



# Strategic Plan

*Approved June 23, 2015*

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Saguache County Strategic Plan, 2014 - 2020

**DRAFT Strategic Plan contacts for the County**

Lyn Lambert • Wendi Maez

Saguache County Co-Administrators

**719 655-2231** [administrator@saguachecounty-co.gov](mailto:administrator@saguachecounty-co.gov)

Dear Saguache County Community,

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that we present to you the DRAFT Saguache County Strategic Plan. It is the first of its kind by and for our County, a reflection of the need to plot a long-term course that serves our County community in a clear, concise manner. This document was created to establish an action plan to address some of the most pertinent issues of our County in a manner that is transparent, measurable, and creates accountability. As government public servants, we are keenly aware of the challenges that we are called upon to address - economic scarcity, the state of our resources... especially water, and the difficulties of isolated communities in a vast landscape - are all issues that are seen as major concerns of our citizens. As we know when seeking solutions for large issues, the most difficult part is the process of turning ideas into action, and more importantly - results. A Strategic Plan aims to address this.

This document was made possible when Saguache County became the recipient of a CO Dept. of Local Affairs (DOLA) Planning Grant. The grant, awarded just before the holidays last year, supports the development of a Saguache County Strategic Plan, by January 31, 2014. This grant is for \$15,000, matched by Commissioner Contributions in 2013 and 2014, to make the project possible. Saguache County worked with the Strategic Planning process and consultants approved by DOLA - Managing Results, LLC (MR).

Saguache County was first introduced to this planning process and MR over 5 years ago, when Gunnison County, which had used this approach presented it at the Annual Colorado Counties Winter Conference, and again a few years later. Implementing their strategic plan, Gunnison County achieved amazing results. They built a state of the art Public Works facility, and jail, while lowering taxes! Their profile as a County is quite different, so our journey and outcomes will be our own. But it is great to have a nearby positive reference, and the added benefit that Gunnison County has so much experience, and have made themselves available to be of support as they can.

The Strategic Planning process began with Managing Results principles, Marv and Marty Weidner, completing a documents review,

to gain the needed understanding of the County's profile, business and services, in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2014. Next, Elected Officials and Dept. Heads, and citizens they encountered during their stay were interviewed to gather essential information on the operations, issues and goals of the County and County governance, in late April. MR collated and analyzed the information from these steps, in preparation for an open working County retreat that began development of the Strategic Plan, in early May. MR and the County reviewed the resulting rough Strategic Plan draft, in a final session in July, where MR captured the ideas that came forth on performance measure development, and plan implementation. In work sessions this fall, Commissioners and County personnel studied possible data sets for where we're at now, and targets for what we're reaching to achieve. And, did an "inventory" of existing organizations and projects in our County already contributing in areas related to the Strategic Plan goals; and potential partners, projects and funding sources there might be.

It is our intention that the County uses this document as a tool to create a more unified effort for the betterment of our county. However as with any tool, it is only effective if we are willing to pick it up and put it to use. So at this time, we request and encourage you to review this DRAFT Saguache County Strategic Plan, and help in shaping it. Let us know how it might be improved, and what would make it yours also, as we move forward as a County.

Sincerely, Saguache County Commissioners-

## **Saguache County Strategic Priority: Economic Growth**

Growing the economy in Saguache County means Livable Wage jobs; healthy, enduring businesses; opportunities to build marketable skills and products; reduction of local poverty; enhanced quality of life for all Saguache County citizens.

***The County's focus areas are:***

*Tourism*

*Airports: Leach and Saguache; Research & Development Parks*

*Energy Economies*

**GOALS**

**By 2016, Saguache County will have economic development and community partnerships in place, and, collaborative Implementation actions and projects initiated or identified for all Strategic Priorities/goals.**

**By 2017, increase and promote Adult Education access in Saguache County communities**

**By 2017, review and update Strategic Plan priorities, goals and implementation measures.**

(Identify available, relevant data sets, if any, for new business start-up and retention; and Livable Wages.)

**By 2018, 8.8 percent or Lower Unemployment Rate SOURCE: [FEDERAL RESERVE](#) Baseline: (July, 2014) 9.8%**

**By 2020, 18% percent or Lower Poverty Rate in Saguache County SOURCE: [US CENSUS](#) Baseline: (2009-2013) 24.7%**

**By 2020, \$26,000 Per Capita Money Income or better in Saguache County SOURCE: [US CENSUS](#) Baseline: (2009-2013) \$20,726 (2013 dollars)**

**By 2020, \$36,500 (\$16.50/hr) Median HOUSEHOLD Income or better in Saguache County SOURCE: [US CENSUS](#) Baseline: (2009-2013) \$34,600 (\$15.59/hourly)**

## **Strategic Priority: Economic Growth**

### **Key Strategy: Focus on three Priorities in Economic Growth**

#### **I. TOURISM goals**

- . Build/Leverage the current connections and ongoing efforts in tourism
- . Build local collaboratives to support tourism-related businesses
- . Proactively market by telling the story of visitor opportunities in Saguache County
- . Highlight pivotal locations that benefit the County
- . Improve signage throughout the County
- . Promote Events developed, within and by our communities, both inside and outside the County
- . Support development of trails and recreation opportunities

#### **II. RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT goals**

- Review/Develop ways to use County-owned land
- Prepare for, and attract R&D industries to locate in Saguache County
- Build upon advantages offered by the two airports (Leach / Saguache), and our abundance of open space

- Ensure and communicate that we have “business friendly” policies; develop Land Use Policies and zoning where needed
- Build our Marketing Message – “Saguache County is invested in R&D and this is the place to do it.”
- Identify incentives and other methods to proactively market for R&D

### **III. ALTERNATIVE ENERGY goals**

1. To establish Saguache County as pro Solar-industry as a result of it’s outstanding solar potential
2. To establish a solar energy project on County land for the purpose of visibility.
3. To move County infrastructure onto a local energy source.
4. Continue to work on a legislative level to encourage rooftop solar for County residents.
5. Work to establish a local power sources for Saguache County residents to serve as the primary energy source

### **Additional Economic Growth Strategies**

- Develop infrastructure
- Focus on roadway intersections where economic activity can occur – motels, markets, services, etc.
- Enhance utility infrastructure
- Develop broadband for local businesses and R&D
- Develop growth strategies, policies for manufacturing, agriculture-related manufacturing/processing



- Continue to review Land Use and Zoning Policies for opportunities to strengthen economic growth
- Continue to review/develop ways to utilize County-owned land

### **Grow the Workforce**

- Partner with Adams State and other colleges to bring courses into the County for marketable skills for business ownership and jobs in existing and future companies
- Review and include as appropriate non-traditional, non-classroom-based coursework

### **Small business development**

- Help educate, network and connect business owners to resources and support, such as - marketing, how to get loans, opportunities to acquire vocational/trade skills, certifications, Enterprise zone, and others
- Focus on identifying and developing marketable skills, goods and services

## **Saguache County Strategic Priority:**

### **One County, One Community**

Saguache County citizens live in a sparsely populated expansive landscape, with extensive public lands and far-flung small towns and neighborhoods (incorporated and unincorporated). With all our differences, distinctions and distances, we are one Saguache County Community. Saguache County invites and supports residents and visitors with opportunities to enjoy the unique qualities and features of our towns and open spaces. The County's decisions and its employees' actions will affirm, with respect and equanimity, the oneness of our community.

*The aim of "One County, One Community" is to foster County diversity - where our differences create a stronger whole, rather than a divided County - where our differences weaken us all.*

**Beginning in 2014 and continuing thereafter, Commissioner Work Sessions will be scheduled in communities across the County**

**By 2016, review Strategic Priorities with County Elected Officials and Dept. Heads, and define departmental action steps and timeframes**

**By 2017, all County employees will have performance plans/evaluations in place that include observable core competencies describing expected behaviors supporting "One County, One Community"**

**By 2017, a "made-in" Saguache County logo/brand will be created; and used by producers and providers of goods and services in Saguache County. Feature high altitude values of agricultural products. Engage producers of other goods and services to use the brand.**

**By 2017, review, refine and update One County, One**

**Community goals and implementation targets.**

## Implementation Overview

**By 2016, Saguache County will have economic development and community partnerships in place, and, collaborative Implementation actions and projects initiated or identified for all Strategic Priorities/goals.**

- . Promote and market our tourism assets (Historical & Heritage / Arts & Culture / Recreation & Outdoors)
- . Brochures, publications, events, web information, maps/routing; 12 Hours of Penitence Mountain Bike Race (Penitente); Northern Access and tourism opportunities to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Baca Wildlife Refuge; Vista Grande recreational area in Saguache; trails and recreation opportunities - SLV Trails & recreation Plan; Sports Park(s); Crestone Creative District and others
- . Manage Leach and Saguache Airport Development - Improvements, Maintenance, Operations, Promotion and Plan Development
- . Develop the concept of Research & Development Parks contiguous to Leach and Saguache Airports
- . Research and develop Alternative Energy goals, opportunities and actions for Saguache County (Solar, Biofuel)
- . Monitor Unmanned Aircraft Opportunity (FAA decision on Alamosa testing and training application anticipated April

2015)

- . Define and launch County practices, procedures, tools, performance measures and standards, to enhance County Services, customer satisfaction and make “One County, One Community” a Reality in County Government
  
- . Create/participate in informal and formal events that bring communities together and foster communications, leadership, understanding, respect and support, and make “One County, One Community” a Reality throughout our Community
  
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## *Acknowledgements*

Saguache County Commissioners thank all those whose contributions made this Strategic Plan possible-

- The CO Dept. of Local Affairs (DOLA), for their funding support and guidance.
- Marv and Marty Weidner of Managing Results, LLC for consulting and facilitating the County's strategic planning process.
- All who have long worked on behalf of the betterment of the economy and quality of life in Saguache County - our Towns, Schools, Non-profit Organizations and Service Agencies, Chambers and Business Associations, Businesses large and small, Valley partners, and Saguache County citizens of all ages.
- And especially, the Saguache County Elected Officials, Dept. Heads and staff who participated in creating the Plan, and those who will carry it forward.

*“Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.”* Stephen R. Covey