



PUEBLO COUNTY

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March 31, 2020

Tara Marshall, Regional Manager
Department of Local Affairs
200 West B St., Suite 222
Pueblo, CO 81003

Dear Ms. Marshall,

Please find enclosed an application from Pueblo County requesting a \$200,000 grant under the Energy/Mineral Impact Assistance Fund (EIAF) program to assist in funding the 2020 Pueblo Regional Comprehensive Development Plan update. Pueblo County will contract with a qualified and experienced consulting firm through a competitive bid process to develop an updated Comprehensive Development Plan that, derived from citizen and stakeholder input, provides clear direction for developing policy, services, and projects within Pueblo County, the City of Pueblo, Pueblo West, Colorado City, Town of Boone, Town of Rye, and the unincorporated communities of Avondale, Blende, Beulah, Salt Creek, and Vineland.

The current Pueblo Regional Comprehensive Development Plan was adopted in 2002 following a two-year planning process incorporating a great deal of public engagement. Since 2002 the Pueblo region has evolved and experienced varying growth and economic trends. Community goals, interests and priorities have also evolved in the last 20 years; therefore, it is imperative to reassess the community and develop a plan to guide growth and policy based on the principles and values of the community for the next 20 years. The project is expected to take approximately 2 years to complete with a total budget of \$400,000.

Pueblo County is a good fit for this grant in that the Pueblo region is tremendously impacted by its manufacturing base anchored by the steel mill to maintain a stable, well-paid workforce within the region. Seamless steel tube products, manufactured at the EVRAZ facility, are used by the oil and gas industries. The 2014-15 downturn in the oil and gas industries and corresponding decline in steel tube product orders had a devastating effect on EVRAZ. In January 2015, EVRAZ announced that 200 workers would be laid off. In June 2015, an additional 100 workers were furloughed, resulting in the temporary shutdown of steel making. An additional 450 employees were laid off in February 2016, culminating in the loss of 63 percent of the total workforce. These layoffs had an immediate effect on the Pueblo economy, reducing regional revenues proportionately to the number of laid-off employees. Until the early 1980's CF&I Steel, the predecessor of EVRAZ/Rocky Mountain Steel Mills,

employed over 6,000 workers. By 1999 employment at the mill had declined to 600 workers. EVRAZ/Rocky Mountain Steel is presently operating with a workforce of approximately 1,163. As noted above, many of the area energy and mineral sector employers are impacted by changing demand for their products. Over time, they tend to be subject to cyclical trends, which impacts the Pueblo area, not only in terms of immediate job gains or losses but also in terms of the secondary retail and service sector jobs that are either generated or lost.

Efforts have been made to fund the plan locally, however, given the increasing costs of planning consultants, it is not feasible to fund this project locally in a timely manner. Because this plan includes the entire county, planning exercises must be tailored to each municipality and unincorporated community resulting in costs that will be greater than a traditional municipal or county comprehensive plan. Pueblo County and its partners, the City of Pueblo and Pueblo Area Council of Government's are putting forth a collaborative effort both financially and with staffing to complete this project. The partners have committed matching funds in the amount of \$200,000. for this project for an overall cost of \$400,000. including the grant funds.

This project would provide the region with a much-needed document to build consensus and commitment from the greater Pueblo region to include elected and appointed officials, staff and the community. The plan is intended to serve as a blueprint for the next 20 years and prepare the community for action. Pueblo County and its partners appreciate your consideration to assist us in launching this Comprehensive Development Planning collaboration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Garrison M. Ortiz".

Garrison Ortiz, Chairman
Pueblo County Board of County Commissioners