

2014 Colorado Planning & Management Region Report

Region 7 – Pueblo County

INTRODUCTION

Of the 14 Colorado planning and management regions, Region 7 is the only one which consists of a single entity: Pueblo County. With a land area of 2,400 square miles, Pueblo County ranks as the 13th-largest of the 64 Colorado counties. Of the planning and management regions, it ranks the smallest in geographic size. In terms of total population, Region 7 ranks 5th-largest of the 14 regions, according to the 2010 Census. The region has seen moderate population growth, and was the 8th fastest growing region in Colorado from 2000 to 2010. 2013 population estimates show a Pueblo county population of 161,258; a growth rate of 1.38% since the 2010 Census.

Pueblo is expected to grow moderately (1.4%) between 2015 and 2025. Pueblo's warm climate, low cost of living, and wide range of urban services make it especially attractive to the growing numbers of retirees in the Front Range.

JOBS & THE ECONOMY

While Pueblo has regained jobs since the recession, they remain below their 2008 peak employment levels. Their September 2014 unemployment rate was 5.7%, a 3.3% decrease from the same time last year.

The largest employers in Pueblo are the Parkview Medical Center, Pueblo School District #60, Evraz Rocky Mountain Steel, Pueblo County, and Pueblo School District #70.

Unemployment

County	September 2013	September 2014	% Change
Pueblo	9.0%	5.7%	-3.3%
Colorado	6.3%	4.0%	-2.3%

HOUSING

New residential construction in Pueblo has been stagnant, although a government-funded program to construct low-to-moderate income homes on the City of Pueblo's East side did provide a small boost last year.

Pueblo has a very low housing cost relative to many other Colorado communities. The median sales price for homes in Pueblo for July through October 2014 was \$124,900. Compared to the same period one year ago, the median price increased 1.1%. The number of homes sold, however, decreased by 23.9%.

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CLEAN ENERGY

Wind-turbine manufacturer, Vestas, expects to fully utilize its tower making facility, in 2014. The plant, located in south Pueblo, currently employs over 400 workers. Up to 600 additional workers may be hired to meet this goal.

NEW PROJECTS

Downtown redevelopment continues, despite the lagging growth in several other economic sectors. The Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority (PURA) intends to begin construction of a \$10 million addition to the Pueblo Convention Center this coming spring. PURA has also approved a master plan and conceptual drawings for improvements and amenities to the area known as the Central Plaza in downtown Pueblo, a nearly \$1 million project.

Another new project is the successful, collaborative effort enabled the formation of a creative district, the Pueblo Creative Corridor. The Creative Corridor has spawned economic development through the promotion and attraction of creative industries. “The recently developed and ever-evolving Creative Corridor is focused around the three historic city centers of Pueblo: Downtown Main Street, Union Avenue Historic District and the Mesa Junction ... attracts artists, creative entrepreneurs and visitors as a strategy to infuse new energy and innovation and enhance the economic and civic capital of the community.”

Pueblo County has just completed their new justice center, a \$55 Million project named after recently retired Chief Judge C. Dennis Maes. It is Colorado’s newest courthouse and is a state-of-the-art facility located in downtown Pueblo.

Heritage Tourism has been a major focus within the region for the past several years with the community utilizing assets such as the Santa Fe Trail and all other agricultural heritage components located in the area. The Canyon & Plains of Southeast Colorado (SECORHT) tourism group was formed in 2006 with financial assistance from DOLA, CTO and Preserve America and continues to promote the many points of tourism interest within the region.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Last year, Colorado State University-Pueblo announced the commencement of a 3-year effort sponsored by the CSU-Pueblo Foundation to generate \$25 million in additional funding. Over \$5 million had already been raised prior to the announcement. The “On the Move” campaign has a three-tiered approach to improving the University: \$15 million will be allocated to scholarships; \$5 million to expansion of the Occhiato University Center; and \$5 million to improvement and enhancement of athletics programs. The \$5 million for University Center renovation and expansion will be augmented primarily through the issuance of bonds. The total cost for the Center’s upgrade is \$35 million with groundbreaking slated to take place next spring. Upon completion of the project, the Occhiato Center’s available space will almost be doubled. The \$15 million earmarked for scholarships will help the University attract new students. The athletics component of the campaign seeks to establish six new competitive sports and build a new soccer/lacrosse stadium.