

APPENDIX E – CEDS Public Input Process

Region 9 invited the public to provide input for the 2021 Region 9 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) between July 15th and August 15th, 2021. The District announced the process through its e-newsletter platform which reaches over 900 subscribers, public announcements in each county’s local newspapers, verbal announcements at meetings, and social media posts on the District’s Facebook page and Instagram. Several formats to provide input were made available including electronic forms, paper forms, phone calls, and emails.

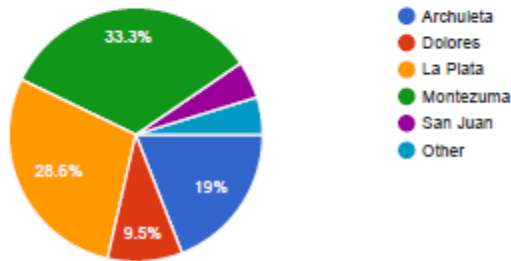
Twenty-three electronic responses were captured via Google Forms and were included in the CEDS document verbatim, on the Table of Contents page of the appropriate section. The following is a compilation of those results.

2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Public Input

22 responses

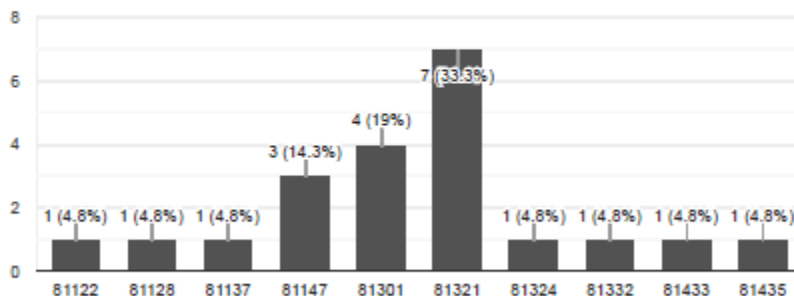
Which county do you reside and/or serve?

21 responses



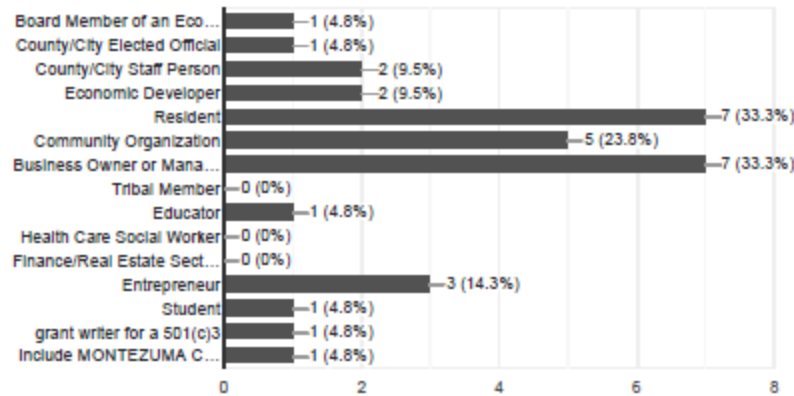
What is your zip code?

21 responses



What is your affiliation?

21 responses



Comments added by pertinent section.

1 – Introduction to the CEDS and 2 – Regional Overview

(1) Public Comment Received (July 15th to August 15th)

Authors Comment – This public comment (#6) was received after Sections 1 and 2 were repaginated, thus some portions reflect comments on the Introduction to CEDS (Section 1) , and others to the Regional Overview (Section 2). We have included the comments in both sections, with current page numbers. We appreciate the well thought out comments and hope that readers of this CEDS document will consider their content as they review this plan.

(1) “As a professional risk manager and community member, I am responding to point out that there are a number of statements in this draft that do not hold up to scrutiny and in some cases are patently misleading or not addressed in the plan goals. In order to publish a reliable and valid report, the authors should consider the following

With reference. Page 10 (Section 2, p.4) – SWOT analysis: Weaknesses – these are accurate, though the focus in inadequate infrastructure does not properly address the lack of support for seniors in a community where that population makes up a significant proportion of the area population. Threats – this is one of the most telling items in the plan – it indicates that “Regulatory Barriers” are viewed as a “Threat.” Regulation is NOT a threat – the actual threat is the failure of industry and businesses in those sectors to self-govern and conduct themselves in an ethical and same manner. That is why regulation is imposed on those industries.

Regional Overview Page 11 - 2 – (Section2, p.5) STRATEGIC DIRECTION – Regional Priorities and Projects Regional stakeholders have expressed a preference to use the terms Priorities (rather than goals) and Projects (rather than objectives).” This is not recognized as an effective way to guide planning – by either funders or local stakeholders. This quoted statement means you go can sidestep the real needs of the region by setting priorities and then not have to meet any “stated goals;” and that you can fund projects, whether they meet strategic objectives or not. So of course, regional stakeholders that have power favor this approach. I'm a regional stakeholder and I think this is a damaging statement about our governing stakeholders who openly choose not to be responsible or accountable to taxpayers (not all companies or stakeholders are taxpayers).

The bottom line with the earlier description sections of the plan that talk about our region is that, this report is a pretty story being told rather than actual fact about the real circumstances on the ground in our region. I have supported businesses in our region for nearly 15 years and speak from experience.

Authors Comment – the ideas expressed in Section 1, p.3-4 reflects a future vision rather than a current reality. These principles were submitted by focus groups during the 2011 CEDS Update, and we believe they continue to reflect a regional philosophy based on stakeholder input.

Page 5 (**Section 1, p. 3**) – “A sustainable community meets the basic needs of all people. These include air, water, food, shelter, health, safety, autonomy, connectedness, meaning and purpose.” While this statement is correct – these are the hallmarks of a sustainable community – Region 9 falls short on many of these basic needs, including the basics of food, shelter, health, safety, autonomy, and connectedness. Workers in our region do not have affordable housing and often have to choose between shelter and safety (e.g., living in a boarding house with individuals who are dangerous to their health and safety – this is not conjecture, but known fact). Domestic violence is rife in our region (read the police reports). Autonomy is challenged in our region by the “old boy network” that runs the state, region, and the county.

Page 5 (**Section 1, p. 3**) – “Damage from invasive weeds has been reduced and our native species are thriving. As extractive industries develop and decline, disturbed lands are successfully reclaimed and utilized.” This is simply unfounded. Invasive weeds are a significant and mounting problem in SW Colorado, and in Archuleta County. This problem has been radically mismanaged for the past decade and we are seeing the dramatic impact from those practices on the ground now. Page 5 – “Our agricultural industry is thriving as a result of increased local markets and innovative programs that ensure agricultural viability without regulations that diminish land value.” Developments are being allowed in flood plains and are taking place without proper regard to water needs. Development is displacing agricultural land.

Page 6 (**Section 1, p. 3**) – “Diversity in our community is valued and celebrated. People from different age groups, cultures, backgrounds, and interest frequently come together to participate in local activities, events, and projects. The local economy provides opportunities for all people, young and old, to grow their families, advance their careers and be productive members of the community. Our communities provide opportunities such as lifelong learning programs, quality recreational facilities, available childcare, and equal access to affordable health care and housing.” In fact, older adults are not valued overall in our region (especially Archuleta County). Affordable housing is NOT available throughout our region and is a significant barrier for hiring and stable employment, negatively impacting both employers and employees. This shortage also forces choices for health decisions and ability to afford health care that are detrimental to those in all age groups who fall into lower income brackets (not just poverty level, but below middle class income).

Page 7 (**Section 2, p. 1**) – “We strive to encourage economic development that preserves our small-town and traditional heritage, takes care of our natural resources, and provides opportunities for our children to stay in southwest Colorado.” Region 9 CEDS Mission Statement. Neither of these mission elements are being met - small town has welcomed Walmart (just for instance) - and we've seen the downfall of local businesses across the region. Opportunities to stay are hampered by high housing costs and employment obstacles, many related to inadequate affordable housing (both long term rental and purchase).

Page 8 (**Section 2, p. 2**) – discussion about internet: Repeatedly, area corporations have accepted federal and state funds to expand broadband into rural communities and then have instead used those funds to expand their suburban markets. The internet, and for that matter basic phone services, throughout Southwest Colorado remains intermittent and poor at best. These services are not even remotely adequate to encourage business or to sustain existing business in our communities.

Page 9 (**Section 2, p. 3**) – with reference to “business retention/expansion” – “If every business were able to support one additional employee, communities would see tremendous benefits. A related set of strategies focuses on improving the competitiveness of local firms.” This is a laughable statement in a market where existing businesses cannot find reliable or even appropriately trainable employees, even with good wages and benefits. See also note about page 8 on Broadband services.

Page 9 (**Section 2, p. 3**) – “Our region is serious about helping business recovery, and we need to back our intentions with real money utilizing all programs in the Federal business support toolkit such as...” Since the pandemic and the changes that has exerted on our regional economy, these sources have tightened considerably. For example, USDA Region 9 rules have been stringently tightened around low interest loans for infrastructure development.

3 – Archuleta County

(3) Public Comments Received (July 15th to August 15th)

(1) “Infrastructure needs to be built in Pagosa similar to LaPlata / Durango. Not sure why Durango is able to pull so many great projects and Pagosa isn’t. Secondly more programs and attractions for young population and adults to attract them to Pagosa. Aging population in Archuleta is a concern. Who is going to staff Medical Center, stores, restaurants if majority of people are retirees?”

(2) “we need support for our manual labor controlling thistles on Crowley Ranch Reserve.

Authors Comment – This public comment (#3) was received after Sections 1 and 2 were repaginated, thus some portions reflect comments on the Introduction to CEDS (Section 1) , and others to the Regional Overview (Section 2). We have included the comments in both sections, with current page numbers. We appreciate the well thought out comments and hope that readers of this CEDS document will consider their content as they review this plan.

(3) “A few comments to consider meeting state priorities, as goals have been sidestepped (see regional response, which is repeated here below). These comments are given from the viewpoint of a business manager/owner who has conducted business in the county and in Pagosa Springs for more than a decade.

Page 3 (**Section 3, p.1**) – “Archuleta County and the Town of Pagosa Springs have identified several strategic priorities. These include: • availability of affordable and attainable housing...” The current housing developments being built in Pagosa are untenable at best. The “low-income housing” across from the Community Center is being built with the “out” that the developers can build on that choice property, claim it is for low income, and then sell for higher prices while only paying a fine. With this type of “rule” in place, it is an incentive to circumvent the “priority.”

As stated in my comments for page 11 – **(Section 2, p.5)** of the Regional Plan: Regional stakeholders have expressed a preference to use the terms Priorities (rather than goals) and Projects (rather than objectives).” This is not recognized as an effective way to guide planning – by either funders or local stakeholders. This quoted statement means you go can sidestep the real needs of the region by setting priorities and then not have to meet any “stated goals;” and that you can fund projects, whether they meet strategic objectives or not. So of course, regional stakeholders that have power favor this approach. I'm a regional stakeholder and I think this is a damaging statement about our governing stakeholders who openly choose not to be responsible or accountable to taxpayers (not all companies or stakeholders are taxpayers).

Page 3 **(Section 3, p.1)** – “Stakeholders continue to seek out grant opportunities to address last mile buildout and increase job creation through home-based businesses.” Repeatedly, area corporations have accepted federal and state funds to expand broadband into rural communities and then have instead used those funds to expand their suburban markets. The internet, and for that matter basic phone services, throughout Southwest Colorado remains intermittent and poor at best. These services are not even remotely adequate to encourage business or to sustain existing business in our communities.

Page 5 **(Section 3, p.3-4)** – Weaknesses: Socio-cultural & Infrastructure: Add lack of appropriate County and Town infrastructure and other funding to adequately support older adults, which make up a significant part of the area population. Governmental: Add Lack of Accountability – there is rife “old boy network” protection – you need only to read the papers and court records to demonstrate this is true. Without a shift in accountability that removes the ability to manipulate the system for the benefit of a few, there will never be a sustainable, responsible community in Archuleta County. This is true across all departments.

Threats: “Special district decisions in relation to cost of doing business.” This is much too broad a description to be useful. As with regulation, if a company or agency cannot do business without doing harm, then it cannot bear the cost of doing business in that location. Many special decisions relate to those types of controls on business. However, there are other types of special decisions that are politically driven that do indeed pose threat. I recommend refinement of the phrase “special district decisions in relation to cost of doing business” to reflect the threats that are politically or otherwise manipulatively driven, rather than those that are ethical or best practices driven (such as environmental controls that positively impact the community for both short and long-term). And finally, there is a distinct lack of goals and priority setting around older adults. Our County population of older adults is growing rapidly and represents a large slice of our population, yet the funding for senior programs is declining regionally, county-wide, and from the Town. Senior living facilities are NOT the only priority that should be set. Funding and infrastructure for active older adults, especially those falling in below middle-income brackets, should be considered, and expanded considerably (set a goal of funding full demand in our County and meet it).

4 – Dolores County

(2) Public Comments Received (July 15th to August 15th)

(1) "I'm a resident of Telluride, to which Dolores County's Rico serves. I'm generally interested in the combined region 9 and region 10 areas, focused on the San Juan Skyway - but not necessarily just the tourism along that loop. Most specifically I am advocating for a continuation of the Hwy 50 corridor from Montrose to Montezuma, and on to Indian lands, Flagstaff, and Arizona - including winter organic agriculture. Housing supply is the biggest issue in the Telluride economy and Rico can play an important part of that and those transportation and transit links are crucial.

San Miguel County does NOT have a history of effective transportation advocacy and although attempts at improvement have been made those historic weaknesses persist. Telluride is the combined region 9/10's most prominent tourist attraction, but its role as a regional destination also needs much improvement. Lastly, the split between western Dolores County and the Rico and Dunton areas is dysfunctional. This dysfunction continues north into western San Miguel County all the way to I-70. I think we need a reorganization of our County boundaries to address this, likely concurrent with a mining area County reorganization. Western San Miguel should become part of Dolores County, if not both to Montezuma. As a brainstorm I would suggest the consideration of transferring middle sections generally around the Dolores River to some sort of Ute Indian jurisdiction."

(2) "It's both great and surprising Rico has many local issues listed here through the county yet most of it has not been addressed. We are currently focusing on the lead soil contamination and the housing crisis. I feel it's imperative for Rico and Dove Creek to communicate more and work together to improve our county as a whole."

5 – La Plata County

(3) Public Comments Received (July 15th to August 15th)

(1) "Looks thorough and well (sic)-thought out. Agree that Bayfield could use the projects outlined."

(2) "The estimated livable wage seems low for our region. Can we link the source to that number in the footnotes? "Across all industries the average annual wage is \$47,936. This is only 70% of the estimated livable wage (\$68,120) for two working adults with two children renting a two- bedroom unit." (pg. 5)."
Authors note – citation of the source is found on p.20.

(3) "Overall, the CEDS is well-researched and written. The gap (see La Plata Co input) may be the positive impact of "remote" or distributed workers that we are seeing at DurangoSpace (here in Durango) and in La Plata County. These professional women and men can work anywhere and earn higher wages and special money on housing and workspaces to support their work. In addition, the SW Colorado Accelerator Program for Entrepreneurs (SCAPE) has had a positive impact, including the recent acquisition of MuniRevs by GovOS, that will stay here in La Plata County (SW Colorado) to grow their business and employment base. Both the "remote workers" and distributed professionals (that can work here in SW Colorado, but their companies service clients across the US and the world (in some cases) shift the business models of traditional industries and employment. Issues relate to broadband access, housing costs and transportation options.

6 – Montezuma County

(5) Public Comments Received (July 15th to August 15th)

- (1) "I think the weaknesses identified are accurate."
- (2) "Great information and very useful."
- (3) "Its ok."
- (4) "Another weakness to be aware of is the three towns putting in restrictive regulations to control economy and housing."
- (5) "the goal of the Montezuma Heritage Museum is to build on the diversity of our community. The community entails both Montezuma and Dolores county as well as, parts of New Mexico , Arizona, and Utah. The museum has been caught up in a difficult time period of Colorado History because of the COVID pandemic and the lack of workers who were willing to work during that time, but we are finally able to move forward with planning and building exhibits and displays in the new museum. The museum will be an economic driver for the city of Cortez and the County of Montezuma and will feature other communities as well. i believe the placement of the museum in a long- term place should be of higher position of importance to the economy of the area."

7 – San Juan County

(2) Public Comment Received (July 15th to August 15th)

- (1) "I have unfortunately become aware of the legal and political effects of the Animas Mine ownership on both region 9 and 10, via the legacy owner the Idarado Company and its Denver based global parent, Newmont Mining. This is a bigger subject, but I do think CERCLA liability management is having a consistent negative impact upon the integrity of our region and economy."
- (2) "I agree with the CDAP plans and priority. I would add that there seems to be many organizations trying to make incubators (creative, science focused, small business) and feel that it would be best that those were all combined into one project that meets all their needs and bring the biggest stability in use moving forward."

Appendix C – Disaster Preparedness

(4) Public Comments Received (July 15th to August 15th)

- (1) "Disaster preparedness must include plans for diminished water resources across the region."
- (2) "We need much better management of public lands for dispersed camping used by disaster and economic displacement. This would include conservation corps type programs both improving this resource and employing some of those impacted."
- (3) "The county emergency director is working hard to ensure preparedness. The county commissioners do not believe a major disaster will happen and do not give the process much credit."

(4) "My response to this plan is to compliment the planners on the thoroughness of this report. They have spent considerable time in meeting best practices and, in particular, in dealing with the needs of a remote area where industry tries to drive awareness and regulations away from the very real and catastrophic nature of industrial accident threats. Thank you.

Page 2 (**Appendix C, p.1**) – Services offered for disaster relief – "Offering grant writing expertise and technical assistance to regional and local entities, both for pre-disaster resiliency initiatives as well as post-disaster recovery efforts." This was not provided during the pandemic. If this is a response, it should be made clear how organizations and agencies can access this critical resource during an emergency. Of note, from a planning viewpoint, development and industry activities in sensitive areas should/must be taken into account. An example of where this has NOT taken place in recent development is the new River Rock Estates development taking place on Light Plant Road along the San Juan River. That is clearly flood plain. It is easy to turn a blind eye to such development now during drought years – it will be harder during adequate water years and public funds will likely be involved in recovery efforts for those unfortunate (and unthinking) owners who purchase in those lots."

Appendix D – Environmental Update

(3) Public Comment Received (July 15th to August 15th)

(1) "The growing lack of water coupled with high water usage agriculture and increased human populations in the region will result in crisis management. The need to manage outdoor recreation with much less marketing and regulation enforcement will assist in maintaining the environment (including wildlife) which residents across the region desire but are 'loving to death'. Other areas in the State of Colorado have recognized this and are taking steps to slow down the influx of people into their regions through reduction of the heavy marketing of outdoor recreation. Strategic planning should include other economic drivers which can take the place of in the economy of outdoor recreation as well as real estate development. Water resources in the future will not support current trends in human population increases and recreational growth impacts in the surrounding environment."

(2) "we need support for our manual labor controlling thistles on Crowley Ranch Reserve."

(3) "Page 6 (**Appendix D, p.5**) – Flood Plains: Of note, from a planning viewpoint, development and industry activities in sensitive areas should/must be taken into account. An example of where this has NOT taken place in recent development is the new River Rock Estates development taking place on Light Plant Road along the San Juan River. That is clearly flood plain. It is easy to turn a blind eye to such development now during drought years – it will be harder during adequate water years and public funds will likely be involved in recovery efforts for those unfortunate (and unthinking) owners who purchase in those lots. Flood plains provide relief when they are maintained as healthy wetlands. When developed, the exhibit extreme flooding and destruction of river and stream boundaries that can be cause failure of other adjacent infrastructure, including roads and power lines – which can in turn impact emergency services and taxpayer costs for remedies.

Page 9 (**Appendix D, p.5**) – Water Quality: Mag Chloride has been repeatedly demonstrated to be destructive to species and to water quality and yet it is still regularly applied for "dust control." This use should be eliminated in the interest of long-term and short-term water improvement and species support along riparian areas throughout the region.