

Together Chaffee County

2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**PROGRESS
DRAFT**

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Photo: Scott Peterson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Board of County Commissioners | March 2020

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The 2020 Comprehensive Plan update was primarily driven by the voices of hundreds of participants representing the people of Chaffee County. Special thanks goes to those who participated in the process by contributing thoughts and ideas online or in-person at any or all of the workshops, open houses, drop-ins or other events.

2020 Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan

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Part 1

INTRODUCTION

This is the 2020 Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan - an aspirational document that communicates a vision for Chaffee County and its people. This comprehensive plan is a roadmap for land use decisions and County policies for the future.

A three-part document, the 2020 Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan begins with Part I which introduces the reasons behind the plan update and summarizes the current character of the County as captured in 2020. Part I also introduces the critical pieces of the plan and how to use them. In summary, Part I is a synopsis of the key pieces of information that influence the plan's policies and projects.

Downtown Salida
Photo: Scott Peterson

1. Introduction

The Chaffee County Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2000. At that time, a significant portion of growth was concentrated in unincorporated areas of the County like Mesa Antero and Game Trail. The plan was created and adopted for the purpose of addressing the pace and nature of growth at that time, and to protect the rural and scenic character that defines Chaffee County's identity.

Many of the trends identified in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan have continued to impact the community and have even intensified since its adoption. Issues like rising housing prices, rapid population growth, the loss of rural and working landscapes, the declining health of forests and increased threat to wildlife continue to be as valid in 2020 as they were in 2000.

Just as in 2000, jobs, housing, market forces, people and community character in Chaffee County are changing in 2020. The County's proximity to outdoor resources, open space and the small-town character continue to attract new residents, organizations and non-profits. As the County continues to grow, resident views on that growth and what the future looks like in Chaffee County continue to diversify.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan is a guidebook for how Chaffee's citizens, workforce, visitors and developers can help the County grow into a sustainable and connected community. The following maps, charts, descriptions and illustrations that make up this comprehensive plan communicate Chaffee County's 2020 values to policy makers and leaders, to use as future generations make the County their own.

Under Colorado law, the Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document and is not regulatory in nature. This means that its importance is to provide the priorities needed to guide updates to Chaffee County's policy and development regulations. For the plan to become reality, the County will need to create and adopt a variety of regulatory (e.g. zoning provisions) and non-regulatory tools (e.g. cluster development incentives).

This plan is designed to be used in conjunction with other County and Town planning documents. Subordinate plans more specific in nature like the Community Wildfire Protection Plan should be consulted in conjunction with this plan when making decisions related to wildfire planning.



Photo: Scott Peterson

WHY IS UPDATING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPORTANT?

The Comprehensive Plan has been updated to communicate an aspirational vision for the future, to build consensus on growth outcomes, and to recommend policies and projects that protect working landscapes while preserving private property rights. As new planning issues emerge, new tools and approaches can be developed and incorporated into this land use plan to build upon recent successes to tackle the County's most sophisticated challenges.

A community is like an ecosystem, to thrive, all of the parts must work together in order to sustain the County's future. This comprehensive plan is meant to help policy makers and implement programs to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our community and preserve our community character for future generations. To do this in a community that is 83% public land, we must have a comprehensive plan organized around stewardship of our ecological resources. This plan extends that ethic to the private lands in Chaffee County, where most of the community lives and works.

County Commitment and Values

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

LEAD BY EXAMPLE: Support, improve, and strengthen public and civic processes to ensure Chaffee County remains a beautiful and healthy place to live, work, and play for generations to come.

FOSTER COLLABORATION: Foster a climate of intergovernmental and interagency collaboration and achieve continuity and systemic integrity by synchronizing and coordinating plans across intergovernmental, interagency, interdepartmental, and private volunteer organizations and non-governmental organizations to lower costs, increase efficiencies, and maximize results.

RESPECT PROPERTY RIGHTS: Take a balanced approach to regulatory, voluntary, and incentive based approaches to achieve community goals respecting all parties.

SUPPORT INNOVATION & CREATIVITY: Approach community development and decision-making with openness, creativity, and seek win-win solutions.

PROMOTE HEALTH & EQUITY: Include health considerations in policy making across different sectors that influence health (transportation, agriculture, land use, housing, public safety, and education) to address policy and structural factors.

ACT HOLISTICALLY: Given all things are connected, consider decisions across scales from the human, site, and landscape scale and across the comprehensive plan's themes. Consider both the connections among things and the potential for unintended consequences when making decisions.

MANAGE GROWTH: Direct growth to compatible areas where growth makes sense using analysis to consider economic, physical, social, and ecological constraints.

BUILD PROSPERITY: Make future oriented decisions that contribute to the health of our economic, social, and environmental values.

COORDINATING ENTITY COMMUNITY VALUES

In addition to the standing Chaffee County advisory groups, standing committees, and working groups, Chaffee County will serve as the default agency to convene, coordinate, and facilitate county-wide interagency working groups or those that will involve, or potentially involve, decisions by the Chaffee County Board of County Commissioners.

With more than 80 percent public land, Chaffee County offers a bounty of natural and working landscapes, wildlife habitats, and quality recreation opportunities. The friendly, small-town character that the County is known for is born from residents who feel lucky to live in such a beautiful place, and value their high quality of life.

Chaffee County values its ecological resources in balance with recreation. Quality outdoor recreation is essential to the Chaffee County lifestyle and is an economic driver. Quality of life here depends on many factors, but the primary factor is the continued health and viability of the ecosystem in which we live.

As collected directly from residents, the following values reflect what the people of Chaffee County care about most in their community:

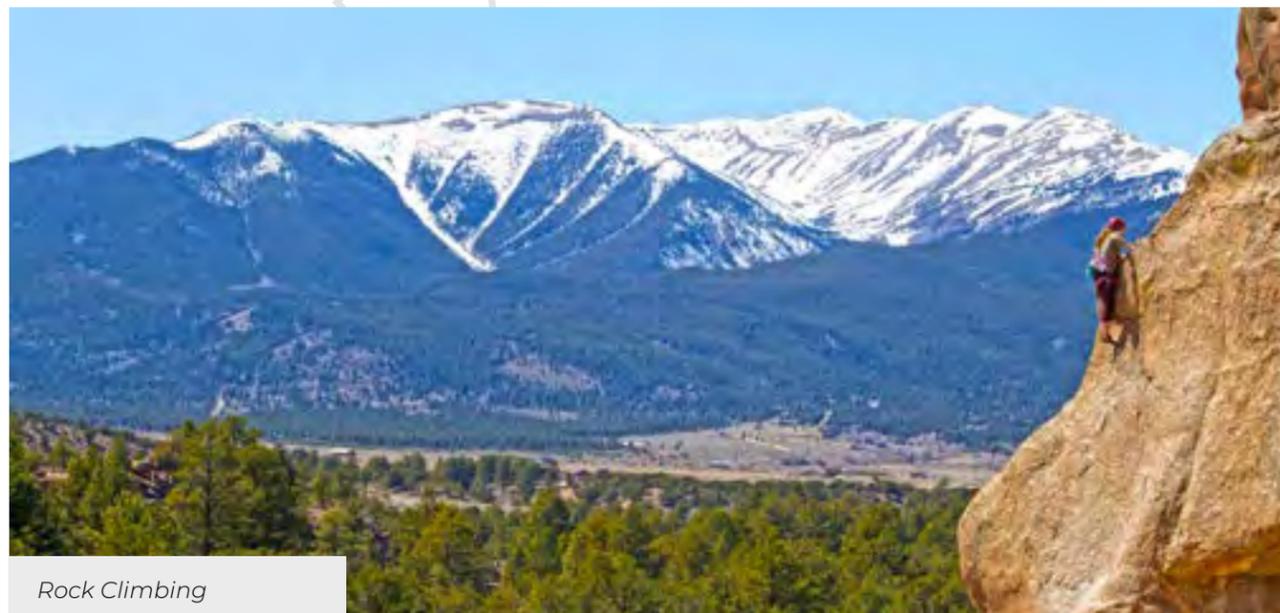
- **We are a caring community.** We value our strong sense of community where we know our neighbors, are welcoming and friendly, and support each other when in need.
- **We are good stewards.** We value the natural beauty in our backyard provided by the Arkansas River, surrounding mountains, and valley. We care for the environment that supports our communities and natural systems.
- **We are civically minded and engaged.** We value the willingness of people to work together and collaborate towards the betterment of our community.
- **We are authentic.** We value our rich heritage, distinctive communities and creative residents that contribute to our unique local character that sets us apart from other places.
- **We are a healthy and active community.** We prioritize the physical and mental wellbeing of all community members.
- **We are a great community for children and families.** We value being an ideal place to raise a family where we support young people and parents by providing services, affordable housing, a strong educational foundation and safe environment.
- **We are a safe community.** We value living in a County with close-knit communities where familiarity fosters trust. We respect our diversity, and we strive to ensure everyone has access to economic opportunities that offer financial security.

Why are we updating this plan?

To reach its vision, Chaffee County is not starting from scratch, this comprehensive plan instead incorporates how past decisions were made and provides new visionary thoughts and ideas to strive for better outcomes.

To use this plan, decision-making should, in the future, be based on analyzing alternatives and understanding of trade-offs. The public outreach process reached far and wide to understand

the public vision from previously unreached or marginalized communities. One outcome of the extensive outreach, for example, was a vision for “keep town town, keep rural, rural”, or focusing density in towns to avoid sprawl in the rural parts of the County. The Plan demonstrates these ideas in the Future Land Use Maps. This plan maintains the use of strategies and maps to convey community values on growth, and creates a venue for cross-jurisdictional coordination in the Sub-area Plans.



Rock Climbing
Photo: Scott Peterson

Motivations and Concerns

As identified through the Envision Chaffee effort, most issues faced by Chaffee County are connected to growth, and the County’s capacity to continue to provide safe and reliable public services, housing and economic opportunities to all citizens. But on a deeper level, the fundamental issue is change, and where people have negative feelings or resistance to change, that usually ties back to—real or perceived—changes to quality of life. In 2020, issues include the health of our forests and watershed, the impacts of increasing visitation, the quickly rising cost of living, lack of affordable housing, shifting demographics and changing community values and threats to the future of agriculture. All of these evoke a sense of loss from long-time community members. Newer arrivals bring a different perspective than many of the long-time residents and while they may embody changing set of values, they share many concerns about Chaffee County’s future.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

The following issues of concern are based on the pressing challenges the County is dealing with in 2020 and are intended to be broad enough to guide decision-making despite certain changes in conditions, such as shifts in economic markets. The following is a discussion of these issues as they provide motivation for the comprehensive planning elements and land use actions put forth in this plan.

Natural Resources and Healthy Landscapes:

- 1. Forest health** in Chaffee County is a major concern as historic practices of fire suppression and global climate change have set the stage for catastrophic wildfire, pests and disease currently ravage the forests. Real threats include spruce budworm and pine beetles resulting in massive tree mortality. Wildfire in nearly any part of the county threatens human health, life and property, and uncertainty on the forest’s future is immense. High priority should be placed on forest treatment as identified in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
- 2. Water:** The availability and quality of water are major concerns, not just for the County but for the region and nation. Water in the Arkansas River Basin is over-appropriated and surface and groundwater supply is depleting. Surface water rights are delivered based on availability of native water to satisfy such rights in accordance with the Prior Appropriation System. There is a nexus between surface and ground water, so well pumping creates an impact to surface water availability. Augmentation replaces the depleted water so that surface water rights are not injured. The availability of an augmentation plan, both the water and the legal/engineering, is a critical component to growth in areas outside of the places served by municipal water service areas. The Upper Arkansas Water Conservation District and its augmentation plan have been critical to most development in the unincorporated parts of the county. Water quality has increasingly been questioned as it relates to aging septic systems.
- 3. Sprawl:** Development pressure threatens to change the working lands and open spaces to sprawling

subdivisions and change the character of Chaffee County from rural to suburban. Success in maintaining agricultural lands and functions needs to be as much about making agriculture successful as it is about protecting lands from development.

4. **Working Lands:** Preservation of working lands and appreciation of the ecological function they provide is growing stronger. There are several large conservation easements in the planning stages, and the Office of Housing has model legislation to adopt conservation subdivision planning.
5. **Wildlife Habitat:** As land has developed in Chaffee County, wildlife habitats and corridors are under increasing threat. How does wildlife fit into development patterns and private property rights?
6. **Recreation in Balance:** Increased use of recreational assets has impacted the landscape and watershed health. Continued support for the Recreation in Balance program is critical to preserving our quality of life.

Built Environment & Infrastructure:

7. **Railroad:** The history of Chaffee County has been physically shaped by the railroads and the future use of rail corridors presents interesting potential. The intact corridor is a unique and valuable asset that should be kept intact, whatever its final use may be. It is not currently being actively maintained. The corridor could potentially be used for routing of utilities in addition to use by trains.
8. **Transportation:** Roads and their capacity for vehicle traffic continues to present challenge conditions in the face of growth. County road maintenance is not able to keep up with impacts of increasing inflow or outflow traffic and, at the same time, public expectations of road conditions continues to rise.

Human Environment:

9. **Schools and Institutions:** Growth in population impacts schools and their institutional capacity to deliver a high-quality learning environment to the County's youth. Care must be taken to ensure public institutions have the resources and facilities they need, and this includes K-12 systems as well as post-secondary education and vocational education or supplemental learning environments. School superintendents and representatives from institutions such as Colorado Mountain College and other regional stakeholders must help in the effort to find tools and procedures that ensure growth does not outpace our ability to fulfill those in the County that desire further learning.
10. **Demographic Change:** The County's population is about 12 years older than the State of Colorado on average. The volume of retirees that have worked an entire career to move to Chaffee County has been substantial, while younger people are leaving. High quality continuum of care means there is a smooth transition between different stages of healthcare needs and providing this is a challenge. Many couples are forced to move away upon developing health issues that are not addressed locally. Plans to build facilities to mitigate these issues exist, however none have come to fruition.
11. **Public Health:** Physical, mental and social public health and wellness is of utmost importance at the time of this Comprehensive Plan. Rural areas like Chaffee County struggle in general against lack of resources, however in times of global strife, even more strain is placed on the County's public health officials and stakeholders. Anecdotally, there are two Chaffee Counties: one that is self-sufficient with social care and safety nets, and a significant number of folks who do not have such resources. This disparity is growing as the cost of living increases. The services provided by non-profits and faith-based groups continues to be essential.



Behavioral Health is a key concern for the future, and ensuring Chaffee County's communities have adequate facilities for the treatment and transport of those in need is a major concern. The County is fortunate to have entities such as Sol Vista in the county who as of this planning effort received a significant grant to start work on a treatment center adjacent to the hospital to serve this critical need. Transporting patients to the Front Range—rather than providing services for them in Chaffee County— is a growing burden.

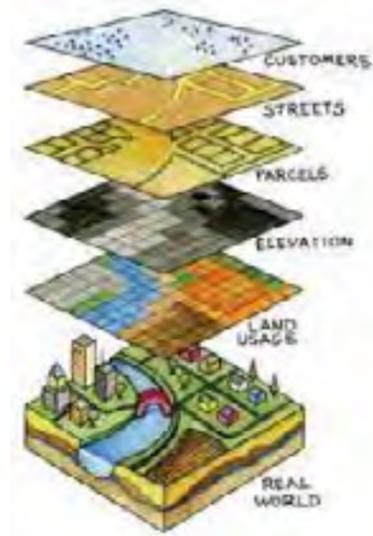
12. **Culture, Arts and Music:** Cultural activities have come to reshape the region's identity in a short time. Several large music festivals and events drive a portion of the economy and contribute to the County as a cultural destination. Being "on the map" for music and social events continues to bring in ancillary activities like weddings and seasonal visitors like never before. The Salida Creative District contributes to this, as well as community organizations like Chaffee Arts in Buena Vista and further cement the area's position as a place to experience authentic Colorado culture. People will continue to come to the County from across the state

and country and many will stay for short time. Some will stay for the rest of their lives.

Recreation and the identity and culture of Chaffee County is another major motivation for the policies in this plan. With high seasonal traffic on county roads and state highways, crowded waterways, intrusion onto private property near camp sites, and over 100,000 people hiking the County's 14,000-foot peaks every season, impacts from human activity to environmental resources are very visible and strongly felt when considering the recreational economy in Chaffee County.

13. **Affordable Housing:** Along with the State of Colorado and the country itself, Chaffee County and the region face challenges to providing sustainable housing for its workforce. A regional housing shortage, lack of diversity of housing, and low-wage jobs have priced certain income levels out of the County, and have continued to push existing residents elsewhere. Permanently affordable housing is critical to ensuring Chaffee County is an equal-opportunity place to live, work and recreate.

An Ecological Approach to Planning



ECOLOGICAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Ecology is sometimes thought of as being synonymous with environmentalism, but it is much more than that. “Ecology” is the interdisciplinary study of relationships of organisms with their physical surroundings – including the built environment – and with each other. Humans as organisms are an important element of this discussion, as is the understanding that ecology examines these relationships on an ecosystem or landscape scale.

There are four laws of ecology that apply at this level of discussion:

1. Everything is connected to everything else (What affects one affects another).
2. Everything must go somewhere (Matter cannot be destroyed). Waste products and byproducts of all processes must go somewhere. The fundamental question we must ask ourselves when making land use and permitting decisions is “Where do the waste and byproducts go? How do we dispose of them? What are the potential impacts to human and ecosystem health and stability?”
3. Nature is the ultimate arbiter (Nature knows best). Natural disasters and unforeseen events – wildfire, flooding, rockslides, disastrous climate and weather

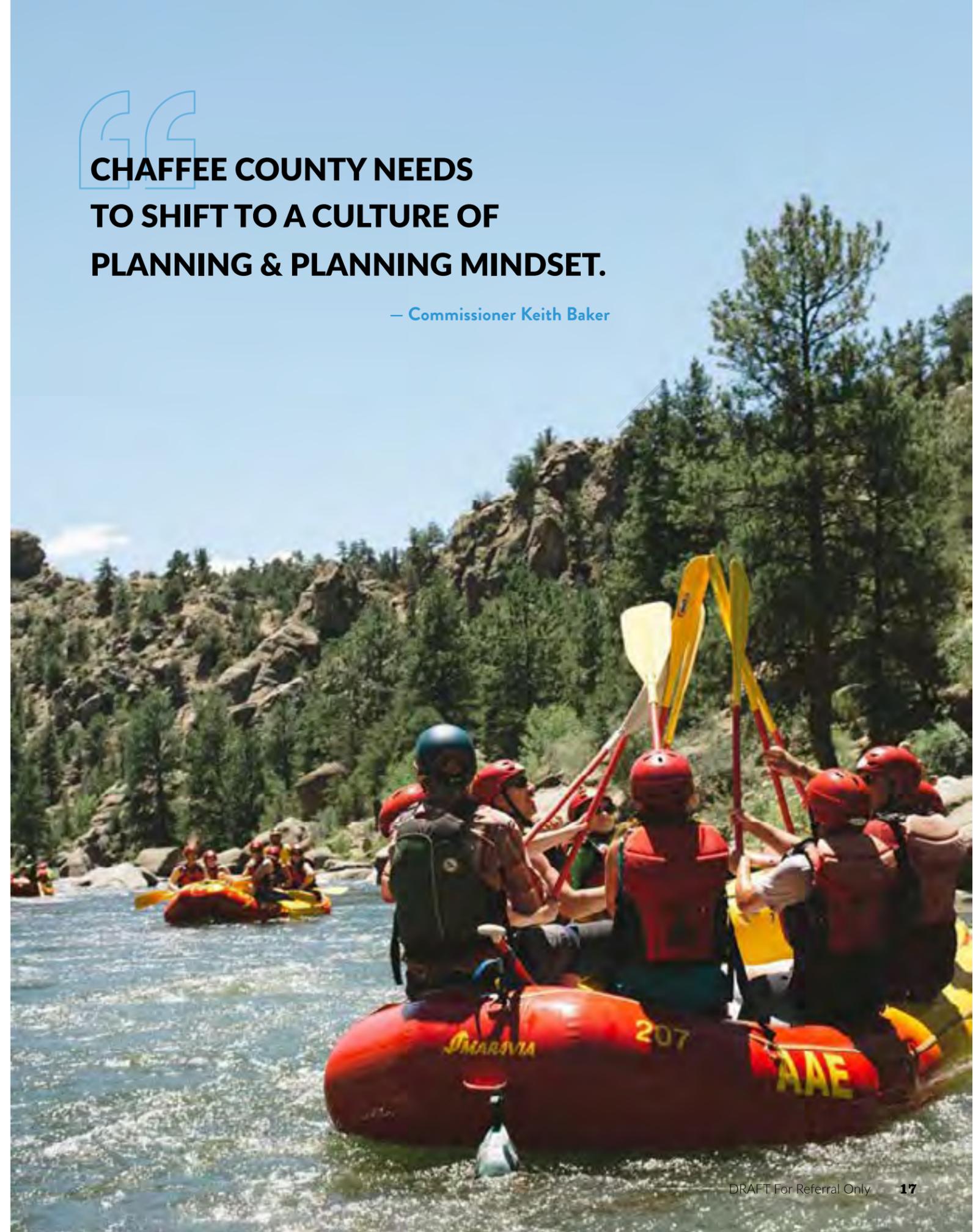
events, chemical spills, and more – are likely to overcome our best human designs and engineering. Similarly, the two previous laws illustrate the potential for unintended consequences – how using one pesticide may lead to the rise of another more damaging pest, for example.

4. There is No Such Thing as a Free Lunch (All decisions involve trade-offs). Every gain comes at some cost. There is no such thing as “zero impact.” For example, an electric vehicle is charged with electricity produced by some source – either fossil fuel or perhaps solar panels containing rare-earth metals that may have been mined a long ship-ride away. The batteries in the vehicle are similarly manufactured and must ultimately be disposed of properly (see # 2 above). Building large developments of “affordable housing” in rural areas may be an attractive option in terms of land costs, but wells, waste disposal, transportation, and other costs may exceed any savings rendering the housing unaffordable and imposing other costs on the community.

When applied to county-wide land use policy, these tenets guide this Plan’s philosophy of promoting logical land use patterns in appropriate areas where growth makes sense by it’s true costs and benefits. An ecological approach finds the best place for something by layering information to optimize suitability. This is particularly applicable to the Growth Scenarios in Part III, which use GIS to take into consideration physical conditions to determine the most optimal criteria for certain human activities.

CHAFFEE COUNTY NEEDS TO SHIFT TO A CULTURE OF PLANNING & PLANNING MINDSET.

– Commissioner Keith Baker



How to Use this Plan

This comprehensive plan - at its essence - is a means of communicating the community's priorities and vision for the future. From developers looking to understand community ideas on a specific parcel, to citizens aiming to find out which infrastructure projects are prioritized over the next five years, the plan represents the voice of thousands of people who have many different needs.

This plan offers language, maps and County-wide policy recommendations that can guide decision-makers. Whether they are Chaffee County Commissioners, the County Manager, County Planning Staff, or officials of the various County municipalities, they can all refer to and use the information contained in the plan to guide policy making. This plan proposes goals, strategies, and implementation steps that address the issues embedded within each of the Comprehensive Plan Themes. While reflecting social and economic values, this plan guides the physical development of the County by addressing land use, open space, and density issues.

The plan is broken into three distinct parts. Part I introduces the philosophy behind land use planning in Chaffee County. This philosophy reflects the mission and vision of County leaders and citizens in 2020. Part II introduces the Planning Framework which discusses elements such as mobility, housing, and public services. The Vision, Goals and Strategies - going from

broad to specific - are aspirational statements that will guide forthcoming land use planning decisions. These statements provide a basis for findings of fact that staff can use in their recommendations to the Planning Commission on land use or policy decisions.

Part III outlines in detail the physical planning and implementation strategies that will advance final plan outcomes. The most demonstrative part of the comprehensive plan, Part III begins with the Future Land Use Plans and Maps (FLUMs), which guide long-term change in land use for each of the four County sub-areas. Should the time come to further plan a specific area, the County-wide Comprehensive Plan shall be amended to reflect new or changing conditions.

A List of Projects were identified by listening to stakeholder and public input, reviewing previous planning efforts and assessing existing conditions. These projects range widely in priority, timeline and investment. They should guide decision making on how and where public resources may be targeted to achieve comprehensive plan goals.

This plan also refers to several other plans and studies that inform plan outcomes. Each external plan operates as a supplemental document implementing the vision, goals and strategies of this comprehensive plan.

WHERE DO I FIND..?

Use this quick-reference guide to locate plan elements and items of interest (click to hyperlink).

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Plan Inputs

Public Input
Stakeholder Interviews
2000 Comp Plan
Envision Chaffee County
Physical Conditions
History

Planning Framework

Vision
Goals
Strategies

Implementation Tools

Sub-area Plans
Opportunity Sites
Future Land Use
Development Outcomes
List of Projects

Part II

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Part II communicates the Vision, discusses the key Plan Elements and establishes Goals and Strategies. The following sections lay the groundwork at a broad level to provide a basis for more specific recommendations in Part III, which is the Implementation Plan.



Downtown Buena Vista
Photo by Scott Peterson

2. Vision, Goals & Strategies



*Buena Vista
Neighborhood Meeting*

HOW THEY WORK

Goals are broad statements that push forward the aspirational elements of the plan as stated in the public vision. Goals - along with associated strategies - are statements representing recommendations of what needs to be done, how, and by whom.

The process of updating these goals and strategies included an in-depth assessment of how effectively the 2000 Comprehensive Plan goals and strategies achieved their intended outcomes. Most important to the revision were the thousands of data points collected throughout the public input process, including through online channels, live public meetings, comment cards or through a series of workshops with various subject-matter expert subcommittees born out of the Planning and Zoning Commission. The following goals and strategies reflect the views of the community with respect to the important issues facing Chaffee County.

Strategies are emphasized key moves and actions that enable goals. Goals and strategies are organized by seven value-based themes.

Strategies further inform - and are implemented by - the Future Land Use Plan and the List of Projects.

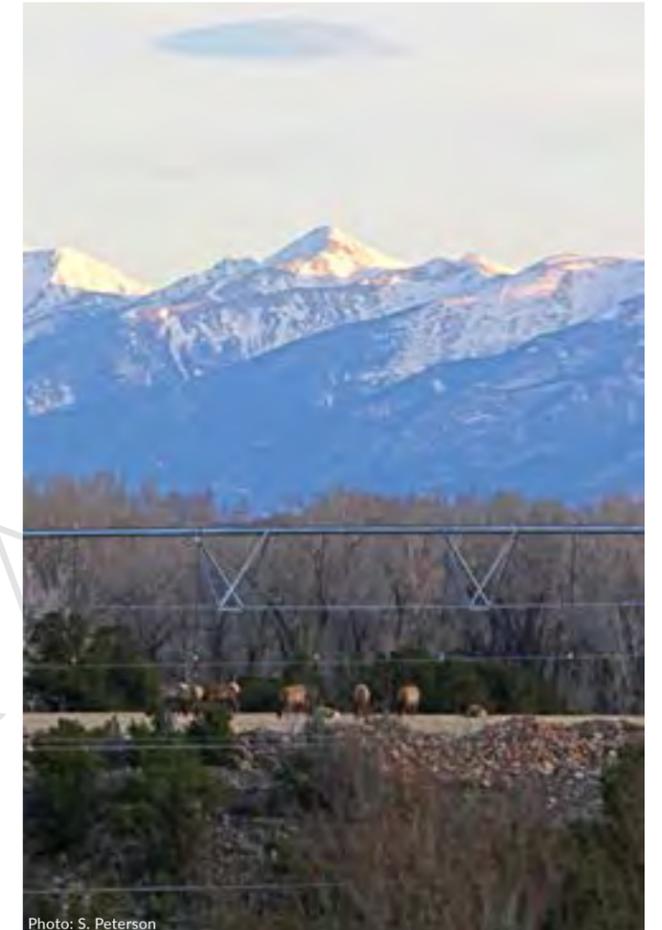


Photo: S. Peterson

The List of Projects and related actions are a translation from strategies to strategic moves that individuals, organizations or agencies can perform to carry out the plan's goals.

Theme 1: PEOPLE & COMMUNITY SERVICES

VISION STATEMENT:

Chaffee County is a harmonious community where all people are valued, diversity is welcomed, all are respected and have opportunities to achieve their highest potential.



Buena Vista Parade
Photo: Scott Peterson

TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- Demographics
- Services and Capacity
- Health and Wellness
- Education
- Services and Fiscal Responsibility

PEOPLE & COMMUNITY SERVICES DATA & DISCUSSION

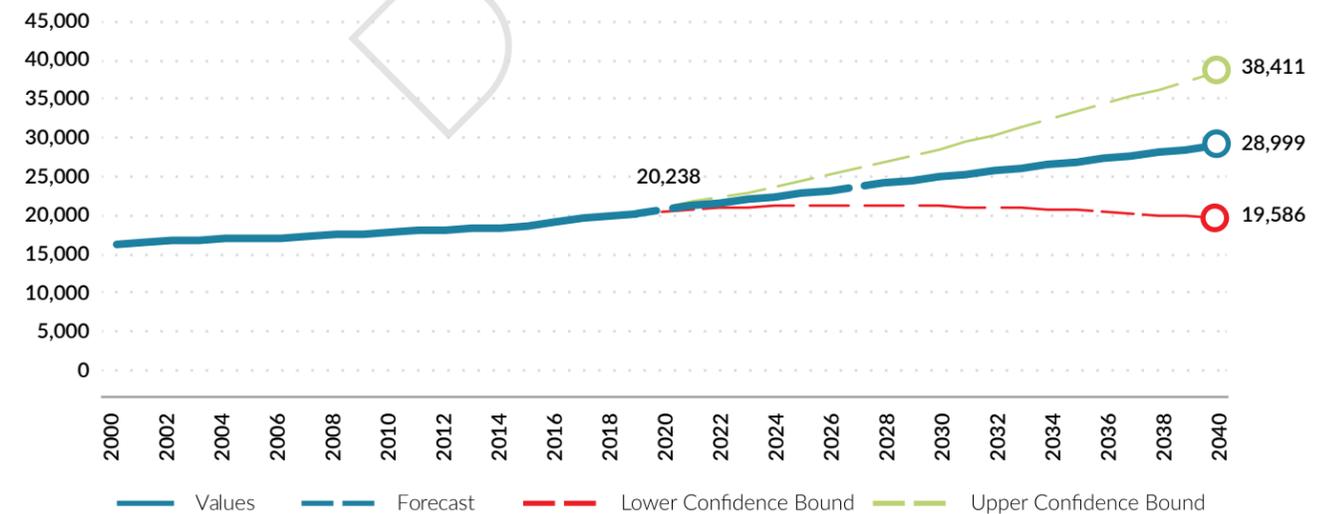
WHY THIS THEME IS IMPORTANT

With changing demographics and an increasing population, Chaffee County is experiencing shifting priorities and growing pains when providing community services to its residents and their changing needs. From education to senior services, the current and future residents of the County rely on these services to meet essential needs.

KEY DATA POINTS

Population & Projections

- Chaffee County has experienced unprecedented growth over the last 20 years, with the fastest growth rates occurring in recent years. According to the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), **from 2015 to 2018 Chaffee County added approximately 1,438 people, an average growth rate of 7.7%**, up 3.3% from that of 2010 to 2015 (4.5%).
- Utilizing U.S. Census data from 2000 through today, an exponential smoothing forecast estimates that **Chaffee County's population will increase by 33% by 2035**, reaching 26,949 people based on historic growth trends.



Population Growth: Population and projection, 2000 to 2040 (Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Cushing Terrell)

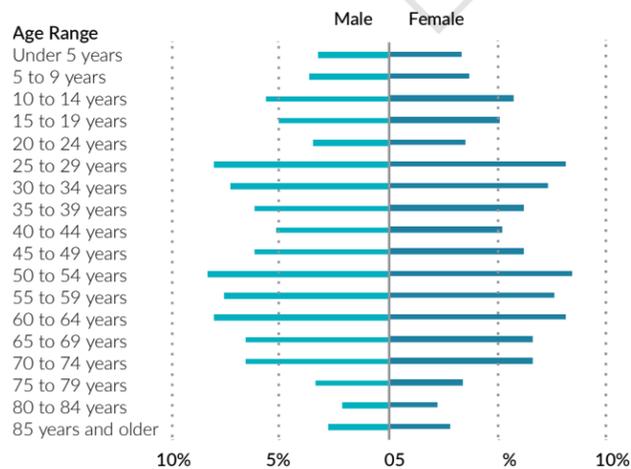
- Pending unforeseen circumstances, Chaffee County will add between 6,000 and 13,000 new residents between 2020 and 2035 who will need adequate housing, services, goods, and recreational activities to maintain the livability that attracts people to this community.

Demographics

- **Chaffee County's population is aging**, with a median age of 49.9, which is much older than the state's median age of 36.5.
- An estimated 64% of the population is between the ages of 30 and 75, and half is over the age of 50. The County's population pyramid indicates current and future demand for housing and services for an aging population, such as assisted living facilities and expanded health care.
- **Personal incomes in Chaffee County are below average for the state**, but are increasing at a faster rate. According to the

Age and Gender: Population Pyramid

Source: US Census ACS 2017



Median Income Comparison, 2010 - 2017

Area	Median Income 2010	Median Income 2017	% Change
Chaffee	\$42,941	\$53,762	25%
Colorado	\$56,456	\$65,458	16%
United States	\$51,914	\$57,652	11%

Source: US Census ACS 2017

US Census 5-year estimates, the median income of Chaffee County residents increased from \$42,941 in 2010 to \$53,762 in 2017. This 25% rate of increase is higher than the state of Colorado's 16% increase in the median income in that time. According to HUD and CHFA, the Area Median income for 2020 is \$50,000 for a single person.

- **An increase in second homes and occasional use homes point to a more seasonal population.** In 2017, the US Census estimated that 17% of housing units in the County were for seasonal or occasional use only, around 1,840 homes. At an average of 2.23 persons per unit in 2017, that represented an estimated seasonal population of around 4,103 persons.

Schools

- The County is serviced by two public school districts, one in Buena Vista and the other in Salida. Each has an elementary, middle/junior, and high school.
- The Montessori School and the Darren Patterson Christian School also operate in the County.

Higher Education

- Residents within the Salida School District voted in 2019 to join the Colorado Mountain College (CMC) Tax District and pay the attendant mill levy on real property. These funds will be used to support much-needed courses and programs through the College.
- CMC is already gearing up its programming in the southern half of the County, with significant emphasis on technical training programs and careers.

Medical Care

- The Heart of the Rockies Medical Center in Salida is the only hospital in the County, and there are many services not available at this facility that require trips to the Front Range.
- Services that were identified as lacking or needed include: urgent care, pediatric dentists, transitional care, substance abuse programs, continuum of care and hospice.

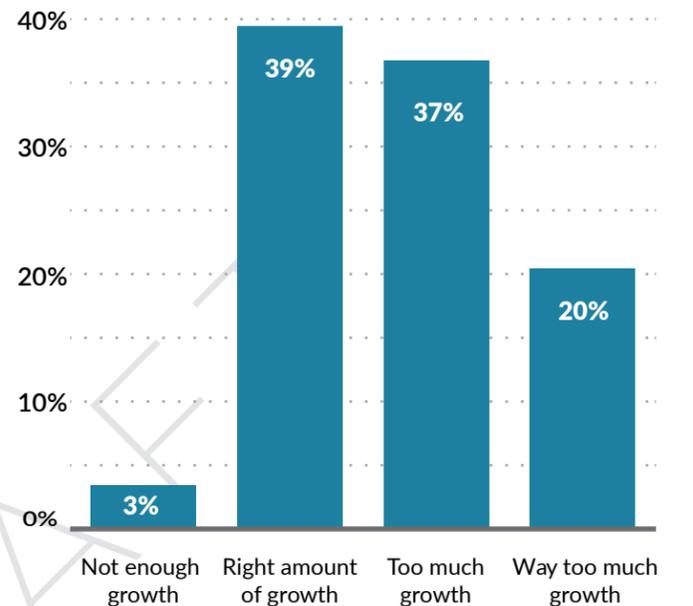
Behavioral Health

- Solvista Health provides mental and behavioral health services for Fremont, Chaffee, Lake and Custer Counties out of Salida. In 2019, they received a grant to build a treatment center adjacent to the Heart of the Rockies Medical Center.

Emergency Response Services

- Capacity for first responders like police, fire and EMS, although potentially adequate for the current population, might be challenged as they serve a growing population. Goal 1.7 "Ensure emergency services are adequately funded and staffed to maintain high quality service in the County as the populations increases" is intended to find ways to

What are your feelings on the pace and amount of growth in the County? Survey #1 Results



proportionally increase facilities, personnel, and resources for emergency service branches at the same pace of proposed growth. Additional studies and capital planning should be completed to build an understanding of servicing needs.

COMMUNITY INPUT

- Almost half (45%) of residents who took the first online community survey have lived in Chaffee County for over 10 years, while 38% have lived here for less than 5 years.
- When asked what they valued most about Chaffee County, 25% of all answers mentioned the people and the sense of community. Many mentioned the friendly people of Chaffee, and the tight-knit nature of the Arkansas Valley community.

- About 39% of survey responders thought that Chaffee was experiencing the right amount of growth, 37% thought that there was too much growth, and 20% responded that there was way too much growth. One responder stated “Growth is going to happen and we have to have a plan and be more progressive...if we do not do that, the growth will still happen, but we will not have control over it. Growth is not a bad thing!”

COMP PLAN IMPLICATIONS

With changing demographics comes the need to create the facilities, supply the housing types and construct mobility features for all ages and abilities, including healthy recreation options.

This means projects should be oriented to accessibility with gathering spaces that have features and facilities for all ages, such as playgrounds, shady resting areas and safe, visible gathering spaces where the community can interact.

Additional focus is therefore placed in existing town centers, where a critical mass of housing, jobs and job creation opportunities and gathering spaces would encourage the vitality and vibrancy desired by the Chaffee community.

Much study and discussion has been held on the social capital within Chaffee and how it relates to growth and development. The value in tapping into Chaffee’s social networks was communicated in the Envision Chaffee process which stated several grassroots-level ambitions including (paraphrased from “Envision Chaffee County”):

- Chaffee County has a severe shortage of licensed child care locations. Providers decreased from 27 to 12 in recent years, and 65% of 2018 Child Care Availability Survey respondents indicate they may leave due to child care shortages.
- Concern about finding common ground and building community capacity to discuss difficult issues, and develop and achieve solutions.
- Support vulnerable residents: Currently resources are limited for supporting domestic violence programs or resources at the county-level. Goal 1.8 “Support vulnerable residents with appropriate services” is intended to consider expanding those programs to offer support for such services.

Fiscal responsibility is paramount to this comprehensive planning effort, particularly as a global pandemic continues to impact the day-to-day financial well-being of Chaffee County. To the extent that it is feasible, development and growth must only occur if it does not cause undue burden on the County’s finances or its ability to provide a high level of public services. As such the plan has a focus within this theme relating directly to the subject of fiscal responsibility with Goal 1.9: Maintain a Fiscal effective County government, and a list of strategies consistent with the community’s desire to maintain financial health while promoting the right amount and character of growth.

Goals & Strategies:

PEOPLE & COMMUNITY SERVICES

GOAL 1.1: Identify as a generous and inclusive community embodying our community values (see page 14) where all people feel valued and are motivated to be engaged in making Chaffee County a more amazing place to live.

STRATEGIES:

- A.** Actively promote a harmonious community (County) through community-building, including events and gathering spaces and places with the support of the Community Foundation and non-governmental groups.

ACTION STEP: Facilitate opportunities for inclusive community-building events, such as a Chaffee Heritage Day Celebration.

ACTION STEP: Facilitate communication of community events through a central events calendar/County Visitors Bureau.

ACTION STEP: Seek opportunities to introduce diversity and encourage inclusive behaviors in the County conversation.

- B.** Identify and support diverse communities and activities that support these communities with the support of the Community Foundation and non-governmental organizations.

ACTION STEP: Assess the needs of all residents in Chaffee County, particularly vulnerable or underserved groups in the region.

ACTION STEP: Provide/facilitate access to essential County functions particularly to overcome communication barriers.

ACTION STEP: Raise awareness of the cultural contributions to our County by diverse communities.

ACTION STEP: Promote inclusivity in all County functions and activities, so as to be welcoming to all faiths and belief systems.

ACTION STEP: Address issues of isolation and deficient services.

- C.** Create a County-wide kindness awareness project and support existing initiatives that promote community understanding.

GOAL 1.2: Recognize the contribution the creative arts make to our community character and economy and enhance and expand creative arts activities and opportunities.

STRATEGIES:

- D.** Support the creative arts organizations through promotion, awareness, branding, events and transportation.

ACTION STEP: Support the creative arts organizations through promotion, awareness, access and events.

ACTION STEP: Support arts education for all ages and arts organizations that promote and offer arts education throughout the County.

ACTION STEP: Support and promote young creative artists.

ACTION STEP: Acknowledge the financial contribution that the creative arts make to the economy in Chaffee County.

GOAL 1.3: Promote and support physical and mental health for all residents.

STRATEGIES:

- E. Invest in facilities and infrastructure that aid in physical activity and promote wellness.

ACTION STEP: Maximize use of existing facilities and coordination with municipalities for health, wellness and fitness activities.

- F. Support individual and community health behaviors that reduce the disease burden in the community.

ACTION STEP: Support the Chaffee County Health Coalition with implementation actions to address community health issues.

ACTION STEP: Update the Community Health Improvement Plan.

ACTION STEP: In partnership with diverse stakeholders, launch an awareness campaign of the effects of behaviors that negatively affect health and the availability of preventive health services.

ACTION STEP: Foster a working relationship between Chaffee County Public Health and the Planning Commission to share expertise and resources to achieve shared goals.

ACTION STEP: Work with CCPH to develop an orientation for new PC members on the interconnections between land use planning and public health.

- G. Encourage practices and activities to achieve healthy food access for all residents.

ACTION STEP: Partner with the retail food community to offer healthy food choices.

ACTION STEP: Review and adopt recommendations from the Chaffee County Food Assessment.

ACTION STEP: Create and support a Healthy Foods Coalition that includes organizations such as Guidestone and the CCHED.

GOAL 1.4: Develop an aging-friendly community.

STRATEGIES:

- H. Develop an age in place action plan.

ACTION STEP: Evaluate assets and needs of seniors in areas such as parks and public spaces, housing, community participation, respect and social inclusion, communication and information, community health, in-home services and grief support services.

ACTION STEP: Financially and culturally support community organizations that serve seniors.

- I. Provide a wide range of housing types accessible to people at all stages of life.

ACTION STEP: Fast track approval of plans for continuum services facilities and affordable housing for seniors near municipalities.

- J. Ensure adequate access to health care for later stages of life.

GOAL 1.5: Develop a child, youth and family-friendly community.

STRATEGIES:

- K. Provide an adequate supply of affordable childcare and after school programs that support working families.

ACTION STEP: Support the Chaffee County Early Childcare Council recommendations for expanding childcare access in the County.

- L. Invest in comprehensive services for the health and wellbeing of children, youth and families that addresses disparities and inequities.

ACTION STEP: Assess needs for health services in the schools.

- M. Ensure County leadership offers support to all schools for programs considered in their master plans that seek county-level support.

GOAL 1.6: Create a culture where all residents feel motivated and empowered to be involved in making Chaffee County an amazing place to live.

STRATEGIES:

- N. Recognize and support the wealth of volunteerism present in Chaffee County.

ACTION STEP: Support and encourage local community volunteer organizations.

ACTION STEP: Encourage and facilitate participation and public engagement in community projects.

- O. Enhance access to information about County activities that support civic participation.

GOAL 1.7: Ensure emergency services are adequately funded and staffed to maintain high quality service in the County as the populations increases.

STRATEGIES:

- P. Review the impact fees for fire and other services for new development to determine if it is sufficient to meet future level of service needs.

Q. Strengthen relationships with proven diversion programs that can reduce impacts to the criminal justice system as the population increases.

ACTION STEP: Perform facilities needs assessments and capital improvements planning to ensure serving needs are being accommodated in proportion with the pace of growth.

GOAL 1.8: Support vulnerable residents with appropriate services.

STRATEGIES:

R. Collaborate with local coalitions and service providers to deliver services for Chaffee County’s most vulnerable residents including people who are experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, or food insecurity.

ACTION STEP: Conduct a County-wide assessment of vulnerable individuals and their needs.

ACTION STEP: Strengthen outreach systems and a central coordinated access point to information about accessing services.

ACTION STEP: Partner with and financially support entities uniquely positioned to assess community member needs and provide advocacy and support for victims and survivors.

ACTION STEP: Provide funding as necessary to public agencies and resources that provide services to crime victims, the incarcerated, unhoused, etc.

ACTION STEP: Prepare for anticipated stresses on all support systems that will occur due to anticipated population increase.

GOAL 1.9: Maintain a fiscally-stable and effective County government.

STRATEGIES:

- S.** Ensure growth does not adversely affect fiscal health.
- T.** Coordinate with municipal, state and other governments to determine potential for cost savings through servicing agreements.
- U.** Communicate routinely with the public through the most convenient and accessible channels during and in anticipation of public health events or human services concerns.
- V.** Complete a Chaffee County Strategic Plan.

ACTION STEP: Assess which County services are vulnerable to future financial strain.

ACTION STEP: Conduct an impact fee study for services or facilities affected by growth.

ACTION STEP: Perform capital improvement plans and facility assessments to ensure adequate facilities and staffing needs are accounted for.

Theme 2: COUNTY CHARACTER

VISION STATEMENT:

Residents and visitors celebrate Chaffee County’s access to the outdoors, unique landscapes and heritage which unites the community around a shared connection to place.



Photo: Scott Peterson

TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- Community Identity
- Historic & Cultural Assets
- Parks & Public Spaces
- Agriculture
- Recreation

COUNTY CHARACTER DATA & DISCUSSION

WHY THIS THEME IS IMPORTANT

County character is visualized in the historic architecture of the core business districts of town and city centers, the historic ranches lining the Collegiate Peaks Byway, the ruins of old mines, and the many pedestrian and bike trails connecting people to recreation opportunities.

Character comes out in the feeling of being in Chaffee County and walking down the streets of Salida, Buena Vista, and Poncha Springs. It comes out of driving down Collegiate Peaks Byway, or one of the winding mountain passes. It's the sounds of the Arkansas River and the glee of people rafting its rapids.

Character can be measured by the demographic, social, or economic characteristics of the County's people. It can also be measured visually by surveying the natural and built environment. Both means of measurement are important to understand in discussing goals and policies that could bring about or maintain desired character in the future. The following discusses this theme in terms of how character has shifted and the implications of such change.

Maintaining public management of public lands at all levels is a mission of Chaffee County's leadership. This Comp Plan builds upon that legacy.

GROWTH AND ITS EFFECTS ON CHARACTER

Recent growth (residential subdivision, land development or infill redevelopment) has been a catalyst for change in community character. The threats in Chaffee County are found among many other mountain and resort communities, including the loss of agricultural landscapes and open spaces in place of suburban sprawl. This exacerbates a jobs and housing imbalance as residences continue to be built on the easiest-to-develop land further out in the unincorporated county instead of near employment centers.

KEY DATA POINTS

Parks and Public Land

- **Chaffee County is 83% public land** owned by Federal, State and Local organizations.
- Resolution 2017-10 "Recognizing the Value of Federal Public Lands" which was adopted in 2017 to state the County's continuing support for public management, maintenance and control of federal lands. The resolution states the public value inherent in these lands and intends to maintain that public use for future generations. Chaffee County does not maintain a formal park or recreation system or facilities such as campgrounds. **Citizens have access to large tracts of state and federal lands for recreational purposes and hundreds of miles of developed trails and over 900 private and public campsites in the County.**

- The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manages 70% of the 83% of public land in Chaffee. The Forest Service has **over 300 miles of trails** within the Chaffee County Forests.
- The Bureau of Land Management manages 8% of public trails in Chaffee County.
- The State of Colorado owns over 20,000 acres in Chaffee County, managed by the Colorado State Forest Service, State Land Board, Department of Corrections and the Colorado Division of Wildlife.
- The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) is managed through a unique partnership of Colorado State Parks, the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Division of Wildlife and the U.S. Forest Service. The AHRA manages recreation along a 152-mile extent of the Arkansas River.

Historic & Cultural Resources

- Chaffee County has a tremendous bank of natural and cultural resources such as abundant wildlife, scenic natural areas like the Chalk Cliffs, historic towns and sites, natural hot springs and pools, and blue-ribbon trout rivers and streams.
- The County has a wealth of sites of historic and archaeological interest. These range from mines to historic cemeteries and ghost towns such as Turret. Of particular note is the **town of St. Elmo, a National Historic District.** Currently, there are no land development or zoning regulations that protect these historic and archaeological resources in the County.
- Salida's Creative District and art scene have offered residents increased opportunities to interact with art after being selected as one of only two inaugural "Certified Creative Districts" in Colorado in 2012.

- Many widely varies cultural and community events have put Chaffee County on the map as a unique destination to enjoy the creative arts, the Arkansas River, music and history.

Agriculture

- In recent years, **farms and ranches in Chaffee County have been increasing in number while decreasing in size.** According to USDA Census of Agriculture estimates, from 2012 to 2017 the number of ranches and farms in the County increased by 30%, while the acreage of farm and ranchland decreased by 15%.
- Most sales from farming and ranching in Chaffee County come from livestock, poultry and products (67%) while 33% come from crop farming."
- **There are approximately 16,464 acres of irrigated land** in Chaffee County, which is 25% of land in farms and ranches.

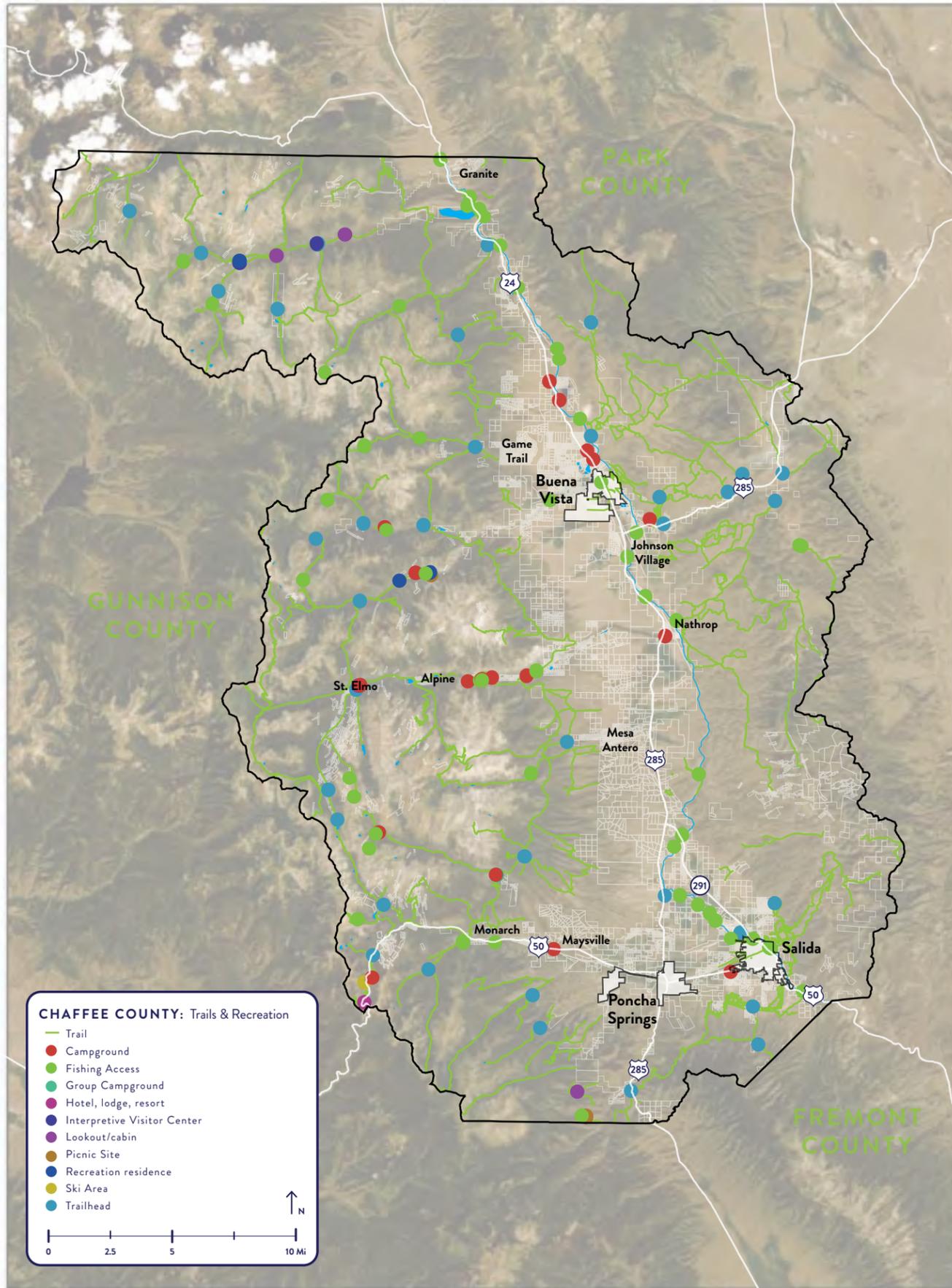
- 90% of farms in Chaffee County are family farms.

Chaffee County Agriculture

County Farms	2017	% Change since 2012
Number of farms	289	+30%
Land in farms (acres)	66,297	-15%
Average farm size (acres)	229	-34%

Land in farms by use	2017
Cropland	26%
Pastureland	62%
Woodland	7%
Other	5%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017



Recreation

- There are **over 800 miles of trails** within Chaffee County for hiking, biking and horseback riding. Some trails are open for ATV/OHV and dirt bike recreation, like the 10,000-acre Fourmile Travel Management Recreation Area.
- The **102 miles of whitewater on the Arkansas River** that runs through the County are open to fishing, white water rafting, kayaking. Boaters can find everything from Class IV and Class V rapids, to milder Class II and Class III sections.
- Monarch Mountain offers over 800 skiable acres, 670 of which can be accessed by ski lifts. There are 66 total trails, and the Mountain gets an average annual snowfall of 350 inches.

COMMUNITY INPUT

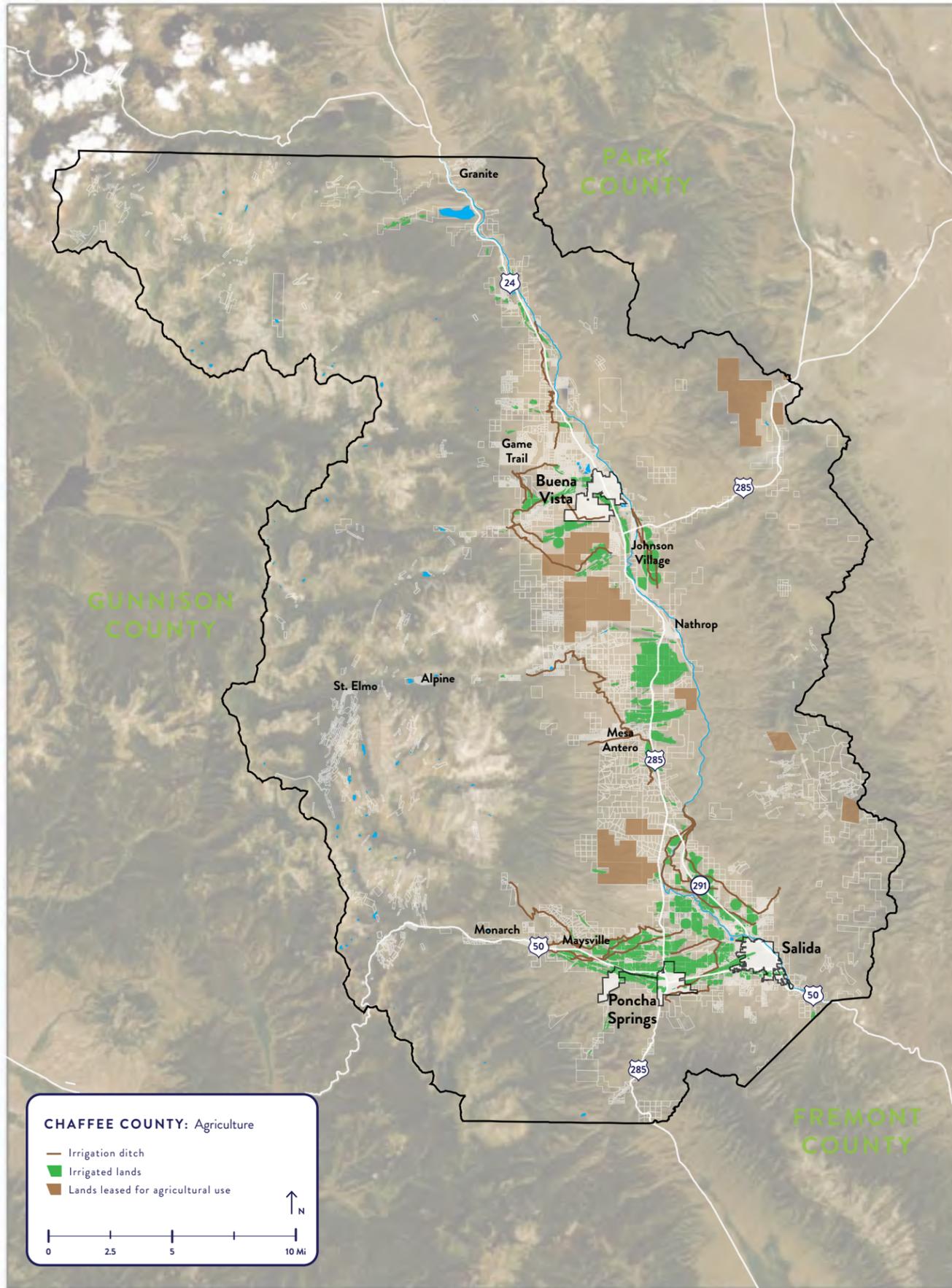
- When asked what the greatest risk to Chaffee County's current quality of life was, 26% survey responders mentioned uncontrolled growth and over-development, and another 26% believed that the lack of affordable workforce housing posed the biggest threat.
- Responders appeared to value the County's open space and were cautious of growth encroaching on natural lands and changing the character of the County.
- Survey responders took pride in the character of the County - when asked what makes Chaffee County a great place to live, 23% answered the rural, small-town feel of their community. Many mentioned the laid-back or "slow" lifestyle as something to be preserved.

COMP PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Agriculture, recreation, western heritage and open space contribute to Chaffee County's character and allow its people their chosen lifestyles. The Comp Plan recognizes this and proclaims the need for flexibility in the face of change. Character is after all defined by the County's people and when the people change, the plan must be adaptable.

The conversion of ranches, farms or other working agricultural landscapes for suburban single family style development has been the impetus for change in land use philosophy across Chaffee County for decades. Similar issues were evident in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and more recently the issue was discussed in the Citizens' Land Use Roundtable. Demand continues to drive the need to provide housing for newcomers. Ranchers and landowners are able to take advantage of the market by conveying pieces of vacant or agricultural land to developers for residential subdivision. Meanwhile, smaller pieces of farmland have been conveyed through subdivisions exempt from full land use review through exemptions in state law.

This pattern has left unincorporated Chaffee County with little land available for subdivision when public lands and previously platted subdivisions are removed from consideration (See Theme 7: Growth & Land Use for additional discussion on developable land). As that is, future land use policy in Part III of this plan provides guidance to keep agricultural lands in the rural county while respecting the rights of ranchers, farmers and landowners to manage their lands in their best interest for future generations.



Goals & Strategies: COUNTY CHARACTER

GOAL 2.1: Responsibly manage the County's recreation opportunities and access to the public lands that contribute to residents' quality of life and support Chaffee County's recreation-based economy.

STRATEGIES:

A. Adopt the Recreation in Balance (RIB) program and its efforts to maintain healthy forests, waters and wildlife in balance with outdoor recreation.

ACTION STEP: Support the development and execution of the RIB's Chaffee County Recreation and Resource Protection Plan.

B. Collaborate with municipalities and public agencies on recreation assessments, planning, and project development to meet regional recreational needs.

ACTION STEP: Develop appropriate master plans, such as a County-wide Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Master Plan, that are amendments to the comprehensive plan and guide land use decision making and investments.

C. Work with local non-profit organizations and public partner agencies to identify, maintain, and provide equitable recreational access to public lands.

ACTION STEP: Support organizations that provide access opportunities for individuals, youth, and families who are typically unable to enjoy the outdoors.

GOAL 2.2: Preserve the County's historic and cultural resources and landscapes recognizing how heritage contributes to economic development and broadens awareness of local culture and history.

STRATEGIES:

D. Identify and preserve historically significant structures and sites and use HDGP funding to create a database, whether geographic or tabular, that is accessible to all.

ACTION STEP: Update the Chaffee County historic structures and sites inventory.

ACTION STEP: Identify and nominate properties for National Historic Register designation.

ACTION STEP: Collaborate with property owners on preservation strategies like conservation subdivision planning.

E. Support the Chaffee County Heritage Area Advisory Board.

ACTION STEP: Appoint a Planning

Theme 3: AFFORDABLE & INCLUSIVE HOUSING

VISION STATEMENT:

Chaffee County residents have the opportunity to live in safe, stable, healthy and affordable homes.



New housing in Buena Vista

TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- Housing Stock
- Affordability
- Lifestyles
- Underserved Populations

Commissioner, County Commissioner, or staff to represent the County on the CCHAAB.

- F. Enhance historic preservation education, outreach, and awareness.

ACTION STEP: Raise awareness of historic structures and sites.

ACTION STEP: Support CCHAAB with enhancing collaboration and coordination amongst regional organizations working on protection of community assets such as, Buena Vista Heritage, Salida Museum, Salida Historic Preservation Committee, Hutchinson Homestead & Learning, and Salida Area Parks, Open Space & Trails.

ACTION STEP: Provide funding for promotion of county heritage historic sites and events.

ACTION STEP: Support historical and cultural education in local schools.

- G. Protect Chaffee County's iconic viewsheds and Scenic Byways designation.

ACTION STEP: Support updates to the Chaffee County Heritage Area & Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byways Management Plan. (SHBMP)

ACTION STEP: Integrate the SHBMP into local and regional economic development plans.

ACTION STEP: Align trail and transportation corridor design and development with the SHBMP.

ACTION STEP: Integrate the updated SHBMP recommendations into the County's land use code update.

GOAL 2.3: Update the regulatory framework to support quality of life goals.

ACTION STEP: Review and amend development regulations related to subdivisions and developments to achieve consistency with County plans for public land access, trail easements, open space dedications as well as municipal standards in urban growth areas.

AFFORDABLE & INCLUSIVE HOUSING DATA & DISCUSSION

WHY THIS THEME IS IMPORTANT

Understanding the interrelationship between housing costs, jobs, local economics and sustainable growth, Affordable and Inclusive Housing plans for a future where housing is accessible for all segments of the population. This theme centers on the lifestyle that includes all people of all ages, social groups and income levels.

Along with the State of Colorado and the country itself, Chaffee County and the region face challenges to providing sustainable housing for its workforce. A regional housing shortage, lack of diversity of housing, and low-wage jobs have priced certain income levels out of the County, and have continued to push existing residents elsewhere.

Understanding the regional nature of housing, the community partnered in completing the Chaffee County Housing Needs Assessment in 2016 which assessed trends, evaluated supply and demand conditions and identified gaps where resources should be focused.

In general the study found that most new jobs added to the County in the past 20 years have been low-wage, tourism-based work, coupled with the rapidly increasing cost of housing and land, resulting in the widening of the gap between wages, incomes and housing. With the

high cost of constructing housing preventing adequate numbers of new homes on the market and non-local ownership and short term rentals constraining the supply of housing to new workers, the gap will continue to widen.

KEY DATA POINTS

Pace of Housing Growth

- **The number of housing units in the County has increased**, with growth of 2,739 units Countywide from 2000 to 2018, according to DOLA. However, the County only grew by 1,975 households over that time. Since one household is equivalent to one occupied housing unit, this faster growth of housing units compared to households indicates an **increase in second home ownership**.
- According to US Census 5-year estimates, 25.7% of housing units in Chaffee County are vacant, which is much higher than the state vacancy rate of 10%. The Census also estimates that in 2017 **1,840 units (16.6% of total housing units) were used as second homes**, classified as “for seasonal, recreational or occasional use”, compared to Colorado’s 4.9% second homes.
- **A large portion of the housing stock in Chaffee is in the unincorporated County, according to DOLA.** Of the approximate 11,188 housing units, 29% are in Salida, 14% are in Buena Vista, 4% are in Poncha Springs, and 53% are in the unincorporated area. Development in the unincorporated area is generally low density, dispersed, and without municipal utilities.

- **The Chaffee County Housing Needs Assessment concluded that the region’s households in most need of housing are those below 120% AMI.** It identified a 1,262-unit shortfall for households at 60% AMI and below, an 834-unit shortfall for those at 60-120% AMI, and a 330-unit shortfall for the “missing middle” households between 120 and 160% AMI in 2016.

Housing Type

- Based on 2017 US Census estimates, single-family detached housing units made up 81% of the countywide housing stock, followed by mobile homes at 8.6%.
- Excluding the municipalities, in the unincorporated areas of the County, the **majority (85%) of housing units are single family detached**, up 9% since 2010.
- The number of mobile home units in unincorporated Chaffee decreased from 20% of all units to just 11% from 2010 to 2017.
- The housing stock has become less diverse

over the last 15 years in the County, with only 2% of units being multifamily. According to the Housing Needs Assessment, there has been very little apartment construction due to a lack of available sites with the right zoning and rents that did not cover the cost of construction.

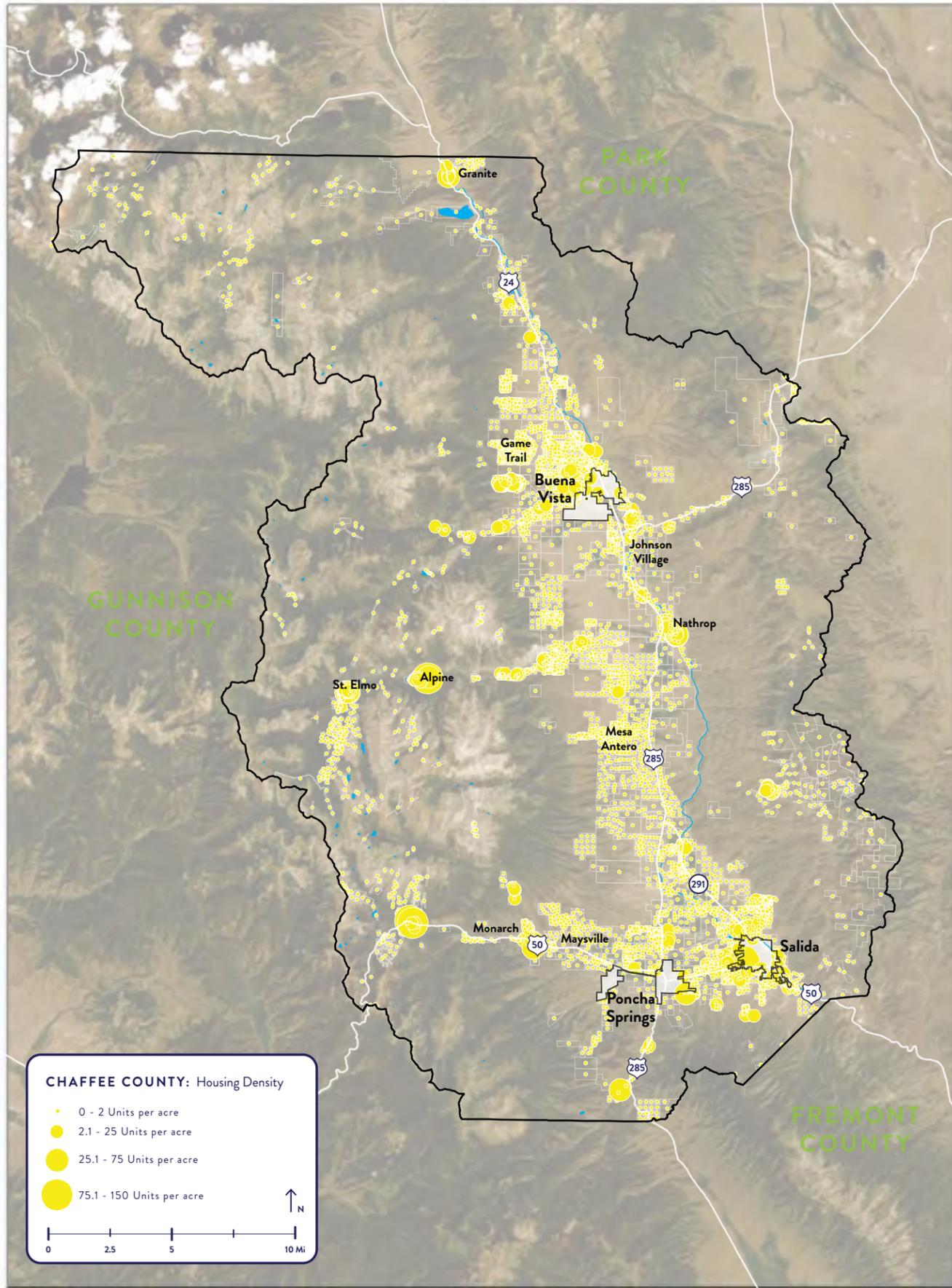
Housing Cost and Affordability

- The dramatic increase in County housing costs largely occurred within the last two to three years. According to the Realtors of Central Colorado, the **median sales price for a single family home in Chaffee County was \$426,978 in December 2019, up 11% from 2018 and up 21% from 2016.**
- Similarly, the median sales price for a townhouse or condo was \$325,200 in December 2019, up 12% from 2018 and up 27% from 2016.
- According to US Census 5-year estimates, 23% of the total housing units in Chaffee County are rentals.

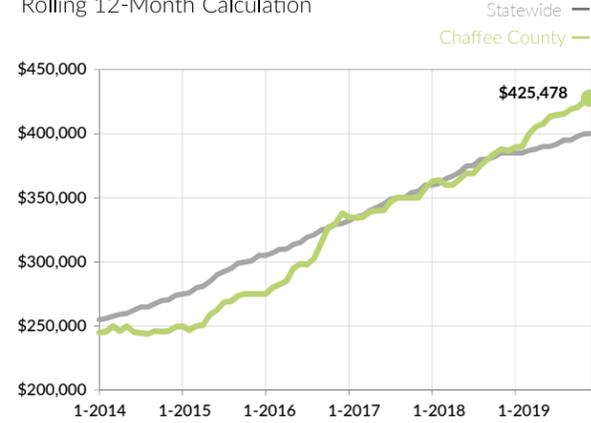
Housing Inventory by Type

Area	Single Family	Duplex	Multi Family	Mobile Home	ADU/ EDU	Total
Unincorporated County	4,860	29	58	648	95	5,700
Salida	2,139	232	368	233	94	5,700
Poncha Springs	236	8	53	28	19	344
Buena Vista	1,250	31	113	9	27	1,430
Johnson Village	41	0	0	119	33	193
Maysville	90	0	0	0	0	90
Total	8,575	300	592	918	235	10,630
% of Total	80.7%	2.8%	5.7%	8.6%	2.2%	100%

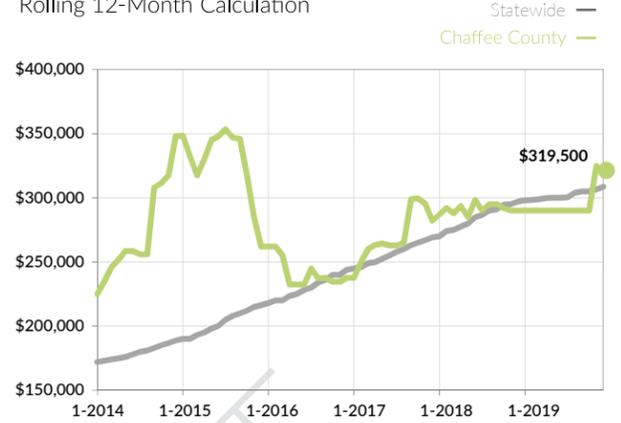
Source: US Census ACS 2017



Median Sales Price – Single Family
Rolling 12-Month Calculation



Median Sales Price – Townhouse-Condo
Rolling 12-Month Calculation



Current as of January 6, 2020. All data from the multiple listing services in the state of Colorado. Report © 2019 ShowingTime.

Chaffee Median Home Sales Price	2016	2018	2019
Single-Family	\$338,000	\$386,500	\$425,478
Townhouse or Condo	\$237,650	\$290,000	\$319,500

Source: Colorado Association of Realtors

- According to the 2016 Chaffee County Housing Needs Assessment, **rents have been rising** and were between \$1,200 and \$1,600 per month. Most rental properties are single family homes, and when properties become available they are usually rented within one month. An average rent of \$1,200 per month is not affordable to a household earning less than 100% AMI. Anecdotally, current local ads show rents between \$1,600 and \$2,000.

- Homelessness has had significant impacts on the management of public lands, as the rapidly increasing housing prices in the County have forced community members to live in tents and vehicles full-time without proper facilities.

COMMUNITY INPUT

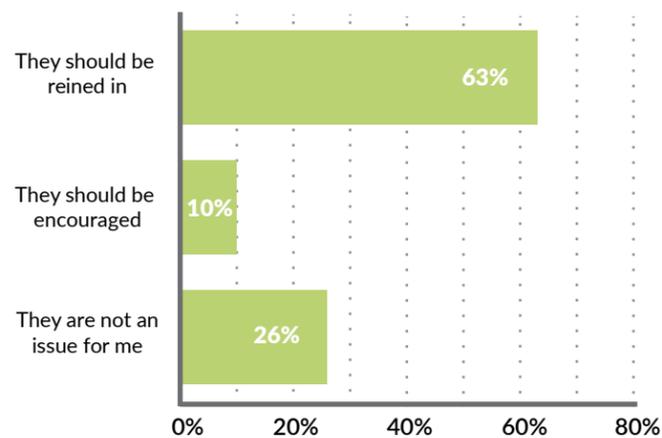
Homelessness

- Although accurate numbers of persons experiencing homelessness are difficult to find for Chaffee County, the school officials report an unexpectedly high number of students who claim to not have “housing security”.
- Chaffee has a Homeless Coalition formed in 2019 that focuses on finding solutions and resources for homeless community members. Limited wintertime facilities are available in the south end of the County.

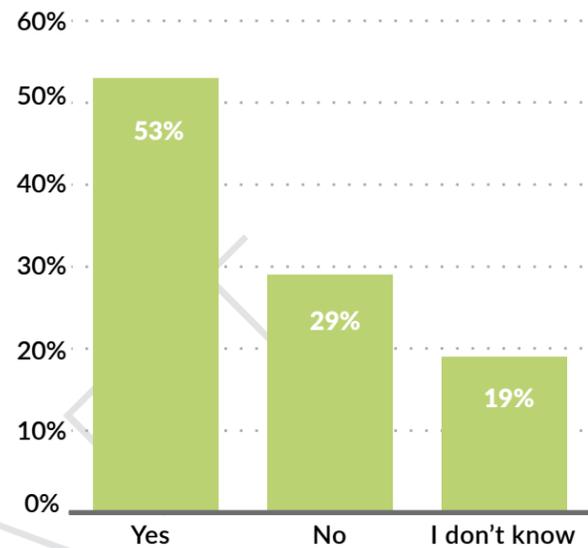
- When asked what the greatest risk to Chaffee’s quality of life was, 26% of responders to the first community survey referred to lack of affordable housing.
- Similarly, 22% of responders mentioned that affordable and/or workforce housing was the number one thing that Chaffee County should focus on in a new comprehensive plan.
- Ninety percent of community survey responders lived in a single-family detached house, while only 3% lived in a townhouse, 2% lived in a duplex or apartment, and 2% lived in a mobile home.

- The majority (89%) owned their home, and of those who rented over half (53%) stated that the greatest barrier to owning was that it was too expensive in their community, while 24% said that there were not enough dwelling types that they needed.
- The majority (63%) of responders thought that short term housing rentals (STRs) should be reined in in Chaffee County, while only 10% thought they should be encouraged, and 26% said that they were not an issue for them personally.
- In Survey #2, 25% of responders said they would support a flat-rate annual licensing fee for STRs that contributes to an affordable housing fund, while 22% said they would support a fee at the percentage of the listing price paid by the vacationer. Only 5% of Survey #2 responders said that they did not support any additional fees for STRs.
- Responders were split on what type of housing they would like to see more of in Chaffee County. Forty percent answered free-standing small homes and small-lot

What do you think about Short Term Rentals (STRs) in the County? *Survey #1 Results*



Would you support a local dedicated tax for affordable housing? *Survey #2 Results*



freestanding houses, while other popular answers included duplex-fourplex (18%) and vertical mixed-use building (12%).

- In response to the open-ended question "What type of affordable community housing should the County produce?", over one quarter of responders described medium to high density apartments in and around existing towns and activity nodes.
- Just over half (53%) of Survey #2 responders were supportive of creating a local dedicated tax for affordable housing, while 29% said they would not support a tax and 19% said they did not know.
- When asked what type of tax they would support, 35% of responders said a hotel/lodging tax, 22% said an excise tax or development impact fee, 15% said a real estate tax or dedicated property tax, and 13% said they did not support a tax for affordable housing.
- When asked if they would support an inclusionary housing ordinance requiring

10-20% affordable housing for every new subdivision developed in the County, 69% responded yes and 31% said that they would not support an ordinance

COMP PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Ultimately the question the community must answer is "How can we continue to supply a strong mix of housing types and prices so that we can alleviate the issues caused by and the economic impacts brought on by losing segments of the population who are unable to participate in the community--either economically or culturally--due to housing costs?" Long commutes, displacement, and empty homes change the community's character and vibrancy.

The dominant housing type is the single family detached unit, and that is unlikely to change. But as people of all types continue to choose Chaffee County as their next home as they depart large cities, the single family home-type will be challenged to absorb the mounting growth pressure. Demand in the rental market is for attached units and apartments, as well as units for seasonal and other workers. Opportunities to increase supply at modest densities will be beneficial in relieving this pressure.

Planning to provide opportunities for a mix of housing--particularly affordable units--for all incomes across the county began with the Housing Needs Assessment and is continued in the Comp Plan by expanding opportunities for housing in the right locations near existing communities and through strategic action steps.

Such locations should be designated in the Sub-area Future Land Use Maps.

From what was heard in the community input, conservation subdivision design appears to be increasingly an alternative to sprawl in applicable locations on transportation corridors or within a municipal planning area where infrastructure may be accommodated. County regulations should incentivize or provide guidance for developers to pursue these designs instead of traditional large-lot rural subdivisions.

As such, the County has made this part of their vision through the goals, strategies, projects and future land use maps. All of the above strive to promote compact, dense housing and mixed use development in the most appropriate areas near or within existing communities.

Goals & Strategies:

AFFORDABLE & INCLUSIVE HOUSING

GOAL 3.1: Support the development of affordable housing within all jurisdictions in Chaffee County.

STRATEGIES:

A. Collaborate regionally to address the affordable housing issues faced by Chaffee County.

ACTION STEP: Support the soon to be created Chaffee Housing Authority by meeting financial commitments and participation by County leadership.

ACTION STEP: Designate the Chaffee Housing Authority as the public entity to represent Chaffee County in affordable housing projects.

ACTION STEP: Update the Chaffee County Housing Needs Assessment every 5 years.

ACTION STEP: Use the Chaffee Housing Authority Strategic Plan and Chaffee County Housing Needs Assessment to periodically measure progress in achieving regional goals for affordable housing.

B. Adopt policies that promote the development and preservation of housing types across the housing spectrum that serve residents across a range of demographics and incomes.

ACTION STEP: Incentivize housing for low- and moderate-income households in designated districts using tools such as: fee reductions, density bonuses, and expedited approval.

ACTION STEP: Research the applicability of a County-wide inclusionary zoning ordinance for major subdivisions.

ACTION STEP: Refer to the Chaffee Housing Authority's Strategic Plan to align land use policies between the County and municipalities to support the production of affordable housing.

ACTION STEP: Research and adopt zoning and development standards within designated districts that permit different housing types including duplexes, multiplex, tiny homes, ADUs, townhomes, condos etc. as use by right.

C. Develop a dedicated housing fund to be used to support the Chaffee Housing Authority's affordable housing programs, affordable housing development projects and affordable housing preservation.

ACTION STEP: Build support for an affordable housing development and preservation fund.

ACTION STEP: Create a local impact investment structure to facilitate local investment in affordable housing development.

D. Work with the Chaffee Housing Authority to meet the regional affordable housing production goals as established in the Chaffee County Housing Needs Assessment.

ACTION STEP: Offer financial contribution to the acquisition, rehabilitation or development of existing and/or new affordable housing developments.

ACTION STEP: Acquire and bank land and/or structures for future development, redevelopment, or financial equity.

ACTION STEP: Offer financial capital towards private market development costs in exchange for permanent or long-term affordability as defined in the Chaffee Housing Authority's Strategic Plan.

ACTION STEP: Create a model for Public Private Partnerships for the development of affordable housing.

E. Ensure residents have access to safe and livable homes.

ACTION STEP: Partner with the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments and the Upper Arkansas Council of Governments to bring, promote and execute their Weatherization and Preservation programs.

Theme 4: CONNECTIVITY, MOBILITY & ACCESS

VISION STATEMENT:

All Chaffee County businesses, residents and visitors can move around easily and safely with access to a high-quality multimodal transportation system.



Photo by Scott Peterson

TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- County Roads
- Highway Traffic
- Commuting Patterns
- Telecommunications
- Public Transportation
- Paths & Trails
- Aviation
- Rail, Trucking & Freight

CONNECTIVITY, MOBILITY & ACCESS DATA & DISCUSSION

WHY THIS THEME IS IMPORTANT

In this document, transportation incorporates Connectivity, Mobility & Access within Chaffee County to create a connected system network for all types of transportation movement through the Arkansas Valley and beyond.

This theme is important as it addresses existing transportation patterns and provides proactive alternatives and practices to accommodate future growth pressures and economic trends. Issues that will affect transportation in the future include population growth, County land development, infrastructure needs and the funding and maintenance of existing and planned transportation networks. This comprehensive plan set the objectives to provide and promote multimodal alternatives to travel, improve connectivity within and between towns, adopt and support safety strategies, support public transportation and telecommunication investments.

Of particular concern is potential growth between the County's employment centers of Buena Vista and Salida. Highways with increasing vehicle traffic and bicycle and pedestrian safety create complicated issues throughout the County.

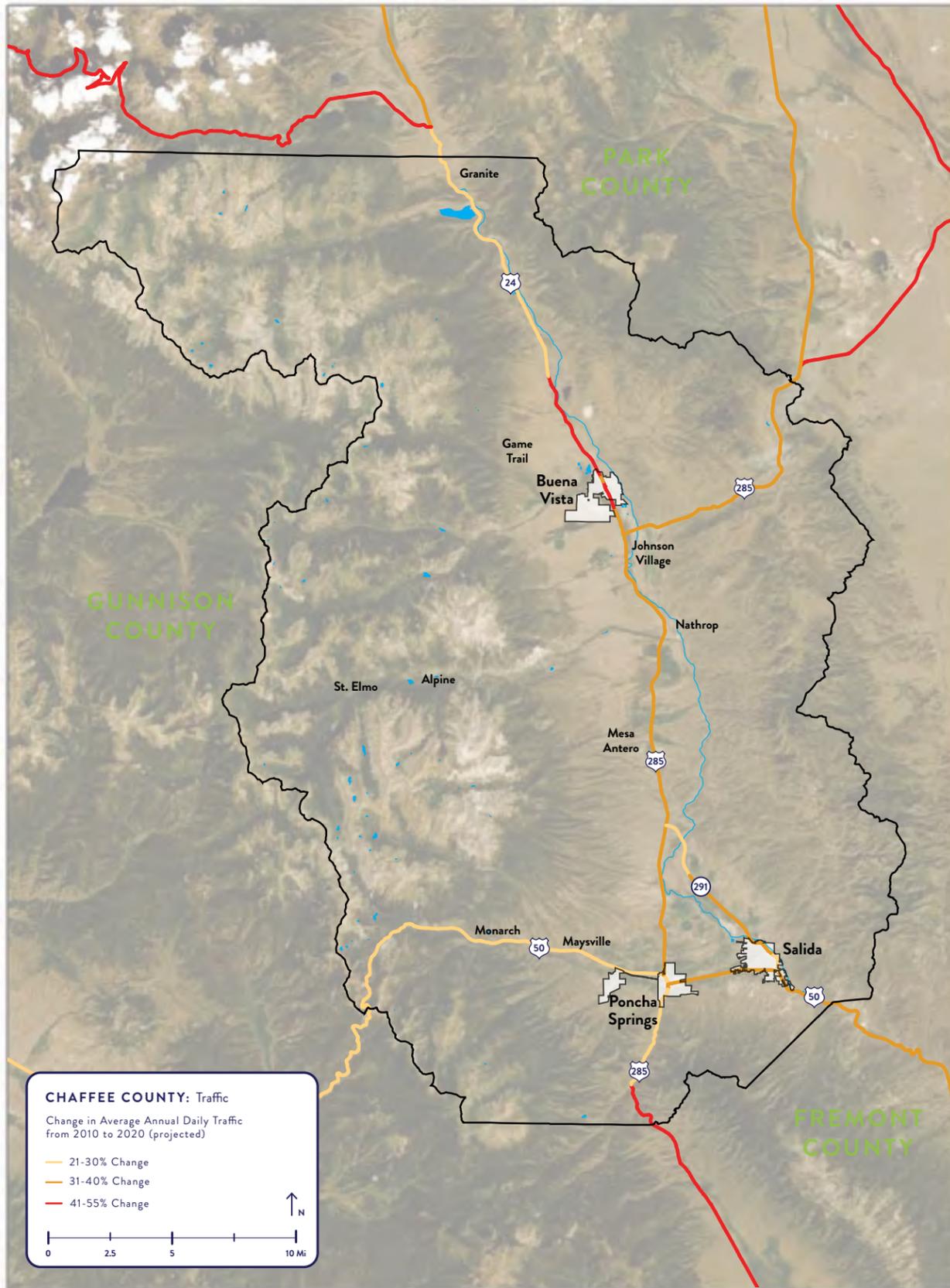
KEY DATA POINTS

County Roads

- The County manages 533.58 miles of roads. 99.97 miles are paved, 37.83 miles are chip seal surfaced, and 395.78 miles are gravel. There are also 59 bridges managed by the County.
- School bus routes utilize approximately 110 miles of county roads.
- Maintenance of these roads involves geohazards such as landslides, rock falls and flooding, tunnels, pipelines (gas, water, other fuels, etc.), signs, incidents such as roadkill and damage from weather and crashes, and telecommunications infrastructure (phone, internet, cable TV, etc.).

Highway Traffic

- Three major highways serve Chaffee County; U.S. Highway 50 is the primary east/west link and Highways 285 and 24 are the primary north/south links. Traffic backups occur on these highways during the summer months when high concentrations of tourists move throughout the County.
- **Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) has increased significantly on portions of both US 285 and US 24** from 2010 to 2020. The section of US 24 that goes through Buena Vista saw an AADT increase of 46% in ten years.



- Other areas that have seen traffic increases include US 285 at Poncha Pass, US 285 through Johnson Village, and the intersection of Highway 50 and 291.

Commuting Patterns

- **The majority of Chaffee County residents work and live in Buena Vista and Salida.** This indicates that the majority of residents in Chaffee County live where they work.
- According to US Census estimates, almost half (47%) of the workforce in Chaffee both live and work in the County, while 25% work in the County but live outside and 28% live in Chaffee County but commute outside for work.
- An estimated 69% of workers in Chaffee County drove alone to work in 2017, according to US Census estimates. Only 8% carpooled, and 11% walked or biked.

Telecommunications

- Chaffee County has emergency and commercial telecommunication systems including broadband fiber-optic cable, cell and radio towers, telephone lines and satellites, providing internet/cellular and television access to subscribers.

Place of Work vs. Place of Residence

Area	Where talent works	Where talent lives
Salida	58%	57%
Buena Vista	32%	30%
Poncha Springs	3%	3%
Nathrop	4%	10%
Monarch	2%	

Source: Chaffee County Economy Overview, 2018

- **Telecommuting has become more prevalent in recent years**, thus putting higher demands on the systems. Tourism, which is a major sector of the county's economy, also strains the existing telecommunications.

- Broadband access is essential to economic development, purchase and delivery of goods for businesses, and residents.

Alternative Transportation

- **The Chaffee Shuttle is a transit organization** operated under the non-profit agency of Neighbor to Neighbor Volunteers. It is a shared ride and public transit service, providing transportation to Chaffee County residents for medical appointments, work, shopping, and social activities. The Shuttle has been expanding to provide connecting services for San Luis Valley residents to and from Chaffee County for the same types of trips. Of significance, it is the only public

Chaffee Shuttle Operations

Chaffee Shuttle Riders	Percent of riders
60+ disabled	27%
60+ (non-disabled)	30%
Under 60 disabled	14%
General public	30%

Chaffee Shuttle Trips	Percent of trips
Shopping	27%
Medical appointments	25%
Social/recreational activities	13%
Nutrition, employment or education	11%

Source: Chaffee Shuttle, 2019

transit agency within CDOT's Transportation Planning Region #5, which includes Chaffee, Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande and Saguache Counties.

- **The Chaffee Shuttle operates with a small office staff and drivers, all of whom are paid through the grants, donations and some fees charged for fixed routes.**
- Bustang, a fee-operating service offered by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), runs a daily bus line from Denver to Gunnison that goes through Buena Vista and Salida. It also runs a bus from Salida to Buena Vista, Salida to Fairplay and Salida to Denver.
- Other transportation options include private taxi and non-profit ride services.

Trails

- Chaffee County has a network of motorized and non-motorized trails used for hiking, walking, mountain biking, and ATV/OHVs. Over the past 30 years, non-motorized systems have developed in each of the three municipalities with connections along county roads leading to the multi-use trails in the public lands surrounding the valley.
- Planning efforts for future trail connections and extensions continue as trail popularity has grown substantially. Continued trail improvements with-in and between communities, counties and the country are encouraged through public support. A Trails Master Plan was completed by the county in 2008 and will be updated as part of the Chaffee County Multimodal Transportation Plan (CCMTP)

Aviation

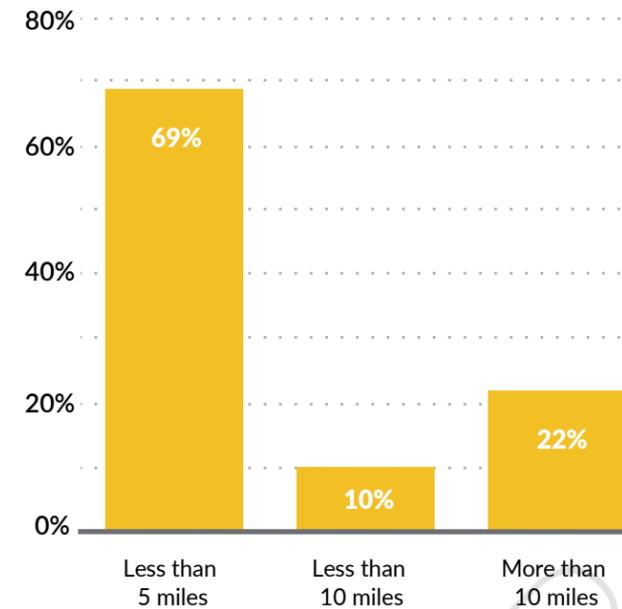
- Chaffee County is served by two general aviation airports. Harriet Alexander Field is located two miles west of Salida and is owned jointly by the City of Salida and Chaffee County and is operated by the County. It serves a variety of private, commercial and government users, including area hospitals.
- Central Colorado Regional Airport is located one mile south of Buena Vista. It is owned by the Town of Buena Vista and is operated by Arkansas Valley Aviation. It serves a mix of private, commercial and government users, including firefighting, search and rescue, and emergency medical operations. (Note: Airport Master Plans for both airports are adopted by this comprehensive plan).

Rail, Trucking and Freight

- The former Denver and Rio Grande Western provides an intact railroad corridor from the southeast corner of the County to the northern border. It has been in Active Reserve status with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) since 1998. Although there have been a number of efforts to utilize the corridor over the years, the STB is holding the corridor for the possible resumption of rail traffic.
- The intact D&RG railroad corridor is a unique and valuable asset that should be kept intact, whatever its final use may be. It is not currently being actively maintained. The corridor could potentially be used for rail and or rail/trail travel.
- Trucks continue to be the main source of freight movement through the County. This not only includes large semi-trucks delivering products to stores, but also includes the "small freight" trucks that are now part of the

How far do you travel to get to work?

Survey #1 Results



County's daily economy. These include parcel delivery by such organizations as UPS and FedEx making direct deliveries to residential and commercial doorsteps from on-line retail establishments.

COMMUNITY INPUT

- Based on the first online survey, Chaffee residents voiced concern over the lack of multimodal options and infrastructure in the County. They were concerned with State Highway congestion, parking issues and that Highway 285 is the only way to get through the County.
- Safety concerns were also often brought up when discussing pedestrian and bicycle interactions on the Highways across the County.

- Although persons who telecommute from home or commute to Chaffee County to work were not surveyed, these are important elements of Chaffee County's economy.
- Responders took great pride in the existing trail network and its importance for active lifestyles. Thirty-three percent of all responses to the question "What spaces in and around Chaffee County are most important to you?" mentioned trails.
- Due to the Chaffee Shuttle's limited capacity (and the lack of awareness among citizens that this service is available), the need for a County-wide circulator shuttle was brought up frequently through the engagement process. At the Together Chaffee Drop-in Events in an investment activity, 7% of residents voted to invest in a County-wide circulator shuttle.

COMP PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Community input indicates the existing trail network is critical to the County's identity, yet progress is needed to ensure recreational and commuter travel is safe and convenient for Chaffee's residents over the next decade.

Implications for this comprehensive plan include the need for maintaining and improving the County transportation system by analyzing existing conditions and implementing policies, procedures, funding and infrastructure to accommodate the future functionality of the County.

This plan encourages the use of existing studies and promotes intergovernmental, agency and community planning in the decision making process concerning the County transportation corridors; roads, trails, waterways, railroads, easements, rights-of-way, air space and telecommunications. The completion of the Chaffee County Multimodal Transportation Plan is essential to meeting these needs.

Land use and connectivity or mobility intersect particularly when exploring ideas to promote density over sprawl. Transit-oriented development has long been discussed as a strategy, such as building density near Bustang stops or along high-volume non-vehicle transport routes.

Goals & Strategies:

CONNECTIVITY, MOBILITY & ACCESS

GOAL 4.1: Design and fund a multimodal transportation network that provides options of travel and serves existing population and activity centers as its priority.

STRATEGIES:

- A.** Create the Chaffee County Multimodal Transportation Plan (CCMTP) to address elements of Safety, Mobility, Economic Vitality, Maintenance, and Strategic Policies.

ACTION STEP: Task the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) with development of the CCMTP.

- B.** Adopt the CCMTP as an addendum to the Chaffee County Comp Plan 2020 and use it to guide consistency in decision making across other plans.

- C.** Update the 2007 Chaffee County Trails Master Plan as part of the CCMTP to improve trail connectivity and town trail connections.

ACTION STEP: Prioritize trail construction and improvements that connect high concentrations of people to activity centers and connect those with high mobility needs and under-served populations to community services, schools and housing.

ACTION STEP: Align open space and trail dedication policies, plans, and standards across municipalities and the County.

ACTION STEP: Invest in the construction of a multi-use long-distance trail connections throughout the County utilizing designated transportation corridors that connects Salida, Poncha Springs, and Buena Vista to each other.

ACTION STEP: Use available rights of way where available for trails to maximize limited funding.

- D.** Develop a Sustainable Funding Plan to offset County investment needed for the multimodal system.

ACTION STEP: Task the TAB with development of Five-Year Sustainable Funding Plan with add-a-year/drop-a-year updates annually to the Board of County Commissioners.

GOAL 4.2: Enhance safety in Chaffee County by reducing fatalities and serious injuries in all modes.

STRATEGIES:

- E.** Work collaboratively to support the Colorado Department of Transportation goal of zero deaths.

ACTION STEP: Involve County Sheriff and emergency service agencies in the planning, building and the everyday use of County airports, roads, freight routes, transit routes bicycle and pedestrian trails to reduce user conflict and increase public safety.

ACTION STEP: Reduce vehicle trips on highways by promoting telecommunication, active land uses in and near existing communities, enhancing access to employment, recreation, public events, services and businesses by use of public transportation and other multimodal options.

ACTION STEP: Identify areas with safety hazards and explore ways to improve safety and comfort. Prioritize transit, telecommunication, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects to promote safe commuting.

ACTION STEP: Improve County highway bicycle and pedestrian crossings. Identify Safe Routes to Schools and prioritize bicycle/pedestrian improvements to and from schools.

GOAL 4.3: Improve mobility and access across Chaffee County.

STRATEGIES:

- F. Prioritize multimodal transportation opportunities and choices to all project developments by integrating bicycle, pedestrian, transit and telework connectivity in developments.

ACTION STEP: Expand transit options in Chaffee County for residents, employees/employers and visitors.

ACTION STEP: Coordinate with businesses/employers and Economic Development organizations to eliminate transportation barriers for employees.

ACTION STEP: Complete an inventory of bicycle/pedestrian assets on the County road system to identify needs and gaps between housing, employment and essential goods and services.

ACTION STEP: Prioritize multimodal access within new development projects.

- G. Maintain and improve access to public lands and recreational assets.

ACTION STEP: Work collaboratively with federal, state and municipal partners to identify public land access points to prioritize for maintaining access as the region grows.

ACTION STEP: Assess existing facilities and access points for capacity and manage to minimize over use.

GOAL 4.4: Improve economic vitality through strategic transportation investments.

STRATEGIES:

- H. Provide appropriate infrastructure to support economic development.

ACTION STEP: Identify transportation barriers to many employers and employees, including tourism, and assist with their needs.

ACTION STEP: Assure public access to County telecommunication systems.

ACTION STEP: Develop freight movement and accessibility criteria to improve delivery options.

ACTION STEP: Invest in the construction of bicycle lanes, sidewalks or multi-use paths, broadband/fiber optic cable on both sides of the road when county roads undergo significant maintenance projects.

ACTION STEP: Evaluate the expansion of airports to support their commercial activities.

GOAL 4.5: Improve multimodal infrastructure maintenance across Chaffee County.

STRATEGIES:

- I. Maintain the quality and functionality of the existing multimodal system now and in the future.

ACTION STEP: Create an ongoing annual Strategic Assessment and Maintenance Plan.

ACTION STEP: Maintain existing county roads, bridges and trails that connect residents, employment and visitors to destinations across the County.

ACTION STEP: Develop County management and operations solutions to create and extend the life-cycle of corridors of all uses.

ACTION STEP: Coordinate with local partners across sectors and jurisdictions on all multimodal projects.

ACTION STEP: Coordinate during the planning and design of improvement projects applying the context of “transportation corridors” for all modes to provide for efficiency of construction of multiple projects at once to maximize funding opportunities.

- J. Provide a safe and efficient County-wide multimodal network that minimizes maintenance costs and supports achieving the community’s vision and goals.

ACTION STEP: Align road development standards and road hierarchies across municipalities and the County for consistency with the Chaffee County Multimodal Transportation Master Plan and designated growth areas.

ACTION STEP: Conduct a fiscal impact study to assess costs of road construction and to address issues such as future maintenance and local, County and State Highway access improvements.

ACTION STEP: Develop a multi-year Capital Improvements Plan for county roads to prioritize road improvements.

Theme 5: RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

VISION STATEMENT:

Chaffee County stewards its resources in a manner that enhances community resilience and the natural environment for future generations.



Photo: Scott Peterson

TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- Environmental Stewardship
- Open Space and Conservation
- Wildlife Habitat
- Water Resources
- Resiliency
- Wildfire

ACTION STEP: Assess strategies for maintaining the ability of agriculturalists to safely move agricultural machinery and move livestock and agricultural products around the County.

- K.** Maintain and improve public transportation in the Chaffee County through coordinated planning and investments.

ACTION STEP: Study the feasibility of a more robust and efficient mass transit system in the County and/or region.

ACTION STEP: Provide support to transit providers to expand service to have local circulating routes in each community and between communities for recreational activities, service and employment to connect Chaffee County to services and activities outside the county.

ACTION STEP: Implement a one-stop-shop for transit with a call center, website and mobile application to make accessing transit services easier.

GOAL 4.6: Ensure development regulations support transportation goals for safety, mobility, economic vitality, maintaining the transportation system and strategic policies.

STRATEGIES:

- L.** Update the development code to achieve transportation goals.

ACTION STEP: Review development regulations for safe and redundant access in natural hazard zones and amend to ensure future County developments are designed to provide for redundancy of ingress/egress.

ACTION STEP: Review and amend development regulations to require consideration of planned multimodal transportation infrastructure within developments such as Safe Routes to School, transit stations/shelters, bus bike racks, park-and-rides, transit pull-ins/pullouts, telecommunication links and connections, etc.

ACTION STEP: Ensure the development review process includes consistency with transportation-related plans, such as the Chaffee County Multimodal Transportation Plan, in order to achieve transportation goals between and within developments.

ACTION STEP: Consider the use of the TAB as a review agency for developments where consistency with state, regional, and county transportation goals are applicable.

RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT DATA & DISCUSSION

WHY THIS THEME IS IMPORTANT

Fostering a Resilient & Sustainable Environment means being a regional and national leader in policy-making and resource allocation that emphasizes sustainable development. It means approaching County planning ecologically, understanding that Chaffee’s way of life and some of its highest valued ecological assets require active protection and monitoring.

This comprehensive plan is meant to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our community and preserve our community character for future generations. To do this in a community that is 83% public land, we must have a comprehensive plan organized around stewardship of our ecological resources. This plan extends that ethic to the private lands in Chaffee County, where most of the community lives and works.

KEY DATA POINTS

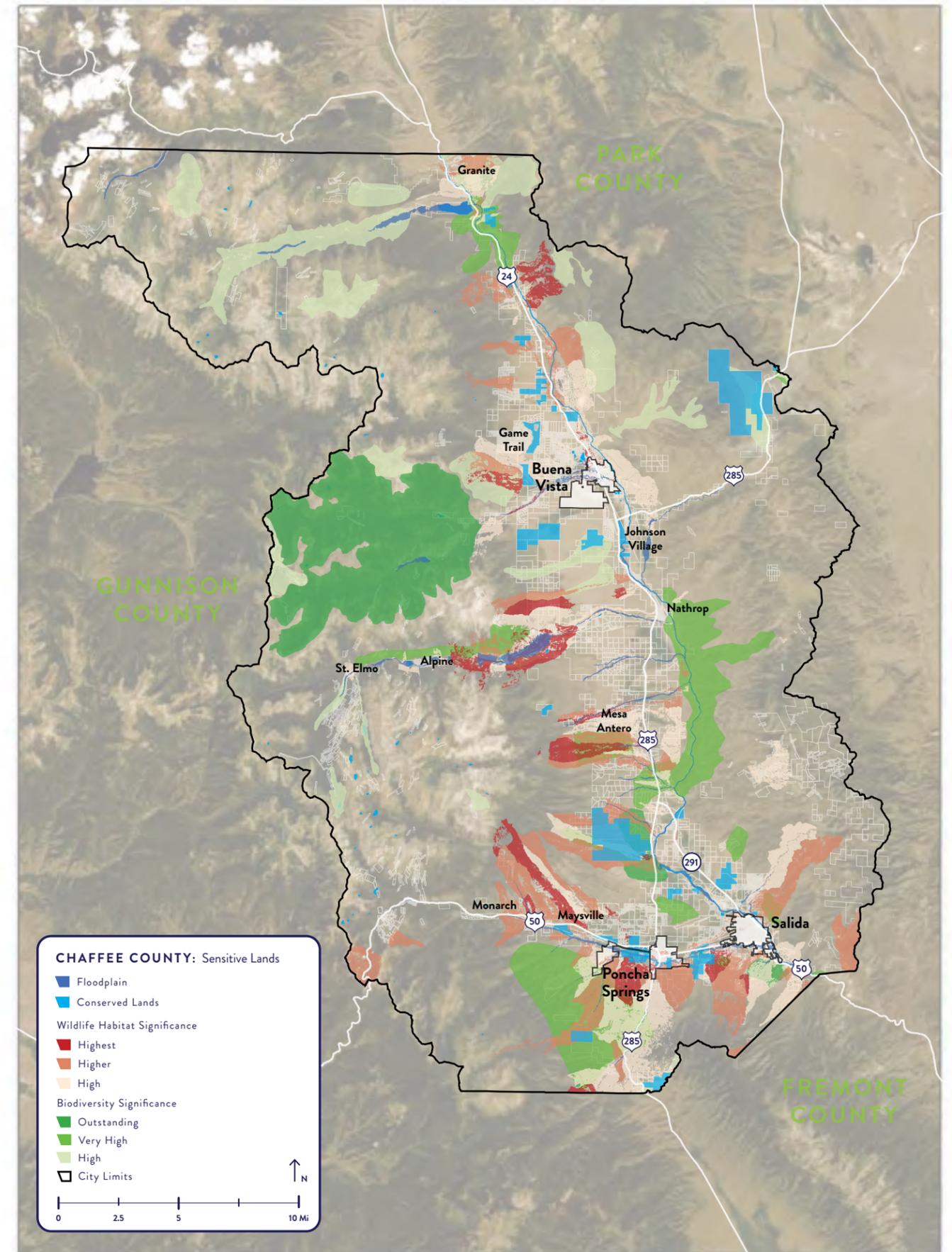
With continuing efforts from the Greater Arkansas River Nature Association and Chaffee Green, community-based organizations, and the general public, Chaffee County has endeavored to become a leader in the field of sustainable and resilient Western living. There are numerous projects, programs, and efforts driven by grassroots and governmental agencies aimed at pushing the Resilient and Sustainable Environment agenda.

Sustainability-oriented agencies, nonprofits, or other groups have emerged in Chaffee County in the past 20 years. The following organizations had direct input into this comprehensive plan:

- GARNA
- Chaffee Green
- Central Colorado Conservancy

Chaffee Common Ground and Citizen Advisory Committee

- An outcome of the Envision Chaffee County action plan, Common Ground is community-led initiative to **maintain the quality of life and resources** that attract so many people to the region.
- Enabled through a ballot-initiated grant process that leverages a portion of local sales tax, Common Ground makes possible programs and projects that **protect “the county’s most spectacular scenic views, the health of forest ecosystems, watersheds and water quality, and wildlife and their habitats.** The Common Ground Fund helps preserve our community’s unique character and enhances the assets that support our local economy” (from Common Ground’s [website](#)).
- Common Ground is overseen by a Citizen Advisory Committee that provides recommendations to the County Commissioners on efforts or projects.
- Common Ground’s guiding principles are congruent with this Comp Plan’s motivations (as discussed on page 16) with forest health, sustainable agriculture and mitigating impacts from recreational uses as high priority subjects.



- Along with the Recreation in Balance Program from Envision Chaffee, this Comp Plan supports the efforts put forth in the mission of these efforts, as well as the urgency in competing critical tasks to further their effectiveness. Further information on these tasks can be found in the CCG 2019 Annual Report ([link](#)).

Forest Health

- In the Envision Chaffee effort, forest health was identified as one of the top two concerns of our community.
- Decades of fire suppression has led to a mostly climax forest that lacks diversity and is susceptible to disease. **The spruce beetle is transforming the spruce zone from a forest with 3-4 standing dead trees per acre to 120 standing dead trees per acre.**
- There is also spruce budworm, beetle, and a disease wiping out stands of aspen trees. This has set the stage for catastrophic wildfire.

Wildfire Risk

- According to the Chaffee County Wildfire Protection Plan, wildfires can be classified by how they are managed on a scale of Type 5 (very small fires) to Type 1 (large, complex fires and natural disasters). Ten years ago, the Upper Arkansas River Headwaters Region in Chaffee and Lake Counties had only experienced one Type 3 wildfire ever. In the decade since, **there have been two more Type 3's (Treasure and Lodgepole), the first Type 2 (Hayden Pass), and the first two Type 1's (Weston Pass and Decker).**
- While lightning statistically causes the most

forest fires, rapid growth in recreation use exacerbates the threat. Fire management will be a critical concern when dealing with future fires.

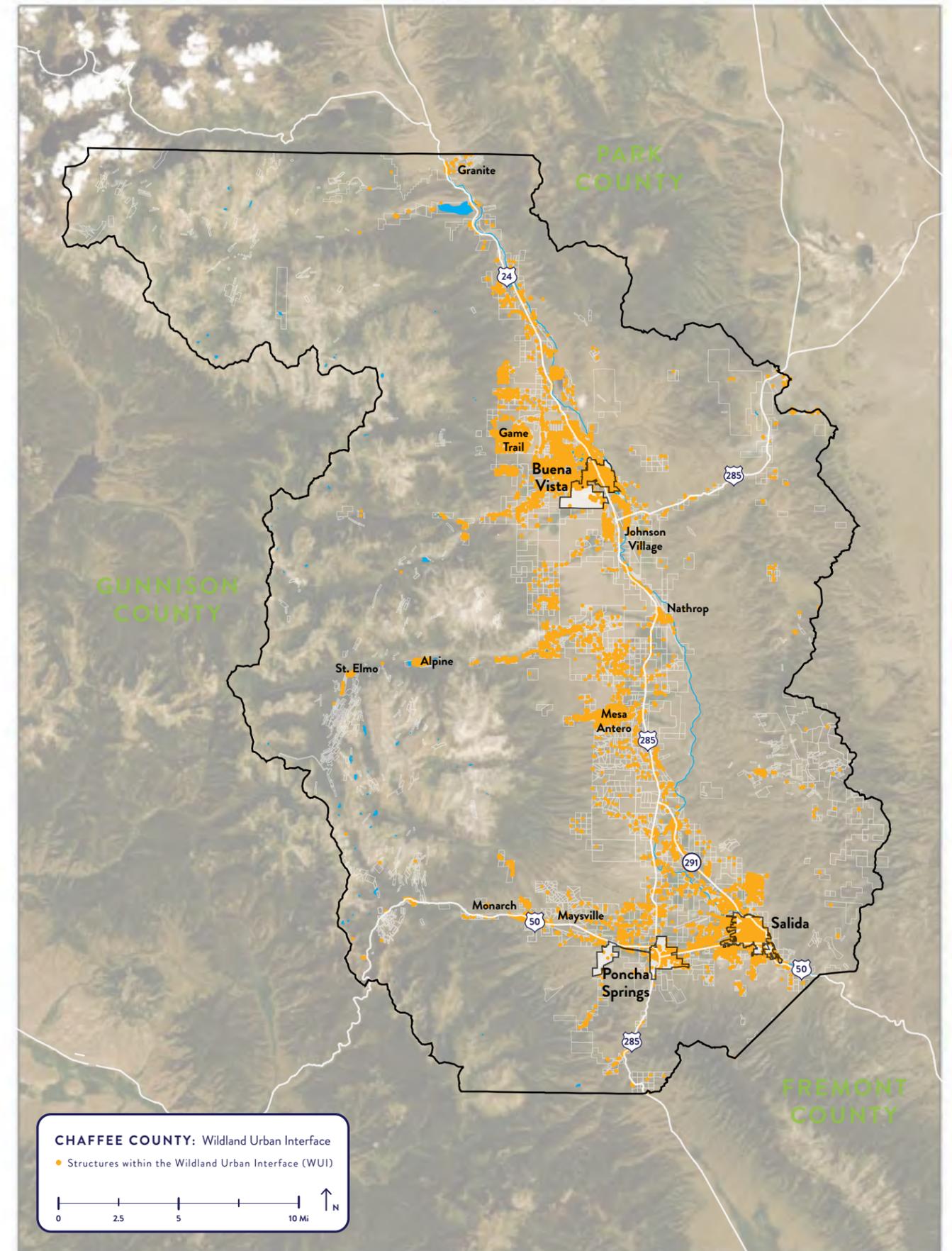
- The Collegiate Peaks Wilderness covers a significant portion of the western side of the County, and much of the municipal water supply derives from that region. The fire management practices, coupled with the difficulty of the terrain make fighting fire in this region extremely difficult and dangerous.
- The CWPP calls for a proactive approach to prioritizing forest treatment, not to eliminate fire, but to try to eliminate *catastrophic* fire.

Preserved/Protected Lands

- With over 502,500 acres of public land, making up 83% of the County, it's undeniable that Chaffee's economic success and future growth is dependent upon preserving its natural assets. The same land that provides spaces for outdoor recreation and drives the tourism industry is also crucial habitat for fish and wildlife, as well as the foliage that sustains the county's grazing agricultural population.
- All of Chaffee's public land is managed by agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, whose responsibilities include managing snowpack repositories, runoff, and surface reservoirs. The proper management of all these elements directly affect the quality and quantity of water supply which the people of Chaffee County rely on.

Water Resources

- Water is a limited resource, and in Chaffee County it is an issue of concern voiced often by the public and County leadership.
- **The Upper Arkansas River Basin has an**



average of 12 inches of precipitation or less, and rivers and streams rise with spring runoff from snowmelt and flows reduce significantly during the hot summer months, making it essential to manage water prudently throughout the year.

- The Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District is responsible for managing water resources through storage, augmentation, legal and engineering activities.
- In Colorado, water in every natural river and stream is owned through water rights, and every drop of water in the Arkansas River Basin is appropriated and thereby owned by individual entities, private and public.
- In Chaffee County, water flows through irrigation ditches which are owned and maintained by ranchers across the County.



Members of Chaffee Green make reusable bags from recycled feed bags

Watershed Health

- A number of cooperating federal and state agencies have worked to clean the Arkansas River from decades of mining and other contaminants that had negative health impacts to the river and its native trout population.
- One major indicator of the success of these cleanup efforts is the **return of a healthy trout population**. The Arkansas is rated Gold Metal Fishing, which means a body of water must consistently support a minimum trout standing stock of 60 pounds per acre, and the Arkansas has an average of 170 pounds per acre.
- A major concern for the Arkansas River is pollution by sedimentation from erosion. A 2010 watershed assessment determined that historical human uses of the water have put pressure on the river as its flows have been channelized, bends straightened, its bank eroded and its wetland habitat degraded.

- Declining forest health and tree mortality impacts the ability of the watershed to hold snow until summer, and weakens the groundwater recharge function as well.

Energy Use

- Clean Energy Chaffee (CEC) is a citizen group dedicated to the advancement of clean energy and energy conservation in the County. The group produced a Clean Energy Plan, in which they recommend strategies for Chaffee County to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. This plan should be used as a guiding document regarding energy use in the County.
- Private energy providers and the State of Colorado are making great efforts to expand renewable energy use statewide. The Colorado Energy Plan updated in 2018 aims to achieve 55% renewable energy on the grid

by 2026, and reduce carbon emissions by about 60 percent from 2005 levels through a \$2.5 billion investment.

- From geospatial surveys in Chaffee County, the aerial extent of the geothermal reservoir in the Mt. Princeton area has been estimated by the Colorado Division of Water Resources as containing between 3.81 Qs and 68.6 Qs of energy. A “Q” is equal to one quadrillion (10 to the 15th power) British Thermal Units (BTUs). If early estimates prove accurate, this is a major renewable energy source. One Q is equivalent to 160 million barrels of oil.
- Congress has recently established tax incentives for businesses locating in Opportunity Zones, two of which lie south of Buena Vista. This is in addition to State Tax Incentives available throughout most of Chaffee County. In late 2019, Congress re-instituted and increased both the Investment Tax Credit and the Production Tax Credits, which incentivize most types of renewable energy investments.

COMMUNITY INPUT

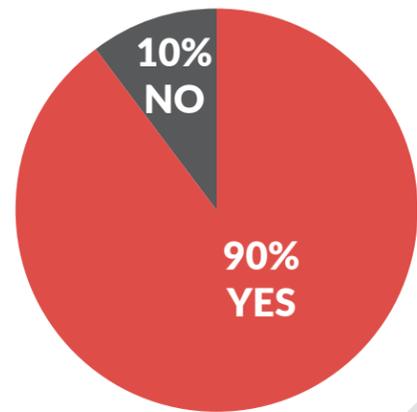
- Those who provided community input voiced concern that development and growth is encroaching on open space and sensitive environments.
- Of particular concern was wildlife habitat and corridors, watershed health, water quality and quantity, wildfire risk, air quality, waste disposal and landfill capacity, and overall ecosystem health.
- One responder to the first online community survey stated “The current County Land Use Code, with 2-acre minimum lot size for single family residential is the primary driving force in creating sprawl, compromising water quality, wildlife habitat, and impacting the

landscape to the maximum degree.”

- Another said “The greatest risk to Chaffee County’s quality of life is the loss of our wilderness areas and wildlife due to growth, wildfire, and not putting an emphasis on sustainability.”
- In Survey #2, when asked if they would support the creation and adoption of a County-wide Sustainability Plan, 90% of responders said yes. Without a sustainability department or manager, many residents expressed their concern that Chaffee County is lagging behind other Colorado communities in planning for sustainability.
- In the effort to update the County’s Wildfire Protection Plan, a survey was conducted to better understand perceptions about forest fire, fire resilience, treatment activities and preparedness for a major wildfire event. The results of the survey indicated that nearly half of citizens were not prepared for wildfire, 40% had no established evacuation plan and 62% had no arrangements related to children at home alone during an emergency.
- Survey responses also indicated that private landowners have little sense of urgency to act to remove vegetation or to change the characteristics of their home to protect their residences from wildfire.
- Regarding new private land development, the survey data appeared to indicate strong support for wildfire-related provisions in building codes.
- Community members recognize that renewable energy competes with other sectors for inputs, particularly land. Poor siting can adversely affect local residents and disrupt tourism, which is a large source of income and employment in Chaffee County.

Would you support the creation and adoption of a County-wide sustainability plan? Survey #2

Results



- Local social acceptance by stating clear benefits to our local community will be critical to introduce renewable energy projects.
- In addition, several key participants in Envision Chaffee and key personnel behind the Recreation in Balance effort were interviewed and provided input to this Comp Plan's goals, strategies and action steps as found in this theme.

COMP PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The key intersection between sustainable planning, climate change and County growth is fire resiliency planning. The heightened awareness caused by the Decker Fire of 2019 may have had a galvanizing effect regarding community awareness of high fire hazard areas and the real dangers of threats to existing homes in such areas.

This residual consciousness is intended to be used to not only prevent future hazards by eliminating future growth in hazardous areas, but also by putting an eye towards prevention efforts, projects and resources not only for fire, but for combating climate change as a whole by promoting smart and efficient growth through the Comprehensive Plan.

Alternative energy should not be considered as a standalone sector within Chaffee County's economy. Potential backward and forward linkages with local industries such as forestry or tourism should be developed through an integrated approach to renewable energy deployment. Collective action should be stimulated through intermediate institutions active in our community and policy makers should aim at involving a larger number of stakeholders in policy interventions to stimulate sustainable development and improve local support.

Goals & Strategies:
RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

GOAL 5.1: Maintain and improve community preparedness, emergency response and recovery capacity to ensure public health and safety.

STRATEGIES:

A. Enhance government hazard mitigation and response planning.

ACTION STEP: Develop preparedness and response plans for all hazards.

B. Plan and support vulnerable populations to be resilient to hazards, epidemics, extreme weather and climate-related events.

ACTION STEP: Work to understand the County's current air quality and what steps can be taken to improve it.

C. Promote disaster-resilient community infrastructure including housing, utilities, transportation systems and healthcare resources.

D. Build and grow in a manner that is resilient to wildfire and other natural hazards.

ACTION STEP: Assess County floodplain regulations and update with best management practices to increase public safety and decrease flood insurance costs for community members.

ACTION STEP: Adopt fire mitigation standards recommended in the Wildfire Protection Plan for all new subdivisions in high wildfire risk areas.

ACTION STEP: Invest in and protect wetlands and riparian areas that attenuate floods and capture sediment to build our resilience to fire and flood.

ACTION STEP: Develop a program for payments for ecosystem services for landowners to enhance floodplains and river corridors.

E. Support policies and programs that protect agricultural water rights and agriculture's contribution to hydrological functions.

ACTION STEP: Maintain existing and historic ditches that are essential to agriculture and support groundwater recharge.

ACTION STEP: Research and develop market alternatives to buy and dry.

GOAL 5.2: Identify, promote, and expand the use of energy efficient practices and renewable energy resources.

STRATEGIES:

F. Collaborate with public entities, community organizations, businesses within the County and with other counties to achieve mutual energy goals.

ACTION STEP: Formalize and adopt a Chaffee County Energy Plan; building off the plan created by Clean Energy Chaffee (CEC) in March 2020.

ACTION STEP: Develop a procedure/ protocol to assist for the facilitation of adoption of existing and new technologies and renewables by citizens and the Chaffee County government.

ACTION STEP: Develop a process for bulk purchase of energy efficient equipment for use by government, contractors and citizens.

ACTION STEP: Invest in a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory to determine what the County's "carbon footprint" is and what the major contributors are, then establish goals and strategies for reducing County-wide carbon emissions.

ACTION STEP: Raise awareness of low-income energy audits and repairs available to County residents.

ACTION STEP: Create a partnership with Energy Smart Colorado to assist with and subsidize the cost of a professional energy audit.

- G.** Lead by example in County operations to conserve energy, use renewable energy sources in an effective manner, and take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

ACTION STEP: Work with local organizations and energy providers to complete a modified energy supply cost/benefit analysis.

ACTION STEP: Follow the Colorado Energy Plan goals and actions to increase Countywide renewable energy usage.

ACTION STEP: Support the deployment of County-owned light-duty electric vehicles.

ACTION STEP: Develop an electric vehicle charging infrastructure throughout the County.

ACTION STEP: Coordinate permitting and siting processes to expedite renewable energy development.

ACTION STEP: Improve energy efficiency in, and retrofit County buildings to a high performance standard.

GOAL 5.3: Protect public health and the environment through proper waste management.

STRATEGIES:

- H.** Minimize land filling through an integrated waste management system in accordance with the state hierarchy of waste reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, and waste to energy.

ACTION STEP: Evaluate the current waste management systems in the County on their effectiveness and efficiency in diverting waste from the landfill.

ACTION STEP: Develop a County-wide integrated waste management system that focuses on next-generation recycling techniques and composting.

GOAL 5.4: Manage water resources to ensure a resilient and sustainable water supply that can support people and ecosystems.

STRATEGIES:

- I.** Ensure new development has a sufficient and sustainable water supply.

ACTION STEP: Adopt a revised water adequacy supply standard for development.

- J.** Promote water conservation and efficiency in new development, redevelopment and County facilities.

- K.** Support an integrated water resource management approach and collaborate across sectors, jurisdictions and agencies on implementation.

ACTION STEP: Work closely with the Upper Arkansas Conservation District to enhance resiliency in water rights management.

ACTION STEP: Collaborate with Buena Vista to adopt an overlay for Cottonwood Creek that reduces future well density and protects the Town of Buena Vista's water supply and riparian corridor.

ACTION STEP: Collaborate with Salida on protection of the municipal water supply along the South Arkansas.

GOAL 5.5: Protect the water quality and quantity in Chaffee County's rivers and streams systems.

STRATEGIES:

- L.** Develop a river corridor overlay map to guide and inform development impacting the river corridor.

- M.** Mitigate impacts of older, less reliable septic systems.

ACTION STEP: Assess the potential of increased nitrate concentrations from septic failure.

- N.** Protect vegetation that enhances infiltration of precipitation for groundwater recharge and erosion prevention.

ACTION STEP: Review current streamside setback, wetland, and riparian habitat standards for consistency with best management practices.

- O.** Ensure erosion and stormwater standards adequately protect water quality and functions of groundwater recharge.

ACTION STEP: Assess land use code for vegetation disturbance limits and revegetation standards, zero net runoff for development and low impact development, and other best practices.

P. Adopt development standards, based on best management practices, that reliably protect the Arkansas River and its tributaries.

ACTION STEP: Work with CPW and nonprofit partners to identify habitat priority conservation areas for focal species.

Q. Support increased collaboration and alignment of efforts to protect the watershed between different agencies, organizations, and governments.

U. Adopt wildlife protection standards for all development.

ACTION STEP: Support an Arkansas River health study to inform a long-range action plan for the river and watershed.

ACTION STEP: Research best practices in land use mitigation standards for focus species (wildlife human conflict, migration corridors, winter habitat, riparian habitat, etc.)

ACTION STEP: Support the development of a watershed collaborative to develop a Stream Management Plan and/or Integrated Water Resource Management Plan.

ACTION STEP: Use research to inform the development of appropriate development standards that mitigate impacts to wildlife.

R. Support payments for ecosystem services programs for landowners to enhance floodplains functions and to protect river corridors.

V. For highest priority habitat areas, adopt a conservation subdivision overlay with appropriate development standards.

S. Support the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative in increasing knowledge and understanding about the health of the Arkansas River and its watershed.

ACTION STEP: Work with CPW and nonprofit partners to use the habitat conservation map to inform location and development standards for highest priority habitat.

GOAL 5.6: Protect wildlife habitat, connectivity and migratory corridors.

STRATEGIES:

T. Develop a Chaffee County Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Map or Plan for focal species.

W. Work with private landowners, non-profits, and government agencies to invest in the protection and restoration of priority wildlife habitats.

ACTION STEP: Leverage funding, grants, and collaborative partnerships to enhance stewardship and protect wildlife habitat on private lands.

ACTION STEP: Educate the community regarding wildlife needs and what community members can do to protect wildlife.

GOAL 5.7: Become a model County for sustainability.

STRATEGIES:

X. Develop a County-wide Sustainability Plan that includes the following topic areas: air quality, water quality, forest health/ Recreation in Balance, food and agriculture, energy, social and economic health, waste management and transportation.

ACTION STEP: Assist in developing a citizen advocacy group like Clean Energy Chaffee, to coordinate education and outreach to citizens relating to reduction of carbon footprint individually and in the County.

ACTION STEP: Develop strategies for reducing fossil fuel usage in the County with a goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions.

Y. Conduct education and outreach to increase understanding and build consensus on the needs of our environment and support citizen's and government's actions in achieving sustainability.

ACTION STEP: Work with local builders and residents to educate them on good building practices and the adoption and application of the latest building methods and codes.

ACTION STEP: Develop Chaffee County Certified Design that offers design guidance for voluntary actions based on local knowledge of the County weather including information about solar orientation, insulation, driveway orientation to minimize snow drifts, etc.

ACTION STEP: Chaffee County accepts the Governor's Sustainability Challenge to integrate environmental science with community-based education approaches, resulting in collaboration, participation and innovation.

Z. Create the capacity in the County to oversee implementation.

ACTION STEP: Establish a Sustainability Advisory Group, Board or Committee on par with other County advisory boards as part of the Chaffee County Interagency Planning System to advise the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners on sustainability-related issues.

ACTION STEP: Organize County services and staff to provide a focus on ecological health and services by appointing an existing employee or creating a new position.

ACTION STEP: Follow the Action and Implementation steps of [energynow](#): Chaffee County's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy. Report found [here](#).

Theme 6: JOBS & ECONOMY

VISION STATEMENT:

Chaffee County cultivates a vibrant and resilient year-round economy, valuing renewable energy and innovation, offering diverse employment opportunities and an affordable, thriving, healthy mountain community.



Photo: Scott Peterson

TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- Jobs and Industry Sectors
- Labor Force
- Local Businesses
- Tourism

JOBS & ECONOMY DATA & DISCUSSION

WHY THIS THEME IS IMPORTANT

Conventionally known as a recreational mecca and tourist destination, Chaffee County aims to reinvent itself as a more diverse and productive place of business so as to attract workers from elsewhere and balance the inflow and outflow of people commuting throughout the valley in their own vehicles.

Housing and employment characteristics are affected by the land use patterns in a region, and this plan strives to balance opportunities for new jobs with housing to mitigate impacts such as increased traffic.

Attracting new and diverse industries would broaden Chaffee County's economy while providing an opportunity for the County's workers with differing education and backgrounds to obtain employment.

Support for existing businesses across the region is also critical, with the growing trends in remote employees working from home. Supporting the technology and infrastructure required for such businesses is a key component of plan implementation.

KEY DATA POINTS

Jobs & Employment

- According to US Census LEHD estimates, there were 7,350 jobs in Chaffee County in 2018. **Jobs are projected to increase to an estimated 9,500 jobs by 2030.**
- An emerging trend in Chaffee County in recent years is the **expanding population of remote workers - in 2017 10.9% of residents worked from home**, which is higher than Colorado's 7.4% remote workers.
- Envision Chaffee found: "telecommuting represents a rapid change in the fabric of our County, with 37% of people living in Chaffee County now working in other locations, an increase from 3% in 2000. Continued broadband development will enable continued telecommuting economy growth."

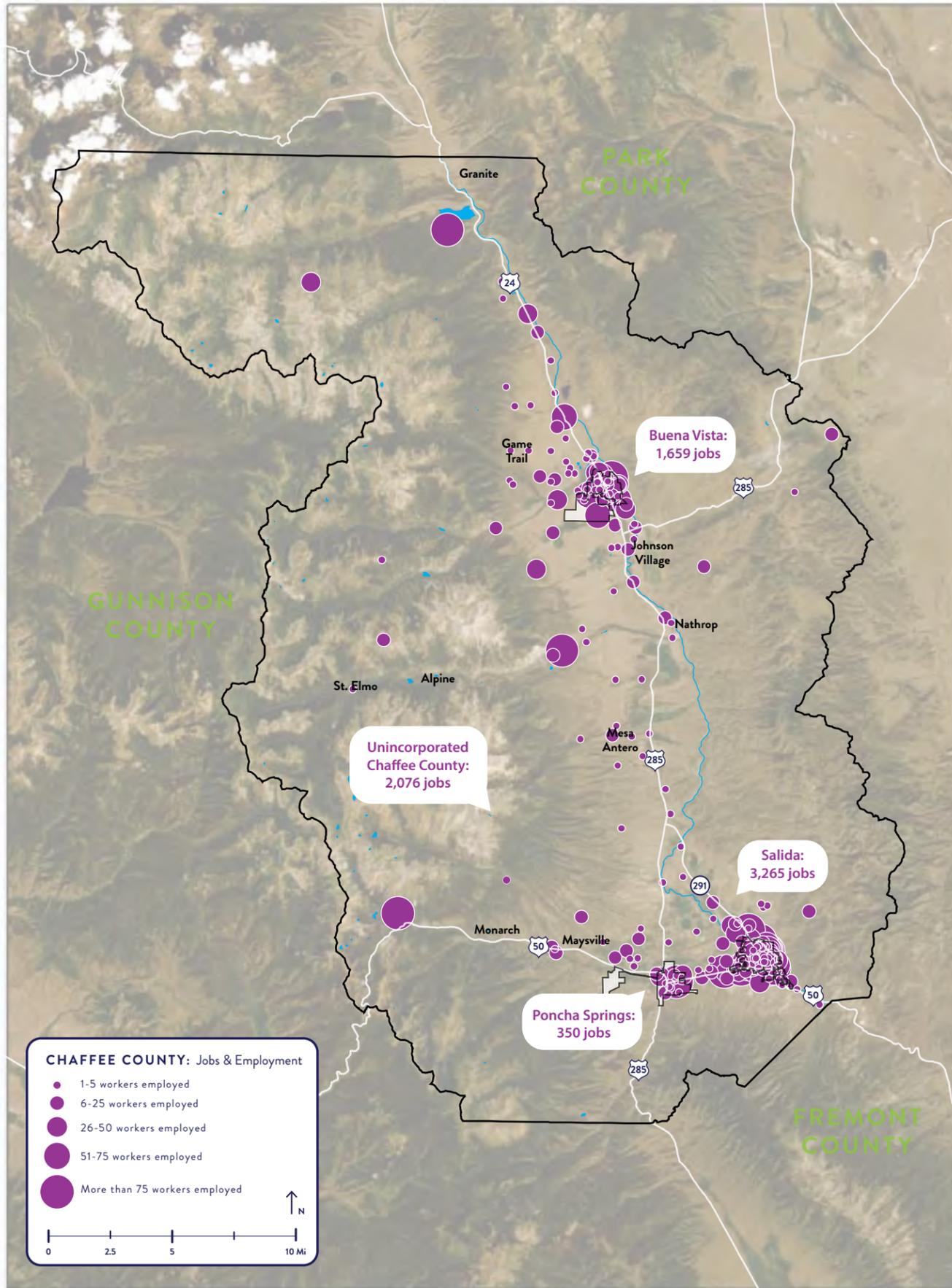
Labor Force

- According to US Census estimates, in 2017 Chaffee County's **labor force participation was 52.9%, which is lower than the state participation of 68.2%.**

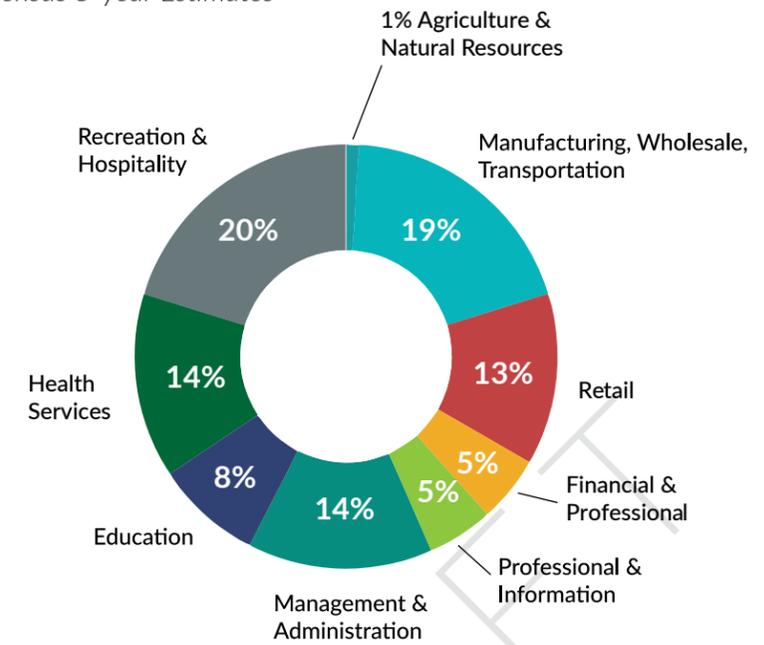
Employment in Chaffee County

Area	% of total jobs
Salida	44%
Buena Vista	21%
Poncha Springs	5%
Unincorporated County	28%

Source: US Census LEHD estimates, 2018



2017 Job Sectors, US Census 5-year Estimates



- In 2018, the ratio of jobs to labor force in Chaffee was 0.86:1, which indicates a **shortage of jobs in the County**. This has increased from 2015, when the jobs to labor force ratio was 0.77:1 and the 2010 ratio was 0.68:1, indicating that jobs have grown faster than the labor force in the past 10 years.

Job Sectors

- Chaffee County's economy benefits from its world-renowned recreational opportunities and the tourists that they attract, and the County's labor force and employment picture reflects a tourist economy.
- According to Census estimates from 2017, the top three job sectors in the County are accommodation and food services (16.9%), health care and social assistance (13.5%), and retail trade (12.3%). **That's 29% of the population that works in the tourism industry**, postulating that almost one third of Chaffee County workers may have to work multiple jobs at relatively low wages. Other prominent job sectors are public administration (9.7%) and construction (9.2%).

- The dominance of food service and retail employers in the County indicates a lack of large-scale employers. According to the 2018 Chaffee County Economy Overview, 42.6% of businesses employ between 1 and 4 workers, 27.9% employ 5-9 workers, 17.5% employ 10-19 workers, and less than 3% employ over 50 workers.
- Government remains the largest employer with almost 2,000 jobs.** There is some growth in administration and professional jobs, along with wholesale trade that reflects some diversification.
- The growth of craft brewing, wine, and distillery businesses, along with marijuana companies, highlights the diversification and growth of this industry, wholesale trade.
- Health care and construction are the fastest growing and among the highest paying jobs in the County. The Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center is the largest employer followed by the Buena Vista Correctional Facility.

- Monarch Mountain Ski area, which anchors the economy during the winter season, and Mt. Princeton Hot Springs, are among the largest employers.
- Building on an already established music scene, new hotels and music venues have catalyzed the expansion of this industry along with the creation of seasonal jobs. Such visitor-oriented job creating venues and events provide for additional seasonal employment, however impacts to public services or facilities should not place undue strain on the County's ability to provide a safe and fiscally responsible environment.

COMMUNITY INPUT

- Residents who responded to the first online survey appeared to be concerned with the lack of economic diversity Chaffee County. When asked what the top issues facing Chaffee planning were, lack of job diversity and low wages was the third most common answer.
- Survey responders were split on the types of businesses they thought are most needed in the County. The most common answers were better paying businesses (23%), small/local businesses (19%), high-tech businesses (13%), and more restaurants (10%).
- In response to the open-ended question "What can Chaffee County do to make businesses more successful?", survey responders offered a variety of ideas. Some thought that small and local businesses should be given financial assistance in the form of tax breaks and incentives, others mentioned workforce housing to support employees.

- Other common answers included providing high-speed internet to businesses and offering more post-high school educational opportunities like vocational training programs.

COMP PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The public vision for Chaffee's future economic identity pushes towards innovative and sustainability-oriented businesses, while looking for opportunities to foster the next-generation worker and workspace. A somewhat large amount of presumed remote workers or sole proprietorships as seen in the data provided by Envision Chaffee may indicate latent demand for live/work uses or buildings where entrepreneurs can start up their dream business.

Similarly, promoting new office formats such as shared office concepts offers young or cash-burdened future businesspeople lower overhead costs, flexible leasing, equipment and technology, and a quality environment conducive to creativity and innovation.

Goals & Strategies:

JOBS & ECONOMY

GOAL 6.1: Develop, grow, and maintain new and existing local businesses.

STRATEGIES:

- A.** Provide business support for a vibrant agricultural economic sector through a variety of financial incentives and programs.

ACTION STEP: Educate on "Agritourism" and other innovative economic methods to maintain working landscapes and boost the local economy.

ACTION STEP: Educate on economic tools for marketing, cooperative, branding, etc.

ACTION STEP: Create a County-wide Agricultural Sustainability Advisory Committee to develop, promote and support programs to support local agriculture and ranching encompassing environmental concerns, etc.

ACTION STEP: Support education in farming and ranching through local educational institutions (high school, Colorado Mountain College).

- B.** Provide educational opportunities for entrepreneurs and small business owners.

GOAL 6.2: Attract new and innovative industries that align with community values and provide long-term employment for a diverse workforce.

STRATEGIES:

- C.** Recruit and support industry sectors including those focused on: agriculture, food production, recreation, sustainability, and light manufacturing.

ACTION STEP: Attract new agriculture, aquiculture, and small-scale farming industries to support local food production.

- D.** Invest in quality of life services in Chaffee County that makes it an attractive location for entrepreneurs and location-neutral employees to relocate.

GOAL 6.3: Manage the tourism sector to ensure the values and resources that make Chaffee County a great and desirable destination are protected and economic benefits are year-round.

STRATEGIES:

- E.** Work closely with the land management agencies, Recreation in Balance program, the Chaffee County Heritage Board, the Chaffee County Visitor's Bureau, the Chaffee County Community Foundation, the Chaffee County

Theme 7: GROWTH & LAND USE

VISION STATEMENT:

Chaffee County will manage growth and land use in a manner consistent with our community values, our recognition of the natural wonder in which we live, and in fairness and equity to the people who live here and respecting the importance of private property rights.



St. Elmo
Photo: Scott Peterson

TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- Developable Land
- Pace of Growth
- Public Infrastructure and Services
- Zoning and Land Use Code

Economic Development Corporation and others to develop strategies for year-round economic resiliency.

ACTION STEP: Ensure the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway is integrated with the County's Visitor's Bureau annual workplan.

GOAL 6.4: Provide appropriate infrastructure to support economic development.

STRATEGIES:

- F. Provide high-quality infrastructure including mobility, telecommunications and public utilities.

GOAL 6.5: Support the needs and advance opportunities for the County's workforce.

STRATEGIES:

- G. Support and expand vocational and trade school programming.

ACTION STEP: Seek out a trade school institution to locate in the County and identify land or funds to contribute as an incentive.

GOAL 6.6: Ensure the land use code supports economic development goals.

STRATEGIES:

- H. Update the code to reduce and/or eliminate unnecessary regulations.

ACTION STEP: Host a building and development community charette to discuss opportunities to streamline and improve the land use regulations to support economic opportunity, creativity, and innovation.

GROWTH & LAND USE DATA & DISCUSSION

WHY THIS THEME IS IMPORTANT

Growth and Land Use directly addresses the regulatory framework in place which has guided growth across the Upper Arkansas Valley. Growing smart in a community with limited resources and tax base to provide public services creates the potential for challenges if the pace of growth exceeds its ability to provide services and infrastructure. Understanding the capacity of public systems and associated facilities is an important function of the Comprehensive Plan. A growth plan must provide for a pattern of development that has mechanisms to harness growth - or in some cases leverage it - to ensure adequate levels of civic services are maintained.

With three incorporated municipalities with their own Three-Mile Planning Areas housing about half of the County's homes and jobs, and the other half scattered throughout various unincorporated nodes, there is considerable overlap in long range land use strategies. Communicating this intended vision becomes critical to building consensus on what happens on the ground throughout the County.

KEY DATA POINTS

Amount of Developable Land

The comprehensive planning process addresses growth and capacity, and the amount of land physically available for development—in this

case referring generally to land that would be subdivided for single family housing—has helped make determinations on how, where and what kind of growth can be managed in the long-term. A planning-level inventory was used to calculate the amount of land that could potentially be developed. The parameters for an available property were:

- Privately-owned
- Vacant or partially-vacant: residential property occupied by an allowed land use which is large enough to be further subdivided or developed
- Not previously platted in a subdivision
- Not in a environmentally sensitive or unbuildable area (e.g. conservation easement, floodplain/wetlands, habitat, steep slopes).

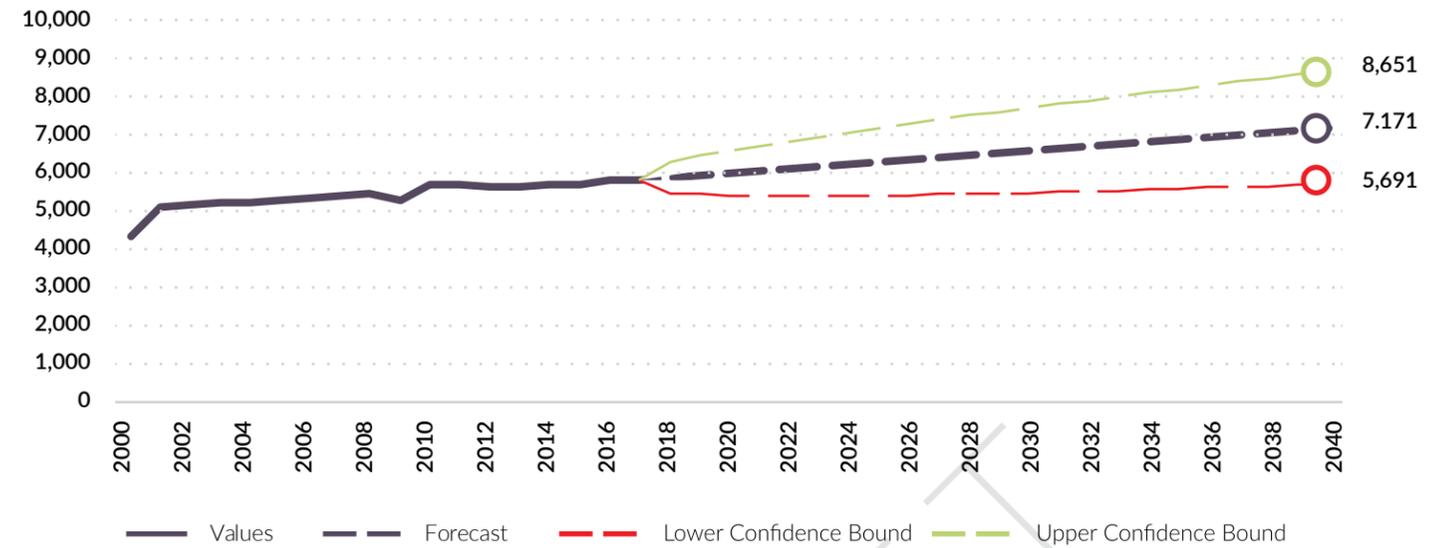
Based on these parameters there are approximately **38,648 acres** that are physically able to be developed. About 12,740 of that total are partially-used residential properties over 40 acres that still that could still be potentially subdivided further.

Housing Distribution in Chaffee County

Area	% of Housing units
Salida	30%
Buena Vista	14%
Poncha Springs	4%
Unincorporated County	over 50%

Source: Chaffee Housing Needs Assessment, 2016

Housing Unit Growth: Pace of housing growth and projection, 2000 to 2040 (US Census, Cushing Terrell)



Pace of Housing Growth

- Utilizing U.S. Census data from 2000 through today, an exponential smoothing forecast estimates that **Chaffee County's housing stock will increase by 16% by 2035, reaching 13,152 housing units** based on historic trends. This forecast also predicts an upper confidence bound of 13,486 units, which indicates that plans for where future growth should occur should accommodate this number of new housing units.
- According to the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment, of the **approximately 10,400 housing units in Chaffee County, 30% are in Salida, 14% in Buena Vista, 4% in Poncha Springs, and over 50% in the unincorporated county.** The Assessment also found that 75% of new housing in Chaffee County was built in the unincorporated area over the past 15 years (2000-2015).

Water

- Water is supplied in the Salida, Buena Vista and Poncha Springs Sub-Areas by municipal water systems. **Outside of the municipalities, a number of community water systems exist within county limits.**

- There are three non-transient, non-community water systems that serve at least 25 of the same people at least six months per year (Mount Princeton Hot Springs, Monarch Mountain Lodge and Salida KOA Campground).
- Additionally, there are 45 transient, non-community water systems are defined as water systems that serve at least 25 people more than 60 days per year.

Sanitation

- Buena Vista, Johnson Village, Salida and Poncha Springs are served by municipal sanitation districts.
- There are 8 minor wastewater dischargers permitted through the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) under Regulation 22 - Site Location and Design Approval Regulations for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Works in Chaffee County.
- **Outside of the municipalities of Chaffee County, most homes use on-site wastewater treatment systems (OWTSs),** also known as septic systems and leach fields.

- According to CDPHE, Chaffee County has experienced a 15% annual increase in OWTS permits filed.

Electricity

- Chaffee County is served by two electric providers: Sangre de Cristo Electric and Xcel Energy.

Broadband & Cell Phone Coverage

- High-speed, redundant broadband is not available in many areas of Chaffee County. Colorado Central Telecom and Spectrum provide internet service to customers throughout the County, although community members have cited redundancy as a significant issue.
- Cell phone coverage has also been reported as unreliable, as outages and poor coverage are common (particularly in the north end of the County). These weaknesses inhibit diversification of the economy and creation of higher paying jobs.

Fire and Emergency Services

- Chaffee County Fire Protection District's (CCFPD) predominately volunteer force is responsible for the efficient mitigation of emergencies and delivering service to the community within the 1,000 sq mile Fire District. The South Arkansas Fire Protection District also operates out of Salida.
- CCFPD has 35 pieces of mobile equipment/apparatus allocated between **6 fire stations (located in Buena Vista, Nathrop, Poncha Springs and Salida)** that are professionally staffed by **40+ volunteer firefighters and 4 paid firefighters.**

Law Enforcement

- Law enforcement is provided by the Chaffee County Sheriff Department. The department

has 23 sworn officers, and in 2019 they received 6,535 calls. The department **struggles with employee retention due to lack of funding to pay officers competitive salaries.**

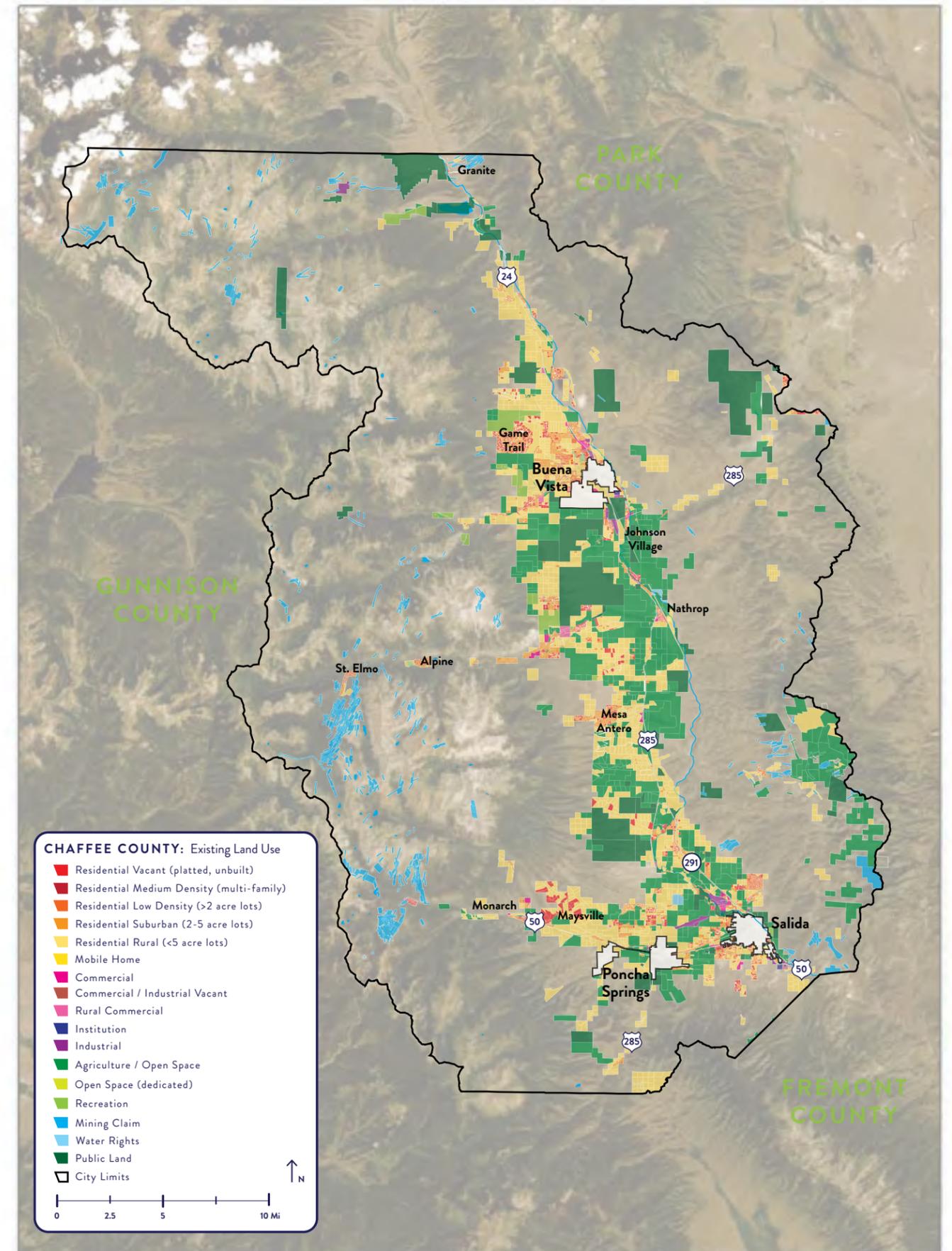
- There are two municipal police forces in Salida and Buena Vista, as well as a wide variety of other law enforcement available including State Patrol, Colorado Paks and Wildlife officers, the Department of Corrections, etc.

Road and Bridge

- Chaffee County Road and Bridge is responsible for maintaining approximately 300 miles of roads in Chaffee County. There are 44 bridge structures of various types in Chaffee County.
- The primary responsibility of the Road and Bridge Department is the routine maintenance of county roads. This includes plowing snow, grading dirt roads, maintaining barrow ditches, cattleguards and drainage along county roads, weed and brush control, and patching asphalt.
- **County road maintenance is currently unable to keep up with the impacts of growth,** and public expectations of road conditions continues to rise.

Waste Services

- The Chaffee County Landfill is located off Highway 285, approximately 11 miles from Salida and 14 miles from Buena Vista. Many County residents contract with private haulers to pick up and dispose of household trash.
- The landfill property and landfill enterprise are critical elements of County infrastructure, and while the projected lifespan of the landfill is many decades, replacing it will be a massive challenge. Efforts to best manage this resource should be continued.



Existing Land Use

Land Use	% of total acres
Public land	83%
Agriculture	7%
Residential	9%
Recreation/mining claims	2%

Source: Cushing Terrell, 2019

- Chaffee County's intergovernmental agencies operate four recycling centers in the County, and according to the UAACOG Waste Optimization Regional Study, the **diversion rate for Chaffee County increased from 4.8% in 2005 to 16% in 2016**. However, the amount of waste generated per household was 8.45 pounds per day, compared to the national average of 4.41 pounds per day. Desire for a more robust recycling program was expressed by the community and County leadership.

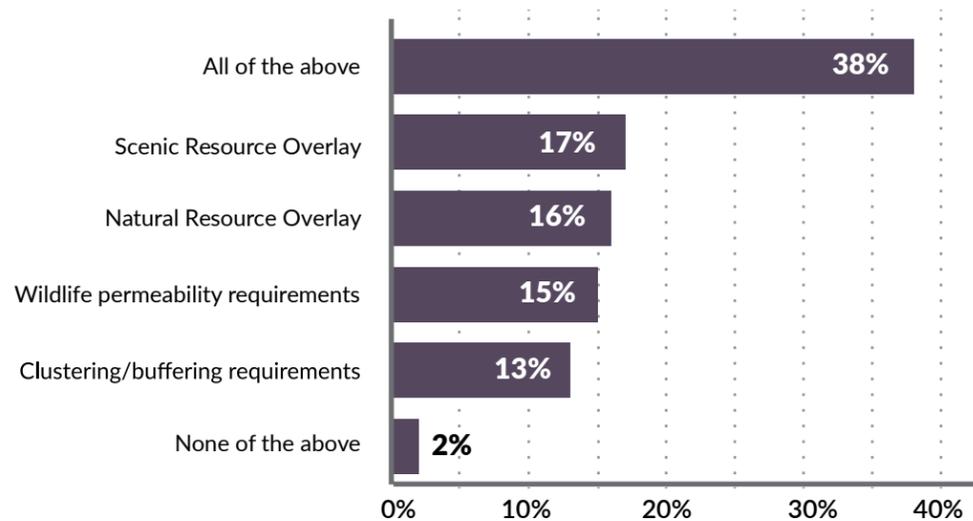
Existing Land Use

- The majority (83%) of Chaffee County is **public land**, most of which is open space. An estimated 7% of the land is agriculture/open space, over 45,000 acres. The remaining 10% of land is mostly (7%) rural residential (on lots larger than 5 acres). Approximately 3,100 acres in unincorporated Chaffee County are Residential Vacant - which are platted but unbuilt lots.

COMMUNITY INPUT

- Community members that participated in the first online survey expressed concern over the nature of growth and development in Chaffee. When asked what the greatest risk to Chaffee County's quality of life is, 25% of responders mentioned uncontrolled, sprawling growth in rural areas.
- One survey responder answered "The greatest risk to Chaffee County's current quality of life is over development of rural areas: rural sprawl. Development must be regulated

Which of the following natural resource protections would you support in Chaffee County? Survey #2 Results



to accommodate the large and growing population," and another stated "Sprawl development that stretch our infrastructure, place homes in greater fire danger and consume more water."

- Across all engagement channels, the 4th most common comment was concern over the capacity of existing infrastructure (water, sewer, roads) to sustain growth. The 5th most mentioned topic was the idea of density over sprawl - residents would rather see dense growth in existing residential and commercial centers to preserve open space in the rural parts of the County.
- In Survey #2, when asked which tools used to direct growth to municipalities they would support, 38% of responders wanted to use every tool listed (all of the above), 17% wanted a Scenic Resources Overlay, 16% wanted a Tiered Natural Resources Overlay, 15% wanted wildlife/human conflict design requirements and 13% wanted clustering and buffering incentives and requirements.
- Responders to Survey #2 were closely split on their feelings toward the 2-acre minimum lot sizes in the Rural Zone; 34% said they should stay the same, 30% said they should be increased to 5 acre minimums, 28% said they should be increased to 10 acre minimums, and 8% said they should be decreased.

COMP PLAN IMPLICATIONS

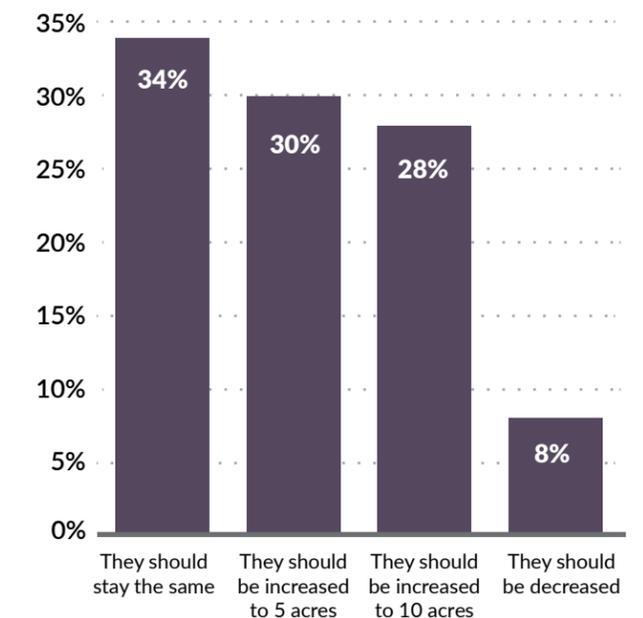
Even with previous growth to date, there are indications that capacity for new growth could be strained in the future. To accommodate new growth, the County should continue to establish policies that equip decision makers with the best possible information. This may include implementing a Transfer of Title program under Regulation 43 to ensure new and existing subdivisions do not adversely impact

environmental conditions or quality of life (see "County-wide Future Land Use Policies and Recommendations" in Part II of this Plan for further information).

Areas where this Comp Plan proposes recommendations that will affect Growth & Land Use include:

- Future Land Use Maps for areas surrounding existing communities that provide a blueprint for future growth and annexation.
- Action steps for implementing land use code revisions.
- A plan for additional funding for the Road & Bridge department for maintenance of county roads.
- Evaluate all land use applications in terms of cost/benefit to the County.

How do you feel about the 2-acre minimum lot sizes in the Rural Zone District? Survey #2 Results



Goals & Strategies:

GROWTH & LAND USE

GOAL 7.1: Create distinct communities focusing growth around existing towns that enhances community character and maximizes public investments in infrastructure and services.

STRATEGIES:

A. Strengthen cooperation and intergovernmental agreements to execute annexation, utility connections, and public services.

B. Use strategies to incentivize and direct growth to existing towns, such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and density bonuses.

ACTION STEP: Research land use incentives used by peer communities to direct growth to inform the land use code update.

C. Encourage infill development and more pedestrian oriented development in unincorporated centers of Nathrop and Johnson Village.

ACTION STEP: Engage local community members to develop and approve specific area plans.

GOAL 7.2: Conserve and protect Chaffee County's agricultural and environmentally important lands, and scenic values while balancing private property rights with community objectives.

STRATEGIES:

D. Apply the Community Conservation Connection criteria to use public funds for the protection of agricultural operations, agricultural land, or environmentally important lands through land acquisitions, conservation easements and conservation leases.

E. Identify market-based incentives to adopt into the land use code that support planned development and achieve desired resource protection.

ACTION STEP: Research and prioritize strategies to achieve better development including but not limited to density bonuses, cluster developments, conservation development, transfer of development rights and other appropriate strategies.

ACTION STEP: Update the development regulations to integrate the most appropriate strategies .

F. Develop an overlay zone and review process to protect environmentally important lands.

ACTION STEP: Identify existing gaps and deficits in overlapping agency responsibilities for protecting critical land values.

ACTION STEP: Assess relevant plans and the land use code for existing policies and processes to inform recommendations.

ACTION STEP: Update land use regulations as necessary based on assessment.

G. Consider land use policies that continue to preserve high value scenic resources in the County and support implementation of the Collegiate Peaks Scenic & Historic Byway's Corridor Management Plan.

ACTION STEP: Update the development code to include recommendations in the updated Collegiate Peaks Scenic Byway's Corridor Management Plan.

ACTION STEP: Develop a scenic byways visual resource assessment methodology to include in an update to scenic resources development standards.

ACTION STEP: Consider integrating visual resource with the environmentally important lands overlay or develop a scenic value overlay.

GOAL 7.3: Ensure adequate and well-planned infrastructure meets the needs of current and future residents and businesses, including telecommunications, water and wells, wastewater and sustainable energy.

STRATEGIES:

H. Provide infrastructure in designated growth areas, and ensure all development proposals address fiscal responsibility.

ACTION STEP: Require a development impact/infrastructure improvement fee study for all new developments.

ACTION STEP: Hold County-owned parcels near existing municipalities for

future schools, housing, water/wastewater treatment plants, landfills, and other future infrastructure needs.

ACTION STEP: Create a dedicated funding source for aiding municipalities with infrastructure service costs when annexations occur.

I. Ensure the planning, funding and construction of infrastructure projects are coordinated across government agencies and jurisdictions and allow public input.

ACTION STEP: Create an accessible geographic database to communicate information on existing conditions such as county infrastructure, facilities, utilities, wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

GOAL 7.4: Create a regulatory framework that supports the new vision of this Plan.

STRATEGIES:

J. Update the County Land Use Code.

ACTION STEP: Write a proposal to DOLA to fund an update the development code.

ACTION STEP: Research regulatory policy examples to achieve community goals.

ACTION STEP: Create overlays showing, land use types/zones, viewsheds, open space, existing and proposed multimodal transportation routes, telecommunications, water supply.