

2017 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 of 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 2016 population of 118,458. This reflects a 0.7% annual increase since the 2010 Census, with Summit County seeing the most growth.

Population:

County	Census 2010	July 2016	Annual Change
Eagle	52,197	53,928	0.5%
Grand	14,843	15,039	0.2%
Jackson	1,394	1,351	-0.5%
Pitkin	17,148	17,773	0.6%
Summit	27,994	30,367	1.4%
Region 12	113,576	118,458	0.7%
Colorado	5,029,196	5,538,180	1.6%

Source: State Demography Office

JOBS & THE ECONOMY

The total number of employed persons in the region – for all industries – increased by 1,657 between August 2016 and August 2017.

Unemployment Rates:

County	August 2016	August 2017	% Change
Eagle	2.4%	1.6%	-0.8%
Grand	2.2%	1.6%	-0.6%
Jackson	2.1%	1.1%	-1.0%
Pitkin	2.6%	1.8%	-0.8%
Summit	2.0%	1.5%	-0.5%
Colorado	3.2%	2.2%	-1.0%

Source: Labor Market Information

As of August 2017, the region's total labor force is reported at 75,362. This is a 2.2% increase over the total labor force reported one year ago in August 2016. Unemployment rates in the region are low, ranging from 1.1% to 1.8%.

Current Regional Economic Issues:

Workforce Housing Crisis:

Long-term rental housing for the workforce is increasingly being lost to the short-term rental market. Businesses are struggling to find workforce to fill jobs. Families, which provide the fabric of our communities, are leaving due to the fact that home ownership is becoming increasingly unattainable.

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Workforce Housing projects underway in the region:

Huron Landing – Summit County

[Huron Landing](#) is a collaborative effort between the Town of Breckenridge and Summit County to continue providing affordable housing for the workforce. Voters passed the 5A tax initiative, which has enabled us to support our local businesses and local families and to preserve our community character by pursuing these housing projects.

Rental rates at Huron Landing are \$1,550 per month for the one-bathroom units and \$1,700 for the two-bathroom units. These rates are set to be affordable to workers earning 66-80 percent of area median income (AMI) and 82 -89 percent of AMI, respectively, depending on the number of persons per household.

The Lake Hill Neighborhood Master Plan (Summit County) will consider the full range of housing needs identified in the 2013 Summit County Workforce Housing Needs Assessment, and will be developed to:

- Include a mix of housing styles and types, with both rental and ownership opportunities
- Provide housing choices affordable to a variety of income levels to encourage a healthy, diverse community
- Be well-connected to the community and integrated with nearby neighborhoods
- Employ principles of sustainable neighborhood design and "design with nature" strategies to create a context-appropriate, waterside mountain-town neighborhood, which respects and fits into the surrounding natural environment
- Provide for open space, neighborhood parks and access to recreation and trails
- Establish a transit-oriented, bicycle and pedestrian-friendly, high-quality neighborhood where people want to live
- Provide a phasing, financing and implementation plan for construction and property development.
- Regulations underway by towns for short-term rentals: Towns in the region are working on creating regulations for short-term rentals, particularly those utilizing on-line services including Airbnb, VRBO, and Home Away. The goal is to make sure owners of short-term rentals are paying their fair share of sales tax, lodging tax, and purchasing a business license.

High Cost of Healthcare:

NWCCOG's region is the most expensive region in the U.S. under the Affordable Care Act; people here are generally healthy, but medical prices and the use of medical services are both high.

Broadband:

Improvements in internet speed and accessibility are needed in our region and are vital to economic development. Project THOR, the next phase in the NWCCOG regional broadband effort, aims to build a resilient middle-mile transport network for broadband in the region. Project THOR will be funded initially through a DOLA grant and the budgets of participating entities.

County/Local government projects completed to date:

- [Eagle County](#): Town of Gypsum has obtained lower cost broadband from Mammoth Networks utilizing the 10G Wave terminating at the Eagle County Offices in Gypsum. A new wireless

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provider is looking to enter the I-70 Eagle County market.

- Grand County: CenturyLink is installing fiber along U.S. 40 in Fraser in support of CAF 2 deployment. CenturyLink had the county waiving all Right of Way fees for the CAF II construction project and will roll the savings into additional resource deployments. County BOCC will need to evaluate and either approve or reject this CenturyLink proposal. Adams Tunnel project will directly benefit Grand County government, residents, businesses and ISPs. Mountain Parks Electric is also reaching out to Estes Park and WAPA about the project. CDOT has an interest in developing fiber along the U.S. 40 corridor from Empire through Kremmling. Investigating with Comcast to learn how this project could be of mutual benefit and potential cost sharing.
- Jackson County: working with VistaBeam to flesh out details of a wireless broadband deployment in Jackson County. Jackson County has created a low-cost revolving loan to support infrastructure deployment and other economic development projects.
- Pitkin County: will create a multi-use fiber/wireless broadband loop connecting all their mountaintop sites, local government buildings, businesses and residents for public broadband deployment, public safety communications and County IT network redundancy. A DOLA broadband grant application has been approved for a Microwave and Tower project to support public safety and broadband throughout Pitkin, Southern Garfield, Western Eagle and Northern Gunnison Counties. Pitkin County is also working on two additional public safety projects; building out and moving their public safety radio communications from VHF to the State DTRS system.
- Summit County: Responses to the two RFIs to improve broadband and cellular service throughout the county have been evaluated and conversations with 4 vendors occurred. The County will issue an RFP for a broadband infrastructure development and network operator. Town of Breckenridge is interested in moving forward with an aggressive broadband infrastructure project.
- Town of Red Cliff (Eagle County): submitted an application to the USFS for a communications site at Ski Cooper. USFS Leadville Office reports that project is on their 2017 Work Plan. Senator Bennet's office helped get the project accelerated. If all factors come together, the town could have broadband Fall 2017.

Goals:

[Region-wide goals](#) were updated by the NWCCOG to serve the 2017-2021 planning timeframe. The plan also includes [strategies set at the county-level](#).

Workforce

Develop a healthy, productive, quality workforce that meets the demand for the business community

Objectives:

- Build capacity for community infrastructure that supports workforce: affordable housing, broadband, transportation, childcare, healthcare, education
- Develop career pathways that help to retain a qualified workforce.
- Foster an environment that supports the health and well-being of our workforce.

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Business

Cultivate a diversified, stable, balanced, sustainable economy

Objectives:

- Create and maintain communities and a business climate attractive to entrepreneurs; Create an entrepreneurial ecosystem that encourages growth of new industries, new businesses
- Encourage creation of higher-paying, year-round, career-focused jobs
- Provide access to capital for existing businesses as well as new start-ups
- Support, strengthen, build capacity in our region's key industries and existing businesses
- Build capacity of our towns and counties to meet their economic development goals

Community

Continue to help steward a unique community character and high quality of life attractive to year-round residents as well as visitors

Objectives:

- Protect our unique community character
- Protect the natural environment
- Assist our communities to have thriving main street/downtown areas with full storefronts

Resiliency

Foster a regional economy that is resilient to economic downturns/shocks and natural disasters in the long-term

Objectives:

- Build capacity of our towns and counties to be resilient in the face of natural disasters, economic downturns
- Bolster the long-term economic durability of the region so as not to be dependent on one single employer or one dominate industry
- Establishing Information networks among the various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges.
- Promote a positive vision for the region