

Introduction to “Our Vision/Our Future”

Dear Citizens:

Begun formally with the help of Denver area community development consultant Carl Neu in Fall 2001, this blueprint offers a balanced view of the future quality of life within our community, defined broadly as Logan Country and immediately surrounding areas. We have touched those issues that will directly affect the future of our community, its families, and its human, social and environmental resources.

We believe that “failing to plan is planning to fail.” To that end, we divided our planning into five important parts: (1) INFRASTRUCTURE, (2) TRANSPORTATION, (3) EDUCATION, (4) HEALTH/WELL-BEING, and (5) BUSINESS/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. We ask readers to study our recommendations and to share their comments with “OUR VISION/OUR FUTURE” Steering Committee Chair Gary Ray, General Manager at KPMX Radio in Sterling (522-4800 or pnggray@sterlingcomputer.net).

Demographers at the Colorado Department of Local Affairs have predicted a Logan County population of 30,879 residents by 2020, a 50% increase over the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2000 count of 20, 504. Things will change as a matter of course. Community members who participated in this process believe wise communities do not simply “enter” their future. Rather, they “plan” their future to achieve desired goals for growth and vigor.

We now ask community residents to participate in this process. After reader comments have been gathered and incorporated into “OUR VISION/OUR FUTURE” document, the Steering Committee will formally present the plan to the Sterling City Council and the Logan County Commission. The Steering Committee wants to energize local officials to consider the community’s future in terms of those areas over which they can exercise some planning control, particularly in the allocation of resources to achieve desired goals. We seek your opinions.

Thanks.

“OUR VISION.OUR FUTURE” Steering Committee

Gary Ray
Bill Kurtz
Gary Nichols
Gene Schneider
Dan Long
Steve Meier
Terry Sanger

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUE PROJECT TEAM VISION STATEMENT

To promote and achieve an ongoing marketing strategy to foster job creation that will nurture and promote economic opportunity for our citizens and community. Promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and provide opportunity for our youth, families, and community to succeed.

Rationale:

The quality of our lives in this community can be positively impacted through the creation of higher paying jobs. Job creation fosters affordable housing, school funding and increases the opportunity for our youth to stay in the community.

Our community has significantly lagged behind the economic prosperity experienced by the Front Range area over the last ten years. Our community has a higher percentage of households below the state average poverty level. Median income and job growth have also been significantly below the state average.

We also have many positive assets in this community that should provide us opportunities to attract positive economic growth.

- Our local communities are recognized as a great place to raise children.
- We have the open space and lack of congestion desired by many people in the Front Range.
- We have excellent recreation opportunities.
- Residential and commercial real estate is more affordable than elsewhere in the state.
- We have excellent infrastructure to support industry including adequate and affordable utilities, railroad access, interstate highway access, Northeastern Junior College and K-12 educational opportunities, and quality medical facilities.
- We have a resource of well-educated, under employed individuals who choose to live in our community.

Based on our historical challenges and our current strengths, our vision focuses on a marketing strategy to capitalize on our strengths and improve the economic opportunities for all citizens, businesses, and all other organizations in our community.

GOAL #1

Provide the start up and continuing support necessary to adequately fund an ongoing independent economic development entity.

Rationale:

In order to successfully compete with other communities in job creation and economic development a private, nonprofit corporation with a professional staff is essential.

Strategies:

1. Develop a budget and plan to fund a full time Executive Director and staff for an economic development entity.
2. Foster cooperative partnerships with other Northeast Colorado Economic Development Organizations.
3. Identify and develop parameters for Economic Development Incentives with local and state government. These could include incentives such as lower cost land, site development incentives, property tax rebates and financing packages (SBA and Revolving Loan Funds with lower interest and longer term, Industrial Revenue Bond packages, and access to Venture Capital Funds).

Implementation/Funding:

- When a budget and plan is finalized, met with all municipalities, Logan County, State of Colorado, and corporate funding sources to obtain funding commitments. (Estimate \$140,000-\$160,000 per year).
- Meet other Northeast Colorado Economic Development Organizations to develop and foster cooperative marketing partnerships. (Estimate local share between \$5,000-\$10,000 per year).

GOAL #2

Emphasize job creation and develop the related training programs as the primary objective of a comprehensive economic development program.

Rationale:

The backbone of our community's job creation efforts should be oriented to the expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses and new value added agricultural industry.

Strategies:

1. Target the expansion of local primary businesses and/or recruitment of new and value added agricultural businesses with potential for job growth.
2. Identify and target companies from Colorado's Front Range with a high potential for job growth.
3. Promote and develop partnerships with Northeastern Junior College that will be responsive to a focused work force preparation and economic development in the form of education and training (contract training through programs such as the Colorado First Program, small business development, entrepreneurship programming and local economic development planning).
4. Support active, business-driven implementation and operation of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Implementation/Funding:

- Meet with and/or survey local primary businesses to determine expansion needs. Research and recruitment of value added agricultural industry. (Same funding as economic development entity).

- Contract for a targeted marketing plan and material for our community. Work with the State of Colorado for funding options. (Estimated funding \$10,000-\$20,000).

GOAL #3

Develop strategies, resources, and marketing material for an economic development entity to effectively respond to existing businesses and new prospects.

Rationale:

To be effective in economic development we need to assess our community strengths and weaknesses. Programs should be developed to effectively respond to economic development opportunities. Marketing material should complement the strategy and build on our community strengths.

Strategies:

- Develop a contact source and network of volunteers to provide information to all prospects.
- Develop a distinctive logo, promotional material, and website for an economic development entity. Incorporate Northeast Colorado Enterprise Zone Incentives and job training programs into this material.
- Maintain current community and demographic information in the marketing material.
- Develop a site and building inventory of all existing available commercial properties in our community.
- Economic development activities should aim to attract those businesses that provide permanent higher paying jobs for semiskilled and skilled workers.
- Develop a group of community contractors and subcontractors who can respond to fast tracking a building project.
- Evaluate developing a Business/Industrial Park.

Implementation/Funding:

- No additional cost is anticipated for developing a volunteer network.
- Costs related to strategies 2-7 are provided in Goal 1.

GOAL #4

Capitalize on, retain, and grow Sterling's regional position as a center for commerce, healthcare, transportation, education, and finance.

Rationale:

Sterling has always been an economic hub for Northeast Colorado. This status has provided a foundation of economic stability for our area. We must leverage this strength to our advantage.

Strategies:

1. Continually monitor and influence legislative actions that will impact the economic development of our region.

2. Integrate the transportation, health and well being, infrastructure, and education plans into our business and economic vision for the future.

Implementation/Funding:

1. Educate the public on the importance of legislative action affecting our area.
2. Partner with other groups, such as Progressive 15, to effectively lobby legislation.
3. Finalize and review implementation plan of “Our Vision-Our Future” on a regular basis.
4. Funding will be part of the economic development entity identified in Goal 1.

GOAL #5

Work with local and relocating businesses to diversify uses within downtown Sterling so it can remain and further its role as a multiuse, pedestrian oriented center for governmental, service, financial, social, cultural, retail and entertainment facilities.

Rationale:

The downtown business district reflects the economic entrepreneurial vitality of the community.

Strategies:

1. Continue to work with new and existing businesses to diversify uses within downtown Sterling so it can retain and further its vitality as a multiuse center.
2. Encourage the development of a cultural/arts center for additional community activities while refurbishing older buildings.
3. Develop an adequate downtown parking plan.
4. Evaluate changing the one-way streets to orient traffic toward the business district.

Implementation/Funding:

Implementation for these strategies will be the cooperative responsibility of all interested parties in the community.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS:

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EDUCATION ISSUE PROJECT TEAM VISION STATEMENT

PROUD TO BE STRONG...

One of the most common and compelling tools used to measure the attractiveness of a community is the quality of the educational opportunities with its boundaries. Historically, the schools (PK-14) in Logan County have been among the best in the state! As move toward the year 2020, it is imperative that the Sterling community, the school districts, and the college work hand in hand to insure that educational opportunities in northeast Colorado remain the highest quality possible. It is the teachers, parents, community members, students and staff working together that ensures excellence in our schools.

VISION STATEMENT

Education is a vital component to attract and retain people and businesses. School at every level have become on the most significant “assets” available to attract higher wage industry and commerce. Our community should have the availability of lifelong educational and vocational opportunities offered by the educational resources in our area. Programs should be designed as industry specific training for new and existing workforces. As employers see the need for business locations that will attract a higher caliber workforce; the reputation and resources of educational systems are a major consideration.

Success relies on the constant cooperation of various agencies within our region, we are envisioning the region’s educational network playing a major role in our community’s economic growth.

There will be many factors that will contribute to the success of students and education in the area. The following is a list of our goals to ensure academic excellence:

- Recruit and retain high quality faculty and staff.
- Maintain high quality and safe educational facilities.
- Establish programs to meet student and community needs.

RE-1 VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

RE-1 Valley School District’s vision is a comprehensive, focused, efficient, and effective educational program with proficient staff supported by the community to provide academic excellence.

The RE-1 Valley’s school district education facilities include five elementary schools, and three high schools, one of which is an alternative school. The most recent school opened in 1996. The school district is very progressive and is charged with the responsibility of insuring that facilities are kept current to accommodate planned growth. New technology is at the forefront of all-educational planning. The expanded are included thirteen schools districts in the five county area of northeast Colorado.

RE-1 Valley’s quality programs are reflected in our student’s ACT scores being consistently above the state and national average. Also, RE-1 Valley students’ Colraod Student Assessment Program (CSAP) scores are above the state average in all areas tested. The district’s attendance rate of nearly 95% along wit the graduation rate of nearly 90% contributes to the district’s success.

The state legislature has created a method to provide communities feedback on the quality of PK-12 education in the form of a school accountability report. This “report card” is a marketing cornerstone in the competition for economic development, home ownership and quality of life. Our local district’s schools have all received very good ratings.

RE-1 Valley schools offer a wide range of educational and extracurricular programs and activities for all students, thoroughly grounded in the basics of education, excelling state wide in academic and athletic competitions. The district will continue to strive to maintain and increase those ratings. Our schools and their ratings will contribute to the choices that citizens make when selecting a place in which to live and work.

The district currently serves approximately 2,800 students. Current growth trends would indicate that the student population could exceed 3,500 by the year 2020. This growth is based on the current growth rates of up to 1.5% annually as estimated by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. Certainly future economic conditions will have a major impact on the growth trend in our community and in our schools.

Northeastern Junior College

Our continuing pursuit of excellence focuses on our mission. NJC will continue to be recognized for superiority and creativity in its academic, career, technical and transfer programs to become one of the best regional high education centers for the 21st century.

Northeastern Junior College is the largest residential comprehensive learning community college within the state. The campus includes 18 buildings. The newest addition is the athletic and events center which is well used by both the campus and community. NJC has a well-defined master facilities plan that has been recognized by the State of Colorado. The Colorado State Legislature has approved NJC for a major capital construction project. This project will provide for modern science labs and technologically advanced classrooms. A second phase of this master plan is to renovate the humanities building giving the students and community not only a better facility, but also additional cultural events.

NJC is well respected by Colorado four-year colleges and universities by having the highest community college transfer rate in the state. NJC has more than 87 different certificate and associate degree programs. NJC’s graduation rate is twice the national average for two-year colleges. NJC produces skilled and knowledgeable citizens who have and will transfer successfully to four-year colleges, enter the workforce productively and contribute positively to their own and society’s economic and social well being.

NJC works closely with agencies state wide and in their specific five county service area. The annual impact of the NJC payroll in Logan County is approximately \$48 million. It is widely believed that education and employment have a direct correlation. Economic development is furthered by education as a means of employment opportunity and business relocation. The NE Colorado Technology Institute at NJC provides continual training and updates to business/industry, education and the community.

NJC is a vibrant comprehensive community college of nearly 4,000 full-time and part-time students. These students come together to explore knowledge and exchange ideas. Beyond the classroom NJC offers a wide range of athletics and extracurricular

programs. There is a solid base of community support for scholarships and tuition assistance for academics and athletics. Approximately 91% of NJC full-time students receive some form of tuition assistance.

Residential growth, by itself, cannot generate the tax base to support the cost of new infrastructure in the public school environment. School districts have statutory imposed debt ceilings that may limit the construction of new facilities without significant growth in the assessed value of the school district. Additionally, taxpayer willingness to support bonds or new school construction or mill levy increases for school operations are influenced a great deal by the community's ability to pay for such improvements and programs. The assessed value of the local school district is a major determiner of the community's actual perceived ability to support quality schools.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

- Retain high quality faculty and staff.
- Provide high quality and safe educational facilities.
- Establish programs to meet student and community needs.

GOAL #1

RETAIN HIGH QUALITY FACULTY AND STAFF

Rationale:

Recruitment and retention of high quality faculty and staff will ensure that academic excellence in all educational programs will continue.

Strategies:

We recommend the following actions:

1. Retention of high quality staff will enhance educational services to promote student achievement and fulfillment.
2. Commitment of significant resources for professional development must be maintained in order to enhance the professional and educational level of preparation and training for all educators.
3. One of the highest priorities must be to offer competitive salaries and benefits to attract and retain high quality faculty and staff.
4. Providing alternative teacher education programs within the local community to meet the critical teach shortage projected for the next twenty years.
5. Explore distance-learning opportunities to provide students and teachers access to the highest quality educators and educational opportunities.

Implementation:

- Set aside adequate funding resources to support attractive salaries benefit packages, and professional development partnerships/programs.
- Use the positive attributes of our community to attract educators to our area.
- Monitor and adjust salaries and benefits of educators to be competitive with state and national compensation plans.

Funding:

An increase in educational funding must be legislatively supported on an annual basis at a rate similar to the consumer price index for maintaining current real income levels for educators. The community, local school district, and junior college must support and recognize the value of recruiting and maintaining highly qualified educators.

To facilitate these strategies, the public should review the following:

1. Current and projected educator salaries for both the school district and local college as they relate to comparative values.
2. Seek alternative financing through educational grants, business partnerships, and other state and federal sources to supplement budgets for educators' salaries.
3. Create partnerships between the school district, NJC, and institutions of higher learning bringing teacher education programs to the local community.
4. Use mill overrides and property tax revenues to fund additional teacher salaries.
5. Consider the value of volunteer contributions to all aspects of success in education.

GOAL #2

PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY AND SAFE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Rationale:

Demands of the job market may very well cause the need for additional facilities and technology. A focal point in long range planning will be to meet the demands of our changing society by maintaining adequate facilities and technology.

Strategies:

We recommend the following actions:

1. The amount of resources available for construction is increased when a balance of commercial and residential growth is maintained.
2. Encourage the joint use of facilities between governmental agencies and local school districts and junior college where possible in order to maximize community resources and taxpayer contributions.
3. Support land dedications to assist the school district and junior college in the acquisition of educational learning sites based on growth in the community.
4. Through incentives such as the Bean Pole project, city and county resources will be enhanced for developing technology infrastructure for the community and schools.

Implementation:

- Plan for the development and maintenance of adequate facilities and technology.
- Develop intergovernmental agreements between the city, county, local school districts and junior college for use of facilities.
- Initiate technology agreements.
- Develop land dedication policies.

- Review, update and monitor the implementation of the above as needed.
- Refer to task force.

Funding:

It is clear that the school districts and junior college will need the support of the communities. This may entail approval of ballot issues to generate the revenue necessary for replacing and upgrading existing facilities. There may also be a need to pass mill levy increases to support the staffing and operation of these facilities as the communities continue to grow.

To facilitate these strategies, the public should review the following:

1. Current and projected student populations for school districts and local college as they relate to funding formulas for all entities.
2. Seek alternative financing in other ways that the city and county might contribute to joint construction projects and resources that benefit all entities.
3. Examine alternative financing solutions such as capital construction bonds, grants, mill levy overrides, and other funding sources.
4. Seek partnerships to create a sound technology infrastructure for our schools and communities.
5. Promote fiscal responsibility and efficient use of resources.

GOAL #3

ESTABLISH PROGRAMS TO MEET STUDENT AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

Rationale:

The educational systems within the community recognize that learning changes and improves lives. There is a commitment to high quality, to life-long learning through a proactive curriculum, which in turn meets the needs of the individuals and workforce.

Strategies:

1. Offer programs that enable students to be adaptable and productive in the changing job market and society.
2. Enhance linkages for educational opportunities and economic growth in the northeast region of the state.
3. Create partnerships that will integrate educational opportunities and effectively make use of the resources available.
4. Strengthen the awareness of racial, ethnic and economic diversity.

Implementation:

- Offer programs that enable students to be adaptable and productive in the changing job market and society.
- Develop partnership agreements between education and the private sector.
- Incorporate innovative and effective teaching, technology and alternative delivery systems to meet the needs of the students and community.
- Review, update and monitor the implementation as the educational needs of the community changes. Task Force.

Funding:

An increase in educational funding must be legislatively supported on an annual basis at a rate similar to the consumer price index for creating and maintaining new and innovative programs.

To facilitate these strategies, the public should review the following:

- Develop financial partnerships within the private sector for creating and delivering new educational programs.
- Develop partners in the community to fund new and innovative offerings.
- Pursue incentive grants.
- Evaluate tax revenue sources to fund additional educational programs.

EDUCATION PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS:

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HEALTH AND WELL BEING ISSUE PROJECT TEAM VISION STATEMENT

We support these values by:

1. Providing access to high quality bio-psychosocial healthcare.
2. Providing choices including social opportunities, recreational activities and cultural amenities.
3. Providing access to high quality services and supports for life-long family care.

Rationale:

Health and well being are basic goals of society. Meeting health and well being needs is a personal, family and social responsibility, and is essential to sustaining a successful community.

The community must support personal and family responsibility, initiative and independence. Dependence on public assistance must be minimized. Barriers to self-sufficiency must be identified and eliminated.

Community-wide planning and coordination of health and well being resources should occur when and where appropriate. We should maximize quality, access and availability while minimizing cost. We must be able to quickly identify and meet needs without being wasteful. Finally, our community must be committed to assisting and providing for those who are truly dependent and those who are temporarily unable to care for themselves.

GOAL #1

Provide access to high quality bio-psychosocial healthcare.

Rationale:

The health of a community is defined by the health of its people. In order to protect and improve the health of our community, we need to value all forms of health: mental, dental, physical, environmental, and spiritual.

Strategies:

1. Promote healthy lifestyles through life-long educational programs, occurring as needed/where needed through out our community.
2. Integrate mental health, substance use prevention, medical care, law enforcement and education systems.
3. Promote diverse health care technologies that foster prevention, high quality treatment and quality management of chronic diseases.

Implementation/Funding:

- Encourage tobacco free environments. Set and enforce local policies that publicly funded buildings will be smoke-free (minimal cost). Enforce a community wide youth possession ordinance (minimal cost). Promote cooperation among local community partners such as Northeast Colorado Health Department, Sterling Regional Med Center, Logan County Family Connections, Logan County Extension, law enforcement, school districts and other community partners.

- Fluoridate our community water systems where feasible. (Grant funding is available for equipment needed. The average estimated cost for fluoridation is thirty-one cents per person per year, which would save an average \$50 per person per year in oral health costs.)
- Improve immunization rates, increase access to parenting education and improve participation in preventative health care by coordinating City and County efforts with the services available through community partners including but not limited to those mentioned above. (Grant Funding available)
- Promote literacy in our community. An individual's health status is affected by the ability to communicate in written and verbal forms. This should be implemented by working closely with the Education Issue Project Team.
- Establish local substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation facilities. An advisory council needs to be established to look at enhancing existing services offered in the diagnosis and treatment of chemical dependency. This council should not only include representatives from the agencies listed above but also parents and other private community groups (specifically teenage children 12-16 years of age).
- Work to improve interagency communication and contributions to a comprehensive public assistance system. This would require primarily human capital and could be implemented by developing a "community health service coordinator".
- Develop insurance alternatives to increase the availability and affordability of care. This could be facilitated by a task force, which would investigate all possible alternatives such as pooling of employer groups and self-funded employers direct contacts with health care providers.
- Increase awareness of and access to alternative medicines. This could be achieved by having a clearing house for information coordinated by an entity such as "community health service coordinators".

Possible funding sources could include licensing permits and user fees.

GOAL #2

Provide choices in social opportunities, recreational activities and cultural amenities.

Rationale:

Social, recreational and cultural activities promote the health and well being of the citizenry. They contribute to economic stability by attracting and retaining the population.

Strategies:

1. Develop, if feasible, a family leisure pool for the use and benefit of our community.
2. Expand development of bike and pedestrian paths.
3. Develop facilities and programs that promote cultural arts and conventions.
4. Develop other social opportunities.

Implementation/Funding:

- Complete and support the City of Sterling feasibility study for the funding and building of the community pool.
- Complete implementation of the City Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan while coordinating/developing a community wide pedestrian and bicycle plan that utilizes all funding sources, including but not limited to Department of Corrections workgroups and the Colorado Department of Transportation Enhancement funds.
- Form a Task Force representing all the cultural and fine arts organizations of the community to:
 - Develop coordinated scheduling and promotion of arts, cultural, recreational activities and athletic events.
 - Promote artistic, cultural and recreational activities.
 - Explore the feasibility of improvements to cultural/convention facilities.
- Have regular community sponsored block parties to promote citizen involvement and to help them get to know their neighbors (Contact the City of Brush for how they implemented block parties.)

GOAL #3

Provide access to high quality and affordable services and supports for life-long family care.

Rationale:

A community must have an adequate quantity of high quality dependent care options so other family members can fulfill employment commitments. Employers must have access to reliable work force. High quality care leads to higher literacy rates in children and future employees, more productive employees and lower poverty rates.

Strategies:

1. Create public awareness on family care issues and how the availability and quality of care impacts the community.
2. Monitor the needs for non-traditional care such as 24 hour, 7 day a week care, “sick” care, and inter-generational care.
3. Increase the quality of available care by investing in providers through training, education and increased salary and benefits.
4. Develop a quality rating system that allows consumers to understand the quality of the care they are purchasing.
5. Continue childcare resources and referral through Family Connections and create a similar system for adult care so those families needing care can learn what is available in our community.

Implementation/Funding:

- Plan annual focus groups with employers and care providers utilizing the Logan County Child Care Pilot, the Interagency Council for the Elderly and the Chamber of Commerce. (No additional funding is necessary)

- Establish a resource database of all care providers and make it available at the Public Library. Develop a community resource guide through an entity such as the Logan County Design Team. (\$2,000 per year to maintain)
- Increase provider salary and benefits through additional government subsidies such as Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) reform, utilization of enterprise zone tax credits, increased donations from private business and organizations and increased consumer fees. Tie increased salary and benefits to completion of specific training, environmental quality rating scales, and other means of demonstrating competent care.
- Utilize funding available through the Logan County Child Care Pilot, foundation grants and other public and private funding opportunities to provide scholarships and bonuses for providers demonstrating excellence. (\$30,000 per year)
- Establish an adult care resource and referral agency in an existing government funded facility. This could be incorporated into the Community Health Service Coordinator position.

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INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUE PROJECT TEAM VISION STATEMENT

By 2020, Logan County can anticipate a population as projected by the Colorado State Department of Local Affairs Demographer's office of 30,879 residents, or an increase of approximately 50% over the 2000 figure of 20,504. Infrastructure binds a community together and provides the underlying means for its survival, transformation, growth, and enhancement. A community does not "enter" its future; it "plans" its future if it wants to control that future. It is imperative that communities pursue long range planning processes that systematically encompass all of Logan County to assure (1) the integrated and systematic infrastructure underpinnings of a strong and growing economy, (2) a desirable community for current and future residents, and (3) a reliably flexible backbone on which to plan and construct our future.

Community-wide cooperation, communication, flexibility, and farsighted willingness to take manageable financial and political risk will become major factors in producing the infrastructure Logan County needs to realize the future its citizens want. We cannot continue to do things the way we have always done them and reasonably expect different results.

PROFILE

Logan County serves as home to 20,205 residents according to the 2000 U.S. Census report. The greatest population concentration lies in Sterling, with a 2001 population of 13,339 people. Other incorporated towns with notable populations include Merino, Fleming, Peetz, Iliff, and Crook. Unincorporated areas include Atwood, Proctor Dailey, Padroni and Willard. The Sterling Correctional Facility, just east of Sterling, constitutes a "population center" of 2,400+ inmates housed in the Colorado Department of Correction's largest single prison. The facility has had a dramatic impact on the County's infrastructure during the last five years in terms of water and sewer availability, electrical service, and other amenities. The rest of the County's population is primarily rural and many rural residents engage in farming and livestock production as a primary or supplemental occupation.

Logan County's industry includes agri-business, agricultural production, manufacturing, fabrication, processing, transportation, and oil and gas production/service. Retail sales, the service sector, education, government, and health care account for much of the County's remaining employment base.

To enhance and grow Logan County and its communities, the OUR VISION/OUR FUTURE initiative addresses the major concerns that impact education, transportation, health and well-being, economic development, and infrastructure. In a real sense, infrastructure underlies all other major issues, and requires a systematic county-wide approach to support those other issues effectively.

For this reason, the Infrastructure Issue Project Team recommends establishing task teams with a strong commitment to purposeful cooperation among all governmental

and private agencies and citizens within Logan County. It is important that task teams research the master plans of surrounding communities and geographical regions. The “turfism” which has long affected the area prevents the unified and pro-active visioning of possibilities and the concerted movement toward their implementation. Research and awareness should extend beyond Logan County to encompass regional concepts such as the Heartland Express highway project, for example. The Infrastructure Issue Project Team envisions a community of strong governmental, private and individual cooperation intent on meeting the goals we offer in the following pages.

GOALS

Keeping the ends in mind [(1) integrated and systematic infrastructure underpinnings for a strong and growing economy, (2) a desirable community for current and future residents and (3) a reliably flexible backbone on which to plan and construct our future], the Infrastructure Issue Project Team offers five major goals:

- Assure high-speed and affordable data availability county-wide
- Assure reliable, adequate water supplies and zero-discharge waste disposal
- Assure the safety and beautification of all communities
- Assure effective county-wide planning for services, transportation and land use
- Assure reliable, affordable and adequate power supplies for the entire county

Success in implementing these goals will “grow” the kind of community Logan County residents want for themselves and their children. Realization of these goals will support economic growth and development, expanded health care and well-being initiatives, improved transportation to and from the entire community, and a comprehensive educational system, which will hold current residents and attract new ones. There is no standing still. Our community moves forward or it fall back. We assume the community wants to move forward, and we believe the infrastructure goals we propose are critical to that forward movement.

Goal #1

Assure high-speed and affordable data availability county-wide.

Rationale:

The future of virtually all educational, business, health care, and governmental activity and commerce will depend more and more heavily on high speed and affordable data availability. Federal, state and local government is moving to facilitate citizen access to a myriad of services via the Internet. In the medical field, distance diagnosis and other services are becoming the norm. In both secondary and high education, learner access to programming, courses, and personal information is already available via the Internet. In agri-business, producers can research their product/commodity sales and purchases 24/7. One local entrepreneur is developing software, which will allow viewers to switch back and forth from TV to Internet using the same screen. The cascade of electronic and interactive data availability will only accelerate across all sectors. To attract more people to Logan County, this data availability is essential.

Strategies:

1. Implement a county-wide assessment of high-speed data need and current/future availability.
2. Use assessment results to generate public and private partnerships for shared network resources.
3. Educate public in practical ways about features and benefits of existing and future technologies.
4. Determine feasibility of accessing and developing appropriate infrastructure for High Speed Data (HSD).
5. Ensure that HSD infrastructure is built to appropriate scale and upgradeable on an as-needed basis to secure reliability, security, emergency backup, and confidentiality of users.

Implementation:

- Implement Beanpole assessment. As of November 16, 2001, the state's Energy and Mineral Impact Funds office agreed to enter into a contract with Logan County to conduct both preliminary and final planning activities for high speed digital telecommunications systems.
- Check with other communities in Colorado and surrounding states for effective and cost efficient implementation strategies that work.
- Create implementation plan based upon assessment results.
- Implement plan as assessment results dictate need.
- Continuously assess effectiveness of implementation in meeting actual needs.
- Devise means to integrate services now offered separately by respective political units.

Funding

- Encourage competition and cooperation to contain costs.
- Actively pursue all public/private grant opportunities. Stay in close touch with all possible information sources.
- Pursue public/private partnerships between governmental agencies or units and private providers.
- Seek private sector support through bequests, foundations, etc.
- Consider county wide mill levy or other tax increase/s.

GOAL #2

Assure reliable and adequate water supplies and zero-discharge waste disposal.

Rationale:

Water availability and sewage disposal have long been the responsibilities of local municipal governmental units, and in rural areas, of private individuals. A reliable source of clean and potable water supports all community life and economic growth. Likewise, all communities require safe, efficient, affordable and non-polluting sewage disposal to sustain human health, agricultural production, and the flourishing of native flora and fauna.

Strategies:

1. Secure and guarantee long-term water availability for all county communities to sustain growth to a 2020 population estimated at 31,000 residents in Logan County.
2. Provide efficient community water treatment at the source/s to include fluoridation, high quality and other health-assuring treatment/s as needed.
3. Working with Wildlife and Parks, implement wetland basins to purify waste water effluent for recharge into the South Platte River on a zero-discharge basis.
4. Assure that all county communities work together to plan complementary and coordinated water availability and sewage discharge plans.

Implementation:

- Review and update all existing city, town and county water plans for consistency, timeliness, regulatory compliance, and the purchase or lease of water to meet the growth demands of the future.
- Adopt a county wide coordinated water/sewage plan that becomes implemented as part of a county-wide master plan.

Funding:

- Local entities will have to provide funding through benefit districts, bond issues, user fees, and other creative financing strategies.
- Local entities should pursue all appropriate funding from federal and state sources.

GOAL #3

Assure the safety and beautification of all communities.

Rationale:

To retain current residents and attract new ones, all communities and areas of Logan County must assure the safety and beauty of their neighborhoods, central business districts, and overall environment. To compete effectively with attractive Front Range and other communities, Logan County must present a physical attractiveness that complements its traditional rural reputation as a “safe” part of Colorado if it wishes to retain current residents and attract new ones.

Strategies:

1. Survey communities to determine residents’ perceptions of the need for beautification and safety.
2. Extend storm sewers, curbing, guttering, sidewalks and adequate lighting within and throughout incorporated communities to assure safety of all citizens and neighborhoods.
3. Adopt county-wide fire safety ordinances for public and commercial structures.
4. Coordinate all rural fire districts to cooperate in crisis situations.
5. Landscape existing medians to enhance beauty.
6. Preserve worthy structures for their aesthetic and historic value.

7. Place utility lines underground along main thoroughfares and business districts extending into residential areas. Require new utility service lines to be underground.
8. Minimize drainage problems in thoroughfares by upgrading existing storm sewers.
9. Generate/coordinate existing ordinances to assure upkeep of clean and safe neighborhoods through appropriate maintenance, repair, inspection, and redress for residential and business properties.
10. Enhance public spaces with trees, shrubs, flowers and other plantings.

Implementation:

- Complete comprehensive needs assessment county-wide through selective surveys and focus groups made up of elected officials and citizens from respective jurisdictions.
- Develop comprehensive implementation timeline starting with strategies cited most often in surveys and focus groups.
- Identify project committees who will take responsibility for championing projects with appropriate governmental and private entities.

Funding:

- Identify and utilize all existing funding sources.
- Secure private and foundation support for preservation and other efforts.
- Secure intergovernmental agreements to standardize fire safety ordinances.
- Float long-term bonds, sales tax increases or both to finance curb, sewer, gutter and side walk improvements in towns and cities.

GOAL #4

Assure effective county-wide planning for services and land use.

Rationale:

Land use will become increasingly important. The City of Sterling has a master plan or major parts thereof. Logan County has developed a partial long-range master plan, last updated in 1990. The community needs to develop and coordinate an umbrella master plan for land use, services, and regulatory ordinances, which covers the entire county, including the incorporated municipalities. Such a county-wide plan should include active awareness and coordination with the planning efforts in neighboring counties and geographical regions.

Strategies:

1. Formally extend uniform building codes to an area that extends not less than three miles in all directions from the Sterling city limits.
2. Develop and implement plan for orderly land development, which respects past and current usages, provides for orderly future growth and generates minimal environmental or economic harm.
3. Provide unified and cost-effective coordination of fire, police, emergency medical services and other public protections.

Implementation:

- Catalog political, legal, and fiscal obstacles to coordinate county-wide land use policy and service provision.
- Calculate realistic savings from coordinated and unified approach.
- Build grass-roots coalitions to educate voters and elect officials about the fiscal and political wisdom of coordinated, reasonable and uniform land use policy and fire/police/emergency medical and other public protections.
- Work through political, legal and existing personnel obstacles.
- Preserve current agricultural land use and design future growth that sustains business without harming agriculture.
- Develop business corridors, which take advantage of transportation routes.

Funding:

- Develop other creative financing strategies.
- Consider tax and other incentives for expansions of existing businesses and relocations of new businesses to Logan County.

GOAL #5

Assure reliable, affordable and adequate power supplies for the entire county.

Rationale:

A population increase to 31,000 residents by 2020 will bring with it a proportionally greater demand for power. While current and projected power supplies appear adequate now, we must plan for more environmentally friendly power sources to preserve the air and water quality, which will attract new residents and new industry.

Strategies:

1. Provide incentives to implement alternate wind and solar power generation and cultivate open-minded receptivity to future developments, inventions, and alternative power sources.
2. Consider municipal ownership of power generation and distribution capacity and support the purchase or development of power generation with intent to sell excess capacity to outlying communities.

Implementation:

- Analyze effectiveness, viability, safety and environmental impact of wind farms like those now operating near Peetz, CO.
- Analyze effectiveness, viability, safety and environmental impact of solar farms now operating at other locations.
- Construct “alternate” wind and solar test farms to transmit power directly into local power grids, homes and businesses.
- Be open-minded about future possibilities as yet undiscovered or un-invented.

Funding:

- Provide investor/consumer incentives in user rate base.

- Provide tax incentives to landowners who lease ground for installation and operation of alternative energy generation.
- Use bonding authority for communities to purchase power generating capacity.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS:

Gene Schneider (Chairman)

Vicki Adney

Tim Chase

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Monica Fehringer

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Jessica Hernandez

Eileen Kaiser

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Jack Peck

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Kent Sager

TRANSPORTATION ISSUE PROJECT TEAM VISION STATEMENT

While providing for the present and planning for the future, the vision of the community is to maintain and improve the quality of life and to promote future economic opportunities in Logan County and adjacent communities in Northeast Colorado by the development of a multi-modal transportation system that moves people, commodities and data and further to inform citizens of the importance of these transportation systems that connect us to the global marketplace.

PROFILE

Transportation, the ability to easily move people and goods, has been throughout history one of the most significant criteria in the development of civilization, as we know it today. America has put men on the moon, have spacecraft that have explored Mars and beyond and shuttle craft that transport payloads into space on a regular basis. So what does the future of transportation hold in store for Northeastern Colorado.

By 2020, Logan County can anticipate a population as projected by the Colorado State Department of Local Affairs Demographer's office of 30,879 residents, or an increase of approximately 50% over the 2000 figure of 20,504. Our community must take a proactive approach in planning for future transportation requirements. Criteria that must be considered include but are not limited to: current and future quality of life, law enforcement and emergency services, funding of repair and maintenance along with future construction and community acceptance. Unprecedented community wide cooperation, communication, flexibility and farsighted willingness to take manageable financial and political risk are essential to providing the transportation base that Logan County needs to realize the future its citizens expect.

GOALS

Utilizing the preceding information as our focal point, the Transportation Issue Project Team offers the following major goals for consideration:

- Education/Communication
- Funding/Money
- Direction for the Future

GOAL #1

EDUCATION/COMMUNICATION

Rationale:

An educated and informed community will recognize and take a proactive approach toward transportation-related opportunities.

Strategies:

1. Minimize the learning curve on transportation issues by educating public officials.
2. Secure a full time facilitator to provide the necessary information flow and develop a plan with the purpose of securing the maximum transportation dollars available.

3. “Get people plugged in – keep them plugged in”
4. Stay current on legislation, enhancements and endowments from both private and public sector that would impact all resources of revenue, including but not limited to pool funds and matching funds.
5. Develop leadership continuity that will promote transportation issues in Northeast Colorado.

Implementation:

- Develop and maintain an ongoing orientation and familiarization process for all officials.
- Provide continuity with elected officials to minimize the learning curve on transportation issues.
- Provide a forum for an ongoing information exchange.
- Develop a public education plan, to include public meetings, and all available media. “Get people plugged in – keep them plugged in”
- Define why this facilitator position is needed.
- Demonstrate that value this position would have on the local economy.
- Fill position restructuring an existing position?
- Commit to a time frame long enough to measure the success of the facilitator position.
- Dedicate facilitator position solely to improving transportation.
- Pursue all resources, including matching funds, pool dollars or grants.
- Start public support at the grass-roots level.
- Develop a marketing strategy, aimed at getting people involved and keeping them involved.
- Help people understand the need and importance of transportation in the community.
- Utilize all resources available to coordinate effort and minimize duplication.
- Utilize the twenty-year surface transportation plan already in place.
- Provide detailed updates every five years.
- Produce a multi-year capital improvement plan.
- Utilize annual budgets to strategize matching funds.
- Prepare a local project prioritization plan, to be included in the unconstrained regional plan. To provide:
 - A list of enhancement funding projects
 - A multi project list
- Provide a timeline with the ability to react in an efficient and effective manner.
- Utilize all resources including matching funds to maximize transportation dollars.

GOAL #2
FUNDING/MONEY

Rationale:

Our community must take a proactive approach toward transportation funding. Both the maintenance and upgrading of existing facilities are expensive and we must utilize all revenue sources to our maximum benefit.

Strategies:

1. Develop an implementation process that will maximize projects, best utilize new and existing revenue sources and minimize the burden of those projects on area residents.
2. Develop an administrative plan with the purpose of funding a transportation facilitator position.
3. Become familiar with the proposed Strategic Investment Plan being promoted in some circles at the State level.
4. Adhere to the philosophy that operation and maintenance costs are considered as a part of all transportation construction projects.

Implementation:

- Identify and maintain a list of all sources of local match funding opportunities.
- Identify and maintain sources of monetary and work-in-kind contributors.
- Monitor, identify and pursue all grant sources.
- Identify those projects that may be stand alone (local funded) projects.
- Annually review and prioritize transportation projects.
- Local need prioritization
- Transportation Planning Region prioritization
- (Logan projects that require federal matching dollars, must be on the TPR prioritization list to secure funding)
- Implement Education/Communication action plan to enhance Funding/Money.
- Develop a pro-active coalition of municipalities, county, state and private sector.
- Develop city and county support based proportional to the population base of each entity.
- Take a pro-active stance to posture ourselves, in support of or in opposition to the Strategic Investment funding proposal.
- All projects will require ongoing operation and maintenance expenditures.
- Utilizing these resources may reduce these costs:
 - Volunteer Labor
 - Inmate Labor
 - Work-In-Kind
 - Adoptions by service clubs or organizations (Adopt-a-Highway)
 - Public Service
- If resources are insufficient to meet ongoing costs, then additional budget allocations must be sufficient to meet these costs.

GOAL #3

DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE

Rationale:

If we don't know where we are headed, then any direction we choose is the right choice.

Strategies:

1. Develop a unified, strategic, countywide Traffic Flow strategy to address smooth, fluid and easy traffic movement through the county that also addresses county wide emergency services.
2. Take a proactive approach, in establishing growth strategies.
3. Take a proactive approach to mass transportation alternatives and begin analysis and development plans.
4. Utilize geographic planning as one set of criteria in all transportation planning.
5. Take a proactive approach to environmental issues impacting transportation.

Implementation:

- Provide for cooperative planning effort, involving municipalities, county and state.
- Develop alternative transportation routing plans.
- Develop a plan to utilize alternative transportation.
- Fully utilize existing facilities to minimize congestion and maximize flow.
- Continue to maintain and improve existing transportation arterials and take a proactive toward utilizing new and improved arterials.
- Look at growth in planned versus unplanned scenarios.
- Take a proactive approach to growth instead of waiting to be reactive.
- Develop plans based on multiple growth strategies.
- Include infrastructure and capital development alternatives, operation and maintenance costs, alternative funding scenarios in all plans.
- Develop a plan for fixed route mass transportation.
- Develop a plan to address air service in our community.
 - Evaluate our existing air service.
 - Evaluate current and future infrastructure aviation requirements.
 - Evaluate current and future community aviation requirements.
 - Develop a growth strategy for local air service.
- Develop a strategy to explore the utilization of light rail service.
 - Evaluate the benefits of high-speed rail.
 - Evaluate the alternative utilization of existing rail or right of way.
 - Evaluate the feasibility of light rail transportation alternatives to the Front Range corridor.
- Develop a strategy to improve public safety due to transportation of hazardous materials.
 - Plan to maximize public safety through designated hazardous material routing.
 - Plan to improve the community communication on hazardous material routing.

- Develop a strategy to improve traffic flow and improve public safety due to transport of oversized loads.
 - Plan to maximize public safety through designated oversize load routes.
 - Lobby the State of Colorado to maximize revenue to help offset cost of oversize transportation.
- Develop a strategy to improve the utilization of data transport.
 - Plan for infrastructure to handle data transmission.
 - Improve on coordination of emergency services operation through the use of existing technology.
- Develop a coordinated Emergency Response plan.
- Develop a strategy to improve upon the transportation of commodities into and out of our community.
 - Plan for shipping and receiving of commodities
 - Improve utilization of existing storage, transfer and warehousing facilities.
- Evaluate the transportation issues in future planning for industrial sites.
 - Develop strategies for ingress and egress.
 - Evaluate the sites on proximity to transportation systems.
 - Evaluate the sites to address impact on traffic flow.
- Plan for and utilize green belts when considering future transportation routes.
 - Evaluate the benefits of bicycle/pedestrian routes.
 - Evaluate the extent of Open Space requirements.
- Develop plans to enhance historical preservation.
- Develop plans to improve Aesthetic Image in our community.
 - Unclean, vacant, unkempt buildings, excessive vegetation
 - Trashy, messy, unsightly properties
 - Enforcement of existing legislation
- As we look at transportation alternatives this community will strive to meet environmental standards in the construction, operation and maintenance of our transportation systems.

TRANSPORTATION PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS:

Gary Ray (Chairman)

Doug Kettelson

Gene Uhler

Larry Worth

Rick Yost

Joe Nichols

Laura Portenier

Jim Hof