

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.

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