

Legislative Affairs Committee – Durango, Colorado
July 6, 2023

Unemployment Rate Update

- The unemployment rate in La Plata County was 2.7% in March and 2.2% in April.
- In San Juan County, it was 2.8% in March and 2.6% in April.
- In Archuleta County, it was 2.8% in March and 2.6% in April.
- In Montezuma County, it was 3.9% in March and 3.2% in April.
- In Dolores County, it was 2.2% in March and 2.7% in April.

Proposition HH

- Proposition HH aims to increase the state's cap on tax collection and reduce the tax burden on property owners. The measure will be put to a vote in November.
- Advocates project that the measure could reduce property owners' tax burden by hundreds of dollars per year. Opponents say the measure will cause a \$10 billion dollar loss in Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR) refunds over the next 10 years.
- The proposal aims to modify the formula established by TABOR for determining the amount of tax money the state can retain, as well as adjust the refund mechanism for overcollections. [More information is here.](#)

Workforce Development Grants

- Colorado awarded \$27 million to 46 organizations in June in the first phase of grants through the [Opportunity Now Colorado](#) program designed to enhance workforce-development pipelines at a time of significant labor shortage across industries.
- Some smaller grants went to programs involving industry and education partners that will focus initially on certain school districts or geographic areas but that could grow if proven to be successful. These included a La Plata County program to provide adult learners with professional certificates driven by industry needs.
- Officials awarded 32 planning grants of about \$50,000 each to local partnerships seeking to craft new workforce-development programs including Pueblo Community College Southwest to design a manufacturing facility that will train high-school students and 18- to 24-year-old workers to build manufactured homes that will be sold to local public-sector industries.

Lodgers Tax Update

- In 2022, La Plata County collected \$892,000 in Lodgers Tax, a 13.8% increase over 2021.
- Durango collected \$3.45M in Lodgers Tax, a 24.7% increase from 2021.
- Durango City councilors continued their conversation on how to allocate about \$361K in excess lodgers' tax specifically earmarked for sustainable tourism marketing on Wednesday, July 5
- After lengthy discussion and multiple motions, Durango City Council agreed in a 3 to 2 vote to allocate excess Lodgers Tax collections. Out of approximately \$361,000 in excess

collections, \$245,000 will go to Visit Durango for sustainable marketing efforts and the remainder will go to Sustainability, earmarked for EV charging stations to be located at the Durango Transit Center. Councilors Olivier Bosmans and Gilda Yazzie voted against the motion. Yazzie said there are many other options for EV charging in Durango than the Transit Center. Bosmans said there was no reason to spend the money on charging stations now, as the money would not be needed immediately.

LPC Sales Tax Collections

- Sales tax collections in LPC for January show an increase of \$657,653 or 36.19% in comparison to the same period in 2022.
- Sales tax collections for February show an increase of \$765,446 or 43.75% in comparison to the same period in 2022.

LPC STR Discussion

- Now that Chapter 90 (oil and gas regulations) of the La Plata County Land Use Code is done, the County is turning its focus toward Short Term Rentals (STRs). The county will conduct a survey to help frame future policy and strategies. The process of drafting the survey is underway now, but is not yet completed.

LPC Board of County Commissioners Policy Priorities

- The Board of County Commissioners adopted county policy priorities for housing and broadband. County staff states that adopting the priorities will help establish clear direction and courses of action.
- Top housing priorities include supporting the Regional Housing Alliance and making strategic investments in infrastructure close to population centers. [Read the Housing Policy Priorities here.](#)
- The top broadband priority is to foster the development and maintenance of affordable, reliable broadband telecommunications services infrastructure in the county, including considering policies to reduce construction costs. [Read the Broadband Policy Priorities here.](#)

LPC Land Use Code Updates

- La Plata County adopted the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code to become effective on August 1, 2023. If the code wasn't adopted before July 1, the county would have had to go to 2021 code by state statute. Staff said that may have been difficult for the local community which is now operating under the 2009 version, and that the 2015 Code would provide a smoother transition to the more stringent code. The code affects new builds and additions.
- This month, the County will also adopt the 2015 International Fire Code. Staff said the most important aspect of the effort is having consistency between the building, fire, and land use codes.

LPC Hiring Updates

- Kevin Hall has been hired as La Plata County's Deputy County Manager. Hall formerly worked for the City of Durango and was also the Interim Community Development Director for La Plata County.
- Lynn Hyde has been hired as the new Community Development Director and is expected to start at the end of July. Hyde is a Durango resident who currently is employed remotely as a Community Development Review Planner for Bozeman, MT. She holds a Masters of Urban Design & Planning from the University of Washington and previously worked for five years as a planner for the city of North Bend, WA.
- Roby Douglas joined La Plata County as the new Natural Resources Planner. Douglas is from Dallas, where she worked in the private sector as an analyst. She's now working on LPC projects including oil & gas, solar, telecommunications and water.

Durango Mortgage Assistance Grants Update

- The City of Durango, in partnership with HomesFund, has been awarded \$1,881,400 to help residents with their mortgage payments. The money comes from a three-year Community Development Block Grant from the state Department of Local Affairs. The City is the pass-through agency and the grant funding will be utilized for the continuation of the HomesFund Mortgage Assistance Program for the Southwest Region.
- HomesFund also recently increased its down payment mortgage assistance amounts to assist with the gap between workforce wages and high home prices in Southwest Colorado. More information is here:
<https://www.durangogov.org/civicalerts.aspx?AID=3209>

Durango MidTown Connections Update

- The [MidTown Safety Improvement Project](#) calls in part for a reconfiguration of the intersections at E2nd Ave & 15th Street and Florida Road/15th Street/3rd Avenue. The city will host a community meeting on this topic in the fall, but in the meantime, the multimodal division has [created a questionnaire](#) to gather additional public input on the project.
- Eleven alternatives were analyzed in a traffic study of the area, and staff found that
 - removal of left turns onto 14th from Main will help improve traffic flow;
 - a mini-roundabout will improve the intersection at Florida Road/15th Street/3rd Avenue;
 - E 2nd Ave operating as a Southbound one-way is the best scenario for adjacent intersections.
- Staff hopes to move forward with a desired design concept this fall. Construction would be anticipated in 2026, though funding is still needed.

Land Use Projects

- June 6th, the Durango City Council approved the annexation, initial zoning and conceptual plan for Elk Grove, a 25 acre development on High Llama Lane where up to 62 single family homes are planned. The developer and city staff are working together to create 10 income-restricted units as part of the plan.

Meetings attended June 1 - July 6

6/1 - 3 pm LAC meeting	6/20 - 10 am BOCC Planning Meeting
6/6 - 10 am BOCC Planning Meeting	6/22 - 6 pm LPC Planning Commission
6/6 - 2:15 pm Durango Council Study Session	6/27 - 10 am BOCC Business Meeting
6/6 - 5:30 pm Durango City Council Meeting	6/28 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time
6/7 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time	6/28 - 6 pm Update on Property Taxes
6/8 - 6 pm LPC Planning Commission	7/5 - 9 am BOCC Discussion Time
6/13 - 10 am BOCC Business Meeting	7/5 - 2:15 pm Durango Council Study Session
6/14 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time	7/5 - 5:30 pm Durango City Council Meeting
6/15 - 8 am Eggs and Issues	7/6 - 3:30 pm LAC Meeting