerging technology and changing requirements. Economic development efforts strive to diversify the tax base so that these services are more completely funded. The feasibility of providing and funding public safety needs to be evaluated in planning future development.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.11 – Recognizing the challenge to provide public safety with existing resources and revenues, ensure that county law enforcement, emergency management and other public safety partners can adequately serve future growth and development.

Strategy 6.11.0 – Clarify and improve the process for the referral of development applications to public safety providers and the process for responding to comments submitted by those agencies or county departments.

Strategy 6.11.1 – Identify funding mechanisms for public safety infrastructure and access including facilities and rolling stock.

FISCAL VIABILITY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

CORE VALUES

Pressures on the County's tax base, challenges in finding adequate funds and ensuring that development pays its own way are all themes throughout this Master Plan. Public infrastructure and services are largely funded by taxes. The tax base that supports all governmental entities County-wide is under pressure. Property tax revenue is being driven down by Gallagher while the ability to increase taxes is limited by TABOR. Meanwhile, retail industry and consumer trends are stunting local sales tax collections.

Growing and diversifying the economy will also grow and diversify the tax base that funds these critical assets and services. While it is always best to work locally to solve problems, there is also a need to work with neighboring counties and organizations to participate in, or even help initiate, a statewide discussion around Colorado's tax policy.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.12 – Establish an economic growth strategy that in addition to diversifying and growing the economic base will also diversify and grow the tax base that is needed to support public facilities and services.



COUNTY RECREATION ASSETS

CORE VALUES

Delta County itself provides limited recreational assets, although it does own and maintain assets that are integral to the fabric of the county including the county roads that access public lands and the fairgrounds. Community members county-wide have identified recreation and access to recreation assets as critical to the quality of life available. Recreation is an economic asset not just in terms of jobs created through recreation and visitor industries, but also in how recreational assets serve as a key factor in creating healthy communities and attracting people to the community that will stay and prosper.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

[forthcoming as Delta County Trails and Recreation Master Plan progresses]

Goal 6.13 – Align county road maintenance and capital improvement priorities with the need for public lands recreation access and parking and with recreation objectives articulated in the Delta County Trails and Recreation Plan.

Strategy 6.13.0 – Protect current and future access to recreation areas and trail systems.

2.7 ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

VISION

Delta County has a vibrantly diverse energy development economy. The County is a leader in protecting clean air and water and continues to provide a safe and healthy community for present and future generations.

CORE VALUES

Delta County is the source for many types of energy resources including coal, oil and gas, biomass, hydro, coal methane and solar. Energy development has been a key part of the economy and culture of the county for decades. Coal will continue to be part of the energy sector but is subject to fluctuating markets in the market. There is strong support county-wide for keeping energy development as a component of the economy and there is excitement about the future of renewable energy production.

Residents expressed support for oil and gas during the master plan process often citing the need for jobs and tax revenues. Residents also expressed concerns about the impacts and unintended consequences of future oil and gas development such as to water and air quality, county roads and other infrastructure and services. The majority of regional oil and



gas resource development is expected to occur in Gunnison County, but there is a concern that activity higher in the watersheds will impact Delta County.

Local government control over oil and gas development is limited in the State of Colorado. The Colorado Oil and Gas Commission (COGC) and federal lands agencies including the Forest Service and BLM have primary jurisdiction over oil and gas development including regulating, permitting, monitoring and enforcement on both public and private lands. In the early 2000's, Delta County was one of the first local government to try to regulate oil and gas activity and challenge the Oil and Gas Commission for local control over many aspects of oil and gas development. The case helped motivate the COGC to appoint Local Government Designees (LGDs). The LDG is the liaison between local governments and the COGC to provide communications, information sharing, facilities monitoring and to address local concerns and values during the oil and gas development permitting.

Moving forward, the County needs to calibrate its land use and development codes to address the short and long-term impacts of solid and fluid mineral energy development within the limits of its authority. Continued advocacy for local values in cooperation with state and federal agencies is paramount.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 7.0 – Facilitate responsible and beneficial energy development and work with energy businesses and land and mineral management agencies to mitigate the impacts of energy development facilities on ecology, community and economy.

Strategy 7.0.0 – Ensure that energy development businesses pay their fair costs of providing county infrastructure, facilities and services needed to serve their business operations and facilities.

Strategy 7.0.1 – Evaluate county regulations covering oil and gas and mining to ensure that the county is effectively exercising the authority that is available to it.

Strategy 7.0.2 – Work in partnership with local, state and federal agencies to maintain and improve communications and to advocate for local values.

Strategy 7.0.3 – Develop and maintain an inventory and map of existing pipelines and other underground energy infrastructure.

Strategy 7.0.4 – Convene a working group of natural resource development experts, industry representatives, and residents to evaluate the County's oil and gas regulations, keep the regulations up-to-date, and to make policy recommendations to the Board of County Commissions.

Goal 7.1 – Encourage responsible and beneficial development of private, commercial and public renewable energy.



Strategy 7.1.0 – Develop clear standards for commercial renewable energy development covering location, scale, infrastructure needs and site planning.

Strategy 7.1.1 – Continue to encourage small-scale private renewable energy systems that meet safety requirements.

