

2012 Colorado Planning & Management Region Report

Region 12 – Eagle, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin and Summit Counties

INTRODUCTION

The Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG), is located in the northwest portion Colorado just west of the Front Range, and includes the counties of Eagle, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin and Summit. In the heart of the Rocky Mountains, Region 12 is characterized by its mountainous terrain and very high overall altitude. The region covers 6,779 square miles, and has an estimated 2011 population of 112,700 per the State Demography Office. Overall population in the region has increased by 19.77% since 2000.

County	Census 2000	July 2011	% Change
Eagle	41,659	51,776	24.29%
Grand	12,442	14,500	16.54%
Jackson	1,577	1,366	-13.38%
Pitkin	14,872	17,094	14.94%
Summit	23,548	27,964	18.75%
Colorado	4,301,261	5,118,526	19.00%

Source: State Demography Office

JOBS & THE ECONOMY

Tourism and recreation dominate the region's economy. The quality of life, the mix of local businesses, a skilled work force, a beautiful natural setting, and the international name recognition provided by world-class ski resorts are invaluable underpinnings unique to Region 12's economy. Direct industries related to tourism alone (accommodations and food service, retail trade, and arts, entertainment and recreation) make up over 50% of the region's economic base.

Accommodations and Food Service. This sector represents the largest percentage of jobs in the region, with a 32% share and is key to the tourism-based economy. These types of jobs are necessary to support the tourism industry, but tend to pay relatively low wages.

Arts, Entertainment, Recreation. Visitors, both American and international, are attracted by the recreational activities afforded by the Rocky Mountains, the twelve ski areas, Rocky Mountain National Park and the large portions of our region that are mountainous, and the National Forests lands that provide abundant camping grounds and trails. There are also multiple special events that attract visitors to the region, as well as cultural activities such as concerts, live theater and art festivals. The numerous streams and lakes provide excellent fishing, and the mountain areas offer excellent wild game hunting.

Construction. The construction of second homes has been a large economic driver in this region spurred by tourism. Over the last four years this region has seen a substantial decline in construction sector jobs due to the Great Recession.

Due to the majority of jobs in the region in the typically low-paying, tourism-related industry sectors such as accommodations and food services, retail trade, and arts and entertainment, Region 12 average hourly wage is considerably lower than the state average.

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Over the last year, average unemployment in the region has decreased from 7.9% (reported March 2011) to 6.4% (March 2012). This is good news, despite the lower number of skier visits due to one of the worst ski seasons on record in terms of snowfall.

Unemployment data from LMI shows a slight decrease in all counties except Jackson from August 2011 to August 2012.

County	August 2011	August 2012	% Change
Eagle	8.0	7.9	-0.1%
Grand	7.1	6.8	-0.3%
Jackson	2.8	2.9	0.1%
Pitkin	6.8	6.7	-0.1%
Summit	7.6	7.5	-0.1%
Colorado	8.1	7.8	-0.3%

Source: Labor Market Information

HOUSING

The regional population of those aged 50 and over is projected to skyrocket. At the same time, the national median age of a home was over 34 years (2009 AARP) with appliances and housing components having reached their life expectancy. Because of these two factors, attention is being focused on repair and rehabilitation of our aging housing stock. In order to support the aging population to live independently as long as possible, and decrease outmigration from the region, access to affordable, safe, livable and visitable housing has become crucial.

WHAT'S NEW AND INTERESTING IN THE REGION

Eagle County. On July 24, 2012, the Eagle County Commissioners signed a purchase agreement for a 5-acre site in Eagle Ranch for the Castle Peak Senior Care Community, a 64-unit assisted living and skilled nursing facility. The facility will include 22 skilled nursing, 20 assisted living and 12 memory care beds in its first phase and is expected to cost around \$20 million. The county has partnered with Augustana Care Corporation of Minnesota — a non-profit experienced in the development, design and operation of senior living facilities. The county is looking for financial partners and anticipates a robust private fund-raising campaign. According to the county, the project will create more than 100 jobs during construction and approximately 65 permanent jobs once phase one of the facility is operating. According to the Colorado State Demography Office, Eagle County had the third highest growth in percentage of residents aged 65-plus in the state from 2000-2010, at 135 percent. The age group is projected to grow another 165 percent from 2010-2020. The potential exists for groundbreaking to occur by the fall of 2013.

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The Town of Vail recently hosted an open house to gather input and evaluation on the preliminary design and plans for the new municipal building. The basics of the new municipal complex, which will include the Steadman Clinic: the proposed new Vail municipal building, 21,000 square feet; the proposed medical office and clinic, 60,000 square feet; 21 months of estimated construction time, with construction beginning May 2013.

Grand County. The County has hired its first Economic Development Coordinator who has already begun working with Downtown Colorado Inc. to access technical assistance from their new county-wide program. A new sawmill to be installed, up and running in Parshall in 2013, is in the works.

Jackson County. A new feed store is coming to Walden's Main Street, and the county is looking forward to reaping the benefits of the COG's new relationship with the Economic Development Administration.

Pitkin County. Whole Foods Market has opened in the Town of Basalt. The new grocery store will fill about 100 full- and part-time jobs, including two executive posts.

Summit County. With \$760 million invested in the start-up, the Climax Mine reopened after an 11- year period of low production, care and maintenance of the site. The grand re-opening was on August 8th. The mine, located 13 miles northeast of Leadville at the top of Fremont Pass (located in both Summit and Lake Counties), is believed to be the world's largest, highest-grade and lowest-cost undeveloped molybdenum ore body. Molybdenum is used as an additive to add strength to cast iron and steel. The concentrate is also processed into a variety of chemical products and used for a number of diverse applications such as lighting, electronics and specialty steel alloys. Its reopening is expected to employ hundreds of people. Freport-McMoRan Copper & Gold, the parent company of the Climax, is now the proud owner of the world's two largest molybdenum mines: Henderson Mine located west of Empire in Clear Creek County and Climax, which is expected to be in full production by the summer of 2014. Freport-McMoRan invested \$760 million in state-of-the-art equipment and manpower to revamp molybdenum production at the site with new technology and infrastructure. Climax currently employs some 350 people in professional positions, including mining, mechanical, electrical, engineering, health and safety and a variety of trade positions.

Lowes Home Improvement Store opened in Silverthorne on August 16th. The store has 111,000 square feet of retail space and a 26,500 square foot garden center. Lowes has created about 100 jobs.

Aspen, Avon and Breckenridge were all host cities for the 2012 USA Pro Cycling Challenge; the international event also went through the Town of Minturn. This event drew thousands of visitors and showcased the region on an international stage to over 200 countries, which is very valuable tourism promotion.

GOALS FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

Region 12 Designated as Economic Development District. NWCCOG is pleased to announce that, after many years of hard work by economic development stakeholders in the region, it has been officially designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Economic Development

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Administration (EDA). This EDA designation will serve as a foundation for future economic successes that will benefit member communities in NWCCOG's region. The EDA provides annual funding to EDD's across the country to assist with the pursuance of economic development activities. NWCCOG will focus on activities which aim to further the goals set forth in its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) which includes:

- Support and strengthen existing businesses
- Attract new businesses/industries to create vibrant, resilient economies
- Focus on projects that bolster tourism
- Protect the natural environment, the region's most basic asset for health, vitality as well as tourism
- Focus on supporting investment in core infrastructure and community resources improvements that will help expand local economies – ESPECIALLY RURAL BROADBAND
- Focus on existing and renewable energy resources to include development of additional energy sources; assist with identification of funding.
- Create sustainable main street / downtown projects
- Create and expand workforce development / training / educational opportunities to focus on training and education programs across all economic sectors

NWCCOG EDD will continue to work in cooperation with OEDIT on Economic Development on the Colorado Blueprint, and aligning regional economic development goals with statewide goals.

Focus on Rural Broadband Development. This has been identified as a top priority for NWCCOG in 2013. On July 30th, 2012 NWCCOG convened broadband stakeholders in the region, along with representatives from the Colorado Office of Information Technology and the Eagle/Net Alliance for a Regional Broadband Alignment Meeting, which is the first step in this effort.

Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) / Mobility Manager Program. The Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) is the local coordinating council for an 8-county rural area of northwest Colorado and is working to improve transportation coordination and options, especially for the veteran, disabled, older, and low-income adult populations. The RTCC's efforts are focused on coordinating the existing public and private transit providers with other human services providers by promoting, enhancing and facilitating seamless access to transportation services through a coordinated system that is easily available to customers from anywhere in the region. The RTCC has been awarded funding from CDOT, as well as the FTA Veteran to develop a One Click/One Call program that will include a regional call center to coordinate transportation for these specific populations.

New Mobility Manager. NWCCOG hired a regional Mobility Manager to staff the RTCC and to work within the CDOT Intermountain and Northwest TPR regions on the development of this new program of NWCCOG.