

# STATE OF THE COUNTY REPORT

Pueblo Regional Comprehensive Plan

**Final Draft**



**YOUR PLAN YOUR PUEBLO**

July 2021

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# ABOUT THIS REPORT









## BACKGROUND

Pueblo County—in partnership with the City of Pueblo, Pueblo West, the towns of Boone and Rye, and the unincorporated communities—is conducting a major update of the Region’s Comprehensive Plan for the first time since 2002.

The Regional Comprehensive Plan process provides an opportunity to explore what is working well in Pueblo County and to identify what improvements are needed for the future. The updated plan will serve as a policy guide to help inform future decisions related to growth and development in Pueblo County.

This process also provides an opportunity to build upon the numerous recent and ongoing efforts and initiatives underway in the region, many of which are highlighted throughout this report.

## PROJECT TIMELINE

The Regional Comprehensive Plan process kicked off in late 2020 and is anticipated to be complete in early 2022. Opportunities for stakeholder and community input will be provided at key points during the process, as illustrated on the diagram above.





## PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

This State of the County report is provided to help build shared understanding of where we are today, and where we will be in the future based on current trends, and to help frame the questions that need to be considered as part of the Regional Comprehensive Plan process. The report contains three sections:

**Setting the Stage.** As a foundation for the sections that follow, this section provides an overview of demographic and socioeconomic data and trends for Pueblo County.

**Focus Areas.** This section explores current conditions and trends, issues and opportunities, and related plans and studies specific to five focus areas that emerged as major topics for discussion during initial meetings with project stakeholders in late 2020. These focus areas include:

- Infrastructure and Services
- Growth and Development
- Economic Base
- Communities and Neighborhoods
- Community Assets


Current and future conditions in these five focus areas are closely inter-related. As the Regional Comprehensive Plan process progresses, key choices in each area will need to be evaluated based on whether they will support—or potentially hinder—Pueblo County's desire for a sustainable and resilient future. This report highlights the social, economic, and environmental factors that must be considered as goals and policies are made.

**Key Policy Choices.** This summary section highlights key policy choices that will need to be explored as part of the next steps in the Pueblo County Regional Plan process, in light of identified trends, current policies, and existing conditions in each focus area.

# SETTING THE STAGE





A photograph of a park area with a fountain, trees, and people walking, overlaid with a semi-transparent green box containing text. The background shows a park with a fountain on the left, a paved path, and several people walking. A large tree is on the right, and a black dog is visible on the left. The green box is positioned in the lower half of the image.

Pueblo County encompasses 1,509,127 acres (2,358 square miles)—only slightly smaller than the state of Delaware. Primary population centers in the County include the City of Pueblo, the unincorporated metro districts of Pueblo West and Colorado City, and the towns of Boone and Rye. Metro districts are service districts permitted by an act of the Colorado Legislature to provide municipal services such as street improvements, fire protection, recreation, and water and sewer services. They do not have the power to provide police services or zoning and subdivision. Pueblo County provides these services to residents of the unincorporated metro districts.

Data and information in this section is generally broken out for Pueblo County, the City of Pueblo, and (where available) for Pueblo West.

## POPULATION

Description	2000	2010	2019	2000-2019 <sup>1</sup>		
				Total	Ann. #	Ann. %
Pueblo	102,121	106,881	112,251	10,130	533	0.5%
Rye	202	153	160	-42	-2	-1.2%
Boone	323	340	359	36	2	0.6%
<b>Unincorp. Area</b>						
Pueblo West	16,996	27,854	31,849	14,853	782	3.4%
Colorado City	1,993	1,384	2,347	354	19	0.9%
Rest	<u>20,166</u>	<u>22,884</u>	<u>21,144</u>	<u>978</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>0.2%</u>
<b>Unincorp. Area Total</b>	<b>39,155</b>	<b>52,122</b>	<b>55,340</b>	<b>16,185</b>	<b>852</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
<b>Pueblo County</b>	<b>141,854</b>	<b>159,496</b>	<b>168,110</b>	<b>26,256</b>	<b>1,382</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>4,338,785</b>	<b>5,050,332</b>	<b>5,763,976</b>	<b>1,425,191</b>	<b>75,010</b>	<b>1.5%</b>

## Population 1870 - 2019

In 2019, Pueblo County has 168,110 residents, approximately two-thirds of whom reside within the City of Pueblo. Over time, the City accounts for a decreasing share of Pueblo County's population, as Pueblo West captures a greater share of population growth. Overall, the County has been adding 9,047 new residents per year since 2010.

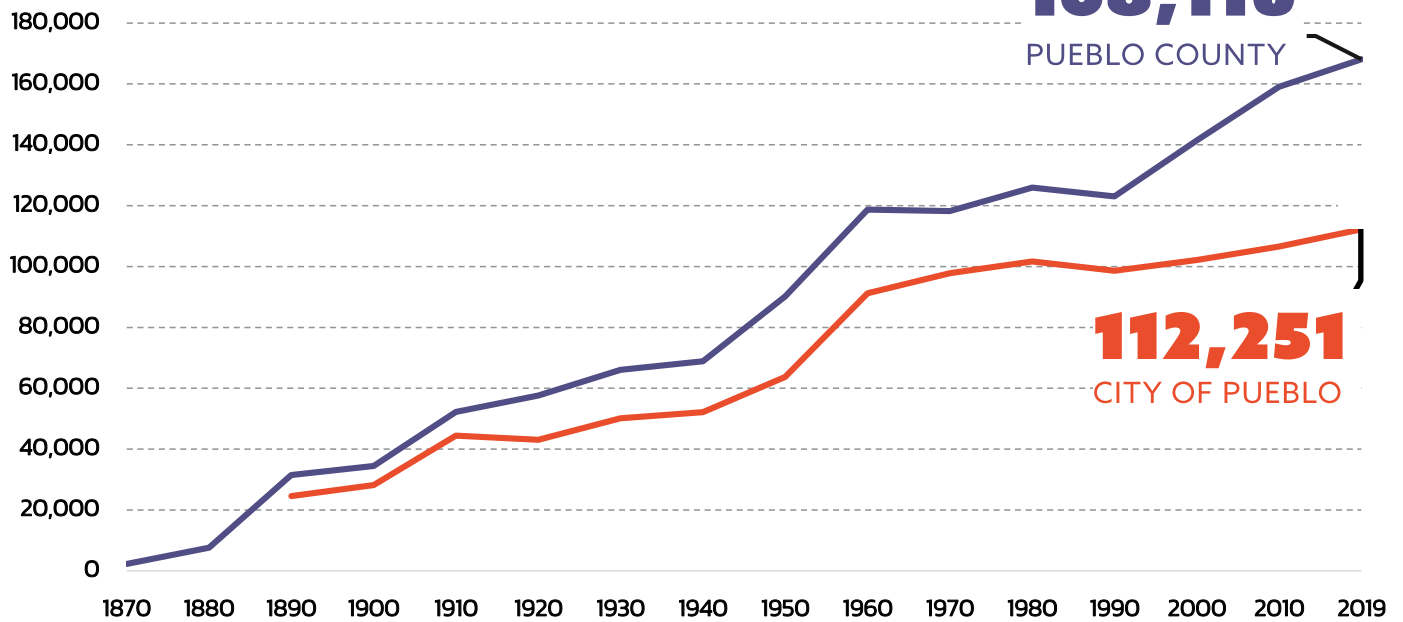
**168,110**  
**PUEBLO COUNTY**  
**POPULATION**

**.9%**  
**ANNUAL**  
**GROWTH RATE**



### Pueblo City and County Population<sup>2</sup>

1870 - 2019



### Current Population

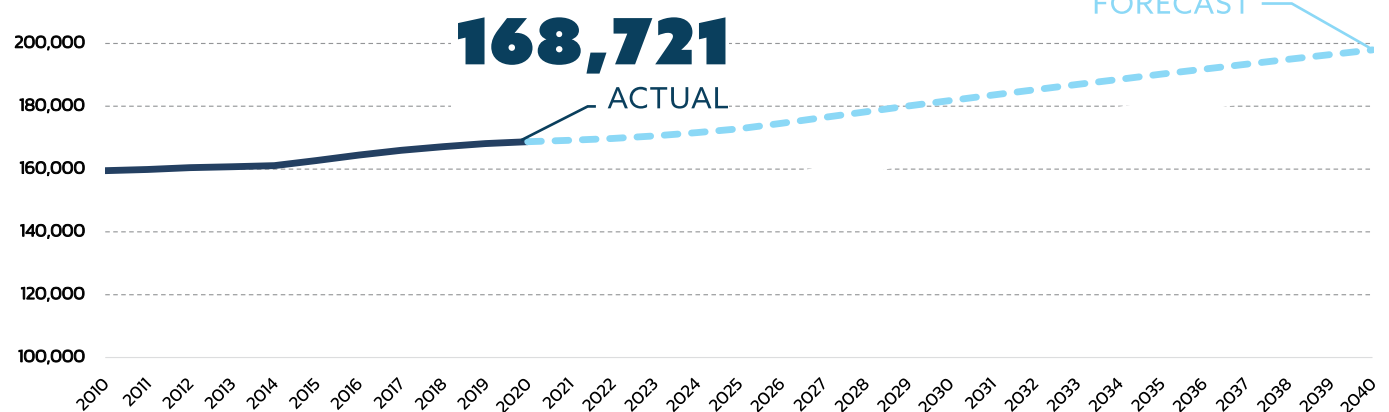
There are 168,110 residents in Pueblo County in 2019. Of those, 112,251 (67 percent) live in the City, and 55,340 (33 percent) live outside City limits. Pueblo West is the fastest growing area in the County, increasing annually by 3.4 percent, while the City grows at 0.5 percent annually. Colorado City is growing at a rate of .9 percent per year, while other small, outlying communities in the County have maintained their populations without growing larger. Taking all communities into account, the County's overall rate of growth between 2000 and 2019 has been 0.9 percent.

### Population Forecast

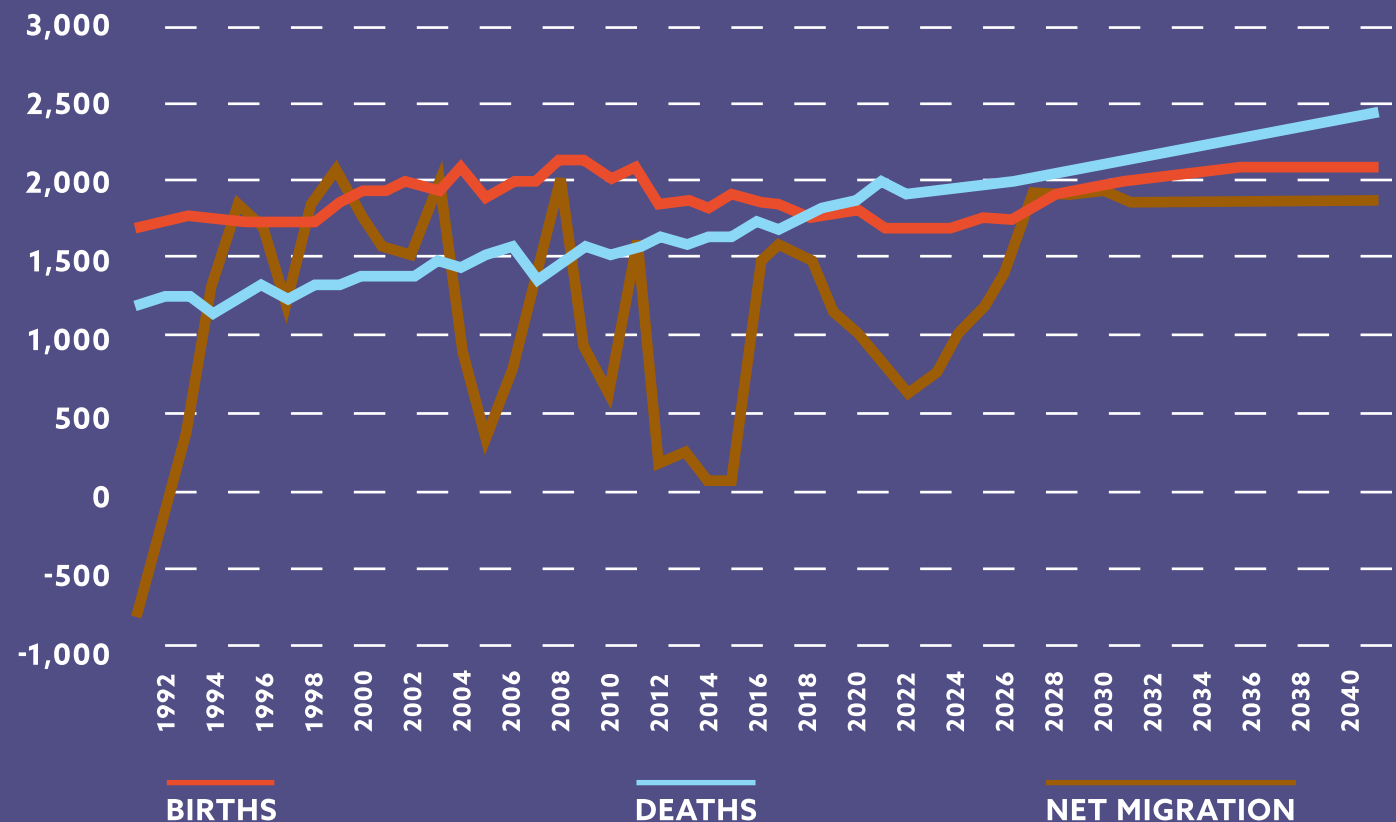
From 2020 to 2040, the County's rate of growth is anticipated to continue at a steady rate, similar to the rate of increase between 2000 to 2019. Overall, the County will add approximately 29,000 new residents by 2040. This is 1,462 new residents per year, or an annual growth rate of 0.8 percent.

### Pueblo County Population Growth<sup>3</sup>

2020 - 2040



Pueblo County Births, Deaths, and Migration<sup>4</sup>  
1990 - 2040

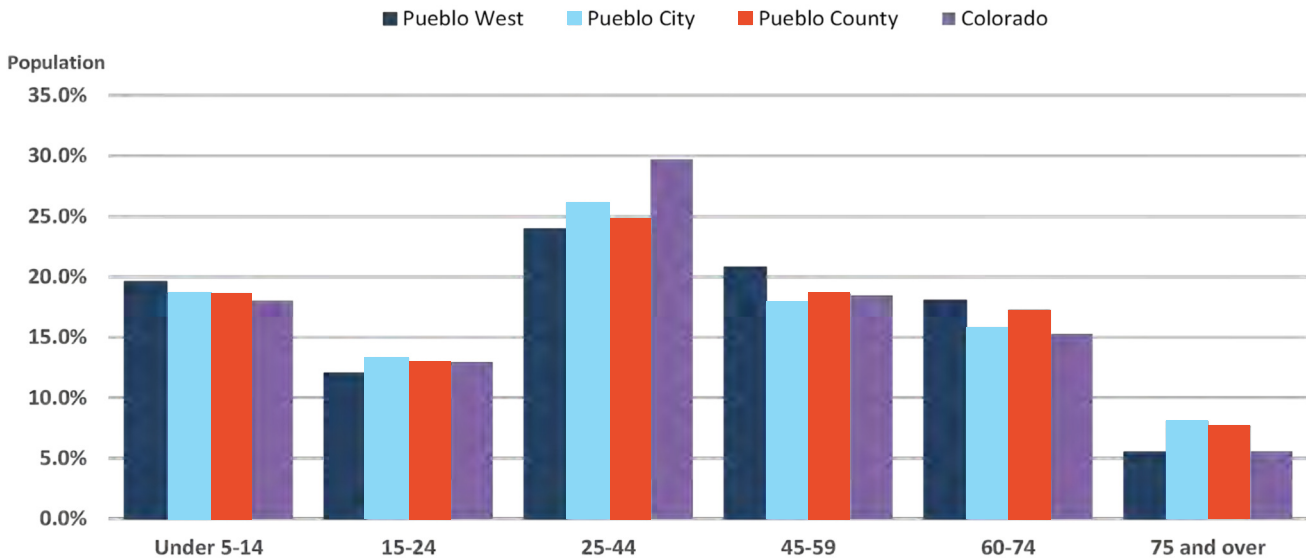


## FACTORS DRIVING PUEBLO COUNTY'S GROWTH TRENDS

The County's rate of births has held relatively steady over the time frame from 1990 to 2020. The rate of deaths began to outpace births in 2016, and is projected to increase between 2020 and 2040. Migration has varied significantly over the time frame, dependent in part on economic cycles. Projected growth in the County is anticipated as a result of new residents moving into the area, which counterbalances the rate of births being lower than the rate of deaths.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Age Distribution by Population, 2019<sup>5</sup>



### Age

The County's median age is 39.3 years. This is slightly lower in the City, at 37.7 years, and slightly higher in Pueblo West, at 40.4 years. The largest cohort is adults, 25-44, and the smallest is adults, 75 and over. The number of residents in the County under the age of 25 has decreased since 2010, and comprises 12-14 percent of the population, while the number of 60-74-year-old is the fastest growing segment of the population, increasing 3.5 percent annually.

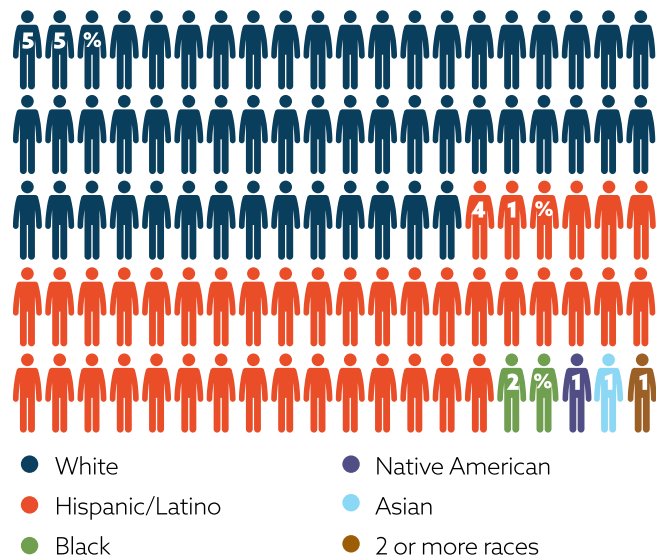
### Racial/Ethnic Composition

Between 2010 and 2019, Pueblo County grew more diverse, with an increase of residents in both the City of Pueblo and Pueblo West identifying as Hispanic or Latino.

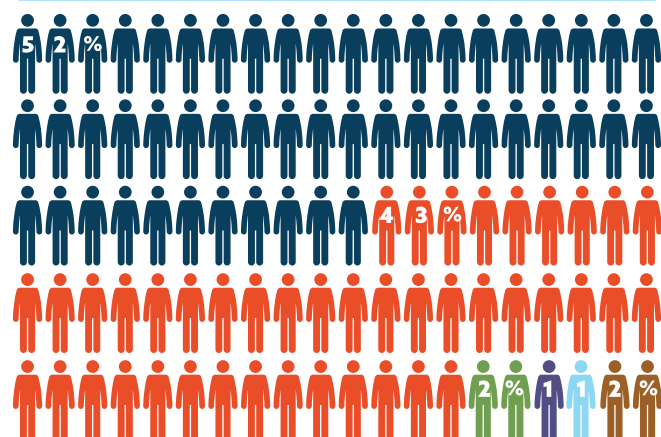
This increase in minority population is most pronounced in the City of Pueblo—already a majority minority community in 2010, when 52 percent of residents identified as minority or mixed-race. In 2019, that percentage has risen to 56, with Hispanic or Latino residents alone accounting for 51 percent of the City's population (up from 48 percent in 2010).

Though Pueblo West also saw a three percent increase in Hispanic or Latino residents, from 23 to 26 percent, it remains majority white, with 69 percent of residents describing themselves as White alone.

### Race/Ethnicity Pueblo County, 2010<sup>6</sup>



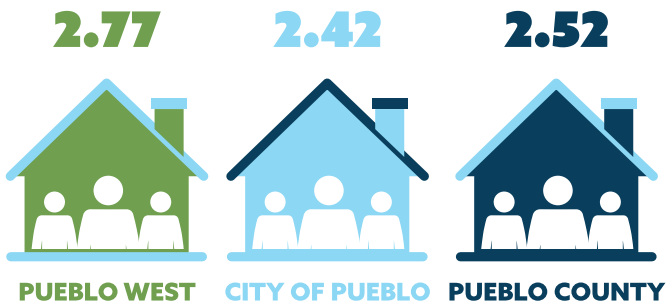
### Pueblo County, 2019<sup>7</sup>



## Household Size

In 2019, the average household size in Pueblo County is 2.52 people per household. Household size in the City is slightly smaller, with 2.42 people per household, while in Pueblo West the average household size is greater at 2.77 people per household. Household size did not change significantly in any jurisdiction between 2010 and 2019.

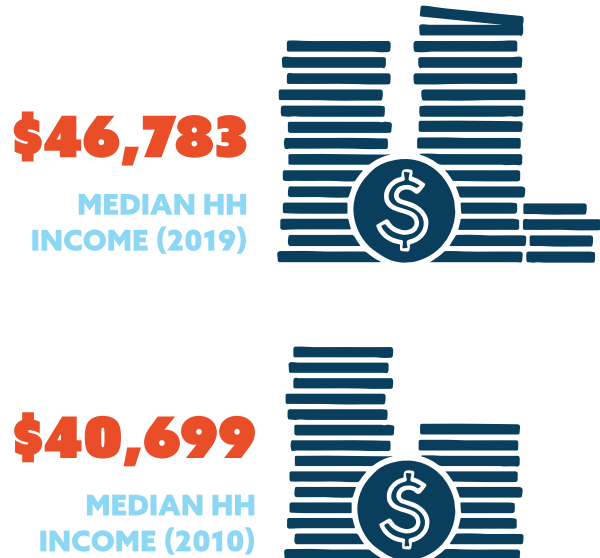
### Average Household Size, 2010 and 2019



## Median Income

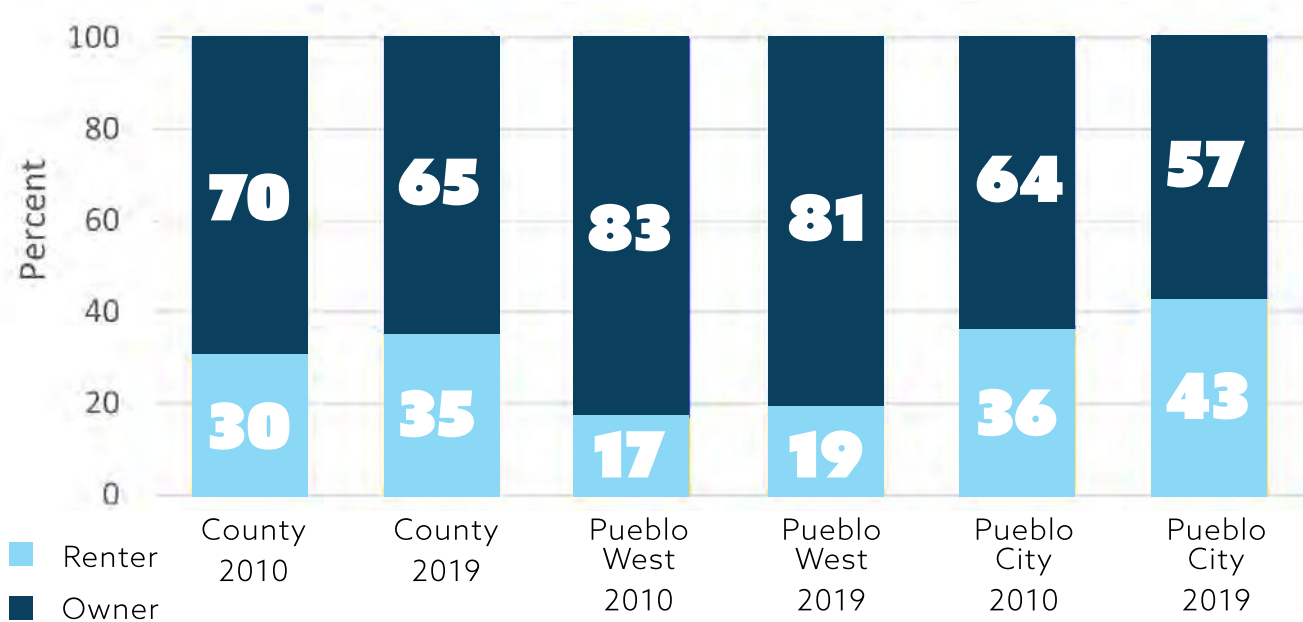
The County's median household income in 2019 is \$46,783. This is an increase of 15 percent over 2010, when the County-wide median income was \$40,699. In both 2010 and 2019, the median in Pueblo West remained higher than the County wide median, which in turn has been higher than the City median. Pueblo West median income increased the most over the time period, rising 21 percent from \$59,068 in 2010 to \$71,553 in 2019. In the City, the 2010 median increased 18 percent, from \$34,323 to \$40,450 in 2019.

### Pueblo County Median Income, 2010 and 2019<sup>8</sup>





### Homeowners and Renters by Jurisdiction<sup>9</sup> 2010 and 2019



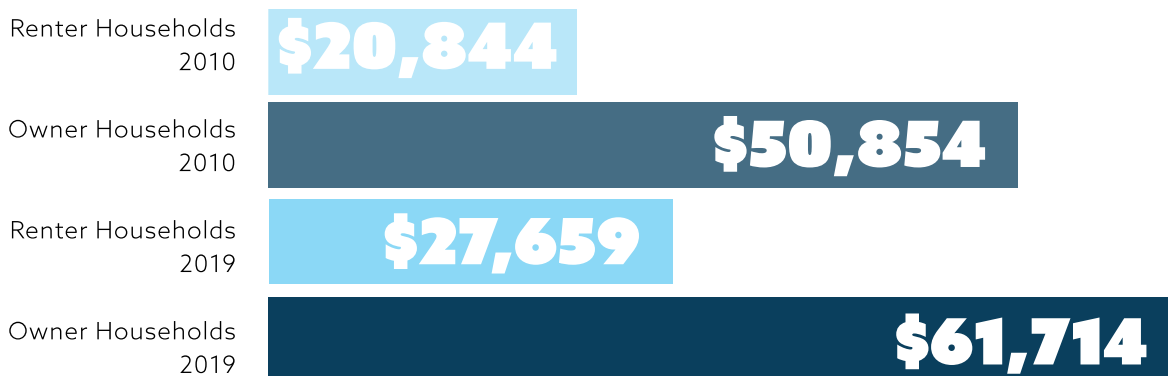
### Household Tenure

In all jurisdictions, the rate of homeownership versus rental has declined from 2010 to 2019. Pueblo West has maintained the highest rate of ownership at 81 percent – well above the rate for Colorado as a whole at 65 percent. In 2019, this rate is only a slight decline from the 2010 rate of ownership, which was 83 percent. By contrast, the City of Pueblo's home ownership rate lags the state by 8 percent (57 percent for the City), and has declined by seven percent from 2010 to 2019. At a County level, the trends are the same: a decline in ownership levels between 2010-2019, at a rate between that of the City and Pueblo West.

### Household Income by Tenure, 2010 and 2019

A persistent income disparity exists in all jurisdictions between the median income for renter households, and the median income for homeowners. At the County level in 2010, the median income for renters was \$30,010 less than that of homeowners, and that disparity increased to \$34,055 in 2019. This discrepancy in renter median income versus homeowner median income increased in all jurisdictions from 2010 to 2019, where it is now a difference of \$30,208 per year in the City, and \$30,728 per year in Pueblo West.

### Pueblo County Median Income by Tenure<sup>10</sup> 2010 and 2019

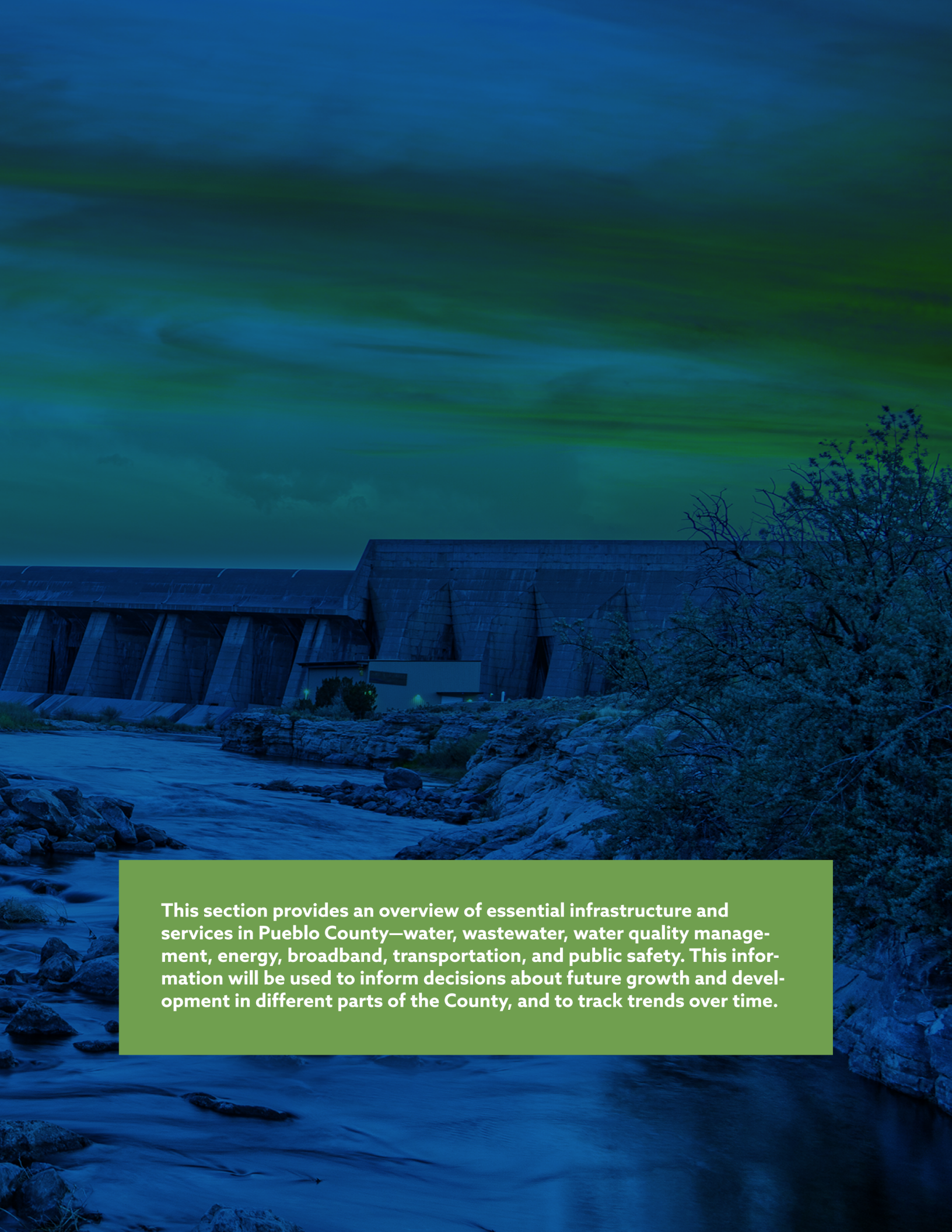


**FOCUS AREA #1**

# **INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES**





A large concrete dam with multiple buttresses is visible in the background under a dark, cloudy sky. In the foreground, a river flows over rocks. A green rectangular box is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image, containing white text.

**This section provides an overview of essential infrastructure and services in Pueblo County—water, wastewater, water quality management, energy, broadband, transportation, and public safety. This information will be used to inform decisions about future growth and development in different parts of the County, and to track trends over time.**

## WATER AND WASTEWATER

Pueblo County residents are currently served by seven individual water service districts, some of which also provide wastewater service. Residents outside these service districts typically rely on individual wells and septic systems. A brief overview of each provider's service area, current and projected service levels, and usage parameters is summarized below.

### City of Pueblo

#### Water<sup>11-12</sup>

The Pueblo Board of Water Works (Pueblo Water) provides domestic water service to approximately 68% of Pueblo County's population.

**Service Area.** Pueblo Water's service area generally aligns with the City of Pueblo limits.

**Current and Projected Service Levels.** In 2018, Pueblo Water provided service to 112,000 people through 40,027 taps, and projected the ability to serve a population of 300,000. Pueblo Water obtains supply from several sources, and possesses very senior rights dating back to the late 1800s on many of these sources. Additionally, in 2009, Pueblo Water purchased a 28 percent share of the water in the Bessemer Irrigation Ditch. Water Court approval was obtained in 2019, but there are additional steps that need to be taken prior to the water being available for municipal use - re-vegetation and dry-up of the historically irrigated land. It is anticipated that the 28% share of Bessemer Ditch water will continue to be used for irrigation until it is needed in the City.

**Current and Projected Water Use.** Demand decreased over the past decade due to conservation efforts and increased use of water-efficient appliances. However, Pueblo Water anticipates an increase in demand over the 20-year planning horizon as a result of population growth and the effects of climate change. The extent of increased demand as a result of climate change is difficult to predict, but is related to both the possible rise in temperature and a decrease in precipitation levels. Even accounting for a measure of increased demand, Pueblo Water projects sufficient

supply to support new development. Pueblo Water is in the process of creating a Water Conservation Plan (currently under review) to identify ways to offset anticipated increases in demand.

#### Water Demand in Acre Feet, 2019<sup>13</sup>

Sector	Pueblo Water	Pueblo West
Agriculture	20K	--
Industrial	12K	--
Municipal/Residential SF	12.6K	3.2k
Municipal/Residential MF	2.4K	153
Municipal/Commercial	7.5K	658
Irrigation of parks and other public spaces	3K	--

#### Gallons per capita water demand, 2019<sup>14</sup>

	Pueblo Water	Pueblo West
Residential	122	--
System wide	207	158
% Target for Conservation	TBA	7% of 158

**Distribution System.** The extent of the existing distribution system does not correspond with the larger boundaries of the service area. This may act as a constraint to development in areas not yet served by the system, and expansion is costly. Further, any possibility of expanding the system must be balanced against the on-going expense of repairing and replacing the existing, aging mains.

**Water Quality.**<sup>15</sup> Pueblo Water routinely monitors for contaminants in the drinking water system in accordance with federal and state laws. The most recent reporting period showed no violations, significant deficiencies, or formal enforcement actions.



### Stormwater<sup>16</sup>

The City of Pueblo Stormwater Utility Division is responsible for providing services necessary to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act and to implement all required provisions of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Program. The Division also conducts education and outreach programs design to raise awareness about run-off issues and surface water pollution prevention.

### Wastewater<sup>17</sup>

The City of Pueblo Wastewater Department is responsible for collection and treatment of sanitary sewage within the City limits of Pueblo.

**Capacity.** The James R. Dilorio Water Reclamation Facility treats wastewater generated in homes, businesses, and industries throughout the City of Pueblo. In addition, sanitary wastes from the Blende, Salt Creek, and St. Charles Mesa sanitation districts as well as from septic tanks throughout Pueblo County are treated at the facility. Currently, the Facility is operating at 59 percent of its wastewater treatment and processing capacity. The need to expand capacity is not anticipated based on growth projections through 2040.

**Treatment and Processing System.** Ongoing improvements to the City's Water Reclamation Facility are being initiated to eliminate obsolete and aging infrastructure, and to decrease the quantity of selenium and sulfate discharged from the processing plant. Both of these substances are cited as impairing water bodies in the region's watershed.

### Pueblo West Metro District<sup>18</sup>

#### Water

**Service area.** The Pueblo West Metro District (PWMD) water service area encompasses an area of approximately 31,000 acres, largely aligned with the PWMD's boundaries.

**Current and Projected Service Levels.** As of 2021, the PWMD provided 12,490 taps, approximately 68 percent of full build out (full build out projected at 18,373 taps). In projections over a 20-year time period

(2016-2036), the PWMD anticipated having supply to serve new development at a projected rate of growth of 1.5 percent per year. Although the supply is projected to be sufficient for this rate of growth, two constraints may nevertheless limit new development.

**Current and Projected Water Use.**<sup>19</sup> Current supply would not be adequate to serve the PWMD at full build out, with a projected shortage of 800 acre feet per year, possibly by 2041. Any entity looking to develop the excluded lots would be responsible for obtaining additional water rights to augment the available District water supply and meet the demand created by the inclusion of the newly developed taps. Because the PWMD has limited opportunity to increase supply by obtaining new water rights, a Water Conservation Strategy was implemented in 2012 and updated in 2020. The Conservation program goal is to reduce demand by 9.9 percent between 2018 and 2038, an amount that would be adequate to cover the projected shortfall.

**Distribution System.** Expanding the existing distribution system is costly, and the ten-year Capital Improvements Projects plan allots limited funds for the extension of mains.

### Wastewater<sup>20-21</sup>

**Capacity.** The PWMD's wastewater treatment facility is currently operating at 76 percent of its capacity.

**Treatment and Processing System.** To account for projected population growth over the next 20 years, the PWMD has begun planning for a \$15 million expansion of its facilities from 2025 to 2030. In addition to greater processing capacity, the upgrade will enable the plant to comply with more stringent regulations regarding effluent discharge limits. The PWMD also recently brought 106 lots previously operating on-site wastewater treatment systems in the States Avenue development onto the municipal system, an expansion that will also accommodate further build out in this development.<sup>22</sup>

## Colorado City Metro District

### Water<sup>23-24</sup>

**Service Area.** The Colorado City Metro District (CCMD) water service area encompasses 8,017 acres, largely aligned with the District's boundaries.

**Current and Projected Service Levels.** In 2014, the CCMD was serving 1,005 connections. At that time, the peak demand from those connections was one fifth of the available supply, indicating sufficient capacity to support further growth in the area. However, in October 2020, the CCMD was losing up to 50 percent of its supply to leakage and aging infrastructure, causing it to turn to pumping groundwater from wells. Until funding for upgrades to the CCMD's delivery infrastructure is secured, and upgrades are completed, growth potential is limited.

**Source Water Protection.** The CCMD draws its water from Greenhorn Creek (as does the Town of Rye, with 100 connections), Cold Spring, and five groundwater intakes. In 2014, the CCMD and the Town of Rye worked with stakeholders to develop the Greenhorn Valley Source Water Protection Plan. The Plan identifies potential sources of source water contamination and identify strategies to protect the health of the water supply.

### Wastewater<sup>25</sup>

**Capacity.** The CCMD has reached the limits of its capacity to treat wastewater, necessitating immediate initiation of construction to expand capacity. Operating at close to 100 percent capacity puts the plant at risk of exceeding its effluent discharge permit limits.

**Treatment and Processing System.** PACOG projects that if construction of expanded capacity is not complete within three to four years (by 2024), the Colorado Department of Public Health & the Environment may prevent the CCMD from offering new taps, which could prove a serious constraint to any growth or expansion, particularly on subdivided lots that are not large enough to allow an on-site wastewater treatment system.

## St. Charles Mesa Water District<sup>26</sup>

**Service Area.** The St. Charles Mesa Water District (SCMWD), established in 1963, covers two service zones encompassing 65 square miles, with water drawn primarily from the Bessemer Irrigation Ditch and the Arkansas River. Zone 1 is east of Pueblo City limits, and south of highway 50. Its western boundary is just west of Aspen Lane, and it extends to the east past Wheeler Lane. (Avondale is not included in the service area.) The SCMWD added Zone 2 in 1999, by absorbing the Huerfano Water District.

**Current and Projected Service Levels.** The District serves approximately 11,000 residents through 4,320 taps. Though 95 percent of the taps serve residential uses (3,853 of the total), the largest users of water are institutional customers, including the School District, which uses water for irrigation of lawns. Requests for new service in Zone 1 are required to provide shares in the Bessemer Ditch sufficient to cover anticipated use, or purchase sufficient shares from the District's Water Bank. Instituted in 2006, the Water Bank held 500 shares, and potential new residential customers without existing rights could buy one share to connect to the St. Charles system (connection requests for non-residential uses would likely require the purchase of more than one share per connection). Since 2006, the District has sold approximately 70 shares, leaving 430 remaining in the bank to accommodate new connections in the service area. In 2009, the amount of available water was greater than twice the demand. The modest rate of share purchases for new connections over the past 15 years seems to indicate that there is still significant unused capacity that can accommodate growth in the District's Zone 1 service area. To further preserve available supply and reduce demand, the District has also had a conservation plan in place since 2009.

In Zone 2, an area west of the Huerfano River, south of the Mesa, and encompassing Huerfano Lake and Fields Road, there were 152 existing taps, and a moratorium on new taps in the Zone. Share purchases from the water bank are not available in Zone 2.

## Avondale Water and Sanitation District

### Water

**Service Area.** Avondale Water and Sanitation District was established as a special service district in 1968 to serve the unincorporated town of Avondale, about 15 miles east of the City of Pueblo.

**Current and Projected Service Levels.** The District manages 278 taps, serving approximately 1,023 people.

### Wastewater

**Current and Projected Capacity.** Though Avondale has seen its population expand and contract over the past decade, its wastewater facility presently operates at only 54 percent of capacity. Spare processing capacity should enable the sanitation district to accommodate a range of growth projections, without the need to expand or upgrade the current facility over the 20-year planning time frame.

## Town of Boone Sanitation District

### Water

**Service Area.** The Town of Boone Water and Sanitation District serves the town's approximately 350 residents.

**Current and Projected Service Levels.** In 2020, the Town managed 140 service taps, serving 343 residents. Residential growth generally in alignment with the County rate of roughly one percent per year does not indicate any large or immediate increases in service demand.

**Source Water.** The town's current sources are two springs (a prior well field source dried up). The 2014 and 2015 reclassification of the springs as ground water under the direct influence of surface water (GWUDI) entailed the need for surface water treatment to comply with an Enforcement Order from the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE). In 2020, the town is in the process of switching to a new source for water supply, an alluvial well drawing Arkansas River water. Part of a larger Arkansas Valley Conduit project, the conduit is anticipated to reach Boone in 2023, enabling switchover to the new source. Concurrent distribution system upgrades, such as replacing asbestos-cement piping segments, are also underway.

### Wastewater

**Current and Projected Capacity.** The facility currently operates at 42 percent of its capacity. Projected population growth does not indicate the need for an upgrade of the existing facility within the 20-year planning horizon.

## WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

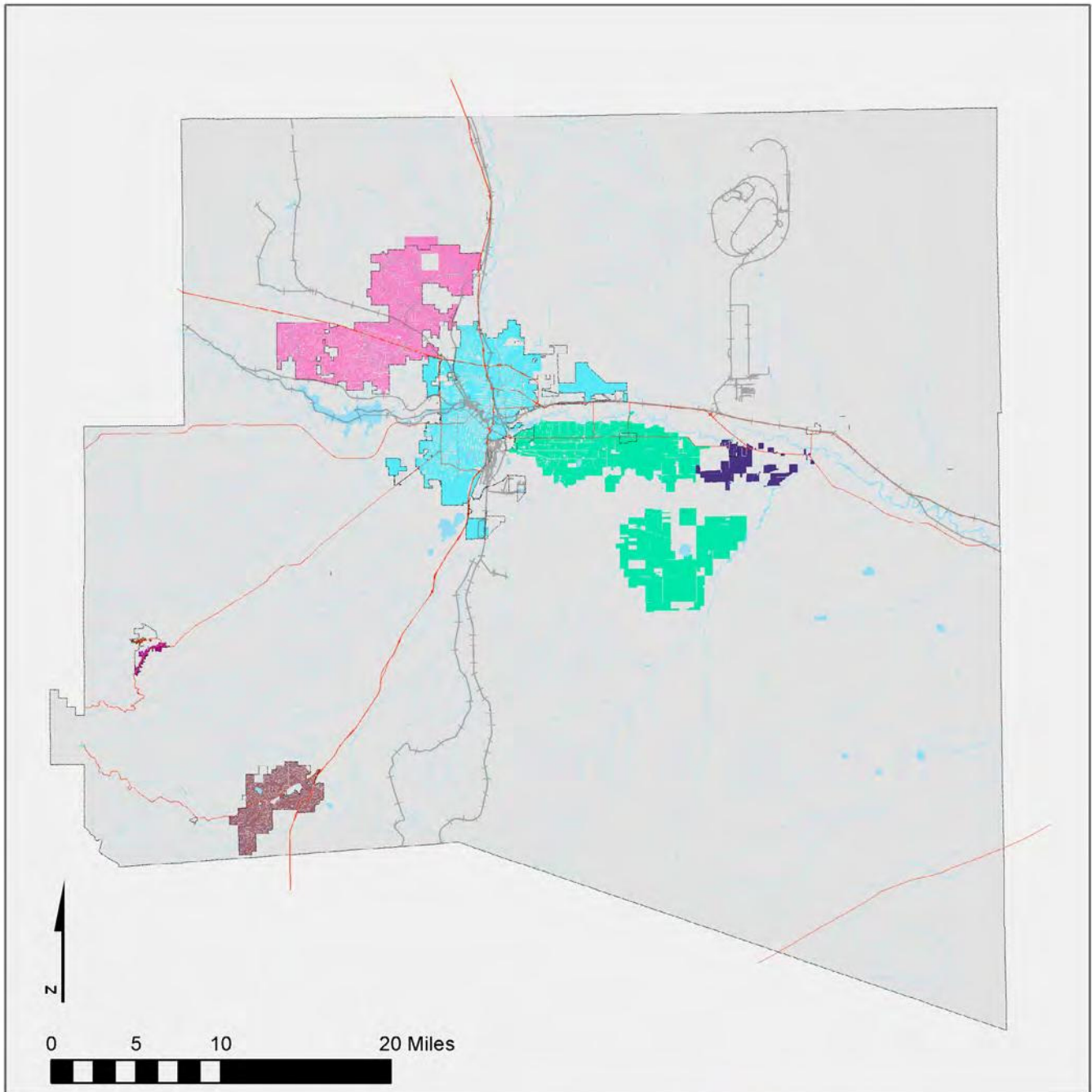
**Pueblo 208 Water Quality Management Plan.** PACOG is responsible for the preparation and administration of the Pueblo 208 Water Quality Management Plan (208 Plan), a requirement under Section 208 of the Federal Clean Water Act. The first 208 Plan for Pueblo County was adopted in 1977 and has been updated periodically since, most recently in 2020. The 2020 Water Quality Management Plan identifies water bodies within Pueblo County that are impaired and provides system boundaries and permit specifications for the six wastewater dischargers in the County.

Future active participation in the 208 Plan relates to monitoring and education of non-point source pollution contributions to the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek. The following issues were identified in the 208 Plan:

- On-site wastewater treatment system (OWTS) failures;
- Agricultural dispersion of nitrogen through use of fertilizers; and
- Conveyance of nitrogen, phosphorus, and E. Coli through irrigation ditches.

**Impaired Waters:** The majority of impaired waters are in the eastern half of the County. Impaired waters include segments of the Arkansas River, Fountain Creek, St. Charles River, Huerfano River, and Greenhouse Creek. Selenium, naturally dissolved from Pierre shale, is a prominent cause of impairment that the City of Pueblo has been working to mitigate, while other causes include E. coli, sulfate (SO<sub>4</sub>), iron (Fe), temperature, manganese (Mn), arsenic, and ammonia. Upcoming changes in regulations will also require treatment for phosphorous and nitrogen, both widely present in fertilizer, such that agricultural runoff will present a concern in managing the levels of these components. Maintaining acceptable total maximum daily loads, and avoiding exceeding effluent discharge limits, may require upgrades to current systems.

## Water Service and Drainage Basins Pueblo County



### Roads

- Interstates and Highways
- Major Streets
- ... Local Streets
- Municipalities and Places

### Water Service Areas

- Pueblo Board of Water Works
- Pueblo West Metro District Water
- St. Charles Mesa Water

### Water Service Areas (Continued)

- Pine Drive Water
- Colorado City Metro District Water
- Avondale Water
- Beulah Water



## ENERGY

Three providers in Pueblo County provide electric and natural gas service. All three providers have been actively working with the County, City, and other stakeholders to increase energy efficiency and help the region achieve its goal of transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy sources by 2035. This commitment was formalized through resolutions made by the City of Pueblo in 2017 and Pueblo County in 2018.

### Black Hills Energy

Black Hills Energy is the primary provider of electricity in Pueblo County and serves nearly 99,000 electric customers in 24 communities across the region. Black Hills Energy operates one of the cleanest electric generation fleets in Colorado today, serving customers with 100% renewable energy and natural gas-fired generation. Since the retirement of its last coal-fired plant in 2012, Black Hills Energy has added multiple community solar gardens across the region along with three Southern Colorado wind farms to its system—Peak View, Busch Ranch I and Busch Ranch II – which together deliver 150 megawatts (MW) of energy capacity to customers.

Black Hills Energy's Renewable Advantage plan to add more low-cost renewable energy to its system is moving forward, offering \$66 million in customer savings over 15 years and \$178 million in direct and indirect economic impact along with significant environmental benefits. When the 200-MW utility-scale solar project comes online in 2023, more than 50% of Black Hills Energy's total generation mix will come from renewable sources, leading to a 70% emissions reduction by 2024, compared with 2005. This puts the company on track to achieve the state's requirement of an 80% emissions reduction by 2030 several years ahead of schedule.

To support customers' growing energy needs and empower economic development in Pueblo West and the surrounding communities of Penrose and Canon City, Black Hills Energy is advancing its Reliability Upgrade Project for Southern Colorado. This transmission infrastructure project will support the continued delivery of safe, reliable energy for customers, while enhancing the integrity of the existing power grid and supporting new growth on the system with needed capacity.

### Xcel Energy

Xcel provides electric service in the County, and is the largest provider of gas service. To support the implementation of the Community Energy Plan, the company has a memorandum of understanding with the County, describing how it will provide support for accomplishing plan goals, to include project management, communications assistance, and tracking and measurement. EVRAZ, which is the first solar-powered steel plant in the country, is Xcel's largest customer, and in 2016 the company worked in partnership to establish the Comanche Solar Project, the largest solar farm east of the Rockies, which is capable of 120 megawatts of generation capacity.

### San Isabel Electric Association

San Isabel Electric Association is a member-owned cooperative that provides service to 24,000 customers in parts of Pueblo County. The cooperative emphasizes increased energy efficiency, and expanded reliance on solar power.





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## RELATED PLANS AND STUDIES: ENERGY

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### 2020 Community Energy Plan

Pueblo County, in partnership with Xcel Energy and the Southern Colorado Energy Collaborative, convened a diverse group of stakeholders, to create a Community Energy Plan. The Plan outlines a variety of strategies move the Pueblo County community toward its energy efficiency and resiliency goals. Strategies address the need for assistance to the County's lower income communities; business engagement in energy efficiency rebates and programs; alignment of workforce, education, human service, and economic development policies with energy transition goals; and investing and showcasing energy efficiency, renewable energy, and innovative energy technologies at Pueblo County facilities.

### Pueblo County Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan (2020)

Pueblo County embraced an ambitious vision to be a leader in the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in the State of Colorado to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve sustainability in Pueblo County and throughout the state. The Pueblo County Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan establishes an EV vision and goals for the County, expands collaboration with a broader range of stakeholders to be active partners to facilitate broader EV adoption, identifies national and regional barriers (based on stakeholder engagement and survey responses) to EV adoption and strategies to overcome them, provides regionally focused strategies to educate the public about EVs, and provides recommendations about the siting and possible funding of EV charging infrastructure.

In accordance with the state's clean energy policy objectives, Black Hills Energy's transportation electrification plan is now pending final approval from the Colorado Public Utilities Commission. Targeted for implementation in July 2021, the Ready EV plan would provide customer rebates to significantly lower the cost of electric vehicle charging equipment, establish rate options that could lead to bill savings, and expand the commercial infrastructure needed to make EV charging more accessible to Southern Colorado drivers.

Through an extensive stakeholder engagement process, Black Hills Energy designed an innovative framework for its Ready EV plan with sensitivity to customer rate impacts and inclusivity while carefully balancing the interests of customers, policymakers, the environmental community and community advocates.

## BROADBAND COVERAGE

The primary internet service providers in Pueblo County are Xfinity, CenturyLink, AT&T, and HughesNet. U.S. Census data from 2019 indicate that 76 percent of households in Pueblo County have a broadband internet subscription. The remaining 24 percent of households could have slower internet connections, or no in-home connection at all. While there have been recent expansions of broadband networks in some parts of the County, the speed of service offered still varies between providers. Gaps in cellular coverage also exist in some areas.

## TRANSPORTATION

The Pueblo Area Council of Governments, working in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), is the Metropolitan Planning Organization charged with short- and long-term transportation planning in the Pueblo region, as required by federal statute. The City’s Public Works Department is responsible for maintenance and expansion of local streets within City limits. CDOT is responsible for maintenance of federal and state highways traversing the region including I-25, U.S. 50, SH 45, SH 47, SH 78, SH 96, and other roads in CDOT-owned right-of-way.

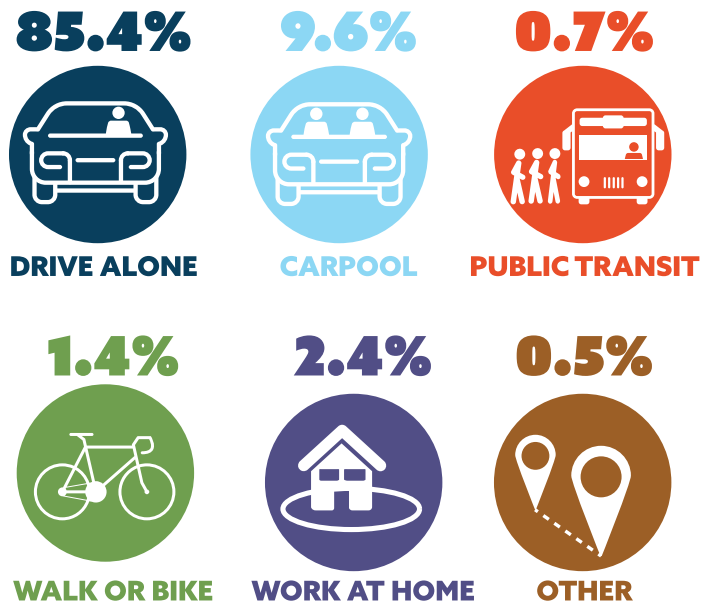
### Mode Split and Commuting Trends

#### Mode Split

According to the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), between 2014 and 2018, the percent of people who drove alone increased, while all other modes of transportation declined in share, as did the percentage of those who reported working from home.

#### Commuter Trends

Approximately one third of residents commute outside the County for work, while one third of the County’s workforce commutes in to work from other jurisdictions (coming primarily from El Paso County to the north, and Fremont County to the west). 67 percent of workers live and work in the County, where the primary employment center is in and around the City of Pueblo. 95 percent of commutes are by automobile, with 85 percent driving alone – a percentage that has been increasing since 2014.



#### Residential Commuter Flow, 2017<sup>27</sup>

Description	Count	Share
<b>City of Pueblo</b>		
Living in the Selection Area	42,403	100%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	23,222	55%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	19,181	45%
<b>Pueblo West</b>		
Living in the Selection Area	12,614	100%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	1,184	9%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	11,430	91%
<b>Pueblo County</b>		
Living in the Selection Area	64,374	100%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	43,175	67%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	21,199	33%

### Road Network

As demonstrated by the LRTP mode split data, the County's road network provides the primary means of transportation around and through the region. Though congestion is an issue on some area roadways, a more widespread concern is the condition of the infrastructure.

In 2020, Highway 50 between the City and Pueblo West is the road segment with the most acute congestion, as measured during peak evening travel time. The LRTP notes that a lack of alternative connections exacerbates the extent of this congestion. Additionally, small segments of I-25 and SH 96 also experience afternoon/evening travel time congestion. Major improvements to this stretch of Highway 50 are underway, and anticipated for completion in 2022.

Referencing the LRTP's pavement condition assessment, both of the region's major thoroughfares, Highway 50 and Interstate 25 (I-25), fall below the 80 percent target for pavement in moderate or good (rated "high") condition. Additionally, there are several bridges on these roadways (and others in the City and County, notably the Union Bridge across the Arkansas River in Pueblo) whose condition is rated as "poor." Business Highway 50, traveling across the Mesa south of the river, scores 47 percent, while the segment of Highway 50 west of the City that bisects Pueblo West, scores 46 percent. I-25 is rated at 63 percent.

With funding secured, improvements to these road segments should be underway as part of the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Plan. Though improvements to Highway 50 west of the City may temporarily alleviate congestion issues, growth in population and concurrent roadway usage could eliminate any gains from these improvements. The extension of 24th Street from its current terminus to connect to Purcell Boulevard to the west is planned to provide a second connection between the City and Pueblo West. However, the planned extension is not part of the 10-year Capital Improvement project list and outside funding sources have not been identified.

### Transit

Pueblo Transit provides public bus services to the City of Pueblo and its immediate vicinity. In 2017, weekly

ridership was 4,600 passengers across all twelve routes. Service operates six days a week (no Sunday service) generally between 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on weekdays with 30 or 60 minute lead times, and 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Saturdays with 60 minute lead times. The 2020 public health crisis necessitated a reduction in service, and reduction to fare revenue in this period (including the initiation of no-fare periods during the crisis) is likely to have on-going fiscal implications for public transportation in Pueblo.

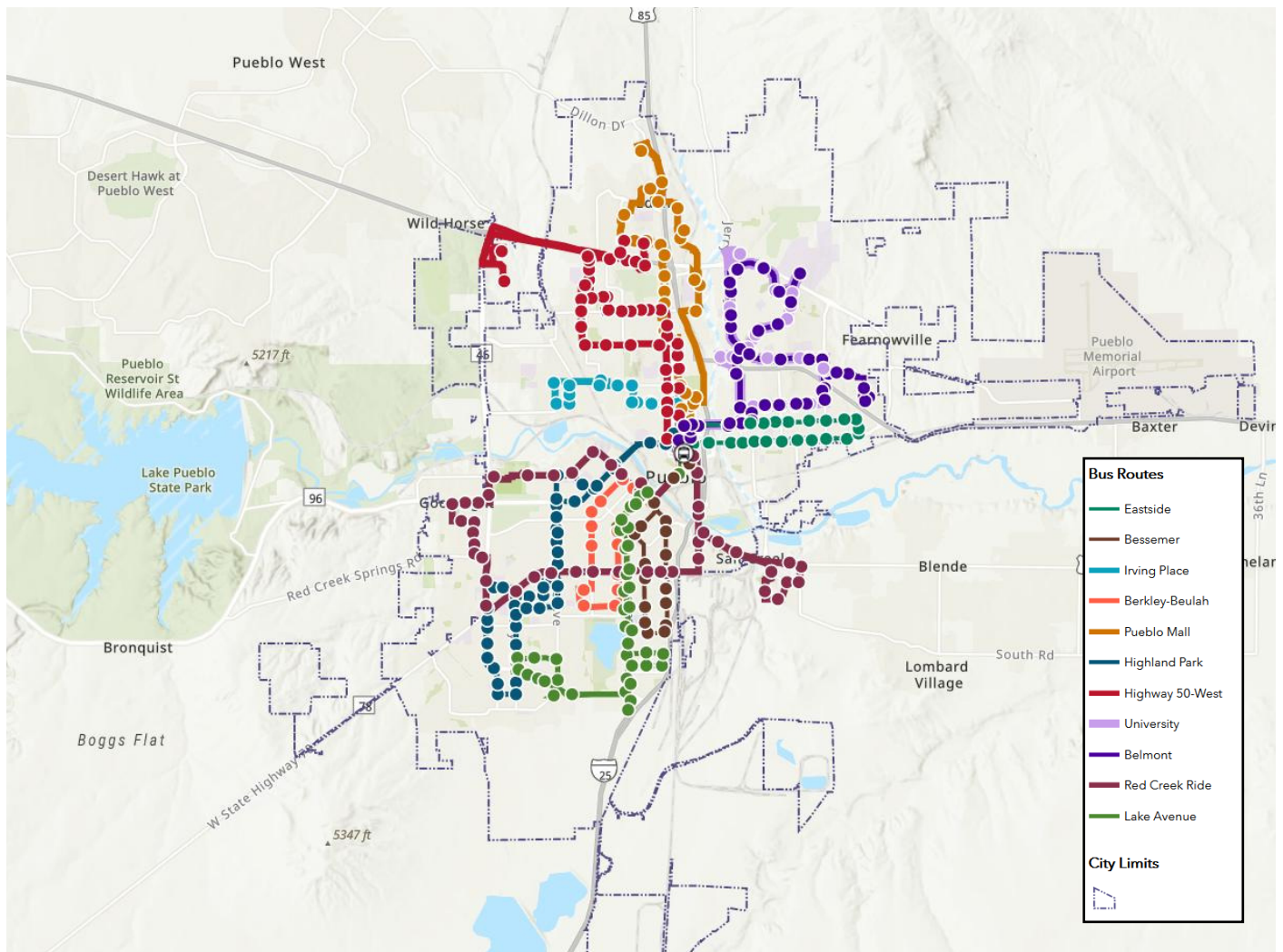
A feasibility study was conducted by PACOG in 2017 in response to an ongoing interest in transit service by Pueblo West residents. The study concluded that Pueblo West did not yet have sufficient demand or community support for all-day fixed-route transit, but provided recommendations for targeted service enhancements in the near-term.

### Multimodal Transportation

#### Biking/Walking

The LRTP recognizes the importance of providing an interconnected transportation network, where walking and biking are viable modes of travel, especially in the City. The LRTP has a top-level goal to "Support Multimodal Transportation," and expansion of the current network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared trails will be important. The City currently has over 24-miles of trails, which connect neighborhoods to destinations in the northern, eastern, central, southern, and western portions of the City. The trail system links directly with Colorado State University-Pueblo; El Centro del Quinto Sol recreation plaza, Runyon Field Sports Complex and lakes, Downtown Pueblo, Pueblo White Water Park, and Lake Pueblo State Park.

However, bicycle commuters are hampered by gaps in connectivity of current trails (linking Pueblo to Pueblo West), and also structural barriers, such as I-25, the railroad tracks, and Fountain Creek (separating the east side of the City from Downtown). Though improvements to the City sidewalk network are continually on-going, with upgrades for ADA-compliant curb ramp and installation of new sidewalk, there are issues with deterioration of old sidewalk, the need for expanded connectivity of the sidewalk network, and a focus on safety improvements.

Pueblo Transit System Route Map<sup>28</sup>

### Rail, Freight, and Air

Though Amtrak has two existing routes in Colorado, Pueblo is currently not served by passenger rail. The possibility of a Front Range Passenger Rail service is one that could have extensive positive economic ramifications from Pueblo and other communities along such a line, which would extend from Fort Collins through Denver and Colorado Springs, on to Pueblo and as far south as Trinidad. While the feasibility of Front Range Passenger Rail Service in the region is still being explored, it may become a more concrete possibility over the twenty-year planning horizon.

Pueblo has important advantages in freight transportation, by being a center where major truck and rail routes intersect. Both BNSF and UP (the only rail line

in the state that crosses the Continental Divide) pass through Pueblo, which also allows a connecting point to other short lines in the state. The interconnectivity of various means of freight transport is a significant advantage for the region in attracting industry that relies on such interconnections. Though the Pueblo Memorial Airport accounts for little of the freight movement in and around the region, it is an existing asset whose prominence in this capacity may grow as the region does. Finally, the presence of the Transportation Technology Center, Inc., which conducts research, development, testing, consulting, and training for railway-related technologies, is an asset unique to the region.





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## RELATED PLANS AND STUDIES: MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

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### 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (currently under review)

The Pueblo Area Council of Government (PACOG)'s 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan establishes a 25-year vision for the Pueblo County's transportation system. Once complete, the LRTP will provide a list of priority transportation projects that meet current and future needs of the region. The draft LRTP was developed through technical analysis, public input and build upon previous plans to incorporate all types of travel including driving, biking, walking, public transportation, and freight.

### Pueblo Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

The Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG) – the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Pueblo region – adopted a new bicycle and pedestrian master plan in December 2020. The plan generally recommends investments in infrastructure, maintenance, and education to improve connectivity, support walkability and bikeability, enhance safety for all users, and improve health and air quality in the region. The Plan supports related efforts to improve outdoor recreation, foster tourism activity, and improve public health and wellness.

### 2018 Colorado Freight and Passenger Rail Plan

Prepared by the Colorado Department of Transportation, the 2018 Colorado Freight and Passenger Rail Plan addresses current conditions, trends, and future plans for the state's rail system. Of particular relevance to Pueblo County, the Plan provides background on planning for future Front Range passenger rail service along the I-25 Corridor from Fort Collins to Trinidad.



## PUBLIC SAFETY

### City of Pueblo Police

The City of Pueblo Police department provides law enforcement services within City boundaries. In 2017, residents approved a tax that enabled the department to hire 24 new officers, bringing the force total to 231 sworn officers who patrol the four quadrants of the City.

### Pueblo County Sheriff

The Pueblo County Sheriff's office provides law enforcement services outside Pueblo City limits. The Sheriff's office has 362 sworn full-time officers.

### Fire and Emergency Response

Pueblo Fire Department provides fire and rescue service within Pueblo City limits. Pueblo West maintains its own fire department to respond within its

service area, and provides support to commercial development adjacent to its service area through cost-of-service agreements.

Some outlying areas of the County have Fire Protection Districts, such as Pueblo Rural Fire, which covers the St. Charles Mesa to a point slightly east of 60th Lane, along with other volunteer fire departments in Beulah, Rye, and Red Creek in the western portion of the County, and Edison, Boone, and Fowler providing coverage to the east. Outside of these defined service areas the Pueblo County Sheriff provides limited support to ensure structure fires are properly extinguished from a health and safety standpoint, but does not have the capability of responding to fires for the purposes of protecting property. Hatchet Ranch is an example of a concentrated area of homes that does not fall within a defined fire service area.



## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Infrastructure and services will play a critical role in defining where and how the region grows in the future. Key considerations highlight the importance of regional collaboration in planning for sustainable and resilient growth in Pueblo County:

### Integrated land use and water resource planning

Ensuring Pueblo County's water supply is resilient in the face of increasing climate variability and vulnerability is a critical concern for the region's future. Pueblo Water, the Pueblo West Metro District, Pueblo County, and other service providers have taken steps to plan for severe drought scenarios and promote water conservation. However, the potential for water and land use planning conflicts has not been a focus until recently. To help shift the focus as part of the Regional Comprehensive Plan process, baseline information about the region's water supply and usage in this section will be used to inform discussions about future land use choices and potential policy and regulatory changes. The updated plan will contain a comprehensive water element to allow Pueblo County to grow in a sustainable way and support agricultural sectors that are critical to the region's economic growth.

### Locating future growth to best capitalize on existing service capacity

Though there is ample land area to accommodate growth throughout the County, the cost of service provision will vary significantly by location. Many outlying areas in the County, along with potential or existing annexation areas on the fringes of the City, would require extension of service delivery networks or boundaries to serve, an option that may be cost-prohibitive in some locations. This consideration applies equally to possible water and sewer line extensions, as it does to surface transportation infrastructure such as roads, broadband service, and the need of expanded boundaries for supportive services such as police, fire, and emergency services. Evaluation of cost-efficient growth locations proximate to existing services and that pose logical and incremental expansion

of existing service networks will be an important consideration moving forward.

### Coordinated decision-making can support meeting renewable energy goals

Coordinated decision-making can support meeting renewable energy goals. Both the City and the County have adopted ambitious goals for reliance on renewable energy sources by 2035. The expansion of solar facilities in the area is a promising step towards achieving the 100 percent target, but close collaboration in planning among jurisdictions and service providers will be an on-going requirement to achieve the goal. This is another component where consideration of locations for growth – both for residential development and industry, including solar – is important. Land use decisions can help best situate solar operations where ancillary impacts to adjacent development are limited or mitigated, and where residential development can most efficiently benefit from existing transmission networks.

With abundant wind and solar resources, Pueblo and Southern Colorado have the potential to lead the nation in the adoption of clean energy development. Black Hills Energy is working in partnership with the City and County to make this ambition a reality through Renewable Advantage and the company's growing renewable energy portfolio. When completed, the 200-MW Pueblo County solar project will provide enough clean energy to power about 46,000 homes annually, assuring significant cost savings for customers while achieving long-lasting environmental benefits and economic vitality for the region for years to come.

In addition to utility-scale wind and solar, Black Hills Energy is reducing emissions and offering customers clean energy options through the development of community solar gardens with some of the capacity reserved exclusively for income qualified customers, removing barriers to participating in Colorado's move toward more renewables.



Another way to reduce emissions is to help customers reduce energy use through energy efficiency programs. Since 2009, Black Hills Energy has helped customers save more than 191 million kilowatt hours of energy which is the equivalent of removing more than 122,000 tons of carbon emissions from the air. In the past 10 years, the company has provided \$25 million in rebates to customers when they purchase energy-efficient appliances.

### **Determining shared priorities for transportation network maintenance and expansion**

Current plans acknowledge that the region is, and has historically been, dependent primarily on automobiles for travel. At the same time, there is a recognition and a growing desire to facilitate other modes of transportation. Biking and walking in particular are areas of focus, as they can lessen congestion pressure on the road network, and provide other health and cost benefits.

But, with limited transportation dollars, the region must balance maintenance and expansion of the road network with the expansion of multimodal options. Recent planning efforts have established priorities that can be confirmed as part of the Regional Plan process, and allow for region-wide assessment and prioritization of transportation improvements that offer shared benefits to users of the system. In addition, opportunities to support emerging modes of transportation (ebikes and scooters) through regulatory updates can also be explored.


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**FOCUS AREA #2**

# **GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT**





An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood at dusk. The sky is a deep blue with scattered clouds. In the foreground, there are modern, multi-story residential buildings with large windows and flat roofs. A paved road and a parking lot are visible between the buildings. In the background, the neighborhood extends into a flat landscape under a darkening sky. A green rectangular text box is overlaid on the lower portion of the image.

This focus area provides an overview of existing land use patterns and future growth potential in Pueblo County based on the availability of vacant land and infrastructure, residential and non-residential development trends, and development feasibility. Data and information are provided for Pueblo County as a whole, the City of Pueblo and Future Growth Areas, and the Pueblo West and Colorado City Metropolitan Districts.

## PUEBLO COUNTY

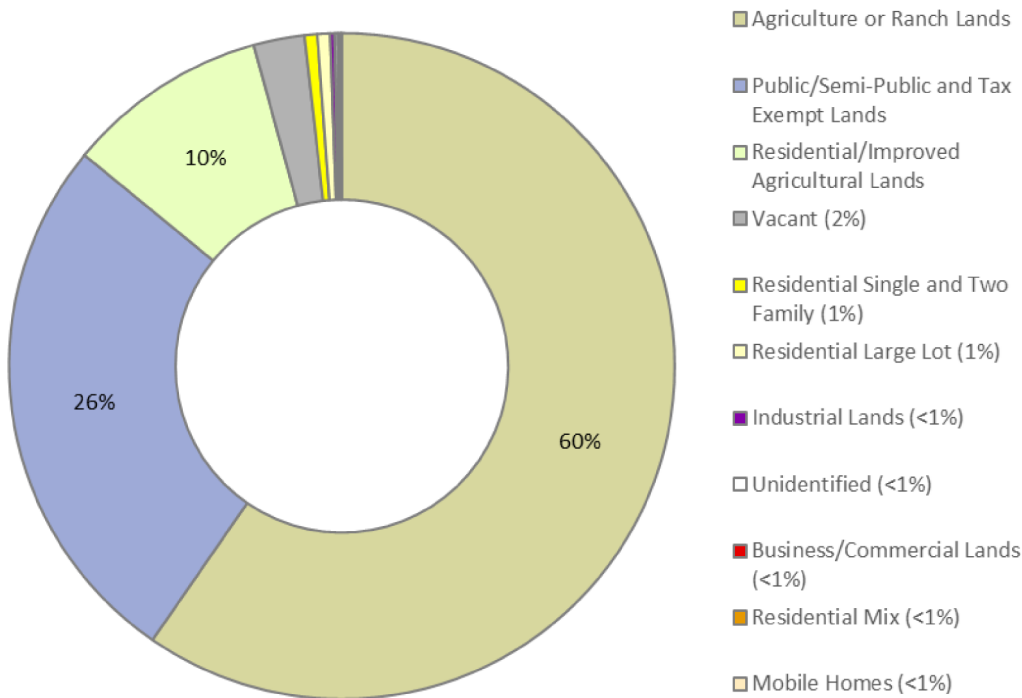
Land use characteristics and growth and development considerations for Pueblo County as a whole are provided below. While some growth and development potential exists in the towns of Boone and Rye and in other unincorporated areas of Pueblo County, that potential represents a negligible percentage of the County's land capacity and is not addressed in detail.

### Existing Land Use

Most of the 1.5 million acres of land in Pueblo County is rural or semi-rural in character. Nearly 900,000 acres of the County's land is designated as agricultural and ranch land. Public or semi-public tax-exempt lands account for 396,852 acres. Major public or semi-public landholdings include Fort Carson, the former Pueblo Chemical Depot (PuebloPlex), State

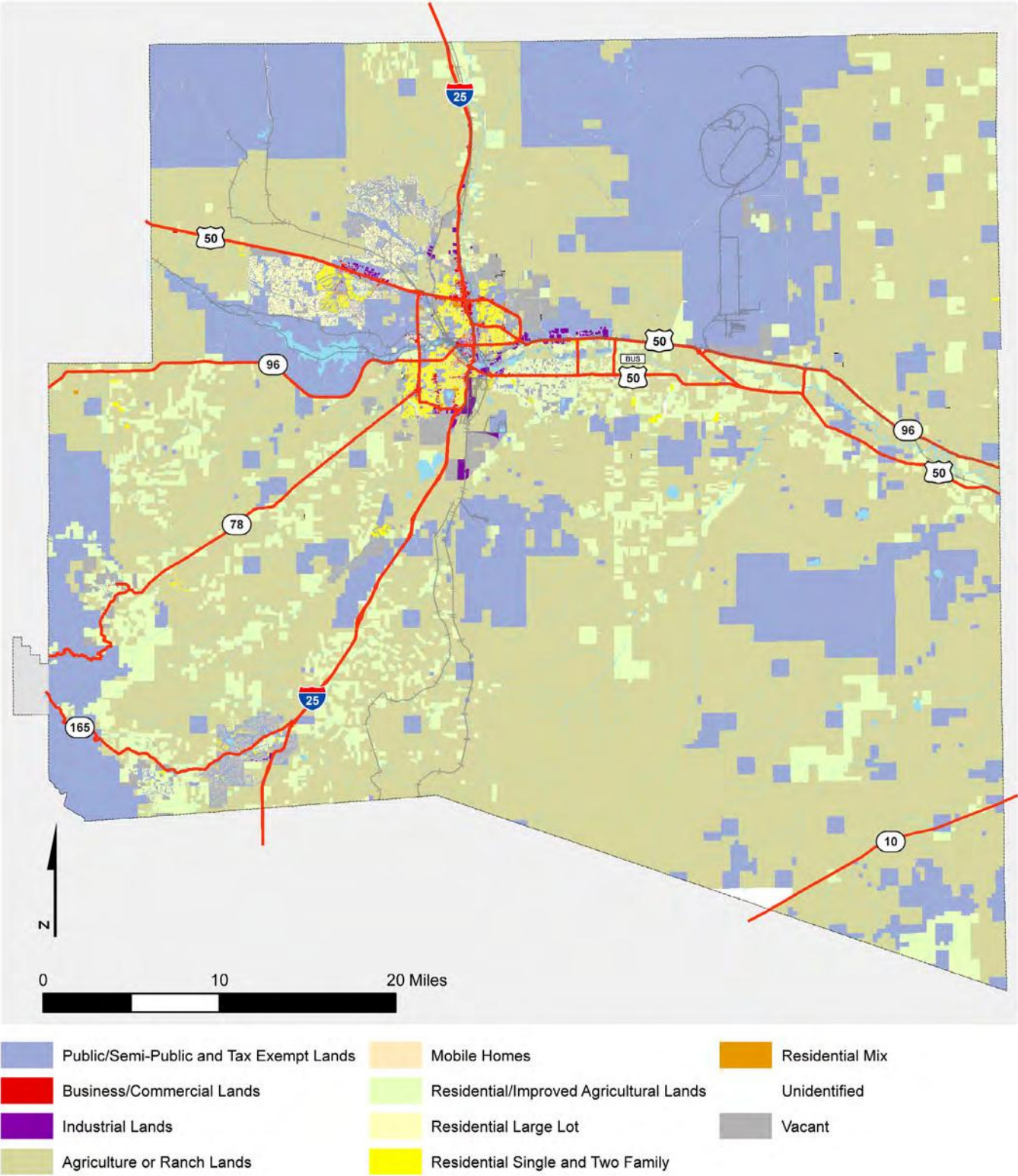
Land Board property, the Transportation Technology Center, Lake Pueblo State Park and Wildlife Area, and other properties owned by the City, County, or Metro Districts. Although some large lot residential development exists in unincorporated areas of the County, the majority of residential uses, commercial and industrial uses, and vacant lands are concentrated within or adjacent to the City of Pueblo, Pueblo West, and Colorado City. Altogether, residential land uses occupy 167,675 acres of the County's total land area. The combination of all other land uses in the County, including business/commercial lands and industrial uses, occupy 4,897 acres. Finally, 37,325 acres of land in Pueblo County is classified as vacant; however, not all of this land is planned for future development. See discussion of Land Capacity for Pueblo County as a whole for additional detail.

Existing Land Use<sup>29</sup>  
Pueblo County





Existing Land Use<sup>30</sup>  
Pueblo County





### Land Capacity: Pueblo County

Pueblo County has 37,325 acres of undeveloped land. The majority of this land, 23,133 acres, is zoned for agricultural use. The second largest category of vacant land is zoned for varying intensities of residential development, including residential/agricultural, large lot single family, mobile homes, and PUDs. These categories account for 9,010 acres of zoned vacant land. Mixed-use and commercial zoning account for 2,239 acres of vacant land, while industrial-zoned land is 1,354 acres.

### Development Feasibility: Pueblo County

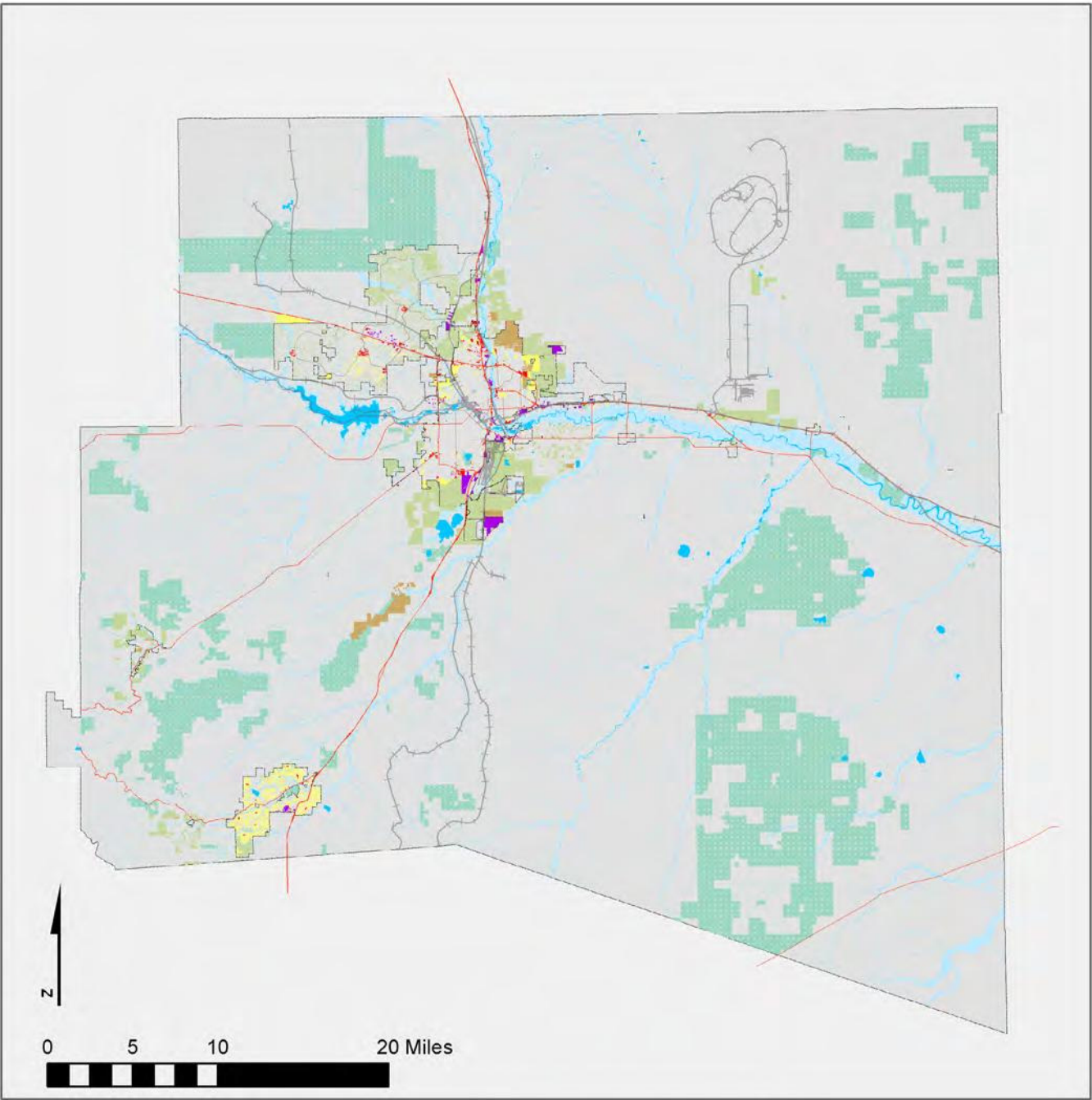
Pueblo County in aggregate has a large amount of undeveloped area to support future growth. However, a significant portion of this land is held in public ownership or conservation easements, used for ranching or agriculture, or is otherwise not planned for urban development. In areas that are planned for

future growth—in and around the City of Pueblo, and within the Pueblo West or Colorado City Metropolitan Districts—development feasibility is more dependent on the availability of infrastructure and services needed to support urban development, than it is on the availability of land. Factors impacting development feasibility include:

- Access to and availability of water and sewer service;
- Access and availability of transportation and resident/business services; and
- Preservation of natural resources and agricultural lands.

Development feasibility factors vary by location. Factors for the City of Pueblo, and the Pueblo West and Colorado City Metropolitan Districts are addressed in the sections that follow.

Land Capacity<sup>31</sup>  
Pueblo County



**Roads**

- Interstates and Highways
- Major Streets
- Local Streets
- Municipalities and Places
- Lakes and Rivers
- Floodzones

**Parcels**

- Committed
- Vacant by Zoning Classification**
- Agricultural Zoning
- Residential Zoning

- Planned Developments; PUD
- Historic Districts
- Business/Commercial Zoning
- Industrial Districts
- Conserved Land

CITY OF PUEBLO AND FUTURE GROWTH AREAS

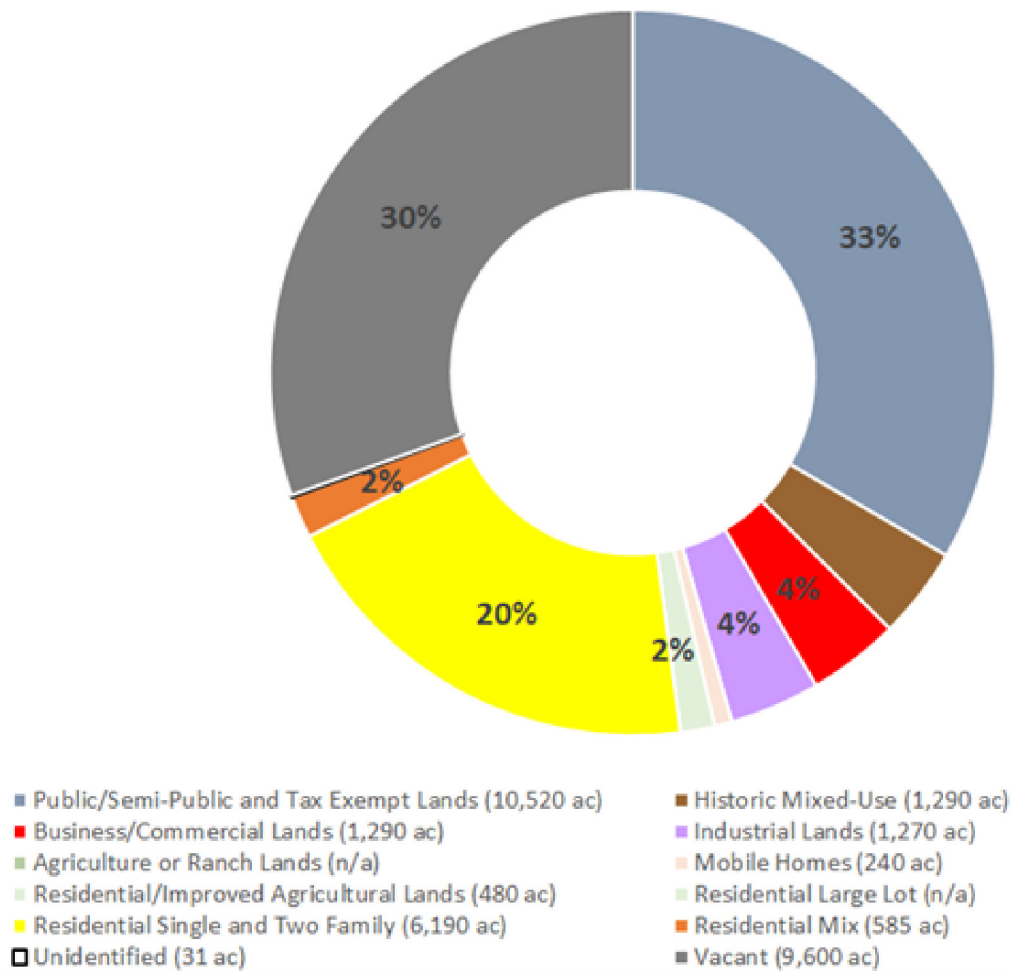
This section includes information about the City of Pueblo, as well as some immediately adjacent land. This land currently lies outside City limits, but may present opportunities for future growth. While some of the unincorporated areas included are proposed for annexation into the City of Pueblo, others are not. These areas are included for the purposes of discussion, but will not necessarily become part of the City within the planning horizon.

Existing Land Use: City of Pueblo and Future Growth Areas

Within the City limits of Pueblo, there are 31,498 acres of land. Just over one-third of that land area (10,520 acres) is classified as public or semi-public tax-exempt land. The City has 6,188 acres of single and two-family

residential land, 1,304 acres of commercial and historic-mixed use land, and another 1,273 acres that is industrial. Finally, 9,602 acres of City land is vacant. In the unincorporated areas immediately adjacent to the City there is an additional 42,095 acres of land, with most of it categorized as vacant (21,954 acres), agriculture or ranch (8,827 acres), residential and improved agriculture (5,876 acres), public/semi-public and tax exempt (3,589 acres), and industrial (1,684 acres).

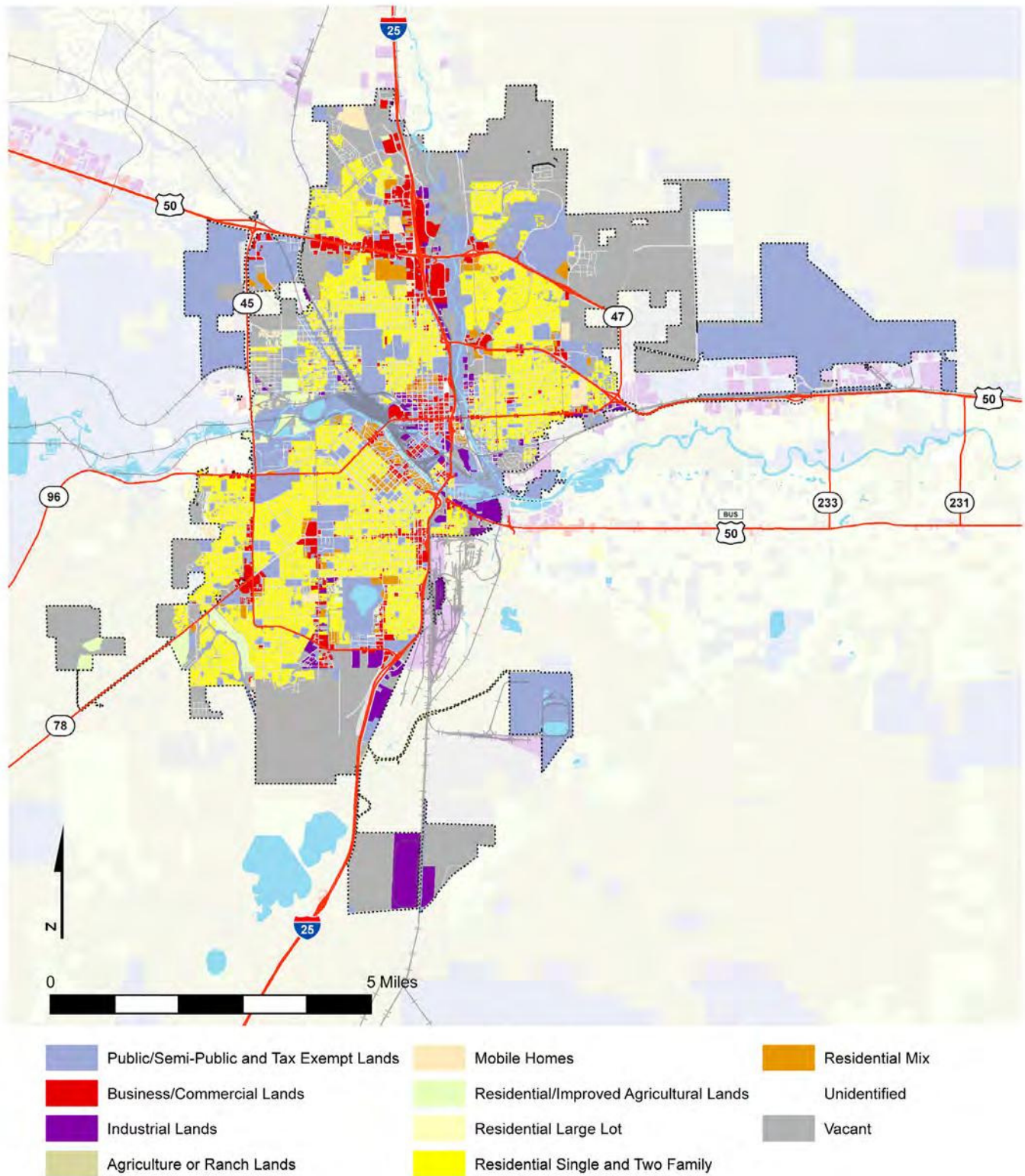
Existing Land Use<sup>32</sup>  
City of Pueblo, 2021





### Existing Land Use<sup>33</sup>

City of Pueblo



## Land Capacity: City of Pueblo

Within the incorporated City of Pueblo, there is a total of 9,561 acres of vacant land. Over half of this land (4,120 acres) is zoned as agriculture, which is used as a holding zone. Most of this land is located at the fringes of the developed areas of the City and is planned for future residential development. An additional 2,050 acres of vacant land is already zoned for residential development. Together, non-residential uses make up 28 percent of the City's land area, with industrial zoning accounting for 15 percent (1,180 acres) and commercial zoning accounting for 7 percent (590 acres). There is a limited amount of vacant land designated as Planned Unit Development (160 acres) or Historic Mixed-Use (5 acres).

## Land Capacity: Future Growth Areas

### North Pueblo

There are 4,106 acres of vacant land in the North Pueblo area. Of that total, 3,436 acres are zoned as agriculture. Approximately 469 acres are zoned for residential—348 acres for large lot residential and 121 acres for single family and attached residential. An additional 194 acres is zoned for industrial uses.

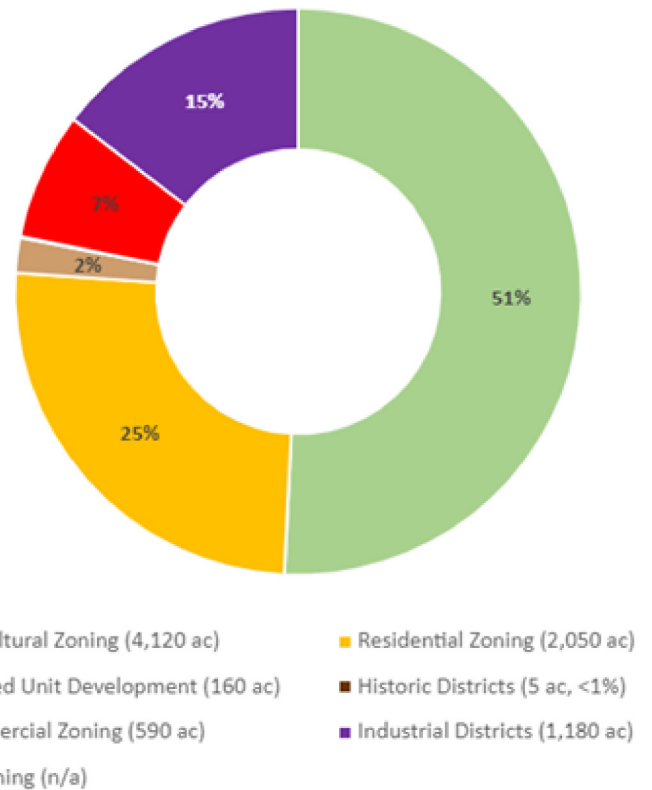
### East Corridor

The East Corridor includes areas east of the Pueblo Airport along Highway 50 to Avondale and north to includes the PuebloPlex and the Transportation Technology Center. The corridor includes 5,027 acres of agriculturally zoned land, 404 acres zoned for industrial uses, 39 acres of land zoned for business/commercial uses, and 355 acres of land zoned for residential uses.

### South Pueblo

The South Pueblo area includes 10,062 acres of vacant land. A majority of that land (8,625 acres) is zoned agriculture. An additional 1,429 acres is zoned for industrial uses, and the remaining 7 acres are zoned for commercial (3 acres) and large lot residential (5 acres).

Land Capacity<sup>34</sup>  
City of Pueblo, 2021



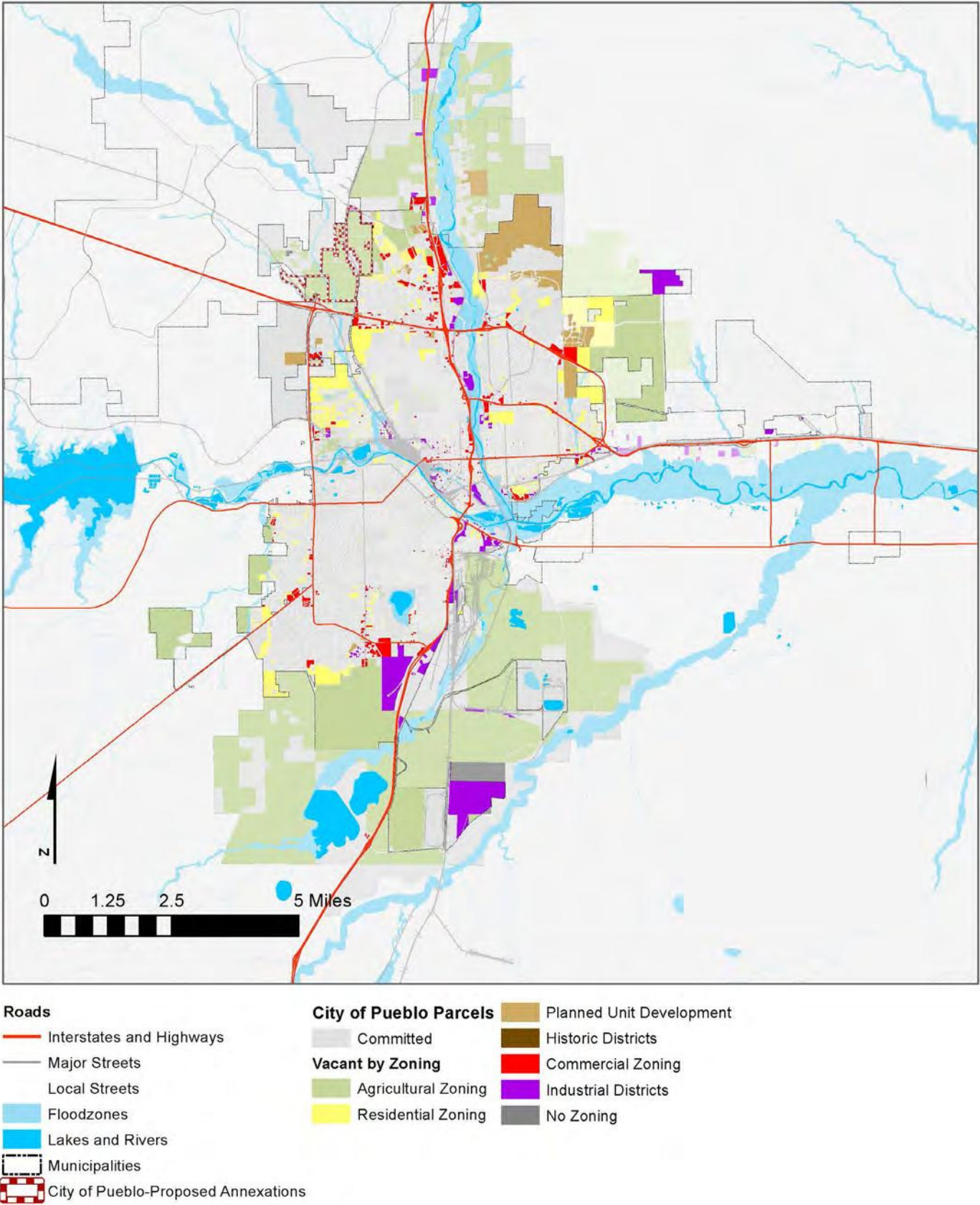
## Development Feasibility: City of Pueblo and Future Growth Areas

A possible constraint on future development in the City may be the limits of existing infrastructure, and the high cost of expanding and maintaining additional infrastructure to serve new development. This applies to new roads, water service, and the possible need for additional fire stations to adequately serve development.

The City of Pueblo is served by Pueblo Water. The quantity of Pueblo Water's supply is a strong point in support of growth within and, in some locations, adjacent to existing City limits. However, while supply is adequate, the service area is limited, and extension of service delivery infrastructure to outlying areas and unincorporated areas is cost-prohibitive. Budget for service expansion is constrained by the need to repair or replace existing, aging service delivery lines.



Land Capacity<sup>35</sup>  
City of Pueblo and Future Growth Areas





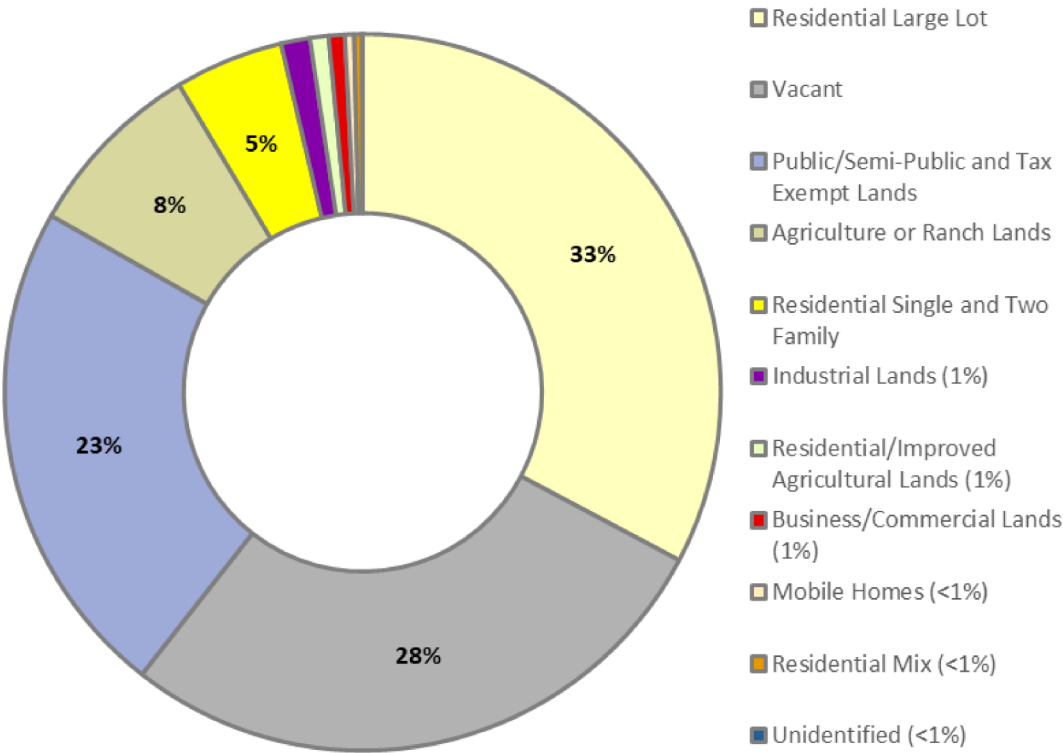
PUEBLO WEST

The Pueblo West Metropolitan District (PWMD) is located west of the City of Pueblo along U.S. Highway 50. Established in 1969, it encompasses 31,000 acres or 49 square miles (a land area slightly larger than City of Pueblo) with 18,700 platted residential lots. The PWMD is responsible for provision of fire and emergency response services, streets, water and wastewater, parks and recreation, and administration services within the District.

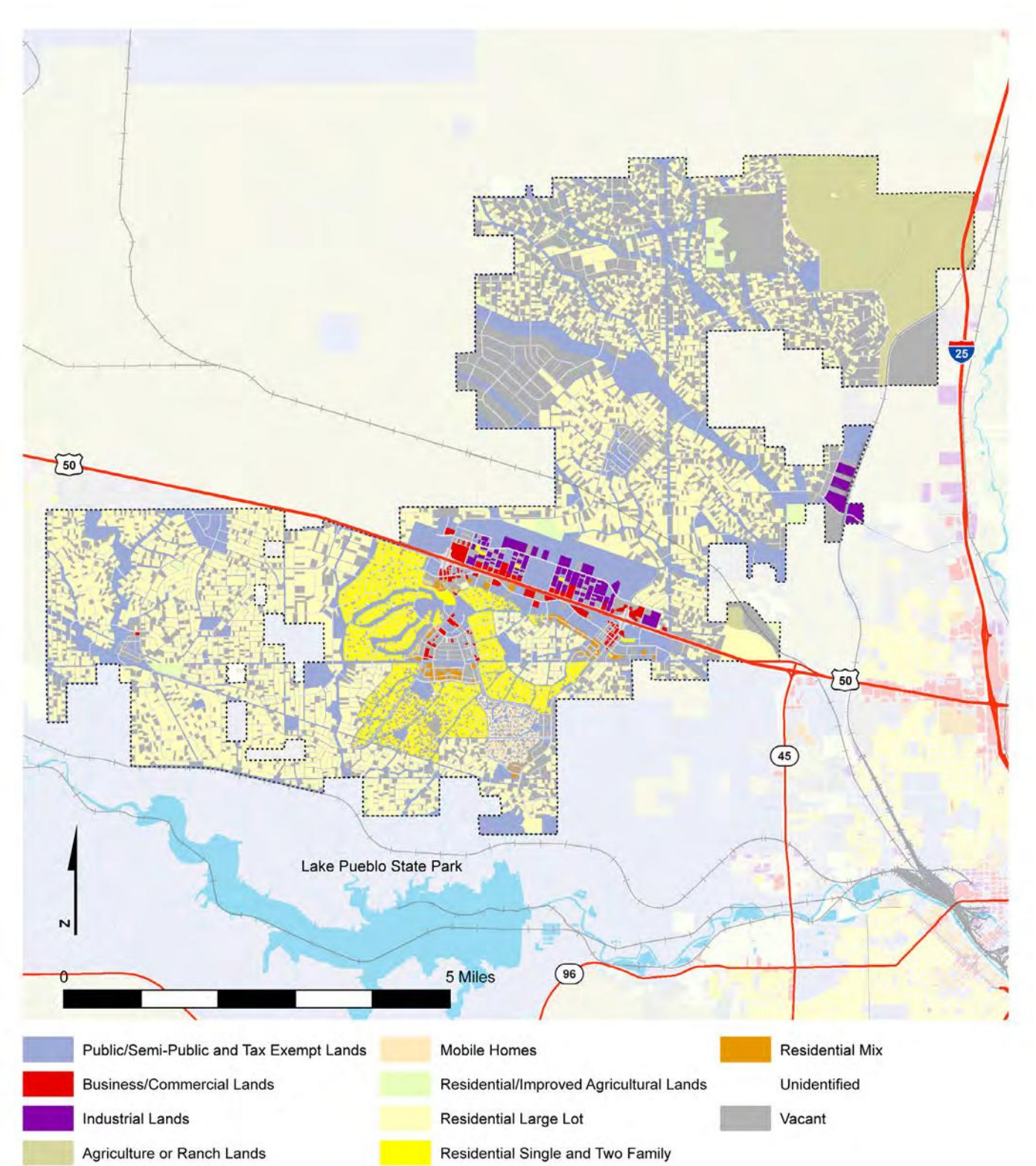
Existing Land Use: Pueblo West

Residential development occupies 10,992 acres within the PWMD. Commercial and industrial uses account for little of the land area in Pueblo West: together, these uses total 567 acres, while agricultural and ranching land represent another 2,300 acres of the total. The remaining acreage in Pueblo West is either public or semi-public and tax-exempt, at 6,331 acres, or vacant land, which totals 7,671 acres.

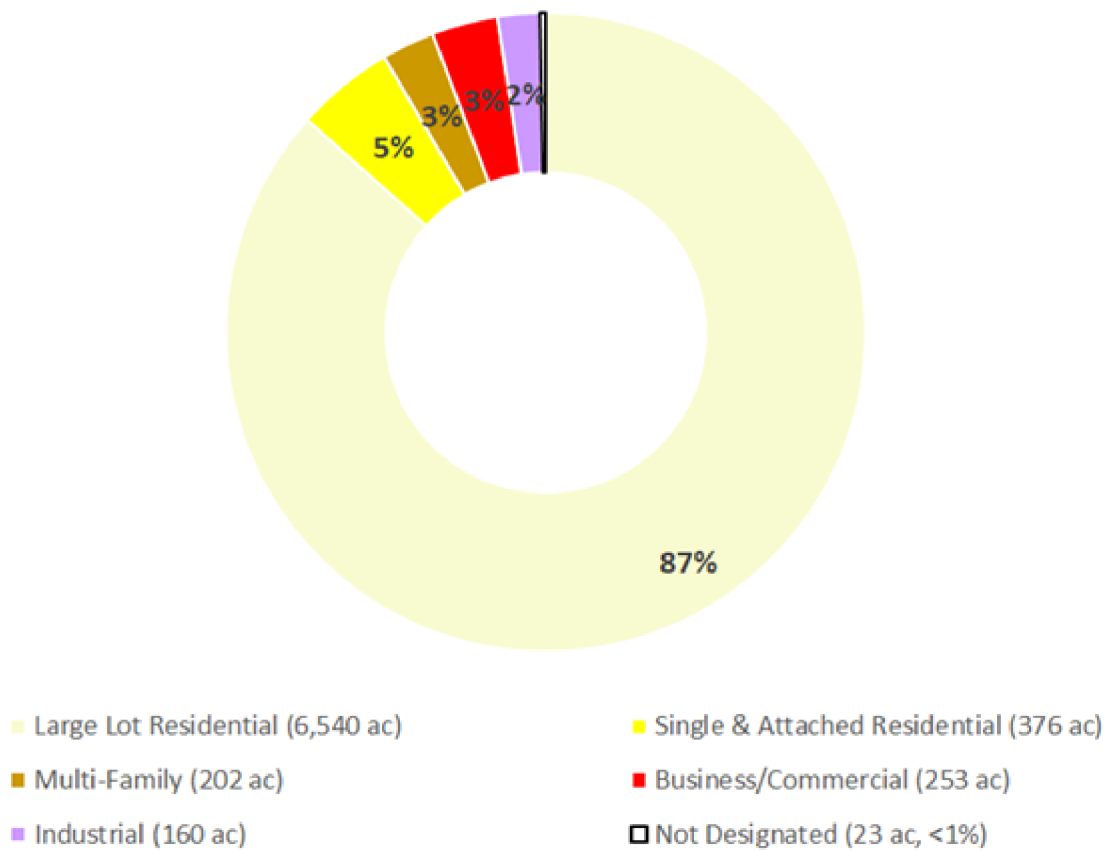
Existing Land Use<sup>36</sup>  
Pueblo West



Existing Land Use<sup>37</sup>  
Pueblo West



Vacant Land By Zoning<sup>38</sup>  
Pueblo West



### Land Capacity: Pueblo West

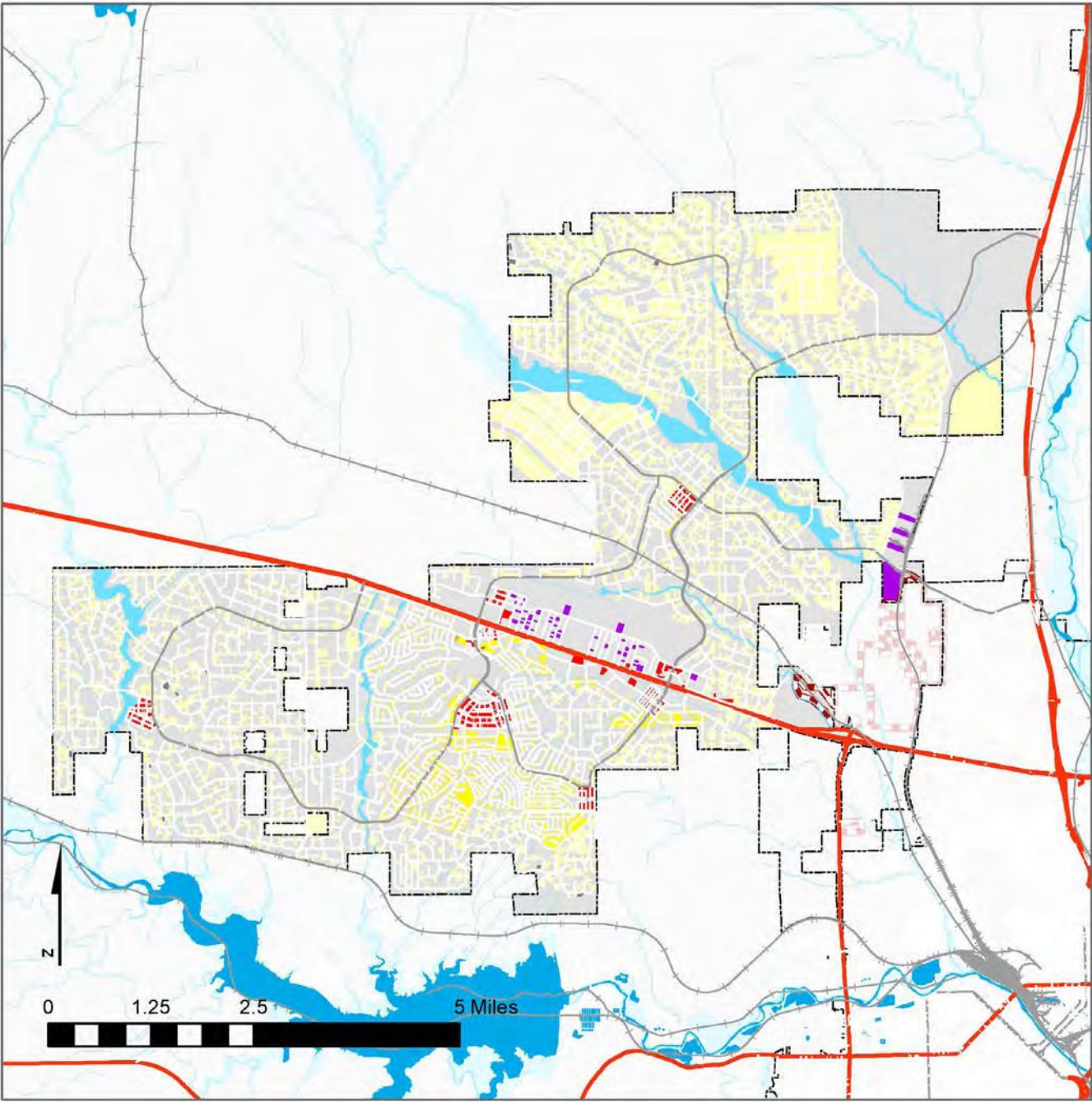
A significant majority of vacant land in the PWMD—7,119 acres of the total vacant acreage of 7,671 acres—is zoned for residential development. Large-lot single family residential zoning applies to 6,540 acres of the residential total, while the other 578 are zoned for smaller lot residential, a PUD, and mobile homes. Industrial zoning applies to 160 acres in the PWMD, while another 253 acres of Pueblo West’s vacant land is zoned for mixed use or commercial districts. There are also several agricultural inholdings within the PWMD boundary (south of Highway 50) that remain

from its original formation in the 1960s. About 116 acres of this land (not included in the diagram) is classified as vacant and available for future development.

The PWMD owns approximately 5,400 acres of land within the Metro District Boundary. While a significant portion this land is located in flood zones, or includes road rights-of-way, approximately 500 acres are planned for future residential or non-residential development. In recent years, the PWMD has sold some District-owned parcels for development purposes. Additional District-owned land may be sold as opportunities for future development arise.



Land Capacity<sup>39</sup>  
Pueblo West



- |                                     |                |                              |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Roads</b>                        | <b>Parcels</b> | <b>Vacant by Zoning</b>      |
| Interstates and Highways            | Committed      | Residential Large Lot Zoning |
| Major Streets                       |                | Residential Zoning           |
| Local Streets                       |                |                              |
| Floodzones                          |                |                              |
| Lakes and Rivers                    |                |                              |
| Municipalities                      |                |                              |
| City of Pueblo-Proposed Annexations |                |                              |
- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Planned Unit Development | Commercial Zoning    |
| Historic Districts       | Industrial Districts |
|                          | No Zoning            |

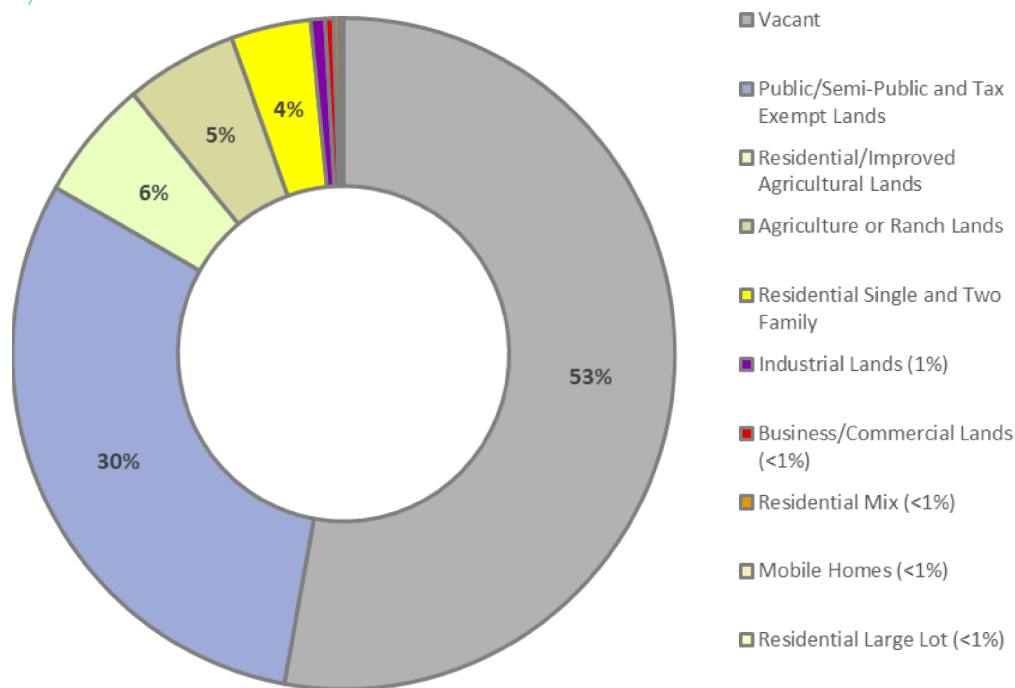
COLORADO CITY

Existing Land Use: Colorado City

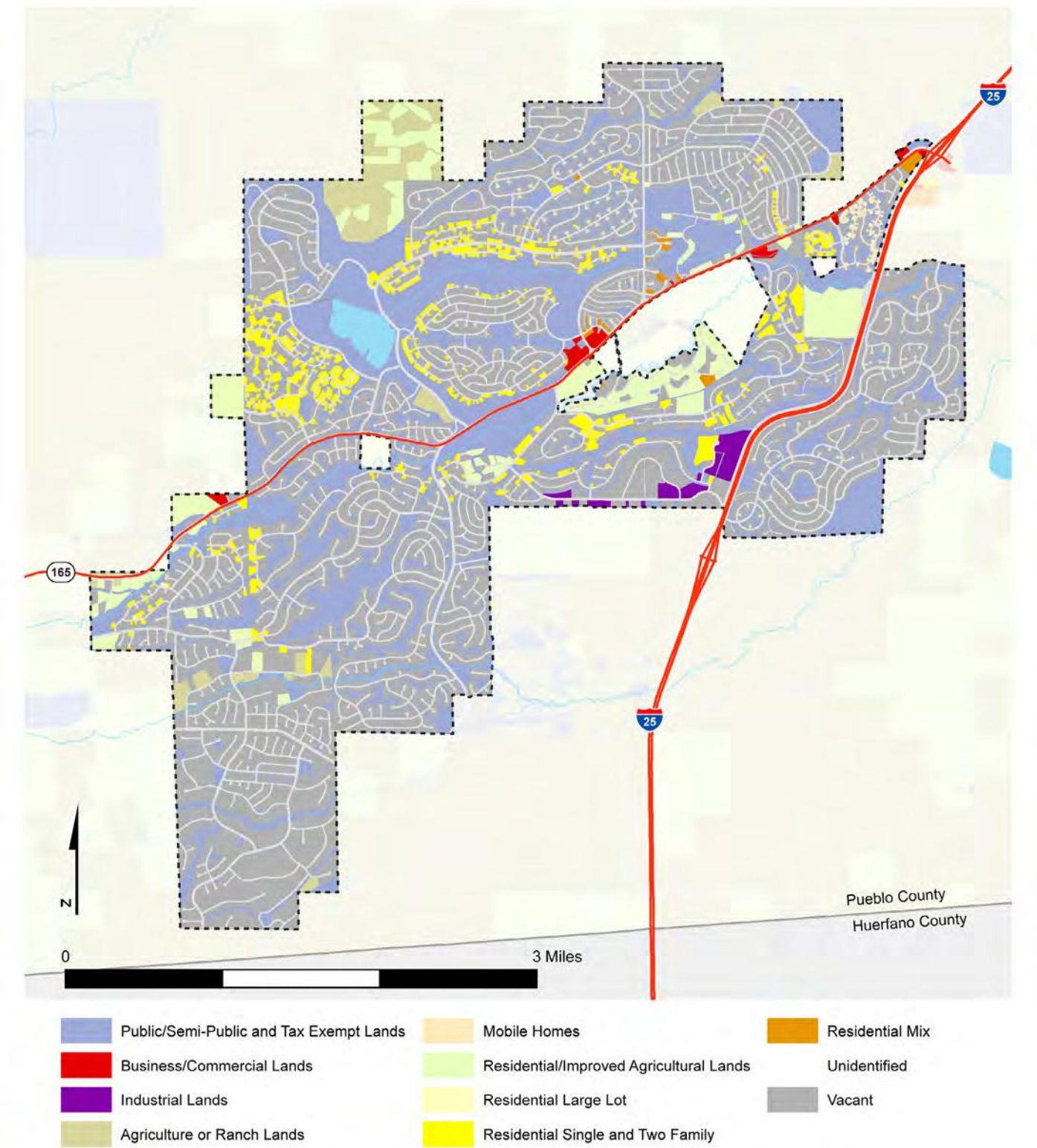
The Colorado City Metropolitan District (CCMD) is located approximately 20 miles south of the City of Pueblo along Interstate 25. The CCMD was established in 1963 and encompasses 8,017 acres or about 12 and a half square miles subdivided into 16,800 lots.

Though subdivided, just over half of the land—4,239 acres—in Colorado City remains vacant. There are 2,435 acres of public or semi-public tax-exempt land. Residential development occupies 815 acres of land. A further 89 acres is used for business, commercial, or industrial purposes, and the remaining 438 acres is agricultural or ranch land.

Existing Land Use<sup>40</sup>  
Colorado City

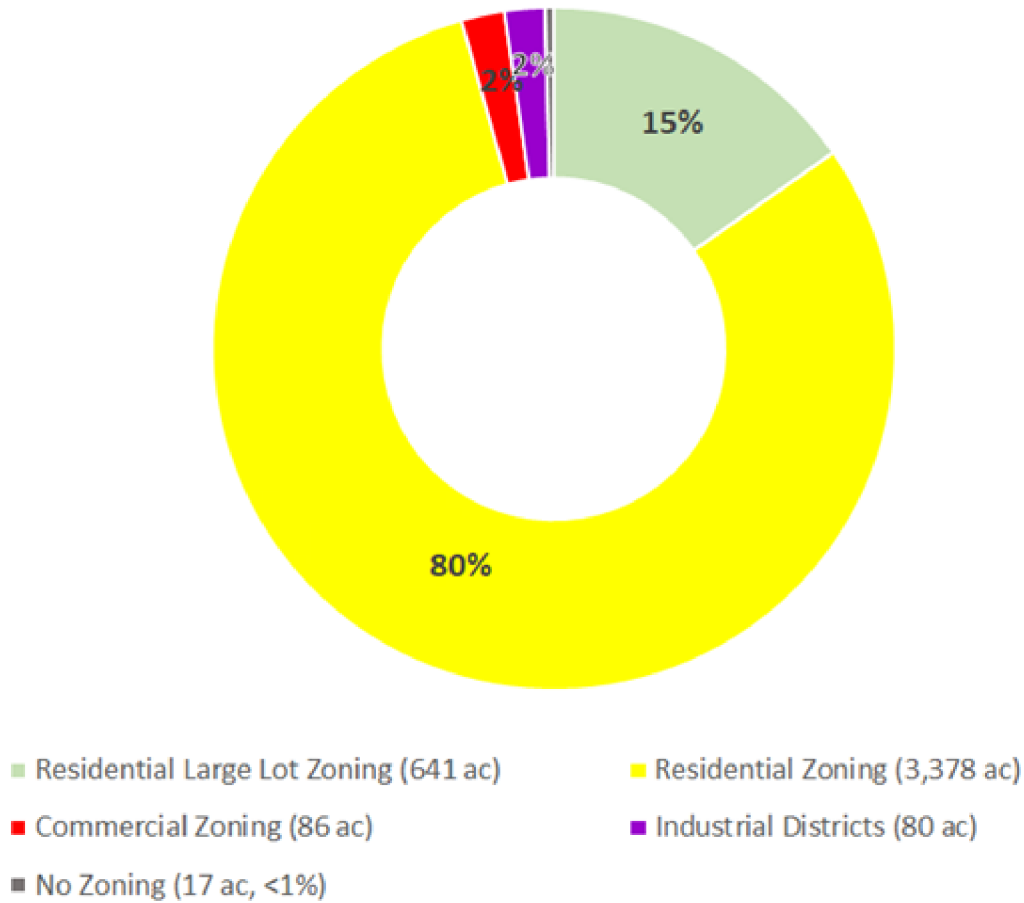


Existing Land Use<sup>41</sup>  
Colorado City





### Vacant Land by Zoning<sup>42</sup> Colorado City



#### Land Capacity: Colorado City

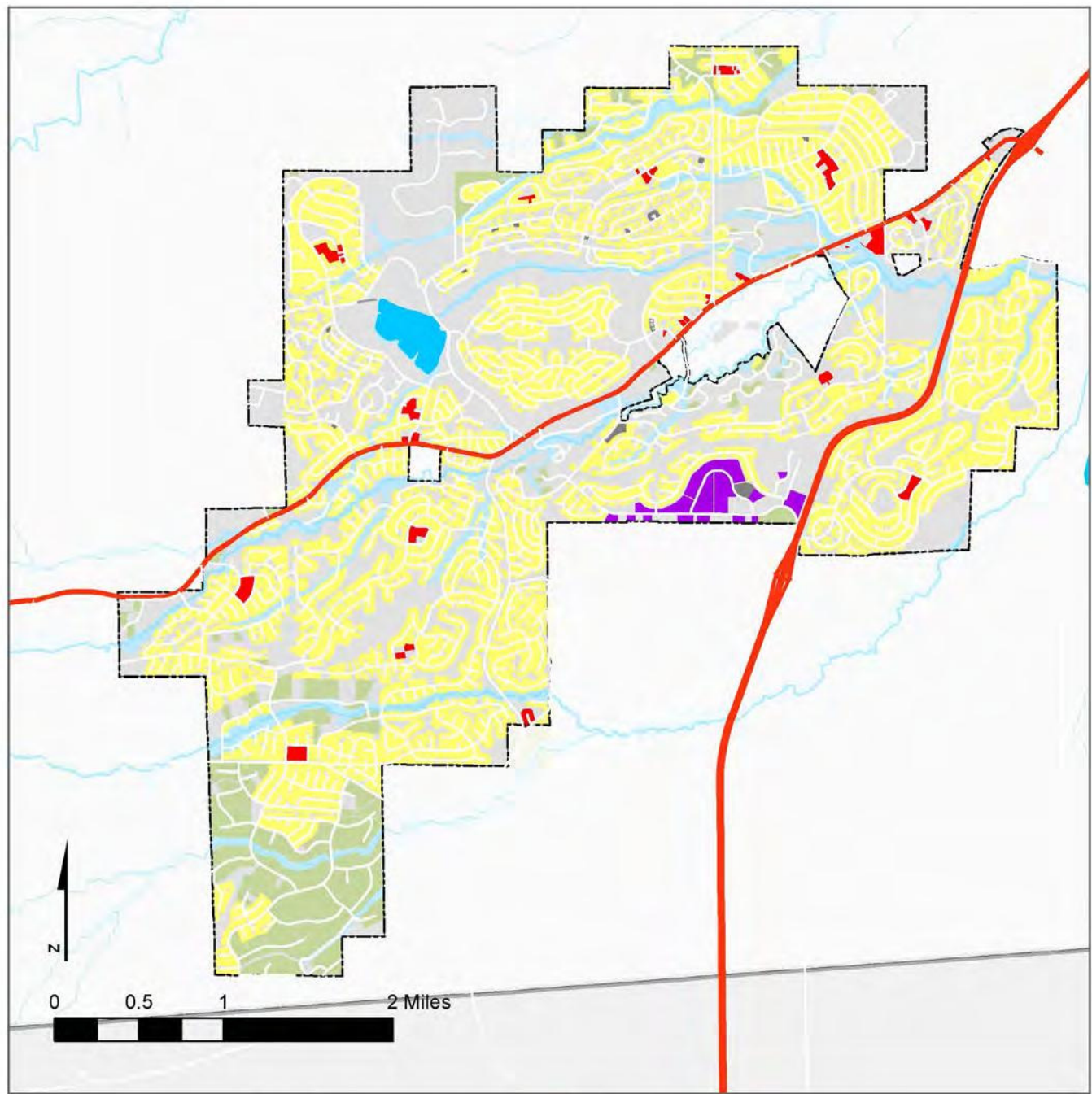
Of the 4,239 vacant acres of land in Colorado City, 641 acres is zoned for large lot residential, 3,220 acres is zoned for single- or two-family, and multi-family residential development. Commercial districts account for 86 acres of zoned vacant land, with only 12 acres agriculturally zoned. The remaining land is 80 acres of industrial zoning, 17 acres with no zoning.

There are more than 13,000 platted and unbuilt residential lots in Colorado City and fewer than 1,000 occupied homes in Colorado City. 52% of the land in Colorado City is still vacant, and a large portion of the committed land is dedicated open space or infrastructure.

#### Development Feasibility: Colorado City

Although there is significant land capacity remaining within the CCMD boundary, residential and non-residential development in Colorado City is anticipated to be fairly modest in the near-term due to current water and sewer system limitations. Colorado City has been growing at a rate of about one percent per year, adding around 15 new homes annually. Though the number of vacant lots far exceeds the existing service capacity for water and sewer, current capacity may be sufficient to support Colorado City's present rate of growth, if planned upgrades are completed and the present rate of growth remains constant over the twenty-year planning horizon.

Land Capacity<sup>43</sup>  
Colorado City



- |                            |                                |                                 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Roads</b>               | <b>Parcels</b>                 | <b>Planned Unit Development</b> |
| — Interstates and Highways | — Committed                    | — Historic Districts            |
| — Major Streets            | <b>Vacant by Zoning</b>        | — Commercial Zoning             |
| — Local Streets            | — Residential Large Lot Zoning | — Industrial Districts          |
| — Municipalities           | — Residential Zoning           | — No Zoning                     |
| — Floodzones               |                                |                                 |
| — Lakes and Rivers         |                                |                                 |

## DEVELOPMENT TRENDS: PUEBLO COUNTY

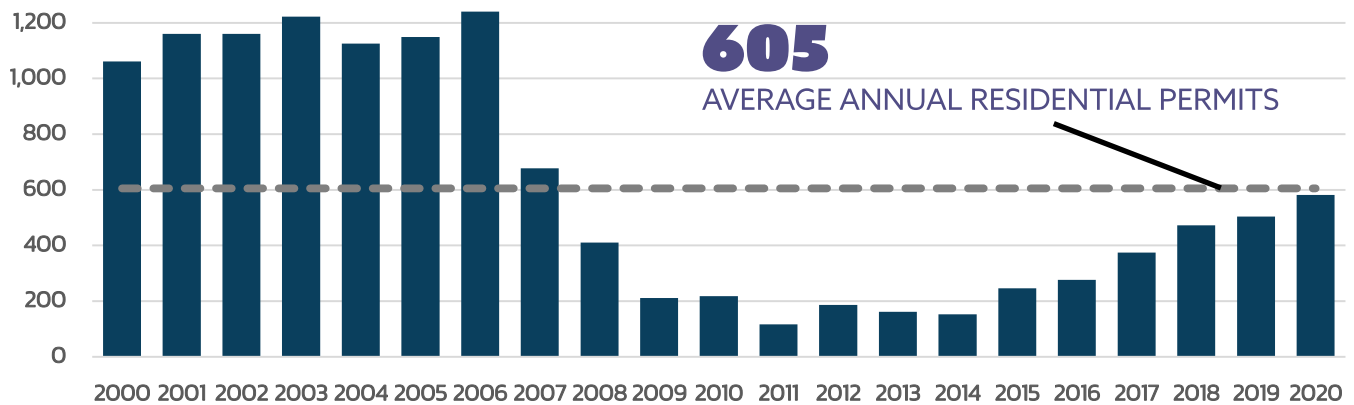
### Residential Development

The housing development market in Pueblo County is beginning to increase to the amount of activity experienced in the early 2000s. Prior to the Great Recession, Pueblo County was issuing over a 1,000 residential construction permits per year. However, permits do not equate to units. The rate of housing permits issued has begun to rebound after more than decade of lower-than-average permits being issued from 2008 to 2019. The Pueblo Regional Building Department issued 582 residential building permits in 2020, which is slightly less than the 20-year average of 605 permits per year. The rate of home construction has not matched with population and employment growth in the past decade.

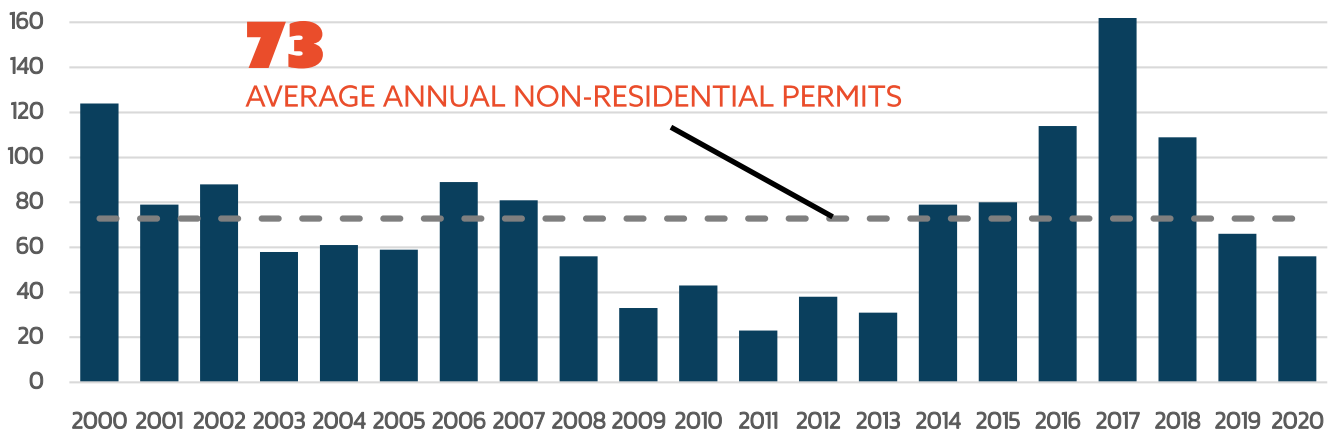
New residential development in the County has largely been by single family homes over the past two decades. Between 2000 and 2020, Pueblo recorded 9,415 residential building permits, with 92 percent of those for single family residences, and accounted for approximately 84 percent of units permitted. The predominance of single-family home development was even greater in the past 10 years, as single-family units accounted for 88 percent of units permitted.

A significant portion of residential building were permitted in zip codes coterminous with Pueblo West, matching high growth rates for population and households in that area over the same period, indicating high demand for the northwest area outside of the City. The other zip codes that attracted significant housing development in the past decade were in the north portion of the County along I-25, within the City of Pueblo, and in and around Colorado City.

Residential Permits Issued<sup>44</sup>  
Pueblo County, 2000-2020

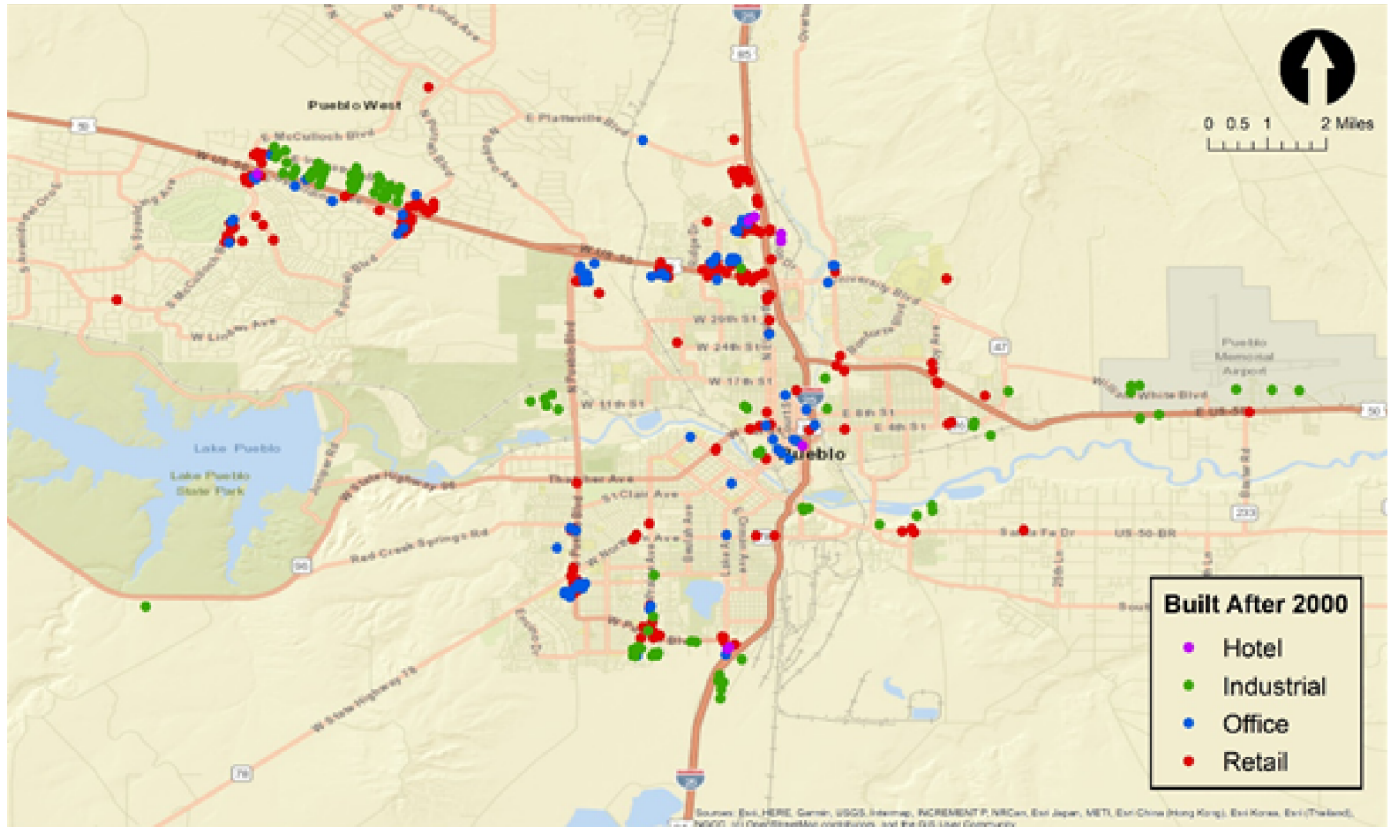


Non-Residential Permits Issued<sup>45</sup>  
Pueblo County, 2000-2020





### New Non-Residential Buildings<sup>46</sup> Pueblo County, 2000-2020

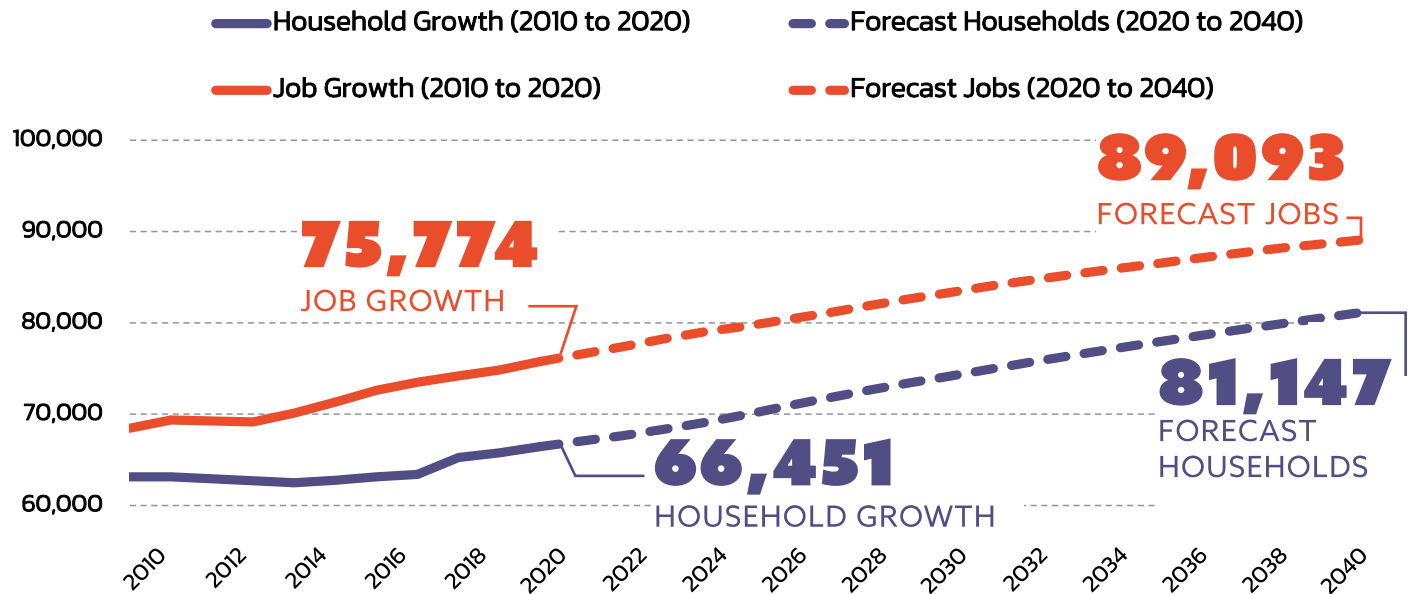


### Non-residential Development

The rate of non-residential development did not follow the same pattern as housing construction. The Pueblo Regional Building Department issued an average of 73 new non-residential building permits annually between 2000 and 2020, with the County experiencing the highest rates of permitted buildings in the past 6 years. Since 2014, the County has averaged 95 non-residential permits annually with a twenty year high in 2017 of 162 permits. This rate of non-residential construction should be indicative of increased employment growth currently and in the near future.

The non-residential development in the County has been more dispersed than the housing development. However, most of the new development has occurred along the Highway 50 corridor in Pueblo West and in the City of Pueblo, and along the I-25 corridor on the north end of the City of Pueblo. New retail developments over the past twenty years have been primarily along these two major transportation routes, with the north I-25 area attracting most of the regionally oriented retail centers. The office and hotel development patterns have largely followed the retail patterns. Industrial development has primarily been concentrated in Pueblo West along Highway 50, on the southern end of the City of Pueblo along I-25 and near the Pueblo Municipal Airport.

### Forecast Household and Job Growth<sup>47</sup> Pueblo County, 2010-2040



## FORECAST GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT DEMAND: PUEBLO COUNTY

### Population Forecast

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) projects that Pueblo County will add 29,000 new residents over the next 20 years at a rate of 0.8 percent annually. This rate of population growth is estimated to result in the increase of households in the County by nearly 14,700 over 20 years. The rate of household growth forecast is greater than the County has experienced in the past decade indicating housing demand will increase along with the growing economy. Employment in Pueblo County is forecast by DOLA to increase from 75,774 jobs to 89,093 jobs in the next 20 years. This is an estimated increase of 13,319 jobs over 20 years, which equates to an annual rate of 0.8 percent matching the rate of population growth. This rate of employment growth is consistent with rates experienced since 2013.

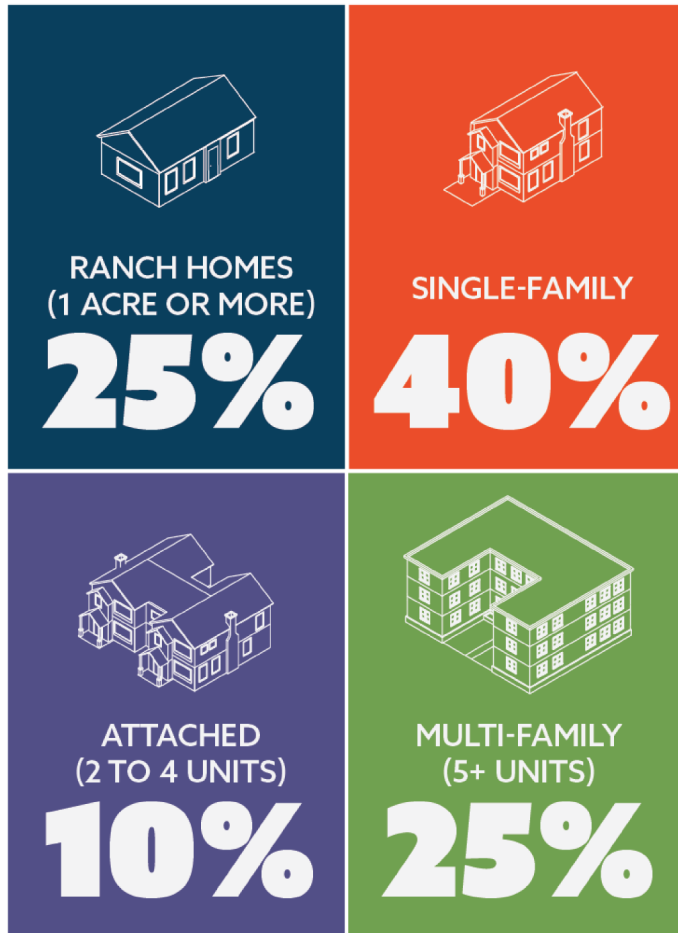
**14,700**  
**NEW HOUSING**  
**UNITS**

**5,131**  
**ACRES OF LAND**  
**FOR HOUSING**

### Housing Forecast and Land Demand

The forecasted amount of household growth was translated into housing demand by housing product type based on an evaluation of demographic conditions, forecasts by age cohort completed by DOLA, analysis of development trends, and considerations of housing prices/costs. The types of housing units in demand in the County over the next 20 years are estimated to be predominately single family, matching current household trends. Single family units are estimated to account for approximately two thirds of new units built. However, there is likely to be an increase in the number of attached and multifamily units built in the County. There will be demand for a greater diversity of unit types due to the rising costs of housing making ownership of single-family homes more difficult for the average household/worker, shifting housing preferences, increased employment, continued in-migration to the County, and most impactfully, the large number of older residents (over the age of 65) currently in the County that will likely need or desire housing options more oriented to seniors. There will be an estimated demand for 14,700 new housing units over the next 20 years, which will

generate the need for 5,131 acres of land for housing to accommodate demand. This housing demand was spread over four primary housing product types including:



### Non-Residential Forecast and Land Demand

To understand the types of non-residential development that will be in demand over the next 20 years, the forecasted 13,300 new jobs in the County by 2040 were distributed by industry. In total, the estimated new employment in the County will generate demand for 4.3 million square feet of additional building space. The total estimated demand for building space over the next 20 years will generate demand for approximately 1,120 acres of land. Most of the land demand comes from heavy industrial uses and land intensive employment uses. Demand is projected to be split relatively evenly among five employment-oriented building types:

**4.3  
MILLION  
FT<sup>2</sup> ADDITIONAL  
BUILDING SPACE**

**1,120  
ACRES OF  
LAND IN  
DEMAND**

- **Retail.** This category includes typical retail and restaurant uses. These uses have similar land demand patterns in terms of space for visitors, length of stay, and locations.
- **Service Commercial/Hospitality.** This category includes a mixture of commercial-oriented businesses (e.g., dentist office, real estate office) and hotel uses.
- **Office/Institutional.** This category includes traditional office buildings (e.g., multi-tenant or limited or no customer interface) and educational and health provider support spaces.
- **Industrial/Flex.** This category includes more traditional industrial and flex-industrial uses. This includes small scale manufacturing and warehouse/distribution uses.
- **Heavy Industrial/Land Based.** These employment uses are more unique to Pueblo that are either large heavy industrial users, such as EVRAZ, and more land consumptive employment uses, such as Vestas and the Transportation Technology Center.



## Forecast Development Land Demand<sup>48</sup>

### Pueblo County, 2020-2040

#### Description

#### Residential (2020–2040)

Development Type	Total Units	Ann. Avg. Units	Total Acreage
Pueblo Ranch	3,622	181	3,622
Suburban Single Family	5,878	294	1,176
Attached (2-5 units)	1,470	73	147
Multifamily (Greater than 5 units)	3,726	186	186
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>14,696</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>5,131</b>

#### Employment (2020–2040)

Development Type	Total Sq. Ft.	Ann. Avg. Sq. Ft.	Total Acreage
Retail	1,051,500	52,575	121
Service / Hospitality	791,200	39,560	61
Office / Institutional	752,600	37,630	58
Industrial / Flex	839,300	41,965	129
Heavy Industrial / Land Based	819,700	40,985	753
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4,254,300</b>	<b>212,715</b>	<b>1,120</b>

<b>Total</b>	<b>6,251 acres</b>
--------------	--------------------

## Total Land Demand

In aggregate, the total demand for land to support both forecasted residential and non-residential growth is approximately 6,251 acres over the next 20 years.

The long-term impacts of the COVID 19 Pandemic on demand for housing and employment development are not fully understood at this point. The shift to remote working for professional service jobs and other industries during the pandemic may have lasting impacts on demand and needs for office space. Retail development trends have only been accentuated during COVID 19 along with a shift to increased

spending on food for home consumption due to stay at home orders and social distancing requirements. These shifts have only accelerated the move towards more distribution-based retail and food service, which continues to drive demand for industry space. The estimated land demand for employment uses is heavily driven by industrial and land-based employment uses. The forecasts still provide a reasonable estimate of future demand by development type even if COVID 19 impacts reduce or increase overall demands for development space and acreage.

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND LAND CAPACITY: PUEBLO COUNTY

The comparison of demand for future development and land capacity is best summarized based on the types of uses expected in the County over the next 20 years. Three major groups of new development types were evaluated to summarize capacity and demand issues: residential, commercial/mixed-use, and industrial.

### Residential Land Demand vs. Capacity

The estimated demand for residential development was split among the four housing types describe previously; Pueblo Ranch, Suburban Single Family, Attached housing, and Multifamily housing. The potential locations that are suitable for each of these types varies. However, most of the future units will likely need to be within areas with water and sewer service and in relatively proximity to major transportation routes, jobs, and/or retail and commercial uses. The housing product types were aligned with the characteristics of the identify development capacity in the County based on existing zoning and other attributes.

The forecast of 14,700 new households over the next 20 years will generate demand for 5,131 acres of land. To provide flexibility for market forces and individual site constraints, a planning factor of 50% is applied for the acres needed for suburban single family, attached, and multifamily housing, which mean the County should strive to have approximately 7,400 acres in total accommodate housing demand. The majority of land in demand is for the Pueblo Ranch housing type, which has demand for 3,622 acres from 3,622 units. The Suburban Single Family housing type is estimated to need 1,176 acres to accommodate demand. The Attached housing type will need 147 acres to accommodate demand and multifamily unit demand will generate the need for 186 areas.

In total, there is capacity of about 23,320 acres for housing uses in currently zoned land or areas that are zoned A-1 but planned for residential development. The capacity by area in the County is described below.

### Residential Land Demand vs Capacity<sup>50</sup>

Description	Units	Acres
<b>Demand</b>		
Pueblo Ranch	3,622	3,622
Suburban Single Family	5,878	1,176
Attached	1,470	147
Multifamily	<u>3,726</u>	<u>186</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,696</b>	<b>5,131</b>
<b>Supply</b>		
City of Pueblo		
Large Lot/Ranch		165
Single Family and Attached		3,285
Mutifamily		160
A-1 Zoned Land (Holding)		<u>3,980</u>
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,590</b>
Unincorporated Urban Area		
Large Lot/Ranch		413
Single Family and Attached		452
Multifamily		24
PUD Zoned Land		121
A-1 Zoned Land (Holding)		<u>3,440</u>
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,450</b>
Pueblo West		
Large Lot/Ranch		6,540
Single Family and Attached		376
Mutifamily		<u>200</u>
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,116</b>
Colorado City Area		
Large Lot/Ranch		641
Single Family and Attached		3,243
Mutifamily		159
A-1 Zoned Land (Holding)		<u>120</u>
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,163</b>
<b>Total Supply</b>		<b>23,319</b>

- **City of Pueblo.** The City of Pueblo has 7,590 acres of vacant land that could be used for new housing. Forty-eight percent of the land is designated for residential uses based on current zoning designations including PUDs. The remaining acreage (3,981 acres) is annexed within the City and zoned A-1, which serves as a reserve category

for future development. Build out in some of these areas may require extension of existing infrastructure to serve new development.

- **Pueblo West.** Pueblo West has 7,116 acres of vacant land designated for residential uses. The vast majority (6,540 acres) is for homes on large lots (1 acre or greater).
- **Unincorporated urban areas.** There is an additional 4,163 acres of land in the unincorporated urban portion of the County (areas immediately outside of the city classified as the North Pueblo Area and East Corridor that is designated or suitable for urban housing).
- **Colorado City.** There is 641 acres of land in Colorado City that is zoned for large lot residential (641 acres) and an additional 3,243 acres zoned for single family and attached housing.

Commercial/Mixed-use Land Demand vs. Capacity<sup>49</sup>

The estimated demand for uses that are suitable in commercial and/or mixed-use areas includes the multifamily housing product type, retail uses, commercial/hospitality uses, and office/institutional uses. These types of uses can locate in single use or mixed-use areas. Generally, these locations will need to be in areas with water and sewer services, with proximity, visibility, and access to major transportation routes, and in areas with substantial amount of existing housing and/or jobs.

The forecast employment growth for Pueblo County is estimated to generate demand for 240 acres of land to accommodate forecast retail, commercial service, hospitality, office, and other institutional uses. In addition, multifamily uses are complimentary to these non-residential uses and could be accommodated in these areas as well. Factoring in the multifamily demand of 186 acres, the total demand for these uses is 425 acres.

In total, there is capacity of over 955 acres for these types of uses. The capacity location is described below.

- **City of Pueblo.** The City of Pueblo has 645 acres of vacant land that could be used for commercial and mixed-use purposes.
- **Pueblo West.** Pueblo West has 250 acres of vacant land designated for commercial and mixed-use.
- **Unincorporated urban areas.** There are 60 acres of land designated for business/commercial uses within the unincorporated areas suitable for urban development.

Commercial/Mixed-Use Land Demand vs Capacity<sup>51</sup>

Description	Acres
Demand	
Multifamily	186
Retail	121
Service/Hospitality	61
Office/Institutional	58
Total	239
Supply	
City of Pueblo	
Business/Commercial Lands	640
Unincorporated Urban Area	
Business/Commercial Lands	60
Pueblo West	
Business/Commercial Lands	202
Colorado City Area	
Business/Commercial Lands	159
Total	1,061



### Industrial/Employment Land Demand Vs. Capacity

The estimated demand for industrial and land intensive employment uses includes the industrial/flex and heavy industry/land based non-residential development types. These types of uses will most likely locate centrally within Pueblo County, in locations proximate to major transportation routes including highways and rail, in locations that will have minimal or no adjacency to housing, and with the presence of infrastructure that can support the demands of the use whether that be water, sewer, electrical, and rail/highway access.

The forecast employment growth for Pueblo County is estimated to generate demand for 881 acres of land to support industrial and flex-industrial uses. This estimated demand does not include land estimated to be in demand for large scale/land consumptive uses that don't require a building or large building. Examples of this type of uses are agricultural land used for produce or hemp and also for large-scale solar power installations.

Pueblo County is estimated to have over 16,800 acres of land that could be used for industrial uses. The majority of this land is in the unincorporated portion of the County.

- **City of Pueblo.** The City of Pueblo has 1,324 acres of vacant land that could be used for industrial uses.
- **Pueblo West.** Pueblo West has 160 acres of vacant land designated for industrial uses. This amount of land could be developed within the plan horizon, which may prompt need for flexibility of use of other land Pueblo County for these uses that is near Highway 50.
- **Unincorporated Urban Areas.** There are 15,400 acres of land in the unincorporated portion of the County that could be suitable for industrial uses. Most of this land is zoned A-1 however there are 1,750 acres zoned for industrial uses. Most of the vacant land in the unincorporated portion of the county that could be used for industrial uses is on the southern edge of the City of Pueblo or along the east Highway 50 corridor from the airport to Pueblo Plex.
- **Colorado City.** Colorado City has 1,750 acres zoned for industrial uses.

### Industrial/Employment Land Demand vs Capacity<sup>52</sup>

Description	Acres
<b>Demand</b>	
Industrial/Flex	128
Heavy Industrial/Land Based	<u>753</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>881</b>
<b>Supply</b>	
City of Pueblo	
Industrial Lands	<u>1,324</u>
Unincorporated Urban Areas	
Industrial Zoned Land	1,750
A-1 Zoned land	<u>13,650</u>
	<b>15,400</b>
Pueblo West	
Industrial Lands	<u>160</u>
Colorado City Area	
Industrial Zoned Land	<u>1,750</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,634</b>

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Information provided as part of Focus Area 2 establishes a baseline understanding of land supply, demand, and development feasibility in Pueblo County today. These factors will help inform policy discussions about where different types of uses—residential, non-residential/mixed-use, and industrial/employment uses—should be prioritized in the future. Key considerations include:

### Aligning housing needs with demand

Pueblo County has ample land to accommodate estimated housing demand. Generally, land within the City of Pueblo or Pueblo West can more easily accommodate new housing due to the presence of existing services and infrastructure. The excess capacity gives the County and municipalities flexibility in where they would like to direct housing development. Considerations on the availability of infrastructure, services, and the cost to provide urban services should be a major consideration in developing the Future Land Use Map. As well, input from the community on the types of housing and neighborhoods they would like to see will also provide guidance on where future housing should go and the overall mix of housing that is provided.

### Encouraging a mix of new development and adaptive reuse/redevelopment

Sufficient land is available in Pueblo County to accommodate demand for commercial, business, and mixed-use areas and provide flexibility for the market. The majority of that land is concentrated in the City of Pueblo and Pueblo West. The inclusion of multifamily

housing as part of the overall mix of uses in areas designated as commercial/business areas will not significantly reduce overall capacity for these uses in the future. Area-specific needs for commercial land in different parts of the County will be explored as part of the process. While land is not a constraint, opportunities to encourage the adaptive reuse of underutilized commercial areas and buildings should be explored to help revitalize older areas of the community and promote the efficient use of available infrastructure and services. Multimodal connectivity should also be considered when planning mixed-use development.

### Prioritizing established/emerging industrial and employment areas

A significant amount of the land planned for industrial and employment currently lacks the infrastructure needed to support new development—streets, water, sewer, and power. As a result, supporting the growth of existing/emerging industrial and employment parks and areas should be a priority. In particular, areas that have the types of assets employers value—access to major arterials/highways or rail—should be protected from encroachment by other uses and prioritized for infrastructure investments that can help attract and grow employment. The primary industrial areas that most desirable include the south Pueblo area along I-25, within Pueblo West along Highway 50, and along Highway 50 from the Pueblo Airport to (and including) PuebloPlex. Considerations of the types of employment lands that may not exist in the County that could attract uses should be made in the plan process.

## Protecting the long-term viability of agricultural and ranching lands

Agricultural production and ranching are an integral part of Pueblo County's history, culture, and economy. Conversion of agricultural land to residential and the transfer of water rights from those lands are of particular concern in the St. Charles Mesa Area. In other unincorporated areas of the County, pressure for the continued expansion of emerging industries like marijuana and industrial-scale solar are becoming more prevalent. While these uses have had a positive impact on the County's economy and (in the case of solar) align with the region's energy goals, questions about the siting and extent of these uses have been raised. Independent of the Regional Comprehensive Plan process, the County has taken steps to examine potential concerns and recommend possible policy and regulatory changes. These recommendations will be used to help frame land use and policy choices as part of the Regional Comprehensive Plan process. Engaging agricultural producers, water providers, ranchers, and other stakeholders in the process will be essential. These recommendations will be used to help frame land use and policy choices as part of the Regional Comprehensive Plan process. Engaging agricultural producers, water providers, ranchers, and other stakeholders in the process will be essential.



**FOCUS AREA #3**

# **ECONOMIC BASE**







This section provides an overview of the current economic landscape in Pueblo County and the various factors that influence the region's economy—primary employment sectors, educational attainment, employment trends, emerging industries, and economic incentives. It also frames ways that the Regional Comprehensive Plan can help advance ongoing economic development efforts—like the One Pueblo Economic Development Strategic Plan—by aligning future land use policies with established goals.

PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Pueblo County is home to over 75,000 jobs, according to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The largest industries in the County include Health Care, Retail Trade, Accommodations and Food Services, Education, and Manufacturing. The economic base in Pueblo County consists of three main elements including a mixture of primary employment industries, the County’s role as a regional service hub, and as a destination for tourists and retirees.

Primary employment sectors including agriculture and agribusiness activities, manufacturing anchored by the Evraz Steel Plant and Vestas, and military training and services. These industries attract outside investment and provide goods and services throughout the US. As well, there are emerging primary employment opportunities that are creating greater diversity in the economy including renewable energy development and the hemp/marijuana growing and processing industry.

The Pueblo County economy has higher than average concentrations of agricultural activities. Pueblo County ranked 26 out of 63 counties in Colorado in terms of market value of agricultural products sold, according to the 2017 US Census of Agriculture. The County has nearly 900,000 acres of land in farms. Food growing in the region helped spur the creation of a robust network of food production, processing, and distributions businesses including major national food companies such as Mission Tortillas. Pueblo is also renowned for its chile peppers. The agriculture and agribusiness sectors are supported by strong organizations including FFA, 4H, and the Pueblo Chile Growers Association.

As a result of its agricultural heritage, Pueblo is also a regional commerce and service hub that draws visitors to the County from throughout southern Colorado for retail goods and services, health care, and education. The Parkview Hospital Medical Center is the largest employer in the County. Pueblo serves a major shopping and agricultural business destination for the region. Lastly, the education institutions in the

Pueblo County Largest Employers, 2019<sup>53</sup>

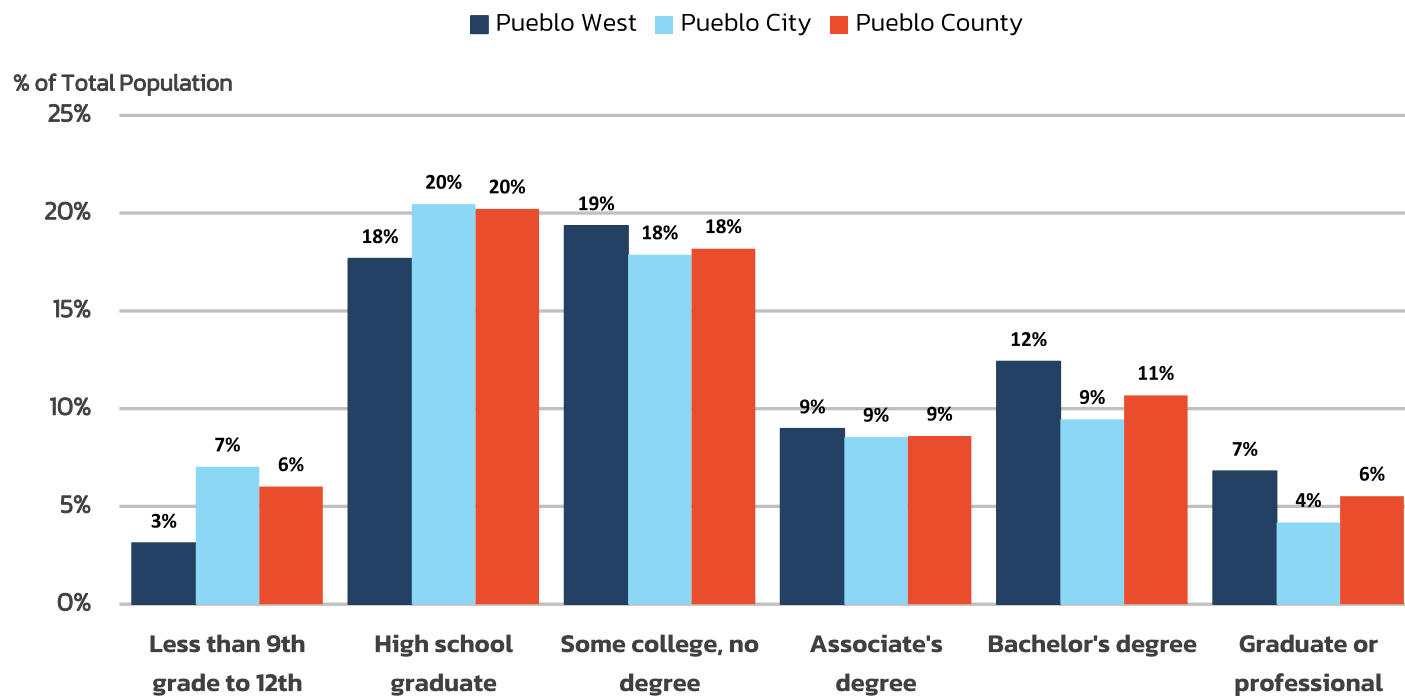
Description	Employees
Parkview Hospital Medical Center	3,100
Pueblo City Schools	1,759
School District #70	1,284
Wal Mart	1,135
Evraz Inc. (Rocky Mountain Steel)	1,124
Pueblo County	1,095
Vestas Tower America	967
St. Mary–Corwin	829
Convergys	700
Target Corp	700
City of Pueblo	683

County, including Colorado State University Pueblo, serve residents throughout the state and from out of Colorado.

Lastly, Pueblo is a tourism destination drawing visitors to the County for its outdoor recreational opportunities including Lake Pueblo State Park, entertainment opportunities including the Colorado State Fair, and attractions anchored by the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk Area. Pueblo’s moderate climate, home prices, and quality of life has made it a destination for retirees.

The economy in Pueblo is also made up of primarily small businesses. According to the Pueblo Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO), most companies in the Pueblo County have under 10 employees and vast majority of companies have under 50 employees.



Educational Attainment, 2019<sup>54</sup>

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

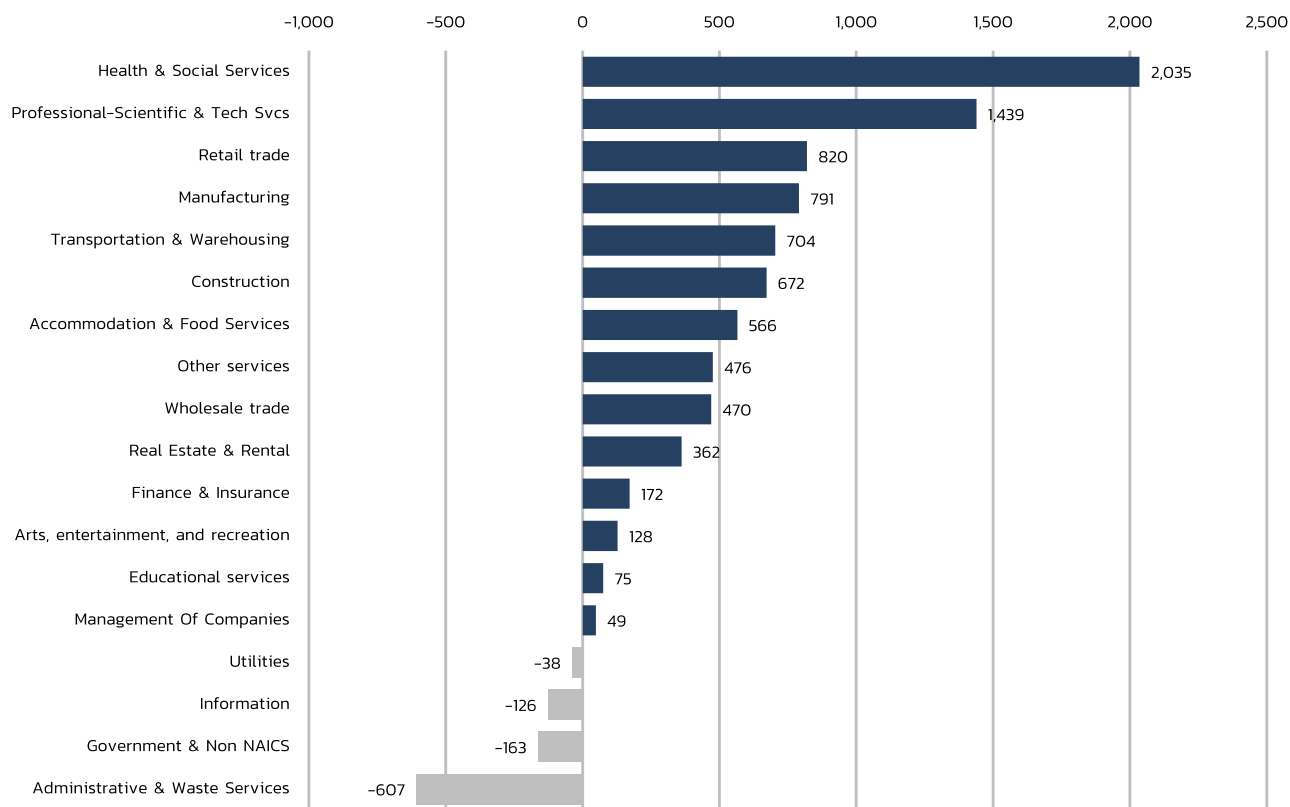
The economic base of the County consists of many jobs that do not require higher education. As a result, the average educational attainment of residents is lower than the state average. The percent of County residents with a bachelor's degree or higher is 17. Pueblo West has the highest incidence of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher, at 19 percent, compared with 13 percent for the City. By comparison, these rates are considerably lower than the rate for the state, which is 27 percent.

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Employment in Pueblo County has been growing at a steady rate for the past 20 years (1 percent per year) with an average 700 to 800 new jobs being created annually. The County's largest industries are also primarily the fastest growing industries. Health Care, Professional Services, Retail Trade, and Manufacturing

have seen the greatest increases in employment since 2010. The increase in number of professional service jobs since 2010 represents significant growth in employment in an industry that had not previously been one of the County's largest industries.

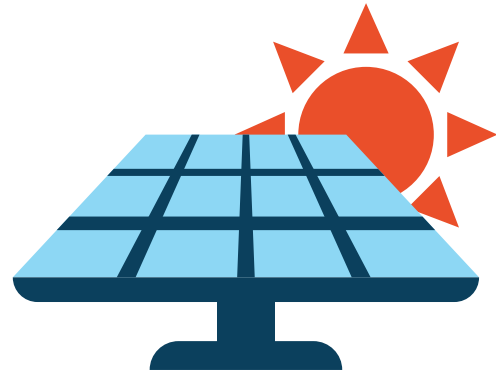
Change in Employment by Industry<sup>55</sup>  
Pueblo County, 2010 - 2019



## Solar Farms in Pueblo County, 2020

**Emerging Industry: Industrial-Scale Solar**

Pueblo County's abundance of land, climate, and utility facilities have attracted the attention of solar developers in recent years. The first utility scale solar project in unincorporated Pueblo County was constructed in 2014. Based on information provided by applicants, projects generate between 250 and 600 jobs during construction, which ranges from nine to 18 months.

**8****EXISTING/PERMITTED SOLAR FARMS****17,000****TOTAL ACRES****3****PROPOSED/PENDING SOLAR FARMS****7,870****TOTAL ACRES****Emerging: Industry Hemp**

Pueblo County has positioned itself as a prime location for hemp production, processing, and related-industries. PEDCO, Pueblo County Community College, the Institute for Cannabis Research (located at Colorado State University – Pueblo) have worked to attract hemp-related businesses and grow a workforce to support these businesses with customized education and training.

## Hemp-related uses in unincorporated Pueblo County, 2020

**###****OF OUTDOOR GROW OPERATIONS****23****OF HEMP-RELATED PROCESSING/  
MANUFACTURING FACILITIES****###****HEMP-RELATED JOBS**



## INCENTIVE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Pueblo County and the City of Pueblo provide a number of incentive and economic development programs to support the economic health of the community. The City of Pueblo provides utility and stormwater fee rebates, property tax rebates, and the use of tax increment financing through urban renewal to support new development projects that further economic development goals. The City also created a dedicated sales and use tax capital improvement fund to support the attraction, expansion, and retention of businesses in the community. In addition to the City's programs, there are a number of state and federal incentive programs that businesses located in the County can access. A few highlighted programs are described below. A comprehensive list of programs is provided in the One Pueblo Economic Development Strategic Plan.

### Established Development Area

The City of Pueblo adopted an Established Development Area in 2018. The Established Development Areas for alternative landscape standards for projects in the area to make it easier for infill projects to be approved.

### Enterprise Zones

Colorado's Enterprise Zone (EZ) program provides tax incentives to encourage businesses to locate and expand in designated economically distressed areas of the state. The state currently has 18 enterprise zones. Pueblo's enterprise zone encompasses approximately 84% of the County. The program encourages job creation and capital investment by providing tax credits to businesses and projects which promote and encourage economic development activities.

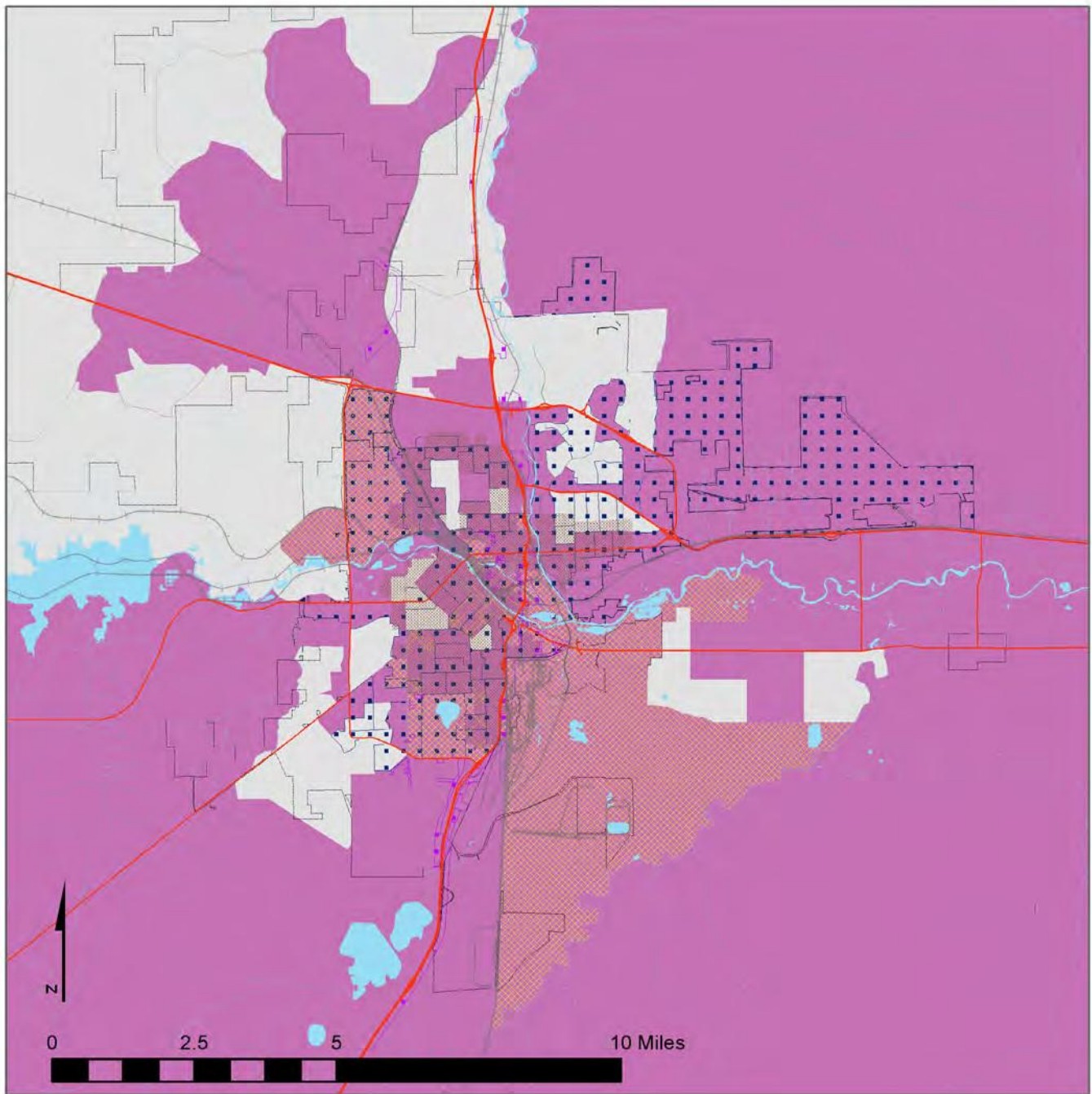
### Opportunity Zones

The Opportunity Zone program is a federal business and real estate tax incentive program established by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. It is intended to attract investment to communities that have traditionally lacked investment to stimulate economic development and job creation. The Opportunity Zone program established tax incentives to encourage private investment in OZs. An investor can place taxable capital gains into a qualified opportunity fund (QOF) and receive reduction or exemption from capital gains tax for investments from the QOF into an opportunity zone.

Opportunity Zones (OZs) are specific geographic areas located in 8,762 census tracts across the country. To be eligible for nomination, a census tract had to have a poverty rate of at least 20 percent or have a median income at below 80 of the state or metropolitan area's level. Pueblo County has nine opportunity zones that encompass most of the major employment areas in the County including Downtown, the EVRAZ Industrial District, the Lake Minnequa area, the St. Charles Industrial Park, and the State Fair/Events Center area.

## Area Economic Incentive Zones<sup>56</sup>

City of Pueblo



### Roads

— Interstates and Highways

— Major Streets

— Local Streets

— Municipalities and Places



Established Development Area



Industrial High Performance Standard Areas



Low/Mod Income Block Groups



Opportunity Zones



Enterprise Zones

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND EFFORTS

Economic development in Pueblo is supported by a large group of organizations, institutions, and public agencies.

### Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization with over 1,300 members. The Chamber serves as an advocate for the business community in Pueblo County and beyond. The chamber provides business development support services, networking events, and business marketing and advertising for members.

### Latino Chamber of Commerce of Pueblo

The Latino Chamber of Commerce of Pueblo was formed in 1979 to provide a voice for Hispanic owned businesses in the community. The chamber helps individuals and companies grow through business support services and promotion. Additionally, the chamber provides support for small business development in the County.

### Greenhorn Chamber of Commerce

The Greenhorn Chamber of Commerce is a membership of business and stakeholders within the communities of Colorado City, San Isabel, and Rye, which are located in the Greenhorn Valley. The chamber provides support service and promotion for its members.

### Pueblo West Chamber of Commerce

The Pueblo West Chamber of Commerce was founded in 2001 and has over 200 members. It provides promotion, networking events, and support services for its members.

### PEDCO

The Pueblo Economic Development Corporation is a non-profit economic development agency that provides primary employment attraction and retention services in the County. PEDCO has identified a set of target industry clusters that represent the major primary employment growth opportunities in the County. These industries clusters are:

- Aerospace and Defense
- Manufacturing
- Food and Beverage Production
- Hemp Growing and Processing
- Outdoor Recreation
- Rail Transportation Services

PEDCO offers a suite of programs and tools to help attract and retain businesses. Its most impactful tool is a dedicated City of Pueblo sales and use tax capital improvement fund that is used to support economic development related improvements. PEDCO also provides primary job training programs and administers tax incentives including a personal property tax abatement, enterprise zones, and agricultural employee tax credits. PEDCO recruits companies and structures deals to bring them to Pueblo. The commitment of funds such as the City's 1/2 cent sales tax funds are approved on a project-by-project basis by City Council. Likewise the County's incentives are authorized and approved by the County Commissioners.





## RELATED PLANS, STUDIES, AND OTHER EFFORTS

### One Pueblo Economic Development Strategic Plan

The COVID-19 Pandemic led business leaders in the County to come together to create a plan to address impacts of pandemic. The effort grew into an opportunity to also generate a collective vision and strategy for the economic recovery and long-term prosperity of the County. The Pueblo Business Economic Recovery Team “BERT” was formed and is comprised of 21 organizations. The BERT Team developed the One Pueblo Economic Development Strategy to guide the collective efforts of the business community. The group created a vision for the community, which is ...

“Pueblo County is a dynamic and forward-thinking community of choice within Colorado that offers unparalleled opportunity for economic prosperity to each of its residents.”

The strategy aligns regional efforts under five goals and collective teams. The five goals area:

- Vision Alignment/Regional Alignment
- Talent Pipeline Optimization
- Foundational Community Elements
- Target Industry Development
- Community Positioning

As of early 2021, teams have been assigned to each goal area and implementation is getting underway.

### Pueblo Means Business

Pueblo Means Business aims to streamline and simplify the process of development review for businesses wishing to operate in the County. The project was initiated by Pueblo County in late 2020, in collaboration with the City of Pueblo, the Pueblo West Metro District, and Regional Building. The process is scheduled for completion in mid- to late-2021.

### PuebloPlex Redevelopment Plan

Published in 2016, the PuebloPlex Redevelopment Plan defines the overall vision for the redevelopment of 16,000 acres of the Army Chemical Depot site 20 miles east of the City. In 2022, as weapons decommissioning concludes, ownership of this site is anticipated to transition to the City of Pueblo.

### Pueblo Shares

Pueblo Shares is a crowdsource site that allows people to upload photos, videos, and other content that positively promotes the assets and advantages of living in, investing in, or visiting the Pueblo region.

### Choose Pueblo

Choose Pueblo is a joint marketing initiative of the City, County, Colorado City and Pueblo West that promotes the region's assets and advantages to tourists and those considering relocating to the area.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Pueblo County possesses a strong economic base, an ample supply of land, and strong regional partnerships to build upon for the future. Existing infrastructure assets—including ready access to the rail network and water and sewer availability—can help support economic growth in the region. However, there are challenges that must be addressed, including the education and skill level of the workforce, rising electric power costs, and inadequate broadband connectivity, among others. Key considerations include:

### Leveraging major transportation assets

Pueblo has major transportation assets (rail, highway, and airport) that can support a variety of industries and logistics efforts. The City has major rail yards for the BNSF and Union Pacific railways. The region's business parks and PuebloPlex redevelopment—the first 5,000 acres of which is slated to be transferred from the Army to PuebloPlex in 2022—also have multiple rail spurs creating opportunity for rail-served industrial sites. As well, the Transportation Technology Center Inc., located north of PuebloPlex is a railroad testing and training facility. The City is also located at the confluence of I-25 and Highway 50 connecting portions of southern Colorado directly to Pueblo. These assets are attractive to business, but Pueblo is still competing with other larger metro areas for jobs and workforce.

### Maintaining a focus on education and workforce development

The relative lack of educational attainment and skills of the workforce may present challenges to attracting growth industries. Given these gaps, whether the workforce can grow to provide the right education/skills to support opportunities is a major concern. The workforce in Pueblo is also aging and older on average. Attraction and training of a younger workforce is needed to take advantage of economic opportunities that may be present now or in the future. (See also, education discussion in Focus Area 1.)

### Assessing both the benefits and longer-term impacts of emerging industries

Emerging economic activities in Pueblo County, such as hemp production and solar energy production, are helping to diversify the economy and (in the case of solar) advance renewable energy goals, but the depth of the market opportunities for these industries are still unknown. As well, these industries can create land use impacts on the County that may not be desired. Solar energy production is land intensive and may impact the availability of easy to develop and/or desirable industrial uses that produce more employment in the County. Hemp and marijuana production is a burgeoning industry with a quickly changing regulatory environment. Analysis and monitoring are needed to understand if these emerging industries generate new economic opportunities for residents and what impacts on the County's services and infrastructure these industries create. Independent of the Regional Comprehensive Plan process, the County has taken steps to examine potential concerns and recommend possible policy and regulatory changes. These recommendations will be used to help frame land use and policy choices as part of the Regional Comprehensive Plan process.

### Planning for economic resilience

Lastly, the economic resilience of the community should be a major focus. The economic base includes industries that have jobs with less skill requirements. Increasingly these less skilled jobs are being replaced by investments in automation and new technologies. The traditional economic sectors in the region are being impacted greatly by technology advances and market forces. Ensuring employment opportunities for residents in the future will require the County's economy and workforce to continue to evolve.

### **Tailoring educational opportunities to match economic opportunities in the region**

Stakeholder interviews emphasized the advantage of having both a two- and a four-year college in the town, but expressed concern that the education system at the secondary and post-secondary may not be sufficiently preparing Pueblo's workforce with the skills that match existing and anticipated jobs in the area. One concern is the limited level of educational attainment, where most residents do not possess higher degrees, making it difficult to fill higher-level positions across industries with employees from the local workforce. Another stated concern is a mismatch of skills, whereby expanding industries such as renewable energy have difficulty recruiting from the local workforce for skilled positions, expressing a desire for the expansion of programs that prepare students to enter into skilled trades. Additional concerns covered a general lack of preparedness of the workforce, citing problems with reliability, inability to pass drug tests, and lack of long-term commitment (beyond six months). Though efforts are already being made to link the needs of industry with the skills of the workforce, a strategic assessment of priorities and target institutions and industries could contribute to stronger alignment between education and industry in the County. Broadband access is also an issue in some parts of the County, raising concerns about digital equity for students. This challenge has been particularly acute over the past year with the reliance on remote learning.









# Riverwalk 100 E

Pueblo County is made up of many unique communities and neighborhoods, each offering a different lifestyle option and sense of community. The right mix of housing, at the right cost, is essential to serve housing needs and support the region's economy. Maintaining the quality and condition of that housing is also essential to ensure all residents have access to safe and healthy living conditions, regardless of their income level. This section provides an overview of household characteristics and existing housing stock in Pueblo County as they exist today and highlights future needs and implications.



## Household Composition, 2019<sup>57</sup>

Description	Pueblo County		City of Pueblo		State of Colorado	
		% of Total		% of Total		% of Total
Family Households	42,573	64%	26,853	60%	1,421,844	64%
Non-Family Households	<u>23,538</u>	36%	<u>18,092</u>	40%	<u>813,259</u>	36%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>66,111</b>		<b>44,945</b>		<b>2,235,103</b>	

### HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

#### Family and Non-family Households

Pueblo is a family-oriented and family-friendly community. This attribute is reflected in its mix of housing options and types. Nearly two-thirds of the households in Pueblo County (64 percent) are family households (defined as two or more related people residing together), a figure equal to the state-wide average. The City of Pueblo has a slightly lower percentage of residents in family households, at 60 percent.

#### Household by Age Cohort

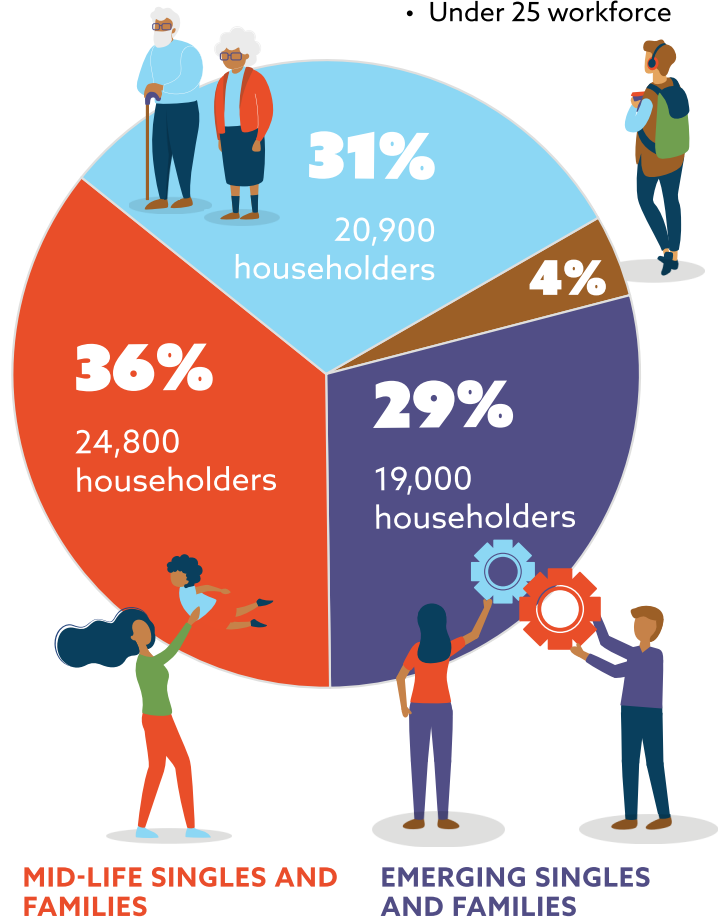
On average, Pueblo County residents are older than other Colorado residents. The most prevalent household type group in the County is householders age 45 to 64 years old, referred to as Mid-life singles and families. This group accounts for 36 percent of households. The second largest is the senior and empty nester category that accounts for 31 percent of households. The population age 60 and above increased by the fastest rate in the past decade while the population in younger age cohorts (specifically under 25 years old) declined. The needs and housing preferences of residents in these older age cohorts have been a major factor for the housing development patterns in the County.

#### SENIORS AND EMPTY NESTERS

- 65+ years old, family and non-family households

#### STUDENT AND YOUNG WORKFORCE

- (2,700 householders)
- University off-campus housing
- Under 25 workforce



#### MID-LIFE SINGLES AND FAMILIES

- 45 to 64 years old, family and non-family households

#### EMERGING SINGLES AND FAMILIES

- 25 to 44 years old, family and non-family households



Households by Units in Structure, 2019<sup>58</sup>

Description	Pueblo County	% of Total	City of Pueblo	% of Total
Single Family Detached	50,872	77%	32,448	72%
Single Family Attached	2,021	3%	1,858	4%
Duplex	1,339	2%	1,077	2%
Tri and Quad Plex	1,212	2%	1,180	3%
5 to 9 units	2,029	3%	1,936	4%
10 to 19 units	1,975	3%	1,929	4%
20 to 49 units	472	1%	472	1%
50 or more units	2,038	3%	2,000	4%
Mobile home	4,153	6%	2,045	5%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66,111</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>44,945</b>	<b>100%</b>

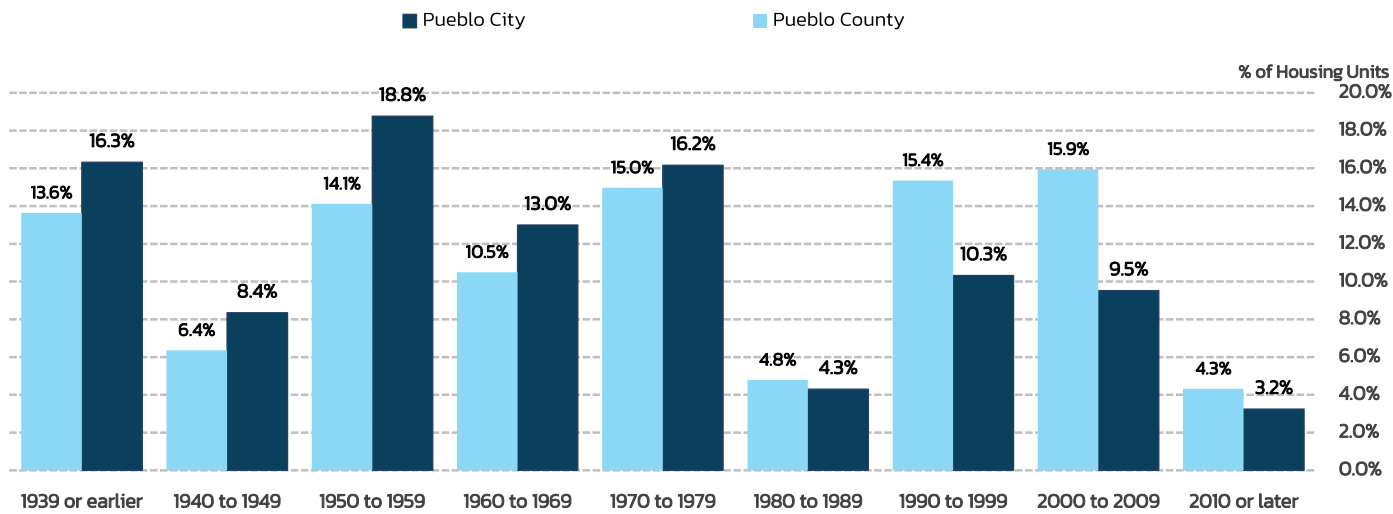
## HOUSING STOCK CHARACTERISTICS

## Housing Variety

Historically, the family orientation of Pueblo households has generated a housing stock where single family-detached units are the predominant housing type throughout the County, accounting for 77 percent of all housing units. Detached, single-family houses are also the most common type of housing in both the City of Pueblo and Pueblo West, accounting for 72 percent of units in the City and 84 percent of units in Pueblo West. Development trends over the past 20 years have been even more oriented to single-family detached housing, a pattern that has

occurred despite the increase of renter households in the County, where the greatest increase of renter households since 2000 has been in single family renter households. While renter households are more typically associated with attached and multifamily housing, this growth pattern indicates that many new renters are occupying existing single-family homes. Metropolitan Districts. The result is a greater proportion of homes built after 1980 are outside of the City of Pueblo and the County's overall housing stock is newer on average compared to the City.

Housing Units by Decade Built, 2019<sup>59</sup>



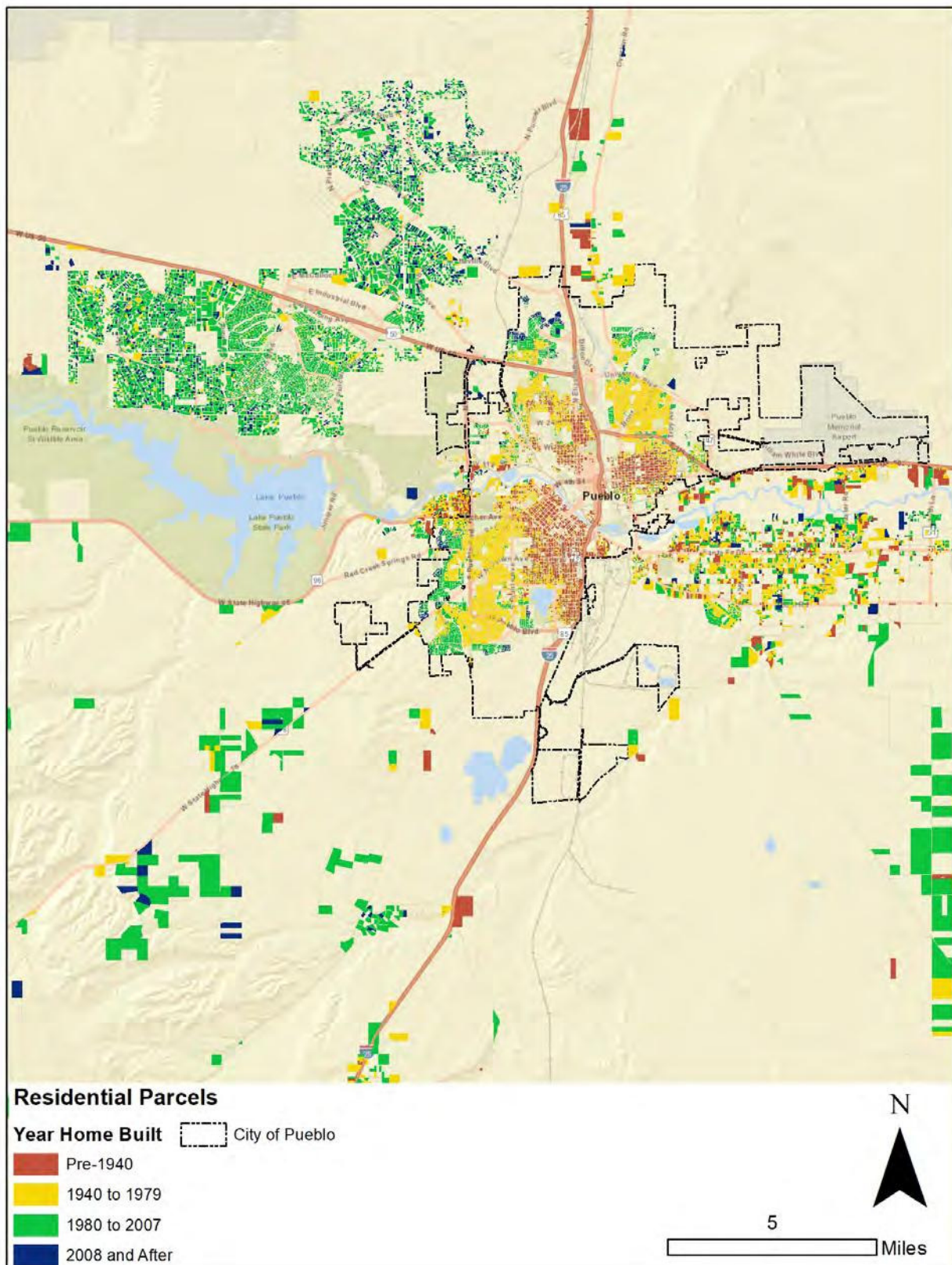
Age of Housing Stock

For much of the twentieth-century, the City of Pueblo captured the majority of the population growth in the County. This trend is reflected in the age of the housing stock. Over 70 percent of the housing units in the City of Pueblo were built before 1980. However, population booms in Pueblo County in the 1990s and 2000s led to a greater number of homes being built outside the City, primarily in Pueblo West and Colorado City, both of which were established as Metro Districts in the 1960s. The result is a greater proportion of homes built after 1980 outside of the City of Pueblo and an overall age for the County’s overall housing stock that is newer on average when compared to the City.

Housing Stock Conditions

Nearly half (43.5 percent) of the housing stock in the City of Pueblo was built before 1960, versus 34.1 percent in the County as a whole. Housing conditions in some older parts of the City are poor due to aging infrastructure and associated disinvestment.

## Homes/Parcels by Year Built<sup>60</sup> Pueblo County





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## NEIGHBORHOOD TYPES IN PUEBLO COUNTY

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Housing construction patterns in Pueblo County have created a distinct set of neighborhood types. Neighborhood types are grouped primarily based on the decade(s) they were built and their similar attributes—age of housing stock, block lengths, lot size, house orientation, and street networks.

- **Pre-War Neighborhoods.** These neighborhoods feature smaller homes on smaller than average lots primarily in the core of the City of Pueblo. These areas have a mix of front and alley-loaded homes, a gridded street pattern with shorter blocks, and greater overall housing density that is higher than other neighborhoods.
- **1950s to 1970s Housing Boom Neighborhoods.** The City experienced a substantial growth period after World War II that resulted in the creation of neighborhoods that are more suburban in nature. These neighborhoods have slightly larger lot sizes that are primarily front-loaded, a street network that is more oriented to major arterials with fewer access points, and more curvilinear street networks.
- **1990's and 2000's Exurbs.** The housing development pattern shifted greatly in the 1990s with most new housing development occurring in Pueblo West, Colorado City, and north of Highway 50 in the City of Pueblo. These neighborhoods range from larger lot suburban single-family homes to one- to two-acre "ranchettes." The street pattern in these neighborhoods is more winding, accessed off major highways and arterials, and has limited access points to surrounding uses. The Pueblo Ranch housing type is indicative of the homes in these neighborhoods.
- **Agricultural and Mountain Communities.** The agricultural communities feature a mixture of homes on large lots to large ranches spread through the agricultural areas and St. Charles Mesa along the Arkansas River including Vineland, Avondale, North Avondale, and the Town of Boone. The foothill communities on the western edges of the County at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range feature collections of homes clustered in small communities such as Rye and Beulah. These agricultural and foothill communities have experienced minimal new housing development, have older than average homes, and are oriented to workers within agricultural businesses or retirees.

## HOUSING ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

Pueblo County faces growing issues related to housing availability, access, and affordability. These challenges are tied to some of the housing stock issues related to the age, conditions, and characteristics, but also to economic conditions and forces outside of the community.

The community's aging housing stock and affordability challenges are a matter of concern to maintaining and improving quality of life in Pueblo County. The interconnected nature of Pueblo County's economy makes housing a regional challenge in need of regional solutions.

### Housing Access

In Pueblo County, currently there is a very limited amount of available housing – regardless of the cost. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey found that the City of Pueblo and the County had a rental vacancy rate of 3.1 percent, which is well below the state (4.8%) and national (6.0%) vacancy rates. Homeowner vacancy rates in the City and Pueblo County are 1.9 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively. This is similar to the state (1.1%) and national (1.6%) vacancy rate for owned homes.

The tight rental housing market makes it difficult for people moving to Pueblo to find a place to rent. In a market with limited options, current residents may find themselves in a home that is too large or small for their family, in a neighborhood that forces a long commute, and at a cost that keeps them from being able to support local businesses, invest in their future, or save for an emergency. A tight housing market limits the ability of residents to transition to housing that better fits their needs and income over time, because there are so few options available.

### Housing Affordability

Pueblo County has traditionally been known as an affordable place to live but raising housing prices are decreasing accessibility to some residents. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey, 28.5 percent of households with a mort-

gage in Pueblo County are spending 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs (known as housing cost-burdened). This is a rate higher than the rate of cost-burdened homeowners nationwide (27.8%) and statewide (27.3%). In the City of Pueblo, 27.5 percent of homeowners are paying 30 percent or more of their incomes to cover housing costs.

Among renters, 58 percent are spending 30 percent or more of their income on housing in Pueblo – higher than the 55.3 percent of renters that are cost-burdened in Pueblo County overall. This is significantly higher than the nationwide (49.6%) and statewide (51.0%) rates of renters spending more than 30 percent of income on housing.

## COST BURDENED RENTERS

**55%** Pueblo County

**58%** City of Pueblo

**39%** Pueblo West

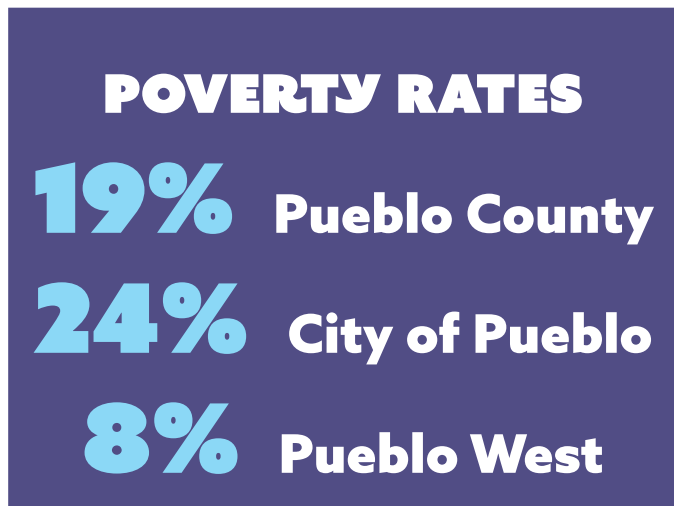
The age of housing stock in Pueblo County, which can be tied to higher maintenance costs and utility costs, can add to affordability issues for homeowners. Low-income homeowners may find themselves unable to afford maintaining their property, especially when major issues arise.

Residents and community service providers in Pueblo County have also indicated that many rental units are poorly maintained or even have unsafe living conditions. The 2019 American Community Survey

found that 0.5 percent of homes in Pueblo County lack complete plumbing facilities, 1.1 percent lack complete kitchen facilities, and 1.5 percent lack telephone service—possibly indicating an inability to access internet. Anecdotes from residents and community leaders suggests that the limited supply of affordable housing, low-income tenants find themselves unable to demand repairs or improvements due to the risk of eviction in a community with few other places to live.

### Poverty

The challenges of housing access and affordability are exacerbated by poverty in Pueblo County. Although many areas of the region are more affluent, large numbers of residents in the region are living below the poverty line—a rate that varies based on the number of individuals in a home. In the City of Pueblo 23.5 percent of residents fall below this threshold, along with 18.9 percent of Pueblo County residents. These are both well above the state (10.3%) and national (13.4%) rates of people living in poverty.



The median household income in 2019 in Pueblo and Pueblo County is estimated at \$40,450 and \$46,783, respectively. Again, this is well below the statewide (\$72,331) and nationwide (\$62,834) median household income and indicates a challenge to housing affordability and security in the Pueblo region.

### Supportive Housing

Poverty, limited housing availability, and increasing housing costs directly contribute to Pueblo's homelessness challenge. In a housing market with limited options, losing a job, a decrease in wages, or an unexpected bill can result in losing housing altogether. There is often little to no housing available at some income levels in Pueblo County. This issue prevents unhoused populations from returning to stable housing and places many more families and individuals on the edge of homelessness.

Although it is difficult to find an accurate current count of Pueblo County's unhoused population due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a place-in-time survey conducted in February 2019 found that Pueblo had roughly 500 unhoused individuals – 200 in shelters and 300 unsheltered. It is estimated that Pueblo's unhoused population may be higher, due to the difficult nature of counting transient populations that may also sleep in cars, on couches, or other impermanent locations. In recent years, Pueblo School District 60 found that over 1,500 students had experienced homelessness for some part of the school year.

Posada of Pueblo, a housing and supportive service provider in the community has indicated that demand for housing and services has increased dramatically over recent years, reflecting a trend towards more unhoused individuals. Similarly, the Pueblo Police Department regularly gets calls related to homeless population and have noted that the volume of calls and the resources dedicated to the issue have increased in recent years.

Nationwide, homelessness has been increasing since 2016, although the long-term trend since 2007 has been toward fewer unhoused people. The challenges presented by the current COVID-19 crisis to employment, mental health, and substance abuse is expected to further increase the need for housing and community services throughout the country. However, the unique and challenging circumstances of Pueblo County's housing market suggest that changes to the status quo for housing access and affordability are central to addressing issues of homelessness and poverty in the community.



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## RELATED PLANS AND STUDIES

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### **Strategic Housing Assessment and Action Plan (forthcoming - 2021)**

The City of Pueblo, in collaboration with Pueblo County and Pueblo West has retained a consultant to prepare a strategic housing assessment with an emphasis on affordable housing. This study will provide a more in-depth look at the housing inventory in the City of Pueblo and surrounding communities, housing cost and affordability, deficiencies in housing supply relative to need by price range or affordability level, and the amount of new housing that could be needed to replace obsolete or unsuitable housing during the next ten years. An economic analysis of housing development alternatives and housing barriers will also be conducted. Based on this assessment, an action plan will be developed to monitor the effects of implementing affordable housing strategies over time. Recommendations that emerge from this work will be used to inform the development of housing-related goals, policies, and implementation strategies as part of the Regional Comprehensive Plan.



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## NEIGHBORHOOD REHABILITATION EFFORTS

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Some of the efforts underway to rehabilitate aging homes and invest in existing neighborhoods in Pueblo County are described below.

- **NeighborWorks of Pueblo.** NeighborWorks of Pueblo is a private nonprofit organization with the goal of assisting families with homeownership. In addition to free credit counseling, education, loan modification, budget planning, and foreclosure prevention training, NeighborWorks of Pueblo helps low-income homeowners restore homes, apply for home rehabilitation loans, and complete energy and water efficiency upgrades. NeighborWorks of Pueblo has also assisted communities with landscaping, neighborhood beautification initiatives, and neighborhood clean-up projects.
- **Colorado Smelter Revitalization Project.** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated the Colorado Smelter Superfund site in December 2014 due to concerns about high levels of arsenic and lead identified in smelter slag and neighborhood soils. The study area for the superfund site encompasses many neighborhoods in Pueblo, including Grove, Bessemer, and Eilers. Along with testing and cleanup in the area, these neighborhoods expect to benefit from neighborhood revitalization efforts including streetscape improvements, better access to recreational opportunities, establishing a neighborhood plaza, connecting to amenities and Downtown, designating a history trail, and installing cultural wayfinding street signage. Finally, the planning effort will work to provide residents with homebuying assistance and develop strategies for developing affordable and workforce housing.
- **Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority (PURA).** The PURA has been active in development and revitalization projects in Pueblo since 1959 and works to identify areas lacking investment and stimulate economic activity in that area through redevelopment projects. In the past, PURA has invested in streetscape improvements, public art, and other infrastructure improvements, and could focus those efforts on residential neighborhood improvements in the future.
- **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).** The LIHTC is an important tool available to the Pueblo region for the creation of affordable housing, as well as rehabilitation of rental housing targeted to lower-income households. The federal tax credit gives tax credits to local governments and LIHTC-allocating agencies to support the acquisition, restoration, or new construction of affordable rental housing.
- **Energy Efficiency and Weatherization Programs and Incentives.** In addition to energy efficiency programs for all residents and businesses in Pueblo County, both Black Hills Energy and Xcel Energy offer programs and incentives for weatherization and energy efficiency that are targeted towards low-income homeowners.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Demographic and economic changes have started to shift the composition of households in the County. The percent of family households has decreased in the past 10 and 20 years, at the same time as the percent of residents that own their home has decreased. Over the past two decades, the increase of renter households has approximately matched the increase of owner households. These shifts, however, have not been represented in the residential development patterns in the County. Furthermore, as the population ages the housing needs will diversify even more. The following were identified as key considerations for the Regional Comprehensive Plan process:

### Adapting the housing supply to meet the needs of older residents.

The fastest growing group of residents over the plan horizon will be adults 65 and over, anticipated to grow by 40 percent. This group is anticipated to account for 5,878 of the projected 14,700 new households and will be the largest group in 2040. Smaller housing products with less maintenance requirements may become more in demand as such residents look to downsize or age in place. As well, health care needs may require or enhance the appeal of retirement communities and assisted living/continuum of care housing developments.

### Expanding housing options to help attract and retain a younger workforce.

Demand for single family homes on large lots is anticipated to remain strong. However, some residents of large-lot areas separated from services and amenities, such as Pueblo West, have begun to express the desire for integration of more commercial uses and neighborhood amenities than currently exist in these large lot subdivisions. National housing trends have been shifting towards more mixed-use and walkable neighborhoods. Employment growth will attract new, younger residents that may desire different neighborhoods or may not be able to afford the types of homes built in these large lot areas. Lastly, as capacity for new homes reduces in existing developments, especially Pueblo West, the need for new subdivisions and neighborhoods may require more dense developed projects

to off-set the costs of land and infrastructure to create housing.

### Improving housing conditions in older neighborhoods.

Improving conditions in older neighborhoods has been an ongoing focus of City of Pueblo, Pueblo County, and other regional partners to help ensure all residents have access to safe and stable housing, promote reinvestment in under served areas, and address housing affordability and supply challenges. Coordination of Regional Comprehensive Plan policies and land use recommendations with these ongoing efforts will be important.

### Advancing efforts to provide a Continuum of Care in housing

Homelessness and housing are regional challenges that merit a regional approach. Achieving long-term and sustainable housing solutions for low-income and unhoused people in Pueblo also requires a comprehensive approach that includes housing options, affordable housing, and supportive housing. A Continuum of Care approach is designed to provide a community-specific strategy for planning, strategic resource use, coordination between programs and providers, and data collection for measuring performance. Pueblo—led by the Pueblo Rescue Mission and Pueblo Triple Aim Corporation—recently signed on to participate in the national Built for Zero program. The program focuses on Continuum of Care and has numerous efforts ongoing to work towards finding homes for all Puebloans.

### Encouraging fiscally sustainable housing development


Lastly, the ability of the City, County, and the metropolitan districts to serve new housing developments with water, sewer, roads, parks, and other municipal services may create financial constraints, which may limit where new development is feasible or supportable. The fiscal health of these communities is greatly impacted by the growth pattern and may have to shift to be able to ensure basic infrastructure needs can be met and existing/desired levels of service can be met.



**FOCUS AREA #5**

# **COMMUNITY ASSETS**





**This section provides an overview of the many community assets that contribute to the quality of life of Pueblo residents and make the region a desirable place to live and visit—schools and institutions, access to health care and local food access, outdoor recreation, arts and culture, historic resources, and many others.**

## EDUCATION

### School Districts

School District 60 serves the City of Pueblo and approximately 16,000 students in 30 schools. It has a student body that is roughly 75 percent non-white and, in 2019, the district had an 83 percent graduation rate. This is slightly higher than the statewide average of 81 percent.

School District 70 serves Pueblo County, outside Pueblo City limits. The district educates over 8,000 students across 35 schools and, in 2020, had a 93 percent graduation rate. This is more than 10 percentage points above the statewide average.

### CSU Pueblo

Part of the Colorado State University System, CSU-Pueblo is a 275-acre campus, with approximately 4,000 students. Located in the northeastern corner of Pueblo, the university offers undergraduate, graduate, and pre-professional degree programs. Nearly 50 percent of the student population is non-white, and 83 percent come from within the State of Colorado. The campus is a federally designated Hispanic-Serving institution.

### Pueblo Community College

The Pueblo Community College (PCC) has its primary campus in Pueblo, with four additional satellite campuses in Durango, Canon City, Mancos, and Bayfield. PCC serves over 5,000 students at its Pueblo campus and offers certificate programs, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees.

### Hospitals and Medical Facilities

Major hospitals in Pueblo County are Parkview Medical Center and St. Mary Corwin Medical Center. Medical offices are clustered nearby each of these hospitals and at the Park West Medical Complex. Pueblo also hosts the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Pueblo (CMHIP), a nearly 500-bed hospital located on a 300-acre campus. CMHIP is one of Pueblo's largest

employers and focuses on inpatient treatment of behavioral health among adults and adolescents.

Residents of Pueblo County can address most medical needs locally, but may need to travel to Colorado Springs, Denver, or another large city for some procedures.

### Food Security<sup>61-62</sup>

Access to healthy and affordable food is a major contributor to a community's quality of life. It can improve public health, reduce stress, save money, and help children excel in school. However, many parts of Pueblo County are not able to meet this fundamental need. The average rate of household food insecurity between 2009 and 2011 was 13.4 percent – up from 8.6 percent between 1999 and 2001. In 2011, 26.3 percent of children in Pueblo County were food insecure. Some factors leading to increased food insecurity is the growing poverty rate and a higher percentage of single-parent households.

The Pueblo City-County Health Department (PCCHD) Consumer and Market Report (2013) looked at buying patterns of Pueblo County customers and the distribution of revenue from food purchases to other sectors of the food industry. The report details the frequency of at-home versus away-from-home meals, the types of places that residents eat and shop for food, the amount spent on food, the type of food purchased, and other factors that influence the local food economy. Key findings from the report include a decline in the amount spent on food (mirroring statewide and regional trends), concerns about cost of fruits and vegetables (72 percent of survey respondents said more affordable fruits and vegetables would make it easier to eat healthy), a significant portion of residents having to travel more than 10 miles to access fruits and vegetables (20 percent), and a growing interest from Puebloans in buying food from local suppliers or growing or hunting for food.<sup>63</sup>



To achieve a more safe, healthy, and affordable food system PCCHD is involved in several initiatives, including:

- **The Healthy Food and Beverage Initiative.** Funded through a grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), the focus of the initiative is to work with public venues, such as the Pueblo Zoo, to add healthier choices to a concession stand or café
- **The Healthy Corner Store Initiative.** Funded through a grant from the CDPHE, this initiative is working with food retail stores in Pueblo to add healthy products to their inventory.

PCCHD has also developed a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to guide efforts towards improving health through 2022. The CHIP identifies obesity as one of the key issues in the community and establishes a strategy to “improve access to healthy and affordable foods in the community,” among other efforts.<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, the Pueblo Food Project is a major effort in Pueblo County to look at the community food system and “create a more vibrant, nutritious and equitable food system for every eater in Pueblo County.” The Pueblo Food Project is a community coalition with five working groups, three task forces, an advisory council, and a youth council. The effort includes participants from the agriculture and food products industries, organizations involved in housing and poverty, local business leaders, community activists, concerned citizens, and representatives from Pueblo Community College, CSU-Pueblo, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, Pueblo County, and the City of Pueblo.

The major initiatives of the Pueblo Food Project are:

- **Healthy food access.** Creating a food system that provides safe, healthy, affordable, and equitable food for all Puebloans.
- **Local food economy.** Developing a resilient local food supply system by incubating and supporting food and farm businesses. This includes the annual Food and Ag Summit, which works to develop entrepreneurs, connect businesses, and establish a stronger local food economy.
- **Food and farm education.** Fostering opportunities for the community to learn about the food system and acquire food skills.
- **Advocacy.** Providing a structured, community-driven means to shape food and farm policy decisions at the local, state, and national level.
- **Collaboration.** Bringing together community organizations, businesses, public institutions, government agencies, and residents to learn, contribute, impact, and celebrate the food system.

Other planned projects include the restoration and adaptive reuse of the former Nuckolls Packing Company building in Pueblo’s Grove neighborhood, and Watertower Place—which involves the redevelopment of a historic building into an urban village and hub of innovation with event space, creative industries, and – notably – a food market to support on-site and local agriculture and food-related businesses.

## FARMS AND RANCHES

Ranching and farming have been important to the economy and culture of the Pueblo area since the County was established in 1861 – when Colorado was still a territory.

### Prime Agricultural Land

The majority of the County's prime agricultural land is located on the St. Charles Mesa in the Arkansas Valley Fill Aquifer. This area is irrigated and highly productive. It was identified in a 2016 assessment completed by the American Farmland Trust as nationally significant agricultural land. The Trust defines nationally significant agricultural land as the land best suited for long-term production of food and other crops.

### Conservation Areas

To protect the agricultural heritage and productivity of the Pueblo region and preserve the scenic and environmental benefits of agricultural lands, some working farms and ranches in Pueblo County have been set aside for preservation through conservation easements. Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements between landowners and land trusts or governments to limit development of the property in the future with permanent restrictions and protect important values of the property forever. Led by the property owner's interests, conservation agreements allow farms and ranches to continue to operate and often protect open space, wildlife habitat, rivers and streams, and other natural features. Nearly 200,000 acres of land in Pueblo County are held in conservation easements. Nearly 50,000 acres (some of which correspond to conservation easements) are designated by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program as Wildlife and Biodiversity conservation areas.

Pueblo County also uses agricultural PUDs to allow for residential lots to be incorporated into a primary agricultural use of the PUD zoned area. This has allowed farm and ranch families to expand some limited new residential lots, while retaining the primary agricultural uses within the PUD.

### Centennial Farms and Ranches<sup>65</sup> Pueblo County

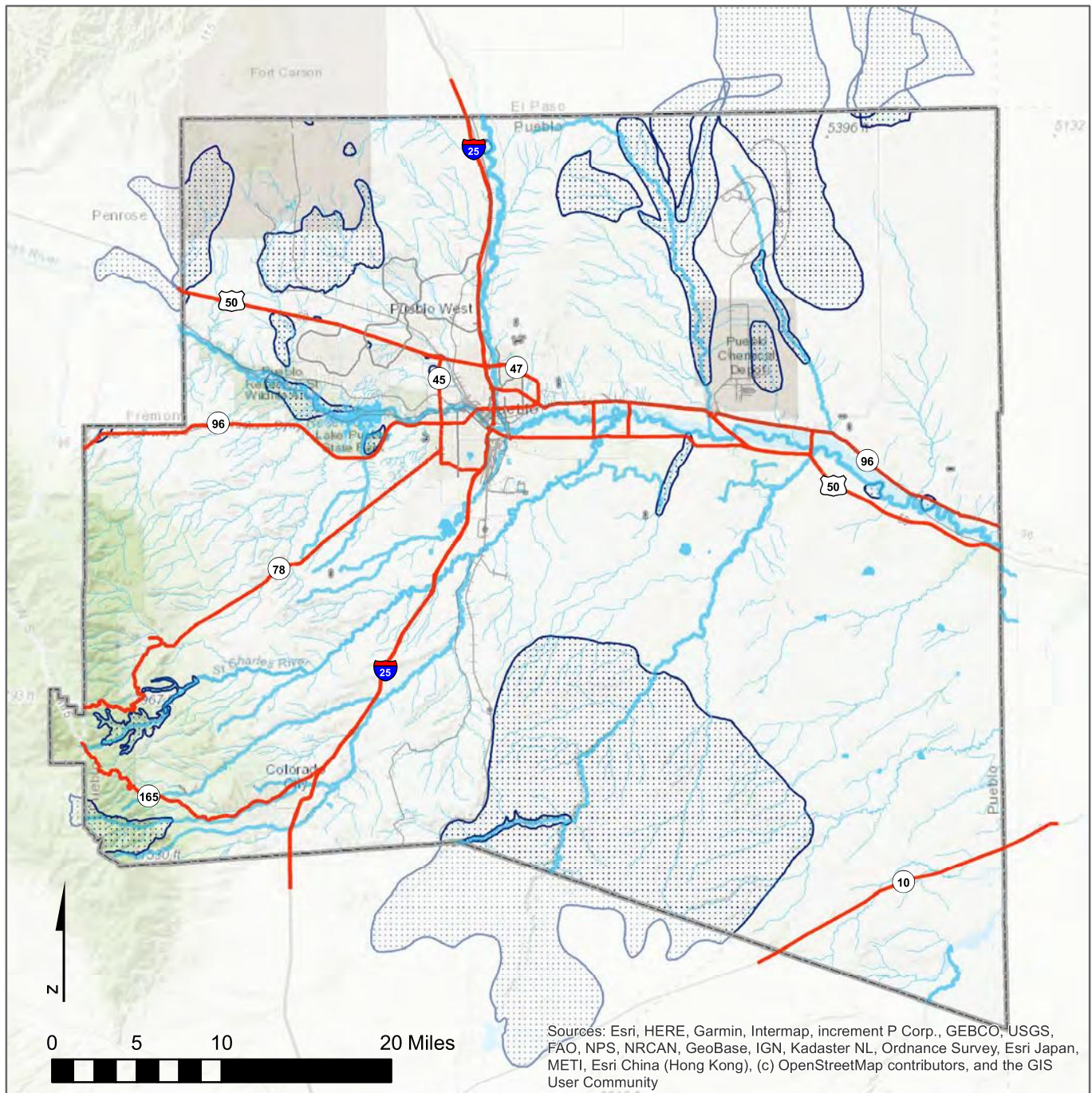


Some of the oldest, continually operating homestead farms and ranches in Pueblo County date back to the late 1800s, with a small number having been operated by the same families since their establishment over a hundred years ago. These are Centennial Farms and Ranches, as recognized by History Colorado.

1. Koch Farm, Pueblo, 1914
2. Butler Ranch, Avondale, 1882
3. William H Johnson Family Farm, Avondale, 1906
4. Carter Ranch, Boone, 1909
5. Thatcher Land & Cattle Co., Boone, 1894
6. Cawfield Farms, Pueblo, 1891
7. San Carlos Ranch, Beulah, 1889
8. Ruddock-Roper Ranch, Beulah, 1892
9. Bennett Ranch, Beulah, 1897

## Conservation Areas Capacity Analysis<sup>66</sup>

### Pueblo County



- |                          |                    |                                 |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Roads</b>             | Lakes and Rivers   | Biodiversity Conservation Areas |
| Interstates and Highways | Rivers             | Conservation Easements          |
| Major Streets            | Creeks and Streams |                                 |
| Local Streets            | Floodzones         |                                 |



## OUTDOOR RECREATION

One of Pueblo County's most valued resources is its abundant and easily accessible outdoor recreation opportunities. These include access to public lands, as well as parks and recreation facilities provided by the County, City, and other regional partners.

### Public Lands

Over 25 percent of Pueblo County's land area is managed by state or federal agencies. While not all of this land is open to the public, two of the most notable public lands assets in Pueblo County that offer outdoor recreation opportunities include:

#### Lake Pueblo State Park and Wildlife Area

Lake Pueblo State Park extends west of the City and north of highway 96 along the shores of the Pueblo Reservoir. The State Wildlife Area extends further west of the Park, along the Arkansas River. The park encompasses 10,280 acres, including the Reservoir. Lake Pueblo is Colorado's most visited state park and reached a record 2.7 million visitors in 2019 – up from 1.8 million visitors in 2016. This continues a trend towards increased visitation across all of Colorado's state parks and signifies the importance of Lake Pueblo State Park to the recreation and tourism economy of the region.

Lake Pueblo State Park is home to over 40 miles of multi-purpose trails. Construction and maintenance of the Lake Pueblo trails is led by local non-profit community group, Southern Colorado Trail Builders (SCTB), which works alongside the State Park and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to maintain and expand the trail network, while working to reduce conflicts between different user groups and limit impacts to natural resources.

#### San Isabel National Forest

Though primarily located west of Pueblo County, portions of the San Isabel National Forest extend into the County on its western and southern edges. The Wet Mountains and Greenhorn Mountain Wilderness are encompassed by the National Forest and are easily accessible from Rye and Beulah in Pueblo County. The

San Isabel National Forest offers miles of trails for use by people hiking, mountain biking, or riding horses. Many trails connect to open spaces managed by local government agencies.

### Parks and Recreation

Pueblo County is home to an extensive system of parks, trails, open space, and other recreation opportunities.

#### Pueblo County Parks and Trails

Pueblo County owns and operate five parks – John Arellano Park and Fulton Heights Park in Salt Creek, McHarg Park in Avondale, Liberty Point near Lake Pueblo State Park, and Rye Mountain Park in the mountains outside of Rye. The County also provides recreational opportunities at the Runyon Field Sports Complex, Desert Hawk Golf Course in Pueblo West, Fulton Heights Community Center, McHarg Community Center, and Pueblo County Recreation Center – along with numerous programs, events, and activities at each park and center. 2016 Ballot Measure 1A offers Pueblo County the opportunity to expand recreational offerings, including construction of the St. Charles Mesa Community Center (including recreation center and swimming pool) and completion of the Downtown Youth Sports Complex.

In addition to trails between County-owned parks, Pueblo County is working to extend the trail system to underserved parts of the community and to create regional connections. Pueblo County is in the early stages of the Arkansas River Trail Connection project – a collaboration with the City of Pueblo and private landowners – which aims to extend trails along the Arkansas River to the east of Pueblo and along the south end of St. Charles Mesa to Baxter Road. Funded by the Capital Improvement Program and 2016 Ballot Measure 1A, the Arkansas River Trail extension will require easements, land acquisition, and further study. Future regional efforts to extend trails and open space along Fountain Creek – and possible future connections to Colorado Springs – present an exciting opportunity for regional collaboration



### City of Pueblo Parks and Recreation

The City of Pueblo offers a robust network of parks, open spaces, and recreational amenities – approximately 90 properties and over 4,575 acres under City ownership and an additional 29 properties and approximately 250 acres under City maintenance. Included is 24 miles of trails. Some notable parks and recreational amenities include:

- City Park
- Mineral Palace Park
- The Honor Farm Open Space
- The Fountain Creek Corridor
- The Arkansas River Corridor
- The Pueblo Plaza Ice Arena
- El Centro del Quinto Sol Recreation Center
- Pueblo Mountain Park: Nature and Wildlife Discovery Center
- Lake Minnequa Park and Open Space

Of the 24 miles of trails maintained by the City, the Pueblo River Trail System is the crown jewel. The system stretches along both the Arkansas River and

Fountain Creek to provide recreational access and connect the river corridors with CSU-Pueblo, Pueblo Mall, Runyon Field Sports Complex, the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk, Downtown Pueblo, Pueblo City Park, and Lake Pueblo State Park. These river corridors are also connected to on- and off-street paths and bikeways that extend into Pueblo neighborhoods. The Pueblo White Water Park and much of the Arkansas River corridor are regional draws for fishing, kayaking, tubing, and more – made possible by protection and investment by the City of Pueblo.

In partnership with the Nature and Wildlife Discovery Center and San Isabel National Forest, and City of Pueblo, the SCTB completed the 1.8-mile Carhart Trail to connect Pueblo Mountain Park with existing trails in the National Forest.

The City's Parks and Recreation Assessment and Implementation Plan looks at the accessibility of parks within a ten-minute walk (1/3 mile) and within a short bike ride (1 mile) from where Puebloans live. Based on this level of access, almost 90 percent of the City is served at a neighborhood level by the current system of parks, trails, open space, and indoor facilities – with

some gaps present between parks and a more noticeable lack of access along the edges of the City.

In addition to the need for parks, trails, open space, and indoor facilities to fill the gaps in service, the community has identified a need for greater investment in and maintenance of existing parks. Stakeholders and residents have particularly noted a need for more pools, athletic centers, and opportunities/activities for youth.

### Pueblo West Parks and Recreation

The Pueblo West Municipal District provides residents with a variety of parks, open space, and recreation amenities. Facilities include indoor and outdoor recreation at Civic Center Park (including Cattail Crossing Pond, the Civic Center Skate Park, and the Splash Park), Lovell Park (including the Waggin' Tail Dog Park and Pueblo West Pool), Memorial Recreation Park, and Pixie Playground. All of these facilities are located south of Highway 50.

Pueblo West offers miles of trails. The McCulloch Main Trail, Safe Routes to School Trail, Sierra Vista Trail, Desert Sage Trail, SDS Trail, Civic Center Park Trail, and Cattail Crossing Pond Trail are all dedicated to people walking or biking – often connecting neighborhoods, schools, parks, and other trails. Because Pueblo West was designed to be an equine-friendly community, the area has miles of trails and easements within neighborhoods and connecting to Lake Pueblo State Park.

The Pueblo West Municipal District also provides classes, activities, and a robust network of open lands and multi-purpose trails throughout the community. Pueblo West has plans and grant funding at this time to complete an additional seven miles of trails in the coming years.

### Community Organizations

In addition to the SCTB – highlighted above for contributions to the regional trail network – Pueblo Active Community Environments (PACE) is an important community organization that working to improve the built environment for people walking and biking. PACE advocates for improvements to recreational amenities, promotes walking and biking, and supports the growth of a sustainable economy – tied to local history, culture, and alternative modes of transportation. Notable efforts that PACE has spearheaded include distributing maps of area bike routes, improving trail signage, organizing Bike to Work and National Bike Challenge events, gaining grant funding for additional bike racks, applying for Bicycle Friendly Community status, and many other local advocacy efforts.



## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES<sup>67</sup>

The City of Pueblo was founded in 1870, making it among the oldest in Colorado. Almost three decades before the City was founded, the area was a trading post and fort called El Pueblo. Historically inhabited by the Ute people, the first European explorers and settlers arrived in 1842 and established the trading post at the confluence of the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek.

The gold rush, western expansion by European people, and later agriculture, mining, and industry led to Pueblo growing into one of Colorado's largest cities – only matched by Denver in terms of population and economic impact.

### Historic Buildings and Structures<sup>68</sup>

Due to Pueblo's history as an economic center in Colorado, the area has a diverse stock of historic structures. There are 67 properties and districts in Pueblo County that are on the National Register of Historic Places. An additional six properties on the National Register have been demolished and are no longer listed. In January 2021, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company Administration Complex was named a National Historic Landmark – the only such landmark designation in Pueblo.

As part of an ongoing effort to document the history of the community, the City of Pueblo is leading a Downtown Historic Survey Project, that aims to catalog the buildings of downtown Pueblo and compile their histories into a larger narrative.

Through investments in Downtown Pueblo and coordinated efforts to protect historic structures, the community has demonstrated an interest in seeing historic structures appreciated, protected, and utilized by local businesses and residents into the future. Residents have expressed a desire to see underutilized historic structures – especially in Downtown Pueblo – become activated with retail, offices, housing, and other active uses.

### Historic Neighborhoods and Districts<sup>69-70</sup>

Much of the region's history is centered in Downtown Pueblo – most notably, the Union Avenue Historic District. The District is home to 87 historic structures that serve as the bases of a National Register of Historic Places designation. The Union Avenue Historic District includes Union Depot, which was completed in 1889 and features Romanesque Revival-style Architecture, beautiful tile flooring, stained glass windows, and hard-wood wainscoting.

In addition to the effort to document the history of Downtown Pueblo, the City of Pueblo has led several other neighborhood-wide inventories and studies. These include:

- Bessemer Historic Study
- Eiler's Historic Context Study
- East Side Historic Building Inventory
- East Side Historic Context Study
- Goodnight Barn Restoration Study
- Northside Historic Context Study
- South Pueblo Historic Context Study

Although many of these efforts are led by the City of Pueblo, the community has many partnering organizations and agencies that contribute to historic preservation. Notable organizations like Pueblo County Historical Society, Historic Pueblo Inc., Pueblo Archaeological and Historical Society, Bessemer Historical Society, History Colorado, and El Pueblo Museum, Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways (CDOT), and others.



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## PUEBLO COUNTY: A CULTURALLY DIVERSE REGION<sup>71-72</sup>

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Pueblo is one of Colorado's most culturally diverse regions. Over its history, Pueblo County has been under the dominion of five nations – Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the United States. Prior to that time, the Pueblo region was home to Paleo-Indian and Archaic peoples, members of the Apishapa culture, the Ute people, the Jicarilla Apache people, and the Comanche people – each culture adding to the unique history of the community.

After the area was acquired by the United States following the Mexican-American War, Pueblo began to see growth among Euro-American settlers during the Colorado Gold Rush. This trend accelerated with the arrival of the railroad – a catalyst for the establishment and rapid expansion of the steel industry. Pueblo County became home to the first steel mill west of the Mississippi River in 1881, which built the rails necessary to extend the railroad into the mineral-rich mountains, nearby coal fields, and to other Front Range communities.

The industrialization of Pueblo led to rapid population growth in the twentieth century, including an influx of immigrants from around the world to provide labor for the mines, railroads, factories, and smelters in the region. Among those that made Pueblo home were immigrants from Canada, China, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Scandinavia, Slovenia, and New Mexican and Black workers from elsewhere in the United States. The vibrant and diverse community also included Jews fleeing from Eastern Europe.

Throughout Pueblo County's history, agriculture has been a major economic and cultural driver. Ranching, famous Pueblo chile peppers, and the cultivation of beans, melons, potatoes, and other vegetables have been mainstays of the agricultural industry. Over time, Pueblo's communities have continued to diversify with the growth of new Latino residents.

During each era of Pueblo's history, different communities and cultures came to the region and established roots, which resulted from time-to-time in a variety of tensions and conflicts. Many longstanding and immigrant communities have formed social groups, built businesses, and developed strong neighborhoods that maintain their unique cultures to this day.

## ARTS AND CULTURE AND EVENTS

The Pueblo region has a unique history in Colorado and offers a similarly rich and distinctive cultural heritage. Numerous events, museums, and cultural amenities in Pueblo celebrate this history while providing enriching educational and entertainment experiences to residents and visitors to Pueblo. Some of the most notable museums and cultural amenities include:

- Sangre de Cristo Arts Center
- El Pueblo Historical Museum
- Nature and Wildlife Discovery Center
- Pueblo Zoo
- Pueblo Heritage Museum
- Pueblo Railway Museum
- Weisbrod Aircraft Museum
- Rosemount Museum
- Steelworks Museum
- Buell Children's Museum
- The Center for American Values

Pueblo is also home to unique cultural amenities and events, including:

- Colorado State Fair
- The Historic Arkansas Riverwalk
- Pueblo Creative Corridor
- Steel City Theatre Company
- Chile and Frijoles Festival
- And many more galleries, performances, live music, and events.

## TOURISM

Like much of Colorado, Pueblo offers a fantastic climate, a full slate of outdoor activities, and many attractions and events. However, unlike many communities – especially among Front Range communities – Pueblo offers easier access to the outdoors, less heavily trafficked trails, a robust agricultural community, and a rich multi-cultural history. These factors

make Pueblo stand-out from other Front Range and Colorado communities and offers a solid base from which to grow a tourism economy alongside enhancements to community quality of life.

Amenities like the Arkansas River (and whitewater park), Fountain Creek, San Isabel National Forest, and Lake Pueblo State Park are centerpieces. Meanwhile, the Chile and Frijole Festival, Colorado State Fair, Historic Arkansas Riverwalk, Sangre de Cristo Arts Center, El Pueblo History Museum, and diverse history of the community offer a robust collection of tourist attractions for heritage and entertainment travelers.

Pueblo is one of the first communities in Colorado to be selected for a Regional Tourism Act (RTA) grant – awarded to develop tourist attractions that bring out-of-state visitors to Colorado. Pueblo's bid in 2011 included a Pro Bull Riders (PBR) University/Exposition Hall, an expanded Medal of Honor Memorial/Memorial of Valor, a Gateway Center & Boat House for the Arkansas Riverwalk, Heritage Events Plaza, a parking structure, and an aquatics center. Additional local and private investments include a 100+ room hotel, redevelopment of historic buildings in downtown, Riverwalk channel extension, the Zebulon Pike Interpretive Center, and other infrastructure improvements. The project will result in over \$43 million in investment in Downtown Pueblo and will be completed in three phases over 50 years.

The Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce and Pueblo Convention and Visitors Bureau, Pueblo Latino Chamber of Commerce, Pueblo West Chamber of Commerce, Pueblo Economic Development Corporation, and other economic development organizations have worked more collaboratively in recent years to support the focus on the economic development potential of tourism and coordinate marketing efforts.





## RELATED PLANS AND STUDIES

### Pueblo E-District

Funded in-part by a grant award from the Colorado Regional Tourism Act (RTA), Pueblo is in the midst of a multi-decade investment in the E-District – an entertainment district centered around Downtown Pueblo and the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk. The project, to be completed in three phases, will include a Pro Bull Riders (PBR) University/Exposition Hall, an expanded Medal of Honor Memorial/Memorial of Valor, a Gateway Center & Boat House for the Arkansas Riverwalk, Heritage Events Plaza, a parking structure, and an aquatics center. Additional local and private investments include a 100+ room hotel, redevelopment of historic buildings in downtown, Riverwalk channel extension, the Zebulon Pike Interpretive Center, and other infrastructure improvements.

### Pueblo Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

The Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG) – the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Pueblo region – adopted a new bicycle and pedestrian master plan in December 2020. The plan generally recommends investments in infrastructure, maintenance, and education to improve connectivity, support walkability and bikeability, enhance safety for all users, and improve health and air quality in the region. The Plan supports related efforts to improve outdoor recreation, foster tourism activity, and improve public health and wellness.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Pueblo's rich history, strong community ties, network of community service providers, diversity of community amenities, and abundant access to public lands and open space offer cornerstones from which to build. The following items are identified as key considerations for the Regional Comprehensive Plan process:

### Providing equitable access to services and amenities

Not all Pueblo residents have equal access to community services and amenities. Efforts to maintain or expand social infrastructure should prioritize communities and residents in need to help invigorate the local economy, expand access to the qualities that make Pueblo special, and improve region-wide quality of life. Although Pueblo offers a wide variety of cultural and historical amenities, many residents have expressed interest in more robust array of entertainment opportunities—particularly those that are family-friendly.

### Maintaining and enhancing community assets

As detailed in this section, there are many areas where the Pueblo region excels in providing community amenities. As the County grows and works to address community concerns it is important that existing community assets are not forgotten. Efforts to protect farms, ranches, and agricultural heritage should be carried forward and expanded, alongside historic preservation, parks and trail maintenance, and improving equitable access to education, healthcare, economic opportunity, and entertainment.

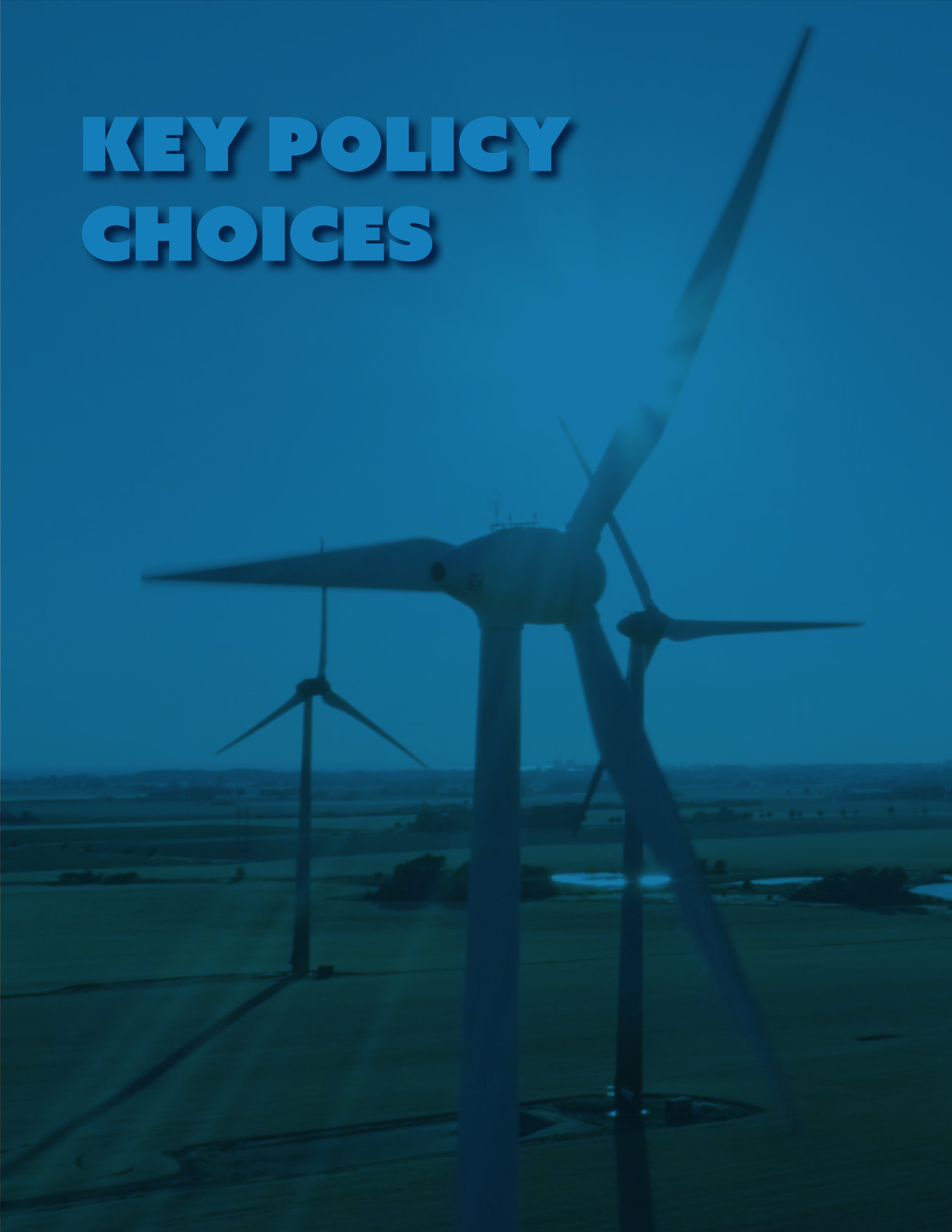
### Celebrating the regions diversity

Pueblo's mix of cultures, landscapes, and lifestyles are unmatched in Colorado. The economic history of the community presents many challenges to improving quality of life, but the historic, cultural, creative, and natural resources and amenities that exist in Pueblo are worthy of community pride. Planning efforts, programs, and investments in the community should capitalize on all that makes Pueblo distinctive. The Pueblo region should also learn from the community's diversity as Pueblo County works to provide services and infrastructure, accommodate growth, expand economic opportunity, and revitalize neighborhoods and communities.

### Expanding tourism opportunities

Opportunities for growth in the region's recreational tourism economy have been raised by many stakeholders, noting the ease of access to parks, trails, rivers, public lands, and other amenities. One example that was cited as a potential opportunity is Pueblo's location along TransAmerica Trail. The coast-to-coast bike route draws thousands of riders through the community each year and Pueblo is considered the halfway point and one of the largest cities along the route. The Regional Comprehensive Plan can help increase awareness of ongoing efforts and partnerships within the region designed to expand tourism opportunities, and establish policy guidance to protect and enhance the many assets that the region has to offer.

# KEY POLICY CHOICES







**This section summarizes key considerations for each focus area covered in this report, and articulates key policy choices for consideration as part of subsequent steps in the Regional Comprehensive Plan process.**

## FOCUS AREA 1: INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Infrastructure and services will play a critical role in defining where and how the region grows in the future. For example, abundant availability of water is a critical asset in Pueblo, but the capacity to deliver it to the further reaches of the County is limited. Additionally, while some parts of the City and County are well-served by existing water, as well as sewer and transportation networks, all of these systems and distribution networks are aging, requiring both maintenance and reinvestment to continue providing service at the same level. The fixed costs for maintaining and repairing these systems into the future will need to be balanced against possible expenditures to expand service delivery infrastructure and road access to unincorporated areas, if development is to occur there.

Certain concerns are more particular to specific areas in the County. Outlying areas such as Colorado City and the St Charles Mesa have similar issues with the age and serviceability of existing service delivery systems, and both are further constrained by limited access to resources such as water supply and funds for the expansion of existing systems needed to support potential growth. Availability of services such as fire response is also limited in some rural, unincorporated portions of the County. In urbanized areas, there is an expressed desire to expand transportation infrastructure options beyond traditional road networks, allowing for more multimodal transport opportunities. Another concern in urban areas is enhancing public safety. There are two further concerns are shared across all areas of the County: managing rising energy costs, and expanding the extent of coverage of broadband and cellular networks.

Key policy choices for the region include:

- How to best integrate land use planning in alignment with water resource availability and conservation goals;
- Where future growth should be prioritized to best capitalize on existing service capacity rather than requiring the need for expansion of existing service delivery networks;
- How to prioritize maintenance of the existing transportation network, expansions of multimodal infrastructure, as well as how they are to be funded;
- What planning and collaboration is critical to meeting renewable energy goals in a cost-effective manner;
- How expansion of cellular and broadband networks can best be encouraged; and
- How can public safety best be addressed county-wide, even where the focus of concern differs (for example, fire and emergency response in rural areas, and police services in urban ones).

## FOCUS AREA 2: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The supply of land that is available for future development in major population centers in the region—the City of Pueblo, Pueblo West, and Colorado City—far exceeds the projected demand for residential, commercial/mixed-use, and industrial development within the planning horizon. Because there is more land available than projections indicate will be needed, the County, City, and Pueblo West may consider establishing a strategy to prioritize which available land should be developed first. Prioritization can take into account the availability of existing infrastructure and services, cost to serve areas that are not currently serviced, the suitability of land for different uses, ownership, and a variety of other factors. Owing to the relative abundance of land and the projection for steady, modest growth, the County has an opportunity to make deliberate and thoughtful growth-planning decisions – a possibility that is frequently eliminated in contexts where development pressure is more pronounced.

Key policy choices for the region include:

- How actively does the County want to pursue policies that direct growth to certain areas, and discourage it in others;
- How best to align housing needs with anticipated and evolving demand;
- What policies can encourage a balanced mix of new development and adaptive reuse, infill, and redevelopment;
- What land use decisions can support both established and emerging industrial and employment sectors;
- What land use decisions can alleviate development pressure that encroaches on agricultural and ranching lands; and
- How can sustainable development objectives (dense, mixed use development, energy efficiency, water conservation) be incorporated into all decisions related to growth in the County.



### FOCUS AREA 3: ECONOMIC BASE

Pueblo County possesses a stable economic base, an ample supply of land, and strong regional partnerships to build upon for the future. The rate of job growth is projected to align with the pace of population growth, but an important concern is aligning the knowledge and skills of the workforce with that required by the work that will be available. The County's numerous educational institutions, from secondary schools to community and four-year colleges, provide the advantage of already having in place the resources that can help to address this issue.

The County's existing infrastructure assets—including an interconnected rail and road network—can facilitate economic growth in the region. Expansion of newer industries, such as solar energy generation facilities and hemp/marijuana, offer new economic opportunity, but also the concurrent need to assess and manage the impacts these industries produce. Adding to these challenges, the County must also confront aging infrastructure, rising electric power costs, and inadequate broadband connectivity.

Key policy choices for the region include:

- How best to leverage the region's major transportation assets to attract industries that rely on them;
- How to balance the benefits and broader-scale impacts of emerging industries;
- How to tailor educational opportunities to match current and anticipated economic opportunities in the region;
- How the region can attract and retain the skilled workforce needed by its industries;
- What efforts can sustain the continuing viability of the agricultural and ranching sectors; and
- What planning is needed to enhance the region's economic resilience.

## FOCUS AREA 4: NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

Housing is the central component underlying the vitality of all the region's communities and neighborhoods, and an increasing mismatch between evolving housing needs and availability is one of the more critical components to consider in the plan update process. While demographic and economic changes have started to shift the composition of households in the County, trends in housing provision have not responded apace.

The number of family households in the County has been declining, while the number of households composed of aging residents has increased. Both of these trends indicate the need for smaller housing units, which new construction – primarily in the form of detached, suburban single-family homes – has not so far reflected. The County has also seen an increase in the cost of housing, both for renters and owners, that has not been matched by increases in wages. The result is more housing insecurity, and fewer opportunities for residents with modest incomes to become homeowners. Just as the constrained supply of attainable for-sale housing has increased the cost of buying, so the increase in the number of long-term renters squeezes the supply of rental housing, and raises its cost as well. A tight housing market and rising costs could be a contributing factor to the recent rise in homelessness that has been observed in the region.

While new housing has risen in cost without meeting demand or mirroring evolving demographics, the City in particular has experienced the deterioration of investment in and maintenance of existing housing stock. Emphasis on redevelopment and infill could offer significant benefits for neighborhoods where disinvestment has occurred. Such an effort, undertaken with a parallel focus on diversifying the kinds of housing being constructed, could provide the base of support for building stronger, more stable neighborhoods and communities throughout the County.

Key policy choices for the region include:

- How to encourage increased provision of diverse housing types that accommodate young workers, smaller and older households;
- How to moderate increasing housing costs, so that home ownership remains attainable to those who wish to pursue it;
- What extent of increased supply would be needed to alleviate pressures and cost-burdens for renter households;
- What efforts can encourage infill and redevelopment and reinvestment in older neighborhoods; and
- What collaboration is necessary to advancing efforts at providing a Continuum of Care in housing .

## FOCUS AREA 5: QUALITY OF LIFE

The Pueblo region has many assets: rich history, a diverse population, distinctive architectural fabric in the City's downtown, and access to abundant outdoor recreation possibilities. While current residents are aware of the many amenities in the region, they are also aware of the challenge in ensuring equitable access to these amenities for all members of the community, and the significant benefits the region could gain by promoting broader awareness of such amenities to those who have not visited the region.

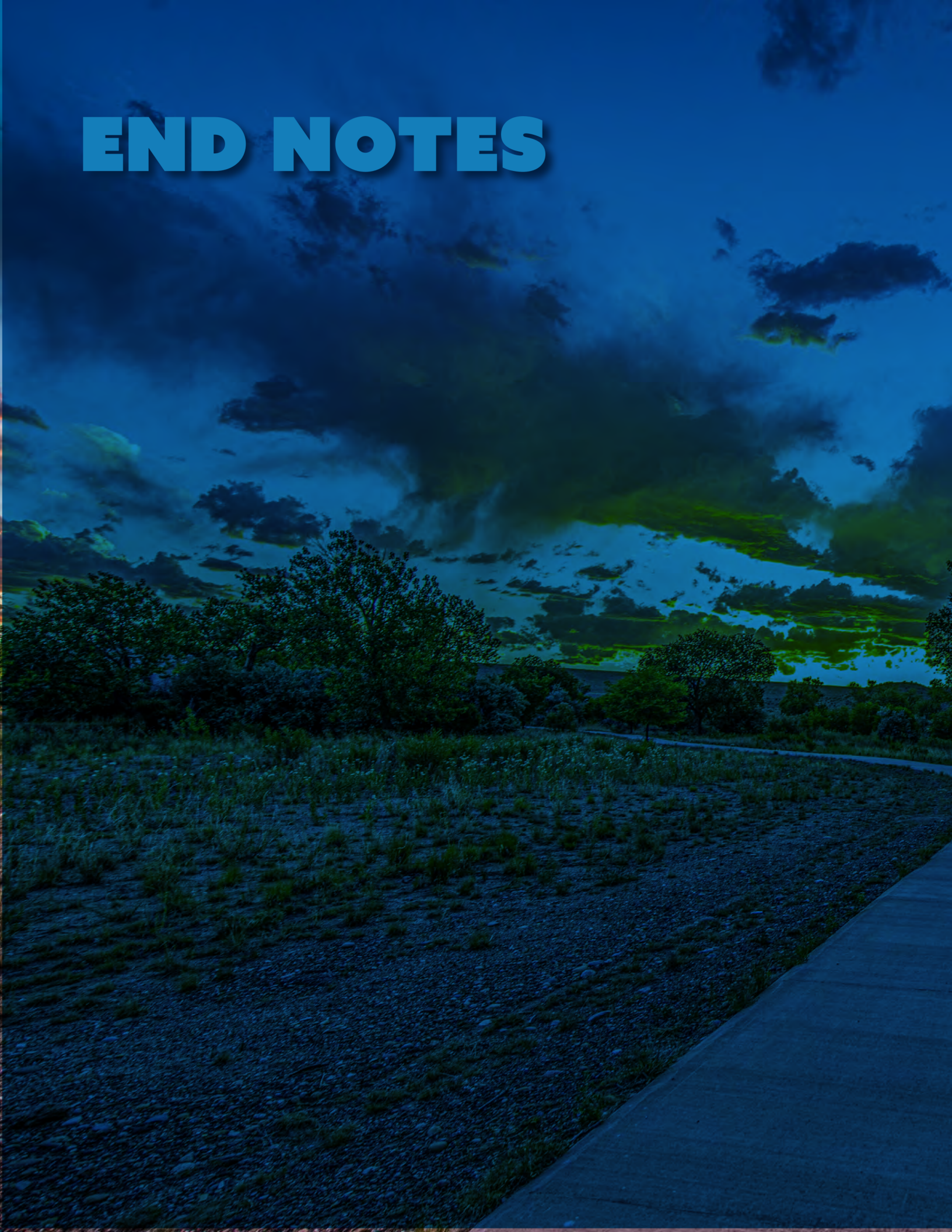
Key policy choices for the region include:

- Who experiences barriers to accessing the community's assets and amenities, and what coordinated efforts can be undertaken to expand equitable access to services and amenities for all residents of the County;
- What is the best strategy for maintaining the community's current assets, including parks, trails, and cultural and historic assets, what are the shared priorities for expanding and enhancing these assets, and how will these efforts be funded;
- How can the region's strong diversity and rich history best be celebrated; and
- Who are the best partners to continue efforts at promoting a coordinated and focused tourism strategy for the region.



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# END NOTES









# ENDNOTES

## SETTING THE STAGE

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- 1 U.S. Census, DOLA, Economic Planning Systems
- 2 U.S. Census and Economic & Planning Systems
- 3 DOLA and Economic Planning Systems
- 4 DOLA and Economic Planning Systems
- U.S. Census, ACS 5-year, 2010
- 5 U.S. Census, ACS 5-year, 2019
- 6
- 7 U.S. Census and Economic & Planning Systems
- 8 U.S. Census, ACS 5-year estimates, 2010 and 2019
- 9 U.S. Census, ACS 5-year estimates, 2010 and 2019
- 10 U.S. Census, ACS 5-year, 2010 and 2019; and Economic & Planning Systems

## FOCUS AREA #1: INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

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- 11 Pueblo's Water System, 2017, <https://pueblowater.org/images/pdfs/files/PueblosWaterSystemWEB.pdf>
- 12 Pueblo Water Distribution System Study, 2016
- 13 Growing Water Smart Self-Assessments, 2019, Pueblo Board of Water Works and Pueblo West Metro District
- 14 Growing Water Smart Self-Assessments, 2019, Pueblo Board of Water Works and Pueblo West Metro District
- 15 Water Quality Report, 2020, <https://pueblowater.org/core/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-CCR-final-v2.pdf>
- 16 <https://www.pueblo.us/458/Stormwater-Utility>
- 17 PACOG Water Quality Management Plan, 2020
- 18 Pueblo West Metropolitan District Water Master Plan, 2017
- 19 PWMD Water Conservation Plan Update, 2020
- 20 PWMD Wastewater Master Plan, 2017
- 21 PWMD Wastewater Utility Plan, 2018 (Supplement for Pueblo County and PACOG)
- 22 PACOG Water Quality Management Plan, 2020
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- 24 <https://www.koaa.com/news/state-of-growth/water-supply-at-risk-of-going-dry-within-months-in-southern-colorado-town>
- 25 PACOG Water Quality Management Plan, 2020
- 26 <https://stcharlesmesawaterdistrict.org/>

## FOCUS AREA #2: GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

- 27 LEHD, Economic Planning Systems
- 28 <https://puebloco.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=00e363e95ea74981add9c3b9c5e8be03>

- 29 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 30 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 31 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 32 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 33 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 34 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 35 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 36 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 37 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 38 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 39 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 40 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 41 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 42 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 43 Pueblo County GIS and MDC, 2021
- 44 Pueblo Regional Building Department, Economic Planning Systems
- 45 Pueblo Regional Building Department, Economic Planning Systems
- 46 Pueblo Regional Building Department, Economic Planning Systems
- 47 Colorado Department of Local Affairs
- 48 MDC, Economic Planning Systems
- 49 MDC, Economic Planning Systems
- 50 MDC, Economic Planning Systems
- 51 MDC, Economic Planning Systems
- 52 MDC, Economic Planning Systems

### **FOCUS AREA #3: ECONOMIC BASE**

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- 53 2019 Pueblo CAFR, Economic Planning Systems
- 54 U.S. Census, Economic Planning Systems
- 55 BLS, Economic Planning Systems
- 56 City and County of Pueblo and Economic Planning Systems

### **FOCUS AREA #4: NEIGHBORHOODS & COMMUNITIES**

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- 57 U.S. Census ACS 1-Year Estimates, Economic Planning Systems
- 58 U.S. Census ACS 1-Year Estimates, Economic Planning Systems
- 59 U.S. Census, Economic Planning Systems
- 60 Pueblo County GIS and EPS, 2021

## FOCUS AREA #5: COMMUNITY ASSETS

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- 61 Pueblo City-County Health Department (PCCHD). <https://county.pueblo.org/public-health/community-data-and-reports>
- 62 Pueblo City-County Health Department (PCCHD). Public Health and Food Access Report.
- 63 Pueblo City-County Health Department (PCCHD). Pueblo County Food System Assessment: Key Findings and Promising Opportunities.
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- 65 History Colorado. <https://www.historycolorado.org/centennial-farms-ranches>
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