



## **Comprehensive Plan Update Review Document 2025 & 2026**

**City of Creede  
PO Box 457  
2223 N Main Street  
Creede, CO 81130**

**From Interim Manager Katie Sickles:**

The following pages reflect a Comprehensive Plan provided by Four Corners Planning and Design Group dated June of 2000, for Mineral County and the City of Creede. The City of Creede Planning Commission adopted a comprehensive plan September 9, 2004, by Resolution 04-09 provided on the last page of this document. It is unknown whether additional actions were taken. As far as I could investigate the “Map to be Inserted” references were never inserted.

To facilitate an update to this plan, the plan document text (with several minor grammatical/spelling corrections) was revised within a modern document format.

Pages 62-70 documenting a public workshop held May 31, 2000, and other public comments, are maintained separately as historical documentation of public comments at that time.

The Board of Trustees are supportive of an update to the Comp Plan that would be Creede City specifically by seeking community input of stakeholders throughout the community.

The first of several planned Comp Plan Group Update meetings is October 29, 5:30pm at Creede Town Hall, 2223 N Main.

# Table of Contents

## Contents

Comprehensive Plan Update Review Document 2025 & 2026 .....	1
Table of Contents .....	2
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	4
A.    Why Plan? .....	4
B.    Creating the Plan .....	4
C.    Engaging the Public.....	4
D.    Collection and Analysis of Data.....	5
E.    Land Use Inventory .....	5
F.    Vision Statement & Desired Future Conditions .....	5
G.    Policies and Action Items .....	6
H.    Development of Alternative Growth Management Scenarios .....	6
I.    Selection of a Preferred Growth Management Scenario and Development of the Future Land Use Map. ....	6
J.    Community Roots.....	6
<b>MAP 1: GENERAL LOCATION OF MINERAL COUNTY TO BE INSERTED.....</b>	<b>7</b>
K.    From the Past to the Future/Growth Trends .....	7
<b>FIGURE 1: POPULATION OF MINERAL COUNTY AND CREEDE 1900 - 2000 .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>FIGURE 2: MINERAL COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH, HISTORIC AND PROJECTED     1990 - 2020.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Chapter 2-Environmental and Natural Resources .....	9
A.    Environmental and Natural Resources .....	9
B.    Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items .....	9
<b>MAP 2: WILDLIFE HABITAT TO BE INSERTED .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Chapter 3-Community Character and Heritage.....	11
A.    Heritage .....	11
B.    Year-round and Seasonal Residents .....	11
C.    The Train .....	12
D.    Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items .....	12
Chapter 4-Land Use, Growth Management and Housing.....	14
A.    Analysis of Existing Land Use .....	14
B.    U.S. Forest Service Land Exchange Program .....	14
C.    Housing.....	16
<b>FIGURE 3: ALTERNATIVE HOUSING UNIT PROJECTIONS .....</b>	<b>18</b>

<b>MAP 3: EXISTING LAND USE, MINERAL COUNTY TO BE INSERTED .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>MAP 4: EXISTING LAND USE, CITY OF CREEDE THREE MILE PLAN AREA.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>TO BE INSERTED .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>MAP 5: EXISTING LAND USE, CITY OF CREEDE TO BE INSERTED .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>TABLE 1: MINERAL COUNTY HOUSING UNITS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
D.    Commercial Land Use.....	20
<b>TABLE 2: MINERAL COUNTY COMMERCIAL SQUARE FOOTAGE*.....</b>	<b>20</b>
E.    Alternative Growth Scenarios .....	21
F.    Preferred Growth Scenario and Future Land Use Map .....	23
<b>MAP 6: FUTURE LAND USE MINERAL COUNTY TO BE INSERTED .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>MAP 7: FUTURE LAND USE CITY OF CREEDE THREE MILE PLAN AREA TO BE INSERTED .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>MAP 8: FUTURE LAND USE CITY OF CREEDE TO BE INSERTED .....</b>	<b>24</b>
G.    Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items .....	24
Chapter 5-Economy and Economic Development.....	27
A.    Economy and Economic Development .....	27
<b>TABLE 3: MINERAL COUNTY WORKFORCE, 1970 - 1997 .....</b>	<b>27</b>
B.    Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items .....	28
Chapter 6-Community Services and Facilities.....	29
A.    Community Services and Facilities .....	29
B.    Adequacy of Public Facilities to Service an Influx of Tourists .....	29
C.    Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items .....	30
Chapter 7-Implementation of the Community Plan.....	31
<b>TABLE 4: ACTION ITEMS PRIORITIES AND SCHEDULE .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>TABLE 4: ACTION ITEMS PRIORITIES AND SCHEDULE-CONTINUED.....</b>	<b>32</b>
Resolution No. 04-09 .....	33

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

### **A. Why Plan?**

A community plan is an official public document designed to guide the future development or redevelopment of a community in order to create and maintain a desirable environment and to promote the public health, safety, and welfare. The plan is intended for use by public officials, citizens, and developers in making decisions about future development of Mineral County and the City of Creede.

This community plan contains various elements that address the interrelationships between the physical layout of a community, public facilities, the provision of government services, and preservation of community character. The plan establishes a framework for managing new growth in a manner that attempts to preserve quality of life while fostering or enhancing a healthy economy.

While the plan is an advisory document only, it is the basis for revising existing regulations or enacting new regulations and guiding project review recommendations. The plan affects new development and major expansions of existing development. Existing development is not affected by the plan, except that voluntary compliance with new policies is encouraged.

The plan recognizes that protection of individual property rights is a fundamental legal and philosophical principle of the nation, the State of Colorado, Mineral County, and the City of Creede. However, the plan also recognizes a common vision to preserve community character and environmental and scenic qualities, while enhancing economic opportunities and creating a more diverse economy. The plan attempts to strike an appropriate balance between the untrammelled exercise of individual property rights, the environment, and achieving the common vision.

### **B. Creating the Plan**

Planning is a process that involves many steps, culminating in the preparation of a plan with maps and text. The steps leading to this plan included: engaging the public through meetings with the Steering Committee, three public workshops, and a community survey; collection and analysis of pertinent data; developing a vision statement and desired future conditions for each planning element; development of alternative growth management scenarios, selection of a preferred growth scenario, and development of the comprehensive plan.

### **C. Engaging the Public**

Citizen participation in the planning process was encouraged throughout the study. Three primary methods were used to solicit public input: meetings with the Steering Committee, public workshops, and a telephone public opinion survey.

#### **(1) The Steering Committee**

consisted of residents of Mineral County appointed by the County Commissioners and the Creede City Council. This committee functioned as the primary working-level citizens' group, providing detailed comments on the survey design, consultant presentations and giving directions for presentations to the general public.

#### **(2) Three public workshops**

were held to solicit public input during the early, middle, and late phases of the planning process. The purpose of the first workshop, which was attended by about 75 people, was to identify issues, concerns, and special values, and to facilitate the development of a long-range vision. Several questions were asked to stimulate a discussion about the future of

Mineral County and the City of Creede:

- What do you like about Mineral County and the City of Creede and what would you like to retain?
- What do you dislike about Mineral County and the City of Creede and what would you like to change?
- What is the appropriate balance between catering to tourists and newcomers and maintaining the quality of life and culture that has been part of this area's heritage for the past century?

At the second public workshop, land use and demographic data were presented along with several alternative growth management scenarios. The preferred growth management scenario, and the draft future land use map, were presented at the third public workshop.

### **(3) A telephone public opinion survey**

was conducted during early autumn 2000 when most of the seasonal as well as year-round residents were in the area. A total of 172 individuals responded, including 103 who identified themselves as permanent residents and 68 who identified themselves as seasonal residents. The survey indicated that 38 percent of residents thought that the railroad was the most important issue facing the county, and 31 percent considered growth to be the most important issue. Most survey respondents (81 percent) favored moderate growth over rapid growth or no growth. A majority (more than 60 percent) desired to pursue economic development to diversify the economy and direct commercial growth only in Creede and a few concentrated areas. More than 75 percent favored enacting policies to preserve open space. The entire public opinion survey is presented in Appendix B.

## **D. Collection and Analysis of Data**

Existing information and studies were reviewed and analyzed. Data was obtained from interviews with key individuals as well as written reports. Information reviewed and analyzed included:

- The 1977 Comprehensive Plan for Mineral County
- The Mineral County Land Use Code
- Mineral County Assessor maps and records
- City of Creede maps, aerial photographs, and ordinances
- Mineral County building permit data
- The Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Rio Grande National Forest

## **E. Land Use Inventory**

In addition to reviewing and analyzing existing information, the consultants conducted a land use inventory of Mineral County and the City of Creede. The purpose of the inventory was to identify and quantify various types of land uses and densities to serve as a basis for projecting future growth and developing the land use plan. An existing land use map was prepared which delineated the types of existing land uses, and tables were created summarizing the data.

## **F. Vision Statement & Desired Future Conditions**

Based on input obtained from the public participation process, a vision statement was developed, and statements of desired future conditions for each planning element were written to guide growth during the next 20 years. While the vision statement is broad and general, statements of desired future conditions reflect more specific values, issues, and concerns. Desired

future conditions, often called goals, are defined as long-term ideals or end products that are desired. Since they are ideals, desired future conditions are rarely fully achieved. Statements of desired future conditions are derived from citizens' expressions of special values, issues, concerns, and needs stated or implied at the first public workshop and in the public opinion survey.

Statements of desired future conditions are presented with each planning element.

*A Vision for Mineral County and the City of Creede*

*Preserve the outstanding scenic and natural qualities and the rural, small City atmosphere of the community, while providing quality community services and striving for economic prosperity*

## **G. Policies and Action Items**

Desired future conditions are achieved by developing and implementing policies that provide guidance to county and City officials as well as individuals and businesses that seek a change in land use or propose new development.

- A policy is defined as a statement describing the general philosophy that guides decision making consistently with achieving a desired future condition.
- An action item is defined as a specific step that should be accomplished to implement a given policy.

## **H. Development of Alternative Growth Management Scenarios**

Three alternative growth management scenarios were developed and presented to the Steering Committee for comment and then presented at the second public workshop for discussion and comment.

Three alternative growth management scenarios were developed and presented to the Steering Committee for comment and then presented at the second public workshop for discussion and comment.

## **I. Selection of a Preferred Growth Management Scenario and Development of the Future Land Use Map.**

Based on input from the Steering Committee and the second public workshop, a preferred growth management scenario and the draft future land use map were presented to the Steering Committee and then to the public at the third public workshop.

## **J. Community Roots**

Mineral County and the City of Creede are located in the southern San Juan Mountains in one of the most pristine areas of Colorado. The county straddles the Continental Divide. The headwaters of the South Fork of the Rio Grande rise at Wolf Creek Pass, and the San Juan River begins its descent toward the Colorado River on the west side of the pass. The Upper Rio Grande Valley, surrounded by high peaks, dominates the landscape of the north-central part of the county. About 96 percent of the county is in public ownership, most of which is U.S. Forest Service land.

The Ute Indians, attracted by plentiful game and the hot springs at Wagon Wheel Gap, hunted in the area that is now Mineral County. As white settlers and tourists discovered Mineral County, the Utes were relocated to their current reservations in the Cortez and Ignacio areas.

In 1883, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad built a line to Wagon Wheel Gap to bring visitors to the hot springs. After silver was discovered in 1890, the railroad extended tracks to Creede. During peak production in 1892, \$1 million worth of silver was shipped by rail, carried by two

trains departing Creede daily.

During the silver boom, the population of Mineral County swelled to 10,000. A disastrous fire in 1892, which burned the business district, and the silver panic of 1893 ended the silver boom in Creede. With the mountains still rich with ore, mines reopened on a smaller scale, operating until 1985 when the price of silver dropped, forcing the closure of the mines. The railroad ceased operation to Creede in 1973 but continued freight service to the Wason siding, several miles southeast of Creede, until 1985.

**MAP 1: GENERAL LOCATION OF MINERAL COUNTY TO BE INSERTED**  
**(A map was never inserted.)**

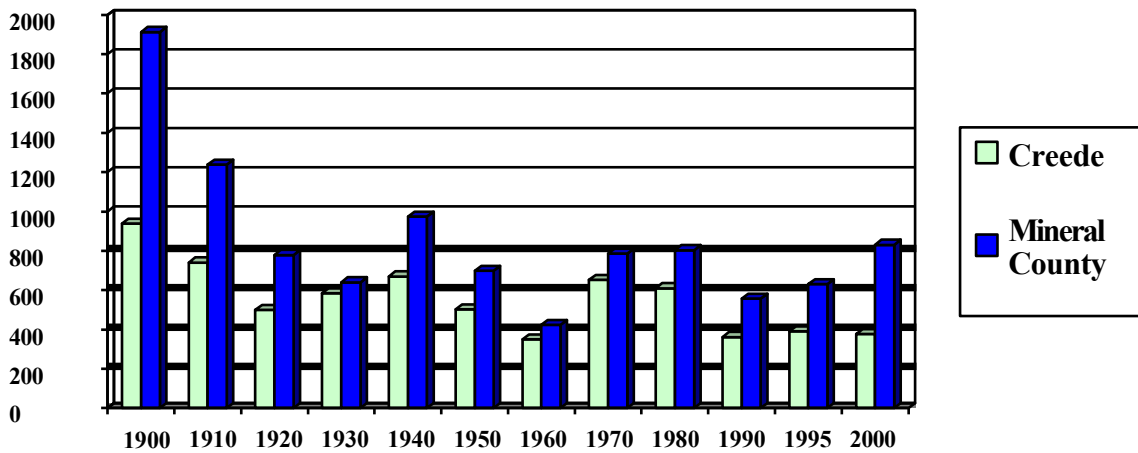
**K. From the Past to the Future/Growth Trends**

Although mining no longer contributes significantly to the local economy, Creede and Mineral County thrive today by preserving and sharing their mining heritage and beautiful natural resources with thousands of visitors and seasonal residents. The nationally renowned Creede Repertory Theatre is a big draw for locals, summer residents, and tourists.

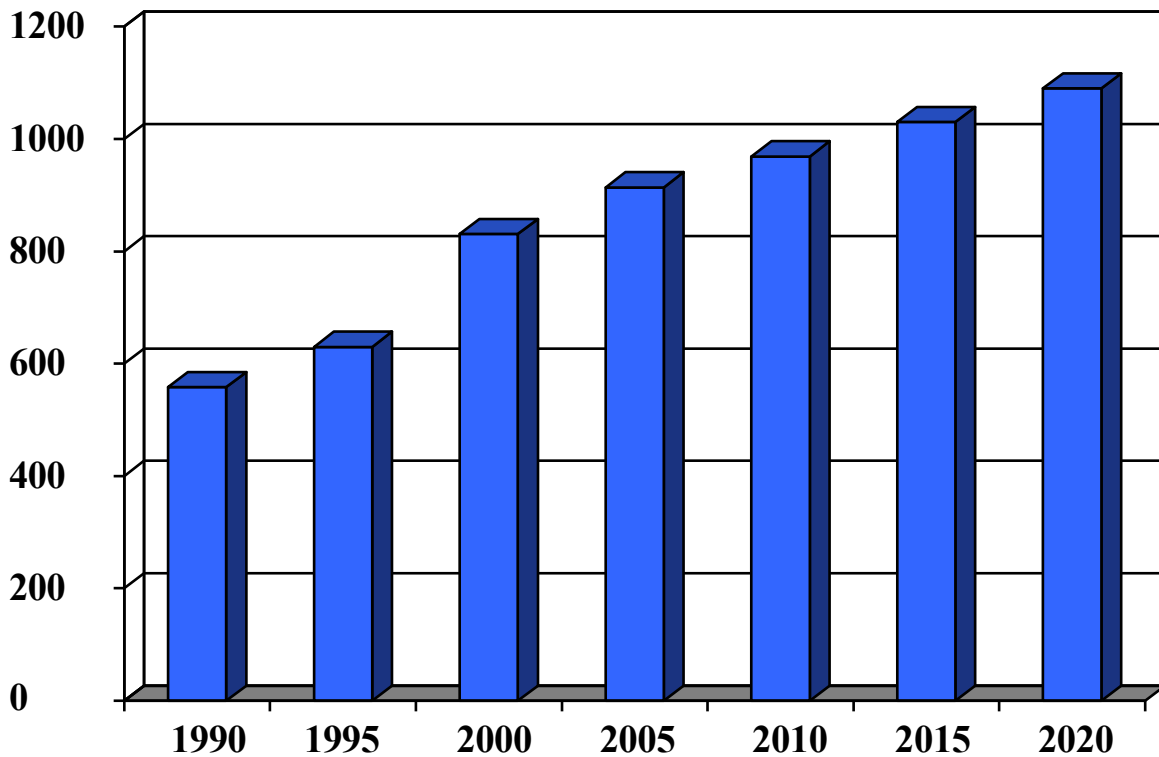
The population of Mineral County fluctuated with the mining boom-bust cycle until the decline of mining in 1985, as indicated in Figure 1. With an economy based on tourism and seasonal residences, Mineral County has grown significantly since 1990 while the City of Creede has grown more slowly. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Mineral County increased to 831, a 49 percent increase over the 1990 population, while the City of Creede's population increased to 377, up from 362 in 1990, an increase of only 4.1 percent. The county is expected to continue to grow during the next 20 years (see Figure 2). According to projections prepared by the Colorado Office of Demography (COD), the county's population is expected to increase to nearly 1,100 in 2020.

Seasonal homes now outnumber year-round residences by a ratio of more than three to one. According to COD, in 1997 there were 1,325 housing units in Mineral County, of which year-round households occupied only 301 units, and 1,024 units were vacant, most of which were presumably seasonal dwellings. (See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion.)

**FIGURE 1: POPULATION OF MINERAL COUNTY AND CREEDE 1900 - 2000**



**FIGURE 2: MINERAL COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH, HISTORIC AND PROJECTED 1990 - 2020**





## Chapter 2-Environmental and Natural Resources

### A. Environmental and Natural Resources

Scenic beauty, abundant wildlife, and free flowing rivers are but a few of the qualities that contribute to the environment and lifestyle that are so attractive to residents of Mineral County and the City of Creede. The natural environment plays an important role in the quality of life of the county and the economy. Vistas of majestic mountains, abundant wildlife, wide open meadows, and the rural atmosphere have aesthetic and economic value. Citizens desire to strike a balance between accommodating development and preserving the clean air, clean water, wildlife, and beauty of Mineral County.

Mineral County is fortunate to have thousands of acres of permanently protected lands – about 96 percent of the county's area. Some of these lands are scenic, others more biologically significant, but all are important for Mineral County's quality of life and identity. Permanently protected lands include the following:

- **National Forest Lands** - The Rio Grande National Forest covers the northern two-thirds of the county that lies on the eastern slope of the Continental Divide. The San Juan National Forest stretches along the southern edge of the county on the west slope.
- **Wilderness** - Two wilderness areas - the Weminuche and La Garita - have been set aside within the National Forest. The Wheeler Geologic Area, featuring unique rock formations, is located within La Garita Wilderness Area.
- **Coller State Wildlife Area** – This area stretches for several miles along the Rio Grande – Route 149 corridor on the eastern side of the county.

Although much of the land valuable for its scenic beauty enjoys permanent protection, many areas do not have protection to ensure preservation of scenic qualities in the future. Support for the protection of scenic areas and wildlife habitat was demonstrated at the first public workshop and in the public opinion survey. Some of these unprotected areas include:

- **River Corridors** - 90% of wildlife species depend on riparian areas for survival. Recreation along river corridors is important for the county's tourist-based economy. River corridors that should be protected include the Rio Grande and the San Juan.
- **Scenic Corridors** – The Silver Thread Scenic Byway, which includes the Rio Grande-Highway 149 corridor through Mineral County, was designated as a National and State Scenic Byway in 1990. This plan recognizes this scenic resource and proposes measures to ensure that new development in this corridor is compatible with scenic values. The US Highway 160 corridor, particularly below the overlook located about four miles north of the Archuleta County line, is also a valuable scenic area that should be preserved. Scenic corridors are discussed in Chapter 4.
- **Critical Wildlife Areas** - If wildlife populations are to remain healthy, areas that are important to wildlife for winter range, calving, migration, and nesting need to be preserved. See Map 2.
- **Ridgelines** – This plan includes policies designed to protect the scenic character of ridgelines.

### B. Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items

(1) Desired Future Condition: The scenic beauty of Mineral County remains intact. The mountain background with vistas of traditional agricultural buildings, ranches, and open spaces is preserved. The air is clean, rivers run free and clear, and wildlife populations

remain healthy through preservation of habitat and migration corridors on public as well as private land.

- a. **Wildlife:** Design and locate new development to avoid or minimize damage and disruption to critical wildlife habitat and avoid or minimize damage to other environmentally sensitive areas.
  - In consultation with DOW, develop criteria for reviewing development proposals to ensure that damage to wildlife habitat and migration corridors is avoided or minimized.
  - Develop regulations that establish standards and guidelines to ensure that new development is designed and located to avoid or minimize damage and disruption to critical wildlife habitat.
  - Adopt additional standards and criteria to protect the environment when reviewing and approving development proposals pertaining to such items as building on steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains.
- b. **Air Quality:** Mineral County and the City of Creede are committed to improving air quality during the winter and maintaining good air quality during the remainder of the year.
  - Explore funding possibilities (private, state, or federal) to assist in converting to cleaner sources of heat and encourage voluntary participation in programs to make homes more energy efficient.
  - Enact county and City building codes to establish air quality standards for heating devices installed in all new buildings or major renovations to existing buildings.
  - Establish air quality standards for industries that may eventually operate in Mineral County and the City of Creede.
- c. **Fishing and Water Quality:** Recognizing that fishing is an important activity for residents and tourists, Mineral County and the City of Creede will work with appropriate public agencies and private landowners to preserve and expand fishing opportunities and to preserve and enhance water quality.
  - Develop a coalition\* to collect scientific data, have discussions with water owners, and make recommendations to the proper authorities on the operation of irrigation reservoirs. (\*Including but not limited to the Division of Wildlife, Mineral County Commissioners, City of Creede Trustees, Willow Creek Reclamation Project, Trout Unlimited, and Rio Grande Water Conservancy District.)
  - Continue to support the efforts of the Willow Creek Reclamation Project.
  - Develop a plan to increase the number of access points to the Rio Grande, which could include working with owners of private land and applying for Go Colorado (GOCO) funds to acquire access easements.

**MAP 2: WILDLIFE HABITAT TO BE INSERTED**  
**(A map was never inserted.)**

## **Chapter 3-Community Character and Heritage**

### **A. Heritage**

Although mining is no longer a significant component of Mineral County's economy, it is an important part of the county's community character and heritage. Creede's unselfish and unique small City atmosphere, the rural character of the county, the agricultural heritage, and long history of visitors to the area also define community character.

The rich heritage of Mineral County and Creede are preserved through the efforts of two museums: The Creede Historical Society Museum and the Creede Underground Mining Museum. The historical significance of parts of Mineral County is recognized by inclusion of several sites and properties on the national and state historic registers.

Two sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Seven Mile Bridge – Located about six miles southwest of Creede, this bridge, constructed in 1935, provides access to Marshall Park Campground. The bridge is architecturally significant for its cantilevered ends.
- Wagon Wheel Gap Railroad Station – In order to serve the resort community built around the hot springs at Wagon Wheel Gap, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad extended narrow gauge tracks to this area in 1883 (converted to standard gauge in 1902) and constructed the wood frame depot. The depot served as the western terminus of this branch of the railroad until 1891 when the tracks were extended to Creede after major silver discoveries. The depot exhibits the characteristics of many wood frame depots built by railroads during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This building now serves as a private residence.

In addition to the two sites discussed above, three other sites are listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties:

- Creede Federal Fish Hatchery – Located south of Creede on Forest Road 801A, the Creede Fish Hatchery operated for 36 years as one of two federal hatcheries in the state. The hatchery significantly aided in the preservation of important native and sport fish populations through its programs of raising and stocking fish in Colorado streams, rivers, and lakes.
- Rio Grande Depot – Located at 201 Wall Street in Creede, this building now serves as the Creede Historical Society Museum. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad provided the Creede mining district with an outlet for its ore while bringing in the necessities of life. The depot served as the hub of this activity.
- Rio Grande Hotel – Located at 209 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Creede, the Rio Grande Hotel was constructed in 1892 to relieve the housing shortage resulting from the area's silver mining boom. The hotel was one of only a few wood structures to survive the devastating fire of 1892. The hotel was restored in 2000 to its original state by the Creede Repertory Theatre, the current owner.

### **B. Year-round and Seasonal Residents**

During the past century, as the local economy has shifted from mining to tourism and services, the character of Mineral County has changed. While tourists have been attracted by the area's beauty and natural resources since a hotel was opened at Wagon Wheel Gap in 1876, the decline of mining ushered in a new era characterized by amenities rather than minerals. Gone is a lifestyle built around mining, with ore-laden trains chugging through the Rio Grande Valley.

Today, Mineral County is populated by a core of about 800 permanent residents who cherish a simple lifestyle amid incredible natural beauty, supplemented by seasonal residents who are

typically welcomed as permanent, part-time locals. Seasonal residents make a significant contribution to the local economy, supporting local shops and cultural events. Seasonal and year-round residents work together on many of the volunteer projects that occur in the community.

At the first public workshop, residents expressed a desire to retain the small City character, the closeness of the community, and the feeling of being part of a family. Other amenities described by residents included the quiet atmosphere and isolation of the community.

Tourists are attracted by the area's scenic beauty and cultural amenities such as high-quality shops, art galleries, museums, the Creede Repertory Theatre, and guest ranches.

### **C. The Train**

After lying dormant for nearly 30 years, the rail line along the Rio Grande may bring many tourists each day from South Fork to Creede. The Union Pacific Railroad's right-of-way on 21.5 miles of track has been purchased, and the owner hopes to operate a tourist train.

Many residents feel that the train and its cargo of tourists will adversely affect community character and quality of life. The Creede Chamber of Commerce recently conducted a survey of local businesses, which voted five to one against reactivation of the train. In the telephone public opinion survey, nearly 40 percent of respondents stated that the railroad was the most important issue facing Mineral County.

With a retail economy geared toward seasonal residents and sophisticated tourists who return year after year, Creede may not be prepared for the sudden influx of additional daily visitors. Public restrooms are few in number, there are not enough restaurants to feed lunch to this many visitors, and local shops generally do not stock inexpensive souvenirs.

If the tourist train eventually comes to Creede, local businesses will probably respond to changing demand for goods and services. Such change, many residents feel, may alter the quiet, small City atmosphere and unique community character. However, other residents feel that the train would have a positive impact on our economy.

### **D. Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items**

(1) Desired Future Condition: The small City atmosphere, rural character, agricultural and mining heritage, and diversity of lifestyles are preserved.

- a. **Historic Preservation:** Preservation of historic buildings and creation of a Creede Historic District is encouraged.
  - Conduct a study to determine whether the City of Creede could or should designate a local historic district.
  - Develop standards and guidelines to protect the historic character of Creede and revise the *Creede Zoning Ordinance and Title and Authority* to include these standards and guidelines.
  - Develop incentives to encourage the restoration of historic buildings.
  - Continue to support the efforts of the Willow Creek Restoration Project to inventory and eventually nominate historical mining structures to the national and state registers.
  - Establish a historic preservation committee to address items 1 – 3 above.
- b. **Design of New Development:** New development is encouraged to be architecturally compatible with community character and heritage.

- Develop architectural standards and guidelines to ensure that new development is compatible with community character and heritage.

## **Chapter 4-Land Use, Growth Management and Housing**

### **A. Analysis of Existing Land Use**

Approximately 96 percent of the total county area is owned and managed by the federal and state governments. The remainder is privately owned, except for parcels owned by local government. Most of the private land is confined to the Rio Grande corridor and, to a lesser extent to the San Juan River corridor near the Archuleta County line. Isolated parcels are scattered throughout the county surrounded by Forest Service land.

Most of the Rio Grande corridor is open, undeveloped land between the Rio Grande County line and Creede, except for several resorts and subdivisions near and east of Wagon Wheel Gap. The open character of the river corridor south and west of Creede is interspersed with several subdivisions and resorts, typically guest ranches, some of which have RV parks. Some of these resorts have commercial uses such as gift shops and restaurants.

Most of the open hills above Creede are within the Rio Grande National Forest, but some of this land, typically mining claims, now has scattered housing, some of which is visible from town.

On the western side of the Continental Divide, several large tracts of private land in the southeastern part of the county are under development pressure. The open meadow area between the US 160 overlook and the Archuleta County line and the East Fork of the San Juan River area, site of the Piano Creek proposal (which has been withdrawn as of 2004), are areas where development could occur in the near future. At the crest of the Continental Divide, new lots have been platted near Wolf Creek Ski Area.

The highest density development within the county occurs in the City of Creede, with its small lots characteristic of the city's 19<sup>th</sup> century mining town origins. Creede serves as the primary commercial and residential area

in Mineral County and contains about 60 percent of the county's year-round population. Creede is also a cultural center and a tourist destination, with its galleries, two museums, and the nationally renowned Creede Repertory Theatre.

Map 3 shows existing land use county-wide, Map 4 shows existing land use in the City of Creede Three Mile Plan Area, and Map 5 depicts existing land use within the existing Creede corporate limits.

### **B. U.S. Forest Service Land Exchange Program**

Approximately 96 percent of the land within Mineral County is part of the Rio Grande National Forest. Most of the land is held by the federal government in vast, continuous tracts of land, there are pockets of private land surrounded by federal land in many places. Conversely, there are locations where federal land is bordered on two or three sides by private land. The Forest Service has established a land exchange program to acquire private pockets, or inholdings, in exchange for parcels, typically adjacent to private land, that are conveyed to non-federal entities.

The US Forest Service has identified about 34 square miles of land adjacent to and surrounding the City of Creede that are eligible for the land exchange program. This program therefore has the potential to affect growth and development in Mineral County, particularly in the area near Creede.

## **(1) Land Exchange Policies and Criteria**

There are over 100,000 acres of privately owned land intermingled with federal land, much of it in Mineral County, within the boundaries of the Rio Grande National Forest, which sometimes makes efficient management of land difficult for both the US Forest Service and private landowners. The US Forest Service has a land exchange program to remedy such situations. A land exchange is a voluntary exchange of land by mutual agreement that consolidates landownership patterns in areas of intermingled landholdings so that all parties can manage their land more effectively.

Congress has provided authority for land exchanges subject to the following general rules:

- The exchange must be in the public interest.
- The appraised value of the properties being exchanged must be equal.
- Lands are exchanged on the basis of their market value, not acre for acre.
- The properties to be exchanged must be in the same state unless special legislation is

Lands can be exchanged only with a person who is a citizen of the United States, a corporation, or a non-federal government entity.

The Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Rio Grande National Forest lists the types of lands that the Forest Service would like to acquire, which include:

- Lands with water frontage, wetlands, and associated riparian ecosystems.
- Lands having endangered or threatened species habitat.
- Lands having unique historical or heritage (cultural) resources.
- Lands primarily of value for outdoor recreation purposes and lands needed for aesthetic protection.
- Lands that ensure access to public lands and resources.
- Key tracts that will promote effective resource management.
- Lands that will consolidate ownership and reduce miles of property lines and corners to maintain.
- Lands that maintain or stabilize the economies of local governments.

The Land and Resource Management Plan also lists the types of lands that are suitable for disposal:

- Lands that states, counties, cities, or other federal agencies can use to serve a greater public purpose.
- Small parcels intermingled with mineral or homestead patents.
- Lands suitable for development by the private sector, if development (residential, agricultural, industrial, recreational, etc.) is in the public interest.
- Parcels isolated from other National Forest system lands.
- Lands occupied by substantial structural improvements for which there is no greater need.
- Lands in developed areas that are losing National Forest character.

National Forest lands may be conveyed through a land exchange program to non-federal entities only if the following are satisfied through an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement:

- Flood hazards on and downstream from conveyed lands are not increased.

- Natural and beneficial values of acquired wetlands equal or exceed those of conveyed wetlands.
- Natural water regimes in wetlands downstream from conveyed lands are not disrupted.
- Lands have been evaluated for the presence of hazardous materials and known hazardous materials have been removed.
- Lands do not contain habitat identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as necessary for recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species.
- Lands do not contain unique resource characteristics.

Forest Service land can be conveyed to non-federal entities, including private property owners and local governments, only in the context of a land exchange. For example, if a developer wished to acquire Forest Service land near Creede that has been identified by the Forest Service for disposal, the developer must negotiate with the owners of private parcels that have been slated for acquisition by the Forest Service. The Forest Service would then help to facilitate the land exchange if all of the criteria listed above were satisfied. In other words, the Forest Service cannot simply sell land to a willing buyer without following land exchange procedures.

## **(2) Land Exchanges in Mineral County**

Appendix C presents maps of lands within Mineral County designated for land exchange by the Rio Grande National Forest. This land includes 18 tracts of Forest Service land identified for disposition to non-federal entities and nine tracts of land identified for acquisition by the Forest Service. The largest tract designated for disposition is a rectangle consisting of about 34 square miles surrounding the City of Creede. Within this rectangle are several square miles of private land, mostly old mining claims.

A land exchange involving tracts of land in Mineral County is currently underway. The Rio Oxbow Land Exchange consists of approximately 473 acres of Forest Service land in Mineral County and 1,043 acres of non-federal land in Hinsdale, Mineral and Rio Grande Counties, including 92 acres in Mineral County. The federal land to be conveyed to private owners in Mineral County consists of 11 parcels southwest of Creede ranging in size between .04 acres to 214 acres. The maps in Appendix C show the location of parcels in Mineral County that are part of the Rio Oxbow Land Exchange.

## **C. Housing**

The proportion of seasonal residences to year-round residences has increased during the past 15 years. According to the Colorado Office of Demography (COD), there were 887 housing units in Mineral County in 1985 and only 323 households (an indicator of year-round residences). The remainder – vacant or seasonal units and guest ranch cottages – totaled 564, or about 64 percent of the housing stock. By 1997, COD estimated that the total number of housing units had increased to 1,325 while households had declined slightly to 301. Vacant or seasonal units and guest ranch cottages comprised about 77 percent of the total, or 1,024. According to the Mineral County Assessor records, there are now about 1,341 housing units in the county, of which about 180 are guest ranch units, leaving a total of about 1,160 year-round, vacant, or seasonal housing units. Thus, households comprise about 26 percent (301 divided by 1,160) of total housing units, excluding guest ranch units.

As shown in Table 1, 967 of the housing units, about 83 percent of the total (excluding guest ranch units, which are considered commercial property) are located within subdivisions or in



the City of Creede. The remaining 193 units are scattered throughout the county. Existing subdivisions have a total of 899 vacant platted lots, and an additional 26 parcels are classified as vacant residential, for a total of 925 vacant residential parcels.

Existing vacant platted lots and parcels, if developed as single-family residences, could accommodate projected population growth (year-round residents) through 2020. Assuming that the current percentage of year-round units to total units, excluding guest ranches (26 percent) remains constant for two more decades, about 240 year-round households could be expected to occupy existing vacant residential lots and parcels. Multiplying 240 units by the present average household size of 2.26 persons per unit yields about 540 persons. Adding this new potential population to the 2000 estimated population of 742 yields 1,282, which exceeds the COD 2020 estimate of 1,011.

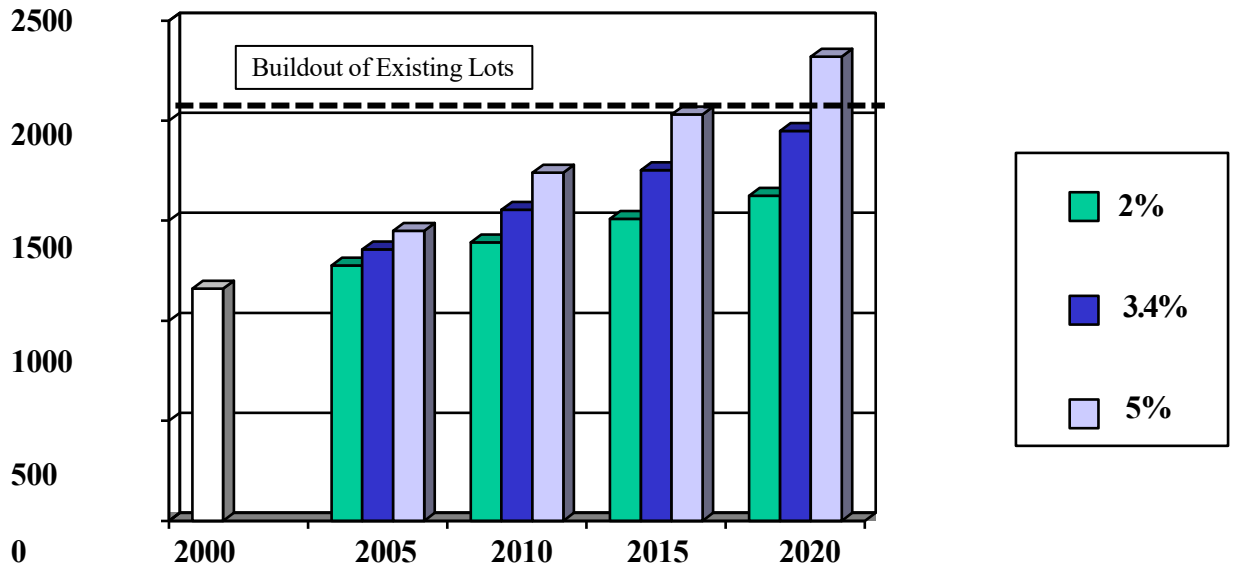
However, if the growth rate for total new housing units between 1985 and 2000 (about 3.4 percent annual average) were to continue through 2020, the total number of housing units (most of which would be seasonal units) would increase to about 1,950 in 20 years, about 790 more units than the present total of about 1,160. If the national and regional economies remain healthy, and with baby boomers reaching retirement age, the number of new homes could increase at a rate greater than recent trends.

Figure 3 shows projections for new housing units at five-year intervals through 2020 with alternative assumptions of 2 percent, 3.4 percent, and 5 percent annual increase. With a current total of 925 vacant residential parcels, Mineral County could accommodate a total of about 2,085 housing units at buildout of existing vacant parcels if all of them were developed with single family units. Existing vacant residential parcels would satisfy demand through 2020 at an annual average growth rates of 2 percent and

3.4 percent (the 1985 – 2000 annual average), but would not accommodate the number of additional units needed at 5 percent average annual growth rate. At this rate, total demand for housing units (2,320) would exceed buildout of existing lots by about 235 units.

If Mineral County continues the trend toward providing more residences, the County should investigate creation of additional affordable residential lots. Mineral County should consider the additional costs of services to new developments and create an appropriate formula for impact fees.

**FIGURE 3: ALTERNATIVE HOUSING UNIT PROJECTIONS**



**MAP 3: EXISTING LAND USE, MINERAL COUNTY TO BE INSERTED**  
(A map was never inserted.)

**MAP 4: EXISTING LAND USE, CITY OF CREEDE THREE MILE PLAN AREA  
TO BE INSERTED**  
(A map was never inserted.)

**MAP 5: EXISTING LAND USE, CITY OF CREEDE TO BE INSERTED**  
(A map was never inserted.)

**TABLE 1: MINERAL COUNTY HOUSING UNITS**

GENERAL LOCATION	SUBDIVISION	# SINGLE FAMILY UNITS	# MOBILE HOMES	# VACANT RESIDENTIAL LOTS
City of Creede	NA	230	59	63
NE & NW of Creede	NA	7	0	0
NW County	Bristol View Acres	23	0	12
	Kipp Family Homes	4	0	0
	Santa Maria	2	67	3
	Spring Creek Ranch	8	1	17
	Wetherill Ranch	8	0	2
Bristol Head	Bristol Head Acres # 1	24	2	19
	Bristol Head Acres # 2	24	0	15
	Bristol Head Acres # 3	14	0	22
	Bristol Head Acres # 4&6	28	0	52
	Bristol Head Acres # 5	11	0	18
	Bristol Head Acres # 7	3	0	3
	Kid Peak Estates	11	0	11
	Rio Grande Estates	6	0	6
	Rio Grande Meadows	26	0	13
	Eagle Nest Park # 1	28	2	38
	Eagle Nest Park # 2	0	0	77
	Spar City	37	0	0
	Carnan Estates	4	0	13
	HQ on the Rio Grande	0	0	2
Central County	Creede Haven # 1	42	0	17
	Creede Haven # 2	1	0	79
	Creede Haven # 3	0	0	84
	Elk Valley	26	0	7
	Holiday Acres # 1	7	1	10
	Holiday Acres # 2	8	7	7
	Holiday Acres # 3	13	8	21
	Moonshine Mesa	5	0	67
	Moonshine Mesa Ranch	16	0	9
	Rivercrest Acres	14	0	47
	Valle Vista Estates	13	0	14
	Vista Grande	2	0	14
	Mtn Views at Rivers Edge	0	0	7
East County	Big River Ranch	21	1	5
	Cottonwood Cove	22	0	0
	Elk Creek Ranch	6	0	0
	Legion Park	14	2	0
	Rio Grande Haciendas	18	0	5
	Riverside Mesa/Valle	37	0	10
	Wagon Wheel Gap Estates	17	0	16
Southwest County	Lost Valley of the San Juans	16	0	70
Southeast County	Wolf Creek Ranchettes	21	0	6
	Wolf Creek Village	0	0	18
<b>Subtotals</b>		<b>817</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>899</b>
All Other County	NA	167	26	26
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>984</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>925</b>

#### D. Commercial Land Use

Table 2 depicts the amount of commercial square footage for nine types of commercial uses. This data is derived from the Mineral County Assessor's records. The data shows an unusually high amount of commercial square footage for such a small year-round population – about 595 square feet per person. This compares to about 170 square feet per person in Archuleta County and about 140 square feet per person in Durango.

The data suggests that much of the commercial space exists to serve seasonal residents and tourists, particularly since nearly half of the space – about 212,000 square feet– consists of lodging, including guest ranches.

The amount of commercial space per each of the 1,160 housing units (most of which are occupied seasonally) is about 380 square feet. Dividing 380 square feet per housing unit by the average household size (2.26 persons) yields about 168 square feet per person during peak periods when most units are occupied.

The above analysis is useful for projecting the amount of commercial square footage that will be needed to serve residents, both year-round and seasonal, and tourists in the future. Using 380 square feet per housing unit to project future commercial space needs, alternative projections of the number of housing units in 2020 using annual average growth rates of 2 percent, 3.4 percent, and 5 percent yields the following:

- 2% annual average growth = 1,625 units in 2020 x 380 sq. ft. = 617,500 commercial sq.ft. (about 175,000 sq. ft. more than current total).
- 3.4% annual average growth = 1,950 units in 2020 x 380 sq. ft. = 741,000 commercial sq.ft. (about 300,000 sq. ft. more than current total).
- 5% annual average growth = 2,320 units in 2020 x 380 sq. ft. = 881,600 commercial sq.ft. (about 440,000 sq. ft. more than current total).

These projections are based on information available as of this writing. Because it is difficult to know what factors will determine future needs, commercial land use will have to be considered as the need arises.

**TABLE 2: MINERAL COUNTY COMMERCIAL SQUARE FOOTAGE\***

TYPE OF COMMERCIAL USE	# SQUARE FEET	# STRUCTURES	AVERAGE SQUARE FEET PER STRUCTURE
Merchandising	54,229	31	1749
Lodging (including guest ranches)	212,531	216	984
Office	12,229	7	1,747
Recreation	30,819	15	2,055
Special Purpose (includes restaurants and gas stations)	95,918	23	4,170
Warehouse/Storage	19,624	20	963
Multi-use (3 or more uses)	12,699	13	977
Manufacturing	3,924	2	1,962
<b>Totals</b>	<b>441,973</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>1,352</b>

\* Based on Mineral County Assessor data

## **E. Alternative Growth Scenarios**

Four alternative growth scenarios were presented as general concepts to help Steering Committee members and the public to visualize alternative spatial patterns that could evolve over the next 20 years:

- Continuation of Existing Growth Patterns
- Open Space Vistas
- Economic Development
- Railroad Tourist Center

These scenarios were presented to Steering Committee members and the public on January 11, 2001, and they were asked to indicate their preferences. Maps showing the spatial implications of the alternative scenarios were also presented. Following these meetings, a preferred alternative was developed, which is a blend of elements taken from several of the four alternatives, which are described below.

### **(1) Continuation of Existing Growth Patterns**

The private sector would continue to determine the location and form of new development with minimal regulation by local government. Property owners would have maximum freedom to use and develop their land as they choose. Continuation of these practices through 2020 would likely result in:

- Strip commercial development and loss of open vistas along highway corridors, particularly along Highway 149, extending for several miles southeast and southwest of Creede, and along US 160, extending several miles north of the Archuleta County line.
- Additional scattered commercial development along Highway 149 west of Creede.
- Infill of existing subdivisions.
- Development of new subdivisions, particularly along the Highway 149/ Rio Grande corridor, resulting in increased rural sprawl, disruption of wildlife habitat, and loss of open space.
- Alteration of the architecture and character of Creede if the tourist train from South Fork to Creede becomes operational.

### **(2) Open Space Vistas**

Scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, and other open space would be preserved through a combination of incentives and requirements, such as clustering new development in rural locations and design standards that minimize the visual impact of new development. A scenic corridor would be designated along the Rio Grande corridor and along the East Fork and West Fork of the San Juan River. There would be an aggressive public/private effort to acquire open space or conservation easements for wildlife, scenic vistas, and access to the Rio Grande and San Juan Rivers where needed to cross private property. For areas where open space could not be preserved through acquisition or purchase of conservation easements due to budgetary limitations or other reasons, policies would be established that:

- Minimize the visual impact of new development on ridgelines and open hillsides.
- Minimize the visual impact of new development within scenic corridors.
- Minimize the adverse impact of new developments on wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

Local government regulations and incentives to maintain and enhance the quality of life may narrow choices for use and development of private property, but would likely result in:

- Confinement of most new commercial development to existing commercial areas.
- Preservation of open vistas along highway corridors, river corridors, hillsides, and ridgelines.
- Preservation of wildlife habitat and migration corridors.
- Infill of existing subdivisions.
- Siting and design of new subdivisions to minimize adverse visual impacts in scenic corridors.
- Continued growth of tourism due to efforts to maintain scenic quality.

### **(3) Economic Development**

Opportunities for a more diversified local economy, increased income and tax revenue from an expansion of tourism, and more year-round employment would be emphasized under this scenario. Assuming that the proposed tourist train would terminate in downtown City Creede, efforts would be made to maximize the economic potential of the train while minimizing the adverse effects on community character. Policies would be established that:

- Encourage the creation of a business/industrial park south of Creede near the airport. This park would help to attract high tech and light industrial development and would also provide a location where heavy commercial uses such as vehicle repair shops could be located away from residential areas and scenic corridors.
- Encourage the development of new affordable housing units to provide year-round housing for workers who earn an average wage.
- Allow for the expansion of existing local businesses and the creation of new businesses in downtown City Creede to serve the daily influx of additional tourists brought by the train, while preserving historic facades of buildings and existing community character.
- Encourage planned residential development for new residents. Design and siting standards would be adopted to minimize adverse visual impacts on scenic corridors and impacts on wildlife.

### **(4) Railroad Tourist Center**

This scenario is a variation of the Economic Development scenario. Instead of terminating in downtown City Creede, the railroad would discharge passengers at a new terminal that would be built several miles south of Creede. The Wason Ranch or Wagon Wheel Gap, both of which served as railroad terminuses in the past, could be possible sites, as well as land near the tailings pile just south of Creede.

Tourist-oriented shops and services would be clustered around the terminal, thereby minimizing the occurrence of such facilities in downtown City Creede.

The creation of a new tourist center would allow the community to reap the benefits of added income and tax revenue from an influx of new tourists while minimizing changes to the character of Creede. A shuttle bus could be established to transport train riders who choose to patronize the types of shops and services that presently exist in downtown City Creede. A revised zoning ordinance could be carefully crafted to preserve existing community character.

## **F. Preferred Growth Scenario and Future Land Use Map**

Following the January 11, 2001, meetings with the Steering Committee and the public, a preferred growth scenario was developed. This scenario is a blend of Alternative 2 (Open Space Vistas) and Alternative 3 (Economic Development). Based on public input, scenic corridors were expanded from the major highway corridors to also include the scenic loop north of Creede and the private land along the East Fork of the San Juan River. The Future Land Use Maps (Maps 6, 7, and 8) show spatial elements of the Preferred Growth Scenario for the entire county, the City of Creede Three Mile Plan Area, and the existing City corporate limits, respectively. Policies and action items pertaining to this scenario are presented in the next section.

It should be noted that the preferred alternative assumes that efforts to reestablish a railroad between Creede and South Fork will not be successful. However, the fate of the proposed railroad is not entirely in the hands of Mineral County and the City of Creede.

Other players are involved, such as the new owner of the railroad right-of-way, the State of Colorado, and the Surface Transportation Board of the federal government. If the proposed tourist railroad comes to Mineral County, elements of the Railroad Tourist Center scenario are included in the policies and action items presented in this chapter and in other chapters.

The preferred growth scenario includes the following specific elements:

### **(1) Designation of the following on the Future Land Use Map**

- Scenic corridors, including hillsides and ridge tops, along the Rio Grande corridor, along the East Fork and West Fork of the San Juan River, and along the scenic loop north of Creede.
- Critical wildlife habitat (big game winter concentration areas, big game migration corridors, and big game calving areas).
- A general area that could serve as a future business/industrial park.
- Several areas, one of which could serve as a future railroad tourist center.
- General locations for commercial development.

### **(2) Adoption of Guidelines and Standards Governing Development of Private Land for, but not necessarily limited to, the following items:**

- Design of new homes in existing subdivisions to preserve scenic and historic character.
- Design of new subdivisions and commercial and industrial development to preserve scenic character.
- Clustering to preserve open space.
- Location, design, and size of signs.
- Design, landscaping, and screening new mobile home parks and subdivisions.
- County tax incentives for conservation easements.

### **(3) Adoption of Local Government Policies that Encourage:**

- Acquisition or donation (by willing landowners) of conservation easements to permanently protect important areas of open space.
- New business and industry to locate in Mineral County.
- The construction of aesthetically pleasing affordable housing units.
- Establishment of a housing entity that will investigate seeking funds to construct and manage new affordable housing units.

**(4) Advantages/Benefits of Preferred Growth Scenario**

- Preservation of open vistas along highway corridors, ridgelines, and other areas of scenic value.
- Preservation of wildlife habitat and migration corridors and mitigation of development's adverse impacts on wildlife.
- Continued growth of local economic sectors dependent on attraction of existing and new residents and tourists due to efforts to maintain scenic quality.
- Concentration of new commercial development within or near the City of Creede and within or adjacent to existing commercial areas, thereby eliminating or reducing strip commercial development.
- Diversification of the local economy by creating opportunities and incentives, including establishment of a business/industrial park, to attract clean light industry and high tech firms.
- Provision of opportunities and incentives to create more housing units that are affordable for year-round working families.

**(5) Disadvantages/Costs of Preferred Growth Scenario**

- Opportunities for use and development of private property would be restricted in some areas, such as scenic corridors and critical wildlife habitat.
- Additional local regulations would be developed to implement policies designed to maintain and enhance the quality of life of Mineral County and the City of Creede.
- The cost of building and site development could increase in some areas due to architectural standards and site planning requirements.

**MAP 6: FUTURE LAND USE MINERAL COUNTY TO BE INSERTED**

**(A map was never inserted.)**

**MAP 7: FUTURE LAND USE CITY OF CREEDE THREE MILE PLAN AREA TO BE INSERTED**

**(A map was never inserted.)**

**MAP 8: FUTURE LAND USE CITY OF CREEDE TO BE INSERTED**

**(A map was never inserted.)**

**G. Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items**

- (1) Desired Future Condition:** Growth and development are managed to preserve and enhance the quality of life that attracted original settlers, more recent arrivals, including permanent and seasonal residents, and tourists to Mineral County and the City of Creede.

- a. **Inter-Governmental Cooperation:** Mineral County and the City of Creede will work toward cooperating in the review and approval of development proposals within the Creede Three Mile Planning Area. The County and City will seek coordination and cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service concerning proposed land exchanges within Mineral County.
- Develop an intergovernmental agreement between the County and City specifying that the County should recognize the policies contained in this plan when reviewing and approving proposed development within the City's Three Mile Planning Area.



- The agreement should include procedures for review and comment by the Town.
- Develop an intergovernmental agreement between the County, the City and the Rio Grande National Forest concerning review and approval of proposed land exchanges within Mineral County.
  - Develop a three-mile plan that is recognized by the City and County as a guide for future land uses, provision of municipal services and annexation of additional land by the town.
- b. **Existing Subdivisions:** Mineral County and the City of Creede will develop minimum design standards that will be required for new construction. Each subdivision is encouraged to adopt additional standards that further protect the aesthetic quality of the subdivision.
  - c. **New Subdivisions:** The County and City will develop standards for design of new subdivisions and new lots outside subdivisions compatible with neighborhood and scenic values
    - Modify the land use codes for the County and City to require that new residential structures are architecturally compatible with neighborhood and scenic values.
    - Coordinate with existing subdivisions and proposed new subdivisions to encourage, through adoption of covenants, additional design standards that further protect the aesthetic quality of subdivisions.
    - Note: These action items apply to Policies b and c.
  - d. **Commercial and Industrial:** The County and City will develop standards for design of new commercial and industrial development compatible with scenic values.
    - Modify the land use codes for the County and City to require that new commercial and industrial structures are architecturally compatible with acceptable industrial standards and scenic values.
  - e. **Clustering:** The County and City encourage clustering of new development to preserve open space.
    - Develop incentives, such as a density bonus, to encourage clustering of new development to preserve open space.
    - Incorporate such incentives in modified land use codes for the County and Town.
  - f. **Conservation Easements:** County and the City of Creede are committed to developing a program to pursue acquisition or donation (by willing landowners) of conservation easements to permanently protect important areas of open space.
    - In coordination with affected landowners, identify and prioritize parcels that should receive permanent open space protection.
    - Coordinate with organizations such as the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust and the Southwest Land Alliance to establish an open space protection program.
  - g. **Design Guidelines for Creede:** The City of Creede will develop neighborhood-based design standards for new structures built on vacant lots or redeveloped lots to ensure architectural compatibility with the city's historic character. (See Chapter 3, D(1)b.)
  - h. **Signs:** The County and the City will develop and adopt a sign code for on- site and off-site advertising that achieves a balance between providing information and maintaining scenic and historic qualities.
    - Modify land use codes for the County and City to include sign codes.

- i. **Business/Industrial Park:** A general location for a potential business/industrial park should be designated. The private sector will be solely responsible for developing the park.
- j. **Incentives for Affordable Housing:** The County and the City will provide incentives to developers to encourage the construction of aesthetically pleasing affordable housing units.
  - Develop an incentive plan tailored to specific geographic areas of the County and Town.
  - Modify the land use codes of the County and City to incorporate affordable housing.
- k. **Affordable Housing:** The County and/or the City will establish a housing entity that will seek state and federal funds to construct and manage new affordable housing units.
  - Develop a strategy to establish a housing entity.
- l. **Mobile Homes:** Recognizing that mobile homes are affordable housing units, the County and City will develop standards for design, density, landscaping, and screening new mobile home parks and subdivisions and encourage existing mobile home parks to comply with the new standards.
  - Modify the land use codes of the County and City to include design, density, landscaping, and screening requirements for new mobile home parks and subdivisions.

## Chapter 5-Economy and Economic Development

### A. Economy and Economic Development

As its name implies, Mineral County was dominated by the mining industry for nearly a century, from the 1890s when silver was discovered to the mid-1980s. Since 1985, the economic base has shifted from mining to the services, construction, and retail trade sectors, which have grown in response to the demand for seasonal homes and tourism.

In 1970, about 57 percent of the county's work force was employed in the mining sector. Mining employment declined to 12 percent of the work force by 1985 and virtually disappeared several years later. Meanwhile, total employment has more than doubled from 311 in 1970 to 705 in 1997, although many of these jobs were probably seasonal, service, construction, or retail occupations.

In 1997, employment in the services sector accounted for 42.3 percent of total employment, construction amounted to 23.5 percent, and retail trade comprised 12.3 percent. As indicated in Table 3, which shows a comparison between the workforce composition from 1970 to 1997, employment in the services, construction, and retail trade sectors has increased significantly since 1970.

The increase in total retail sales from 1985 to 1995 is another indicator of the transition of Mineral County's economy from mining to tourism and seasonal residents. While the increase between 1985 and 1990 was significant – from about \$5.3 million to about \$7.7 million – total retail sales skyrocketed to more than \$13.1 million in 1995 and increased slightly to about \$14.2 million in 1999, according to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

Diversification of the local economy and creation of more opportunities for year-round employment were important issues identified by the public.

Designation of a general location for a business/industrial park is part of a strategy to attract clean business and industry that would provide year-round employment.

**TABLE 3: MINERAL COUNTY WORKFORCE, 1970 - 1997**

ECONOMIC SECTOR	1970*		1985**		1990		1997	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Total Estimated Employment</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>100</b>
Agricultural Products and Services	15	4.8	26	5.9	25	5.5	49	7.0
Mining	177	56.9	53	12.1	4	0.9	0	0
Construction	15	4.8	52	11.9	12	2.6	166	23.5
Manufacturing	4	1.3	43	9.8	35	7.7	9	1.3
Transportation, Communications & Utilities	11	3.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Retail Trade	22	7.1	54	12.3	72	15.8	87	12.3
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	0	0	13	3.0	2	0.4	6	0.9
Services	57	18.3	120	27.4	227	49.8	298	42.3
Government	10	3.2	77	17.6	80	17.5	88	12.5

\* Source: Comprehensive Plan for Mineral County, 1977

\*\* Source: Colorado Office of Demography

## **B. Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items**

**(1) Desired Future Condition:** Economic activity oriented toward seasonal residents and tourism remain important parts of an economy that has become more diverse by attracting other economic sectors, compatible with community character and the natural environment, which provide well-paying jobs for local residents.

- a. **Economic Diversification:** Mineral County and the City of Creede should actively seek and support the efforts of public and private organizations to diversify the local economy.
  - Designate an area to attract new clean business and non-polluting light industry and to provide an alternative location for some existing businesses.
  - Develop incentives to attract new clean businesses and non-polluting light industries for year-round employment.
  - Develop strategies to attract tourists during winter.
  - Continue to support the efforts of the Creede Chamber of Commerce to work with local service-oriented businesses to develop ways to better serve the needs of local residents.
- b. **Growth Impacts:** If the railroad resumes operation, Mineral County and the City of Creede should actively commit to preserving community character and quality of life over short-term economic gain.
  - Establish a task force to determine the impact on private sector facilities and services (see Chapter 6 for public facilities and services) resulting from an influx of railroad-borne tourists, including, but not limited to: Restaurants, Gift Shops, Lodging Establishments, Restrooms and Economic Impact
  - Develop a plan to encourage expansion of existing facilities or construction of new facilities as necessary in a manner that does not detract from community character.
  - Prepare grant applications to fund 1 and 2 above.
  - If the Railroad Tourist Center growth scenario is selected as an element of the preferred growth scenario, work with the railroad and private property owners to acquire a site for a terminal and tourist-oriented facilities and services.
- c. **Business Incubator Facility:** Mineral County and the City of Creede support the development of a business incubator facility and program.
  - Investigate the feasibility of using the Homestake Mine property, which is owned by Mineral County, as a business incubator facility.
  - The bullet above is feasible, work with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to develop the Homestake Mine property as a business incubator facility and program.
- d. **Incentives to Attract New Business and Industry:** The County and the City will develop incentives to attract new business and non-polluting industry.
  - Develop a strategy to attract new business and industry and explore additional resources for economic development.

## **Chapter 6-Community Services and Facilities**

### **A. Community Services and Facilities**

A high quality of life is impossible without adequate community services and facilities. In Mineral County, public and quasi-public entities have built facilities and recruited professionals in various fields to provide services such as education, recreation, police and fire protection, EMT, and water and sewer. Mineral County has a combination of special service districts, local government, and companies that provide vital services and facilities.

These include but are not limited to:

- Local governments: Mineral County and the City of Creede
- Special districts and subdivisions providing water and/or sewer service: Deep Creek Water and Sanitation District (serves Creede Haven area), River Crest Acres (water), and Eagle Nest Park (water and sewer).
- Water conservation: San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District, and Rio Grande Water Conservation District.
- Schools: Creede Consolidated School District # 1
- Fire protection: Mineral County/Creede Fire Protection District.
- Miscellaneous: Upper San Juan Hospital District (serves west side of Continental Divide) and Rio Grande/Mineral Health Service District (serves east side of Continental Divide).
- Private utilities: San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, CenturyTel, and Rocky Mountain Cable.

Facilities and services under the jurisdiction of Mineral County include:

- Mineral County Courthouse.
- Creede Underground Mining Museum and Community Center (administered and operated by the county, but property is owned by the City of Creede.)
- Creede Historical Society Museum.
- Mineral County Airport.
- General government services and special services, such as EMS, County Sheriff, and Search and Rescue.

Facilities and services under the jurisdiction of the City of Creede include:

- City Hall.
- Municipal water and sewer systems.
- City parks
  - Basham Park
  - Ball Park
  - Art Park (owned by the Creede Art Council but maintained by the town.
  - A double-wide lot serving as a park that is leased from a private owner and maintained by the town.
  - The Willow Creek Reclamation Project recommends that the area south of Creede along the creek be reclaimed and converted to a park.
- Public restrooms: one stall at Basham Park, four stalls at the ballpark.

### **B. Adequacy of Public Facilities to Service an Influx of Tourists**

Two wells south of City provide potable water for the municipal water system. While the system is adequate to serve the year-round population and the influx of seasonal residents and

tourists, the system may not have the capacity to handle additional tourists. If the railroad resumes operation, as many as 600 visitors could arrive per day, staying in Creede for several hours. Water-using activities during peak visitor hours would include toilet flushes, water served at restaurants, and dishwashing at restaurants.

The sewer system is now approaching capacity, and a study is now under way to revise the permit issued by the Colorado Department of Health and to explore ways to increase the capacity of the sewage treatment plant. The water-using activities discussed above resulting from a large influx of tourists would also probably strain the sewage system. The number of public restrooms – two with only five stalls – is inadequate to serve peak period visitors.

Other public facilities and services could be strained by a large influx of tourists. Except for the ball park at the southern edge of town, public open spaces are limited to three small parks in the downtown City area, which could become overcrowded during peak visitor periods. Based on projections of up to 600 tourists per day, plus Creede's high altitude, medical emergencies would be inevitable, requiring more EMS resources. Additional Sheriff resources may also be needed.

### **C. Desired Future Condition, Policies and Action Items**

**(1) Desired Future Condition:** Government services and facilities are adequate to serve urban and rural areas without excessive tax burdens for individuals, property owners, and businesses. Quasi-public and private organizations provide a variety of cultural, recreational, medical, communications, and other services, and facilities to maintain and enhance the quality of life in Mineral County and the City of Creede.

- a. **Expansions of Public Facilities and Services:** While the City of Creede is committed to providing high quality potable water and sewage systems and other facilities to serve residents, businesses and tourists, new users of public facilities and services shall pay a fair, proportionate share of the cost for any necessary expansions to these facilities and services.
  - Conduct a study to determine the impact on public facilities and services resulting from new development and an influx of railroad-borne tourists, including, but not limited to: Municipal Water System, Municipal Sewer System, Public Restrooms, City Parks, EMS, Fire Prevention and Suppression, Police Protection, Search and Rescue, City and County Road System, Parking, City Library, Ongoing Maintenance, Long Term Financial Planning.
  - Conduct an impact fee study that quantifies the impacts of new residential development and new businesses, including the railroad, on public services and facilities, and develop an impact fee schedule.
  - Prepare grant applications to fund above items.
- b. **Willow Creek Park and Greenway:** Mineral County and the City of Creede are committed to working with the Willow Creek Reclamation Project to reclaim lower Willow Creek and to develop a park and greenway along the creek.
  - Continue to participate in the Willow Creek Reclamation Project to ensure that reclamation plans and park/greenway design are consistent with county and City interests.
  - Prepare necessary grant applications to implement the park/greenway.

## Chapter 7-Implementation of the Community Plan

### Implementation of the Community Plan

This Community Plan is designed to guide future growth and development of Mineral County and the City of Creede. **The plan is an advisory document only and does not have the force of law.** While the policies contained within the plan can serve as a basis for reviewing future development projects, such policies are more effectively implemented by incorporating them into law (an ordinance, for example).

The plan contains numerous action items designed to achieve stated policies. In the preceding chapters, the action items are organized by subject. Table 4 lists the action items by priority, indicates a time frame to accomplish each action item, and provides possible resources and contacts for information.

**TABLE 4: ACTION ITEMS PRIORITIES AND SCHEDULE**

#	Priority Description	2025-26
1	The Board of Trustees adopted the Comp Plan September 9, 2004.	
2	Develop a Three-mile Plan	
3	Revise land use codes.	
4	Adopt additional standards and criteria to protect the environment when reviewing and approving development proposals pertaining to such items as building on steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains.	
5	Develop architectural standards and guidelines to ensure that new development is compatible with community character and heritage.	
6	Modify the land use codes for the City to require that new residential structures are architecturally compatible with neighborhood and scenic values.	
7	Modify the land use codes for the City to require that new commercial and industrial structures are architecturally compatible with acceptable industrial standards and scenic values.	
8	Develop incentives, such as a density bonus, to encourage clustering of new development to preserve open space.	
9	Modify land use codes for the City to include design, density, landscaping and screening requirements for new mobile home parks and subdivisions.	
10	Develop an intergovernmental agreement between the City and County.	
11	Develop an intergovernmental agreement between the County, the City and the Rio Grande National Forest.	
12	Conduct an impact fee study that quantifies the impacts of new businesses, including the railroad, and new residential development on public services and facilities, and develop an impact fee schedule.	
13	Designate an area to attract new clean business and non-polluting light industry and to provide an alternative location for some existing businesses.	
14	In coordination with affected landowners, identify and prioritize parcels that should receive permanent open space protection.	
15	Continue to support and participate in the efforts of the Willow Creek Reclamation Project to ensure that reclamation plans and park/greenway design are consistent with City interests.	
16	Develop an affordable housing incentive plan tailored to specific areas of the City.	
17	Develop a strategy to establish a housing entity.	
18	Modify land use codes for the City to incorporate affordable housing.	
19	Explore funding possibilities (private, state, or federal) to assist in converting to cleaner sources of heat and encourage voluntary participation in programs to make homes more energy efficient.	
20	Enact City building codes to establish air quality standards for heating devices installed in all new buildings or major renovations to existing buildings.	

**TABLE 4: ACTION ITEMS PRIORITIES AND SCHEDULE-CONTINUED**

#	Priority Description	2025-26
21	Establish air quality standards for industries that may eventually operate in City of Creede.	
22	Develop a strategy to attract new clean businesses and non- polluting light industry for year- round employment and explore additional incentives for economic development.	
23	Develop strategies to attract tourists during winter.	
24	Continue to support the efforts of the Creede Chamber of Commerce to work with local service oriented businesses to develop ways to better serve the needs of local residents.	
25	Conduct a study to determine whether the City of Creede could or should designate a local historic district.	
26	Develop incentives to encourage the restoration of historic buildings	
27	Develop standards and guidelines to protect the historic character of Creede.	
28	Continue to support the efforts of the Willow Creek Restoration Project to inventory and eventually nominate historical mining structures to the national and state registers.	
29	Coordinate with organizations such as the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust and the Southwest Land Alliance to establish an open space protection program.	
30	Develop a plan to increase the number of access points to the Rio Grande, which could include working with owners of private land and applying for Go Colorado (GOCO) funds to acquire access easements	
31	Coordinate with existing subdivisions and proposed new subdivisions to encourage, through adoption of covenants, additional design standards that further protect the aesthetic quality of subdivisions.	
32	In consultation with DOW, develop criteria for reviewing development proposals to ensure that damage to wildlife habitat and migration corridors is avoided or minimized.	
33	Develop regulations that establish standards and guidelines to ensure that new development is designed and located to avoid or minimize damage and disruption to critical wildlife habitat.	
34	Develop a coalition to collect scientific data, have discussions with water owners, and make recommendations to the proper authorities on the operation of irrigation reservoirs.	
35	Investigate the feasibility of using the Homestake Mine property, which is owned by Mineral County, as a business incubator facility.	
36	If above is feasible, work with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to develop the Homestake Mine property as a business incubator facility and program.	
37	Conduct a study to determine the impact on public facilities and services resulting from new development and an influx of railroad-borne tourists.	
38	Establish a task force to determine the impact on private sector facilities and services resulting from an influx of railroad-borne tourists, including, but not limited to: restaurants, gift shops, lodging establishments, restrooms.	
39	Develop a plan to encourage expansion of existing facilities or construction of new facilities as necessary in a manner that does not detract from community character.	
40	Prepare grant applications to fund 1 and 2 above.	
41	If the tourist railroad is approved, work with the railroad and private property owners to acquire a site for a terminal and tourist-oriented facilities and services.	



## Resolution No. 04-09

### Resolution No. 04-09 City of Creede a Colorado Town

RESOLUTION - TO ADOPT A COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN FOR THE CITY AND COMMUNITY OF CREEDE

WHEREAS - That the Town Board and Planning Commission has identified that there is a need for a Comprehensive Plan for the City of Creede and Community and;

WHEREAS - The Town Board has determined this Plan is necessary for growth and planning for Creede's future and;

WHEREAS - The City arranged with Four Corners Consulting and the Department of Local Affairs to accomplish and assist in the development of the Plan and;

WHEREAS - C.R.S. Section 31-23-208, et seq. provides the authority for the creation of a Planning Commission and its authorization for the creation and adoption of a Comprehensive Master Plan and;

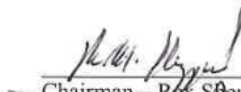
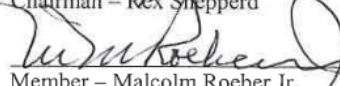

WHEREAS - The Planning Commission held a Public Meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, 2004 at 7:00 PM to hear public comments and has considered those comments.

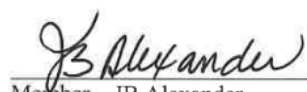
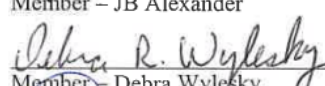
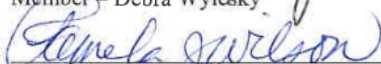
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, By the City of Creede Planning Commission that:

SECTION 1. The Planning Commission adopted the Comprehensive Master Plan at the conclusion of the Public Hearing on September 9, 2004. This Plan has the full effect of law as provided under Colorado statutes.

SECTION 2. The Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed at least once a year or as needed to accomplish a planned, coordinated and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs for future needs.

Adopted this 9<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2004

  
Chairman - Rex Shepperd  
  
Member - Malcolm Roeber Jr.  
  
Member - Eldon Seime

  
Member - JB Alexander  
  
Member - Debra Wylesky  
  
Attest - City Clerk - Pamela Wilson