

# 2013 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 2012 population of 92,741 in all five counties. Overall, the region saw a 3.84% increase since 2010, driven mainly by La Plata and Archuleta counties.

County	Census 2010	July 2012	% Change
Archuleta	12,084	12,144	0.50%
Dolores	2,064	2,002	-3.00%
La Plata	51,334	52,506	2.28%
Montezuma	25,535	25,407	-0.50%
San Juan	699	682	-2.43%
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>5,029,196</b>	<b>5,188,683</b>	<b>3.17%</b>

*Source: State Demography Office*

Durango, in La Plata County, was ranked as the 13<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

Each county in our region has seen a decrease in unemployment over the past year, and all are below the state average.

County	August 2012	August 2013	% Change
Archuleta	8.4%	6.9%	-1.5%
Dolores	8.1%	6.3%	-1.8%
La Plata	6.3%	5.2%	-1.1%
Montezuma	7.9%	6.9%	-1.0%
San Juan	5.3%	3.6%	-1.7%
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>-0.9%</b>

## HOUSING

Local area sales are up 29% from the same period last year with residential properties leading the way with a 34% increase. Median prices have also risen, although not to the peaks of 2006-2008. The lack of inventory and the prospect of higher interest rates are two main concerns for many buyers. The cost to purchase land and build homes remains high compared with existing

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home prices, keeping downward pressure on the prospect of new inventory (Statistics courtesy of The Wells Group).

## 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. Through March 2013, the 4CFO assisted on 28 projects, estimating \$235,831 of direct economic impact.

## 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. **Diversify the economy and improve access to markets.** The Region 9 Economic Development District (R9EDD) continues to serve as a connector between local, state and federal programs and agencies to assist area businesses improve access to markets outside of the region.
5. **Encourage retention and growth of existing businesses.** Regional economic gardening efforts continue to grow through partnerships with area economic development groups and the Southwest Colorado Small Business Development Center (SBDC). A new

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accelerator program, the Southwest Colorado Accelerator Program for Entrepreneurs (SCAPE) is working with its first companies to provide funding, education and intense mentoring.

SCAPE's objective is to support the creation and development of high growth, job creating companies in Southwest Colorado. Successful completion of the SCAPE program should provide these ventures the ability to enter markets and raise capital. The goal is to "graduate" at least 8 companies every year, with each company creating at least 6 jobs in the first two years.