

# 2012 Colorado Planning & Management Region Report

Region 9 – Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan Counties

## INTRODUCTION

Region 9 encompasses a five-county area including Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan Counties as well as the reservations of the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Indian Tribes. The region is located at the juncture of three distinct physiographic regions: the Rocky Mountains, the Colorado Plateau, and the San Juan Basin. Of the 6,584 square miles that comprise the region, 45% are public lands, 38% are private lands and 17% are tribal lands.

The region is largely rural with an estimated 2011 population of 92,128 in all five counties. All counties have shown a double-digit percentage increase since 2000, with the exception of Montezuma County.

| County          | Census 2000      | July 2011        | % Change      |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Archuleta       | 9,898            | 12,038           | 21.62%        |
| Dolores         | 1,844            | 2,042            | 10.74%        |
| La Plata        | 43,941           | 51,944           | 18.21%        |
| Montezuma       | 23,830           | 25,413           | 6.64%         |
| San Juan        | 558              | 691              | 23.84%        |
| <b>Colorado</b> | <b>4,301,261</b> | <b>5,118,526</b> | <b>19.00%</b> |

*Source: State Demography Office*

Durango, in La Plata County, was ranked as the 6<sup>th</sup> top Micropolitan Area (population less than 50,000) in the United States in 2011. Policom, an independent economic research firm, studied 576 micropolitan areas and compared 23 economic factors over a 20-year period from 1991 to 2010, including wages, earnings, and public assistance. In 2010 Durango ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation.

## JOBS & THE ECONOMY

As of June 2012 unemployment rates for the region are encouraging compared to Colorado's overall rate of 8.4%. Archuleta and Dolores Counties each saw a drop in unemployment from June 2011 to June 2012, 0.6% and 3.6% respectively. La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan Counties saw small increases of less than 1% each during the same period.

## HOUSING

Comparing 2012 year-to-date with the same period in 2011, area realtors are seeing a lot of first-time buyer sales. One of the reasons is that the Housing Affordability Index has fallen from over 35% of household income to pay for a home to about 17%. Another reason is the ability of buyers to obtain a zero down loan thanks to USDA programs and the Regional Housing Authority in La Plata County. Condominium and town home sales have been doing well as the greatest decreases in price lately have been in this category. The Durango/La Plata County area is doing better than the rest of the region, with

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the number of sales and sales volume up about 5% over this time last year. The average sales price is up 6%, and the median sales price is up 1% to \$300,000.

Montezuma and Dolores Counties are seeing a 15% increase in sales volume with a 9% drop in average price and 5% drop in median price to \$144,500, though this may be due to the low number of sales in 2011. Archuleta County is showing a 16% drop in sales volume, a 25% drop in average sales price and a 1% increase in median price to \$171,600. Statistics for San Juan were not available (Statistics courtesy of Keller Williams).

### NEW & ONGOING PROJECTS

Energy efficiency is a high regional priority, as evidenced by a new energy efficiency loan program for businesses to help them decrease energy costs. Archuleta and Dolores Counties are also exploring the feasibility of commercial development of geothermal resources for renewable energy and creation of jobs.

The Four Corners Film Office (4CFO), opened in 2010, is successfully attracting more film and media production to the area. In its first year the 4CFO assisted on 20 projects, estimating \$150k of direct economic impact. The most notable is the upcoming “Lone Ranger” with Johnny Depp.

### GOALS FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

Regional goals were aligned with Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper’s “Bottom Up” economic development initiative, now called the Colorado Blueprint. These include:

1. **Expand and maintain broadband/fiber optics infrastructure to support and anticipate the needs of future growth.** The Southwest Council of Governments (SWCCOG) is implementing a \$3M grant from the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) to help build an open access telecommunications network (SCAN) supported by publicly-owned or leased infrastructure to provide secure connections between community public offices including government, education, law enforcement, search and rescue, and medical facilities.
2. **Improve community amenities necessary to attract and retain business, focusing on healthcare, education, and housing.** The region’s recently updated county Community Development Action Plans identify specific projects planned by each county to meet this goal.
3. **Be business friendly and make the region an effective and efficient place to do business.** The IMPLAN economic modeling system is being used by a number of local governments and economic development organizations to estimate impacts from current and proposed projects.
4. **Diversity the economy and improve access to markets.** The Region 9 Economic Development District (R9EDD) continues to promote economic diversification and provides links to programs and agencies at the state and federal levels to improve access to markets outside of the region.

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5. **Encourage retention and growth of existing businesses.** Regional economic gardening efforts are expected to grow through partnerships with area economic development groups and the Southwest Colorado Small Business Development Center (SBDC).