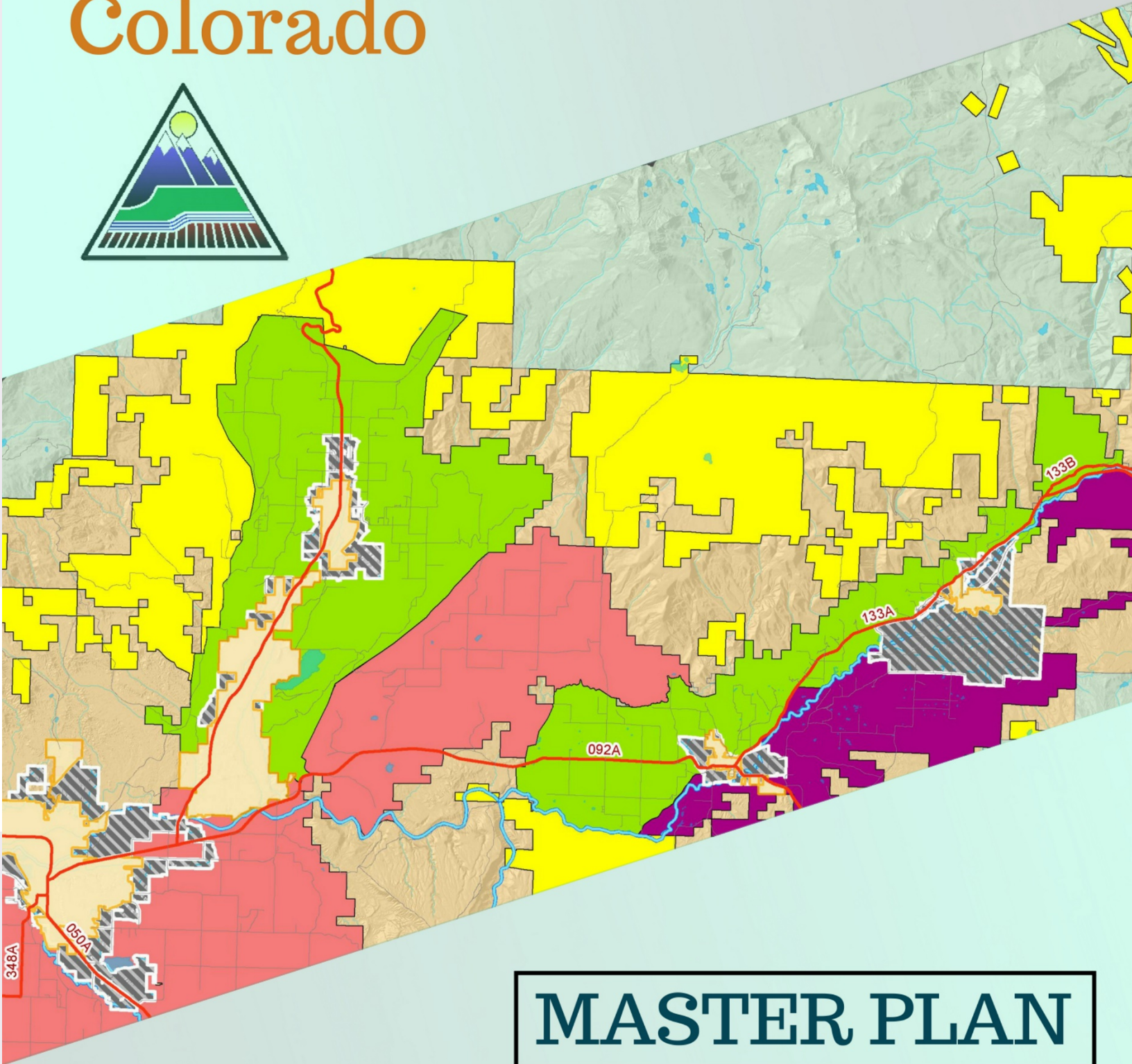


Delta County, Colorado



MASTER PLAN

MAY, 2018

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A stylized sun composed of a grid of small orange dots is positioned in the upper right quadrant. A large teal circle overlaps the sun and the text. A thick white line curves from the left side, passing behind the teal circle and extending towards the bottom left.

Chapter One

PLAN

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION, PLAN PURPOSE, AND PLANNING PROCESS

The Delta County Master Plan is a policy document that offers visions for the county's future and sets specific goals, strategies and land use planning objectives designed to achieve those visions. The Master Plan provides direction for decisions about economic development, land use and development, infrastructure and facilities planning, and methods and means for coordination with partner agencies and governmental organizations designed to implement the goals and objectives identified in the planning process.

Colorado State Statutes, C.R.S. 30-28-106, direct County Planning Commissions to develop a master plan for the physical development of unincorporated areas of each county, allowing for public written and oral comments throughout the process of plan development and adoption of the master plan after a public hearing.

The Delta County Master Plan is only an advisory document. It does not create rights or obligations, does not change existing regulations and does not create new regulations. It is a strategic planning tool that offers general policy direction for the unincorporated areas of the county and must be considered in association with master plans adopted by municipalities within the county. Nonetheless, this Master Plan serves to identify possible subsequent changes to regulations designed to achieve the visions and goals established thereby.

This Delta County Master Plan was developed over a period of more than a year to replace a master plan adopted in 1997, more than 21 years ago. Nine Planning Commission members, appointed from each of the three County Commissioner Districts, and who reside in diverse and representative areas of the county with wide ranging professional and business backgrounds, developed this Master Plan in conjunction with representatives from the Crawford, Leroux Creek, Surface Creek and the Upper North Fork Valley Area Planning Committees. The planning process involved participation by the public, both through opportunities to offer written comments via the internet, in a series of area meetings held in Delta, Hotchkiss, Crawford, Paonia and Cedaredge, and in various outreach efforts across the county. This public process, described in detail starting on page 10, identified and shaped the visions, goals and strategies set forth in this Master Plan. In addition, the Planning Commission held some 20 plus hours of public work session meetings with: private sector business owners and experts; leaders representing

What is the Delta County Master Plan?

The Delta County Master Plan is a long-range plan for land use that can be used to guide growth and development of the unincorporated Delta County.

The plan provides a policy foundation for the County's land use regulations such as subdivision and specific development, and future regulations that may be adopted.

The Master Plan is advisory and does not affect legally protected interests of property owners and does not create individual regulatory requirements that land use applicants must affirmatively prove.

agricultural interests; individuals with knowledge about water law and water use; natural resources experts; and county officials representing a wide variety of offices including: roads and bridges, taxation, health and human services, law enforcement and hazard mitigation/emergency services.

These meetings are described on page 10 and were integral to the planning process. The details of the Master Plan were finalized during four hours of publicly noticed Planning Commission meetings, which included the consulting team RPI and members of the Area Planning Committees, and at which, input and comments from members of the public were encouraged.

This Master Plan is, therefore, a plan by and for our community that offers a construct to protect the unique qualities valued by Delta County residents and provides strategies that will make Delta County an even better place to live and work. Because the Master Plan describes general parameters for land use and development patterns, it serves as an information source for property owners and developers to make informed land use decisions that are consistent with identified visions and goals. The Planning Commission recognizes that Delta County's varied regions, assets and economies are interconnected and interdependent. Nonetheless, some unique differences continue to be apparent in various areas of the county from a land use perspective. It is recommended that the Planning Areas of Delta, Surface Creek, Leroux Creek, Upper North Fork and Crawford, developed in the 1997 master plan, be retained and that Planning Commission representation from these areas be maintained.

PRINCIPAL DETERMINATIONS DERIVED FROM THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

The 1997 master plan identified five important county-wide issues:

1. Preservation of agricultural lands and open space
2. Protection of private property rights
3. Maintaining the rural lifestyle
4. Scarcity of availability of domestic water
5. Lack of land use planning

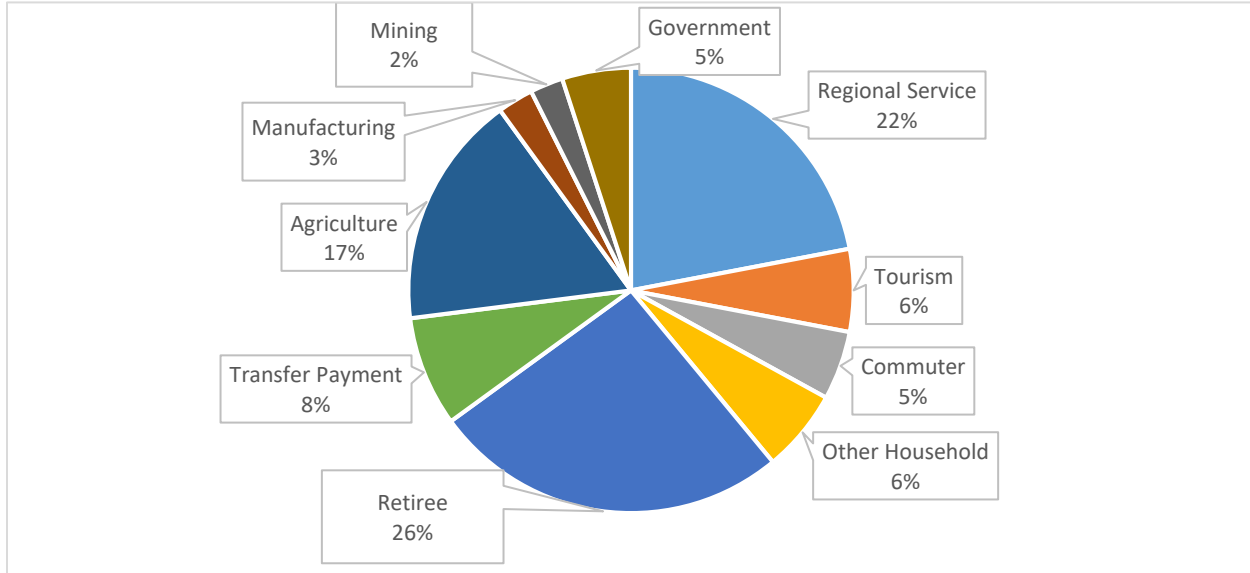
These concerns and issues continue to hold importance for Delta County residents today and are reflected in the visions and goals described in this Master Plan.

Protection and promotion of agricultural lands and businesses was high on the priorities of the public, landowners, experts and members of the Planning Commission. There is a clear preference that Delta County should continue to be an agriculturally based community and that agricultural interests should be preserved and protected. However, it is clear that agriculture has and continues to evolve from the conditions existing in 1997. There have been some changes in the economic indicators around the importance of traditional

agriculture in our county, but at the same time, new opportunities are presented and growing in realms such as organic produce and other organic products, value added agricultural products and wine and hops production. Moreover, substantial new investment continues in Delta County agricultural lands in the form of improved irrigation systems, conservation efforts and new crop alternatives. It must also be recognized that in certain areas of Delta County, rural residential development has replaced former agricultural lands. This trend has been slow to develop, but is continuing and may be expected to increase with population growth. As described in greater detail in this Master Plan a number of population growth scenarios apply for Delta County's future. However, moderate population increases have occurred since 1997 and there is every reason to believe such growth will continue or even accelerate. Accordingly, although this Master Plan places agriculture foremost with respect to future land use policy revisions, the rights and interests of existing rural residents must also be considered and protected.

There is a general consensus that policies should be adopted to encourage future residential development in those areas where residences are currently located to avoid problems of residential sprawl, prevent loss of agricultural lands and open space, ensure availability of necessary services and preserve the rural character of Delta County. There is a concern about extension of residential development beyond the formal subdivision process. Regulations should be considered to address this issue. Intergovernmental agreements with the incorporated municipalities should be designed to direct growth to these towns consistent with the terms of such intergovernmental agreements.

Land use policies for economic development have been the subject of substantial discussion in the planning process of this Master Plan. The Planning Commission has identified concerns around the erosion of tax revenues generated within the county that are essential to support public services and infrastructure. Improved economic development is essential to reviving sources of tax revenue. Such development is needed because Delta County has been identified as lagging its Colorado counterparts in economic progress (Denver Post, October 1, 2017; 2017 Distressed Communities Index from Economic Innovation Group, Washington D.C; data from 2011-2015, See Appendix F). Further, new economic development is needed to offer opportunities to citizens and their children. New businesses will enrich Delta County's diversity and make our community a better and more interesting place to live. However, economic development policies must be designed to protect and not compromise existing, valued agrarian and rural lifestyles now enjoyed by Delta County residents. Further, new development must "pay its own way" and mechanisms, beyond increased tax revenue streams, should be identified to ensure that result. Figure 1 shows the current sectors that contribute to Delta County's total economy.

Figure 1 – Delta County Economic Base Analysis

Source: Department of Local Affairs State Demography Office

An obstacle to economic development exists in the form of current specific development regulations concerning changes in land use. These regulations require each economic development project to undergo a cumbersome, time consuming regulatory process that is uncertain as to outcome and holds the potential for legal challenge regardless of the decision. Moreover, any change in land use arguably requires a new specific development application, even where the new use is consistent with an existing use. There is anecdotal evidence that, because of uncertainty created by the current specific development regulations, the county has missed out on the establishment of new businesses. It is the consensus of the Planning Commission that efforts should be undertaken in the future for revision of the specific development regulations in order to provide for a more predictable, certain and defensible arrangement for land use determination. Such a change will inform and offer protection to existing landowners, who will no longer be uncertain about the uses that may be made of neighboring properties, as well as those wishing to undertake a development, who will know from the outset whether that development will be permissible. Such regulatory revisions will be an important step toward encouraging and welcoming new business and industrial growth in the county. The Planning Commission recommends that any process undertaken for revision of development regulations involve existing landowners and county residents to ensure broad-based input and acceptance. Moreover, any revised regulations should be designed in so far as possible to protect current land use opportunities and to avoid over-regulation.

The master planning process identified the continuing need for regulatory policies that will protect domestic and agricultural water supplies, quality and distribution systems. The Planning Commission also recognizes that Delta County has limited jurisdiction in the arena of water provision and use, and must partner with appropriate governmental

agencies and stakeholders in these efforts. In addition, domestic water supply and scarcity must be a central determining factor in the siting of new development, both residential and commercial, and policies should be adopted consistent therewith.

Finally, the planning process confirmed the need for Delta County to continue efforts, within its jurisdiction, to ensure a diverse energy economy. However, the county must also continue to be a leader in protecting clean air and water, while providing a safe and healthy environment for its residents and visitors.

VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The vision, goals and strategies section of the master plan is inherently strategic. Goals provide statements of WHAT the community aims to accomplish over the life of the plan. Strategies are specific actionable measures for HOW to implement the goals. The Vision, Goals and Strategies topics arose by sorting input from the community vision process by theme. The topics and the vision statement for each topic are listed below (see chapter 3 for complete Vision, Goals and Strategies):

- **Agricultural Land and Business** – Delta County will remain an agricultural county by protecting agricultural lands and operations and supporting agricultural innovation.
- **Water Resources** – Delta County, within its legal parameters, strives to protect water supplies, delivery systems and water quality by partnering with the appropriate agencies and stakeholders to minimize the potential loss of quantity or quality of its water resources.
- **Economic Development** – Delta County encourages and welcomes new business and industrial growth and strives to clearly identify areas in the county where business and industry may locate with processes that are fair and predictable. Growing and diversifying the economy will create needed jobs and increase the tax base that funds critical assets and services.
- **Land Use and Development** – Delta County’s land use processes will be fair, predictable, defensible and easily understood. Growth and development in the county supports the community’s desired future while enhancing health, safety, welfare, quality of life, while fostering innovation.
- **Public Infrastructure, Services and Assets** – Delta County provides thoughtfully planned and coordinated infrastructure and services that support the health, safety, and welfare of county residents. Projects, improvements and maintenance are prioritized to meet the needs of the community, to maintain the physical assets already invested in by the community and to protect those investments well into the future.

Energy Development – Delta County has a vibrantly diverse energy development economy. The county is a leader in protecting clean air and water and continues to protect community health, safety, and welfare for present and future generations.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Chapter 3 - Future Land Use Plan (Designations and Map starting on page 79) articulates a physical planning strategy to implement the goals and strategies of this Master Plan. The Future Land Use Plan contains five designations that together cover the entirety of the private property in unincorporated Delta County. Each designation addresses the following components of future land use:

Existing Conditions – The current status of the land in each designation, the major assets and challenges that exist today.

Vision – The vision for the future of the land in each designation, the desirable possibilities and opportunities.

Infrastructure – The list of basic infrastructure investments that will be necessary or that would increase the potential and attractiveness of the property in each designation.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Public involvement in the Delta County Master Plan was essential to the development of a community driven plan. Delta County is a very diverse community in both geography and perspectives. The outreach and engagement effort aimed to ensure that this diversity was deliberately targeted during outreach to stakeholders as well as the diversity of voices heard in considering development of the plan.

The goals for the public outreach and engagement were to:

- Inform community members about the project—it’s purpose, background and direction.
- Gather input about what residents value in our community.
- Identify and discuss important issues that need to be addressed.
- Provide information about potential solutions and strategies for action.
- Gather input from the community about community priorities for action.

The community was given an opportunity to provide input during four distinct phases from the beginning to end of the project.

- **Phase 1: Where Are We Now?** This phase assessed current community conditions and land use policies and focused on gathering input from the public about values, issues and concerns, and hopes for the future.

- **Phase 2: Where Do We Want To Go?** During this phase, the project had a developed vision and goals that expressed desired community conditions for the future. The community provided feedback on the draft vision and goals.
- **Phase 3: How Will We Get There?** During this phase, the project team created a draft Master Plan and Future Land Use Plan. The community provided feedback on the strategies to achieve the vision and goals as well as the future land use plan.
- **Phase 4: Taking Action:** During this phase, the County adopted the Master Plan and identified next steps needed for implementation. Community input was heard at the final public hearing prior to plan adoption.

How We Reached Out To the Community

To reach out and inform the community about the project, a number of tactics were used during each phase. The project's website, www.deltacountyplan.com, was the depository for information as well as a mechanism for collecting online community input. In total, approximately 1,892 people participated. The project maintained an email distribution list of about 350 residents in addition to the 125 residents who are signed up for emails directly from Delta County. Organizations around the county including chambers, nonprofits, and social organizations, were asked to forward project updates via email to their members. Finally, the County's social media (Twitter and Facebook) were used to promote updates and events. Together, the County has about 350 followers. To enhance distribution of social media posts, county staff posted information to numerous community Facebook pages including the message boards for Delta, Orchard City, Cedaredge, Paonia, Hothchkiss, and Crawford. Several interested formal and informal organizations were very helpful in reposting Facebook posts directly to their own pages.

The Delta County Independent and KNVF were sent press releases during each major public involvement phase. Each of these media outlets ran stories, sometimes both before and after events. Additionally, KVNF provided a forum for the County to provide updates directly through interviews.

Delta County staff and members of the Planning Commission conducted outreach at several community events. The County attended Downtown Delta Fest, Celebrate Cedaredge, County Fair, Deltarado Days, and Farm to Fiddle. A total of 167 people stopped and talked with staff and the Planning Commission members during these events.

Finally, county staff attended meetings with numerous organizations around the county to inform stakeholder groups about the planning process and seek their participation. These groups included:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Delta Rotary | • All-Chamber meeting |
| • Paonia Rotary | • Delta Kiwanis |
| • Cedaredge Chamber of Commerce | • Western Slope Conservation Center |
| • Delta Chamber of Commerce | |

- Delta Board of Realtors
- Citizens for a Healthy Community
- Delta Livestock Association
- Town of Cedaredge
- City of Delta
- Town of Orchard City
- Town of Crawford
- Town of Hotchkiss
- Town of Paonia
- Delta Tourism
- Delta School District Principals
- Cedaredge High School
- Paonia High School
- Delta High School
- Hotchkiss High School
- Delta LULAC
- Delta County Economic Development
- VOA Senior Meals
- Conservation District
- Valley Organic Growers Association
- Farmers Union

The Role of the Planning Commission

The Planning Commission took a very hands-on approach in drafting the Delta County Master Plan. To create the vision, goals, and strategies, they met every other week from September 2017 to early November 2017. These meetings included a series of information sharing discussions between the Planning Commission and numerous organizations and topic experts to help strengthen the collective understanding of the breadth and depth of issues and opportunities related to the emerging focus areas of the master plan including agriculture, land use, economic development, water, public infrastructure, and energy. Specifically, the Planning Commission met with the following:

- Delta County Assessor
- Delta County Sheriff
- Delta County Engineering
- Delta County Road & Bridge
- Delta County Local Government Designee
- Delta County Public Health
- Citizens for a Health Community
- Western Slope Conservation Center
- Solar Energy International
- Arch Coal
- Department of Local Affairs
- State Demographer
- Delta County Economic Development
- Uncompahgre Development
- Board of Realtors
- North Fork Creative Coalition
- Aaron Clay
- Colorado Water District
- Farm Bureau
- Farmer's Union
- Valley Organic Growers Association
- Livestock Association

To create the Future Land Use Plan section of the Master Plan, the Planning Commission met regularly from January 2018 to mid-March 2018 adding extra work sessions into their schedule as needed. These meetings were open to the public with opportunity for public comment at each meeting.

The Public Involvement Process

Over the course of the entire planning process, the community had the opportunity to participate in fourteen public meetings, two community surveys, and one public hearing.

Phase 1: Where Are We Now?

To initiate the project, RPI conducted nearly 20 one-on-one interviews to help them become more informed about the community as the firm initiated the master planning process. Interviewees were selected based on diversity of geographic location around the county and interests. This process was purely informative, and the data collected during this was not included in community comments.

From May 15th to May 25th, 2017, ten public events were held in five locations (Paonia, Cedaredge, Crawford, Hotchkiss, and Delta) around the community engaging nearly 300 people. The goal of these meetings was to introduce the planning process and collect community input on the following questions:

- What do you love about living in Delta County and why?
- What are your concerns and hopes for the future?
- Looking forward 20 years, what story would Delta County have to tell about its success?

Five *Visioning Workshops* were held in these locations and were dialogue oriented and focused on creating a shared vision for the future. The five *Property Owner Drop-in Events* were more informal and provided property owners an opportunity to meet with the planning consultant, RPI, and county staff to discuss specific questions about the master plan process.

For community members unable to participate in the visioning meetings, online participation was available for four weeks through July 8, 2018. The online forum and *Community Vision Questionnaire* collected an additional 340 comments.

Finally, Delta County conducted an online survey that asked a series of questions. A total of 568 people participated in the survey. The survey helped to identify areas to focus on for further discussion and also highlighted the range of opinions that are held across the county.

The results of this community input became the basis for the draft community vision and goals.

Phase 2: Where Do We Want To Go?

In mid- November 2017, the community was invited to provide feedback on the draft vision and goals. Three community meetings were held in Cedaredge, Hotchkiss, and Delta. Approximately 145 community members reviewed the vision and all the goals in an open house format followed by small group discussion that dove deeper into specific thematic

areas and goals. An online feedback forum was provided for two and a half weeks that collected feedback from 39 community members. All the feedback collected answered the following questions:

- Do the vision and goals move the county in the right direction?
- If we were successful in accomplishing our goals, what would that success look like on the ground?
- As we explore strategies to accomplish these goals, what do we need to keep in mind?

The community input was used by the Planning Commission and staff to finalize the vision, goals, and strategies in January 2018.

Phase 3: How Will We Get There?

The Delta County Master Plan, which includes a future land use plan, was developed by the staff, consultant and Planning Commission between January and the end of April 2018. A draft Master Plan was made available for public review at the end of March 2018 followed by open houses in Hotchkiss, Orchard City, and Delta in early April. The goal of the open house was to review the process, understand the future land use plan, and learn about what happens next with implementation. A total of about 100 community member attended. The community was asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Do the priorities identified in the plan reflect the discussions held during the planning process?
2. Do the strategies and next steps move these priorities forward appropriately based on the level of community consensus achieved during the planning process?
3. Does the Master Plan move Delta County in the right direction with regards to the community's Vision and Goals?

The community was also provided with an opportunity to submit formal comments to the Planning Commission through email and the online community forum before and after the open house. A total of approximately 121 written comments were received.

The Planning Commission met at the end of April and made changes and additions to the draft plan based on input from the public. A public hearing was held on May 9, 2018. A total of 47 people attended and several spoke and provided comments. The Planning Commission voted on final changes to the master plan and approved the master plan on May 16, 2018.

Youth and Targeted Engagement

County staff worked directly with the Delta County School District to connect with county youth to engage them in community visioning. Staff joined the School Board members and went to each of the four high schools in the county. The Student Councils at each of the

schools facilitated a discussion with students. A total of about 140 students participated across the four high schools. The student facilitators asked the students to answer the following questions, and then worked together to identify the common issues and themes:

- What do you love about your community and what are its strengths?
- What concerns do you have about your community and what is challenging to live here?
- What would make your community a better place to live?
- How does your community support you and what tools does your community provide you to be successful after high school?
- When you are an adult, do you want to live in Delta County? What would make you want to come back to Delta County if you plan on leaving?

Finally, the staff tried to reach out to the Hispanic population in the county. This proved to be very challenging. The county translated the original survey into Spanish and worked with several partners including the Delta County Libraries to distribute the survey. Unfortunately, this engagement method was unsuccessful. However, staff was able to connect Delta High School LULAC. LULAC is a Hispanic leadership group comprised of high school students. This group of about 25 students also participated in a facilitated discussion answering the above questions.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This information provides the current and historic context through indicators obtained from various sources including but not limited to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Delta County. In order to provide some background and context for the policy sections of this plan in Chapters 2 and 3, this section is organized according to the same topics as the Vision, Goals and Strategies; Agricultural Land and Business; Water Resources; Economic Development; Land Use and Development; Public Infrastructure, Services and Assets; and Energy Development. The information provided in this section creates a benchmark for measuring progress in implementing the goals in this plan.

Why does this matter?

The end of each plan topic section includes a subsection entitled “Why does this matter?” that briefly summarizes the policy guidance for each topic contained in Chapter 2 Vision, Goals and Strategies. Refer to Chapter 2 for the complete and formal policy statements.

KEY FINDINGS

These are the key findings from the trends and indicators for each of the topics contained in Chapter 2 Vision, Goals and Strategies. Below these summaries, each topic is detailed.

Agricultural Land and Business – Although the indicators show that this industry has faced some adverse economic conditions, agriculture is incredibly resilient and remains a significant component of the economy. Agriculture is one of the largest contributors to the county’s economic base representing 17% of the total. Farm earnings have declined steeply since 2000 while employment has fluctuated moderately up and down, not declining steadily like earnings. There was a slight decrease in the acreage farmed and the average farm size between 1997 and 2012, but the number of farms and market value of products sold has increased according to the most recent Census of Agriculture data. Organic farms sold \$2.4 million in products in 2012 according to the Census of Agriculture and there were 28 organic certified operations in Delta County as of 2018 according to the USDA.

Water Resources – Delta County GIS data shows that there are 47 domestic water providers in Delta County ranging in scale from the regional distribution company, Tri-County Water, to water companies serving just a handful of homes. There are many smaller domestic water providers throughout the county and several major domestic water providers. While domestic water supply is a pivotal factor, Delta County government has very limited authority over domestic water supply. The availability of domestic water will likely shape the future throughout the county.

Economic Development – The county’s economy has been in transition with growth in services-related industries and nearly commensurate declines in employment and earnings in non-services related industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction and

mining. This ongoing transition combined with the financial crisis and recession have meant fluctuating/flat economic trends since 2010. Delta County showed significantly lower growth than the state as a whole between 2000 and 2016 across all major indicators (population, employment, income, earnings per job). There were 698 jobs classified as ‘creative jobs’ as of 2016 and there are numerous art galleries and organizations, wineries, breweries, cideries, all positive signs for economic diversity and adaptation.

Land Use and Development – Fifty-six percent (56%) of the population resides in one of the six municipalities and the other 44% of the population resides in the unincorporated county. Nearly half of the properties in the unincorporated county have some portion that is irrigated agriculture and three-quarters of agricultural parcels contain at least one residence. As of 2016, the municipalities contain roughly 55% of housing units while the unincorporated county contains the other 45%. Since 2000, the total number of housing units in the county increased by roughly 1,126, fewer than predicted. There are 170 parcels with commercial uses on them and 629 vacant lots or parcels, most of which are less than 5 acres in size. Approximately 37,000 acres of land is currently under a conservation easement in the county.

Public Infrastructure, Services and Assets – The vision and many of the goals and strategies outlined in this Master Plan will require sufficient revenue. The county has maintained a fiscally conservative budget in the past and strives to maintain this in the future. However, declining revenues make this a challenge. In recent years the county has seen a decrease in the total county assessed value of property from \$325 million in 2009 to \$272 million in 2016 and property tax collections have remained relatively stagnant between 2014 and 2016. Residential property made up 47% of county assessed value. Commercial was the second largest source of property taxes (19%) followed by state assessed (13%), natural resource (7%), agricultural and vacant land which each accounted for 6%, and industrial, which contributed 2%. Retail sales in Delta County peaked in 2010 with over \$605 million in sales. Since then, retail sales in Delta County have seen minor fluctuations but have remained relatively flat overall. The county collected \$5.4 million in sales taxes in 2014 and saw a slight increase in collections to \$5.9 million in 2017.

Energy Development – Most of the BLM lands include federal mineral rights as do large areas of private land, especially inholdings surrounded or partially surrounded by public lands. Large areas of BLM and Forest lands in the eastern portion of the county are classified as “no surface occupancy” and “withdrawal” under BLM stipulations, limiting or excluding development. Although there have been efforts to produce oil and gas, there is not much actual production occurring today. With 145 wells total, 2 are producing, 1 has an approved permit, 1 is waiting on completion, 43 are abandoned, 60 are dry and abandoned 14 are shut-in, and 24 are plugged and abandoned. Coal production has been and remains an important part of the county’s economy, and although it has declined in recent years, markets change and it could rebound. The solar energy potential in Delta County is considerably high overall compared with the national average with the highest solar

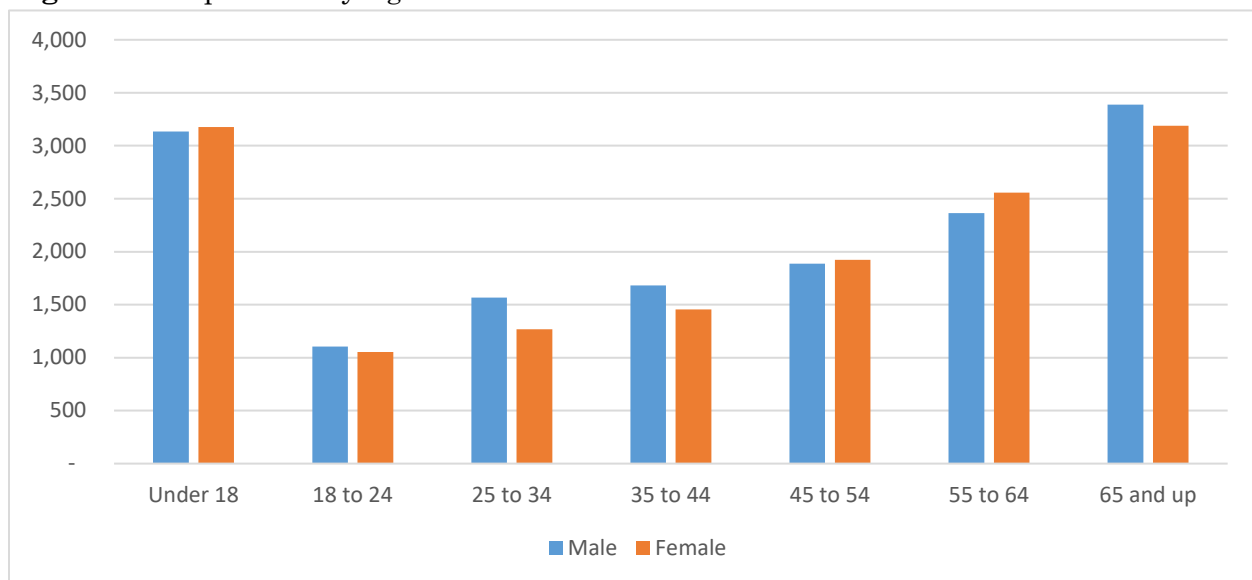
potential near the City of Delta. There is also potential for small scale hydro-electric systems in the county, largely related to irrigation structures.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The demographic context provides a snapshot of the current demographic conditions in Delta County at time of writing. At the time of writing, the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates were the most recent data available from the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey.

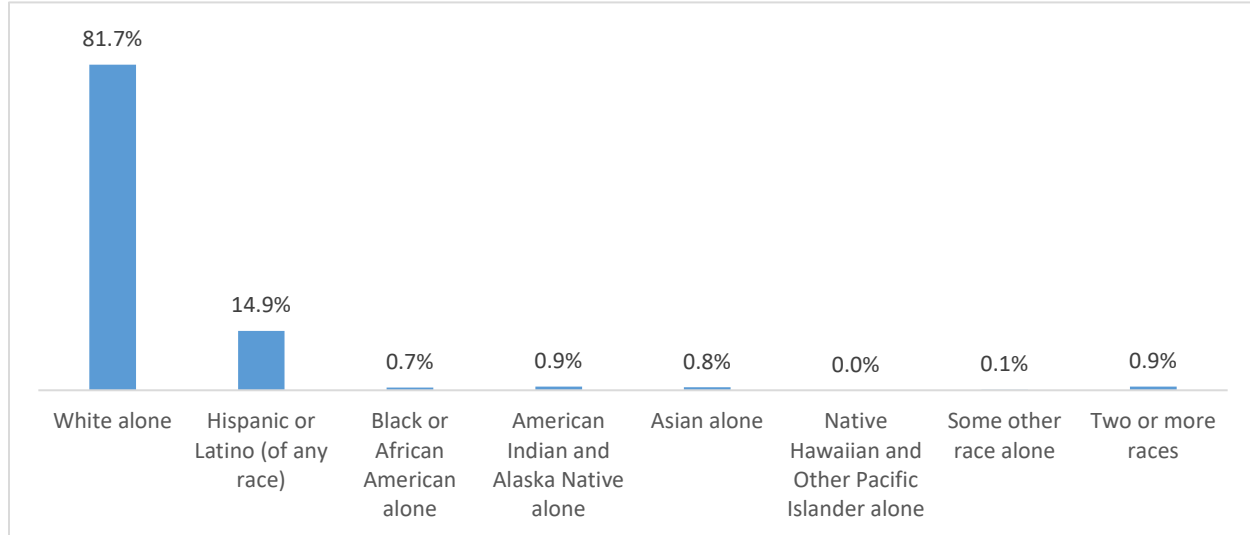
There are more males in Delta County than there are females with 51% of the population male and 49% female. The county population is fairly split between age groups with just over 21% of the county population under 18 years old, 27% between 18 and 44 years old, 29% of the population between 45 and 64 years, and 22% of the population 65 years of age and older.

Figure 2 – Population by Age and Sex 2016



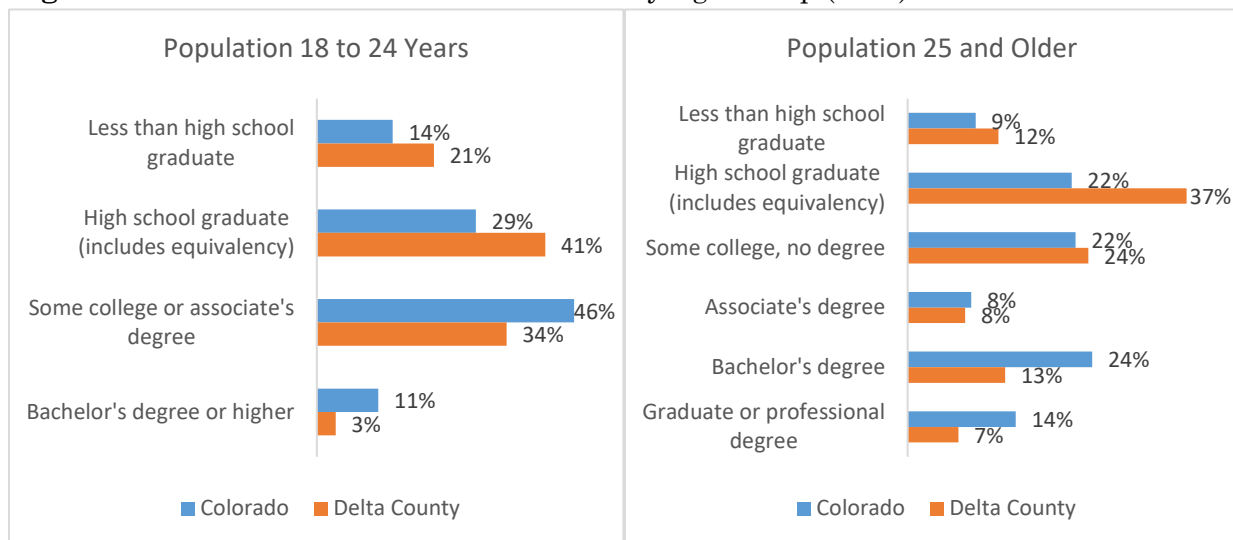
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The racial composition of the county population is as follows: 81.7% of the population is white, 14.9% is Hispanic or Latino, and other or a combination of races make up the remaining 3.4% of the population in Delta County as seen in figure 3.

Figure 3 – Delta County Racial Demographics 2016

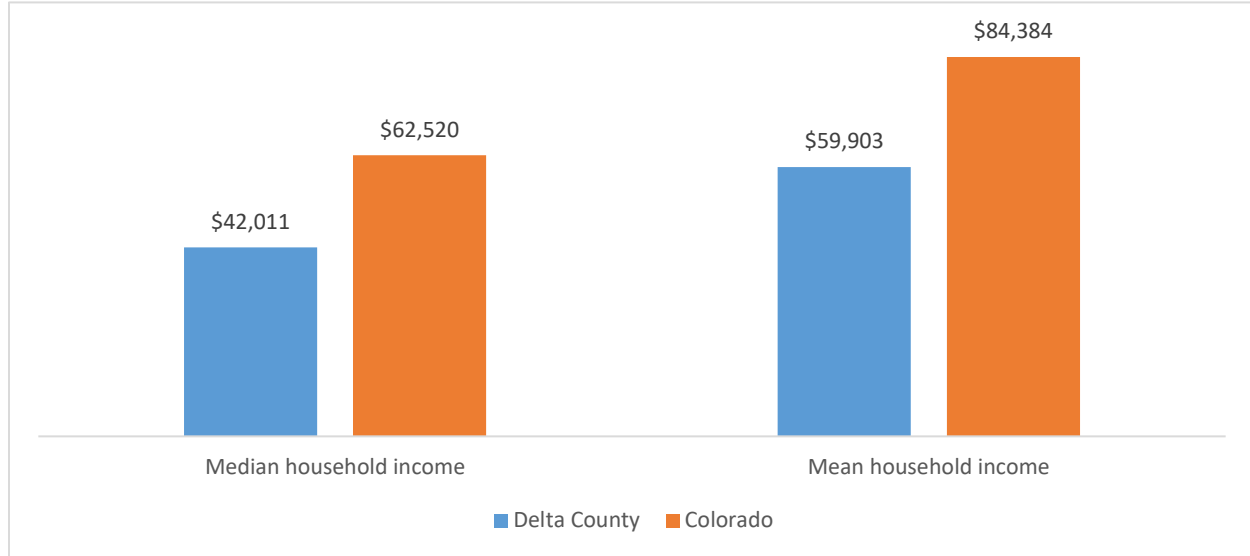
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Delta County's population has lower educational attainment than the state average. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of Delta County residents age 25 or older have an associate's degree or higher, while 46% of Coloradans age 25 or older have an associate's degree or higher. Twelve percent (12%) of Delta County residents over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma or its equivalency (GED), compared to 9% of all Coloradans.

Figures 4 & 5 – Level of Education Attained by Age Group (2016)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of households in Delta County make less than \$50,000 a year, 28% of households make between \$50,000 and \$99,999 per year and 15% of households make over \$100,000. Both the median (\$42,011) and mean (\$59,903) household incomes for Delta County, are below the statewide averages of \$62,520 (median) and \$84,384 (mean).

Figure 6 – Mean and Median Annual Household Income 2016

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Headwaters Economics EPS

In 2016, Delta County also had a higher percentage of families and people whose income was below the poverty level than the state. Families with children had the highest poverty rate, 21.2% of all families with related children under the age of 18 years had incomes below the poverty level in Delta County, compared to 12.8% statewide.

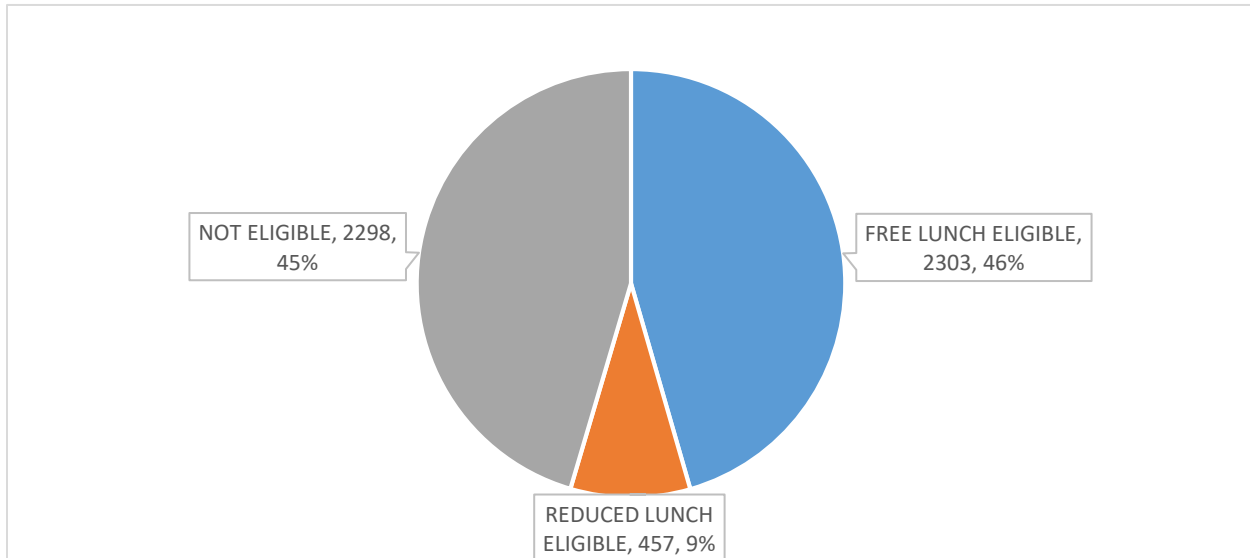
Figure 7 – Percentage of Families and People Whose Income in the Past 12 Months Is Below the Poverty Level (2016)

	Delta County	Colorado
All people	16.8%	12.2%
All families	11.6%	8.1%
Families with related children of the householder under 18 years	21.2%	12.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The 50J School District in Delta County had a total student body of just over 5,000 students in 2017. According to the Colorado Department of Education, just over half of the students in the 50J School District are eligible for free or reduced lunch with 46% eligible for free lunch and 9% eligible for reduced lunch costs as seen in figure 8. Household size and income in addition to other qualifying factors (foster children, homeless children, children in Migrant Education Program etc.) determine eligibility. Households with an income below 130% of the federal poverty line qualify for free lunch and households with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty line qualify for reduced lunch.

Figure 8 – PK – 12th Grade Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility School District 50J 2017-2018



Source: Colorado Department of Education

AGRICULTURAL LAND AND BUSINESS

Agriculture is integrated throughout the county physically, it is a key component of the economy representing 17% of the economic base. Equally important, the diversity and durability of agriculture is central to well-being and quality of life in Delta County. Parcels assessed as agriculture range in size from less than an acre to hundreds of acres and the majority of agricultural parcels have a portion that is irrigated. While agriculture is a type of business operating throughout the county, homes and rural neighborhoods are also part of the agricultural landscape throughout Delta County. Most who farm or ranch live onsite and many properties interspersed throughout agricultural areas are assessed residential, often in subdivisions or clusters of parcels.

The USDA conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years to gather information about size, production, value, and type of agriculture. The most recent census was conducted in 2012 and is the most recent data available for size, acreage and value of products in Delta County. The Census of Agriculture provides insight into the amount and value of agriculture in Delta County. According to the census, the county had a total of 1,250 farms, with 42% of these farms ranging between 10 to 49 acres. Farms between 50 and 179 acres accounted for 26% of all farms in Delta County. Small farms, nine acres or less, accounted for 17% of all farms and while they are smaller, they add diversity to the agricultural products offered in the county and are an important part of the agricultural economy and culture in Delta County.

Figure 9 – Farms in Delta County by Size, 2012

Farms by size	Number
1 to 9 acres	215
10 to 49 acres	521
50 to 179 acres	330
180 to 499 acres	110
500 to 999	31
1,000 acres or more	43

Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

Figure 10 shows there was a slight decrease in the acreage farmed and the average farm size between 1997 and 2012, but the number of farms and market value of products sold has increased.

Figure 10 – Change in Agriculture 1997-2012

	1997	2002	2007	2012	% change '97 to '12
Number of Farms	1,100	1,063	1,294	1,250	14%
Land in Farms (acres)	265,593	262,443	252,530	250,761	-6%
Average Size of Farm (acres)	241	247	195	201	-17%
Market Value of Products Sold	\$38,312,000	\$39,077,000	\$46,800,000	\$55,639,000	45%
Crop Sales	\$14,941,680	\$14,413,000	\$20,158,000	\$23,582,000	58%
Livestock Sales	\$23,370,320	\$24,664,000	\$26,642,000	\$32,056,000	37%
Average Per Farm	\$34,829	\$36,761	\$36,167	\$44,511	28%
Government Payments	\$392,000	\$847,000	\$725,000	\$728,000	86%
Average Per Farm Receiving Payments	\$4,606	\$5,803	\$6,141	\$6,120	33%

Source: 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012 Census of Agriculture

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, there were 29 certified USDA National Organic Program farms and 4 exempt farms in 2012. While this is a small number of farms compared to the total, organic farming is growing throughout the county. Moving forward, there will likely be more farms seeking organic certification.

Figure 11 – Organic Agriculture Farms and Value

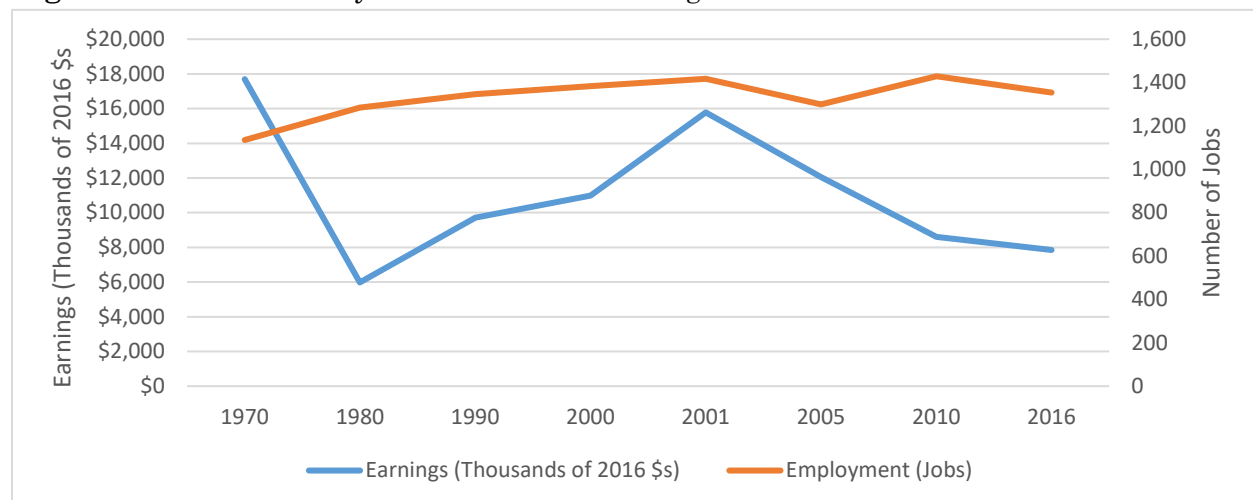
Type of Production	Farms	Value
USDA National Organic Program certified organic production...farms	29	
USDA National Organic Program organic production exempt from certification	4	
Acres transitioning into USDA National Organic Program organic production	7	
Value of Sales of Certified or Exempt Organically Produced Commodities		
Total organic product sales	26	\$2,395,000

Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

According to the USDA Organic Integrity Database there were 530 certified organic operations in Colorado in 2018 and 28 certified operations in Delta County. The USDA Organic Integrity Database lists certified organic operations but does not list operations that are exempt from organic certification (retail-only operations, certain handling operations, and operations with below \$5,000 in gross annual organic sales) nor does it provide total organic product sales.

Farm earnings in Delta County declined steeply between 2001 and 2010 and have declined moderately since 2010 (see Figure 12). The Bureau of Economic Analysis defines earnings as “the sum of wage and salary disbursements, supplements to wages and salaries, and proprietors' income” (Bureau of Economic Analysis). In 2001, farm labor earnings totaled nearly \$15.8 million. In 2016, they totaled \$7.9 million. The number of jobs decreased by 63 during that same time.

Figure 12 – Delta County Farm Jobs and Earnings 1970-2016



Source: Headwaters Economics, 2017

Why Does This Matter?

Delta County residents strongly desire to protect agriculture as a cornerstone industry that contributes to residents' well-being in countless ways. Although the indicators show that this industry has faced some adverse economic conditions, agriculture is incredibly resilient and remains a significant component of the economy. Working agriculture is highly valued by residents and there is growing optimism about the future possibilities for agricultural enterprises. From a policy perspective, it is critical to maintain the agricultural land base by clearly articulating in land use regulations that agricultural uses and operations are a primary use in agricultural areas. Occupants of neighboring areas and future development near agricultural operations can expect that agriculture is allowed and encouraged. Site design standards are needed in future development proposed near agricultural lands to reduce impacts on agricultural operations. Creating incentives for agricultural land conservation that are viable and attractive options for owners could yield permanent agricultural land conservation.

WATER RESOURCES

Water resources including irrigation water and domestic water have been fundamental in shaping development patterns in Delta County and are likely to continue to be the most important factor. Availability of irrigation water influenced settlement patterns and today irrigation water is widely distributed throughout the county by many irrigation water providers. Although irrigation water is broadly beneficial and the maintenance and improvements to the infrastructure are strongly supported, the Master Plan focuses on domestic water. While irrigation water originally influenced settlement patterns and allows for agriculture, domestic water has become the pivotal factor for development patterns and is therefore central in the Master Plan.

As part of the master plan update process, Delta County conducted a survey of domestic water providers to try to identify status of domestic water resources around the county. This survey effort helped identify where water is available, but did not provide the clarity hoped for as many water providers did not participate or did not provide enough detail. In addition to the survey, the consultant team interviewed each of the municipalities including discussion on water supply.

Although water has been available through domestic water companies throughout the county in the past, only a handful of water distribution companies stated that they have water taps available. Delta County GIS data shows that there are 47 domestic water providers in Delta County ranging in scale from the regional distribution company, Tri-County Water, to water companies serving just a handful of homes. Many residents in unincorporated areas of the county get domestic water from private wells.

While there are many smaller domestic water providers throughout the county, there are several major domestic water providers. Project 7 Water Authority is a cooperative effort between seven water entities that provides drinking water to municipalities and rural areas of the Uncompahgre River Valley. The City of Delta receives its water from Project 7. Project 7 and Tri-County water distribute Project 7 water in the areas east and west of Delta. Upper Surface Creek Domestic Water Users Association serves a large area and many customers and may serve future development. Municipalities provide water in their boundaries and in limited areas outside of the municipal boundaries through service agreements. Currently, there is a need to better understand the availability of domestic water throughout the county. Water availability will shape where future development occurs.

While domestic water supply is a pivotal factor, Delta County has limited authority over water resources. The authority granted to the county includes permitting/regulation of individual sewage disposal systems, floodplain regulations administration, erosion and sedimentation control requirements in new developments, and requiring adequate water supply in new developments.

Delta County also has an opportunity to address conveyance of irrigation water to ensure new development does not conflict with or hinder irrigation water delivery. Likewise, the county has an opportunity to ensure, through subdivision, that historical or prescriptive access to irrigation infrastructure like diversion structures and head gates be addressed.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) regulate and control water resources. The EPA's Office of Water (OW) establishes and enforces federal clean water and safe drinking water laws, provides support for municipal wastewater treatment plants, and is involved with prevention efforts aimed at protecting watersheds and drinking water sources. The EPA delegates much authority and some resources to state-level oversight via DNR and CDPHE.

The CDPHE's Colorado Water Quality Control Division manages water quality. Their role in water management includes, but is not limited to, the following: oversee permits and authorizations, including facility operator certifications; enforce clean water standards; manage compliance assurance for drinking water; respond to emergency drinking water issues; regulate domestic water facility designs; monitor and measure contaminants in fish; administer water-quality related grants and loans.

The DNR oversees mostly water quantity issues while the CDPHE mostly oversees quality issues. The DNR distributes water rights and promulgates rules that support water rights distribution in accordance with the Colorado Revised Statutes. The State of Colorado provisioned the Colorado State Engineer to administer water resources. The State Engineer and Division Engineers assign Water Commissioners to seven divisions to carry out front-line aspects of water right administration and research, including on-site inspections.

Why Does This Matter?

County representatives must actively engage with the appropriate regulatory agencies to influence policies and other outcomes in a manner consistent with achieving the county's values. The best opportunity to influence the processes is to work in cooperation with those agencies and representatives who directly regulate water resources. A first step in better integrating water availability into land use policies is to conduct an inventory of domestic water providers, including their service areas, capacity and readiness to serve additional customers.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

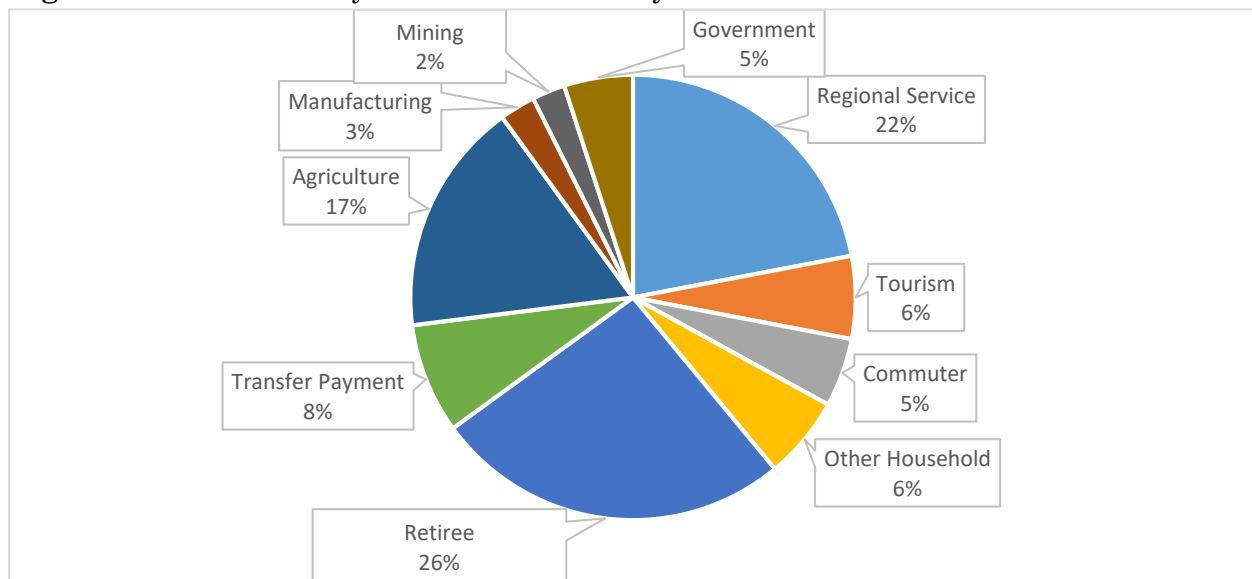
The county's economy has been in transition with growth in services related industries and nearly commensurate declines in employment and earnings in non-services related industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction and mining. This ongoing transition combined with the financial crisis and recession have meant fluctuating/flat economic trends since 2010. The Master Plan is focused on county land use policy and the

related public infrastructure and services, both of which have a role in economic growth that is in keeping with community values.

The municipalities similarly guide land use and infrastructure and services within their boundaries, so the county's direct influence is in the unincorporated areas in the county. Unincorporated areas tie together the municipalities and are where the agricultural industry operates and also where nearly half the county population lives. Within this essential role, the county strives to grow existing businesses, to maintain the economic diversity that exists and continue to evolve and diversify from this point.

The State Demographer prepares an economic base analysis for all counties in Colorado which examines what drives the local county economy. According to the State Demography Office "Industries that sell goods or services outside the local area are considered the base of the economy; these 'Basic Industries' are responsible for existence of the local economy as they bring in outside dollars to the community. Base industries also generate additional secondary jobs in the economy that are classified as either 'Indirect Basic' or 'Local Resident Services'." (State Demography Office, 2017).

Figure 13 – Delta County Economic Base Analysis



Source: Department of Local Affairs State Demography Office

Based on analysis by the State Demographer, Delta County's economy is driven by ten key industries as identified in figure 13. Retirees contribute 26% of the economic base through earnings and employment associated with expenditures made by retirees on local resident services. Agriculture is the third largest industry representing 17% of the economic base, but may actually play a stronger role in the overall economy. The category of regional services collectively represents a 22% share of the base economy, but this category is comprised of construction, communications, trade and transportation, professional and business, finance and insurance, and education and health, and the individual compositions of each sub-industry are not specifically delineated. Transfer payments (also known as

public assistance) contribute 8% of the economic base while tourism and other household (household income from dividends, interest and rents) each contribute 6%. Government and commuters (residents who live in Delta County but commute outside the county for work) each account for 5% of the economic base while mining and manufacturing contribute a combined 5% of the economic base.

There were 12,476 jobs in Delta County in 2016 according to the State Demographer. The top four industries with the highest number of jobs in Delta County were government (19.9%), health care and social assistance (12.5%), retail trade (12.0%) and agriculture (10.9%). The top four industries with the highest average weekly wage are utilities (\$1,167), management of companies and enterprises (\$1,036), mining (\$1,022) and government (\$948). The two industries with the lowest average weekly wage are arts, entertainment and recreation with an average weekly wage of \$320 and accommodation and food services with an average weekly wage of \$290. Agriculture has an average weekly wage of \$546.

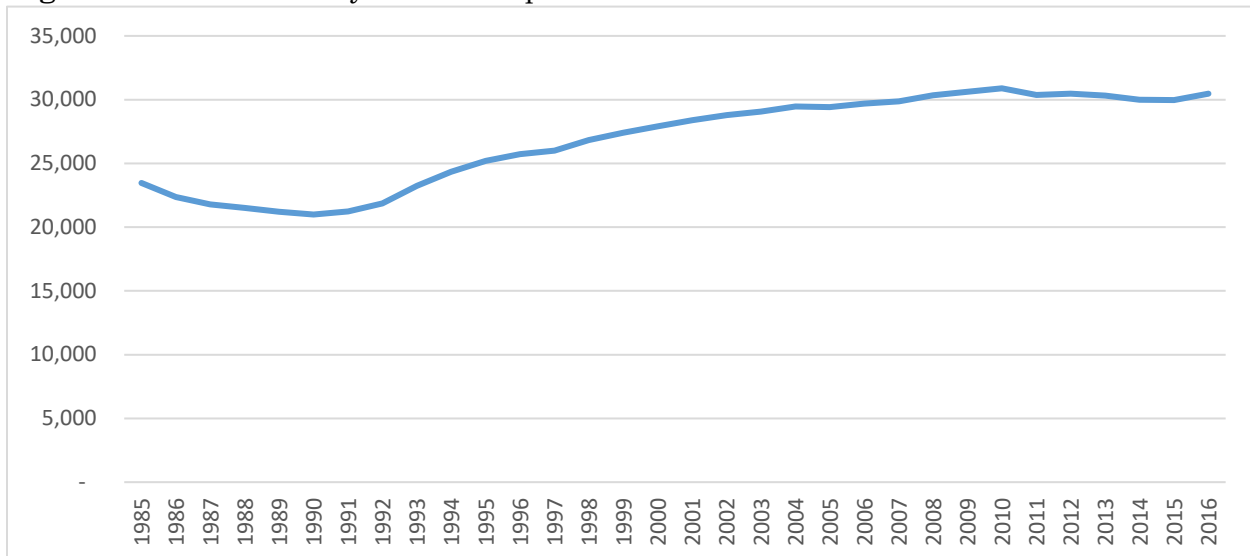
Figure 14 – Share of jobs in Delta County by Industry 2016

	Number of Jobs	Percent	Average Weekly Wage
Total Jobs	12,476	100.0%	\$675
Agriculture	1,362	10.9%	\$546
Finance Activities	343	2.7%	\$888
Real Estate	429	3.4%	\$633
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	492	3.9%	\$768
Management of Companies and Enterprises	27	0.2%	\$1,036
Administrative and Waste Services	362	2.9%	\$532
Education	84	0.7%	Unavailable
Health Services	1,561	12.5%	\$758
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	129	1.0%	\$320
Accommodation and Food Services	813	6.5%	\$290
Other Services, Except Public Administration	885	7.1%	\$552
Government	2,482	19.9%	\$948
Mining	192	1.5%	\$1,022
Utilities	42	0.3%	\$1,167
Construction	815	6.5%	\$858
Manufacturing	545	4.4%	\$701
Wholesale Trade	119	1.0%	\$743
Retail Trade	1,494	12.0%	\$793
Transportation and Warehousing	133	1.1%	\$693
Information	168	1.3%	\$574

Source: Department of Local Affairs State Demography Office

The county population decreased in the late 1980's but recovered in the 1990's and continued with steady growth through the 2000's. The total population in the county grew from 25,718 to 30,471 between 1996 and 2016. Most of this growth occurred in the years between 1996 and 2010. Small fluctuations in the county population have occurred since 2010, but a population growth trend appears to be emerging.

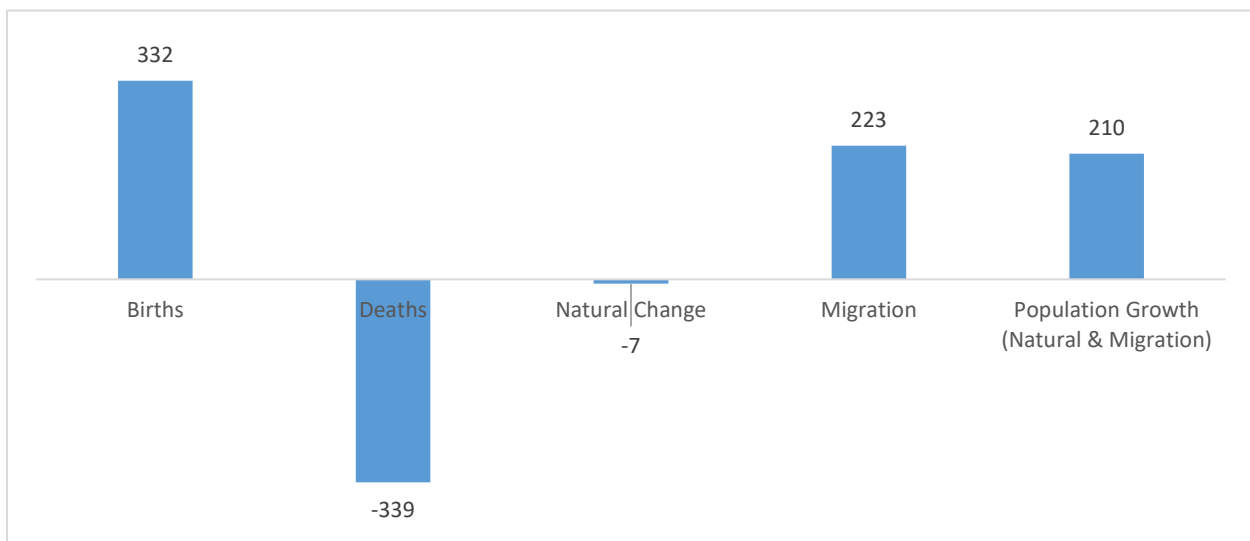
Figure 15 – Delta County Historic Population 1985-2016



Source: Department of Local Affairs State Demography Office

From 2000 to 2016, the population grew by 2,526 people, a 9% increase over 16 years. Births and deaths were nearly even, meaning that migration to Delta County is driving population growth (see figure 16).

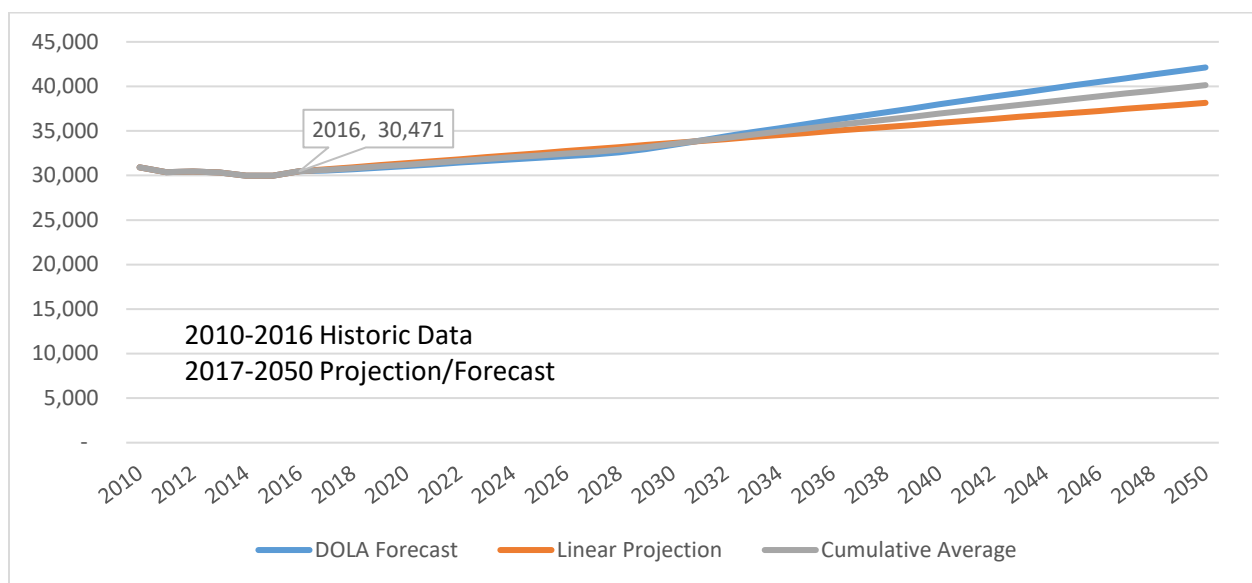
Figure 16 – Annual Average Components of Population Change in Delta County, 2000-2016



Source: Headwaters Economics EPS

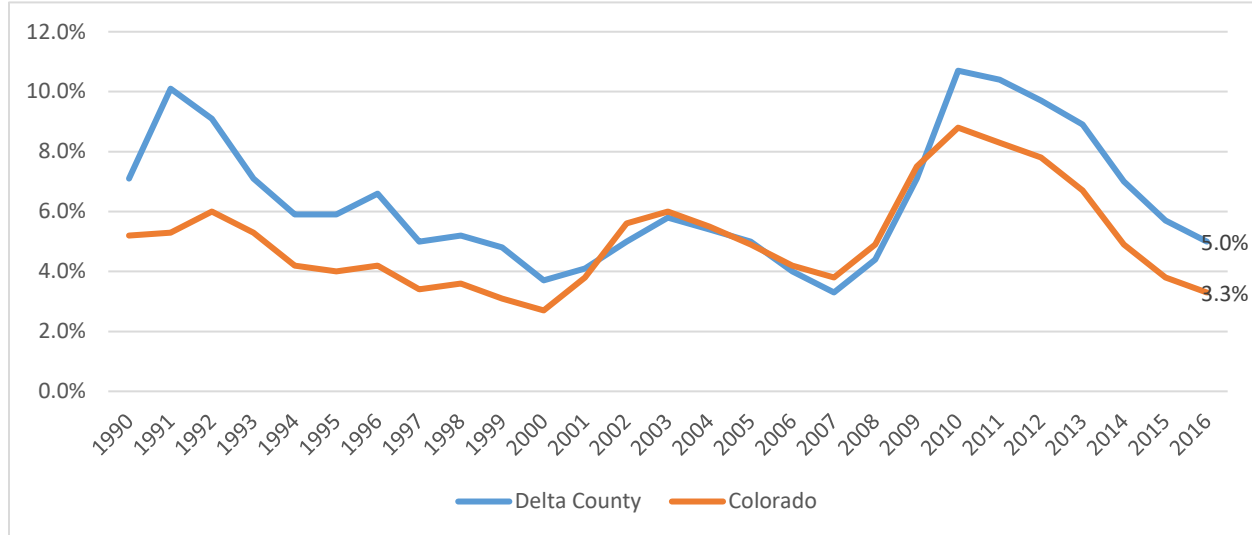
The Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Demography Office forecasts the county population through 2050. DOLA forecasts the population will increase by 11,656 people over the next 32 years and that this growth will occur incrementally. Job growth trends are key inputs into the DOLA population forecasts, when jobs slow down or decline, so does population. A linear projection shows an increase by 7,683 people by 2050. The cumulative average of the DOLA forecast and the linear projection shows an additional 9,669 people in Delta County by 2050. These are scenarios, and the actual population may grow at a faster or slower rate based on a number of economic and demographic factors. Without job growth these population forecasts will not occur. Young and middle-aged people move to where they can live and work while retirees have more ability to move for pleasure rather than a job. Still, the population that lives in Delta County, or will live in Delta County, must have amenities and services. The county will need to consider the population when planning for the carrying capacity of infrastructure and services.

Figure 17 – Delta County Population Forecast (DOLA) and Linear Projection and Cumulative Average 2017-2050



Source: Department of Local Affairs State Demography Office, RPI Linear Projection

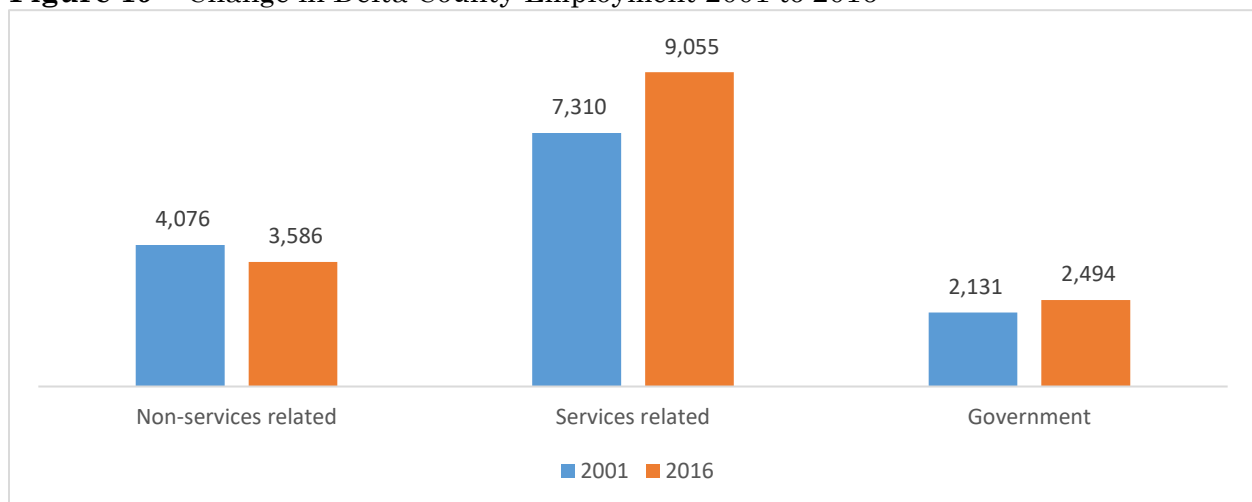
The region's economic performance can be gauged by referencing changes over time in particular indicators. Key indicators include unemployment, household income, and job growth/loss. The unemployment rate in Delta County peaked at 10.7% in 2010, at the worst of the recession. The unemployment rate in Delta County in 2016 was 5%, this was 1.7% higher than the unemployment rate in Colorado.

Figure 18 – Annual Unemployment Rate 1990-2016

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Colorado Information Marketplace

The four industry sectors with the highest number of jobs in 2016 were government, retail trade, healthcare, and agriculture. The healthcare and social assistance industry was the fastest growing industry from 2001 to 2016 adding the most jobs of all industries (582 new jobs) followed by real estate and rental leasing (531 new jobs) and government (363 new jobs).

From 2001 to 2016 the total number of non-services related jobs decreased from 4,076 to 3,586, or 12%. Non-service industries include farming; forestry, fishing & agricultural services; mining, construction and manufacturing. The number of jobs in services related industries increased by 24% and government jobs increased by 17% between 2001 and 2016 (see figure 19). Service industries include transportation, public utilities, wholesale trade, retail, finance, insurance, real estate, and services.

Figure 19 – Change in Delta County Employment 2001 to 2016

Source: Headwater Economics EPS

Since 2000, the county has seen an increase in population, employment, and personal and per capita income, but it has seen a decrease in average earnings per job of 3%. This slip in effective job earnings could be a result of a combination of more part-time employment and stagnant and/or declining wages measured in real dollars. Delta County has seen less population, employment and income growth since 2000 compared to Colorado as a whole.

Figure 20 – Delta County and Colorado Economic Indicators % Change 2000-2016

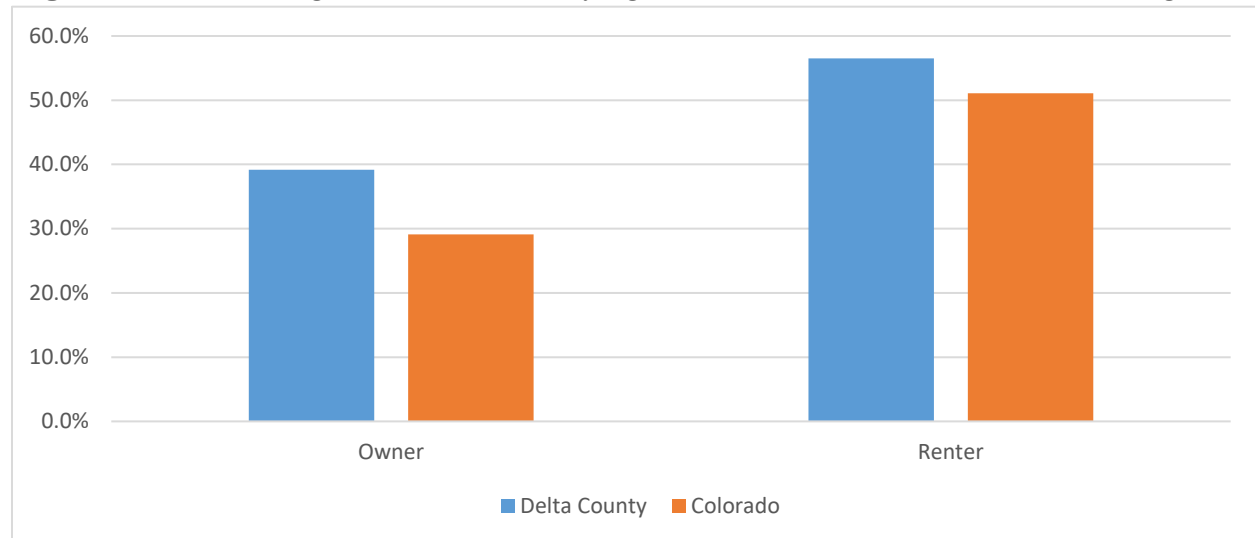
	Delta County	Colorado
Population (percent change, 2000-2016)	9.2%	28.0%
Employment (percent change, 2001-2016)	17.0%	25.1%
Personal Income (percent change, 2000-2016)	16.4%	40.4%
Average Earnings per Job (percent change, 2000-2016)	-3.0%	2.1%
Per Capita Income (percent change, 2000-2016)	6.6%	9.6%

Source: Headwaters Economics EPS

Housing

According to the US Census Bureau, a household is economically burdened if they are paying greater than 30% of their household income on housing costs. Delta County has a higher number of both renter and owner households who are paying more than 30% of their household income on housing than the state average.

Figure 21 – Percentage of Households Paying >30% of Household Income on Housing Costs



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

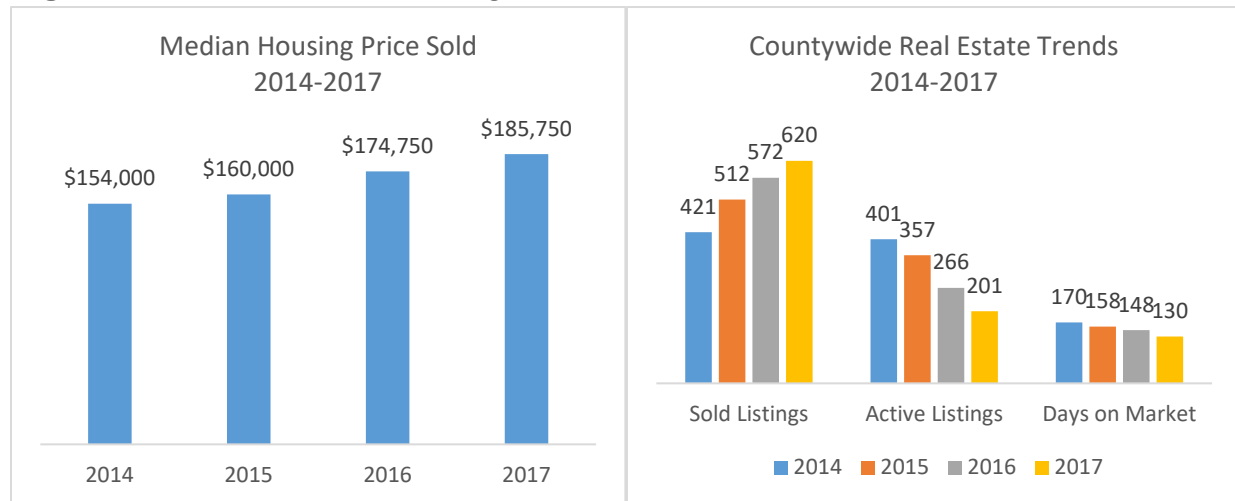
The Delta area sold the most houses (263) in the county, and also had the lowest median sale price (\$177,500) of all three geographic areas in 2017. There were 197 houses sold in Surface Creek area with a median price of \$189,500 and the North Fork area sold the fewest houses and had the highest median sale price of \$215,000 in 2017.

Figure 22 – Residential Listings and Sale Data 2017

	Delta	North Fork	Surface Creek
Sold Listings	263	167	197
Median Sale Price	\$177,500	\$215,000	\$189,500

Source: Colorado Real Estate Network

The county appears to be recovering from the financial crisis and the Great Recession. The median sale price of a house sold in Delta County increased 21% between 2014 and 2017. The number of real estate listings sold grew 47% during the same time, while the number of active listings and the number of days listed before a sale occurred shrank (see figures 23 and 24). These indicators show a recovery trend in the housing market for Delta County.

Figures 23 & 24 – Median Housing Sale Price and Real Estate Trends 2014-2017

Source: Colorado Real Estate Network

Arts and Culture

Delta County is home to a number of unique cultural, arts, and agricultural assets that set the county apart from surrounding communities and regions. According to the Snapshot of the Arts in Delta County CV, the county's creative vitality index was 0.56 out of a 0-to-1-point scale; considerably higher than surrounding counties. The creative industries refer to businesses that are founded with creativity as their basis. Examples include but are not limited to advertising & graphic design, computer designs/games, architecture, arts, film, music, publishing, and TV/radio. More specifically, the industry is built on leveraging intellectual property to generate jobs. There were 698 creative jobs as of 2016, with concentrations of the following: 90 photographers, 46 singers and musicians, 44 writers and authors, 40 graphic designers, and 31 interpreters and translators (Snapshot of the Arts in Delta County CV, 2016, See Appendix F).

There are a significant number of arts and cultural assets in Delta County including historic landmarks, museums, art galleries, organizations, wineries/breweries/cideries, and scenic byways. Registered Historic Landmarks in Delta County include historic churches,

hotels, theatres, and stores. The National Register of Historic Places includes additional landmarks.

Residents place a high value on celebrating and preserving the region's history and frontier heritage as a trading post for early settlers and the Ute Indian Tribe. Residents directly linked the value of the region's historical landmarks, buildings, and sites to the quality of life experienced in Delta County. Properly stewarding these sites requires a collective ethic to advocate, educate, and fundraise.

Delta County has a considerable number of art studios, galleries, and organizations. These individuals and coalitions create an atmosphere of artistic value and cultural importance in the community and county at-large. Research by RPI Consulting showed twenty art galleries and other art organizations at time of writing (sources: Delta County, Uncover Colorado, Delta Fine Art Guild).

Delta County has numerous wineries, breweries and cideries. Wine and brew tasting is one of the top attractions for Delta County. The wineries, tasting rooms, breweries and cideries included in the Arts and Culture Map (page 58) were provided from the county's activities and attractions as well as Wine Colorado's top wineries in Delta County. Research by RPI Consulting showed that there are eighteen wineries, three breweries, and three cideries in the county at time of writing. For up-to-date information, contact the chambers of commerce and tourism board.

Delta County contains sections of two of Colorado's designated scenic byways; the Grand Mesa Scenic Byway and the West Elk Scenic Byway. The southern end of the Grand Mesa Scenic Byway starts in Cedaredge and continues north on Highway 65 around Island Lake and out of the Delta County boundary towards Mesa, Colorado. This byway is one of 26 Scenic and Historic Byways designated by State and Federal agencies.

The West Elk Scenic Byway is a lollipop-loop that goes from Hotchkiss to Crested Butte, then north to Glenwood Springs. Parts of this scenic byway run through Highway 133 and Highway 92. The West Elk Scenic Byway goes through the towns of Paonia, Hotchkiss and Crawford. Containing two of Colorado's designated scenic byways is another asset to Delta County and its historical and scenic characteristics.

Why Does This Matter?

The ongoing transition with declining inputs from traditional economic sectors and growth in service sectors combined with the financial crisis and Great Recession have meant fluctuating/flat economic trends since 2010. There is widespread support for economic growth and an increase in overall prosperity that is commensurate with community values. The Master Plan is focused on county land use policy and the related public infrastructure and services, both of which have a role in economic growth that is in keeping with community values. Economic growth also drives much-needed growth in tax revenues for providing public infrastructure and services. Ensuring that land use regulations are consistent with economic development goals and support innovation in a manner consistent

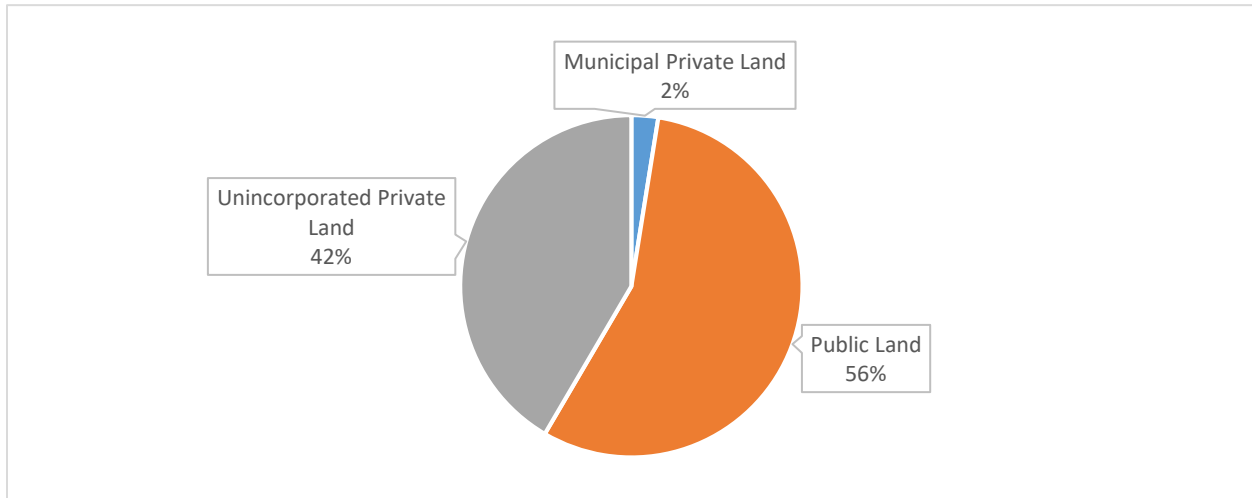
with the community's values is the most direct and important county role in economic development. Partnering with economic development entities whose primary focus is to strengthen the communities' economic advantages and providing leadership are also crucial roles the county can provide.

Housing is one of the pillars of economic development and the real estate market appears to be recovering from a challenging decade. The Master Plan calls for a diversity of housing types and to retain the flexibility for individualism and creativity in housing. Higher density housing is typically more affordable and it is generally more financially feasible when sited in municipalities where public sewer is available, so careful coordination with municipalities is an essential component of providing a diversity of housing types.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

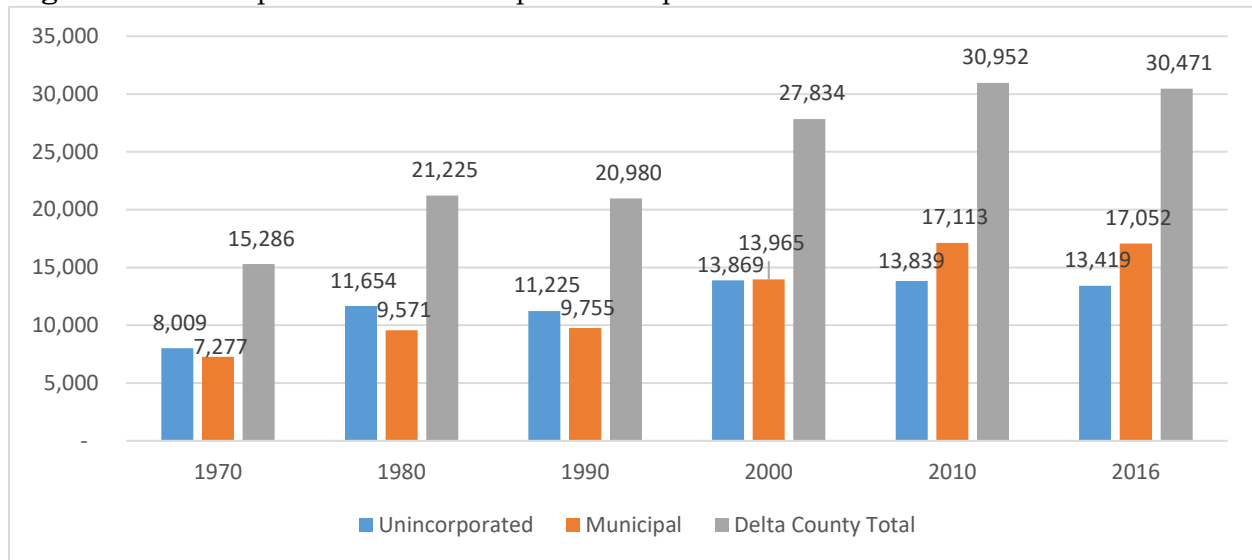
Just over half (56%) of Delta County is public land which includes federal, state and local public lands. The municipalities account for roughly 2% of the land in the county and private land in the unincorporated county makes up 42% of the entire county. This 42% is what this Master Plan covers. While there are goals and strategies related to public lands and coordination with the municipalities, the vast majority of the Master Plan is about 42% of the county.

Figure 25 – County Land by Type



Source: Delta County GIS

Historically, more of the population in Delta County was located in the unincorporated county, but as the county grew, more of the population concentrated in the municipalities. Starting in the 2000's, the municipalities gained a higher portion of the population than the unincorporated county (see figure 26). The proportion of population living in the municipalities vs. unincorporated Delta County has remained relatively steady since 2010. An average of 56% of the population resides in one of the six municipalities and the other 44% of the population resides in the unincorporated county.

Figure 26 – Incorporated vs Unincorporated Population 1970-2016

Source: Department of Local Affairs State Demography Office

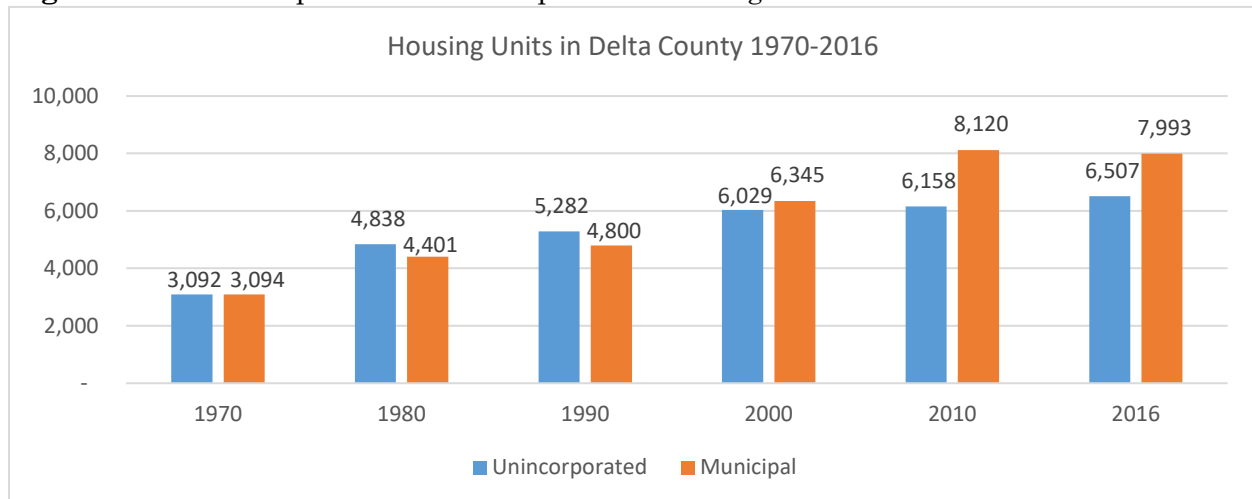
Nearly 2,300 of the properties in the unincorporated county have some portion that is irrigated agriculture. About three-quarters of agricultural parcels contain at least one residence and over 3,200 non-agricultural parcels in the unincorporated county contain at least one residence. There are 170 parcels with commercial uses on them and 629 vacant lots or parcels, most of which are less than 5 acres in size.

Figure 27 – Unincorporated Private Parcels and Acreage by Assessor Category

	Total Parcels	Total Acres
Residential Use	3,215	21,407
Irrigated Ag	2,278	90,064
Grazing Ag	675	34,473
Commercial Use	170	2,335
Vacant Land	629	8,890

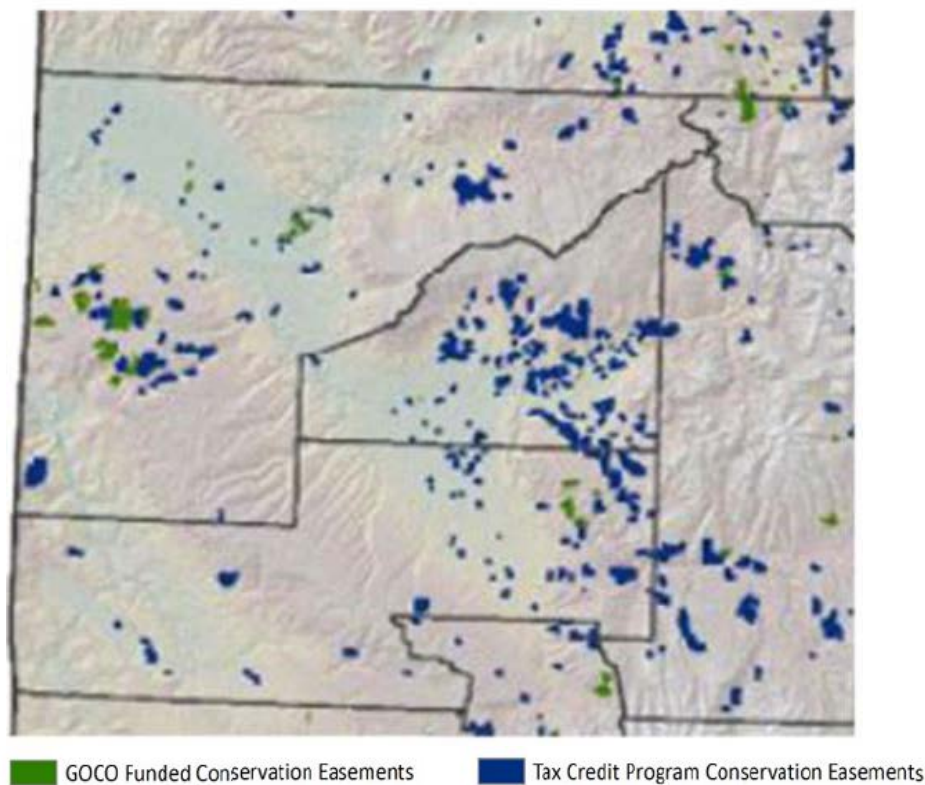
Source: Delta County Assessor

Starting in the 2000s, there were more housing units located within the municipalities than in the unincorporated county. As of 2016, the municipalities contain roughly 55% of housing units while the other 45% are dispersed throughout the unincorporated county. During development of the previous Master Plan in the 1990s everyone thought rapid population and housing growth would occur. Since 2000, the total number of housing units in the county increased by roughly 1,126, fewer than predicted.

Figure 28 – Unincorporated and Incorporated Housing Units 1970-2016

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Research by RPI Consulting found approximately 37,000 acres of land is currently under a conservation easement in the county. Conservation easements are in place on approximately 12% of private land within the county.

Figure 29 – Location of Conservation Easements in Delta County, 2017

Source: Colorado's return on investments in conservation easements: Conservation Easement Tax Credit program and Great Outdoors Colorado. Colorado State University, 2017 (See Appendix F)

Conservation easements offer property owners the opportunity to conserve larger tracts of land from certain types of development, as determined in the legally binding agreement between the landowner and a nonprofit land trust or government conservation agency. In return for placing land into an easement, property owners are eligible for considerable tax incentives. Several conservation entities are actively working with Delta County land owners to assist them in the easement process. Research by RPI Consulting found 17 land trusts known to be actively working in Delta County at time of writing. In addition to land trusts there are a number of non-profit organizations working in land conservation in the county. Figure 29 page shows the location of conservation easements in Delta County and surrounding counties.

Why Does This Matter?

Successful implementation of this Master Plan hinges on developing comprehensive, consistent, fair and predictable land use regulations. Development patterns and trends, such as mixed residential development and agriculture lands present unique challenges in various areas of the county. Increasing the predictability and consistency of land use policies and regulations regarding the location of future business is a critical component of implementing economic development goals. Land use policies and regulations need to account for the existing capacity of infrastructure. Likewise, future investments in public infrastructure capacity need to support community growth strategies.

The intent of this Master Plan is to lay groundwork for future regulations that will protect property rights while rationally planning for growth, addressing impacts on neighboring properties and protecting the most important land and economic resources. Future land use regulations need to maintain a balance between community goals and individual property rights and must be consistent, fair, predictable and easily understood. Today, on legally created parcels with adequate water, sewer and access, the land use regulations currently in place (May 2018) only allow single family homes and duplexes, home businesses and cottage industries, and agricultural uses except for confined animal feeding operations and except for commercial slaughtering and rendering facilities with little review or approval by the county. An access permit, a septic permit, and an address permit are the only approvals needed. All other uses require an application submittal and review process that includes public meetings with the designated Area Planning Committee, the County Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners. Because the current review process results in either approval or denial of the proposed use, there is a high degree of uncertainty about what one can do on their property beyond the limited allowed land uses listed above. The intent of rewriting the land use regulations is to increase the level of certainty. By doing so, new land use regulations will support and encourage viable uses of private property.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES AND ASSETS

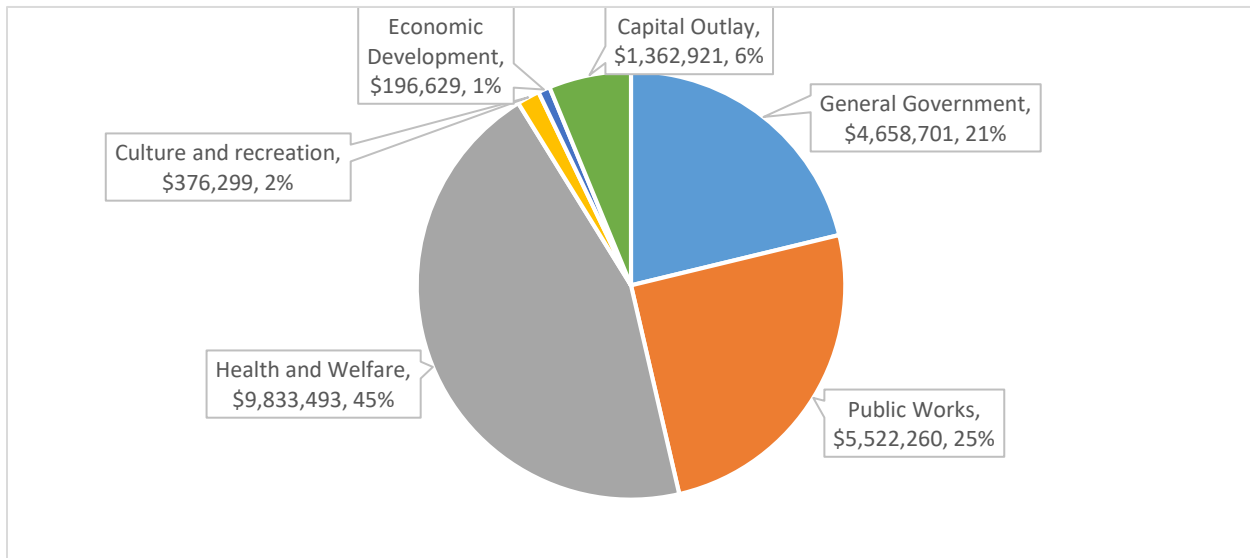
Delta County provides core infrastructure and services to the entire county with a budget of \$22 million per year. The county provides integral services for residents including public safety, general administration, courts and legal, public health and many more less commonly known, but key services that allow residents to access the local resources they need. The following offices and departments provide the services that make the county government function.

- Administration
- Alternative Sentencing
- Assessor
- Clerk and Recorder
- Community and Economic Development
- Coroner
- Courts
- CSU Extension
- Driver License Office
- Elections
- Emergency Management
- Engineering
- GIS
- Health Services
- Human Services
- Human Resources
- Integrated Solid Waste Management
- Road and Bridge
- Sheriff
- Treasurer

The vision and many of the goals and strategies for this topic that are outlined in Chapter 2 will require sufficient revenue. The county's revenue is tied to the economic activity that occurs within Delta County. Achieving revenue thresholds that allow for additional investment in public services and infrastructure is contingent on economic growth, even if it is incremental growth. Economic growth relies on certain conditions including a sufficiently funded county government. In turn, more revenues are achieved by business development and diversification, and creating new jobs which will provide opportunities for new households to make Delta County home. Sufficient revenues then allow for maintaining or improving levels of service and infrastructure.

Between 2014 and 2016, Delta County had average annual expenditures of just under \$22 million. Health and welfare accounted for an average of 45% of all expenditures between 2014 and 2016 making it the largest expenditure followed by public works (25%), general government (21%), capital outlay (6%), culture and recreation (2%) and economic development (1%). The county has maintained a fiscally conservative budget in the past and strives to maintain this in the future, however, declining revenues make this a challenge.

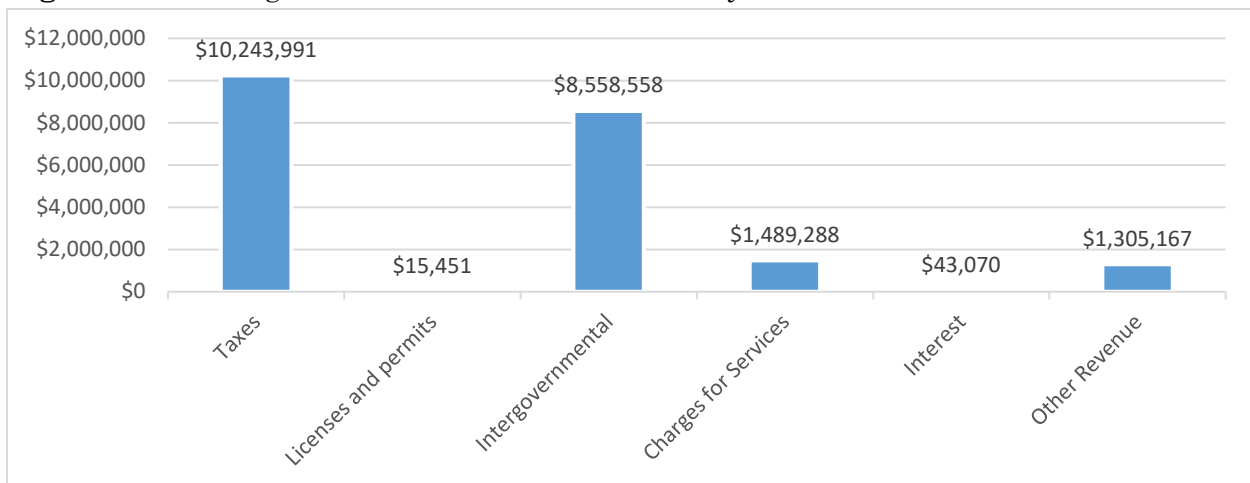
Figure 30 – Average Annual Expenditures – All Delta County Governmental Funds, 2014-2016



Source: Delta County Audits 2014-2016

Taxes (including property and sales) contributed the largest portion of the county's revenue, accounting for an annual average of 47% of all revenues between 2014 and 2016. The second largest source of county revenues is intergovernmental transfers which accounted for an annual average of 40% of county revenue. Licenses and permits, interest, charges for services and other revenue account for the remaining 13% of revenue as seen in figure 31.

Figure 31 – Average Annual Revenues for All County Funds 2014-2016

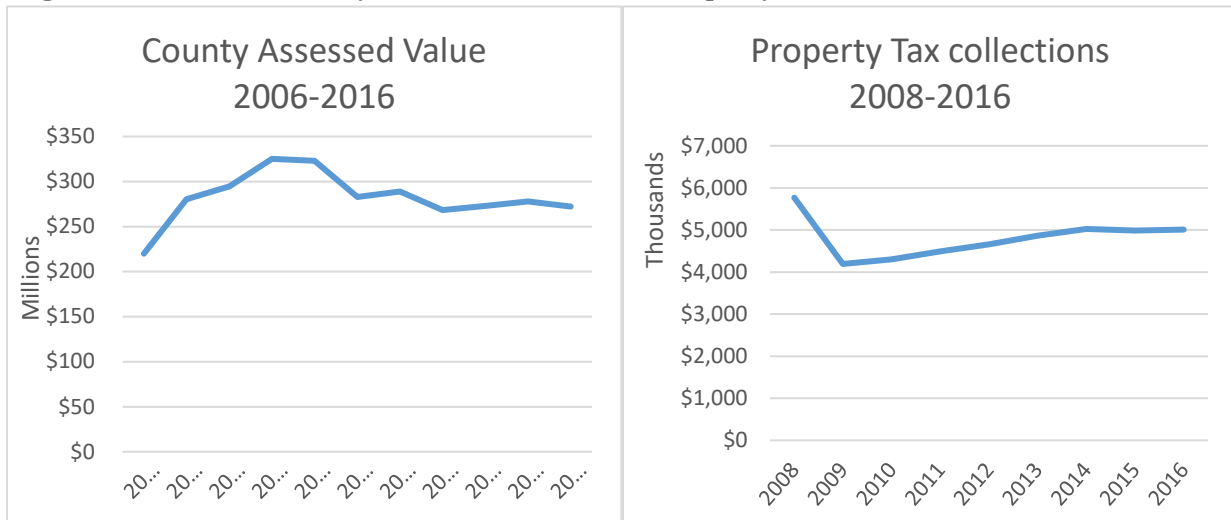


Source: Delta County Audits 2014-2016

External influences affect Delta County revenues including the Great Recession which the county is recovering from, TABOR which limits the ability to increase taxes and the Gallagher Amendment which sets various thresholds on property taxes. In recent years the county has seen a decrease in the total county assessed value of property from \$325 million

in 2009 to \$272 million in 2016. Property tax collections have fluctuated over the years but have recently remained stagnant right around \$5 million annually from 2014 through 2016.

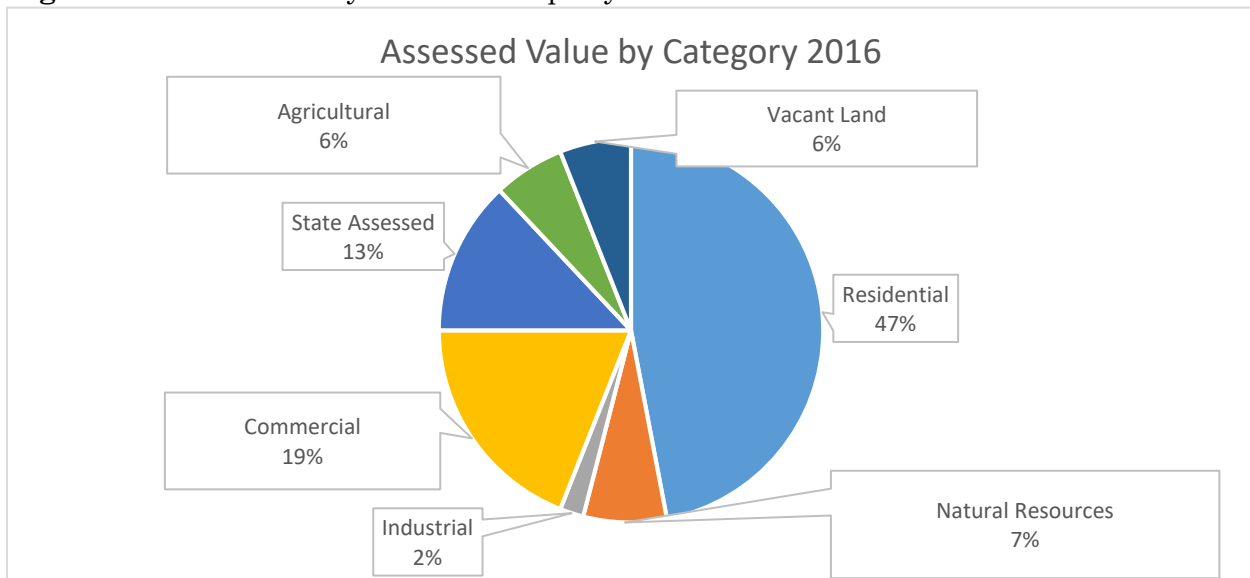
Figures 32 & 33 – County Assessed Value and Property Tax Collections



Source: Delta County Assessor, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Residential property made up 47% of county assessed value making it the largest source of property taxes for the county in 2016. Commercial property was the second largest source of property taxes (19%) followed by state assessed (13%), natural resource (7%), agricultural and vacant land which each accounted for 6%, and industrial which contributed 2%. While agriculture is an integral part of the culture and economy of the county, it does not contribute a significant amount in property taxes.

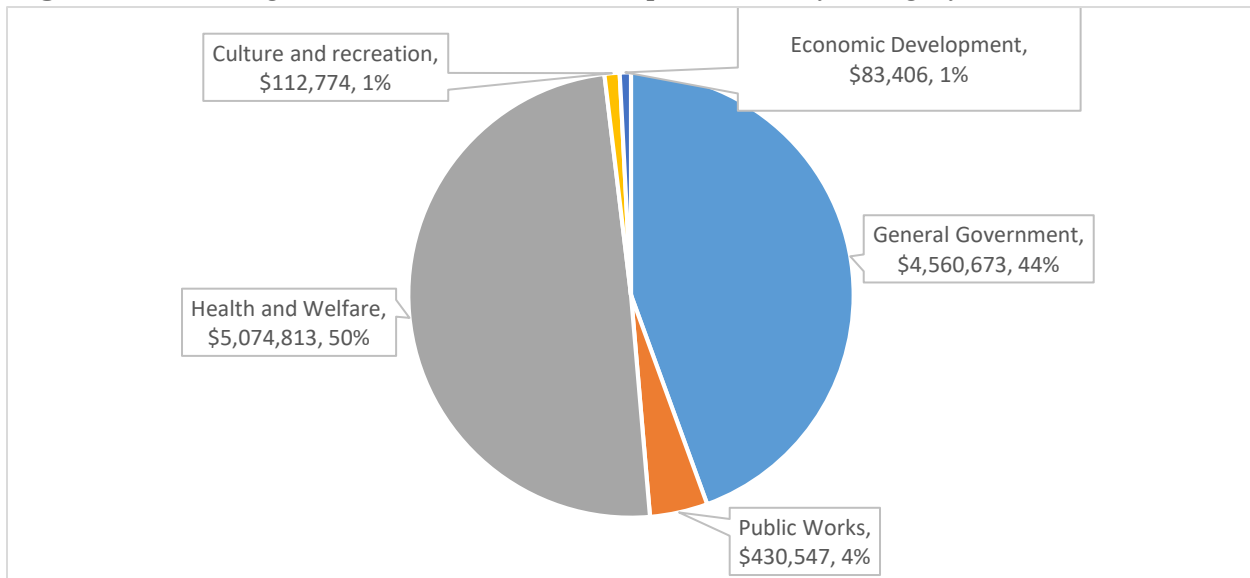
Figure 34 – Total County Assessed Property 2006-2016



Source: Delta County Assessor

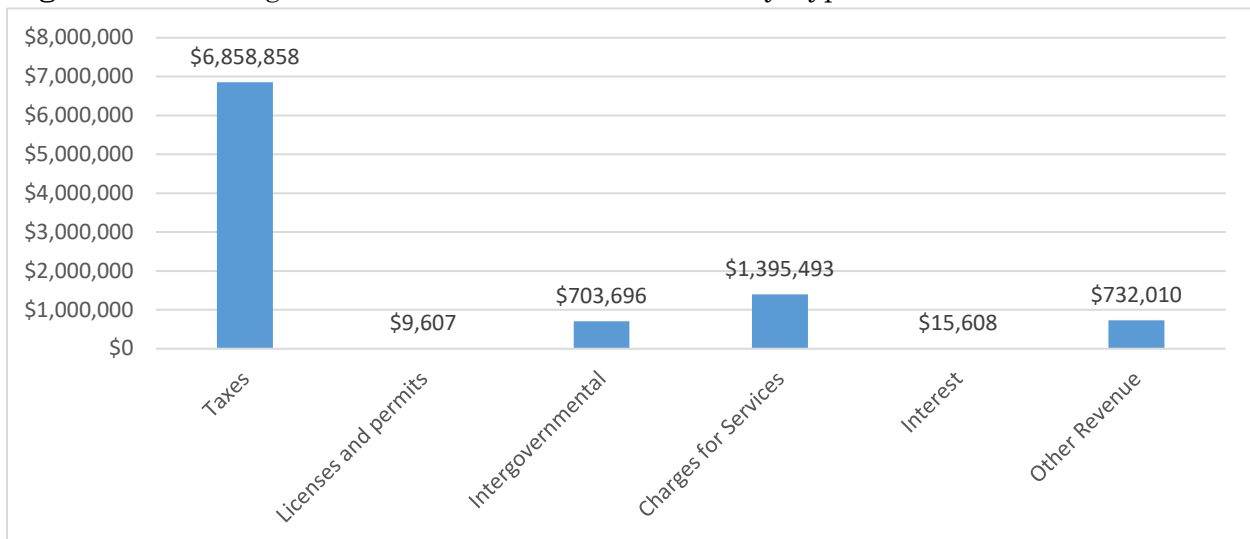
The county relies on stable revenues to be able to provide quality services and maintain a functional county government. The county faces a tight budget and without increased revenues it will face the possibility of declining levels of service.

Figure 35 – Average Annual General Fund Expenditures by Category 2014-2016



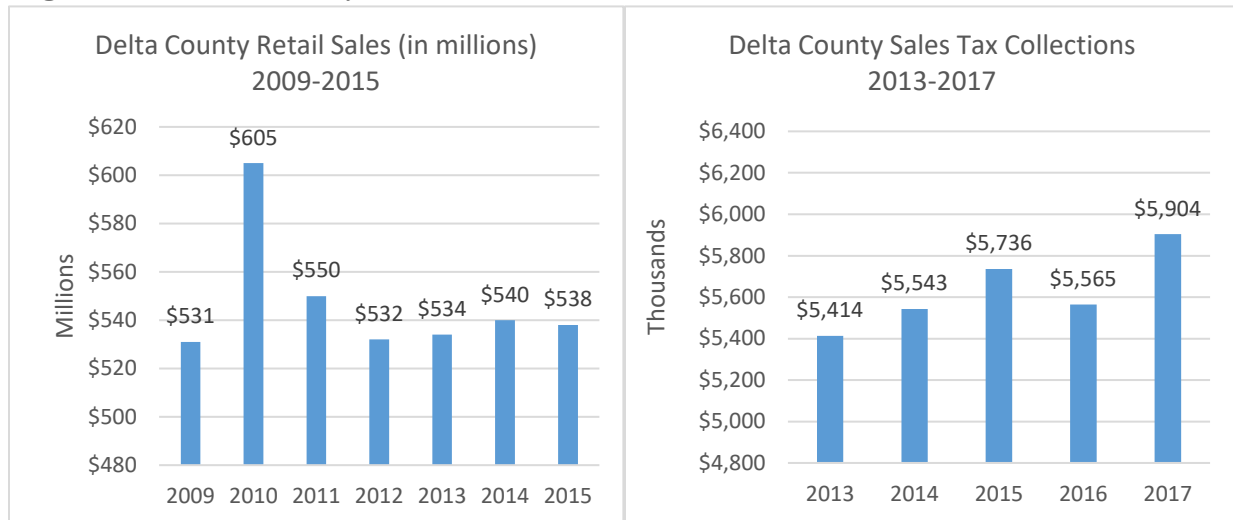
Source: Delta County Audits 2014-2016

Figure 36 – Average Annual General Fund Revenues by Type 2014-2016



Source: Delta County Audits 2014-2016

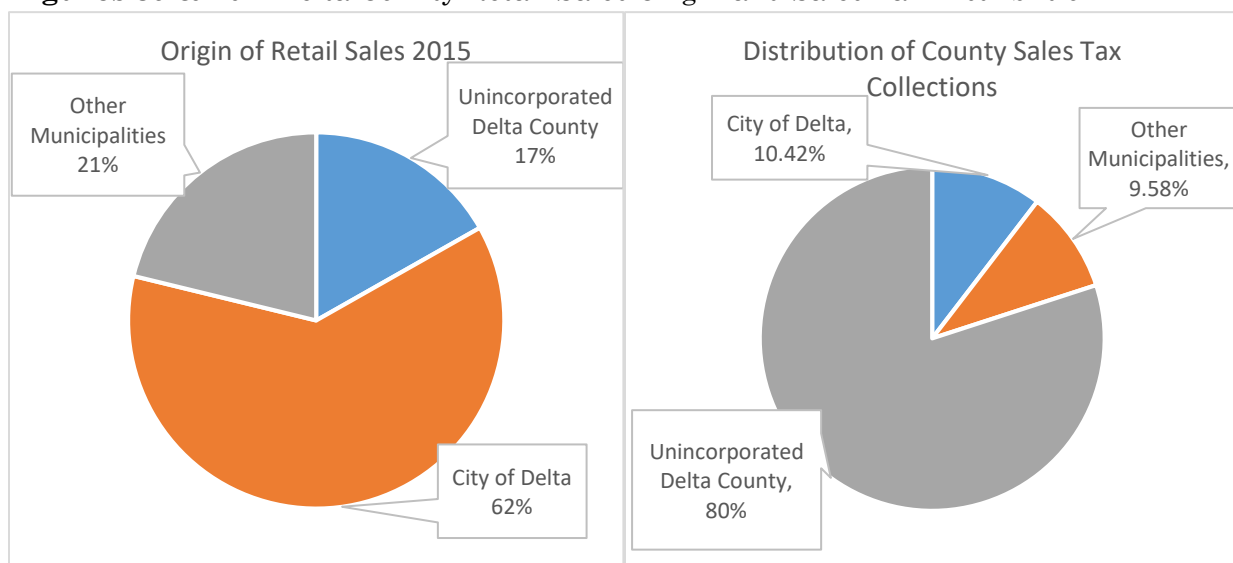
As one of its revenue sources the county collects a 2% sales tax. Retail sales in Delta County peaked in 2010 with over \$605 million in sales. Since then retail sales in Delta County have seen minor fluctuations but have remained relatively flat overall (see figure 37). The sales tax collections in 2017 were the highest for Delta County in the last five years and totaled \$5.9 million, an increase of roughly half a million dollars over the total collected in 2014 (\$5.4 million).

Figure 37 & 38 – County Annual Retail Sales and Sales Tax Revenues

Source: Colorado Department of Revenue, Delta County

The City of Delta had 62% of all retail sales in the county while the other four municipalities had a combined 21% and the remaining 17% of retail sales occurred in the unincorporated county. The City of Delta is the largest municipality and has the largest concentration of retail establishments, still the other municipalities and the unincorporated county play an important role in retail (see figure 39 below).

The county has an arrangement in place where it distributes a portion of the county sales tax revenue to each of the municipalities. Currently, the unincorporated county retains 80% of the sales tax revenues and distributes 10.42% to the City of Delta, and divides the remaining 9.58% among the other municipalities based on a distribution schedule agreed upon in a county resolution.

Figures 39 & 40 – Delta County Retail Sales Origin and Sales Tax Distribution

Source: Colorado Department of Revenue, Delta County

Broadband

Broadband networks support and enhance business development, increase productivity and facilitate job creation by opening new markets. The county continues to engage with partners to expand the broadband network. Local broadband efforts began in 2013 with a planning grant awarded to Region 10 from the Department of Local Affairs to design and construct a broadband “backbone” throughout the counties comprising Region 10. This effort has included substantial support from municipalities and counties and Delta-Montrose Electric Association. The El Pomar Foundation and the U.S. Economic Development Administration also awarded funding to complete the plan. The early implementation steps include siting fiber optic cable alignments in the towns of Paonia, Hotchkiss, Cedaredge, and Crawford.

Why Does This Matter?

Public infrastructure and services are foundational to supporting development and require sufficient tax revenues. Tax revenues fund improvements and maintenance to the county’s infrastructure and they fund the public services the county offers. When the local economy fluctuates, tax revenues fluctuate correspondingly. The TABOR and Gallagher Amendments constrain tax revenue collections, creating further challenges for the county and its public service partners. Building revenues for public infrastructure and services is necessary for achieving the vision and goals articulated throughout this Master Plan. The approach needs to be integrated and addressed from several angles. Land use and development policies and standards must consider the revenues generated versus the costs of serving various land use types while future development proposals need to be evaluated with impacts and costs on public infrastructure and services at the forefront. Meeting the demands on local government to improve the health and well-being of residents through transportation infrastructure, recreational amenities, core public services and other emerging demands will require a comprehensive fiscal policy.

ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Energy development is part of the history, the landscape and the economy in Delta County. Most of the BLM lands include mineral rights, most of which fall under the “all minerals” classification which includes oil and gas, coal and any other solid or fluid mineral. Large areas of private land, especially inholdings surrounded or partially surrounded by public lands also include federal mineral rights. According to the county assessor, there are 25 mineral deeds underlying private parcels in the county. These 25 deeds add up to 2,087 total acres; averaging 83.5 acres per mineral deed.

Bowie # 2 coal mine operated from 1998 to 2016 and Oxbow closed its Elk Creek Mine in Gunnison County in 2013, while the West Elk Mine, also in Gunnison County, continues to operate. These closures meant hundreds of jobs held by Delta County residents were lost. Although there have been efforts to produce oil and gas, there is not much actual

production occurring today. No new wells have been permitted in Delta County in the last three years. According to the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC), a total of 145 wells have been drilled in the county with 97% of them now dry, dry and abandoned, or shut-in (completed wells that are not producing but are capable of producing).

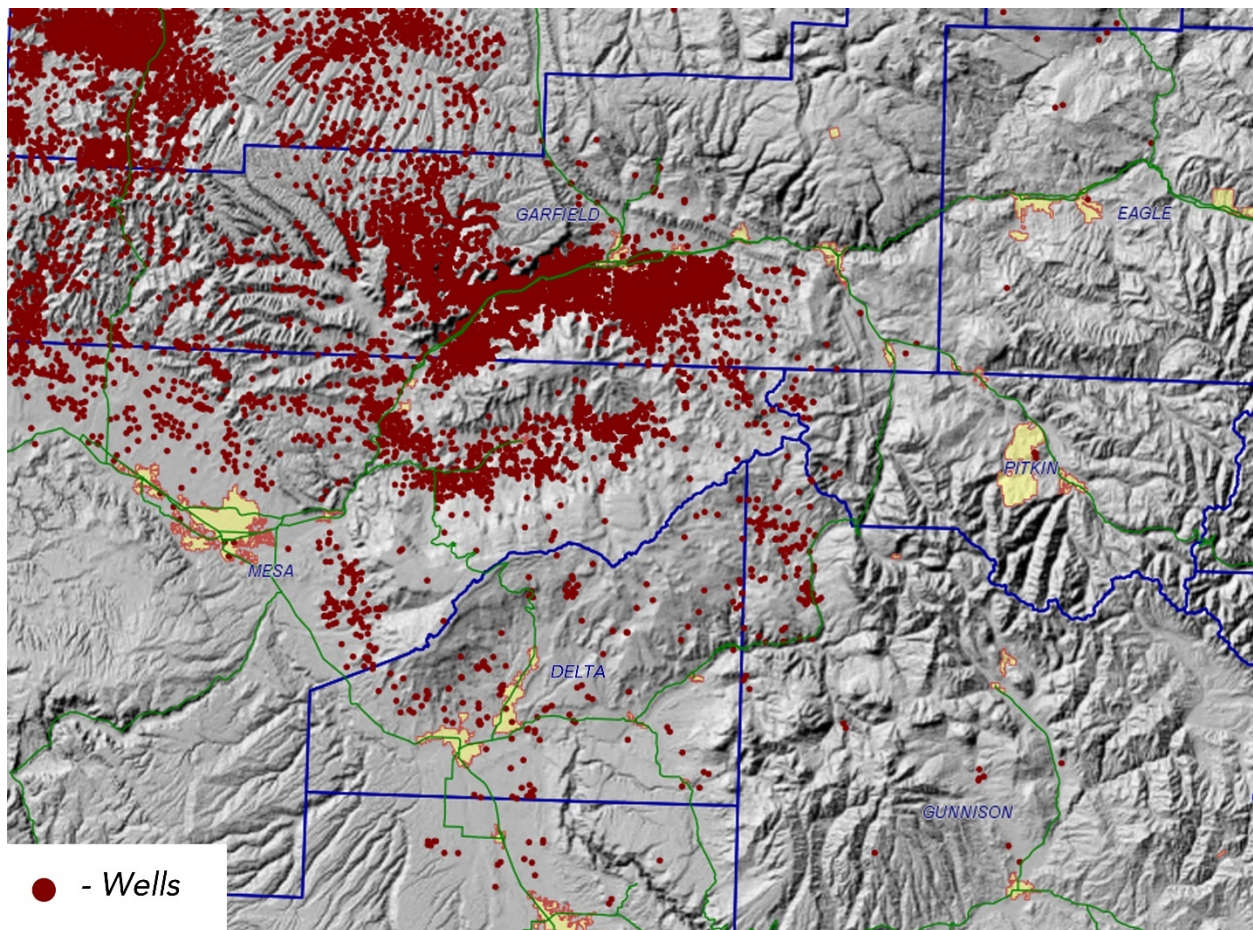
Figure 41 – Delta County Well Status Summary

Well Status	Status Abbreviation	Count
Producing	PR	2
Approved Permit	XX	1
Waiting on Completion	WO	1
Abandoned	AL	43
Dry and Abandoned	DA	60
Shut-In	SI	14
Plugged and Abandoned	PA	24
Total Wells	-	145

Source: Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, 2017

During the original vision workshops, survey, community input meetings, and discussions with residents at county events across the county, the Planning Commission heard support for responsible development of oil and gas resources based on the potential economic benefits to the county. During these same community engagement events residents, especially from the North Fork Valley, have consistently expressed concern about protecting the county’s clean air, water, and soil from oil and gas activity. Written comments since release of the final draft of the plan and public hearing participation reflected significant concern about the potential impacts of future oil and gas development in Delta County, especially in view of such development in Gunnison and Mesa Counties. Further, it should be noted that such adjoining development is taking place in watersheds that flow into Delta County’s irrigation and ground water sources.

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office is revising the BLM Uncompahgre Resource Management Plan (RMP) which includes a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS includes five alternatives for fluid mineral leasing stipulations. According to the DEIS, “Stipulations for fluid mineral leasing (i.e., no surface disturbance (NSO), controlled surface use (CSU), and timing limitation [TL]) and activities associated with fluid mineral leasing (e.g., truck-mounted drilling, stationary drill rigs in unison, geophysical exploration equipment off designated routes, and construction of wells and/or pads) would be applied as specified to BLM-administered lands overlying fluid federal mineral estate. In addition, stipulations may be recommended for private lands overlying federal mineral estate (known as split-estate).” (Bureau of Land Management Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan Draft EIS, See Appendix F for weblink). For maps of leasing stipulations for each alternative contained in the current DEIS see Appendix G.

Figure 42 – Delta County and Regional Oil/Gas Wells

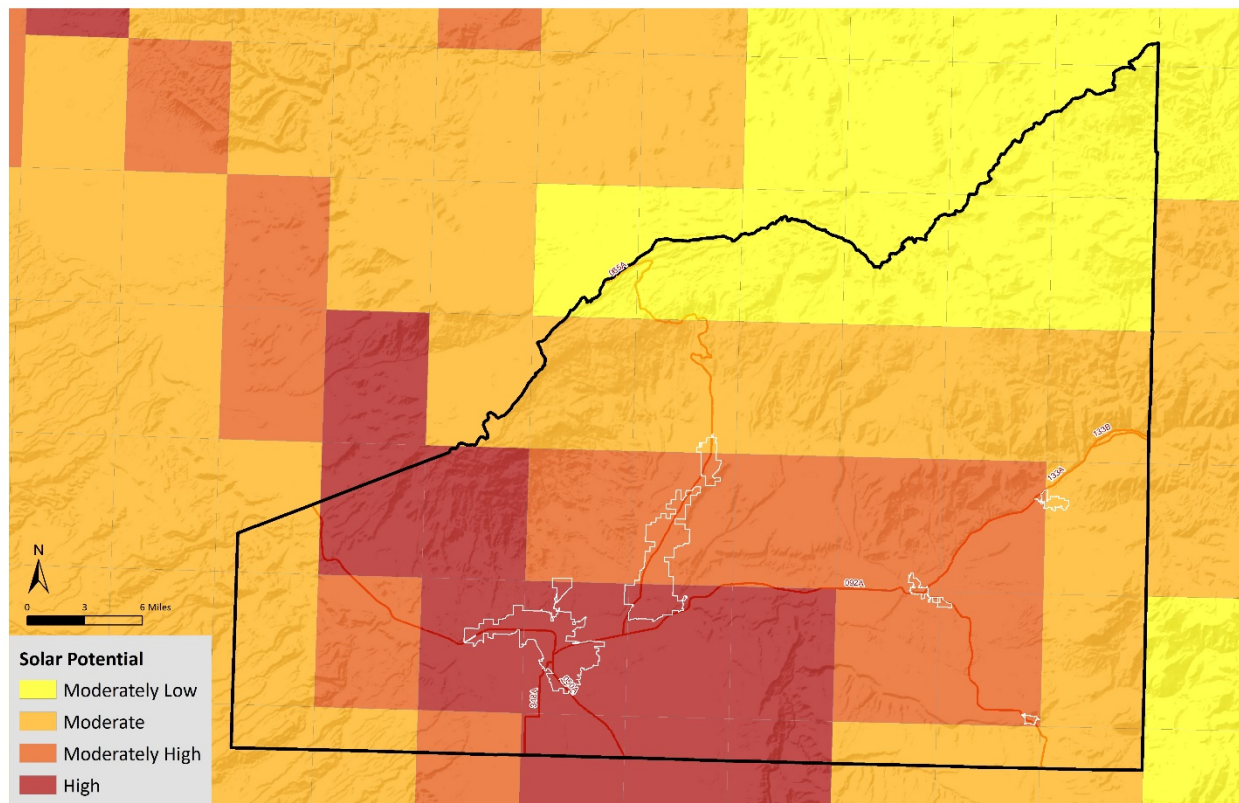
Source: Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission, Interactive Map (See Appendix F)

Delta County has potential for both ditch drop and pressurized irrigation hydroelectric systems. In 2016, a site just north of Hotchkiss hosted a small-hydro power generation facility. This was the first installation for the multi-agency Pressurized Irrigation Small Hydropower Partnership Project, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program. In the following few years, Colorado expects to open 30 on-farm hydropower projects in Colorado (John Miller Delta Conservation District, September 2016). According to a study conducted in 2014, there were 77 ditch drops identified in Delta County, 9 were found to be economically feasible with a break-even point of 20 years or less. These 9 drops have a combined capacity of roughly 0.8 MW and would generate approximately 4 GWh per year and a combined estimated annual revenue of \$192,100 (Colorado Agricultural Hydro Resource Assessment, March 2014, See Appendix F). With ditches spread throughout the county, there is a high potential for future small-hydro power generation facilities.

The solar energy potential in Delta County is considerably high compared with the national average according to the US Department of Energy National Renewable Energy Laboratory

with the highest solar potential near the City of Delta. Solar energy potential ranges from around 300 to 630-watt hours per square foot per day in the US, and in Delta County solar potential ranges from 490 to 543 watt hours per square foot per day.

Figure 43 – Delta County Solar Energy Potential



Source: US Department of Energy National Renewable Energy Laboratory

Why Does This Matter?

The potential for energy development and the economic benefits of its diversification in the county is high. Oil and gas production is low at this time, but the resource exists and has been actively developed in the past. Mineral resources, including oil and gas are regulated by multiple agencies, so engaging these agencies to advocate for community goals is paramount. Energy development goals are focused on gaining a better understand of the potential for energy development, to update county regulations and to inform communications with mineral and energy regulatory agencies. There is also great potential for solar and hydro energy development and residents are supportive of developing these largely un-tapped resources and of the emerging renewable energy industry.



Chapter Two

VISION, GOALS & STRATEGIES

2.1 OVERALL VISION

The vision of the Master Plan update is to promote prosperity in Delta County for present and future generations through stewardship of the county's resources, and thoughtful, predictable land use regulations. The County will foster a culture that upholds the values of community, quality of life, and respectful, neighborly communication.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1.0: Cultivate a countywide culture where problems, issues and needs are addressed neighbor to neighbor and where disagreement is handled respectfully, differing opinions are valued and every participant is heard.

Goal 1.1: Work to build trust and faith that local government can balance the needs and values of all segments of the county by developing new land use policies that provide greater stability and predictability while decreasing conflict.

Strategy 1.1.0: Partner with other local governments, civic and education organizations and non-profit organizations to engage in regular community dialogue.

Strategy 1.1.1: Partner with other local governments, civic and education organizations and non-profit organizations to develop a county-wide leadership development program.

Strategy 1.1.2: Update land use regulations to define where all land uses may be located and prosper with minimal conflict.

Strategy 1.1.3: Develop strategies for better communicating and engaging with the County's diverse and underrepresented populations including our Hispanic, youth, senior, and economically disadvantaged residents.

Goal 1.2: Develop land use regulations that are fair and predictable and protect residents' core values of limiting county regulations. Involve property owners and residents in the development of new land use regulations, and strive for efficient regulations that can achieve the vision of this master plan.

Strategy 1.2.1: Educate Delta County property owners and residents about land use regulations, property rights, master planning, community development, economic development, and tax base to help them be informed and effective participants in future discussions and processes.

Strategy 1.2.2: Engage in discussion with property owners on their existing property rights, misperceptions about property rights in Delta County.

2.2 AGRICULTURAL LAND AND BUSINESS

VISION

Delta County will remain an agricultural county by protecting agricultural lands and operations and supporting agricultural innovation.

CORE VALUES

Agriculture is strongly supported throughout the county. Residents feel that agriculture connects them to their community and contributes to the quality of life. Agricultural lands set the backdrop to the county's landscape, bringing green open areas to what would otherwise be dry desert, while supporting wildlife, strengthening the local economy and providing locally produced food.

Agricultural operations and businesses remain one of the top employing industries in the county, employing 15.3% of the county's working population. Agriculture attracts revenue from outside the county as it provides the largest number of direct basic jobs (jobs that bring outside money into the local economy). The total acreage of designated farm land in 2012 was 250,761. The average farm size totaled 202-acres; the median farm acreage was 38. The market value of agricultural products in 2012 was \$55,639,000—a 28% increase over the previous 21 years.

Delta County's agricultural industry is one of the most diverse in the state. The county has a mix of traditional agriculture and organic agriculture, with the highest concentration of organic farms in Colorado. Agritourism and value-added agricultural production bring a greater depth to the agricultural industry. Delta County's wine industry is growing, as are agricultural activities and events that bring visitors to the county. The county produces livestock including cattle, goats, elk, pigs and sheep; hay and alfalfa; row crops such as hemp, field corn, sweet corn, hops, soybeans, onions and potatoes; fruit & vegetables including grapes, peaches, apricots, cherries, apples, pears, and berries; eggs and poultry; and dairy just to name a few. Agricultural operations range in scale from high-acreage ranches and farms to small two- or three-acre farms. Both large and small producers are having success in agriculture with the increased value of locally grown food sold directly to market. Access to locally grown healthy foods supports not only the county's economy, but potentially helps to address health equity and reduce chronic illness among residents.

Protecting agricultural lands, especially those lands with quality soil, irrigation and that remain largely intact (acreage) is a high priority. Protection of agricultural lands means ensuring the economic viability of agricultural producers. Agricultural producers expressed concerns that future land use and development regulations not impair their ability to adapt and innovate so they can remain economically viable.

While the benefits of agriculture are highly valued throughout the county, less attractive localized impacts such as noise, dust, and odor also result from operations. Residents and producers identified a need to maintain and build good neighbor relations to communicate about issues and solutions that can be handled neighbor-to-neighbor. Defining the range of uses and activities allowed to occur in agricultural areas will help agricultural operators and their neighbors by clarifying what can be expected on and around existing agricultural lands. Future development that occurs in agricultural areas needs to be designed and located to minimize impacts between the development and the nearby agricultural uses and activities.

Residents and agricultural operators have expressed support for better defining where and to what standards concentrated animal feeding operations should be regulated. County officials, residents and agricultural operators would like to better understand the regulatory implications of concentrated animal feeding operations as well as the “Right-to-Farm” statutes.

With the unpredictable nature and declining trend of returns in agriculture, farms may rely on income from a range of other value added products, small businesses, services, and tourism in order to stay financially viable. Farmers expressed the importance for the County to support flexibility for farmers to innovate and supplement agricultural income in order to support viable farms and agriculture in the county.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 2.0 – Continue to expand and diversify agriculture as an economic base.

Strategy 2.0.0 – Encourage value-added agricultural enterprises.

Strategy 2.0.1 – Encourage the use of agricultural lands to support agritourism, research, education and local foods industries.

Strategy 2.0.2 – Explore new options for transporting harvested crops to markets.

Strategy 2.0.3 – Generate innovative agricultural opportunities throughout the county by supporting existing agricultural educational organizations, such as the Colorado State University (CSU) extension office.

Goal 2.1 – Maintain the character, integrity of agricultural land including irrigated and potentially irrigatable agricultural land, and the functionality of agricultural areas for agricultural business operations.

Strategy 2.1.0 – Encourage communications between agricultural operators and rural residential neighbors about land uses and activities that may affect one another.

Strategy 2.1.1 – List the full range of land uses, activities, structures and infrastructure associated with agricultural enterprises and establish these as

allowed and expected uses in agricultural areas while allowing for future innovations.

Strategy 2.1.2 – Create land use tools to address impacts between agriculture and future development in agricultural areas.

Strategy 2.1.3 – Educate landowners, potential buyers and tenants about the uses that may occur on agricultural land.

Strategy 2.1.4 – Create and consistently update an inventory and map of agricultural lands and monitor trends.

Strategy 2.1.5 – Support and facilitate the voluntary conservation of agricultural lands and associated water.

Strategy 2.1.6 – Convene a working group of agricultural business owners, residents, and legal experts to evaluate Delta County’s “Right to Farm” resolution, evaluate the regulatory environment and best-practices of concentrated animal feeding operations, initiate an education and communication process that is designed to address the issues, tensions, and conflicts surrounding these topics as well as to provide a final set of recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners.

2.3 WATER RESOURCES

VISION

Delta County, within its legal parameters, strives to protect water supplies, delivery systems and water quality by partnering with the appropriate agencies and stakeholders to minimize the potential loss of quantity or quality of its water resources.

CORE VALUES

The importance of water spans most of the highly regarded community values including agriculture, wildlife habitat, recreation and the desire to maintain clean water. Delta County is fortunate to have a diversity of water supply for both irrigation and domestic uses and there is strong support to keep this resource intact.

Much of the regulatory authority over water lies outside of Delta County's purview. The following agencies oversee water resources and infrastructure:

Division of Water Resources — State Engineer: Oversees the administration of all surface water rights and interstate compacts, records flow and diversion data, and regulates dam safety. The State Engineer also issues well permits.

Colorado Water Court — The Colorado Water Court makes all legal decisions about water rights administered in turn by the State Engineer. Water rights are a private property right. The State of Colorado determines what someone can or cannot do with a water right.

Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment — Has statutory authority for protecting surface and ground water quality. The Water Quality Control Division implements the Federal Clean Water Act, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and the Safe Drinking Water Act in Colorado.

Multiple Water Providers — Delta County has multiple water providers including municipal water providers, irrigation/ditch companies, conservancy districts and private water companies. These entities govern all decisions about the water they supply including rates, fees and ultimately, availability for new taps/new customers.

Delta County's authority over water resources is limited, but the county does have authority over land use which interfaces with water resource management agencies and water providers. C.R.S. 30-28-133(6)(a) requires that any subdivision has "a water supply that is sufficient in terms of quantity, dependability and quality to provide an appropriate supply of water". It is incumbent that Delta County work closely with water providers and the State Engineer to evaluate the adequacy of water supply plans for subdivisions.

The County also reviews land development plans so they do not interfere with the conveyance of water through existing ditches and water facilities. The planning and design

stage for future subdivisions offers the opportunity for lot owners and irrigation water providers to define equitable arrangements for the utilization of irrigation water rights that are available to the development as well as to arrange adequate procedures for protecting and retaining secured water rights from unintentional abandonment. Drainage and erosion development standards address impacts of run-off on water quality. The County has the opportunity to protect historical and prescriptive access through the subdivision process. Effective planning around water issues requires Delta County to have clear and consistent communication with water regulatory agencies and providers.

The Environmental Health Department administers regulations regarding septic systems and floodplains and is continually expanding the knowledge of water systems in the county to inform discussions about water resources management. Additionally, access to irrigation infrastructure by all users of the irrigation system is a critical issue.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 3.0 – Engage with federal, state and local water resource agencies and land conservation entities to advocate for conservation and the continued productive use of established water rights.

Strategy 3.0.1 – Research, promote, and encourage wise use of water.

Strategy 3.0.2 – Maximize the efficient use of water supplies and support long-term water supply planning.

Goal 3.1 – Coordinate with appropriate federal, state and local water resource agencies and water providers to address current and future water sources.

Strategy 3.1.0 – Develop and maintain an inventory of existing domestic water distribution systems that includes the estimated capacity available to serve new customers.

Strategy 3.1.1 – Evaluate the long-term viability and facility needs of existing domestic water distribution systems.

Strategy 3.1.2 – Coordinate with state and local agencies and water providers to ensure that proposed development projects are consistent with domestic water system requirements.

Strategy 3.1.3 – Establish land use and development standards to avoid disturbance of existing ditches and other water infrastructure.

Strategy 3.1.4 – Establish land use and development standards directing future developments to continue to irrigate and maintain existing irrigated lands.

Strategy 3.1.5 – Strengthen subdivision regulations to protect and preserve historical and prescriptive access to irrigation infrastructure by all irrigation users.

Strategy 3.1.6 – Work with partner agencies to identify strategies that can help protect existing water quality from future development of all types.

Goal 3.2 – Work with water resource and land management agencies to maintain and improve surface and groundwater quality and quantity.

Strategy 3.2.0 – Continue to study the regional groundwater systems to:

- Better understand the quality and location of groundwater resources throughout the county.
- Identify land and water resource management practices to protect groundwater quality and quantity.

Strategy 3.2.1 – Develop standards for proposed future land uses and activities to avoid or minimize impacts on ground or surface water quality, and provide for water resource development and conservation.

Strategy 3.2.2 – Map groundwater and surface water source areas that supply domestic and irrigation providers.

Strategy 3.2.3 – Convene a working group of water interests and legal experts to evaluate Delta County’s long term water supply, develop strategies for addressing long term policy in the county, and provide ongoing support to the County in its cooperative role with multiple water agencies.

2.4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VISION

Delta County encourages and welcomes new business and industrial growth and strives to clearly identify areas in the county where business and industry may locate with processes that are fair and predictable. Growing and diversifying the economy will create needed jobs and increase the tax base that funds critical assets and services.

CORE VALUES

Delta County is in a period of economic transition as the economic activity associated with coal mining is in a period of decline. Additionally, full recovery following the 2008 recession has yet to be achieved. The tax base of countywide governmental entities is at critical risk as internal and external forces exert downward pressure on the tax base; meanwhile demand for services, maintenance and upkeep of infrastructure is increasing. The economic development strategy and the county's fiscal goals and policies need to be aligned to generate the revenues that are and will be needed.

The county has always had and continues to have a strong agricultural and natural resource base. In the face of recent decline and ongoing uncertainty in the natural resources extraction sector, residents see growing opportunities in many other economic sectors. It is broadly recognized that Delta County's economic advantage is tied to its community and natural resources. Outdoor recreation on public lands is one of the county's greatest assets both for attracting visitors and as a major contributor to quality of life. To become more competitive, Delta County must continue to invest in its community, agricultural and recreational assets.

The county's current economy is built on the ingenuity and creativity of many individuals and local businesses across numerous economic sectors including government, health care, agriculture, retail, and more. Diversifying and expanding opportunities across the economic sectors will expand livelihoods and boost the tax base needed to provide public infrastructure and services. Delta County needs to grow the diversity of economic industries in the county, while maintaining what makes Delta County attractive to residents. This Master Plan recognizes and places the highest emphasis on economic growth that aligns with local values and does not degrade the characteristics that form the quality of life in

BROADBAND

Broadband networks support and enhance business development, increase productivity and facilitate job creation by opening new markets. The county continues to engage with partners to expand the broadband network. Local Broadband efforts began in 2013 with a planning grant award to Region 10 from the Department of Local Affairs to design and construct a Broadband "backbone" throughout the counties comprising Region 10.

the county. Local values include a fierce sense of independence, strong support for private property rights, a reluctance for regulation but growing acknowledgement that reasonable thoughtful regulation is necessary, connection to outdoor recreation, personal connection to healthy local food, valuing community input, protection of the region’s clean air and clean water and preservation of natural resources. Economic development efforts need to improve predictability for future businesses looking to grow or relocate; foster the entrepreneurial spirit and support home-based business and cottage industry; and promote, strengthen, preserve and build upon the county’s strongest assets.

Delta County has many strengths that can help it expand its economy. In addition to its natural assets and quality of life, the county is home to an award winning hospital, recognized as one of the top 20 rural hospitals in the nation. The county has a great school district, and access to key transportation networks including highway corridors, access to rail, two county airports and regional air services.

Delta County has an extensive and expanding broadband infrastructure that opens the door to technology-based businesses and to attracting “location neutral” businesses and employees. “Location neutral” refers to business activities that do not require designated, physical spaces (such as an office headquarters) as long as a broadband connection is available. The county also has quality outdoor recreation access, excellent transportation corridors, access to rail, access to an educated and skilled work force, quality business support programs and unique communities. The county has a great opportunity to diversify outside of the traditional economic sectors moving forward to the next generation of economic development, particularly in the areas of creative industries, outdoor recreation services and equipment, information and technology, manufacturing, retail trade, wholesale trade, professional services and tourism.

WHAT ARE THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES?

The ‘creative industries’ refer to businesses that are founded with creativity as their basis.

Examples include but are not limited to these examples: advertising & graphic design, computer designs/games, architecture, arts (painting, sculpture, drawing, etc.) design, film, music, the performing arts, podcasting, publishing, TV/radio, visual arts. More specifically, the industry is built on leveraging intellectual property to generate jobs.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 4.0 – Explore options for utilizing incentives to encourage business development that supports the community’s core values and results in improving livelihoods.

Strategy 4.0.0 – Promote the use of the state and federal economic development incentives that are currently available.

Strategy 4.0.1 – Explore additional incentives that Delta County and its economic development partners could feasibly offer.

Goal 4.1 – Align land use and development policies and regulations with core values for economic development by defining where business and industry may locate as a permitted land use.

Goal 4.2 – Continue working with economic development partners county-wide and regionally to refine economic strategies that build on the diversity within the county and on the strengths of its communities.

Strategy 4.2.0 – Develop leadership programs to draw more business owners into county-wide discussions about economic development.

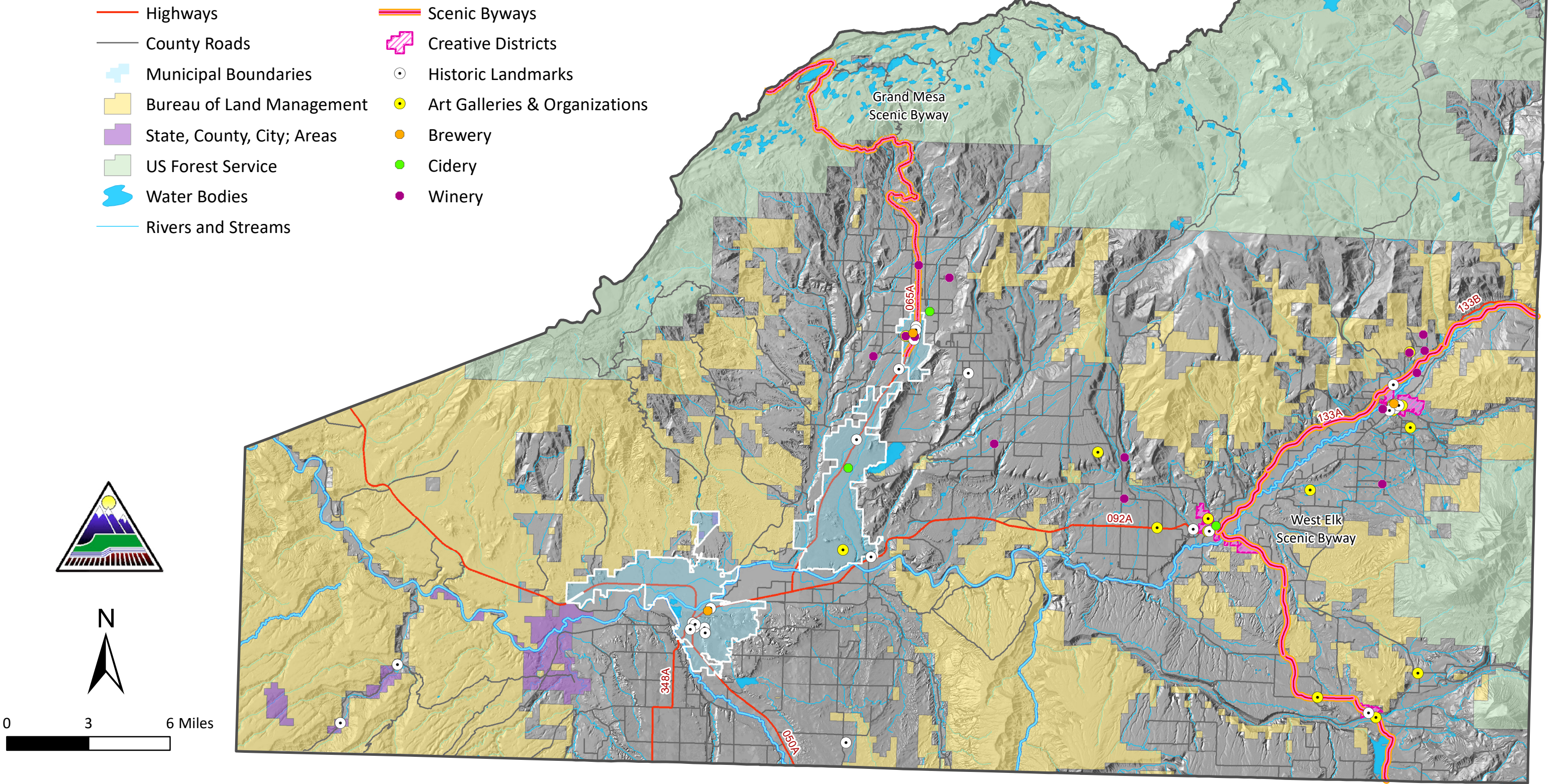
Strategy 4.2.1 – Develop a proactive strategy for attracting location neutral businesses and jobs to Delta County.

Strategy 4.2.2 – Work with each community to build collaborative partnerships to strengthen and enhance their economic advantages.

Strategy 4.2.3 – Identify barriers to economic development in Delta County and develop strategies to address those barriers.

Delta County Master Plan

- Arts & Culture -



2.5 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

VISION

Delta County's land use processes will be fair, predictable, defensible and easily understood. Growth and development in the county supports the community's desired future while enhancing health, safety, welfare, quality of life, while fostering innovation.

CORE VALUES

During the community vision meetings, residents expressed a desire to be a county where neighbors work with neighbors to address and resolve issues. This spirit was captured in the 1997 Master Plan and in the county land use regulations and is a guiding principle moving forward. Another guiding principle of the 1997 Master Plan and of the county's land use regulations since has been to limit how and when Delta County regulates land use. This limited regulatory environment, while intended to protect private property rights, has created an unpredictable system for both applicants seeking land use approval and neighbors. Limited land use and development regulations have advantages and are an important part of what makes Delta County unique. However, the complexity of land use and development applications continues to rise and the land use and development regulations need to be recalibrated to better serve the county.

The existing process for land use and development review needs to be more user-friendly for applicants and neighbors and needs to better implement the community's values and desired future. Revisions to the land use and development standards and procedures need to encourage thoughtful and beneficial development while also preserving the characteristics that form quality of life in the county while maintaining private property rights. Changes to the land and development regulations need to maintain flexibility to allow for innovation and creativity and to balance the needs of the applicant with those of their neighbors. Revised processes should create more meaningful ways for public participation that helps to resolve issues and conflicts as opposed to creating a stand-off between different interests.

Future development needs to fit within the existing carrying capacity of public infrastructure and services or it needs to add the capacity required to accommodate the new development. Development in the county should be directed to areas with adequate infrastructure such as drinking water and transportation and with adequate services such as law enforcement, fire and ambulance. Areas that have special characteristics such as productive agricultural land, wildlife habitat, historic resources, access to outdoor recreation, or natural hazards deserve careful consideration. Revisions to the land use and development standards and procedures are needed to promote long-term economic viability for landowners while protecting the foundational characteristics of the land.

The intent of this Master Plan is to rationally plan for growth while also protecting property rights, addressing impacts on neighboring properties and protecting the most important land and economic resources. Future land use regulations need to maintain a balance between community goals and individual property rights and must be consistent, fair, predictable and easily understood. Today, most low-density residential and agricultural uses are allowed anywhere in the county with minimal regulations except for a list of specific types of uses that require county approval through the specific development regulations (Spring 2018). Specific development include confined feeding animal operations, salvage yards, gravel pits, oil and gas operations, and other commercial and industrial activity that might adversely impact neighboring existing uses. An access permit, a septic permit, and an address permit are the only approvals needed. All other uses require an application submittal and review process that includes public meetings with the designated Area Planning Committee, the County Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners. Because the current review process results in either approval or denial of the proposed use, there is a high degree of uncertainty about what one can do on their property beyond the limited allowed land uses listed above. The intent of rewriting the land use regulations is to increase the level of certainty. By doing so, new land use regulations will support and encourage viable uses of private property while informing and offering protection to existing property owners.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 5.0 – Facilitate business, industrial and residential development by revising the land use and development regulatory processes and standards to make the regulations clear, predictable, consistent, timely and cost-effective.

Strategy 5.0.0 – Update the land development regulations to clearly answer these questions for any landowner or applicant:

- What can I do with this property?
- What infrastructure is needed to support my use?
- What potential impacts on neighboring land uses need to be addressed?
- What is the process, start-to-finish?
- What are the definitions of the terms in the regulations?

Strategy 5.0.1 – Evaluate enforceability and ease of use when considering changes to the land use and development regulations.

Strategy 5.0.2 – Establish clear and timely development application procedures that encourage meaningful public participation.

Goal 5.1 – Encourage business, industrial, and residential development while protecting the resources that contribute to the economy and are integral to the quality of life in the

county, protecting the health, safety, and welfare of residents, and while informing and offering protection to existing property owners.

Strategy 5.1.0 – Identify productive and potentially productive agricultural lands, including those that are or could be irrigated, and establish site planning and design standards and incentives that keep agricultural lands intact in future developments.

Strategy 5.1.1 – Identify valuable wildlife habitat, natural and cultural landmarks and natural hazards and avoid or minimize impacts on these features in site planning and design of future development.

Strategy 5.1.2 – Identify existing developed residential neighborhoods and rural-residential areas and apply consistent countywide standards for uses and physical development parameters.

Strategy 5.1.3 – Encourage home occupation and cottage industry businesses and set standards for allowed uses and physical development that may occur associated with home-based businesses.

Strategy 5.1.4 – Encourage a diversity of housing types and allow creativity and flexibility for buildings.

Strategy 5.1.5 – Establish clear standards and procedures for enforcing cleanup of refuse, debris, abandoned and dilapidated structures and inoperable vehicles and explore incentives and programs to encourage voluntary cleanup.

Strategy 5.1.6—Incorporate access and continuity of trails in future development design.

Strategy 5.1.7 – Preserve the dark sky resource of Delta County with the objective of minimizing light pollution created by new development

Goal 5.2 – Encourage and direct future development that optimizes access to existing infrastructure and public service capacity and that does not strain infrastructure and public service providers.

Strategy 5.2.0 – Identify locations and create standards for future business/industrial developments and residential neighborhoods where adequate water, public infrastructure and services are in place or can be feasibly expanded.

Strategy 5.2.1 – Develop revenue mechanisms to ensure that new development pays its fair share of the cost of expanding public infrastructure needed to serve that development.

Goal 5.3 – To protect citizens' core values of limiting county regulations, ensure that any new or existing land use regulations provide targeted regulations needed to effectively address clearly defined problems.

2.6 PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES AND ASSETS

VISION

Delta County provides thoughtfully planned and coordinated infrastructure and services that support the health, safety, and welfare of county residents. Projects, improvements and maintenance are prioritized to meet the needs of the community, to maintain the physical assets already invested in by the community and to protect those investments well into the future.

CORE VALUES

Public services are provided by governmental and private entities throughout the county. Delta County has 33 separate governmental taxing entities, numerous private water providers and the presence of state and federal agencies including BLM, Forest Service and the USDA. All of these entities share a part in shaping future development and are part of day to day life including essential services such as public schools, health care, recreation, fire and ambulance. It is critical to communicate and coordinate ongoing efforts.

The public assets and public services provided by agencies throughout the county contribute to the overall quality of life for county residents and to the regional economy. Transportation networks, public lands access and management and core public services such as fire, law enforcement, education, water, sewer and public health are essential to the day to day lives of all residents. Residents look to Delta County to collaborate with the land managers, local governments and public service agencies to advocate for quality services, ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and ongoing investment in assets and infrastructure. Likewise, residents look to Delta County to manage and maintain its existing assets and infrastructure and provide thoughtful expansion of county infrastructure where it makes the most sense.

COUNTY ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

CORE VALUES

The transportation network located throughout the county is an evolving system of rural roads, many of which were not built to handle large volumes of traffic or heavy truck traffic that exists today. There are 738 miles of county roads and maintenance of existing roads and reconstruction of key roads is an ongoing challenge. The County's limited resources are prioritized year-to-year to meet growing demands.

Delta County has a lack of multi-modal transportation, although limited regional bus service is provided through All Points Transit, a regional non-profit. Developing multi-modal transportation will be a challenge given the rural nature of the county. However, as

we face growing and changing needs of the community such as an aging population and an influx of young families, the County needs to evaluate its transportation plans and policies. Community members have clearly expressed a desire for more bike-friendly transportation routes, such as increasing road width and paving road shoulders. There is likely going to be increased demand for transportation services as the senior population grows.

Community members expressed overall satisfaction with the way county roads are maintained, with some exceptions. Individuals expressed frustration about road networks outside of Delta County's control. This community sentiment emphasizes the need to work cooperatively to plan for local and regional transportation infrastructure including county roads, state highways and municipal roads. Partnering with municipalities to better coordinate road design and maintenance will help address concerns relating to public infrastructure that interfaces between Delta County and the municipalities.

The county is fortunate to have an active rail system running from Grand Junction south to Montrose and east to Paonia and into Gunnison County. The primary demand for rail activity is from the coal industry, but there are numerous other businesses dependent on access to rail. Maintaining and evolving the role of rail infrastructure for transporting goods and for public transportation will require deliberate and coordinated effort given that a continued decline in the coal industry is anticipated.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.0 – Integrate land use planning with county transportation capital improvements planning and maintenance prioritization.

Strategy 6.0.0 – Inventory county roads and bridges constructed to serve high traffic volumes and evaluate the suitability of these travel corridors as areas to accommodate future development.

Strategy 6.0.1 – Inventory county roads and bridges constructed to serve commercial trucks and evaluate the suitability of these travel corridors to accommodate future development that includes commercial truck traffic.

Strategy 6.0.2 – Delineate areas served by county roads and bridges not designed to serve high traffic volumes or commercial truck traffic and recognize the constraints on future development in these areas.

Strategy 6.0.3 – Map planned county road extensions and capacity improvements to existing roads and evaluate the suitability of these travel corridors as areas to accommodate future development.

Strategy 6.0.4 – Plan for capacity improvements to county roads in areas that are exceptionally suitable for future development but that currently do not possess road capacities to serve future development.

Strategy 6.0.5 – Identify routes for bike lanes and pedestrian paths that would be well-utilized along roads that could be feasibly improved to meet best practice design standards for connected community routes that include wayfinding.

Strategy 6.0.6 – Continue to refine and adapt the systematic approach to programming county road and bridge maintenance and concurrently plan for maintenance, capital improvements and long-term budgeting.

Goal 6.1 – Establish long range regional transportation policies to articulate the community’s vision and goals to regional transportation infrastructure partners.

Strategy 6.1.0 – Continue to advocate for community transportation goals through Colorado Department of Transportation regional transportation planning and during the development of highway access management and corridor plans.

Strategy 6.1.1 – Advocate for sustaining rail infrastructure and evolving its use as a long-term component of local and regional transportation infrastructure including private rail sitings. The current railroad infrastructure is an essential asset that can move goods, provide mass transit, and help to minimize air pollution, safety risks, and upkeep costs to the County’s transportation network as the population and economy grow.

Strategy 6.1.2 – Explore options with local, regional, state and federal partners for public transportation, especially for children, elders and special needs populations. These options will address access to essential services such as libraries, schools, post offices, medical providers, and grocery stores.

Strategy 6.1.3—Coordinate with municipalities regarding design and maintenance standards and plans where county-municipality jurisdiction overlaps, especially within each municipality’s 3-mile planning boundary.

PUBLIC LANDS

CORE VALUES

Public lands make up 56% of Delta County, and forms the backdrop of Delta County, and is the foundation of much of the county’s economy, agriculture, and quality of life. Delta County has a long history of working cooperatively with federal agencies including the BLM and US Forest Service. The County should continue to take a proactive approach to its relationship with these federal agencies to ensure coordination on issues that impact the County’s economy, quality of life, and residents. Delta County asserts its role as a Cooperating Agency when the BLM or US Forest Service update their plans such as resource management plans, forest plans, rulemaking, species listing, etc. Likewise, Delta County coordinates with neighboring counties on issues of mutual concern.

Delta County residents identify access to public lands and the activities that they participate in on public lands, whether it be for commerce or pleasure, as critical to their overall quality of life. Public lands contribute significantly to the Delta County's economy with inputs into several sectors such as agriculture, grazing, mining, recreation and tourism. Many of the county's ranchers rely on summer grazing on federal lands. Delta County is in full support of multiple use management of public lands and will work with federal and state agencies so that there is no net loss of Animal Unit Months for livestock grazing on public lands.

Access to all public lands and waterways is a shared value in the county and is the top priority. There is untapped potential to continue to build more economic activity from public lands activity in all industries. Recreation and tourism supported by public lands, especially the newly created National Conservation Areas, have great potential for the county. This will require careful coordination with public land management agencies to ensure adequate resources are made available to build the infrastructure necessary to support public access.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) oversee a wide range of activities that permit residents and visitors to enjoy the plethora of outdoor recreational opportunities available in our region. CPW oversees fishing and hunting licenses, monitors wildlife, and facilitates conservation efforts for the county's three state parks. Support for this agency is important to the county's citizens to preserve and enhance the value of the outdoors. Partnering with organizations like the CPW and others to enhance and install infrastructure such as directional signage, trailheads, parking, restrooms, picnic areas and campgrounds is critical for the long-term viability and attractiveness of our public lands. Delta County has been and will continue to be a cooperating partner with federal and state land agencies through such as the CPW and United States Forest Service and with other counties on issues of mutual concern.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.2 – Support and advocate for multiple use of public lands that balances agricultural uses, recreation, habitat preservation, wildlife and natural resource development.

Strategy 6.2.0 – Work with federal and state land agencies to maintain livestock grazing activity on public lands to achieve no net loss of Animal Units Months.

Strategy 6.2.1 Identify wildlife habitat and corridors on state and federal lands to protect the economic and ecological value wildlife provides the county through hunting and tourism.

Goal 6.3 – Work with land management agencies to improve and expand outdoor recreation assets and to maintain and enhance public access to public lands.

Strategy 6.3.0 – Work with state and federal land agencies to identify federal and state funding to address infrastructure impacts associated with public lands including impacts to roads and other public facilities.

Goal 6.4 – Identify and maintain the legitimacy of existing public easements and other established public access to public lands and waterways and work with partners to obtain additional easements from willing landowners that expand access to public lands.

Goal 6.5 – Continue to participate as a cooperating agency with federal regulatory and land management agencies, e.g., Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), etc.

Strategy 6.5.1 – Engage in active dialogue with land management and mineral management agencies to include county-wide values in natural resource management and development decisions.

Strategy 6.5.2 – Coordinate planning efforts and work to integrate county plans, such as this master plan and trails plan, into federal and state land decision processes.

Strategy 6.5.3 – Identify opportunities to improve mapping of resources between County, BLM, US Forest Service, and state agencies. Mapping efforts should be coordinated, and data shared, to identify key wildlife habitat and corridors, trails, recreation, and areas of economic activity including grazing allotments, timber allotments, and conservation easements.

HAZARD MITIGATION

At the time of writing this Master Plan, the County has a concurrent hazard mitigation plan underway. The intent is to revisit this section once that plan is complete and adopted.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.6 – Create, adopt and periodically update a hazard mitigation plan.

Goal 6.7 – Secure federal and state funding pursuant to the hazard mitigation plan and complete the capital improvements needed to reduce risk.

Goal 6.8 – Create, adopt and periodically update an emergency preparedness plan.

COORDINATION WITH MUNICIPALITIES AND UTILITY PROVIDERS

CORE VALUES

Each municipality in Delta County plays an integral part in shaping future development and are the location of core services including water and sewer, fire stations, schools,

hospitals/clinics, libraries and police stations. Strategic and coordinated development in the growth management areas around each municipality continues to be critical. Delta County has intergovernmental agreements with four of its municipalities that provide guidance for reviewing development applications in currently unincorporated growth management areas around each municipality. These agreements are the foundation for continued adaptive management of land uses and the provision of municipal utilities. Delta County and each municipality need to revisit these agreements in light of the policies contained in this Master Plan and the most current municipal master plans. Other utility providers such as natural gas, electricity and communications are equally important players in serving the residents and future development.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.9 – Revisit the adopted intergovernmental agreements regarding development in growth management areas delineated around each municipality and determine the need for updates such as more closely aligning infrastructure standards for new development inside of the growth management area with those adopted by each municipality.

Goal 6.10 – Coordinate planning efforts between the municipalities and Delta County especially in designated growth areas. Specifically, ensure coordination and communication occurs related to economic development; transportation; land use; residential, commercial, and industrial development, in order to create greater consistency and mutual support among jurisdictions.

Goal 6.11 – Work with municipalities to better define potential annexation areas while being mindful of unincorporated county residents and agricultural operations.

Goal 6.12 – Encourage and support municipalities in adopting business-friendly environments through supportive regulations and procedures that aid in job creation.

Goal 6.13 – Identify opportunities to leverage shared services agreements with municipalities to maximize existing resources and minimize the cost of providing services.

Goal 6.14 – Increase communication with water, sewer and other utility providers to ensure growth is encouraged where adequate services can be feasibly provided.

Strategy 6.14.0 – Revisit land use and development referral procedures to ensure service providers are able to provide an adequate evaluation of proposed developments.

Strategy 6.14.1 – Ensure that access to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure are not impeded by future development and provide linkages to pedestrian trails and bike lanes to protect connected communities.

PUBLIC SAFETY

CORE VALUES

Public safety agencies including the sheriff, municipal police departments, fire and ambulance services continue to experience increased demands for services. The tax base of all public safety entities county-wide is at risk as internal and external forces exert downward pressure on the tax base, meanwhile demand for services is increasing. This challenge presents Delta County and the municipalities with an opportunity to further explore shared services, especially as they relate to public safety.

Public safety organizations have limited staff yet demand for services is growing. Likewise, there will be an ongoing need to continue to upgrade equipment and facilities such as the courthouse, jail and dispatch center to keep up with both emerging technology and changing requirements. Economic development efforts strive to diversify the tax base to more completely fund these services. The feasibility of providing and funding public safety needs to be evaluated when planning future development.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 6.15 – Recognizing the challenge to provide public safety with existing resources and revenues, ensure that county law enforcement, emergency management and other public safety partners can adequately serve future growth and development.

Strategy 6.15.0 – Clarify and improve the process for the referral of development applications to public safety providers and the process for responding to comments submitted by those agencies or county departments.

Strategy 6.15.1 – Identify funding mechanisms for public safety infrastructure including facilities, vehicles and equipment.

Strategy 6.15.2 – Identify opportunities to coordinate public safety taxing requests to the public prior to engaging in formal ballot initiatives.

FISCAL VIABILITY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

CORE VALUES

Pressures on Delta County's tax base, challenges in finding adequate funds and ensuring that development pays its own way are all themes throughout this Master Plan. Public infrastructure and services are largely funded by taxes. The tax base that supports all governmental entities county-wide is under pressure. The Gallagher Amendment is driving down property tax revenue while TABOR limits the ability to increase taxes. Meanwhile, retail industry and consumer trends are stunting local sales tax collections.

Growing and diversifying the economy will also grow and diversify the tax base that funds these critical assets and services. While it is always best to work locally to solve problems, there is also a need to work with neighboring counties and organizations to participate in, or even help initiate, a statewide discussion around Colorado's tax policy.

GOAL

Goal 6.16 – Establish an economic growth strategy that in addition to diversifying and growing the economic base will also diversify and grow the tax base that is necessary to support public facilities and services.

WHAT IS THE TABOR AMENDMENT?

TABOR stands for the Taxpayer Bill of Rights. Taxpayers voted this amendment into the Colorado Constitution in 1992. TABOR prohibits tax increases without vote. It also strictly limits how much revenue the state may keep and spend. Revenues collected that exceed the TABOR revenue limits must be refunded to taxpayers. The challenge TABOR presents to governments is that it imposes a "ratchet effect" during economic recessions, that limits the amount of revenue they may keep. When revenue dips during times of economic recessions, the "ratchet effect" establishes a new revenue ceiling at this lowered level. Revenue and tax levels are not permitted to adjust to economic recoveries. This presents a significant challenge especially to rural governments that already operate on skeletal budgets.

WHAT IS THE GALLAGHER AMENDMENT?

Taxpayers adopted the Gallagher Amendment in 1982. The amendment is intended to "maintain a constant ratio between the property tax revenue that comes from residential property and from business property," according to Great Education Colorado. In effect, the amendment works by reducing property assessment rates when residential property values increase faster than business property values. The result of this amendment is that residential property values have declined by more than two-thirds since the amendment was adopted. The direct result is further decline in revenues collected from property taxes.

COUNTY RECREATION & TOURISM

Community members countywide have identified recreation and access to recreation assets as critical to the quality of life available in the county. Recreation is an economic asset, not just in terms of jobs created through recreation and tourism, but also in how recreational

assets serve as a key factor in creating healthy communities and attracting people to the community who will visit, stay, and prosper.

Recreational activities throughout the county include, but are not limited to:

- Motorized Trail Use (OHV, 4X4, Dirtbike, Snowmobiling, etc)
- Wildlife/Bird Viewing
- Non Motorized Trail Use (hiking, biking, backpacking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing)
- Photography
- Rock Climbing
- Shooting/Archery
- Rafting/Boating/Kayaking/SUP
- Heritage Tourism
- Hunting
- Agri-Tourism
- Fishing
- Outdoor Education
- Camping

Residents may enjoy more structured recreation, with recreation programming provided by municipal or recreation districts including swimming, sports, parks and playgrounds. Additionally, there are numerous private and non-profit social clubs and organizations that provide specialized recreation, often times reflecting the strong agricultural roots of the county such as rodeos, as well as schools. Many of the recreational activities enjoyed by residents, and that serve as a tourism attraction, are located within public lands owned and managed by BLM and the US Forest Service.

Delta County itself owns and maintains limited recreational assets, and does not have a recreation or parks department that provides recreational programming. However, Delta County does own and maintain assets that support recreation and tourism including the county road network which provides critical access to public lands and state lands. Additionally, the County owns and maintains the County Fairgrounds where numerous recreational and tourism driven events and activities occur.

Delta County has completed a Recreation Trails Master Plan (RTMP) along with this Master Plan. The RTMP addresses the variety of recreational activities enjoyed by residents and tourists throughout the county, and makes recommendations for project and policy priorities with a primary focus on trail development. Trails and road networks provide the connectivity and access to many of the places where Delta County residents and visitors recreate.

The County's Recreation Trails Master Plan is incorporated into this Master Plan By Resolution No. 2018-01. The RTMP and its goals and policies should be referenced and reviewed to better understand the County's recreational assets, and how the County will provide for the recreational needs and of residents and visitors as resources allow.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Goal 6.17— When evaluating public land recreation access, parking and recreation objectives articulated in the Delta County Recreation Trails Master Plan, consider county road maintenance and capital improvement priorities.

Strategy 6.17.0— Evaluate current and future access to recreation areas and trail systems and determine what land protections or other tools may be needed to address access.

Strategy 6.17.1—Work with partners to identify and obtain additional public trails easements from willing landowners.

Goal 6.18—Continue to coordinate and collaborate with municipalities, recreation districts, user groups, and public land agencies to facilitate the maintenance and development of county assets that improve recreational opportunities through thoughtful development of hiking trails, bikeways, and access to hunting, fishing, and boating potential on federal, state, municipal, and county lands.

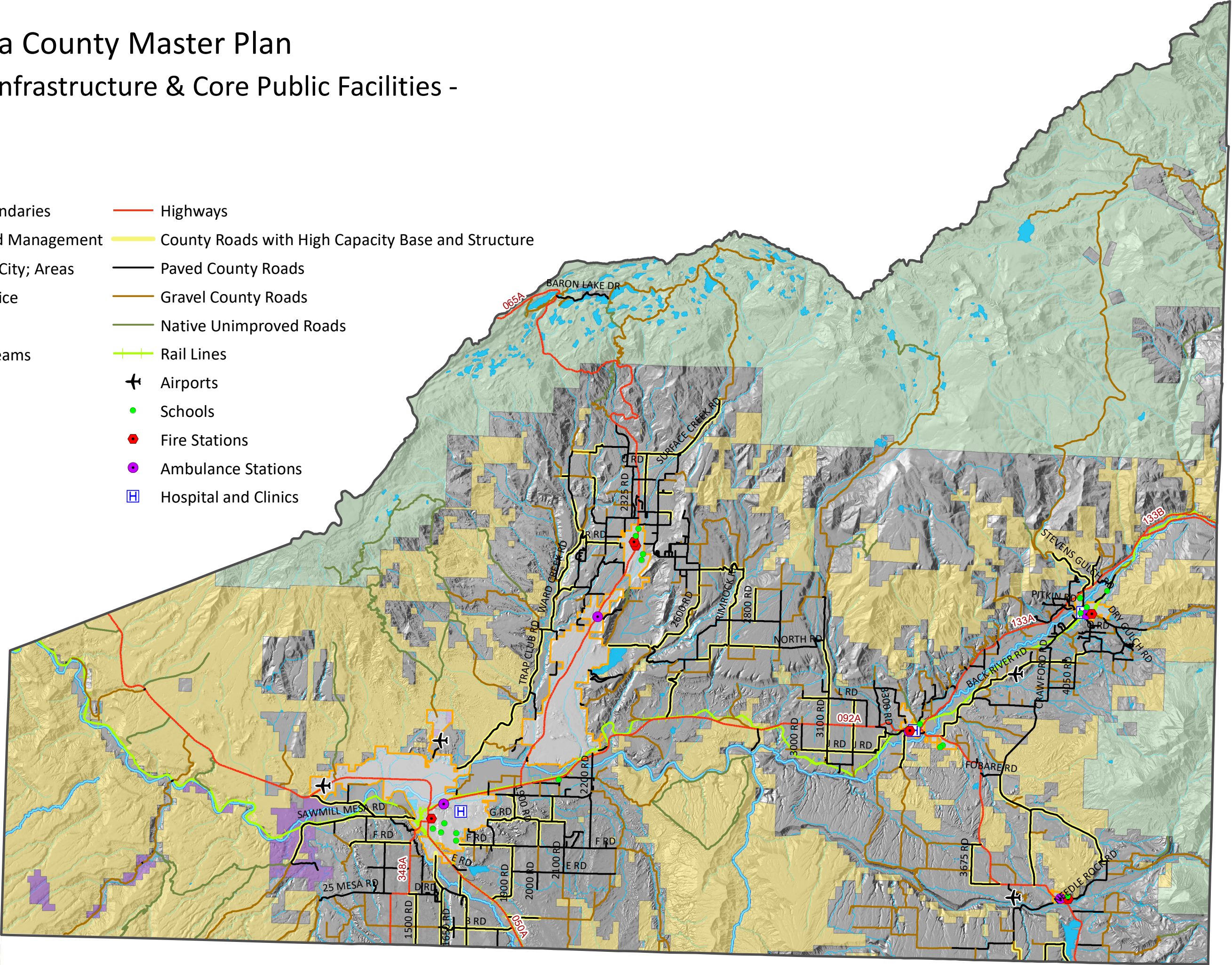
Strategy 6.18.0—Ensure that the development of any new recreational assets, including trails minimizes impacts to natural resources, agricultural activities, wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Goal 6.19—Advocate for the development of recreational assets that meet the needs of all residents including the young, elderly, disabled, and all user types.

Goal 6.20—Continue to work with tourism related organizations including the Delta County Tourism Board, Chambers of Commerce, Scenic Byways committee, Public Land entities to market and promote Delta County’s agri-tourism, heritage tourism, and recreation assets.

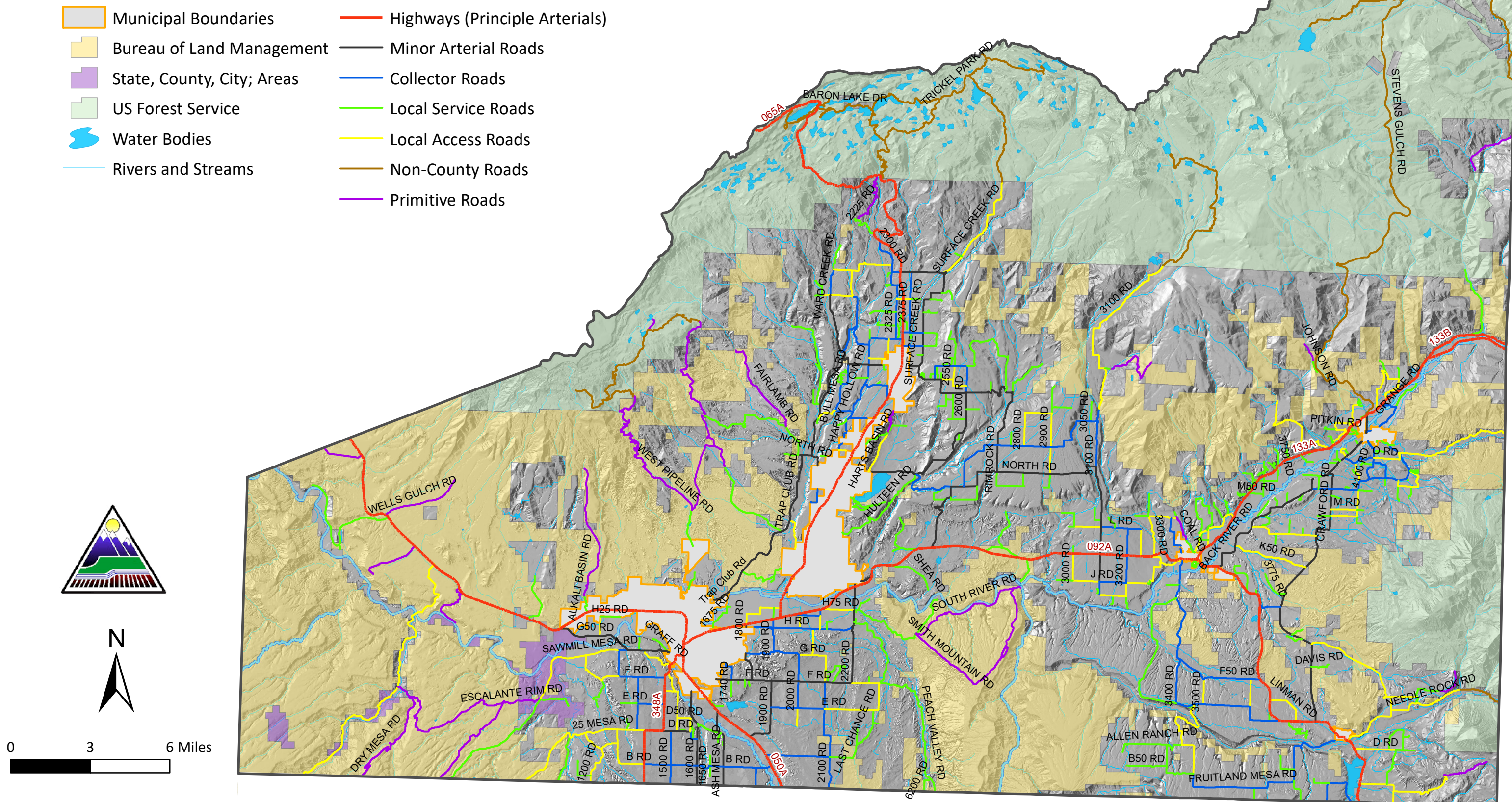
Delta County Master Plan

- Transportation Infrastructure & Core Public Facilities -



- 2009 Master Roads Plan - Roads Function Classification -

- 2009 Master Roads Plan - Roads Function Classification -



2.7 ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

VISION

Delta County has a vibrantly diverse energy development economy. The county is a leader in protecting clean air and water and continues to protect community health, safety, and welfare for present and future generations.

CORE VALUES

Delta County is the source for many types of energy resources including coal, oil and gas, biomass, hydro, coal methane and solar. Energy development has been a key part of the economy and culture of the county for decades. Coal will continue to be part of the energy sector but is subject to fluctuating markets. There is strong support county-wide for keeping energy development as a component of the economy and there is excitement about the future of renewable energy production.

Residents expressed support for oil and gas during the Master Plan process often citing the need for jobs and tax revenues. Residents also expressed concerns about the impacts and unintended consequences of future oil and gas development such as to water and air quality, county roads and other infrastructure and services. There is a concern that activity higher in the watersheds in Gunnison County will also impact Delta County.

Local government control over oil and gas development is limited in the State of Colorado. The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) and federal lands agencies including the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have primary jurisdiction over oil and gas development including regulating, permitting, monitoring and enforcement on both public and private lands. In the early 2000's, Delta County was one of the first local governments to regulate oil and gas activity and challenge the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission for local control over many aspects of oil and gas development. Delta County's early efforts helped motivate the COGCC to appoint Local Government Designees (LGDs). The LDG is the liaison between local governments and the COGCC to provide communications, information sharing, facilities monitoring and to address local concerns and values during the oil and gas development permitting.

Moving forward, Delta County needs to calibrate its land use and development regulations to address the short and long-term impacts of solid and fluid mineral energy development within the limits of its authority. Continued advocacy for local values in cooperation with state and federal agencies is paramount. This includes participation in rule-making of state and federal agencies such as Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), COGCC, and CPW among others.

The Oil and Gas working group is tasked with reviewing the County's oil and gas regulations, and helping the County and its partners better understand the County's role in oil and gas regulation. The oil and gas working group should look carefully at the Bureau of Land Management's Resource Management Plan for county watersheds, and consult with adjoining counties where oil and gas development is taking place, and visit those locations e.g. Collbran and Palisade and determine the impacts of such development. The working group should review any other available natural resource plans, and work to provide policy and regulatory recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission that respect the County's regulatory authority, but also leverage the County's relationships with other agencies to help elevate county-wide values.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 7.0 – Facilitate responsible, beneficial energy development in order to promote the wise use of natural resources, while also working with energy businesses, land and mineral management agencies, and neighboring county governments to eliminate or mitigate, to the maximum extent feasible within the County's jurisdiction, both on and off site impacts of energy development activities to the environment, water resources, communities, public infrastructure, surrounding land uses, and public health, safety, and welfare within.

Strategy 7.0.0 – Ensure that energy development pays for its impact to County infrastructure, facilities and services, and reclamation needed to serve business operations and facilities.

Strategy 7.0.1 – Evaluate county regulations covering oil and gas and mining to ensure that Delta County is effectively exercising the authority that is available to it.

Strategy 7.0.2 – Work in partnership with local, state, and federal agencies to maintain and improve communications and to advocate for local values. Consult with Mesa, Gunnison, and Montrose Counties regarding policies for oil and gas development and regulation thereof.

Strategy 7.0.3 – Develop and maintain an inventory and map of existing pipelines and other underground energy infrastructure.

Strategy 7.0.4 – Convene a working group of natural resource development experts, industry representatives, and residents for the time needed to evaluate Delta County's oil and gas regulations, keep the regulations up-to-date, and to make policy recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners.

Goal 7.1 – Encourage responsible and beneficial development of private, commercial and public renewable energy.

Strategy 7.1.0 – Develop clear standards for commercial renewable energy development covering location, scale, infrastructure needs and site planning.

Strategy 7.1.1 – Continue to encourage small-scale private renewable energy systems that meet safety requirements.

Delta County Master Plan

- Federal Mineral Estates -

- 

Municipal Boundaries
- 

Highways
- 

County Roads
- 

Bureau of Land Management
- 

State, County, City; Areas
- 

US Forest Service
- 

All Minerals
- 

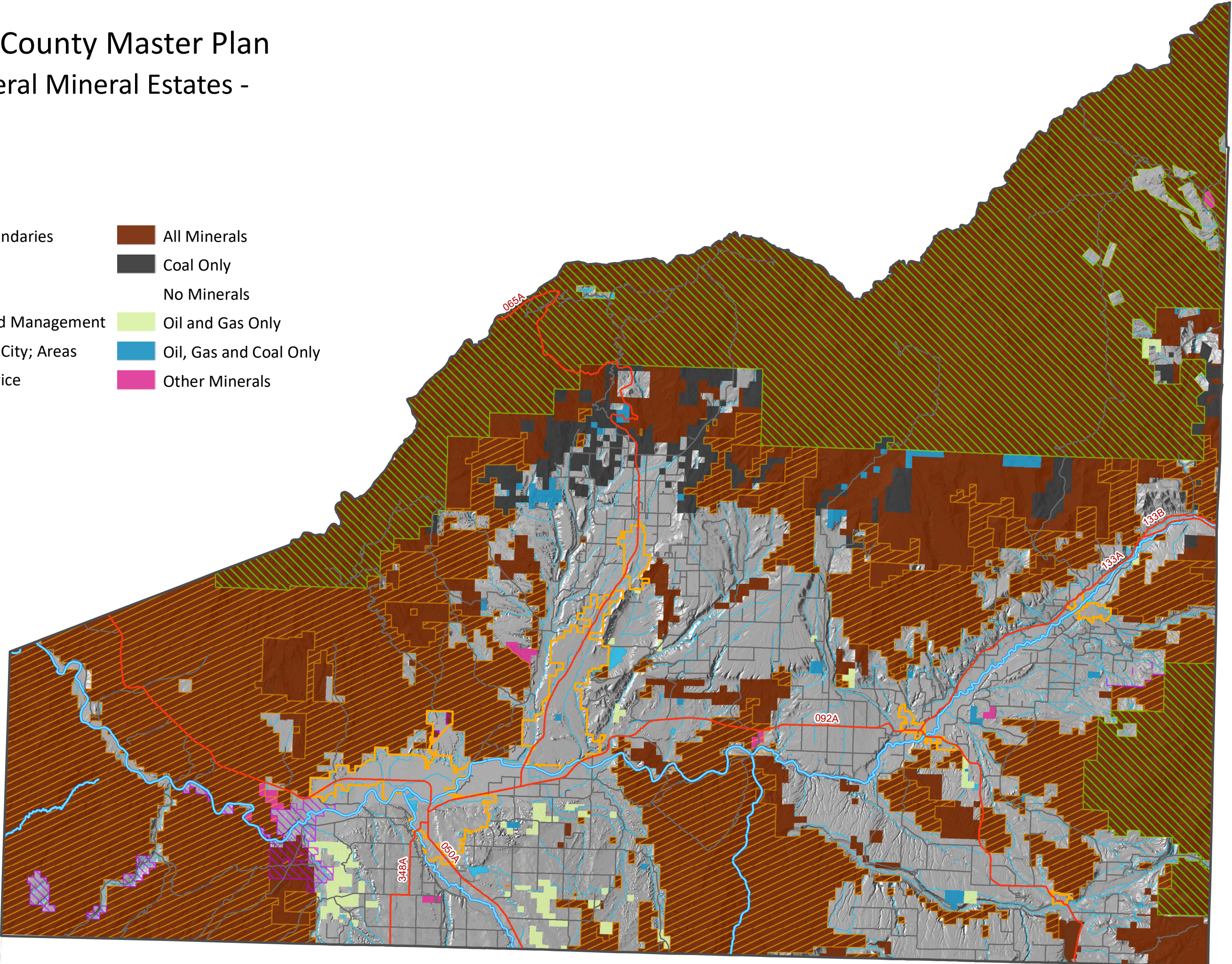
Coal Only
- 

No Minerals
- 


Oil and Gas Only
- 

Oil, Gas and Coal Only
- 

Other Minerals



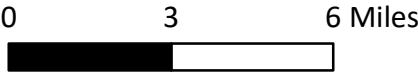
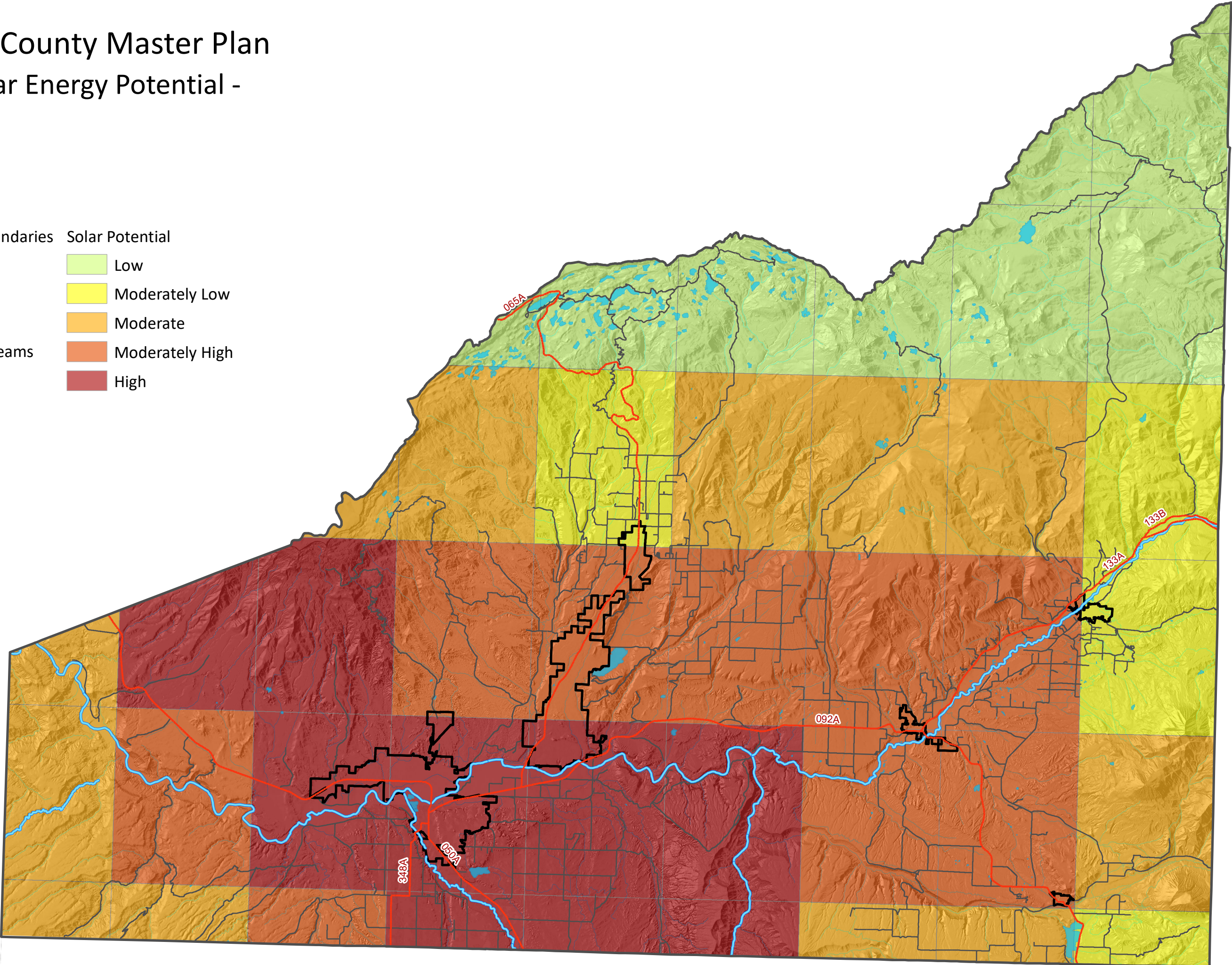
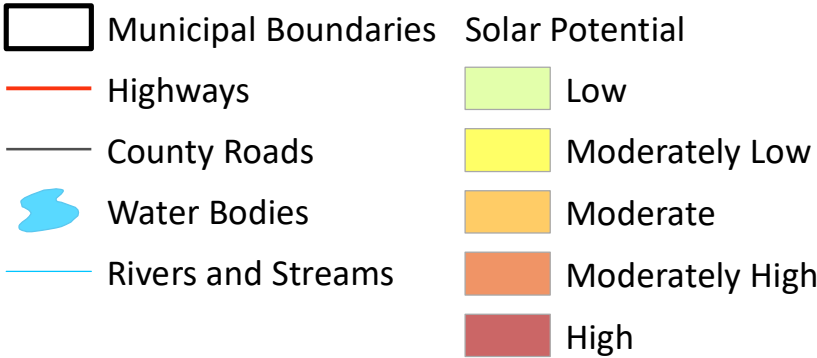
0 3 6 Miles



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Delta County Master Plan

- Solar Energy Potential -





Chapter Three



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN




3.1 FUTURE LAND USE PLAN OVERVIEW

The Future Land Use Plan provides additional physical planning guidance for implementing the Vision, Goals and Strategies. The Future Land Use Plan is advisory and presents general policy and is not the same as land use regulations. However, the Future Land Use Plan makes recommendations about changes to land use regulations and acts as a guide to property owners and developers to help them understand the community vision and make informed land-use decisions that support this vision. The Future Land Use Plan is broken into five designations that are applied in different locations across the county. These designations identify areas that have commonalities that will impact future growth and development. Each designation has a set of policies that can be used to help guide development of land use regulations. The designations are organized into three components:

- Existing Conditions – The current status of the land in each designation, the major assets and challenges that exist today.
- Desired Future Conditions – The vision for the future of the land in each designation, the desirable possibilities and opportunities and the preservation strategies.
- Infrastructure – The interrelationship between future land use policy and infrastructure current capacities and needed improvements.

The designation names, map symbols and a brief description are included below. For full details, refer to the full description of each designation following this introduction.

Designation	Description
Agriculture with Residential Interface 	These are areas where domestic water is widely available and where intact agricultural lands interface with residential development. Opportunity for future growth exists on non-agricultural undeveloped land where domestic water is available.
Intermixed Rural Communities & Agriculture 	These areas exhibit a diverse array of development patterns and land uses, with the underlying characteristic that there is a mosaic of agriculture and rural residential throughout the designation. These areas call for policies that balance between diverse land uses while assuring flexibility for creativity and adaptation.

<p>Agriculture and Domestic-Water-Limited Rural</p> 	<p>The combination of limited domestic water supply and a development pattern founded on larger parcels used for hay farming and ranching means that this area is the least intensively developed in the county. Domestic water supply limitations have tempered development in this area to date, but deliberate land use policies are needed to foster agriculture and to balance land conservation with future development.</p>
<p>Remote Agriculture</p> 	<p>These areas higher on the mesas and mountains hold many large intact ranch properties with dispersed clusters of residential parcels. These areas are mostly beyond the paved road network and remote from basic public services and while it is expected that the feasible development lots will develop, it is not an area where further subdivision is encouraged.</p>
<p>Growth Management Areas</p> 	<p>These are the areas delineated in Growth Management Agreements between the county and individual municipalities between 2007 and 2014. The Master Plan establishes unified county-level guidance for these five distinct areas around the City of Delta and the Towns of Paonia, Hotchkiss, Orchard City and Cedaredge.</p>

The Future Land Use Designations are followed by a series of maps displaying information utilized during the process of developing the designations (see 3.3 Background Information Maps, page 104). The maps show agricultural land use, residential land use, commercial land use, public infrastructure and facilities, water providers, natural hazards, jurisdictions and other land use and geographic information. The land use and parcel size analysis performed for each designation utilized Delta County GIS and Assessor data. The background information maps are intended to display some of the key information used in the land use analysis.

There are a lot of similarities in each FLUP designation, that may benefit from common approaches. The following general policies apply to all designations:

- The full range of land uses, activities, structures, future innovations and infrastructure associated with agricultural enterprises are allowed and expected uses on agricultural lands as well as other types of businesses that are symbiotic with agricultural lands and support the long-term viability of the agricultural use.
- Design future developments on agricultural lands to maximize the agricultural land that remains intact and productive for the long-term.
- A new regulatory system is needed to address future conflicts that are likely to continue between rural residential, agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. This regulatory system should identify what range of land uses are permitted and

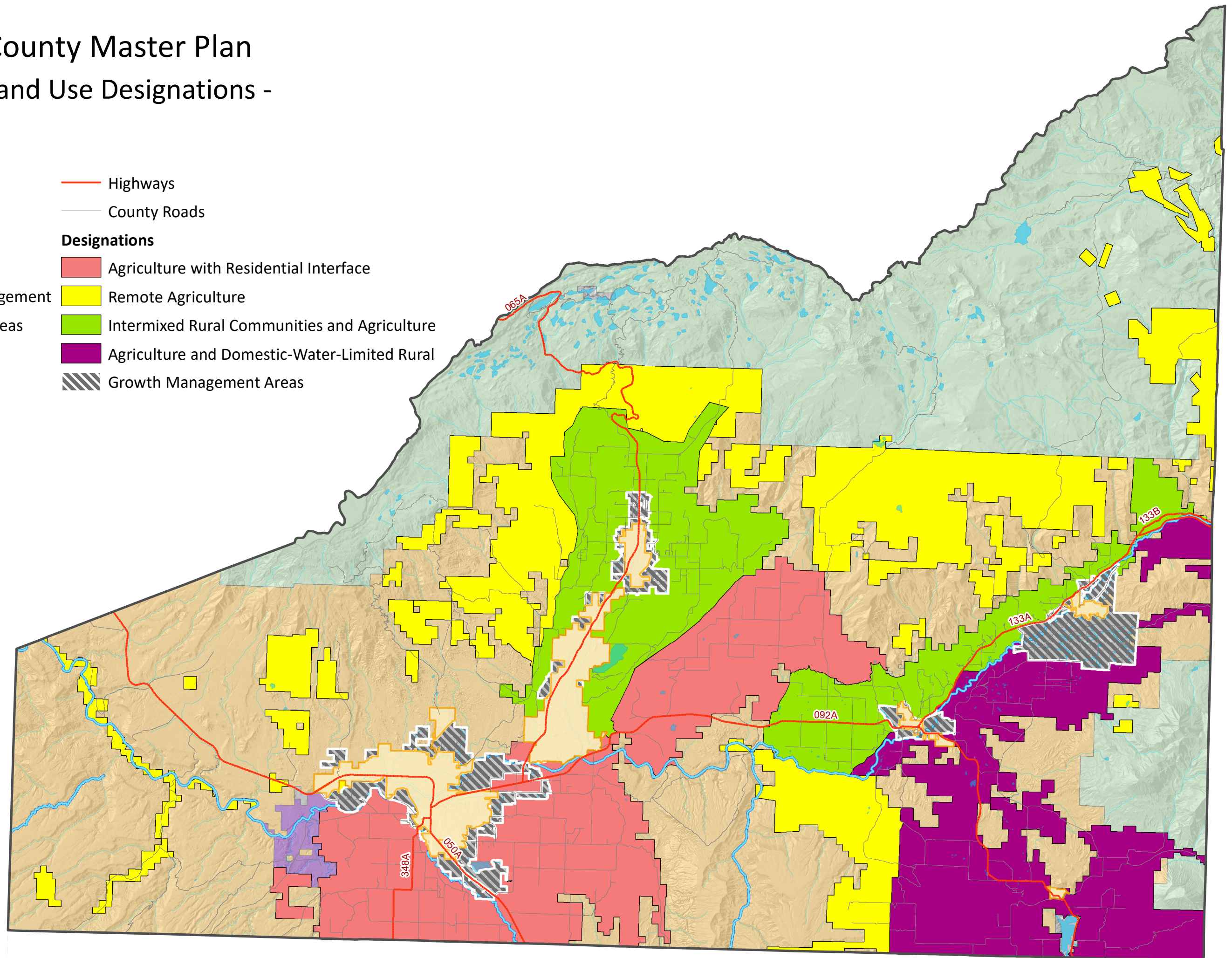
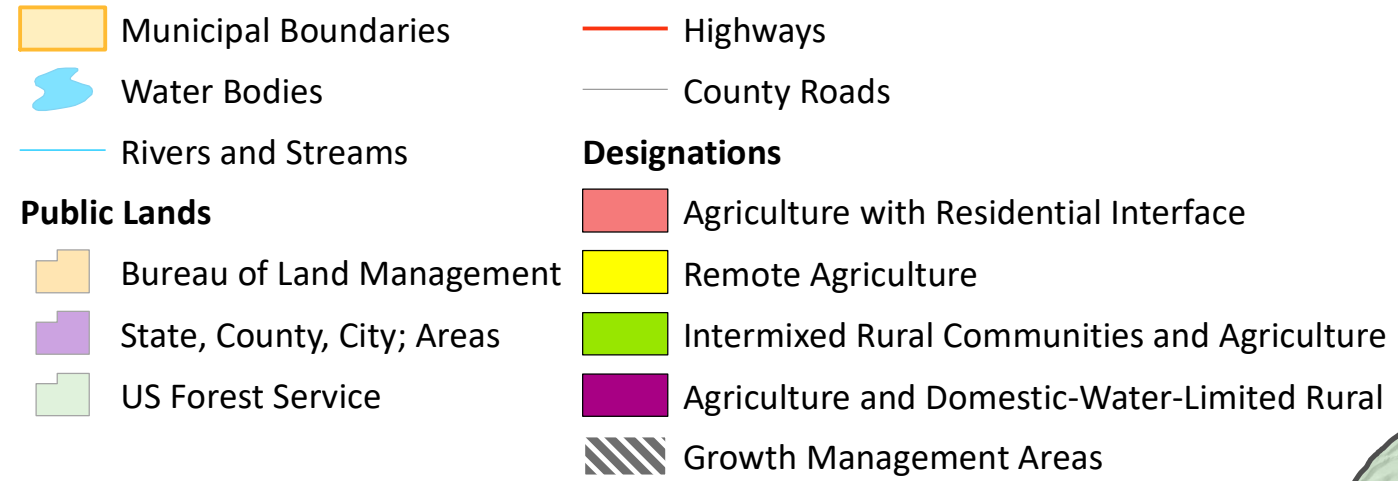
where different types of land uses are allowed. Property owners across the county will be encouraged to participate collaboratively in determining permitted land uses for their property based on new land use regulations that are fair, predictable and offer protection to property owners.

- Encourage future higher impact commercial and industrial development to locate in proximity to similar existing operations and in locations with adequate road, water, utility, and sewer infrastructure, while mitigating impacts on surrounding agricultural and residential uses.

However, there are some unique qualities in each designation that may require additional policy consideration. These differences are identified in greater detail further in this document. The policies in each Future Land Use Designation need to be read collectively. The policies are not listed by or intended to be viewed as one having priority over another.

Delta County Master Plan

- Future Land Use Designations -



3.2 FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

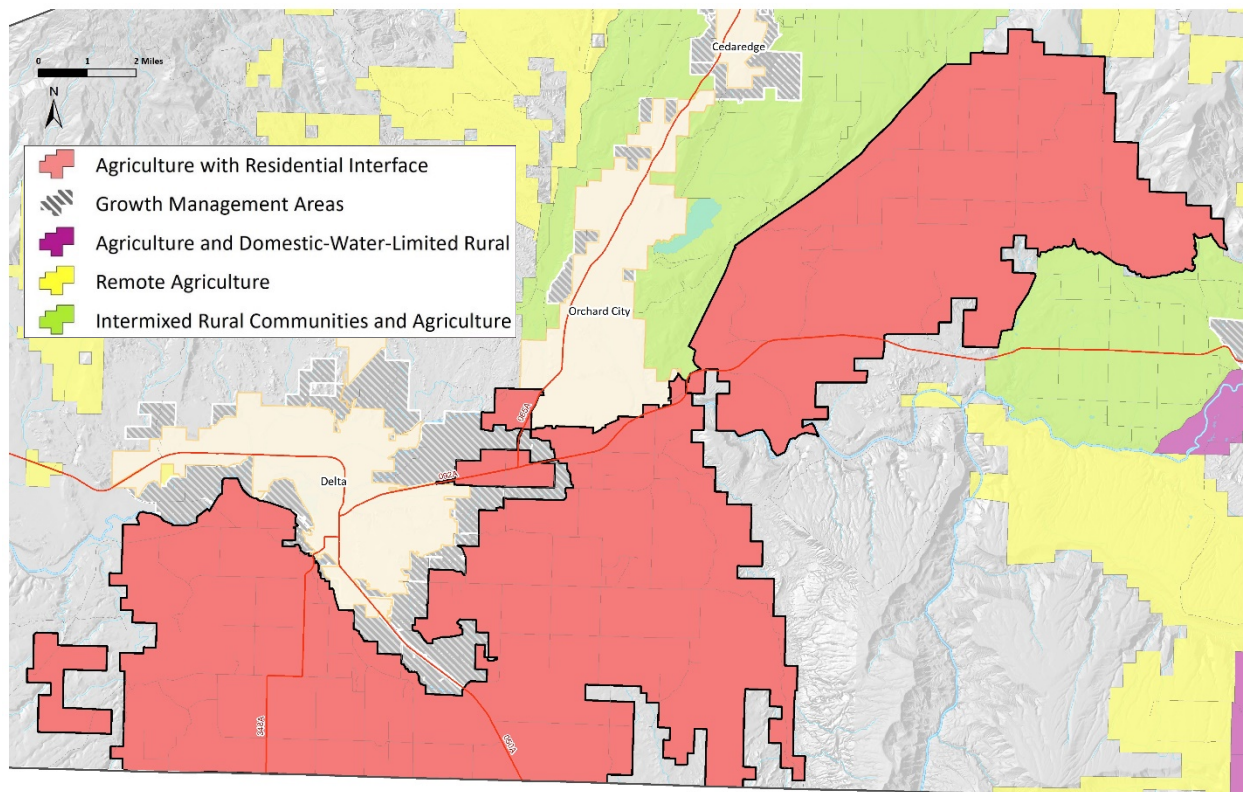
AGRICULTURE WITH RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT INTERFACE

This designation applies to areas in the county that have a strong agricultural presence. Residential and commercial development, and large areas of vacant land are present, but agriculture is a predominant use in these areas.

Existing Conditions

Irrigated lands are interspersed with subdivisions and various metes and bounds neighborhoods, some of which are built out and some of which have vacant lots. Higher terrain that is too irregular for crops or lacks irrigation is typically assessed as grazing. There are sizable areas of non-agricultural land and other undeveloped-vacant land in Peach Valley in areas where domestic water is available, in the dry areas along Highway 92 just east of Austin, and in other areas within this designation.

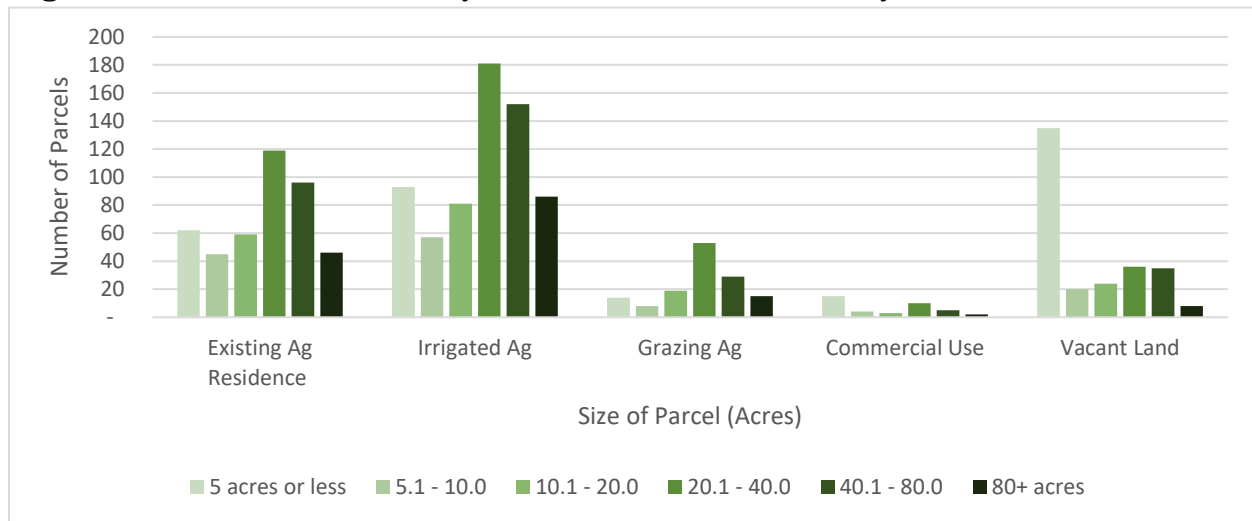
Figure 44 – Agriculture with Residential Development Interface



GIS analysis of Delta County Assessor information shows that agriculture in this designation occurs on a wide range of parcel sizes and that most agricultural-assessed properties have at least some portion that is irrigated. Of agriculture-assessed properties, 650 of the 790 parcels in this designation include a portion of the property that is classified

as irrigated agriculture, while the remaining 140 parcels are classified as grazing land. Just over half of the 790 agriculture-assessed parcels in this designation are between 20.1 acres and 80 acres and 100 of these agriculture-assessed parcels are larger than 80 acres. The remaining 35% of the agriculture-assessed parcels are 20 acres or less.

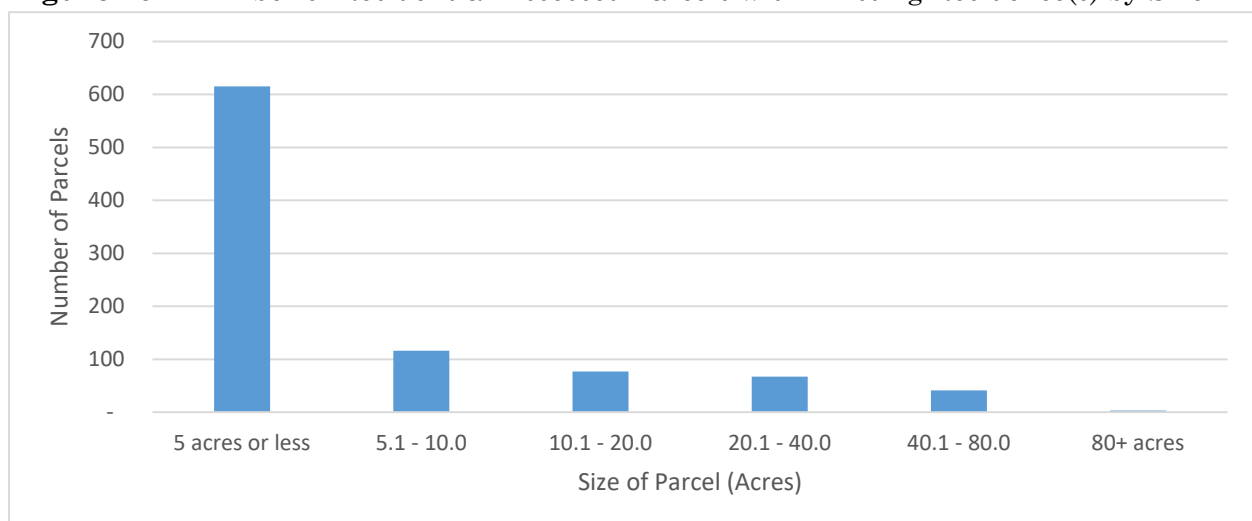
Figure 45 – Number of Parcels by Assessor Classification and by Acres



Source: Delta County Assessor

Homes are part of the landscape, 430 of the agriculture-assessed properties across all parcel sizes contain at least one residence. When a residence occurs on irrigated or grazing land, then the assessor classifies the residence as an agricultural residence. When a residence is not on agricultural land the assessor classifies it as simply a residential-assessed property. An additional 920 residential-assessed properties contain at least one residence throughout this designation, two-thirds of which are 5 acres or less.

Figure 46 – Number of Residential-Assessed Parcels with Existing Residence(s) by Size



Source: Delta County Assessor

Commercial use is present throughout this designation in a dispersed pattern across the range of parcel sizes, with 39 properties that contain at least one commercial use. About half of the 258 parcels classified as vacant land are 5 acres or less while there are 80 vacant parcels that are 20 acres or larger. In total, there are over 5,000 acres of land in this designation classified as vacant.

Desired Future Conditions

The agricultural operations of all sizes throughout this designation are highly valued by the community and they contribute substantially to the local economy. Land use policy and regulations are needed to direct future growth and development so that agriculture remains intact. Most of the agriculture occurring in this designation is irrigated and this designation contains some of the most productive land on the Western Slope. The development patterns show that residences are part of agricultural operations across the full range of parcel sizes. Non-agricultural residences have been built incrementally throughout this designation on individual parcels and within platted subdivisions. Similarly, thinly dispersed commercial uses are in place throughout this designation. Without a deliberate approach, incremental conversion of agricultural lands to other uses and an increase in conflicts between land uses will continue.

The desired future conditions for this designation are as follows:

- Larger, undeveloped non-agricultural parcels in areas with adequate infrastructure are development opportunities.
- Design future development to reduce impacts on agricultural operations.
- Develop incentives for landowners to keep agricultural lands intact and productive.
- Explore mechanisms that encourage buildout of existing residential subdivisions and other residential vacant parcels.
- The full range of land uses, activities, structures, future innovations and infrastructure associated with agricultural enterprises are allowed and expected uses on agricultural lands as well as other types of businesses that are symbiotic with agricultural lands and support the long-term viability of the agricultural use.
- Design future developments on agricultural lands to maximize the agricultural land that remains intact and productive for the long-term.
- A new regulatory system is needed to address future conflicts that are likely to continue between rural residential, agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. This regulatory system should identify what range of land uses are permitted and where different types of land uses are allowed. Property owners across the county will be encouraged to participate collaboratively in determining permitted land uses for their property based on new land use regulations that are fair, predictable and offer protection to property owners.

- Encourage future higher impact commercial and industrial development to locate in proximity to similar existing operations and in locations with adequate road, water, utility, and sewer infrastructure, while mitigating impacts on surrounding agricultural and residential uses.

Infrastructure

Domestic Water: County water maps indicate that most of the area is served with domestic water by Tri-County Water Conservation District in the Delta area and by the Upper Surface Creek Water Users Association east of Cedaredge and Orchard City. Both of these water providers serve a significant amount of development and could serve more in the future. County GIS mapping shows that the dry areas along Highway 92 just east of Austin have limited domestic water service, so future development in these areas will rely on groundwater wells or on extension of domestic water service.

Roads: The county road network maintains a grid pattern as terrain allows, so the connectivity and efficiency of access is relatively high. There is a relatively connected network of county roads that were originally built or have been rebuilt with a base and structure that can handle heavier loads and higher volumes of traffic. The 2008 City of Delta Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Plan designates several existing county roads as Minor Arterials with 80 feet rights of way within their 3-mile planning area and it will be important to coordinate on road infrastructure in this area. These designations are in no way binding on the county, but they are an important factor for the county to consider when making road infrastructure investment decisions.

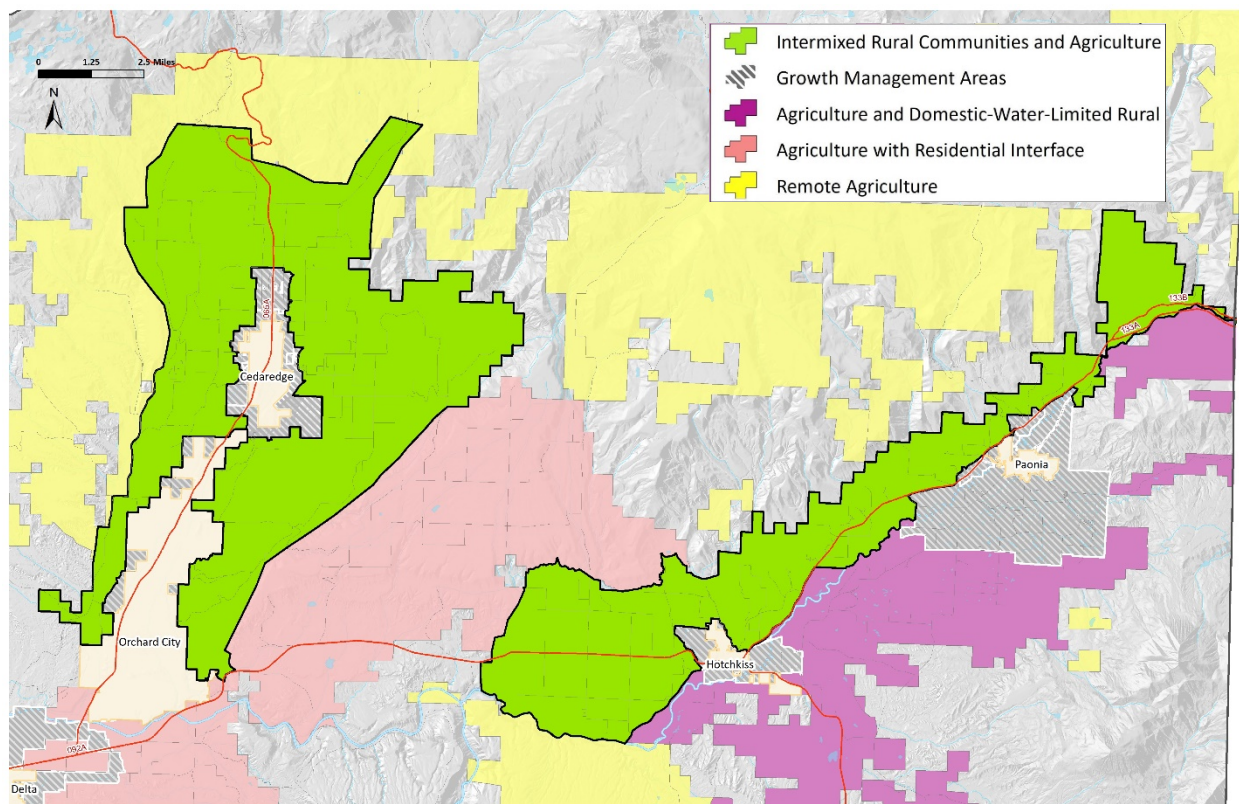
INTERMIXED RURAL COMMUNITIES & AGRICULTURE

This land use designation applies to areas of the county where there are large areas of productive agriculture, but the area also has a lot of rural residential properties dispersed across the designation area.

Existing Conditions

These areas encompass a diverse array of development patterns and land uses, with the underlying characteristic that there is a mix of small and large agricultural operations and rural residential subdivisions and individual residences throughout the designation. Many of these areas identify with one of the municipalities such as the areas around Cedaredge and Paonia while others identify with the land feature that defines the area such as Rogers Mesa or Hanson Mesa. Thinly dispersed commercial is also part of the mix. These areas exhibit a diverse array of agricultural practices and agricultural enterprises on properties ranging from less than an acre to hundreds of acres.

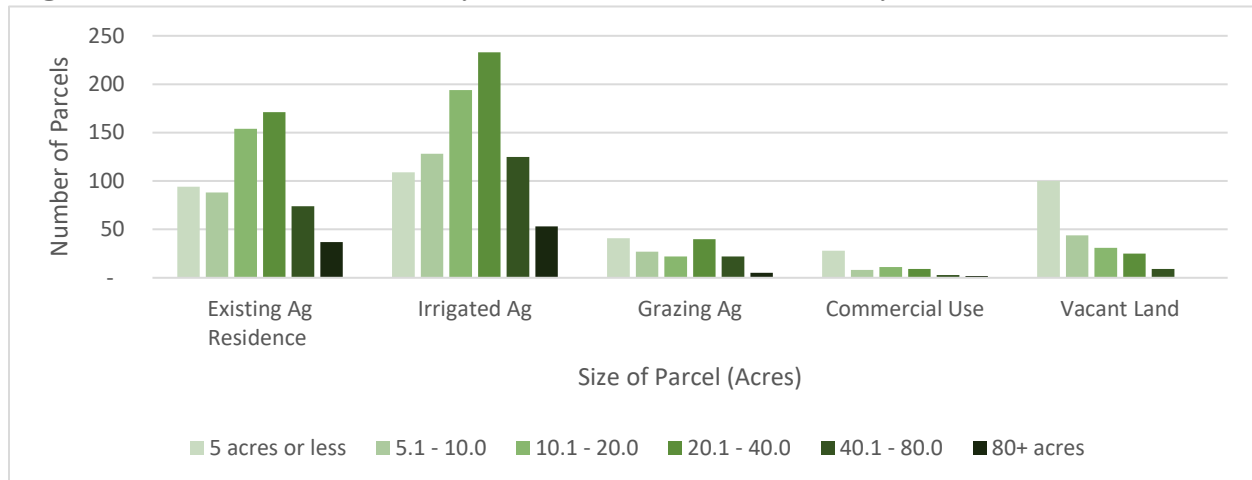
Figure 47 – Intermixed Rural Communities & Agriculture



GIS analysis of Delta County Assessor information shows that 840 of the 1,000 agriculture-assessed parcels in this designation include a portion of the property that is classified as irrigated agriculture, while the remaining 160 parcels are classified as grazing land. Forty-two percent (42%) of agriculture-assessed parcels in this designation are between 20.1 acres

and 80 acres and 58 (6%) of these agriculture-assessed parcels are larger than 80 acres. The remaining 52% of the agriculture-assessed parcels are 20 acres or less.

Figure 48 – Number of Parcels by Assessor Classification and by Acres

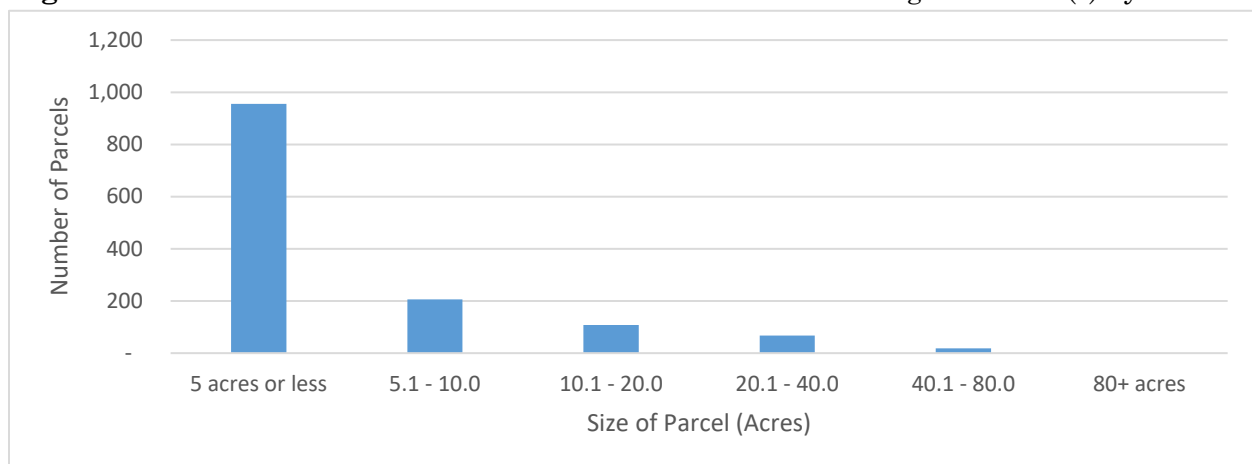


Source: Delta County Assessor

The development pattern analysis shows residences throughout this designation, with nearly 2,000 parcels that have at least one residence. Of agriculture-assessed properties in this designation, 620 have at least one residence and 29% of these agricultural properties are ten or less acres. An additional 1,350 residential-assessed properties have at least one residence throughout this designation, 71% of which are 5 acres or less, occurring in clusters of parcels or as platted subdivisions.

Commercial use is present throughout this designation in a dispersed pattern across the range of parcel sizes, with 60 properties that contain at least one commercial use. Just under half of the 210 parcels classified as vacant land are 5 acres or less and 79 of these parcels are larger than 20 acres. In total, there are about 5,100 acres of vacant land in this designation.

Figure 49 – Number of Residential-Assessed Parcels with Existing Residence(s) by Size



Source: Delta County Assessor

Desired Future Conditions

The extent of residential development in these areas reflects geographic factors such as adjacency to four municipalities (Orchard City, Cedaredge, Hotchkiss and Paonia), availability of domestic water, and the varied terrain and working agriculture that make these areas appealing places to live. It is essential that agriculture continues to grow and adapt. The landscape has evolved and will continue to evolve, calling for deliberate land use policies and regulations aimed at maintaining the balance between diverse land uses while assuring flexibility for creativity and adaptation. Delta County has no land use regulations to determine where land uses may locate. As a result, there are areas of the county where rural residential, agricultural, industrial, and commercial land are mixed. This mix creates neighborhood conflict, especially when new more intensive uses are proposed. The goal is not to change these areas, the goal is to take deliberate steps to ensure the most valued core elements remain intact as future growth and development occur.

The desired future conditions for this designation are as follows:

- Design future development to reduce impacts on agricultural operations.
- Develop incentives for landowners to keep agricultural lands intact and productive.
- Explore mechanisms that encourage buildout of existing residential subdivisions and other residential vacant parcels.
- The full range of land uses, activities, structures, future innovations and infrastructure associated with agricultural enterprises are allowed and expected uses on agricultural lands as well as other types of businesses that are symbiotic with agricultural lands and support the long-term viability of the agricultural use.
- Design future developments on agricultural lands to maximize the agricultural land that remains intact and productive for the long-term.
- A new regulatory system is needed to address future conflicts that are likely to continue between rural residential, agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. This regulatory system should identify what range of land uses are permitted and where different types of land uses are allowed. Property owners across the county will be encouraged to participate collaboratively in determining permitted land uses for their property based on new land use regulations that are fair, predictable and offer protection to property owners.
- Encourage future higher impact commercial and industrial development to locate in proximity to similar existing operations and in locations with adequate road, water, utility, and sewer infrastructure, while mitigating impacts on surrounding agricultural and residential uses.

Infrastructure

Water: Domestic water supply has been and likely will be the primary limitation on how much and where future development can occur. The multitude of domestic water providers throughout the county make it difficult to determine how much development could be served with the existing water capacity, but some water providers possess capacity to serve future customers. The development pattern mirrors the water provider service areas, showing that water has been available and could continue to be available. The Towns of Orchard City, Cedaredge, Hotchkiss and Paonia and the Upper Surface Creek Water Users Association have the most capacity for supplying treated water to future customers. Several others have some limited capacity including Lazear, Sunshine Mesa and Stewart Mesa Domestic Water Companies. The Towns of Paonia, Hotchkiss and Cedaredge currently provide water to some water distribution companies that serve unincorporated properties around the municipalities. While older parcels that were legally created may be eligible for an exempt groundwater well permit, finding sustainable potable groundwater in Delta County can be difficult.

Roads: The county road network is already in place to serve these areas and in a grid network as terrain allows. Connectivity breaks down at higher elevations where a single road provides access to several drainages and areas north of Highway 133 between Hotchkiss and Paonia. Several county roads also end at the Gunnison River. Significant development in these areas that currently lack connectivity may not be feasible and/or safe. Incremental increases in traffic are expected as more properties develop, so safety-related improvements to the two-lane roads and intersections will be among the top priorities. Highways 92 and 133 provide the arterial network that connects to the broader region. Colorado Department of Transportation highway access management plans along Highway 133 near Paonia and along Highway 92 in the Rogers Mesa area provide specific standards. Many county roads lead to BLM parcels, so working with land managers to accommodate recreation traffic and parking will be essential in popular recreation areas.

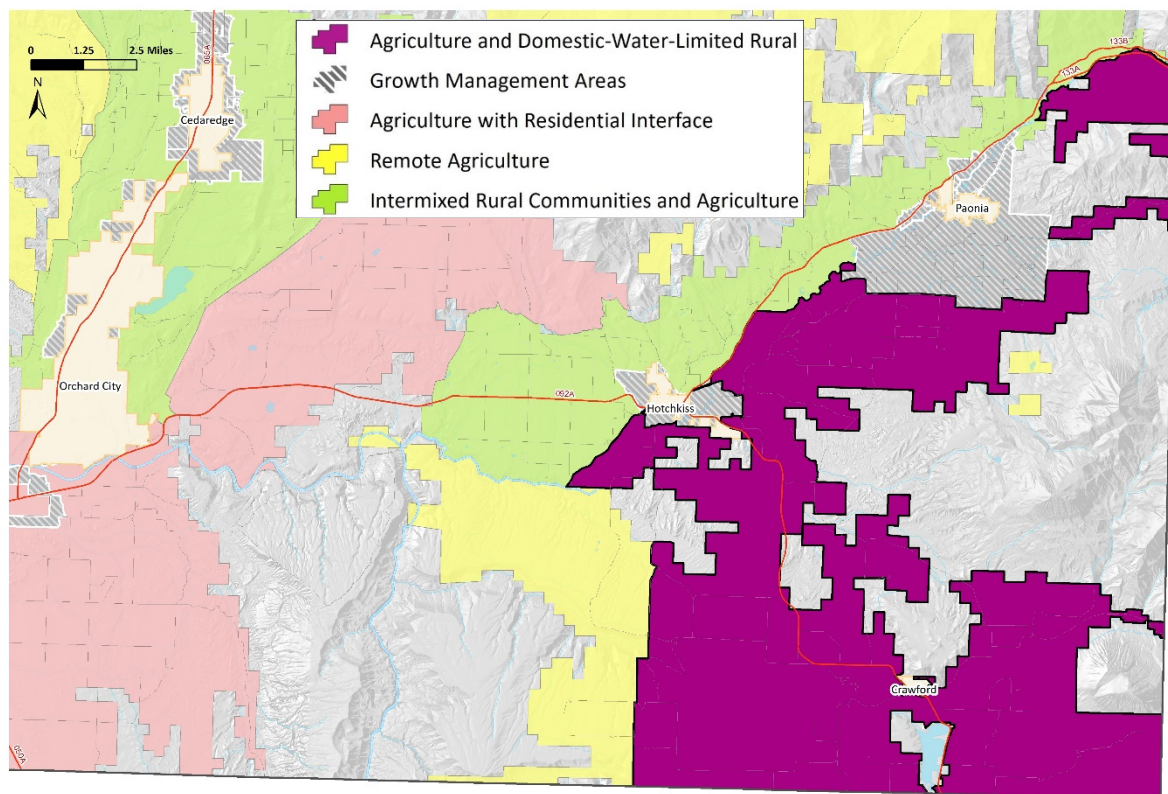
Rail: Rail infrastructure is available along the North Fork of the Gunnison River corridor and passes through four municipalities as well as through the historic townsite of Lazear. Most of the track through this designation runs along the highway, the river, and agricultural land. While the railroad is an underlying development opportunity, it runs alongside the river along some reaches to form a defined geographic edge, and in this respect is a constraint.

AGRICULTURE AND DOMESTIC-WATER-LIMITED RURAL

This designation applies to areas in the county that have a strong agricultural presence. There is residential development dispersed in the area, but future development may be limited by the availability of domestic water.

Existing Conditions – This designation is characterized by hay farming and ranching with subdivisions and various metes and bounds neighborhoods located in pockets where domestic water is available, mostly along the southern county border. There are domestic water providers in some areas but only a couple of these have indicated that they have capacity to serve future growth. In general, the parcels are larger in this area overall than in other parts of the county, and residential development is not as consistently dispersed as in other parts of the county. The combination of limited domestic water supply and a development pattern founded on larger parcels used for hay farming and ranching means that this area is the least intensively developed in the county.

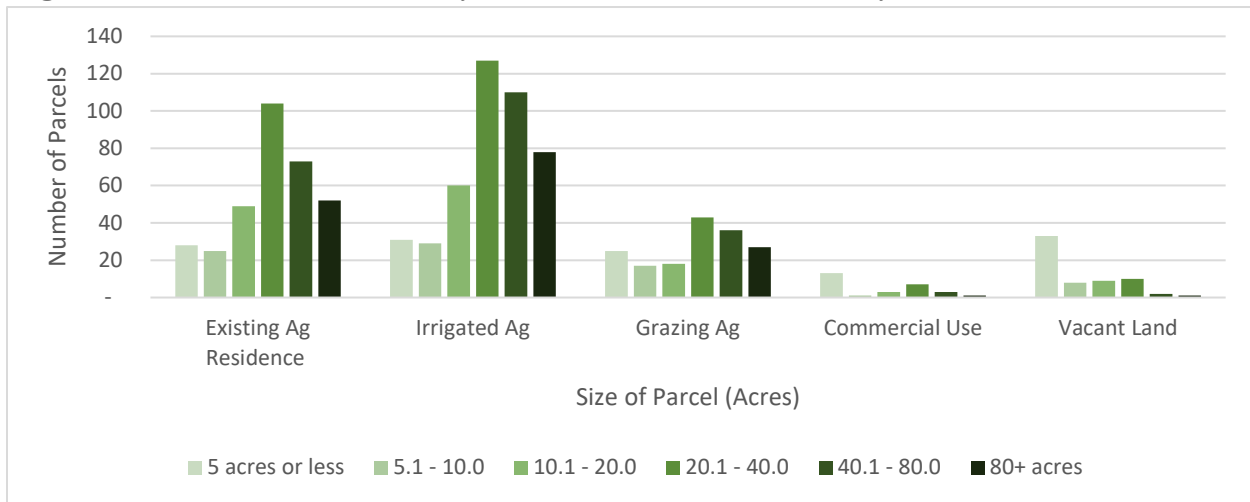
Figure 50 – Agriculture and Domestic-Water-Limited Rural



GIS analysis of Delta County Assessor information shows that agriculture in this designation occurs on a wide range of parcel sizes and that most agricultural-assessed properties have at least some portion that is irrigated. A total of 435 of the 600 agriculture-assessed parcels in this designation include a portion of the property that is classified as irrigated agriculture. Slightly over half of the 600 agriculture-assessed parcels in this

designation are between 20.1 acres and 80 acres while 105 (17%) of these agriculture-assessed parcels are larger than 80 acres. The remaining 17% of the agriculture-assessed parcels are 20 acres or less.

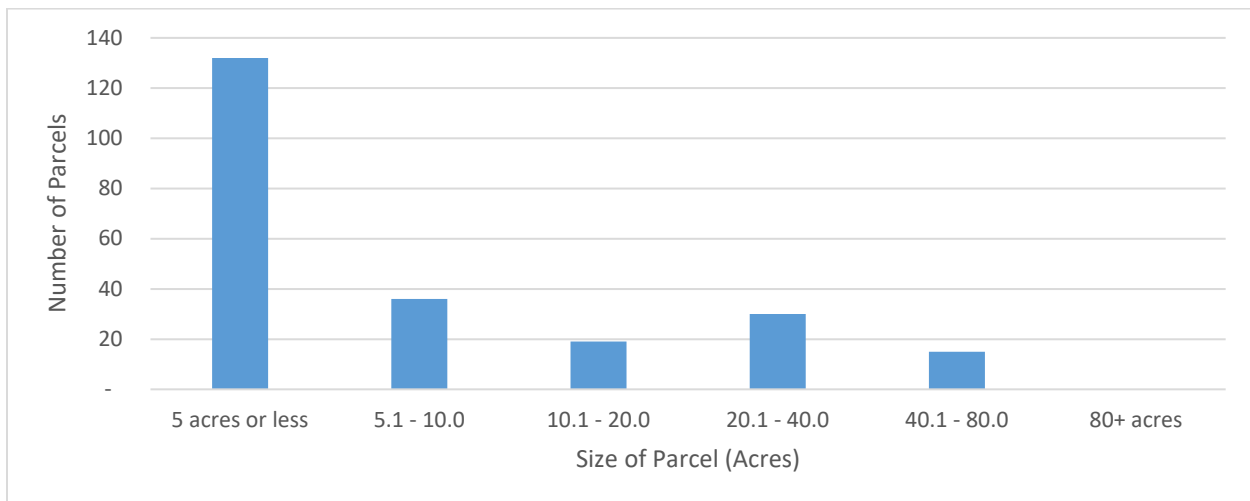
Figure 51 – Number of Parcels by Assessor Classification and by Acres



Source: Delta County Assessor

Homes are part of the landscape with 232 of the agriculture-assessed properties across all parcel sizes containing at least one residence. An additional 331 residential-assessed properties contain at least one residence throughout this designation, 57% of which are 5 acres or less.

Figure 52 – Number of Residential-Assessed Parcels with Existing Residence(s) by Size



Source: Delta County Assessor

Commercial use is present throughout this designation in a dispersed pattern across the range of parcel sizes, with 28 properties that contain at least one commercial use. There are just 63 vacant lots or parcels, half of which are five acres or less, for a total of 775 acres of vacant land.

Desired Future Conditions

Domestic water supply is finite and the low intensity development patterns in this designation reflect this limitation. Residents value agricultural, larger properties and space in between properties. While water supply has tempered development in this area to date, it may not always be the case. Deliberate land use policies and regulations will help foster agriculture and balance land conservation and future development.

The desired future conditions for this designation are as follows:

- Design future development to reduce impacts on agricultural operations.
- Develop incentives for landowners to keep agricultural lands intact and productive.
- Explore mechanisms that encourage buildout of existing residential subdivisions and other residential vacant parcels.
- The full range of land uses, activities, structures, future innovations and infrastructure associated with agricultural enterprises are allowed and expected uses on agricultural lands as well as other types of businesses that are symbiotic with agricultural lands and support the long-term viability of the agricultural use.
- Design future developments on agricultural lands to maximize the agricultural land that remains intact and productive for the long-term.
- A new regulatory system is needed to address future conflicts that are likely to continue between rural residential, agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. This regulatory system should identify what range of land uses are permitted and where different types of land uses are allowed. Property owners across the County will be encouraged to participate collaboratively in determining permitted land uses for their property based on new land use regulations that are fair, predictable and offer protection to property owners.
- Encourage future higher impact commercial and industrial development to locate in proximity to similar existing operations and in locations with adequate road, water, utility, and sewer infrastructure, while mitigating impacts on surrounding agricultural and residential uses.

Infrastructure

Water: Domestic water supply has been and could be the primary limitation on how much and where future development can occur. The multitude of domestic water providers make it difficult to determine how much development could be served with the existing water capacity. The water company survey results indicate that just two providers, the Town of Crawford and the Deutsch Pipeline Needle Rock Water Company, have capacity to supply domestic treated water for future growth. While older parcels that were legally created may be eligible for an exempt groundwater well permit, finding viable groundwater in Delta

County can be difficult. The tight supply of domestic water means that any significant development opportunities will be focused where water is available.

Roads: The county road network maintains a grid pattern as terrain allows but the pattern breaks down near the edges of private lands and due to drainages and the predominance of federal lands. There is a relatively connected network of county roads that were originally built or have been rebuilt to be structurally and geometrically sound. Highways 92 and 133 provide the arterial network that connects to the broader region.

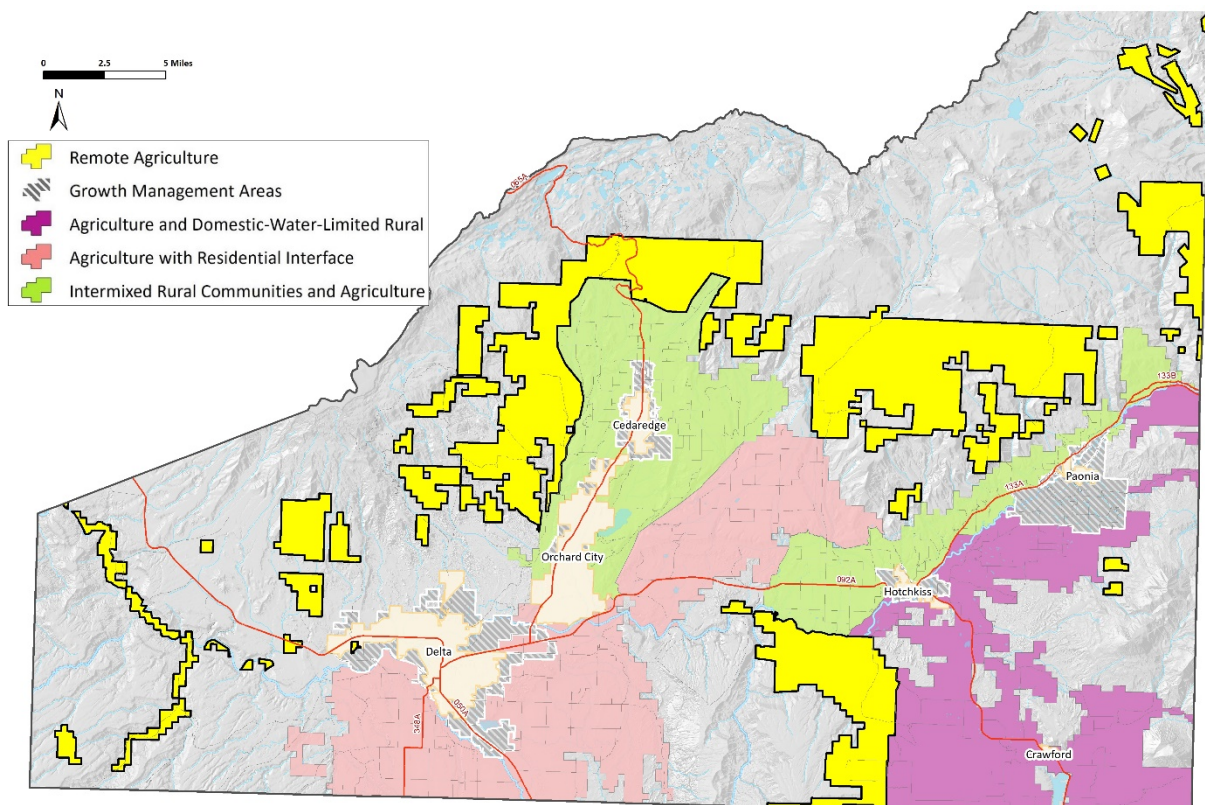
REMOTE AGRICULTURE

This designation applies to areas in the county that are dominated by properties located at higher elevations with limited infrastructure including roads and water.

Existing Conditions

There are many private parcels located high on mesas or in the mountains and are mostly beyond the paved road network. These areas are primarily grazing lands and many large intact ranch properties with interspersed clusters of 35 acre parcels and other metes and bounds parcels. Some of these areas are inholding, entirely surrounded by federal lands and many are adjacent to federal lands. Mineral estates underlie most of the land in this designation.

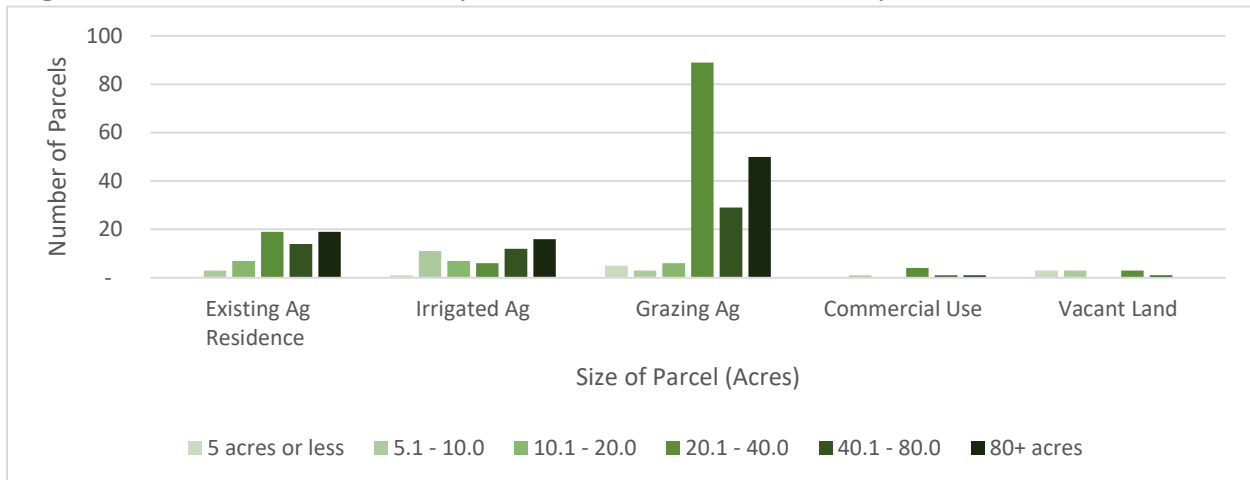
Figure 53 – Remote Agriculture



GIS analysis of County Assessor information shows that agriculture in this designation occurs on a wide range of parcel sizes and that 23% of agricultural-assessed properties have at least some portion of the parcel that is irrigated. A total of 182 of the 235 agriculture-assessed parcels in this designation include a portion of the property that is classified as grazing agriculture but do not include any portions classified as irrigated agriculture. This designation is comprised of larger parcels overall compared with other areas in the county. 58% of the agriculture-assessed parcels in this designation are between 20.1 acres and 80

acres while 28% of these agriculture-assessed parcels are larger than 80 acres. The remaining 14% of the agriculture-assessed parcels are 20 acres or less.

Figure 54 – Number of Parcels by Assessor Classification and by Acres



Source: Delta County Assessor

Homes are thinly dispersed in this designation with 62 of the agriculture-assessed properties across all parcel sizes containing at least one residence. An additional 42 residential-assessed properties contain at least one residence throughout this designation, across the full range of parcel sizes.

Figure 55 – Number of Residential-Assessed Parcels with Existing Residence(s) by Size



Source: Delta County Assessor

Commercial use occurs in this designation, with 7 properties that contain at least one commercial use. There are just 10 vacant lots or parcels, six of which are ten acres or less, for a total of 166 acres of vacant land.

Desired Future Conditions

These areas are in the public and private land interface and at the edges of the county road network. Ranching is an important pillar of the economy and ranchers are the stewards of

these larger and more remote parcels and it is essential that agriculture continues to grow and adapt. The close proximity of many properties in this area and the agricultural and natural setting create opportunities for outdoor recreation, hunting and agritourism to supplement revenues for agricultural businesses. There are some non-agricultural residences in this area and a limited number of vacant lots appear to have been developed for residential purposes, and it is expected that feasible lots will develop over time. Because this area is remote from basic public services and is mostly used for ranching and hunting, it is not an area where additional subdivision is encouraged.

- Expect development of existing residential or agricultural/residential properties where adequate access to public roads can be achieved and viable water is available.
- These are areas where further subdivision of land is not encouraged.
- Continue collaboration with federal public land agencies to address issues along the interface between public lands and private lands.
- Develop incentives for landowners to keep agricultural lands and wildlife habitat intact.
- The full range of land uses, activities, structures, future innovations and infrastructure associated with agricultural enterprises are allowed and expected uses on agricultural lands as well as other types of businesses that are symbiotic with agricultural lands such as hunting and dude ranches and support the long-term viability of the agricultural use.
- Design future developments on agricultural lands to maximize the agricultural land and wildlife habitat that remains intact for the long-term.
- A new regulatory system is needed to address future conflicts that are likely to continue between rural residential, agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. This regulatory system should identify what range of land uses are permitted and where different types of land uses are allowed. Property owners across the county will be encouraged to participate collaboratively in determining permitted land uses for their property based on new land use regulations that are fair, predictable and offer protection to property owners.
- Encourage future higher impact commercial and industrial development to locate in proximity to similar existing operations and in locations with adequate road, water, utility, and sewer infrastructure, while mitigating impacts on surrounding agricultural and residential uses.

Infrastructure

Water: These areas lie beyond central water services and rely on the availability of groundwater. While older parcels and parcels 35 acres and larger that were legally created

may be eligible for an exempt groundwater well permit, finding viable groundwater in Delta County can be difficult.

Roads: Providing increased levels of county road maintenance in these remote portions of the county would put further strain on the already tight county budgets. Most of these areas are beyond the paved road network and the public road network lacks connectivity and alternate emergency access as county roads reach higher in the watersheds.

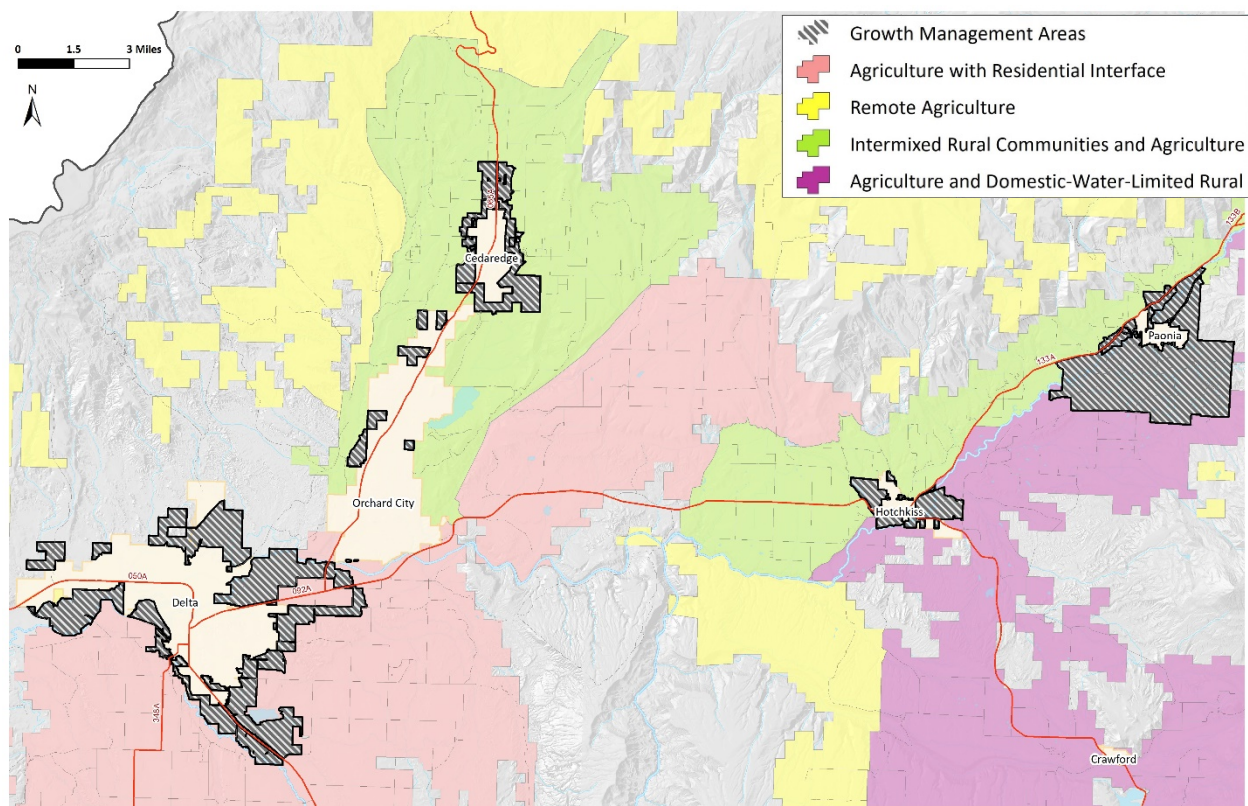
Fire and Ambulance: From an EMS and fire-protection standpoint, this area is at higher risk and more difficult to access.

MUNICIPAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT AREAS

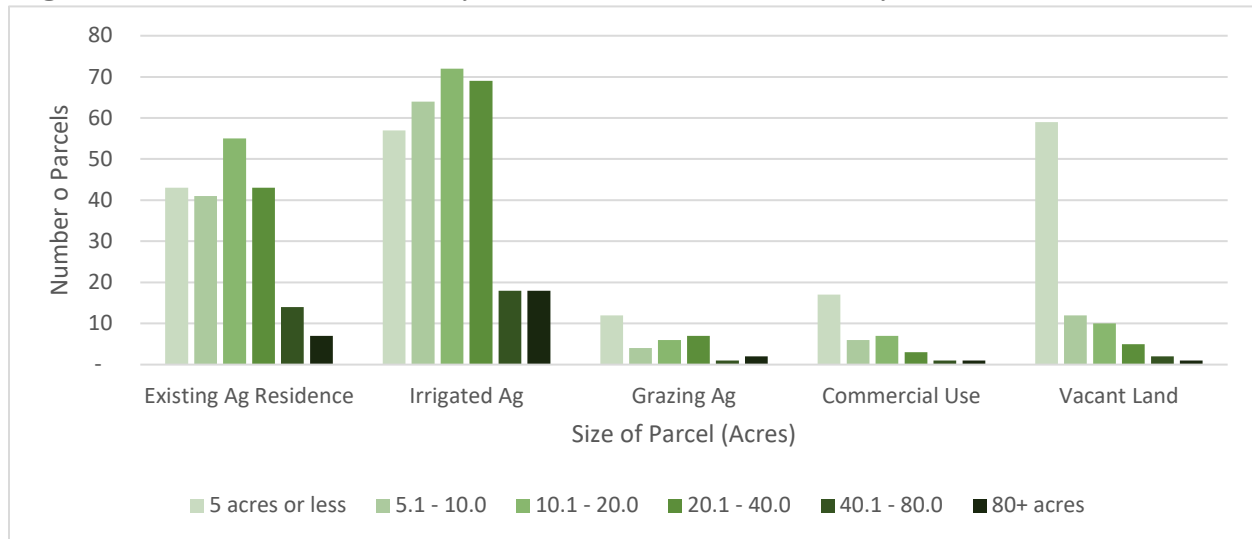
Existing Conditions

These are the areas delineated in Growth Management Agreements between the county and individual municipalities between 2007 and 2014. The Master Plan establishes unified county-level guidance for these five distinct areas around the City of Delta and the Towns of Paonia, Hotchkiss, Orchard City and Cedaredge. Because these areas are close to towns, residential development is common, but working agriculture on the edge of town remains a defining characteristic of Delta County.

Figure 56 – Municipal Growth Management Areas

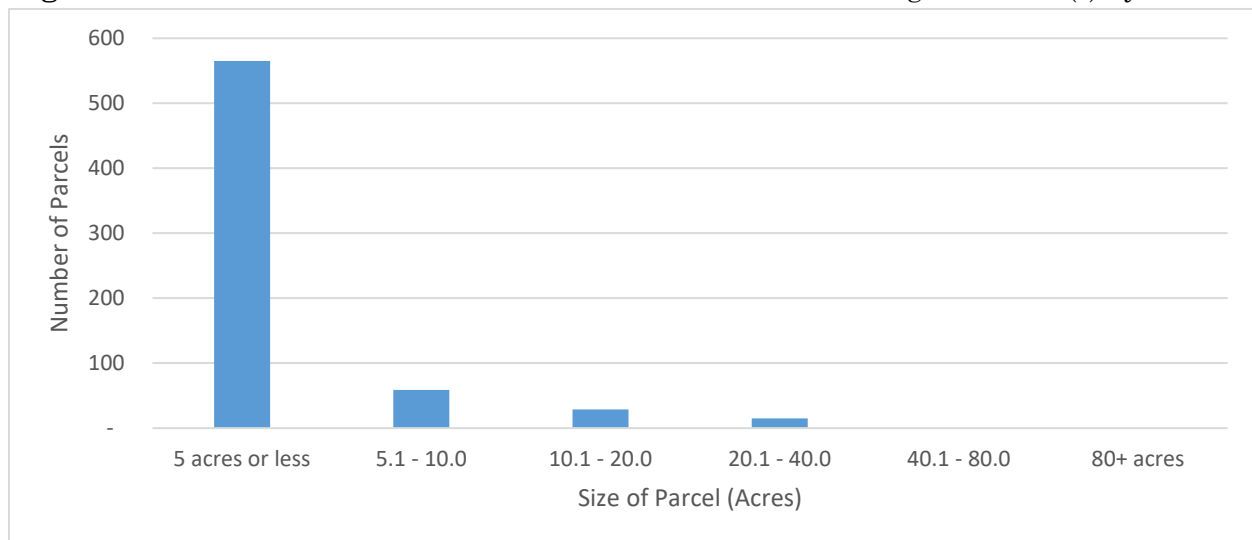


GIS analysis of County Assessor information shows a total of 298 of the 330 agriculture-assessed parcels in this designation include a portion of the property that is classified as irrigated agriculture. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the agriculture-assessed parcels in this designation are between 20.1 acres and 80 acres while 6% of these agriculture-assessed parcels are larger than 80 acres. The remaining 65% of the agriculture-assessed parcels are 20 acres or less.

Figure 57 – Number of Parcels by Assessor Classification and by Acres

Source: Delta County Assessor

Homes are part of agricultural operations with 200 of the 330 agriculture-assessed properties containing at least one residence across the range of parcel sizes. An additional 670 residential-assessed properties contain at least one residence throughout this designation, 85% of which are 5 acres or less.

Figure 58 – Number of Residential-Assessed Parcels with Existing Residence(s) by Size

Source: Delta County Assessor

Commercial use occurs in this designation, with 35 properties that contain at least one commercial use. There are 90 vacant lots or parcels, most of which are five acres or less, for a total of 166 acres of vacant land.

Municipal Plans Summary

The City of Delta and the Towns of Orchard City, Hotchkiss, Cedaredge, and Paonia comprehensive plans and other long-range plans contain guidance relating to annexation, extension of municipal infrastructure and coordinated planning.

- Town of Paonia Highway 133 Corridor Master Plan, 2011 – This plan concerns the major gateway to Paonia and strives to protect the rural, small town character of the corridor. The plan cites a range of design considerations including building massing, architectural style, protecting the Highway 133 West Elk Scenic Byway, lighting and other details. The plan calls for reduced town water tap charges as an incentive for compliance with the corridor master plan.
- Town of Cedaredge Master Plan, 2017 – The plan calls for gradual, compatible growth through infill and compact expansion adjacent to the town in areas that are easily serviced by existing town infrastructure. It cites compliance with the state ‘3-mile’ planning provisions including a circulation plan and 201 Plan concerning the area that can be served with municipal water and sewer.
- Town of Orchard City Master Plan, 2016 – This plan makes only a single reference to state statutes regarding annexation. The Town of Orchard City is highly supportive of agriculture and agricultural land uses and has an adopted Right to Farm and Ranch Ordinance.
- Town of Hotchkiss Master Plan – This plan references the Growth Management Agreements and promotes ongoing coordination of land use and infrastructure in feasible annexation areas. The plan lists general criteria for evaluating annexations and cites options for the potential annexation areas: south of the Town across the river, east of the Hotchkiss High School and Lower Barrow Mesa.
- City of Delta – The city’s future land use plan extends a couple of miles or more beyond its municipal boundaries, mostly designated as medium density residential. To accommodate this level of development, the plan includes a network of minor arterials and neighborhood commercial nodes.
- The Crawford County Addendum to the 1997 Delta County Master Plan – This succinct plan references the importance of a sustainable natural resource base including water, vegetation, wildlife and views. It encourages a diversity of housing styles, building materials and creativity in future development. The plan includes a development review process and areas that need to be addressed in proposed developments such as water, infrastructure, impact on public services and wildlife habitat.

Desired Future Conditions

These areas around the periphery of the municipalities are extremely important because with favorable circumstances, property owners could initiate the annexation process to

bring the property under municipal jurisdiction. The municipalities possess the only infrastructure and services capable of serving higher density residential development, more intensive commercial uses and community facilities. In general, municipalities provide infrastructure and services only once a property is annexed. It is essential to strive for utility and road right of way standards in future county developments that will allow for viable annexation. Today, there is a mix of agriculture and rural residential development, and although towns are nearby, ensuring that agriculture remains intact and viable in these areas is no less important than in other areas in the county.

The desired future conditions for this designation are as follows:

- Encourage density and higher intensity business development by supporting municipal annexation to provide critical services and infrastructure.
- Engage with each municipality to review the growth management agreements and to revise as needed.
- Encourage municipalities to maintain and regularly update their comprehensive plans, master plans and corridor plans.
- Larger, undeveloped non-agricultural parcels in areas with adequate infrastructure are development opportunities.
- Strive for road and utility right of way standards in future developments that are consistent with the standards of each municipality.
- Explore mechanisms that encourage buildout of existing residential subdivisions and other residential vacant parcels.
- The full range of land uses, activities, structures, future innovations and infrastructure associated with agricultural enterprises are allowed and expected uses on agricultural lands as well as other types of businesses that are symbiotic with agricultural lands and support the long-term viability of the agricultural use.
- Design future developments on agricultural lands to maximize the agricultural land that remains intact and productive for the long-term.
- A new regulatory system is needed to address future conflicts that are likely to continue between rural residential, agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. This regulatory system should identify what range of land uses are permitted and where different types of land uses are allowed. Property owners across the county will be encouraged to participate collaboratively in determining permitted land uses for their property based on new land use regulations that are fair, predictable and offer protection to property owners.

3.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION MAPS

The GIS data utilized in this Master Plan comes from a variety of public domain sources. Most of the data was obtained from the Delta County GIS department and from the Delta County Assessor. GIS data sources include:

- Delta County GIS Department
- United States Geologic Survey
- Bureau of Land Management
- United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Colorado State Forest Service
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Colorado Oil and Gas Commission
- U.S. Department of Energy
- ESRI Community
- North Fork Valley Creative Arts District
- City of Delta

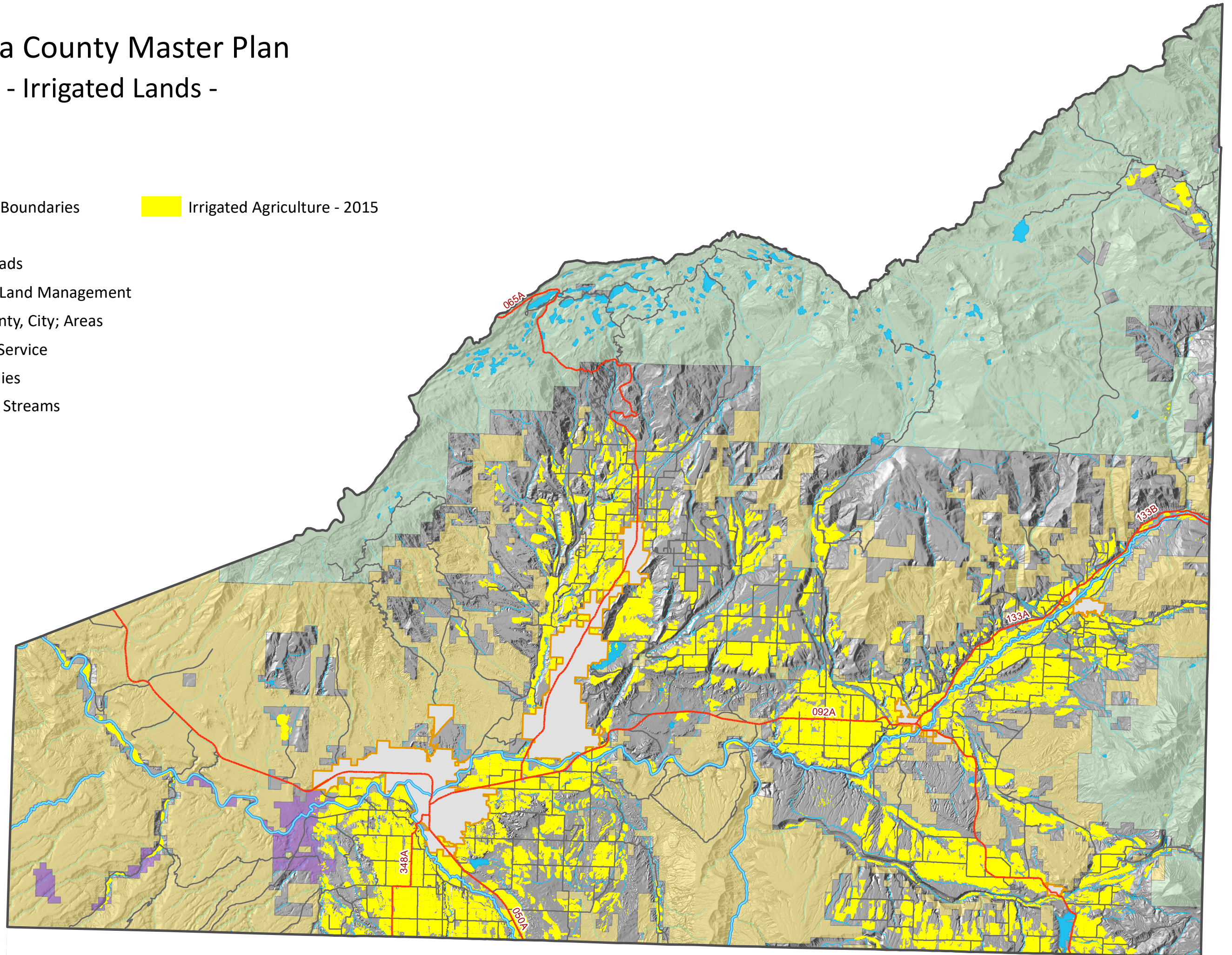
Delta County Master Plan

- Irrigated Lands -

- Municipal Boundaries
- Irrigated Agriculture - 2015
- Highways
- County Roads
- Bureau of Land Management
- State, County, City; Areas
- US Forest Service
- Water Bodies
- Rivers and Streams



0 3 6 Miles



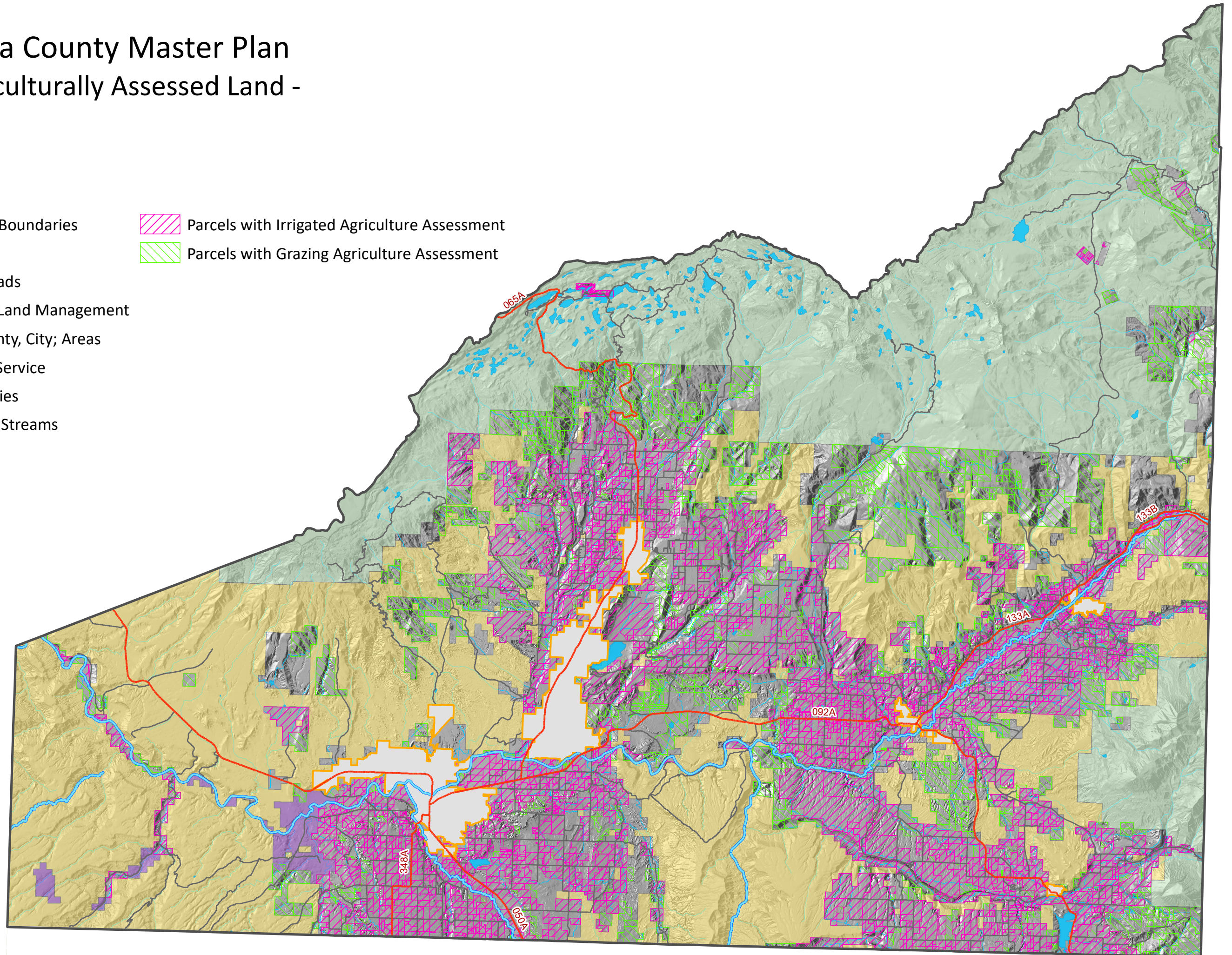
Delta County Master Plan

- Agriculturally Assessed Land -

- Municipal Boundaries
- Highways
- County Roads
- Bureau of Land Management
- State, County, City; Areas
- US Forest Service
- Water Bodies
- Rivers and Streams
- Parcels with Irrigated Agriculture Assessment
- Parcels with Grazing Agriculture Assessment

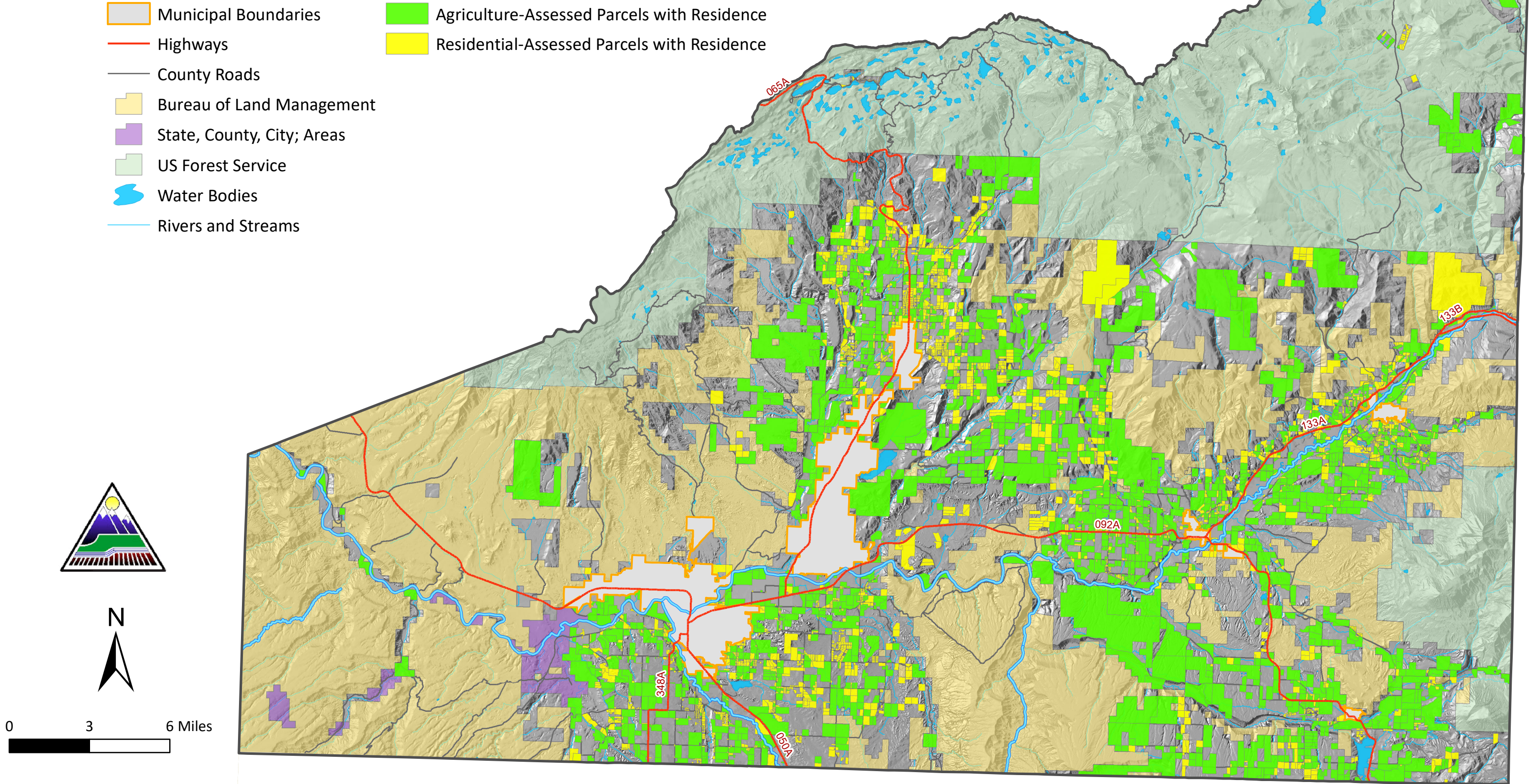


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Delta County Master Plan

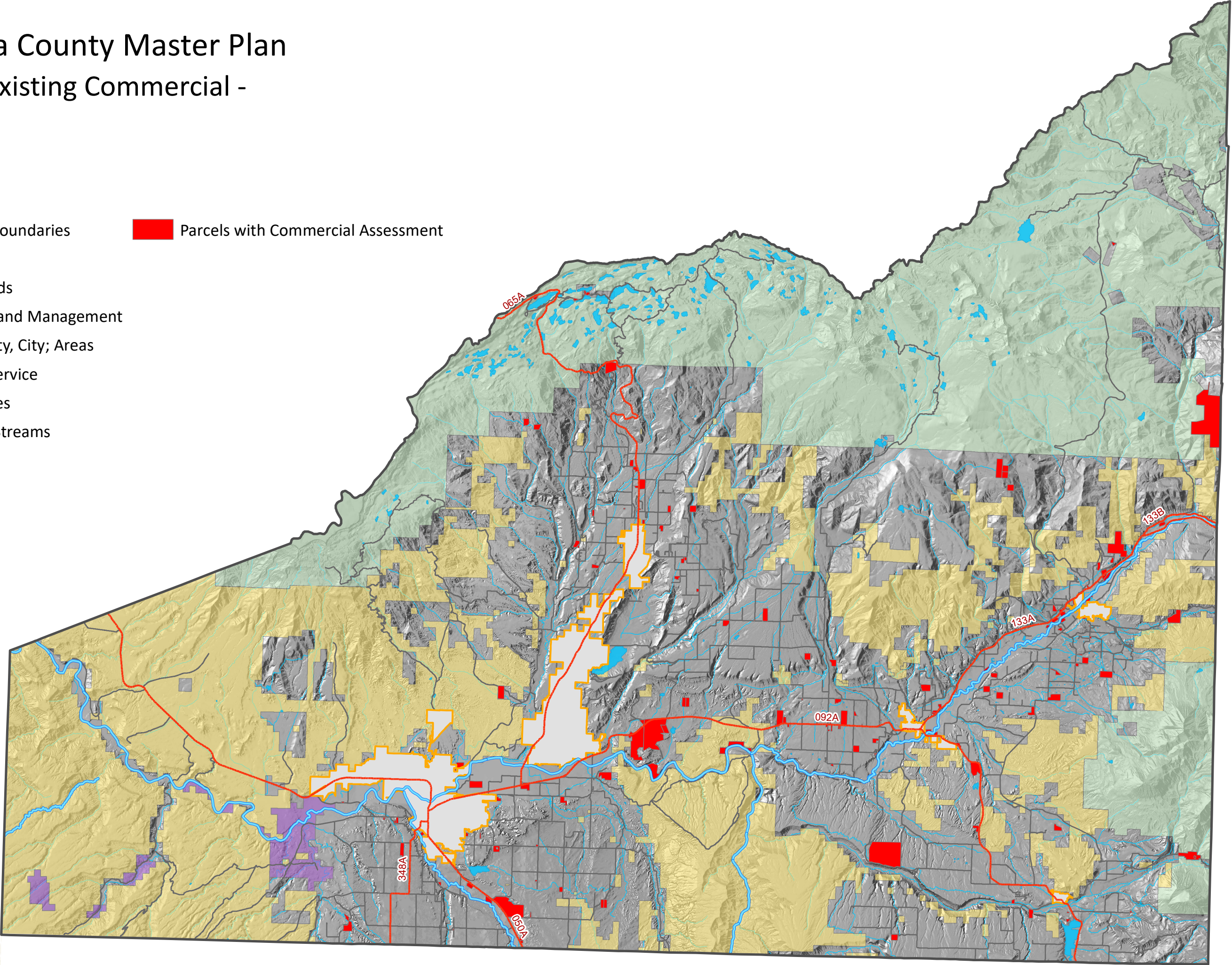
- Existing Residences -



Delta County Master Plan

- Existing Commercial -

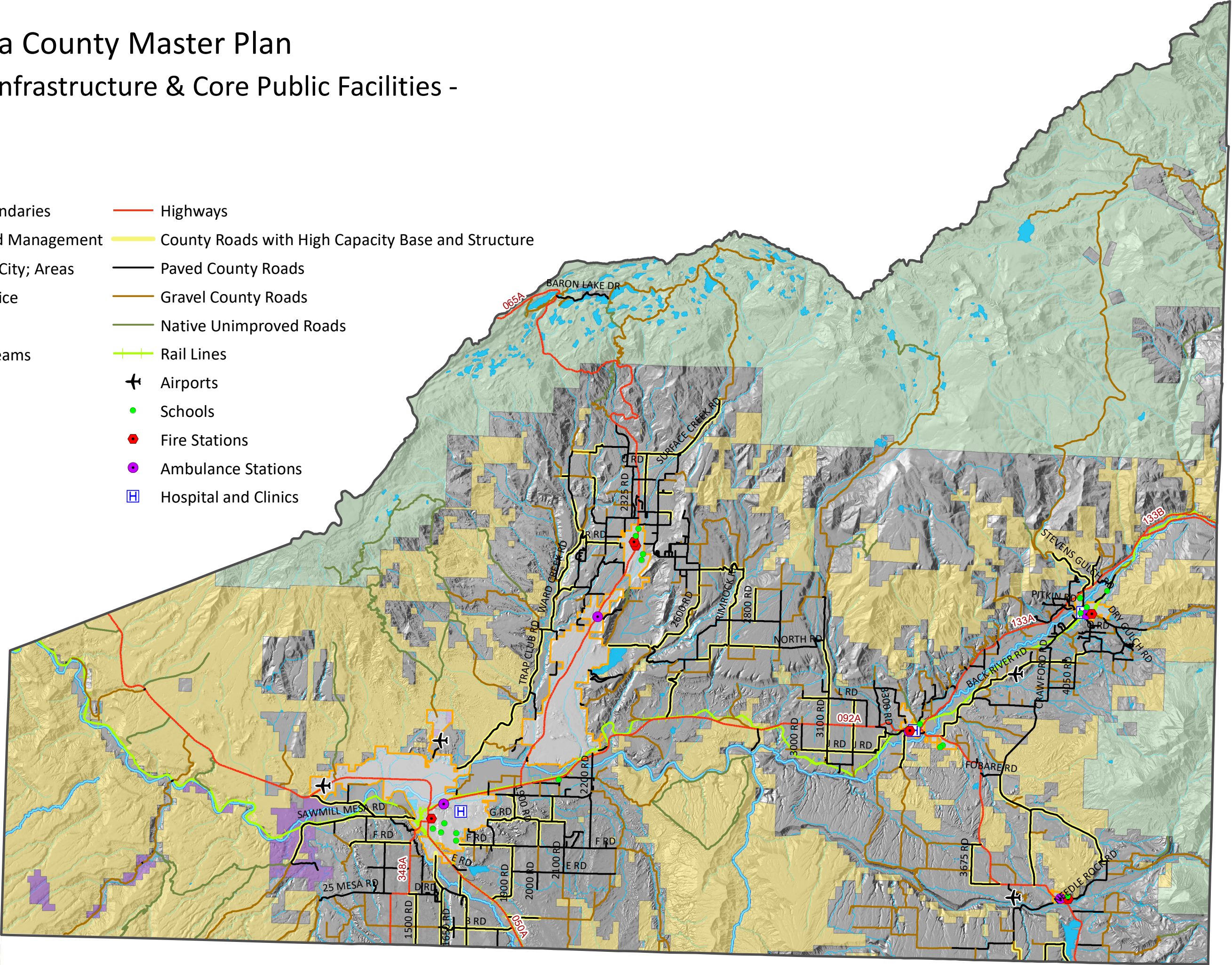
- Municipal Boundaries
- Highways
- County Roads
- Bureau of Land Management
- State, County, City; Areas
- US Forest Service
- Water Bodies
- Rivers and Streams
- Parcels with Commercial Assessment



0 3 6 Miles

Delta County Master Plan

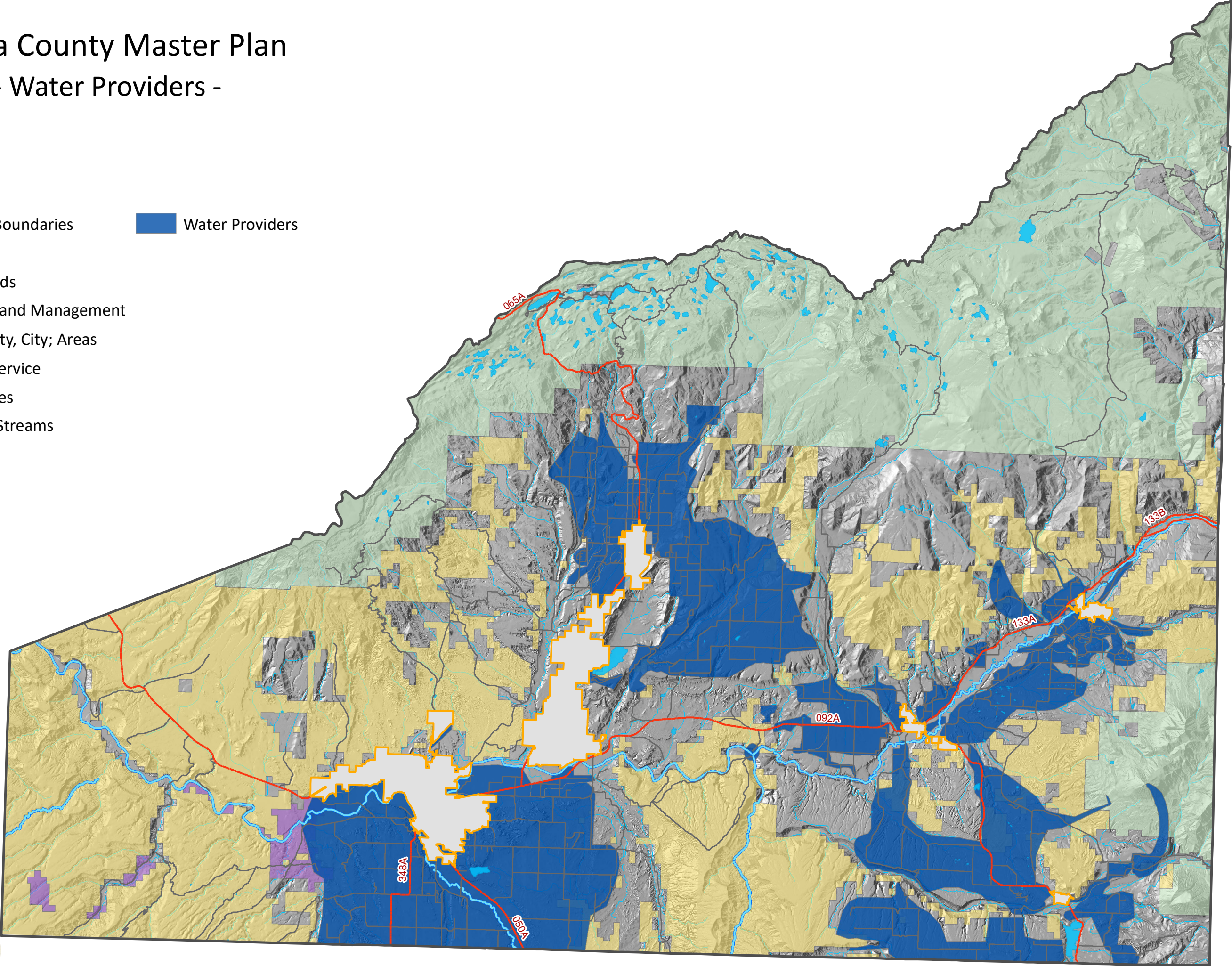
- Transportation Infrastructure & Core Public Facilities -



Delta County Master Plan

- Water Providers -

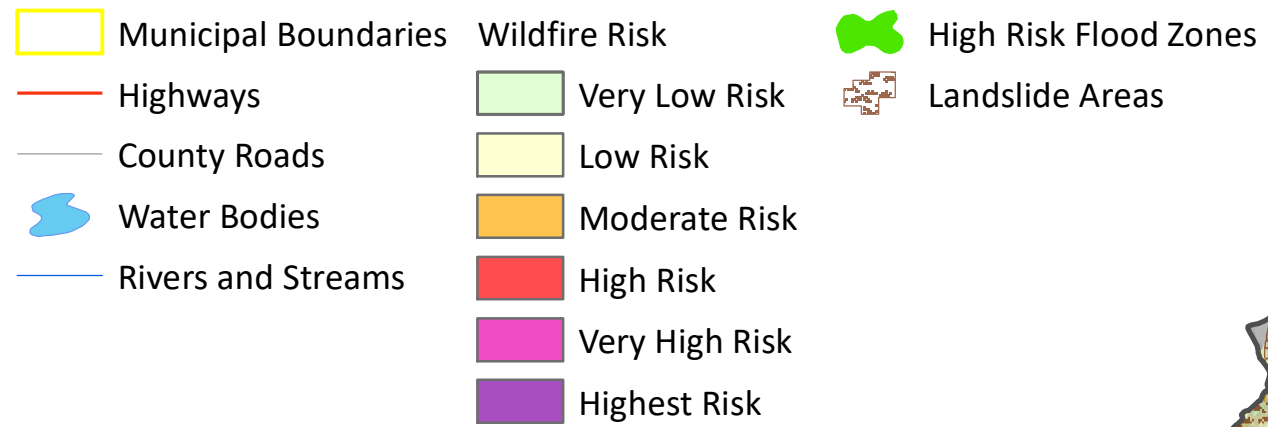
- Municipal Boundaries
- Water Providers
- Highways
- County Roads
- Bureau of Land Management
- State, County, City; Areas
- US Forest Service
- Water Bodies
- Rivers and Streams



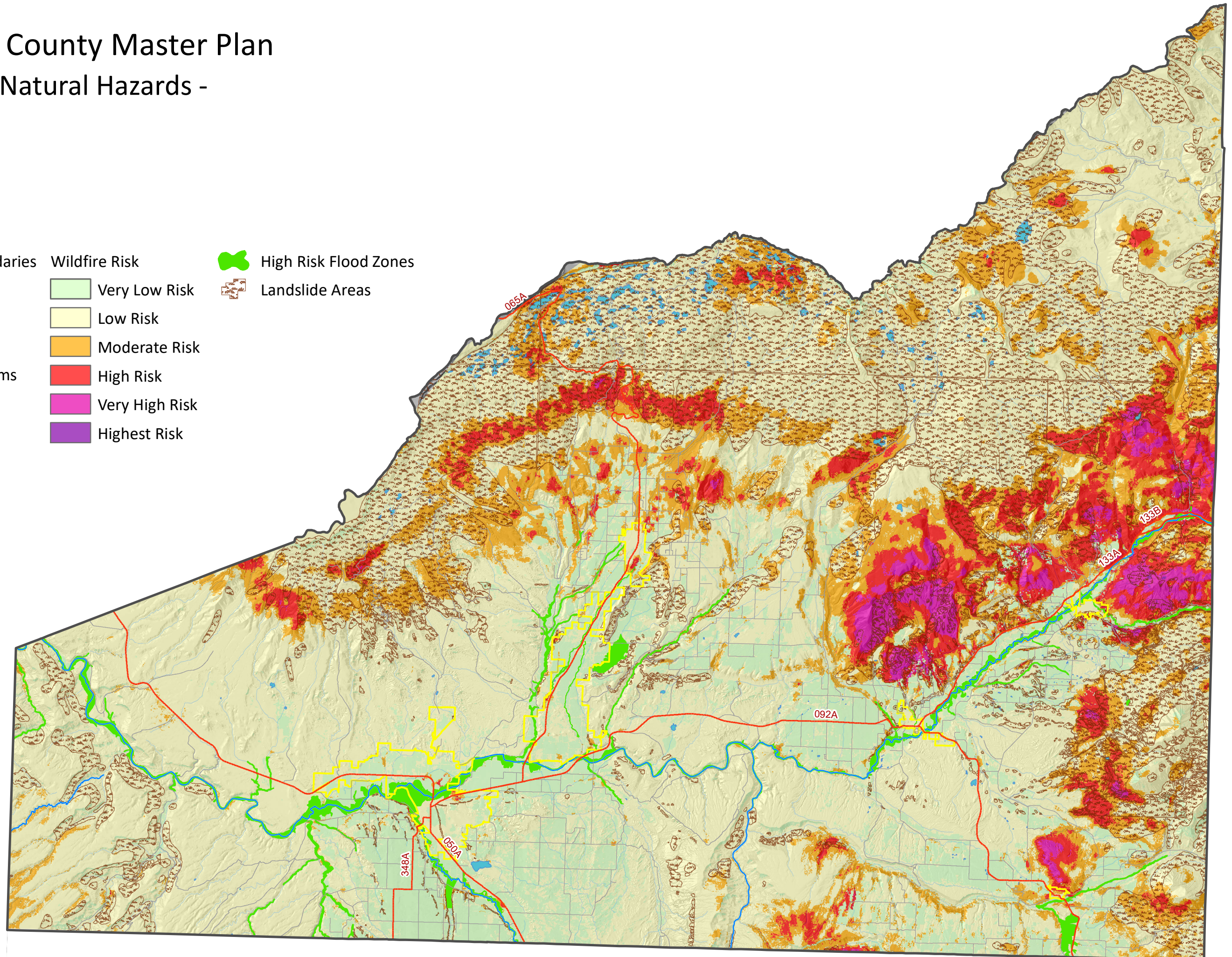
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Delta County Master Plan

- Natural Hazards -



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APPENDICES