



REGIONAL
HOUSING
ALLIANCE

RHA Agenda
Board of Directors
March 13, 2025, 2–4 p.m.
Chamber Conference Room

- 1. Call Meeting to Order (2 p.m.)**
- 2. Introductions and Roll Call**
 - a. Identification of any actual or perceived conflicts of interest
- 3. Public Comment**
- 4. Approval of Agenda**
- 5. Approval of Consent Agenda (2:10 p.m.)**
 - a. February 2025 Minutes
 - b. January 2025 Financial Statements
 - c. Approval of RHA 2024 Annual Report
- 6. Updates (2:15 p.m.)**
 - a. 2nd Annual Southwest Housing Summit - April 29, 2025
 - b. S.T.E.E.R. Committee Initiative & Strategic Next Steps
 - c. DOLA Local Planning Capacity Grant Progress & Strategic Next Steps
- 7. Decision Items (2:45 p.m.)**
 - a. Approval of Final La Plata Housing Needs Assessment Report
- 8. Public Presentations & Engagement with Non -RHA Entities (3 p.m.)**
 - a. La Plata Economic Development Alliance Update:
 - Early Childcare Strategic Investment Plan, Sarah Tober, Executive Director and Heather Hawk, Executive Director Early Childhood Council of La Plata County (15 min.)
 - b. Region 9 Updates including: (25 min.)
 - Livable Wage Report presented by Heather Otter, Economic Development Project Manager

RHA Agenda

Board of Directors

March 13, 2025, 2–4 p.m.

Chamber Conference Room

- Regional Programs Update presented by Shak Powers, Regional Programs

Manager

9. Member Updates (3:40 p.m.)

(5 min. or less each)

- a. Member at Large
- b. Town of Ignacio
- c. Town of Bayfield
- d. City of Durango
- e. La Plata County

10. Adjournment

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of La Plata County Regional Housing Alliance.

February 13th, 2025

1. Call to Order

A meeting of the Board of Directors (the “**Board**”) of La Plata Regional Housing Alliance, (“**RHA**”), was held on February 13th, 2025 commencing at approximately 2:00 pm MST at the offices of the Durango Chamber of Commerce, located at 2301 Main Ave Durango, CO 81031.

2. Introductions and Roll Call

The following directors, constituting a quorum, were present in person or by Zoom. Patrick Vaughn, Chair of the RHA, presided over the meeting noting there was a quorum of the Board being present and he called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Attendees:

- Chair, Patrick Vaughn, Member at Large
- Vice-Chair, Marsha Porter-Norton, La Plata County Commissioner
- Secretary, Mark Garcia, Town of Ignacio Manager
- Clark Craig, Town of Ignacio Mayor
- Mike French, City of Durango Prosperity Officer
- Kevin Hall, La Plata County Deputy Manager
- Gilda Yazzie, City of Durango Councilor

Directors absent:

- Brenna Morlan, Town of Bayfield Trustee (excused absence)

Others present:

- Eva Henson, EDA Contractor
- Sarah Tober, EDA
- Jessie Christiansen, EDA
- Deedee Schadt, EDA Contractor
- Pam Moore, HomesFund

- Brad Blake, Pine River Commons
- Charlie Albert, Pine River Commons
- Dan Hunt, Mobile Home Parks
- Ryan Champion, Maverick Capital Lending
- Online attendance:
- Jennifer Lopez, Project Moxie
- Elizabeth Salkind, Housing Solutions of the Southwest
- Carolyn Moller, RHA Accountant

Conflicts of Interest - no conflicts of interest were disclosed

3. Public Comment

Brad Blake and Charlie Albert, developers of the Pine River Commons project in Bayfield, CO. Five units have been completed, with 4 sales and a model unit is available for showings. The next 5-plex is under construction and 2 units are under contract, there will be 66 units in all. Brad and Charlie are both appreciative of the support that the RHA has given them. There is about \$4.4 million invested in the project so far. They are present if the board has any questions regarding the Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund request for HVAC equipment.

4. Agenda Approval

Director Porter-Norton requested that Pine River Commons Catalyst Revolving loan fund decision (8.b.) be discussed after the Approval of Consent Agenda.

Upon motion duly made by Director Porter-Norton and seconded by Director Craig, it was unanimously **RESOLVED**, that the agenda for the meeting of the Board held on February 13, 2025, in the form provided to the Directors in advance of this meeting, is hereby approved.

8. b. Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund Decision

Eva Henson reviewed the loan request and details were also included in the memo in the board's packet. The request is for a \$100,000 low-interest loan to pay for HVAC equipment for the remaining 23 units in Phase I. The recommendation from the Advisory Committee meeting on Monday, February 10th was to fund the full request, as there is no one else seeking to borrow the money. Payments will be phased accordingly.

Brad Blake communicated that the vendor for the HVAC equipment said there will be a 25% increase due to new regulations on environmental issues, i.e. freon. It's typical to see 3,4,5% increases, but 25% is huge. His thoughts were to head off the increase by purchasing the equipment up front to help maintain the price points for potential buyers. For instance, one of the first buyers, a nurse at Mercy, wouldn't have been able to afford this increase. Charlie's goal from the beginning has been to get people into these homes. Currently there are teachers, police officers, a manager at City Market and a Mercy worker who have bought the units. One Board member thought it would be nice to set up a tour for the members.

The Advisory Committee was understanding and supportive of this proposal. It may be a one-time decision/request to loan the money out like this, depending on what other projects are in the pipeline in the future.

As for the additional money, it will be paid back at the current rate of \$50,000 a unit, until the 11th unit is sold, and will increase to \$55,000 a unit.

There was discussion about Rock Creek needing funds for phase two of their project. The committee is aware of the need and anticipate the funds will be available considering the payment schedules involved.

Upon motion duly made by Director Craig and seconded by Director Porter-Norton, it was unanimously **RESOLVED**, for the Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund Request for Pine River Commons in the form provided to the Directors in advance of this meeting, is hereby approved.

5. Approval Consent Agenda

a. January 2025 Minutes

Upon motion duly made by Director Garcia and seconded by Director Porter-Norton, it was unanimously **RESOLVED**, that the minutes for the meeting of the Board held on January 9, 2025, in the form provided to the Directors in advance of this meeting, is hereby approved.

b. December 2025 Financial Statements

Upon motion duly made by Director Garcia and seconded by Director Porter-Norton, it was unanimously **RESOLVED**, that the December 2025

financial statements, in the form provided to the Directors in advance of this meeting, is hereby approved.

6. Public Presentations & Engagement with Non-RHA Entities

a. Project Moxie Updates on DOLA Capacity Grant Activities/Deliverables.

Project Moxie is wrapping up and providing the RHA with final grant deliverables that includes:

Resale Controls Executive Summary Final

- Jennifer Lopez initiated the discussion by inquiring if there were any questions regarding Project Moxie's deliverables. She noted that Mark Garcia's experience with the Rock Creek project was used as a reference point. The Executive Summary outlines best practices, especially regarding the new state-level requirement for deed restrictions under Prop 123.
- Leveraging Buying Power: Exploring how projects can maximize resources given the constraints of deed restrictions.
- Administrative Costs & Program Guidelines: The Memo suggests that shared administrative costs and standardized guidelines can reduce expenses.
- Funding Enforcement of Deed Restrictions: The group emphasized the need to determine funding mechanisms for ongoing enforcement. The Memo provides details on budgeting for organizations like HomesFund, whose deed restriction template was utilized for Rock Creek.
- Regional Land Trust & HomesFund Role: HomesFund is setting up opportunities for regional support, which could streamline project setup with deed restrictions. While implementation is relatively quick, potential resale challenges may arise.
- Resale Fee Proposal: A 1% fee on each sale was proposed to create a sustainable funding source for ongoing oversight.

- Legal Review & DOLA Coordination: A legal review may be necessary to ensure alignment with government requirements, potentially funded through DOLA resources.
- Next Steps & RHA's Role: The RHA is proactively coordinating with Project Moxie, HomesFund, legal experts, and other stakeholders to guide all four government partners. These efforts aim to enhance housing strategies across the county and municipalities, reinforcing the RHA's commitment to making a meaningful impact.

Preservation Memo Final

The group discussed using Prop 123 funds for home preservation, though funding is limited.

Preservation Opportunities: RHA staff should access the national preservation database. Only a few properties may qualify at year 15 or 25.

Mercy Housing Portfolio: These properties may be good candidates for refinancing in the coming years.

RHA's Preservation Role: RHA has supported preservation with Private Activity Bonds (PAB) for projects like Tamaron Square and the Best Western conversion.

Annual PAB Review: RHA should check annually with the city and county on available PAB amounts.

Tax Exemptions: Housing authorities can offer property tax exemptions through minor ownership roles, though this isn't currently done in La Plata County. A consultant could help navigate PAB and tax exemption processes.

PAB allocation occurs annually in January and must have a population size of \$20,000 or more. PABs must be committed by September 15, or they'll return to the state. Options include rolling funds forward, assigning them to a project, or delegating to CHFA.

Housing Solutions for the Southwest - Rehab Program Update:

Funding has become limited for individual rural rehab programs, despite community efforts to keep it. The program's funding moved from CDBG to HDG,

and then to Prop 123, but the state won't fund staffing. Without local governments stepping in, rural communities will lose this resource.

Looking Ahead:

Funding may be tighter over the next few years, making ongoing coordination and planning even more critical for success.

Follow up: It was requested at next month's board meeting to review the DOLA grant funds and action plan for the remaining grant activities and deliverables.

Technical Assistance for State Funding

- Project Moxie assisted Mark Garcia with Rock Creek Prop 123 gap funding state application and was notified this week of funding approval - \$462,000
- Project Moxie won't be proceeding forward with the scope of identifying potential public parcels for housing due to possible conflicts of interest with other contract work.

7. RHA Updates, presented by Eva Henson

a. RHA Photo and media release form

As new affordable and attainable housing units become available, with projects such as Rock Creek in Ignacio and Pine River Commons in Bayfield, it is a best practice to have a waiver/form of release for buyers for permission to use their photos, videos, and digital images for marketing, social media, websites, newsletters, and other promotional and educational materials. The form, has been reviewed by the RHA attorney David Liberman, and a sample template was provided by Emily Lashbrooke, Pagosa Springs Community Development Corporation, and can be shared with our 4 government partners and HomesFund.

b. 2024 Draft RHA Annual Report

The RHA 2024 Annual Report highlights key achievements in advancing affordable housing initiatives across the region. It outlines the completion of 1st inaugural Southwest Housing Summit, Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund, Rental Assistance Program and the Stakeholder Taskforce for Evaluation and

Endorsement of Revenue-streams (S.T.E.E.R.) Committee. It emphasizes the collaborative efforts with our four government partners, developers, and stakeholders. The report also showcases progress in policy advocacy, community engagement, and the successful distribution of grants. It reflects on the impact of these efforts in fostering sustainable, attainable housing solutions, while setting goals for continued growth and innovation in the coming year.

Note: a change in lodger tax number of \$700,000 toward housing and childcare to \$595,000 as this is a more accurate number.

c. 2025 RHA Proposed Work Plan

The RHA Work Plan, prepared by Eva Henson of Soluvera LLC, outlines the proposed approach and timeline for the RHA Contract Director role, aimed at achieving the goals of the Regional Housing Alliance (RHA) for 2025. The work plan focuses on key activities related to strategic leadership, fundraising, capacity building, community engagement, and event execution, all designed to advance the mission of expanding attainable and workforce housing in La Plata County. The plan is divided into six key categories, each with specific milestones, deliverables, and timelines running from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025. This approach and schedule are also reflected in the Soluvera LLC Professional Services Agreement with the La Plata Economic Development Alliance (LPEDA) for the period from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025.

Website Update Discussion:

The group briefly discussed the status of the RHA website, which is maintained under the Alliance Professional Services Agreement. While updates are needed, there's also consideration for a broader overhaul. Eva is currently prioritizing tasks outlined in her scope and will continue coordinating with the Alliance team to complete all necessary website updates.

8. Decision Items

a. Officer Election

Upon motion duly made by Director Craig and seconded by Director Yazzie, it was unanimously **RESOLVED**, that the officer elections, in the form provided to the Directors in advance of this meeting, is hereby approved.

9. Member Updates

a. Member at Large

Congratulations to Mark and Rock Creek, on all your efforts. It is fantastic project. You've done a wonderful job, you should be proud.

b. Town of Ignacio

There are \$2.7 million in grant funds on this project, on infrastructure portions going on the vertical builds, \$3.2 million, \$50,000 in Catalyst funds, significant funds in grant funding to move this project forward. Thank you to Pam and her team at HomesFund who have been helpful. It takes a team. The RHA has been helpful with Catalyst funds, existing projects hope to see more qualified buyers. There have been two teachers, another local, teachers and principals, others looking at it think its nice, using lots of local contractors, \$299k for 1024 sq. ft. and 399k for 1368 sq. ft., about \$290 per sq. ft. for vertical costs. Selling these at cost when all these things were funded through grant monies. Fifty to sixty years ago the county and cities built the infrastructure with tax money. Now we are coming full circle.

Phase 2: Fading West is pushing us into another production window, they will be able to take action in a matter of weeks. The change in the Prop 123 issue will help us out and it could happen by the end of the year. Eva offered to assist with a regional press release.

On the realtor side, one was willing to only charge an \$1,100 fee, the rest were submitting percentages. Through HomesFund we are trying to see if there are funds from CHFA (Colorado Housing and Finance Authority) that can cover the fees we are trying to move people into for that kind of program.

c. Town of Bayfield

Sarah Tober shared that she and Eva will meet with Scott Hahn, Interim Town Manager, later this month to discuss Proposition 123 initiatives and address the stalled traffic signal near Pine River Commons development. A key topic will be the traffic signal needed near the development, with input from the fire department and school district. Additional funding sources to help offset the \$700k gap, even with the \$1.2 million in Congressional Direct Spending, are being explored to support the signal's construction and help move the project forward.

d. City of Durango

The Lightner Creek development, located next to Twin Buttes, has an approved conceptual plan for 31 modular units, converting a mobile home park with estimated costs between \$80,000 and \$120,000 per unit. The developer, Tributary, is partnering with Elevation Land Trust and working through fire safety requirements, as the fire department has requested sprinklers similar to those required in Twin Buttes. Tributary has agreed to this, and the issue is expected to be resolved. At Rivergate, an RFQ will be issued within the next 60 days to explore development options. The North Main property, formerly the Boxcar project, has preliminary approval for 150 units and is under contract with the state agency DAP for workforce housing, with plans for a public-private partnership, though the process may take time. A new Community Development Manager has been hired, and the Residences at Durango are set to open soon. While rising costs and financial uncertainty are slowing some projects, efforts continue to keep things moving forward.

e. La Plata County

There is no update on the funding, as we are on hold until Scott Hahn and his team get organized, we will work through it all.

Legislative Updates: Regarding legislation that focuses on regional building codes for factory-built structures. This bill addresses concerns from Fading West, who want to avoid dealing with multiple codes. The goal is to create simpler, standardized codes for the region. Director Porter-Norton has supported amendments to this bill, which is a key initiative for the governor. Additionally, the YIGBY proposition would allow faith-based groups to build housing on their properties, potentially bypassing local county and municipal codes. Another issue being discussed is Construction Defects, which is aimed at middle-market housing but still lacks clarity, particularly on insurance company involvement. Finally, the Lodger Tax Bill has strong bipartisan support and will continue to monitor these all closely.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:35 pm MST. The next meeting is scheduled for March 13th, 2025 at 2:00 pm MST at the Durango Chamber and via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Signed: Patrick Vaughn, Chair: _____

Signed: Eva Henson, Secretary of Meeting: _____



Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata Co.

Stmnt of Assets, Liabilities & Net Assets

As of January 31, 2025

	TOTAL		
	AS OF JAN 31, 2025	AS OF JAN 31, 2024 (PY)	CHANGE
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Bank Accounts			
1000 TBK Operating Account	386,826.51	210,370.66	176,455.85
1025 Bank of CO Money Market	39,768.64		39,768.64
1040 Funds in Trust - Region 9 <i>(Transferred to BOC in February)</i>	200,000.00		200,000.00
Total Bank Accounts	\$626,595.15	\$210,370.66	\$416,224.49
Accounts Receivable			
1300 Accounts Receivable	73,800.00	0.00	73,800.00
Total Accounts Receivable	\$73,800.00	\$0.00	\$73,800.00
Other Current Assets			
1400 Prepaid Expenses	2,416.79	1,409.26	1,007.53
1510 Note Receivable - Bayfield Haga	500,000.00		500,000.00
1511 Note Receivable - Ignacio HA	235,000.00		235,000.00
1514 Interest Receivable - Bayf Haga	5,504.41		5,504.41
Total Other Current Assets	\$742,921.20	\$1,409.26	\$741,511.94
Total Current Assets	\$1,443,316.35	\$211,779.92	\$1,231,536.43
Other Assets			
1700 Lease Deposit	350.00	350.00	0.00
Total Other Assets	\$350.00	\$350.00	\$0.00
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,443,666.35	\$212,129.92	\$1,231,536.43
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	\$21,179.19	\$1,246.00	\$19,933.19
Other Current Liabilities			
2072 Accrued Expense - Loan Servicing	805.69		805.69
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$805.69	\$0.00	\$805.69
Total Current Liabilities	\$21,984.88	\$1,246.00	\$20,738.88
Total Liabilities	\$21,984.88	\$1,246.00	\$20,738.88
Equity			
2050 Beginning Net Assets	0.00	0.00	0.00
2053 Unrestricted Net Assets	239,212.45	222,265.23	16,947.22
2054 Reserved for Emergencies	9,290.41	6,576.41	2,714.00
2058 Restricted-Revolving Loan Fund	960,343.41		960,343.41
Net Income	212,835.20	-17,957.72	230,792.92
Total Equity	\$1,421,681.47	\$210,883.92	\$1,210,797.55
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$1,443,666.35	\$212,129.92	\$1,231,536.43

Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata Co.
Budget Performance YTD
January 2025

	Actual	Jan 2025 Budget YTD	% of Budget	Annual Budget	Notes
Income					
3000 Unrestricted Revenues				0	
3100 IGA Member Contribution Revenue				0	
3101 City of Durango	73,800	73,872	100%	73,872	
3102 La Plata County	140,819	140,819	100%	140,819	
3103 Town of Ignacio	4,617	4,617	100%	4,617	
3104 Town of Bayfield	11,543	11,543	100%	11,543	
Total 3100 IGA Member Contribution Revenue	\$ 230,779	\$ 230,851	100%	\$ 230,851	All contributions received by Feb 26
3118 Interest Income - RLF	813	1,385	59%	16,625	
3121 Interest Income - Bank Accounts	98	32	305%	360	
3122 Sponsorship/Donation		0		21,000	
3133 Fee For Service		0		7,000	
Total 3000 Unrestricted Revenues	\$ 231,690	\$ 232,268	100%	\$ 275,836	
Total Income	\$ 231,690	\$ 232,268	100%	\$ 275,836	
Gross Profit	\$ 231,690	\$ 232,268	100%	\$ 275,836	
Expenses					
4015 Client Loan Expenses	135	198	68%	2,375	
4080 Liability Insurance	101	133	76%	1,600	
4119 Marketing/Outreach	210			26,000	
4121 Summit-Coordination	2,500			0	
Total 4119 Marketing/Outreach	\$ 2,710	\$ 2,710	100%	\$ 26,000	
4140 Office Expense	341	360	95%	2,520	annual PO box renewal
4315 Professional Services					
4005 Prof Serv Audit Fees	0	0		9,200	
4322 Prof'l Services- Legal Fees	140	417	34%	5,000	
4323 Prof'l Services- Website	0	417	0%	5,000	
4394 Prof'l Services-Hsng Strategy	10,000	10,000	100%	120,000	
4397 Prof'l Services - RHA Director	3,073	3,750	82%	40,000	
4398 Prof'l Services - Admin Fee	1,993	1,993	100%	23,920	
Total 4315 Professional Services	\$ 15,207	\$ 16,577	92%	\$ 203,120	
4340 Rent	360	360	100%	4,320	
4379 Training		0		4,000	
6240 Miscellaneous		87	0%	1,040	
Total Expenses	\$ 18,854	\$ 20,425	92%	\$ 244,975	
Net Operating Income	\$ 212,836	\$ 211,843	100%	\$ 30,861	
Other Income					
5020 Grants - Inkind	12,293	15,000	82%	144,500	
Total Other Income	\$ 12,293	\$ 15,000	82%	\$ 144,500	
Other Expenses					
6020 Grant Project Exp - In Kind	12,293	15,000	82%	144,500	
Total Other Expenses	\$ 12,293	\$ 15,000	82%	\$ 144,500	
Net Other Income	\$ 0	\$ 0		\$ 0	
Net Income	\$ 212,836	\$ 211,843	100%	\$ 30,861	

Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata Co.

Revenue & Expenses by Project

January 2025

	CATALYST RLF	SUMMIT	UNRESTRICTED	TOTAL
Income				
3000 Unrestricted Revenues				\$0
3100 IGA Member Contribution Revenue			230,779	\$230,779
3118 Interest Income - RLF	813			\$813
3121 Interest Income - Bank Accounts	98			\$98
Total 3000 Unrestricted Revenues	910		230,779	\$231,689
Total Income	\$910	\$0	\$230,779	\$231,689
GROSS PROFIT	\$910	\$0	\$230,779	\$231,689
Expenses				
4015 Client Loan Expenses	135			\$135
4080 Liability Insurance			101	\$101
4119 Marketing/Outreach		2,500	210	\$2,710
4140 Office Expense			341	\$341
4315 Professional Services				\$0
4322 Prof'l Services- Legal Fees			140	\$140
4394 Prof'l Services-Hsng Strategy			10,000	\$10,000
4397 Prof'l Services - RHA Director			3,073	\$3,073
4398 Prof'l Services - Admin Fee			1,993	\$1,993
Total 4315 Professional Services			15,207	\$15,207
4340 Rent			360	\$360
Total Expenses	\$135	\$2,500	\$16,219	\$18,854
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$775	\$ -2,500	\$214,560	\$212,835
Other Income	\$0	\$0	\$12,293	\$12,293
Other Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$12,293	\$12,293
NET OTHER INCOME	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
NET INCOME	\$775	\$ -2,500	\$214,560	\$212,835

Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata Co.

Revenue & Expense Transaction Detail

January 2025

DATE	TRANSACTION TYPE	NUM	NAME	CLASS	MEMO/DESCRIPTION	SPLIT	AMOUNT	BALANCE
Ordinary Income/Expenses								
Income								
3000 Unrestricted Revenues								
3100 IGA Member Contribution Revenue								
3101 City of Durango								
01/14/2025	Invoice	142	City of Durango	Unrestricted	Annual RHA Support - 2025 Contribution	Accounts Receivable:Accounts Receivable - Other	73,800.00	73,800.00
Total for 3101 City of Durango							\$73,800.00	
3102 La Plata County								
01/14/2025	Invoice	143	La Plata County	Unrestricted	Annual RHA Support - 2025 Contribution	Accounts Receivable:Accounts Receivable - Other	140,819.00	140,819.00
Total for 3102 La Plata County							\$140,819.00	
3103 Town of Ignacio								
01/14/2025	Invoice	145	Town of Ignacio	Unrestricted	Annual RHA Support - 2025 Contribution	Accounts Receivable:Accounts Receivable - Other	4,617.00	4,617.00
Total for 3103 Town of Ignacio							\$4,617.00	
3104 Town of Bayfield								
01/14/2025	Invoice	144	Town of Bayfield	Unrestricted	Annual RHA Support - 2025 Contribution	Accounts Receivable:Accounts Receivable - Other	11,543.00	11,543.00
Total for 3104 Town of Bayfield							\$11,543.00	
Total for 3100 IGA Member Contribution Revenue							\$230,779.00	
3118 Interest Income - RLF								
01/31/2025	Journal Entry	25002		Catalyst RLF	mo interest accrued thru mo end	-Split-	812.50	812.50
Total for 3118 Interest Income - RLF							\$812.50	
3121 Interest Income - Bank Accounts								
01/31/2025	Deposit			Catalyst RLF		1025 Bank of CO Money Market	97.72	97.72
Total for 3121 Interest Income - Bank Accounts							\$97.72	
Total for 3000 Unrestricted Revenues							\$231,689.22	
Total for Income							\$231,689.22	
Expenses								
4015 Client Loan Expenses								
01/31/2025	Journal Entry	25002		Catalyst RLF	mo accrued loan servicing fee to Region 9	-Split-	135.42	135.42
Total for 4015 Client Loan Expenses							\$135.42	
4080 Liability Insurance								
01/31/2025	Journal Entry	25001		Unrestricted	monthly liab insurance expense	-Split-	101.02	101.02
Total for 4080 Liability Insurance							\$101.02	
4119 Marketing/Outreach								
01/23/2025	Bill	001	Colorado Mountain Housing Coalition	Unrestricted	2025 affiliate membership	2000 Accounts Payable	210.00	210.00
Total for 4119 Marketing/Outreach							\$210.00	
4121 Summit-Coordination								
01/31/2025	Bill	2756	LPEDA	Summit	summit coord 25%	2000 Accounts Payable	2,500.00	2,500.00
Total for 4121 Summit-Coordination							\$2,500.00	
Total for 4119 Marketing/Outreach with sub-accounts							\$2,710.00	
4140 Office Expense								
01/31/2025	Bill	2756	LPEDA	Unrestricted	annual po box renewal	2000 Accounts Payable	256.00	256.00
01/31/2025	Journal Entry	25001		Unrestricted	mo share triple net Jan 2025	-Split-	85.00	341.00
Total for 4140 Office Expense							\$341.00	
4315 Professional Services								
4322 Prof'l Services- Legal Fees								

Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata Co.

Revenue & Expense Transaction Detail

January 2025

DATE	TRANSACTION TYPE	NUM	NAME	CLASS	MEMO/DESCRIPTION	SPLIT	AMOUNT	BALANCE
01/31/2025	Bill	4438	Law Office of David Liberman	Unrestricted	summit speakers agrmnt review	2000 Accounts Payable	140.00	140.00
Total for 4322 Prof'l Services- Legal Fees							\$140.00	
4394 Prof'l Services-Hsng Strategy								
01/01/2025	Bill		LPEDA	Unrestricted	mo contract for 2025	2000 Accounts Payable	10,000.00	10,000.00
Total for 4394 Prof'l Services-Hsng Strategy							\$10,000.00	
4397 Prof'l Services - RHA Director								
01/31/2025	Bill	1798	LPEDA-Grant match	Unrestricted	Jan DOLA capacity match	2000 Accounts Payable	3,073.25	3,073.25
Total for 4397 Prof'l Services - RHA Director							\$3,073.25	
4398 Prof'l Services - Admin Fee								
01/01/2025	Bill		LPEDA	Unrestricted	mo admin 2025	2000 Accounts Payable	1,993.33	1,993.33
Total for 4398 Prof'l Services - Admin Fee							\$1,993.33	
Total for 4315 Professional Services							\$15,206.58	
4340 Rent								
01/31/2025	Journal Entry	25001		Unrestricted	expense 12/30 rent pmt for Jan 2025	-Split-	360.00	360.00
Total for 4340 Rent							\$360.00	
Total for Expenses							\$18,854.02	
Net Ordinary Income							\$212,835.20	
Other Income/Expense								
Other Income								
5020 Grants - Inkind								
01/31/2025	Bill	1798	LPEDA-Grant match	Unrestricted	DOLA grant rev last mo	2000 Accounts Payable	12,293.00	12,293.00
Total for 5020 Grants - Inkind							\$12,293.00	
Total for Other Income							\$12,293.00	
Other Expense								
6020 Grant Project Exp - In Kind								
01/31/2025	Bill	1798	LPEDA-Grant match	Unrestricted	DOLA grant exp last mo	2000 Accounts Payable	12,293.00	12,293.00
Total for 6020 Grant Project Exp - In Kind							\$12,293.00	
Total for Other Expense							\$12,293.00	
Net Other Income							\$0.00	
Net Income							\$212,835.20	



annual report 24



Content



Letter from RHA Board Chair	02
About the RHA	03
Housing Shortage in La Plata County	05
2024 Achievements	07
Coming Home: 1st Inaugural Housing Summit	07
2024 Strategic Plan	07
3-Year Workforce Housing Strategic Investment Plan	08
DOLA Local Planning Capacity Grant	08
Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund	08
Rental Assistance Program	08
S.T.E.E.R. Committee	09
Financial Highlights	09
2025 Outlook	10

Welcome



PATRICK VAUGHN

**RHA Board
Chair**

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As 2024 comes to a close, it's time to reflect on the significant strides we have made together in addressing our region's housing challenges. This year has been one of growth, collaboration, and meaningful impact. Guided by our shared commitment to ensuring everyone in our community has access to safe, affordable, and attainable housing, the work we have accomplished reflects our dedication and the strength of our partnerships.

The challenges are great, but the Regional Housing Alliance (RHA) is positioned to make a real difference. As a multi-jurisdictional housing authority formed under state law, the RHA unites the Town of Bayfield, City of Durango, Town of Ignacio, and La Plata County. Together, representatives from these jurisdictions have prioritized housing our local workforce—the people who make this place tick.

In November 2024, La Plata County Voters overwhelmingly approved Ballot Issue 1A, authorizing the county to direct up to 70% of the revenue from its lodgers tax toward affordable housing and childcare. The passage of the ballot question means the county has discretion to use an estimated \$700,000 in any number of ways related to workforce housing and child care. While this funding will help advance workforce housing projects, a significant gap remains. The need for consistent and dependable local funding

has become clear, as state and federal agencies prioritize funding projects that demonstrate real local contributions. These layers of funding are essential to addressing this pressing issue.

Recognizing this, the RHA board developed a strategic plan for 2024 and beyond. A key focus of this plan is identifying and establishing a local funding source to leverage state and federal resources. In the coming year, we will engage the community to explore how this can be achieved and ensure that our efforts reflect the needs and priorities of those we serve.

The RHA's focus remains on driving tangible solutions, fostering collaboration, and building a future where housing insecurity is no longer a barrier to opportunity. Together, we can create a recognizable difference and strengthen the foundation of our community. On behalf of the Regional Housing Alliance Board, thank you for being an integral part of this journey. Your trust and partnership inspire us to reach even greater heights in the years to come.

With gratitude,

Patrick Vaughn

About the RHA

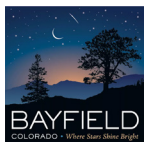
The **Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County** is a Multi-Jurisdictional Regional Housing Authority (RHA) created in 2004 by an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between La Plata County, City of Durango, Town of Bayfield, and Town of Ignacio. The RHA is governed by a 9-member Board of Directors with two representatives from each of the parties to the IGA and one at large member appointed by the Board.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the RHA is to facilitate and support the preservation, rehabilitation, and development of appropriate affordable/attainable housing for the workforce essential to the long-term economic sustainability and resiliency of La Plata County and its communities.

OUR PURPOSE

The RHA's purpose is to cultivate and sustain communities through innovative partnerships and entrepreneurial housing programs.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Patrick Vaughn, Chair
Member at Large



Marsha Porter-Norton, Vice-Chair
La Plata County, Commissioner



Mark Garcia, Board Treasurer
Town of Ignacio, Town Manager



Clark Craig
Town of Ignacio, Mayor



Kevin Hall
La Plata County, Deputy County Manager



Kathleen Sickles
Town of Bayfield, Town Manager



Brenna Morlan
Town of Bayfield, Trustee



Mike French
City of Durango, Chief Prosperity Officer



Gilda Yazzie
City of Durango, City Councilor



Housing Shortage in La Plata County

In 2021, Root Policy completed a five-county housing needs assessment. Although the assessment provides a snapshot, the study did not have access to post-COVID housing data and could not provide the most accurate information on current housing needs in La Plata County. In the last two years, the local housing markets have become increasingly more unaffordable. The RHA and its core partners are currently funding an update on countywide housing needs to be completed in early 2025.

The RHA, in partnership with the La Plata Economic Development Alliance (Economic Alliance), issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to identify gaps between our current housing market and local workforce housing needs to assist with a strategic direction for our local multi-jurisdictional housing authority and to adjust other initiatives to support potential housing developments and programs intended to serve the needs of La Plata County Workforce in 2025 and beyond.

The Economic Alliance is working on several workforce housing initiatives in La Plata County. These efforts include staffing and building capacity for the Regional Housing Alliance, managing a three-year investment strategy to increase workforce housing, and managing the Catalyst Fund, a predevelopment initiative housing trust fund aimed at having a robust development pipeline of workforce housing projects in the region.

Data from this assessment will help to inform project decisions (housing types, size, quantity, target demographics, price point, and location relative to jobs) and access to Proposition 123 funding to meet the community needs based on income ranges. The RHA and Economic Alliance seek to confirm which product types are currently needed, and how many are projected to be needed in the next 5 years based on our current inventory and trending local demographics.



2019-2024 Market Comparison in La Plata County

	MEDIAN SALE PRICE	CLOSED SALES
2019	\$397,750	1136
2020	\$449,000	1434
2021	\$545,000	1390
2022	\$617,500	1060
2023	\$660,450	842
2024	\$675,827	858



Note: Totals do not include Mobile Homes sold without land. This information is provided by the Multiple Listing Service of the Durango Area Association of Realtors, Inc. and is based on MLS Statistics only.

Source: Durango Area Association of Realtors, Annual Trends

La Plata County Affordability Threshold (2-person household, 2024)

<p><i>Income and affordability levels are shown for a household size of two</i></p>	
<p>"extremely" low income</p> <p>< 30% AMI</p>	<p>Income < \$26,550 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: < 664/mo.</p>
<p>"very" low income</p> <p>30-50% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$26,550-\$44,200 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$664-\$1,105/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: <\$75,348</p>
<p>"low" income</p> <p>50-80% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$44,200-\$70,750 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$1,105-\$1,769/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: \$75,348-\$187,803</p>
<p>"median" to "moderate" income</p> <p>80-120% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$70,750-\$106,080 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$1,769-\$2,652/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: \$187,803-\$337,638</p>

Note: AMIs shown in the figure reflect a 2-person household in La Plata County. Affordable home price shows the Economic Development Alliance Home Ownership Reference Charts, which calculate the affordable homeownership (1) a 30-Year Fixed Mortgage Interest Rate of 7.06%, (2) ability to contribute 33% of income to housing costs, (3) a 3% down payment; and (4) ancillary costs (property taxes, insurance, HOA payments, etc.) are estimated using a HomesFund formula.

Source: HUD Income Limits and Root Policy Research.

2024 Achievements

COMING HOME: 1ST INAUGURAL HOUSING SUMMIT

The RHA hosted the Coming Home: Southwest Housing Summit on April 30, 2024 to facilitate insightful discussions, networking opportunities, and expert panels on all things housing in the Southwest region.

The inaugural event boasted 125 attendees that included housing experts, policymakers, advocates, and community housing leaders, including members of Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA), Housing Colorado, and Elevation Community Land Trust. The day produced insightful discussions and presentations that explored innovative strategies and collaborative efforts to advance affordable housing initiatives in the Southwest.

Presentations included The Future of Housing Supply, Establishing Revenue Streams for Local Housing Trust Funds, and Proposition 123. Additionally, expert panels were coordinated to present on Mobile Home Park Preservation and Innovation as well as Housing Innovation in the Region.

The RHA encourages developers, government employees, elected officials, real estate professionals, and community members to mark their calendars for the **2nd Annual Southwest Housing Summit on April 29, 2025.**

Last year’s sponsors included:

CHFA, Colorado Health Foundation, First Southwest Bank, Durango Area Association of Realtors (DAAR), The Boettcher Foundation, and Project Moxie, who have not only demonstrated commitment to affordable housing resources but have also contributed to a meaningful dialogue on one of the most pressing issues facing our community today.

2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

The RHA received a facilitated board retreat and a strategic plan was created through technical assistance provided by the Colorado Division of Housing (DOH) Affordable Housing Toolkit for Local Officials program. This grant and associated technical assistance helped the RHA to further define the La Plata County-wide workforce housing needs along with housing affordability gaps and how to best combat the burgeoning need. The RHA is well-positioned to lead the area in workforce and attainable housing solutions and this strategic plan will serve as a roadmap to the dedicated board members and associated partner jurisdictions for years to come.

RHA’s Primary Value	Current Priorities & Areas of Focus
Convener & Hub for Regional Collaboration Address Funding Needs Capacity for Regional Housing Work Pursue/Coordinate Opportunities (TA, grants, etc) Elevate Awareness & Support for Housing Enable Public Private Partnerships	Build on Current Collaboration Funding + Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>State and Federal Grants</i>• <i>Dedicated Local Funding</i>• <i>Other sources / programs / support</i> Enable Improvements to local policies Tax exemption authority

*This picture can be found in the strategic plan [here](#).

3-YEAR WORKFORCE HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE (APRIL 2024)

The La Plata County 3-Year Workforce Housing Investment Strategy was originally published in 2022. While significant achievements have been made in the last two years, updates to the strategy were made in 2024 to reflect the significant changes to the current funding environment. These changes include the consideration of Proposition 123 funding, establishing a local housing trust fund, and includes updated metrics tracking the success of implemented strategies from the plan.

DOLA LOCAL PLANNING CAPACITY GRANT

The Town of Ignacio on behalf of the RHA and the four government partners was awarded \$192,400, with a 20% (\$48,000) local match requirement, through the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Local Capacity Grant as a direct initiative of Prop 123 funding and project fast tracking. Grant goals are to increase the capacity of La Plata County's four jurisdictions to implement and meet the affordable housing goals of Proposition 123 and assist the RHA become aligned in their goals and strategies to meet the housing needs of their communities. The one-time DOLA funds will be used to create infrastructure and build capacity.

CATALYST REVOLVING LOAN FUND

In May, the RHA received nearly \$1M from the Durango Industrial Development Foundation (DIDF) that was used to create a low-interest housing catalyst revolving loan fund to support local workforce housing initiatives.

The design of this low-interest revolving loan fund program was created to stimulate workforce housing projects already permitted and in the construction financing stage of a project. The early-stage costs to development including infrastructure and short-term construction financing are critical to the beginning phases of development but are often underfunded or funded at a high interest rate, creating a roadblock that prevents projects from getting underway or for the housing to be sold at below market rates.

Over the summer, the Housing Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund initiative was developed by the Economic Alliance, who has administered the fund on behalf of the RHA. The Economic Alliance leveraged the existing Catalyst Fund structure and framework that has a committee of community housing and finance leaders to evaluate applications based on a rubric and make recommendations for funding.

In 2024, the RHA was able to fully lend out the loan fund to two area workforce and attainable housing projects, Pine River Commons (Bayfield) and Rock Creek Townhomes (Ignacio). These projects are currently under construction and will create more than 110 affordable housing units for the community.



RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Since 2022, the Workforce Rental Assistance Micro-loan program—a partnership between The Economic Alliance, First Southwest Bank and RHA—has provided accessible, low-cost micro-loans to help renters cover these expenses, including first and last month's rent as well as security deposits. With \$71,588 loaned to date and \$33,460 still available, the program remains a resource for those in need of housing support. For more information visit fswb.bank/personal/rental-assistance-micro-loans

S.T.E.E.R. COMMITTEE

The Stakeholder Taskforce for Evaluation and Endorsement of Revenue-streams (S.T.E.E.R.) Committee was seated and began meeting in February 2024. They are tasked with deciding if a public funding source is viable; answering what source, when, and how it would be pursued. They would also identify educational opportunities and provide some feedback on how the fund could be administered.

Although the state passed Proposition 123, creating millions in new resources, the demand for these funds remains substantial, especially now that American Rescue Plan Act funds have been exhausted. The first few application rounds were oversubscribed 10 to 1. As a result, communities are recognizing the need to provide funding for projects at the local level to make their state applications for funding more competitive.

In June 2024, The S.T.E.E.R. Committee submitted a letter to request the Board of County Commissioners to consider the reallocation of county lodgers tax to fund attainable housing initiatives. The S.T.E.E.R. committee identified this as a significant opportunity to secure a short-term, sustainable funding source for RHA operations. This funding will enable the RHA to continue its essential work, supporting the development of housing solutions that are critical for the well-being and prosperity of our community.

In November 2024, La Plata County Voters overwhelmingly approved Ballot Issue 1A, authorizing the county to direct up to 70% of the revenue from its lodgers tax away from tourism and marketing and toward affordable housing and childcare. The passage of the ballot question gives the county discretion to allocate the collected funds in various ways related to housing and childcare. To date, \$595,000 has been collected.

2024 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS



REVENUE

Beginning Balance	\$ 1,237,444
Member Contributions	\$ 230,850
Grants	\$ 144,500
Loan Fund Interest	\$ 16,985
Program Fee	\$ 28,000
Total Revenue	\$ 420,335

EXPENDITURES

Project Cost	\$ 144,500
Project Cost Match	\$ 40,000
Alliance Admin	\$ 204,975
Total Expenditures	\$ 389,475
Ending Balance	\$ 1,268,304

2025 Outlook

STRENGTHENING FOUNDATIONS, EXPANDING CAPACITY

As we step into 2025, we carry a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to creating sustainable, impactful housing solutions for our communities. This year represents a pivotal period of growth, collaboration, and focused effort as we partner with Eva Henson, our new Contract Director from Soluvera LLC, to build capacity and infrastructure for the Regional Housing Alliance utilizing the one-time DOLA Local Planning Capacity Grant funds.

Our shared vision is to empower the RHA to more effectively address the housing needs of our communities. By prioritizing strategic planning, improving operational efficiencies, and embracing innovative practices, we are setting a robust foundation for long-term success.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS FOR 2025



Strategic Leadership

Strengthening leadership capabilities to guide RHA's vision and ensure effective day-to-day operations.



Community Engagement & Advocacy

Building trust and collaboration with communities while advocating for housing policies that reflect local needs.



Fundraising & Resource Development

Securing diverse funding streams to enhance financial sustainability and expand RHA's impact.



2nd Annual Southwest Housing Summit

Creating a platform for stakeholders to exchange knowledge, foster collaboration, and explore innovative solutions to regional housing challenges.



DOLA Local Capacity Grant Activities & Deliverables

Leveraging grant resources to implement capacity-building initiatives that enhance operational effectiveness.



Organizational Management

Ensuring RHA operates with efficiency, transparency, and accountability to maximize its impact.

Looking Ahead with Optimism

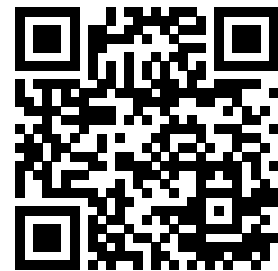
The challenges we face are complex, but our optimism is grounded in the strength of our partnerships and the unwavering dedication of our Board of Directors. Together with Eva Henson, the Economic Alliance team, and key stakeholders, we are confident in our ability to overcome obstacles, seize new opportunities, and fulfill the RHA's mission of making quality housing accessible to all. 2025 is not just a year for maintaining progress—it is a year for transformation, innovation, and measurable impact.



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RHA

Visit the RHA website: laplatahousing.colorado.gov

Join a monthly RHA Board Meeting held on the 2nd Thursday of the month between 2-4pm. You can attend virtually or in person at 2301 Main Ave, Durango, CO. More information available on our website.



GET IN TOUCH

PO Box 2445
Durango, CO 81302
(970) 828-4663
laplatahousing.colorado.gov



REGIONAL
HOUSING
ALLIANCE





Root Policy Research

789 N Sherman St., Ste 360
Denver, CO 80203
www.rootpolicy.com

Executive Summary **La Plata County** **Housing Needs** **Assessment**

PREPARED FOR:

Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County

Report:

2/28/2025

Report Organization:

- I. Socioeconomic Framework
- II. Housing Market Trends
- III. Housing Needs Analysis
- IV. Community Engagement Findings

The La Plata county HNA was drafted prior to the release of guidance from the State on compliance with SB24-174; however the content of this HNA is aligned with its legislative intent.

Housing Balance

A balanced housing stock accommodates a full “life cycle community”—where there are affordable housing options for each stage of life from career starters through centenarians—which in turn supports the local economy and contributes to La Plata County’s community culture.

Introduction

The Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) was commissioned by the Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County (RHA) to better understand housing needs in La Plata County—including market changes since the 2020 regional assessment.

The results of this HNA will assist the RHA in developing strategies to help address housing needs throughout the county.

Why Work to Address Housing Needs?

- Research consistently shows that a constrained housing market negatively impacts economic growth while stable and affordable housing are central to the health of individuals, families, and communities.
- Households living in stable housing are more likely to spend their incomes in the local economy through direct spending on goods and services.
- Housing investments that allow workers to live near their place of employment can reduce the impacts of traffic and commuting.
- Affordable housing is key to providing high quality public services as many essential workers (e.g., doctors, nurses, and teachers) often leave communities that do not have an adequate supply of housing in their price range.
- Generational wealth from affordable home ownership is a major contributor to positive outcomes for children. As housing and equity are passed down, young adults have the option to remain in the community and have families of their own.
- Housing investments and stable housing environments also bolster local revenue, increase job readiness, help renters transition to homeownership, lower public costs of eviction and foreclosure, and increase the economic and educational opportunities for children.

Defining Affordability

Affordability is often linked to the idea that households should not be cost burdened from housing costs. A cost burdened household is one in which housing costs—rent or mortgage payment, taxes, and utilities—consumes more than 30% of monthly gross income. The 30% proportion is derived from mortgage lending requirements and follows flexibility for households to manage other expenses (e.g., childcare, health care, transportation, food costs).

Eligibility for housing programs is determined by where a household's income falls within specific brackets determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Brackets are set by Area Median Incomes (AMI). The AMI encompasses all of La Plata County (there is not an AMI for each individual municipality).

Figure ES-1.

La Plata County Regional HUD AMI Thresholds (for 2-person households), 2024

<p><i>Income and affordability levels are shown for a household size of two</i></p> <p>"extremely" low income</p> <p>< 30% AMI</p>	<p>Income < \$26,550 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: < \$664/mo.</p>
<p>"very" low income</p> <p>30-50% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$26,550-\$44,200 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$664 - \$1,105/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: < \$75,348</p>
<p>"low" income</p> <p>50-80% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$44,200 - \$70,750 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$1,105 - \$1,769/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: \$75,348 - \$187,803</p>
<p>"median" to "moderate" income</p> <p>80-120% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$70,750 - \$106,080 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$1,769 - \$2,652/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: \$187,803 - \$337,638</p>

Note: AMIs shown in the figure reflect a 2-person household in La Plata County. Affordable home price shows the Economic Development Alliance Home Ownership Reference Charts, which calculate the affordable homeownership (1) a 30-Year Fixed Mortgage Interest Rate of 7.06%, (2) ability to contribute 33% of income to housing costs, (3) a 3% down payment; and (4) ancillary costs (property taxes, insurance, HOA payments, etc.) are estimated using a HomesFund formula.

Source: HUD Income Limits, Economic Development Alliance Home Ownership Reference Charts and Root Policy Research

Socioeconomic Trends

Economic growth outpacing housing supply; residents are aging and incomes are rising, but poverty disproportionately impacts certain groups.

Population and households: La Plata County's population post Covid has steadily grown following a period of little to no growth between 2018 and 2020. The county's senior population (over 65) is projected to increase from 20% of the population share in 2020 to 26% in 2050.

Income and poverty. Income shifts over the last decade show an increase in the number (and proportion) of households earning more than \$100,000 per year. This shift reflects income gains for some, coupled with an influx of higher income residents. Poverty in La Plata County is moderate at just over 11%, though some resident groups are disproportionately impacted by poverty.

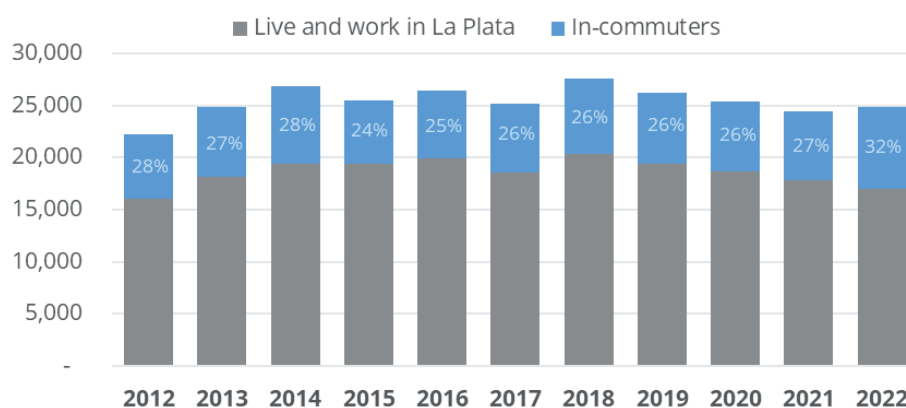
Economic profile. Job growth outpaced housing production over the past decade, leading to an undersupply of housing overall.

In-commuting as a percentage of primary jobs was fairly consistent between 2012 and 2021 (averaging about 27%), but may be on the rise, according to 2022 data, which shows nearly one-third (32%) of workers commuting from elsewhere. The most common counties where workers are commuting from are San Juan County in New Mexico (8%), Montezuma County (4%) and Archuleta County (2%).

Figure ES-2.
Employment and
Commuting
Patterns, La Plata
County

Source:

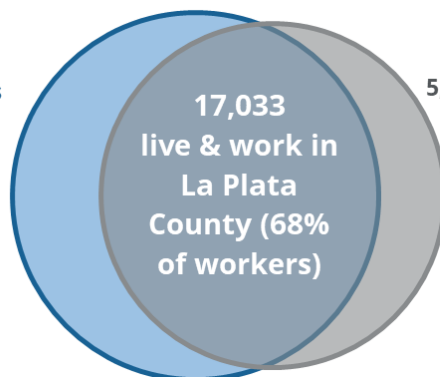
U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal
Employer-Household Dynamics
(LEHD) and Root Policy Research.



7,836 workers are in-commuters

**Originations: Where do La Plata
County workers live?**

La Plata County (68%)
San Juan County, NM (8%)
Montezuma County (4%)
Archuleta County (2%)
El Paso County (1%)
Montrose County (1%)



5,841 residents are outcommuters

**Destinations: Where do La Plata
County residents work?**

La Plata County (75%)
San Juan County, NM (3%)
Montezuma County (2%)
Mesa County (2%)
Denver County (2%)
Other Colorado Counties (6%)

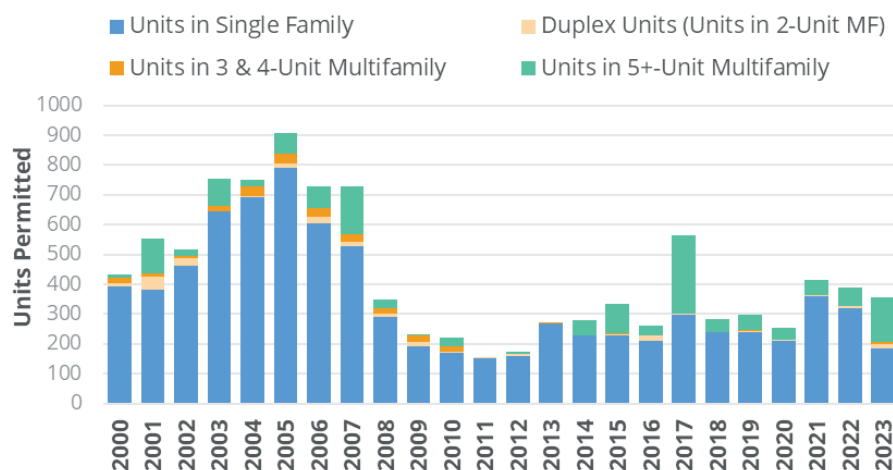
Housing Stock and Market Trends

Steep price and rent increases outpace inflation. Single family detached is the dominant housing type, though multifamily production is up (concentrated in Durango).

Housing stock and production. The majority of La Plata County's housing stock is single-family detached products—however, recent permitting has shown an increase in multi-family housing types (concentrated in Durango).

The vast majority of La Plata's housing stock—82%—is occupied by permanent resident households. Of the remaining 18%, about half of units are vacant for “recreational, seasonal, or occasional use”—including short-term rentals.

Figure ES-3. Units Permitted, La Plata County



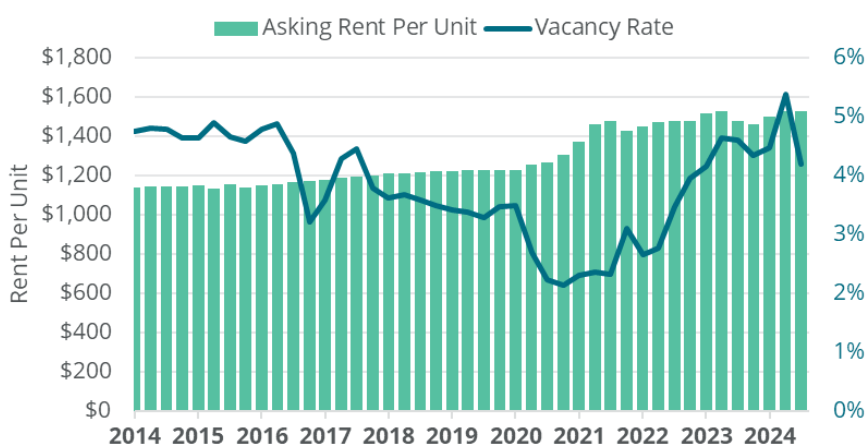
Source: U.S. Census Bureau's State of the Cities Data Systems (SOCDS) and Root Policy Research.

Since 2012, job growth has outpaced new housing production—in other words, housing supply is not keeping up with economic growth, creating additional pressure on the housing market and contributing to higher in-commuting.

Rental market. The median rent paid by renters, accounting for the use of regulated affordable units and vouchers is about \$1,350 (as of 2022). The current asking rent of market-rate units is about \$1,500 (median as of 2024). The increase in median rent outpaced income growth, compressing affordability for current renters.

Rental units in the county have increasingly shifted to higher price points over the last decade, resulting in a sharp decline in units affordable to low- and middle-income households. Just since 2017, the number of units priced below \$1,000 per month dropped by 1,300 units. Rental units priced over \$2,000 per month tripled and comprise about one third of the rental stock.

Figure ES-4. Asking Rent and Rental Vacancy Rate.

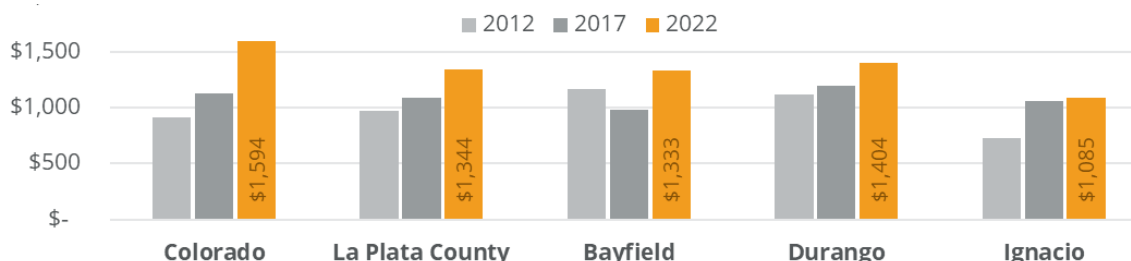


Source: Costar and Root Policy Research.

Housing Stock and Market Trends (continued)...

Steep price and rent increases outpace inflation. Single family detached is the dominant housing type, though multifamily production is up (concentrated in Durango).

Figure ES-5. Median Rent Paid (by Community), 2012, 2017, 2022



Source: 2012, 2017, and 2022 American Community Survey (ACS).

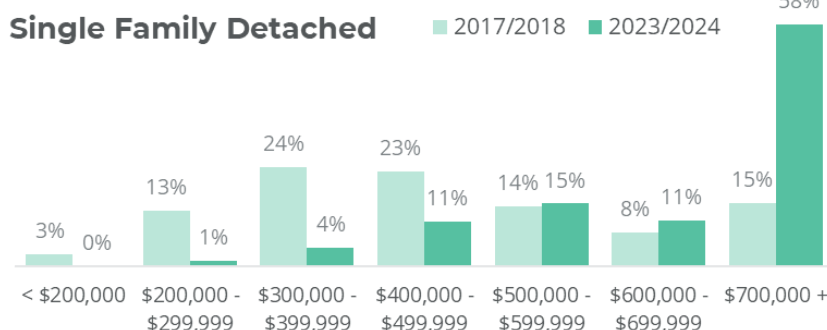
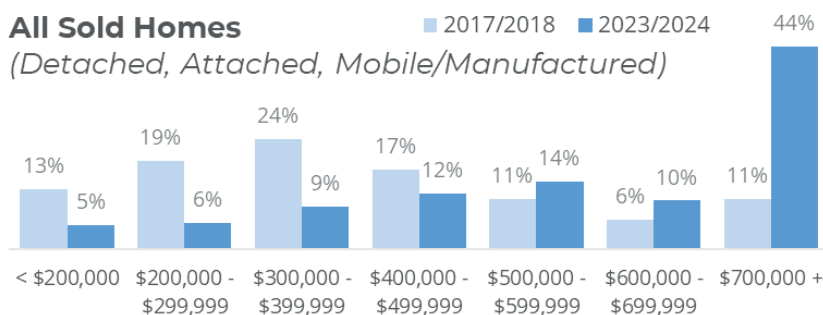
Homeownership and sale market.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of La Plata County households own their home. Bayfield has the highest homeownership rate at 74% and Durango has the lowest at 55%.

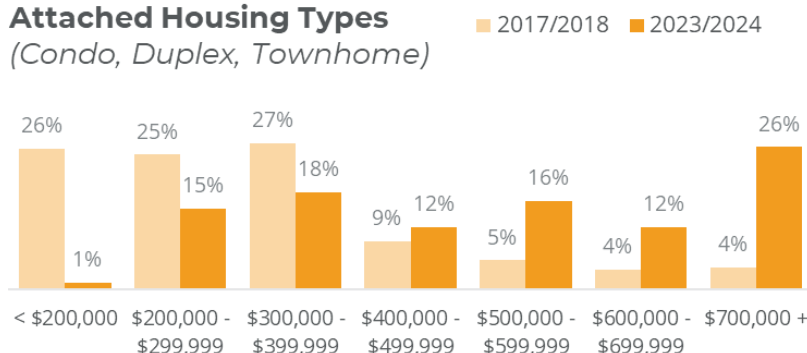
The median home *value* in the county (including all home types) was about \$666,000¹ in 2024—up 55% in the past five years and more than double the 2010 value.

Figure ES-6 shows the price distribution (by product type) of homes listed or sold in La Plata County in 2017/18 compared to 2023/23. Sales below \$500,000 have dramatically declined in recent years, comprising only 32% of homes sales in the county in 2023/24, down from 73% in 2017/2018.

Figure ES-6. Distribution of Homes by Sale Price.



Attached Housing Types
(Condo, Duplex, Townhome)



Note: Source: MLS and Root Policy Research.

¹ This median value is in line with data from the Durango Association of Realtors which reports the 2024 median sale price as \$675,827 (see <https://durangorealtor.com/market-stats/> for details and for regular updates).

Housing Affordability & Needs (continued)...

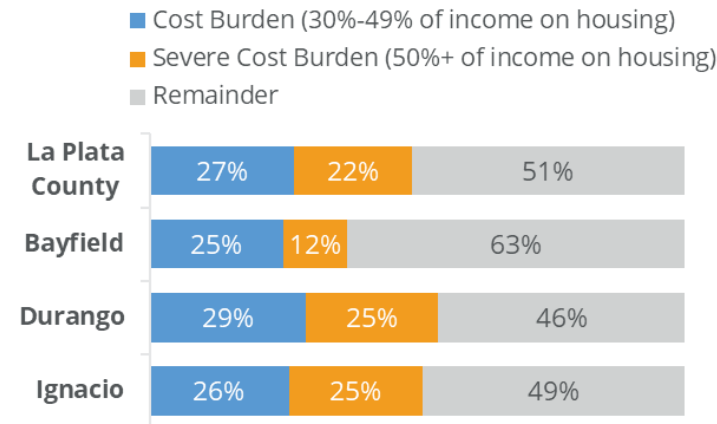
Changes in affordability, mismatches in supply and demand, and cost burden.

Affordable rental inventory. Income-restricted housing plays an important role in providing affordable rents to La Plata residents and workers with low to moderate incomes. There are a total of 808 income-restricted rental units across 19 properties in La Plata County.

Cost Burden. Thirty percent (30%) of all La Plata County households are cost burdened (even after accounting for income-restricted inventory). Rates of cost burden are more prominent among renters (see Figure ES-7): about half (49%) are either cost burdened (27%) or severely cost burdened (22%).

Over the past 10 years, the impact of cost burden has expanded to higher income renters than in the past. Recent data trends show substantial increases in the proportion of renters who are considered cost burdened in the \$35,000 to \$75,000 income bracket.

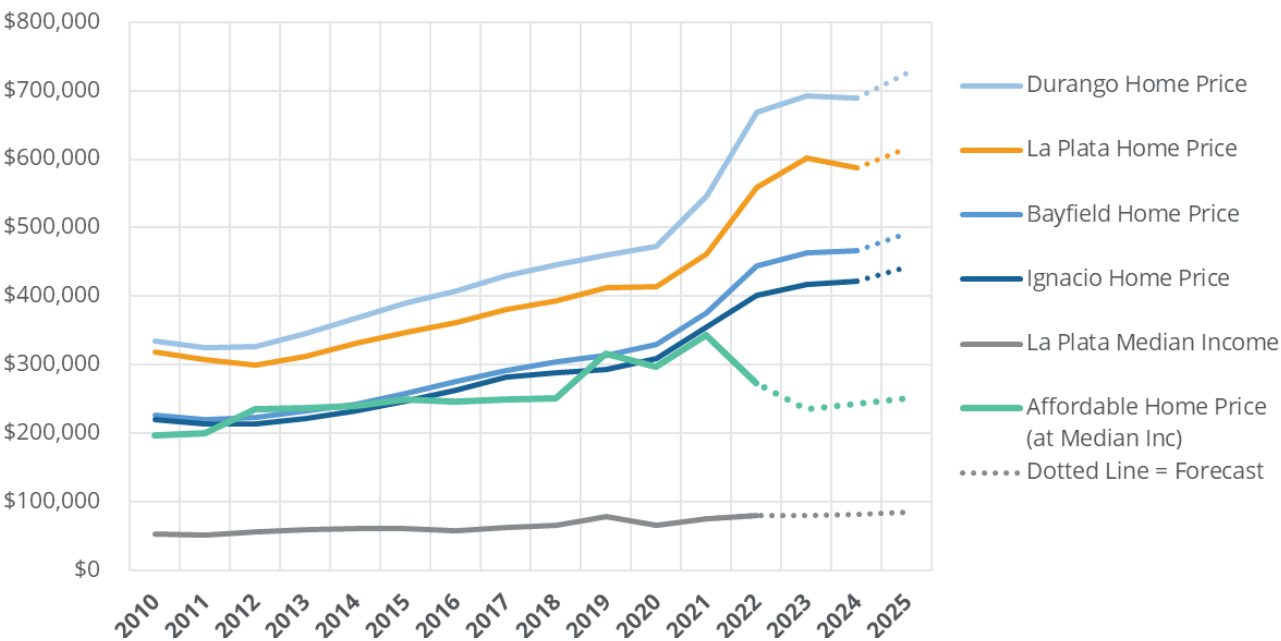
Figure ES-7. Renter Cost Burden



Source: 2022 ACS and Root Policy Research.

Changes in affordability: Increases in both rent and home prices exceeded the change in median incomes—compressing affordability for renters and buyers. Rising interest rates exacerbated affordability challenges for buyers.

Figure ES-8. Home Values vs Affordable Prices, 2010-2024



Notes: Purchasing power assumes that buyers spend 30% of their income on housing and have a 30-year mortgage with a 10% down payment. Ancillary costs (e.g., property taxes, insurance, HOA payments) are assumed to collectively account for 30% of monthly housing costs.

Source: Zillow Analytics, US Census Bureau, and Freddie Mac.

Housing Affordability & Needs

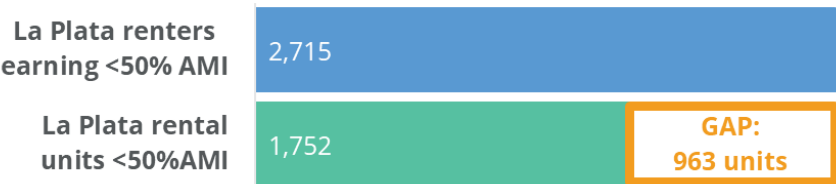
Changes in affordability, mismatches in supply and demand, and cost burden.

Current Needs—mismatches in supply and demand by price-point: The affordability gaps analysis indicates that current affordability needs are concentrated below 50% AMI in the rental market and below 150% AMI in the for-sale market.

There is an affordability shortage of nearly 1,000 units for renters earning < 50% AMI (even after accounting for income-restricted rental inventory). These **“catch up” needs** can be addressed through new production of housing at the needed price-points and/or subsidies of existing units.

Figure ES-9. Rental Affordability Gaps.

Source: 2022 ACS and Root Policy Research.



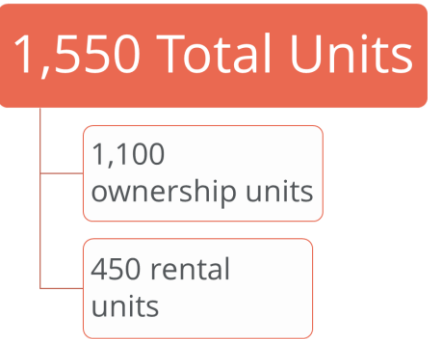
Under current market conditions a 2-person household needs an income of 246% of AMI to afford the median priced home. The biggest supply shortage of for-sale homes is for households with incomes below 150% AMI (or homes priced below \$450,000).

Future Housing Needs (“Keep Up” Needs): In order to keep up with projected growth, the county needs to create an additional 1,550 units over the next five years. Of those units, 71% (1,100 units) would need to be owner occupied in order to maintain current homeownership levels.

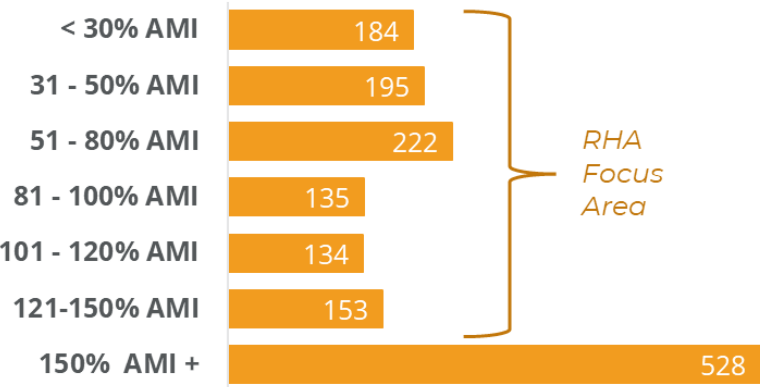
Figure ES-10 also shows the affordability distribution needed to align those units with the county’s current income distribution. The market is most likely to deliver rental units above 80% AMI and ownership units above 150% AMI; but public assistance is likely needed to create rental units below 80% AMI and ownership products below 150% AMI. As illustrated by the figure, RHA’s focus area for housing investments will be units below 150% AMI.

Figure ES-10. Projected Housing Needs through 2029

Units Needed over 5 years (through 2029):



Units Need by Income/Affordability Level



Source: Colorado State Demographer and Root Policy Research.

Community Perspectives

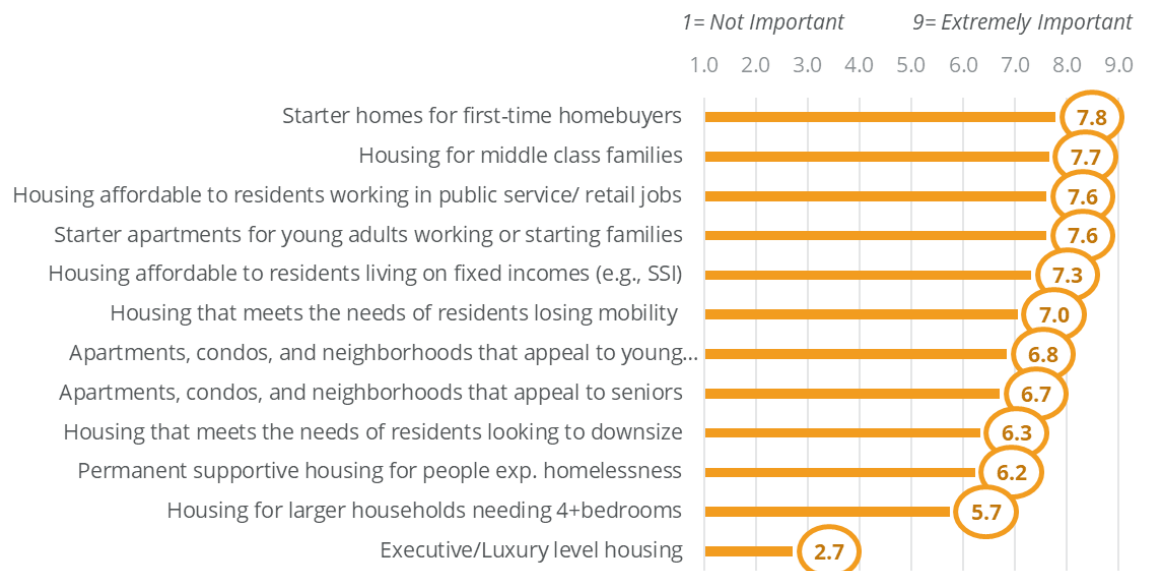
Resident and in-commuter survey, stakeholder interviews and focus groups

Resident Survey. Over 400 people responded to a resident / workforce survey on housing choices, challenges, and preferences in the community:

- Housing affordability was a key concern among residents, impacting housing choice (across income levels and tenure), financial security, and housing stability.
- La Plata County resident respondents are open to small-scale density housing products including duplexes, townhomes, tiny homes and apartment buildings with 3 or less stories.
- Residents ranked housing for first time homebuyers, housing for middle class families, and workforce housing as the most important housing types to local housing supply.
- Residents responded favorably to a potential deed restricted model of affordable home ownership.

Figure ES-11.
Average
Importance
Rating of
Housing
Types

Source:
Root Policy Research
from the 2024 La Plata
County Housing Survey.



Stakeholder interviews and focus groups:

- **Nonprofit service providers** emphasized the need for more affordable housing opportunities for families and people in the service industry. Other concerns included overcrowding, unique housing challenges for newly arrived immigrants, and conditions of manufactured home parks.
- **Employers** across a variety of industries say the housing shortage is a significant contributor to high employee turnover and labor shortage. Looking forward the business community is very concerned that the lack of housing in La Plata County will increasingly limit economic development and the diversity, quantity, and quality of services available to current residents.
- **Real estate professionals and housing developers** highlighted both market and policy barriers to creating affordable and diverse housing in the region, including infrastructure challenges/costs, construction defect laws (state-level), and local land use and zoning regulations. They would like to deliver more product and price-point diversity and offered a range of solutions to help address housing challenges.



Root Policy Research

789 N Sherman St., Ste 360

Denver, CO 80203

www.rootpolicy.com

La Plata County *Housing Needs* *Assessment*

PREPARED FOR:

Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County

Report:

2/28/2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

I. Socioeconomic Framework

Primary Findings	I-1
Population and Households.....	I-2
Income and Poverty	I-10
Economic Profile	I-15

II. Housing Market Trends

Primary Findings	II-1
Housing Stock.....	II-2
Renters and Owners.....	II-7
Rental Market Trends.....	II-10
For-Sale Market Trends.....	II-14
Short-term Rentals	II-19
Affordable Housing Inventory.....	II-21

III. Housing Needs Analysis

Primary Findings	III-1
Defining Affordability	III-2
Importance of Addressing Housing Needs.....	III-3
Cost Burden and Severe Cost Burden	III-5
Affordability and Income Changes.....	III-7
Affordability Gaps Analysis.....	III-8
Future Housing Need	III-14

IV. Community Engagement Findings

Engagement Elements	IV-1
Primary Findings	IV-1
Resident Survey Methodology	IV-3
Current Housing Choice and Challenges.....	IV-5
Future Housing Preference	IV-11
La Plata County Housing Types	IV-14
Stakeholder Engagement	IV-20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LA PLATA COUNTY HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Report Organization:

- I. Socioeconomic Framework
- II. Housing Market Trends
- III. Housing Needs Analysis
- IV. Community Engagement Findings

The La Plata county HNA was drafted prior to the release of guidance from the State on compliance with SB24-174; however the content of this HNA is aligned with its legislative intent.

Housing Balance

A balanced housing stock accommodates a full “life cycle community”—where there are affordable housing options for each stage of life from career starters through centenarians—which in turn supports the local economy and contributes to La Plata County’s community culture.

Introduction

The Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) was commissioned by the Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County (RHA) to better understand housing needs in La Plata County—including market changes since the 2020 regional assessment.

The results of this HNA will assist the RHA in developing strategies to help address housing needs throughout the county.

Why Work to Address Housing Needs?

- Research consistently shows that a constrained housing market negatively impacts economic growth while stable and affordable housing are central to the health of individuals, families, and communities.
- Households living in stable housing are more likely to spend their incomes in the local economy through direct spending on goods and services.
- Housing investments that allow workers to live near their place of employment can reduce the impacts of traffic and commuting.
- Affordable housing is key to providing high quality public services as many essential workers (e.g., doctors, nurses, and teachers) often leave communities that do not have an adequate supply of housing in their price range.
- Generational wealth from affordable home ownership is a major contributor to positive outcomes for children. As housing and equity are passed down, young adults have the option to remain in the community and have families of their own.
- Housing investments and stable housing environments also bolster local revenue, increase job readiness, help renters transition to homeownership, lower public costs of eviction and foreclosure, and increase the economic and educational opportunities for children.

Defining Affordability

Affordability is often linked to the idea that households should not be cost burdened from housing costs. A cost burdened household is one in which housing costs—rent or mortgage payment, taxes, and utilities—consumes more than 30% of monthly gross income. The 30% proportion is derived from mortgage lending requirements and follows flexibility for households to manage other expenses (e.g., childcare, health care, transportation, food costs).

Eligibility for housing programs is determined by where a household's income falls within specific brackets determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Brackets are set by Area Median Incomes (AMI). The AMI encompasses all of La Plata County (there is not an AMI for each individual municipality).

Figure ES-1.

La Plata County Regional HUD AMI Thresholds (for 2-person households), 2024

<p><i>Income and affordability levels are shown for a household size of two</i></p> <p>"extremely" low income</p> <p>< 30% AMI</p>	<p>Income < \$26,550 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: < \$664/mo.</p>
<p>"very" low income</p> <p>30-50% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$26,550-\$44,200 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$664 - \$1,105/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: < \$75,348</p>
<p>"low" income</p> <p>50-80% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$44,200 - \$70,750 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$1,105 - \$1,769/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: \$75,348 - \$187,803</p>
<p>"median" to "moderate" income</p> <p>80-120% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$70,750 - \$106,080 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$1,769 - \$2,652/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: \$187,803 - \$337,638</p>

Note: AMIs shown in the figure reflect a 2-person household in La Plata County. Affordable home price shows the Economic Development Alliance Home Ownership Reference Charts, which calculate the affordable homeownership (1) a 30-Year Fixed Mortgage Interest Rate of 7.06%, (2) ability to contribute 33% of income to housing costs, (3) a 3% down payment; and (4) ancillary costs (property taxes, insurance, HOA payments, etc.) are estimated using a HomesFund formula.

Source: HUD Income Limits, Economic Development Alliance Home Ownership Reference Charts and Root Policy Research

Socioeconomic Trends

Economic growth outpacing housing supply; residents are aging and incomes are rising, but poverty disproportionately impacts certain groups.

Population and households: La Plata County's population post Covid has steadily grown following a period of little to no growth between 2018 and 2020. The county's senior population (over 65) is projected to increase from 20% of the population share in 2020 to 26% in 2050.

Income and poverty. Income shifts over the last decade show an increase in the number (and proportion) of households earning more than \$100,000 per year. This shift reflects income gains for some, coupled with an influx of higher income residents. Poverty in La Plata County is moderate at just over 11%, though some resident groups are disproportionately impacted by poverty.

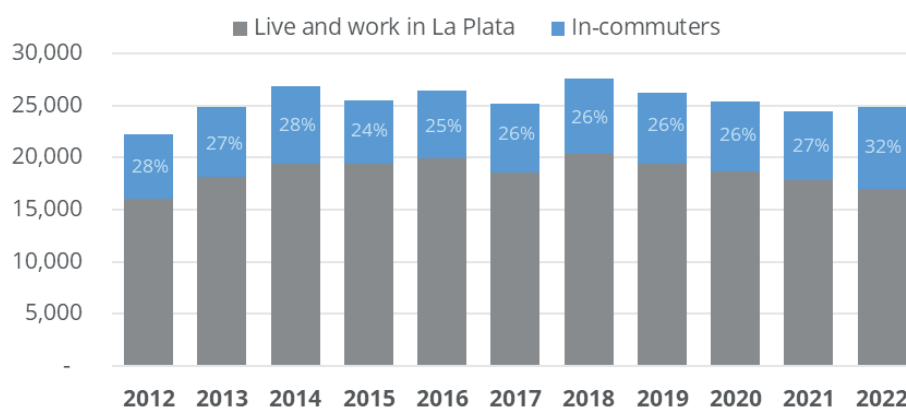
Economic profile. Job growth outpaced housing production over the past decade, leading to an undersupply of housing overall.

In-commuting as a percentage of primary jobs was fairly consistent between 2012 and 2021 (averaging about 27%), but may be on the rise, according to 2022 data, which shows nearly one-third (32%) of workers commuting from elsewhere. The most common counties where workers are commuting from are San Juan County in New Mexico (8%), Montezuma County (4%) and Archuleta County (2%).

Figure ES-2.
Employment and
Commuting
Patterns, La Plata
County

Source:

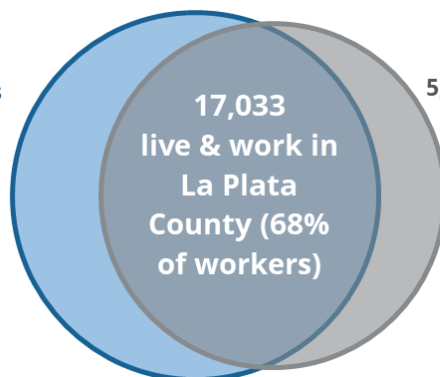
U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal
Employer-Household Dynamics
(LEHD) and Root Policy Research.



7,836 workers are in-commuters

**Originations: Where do La Plata
County workers live?**

La Plata County (68%)
San Juan County, NM (8%)
Montezuma County (4%)
Archuleta County (2%)
El Paso County (1%)
Montrose County (1%)



5,841 residents are outcommuters

**Destinations: Where do La Plata
County residents work?**

La Plata County (75%)
San Juan County, NM (3%)
Montezuma County (2%)
Mesa County (2%)
Denver County (2%)
Other Colorado Counties (6%)

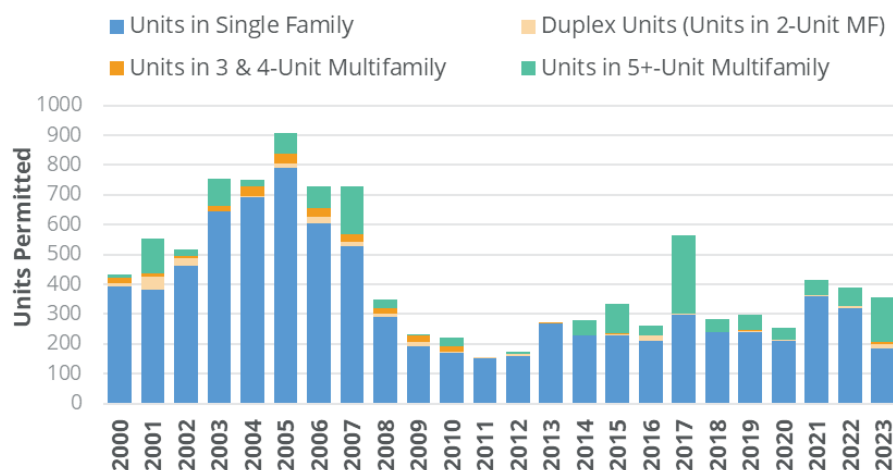
Housing Stock and Market Trends

Steep price and rent increases outpace inflation. Single family detached is the dominant housing type, though multifamily production is up (concentrated in Durango).

Housing stock and production. The majority of La Plata County's housing stock is single-family detached products—however, recent permitting has shown an increase in multi-family housing types (concentrated in Durango).

The vast majority of La Plata's housing stock—82%—is occupied by permanent resident households. Of the remaining 18%, about half of units are vacant for “recreational, seasonal, or occasional use”—including short-term rentals.

Figure ES-3. Units Permitted, La Plata County



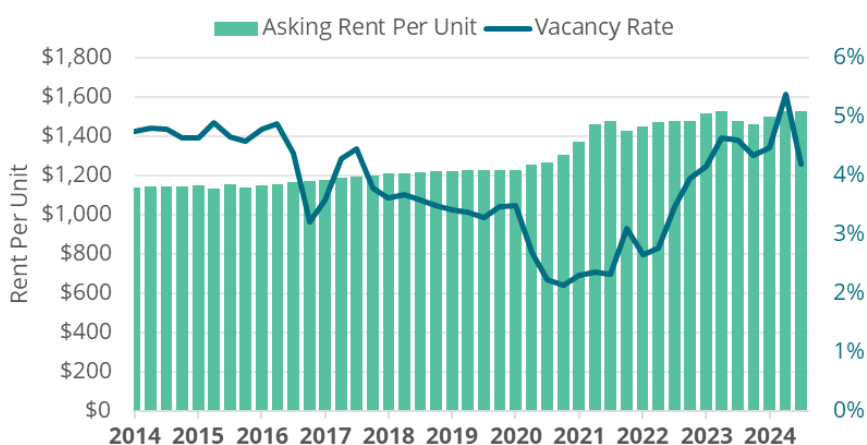
Source: U.S. Census Bureau's State of the Cities Data Systems (SOCDS) and Root Policy Research.

Since 2012, job growth has outpaced new housing production—in other words, housing supply is not keeping up with economic growth, creating additional pressure on the housing market and contributing to higher in-commuting.

Rental market. The median rent paid by renters, accounting for the use of regulated affordable units and vouchers is about \$1,350 (as of 2022). The current asking rent of market-rate units is about \$1,500 (median as of 2024). The increase in median rent outpaced income growth, compressing affordability for current renters.

Rental units in the county have increasingly shifted to higher price points over the last decade, resulting in a sharp decline in units affordable to low- and middle-income households. Just since 2017, the number of units priced below \$1,000 per month dropped by 1,300 units. Rental units priced over \$2,000 per month tripled and comprise about one third of the rental stock.

Figure ES-4. Asking Rent and Rental Vacancy Rate.

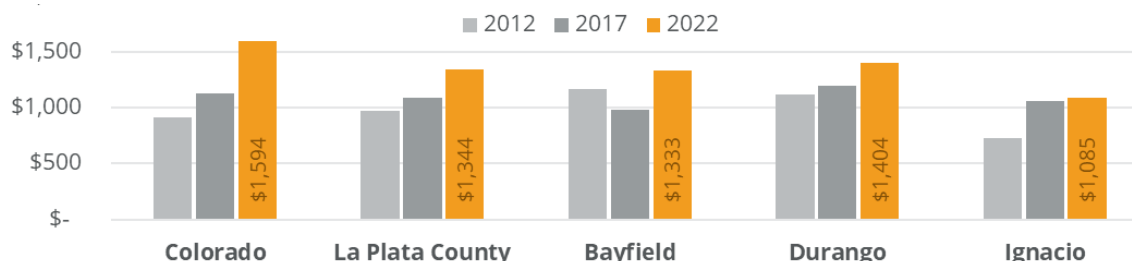


Source: Costar and Root Policy Research.

Housing Stock and Market Trends (continued)...

Steep price and rent increases outpace inflation. Single family detached is the dominant housing type, though multifamily production is up (concentrated in Durango).

Figure ES-5. Median Rent Paid (by Community), 2012, 2017, 2022



Source: 2012, 2017, and 2022 American Community Survey (ACS).

Homeownership and sale market.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of La Plata County households own their home. Bayfield has the highest homeownership rate at 74% and Durango has the lowest at 55%.

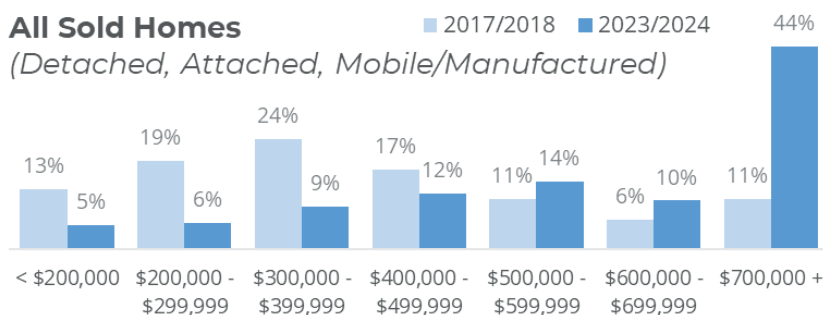
The median home *value* in the county (including all home types) was about \$666,000¹ in 2024—up 55% in the past five years and more than double the 2010 value.

Figure ES-6 shows the price distribution (by product type) of homes listed or sold in La Plata County in 2017/18 compared to 2023/24. Sales below \$500,000 have dramatically declined in recent years, comprising only 32% of homes sales in the county in 2023/24, down from 73% in 2017/2018.

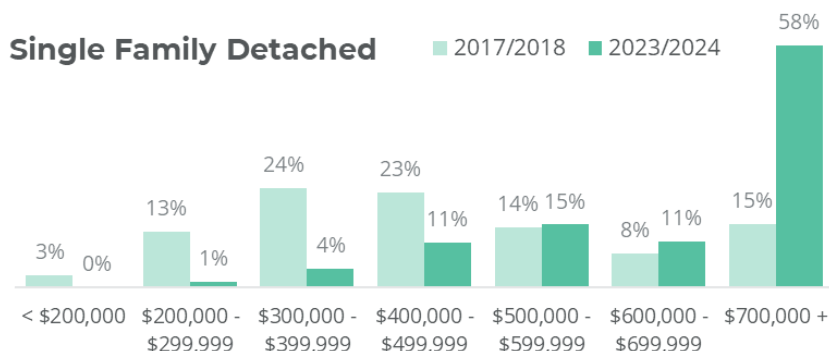
Figure ES-6. Distribution of Homes by Sale Price.

All Sold Homes

(Detached, Attached, Mobile/Manufactured)

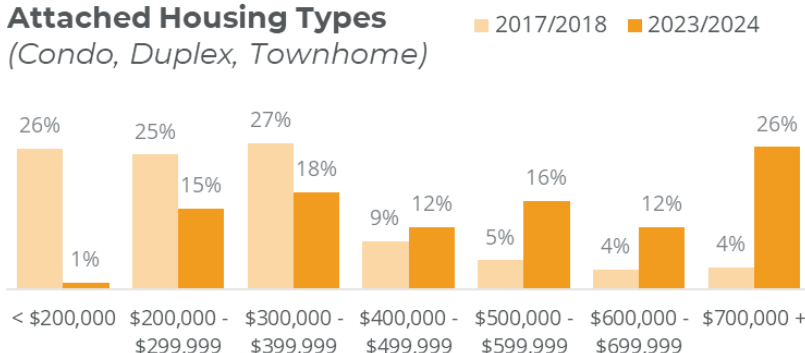


Single Family Detached



Attached Housing Types

(Condo, Duplex, Townhome)



Note: Source: MLS and Root Policy Research.

¹ This median value is in line with data from the Durango Association of Realtors which reports the 2024 median sale price as \$675,827 (see <https://durangorealtor.com/market-stats/> for details and for regular updates).

Housing Affordability & Needs (continued)...

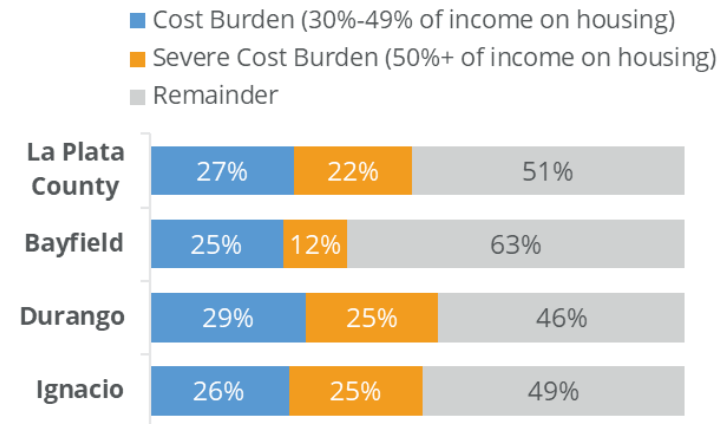
Changes in affordability, mismatches in supply and demand, and cost burden.

Affordable rental inventory. Income-restricted housing plays an important role in providing affordable rents to La Plata residents and workers with low to moderate incomes. There are a total of 808 income-restricted rental units across 19 properties in La Plata County.

Cost Burden. Thirty percent (30%) of all La Plata County households are cost burdened (even after accounting for income-restricted inventory). Rates of cost burden are more prominent among renters (see Figure ES-7): about half (49%) are either cost burdened (27%) or severely cost burdened (22%).

Over the past 10 years, the impact of cost burden has expanded to higher income renters than in the past. Recent data trends show substantial increases in the proportion of renters who are considered cost burdened in the \$35,000 to \$75,000 income bracket.

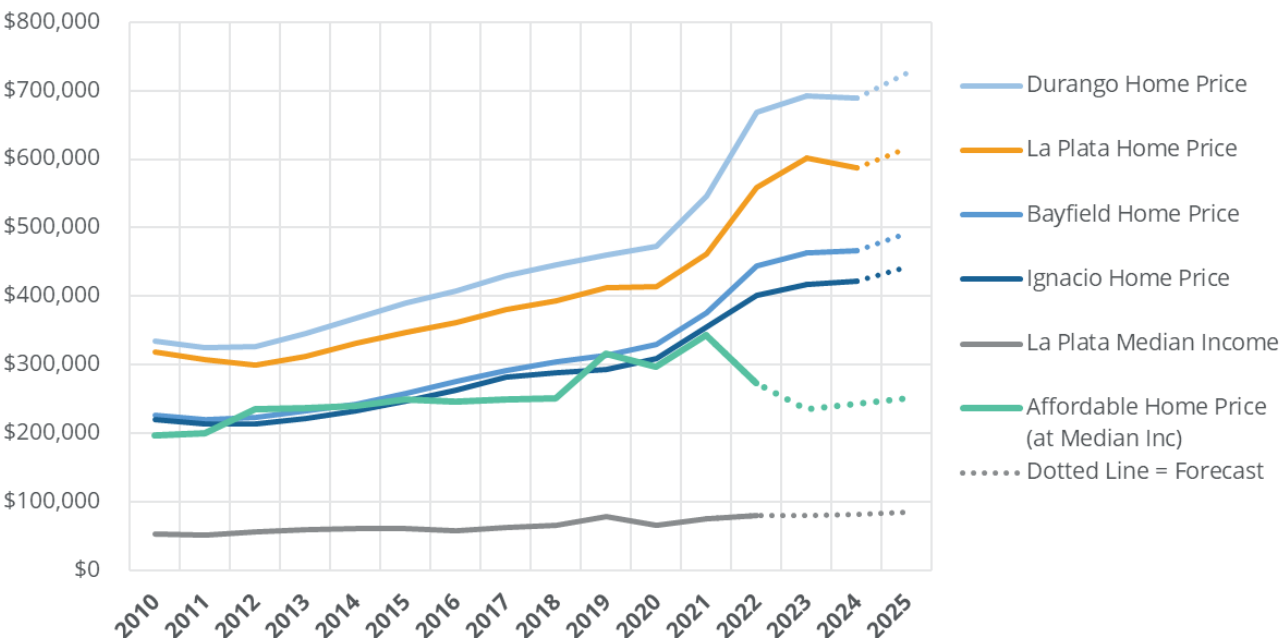
Figure ES-7. Renter Cost Burden



Source: 2022 ACS and Root Policy Research.

Changes in affordability: Increases in both rent and home prices exceeded the change in median incomes—compressing affordability for renters and buyers. Rising interest rates exacerbated affordability challenges for buyers.

Figure ES-8. Home Values vs Affordable Prices, 2010-2024



Notes: Purchasing power assumes that buyers spend 30% of their income on housing and have a 30-year mortgage with a 10% down payment. Ancillary costs (e.g., property taxes, insurance, HOA payments) are assumed to collectively account for 30% of monthly housing costs.

Source: Zillow Analytics, US Census Bureau, and Freddie Mac.

Housing Affordability & Needs

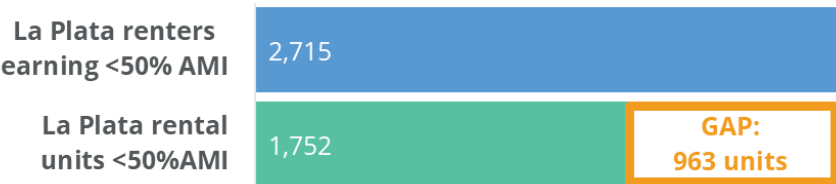
Changes in affordability, mismatches in supply and demand, and cost burden.

Current Needs—mismatches in supply and demand by price-point: The affordability gaps analysis indicates that current affordability needs are concentrated below 50% AMI in the rental market and below 150% AMI in the for-sale market.

There is an affordability shortage of nearly 1,000 units for renters earning < 50% AMI (even after accounting for income-restricted rental inventory). These **“catch up” needs** can be addressed through new production of housing at the needed price-points and/or subsidies of existing units.

Figure ES-9. Rental Affordability Gaps.

Source: 2022 ACS and Root Policy Research.



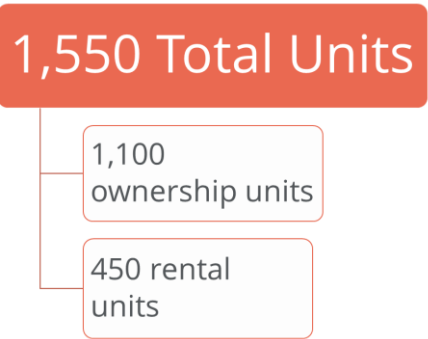
Under current market conditions a 2-person household needs an income of 246% of AMI to afford the median priced home. The biggest supply shortage of for-sale homes is for households with incomes below 150% AMI (or homes priced below \$450,000).

Future Housing Needs (“Keep Up” Needs): In order to keep up with projected growth, the county needs to create an additional 1,550 units over the next five years. Of those units, 71% (1,100 units) would need to be owner occupied in order to maintain current homeownership levels.

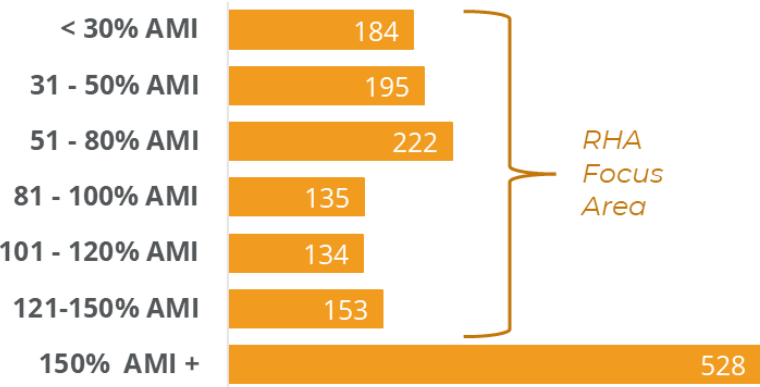
Figure ES-10 also shows the affordability distribution needed to align those units with the county’s current income distribution. The market is most likely to deliver rental units above 80% AMI and ownership units above 150% AMI; but public assistance is likely needed to create rental units below 80% AMI and ownership products below 150% AMI. As illustrated by the figure, RHA’s focus area for housing investments will be units below 150% AMI.

Figure ES-10. Projected Housing Needs through 2029

Units Needed over 5 years (through 2029):



Units Need by Income/Affordability Level



Source: Colorado State Demographer and Root Policy Research.

Community Perspectives

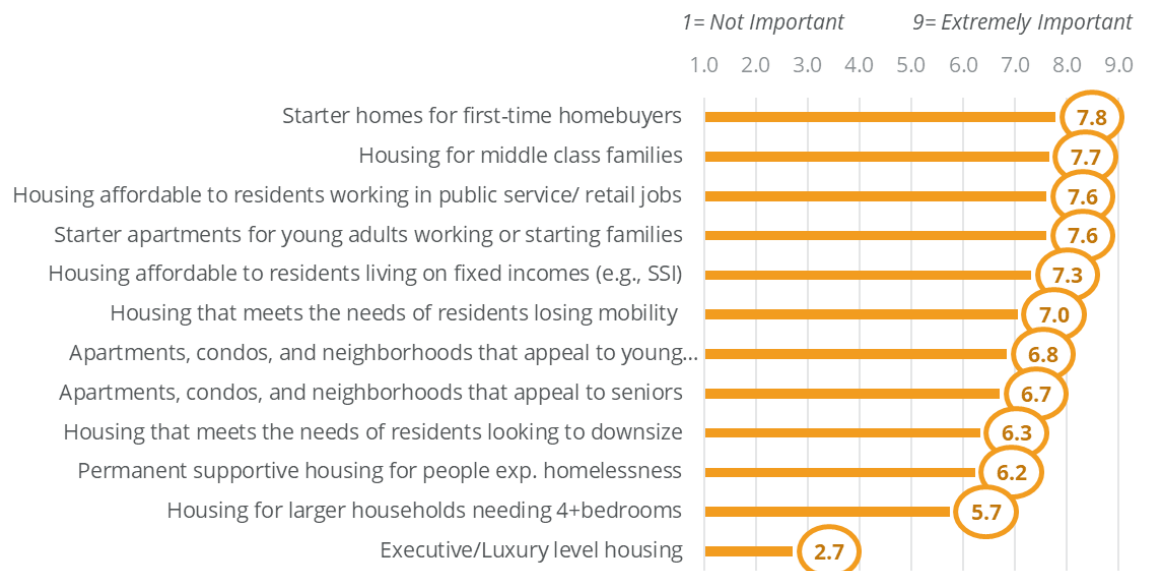
Resident and in-commuter survey, stakeholder interviews and focus groups

Resident Survey. Over 400 people responded to a resident / workforce survey on housing choices, challenges, and preferences in the community:

- Housing affordability was a key concern among residents, impacting housing choice (across income levels and tenure), financial security, and housing stability.
- La Plata County resident respondents are open to small-scale density housing products including duplexes, townhomes, tiny homes and apartment buildings with 3 or less stories.
- Residents ranked housing for first time homebuyers, housing for middle class families, and workforce housing as the most important housing types to local housing supply.
- Residents responded favorably to a potential deed restricted model of affordable home ownership.

Figure ES-11.
Average
Importance
Rating of
Housing
Types

Source:
Root Policy Research
from the 2024 La Plata
County Housing Survey.



Stakeholder interviews and focus groups:

- **Nonprofit service providers** emphasized the need for more affordable housing opportunities for families and people in the service industry. Other concerns included overcrowding, unique housing challenges for newly arrived immigrants, and conditions of manufactured home parks.
- **Employers** across a variety of industries say the housing shortage is a significant contributor to high employee turnover and labor shortage. Looking forward the business community is very concerned that the lack of housing in La Plata County will increasingly limit economic development and the diversity, quantity, and quality of services available to current residents.
- **Real estate professionals and housing developers** highlighted both market and policy barriers to creating affordable and diverse housing in the region, including infrastructure challenges/costs, construction defect laws (state-level), and local land use and zoning regulations. They would like to deliver more product and price-point diversity and offered a range of solutions to help address housing challenges.

SECTION I.

SOCIOECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

SECTION I.

Socioeconomic Framework

This section provides an overview of demographic, economic, and household trends in La Plata County to establish the context for the housing market and housing needs analyses. Specifically, the section explores the following factors:

- Population shifts;
- Household type and size;
- Age;
- Race and ethnicity;
- Incidence of disability;
- Income and poverty;
- Education and employment; and
- Commuting/transportation patterns.

Peer communities. Comparison counties were chosen based on their size, proximity, and/or other comparable characteristics. These counties include Alamosa, Archuleta, Chaffee, Montezuma, Montrose, Routt, and San Juan, NM. Detail for Durango, Bayfield, and Ignacio with comparisons to common commuter towns of Cortez, Aztec and Farmington are provided to the extent that data are available.

Primary Findings

- La Plata County's population is 56,557 residents¹; a 10% increase over the past 10 years. The population post Covid has steadily grown following a period of little to no growth between 2018 and 2020. La Plata County's population growth exceeds neighboring Colorado counties with the exception of Archuleta County.
- La Plata County's senior population (over 65) is projected to increase from 20% of the population share in 2020 to 26% in 2050 while all other age groups will decline slightly or stay the same having implications for housing accessibility and healthcare needs.
- La Plata had a median² household income of \$81,936 in 2022, the highest of peer communities. Within the county, Bayfield has the highest household median income at \$84,609 followed by Durango (\$76,177) and Ignacio (\$62,833). Income shifts over the last decade show an increase in the number (and proportion) of households earning more than \$100,000 per year. This shift reflects income gains for some, coupled with an influx of higher income residents.

¹ Based on American Community Survey 2022 5-year estimates.

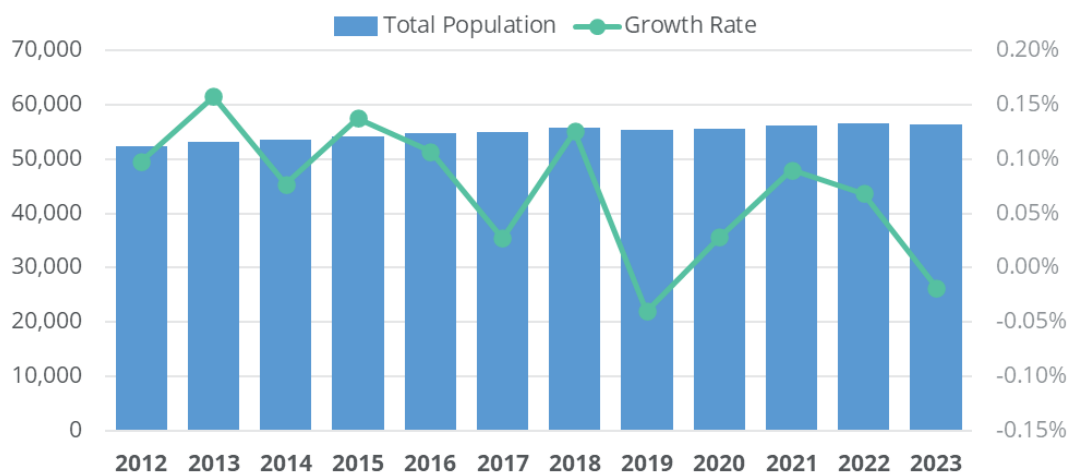
² Median is the middle value in a set of numbers. Throughout this report, median is the preferred metric for evaluating the typical value, rather than average, as median more effectively handles outlier values.

- Poverty in La Plata County is moderate at just over 11%, though some resident groups are disproportionately impacted by poverty. Durango and Ignacio have high childhood poverty rates at 23% and 26% respectively and roughly double the rate of peer counties in Colorado. Hispanic or Latino residents, single mothers, and residents with less than a high school degree also have disproportionately high poverty rates across the county.
- Nearly one-third of La Plata County workers do not live in the county. San Juan County in New Mexico and Montezuma County in Colorado are the most common locations of residency for in-commuters.

Population and Households

La Plata County has about 56,600 residents, up from about 51,400 in 2012. As shown in Figure I-1, the county experienced a steady increase in population between 2012 and 2018. The population declined slightly in 2019 but then increased through 2022, with a slight drop again in 2023.

Figure I-1.
Population Growth, La Plata County, 2012-2022



Source: Colorado Demography Office and Root Policy Research.

As shown in Figure I-2, population growth in La Plata County was higher than most peer counties with the exception of Archuleta County over the last decade. Population changes were notably low in Montezuma, Alamosa, and Montrose, with San Juan County in New Mexico consistently experiencing population loss over the decade.

Durango is the largest community in La Plata County accounting for about one-third of the county's population overall. Growth in incorporated areas (Durango, Bayfield, and Ignacio) exceeded growth in unincorporated areas over the past decade. Growth rate was highest in Ignacio, though it still has the smallest population (1,257 residents) in the County.

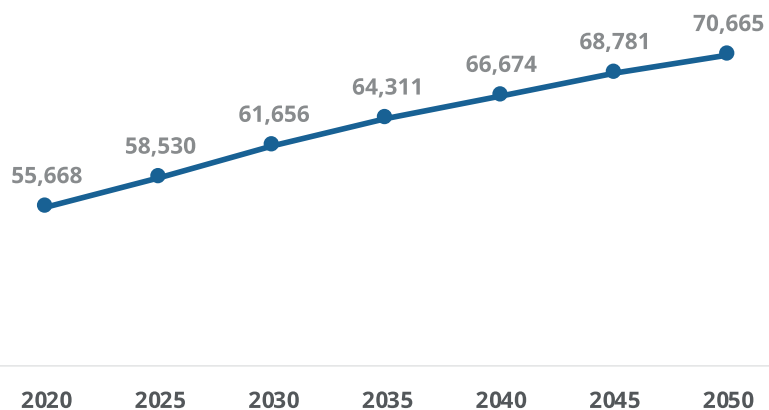
Figure I-2.
Total Population, La Plata County and Peer Communities, 2012-2022

	2012	2017	2022	2012-2017		2017-2022		2012-2022 Change
				Num.	Pct.	Num.	Pct.	
La Plata	51,441	55,034	56,557	3,593	7%	1,523	3%	10%
Durango	16,936	17,986	19,148	1,050	6%	1,162	6%	13%
Bayfield	2,110	2,576	2,853	466	22%	277	11%	35%
Ignacio	864	883	1,257	19	2%	374	42%	45%
Peer Counties								
Alamosa	15,750	16,345	16,460	595	4%	115	<1%	5%
Archuleta	12,109	12,592	13,509	483	4%	917	7%	12%
Chaffee	17,879	18,818	19,436	939	5%	618	3%	9%
Montezuma	25,424	25,770	26,464	346	1%	694	3%	4%
Montrose	42,823	40,908	43,799	-1,915	-4%	2,891	7%	2%
Routt	23,385	24,359	24,944	974	4%	585	2%	7%
San Juan, NM	128,600	128,221	121,798	-6,802	-5%	-6,423	-5%	-5%

Source: 2012, 2017, and 2021 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Population projections. Population projections will play a significant role in La Plata County's housing planning efforts. Housing development has not kept pace with demand in the county over the past 2 decades, and as such, actual population growth is not likely to reach these projections as residents find housing in neighboring communities. Population growth rates are declining, impacting economic development including the diversity and accessibility of services that can be offered to residents in the community.

Figure I-3.
Population Projections, La Plata County, 2020-2050



Source:
 Colorado Demography Office
 and Root Policy Research.

Between 2025 and 2050, the State of Colorado Demography Office estimates that La Plata County will increase its total population by more than 12,000 residents (or 21%). The rate

of growth is projected to be slightly higher over the next decade, however, realization of this increase will be highly dependent upon decisions made at the county and municipality level to address growth restricting processes and policies related to housing and economic development.

Households. In 2022, there were nearly 23,000 permanent resident households in La Plata County. Household growth in La Plata County was slightly less than that of total population growth—reflecting a possible trend towards more people per household.

Since 2012, La Plata County added 1,631 households for an overall percentage increase of 8% with steady growth across this timeframe. Archuleta and Chaffee Counties greatly outpaced La Plata County, with other peer counties adding significantly fewer households if not experiencing a reduction in households in the case of Montezuma and San Juan Counties (Figure I-4).

Figure I-4.

Total Households, La Plata County and Peer Communities, 2012-2022

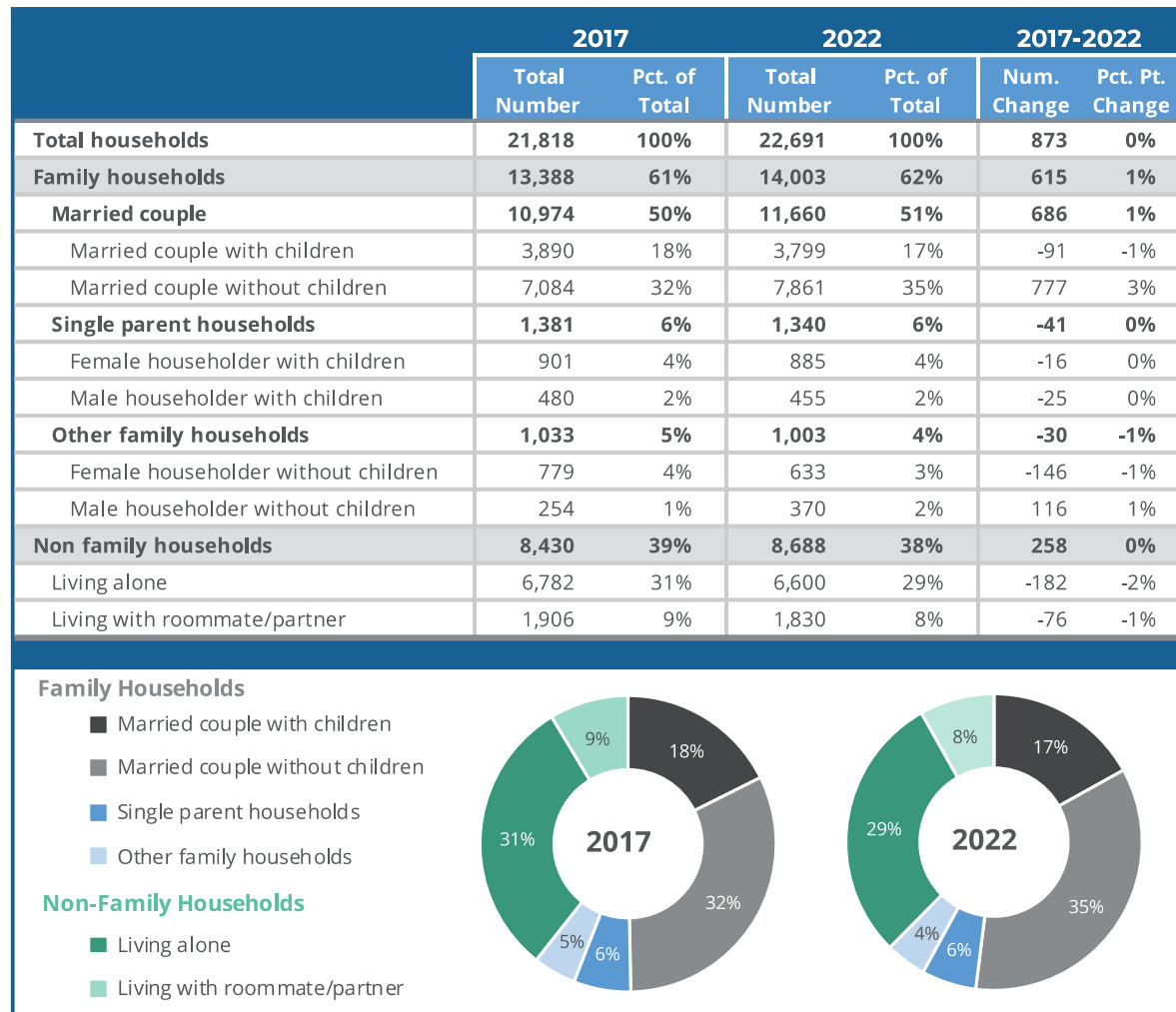
	2012	2017	2022	2012-2017		2017-2022		2012-2022 Change
				Num.	Pct.	Num.	Pct.	
La Plata	21,060	21,818	22,691	758	4%	873	4%	8%
Durango	6,849	6,998	8,139	149	2%	1,141	16%	19%
Bayfield	789	912	1,017	123	16%	105	12%	29%
Ignacio	360	354	462	-6	-2%	108	31%	28%
Peer Counties								
Archuleta	4,536	5,553	5,738	1,017	22%	185	3%	26%
Alamosa	5,853	6,049	6,471	196	3%	422	7%	11%
Chaffee	7,680	7,900	9,066	220	3%	1,166	15%	18%
Montezuma	10,883	10,520	10,520	-363	-3%	0	0%	-3%
Montrose	16,732	16,951	17,042	219	1%	91	1%	2%
Routt	9,833	9,478	10,279	-355	-4%	801	8%	5%
San Juan, NM	41,791	41,999	41,049	-742	0%	-950	-2%	-2%

Note: Due to rounding to whole percentage, 2012-2017 and 2017-2022 change does not always equal total change.

Source: 2012, 2017, and 2021 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Household composition. As shown in Figure I-5, just over 60% of La Plata County households are “family households”. Roughly a third of households are married couples without children, and another third are single households. Approximately 20% of county households are married families with children. Household composition in La Plata County has remained static from 2017 to 2022.

Figure I-5.
Change in Household Composition, La Plata County, 2017 and 2022



Source: 2017 and 2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

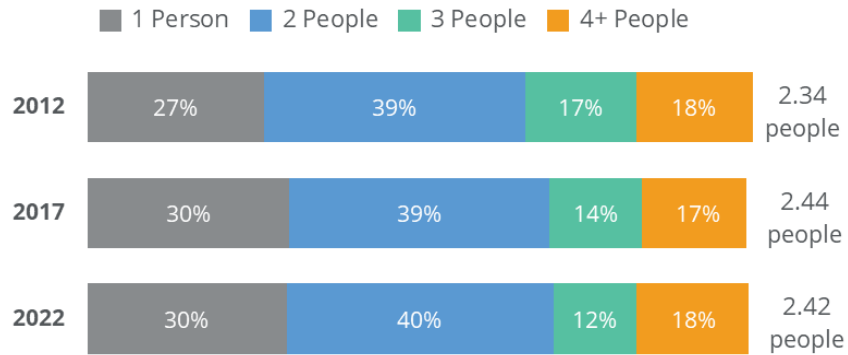
It is important to note the reduction of non-family households at the same time married households with children has increased, possibly indicating that housing in the county is most accessible for dual income households without children.

Household size. La Plata County has an average household size of 2.42 people, slightly larger than the average household size in 2012 at 2.34 people per household. Households have shifted little in terms of size particularly in the past 5 years, however, when looking further back to 2012, 3 person households slightly declined offset by an increase in the share of 1 person households (Figure I-6).

Figure I-6.
Number of People
per Household, La
Plata County,
2012-2022

Source:

2012, 2017, and 2022 5-year ACS
 and Root Policy Research.

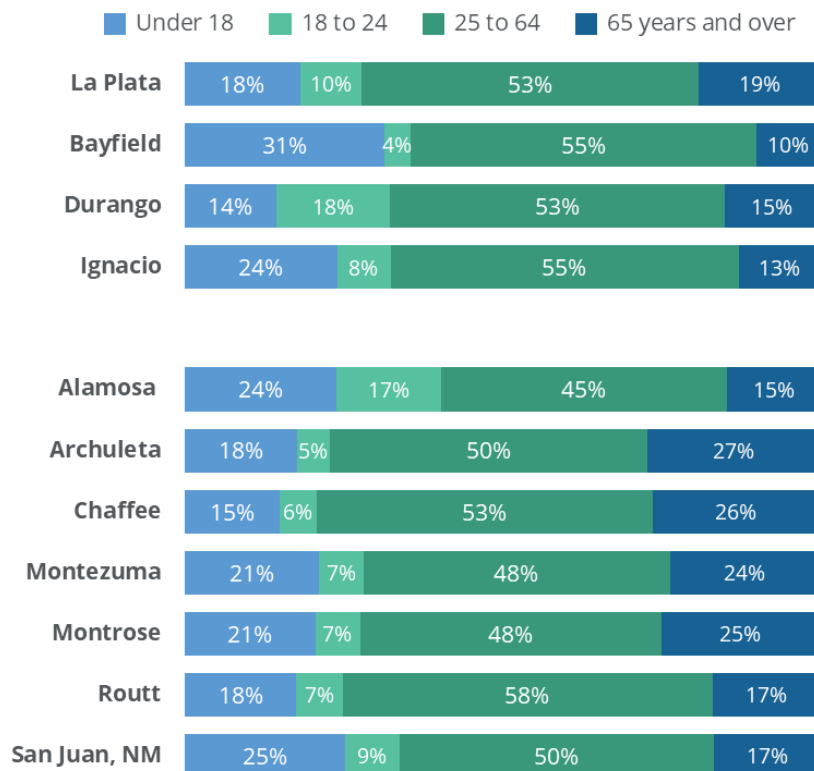


Owner households are larger than the average household size in the county at 2.46 people compared to only 2.22 people for the average renter household and 1.38 people for the average non-family household. Comparatively smaller household sizes for non-families are expected as these households are more likely to not have children and/or be living alone.

Age profile. Although La Plata County seniors account for 19% of the population currently, this age group is expected to grow to 26% by 2050. Nevertheless, compared to peer Colorado counties and San Juan, New Mexico, La Plata County is still relatively young. Within La Plata County, Bayfield has the highest proportion of children (under 18) and Durango has the highest proportion of 18-24 year olds (driven in part by the presence of Fort Lewis College).

Figure I-7.
Population
by Age
Cohort, La
Plata County
and Peers,
2022

Source: 2022 5-year
 ACS and Root Policy
 Research.

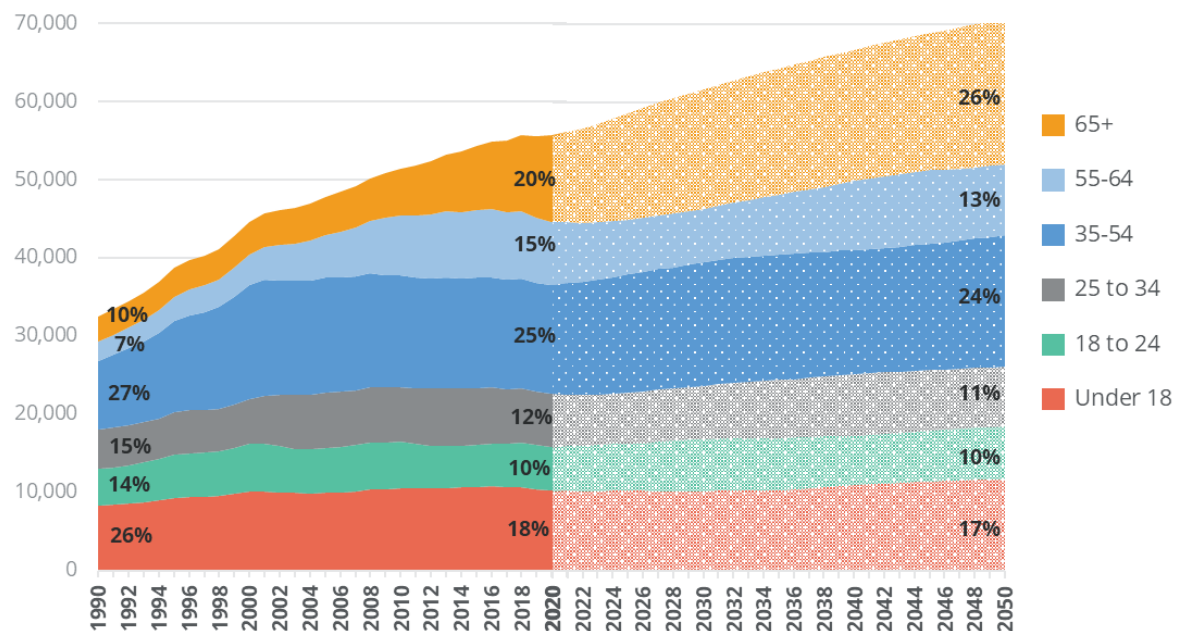


According to population and age forecasts from the Colorado Demography Office, La Plata County is projected to undergo some slight demographic shifts in the county's age profile. As shown in Figure I-8:

- Seniors are forecast to have the biggest change in population proportion in the county increasing from 20% of the population in 2020 to 26% by 2050.
- The population of working age residents (25 to 64) in the county is expected to decrease by approximately 5% over the next 30 years.
- The number of children (<18 years) and young adults (18 to 24) are expected to remain stable with only a 1% reduction over time.

Figure I-8.

Population Projections by Age Cohort, La Plata County, 1990-2050

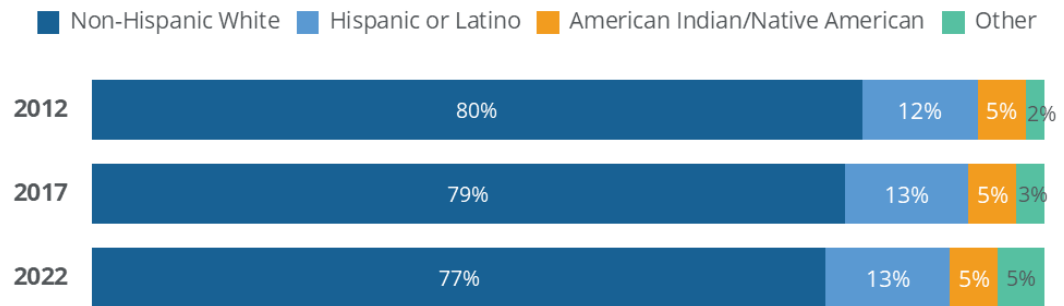


Note: Data are not available at the municipal level.

Source: Colorado Demography Office.

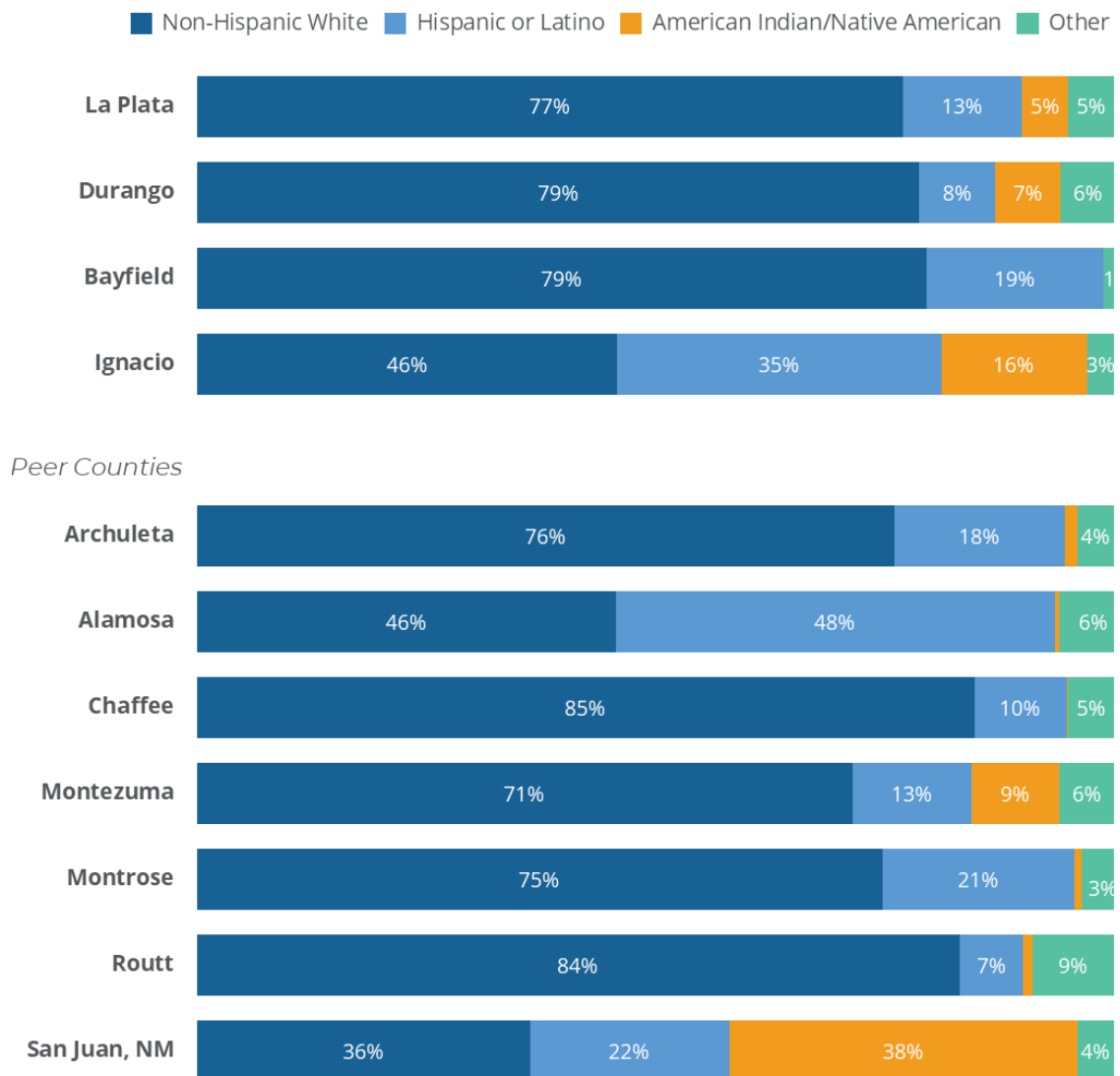
Race and ethnicity. Over three quarters (77%) of La Plata County's population identify as non-Hispanic White, 13% identify as Hispanic or Latino and 5% identify as American Indian/Native American. The racial and ethnic composition of residents in the County has experienced little change over the last decade with a minor shift in the share of residents identifying as more than one race/ethnicity (Figure I-9).

Figure I-9.
Population by Race and Ethnicity, La Plata County, 2012-2022



Source: 2012, 2017, and 2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Figure I-10.
Population by Race and Ethnicity, La Plata and Peer Communities, 2022



Source: 2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

As shown in Figure I-10, La Plata County's racial/ethnic profile is most similar to Archuleta and Montrose Counties overall and less diverse than Alamosa, Montezuma, and San Juan, NM Counties. San Juan, NM has by far the most diversity with nearly two-thirds of the population identifying as Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Native American and multiple race/ethnicities followed by Alamosa County in Colorado with less than half of residents identifying as non-Hispanic white.

Residents with a disability. Figure I-11 shows La Plata County's population with a disability by type and age.

**Figure I-11.
Incidence of
Disability by Age
and Type, La
Plata County,
2022**

Source:
2022 5-year ACS and Root
Policy Research.

	Total	With a Disability	Pct. With a Disability
Total	55,580	5,640	10%
Under 18 years old	10,194	384	4%
With a hearing difficulty		20	0%
With a vision difficulty		47	0%
With a cognitive difficulty		233	3%
With an ambulatory difficulty		16	0%
With a self-care difficulty		155	2%
18 to 64 years old	34,866	2,775	8%
With a hearing difficulty		597	2%
With a vision difficulty		658	2%
With a cognitive difficulty		1,337	4%
With an ambulatory difficulty		1,019	3%
With a self-care difficulty		406	1%
With an independent living difficulty		998	3%
Over 65 years old	10,520	2,481	24%
With a hearing difficulty		1,413	13%
With a vision difficulty		486	5%
With a cognitive difficulty		571	5%
With an ambulatory difficulty		830	8%
With a self-care difficulty		320	3%
With an independent living difficulty		804	8%

Ten percent of La Plata's total population (or 5,640 people) had some type of disability in 2022. Nearly a quarter of La Plata County residents with a disability are over the age of 65, the majority of which have an ambulatory and or hearing difficulty. Only 4% of children in La Plata County have a disability and 8% of working age residents have a disability.

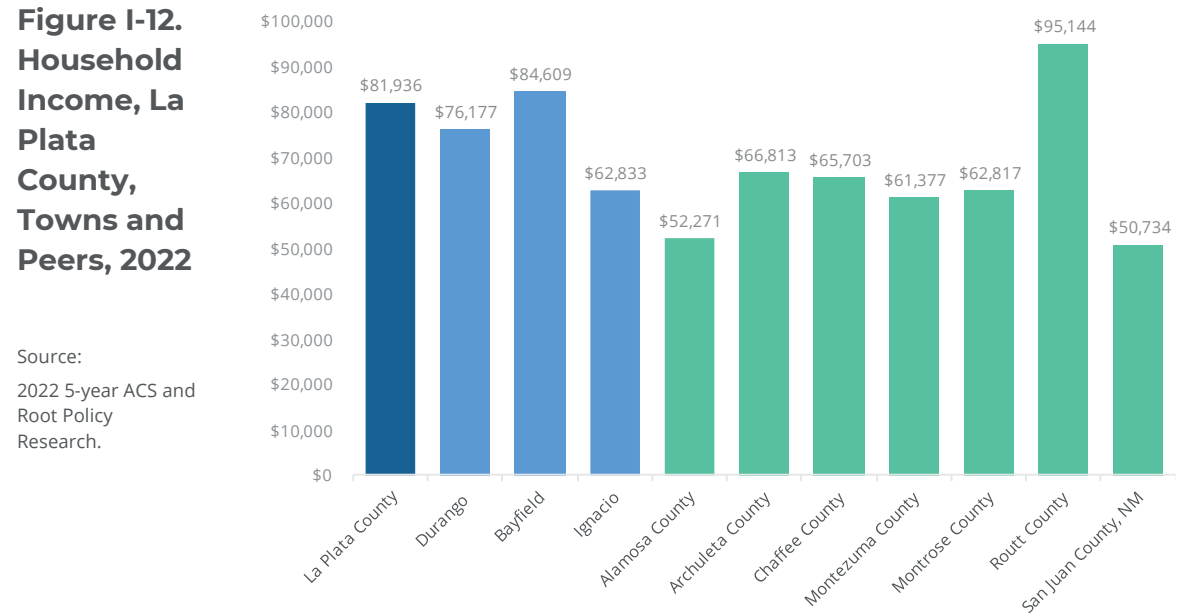
Independent living difficulties disproportionately impact seniors. These patterns are important for the County's planning efforts and housing priorities as it indicates the type of

housing La Plata County will need to accommodate resident’s needs, specifically accessibility improvements and accommodations (e.g., grab bars in the bathroom, service animals, entrance ramps, designated parking spot). As La Plata County’s population (and the surrounding areas) continue to age, the incidence of disability will likely increase, specifically for residents with ambulatory and independent living difficulties. Shifting demographics will result in changing housing and community needs such as accessible and visitable housing units and access to healthcare, as mentioned above.

Income and Poverty

This section provides a comprehensive overview of income and poverty trends in La Plata County including changes in median household incomes by tenure and household characteristics as well as individual poverty rates. Trends and patterns are compared to surrounding counties, cities within the county and peer cities in neighboring counties when data is available.

Household income. La Plata County had a median household income of \$81,936 in 2022, up 43% since 2012 and the highest of peer counties.³ Bayfield had a higher median income at about \$84,609 while San Juan County in NM has the lowest median among peer counties at about \$50,734 (Figure I-12).



³ Throughout this report, incomes and housing prices are discussed in nominal dollars as opposed to inflation adjusted (“real”) dollars. We take this approach for a couple reasons: 1) it helps us more accurately isolate relative changes in local incomes and housing prices because inflation is both a regional measure and is directly impacted by housing price changes at a broad scale, which means inflation adjustments can actually mute or hide the real comparison between local prices and incomes; and 2) our experience is that most readers find nominal dollar amounts to be more intuitive than inflation-adjusted amounts. For reference, inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 7% between 2012 and 2017 and 19% between 2017 and 2022 (and 27% for the collective period between 2012 and 2022).

Income by household type and size. Incomes vary by household size, type, and tenure (Figures I-13 and I-14). Married couple households in La Plata County have higher household incomes than other household types and experienced higher income gains than non-family households from 2017 to 2022. Higher incomes for family households, particularly married couples, are likely the result of having multiple earners.

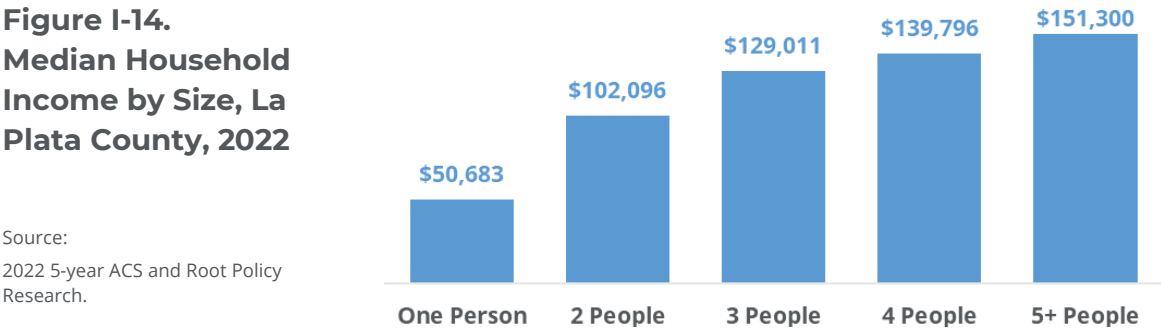
Figure I-13.
Median Household Income by Household Type, La Plata County, 2012-2022

	2012	2017	2022	2012-2017		2017-2022	
				Amount Change	Percent Change	Amount Change	Percent Change
All households	\$57,407	\$62,533	\$81,936	\$5,126	9%	\$19,403	31%
Family households	\$70,697	\$78,735	\$104,101	\$8,038	11%	\$25,366	32%
Married couple households	\$79,433	\$87,944	\$113,428	\$8,511	11%	\$25,484	29%
Non-family households	\$37,782	\$38,739	\$48,429	\$957	3%	\$9,690	25%

Notes: Income shown in nominal dollars, not adjusted for inflation. For comparison, inflation was 7% between 2012 and 2017 and 19% between 2017 and 2022.

Source: 2012, 2017, and 2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Figure I-14.
Median Household Income by Size, La Plata County, 2022



Source:
2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

As would be expected, one-person households have substantially lower incomes than larger households because, by definition, they include only one earner/worker. The average one-person household in La Plata County had a median household income of \$50,683 compared to \$102,096 for households with two people (Figure I-14).

Income by tenure. At the median, homeowners in La Plata County have income nearly double that of renters (\$96,611,000 compared to \$48,454), as shown in Figure I-15. Owners also experienced a greater percentage change in income (28% increase over the past 5 years) compared to only 19% increase for renters.

Figure I-15.
Median Household Income by Tenure, La Plata County, 2012-2022

	2012	2017	2022	2012-2017		2017-2022	
				Total	Change	Total	Change
All households	\$57,407	\$62,533	\$81,936	\$5,126	9%	\$19,403	31%
Owner households	\$67,376	\$75,242	\$96,611	\$7,866	12%	\$21,369	28%
Renter households	\$39,209	\$40,636	\$48,454	\$1,427	4%	\$7,818	19%

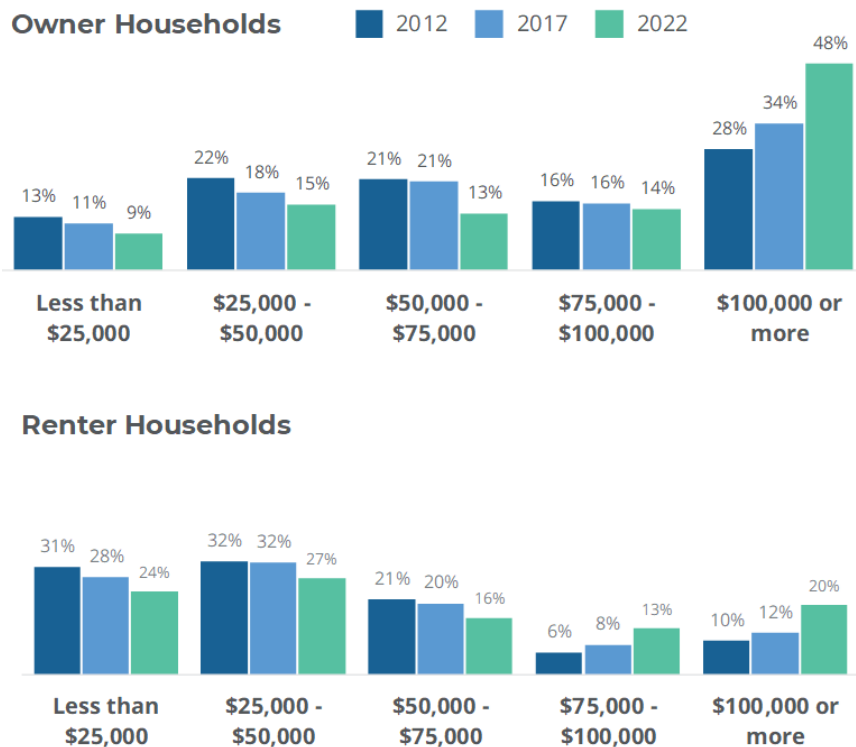
Note: Income shown in nominal dollars, not adjusted for inflation. For comparison, inflation was 7% between 2012 and 2017 and 19% between 2017 and 2022.

Source: 2012, 2017, and 2022 5-year ACS.

Over the last decade, incomes have shifted with fewer households in the less than \$50,000 annual income category and an increase of both owner and rental households in the over \$100,000 income category (Figure I-16).

Figure I-16.
Income Shifts by Tenure, La Plata County, 2012-2022

Source:
2012, 2017, and 2022 5-year ACS
and Root Policy Research.



Renters and owners with incomes below \$75,000 all declined during this timeframe. Renters with higher incomes (>\$75,000) more than doubled from 16% in 2012 to 33% in 2022 signaling that homeownership which is typically accessible for this income range has become less attainable creating more competition for limited rental units available in the county. With a competitive housing market and limited affordable options, renters and

young adults/families with lower incomes will likely leave the city to find housing elsewhere.

Poverty. In 2022, an estimated 11% of La Plata County residents were living in poverty, a rate slightly higher than 2017 when the County’s poverty rate was estimated at 10%. As shown in Figure I-17 below, poverty rates for children under 17 are both the highest and have increased the most over the past 5 years. Poverty rates have remained stable for all other age categories.

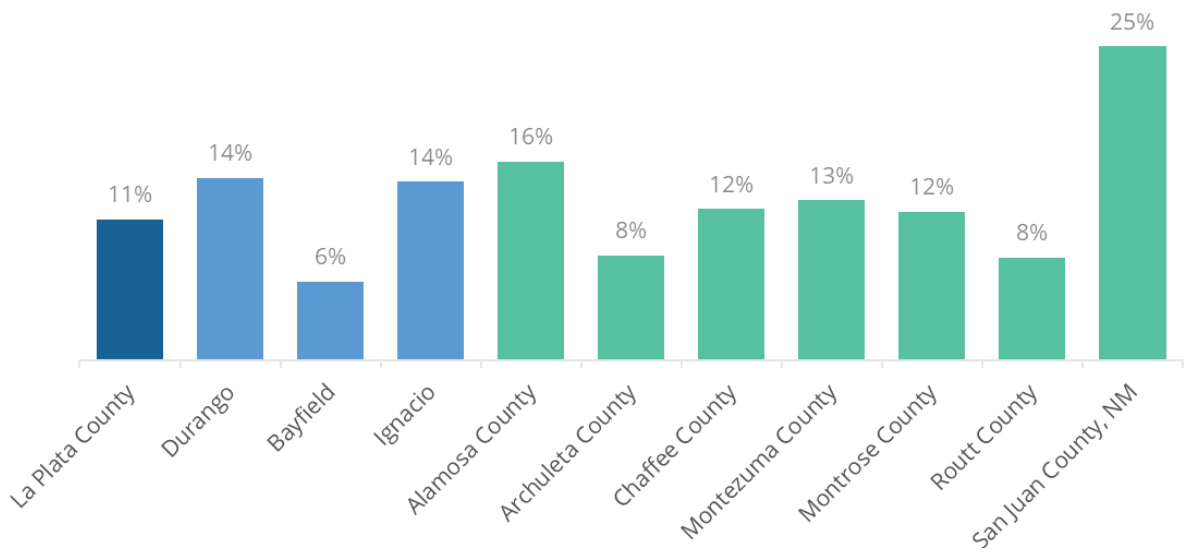
Figure I-17.
Poverty Rate by Age Cohort, La Plata County, 2017-2022

Source:
2017 and 2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

	2017	2022	2017-2022
			Percent Point Change
Total population	10%	11%	1%
Under 5 years	6%	14%	8%
5 to 17 years	10%	18%	8%
18 to 34 years	17%	19%	2%
35 to 64 years	7%	9%	2%
65 years or older	6%	5%	-1%

With the exception of Chaffee and San Juan Counties, poverty declined for all peer counties during this time period. A significant decline in poverty in Alamosa County occurred between 2019 and 2022 which could be attributed to covid era supports; progress that could be reversed with the expiration of assistance.

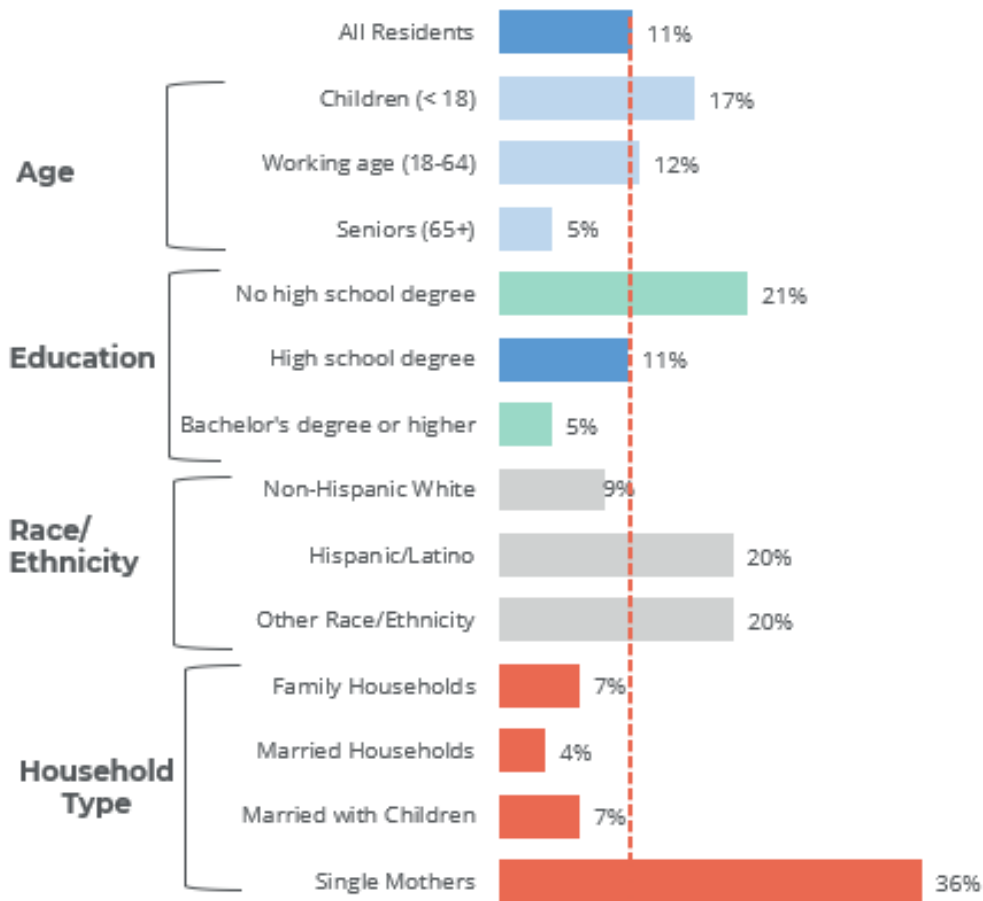
Figure I-18.
Poverty Rate, La Plata County and Peer Communities, 2017 and 2022



Source: 2017 and 2021 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Figure I-20 shows the poverty rate for La Plata County residents by socioeconomic characteristics. As previously indicated, children are more likely to experience poverty in the County than working age adults, seniors, and the general population.

Figure I-19.
Poverty Rate by Characteristics, La Plata County, 2022



Source: 2022 5-year American Community Survey and Root Policy Research.

Other findings illustrated in Figure I-19 include:

- Around one in five residents without a high school degree have incomes below the poverty level.
- Racial and ethnic minorities experience poverty at a greater rate than non-Hispanic White residents.
- Single mothers are significantly more likely to have incomes below the poverty level with more than one third living in poverty. These trends are likely related to having fewer earners/workers in the household.

Economic Profile

This section provides an overview of La Plata County's economic profile including jobs and workers, wages, and commute patterns. Overall, about 65% of the City's population over age 16 participates in the labor force—almost 30,000 residents—and the current unemployment rate is approximately 2%.

Jobs and workers. In 2023, there were approximately 36,000 jobs located in La Plata County an increase of 13% since 2012. Retail, health, and the accommodation and food services industries comprise the greatest share of jobs located in the county. Professional and business services jobs have shown the most growth in terms of the actual number of jobs over the past decade. These findings are shown in Figure I-20 below.

Figure I-20.
Jobs by Industry, La Plata County, 2012 and 2023

	2012		2023		Change	
	Total Number	Percent of Total	Total Number	Percent of Total	Num. Change	Pct. Change
Agriculture	927	3%	1,061	3%	134	14%
Mining	791	2%	517	1%	-274	-35%
Utilities	126	0%	153	0%	27	21%
Construction	2,855	9%	2,943	8%	88	3%
Manufacturing	679	2%	891	2%	212	31%
Wholesale trade	638	2%	714	2%	76	12%
Retail Trade	3,465	11%	3,848	11%	383	11%
Transportation and warehousing	710	2%	1,001	3%	291	41%
Information	492	2%	471	1%	-21	-4%
Finance activities	1,143	4%	986	3%	-157	-14%
Real estate	1,228	4%	1,467	4%	239	19%
Professional and business services	2,051	6%	2,828	8%	777	38%
Admin and waste	1,176	4%	1,488	4%	312	27%
Education	434	1%	612	2%	178	<1%
Health Services	3,451	11%	3,862	11%	411	12%
Arts	1,132	4%	1,453	4%	321	28%
Accommodation and food	3,183	10%	3,605	10%	422	13%
Other services, except public admin.	1,659	5%	1,787	5%	128	8%
Public Administration / Government	5,737	18%	6,156	17%	419	7%
Total Employment	31,921	100%	36,027	100%	4,106	13%

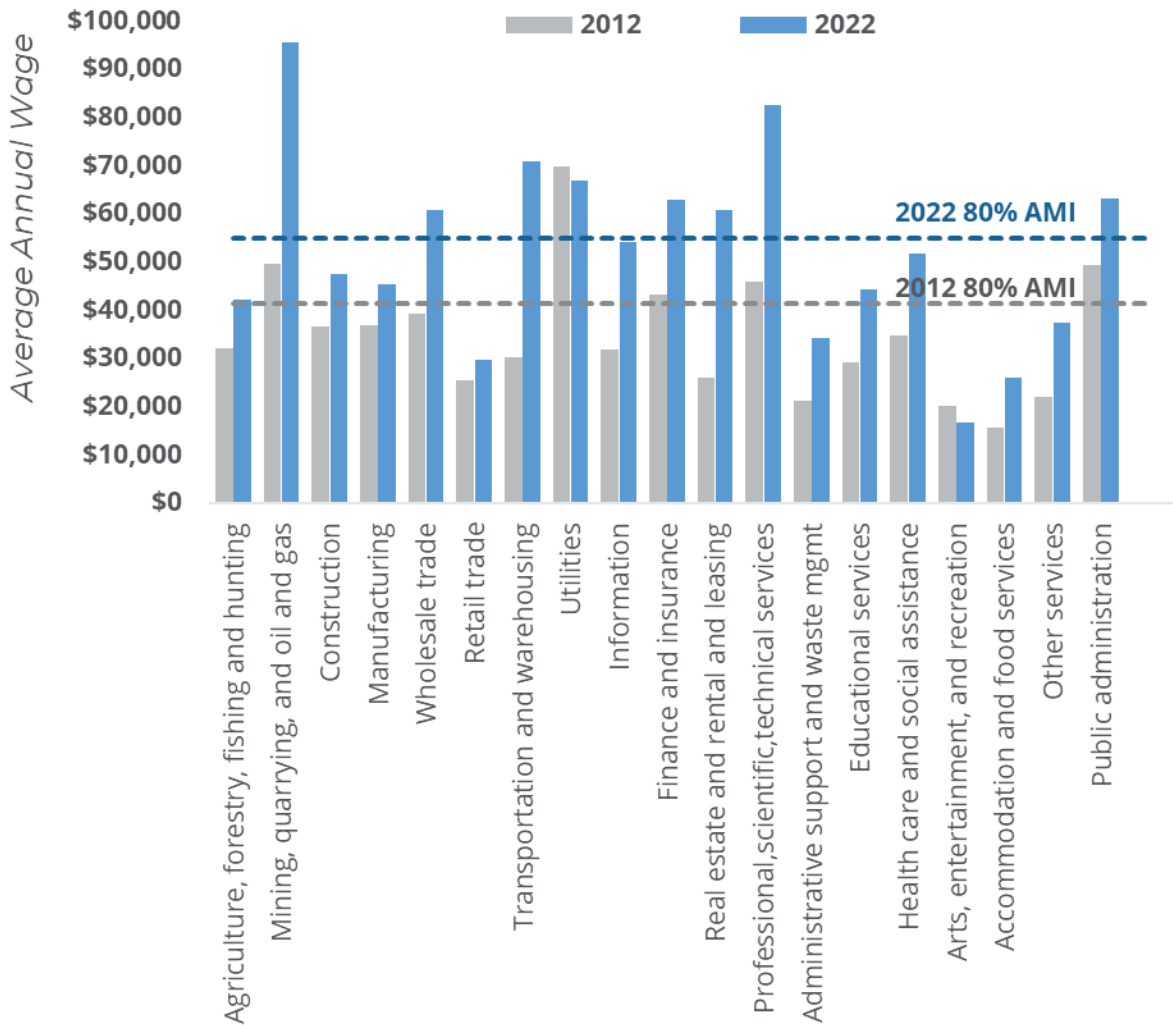
Note: Data are shown for all jobs including the private and public sectors. Industries classified according to NAICS.

Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) 2012 and 2023.

The average worker in La Plata County earned \$54,820 in 2022, an increase of 35% over the last decade. Average wages are lowest for workers in the accommodation and food service industry (around \$21,000/year) which comprise 12% of La Plata County's jobs.

As shown in Figure I-21, workers in mining/gas and professional/technical jobs have notably higher wages in 2022. The figure also includes HUD's 80% Area Median Income limit (AMI) for 2012 in gray and 2022 in blue for comparison to actual wages. HUD AMI is used for income qualification of various housing programs and the 80% limit is often used to designate "workforce housing programs;" more detail on AMI in subsequent sections).

Figure I-21.
Average Annual Wages by Industry, La Plata County, 2012 and 2022

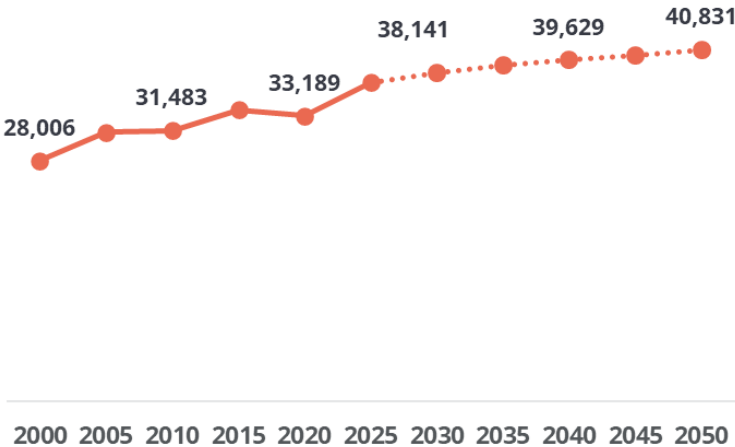


Notes: Industries are classified according to North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

Source: 2012, and 2022 5-year ACS.

Job growth in La Plata County is forecast to increase only slightly over the next 30 years to approximately 40,000 jobs in 2050; an increase of approximately 13%. Whether this growth is realized will be dependent on whether local businesses continue to expand and the ability of the region to incentivize and attract new businesses. Availability of workforce and affordable housing will be critical to maintaining the current services available to county residents and attracting new investment in the county going forward.

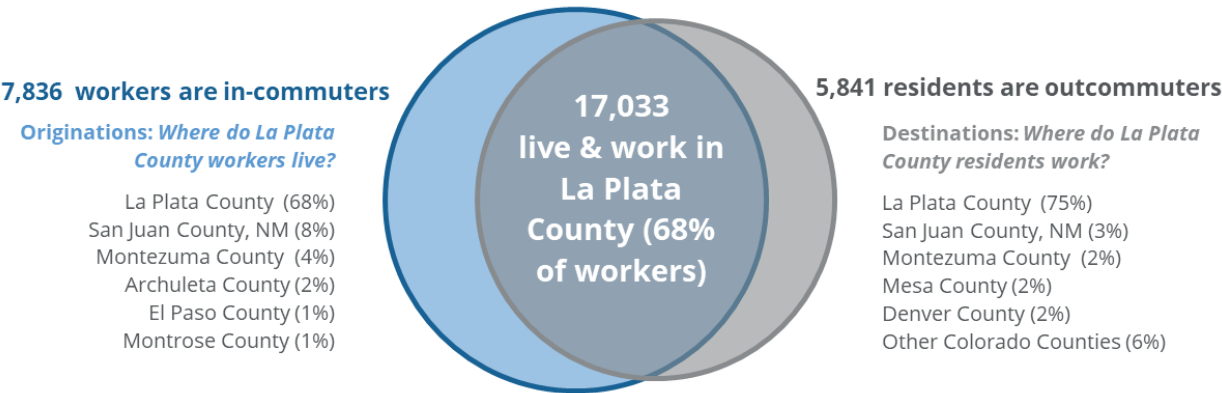
Figure I-22.
Projected Job
Growth, La Plata
County, through
2050



Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, 2000-2050.

Commuting patterns. Nearly one-third of La Plata County’s workers (32%) do not live in the county (Figure I-24). The most common counties where workers are commuting from are San Juan County in New Mexico (8%), Montezuma County (4%) and Archuleta County (2%).

Figure I-23.
Commute Patterns, La Plata County, 2022



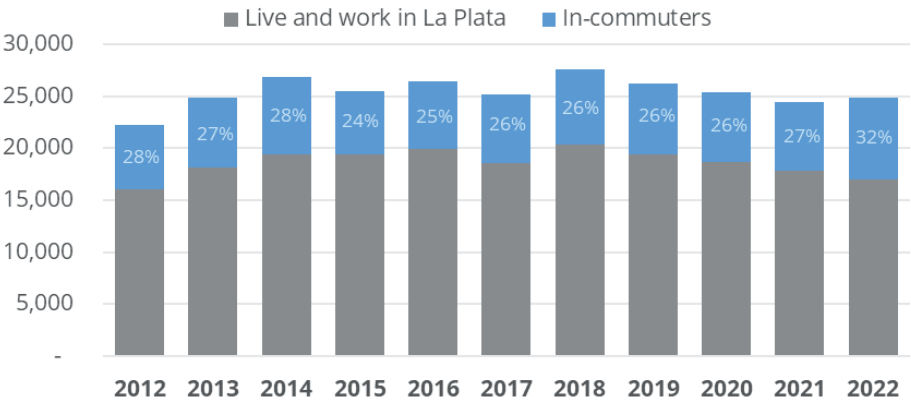
Note: Data reflect primary jobs so may not total to the same job numbers as previous figures. Data are shown for all workers including the public and private sectors.

Source: LEHD 2022 and Root Policy Research.

Figure I-24 shows commute patterns over time in La Plata County. In-commuting as a percentage of primary jobs was fairly consistent between 2012 and 2021, but may be on the rise, according to 2022 data (the most recent available).

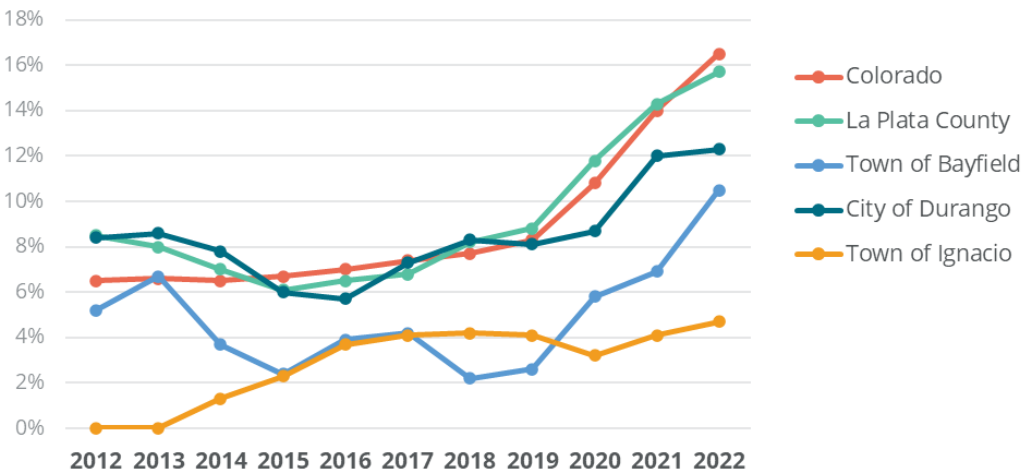
Figure I-24.
Total
Employment
Vs. Commute
Patterns, La
Plata County,
2012-2022

Source:
(LEHD and Root Policy
Research.



Remote workers. Since 2019, there has been a sharp increase in the number (and proportion) of employees working primarily from home. This trend can create changes in a housing market by decoupling housing demand from local employment and by creating new preferences in housing stock (e.g., home office space). Figure I-25 shows the trends in the proportion of residents working from home in Colorado and La Plata County. Generally, La Plata County trends have closely tracked statewide trends over the past decade.

Figure I-.
Residents Working from Home, 2012-2022



Source: 2012-2022 ACS and Root Policy Research.

SECTION II.

HOUSING MARKET TRENDS

SECTION II.

Housing Market Trends

Section II of the Housing Needs Assessment provides an analysis of La Plata County's housing stock, rental and for-sale market, as well as residential development patterns. An inventory of the county's income-restricted housing units is provided at the end of the section.

Primary Findings

- The majority of La Plata County's housing stock is single-family detached products—however, recent permitting has shown an increase in multi-family housing types (concentrated in Durango).
- The vast majority of La Plata's housing stock—82%—is occupied by permanent resident households. Of the remaining 18%, about half of units are vacant for “recreational, seasonal, or occasional use”—including short-term rentals.
- Since 2012, job growth has outpaced new housing production—in other words, housing supply is not keeping up with economic growth, creating additional pressure on the housing market and contributing to higher in-commuting.
- Seventy one percent (71%) of La Plata County households own their home. Bayfield has the highest homeownership rate at 74% and Durango has the lowest rate at 55%.
- The median rent paid by renters, accounting for the use of regulated affordable units and vouchers is about \$1,350 (as of 2022). The current asking rent of market-rate units is about \$1,500 (median as of 2024). The increase in median rent outpaced income growth, compressing affordability for current renters.
- Rental units in the county have increasingly shifted to higher price points over the last decade, resulting in a sharp decline in units affordable to low- and middle-income households. Just since 2017, the number of units priced below \$1,000 per month dropped by 1,300 units. Rental units priced over \$2,000 per month tripled and comprise one third of rental stock in 2022.
- The median sale price in the county across 2023/24 was about \$650,000 (including all home types)—up 71% since 2017-2018 when the median was around \$375,000. For sale homes priced below \$500,000 have dramatically declined, comprising only 32% of homes sales in the county in 2023/24, down from 73% in 2017/2018.

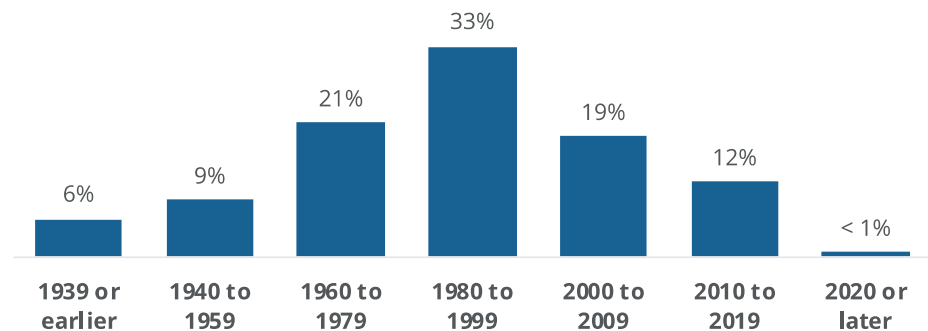
- Income-restricted housing units play an important role in providing affordable rents to La Plata County residents and workers with low to moderate household incomes. There are a total of 808 income-restricted rental units across 19 properties in La Plata County.

Housing Stock

This section presents the characteristics of La Plata County's housing stock compared to peer communities in Colorado and communities in New Mexico that are housing La Plata County workers. The County's housing stock is evaluated by total housing units, age of housing, housing types and size, and vacancy rates for owner and renter occupied housing.

Age of housing. Housing age diversity in La Plata County is similar to peer communities, with the vast majority of units being built more than 25 years ago as shown in Figure II-1 below.

Figure II-1.
Share of
Housing by
Year Built, La
Plata County,
2022



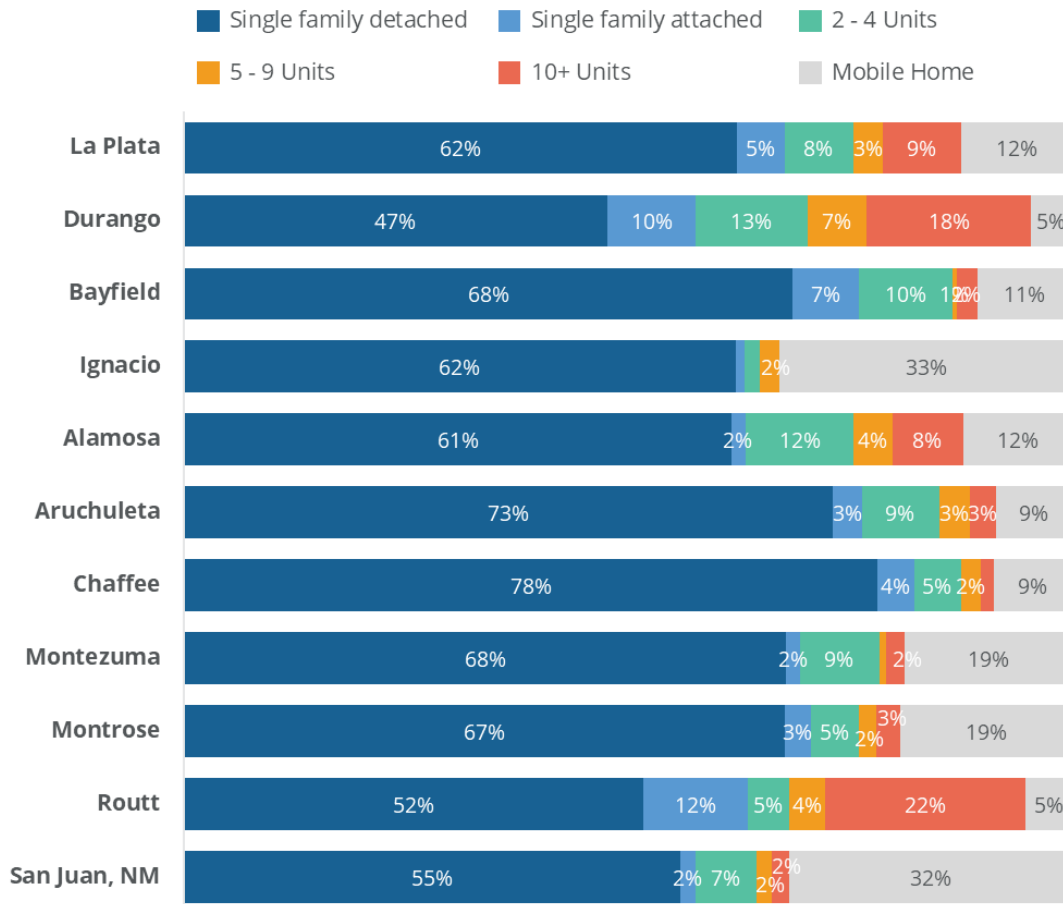
Source:
2022 5-year ACS and
Root Policy Research.

As La Plata County has a large inventory of housing stock dated prior to 1991 when accessibility requirements were established for residential multifamily construction, a large share of units are likely in need of accessibility features and updates in general (e.g., grab bars in the bathroom, stepless entry), especially as the population continues to age.

Housing types. Most of La Plata County's housing stock is comprised of single family detached units (62%). Another 16% is "missing middle" density, or small-scale density housing: single family attached, duplexes, triples, fourplexes, and small multifamily (structures with fewer than 10 units per building). Nine percent (9%) of homes are in multifamily structures with 10 or more units per building, and 12% of homes are mobile/manufactured home structures.

Figure II-2 shows the housing stock by units in structure for La Plata and its communities, along with comparison counties. Durango has the most diversity in housing types (not surprisingly, since it is the largest city). Among peer counties, Routt County has the most product diversity (driven primarily by the development patterns in Steamboat Springs).

Figure II-2.
Share of Housing Stock by Structure Type, La Plata County/Communities,
and Peer Counties



Note: An attached single family home is one dwelling unit on a single lot (shares walls with another dwelling). Multi-unit properties have 2 to 4 units on a single lot.

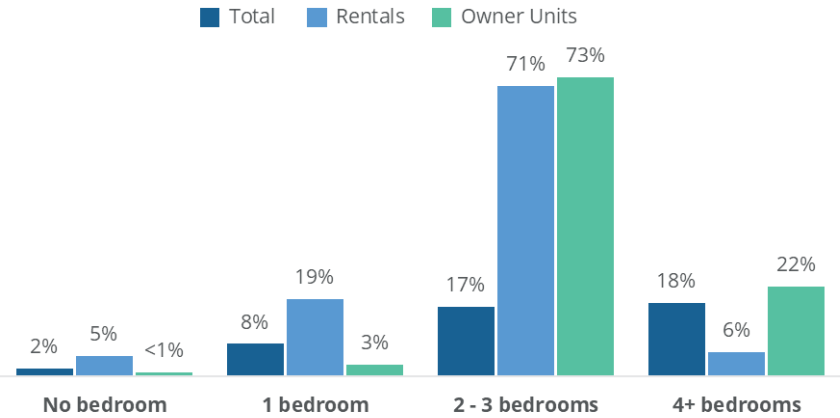
Source: 2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Unit size. The vast majority of renters and owners in La Plata County live in homes with 2-3 bedrooms. As shown in Figure II-3 below, homeowners are more likely to occupy larger units—22% live in units with four or more bedrooms compared to 6% of renters. Renters tend to occupy smaller units with 24% living in either studios or 1-bedroom units.

The average number of people per household is 2.39 in La Plata County. Owner households have 2.46 people on average, compared to 2.22 people for the average renter household.

Figure II-3.
Housing Units
by Bedrooms
and Tenure, La
Plata County,
2022

Source:
 2022 5-year ACS and Root
 Policy Research.



Residential development. Figure II-4 shows permitting trends for residential developments in La Plata County as a whole, Durango, Bayfield, and unincorporated areas of La Plata County. Development activity countywide has not fully rebounded to its pre-Recession levels (prior to 2007).

Although La Plata County’s current housing structure mix has traditionally been weighted toward single-family detached products, permitting in 2024 indicated an increase in 2-unit structures and multi-family, particularly in Durango.

Figure II-4.
Building Permits by Number of Units in Structure, La Plata County and
Jurisdictions, 2000-2023

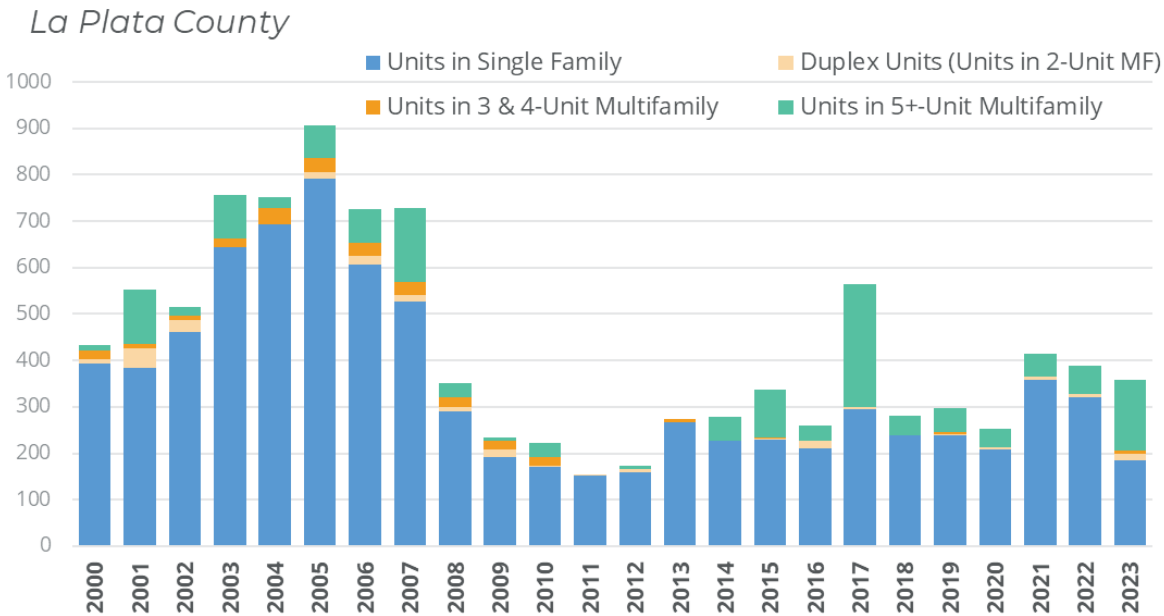
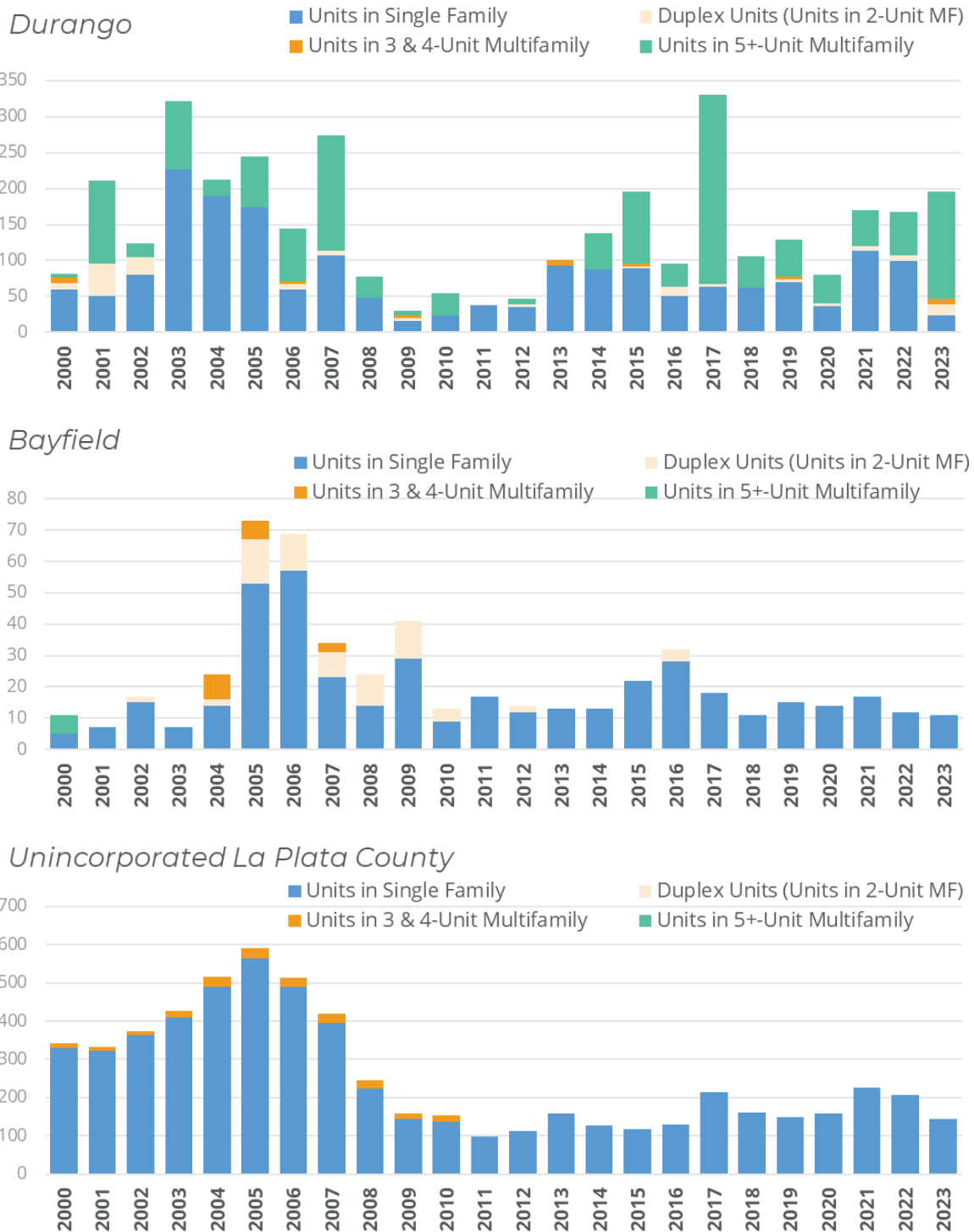


Figure II-4 (continued).
Building Permits by Number of Units in Structure, La Plata County and Jurisdictions, 2000-2023

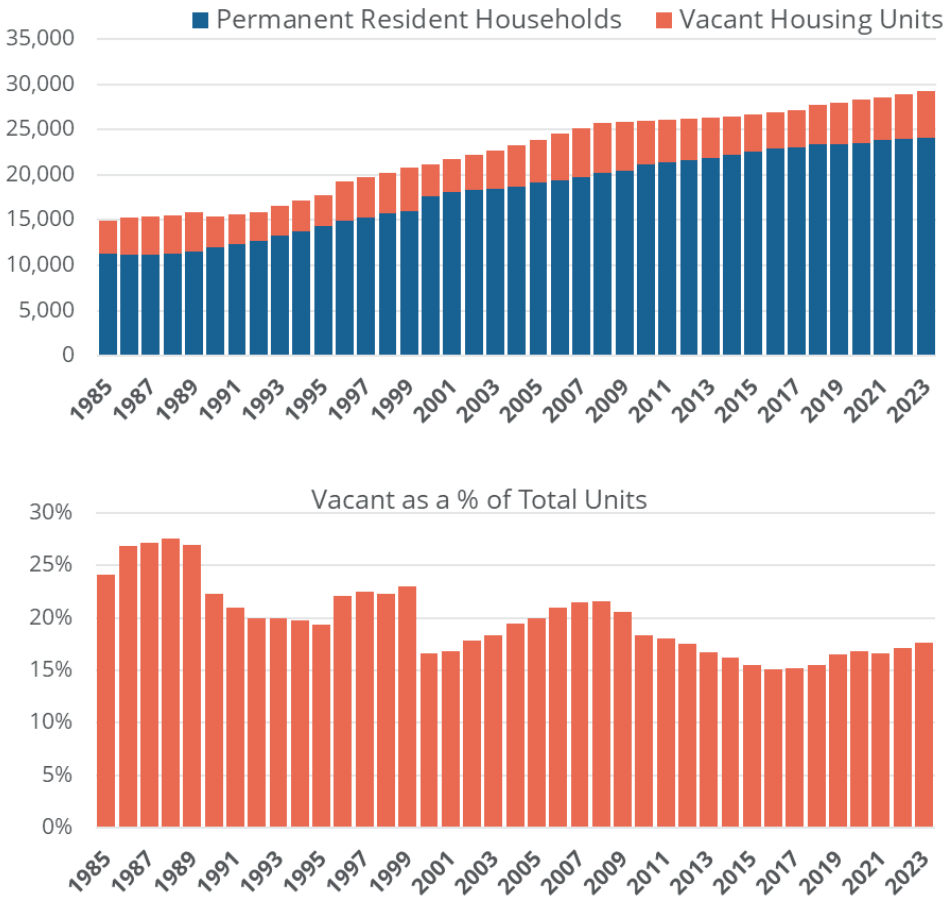


Source: HUD State of the Cities Data Systems (SOCDS) Building Permit Database.

Changes in housing stock and occupancy. Figure II-5 shows total housing units in the county from 1985 through 2023, separating out units occupied by permanent resident households and vacant housing units. It also shows vacant units as a percent of total units over time. The number of units has consistently increased, though vacant units as a percent of total units has declined since 2008, despite marginal upticks over the last 5 years.

Figure II-5.
Housing
Units by
Occupancy,
La Plata
County,
1985-2023

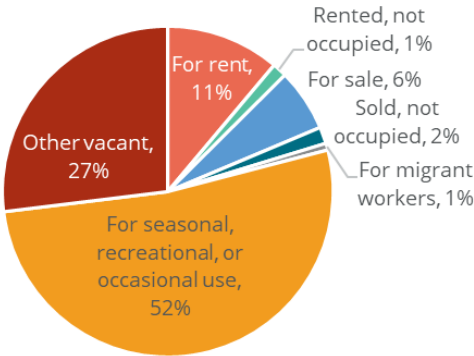
Source:
Colorado
Department of Local
Affairs.



Among vacant units, the most common reason for vacancy is for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use (52% of all vacant units. Figure II-6 shows reason for vacancy in 2023.

Figure II-6.
Reason for Vacancy,
La Plata County,
2022

Source:
2022 ACS and Root Policy Research.



Is housing supply keeping up with household and economic growth? To understand whether housing supply is keeping up with the change in household and economic growth, we compare the increase in total units with the increase in permanent resident households and with the increase in jobs.

The number of housing units relative to the number of households in La Plata County was stable between 2012 and 2022—in other words, unit production was on pace with the increase in households. However, the number of jobs increased by 12% between 2012 and 2022, while the number of housing units increased by just 9%. In other words, housing supply is *not* keeping pace with job/economic growth, resulting in a declining jobs-to-household-units ratio.

Figure II-7.
Housing Units to Households, La Plata and Peer Counties 2012-2022

	2022				% Change from 2012			
	Pop.	HH.	Jobs	Units	Pop.	HH.	Jobs	Units
La Plata County	55,983	22,691	24,869	28,233	9%	8%	12%	9%
Alamosa County	16,460	6,471	7,698	7,084	5%	11%	11%	8%
Archuleta County	13,509	5,738	4,685	9,591	12%	26%	58%	10%
Chaffee County	19,564	9,066	8,489	11,072	9%	18%	38%	10%
Montezuma County	26,070	10,520	8,264	12,269	3%	-3%	2%	2%
Montrose County	42,823	17,042	14,777	19,122	4%	2%	18%	5%
Routt County	24,944	10,279	14,618	16,642	7%	5%	16%	3%
San Juan County, NM	121,798	41,049	42,325	48,050	-5%	-2%	-15%	-2%

Source: 2012 and 2022 5-year ACS, LEHD, and Root Policy Research.

Renters and Owners in La Plata County

Seventy-one percent (71%) of La Plata County's households own their home, with Bayfield having the highest home ownership rate at 74%. Comparison communities (shown in Figure II-8 below) have ownership rates that range 43% (Pagosa Springs) up to 64% (Cortez). Aztec and Farmington, New Mexico have ownership rates on the higher end of peer communities and higher than Durango whose ownership rate is the lowest in La Plata County.

**Figure II-8.
Ownership
Rates, La
Plata County
Communities
and Peers**

Source:
2022 5-year ACS.

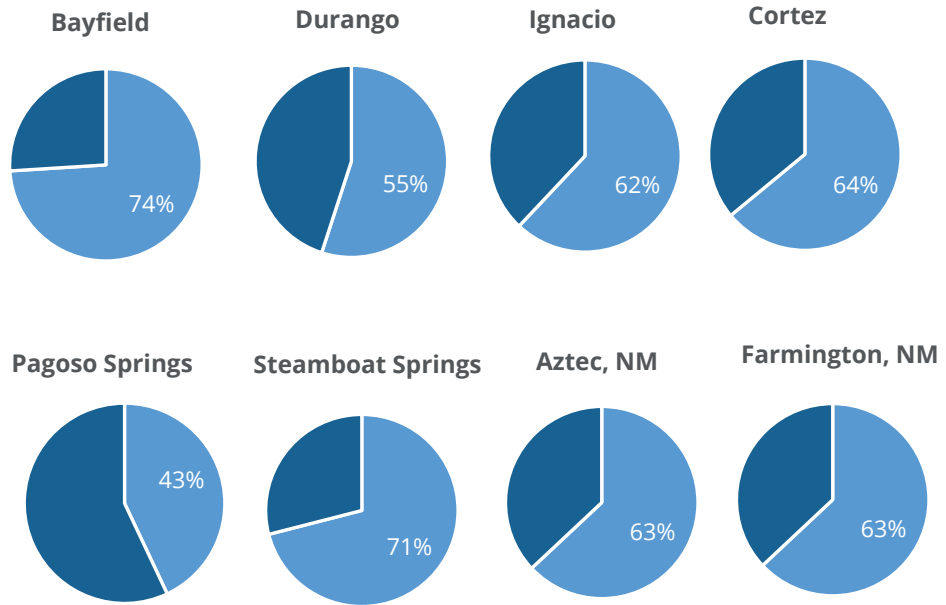


Figure II-9 shows the homeownership trend by income in La Plata County. Not surprisingly, higher ownership is associated with higher incomes. It is also not surprising that homeownership remained stable and even ticked upwards across some income ranges between 2020 to 2021 during a period of historically low interest rates making higher priced homes more accessible. Overall, ownership across incomes has declined with the combination of high home prices and rising interest rates beginning in 2022.

**Figure II-9.
Ownership by
Income, La
Plata County
2017-2022**

Source:
2017-2022 5-year ACS.

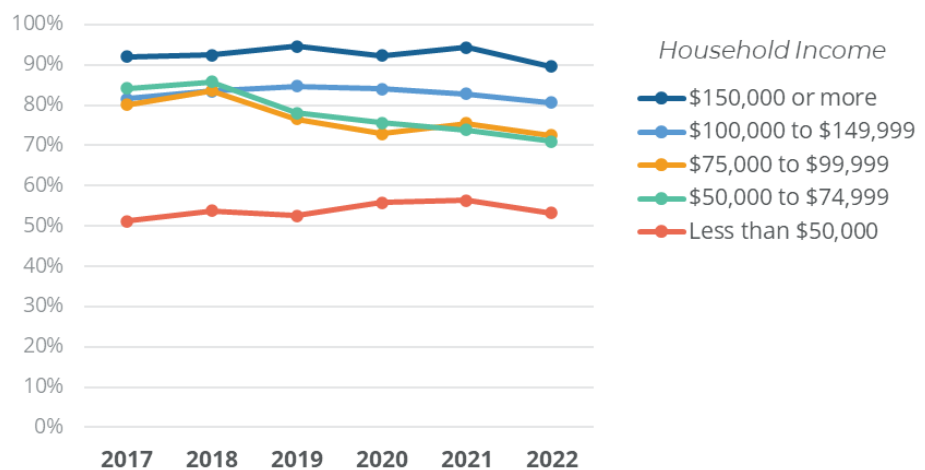




















Figure II-10 summarizes the number and distribution of owner and renter households by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

Figure II-10.
Profile of Owners and Renters, La Plata County, 2022

	Owners		Renters		Ownership Rate
	Num.	Pct.	Num.	Pct.	
Total Households	16,036	100%	6,655	100%	71% 
Median Income	\$96,611		\$48,454		
Race and Ethnicity					
Non-Hispanic White	13,835	86%	4,918	74%	74% 
Hispanic or Latino	1,043	7%	1,012	15%	51% 
American Indian / Native American	569	4%	525	8%	52% 
Other	251	2%	236	4%	52% 
Age of Householder					
Under 35 years	1,406	9%	2,512	38%	36% 
35 to 44 years	2,472	15%	1,457	22%	63% 
45 to 64 years	6,476	40%	1,803	27%	78% 
Over 65 years	5,682	35%	883	13%	87% 
Household Type					
Family households	11,162	70%	2,841	43%	80% 
Married family households	9,856	61%	1,804	27%	85% 
Male householder, no spouse	475	3%	350	5%	58% 
Female householder, no spouse	831	5%	687	10%	55% 
Non-family households	4,874	30%	3,814	57%	56% 
Education of Householder					
Less than high school graduate	327	2%	305	5%	52% 
High school graduate (or equivalent)	2,836	18%	1,374	21%	67% 
Some college or associate's degree	3,927	24%	2,531	38%	61% 
Bachelor's degree or higher	8,946	56%	2,445	37%	79% 

Note: Some percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding. Asian and African American estimates have small population sizes and are therefore combined with "other".

Source: 2022 5-year ACS.

Key differences between homeowners and renters can be summarized as follows:

- Homeowners tend to be married with bachelor's degree or higher. Median household incomes for owners are almost double that of renter households (\$96,611 v. \$48,454).
- Racial and ethnic minorities are underrepresented in homeownership with significantly lower ownership rates than non-Hispanic White households. The sample size for Black/African American and Asian households is very small and is therefore included with "other" race/ethnicity.
- Renters tend to be younger and have lower levels of education. More than a third of renters in La Plata County are under the age of 35. About two-thirds of renters have

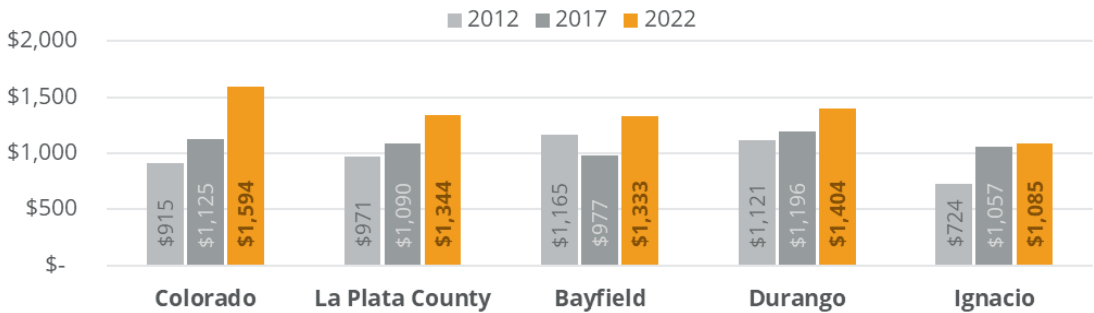
less than a bachelor's degree compared to less than half of owners. These differences could be driven by life stages as younger renters are more likely to be in the early stage of their education and the presence of Ft. Lewis College in Durango increases the number of younger residents who live in the area and are renting temporarily while attending school. Home ownership is out of reach for workers who do not hold a college degree.

Rental Market Trends

This section provides an analysis of La Plata's rental market including patterns and trends in median rents and rental price distributions. It begins with an overview of the market using ACS data, the most recent year available is 2022. ACS data are the most comprehensive data on rentals as the dataset describes what all renters pay, regardless of unit type and inclusive of affordable housing inventory and public subsidies. However, since the ACS data are lagged, this section also includes market data on multifamily rentals through Q3 of 2024, using Costar data.

Median rent. According to the ACS, the median rent paid by renters in La Plata County was \$1,333 in 2022 (after adjusting for publicly subsidized units/vouchers). Durango has the highest median rent of local communities (\$1,404), following by Bayfield (\$1,333) and then Ignacio (\$1,085).

Figure II-11.
Median Rent, 2012, 2017, and 2022, La Plata County and Communities

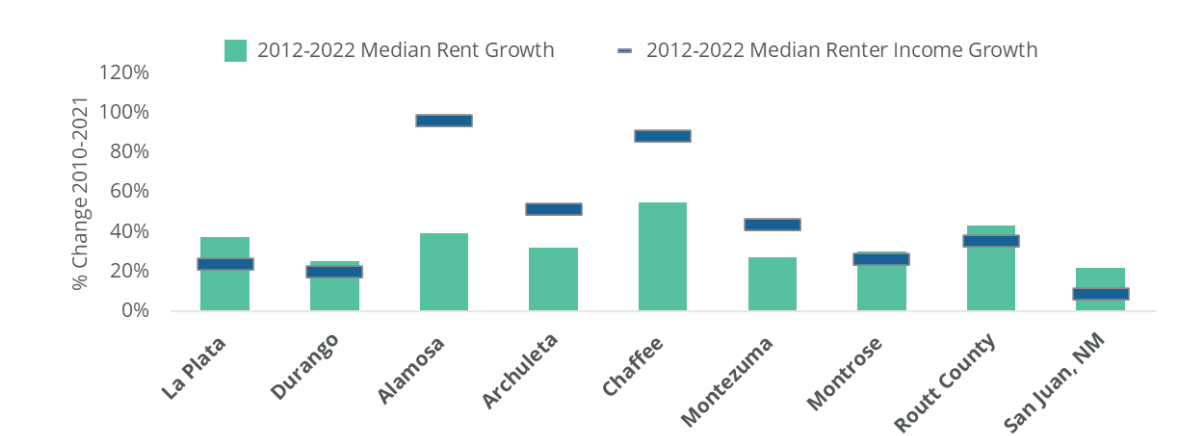


Source: 2012, 2017, 2022 ACS.

As illustrated in the previous figure, La Plata County's median rent increased by 38% from 2012 to 2022 (from \$971/month to \$1,344 per month). Over the same time period, median renter income increased by 26%--in other words, rent increases outpaced income increases for renters. Figure II-12, on the following page, compares the percentage change in rents to the percentage change in renter incomes between 2012 and 2022. Where rent increase (represented by the green bar) are higher than renter income increase (represented by the blue lines), affordability declined. Where income increases are higher than rent increases,

affordability improved. Rents increases in La Plata County and in Durango are higher than income growth. The same was true in Routt County and San Juan, NM. However, other peer counties saw affordability improvements at the mediana as incomes outpaced rent increases.

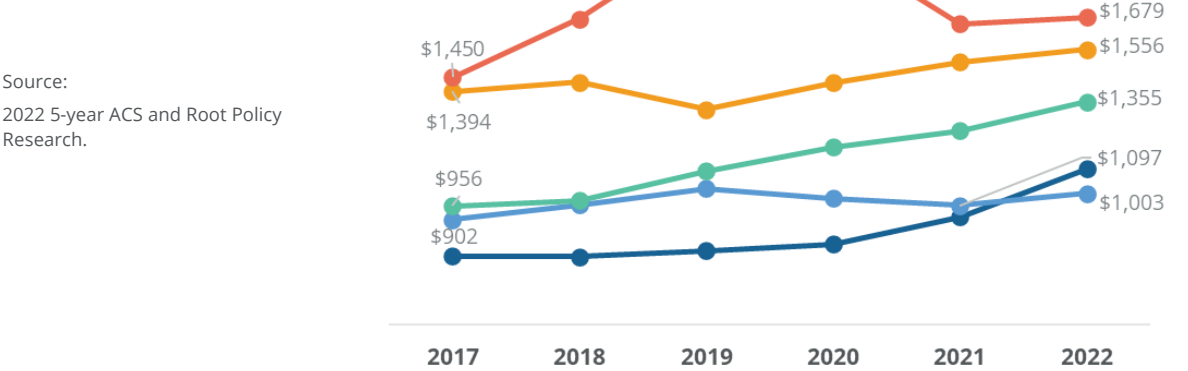
Figure II-12.
Change in Median Rent and Income, 2012-2022



Source: 2010, and 2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Figure II-13 shows La Plata County rental trends by number of bedrooms. For the most part, larger units command higher rents, although some studios do have a higher median rent than 1-bedrooms, likely reflecting luxury rental housing. Rent increases were the greatest for studio and 2-bedroom rentals, which could indicate high demand on these types of units.

Figure II-13.
Median Rent by Number of Bedrooms, La Plata County, 2017-2022



Source:
2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Rental price distribution. Rental units in the county have increasingly shifted to higher price points over the last decade. Since 2012, the number of units priced above

\$2,000 nearly tripled to comprise over one-third of total rental stock in 2022. The number of rental units priced below \$1,250 also declined during this time, decreasing by more than a third (34%). These shifts were most dramatic for units priced between \$500 and \$1000—the steepest decline occurred over the last five years (Figure II-14).

Figure II-14.
Distribution of Units by Gross Rent, La Plata County, 2012-2022



Source: 2012, 2017, and 2021 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

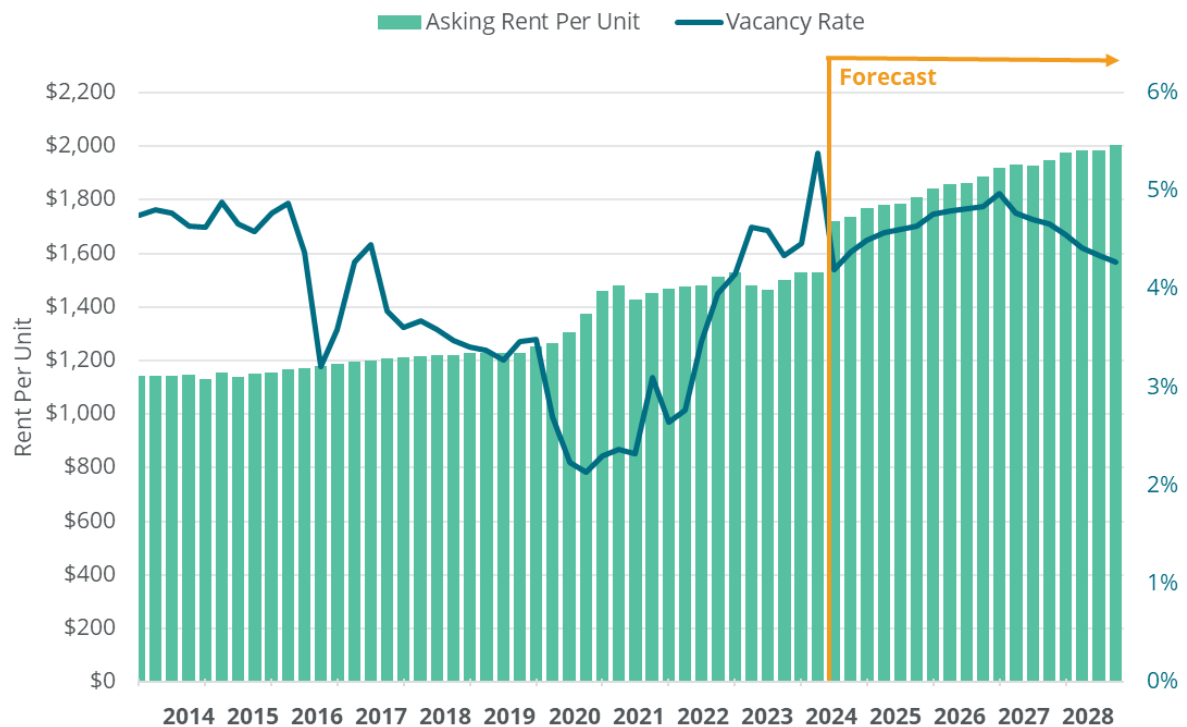
As shown in the figure above, the number of rental units increased only if the rent was priced \$1,000. Units between \$1,000 and \$1,499 per month increased by 43%, units between \$1,500 and \$1,999 increased by 90% while units over \$2,000 per month increased by 288%.

Market rents and vacancy. The ACS data on median rent and rental distribution (shown in the preceding figures) offer a comprehensive analysis of what La Plata County renters currently pay for rent. The ACS data include all structure types (single-family rentals to apartments) as well as both market-rate rental units and subsidized/affordable rental units. However, the ACS data may not accurately portray what is currently available on the market for a household looking to rent nor does it illustrate the asking rents of newly constructed rental properties.

CoStar data provide a more accurate picture of market-rate apartment rents, relying on extensive surveys of multifamily properties across the United States. Figure II-15 shows the CoStar data on effective rents¹ in La Plata County from 2014 through 2024 Q2 and forecasts rents through 2028. It also shows the rental vacancy rate in La Plata County over the same period (indicated by the blue line in the figure).

¹ Effective rent factors in concessions offered by the landlord such as one free month at leasing.

Figure II-15.
Monthly Asking Rent, La Plata County, 2014-2024; Forecasts through 2029



Source: CoStar and Root Policy Research.

According to CoStar, average rent in La Plata County in 2024 is about \$1,500 per month. This average equates to rents in the 60% to 80% AMI range, depending on unit and household size. Rents are expected to progressively increase over the next five years, reaching around \$2,000 per month by the end of 2028.

Current vacancy rates are just over 4%, up from a historically low of just over 2% in 2020. Despite the recent increase in vacancy rates, 4% still reflects a very tight rental market. When vacancy rates are relatively low (below 8%), there is lots of competition for available units, which allows landlords to command higher rents.

Rising rental construction costs. Statewide, the average cost to construct an affordable multifamily rental unit was \$432,835 in 2024, up from \$307,079 in 2020 (a 41% increase).² Rising interest rates also make it more challenging for developers to finance new multifamily rental units. Rising construction and financing costs, in general, contribute to higher prices in the delivery of new multifamily rental units.

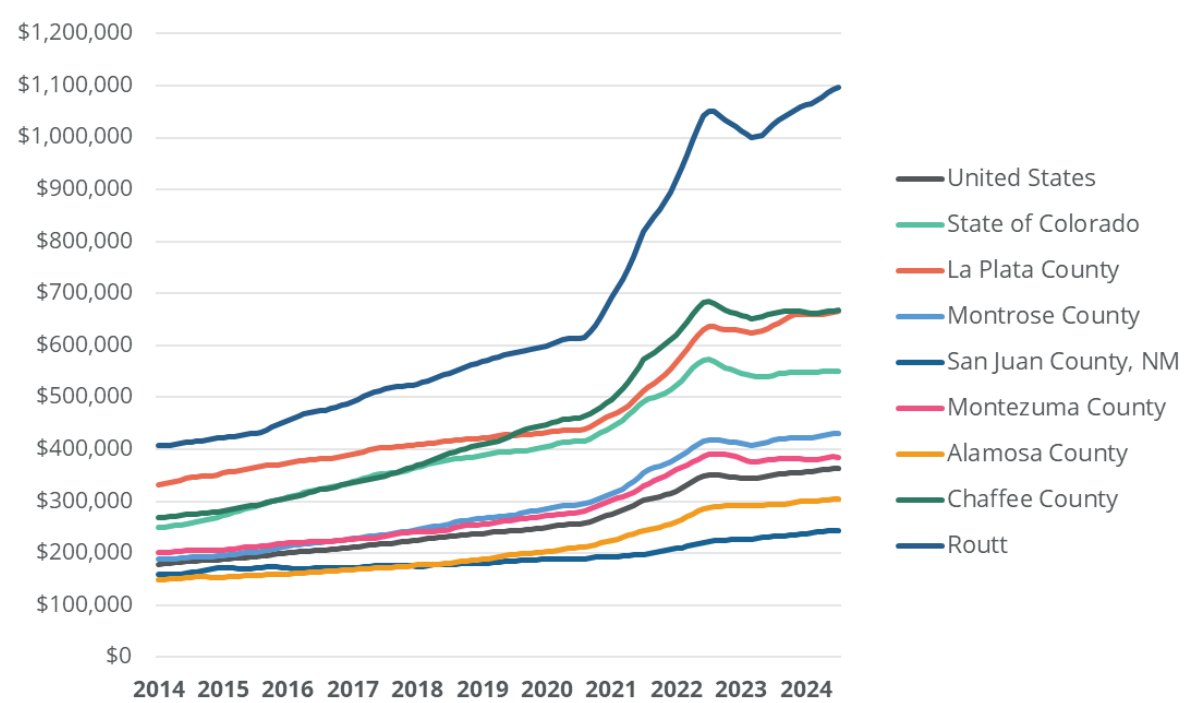
² Data from CHFA Affordable Housing Development Cost Dashboard.

For-Sale Market Trends

Similar to the rental market, the for-sale market in La Plata has seen significant increases in price in recent years. Rising interest rates further exacerbated affordability challenges, particularly for first-time buyers. This section discusses trends in the for-sale market in La Plata County using data from Zillow Analytics as well as local data from the Multiple List Service on all homes listed or sold in La Plata County in 2023 and the first two quarters of 2024.

Home values. According to the Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI), La Plata County had a median home value of \$665,831³ in 2024, an increase of 110% from 2010 or nearly \$350,000 over the last 15 years.

Figure II-16
Median Home Values, La Plata County Comparisons, 2014-2024



Note: Home value data are shown for Zillow estimates up to July 2024.

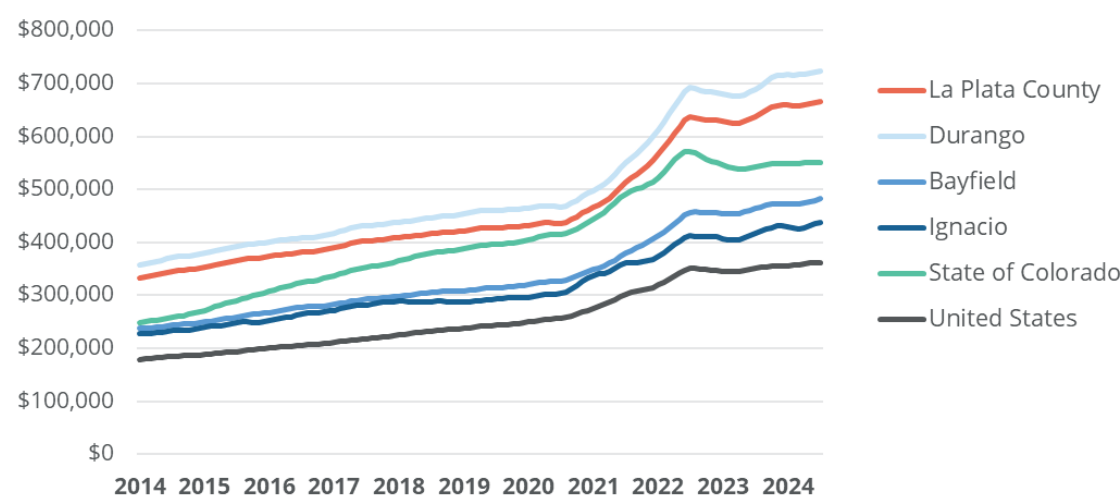
Source: Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI) and Root Policy Research.

Relative to peer communities, La Plata and Chaffee County home prices are significantly higher, with median home values in in the county exceeding \$600,000 by 2024, while

³ Note that 2024 median home values represent home value estimates for January 2023 up to July 2024. Home value data reflects all owner-occupied homes in La Plata County; home sales in the next section refer to homes that were listed or sold during the period. The median shown in this figure is in line with data from the Durango Association of Realtors which reports the 2024 median sale price to be \$675,000 (see <https://durangorealtor.com/market-stats/> for details and for monthly updates).

communities in San Juan County, NM have medians in the \$250,000 range. La Plata County home values are also higher than the State of Colorado median.

Figure II-17
Median Home Values, La Plata County Communities, 2014-2024



Note: Home value data are shown for Zillow estimates up to July 2024.

Source: Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI) and Root Policy Research.

Home sales. Around 1,444 homes were sold in La Plata County from January 2023 to October 2024 for a median sales price of \$642,500.⁴ Nearly three in four homes were single-family detached units, 19% were duplexes or townhomes, and the remaining 8% were condos. Figure II-18 shows the distribution of homes sales by type along with the median price, typical characteristics, and location of homes sold in La Plata County (January 2023-October 2024). Note that median *price* differs from the median home *values* discussed previously: home values include all owner-occupied homes in La Plata; home prices refer only to the homes that were listed or sold during period.

⁴ La Plata County has a total of approximately 22,691 owner occupied homes so about 6% of all owner occupied homes were listed for sale at some point between January 2023 and October 2024.

Figure II-18.
Profile of Home Sales, La Plata County, 2023-2024

<i>All Home Sales</i>		<i>Sales by Type of Home</i>			
		<i>Single Family Detached</i>	<i>Townhome</i>	<i>Condo</i>	<i>Manufactured/ Mobile/Modular</i>
Home Sales Jan 2023 - October 2024					
Total Homes Sold	1,444	901	177	206	160
Percent of Sold Homes	100%	62%	12%	14%	11%
Median Sales Price	\$642,500	\$775,000	\$630,000	\$376,000	\$300,000
Median Price per Square Foot	\$397	\$404	\$407	\$480	\$212
Typical Characteristics					
Median Year Built	1998	1998	2006	1984	1996
Median Square Feet	1,750	2,050	1,671	862	1,296
Avg. Number of Bedrooms	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0
Avg. Number of Bathrooms	2	3	3	2	2
Location					
Bayfield	252	81%	4%	0%	14%
Durango	1093	57%	15%	19%	9%
Hesperus	40	80%	0%	0%	20%
Ignacio	39	56%	0%	0%	44%
Vallecito Lake/Bayfield	17	82%	0%	0%	18%
Other unincorporated	2	100%	0%	0%	0%

Note: Includes sales from January 1, 2023 to October 31, 2024.

Source: MLS and Root Policy Research.

The typical home sold in La Plata County in 2023/24 was built around 1998, was 1,750 square feet, and had about 3 bedrooms. On average, condos are older than single family detached, mobile/modular and other types of attached units (duplexes, townhomes), but command a higher price per square foot (\$480 compared to around \$404) which makes sense as smaller square footage is typically priced higher per square foot. Condos offer the most affordable option with a median price around \$376,000, and account for a small proportion of total sales (14%) relative to single family detached homes.

Median sale price trends by home type. Since 2017-2018, home sales prices in the county increased by 71% (or \$267,450) reaching a median sale price of \$642,500 compared to only \$375,050 6-7 years ago.

As shown in Figure II-19, changes in median sale prices vary by the type of home sold. Over the last 6-7 years, sales prices have increased the greatest for condos at 84%, followed by single family detached homes and townhomes both around 78% (or \$340,000 for single

family and \$275,000 for townhome). Mobile/Manufactured/Modular homes continue to be the most affordable with moderate increase in price of 36% (though total housing costs in manufactured housing communities can be high after accounting for lot rents). In general, home price increases at the median exceeded income growth over this period.

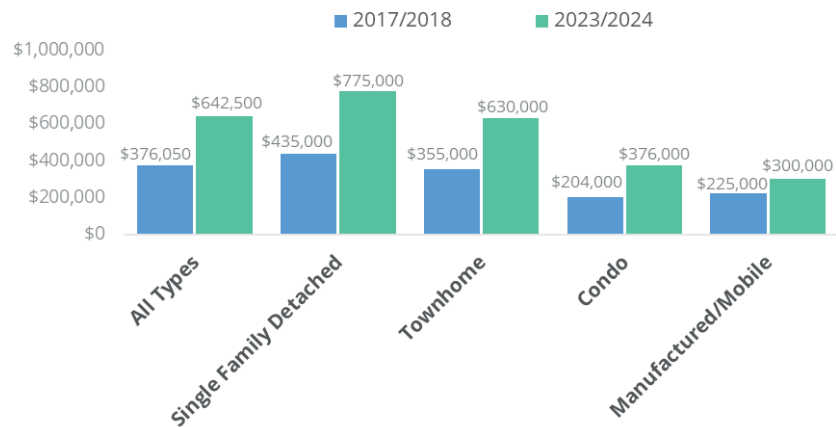
Figure II-19.
Median Sale Price by
Type of Home, La
Plata County,
2017/18-2023/24

Note:

2017/18 data includes homes sold between January 2017 through October 2018. 2023/24 data includes homes sold between January 2023 through October 2024.

Source:

Zonda Sales Data and Root Policy Research.



Distribution of sales prices. Price distribution trends for home sales in La Plata County are an important indicator for residents' ability to transition to homeownership. Shifts towards higher price points suggest that low- to moderate-income renters will be unable to afford to purchase a home which could result in a loss of essential workers and young adults/families, should those households seek homeownership opportunities elsewhere. Figure II-20 (below) shows the price distribution of home sales in 2017-2018 and 2023/24. As illustrated in the figure:

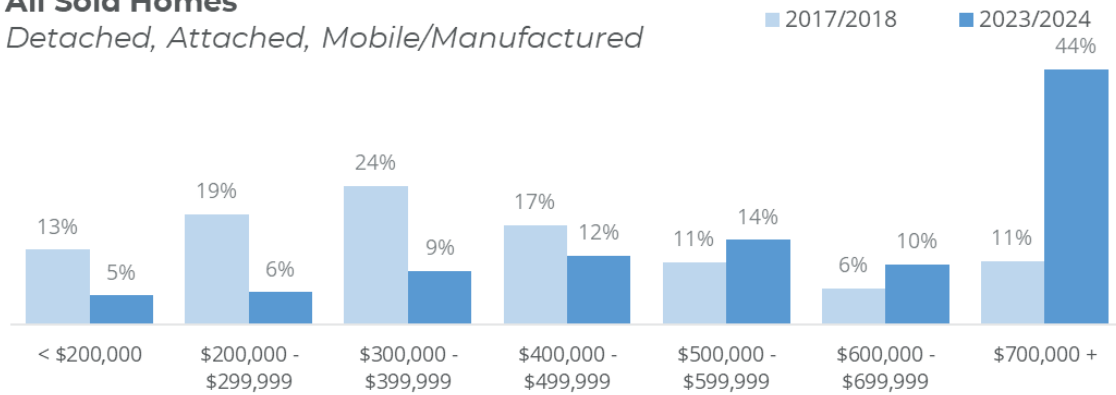
- For sale homes priced below \$500,000 have dramatically declined, comprising only 32% of homes sales in the county in 2023/24, down from 73% in 2017/2018. These changes were consistent across housing types. Stakeholder interviews consistently referenced housing below \$500,000 as the maximum threshold for homeownership for workers in La Plata County, if not lower.
- Attached housing types—traditionally an affordable option for first-time buyers—shifted to unaffordable levels. In 2018, sales were concentrated between \$200,000 and \$400,000 but by 2024 prices were spread across all higher price points, with more than half of attached sales priced exceeding \$500,000.
- Single-family detached homes in La Plata County are also shifting to higher price points. In 2018, more than half of single-family detached home sales prices were between \$200,000 and \$499,999; six years later, over half of all homes sold for more than \$700,000.

Figure II-20.

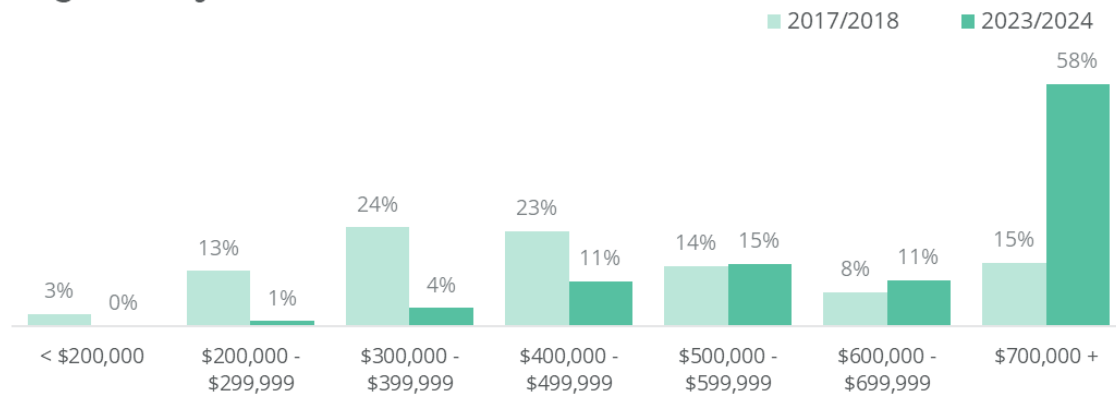
Price Distribution of Home Sales in La Plata, 2017/18 and 2023/24

All Sold Homes

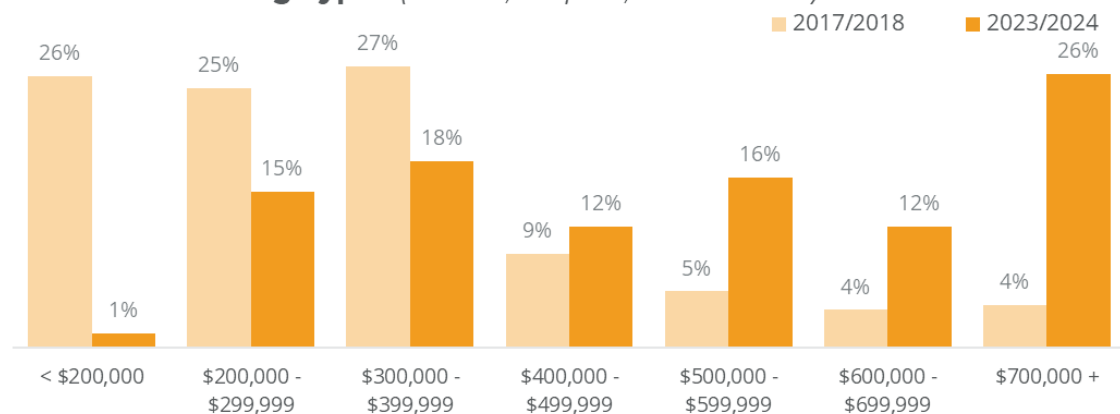
Detached, Attached, Mobile/Manufactured



Single Family Detached



Attached Housing Types (Condo, Duplex, Townhome)



Note: Sales data for 2017/2018 includes homes sold from January 2017 through October 2018. Sales data for 2023/24 includes homes sold between January 2023 through October 2024.

Source: MLS Data and Root Policy Research.

Short-term Rentals in La Plata County

This section provides a high-level overview and current snapshot of short-term rentals in La Plata County, typically defined as residential units rented less than 30 days at a time. Short-term rentals, or STRs, can play a unique role within housing markets because they can provide economic benefits (to homeowners through rental revenue and the city/county through sales tax/tourism revenue) but may disrupt the long-term rental market if they account for a substantial portion of the total housing stock (this is most common in tourist-driven economies such as mountain resort communities in Colorado).

According to data from airdna.com, there are 2300 units listed as short-term rentals in La Plata County with 837 in Durango, and 292 in Bayfield.⁵ Nearly half (45%) of these are part-time STRs, meaning they are available fewer than 180 nights per year. Some of these may be permanently occupied and rented occasionally, others may be rented consistently and otherwise vacant or used seasonally. The 1,035 units that appear to be full-time STRs account for about 4% of the total housing stock countywide.

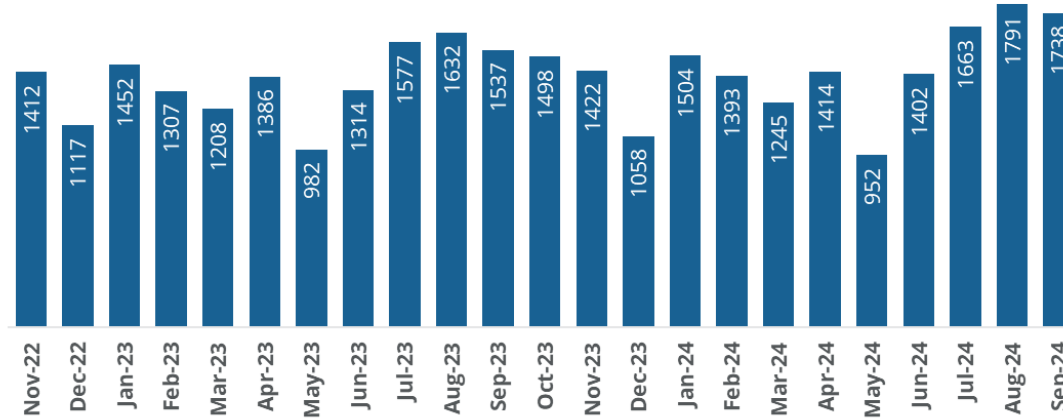
Figure II-21 illustrates key metrics in the La Plata County STR market, including trends in the number of STR listings over the last two years. As shown on the following page:

- The size of STRs is distributed relatively evenly (excluding units with five beds or more). Rentals with one bedroom comprise a slightly larger share of listings at almost a quarter; rentals with two to four bedrooms comprise around 25% of total listings.
- Listings vary by annual availability and minimum stay requirements. Most STRs (23%) are available fewer than 90 days per year and almost half (49%) have a minimum stay requirement of at least two nights.
- In October 2024, only 47% of listings were occupied and only 25% were occupied in April 2024. The highest occupancy rate across 2024 was 77% in July.

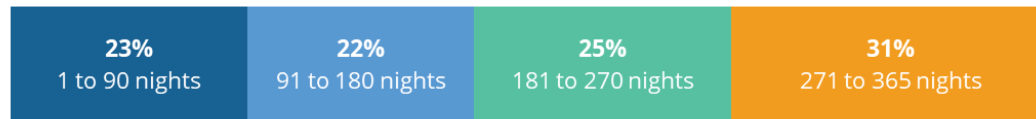
⁵ There are 1747 active listings in La Plata County for a total of 2,300 STR listings in zip codes 81122, 81137, 81301, 81303, and 81326. (data not available for 81302).

Figure III-21.
La Plata County's Short-term Rental Market, 2024

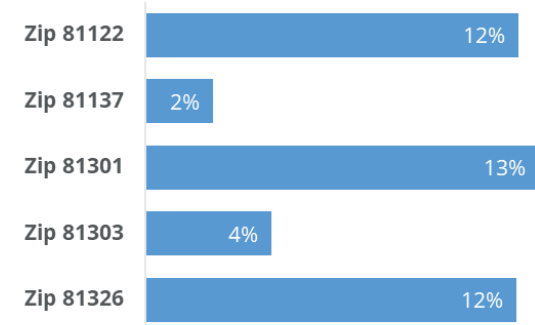
Booked Listings



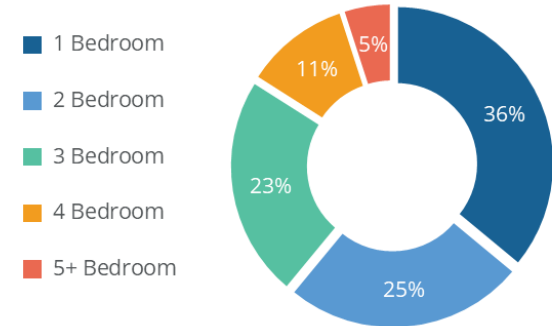
Annual Availability



STR's by Zip Code



Rental Size



Note: STR data are shown for select zip codes only—81122, 81137, 81301, 81303, and 81326. Data is not available for 81302.

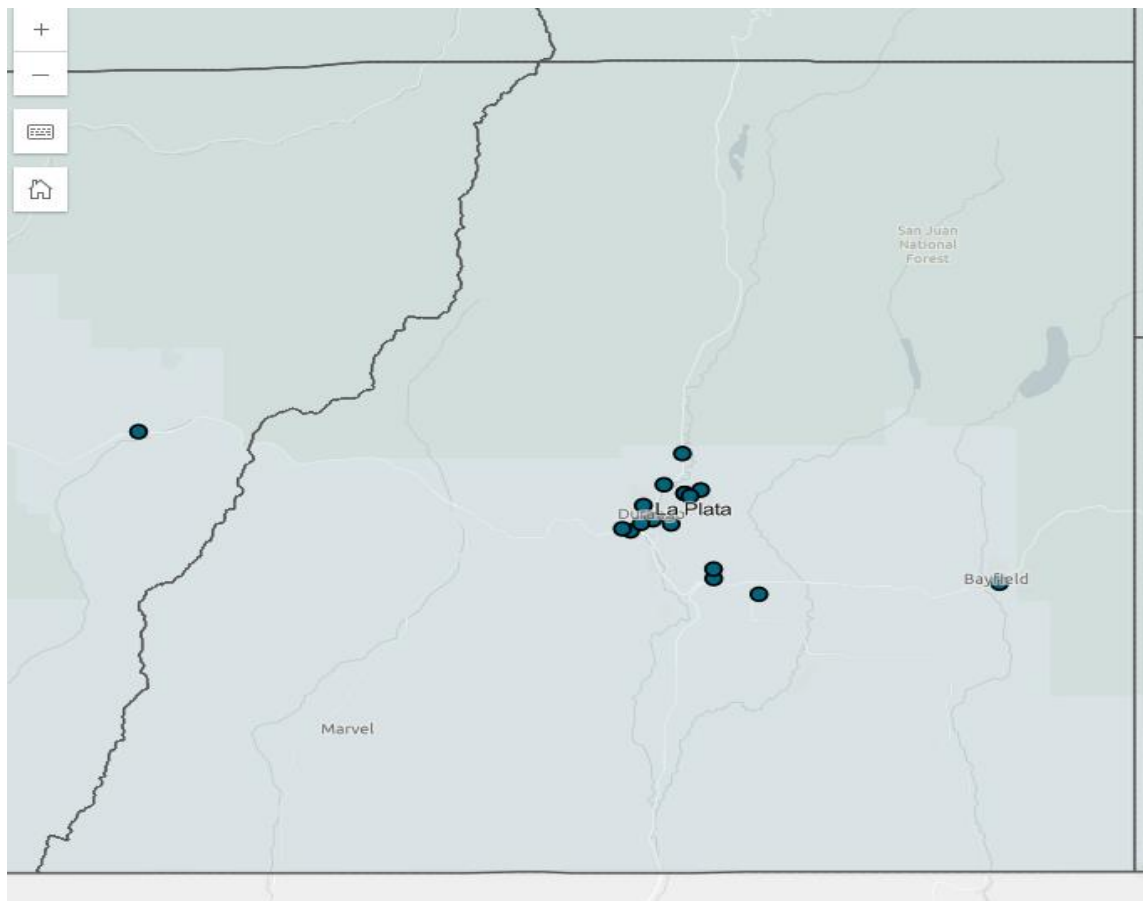
Source: AirDNA, American Community Survey 2022 5-year estimates, Root Policy Research.

Affordable Housing Inventory

Income-restricted housing units (affordable housing) play an important role in providing affordable rents to La Plata residents and workers with low to moderate household incomes. According to National Housing Preservation Database (NHPD) which tracks publicly assisted housing nationwide, there are a total of 808 income-restricted housing units across 19 properties in La Plata County. Affordable housing in La Plata is largely supported by Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) but also includes HUD-funded properties (through Project Based Section 8 and other HUD programs).

Figure II-22 shows the geographic distribution of affordable LIHTC housing in La Plata County. As shown in the map below, there is one affordable development in Bayfield but the remainder are located in or near Durango.

Figure II-22.
LIHTC Developments in La Plata County



Source: Colorado Housing Finance Authority.

Of the 808 affordable units, 92 (12%) are designated specifically to serve older adults, 101 units (13%) are designated specifically to serve people experiencing homelessness and/or

people earning less than 30% AMI who need permanent supportive housing (PSH). The remainder of units are for any income-qualifying household (primarily serving households earning less than 60%AMI).

Affordable housing units in the county are supplemented by the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program which provides rental assistance to low income families and households. According to HUD's Picture of Subsidized Households data, there are currently 385 HCVs in use in La Plata County. Note that in some cases, HCVs are used on conjunction with affordable units in order to reach deeper AMIs – as such, the HCVs are not necessarily additive to the designated affordable units.

SECTION III.

HOUSING NEEDS ANALYSIS

SECTION III.

Housing Needs Analysis

Section III provides an in-depth analysis of housing needs in La Plata County. Housing cost trends are explored in relation to household incomes to identify housing and affordability needs. Several factors in this analysis are:

- Household cost burden¹ and severe cost burden by tenure and household income;
- Housing costs (e.g., rent and purchase prices) compared to income;
- Housing supply compared to housing demand, measured by an affordability gaps analysis (explained in detail on page 9 of this section); and
- Housing affordability for La Plata County's workforce, used to determine what workers can afford in the city's housing market.

The section concludes with a projection of future housing needs based on the methodology compliant with Colorado state requirements.

Primary Findings

- Thirty percent (30%) of La Plata County households are cost burdened. Rates of cost burden are more prominent among renters: more than half are either cost burdened or severely cost burdened. Over the past 10 years, the impact of cost burden has expanded to higher income renters than in the past. Recent data trends show substantial increases in the proportion of renters who considered cost burdened in the \$35,000 to \$75,000 income bracket.
- Owner cost burden has also shifted in the \$50,000-75,000 income range increasing to 41% in 2022 from 27% a decade ago which could indicate that this income group earns enough to qualify for higher priced homes, but not without taking on debt that results in cost burden coupled with higher interest rates.
- Median home sales prices rose by 107% between 2012 and 2022, exceeding the change in median income (43%). Rising interest rates compress affordability further: changes in purchasing power (i.e., how much households can afford to pay for a home) associated with rising incomes was only 6%.

¹ Cost burden occurs when households pay more than 30% of their monthly gross income on housing costs. Severe cost burden occurs when households pay more than 50% of their monthly gross income on housing costs. Cost burden is the industry standard for affordability and often indicates risk of eviction, foreclosure, and/or homelessness.

- In La Plata County there is a current shortage of 1,053 units for renters with incomes below \$35,000. The largest affordability gap for renters is for households with incomes below \$25,000. These “catch-up” needs can be addressed through rental subsidies for existing units or through the creation of new rental units priced below \$875 per month (and/or <50% AMI).
- For-sale affordability gaps for potential first-time buyers are concentrated among households with incomes below \$75,000 but persist for households earning up to \$100,000.
- There are only 9 industries in which median wages are high enough to afford median rents in La Plata County. There are no industries that have average wages high enough to afford the median home sales price in La Plata County (even with 1.5 workers per household).
- To keep up with projected growth, the county needs to add 1,550 units over the next 5 years.
 - Of those units, 71% (1,100 units) would need to be owner occupied in order to maintain current homeownership levels.
 - Aligning those units with the county’s current income distribution suggests that 379 units should be affordable to households with incomes below 50% AMI, 222 units affordable to 51%-80% AMI, 269 affordable to 81%-120% AMI, 153 affordable to 120% to 150% AMI, and 528 units above 150% AMI.
 - The market is most likely to deliver rental units above 80% AMI and ownership units above 150% AMI; but public assistance is likely needed to create rental below 80% AMI and ownership products below 150% AMI.

Defining Affordability

Affordability is often linked to the idea that households should not experience cost burden due to high housing costs. A cost burdened household is one in which housing costs (e.g., rent, mortgage payments, taxes, utilities) consumes more than 30% of monthly gross income. The 30% proportion is derived from mortgage lending requirements and is theoretically supposed to allow flexibility for households to manage other expenses such as childcare, health care, transportation, and food costs. In some cases, additional support may be needed.

Eligibility for housing programs is determined by where a household’s income falls within specific brackets determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Brackets are set by Area Median Incomes (AMI). The AMI encompasses all of La Plata County (there is not an AMI for each individual municipality).

- Households earning 30% AMI are considered extremely-low income ("ELI") and below the federal poverty level;
- Households earning between 31% and 50% AMI are very low income;
- Households earning between 51% and 80% AMI are low income; and
- Households with incomes between 80% and 120% are considered moderate income.

In high-cost housing markets, moderate income households may be eligible for housing programs, specifically homeownership programs up to 120% AMI.

Figure III-1.

La Plata County Regional HUD AMI Thresholds (for 2-person households), 2024

<p><i>Income and affordability levels are shown for a household size of two</i></p> <p>"extremely" low income</p> <p>< 30% AMI</p>	<p>Income < \$26,550 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: < \$664/mo.</p>
<p>"very" low income</p> <p>30-50% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$26,550-\$44,200 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$664 - \$1,105/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: < \$75,348</p>
<p>"low" income</p> <p>50-80% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$44,200 - \$70,750 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$1,105 - \$1,769/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: \$75,348 - \$187,803</p>
<p>"median" to "moderate" income</p> <p>80-120% AMI</p>	<p>Income: \$70,750 - \$106,080 per year</p> <p>Affordable rent: \$1,769 - \$2,652/mo.</p> <p>Affordable home: \$187,803 - \$337,638</p>

Note: AMIs shown in the figure reflect a 2-person household in La Plata County. Affordable home price shows the Economic Development Alliance Home Ownership Reference Charts, which calculate the affordable homeownership (1) a 30-Year Fixed Mortgage Interest Rate of 7.06%, (2) ability to contribute 33% of income to housing costs, (3) a 3% down payment; and (4) ancillary costs (property taxes, insurance, HOA payments, etc.) are estimated using a HomesFund formula.

Source: HUD Income Limits, Economic Development Alliance Home Ownership Reference Charts and Root Policy Research.

Importance of Addressing Housing Needs

In recent years, housing needs have become a priority for local and state governments. Greater support for housing at the local and state levels is primarily driven by the federal government's diminishing role in providing publicly subsidized housing as well as meaningful investments from the state, nonprofit and private sectors for housing projects

and programs. Addressing acute housing needs and supporting a balanced housing stock accommodates a full “life cycle community”—where there are housing options for each stage of life from career starters through centenarians—this in turn supports the local economy and contributes to La Plata County’s community culture. Research has shown:

- Rising housing costs have undermined equitable access to opportunity such as education, employment, health care, and community services/resources—all of which are critical to ensuring success and quality of life.
- Stable, safe, and affordable housing are central to the health of individuals, families, and communities. Poor housing quality often exposes households to mold, pests, and/or chemical toxins that are harmful to individual health.
- Limited affordable housing opportunities significantly impact mental health, particularly among children and adolescents. Providing families with affordable housing that meets their needs provides greater stability and reduces stress.
- Households living in stable housing are more likely to spend their incomes in the local economy through direct spending on goods and services. Money that would otherwise be used for housing gives households the ability to spend their incomes on food, transportation, and health care services.
- Housing investments that allow workers to live near their place of employment can reduce the impacts of commuting (e.g., wear-and-tear on roads and vehicular accidents) and helps to address the growing threat of climate change.
- Affordable housing is key to providing high quality public services to the community as many essential workers (e.g., nurses police officers, teachers, home-health aides, and childcare providers) often leave communities that do not have an adequate supply of housing in their price range. As more essential workers leave the community, residents will likely experience greater difficulty accessing health care services as well as quality education for their children.
- Generational wealth from homeownership is a major contributor to positive outcomes for children. As housing and equity are passed down, young adults have the option to remain in the community and have families of their own.
- Housing investments and stable housing environments bolster local revenue, increase job readiness, help renters transition to homeownership, and increase economic and educational opportunities for children. This also lowers public costs incurred from eviction, foreclosure and homelessness.

The benefits mentioned above do not represent a comprehensive list of the benefits to providing households with stable and affordable housing.

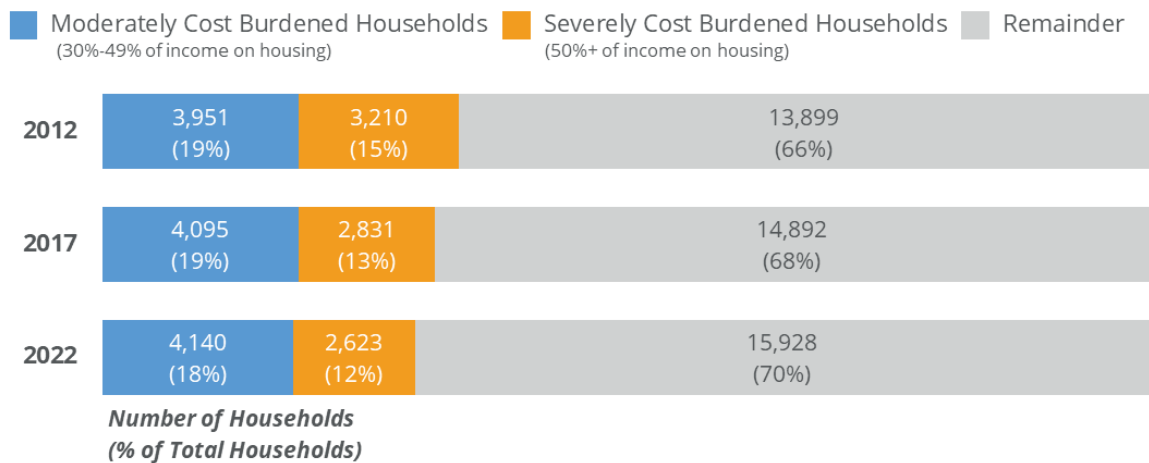
Cost Burden and Severe Cost Burden

Affordability shortages often result in households “renting up” or “buying up” meaning a larger share of their income is being dedicated to their housing costs. This can result in financial instability, housing instability, and the threat of displacement of households from their home and/or community.

- Cost burden occurs when households spend more than 30% of their gross household income on housing costs. Housing costs include rent or mortgage payments, homeowner association (HOA) fees, utilities, mortgage insurance, renter/homeowner insurance, and property taxes.
- Severe cost burden occurs when households spend more than 50% of their monthly gross income on housing. Severe cost burden is closely linked with higher rates of eviction, foreclosure, and homelessness.

Figure III-2 shows the proportion of moderate and severe cost burdened households in La Plata County. In total, 18% of La Plata County households are cost burdened—15% spend between 30% and 49% of their income on housing and 12% are severely cost burdened, spending half or more of their income on housing.

Figure III-2.
Cost Burden and Severe Cost Burden, La Plata County, 2012-2022



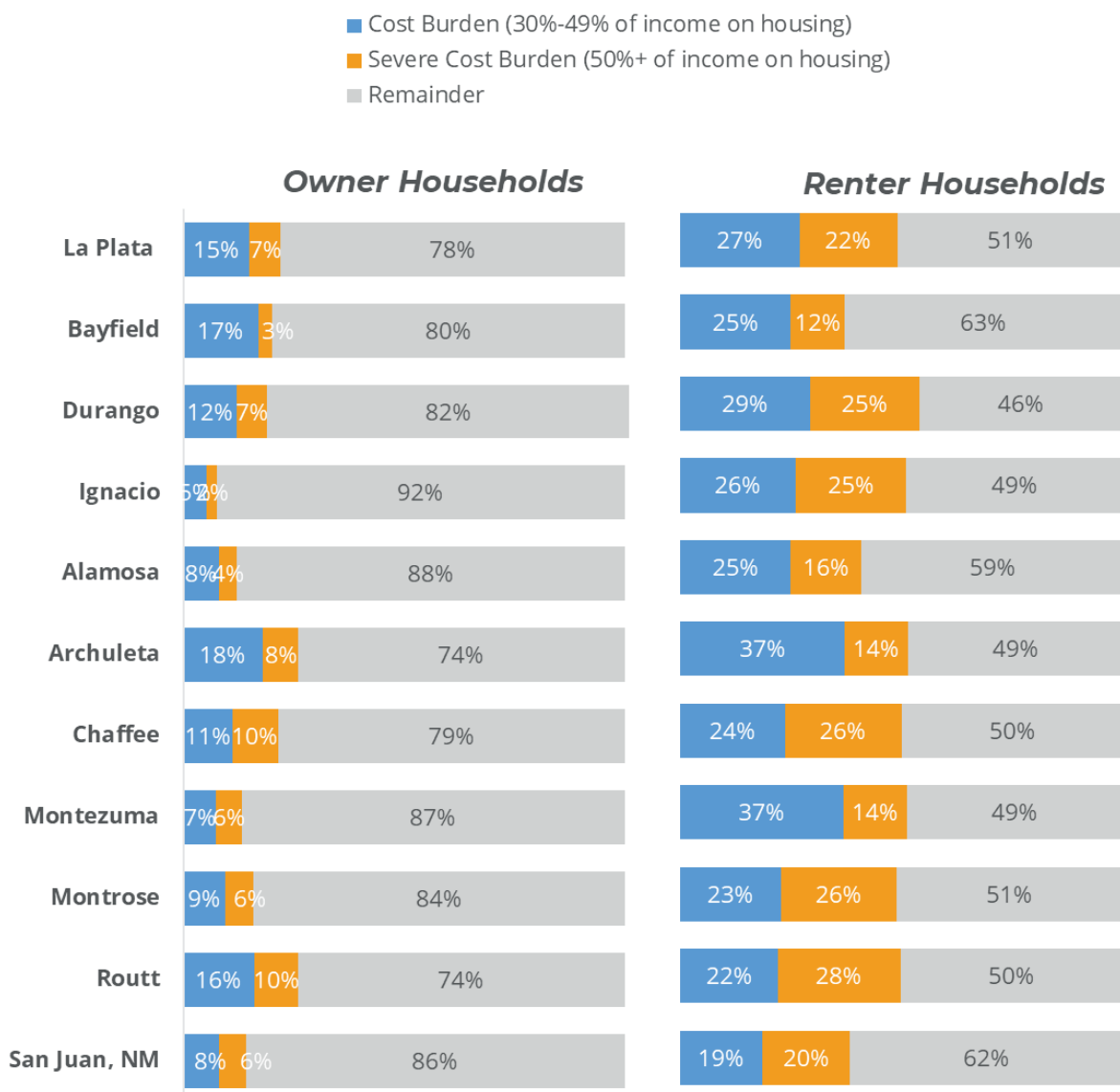
Source: 2012, 2017, and 2022 5-year ACS.

As shown in the previous figure, total cost burden (when combining owners and renters) did decline over the past 10 years, possibly due to an increased number of higher income residents. When isolating cost burden by tenure, however, more than half of La Plata County renters are either cost burdened or severely cost burdened with 54% of Durango renters experiencing either cost burden or severe cost burden. Cost burden is less

prominent among owners in La Plata County with 15% of owners experiencing cost burden and only 7% severely cost burdened.

Cost burden for renter households is similar across peer communities with the exception of San Juan County in New Mexico and Alamosa County which have slightly lower levels of cost burden. Within La Plata County, Durango and Ignacio have higher levels of cost burden than Bayfield, however, Bayfield has higher homeownership and fewer renters. (Figure III-3).

Figure III-3.
Cost Burdened Households by Tenure, La Plata County Towns and Peer Counties, 2022



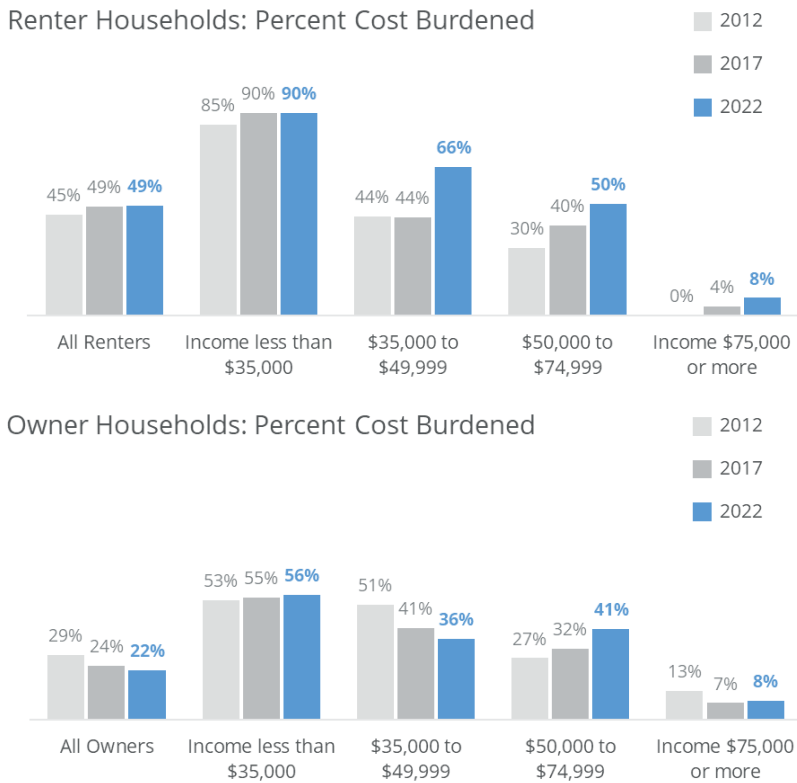
Source: 2022 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Figure III-4 (below) shows the change in cost burdened households by tenure and income over the last decade. Despite an overall decline in cost burden in La Plata County since 2012, cost burden has started to impact higher income renters with substantial increases in the proportion of renters earning \$35,000 to \$75,000 that are cost burdened increasing by roughly 20%. Renters with incomes below \$35,000 are not surprisingly overwhelmingly cost burdened (90% of renters in this income range).

Additionally, more homeowners in the \$50,000-\$75,000 income range are cost burdened than a decade ago which could be combination of being at the very lowest income range to qualify for higher priced homes in the market and increased interest rates in 2022.

Figure III-4.
Percent of Cost Burdened Households by Tenure and Household La Plata County, 2012-2022

Source:
2012, 2017, and 2022 5-year ACS
and Root Policy Research.



Affordability and Income Changes

This section compares trends in La Plata County housing costs to trends in La Plata County household incomes. In other words, are incomes keeping up with home and rental prices?

Figure III-5 (below) summarizes housing affordability changes in La Plata County by comparing the change in median income to changes in rent and home prices as well as purchasing power at the median income. A focus on purchasing power, rather than income alone, captures the impact of changing interest rates—it reflects what a household at the median income can afford to buy, given current lending conditions.

- The median sales price rose 107% between 2012 and 2022, exceeding the change in median income (43%) between 2012 and 2022. Rising interest rates exacerbate these changes and compress affordability further: the change in purchasing power associated with rising incomes was only 3%, due to the sharp spike in interest rates over the period.
- At the median, the increase in renter income did not keep pace with increase in rent (24% rise in income and 38% rise in rent) over the past decade. In other words—the median renter was unlikely to keep up with rising rents.

Figure III-5.
Income and Market Changes, La Plata County, 2012-2022

	2012	2017	2022	Percent Change	
				2012-2022	2017-2022
Income					
Median Household Income	\$57,407	\$62,533	\$81,936	43%	31%
Median Renter Income	\$39,209	\$40,636	\$48,454	24%	19%
Median Owner Income	\$67,376	\$75,242	\$96,611	43%	28%
Rent / For Sale Prices					
Median Rent	\$971	\$1,090	\$1,344	38%	23%
Median Home Sales Price	\$305,317	\$402,871	\$630,667	107%	57%
Purchasing Power					
Affordable Home Price at Median Household Income	\$258,825	\$253,355	\$267,365	3%	6%
Interest Rate	3.65%	4.54%	6.50%		

Note: Purchasing power estimates assume that buyers spend 30% of their income on housing and have a 30-year mortgage with a 10% down payment. Ancillary costs (e.g., property taxes, insurance, HOA payments) are assumed to collectively account for 25% of monthly housing costs.

Source: 2012, 2017, and 2022 ACS 5-year estimates, Zillow and Root Policy Research.

Affordability Gaps Analysis

Root Policy Research conducted a modeling effort (Affordability Gaps Analysis) to examine how well La Plata County's housing market is meeting the affordability needs of residents. The Gaps Analysis compares the supply of housing at various price points to the number of households who can afford such housing. If there are more housing units than households in a specific income range, the market is oversupplying housing at that price point. If there are too few units, the market is undersupplying housing at that price point. The affordability gaps analysis completed for La Plata County addresses both rental affordability and ownership opportunities for renters looking to purchase a home. It is

important to note that the analysis is intended to evaluate *affordability* needs among **current residents** not the need for additional housing to accommodate future residents.

Affordability gaps in the rental market. The rental Gaps Analysis compares the number of renter households in La Plata County, household income levels (defined as AMI for 2 people as previously discussed), the maximum monthly housing payment they can afford, and the number of affordable housing units in the market (including income-restricted affordable units).

Figure III-6.
La Plata County Rental Affordability Gaps

Income Range	Maximum Affordable Rent	Rental Demand: Current Renters		Rental Supply: Current Units		Rental Mismatch	Cummulative Affordability Gap
		Num.	Pct.	Num.	Pct.		
Income by AMI							
0-30% AMI	\$580	1,446	22%	795	11%	(651)	(651)
31-50% AMI	\$967	1,269	19%	957	13%	(312)	(963)
51-80% AMI	\$1,547	1,191	18%	2,906	40%	1,715	752
81-100% AMI	\$1,934	642	10%	1,386	19%	744	1,496
101-120% AMI	\$2,127	539	8%	785	11%	246	1,742
121% AMI +	\$2,321 +	1,568	24%	443	6%	(1,125)	617
Total / Low Income Gap (<50% AMI)		6,655	100%	7,272	100%	(963)	
Income by Dollar							
Less than \$25,000	\$625	1,569	24%	870	12%	(699)	(699)
\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$875	925	14%	571	8%	(354)	(1,053)
\$35,000 to \$49,999	\$1,250	904	14%	1,683	23%	779	(274)
\$50,000 to \$74,999	\$1,875	1,068	16%	2,711	37%	1,643	1,369
\$75,000 to \$99,999	\$2,500	871	13%	1,299	18%	428	1,797
\$100,000 or more	\$2,500 +	1,318	20%	138	2%	(1,180)	617
Total / Low Income Gap (<\$25,000)		6,655	100%	7,272	100%	(1,053)	

Note: Household AMI is based on HUD limits for a 2-person household (in line with the average household size) in La Plata County in 2024. 2024 AMIs are used for consistency with renter income data.

Source: 2022 5-year ACS, HUD Income Limits, and Root Policy Research.

The “Rental Mismatch” column in Figure III-6 shows the difference between the number of renter households and the number of rental units affordable to them at that price point. Negative numbers indicate a shortage of units at specific income levels and positive units indicate an excess of housing at that price point. Note that the analysis focuses on existing renters and units in La Plata County and does not account for potential demand for additional rentals.

The renter affordability gaps illustrated in Figure III-6 above shows that:

- **Collectively, there is an affordability shortage of 963 units for renters with incomes below 50% AMI.** Supply and demand mismatches at this income level mean households are paying more than they can afford for their housing.
 - The largest affordability gap is for households below 30% AMI. One in five renters, nearly 1,500 households fall within this income range and only 795 units are affordable to them.
 - Renters earning 30-50% AMI need rentals priced at or below \$967 to avoid being cost burdened; only 957 units are in this range for an affordability gap of 312 units.
- **Rental gaps indicate that households are “renting up” into higher priced units.** Rental affordability gaps can be addressed through rental subsidies for existing units or through the creation of new rental units priced in their affordability range (less than 50% AMI).
- The “shortage” that appears for higher income households (120% AMI does theoretically show a mismatch in their ability to pay for higher priced rental units and the lack of units at that higher price point). However, it does not necessarily mean they prefer higher priced units. Many households in this income range will “rent down” to spend less than 30% of their income on housing to save money or a downpayment to purchase a home. This increases competition for naturally affordable rental units limiting the inventory of units for people with lower incomes even more.

Affordability gaps in the for-sale market. The for-sale Gaps Analysis shows the affordability mismatch between prospective buyers (current renters) and available housing products (Figure III-7). Similar to the rental gaps analysis, the model compares renters, renter income levels, the maximum monthly housing payment they can afford, and the proportion of for-sale units that were affordable to them.² Renters are used to determine ownership gaps because the analysis intends to capture renters’ ability to purchase a home (as opposed to measuring existing owners’ ability to sell and buy). The renter purchase mismatch shows the difference between the proportion of renter households and the proportion of homes sold from 2023 through October 2024 that were in their affordable price range.³ Negative percentages indicate a shortage of units for sale at specific price points; positive percentages indicate an excess of units.

² Renters are used as approximate demand among first-time buyers that do not already have existing home equity.

³ Data on the number of renter households are from 2022; for-sale data show the total number of home sales in 2023 through October 2024.

Figure III-7.
La Plata County For-Sale Affordability Gaps

Income Range	Maximum Affordable Home Price	Potential Demand of 1st Time Buyers (Current Renters)		For-Sale Supply (Homes Sold)		Renter Purchase Mismatch	Cumulative Affordability Gap excl. < 30% AMI
		Num.	Pct.	Num.	Pct.		
Income by AMI							
< 30% AMI	\$76,485	1,446	22%	20	1%	-20%	excluded
31 - 50% AMI	\$127,475	1,269	19%	25	2%	-17%	-17%
51 - 80% AMI	\$203,960	1,190	18%	31	2%	-16%	-33%
81 - 100% AMI	\$254,950	642	10%	33	2%	-7%	-40%
101 - 120% AMI	\$305,940	538	8%	49	3%	-5%	-45%
121-150% AMI	\$382,425	509	8%	103	7%	-1%	-45%
150% AMI +	509,900+	1,059	16%	1,181	82%	66%	21%
Income by Dollar							
Less than \$25,000	\$82,401	1,569	24%	21	1%	-22%	excluded
\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$115,362	925	14%	19	1%	-13%	-13%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	\$164,803	904	14%	19	1%	-12%	-25%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	\$247,204	1,068	16%	44	3%	-13%	-38%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	\$329,606	871	13%	88	6%	-7%	-45%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	\$494,406	807	12%	243	17%	5%	-41%
\$150,000 or more	\$494,406+	511	8%	1,009	70%	62%	22%

Note: Maximum affordable home price is based on a 30-year mortgage with a 10% down payment and an interest rate of 6.5%. Ancillary costs (property taxes, insurance, HOA payments, etc.) are assumed to account for 25% of monthly payments. Household AMI is based on HUD income limits for a 2-person household. 2022 AMIs are used for consistency with price data.

Source: 2022 5-year ACS, HUD Income Limits, MLS Sales Data, and Root Policy Research.

La Plata's for-sale affordable gaps analysis in Figure III-7 shows that:

- **For-sale affordability gaps in La Plata County are concentrated among households with incomes below 150% AMI (around \$120,000 annual income).**
 - Seventy percent (70%) of renter households have an income less than 100% of AMI and only 7% of sales were affordable to them (priced under \$255,000).
 - The market also undersupplies units affordable to households earning between 100% and 120% AMI. Eight percent of renters are in this income range but only 3% of units were listed/sold in their affordability range.
 - The cumulative gap shows that the overall undersupply of affordable for-sale homes of 45%.

- The affordability gap at these entry-level price-points indicates a strong need for additional affordable ownership options for current residents either through production of new affordable homes or subsidies on existing units (e.g., land trust or deed restrictions, downpayment assistance, etc.). Renters who cannot afford to purchase a home will either remain in rental units longer or look to move elsewhere to purchase a home.

What can workers afford? Major employers in La Plata County are experiencing challenges with recruitment and retention of employees due to housing rental and sales prices that are not attainable at current wages coupled with inventory that does not match the needs of incoming workers. With rising housing prices, many employees have sought less expensive housing outside of La Plata County, forcing residents to commute longer distances, increasing local traffic and contributing to employee absence and higher turnover rates for local businesses.

Figure III-8 shows the housing that industry workers in La Plata County can afford based on the median earnings by industry in La Plata County in 2021 (the most recent data currently available). Median rent (2022) and median home value (2022) are used to measure the extent to which La Plata County employees can participate in the County's housing market. This analysis provides greater insight on La Plata County's economic trajectory: if industry workers are unable to afford a home or apartment in the city, it is more likely that they will leave the area to find affordable housing elsewhere. With fewer workers available, it could become difficult for La Plata County to attract primary employers. The healthcare industry in particular is at risk in La Plata County, with specific skills needed to fill positions that provide critical in person services to county residents.

- **Nine industries provide a median wage that could support the median rent in La Plata County.** These industries include: mining/quarrying/oil and gas, wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing, utilities, information, finance and insurance, real estate, professional/scientific/technical services; and public administration.
- **La Plata County's median sales price of \$630,667 in 2022 is far out of reach for workers earning a median wage in all industries, even with 1.5 earners per household.**
- **Essential workers cannot afford median rents nor median sale prices in the city.** Workers in the educational service industry and the health care and social assistance industry cannot afford housing in La Plata County on their own and would need at least 2 earners per household to purchase a home.

Figure III-8.
Worker Affordability, La Plata County, 2022

Industry	Median Annual Earnings	Max Affordable Rent	Can Afford Median Rent?	Max Affordable Home Price	Can Afford Median Home Price?	Can Afford Median Home Price with 1.5 Earners per Household?
Goods Producing						
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	\$42,202	\$1,055	no	\$137,709	no	no
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas	\$95,741	\$2,394	yes	\$312,412	no	no
Construction	\$47,486	\$1,187	no	\$154,951	no	no
Manufacturing	\$45,436	\$1,136	no	\$148,262	no	no
Service Producing						
Wholesale Trade	\$60,833	\$1,521	yes	\$198,504	no	no
Retail Trade	\$29,929	\$748	no	\$97,661	no	no
Transportation and Warehousing	\$71,071	\$1,777	yes	\$231,912	no	no
Utilities	\$67,069	\$1,677	yes	\$218,853	no	no
Information	\$54,350	\$1,359	yes	\$177,349	no	no
Finance and Insurance	\$63,018	\$1,575	yes	\$205,634	no	no
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$60,772	\$1,519	yes	\$198,305	no	no
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	\$82,750	\$2,069	yes	\$270,021	no	no
Admin and Support and Waste Management	\$34,440	\$861	no	\$112,381	no	no
Educational Services	\$44,327	\$1,108	no	\$144,643	no	no
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$51,880	\$1,297	no	\$169,290	no	no
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$16,698	\$417	no	\$54,487	no	no
Accommodation and Food Services	\$26,196	\$655	no	\$85,480	no	no
Other Services	\$37,642	\$941	no	\$122,830	no	no
Public Administration	\$63,348	\$1,584	yes	\$206,711	no	no
Total Employment	\$44,757	\$1,119	no	\$146,046	no	no

Note: Median rent was \$1,344 in 2022 and the median home sales price was \$630,667 in 2022. Mortgage assumptions include a 6.50% interest rate, 25% of monthly mortgage payment for ancillary ownership costs (insurance, taxes, HOA, etc), and a 10% downpayment.

Source: 2022 5-year ACS, Zillow and Root Policy Research.

Future Housing Need

The following analysis estimates the number of dwelling units by income level that are needed to ensure housing availability, stability, and affordability for future resident and employee households. The approach used to project housing needs follows guidance from Colorado’s Department of Local Affairs to meet legislative requirements of SB24-174, relying on the State Demographer’s Office projections of new households, adjusted for standard vacancy allowances (5% for rentals and 2% for ownership).

Based on the demographer projections, La Plata County will **need 1,550 new housing units by 2029** in order to accommodate growth. Of those units, 71% (1,100 units) would need to be owner occupied in order to maintain current homeownership levels.

Figure III-9.
Projected
Needs by
Tenure

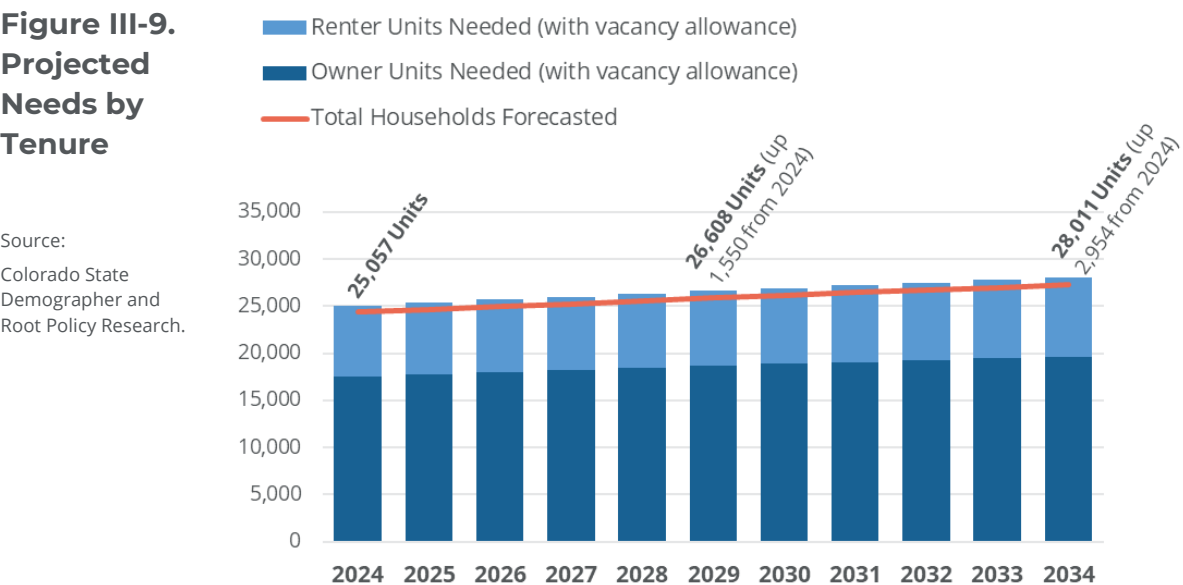
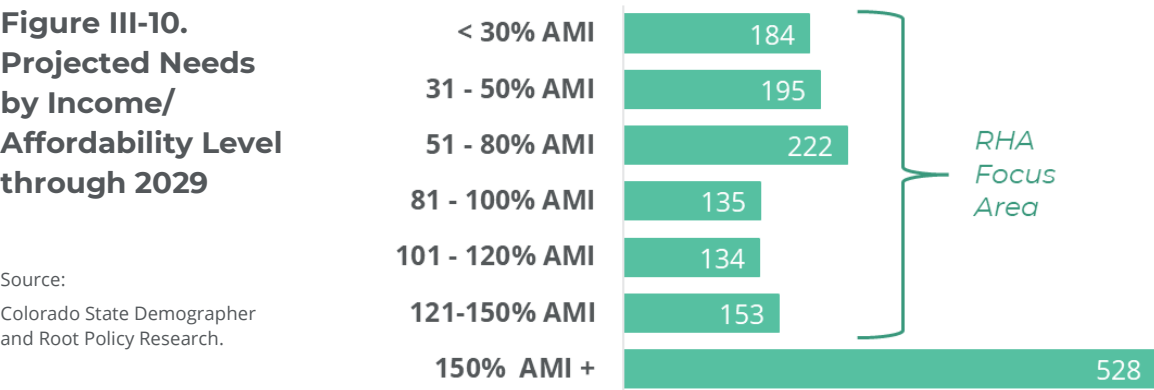


Figure III-10 shows how the 1,550 new units need by 2029 would need to be priced in order to match the County’s existing income profile. The market is most likely to deliver rental units above 80% AMI and ownership units above 150% AMI; but public assistance is likely needed to create rental below 80% AMI and ownership products below 150%AMI.

Figure III-10.
Projected Needs
by Income/
Affordability Level
through 2029



SECTION IV.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

SECTION IV.

Community Engagement Findings

Section IV. presents the findings from the community engagement research completed to support La Plata County's Housing Needs Assessment. The section explores results from a resident / workforce survey on housing choices, challenges, and preferences in the community; as well as a summary of engagement interviews and focus groups with local stakeholders representing major county employers, business leaders, real estate professionals and nonprofit service providers. The survey also includes a short section on childcare needs in the county with a summary of results also provided in this section.

The Root team is grateful to the residents who shared their housing experiences and insights by participating in the housing survey, and to the individuals who participated in stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

Engagement Elements

The community engagement process completed for La Plata County's Housing Needs Assessment included the following elements:

- A survey available in English and Spanish (436 total responses) from September 2024 to December 2024;
- Individual interviews with county real estate professionals;
- A focus group with county nonprofit service providers; and
- A focus group with county major employers, housing developers and county business leadership.

Primary Findings

Primary Findings from Resident Survey

- Housing affordability plays a significant role when choosing a home or apartment with 82% of residents indicating that the cost of housing was the most important factor in their current choice of home or apartment. When considering homeowners only, three quarters still prioritize affordability;
- The majority of all survey respondents (85%) said they had to make some type of budgetary sacrifice to keep up with housing costs. Cuts to entertainment / recreation and looking for better deals on monthly expenses were the top selected items to compensate for high housing costs;

- 29% of all renters consider their current home/apartment to be in poor condition; of those, 31% indicated that they haven't requested repair work from their landlord because they believe the landlord "won't make the repairs" or because they worry a request for a repair "will result in a rent increase or eviction.";
- Three quarters of La Plata County survey respondents do not feel financially secure in their current housing situation. Among renters, programs related to homeownership were selected the most frequently including: "find a home I can afford to buy", "help with down payment and/or closing costs", and/or "help getting a loan to buy a house";
- The majority of renter respondents (78%) are thinking about buying a home in the next three years, most of which expressed a preference to buy in La Plata County. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of all renters *want* to buy a home but are unsure if they will be able to with the top reason being concerns related to cost;
- La Plata County resident respondents are open to small-scale density housing products including duplexes, townhomes, tiny homes and apartment buildings with 3 or less stories both in their neighborhoods and in other neighborhoods in the county. Residents view apartment buildings with more than 3 stories slightly less favorably with a quarter of residents indicating they are not appropriate anywhere in the county;
- Residents ranked housing for first time homebuyers, housing for middle class families, and workforce housing high across income ranges and in Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio;
- Residents responded favorably to a deed restricted model of home ownership with the majority either extremely interested or interested in a theoretical program.

Primary Findings from Stakeholder Focus Groups and Interviews

- **Nonprofit service providers** emphasized the need for more affordable housing opportunities for families and people in the service industry. Currently families are doubling up to access housing in La Plata County. Newly arrived immigrants are having challenges with application acceptance with limited rental and/or credit history. Mobile home parks are the most accessible financially but are in poor condition.
- **Employers** are losing employees who are interested in homeownership but cannot afford to buy a home in La Plata County and/or cannot find a rental unit within their price range. Turnover rates are high and extra recruitment incentives are necessary to attract qualified employees. Many employees are commuting long distances having implications for consistency and absences impacting the quantity, quality and diversity of services that can be offered in the county.
- **Real estate developer professionals and affordable housing developers** who participated in interviews and the focus group highlighted infrastructure challenges—specifically with water—that considerably increase cost, construction defect laws at the

state level impacting the building of condos, county subdivision regulations and lengthy/costly procedures and processes. Stakeholders identified a need for downsizing opportunities for older residents such as patio homes, and smaller lot single family homes priced at less than \$500k, but ideally less than \$300k when considering HOA fees. Local developers highlighted construction labor shortage and cost as a huge barrier. Workers cannot afford to live there. Home insurance (cost and access) is increasingly an issue as well, particularly in rural areas, driving people to live in Durango.

Resident Survey Methodology

Survey distribution was executed via convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. Convenience sampling refers to promoting the survey to known individuals or organizations through direct contact (e.g., email invitation), engaging with the RHA's Board and network including social media. Snowball sampling occurs when a respondent promotes the survey to their peers or social networks (e.g., sharing the survey link by email or social media). Due to the nature of the sampling methodology, the online survey responses do not represent a *random* sample of La Plata County. A true random sample is a sample in which every individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected for the survey. Despite this, important insights and themes can still be drawn from the survey results with an understanding of the differences of the sample from the larger population.

Geographic note. Survey data are reported for La Plata County residents. Although the survey provided a path for in-commuters from outside of La Plata County, few respondents fell into this category (20), with a quarter of these commuting into La Plata County from New Mexico (Farmington or Aztec) and the remainder commuting into the county from Archuleta, Montezuma and Montrose Counties. Survey respondents indicated their town/area of residence including Bayfield, Durango, Ignacio, Breen, Hesperus, Marvel, Bondad and unincorporated La Plata County. While there were 436 respondents, nearly 80 participants did not indicate their town.

Survey sample. As shown in Figures IV-1 and IV-2, survey respondents are slightly more likely to be homeowners (55% of survey respondents) than renters or residents with alternative housing arrangements (44%). The majority of survey respondents have incomes less than \$100k (65%) which is at or below approximately 120% of AMI and are between 34-65 years old (59%) and are employed full time (64%). Top industries include education, hospitality, real estate, government and healthcare and top job types are teachers, administrative personnel, service people (hospitality, retail), business owners and managers representing a diverse range of perspectives in the county.

**Figure IV-1.
Survey Respondent
Profile and
Demographics**

Source:

Root Policy Research from the 2024
La Plata County Housing Survey

	Survey Results	
	Number	Percent
Total Responses/Population	436	100%
Geography		
Bayfield	94	21%
Durango	185	42%
Ignacio	22	5%
Other / Unincorporated	58	13%
No response / Outside of La Plata	77	4%
Housing Situation		
Homeowner	203	55%
Renter	125	34%
Other (RV, motel, etc.)	37	10%
Race/Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic White	243	75%
Native American/American Indian	29	9%
Hispanic or Latino	37	11%
Age		
19 to 24 years	23	7%
25 to 34 years	84	26%
35 years to 64 years	195	59%
65+	24	7%
Income		
Below \$50,000	82	25%
\$50,000 up to \$100,000	129	40%
Above \$100,000	112	35%
Employment		
Full time	211	65%
Part time	30	9%
Self employed	31	10%
Retired	15	5%
Other (unemployed, student, etc)	39	12%
Household Characteristics		
Couple without Children	65	20%
Households With Children	90	14%
Single Parent	23	8%
Multigenerational	28	9%
Roommates	27	8%
Single Adult Living Alone	36	12%

Figure IV-2.
Survey Respondent
Top 5 Industry and
Job Type

Source:
Root Policy Research from the 2024
La Plata County Housing Survey

	Survey Results	
	Number	Percent
Industry		
Education (Prek-12, College)	50	16%
Accommodation/Food Service/Hospitality	48	15%
Real Estate	24	8%
Local/State Government	23	7%
Healthcare	20	6%
Job type		
Administrative / Office	54	17%
Teacher / faculty	40	13%
Service (waiter/waitress, retail associate)	40	13%
Business owner	26	8%
Management (including hospitality/restaurant)	21	7%

Current Housing Choice & Challenges
















This section explores La Plata County residents’ current housing situation, including what they identified as the most important factors influencing their current housing choice, assessments of their housing condition, and other housing-related challenges.

Most important factors in choosing current home. Affordability was identified as the most important factor for residents across tenure, income and household size followed by proximity to work and outdoor space (with allowance of pets as important for renters). Other top housing characteristics across most groups were proximity to work and outdoor space,

- All respondent groups placed significant importance on housing affordability with 82% of respondents overall indicating this as priority;
- Renters and respondents with incomes between \$50-100K placed high importance on having a unit that accepts pets and similarly owners and average to large households chose outdoor space for children and/or pets;
- Size of home was a top factor in housing choice for residents who are homeowners, residents with incomes below \$50k and large households (5+ people);
- Proximity to work was a top choice for renters and residents with incomes below \$50k and over \$100k.

Figure IV-3.

Which factors were most important to you when choosing your current home or apartment?

	La Plata County Residents	Tenure		Income			Household Size		
		Owner	Renter	0-\$50K	\$50-\$100K	\$100K+	Single	2-4 people	5+
Cost/I could afford it	 82%	75%	82%	55%	68%	63%	82%	71%	62%
Close to work/job opportunities	 41%	28%	56%	39%	21%	31%	36%	39%	22%
Outdoor space for children and/or pets	 32%	34%	21%	12%	22%	33%	3%	31%	30%
Number of bedrooms/size	 31%	33%	29%	26%	18%	25%	15%	27%	27%
Safety of neighborhood	 27%	26%	24%	13%	19%	27%	21%	24%	19%
Allows pets	 23%	12%	37%	21%	24%	12%	33%	20%	19%
Close to family/ friends	 21%	18%	11%	12%	12%	13%	9%	17%	22%
Liked the type of apartment/unit	 19%	19%	22%	10%	16%	21%	30%	17%	3%
Close to quality schools	 16%	19%	8%	13%	9%	15%	6%	13%	27%
Good investment for rent or resale	 14%	20%	2%	4%	12%	14%	12%	12%	19%
Needed a place to live quickly	 14%	6%	22%	22%	11%	5%	18%	14%	8%
Close to grocery stores	 10%	8%	10%	5%	7%	6%	12%	8%	3%
Want to live near people like me	 6%	5%	3%	4%	5%	4%	6%	6%	3%
Amenities	 5%	3%	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	4%	3%
Accessibility features	 3%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	2%	0%

Note: Green shading in the table portion of the figure indicates the most common three answers among each respondent group.

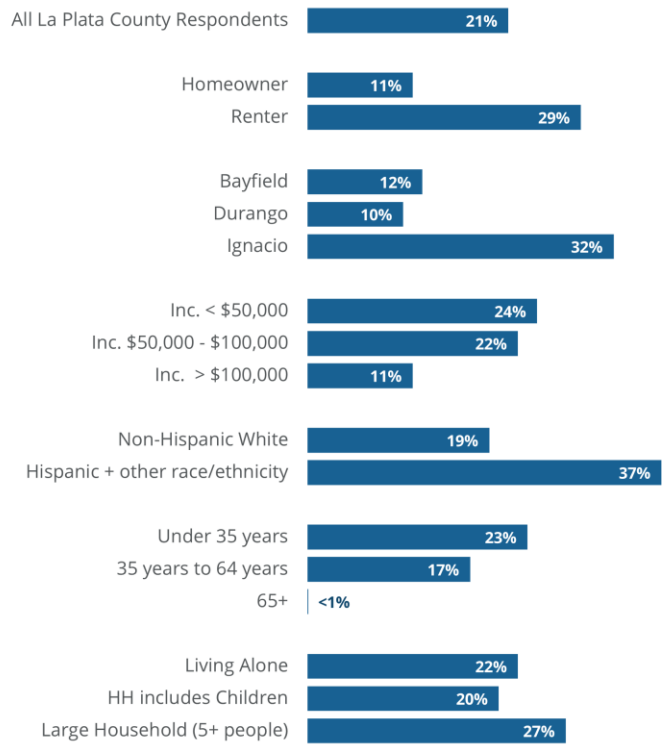
Source: Root Policy Research from the 2024 La Plata County Housing Survey.

Housing condition. Most La Plata County resident respondents consider their home to be in “excellent” or “good” condition (79%), with 21% of La Plata County respondents consider their home or apartment to be in fair or poor condition. Figure IV-4 presents the proportion of respondents who rated their home’s condition as “fair” or “poor.”

Figure IV-4.
How would you rate
the condition of
your home or
apartment?
(% Fair/Poor)

Note: Single householder means that the respondent lives alone.

Source:
Root Policy Research from the 2024
La Plata County Housing Survey.



Primary findings illustrated in the preceding figure are summarized below.

- Low-income households (below \$50,000) and renters are more likely to report their homes to be in fair or poor condition;
- The share of residents who report their home to be in fair/poor condition is around one in four for single householders (residents living alone) and large households (5+ people), and over one third of residents who are Hispanic, American Indian or other non-White race/ethnicity;
- Resident respondents from Ignacio report homes in fair or poor condition more than respondents from Durango and Bayfield;
- Younger resident respondents (under 35 years old) are more likely to live in housing in fair or poor condition.

The most needed repairs among respondents in fair/poor condition housing are energy efficient improvements, cosmetic improvements, kitchen/bathroom plumbing, and/or weatherization.

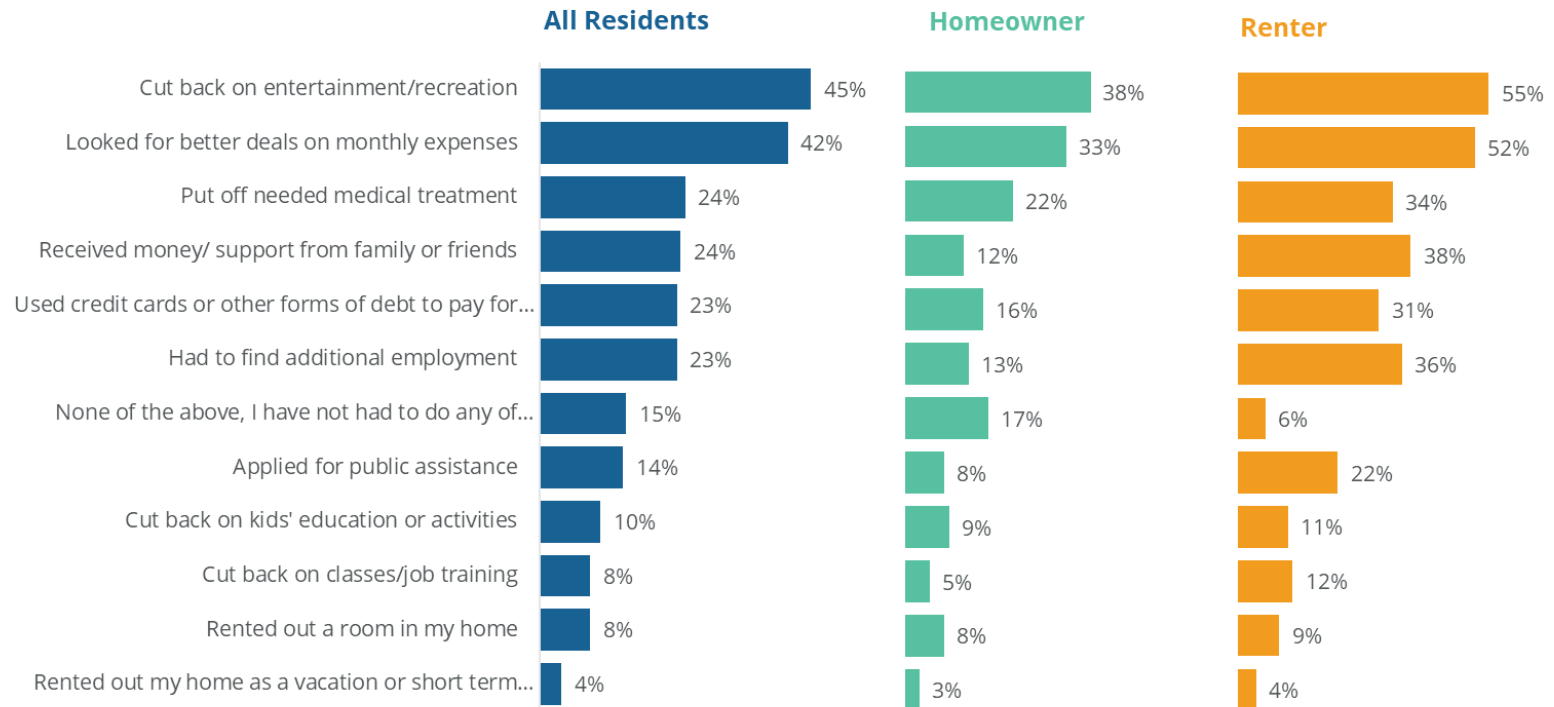
In more than half of the cases, repairs have not been made because the respondent “cannot afford to make them.” One in 3 renter respondents living in fair or poor housing conditions indicated that they haven’t made the repairs they worry a repair request “will result in a rent increase or eviction.”

Housing affordability. Survey respondents also shared their household’s experiences with housing costs and affordability, housing security challenges, and what they feel they need to be more secure in their housing situation.

Sacrifices to keep up with housing costs. More than half (55%) of renter respondents said they had to make some type of budgetary sacrifice to keep up with housing costs (see Figure IV-5). Almost half (45%) reported cutting back on entertainment or recreation or looked for better deals on their monthly expenses (42%). Renters were more likely to manage their housing costs through one or more of these sacrifices, most commonly cutting back on entertainment, reducing other monthly expenses, finding additional employment, or seeking assistance from family/friends. Almost a quarter of all residents put off needed medical treatment to keep up with housing costs in La Plata County.

Figure IV-5.

In the past year, have you your household had to do any of the following to keep up with your housing costs?



Source: Root Policy Research from the 2023 Arvada Housing Survey.

Improving housing security. Figure IV-6 illustrates residents' housing security needs by tenure, income and household size. Overall, challenges and barriers related to buying a home were most cited across categories including finding affordable housing, down payment assistance and help securing a mortgage loan. Not surprisingly, for renters with incomes less than \$50k annually, a need for rental assistance to attain financial security was reported by 27% of respondents. For homeowners, money to make critical home repairs was cited by 16% of respondents. Large households identified security deposit assistance as a top need.

Figure IV-6.
What do you feel you need to be more financially secure in your housing situation?

	All Residents	Tenure		Annual Income			Household Size		
		Owner	Renter	<\$50K	\$50-\$100K	\$100K+	Single	2-4 People	5+
Find a home I can afford to buy	22%	10%	37%	35%	32%	19%	27%	29%	22%
Help with a down payment to buy a home	16%	30%	31%	24%	26%	12%	27%	20%	16%
Help getting a loan to buy a house	16%	2%	32%	32%	22%	11%	15%	21%	19%
Money to make critical repairs	13%	16%	8%	16%	20%	12%	9%	17%	22%
Assistance to help me pay rent each month	11%	3%	19%	27%	10%	4%	18%	13%	11%
Homeownership counseling so I can buy a home	9%	3%	19%	20%	12%	6%	12%	13%	5%
Housing my adult child can afford	7%	10%	3%	10%	7%	11%	3%	9%	14%
Money or assistance to build an ADU on my lot	6%	10%	2%	4%	9%	12%	0%	8%	15%
Help with a security deposit for a rental unit	6%	1%	10%	12%	10%	4%	9%	8%	19%
Help with rental housing search/rental applications	5%	1%	6%	10%	4%	4%	6%	6%	5%
Information on my rights as a tenant	5%	0%	9%	9%	5%	2%	12%	4%	8%
Moving back in with my parents or family members	4%	0%	8%	7%	5%	1%	6%	4%	3%
Housing for my adult child with a disability	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%	5%
Money for a disability accommodation	2%	2%	2%	5%	2%	1%	0%	2%	8%

Note: ADU stands for Accessory Dwelling Unit. Green shading in the table portion of the figure indicates the most common three answers among each respondent group.

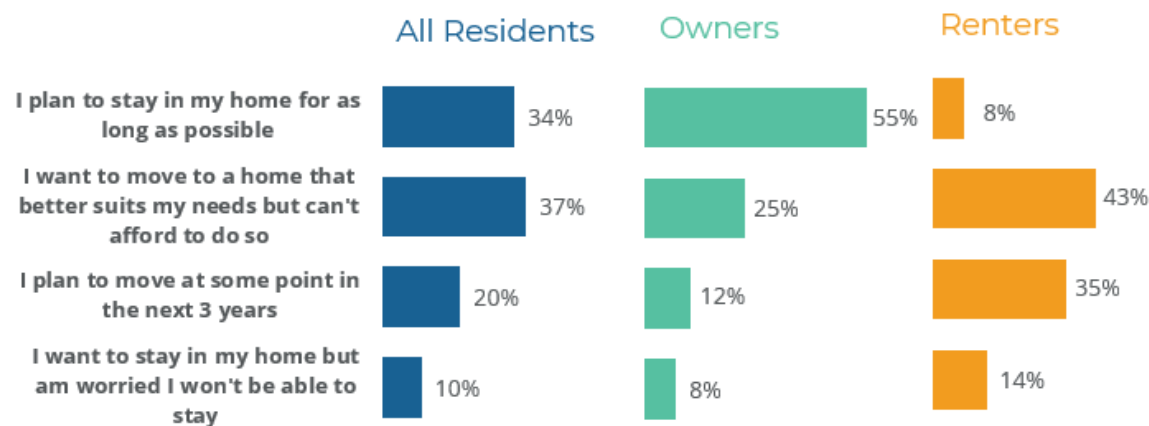
Source: Root Policy Research from the 2024 La Plata County Housing Survey

Future Housing Preference

Survey respondents also shared their future housing preferences, including the desire for homeownership and/or changing their housing situation.

Desire to move. Just over half (55%) of homeowners plan to stay in their home for as long as possible while 43% of renters *want* to move to a home that better suits their needs and 35% *plan* to move in the next three years. One in 10 respondents want to stay in their home but are worried they won't be able to. (Financial issues are the primary reason residents are concerned they won't be able to stay in their housing.

Figure IV-7.
Desire to Move by Tenure: Which of the following is most true for you?

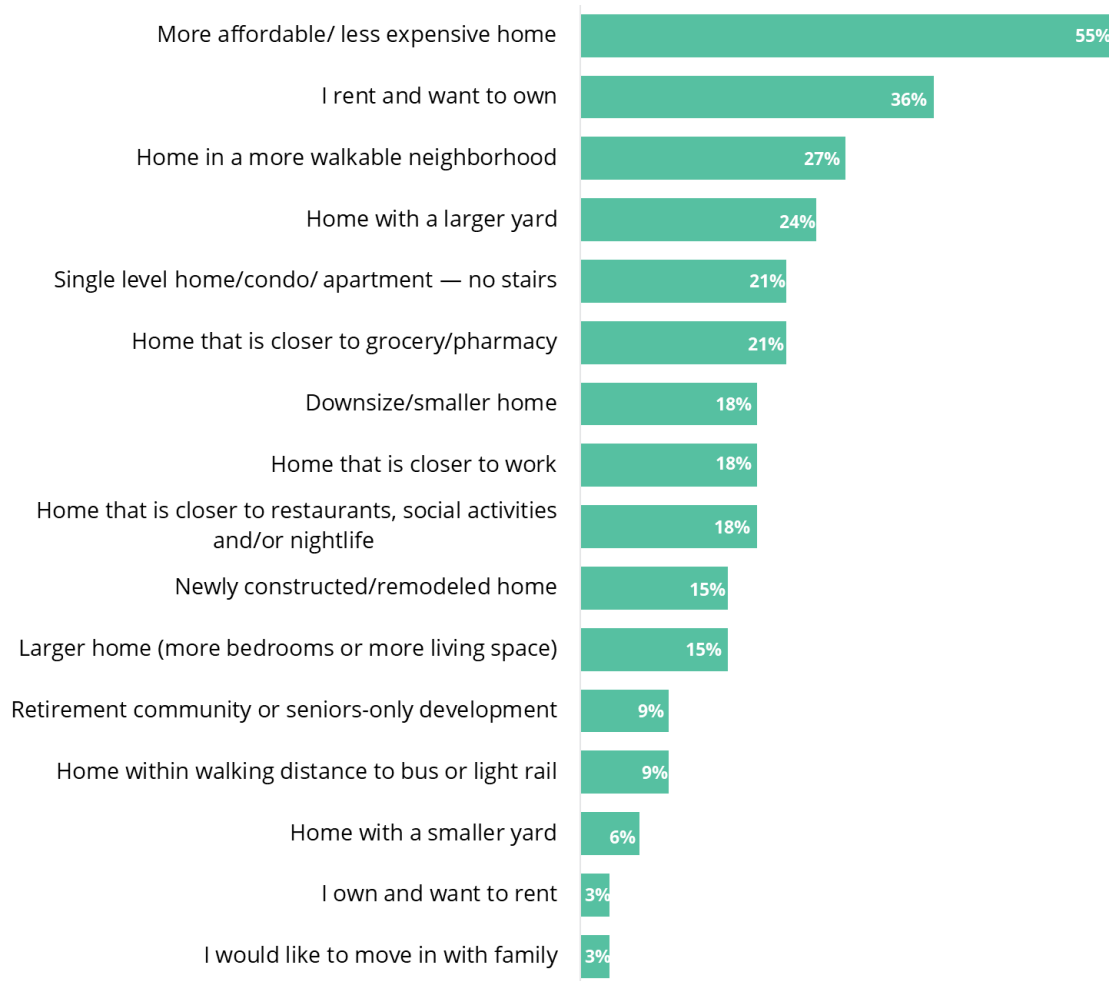


Source: Root Policy Research from the 2024 La Plata County Housing Survey.

When asked what housing types would best meet their household needs, the top housing types chosen by respondents were related to affordability, walkability, and having some type of outdoor space for children and/or pets. A top preference was also renters who wish to pursue homeownership.

Figure IV-8.

If you were to move in the next three years, what type of housing would best suit your needs?



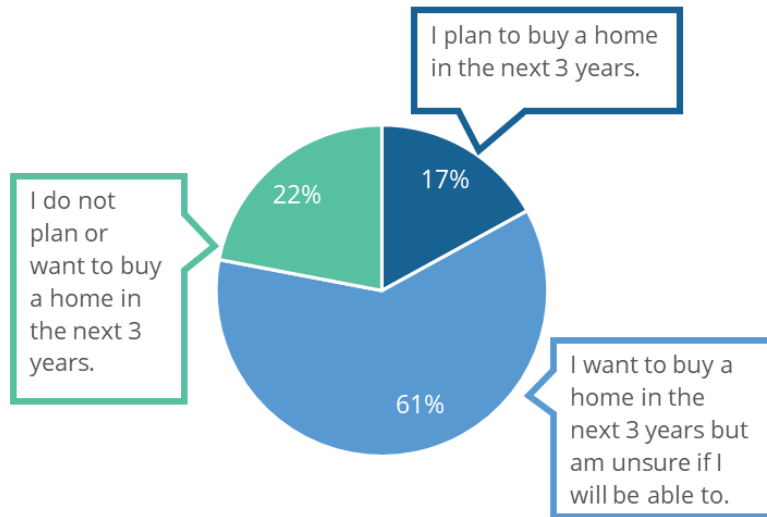
Source: Root Policy Research from the 2024 La Plata County Housing Survey.

Desire to own. As shown in Figure IV-9 below, more than half (61%) of renters in La Plata County want to buy a home but are unsure if they will be able to and another 17% have plans to buy a home in the next three years or so. Of those renters who indicated that they plan to or want to buy a home in the coming years approximately three-quarter indicated that they would like to buy a home in La Plata County.

Renters who are unsure if they will be able to transition to homeownership overwhelmingly attributed these uncertainties to affordability challenges. Renter respondents indicated that the biggest barrier to homeownership in La Plata County are housing affordability (87%). Additionally, over half can't come up with a down payment and roughly a third indicated they can't afford homeowner association or condo fees.

Figure IV-9.
Which of the
following is most
true for you?

Source:
Root Policy Research from the 2024
La Plata County Housing Survey.



Renters who plan to buy a home in a different community were given the opportunity to explain why they would prefer to buy a home elsewhere. Notable responses left by renters included:

- *"Because I can't afford to buy in La Plata with how expensive mortgages are and the non-locals are buying out good property. Plus, homes that are lower in price need a lot of work do."*
- *"If I find a better paying job outside of La Plata, I'm going to move to where that job is."*
- *"Closer to my job, closer to recreational things, paved sidewalks/roads for children"*
- *"After just making it here for 20 years, I can't afford it here."*
- *"Affordability and value. Friends sold their small home in La Plata County and got a nicer home, twice the size, half the price, and reported being much happier."*

La Plata County Housing Types

This section discusses respondents' perceptions of the importance of various housing types in La Plata's housing market and the appropriateness of housing types in their neighborhoods vs. elsewhere in the community.

Importance of certain home types. Figures IV-10 through IV-12 show the average importance rating respondents gave to housing types ranging from starter homes for first-time homebuyers, apartments and condos that appeal to young adults and seniors, to executive/luxury level housing. Importance was measured on a 1 to 9 scale where 9 means "extremely important" and 1 means "not important at all".

Housing types that received the highest *average* importance by all La Plata County respondents are:

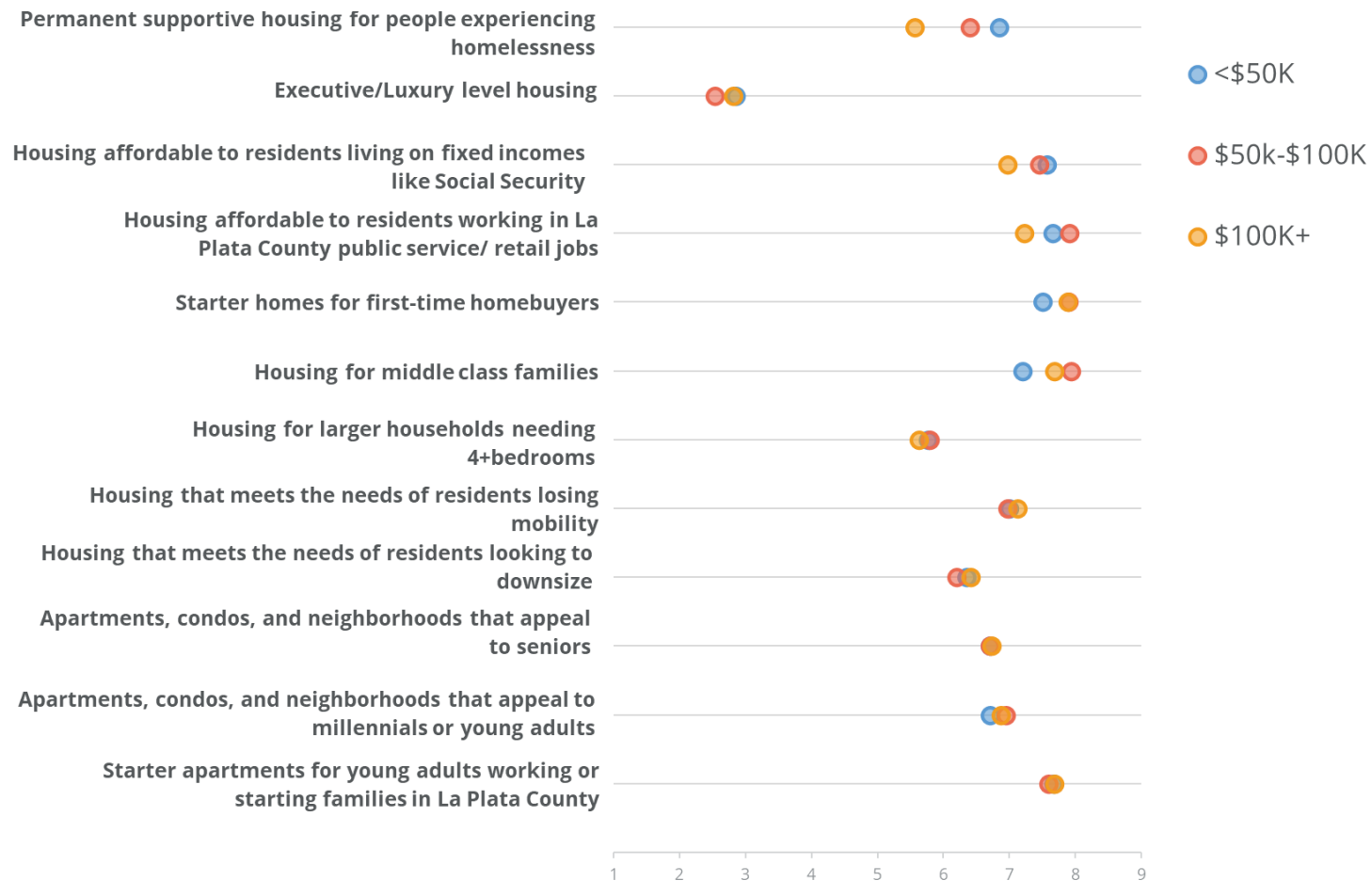
- Starter homes for first-time homebuyers (average importance of 7.8);
- Housing for middle class families (average importance of 7.7);
- Housing affordable to residents working in La Plata County in the public service or retail sector and starter apartments for young adults working in La Plata County (average importance of 7.6)

As shown in the following figures, the average importance of housing types varies by income, household size, and town in which respondents live:

- Lowest income resident respondents place a higher importance on permanent supportive housing than higher income residents as did average size households of 2-4 people;
- Larger units (4+ bedrooms) and executive housing were ranked among the lowest for all income groups and locations with the exception of Ignacio resident respondents who indicated a greater preference for larger homes and households with 5+ people;
- Larger households on average placed less priority on starter homes and workforce housing, whereas single and average size households ranked these the higher;
- Durango residents ranked starter apartments for young working professionals, apartments for millennials and workforce housing as very high relative to Ignacio and Bayfield respondents, and larger housing units lower;
- Bayfield resident respondents indicated a higher preference for downsizing options and housing for seniors than resident respondents from Durango and Ignacio.

Figure IV-10.

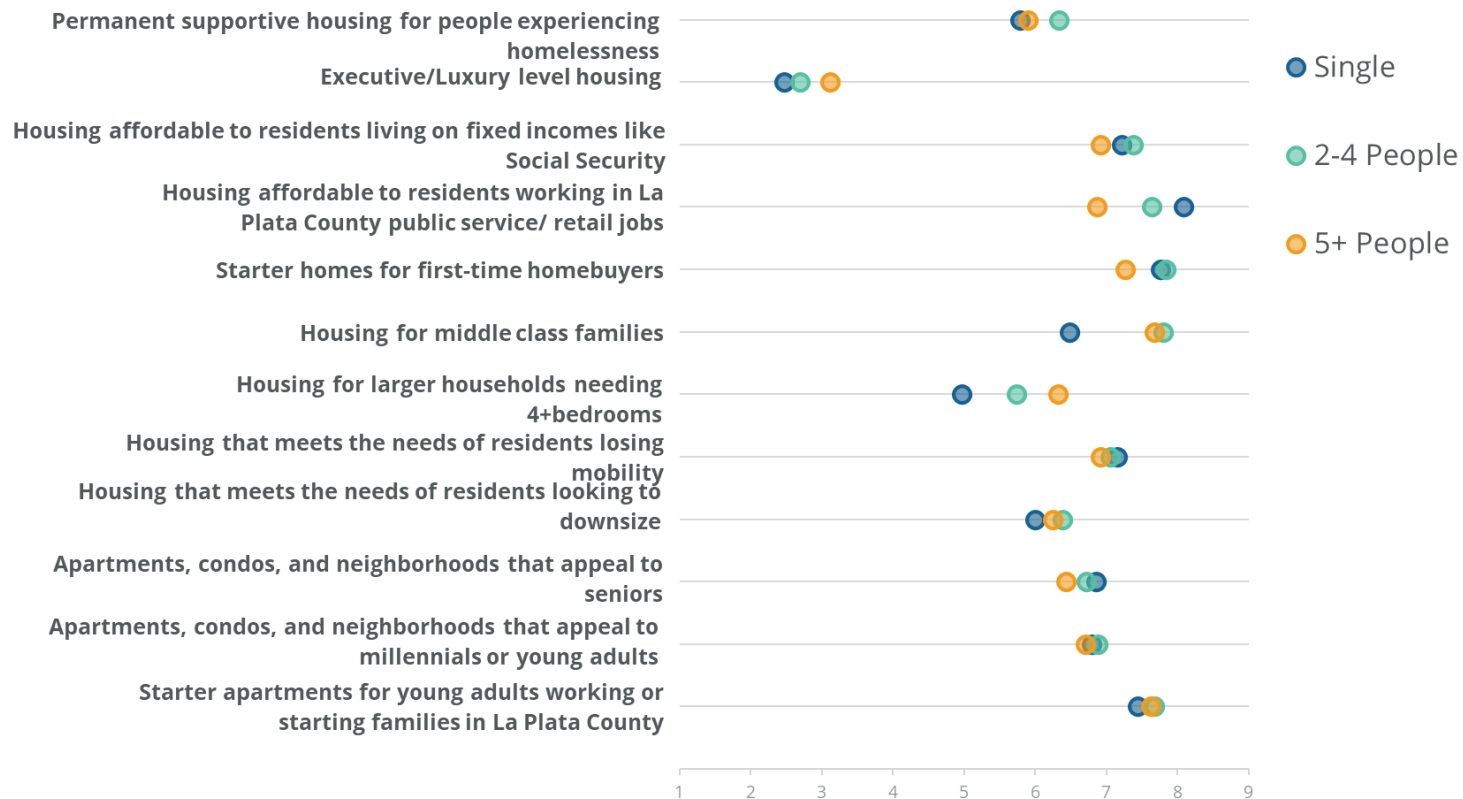
On a scale of 1 to 9, where 9 means extremely important and 1 is not at all important, how important is it to you that La Plata County's housing supply includes the following types of homes? By Income.



Source: Root Policy Research from the 2024 La Plata County Housing Survey.

Figure IV-11.

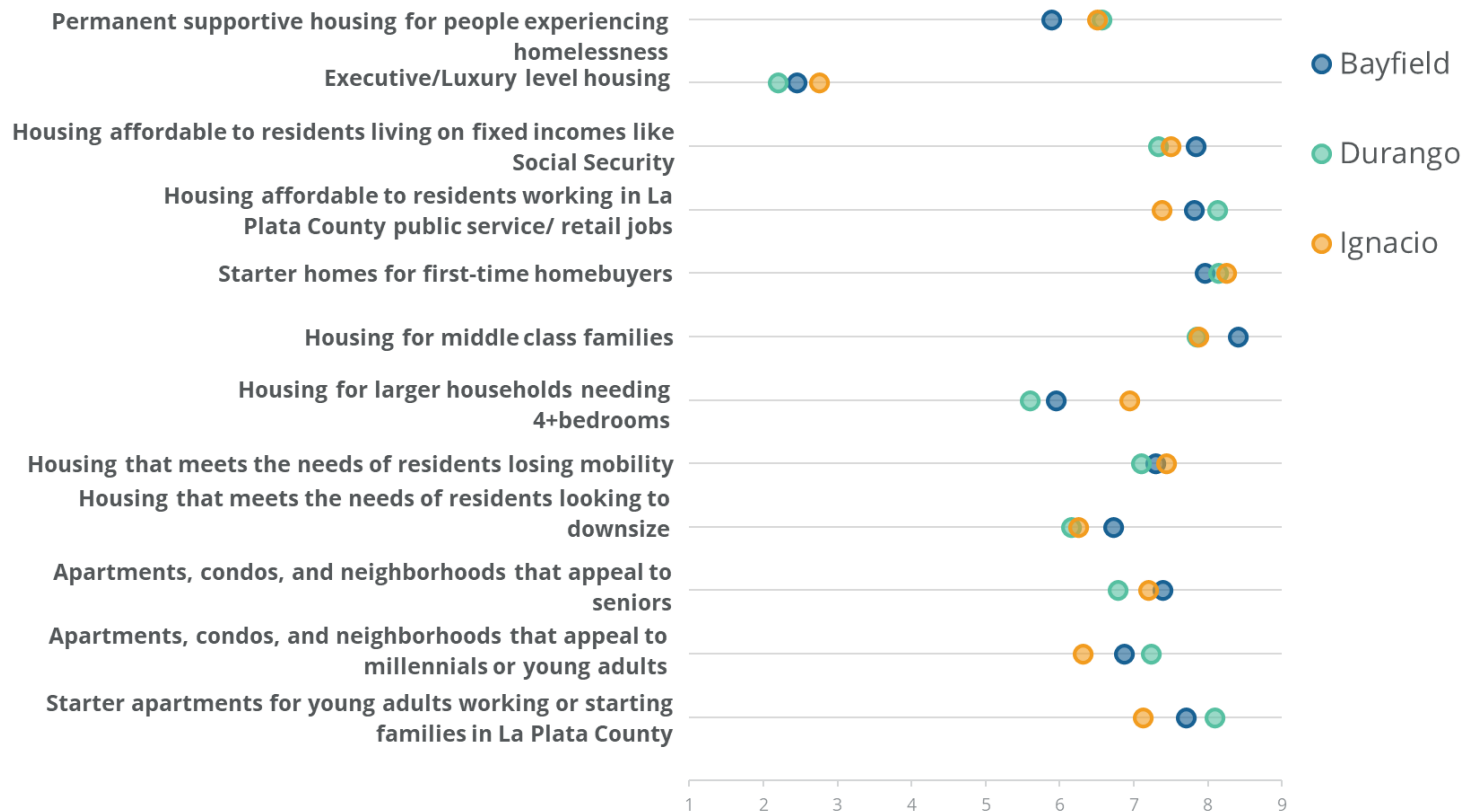
On a scale of 1 to 9, where 9 means extremely important and 1 is not at all important, how important is it to you that La Plata County's housing supply includes the following types of homes? By household size.



Source: Root Policy Research from the 2024 La Plata County Housing Survey.

Figure IV-11.

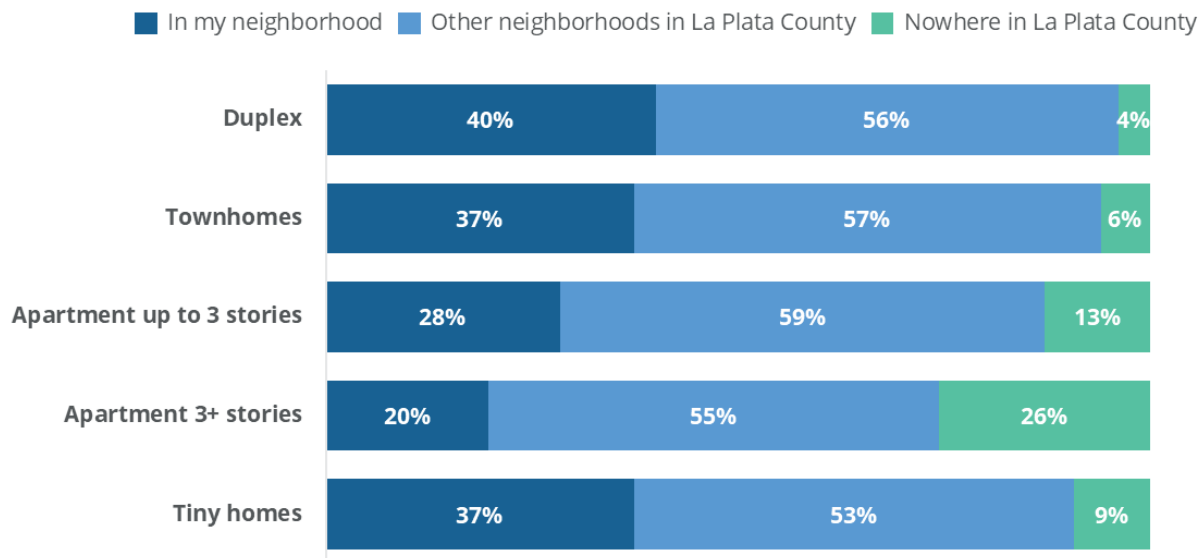
On a scale of 1 to 9, where 9 means extremely important and 1 is not at all important, how important is it to you that La Plata County's housing supply includes the following types of homes? By town.



Source: Root Policy Research from the 2023 Arvada Housing Survey.

Appropriate location for home types. Residents were then asked to consider whether different housing types were appropriate in their neighborhood, other neighborhoods in La Plata County, or not appropriate anywhere in La Plata County.

Figure IV-12.
Perception of Neighborhood Compatibility of Various Housing Types



Note: The survey stipulated that apartment buildings would be near major roads.

Source: Root Policy Research from the 2024 La Plata County Housing Survey.

As shown in Figure IV-12:

- Respondents perceive less dense housing types such as townhomes, duplexes and tiny homes as the most appropriate housing types for their neighborhood in La Plata County. Less than 10% of survey takers indicated that these housing types are not appropriate anywhere in La Plata County.
- Survey respondents indicated greater support for gentle density in their neighborhoods or other neighborhoods in La Plata County—just over a quarter perceive apartments with up to three stories near major roads as appropriate in their neighborhood and more than half (54%) as appropriate in other La Plata County neighborhoods.
- Although preference is greater for lower density apartment buildings, the majority of respondents indicate that higher density apartment building (3+ stories) would be appropriate in other neighborhoods in La Plata County than their own indicating a moderate tolerance for this building type with only a quarter of respondents indicating that they are not appropriate anywhere in the county.

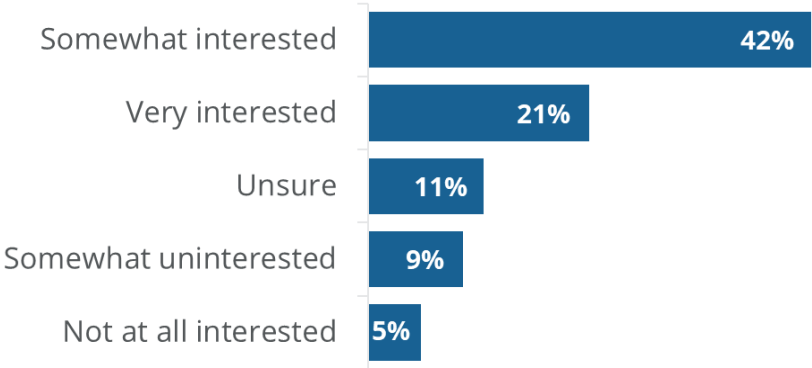
Deed-restricted homeownership. Deed restrictions are a common policy tool to increase access to homeownership for low- and moderate-income households. In a typical deed-restricted affordability program, homes with an affordability deed restriction can only be rented, sold, or re-sold to income-eligible individuals—typically for a price below the standard market price. Program participants are able to build equity in the home, but don’t full capitalize on the full value of market increases—this keeps the home affordable to future income-qualified households. In order to test for general perceptions of deed restricted homeownership, the survey asked respondents about their potential interest in a theoretical deed-restricted ownership program.

Over 60% of survey respondents said they would be very or somewhat interested in purchasing a home with a deed restriction if it was the only way to afford the home. (see Figure IV-13). Comments received from respondents who were not at all interested indicated a possible lack of understanding of the mechanisms of these types of programs and potential need for educational outreach.

Overall, La Plata County responses indicate a considerable interest in and potential for deed-restricted homeownership programs, particularly when coupling this response with “good investment for resale” ranked relatively low in the survey question regarding residents’ reasons for choosing their current housing.

Figure IV-13.
Deed-Restricted
Homeownership

Source:
Root Policy Research from the 2024
La Plata County Housing Survey.



Stakeholder Engagement

Section IV concludes with a discussion of primary findings from the stakeholder engagement conducted to inform La Plata County's Housing Needs Assessment. The findings presented here were drawn from:

- Interviews with real estate professionals in La Plata County;
- A focus group with employers, affordable housing developers, business and economic development leaders; and
- A focus group with nonprofit service providers.

The Root team conducted these interviews and focus groups virtually between October and November 2024. The main themes gathered from this engagement offer additional insight into housing barriers, community development needs, impact of housing on employment and economic development, and suggestions to address needs.

Social service and housing providers. Primary findings, recommendations, and solutions offered by social service and housing providers included:

- Service providers report that families—particularly in the Latino community—are doubling, sometimes tripling up due to affordability and challenges with sufficient rental history in order to qualify for rental units in the area.
- There is concern about poor condition of mobile homes. While mobile homes may offer the most affordable option for some residents; service providers are concerned that some mobile home residents are living in conditions that do not meet health and safety standards.
- Broadly speaking, the perception among service providers is that the most critical need in the rental market is for additional inventory priced in the \$600-\$700 range.
- Access to homeownership for low-income home buyers is also a challenge. Prices are so high that even if buyers are able to access support for downpayment assistance, mortgages are still out of reach for lower income buyers;
- Housing and service provider also report that the lack of available rentals (in general) makes it especially hard for voucher holders to find units. This can result in the resident losing a voucher because they can't find an available unit in time.
- Affordable childcare also came up as a concern for many families. High childcare costs coupled with high housing costs are creating a significant burden for working families—especially in lower wage occupations with irregular schedules (e.g., in the hospitality industry).

Employers and business representatives. Employers and representatives of La Plata's business community offered the following insights, recommendations, and solutions to address housing and community needs:

- Recruitment and retention are critical issues among local employers who report that critical jobs are not being filled due to high housing costs and limited supply.
- Employers across a variety of industries say the housing shortage is a significant contributor to high employee turnover and labor shortage. In recent years, employers feel they need to offer additional incentives for recruitment to the area. Even so, employers feel they attracting fewer qualified candidates—even to higher level positions.
- Employers and the business community perceive the greatest need in the housing market to be additional for-sale inventory for residents and workers ideally priced below \$300,000 (but certainly no more than \$500,000), as well as rental units priced for people working in the retail and hospitality sector (preferably priced below \$600 per month).
- Many people are commuting from Montezuma County, and San Juan County in New Mexico and commuting has implications for absences, late arrivals, and work inconsistency for employers. Some employers report that workers will quit during the winter when the commute is the most challenge and then reapply in spring/summer months. This pattern makes it incredibly difficult to maintain full employment year-round and impacts delivery of services for the local community.
- Looking forward the business community is very concerned that the lack of housing in La Plata County will increasingly limit economic development and the diversity, quantity, and quality of services available to current residents.

Real Estate Professionals and Housing Developers. Real estate professionals and affordable housing developers participated in interviews and a focus group discussion with the Root Policy team. Primary findings from these discussions are provided below.

- Real estate professionals and developers highlighted the following components of market demand:
 - The county is undersupplied in general and that undersupply of available homes is constraining population growth (and economic development). Developers perceive this to be a long-standing issue of chronic undersupply.
 - Most families prefer a detached housing product with some type of outdoor space.

- Buyers are open to smaller lot sizes for single family homes but land use, zoning, and building requirements can be a barrier to delivering this product.
- There is very low churn in the market because many owners who might be interested in selling have very low interest rates are choosing not to sell or to “wait it out” impacting available for sale inventory and therefore prices;
- The current housing supply is not well-tailored to La Plata County’s aging population. The market needs more housing options for seniors that are accessible and will allow them to age in place.
- Withing the City of Durango, real estate stakeholder also noted a need for higher density housing, condos, and infill development.
- Affordable housing development is complicated by administrative barriers at the county level (approvals, permitting), subdivision rules and infrastructure challenges (water) that become too costly to pursue.
 - Developers perceive the permitting and approval process to be burdensome and time consuming. Some also highlighted code requirements (e.g., sidewalks, curb/gutter requirements, and landscape buffers) to be a barrier.
 - While the county is fairly permissive, the infrastructure costs are a real challenge for developers (and/or individual landowners). Developers suggested that the County consider subsidizing infrastructure in unincorporated areas to help catalyze development.
 - Like many locations in Colorado, the availability and cost of water is also a barrier to development—even the primary pinch point according to some developers.
 - There is a shortage of skilled construction labor, which adds both time and cost to development projects. Durango’s location also contributes to high material costs (and delivery).
 - Rising construction costs and high interest rates make it very difficult for developers to meet market demand for low- and middle-income rents and prices. The current interest rate environment is making it particularly challenging for multifamily builders to make projects pencil.
 - State-level construction defects concerns persist as a barrier to both condo and townhome development, which could otherwise help meet affordability needs in the ownership market.
 - Some developers see modular construction as a solution but transportation costs are relatively high because there are no nearby factories. There are also financing challenges which require large cash outlays up front.

- Key solutions highlighted by developers include:
 - Land banking, particularly strategic purchases in the county, coupled with infrastructure investments and/or subsidies.
 - Need a funding source for affordable housing to be used for gap financing, additional downpayment assistance and other affordability initiatives. Specific suggestions included lodging, short-term rental tax, and/or other broad-based tax (e.g., property or sales tax).
 - Regulatory and zoning changes that allow for more product diversity and innovative solutions (smaller lots, higher density, etc.)
 - Streamline approval process and enhance transparency of permit/development decisions.
 - Create a revolving loan fund deployed through public private partnerships on workforce development, with a funding focus on infrastructure.
 - Consider public financing options that could “buy down” high interest rates.



La Plata Economic Development Alliance

Sarah Tober, Executive Director

Early Childhood Council of La Plata County

Heather Hawk, Executive Director

February 2025

La Plata Economic Development Alliance

OUR MISSION

To create a vibrant and resilient economy through the recruitment, retainment, and growth of business to preserve our quality of life. This mission is achieved by workforce development, enabling business capacity, supporting affordable housing for the community workforce that is essential for long-term economic sustainability, and fostering public and private partnerships.

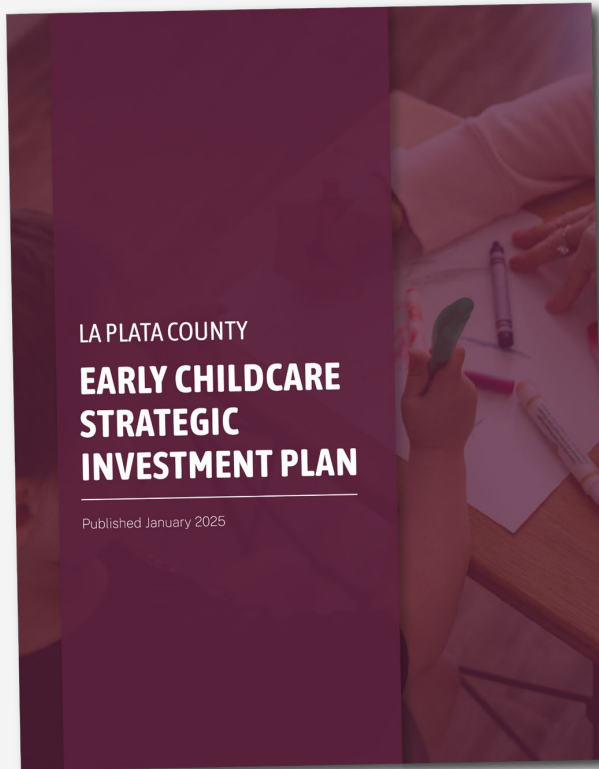


Early Childhood Council of La Plata County

OUR MISSION

The mission of the **Early Childhood Council of La Plata County** is to support families by increasing the availability, accessibility, and reliability of affordable high-quality comprehensive services for all children (birth to age 8) and their families in La Plata county.





Developed by the **La Plata Economic Development Alliance**, the **Early Childhood Council of La Plata County**, the **Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County**, and the **City of Durango** in partnership with local consultants (Cass Walker Harvey of CWH Consulting, and Cyo Nystrom).

The plan incorporates extensive market research and input from the business and childcare communities.

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

The business impact is immediate and measurable. 60% of employers have lost employees directly to childcare issues, while 54% face ongoing hiring challenges linked to childcare accessibility. More concerning, 26% of employers reported losing five or more employees in the past two years due to childcare gaps. **Only 6% of employers report adequate childcare access for their workforce**, leading some businesses to consider relocation due to workforce instability. These statistics highlight the critical need for systemic childcare solutions to ensure business stability and economic growth in La Plata County.

“We track exit reasons, and childcare is one of the top two reasons people leave.”

–Participating Employer

BUSINESS IMPACT OF CHILDCARE GAP

in La Plata County



\$34M in lost wages annually

60%

employers lost employees due to childcare issues

26%

employers lost 5+ employees



54%

employers report ongoing hiring challenges

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN



THE CRISIS: Market Analysis & Economic Impact

Due to childcare shortfalls, La Plata County loses up to \$34 million annually in unrealized economic potential, representing our share of Colorado's staggering \$2.2 billion annual loss. These deficits have immediate, measurable impacts on business operations, talent retention, and growth potential across all sectors, including healthcare, education, and small businesses.



Half of Colorado parents report making sacrifices that affect their employment, including reducing work hours, taking unpaid leave, or entirely leaving their jobs due to lack of affordable childcare options.²



The Healthier Colorado 2023 Voter Opinion Survey revealed that **one-third of respondents limited their work hours** because of the high costs of childcare.³



Colorado would realize over \$700 million in lost wages if the estimated 10,200 Colorado parents could secure childcare and re-enter the workforce. If this occurred, it would generate over \$3.7 billion in GDP and create 29,000 new jobs.⁴



To replace an employee costs companies up to 2x an employee's salary⁵, and productivity problems cause **Colorado employers to lose \$780 million annually** due to childcare challenges their workforce faces.⁶

Since 2019, La Plata County has experienced **an 11% decrease in licensed childcare slots**, losing 147 slots over five years. If this trend continues, the county's **licensed childcare capacity will decline by approximately 23%, falling below 1,000 slots by 2030**. This worsening shortfall will further strain families, exacerbate workforce instability, and significantly hinder economic growth.

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

Current Market Status

AGE GROUP	CURRENT LICENSED CAPACITY	NEED	GAP
Infants (0-18 months)	80	656	576
Toddlers (18-36 months)	244	629	385
Preschool (36-60 months)	822	850	28
Total Licensed Care	1,146	2,137	991
Additional FFN Care	250	-	-

Note: FFN Care refers to Family, Friends, and Neighbor Network care options, including informal arrangements with nannies, babysitters, relatives, and unlicensed providers. While these options supplement licensed care, they do not fully bridge the childcare gap.

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

La Plata County Educator Wage Analysis

Understanding the wage structure is key to addressing workforce stability:

ROLE	WAGE RANGE
Assistant Teachers	\$17.00 - \$19.47/hr
Lead Teachers	\$19.50 - \$26.51/hr
Infant Teachers	\$17.62 - \$22.69/hr
Toddler Teachers	\$16.98 - \$21.00/hr
Assistant Directors	\$18.11 - \$20.00/hr
Directors	\$31.03/hr or approx. \$59,381/year

EARLY CHILDCARE WORKFORCE STATISTICS in La Plata County



260

employed as Early
Childcare Educators

\$40,560

median annual income
early childcare employee

15.1%

live below
poverty line

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

THE SOLUTION: The Strategic Investment Framework

A \$20M investment over five years will reimagine the childcare sector in La Plata County, doubling the number of childcare slots available for children aged 0-3.

Our \$20M strategy addresses immediate business needs and long-term economic growth through three coordinated initiatives. Each component targets specific market failures identified through community engagement and economic analysis:



Childcare Investment Fund (\$10M)

Stabilizes the workforce by raising educator wages, improving retention and recruitment of qualified childcare educators. Catalyzes 420 new childcare slots over three years.



Capital & Infrastructure Fund (\$10M)

Expands physical capacity by providing loans and grants for new facilities and upgrades. Creates sustainable infrastructure to meet growing childcare demand.



Childcare Champions Initiative

Offers perks, discounts, and recognition to early childhood educators. Builds support and retention by enhancing educator morale and appreciation.

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN



Childcare Investment Fund - \$10M

- Stabilizes the workforce through wages, tuition assistance, and benefits
- Immediate impact on retention and recruitment

Year	Investment	Funding Source	Outcomes
2026	<p>\$2.2M total investment</p> <p>\$1.2M to increase wages for 260 early childcare educators</p> <p>\$800,000 to catalyze new childcare providers. Priority projects for year one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring existing facilities to capacity • Expansion of existing facilities • Creation of bilingual program • Creation of 3 new in-home/family providers • Creation of Bayfield center • Support to alternative providers <p>\$200,000 to complete strategic projects</p>	<p>Public Sector: \$800,000</p> <p>Private Sector: \$1M</p> <p>Philanthropy: \$400,000</p>	<p>Additional approx. 260 childcare slots created</p> <p>Increased wages by an average of \$4000/year per educator - ensuring all educators are making at least \$20/hour.</p>

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

Funding Source	Details
Public Dollars	Possible Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Plata County Lodgers Tax • Municipal Lodgers Tax • Special Tax Districts • Mill Levy • Sales / Property Taxes • Tax exempt revenue bonds or Capital bonds
Employer Donations	Three year commitment
Gold Level	8 businesses contributing \$50k+ each (\$25,000+ back in tax credits ¹³) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority access to childcare spots at designated partner providers after year 2 • Childcare contribution state and federal tax credits (50%) • Strategic partner recognition • Business network benefits • Economic impact tracking
Silver Level	8+ businesses contributing \$30k-45k each (15,000+ back in tax credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare contribution state and federal tax credits (50%) • Strategic partner recognition • Business network benefits
Bronze Level	10+ businesses contributing \$5k-\$10k each (\$2,500+ back in tax credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare contribution state and federal tax credits (50%) • Community partner recognition
Philanthropy	Contributions from philanthropic organizations

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
ALLIANCE

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Our four-phase implementation plan ensures measurable progress toward economic impact goals.

Phase 1: Market Foundation

January-August 2025

The first phase focuses on building the foundation for long-term childcare improvements by addressing immediate needs and laying the groundwork for implementation.

- Formation of the Childcare Coalition to coordinate cross-sector efforts and oversee progress.
- Completion of the geo-mapping project to identify expansion opportunities across Durango, Bayfield, Ignacio, and unincorporated areas.
- Conducting a childcare planning audit to identify regulatory barriers and opportunities for improvement.
- Development of strategic plans for childcare centers operating below capacity to optimize existing resources.
- Creation of fund guidelines, governance structures, and policies for both investment funds.
- Launch of the capital campaign to achieve the \$20 million fundraising goal.

Phase 2: Fund Launch

August-December 2025

The second phase prioritizes deploying resources and solidifying partnerships.

- Launch of the Childcare Investment Fund and the Childcare Capital & Infrastructure Fund by December 2025.
- Identification and formalization of two to three housing partnerships through signed MOUs.
- Activation of the Childcare Champions Initiative to engage local businesses in supporting the childcare workforce.
- Establishment of measurement frameworks to evaluate the impact of both funds, including specific activation targets.

LA PLATA COUNTY EARLY CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

EXPECTED OUTCOMES & ECONOMIC IMPACT

We project significant growth in La Plata County's childcare capacity through strategic investment and coordinated action.

Outcomes Include:



Grow childcare capacity to 73% by 2029, including 15 new licensed centers or homes.



Increase wages for all childcare workforce to at least a \$20-\$24/hour, and ensure all childcare educators have access to health benefits.



Stabilize the childcare workforce, reducing the turnover rate to 25-30% and ensuring all facilities are fully staffed.



Establish at least one bilingual Spanish option for families.



Establish at least one licensed center for 0-3 in both Bayfield and Ignacio.



Add at least \$21M in additional earnings annually to La Plata's economy.

Thank you!



Early Childhood Council
of La Plata County

Heather Hawk

Executive Director

Early Childhood Council of La Plata County

heatherh@ecclaplata.org



Sarah Tober

Executive Director

La Plata Economic Development Alliance

sarah@yeslpc.com

Public Presentation



La Plata County Early Childcare Strategic Investment Plan

Join the Economic Alliance and the Early Childhood Council for a discussion on the community-driven plan to stabilize and grow early childcare in La Plata County.



Durango Public Library (Room 2)
1900 E 3rd Ave, Durango



Wednesday, March 12
5:30 – 7:00 pm

Visit yeslpc.com/childcare-strategy



Livable Wages in Southwest Colorado

2024 Update

Prepared by Donna Graves, Information Services, Inc. and Zac Robinson for Region 9 Economic Development



A healthy community has a diverse and sustainable economy that pays livable wages and offers meaningful work.



LIVABLE WAGES IN SOUTHWEST COLORADO – 2024 UPDATE

Executive Summary.....	1
Background	2
Key Findings	3
Housing Costs	3
Poverty Guidelines	4
Minimum Wage.....	5
Average Annual Living Expense by County	5
Livable Hourly Wage by Area	5
Wages by Job Sector	5
Livable Wage by County/Community	9
Archuleta County.....	11
Dolores County.....	12
La Plata County.....	14
Montezuma County.....	17
San Juan County	20
Summary	21

Questions regarding this report can be addressed to Donna Graves, Information Services, Inc. at dkgraves1956@gmail.com, or Heather Otter heather@region9edd.org.

More information regarding demographics and the economies of the counties in Region 9 can be found at <https://www.region9edd.org/>.

Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, Inc.
135 Burnett Drive, Unit 1
Durango, CO 81301
Phone 970-247-9621

LIVABLE WAGES IN SOUTHWEST COLORADO – 2024 UPDATE

Executive Summary

A healthy community has a diverse and sustainable economy that pays livable wages and offers meaningful work. But what level of income is necessary to support a given size and type of household? A livable wage addresses the essential financial needs for basic living tools such as shelter, healthcare, childcare, and nutrition. When one earns less than a livable wage, he or she is forced to make undesirable choices such as working two or more jobs, working longer hours, making longer commutes, sharing a residence, or giving up basic items such as a vehicle or insurance.

The Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado (Region 9) has estimated livable wages since 1999, using a consistent method in order to compare costs and wages each year. In this report, *Livable Wages in Southwest Colorado – 2024 Update*, Region 9 uses estimated expenditures prepared by the Center for Women's Welfare University of Washington School of Social Work (UW). The UW has allowed Region 9 access to the data inputs for our five counties (Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan), as well as the technical documentation.¹

In Region 9, the amount needed to be economically self-sufficient varies by geographic location. The 2024 Colorado minimum wage is \$14.42 per hour, which amounts to \$30,455 per year working full time. We found that in Region 9, Montezuma County is the least expensive (\$91,519 annually), and Archuleta County is the most expensive place to live (\$105,919 annually) for a family of four. Using housing costs specific to each community we found that Pagosa Springs is the most expensive community in the region for a family of four (\$25.08 per hour for each working adult) due to the high cost of housing. Cortez (\$18.93) and Town of Dolores (\$18.74) are the least expensive communities for a family of four.

When we link our livable wage findings to average annual wages by sector in each county in our region, we find that most employment sectors do not provide enough income to meet the basic needs of a family of four, especially if there is only one bread winner in the household. We know that there is a growing workforce shortage in our area. Being able to attract and retain workers is essential for a healthy economy.

Closing the wage gap between current wages and self-sufficiency wages require both **reducing costs** and **raising incomes**. Raising public awareness at the local level is also essential to closing the wage gap. In order to enhance the quality of life through fair wages a number of strategies may be useful.

- Reduce costs of housing and childcare.
- Build a coalition of workers, employers, government and organizations who work together in achieving a living wage.
- Educate workers, employers and government officials about the importance of creating a living wage.
- Publicly recognize employers who provide, or aspire to provide, a living wage.
- Advocate for improving minimum wages at the local, state and national level.

¹ https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SSS2024_TechnicalBrief_2024909.pdf

Background

The Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado (Region 9) has estimated livable wages since 1999, using a consistent method in order to compare costs and wages each year. In this *2024 Update*, Region 9 uses estimated expenditures for our counties prepared by the Center for Women’s Welfare University of Washington School of Social Work (UW). To date, the UW has not yet prepared an updated report for Colorado counties. However, the UW has allowed Region 9 access to the 2024 data inputs for our five counties, as well as the technical documentation.²

These data are reported by UW for each county nation-wide, compiled into a report known as the *Self Sufficiency Standard (Standard)*.³ The *Standard* defines the income needed to realistically support a family without public or private assistance. It calculates the costs of six basic needs: housing, child-care, food, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous.⁴ We have also used their estimate of taxes and tax credits with the caveat that they may not fully reflect our local adjustments to housing, childcare and utilities.

The *Standard* is updated periodically. In the interim years adjustments are made using the West Region Consumer Price Index (CPI). The Consumer Price Index is a key statistic for purposes of economic and social policymaking and has substantial and wide-ranging implications for governments, businesses and workers. The Colorado Constitution requires the Colorado minimum wage to be adjusted annually for inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index used for Colorado. However, the 2019 *Update Report* by Region 9 found that estimating the increase in costs using the CPI drastically underestimates the real increases in the cost of basic needs faced by Colorado families.

Many of the expenditures estimated by UW are applied to southwest Colorado. However, for this *2024 Update* we have substituted housing and childcare costs with those that are specific to our communities, as was done in past reports. Housing information is collected by calling property managers, looking at online listings, and following ads in local newspapers over a period of several months to obtain a **median** housing cost for 1 and 2- bedroom rental units in each county/community. This information is not readily available in some areas such as: Dolores County; Bayfield and Ignacio (La Plata County); Dolores Town (Montezuma County); and San Juan County, thus Fair Market Rents provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are used.⁵

Where available, childcare costs are obtained through the childcare centers in each county, though not all of the centers provided information about average tuition costs for preschoolers. We also used the estimates provided by UW for summer/part-time tuition for school-age children as most centers in the region do not provide these services due to lack of capacity.

A mileage allowance is also added for the communities of Silverton, Rico, and Dove Creek to recognize the extra distance that people in those towns must travel for many basic goods and services. Commuting is common in the region as residents juggle the cost of housing with job availability.

² https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SSS2024_TechnicalBrief_2024909.pdf

³ <https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/>

⁴ Miscellaneous includes, clothing, shoes, paper products, diapers, nonprescription medicines, cleaning products, household items, personal hygiene items, and telephone, cell phone and internet.

⁵ Fair Market Rent from HUD <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html#year2024>

Key Findings

Housing Costs

Many estimates of Fair Market Rent (FMR), including those used by the Standard, are drawn from surveys conducted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Those rental costs include utilities. However, most of those surveys are conducted in metropolitan areas, and often do not reflect the reality of rental costs in small, rural areas.

2024 Comparison of Median Rental Costs to Fair Market Rent Estimates Region 9	¹ Actual Rental Costs		² Fair Market Rent (FMR)	
	1 BDR	2 BDR	1 BDR	2 BDR
Archuleta County - Pagosa Springs	\$ 1,750	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,063	\$ 1,397
Dolores County - Dove Creek	NA	NA	\$ 817	\$ 1,074
Dolores County - Rico	NA	NA	\$ 817	\$ 1,074
La Plata County	\$ 1,550	\$ 2,075	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716
La Plata County - Bayfield	NA	NA	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716
La Plata County - Durango	\$ 1,759	\$ 2,100	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716
La Plata County - Ignacio	NA	NA	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716
Montezuma County	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,500	\$ 966	\$ 1,269
Montezuma County - Cortez	\$ 1,075	\$ 1,300	\$ 966	\$ 1,269
Montezuma County - Dolores	NA	NA	\$ 966	\$ 1,269
Montezuma County - Mancos	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,825	\$ 966	\$ 1,269
San Juan County - Silverton	NA	NA	\$ 1,324	\$ 1,486

Highlighted cells indicate the estimated rental amount used for this report

NA = Actual rents not available for this community.

(1) Source: Median of compilation of online listings.

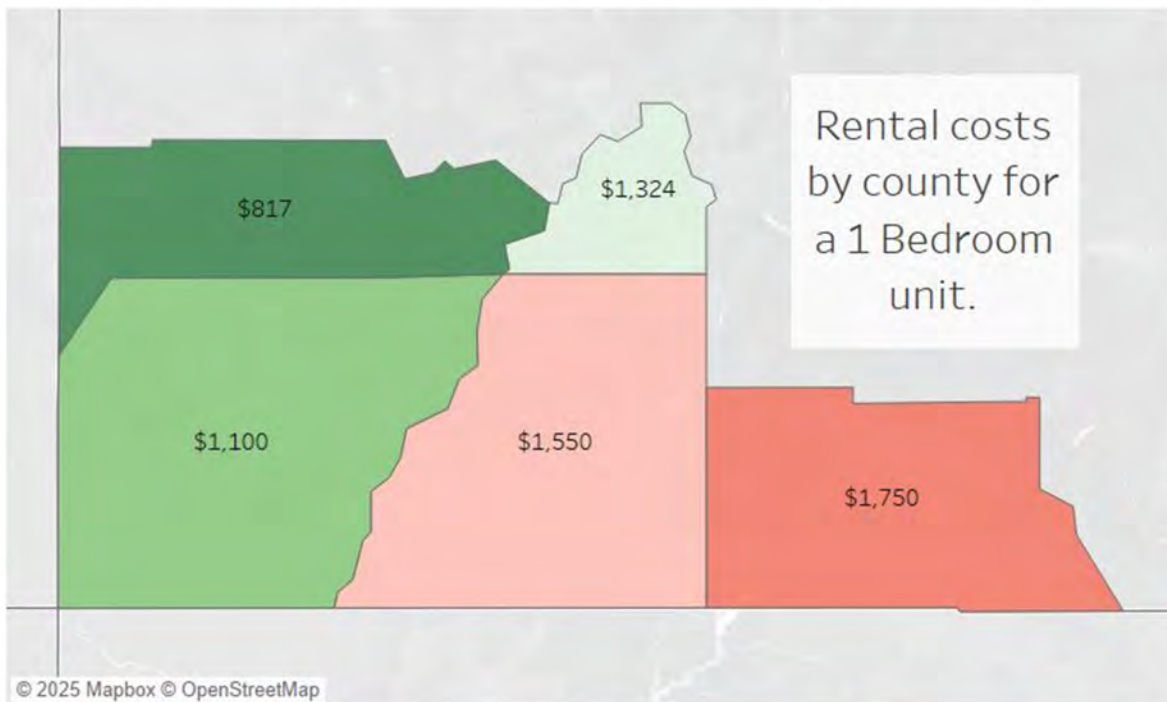
(2) Fair Market Rent <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html#year2024>


We are assuming that a single adult would rent a one-bedroom unit, while an adult with a preschooler or two adults with a preschooler and a school-aged child would rent a two-bedroom unit. It is also conceivable that a family of four would make the choice to rent a one-bedroom unit, especially in the areas with high rent.

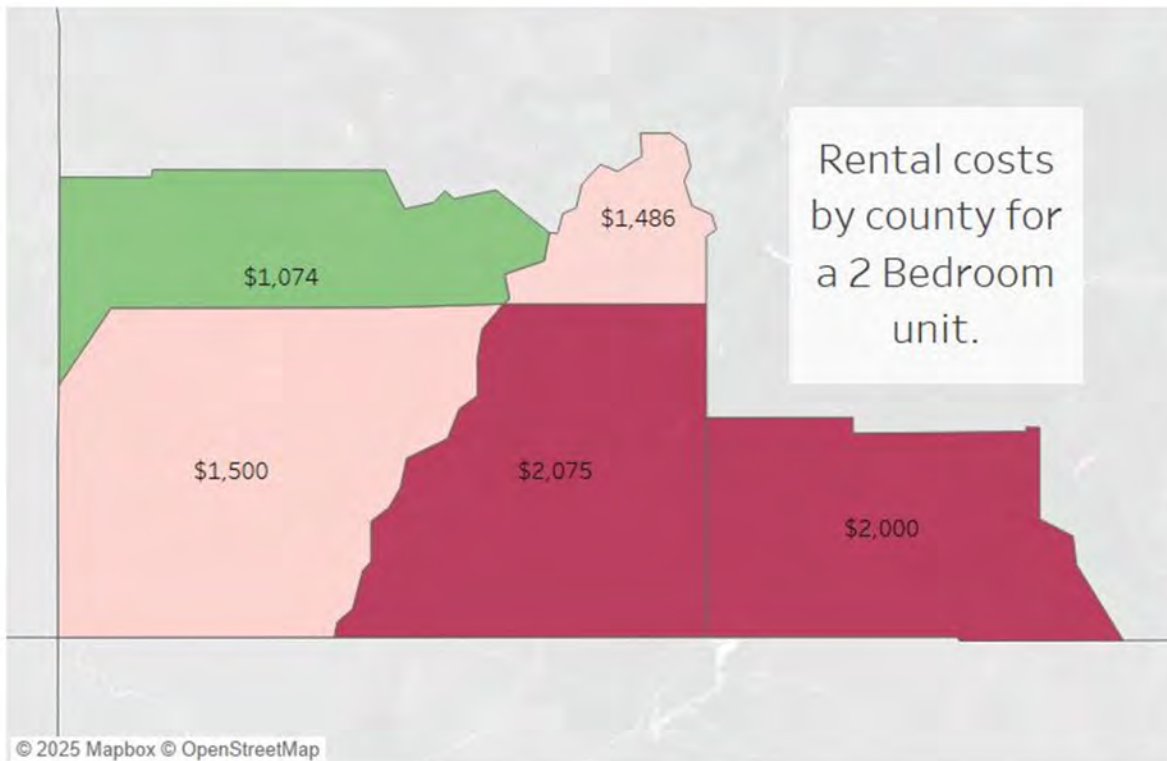
We found that in almost every community actual rental costs are substantially higher than Fair Market Rent estimates. In many communities' landlords pay for public services such as water, sewer and trash collection, but not utilities such as gas and electric. To account for these utility costs, we have added an average energy consumption rate for each county to monthly expenditures.⁶ This average does not include utility costs subsidized through the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), which could reduce the overall cost of utilities.

⁶ Low-Income Energy Affordability Data Tool Map Export (<https://lead.openei.org/>)

2024 Median Rental Costs by County



\$750  \$2,000



Poverty Guidelines

For most workers throughout Colorado, earnings above the official Federal Poverty Level are far below what is needed to meet families' basic needs.⁷

Minimum Wage

In Colorado, the amount needed to be economically self-sufficient varies by geographic location. The 2024 Colorado minimum wage is \$14.42 per hour, which amounts to \$30,455 per year working full time.⁸

2024 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$15,060
2	\$20,440
3	\$25,820
4	\$31,200

Livable Hourly Wage by Area

Using housing costs specific to each community we found that Pagosa Springs is the most expensive community in the region for a family of four (\$25.08 per hour for each working adult) due to the high cost of housing. Cortez (\$18.93) and Town of Dolores (\$18.74) are the least expensive communities for a family of four.

Region 9 - 2024 Livable Hourly Wage by Area			*2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	
Archuleta County - Pagosa Springs	\$ 22.39	\$ 39.09	\$ 25.08
Dolores County - Dove Creek	\$ 15.09	\$ 27.39	\$ 18.94
Dolores County - Rico	\$ 15.16	\$ 27.46	\$ 18.98
La Plata County - Bayfield, Ignacio	\$ 19.35	\$ 33.74	\$ 23.12
La Plata County - Durango	\$ 22.74	\$ 37.28	\$ 24.89
Montezuma County - Cortez	\$ 15.94	\$ 28.27	\$ 18.93
Montezuma County - Dolores	\$ 15.13	\$ 27.90	\$ 18.74
Montezuma County - Mancos	\$ 17.22	\$ 31.25	\$ 20.42
San Juan County - Silverton	\$ 20.31	\$ 33.01	\$ 22.72

* Per hour for each working adult

Average Annual Living Expense by County

We found that in Region 9, Montezuma County is the least expensive (\$91,519 annually), and Archuleta County / Pagosa Springs is the most expensive place to live (\$105,919 annually) for a family of four.

Region 9 - 2024 Average Annual Living Expense by County			2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	
Archuleta County - Pagosa Springs	\$ 47,296	\$ 82,552	\$ 105,919
Dolores County - Dove Creek	\$ 31,870	\$ 57,850	\$ 80,019
Dolores County - Rico	\$ 32,020	\$ 58,003	\$ 80,169
La Plata County	\$ 45,521	\$ 78,442	\$ 104,827
La Plata County - Bayfield, Ignacio	\$ 40,877	\$ 71,266	\$ 97,651
La Plata County - Durango	\$ 48,029	\$ 78,742	\$ 105,127
Montezuma County	\$ 36,995	\$ 68,263	\$ 91,519
Montezuma County - Cortez	\$ 33,660	\$ 59,710	\$ 79,944
Montezuma County - Dolores	\$ 31,944	\$ 58,930	\$ 79,164
Montezuma County - Mancos	\$ 36,360	\$ 66,010	\$ 86,244
San Juan County	\$ 42,902	\$ 69,721	\$ 95,965

⁷ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>

⁸ The Standard assumes adults work eight hours per day for 22 days per month for 12 months per year (2,112 hrs.)

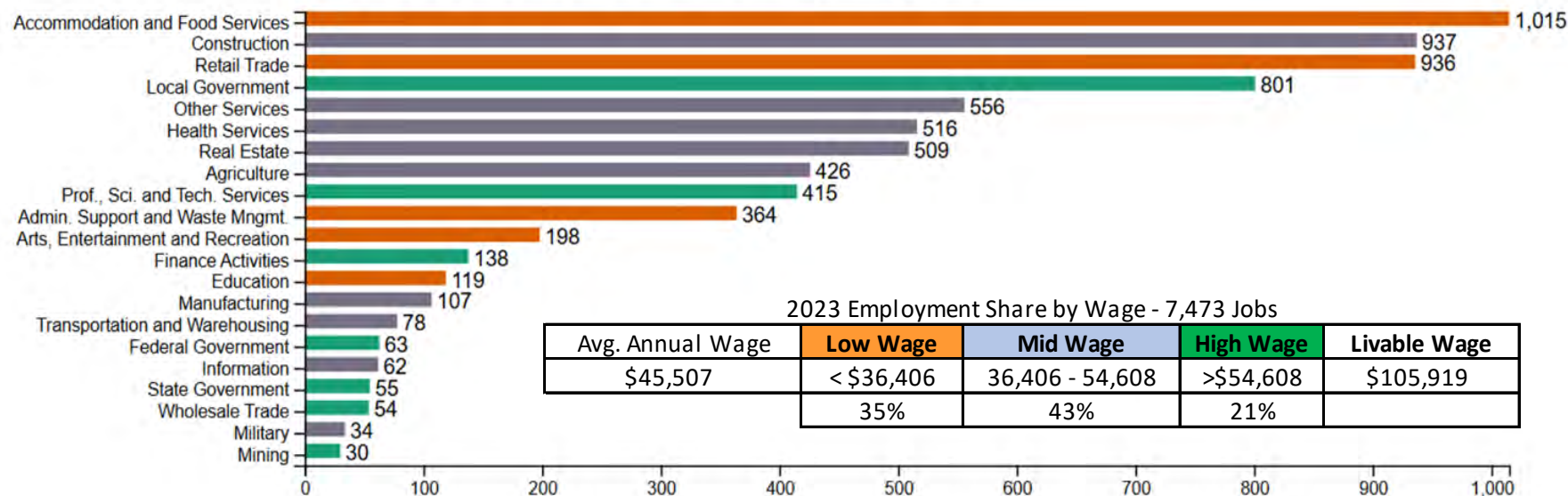
Wages by Job Sector

Since almost all working-age families meet their income needs with employment, a crucial question is whether the jobs available provide sufficient wages. When we link our livable wage findings to average annual wages by sector in each county in our region, we find that most employment sectors do not provide enough income to meet the basic needs of a family of four, especially if there is only one bread winner in the household. Data from the Quarterly Census of Wages is not yet available for 2024, thus 2023 data is used in this report.

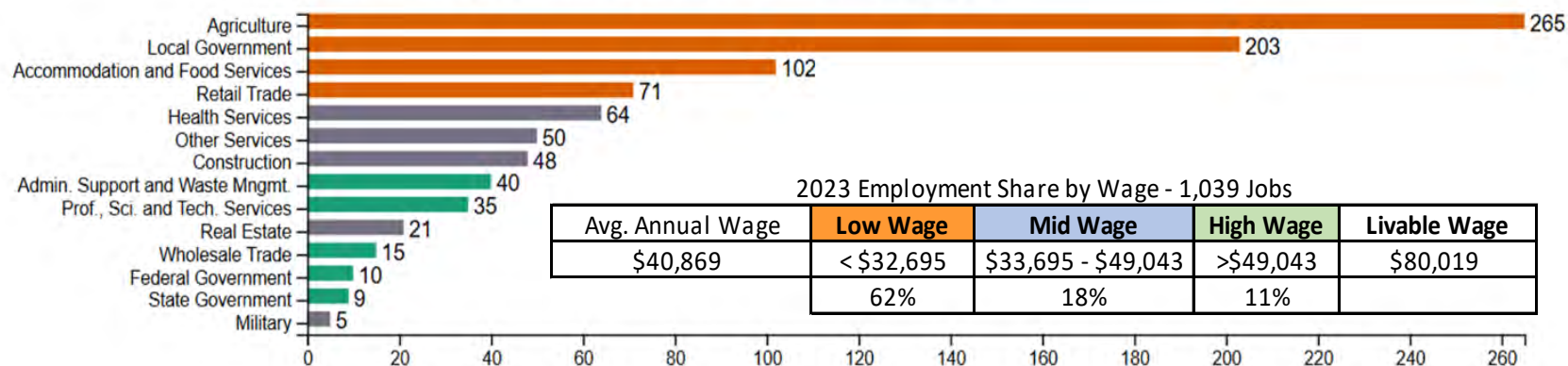
Jobs in the mining and utilities sectors provide an adequate income in each county where they exist. Professional and management services also provide sufficient wages in most areas. The most numerous jobs in Region 9 are local government (13%), health services (11%), and retail trade (11%). These occupations do not provide sufficient wages to support a family of four.

Low Wage < 80% of AAW
Mid Wage > 80% and < 120% of AAW
High Wage > 120% of AAW

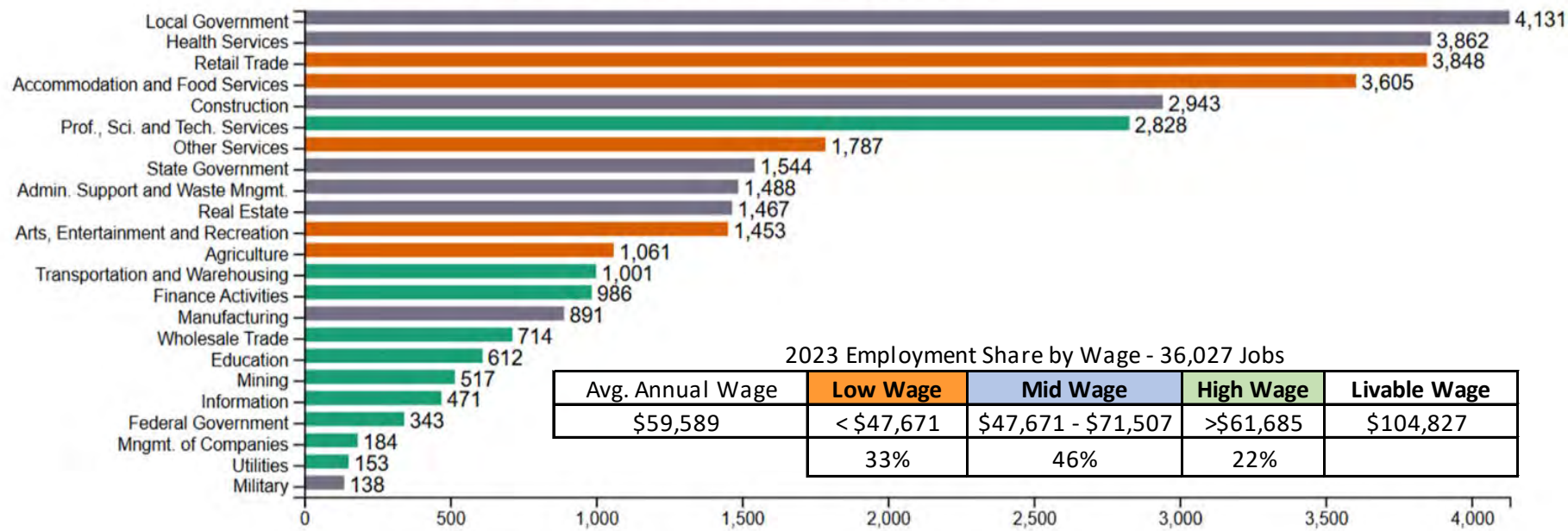
Jobs by Sector: Archuleta County, 2023



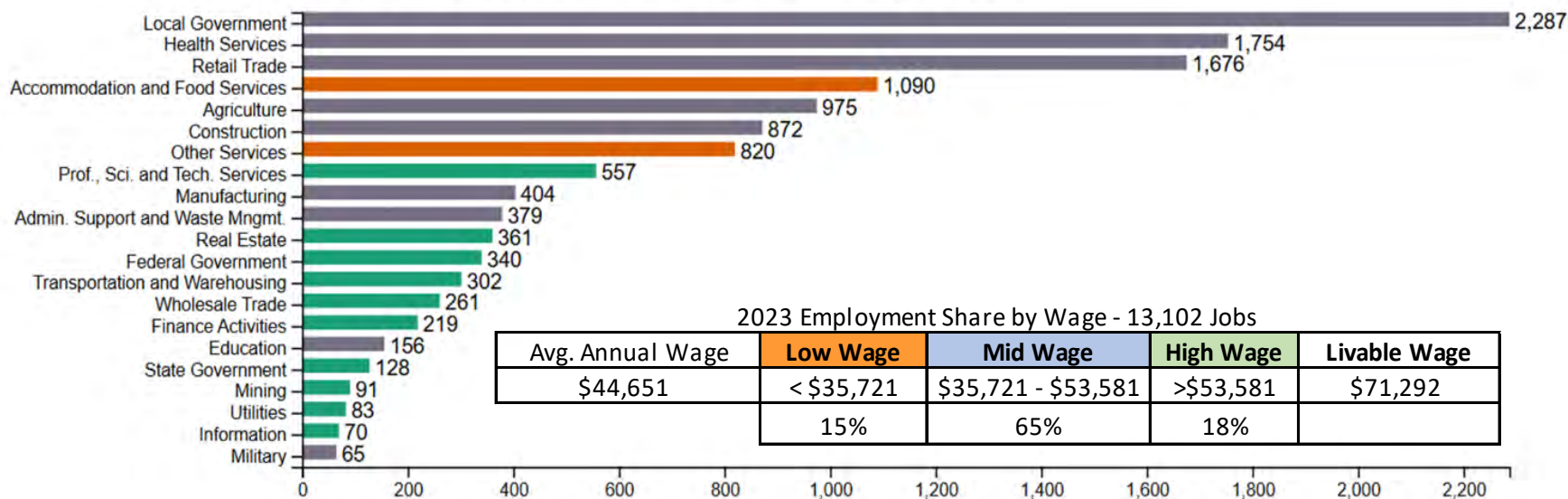
Jobs by Sector: Dolores County, 2023



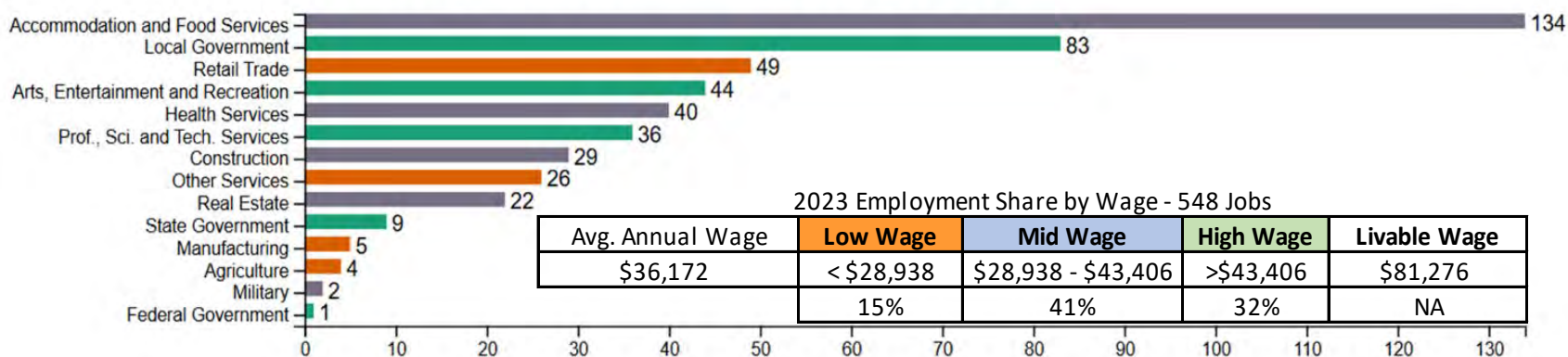
Jobs by Sector: La Plata County, 2023



Jobs by Sector: Montezuma County, 2023



Jobs by Sector: San Juan County, 2023



A healthy community has a diverse and sustainable economy that pays livable wages and offers meaningful work. But what level of income is necessary to support a given size and type of household? A livable wage addresses the essential financial needs for basic living tools such as shelter, healthcare, childcare, and nutrition. When one earns less than a livable wage, he or she is forced to make undesirable choices such as working two or more jobs, working longer hours, making longer commutes, sharing a residence, or giving up basic items such as a vehicle or insurance.

Closing the wage gap between current wages and the Self-Sufficiency Standard requires both **reducing costs** and **raising incomes**.

Reducing costs means ensuring families who are struggling to cover basic costs have access to work supports. These offer stability and resources while they become self-sufficient, and include childcare assistance, food benefits, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Most individuals cannot achieve self-sufficiency through stopgap measures or in a single step, but require support through transitional work supports and programs, as well as the removal of barriers to help families work towards self-sufficiency over time.

Raising incomes means enhancing skills as well as improving access to jobs that pay self-sufficient wages and have career potential. A strong economy will mean good jobs that pay self-sufficient wages, a workforce with the skills necessary to fill those jobs, and enhancing connections and removing barriers between those jobs and the workers that need them.

Key to raising incomes are public policies such as living/minimum wage policies and paid sick and family/medical leave, which increase wages directly. Likewise, access to education, training, and jobs that provide real potential for skill and career advancement over the long term are also important.

Livable Wage by County/Community

The livable wage per hour (and annually) for each community is summarized in the following pages, as well as how many jobs an individual would need (at minimum wage) to sustain just the basic needs of a household. A mileage allowance is also added for the communities of Rico, Dove Creek and Silverton to recognize the extra distance that people in those towns must travel for many basic goods and services.

Housing affordability/attainability is a long term, ongoing priority across the region. Housing experts agree that ideally a family should not spend more than one-third of their income on housing costs. The lack of workforce housing continues to impact economic growth and diversity when businesses cannot recruit employees because there is no place for them and their families to live. Attracting and retaining a viable workforce is key to economic health. Rising rents, simultaneous increases in short term vacation rentals and decreases in long-term rentals, a lack of low-price housing stock, and low wages have been identified as factors contributing to a housing crisis. Policy considerations and long-term funding is needed to address this critical issue.

The provision of quality, affordable childcare is also an issue of primary economic importance. There are coalitions of educators, policy makers and citizens working on childcare initiatives. These initiatives seek to lower costs for parents, raise salaries for teachers, and provide more capacity.

Monthly expenses vary proportionately by county. Generally, housing and childcare costs are the largest part of a families' expenses. The Childcare and Child Tax Credits are federal programs.⁹

2024 Family of Four - % of Monthly Costs

	Archuleta	Dolores		La Plata			Montezuma			San Juan
	All	Dove Creek	Rico	Bayfield	Durango	Ignacio	Cortez	Dolores	Mancos	All
Housing	30%	16%	16%	21%	24%	21%	20%	19%	25%	19%
Childcare	16%	21%	21%	21%	19%	21%	24%	25%	23%	20%
Utilities	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	4%	3%	4%	0%
Food	12%	15%	15%	14%	13%	14%	13%	13%	12%	15%
Transportation	8%	14%	15%	10%	9%	10%	9%	9%	8%	13%
Health Care	12%	13%	13%	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%	10%	11%
Miscellaneous	9%	10%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Taxes	17%	17%	17%	19%	18%	19%	16%	16%	15%	18%
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	-1%	-1%	-1%	-1%	-1%	-1%	-2%	-2%	-1%	-1%
Child Tax Credit (-)	-4%	-5%	-5%	-4%	-4%	-4%	-5%	-5%	-5%	-4%

Monthly Costs	\$ 8,827	\$ 6,668	\$ 6,681	\$ 8,138	\$ 8,761	\$ 8,138	\$ 6,662	\$ 6,597	\$ 7,187	\$ 7,997
---------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

The notes below pertain to each of the tables on the following pages:

¹ Monthly costs for each county are estimated by the Center for Women's Welfare University of Washington School of Social Work (UW).

² Source: Compilation of online listings, newspapers and property managers. Rental costs reflect listings within city limits of each municipality, and in rural areas of each county. Some areas do not have an adequate number of listings, so FMR reported by HUD was used in this report.

³ Source: Childcare centers in each jurisdiction, not all centers reported so costs from UW were used. Childcare expenses are averaged for all age groups per child per day. Assumes that one child (preschooler) in the family is in full time childcare and the school age child is in childcare for 3 months in the summer. Programs for school-aged children in early learning centers are not readily available due to capacity issues.

⁴ Source: Low-Income Energy Affordability Data Tool Map Export (<https://lead.openei.org/>).

⁵ Source: The *Standard* assumes adults work eight hours per day for 22 days per month and 12 months per year. Each cost component in the Standard is first calculated as a monthly cost. Hourly and annual Self-Sufficiency Wages are calculated based on the monthly Standard by dividing the monthly Self-Sufficiency Standard by 176 hours per month to obtain the hourly wage and multiplying by 12 months per year to obtain the annual wage. Tax Credits are subtracted (-) from monthly costs. The hourly wage shown is for each working adult.

⁶ Source: The emergency savings amount is calculated by UW to make up for the earnings of one adult becoming unemployed over the average job loss period, less the amount expected to be received in unemployment benefits. In two-adult households, it is assumed that the second adult continues to be employed, so that the savings only need to cover half of the family's basic living expenses over the job loss period. The savings calculation does not include the higher costs of living presented here.

⁹ Federal Child Care Tax Credit Internal Revenue Service, "Publication 503. Child and Dependent Care Expenses," <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p503.pdf> (accessed September 26, 2023). Federal Child Tax Credit: Internal Revenue Service, "Publication 972. Child Tax Credit," <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p972.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2021).

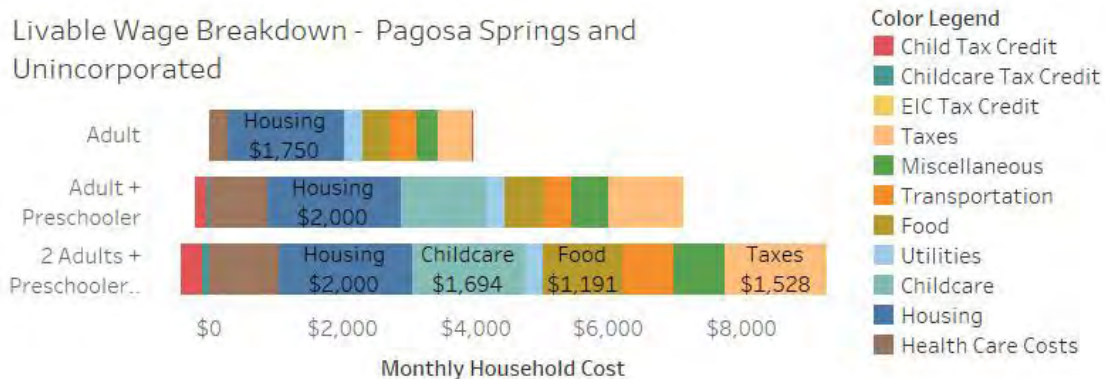
Archuleta County

We found that in this region Archuleta County is the most expensive county for a family to live. This is driven primarily by housing costs. Many (14%) of the service jobs in Archuleta County support tourism in accommodations (lodging) and food services with an average annual wage of \$29,856. Across all industries the average annual wage is \$45,507. This is only 43% of the estimated livable wage (\$105,919) for a family of four (two working adults, a preschooler and one school age child).

Pagosa Springs and Unincorporated	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 ARCHULETA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,750	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,280	\$ 1,694
Utilities (4)	\$ 270	\$ 270	\$ 270
Food	\$ 409	\$ 603	\$ 1,191
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Health Care Costs	\$ 281	\$ 883	\$ 1,041
Miscellaneous	\$ 318	\$ 547	\$ 757
Taxes	\$ 517	\$ 1,108	\$ 1,528
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 22.39	\$ 39.09	\$ 25.08
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.55	2.71	1.74
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,941	\$ 6,879	\$ 8,827
Annual	\$47,296	\$ 82,552	\$ 105,919
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 70	\$ 183	\$ 108

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Pagosa Springs and Unincorporated



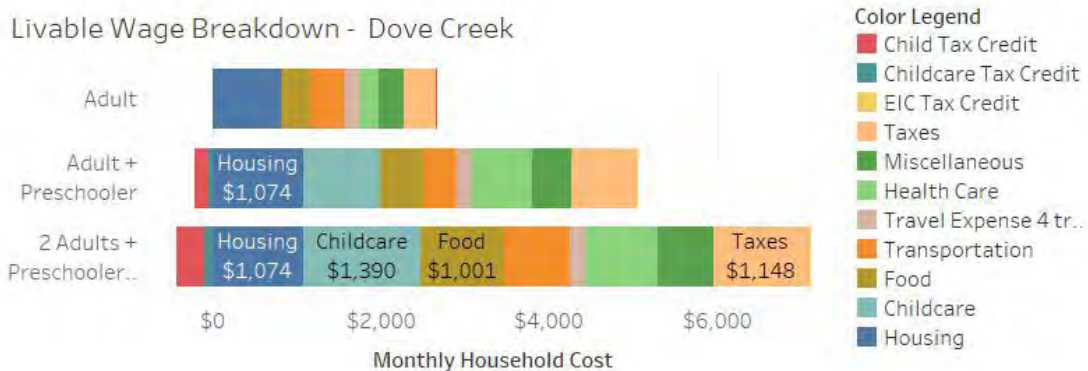
Dolores County

Across all employment industries in Dolores County the average annual wage is \$40,869. This is only 51% of the estimated livable wage (\$80,019) for a family of four in Dove Creek (two working adults, a preschooler and one school age child), and 51% of the estimated livable wage in Rico (\$80,169). Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in Dove Creek.

Dove Creek	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 DOLORES COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 817	\$ 1,074	\$ 1,074
*Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 917	\$ 1,390
Utilities (4)			
Food	\$ 344	\$ 506	\$ 1,001
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Travel Expense 4 trips x 75 miles x .625	\$ 188	\$ 188	\$ 188
Health Care	\$ 239	\$ 705	\$ 864
Miscellaneous	\$ 283	\$ 464	\$ 658
Taxes	\$ 390	\$ 777	\$ 1,148
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 15.09	\$ 27.39	\$ 18.94
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.05	1.90	1.31
Monthly Costs	\$ 2,656	\$ 4,821	\$ 6,668
Annual	\$31,870	\$ 57,850	\$ 80,019
Emergency Savings	\$ 62	\$ 134	\$ 97

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Dove Creek



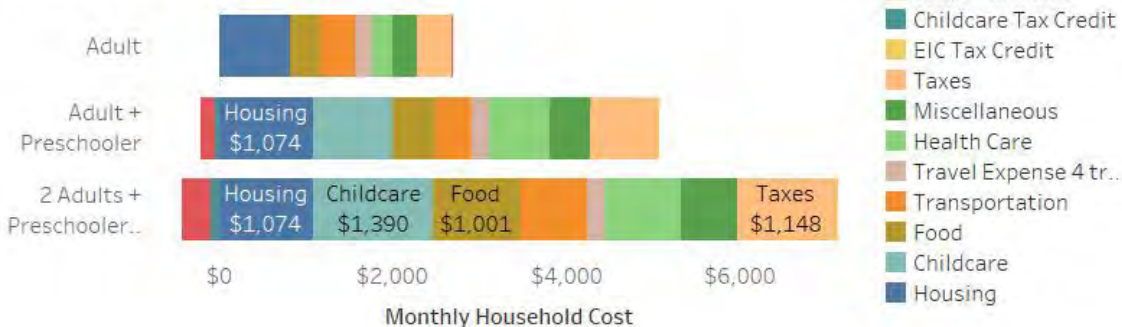
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

Our method for calculating costs does not consider that many residents in Rico commute daily to Telluride (San Miguel County) for work, a distance of 56 miles round trip. San Miguel County is one of the most expensive areas of the state in which to live, so many workers find housing in Dolores County. Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in Rico.

Rico	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 DOLORES COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 817	\$ 1,074	\$ 1,074
*Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 917	\$ 1,390
Utilities (4)			
Food	\$ 344	\$ 506	\$ 1,001
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Travel Expense 4 trips x 80 miles x .625	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200
Health Care	\$ 239	\$ 705	\$ 864
Miscellaneous	\$ 283	\$ 464	\$ 658
Taxes	\$ 390	\$ 777	\$ 1,148
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 15.16	\$ 27.46	\$ 18.98
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.05	1.90	1.32
Monthly Costs	\$ 2,668	\$ 4,834	\$ 6,681
Annual	\$ 32,020	\$ 58,003	\$ 80,169
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 62	\$ 134	\$ 97

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Rico

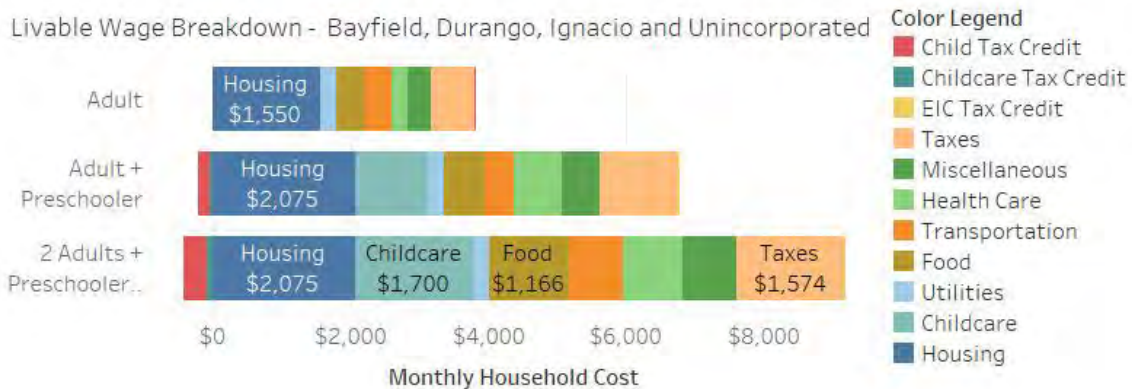


La Plata County

Wages and employment in the county are highly dependent on service sector jobs (44% of employment). Many of the jobs in La Plata County are in accommodation and food services (10%), with an average annual wage of \$28,782. Across all industries the average annual wage is \$59,589. This is only 57% of the estimated livable wage (\$104,827) for two working adults with two children renting a two - bedroom unit.

Bayfield, Durango, Ignacio and Unincorporated	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 LA PLATA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,550	\$ 2,075	\$ 2,075
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,048	\$ 1,700
Utilities (4)	\$ 239	\$ 239	\$ 239
Food	\$ 400	\$ 590	\$ 1,166
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Health Care	\$ 240	\$ 708	\$ 866
Miscellaneous	\$ 347	\$ 554	\$ 770
Taxes	\$ 622	\$ 1,133	\$ 1,574
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 21.55	\$ 37.14	\$ 24.82
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.49	2.58	1.72
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,793	\$ 6,537	\$ 8,736
Annual	\$ 45,521	\$ 78,442	\$ 104,827
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 77	\$ 191	\$ 109

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW



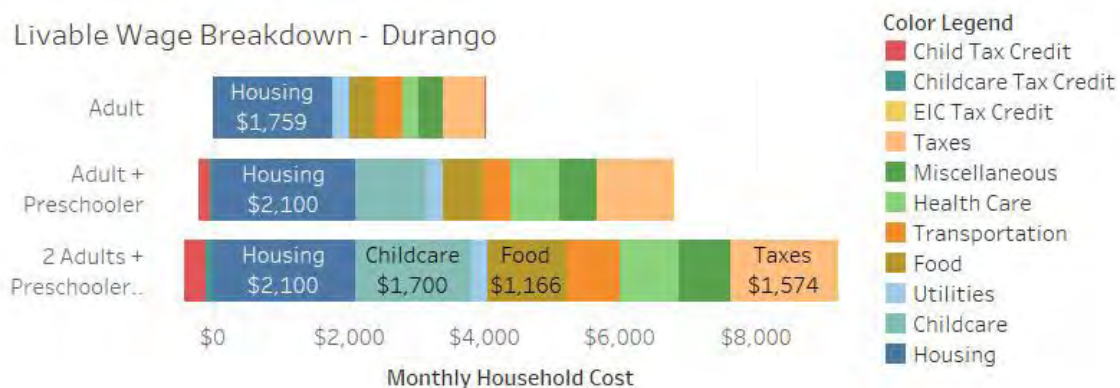
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

We found that Durango is the second most expensive community in the region for a family of four (\$24.89 per hour for each working adult) due primarily to the high cost of housing.

Durango	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 LA PLATA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,759	\$ 2,100	\$ 2,100
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,048	\$ 1,700
Utilities (4)	\$ 239	\$ 239	\$ 239
Food	\$ 400	\$ 590	\$ 1,166
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Health Care	\$ 240	\$ 708	\$ 866
Miscellaneous	\$ 347	\$ 554	\$ 770
Taxes	\$ 622	\$ 1,133	\$ 1,574
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 22.74	\$ 37.28	\$ 24.89
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.58	2.59	1.73
Monthly Costs	\$ 4,002	\$ 6,562	\$ 8,761
Annual	\$48,029	\$ 78,742	\$ 105,127
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 77	\$ 191	\$ 109

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Durango



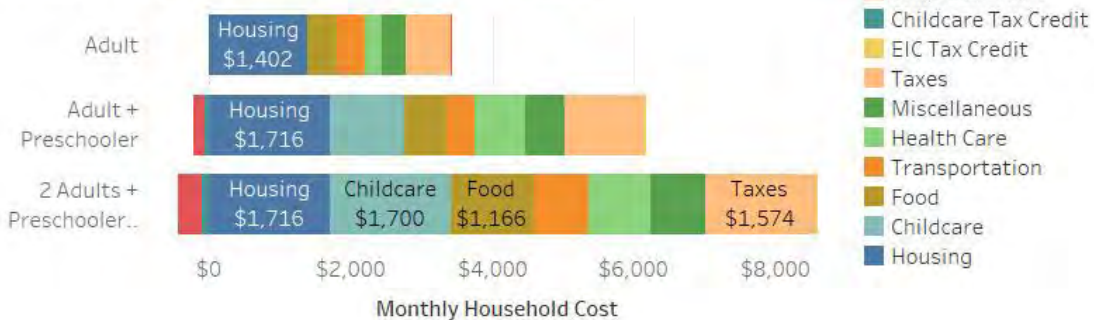
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

Many people that live in and around Bayfield and Ignacio commute to Durango for work. These towns have the same livable wage estimates based on similar costs. Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in these communities.

Bayfield, Ignacio	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 LA PLATA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716	\$ 1,716
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,048	\$ 1,700
Utilities (4)			
Food	\$ 400	\$ 590	\$ 1,166
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Health Care	\$ 240	\$ 708	\$ 866
Miscellaneous	\$ 347	\$ 554	\$ 770
Taxes	\$ 622	\$ 1,133	\$ 1,574
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 19.35	\$ 33.74	\$ 23.12
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.34	2.34	1.60
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,406	\$ 5,939	\$ 8,138
Annual	\$40,877	\$ 71,266	\$ 97,651
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 77	\$ 191	\$ 109

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Bayfield, Ignacio



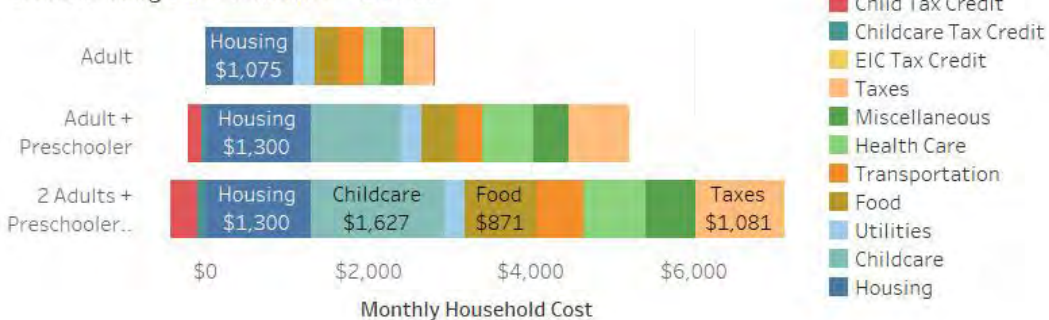
Montezuma County

Rental rates for housing in Montezuma County are among the lowest in the region, based on Fair Market Rent estimates. An estimated 13% of the jobs in Montezuma County support health services with an average annual wage of \$45,025. Across all industries the average annual wage is \$44,651. This is only 56% of the estimated livable wage (\$79,944) for a family of four (two working adults, a preschooler and one school-age child).

Cortez	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 MONTEZUMA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 1,075	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,300
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,084	\$ 1,627
Utilities (4)	\$ 263	\$ 263	\$ 263
Food	\$ 298	\$ 439	\$ 871
Transportation	\$ 296	\$ 304	\$ 585
Health Care	\$ 227	\$ 634	\$ 748
Miscellaneous	\$ 270	\$ 438	\$ 620
Taxes	\$ 376	\$ 731	\$ 1,081
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 15.94	\$ 28.27	\$ 18.93
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.11	1.96	1.31
Monthly Costs	\$ 2,805	\$ 4,976	\$ 6,662
Annual	\$ 33,660	\$ 59,710	\$ 79,944
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 65	\$ 140	\$ 101

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Cortez



Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in the Town of Dolores.

Dolores	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 MONTEZUMA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 966	\$ 1,269	\$ 1,269
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,084	\$ 1,627
Utilities (4)	\$ 229	\$ 229	\$ 229
Food	\$ 298	\$ 439	\$ 871
Transportation	\$ 296	\$ 304	\$ 585
Health Care	\$ 227	\$ 634	\$ 748
Miscellaneous	\$ 270	\$ 438	\$ 620
Taxes	\$ 376	\$ 731	\$ 1,081
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 15.13	\$ 27.90	\$ 18.74
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.05	1.93	1.30
Monthly Costs	\$ 2,662	\$ 4,911	\$ 6,597
Annual	\$ 31,944	\$ 58,930	\$ 79,164
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 65	\$ 140	\$ 101

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Dolores



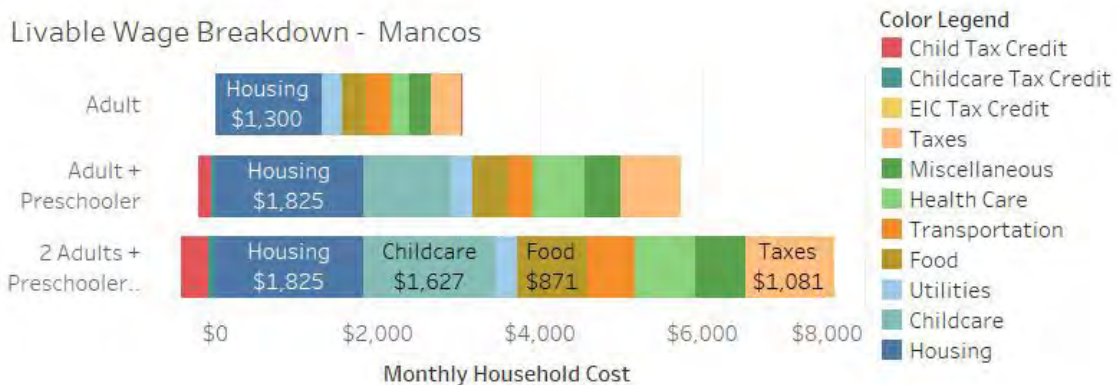
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

Mancos has become a more attractive rental market in recent years, possibly due to high housing costs in the surrounding areas, i.e. Durango.

Mancos	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 MONTEZUMA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,825	\$ 1,825
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,084	\$ 1,627
Utilities (4)	\$ 263	\$ 263	\$ 263
Food	\$ 298	\$ 439	\$ 871
Transportation	\$ 296	\$ 304	\$ 585
Health Care	\$ 227	\$ 634	\$ 748
Miscellaneous	\$ 270	\$ 438	\$ 620
Taxes	\$ 376	\$ 731	\$ 1,081
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 17.22	\$ 31.25	\$ 20.42
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.19	2.17	1.42
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,030	\$ 5,501	\$ 7,187
Annual	\$ 36,360	\$ 66,010	\$ 86,244
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 65	\$ 140	\$ 101

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Mancos



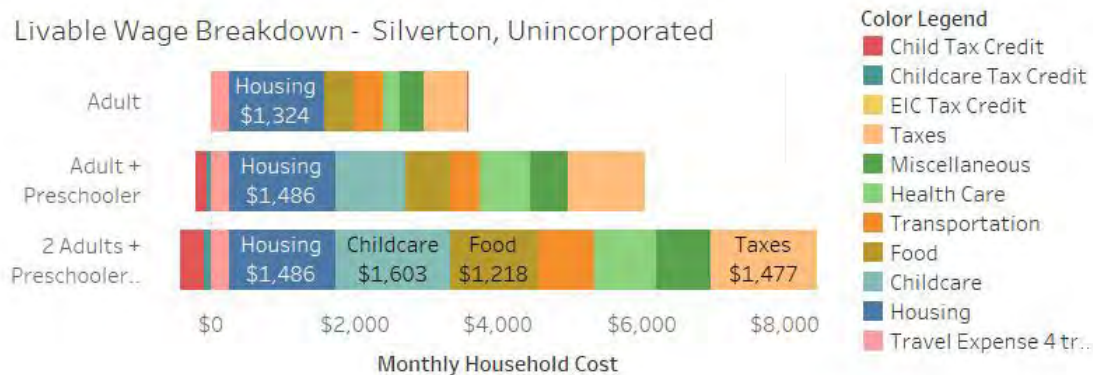
San Juan County

Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in San Juan County. Many (24%) of the jobs in San Juan County/Silverton are in accommodation and food services, with an average annual wage of \$29,979. Across all industries the average annual wage is \$36,172. This is only 38% of the estimated livable wage (\$95,965) for a family of four.

Silverton, Unincorporated	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 SAN JUAN COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,324	\$ 1,486	\$ 1,486
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 975	\$ 1,603
Utilities (4)			
Food	\$ 418	\$ 616	\$ 1,218
Transportation	\$ 401	\$ 411	\$ 790
Travel Expense 4 trips x 100 miles x .625	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250
Health Care	\$ 239	\$ 705	\$ 864
Miscellaneous	\$ 342	\$ 531	\$ 743
Taxes	\$ 602	\$ 1,051	\$ 1,477
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 20.31	\$ 33.01	\$ 22.72
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.41	2.29	1.58
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,575	\$ 5,810	\$ 7,997
Annual	\$42,902	\$ 69,721	\$ 95,965
Emergency Savings	\$ 75	\$ 165	\$ 106

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Silverton, Unincorporated



Summary

In summary, we found that in Region 9, Montezuma is the least expensive county, and Archuleta is the most expensive county to live for a family of four. Using housing costs specific to each community we found that Cortez and Town of Dolores are the least expensive communities in the region for a family. The Town of Pagosa Springs is the most expensive community in the region for a family due to the high cost of housing. Workforce housing policy and childcare initiatives are being discussed in all counties in the region.

Closing the wage gap between current wages and self-sufficiency wages require both **reducing costs** and **raising incomes**. Raising public awareness at the local level is also essential to closing the wage gap. In order to enhance the quality of life through fair wages a number of strategies may be useful.

- Reduce costs of housing and childcare.
- Build a coalition of workers, employers, government and organizations who work together in achieving a living wage.
- Educate workers, employers and government officials about the importance of creating a living wage.
- Publicly recognize employers who provide, or aspire to provide, a living wage.
- Advocate for improving minimum wages at the local, state and national level.

More information regarding demographics and the economies of the counties in Region 9 can be found at <https://www.region9edd.org/>.

LIVABLE WAGES IN SOUTHWEST COLORADO – 2024 UPDATE

Executive Summary.....	1
Background	2
Key Findings	3
Housing Costs	3
Poverty Guidelines	4
Minimum Wage.....	5
Average Annual Living Expense by County	5
Livable Hourly Wage by Area	5
Wages by Job Sector	5
Livable Wage by County/Community	9
Archuleta County.....	11
Dolores County.....	12
La Plata County.....	14
Montezuma County.....	17
San Juan County	20
Summary	21

Questions regarding this report can be addressed to Donna Graves, Information Services, Inc. at dkgraves1956@gmail.com, or Heather Otter heather@region9edd.org.

More information regarding demographics and the economies of the counties in Region 9 can be found at <https://www.region9edd.org/>.

Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, Inc.
135 Burnett Drive, Unit 1
Durango, CO 81301
Phone 970-247-9621

LIVABLE WAGES IN SOUTHWEST COLORADO – 2024 UPDATE

Executive Summary

A healthy community has a diverse and sustainable economy that pays livable wages and offers meaningful work. But what level of income is necessary to support a given size and type of household? A livable wage addresses the essential financial needs for basic living tools such as shelter, healthcare, childcare, and nutrition. When one earns less than a livable wage, he or she is forced to make undesirable choices such as working two or more jobs, working longer hours, making longer commutes, sharing a residence, or giving up basic items such as a vehicle or insurance.

The Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado (Region 9) has estimated livable wages since 1999, using a consistent method in order to compare costs and wages each year. In this report, *Livable Wages in Southwest Colorado – 2024 Update*, Region 9 uses estimated expenditures prepared by the Center for Women's Welfare University of Washington School of Social Work (UW). The UW has allowed Region 9 access to the data inputs for our five counties (Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan), as well as the technical documentation.¹

In Region 9, the amount needed to be economically self-sufficient varies by geographic location. The 2024 Colorado minimum wage is \$14.42 per hour, which amounts to \$30,455 per year working full time. We found that in Region 9, Montezuma County is the least expensive (\$91,519 annually), and Archuleta County is the most expensive place to live (\$105,919 annually) for a family of four. Using housing costs specific to each community we found that Pagosa Springs is the most expensive community in the region for a family of four (\$25.08 per hour for each working adult) due to the high cost of housing. Cortez (\$18.93) and Town of Dolores (\$18.74) are the least expensive communities for a family of four.

When we link our livable wage findings to average annual wages by sector in each county in our region, we find that most employment sectors do not provide enough income to meet the basic needs of a family of four, especially if there is only one bread winner in the household. We know that there is a growing workforce shortage in our area. Being able to attract and retain workers is essential for a healthy economy.

Closing the wage gap between current wages and self-sufficiency wages require both **reducing costs** and **raising incomes**. Raising public awareness at the local level is also essential to closing the wage gap. In order to enhance the quality of life through fair wages a number of strategies may be useful.

- Reduce costs of housing and childcare.
- Build a coalition of workers, employers, government and organizations who work together in achieving a living wage.
- Educate workers, employers and government officials about the importance of creating a living wage.
- Publicly recognize employers who provide, or aspire to provide, a living wage.
- Advocate for improving minimum wages at the local, state and national level.

¹ https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SSS2024_TechnicalBrief_2024909.pdf

Background

The Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado (Region 9) has estimated livable wages since 1999, using a consistent method in order to compare costs and wages each year. In this *2024 Update*, Region 9 uses estimated expenditures for our counties prepared by the Center for Women’s Welfare University of Washington School of Social Work (UW). To date, the UW has not yet prepared an updated report for Colorado counties. However, the UW has allowed Region 9 access to the 2024 data inputs for our five counties, as well as the technical documentation.²

These data are reported by UW for each county nation-wide, compiled into a report known as the *Self Sufficiency Standard (Standard)*.³ The *Standard* defines the income needed to realistically support a family without public or private assistance. It calculates the costs of six basic needs: housing, child-care, food, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous.⁴ We have also used their estimate of taxes and tax credits with the caveat that they may not fully reflect our local adjustments to housing, childcare and utilities.

The *Standard* is updated periodically. In the interim years adjustments are made using the West Region Consumer Price Index (CPI). The Consumer Price Index is a key statistic for purposes of economic and social policymaking and has substantial and wide-ranging implications for governments, businesses and workers. The Colorado Constitution requires the Colorado minimum wage to be adjusted annually for inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index used for Colorado. However, the 2019 *Update Report* by Region 9 found that estimating the increase in costs using the CPI drastically underestimates the real increases in the cost of basic needs faced by Colorado families.

Many of the expenditures estimated by UW are applied to southwest Colorado. However, for this *2024 Update* we have substituted housing and childcare costs with those that are specific to our communities, as was done in past reports. Housing information is collected by calling property managers, looking at online listings, and following ads in local newspapers over a period of several months to obtain a **median** housing cost for 1 and 2- bedroom rental units in each county/community. This information is not readily available in some areas such as: Dolores County; Bayfield and Ignacio (La Plata County); Dolores Town (Montezuma County); and San Juan County, thus Fair Market Rents provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are used.⁵

Where available, childcare costs are obtained through the childcare centers in each county, though not all of the centers provided information about average tuition costs for preschoolers. We also used the estimates provided by UW for summer/part-time tuition for school-age children as most centers in the region do not provide these services due to lack of capacity.

A mileage allowance is also added for the communities of Silverton, Rico, and Dove Creek to recognize the extra distance that people in those towns must travel for many basic goods and services. Commuting is common in the region as residents juggle the cost of housing with job availability.

² https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SSS2024_TechnicalBrief_2024909.pdf

³ <https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/>

⁴ Miscellaneous includes, clothing, shoes, paper products, diapers, nonprescription medicines, cleaning products, household items, personal hygiene items, and telephone, cell phone and internet.

⁵ Fair Market Rent from HUD <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html#year2024>

Key Findings

Housing Costs

Many estimates of Fair Market Rent (FMR), including those used by the Standard, are drawn from surveys conducted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Those rental costs include utilities. However, most of those surveys are conducted in metropolitan areas, and often do not reflect the reality of rental costs in small, rural areas.

2024 Comparison of Median Rental Costs to Fair Market Rent Estimates Region 9	¹ Actual Rental Costs		² Fair Market Rent (FMR)	
	1 BDR	2 BDR	1 BDR	2 BDR
Archuleta County - Pagosa Springs	\$ 1,750	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,063	\$ 1,397
Dolores County - Dove Creek	NA	NA	\$ 817	\$ 1,074
Dolores County - Rico	NA	NA	\$ 817	\$ 1,074
La Plata County	\$ 1,550	\$ 2,075	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716
La Plata County - Bayfield	NA	NA	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716
La Plata County - Durango	\$ 1,759	\$ 2,100	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716
La Plata County - Ignacio	NA	NA	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716
Montezuma County	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,500	\$ 966	\$ 1,269
Montezuma County - Cortez	\$ 1,075	\$ 1,300	\$ 966	\$ 1,269
Montezuma County - Dolores	NA	NA	\$ 966	\$ 1,269
Montezuma County - Mancos	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,825	\$ 966	\$ 1,269
San Juan County - Silverton	NA	NA	\$ 1,324	\$ 1,486

Highlighted cells indicate the estimated rental amount used for this report

NA = Actual rents not available for this community.

(1) Source: Median of compilation of online listings.

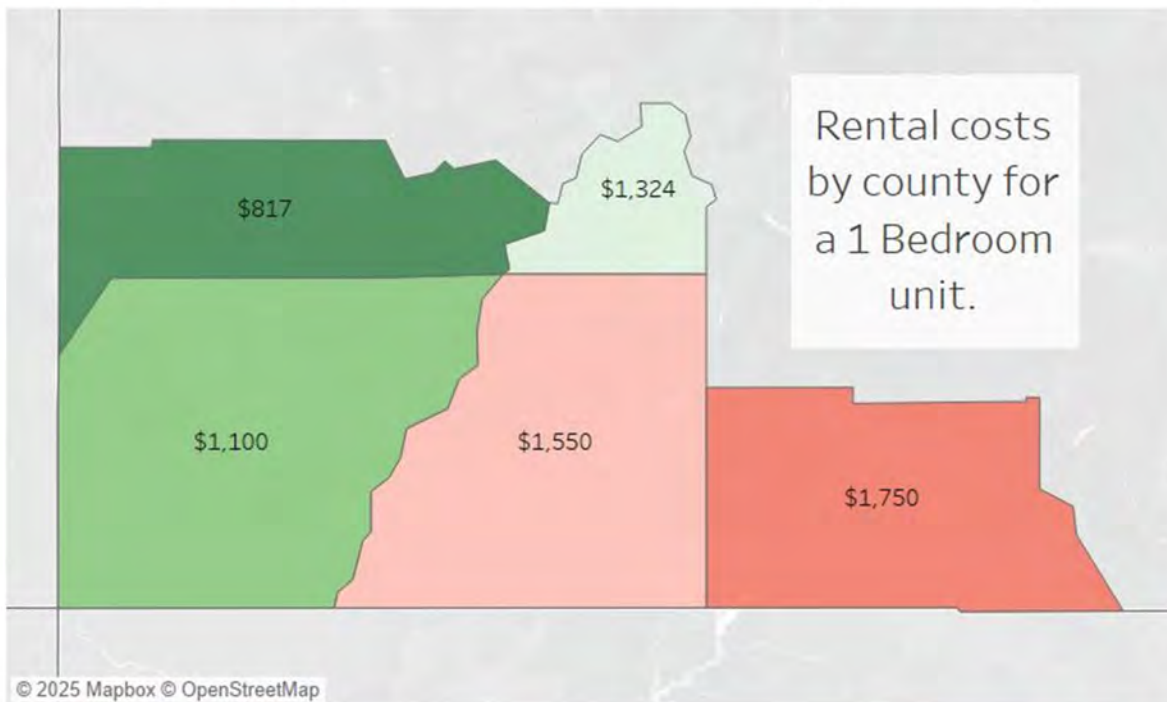
(2) Fair Market Rent <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html#year2024>

We are assuming that a single adult would rent a one-bedroom unit, while an adult with a preschooler or two adults with a preschooler and a school-aged child would rent a two-bedroom unit. It is also conceivable that a family of four would make the choice to rent a one-bedroom unit, especially in the areas with high rent.

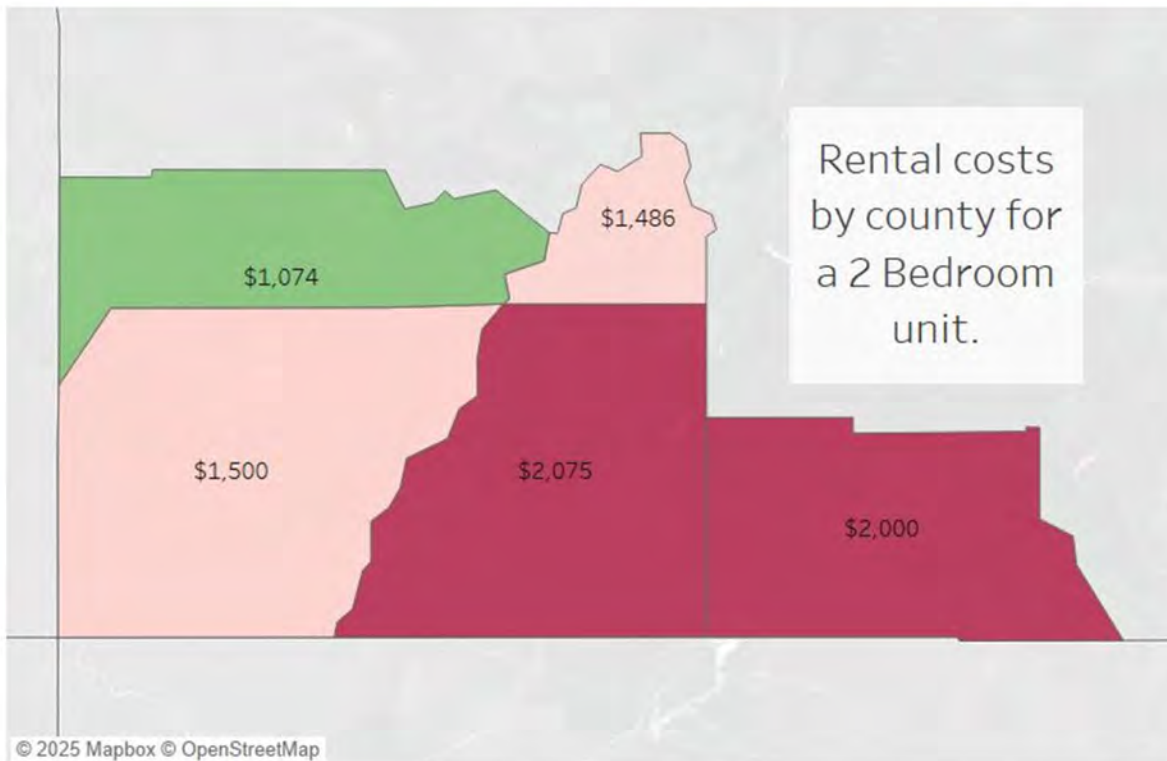
We found that in almost every community actual rental costs are substantially higher than Fair Market Rent estimates. In many communities' landlords pay for public services such as water, sewer and trash collection, but not utilities such as gas and electric. To account for these utility costs, we have added an average energy consumption rate for each county to monthly expenditures.⁶ This average does not include utility costs subsidized through the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), which could reduce the overall cost of utilities.

⁶ Low-Income Energy Affordability Data Tool Map Export (<https://lead.openei.org/>)

2024 Median Rental Costs by County



\$750  \$2,000



Poverty Guidelines

For most workers throughout Colorado, earnings above the official Federal Poverty Level are far below what is needed to meet families' basic needs.⁷

Minimum Wage

In Colorado, the amount needed to be economically self-sufficient varies by geographic location. The 2024 Colorado minimum wage is \$14.42 per hour, which amounts to \$30,455 per year working full time.⁸

2024 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$15,060
2	\$20,440
3	\$25,820
4	\$31,200

Livable Hourly Wage by Area

Using housing costs specific to each community we found that Pagosa Springs is the most expensive community in the region for a family of four (\$25.08 per hour for each working adult) due to the high cost of housing. Cortez (\$18.93) and Town of Dolores (\$18.74) are the least expensive communities for a family of four.

Region 9 - 2024 Livable Hourly Wage by Area			*2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	
Archuleta County - Pagosa Springs	\$ 22.39	\$ 39.09	\$ 25.08
Dolores County - Dove Creek	\$ 15.09	\$ 27.39	\$ 18.94
Dolores County - Rico	\$ 15.16	\$ 27.46	\$ 18.98
La Plata County - Bayfield, Ignacio	\$ 19.35	\$ 33.74	\$ 23.12
La Plata County - Durango	\$ 22.74	\$ 37.28	\$ 24.89
Montezuma County - Cortez	\$ 15.94	\$ 28.27	\$ 18.93
Montezuma County - Dolores	\$ 15.13	\$ 27.90	\$ 18.74
Montezuma County - Mancos	\$ 17.22	\$ 31.25	\$ 20.42
San Juan County - Silverton	\$ 20.31	\$ 33.01	\$ 22.72

* Per hour for each working adult

Average Annual Living Expense by County

We found that in Region 9, Montezuma County is the least expensive (\$91,519 annually), and Archuleta County is the most expensive place to live (\$105,919 annually) for a family of four.

Region 9 - 2024 Average Annual Living Expense by County			2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	
Archuleta County	\$ 47,296	\$ 82,552	\$ 105,919
Dolores County - Dove Creek	\$ 31,870	\$ 57,850	\$ 80,019
Dolores County - Rico	\$ 32,020	\$ 58,003	\$ 80,169
La Plata County	\$ 45,521	\$ 78,442	\$ 104,827
La Plata County - Bayfield, Ignacio	\$ 40,877	\$ 71,266	\$ 97,651
La Plata County - Durango	\$ 48,029	\$ 78,742	\$ 105,127
Montezuma County	\$ 36,995	\$ 68,263	\$ 91,519
Montezuma County - Cortez	\$ 33,660	\$ 59,710	\$ 79,944
Montezuma County - Dolores	\$ 31,944	\$ 58,930	\$ 79,164
Montezuma County - Mancos	\$ 36,360	\$ 66,010	\$ 86,244
San Juan County	\$ 42,902	\$ 69,721	\$ 95,965

⁷ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>

⁸ The Standard assumes adults work eight hours per day for 22 days per month for 12 months per year (2,112 hrs.)

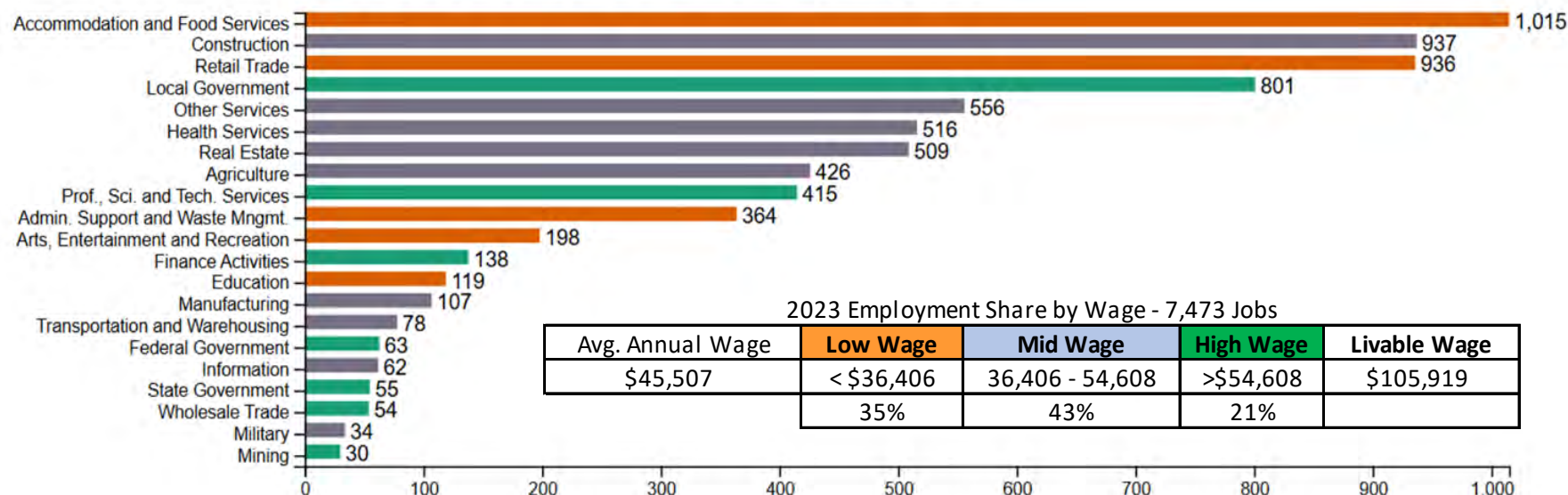
Wages by Job Sector

Since almost all working-age families meet their income needs with employment, a crucial question is whether the jobs available provide sufficient wages. When we link our livable wage findings to average annual wages by sector in each county in our region, we find that most employment sectors do not provide enough income to meet the basic needs of a family of four, especially if there is only one bread winner in the household. Data from the Quarterly Census of Wages is not yet available for 2024, thus 2023 data is used in this report.

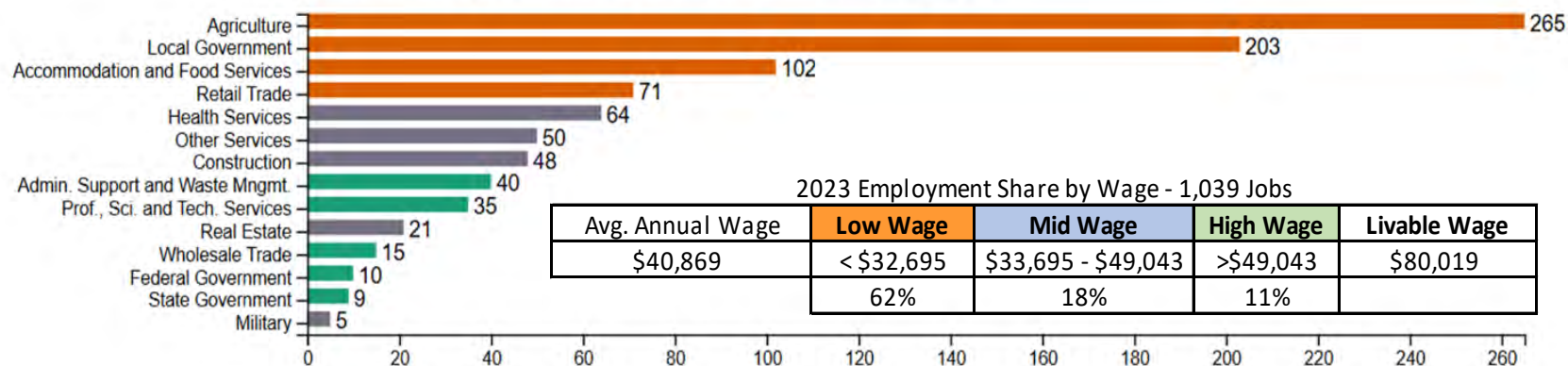
Jobs in the mining and utilities sectors provide an adequate income in each county where they exist. Professional and management services also provide sufficient wages in most areas. The most numerous jobs in Region 9 are local government (13%), health services (11%), and retail trade (11%). These occupations do not provide sufficient wages to support a family of four.

Low Wage < 80% of AAW
Mid Wage > 80% and < 120% of AAW
High Wage > 120% of AAW

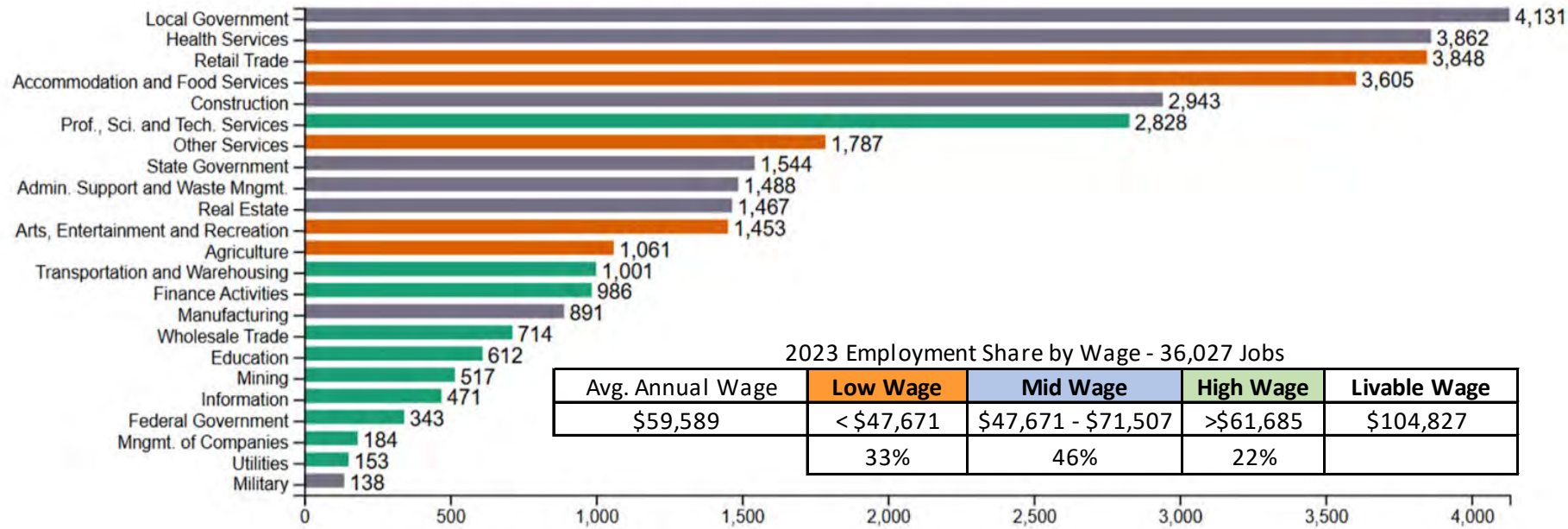
Jobs by Sector: Archuleta County, 2023



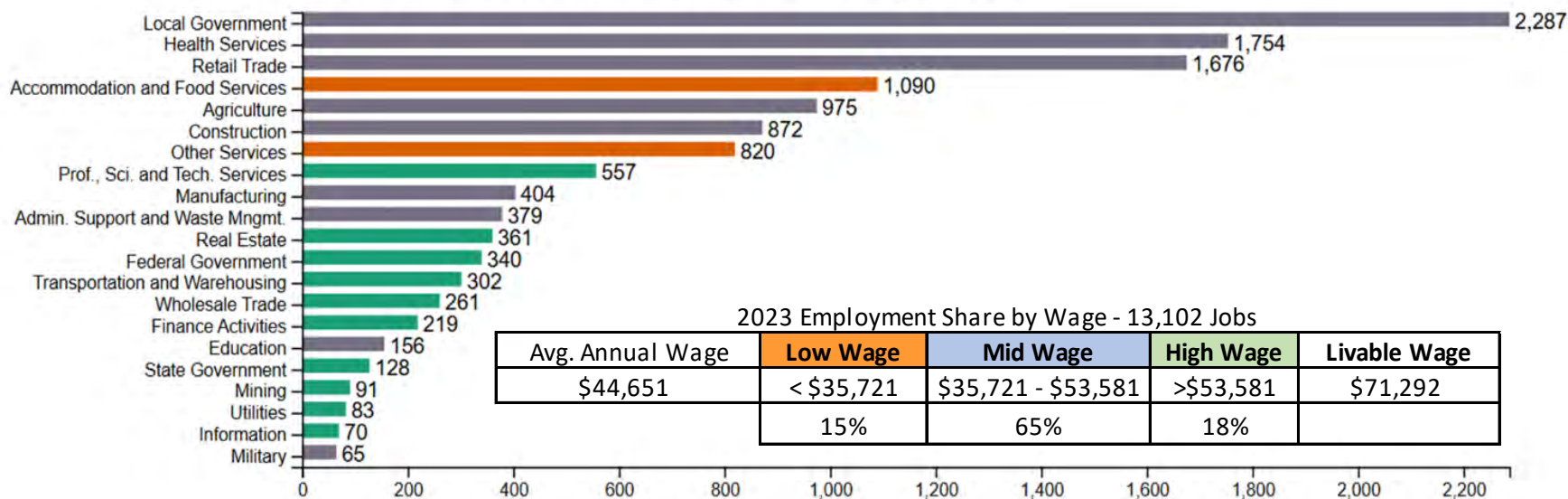
Jobs by Sector: Dolores County, 2023



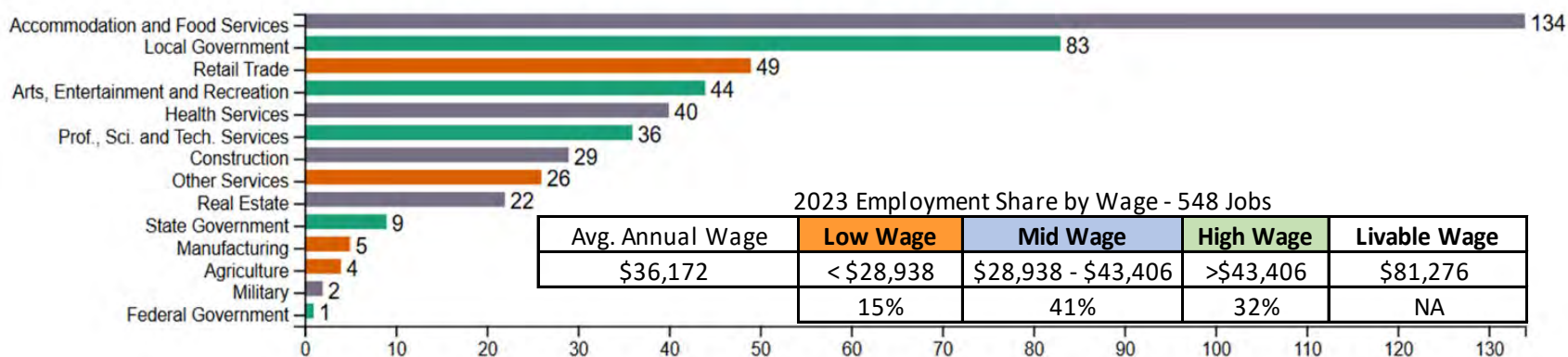
Jobs by Sector: La Plata County, 2023



Jobs by Sector: Montezuma County, 2023



Jobs by Sector: San Juan County, 2023



A healthy community has a diverse and sustainable economy that pays livable wages and offers meaningful work. But what level of income is necessary to support a given size and type of household? A livable wage addresses the essential financial needs for basic living tools such as shelter, healthcare, childcare, and nutrition. When one earns less than a livable wage, he or she is forced to make undesirable choices such as working two or more jobs, working longer hours, making longer commutes, sharing a residence, or giving up basic items such as a vehicle or insurance.

Closing the wage gap between current wages and the Self-Sufficiency Standard requires both **reducing costs** and **raising incomes**.

Reducing costs means ensuring families who are struggling to cover basic costs have access to work supports. These offer stability and resources while they become self-sufficient, and include childcare assistance, food benefits, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Most individuals cannot achieve self-sufficiency through stopgap measures or in a single step, but require support through transitional work supports and programs, as well as the removal of barriers to help families work towards self-sufficiency over time.

Raising incomes means enhancing skills as well as improving access to jobs that pay self-sufficient wages and have career potential. A strong economy will mean good jobs that pay self-sufficient wages, a workforce with the skills necessary to fill those jobs, and enhancing connections and removing barriers between those jobs and the workers that need them.

Key to raising incomes are public policies such as living/minimum wage policies and paid sick and family/medical leave, which increase wages directly. Likewise, access to education, training, and jobs that provide real potential for skill and career advancement over the long term are also important.

Livable Wage by County/Community

The livable wage per hour (and annually) for each community is summarized in the following pages, as well as how many jobs an individual would need (at minimum wage) to sustain just the basic needs of a household. A mileage allowance is also added for the communities of Rico, Dove Creek and Silverton to recognize the extra distance that people in those towns must travel for many basic goods and services.

Housing affordability/attainability is a long term, ongoing priority across the region. Housing experts agree that ideally a family should not spend more than one-third of their income on housing costs. The lack of workforce housing continues to impact economic growth and diversity when businesses cannot recruit employees because there is no place for them and their families to live. Attracting and retaining a viable workforce is key to economic health. Rising rents, simultaneous increases in short term vacation rentals and decreases in long-term rentals, a lack of low-price housing stock, and low wages have been identified as factors contributing to a housing crisis. Policy considerations and long-term funding is needed to address this critical issue.

The provision of quality, affordable childcare is also an issue of primary economic importance. There are coalitions of educators, policy makers and citizens working on childcare initiatives. These initiatives seek to lower costs for parents, raise salaries for teachers, and provide more capacity.

Monthly expenses vary proportionately by county. Generally, housing and childcare costs are the largest part of a families' expenses. The Childcare and Child Tax Credits are federal programs.⁹

2024 Family of Four - % of Monthly Costs

	Archuleta	Dolores		La Plata			Montezuma			San Juan
	All	Dove Creek	Rico	Bayfield	Durango	Ignacio	Cortez	Dolores	Mancos	All
Housing	30%	16%	16%	21%	24%	21%	20%	19%	25%	19%
Childcare	16%	21%	21%	21%	19%	21%	24%	25%	23%	20%
Utilities	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	4%	3%	4%	0%
Food	12%	15%	15%	14%	13%	14%	13%	13%	12%	15%
Transportation	8%	14%	15%	10%	9%	10%	9%	9%	8%	13%
Health Care	12%	13%	13%	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%	10%	11%
Miscellaneous	9%	10%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Taxes	17%	17%	17%	19%	18%	19%	16%	16%	15%	18%
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	-1%	-1%	-1%	-1%	-1%	-1%	-2%	-2%	-1%	-1%
Child Tax Credit (-)	-4%	-5%	-5%	-4%	-4%	-4%	-5%	-5%	-5%	-4%

Monthly Costs	\$ 8,827	\$ 6,668	\$ 6,681	\$ 8,138	\$ 8,761	\$ 8,138	\$ 6,662	\$ 6,597	\$ 7,187	\$ 7,997
---------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

The notes below pertain to each of the tables on the following pages:

¹ Monthly costs for each county are estimated by the Center for Women's Welfare University of Washington School of Social Work (UW).

² Source: Compilation of online listings, newspapers and property managers. Rental costs reflect listings within city limits of each municipality, and in rural areas of each county. Some areas do not have an adequate number of listings, so FMR reported by HUD was used in this report.

³ Source: Childcare centers in each jurisdiction, not all centers reported so costs from UW were used. Childcare expenses are averaged for all age groups per child per day. Assumes that one child (preschooler) in the family is in full time childcare and the school age child is in childcare for 3 months in the summer. Programs for school-aged children in early learning centers are not readily available due to capacity issues.

⁴ Source: Low-Income Energy Affordability Data Tool Map Export (<https://lead.openei.org/>).

⁵ Source: The *Standard* assumes adults work eight hours per day for 22 days per month and 12 months per year. Each cost component in the Standard is first calculated as a monthly cost. Hourly and annual Self-Sufficiency Wages are calculated based on the monthly Standard by dividing the monthly Self-Sufficiency Standard by 176 hours per month to obtain the hourly wage and multiplying by 12 months per year to obtain the annual wage. Tax Credits are subtracted (-) from monthly costs. The hourly wage shown is for each working adult.

⁶ Source: The emergency savings amount is calculated by UW to make up for the earnings of one adult becoming unemployed over the average job loss period, less the amount expected to be received in unemployment benefits. In two-adult households, it is assumed that the second adult continues to be employed, so that the savings only need to cover half of the family's basic living expenses over the job loss period. The savings calculation does not include the higher costs of living presented here.

⁹ Federal Child Care Tax Credit Internal Revenue Service, "Publication 503. Child and Dependent Care Expenses," <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p503.pdf> (accessed September 26, 2023). Federal Child Tax Credit: Internal Revenue Service, "Publication 972. Child Tax Credit," <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p972.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2021).

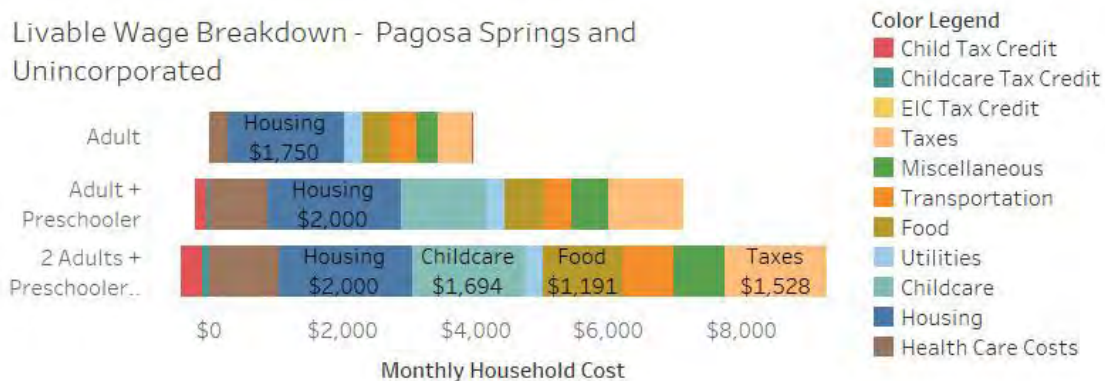
Archuleta County

We found that in this region Archuleta County is the most expensive county for a family to live. This is driven primarily by housing costs. Many (14%) of the service jobs in Archuleta County support tourism in accommodations (lodging) and food services with an average annual wage of \$29,856. Across all industries the average annual wage is \$45,507. This is only 43% of the estimated livable wage (\$105,919) for a family of four (two working adults, a preschooler and one school age child).

Pagosa Springs and Unincorporated	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 ARCHULETA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,750	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,280	\$ 1,694
Utilities (4)	\$ 270	\$ 270	\$ 270
Food	\$ 409	\$ 603	\$ 1,191
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Health Care Costs	\$ 281	\$ 883	\$ 1,041
Miscellaneous	\$ 318	\$ 547	\$ 757
Taxes	\$ 517	\$ 1,108	\$ 1,528
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 22.39	\$ 39.09	\$ 25.08
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.55	2.71	1.74
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,941	\$ 6,879	\$ 8,827
Annual	\$47,296	\$ 82,552	\$ 105,919
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 70	\$ 183	\$ 108

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Pagosa Springs and Unincorporated



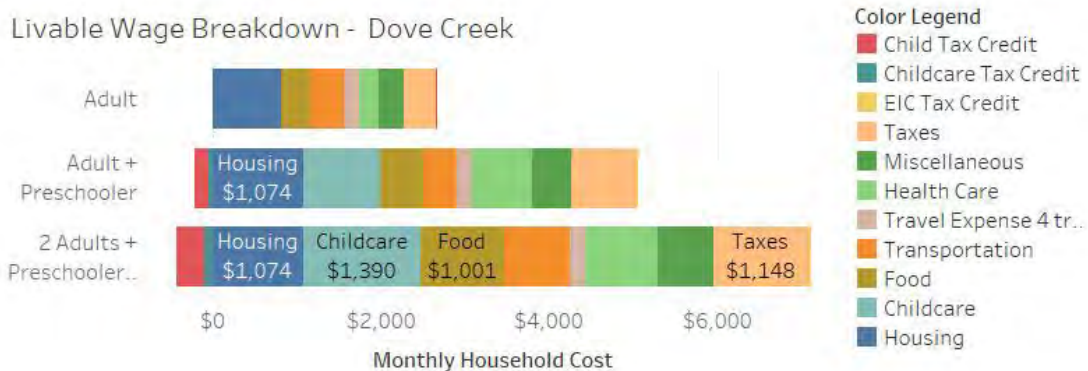
Dolores County

Across all employment industries in Dolores County the average annual wage is \$40,869. This is only 51% of the estimated livable wage (\$80,019) for a family of four in Dove Creek (two working adults, a preschooler and one school age child), and 51% of the estimated livable wage in Rico (\$80,169). Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in Dove Creek.

Dove Creek	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 DOLORES COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 817	\$ 1,074	\$ 1,074
*Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 917	\$ 1,390
Utilities (4)			
Food	\$ 344	\$ 506	\$ 1,001
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Travel Expense 4 trips x 75 miles x .625	\$ 188	\$ 188	\$ 188
Health Care	\$ 239	\$ 705	\$ 864
Miscellaneous	\$ 283	\$ 464	\$ 658
Taxes	\$ 390	\$ 777	\$ 1,148
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 15.09	\$ 27.39	\$ 18.94
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.05	1.90	1.31
Monthly Costs	\$ 2,656	\$ 4,821	\$ 6,668
Annual	\$31,870	\$ 57,850	\$ 80,019
Emergency Savings	\$ 62	\$ 134	\$ 97

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Dove Creek



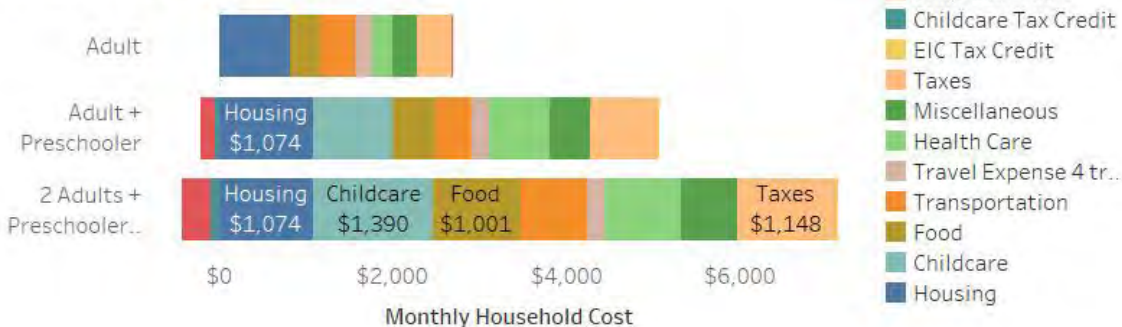
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

Our method for calculating costs does not consider that many residents in Rico commute daily to Telluride (San Miguel County) for work, a distance of 56 miles round trip. San Miguel County is one of the most expensive areas of the state in which to live, so many workers find housing in Dolores County. Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in Rico.

Rico	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 DOLORES COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 817	\$ 1,074	\$ 1,074
*Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 917	\$ 1,390
Utilities (4)			
Food	\$ 344	\$ 506	\$ 1,001
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Travel Expense 4 trips x 80 miles x .625	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200
Health Care	\$ 239	\$ 705	\$ 864
Miscellaneous	\$ 283	\$ 464	\$ 658
Taxes	\$ 390	\$ 777	\$ 1,148
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 15.16	\$ 27.46	\$ 18.98
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.05	1.90	1.32
Monthly Costs	\$ 2,668	\$ 4,834	\$ 6,681
Annual	\$ 32,020	\$ 58,003	\$ 80,169
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 62	\$ 134	\$ 97

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Rico

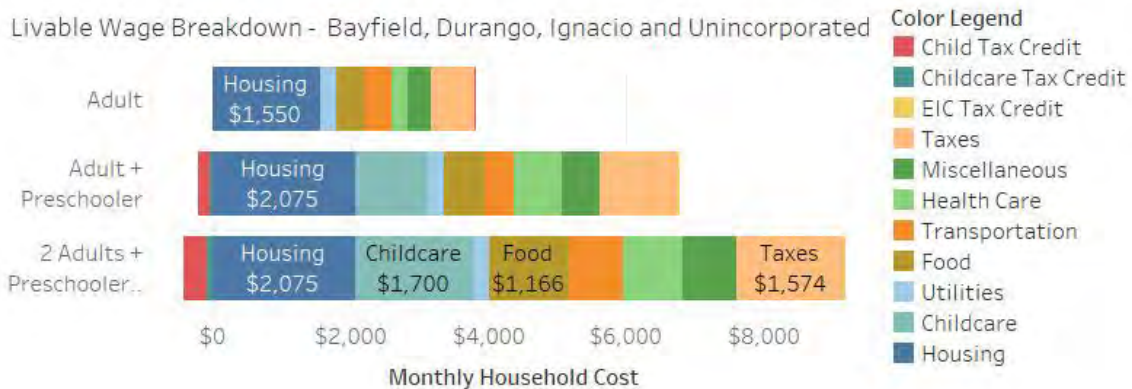


La Plata County

Wages and employment in the county are highly dependent on service sector jobs (44% of employment). Many of the jobs in La Plata County are in accommodation and food services (10%), with an average annual wage of \$28,782. Across all industries the average annual wage is \$59,589. This is only 57% of the estimated livable wage (\$104,827) for two working adults with two children renting a two - bedroom unit.

Bayfield, Durango, Ignacio and Unincorporated	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 LA PLATA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,550	\$ 2,075	\$ 2,075
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,048	\$ 1,700
Utilities (4)	\$ 239	\$ 239	\$ 239
Food	\$ 400	\$ 590	\$ 1,166
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Health Care	\$ 240	\$ 708	\$ 866
Miscellaneous	\$ 347	\$ 554	\$ 770
Taxes	\$ 622	\$ 1,133	\$ 1,574
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 21.55	\$ 37.14	\$ 24.82
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.49	2.58	1.72
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,793	\$ 6,537	\$ 8,736
Annual	\$ 45,521	\$ 78,442	\$ 104,827
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 77	\$ 191	\$ 109

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW



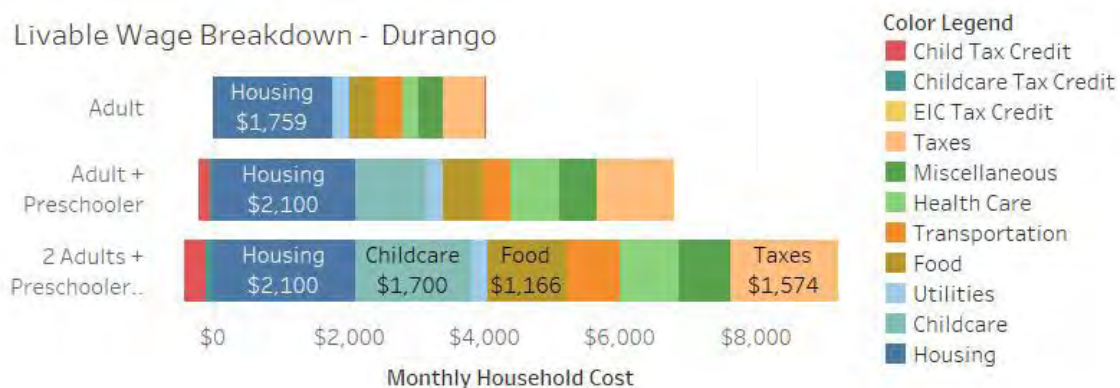
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

We found that Durango is the second most expensive community in the region for a family of four (\$24.89 per hour for each working adult) due primarily to the high cost of housing.

Durango	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 LA PLATA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,759	\$ 2,100	\$ 2,100
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,048	\$ 1,700
Utilities (4)	\$ 239	\$ 239	\$ 239
Food	\$ 400	\$ 590	\$ 1,166
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Health Care	\$ 240	\$ 708	\$ 866
Miscellaneous	\$ 347	\$ 554	\$ 770
Taxes	\$ 622	\$ 1,133	\$ 1,574
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 22.74	\$ 37.28	\$ 24.89
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.58	2.59	1.73
Monthly Costs	\$ 4,002	\$ 6,562	\$ 8,761
Annual	\$48,029	\$ 78,742	\$ 105,127
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 77	\$ 191	\$ 109

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Durango



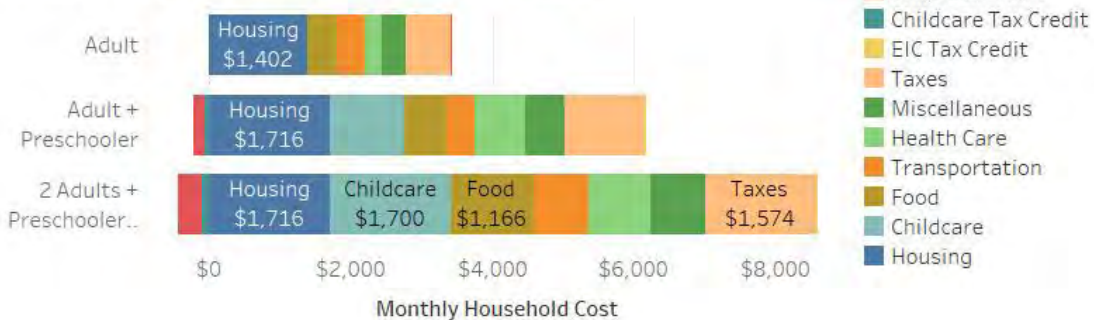
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

Many people that live in and around Bayfield and Ignacio commute to Durango for work. These towns have the same livable wage estimates based on similar costs. Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in these communities.

Bayfield, Ignacio	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 LA PLATA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,716	\$ 1,716
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,048	\$ 1,700
Utilities (4)			
Food	\$ 400	\$ 590	\$ 1,166
Transportation	\$ 396	\$ 406	\$ 779
Health Care	\$ 240	\$ 708	\$ 866
Miscellaneous	\$ 347	\$ 554	\$ 770
Taxes	\$ 622	\$ 1,133	\$ 1,574
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 19.35	\$ 33.74	\$ 23.12
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.34	2.34	1.60
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,406	\$ 5,939	\$ 8,138
Annual	\$40,877	\$ 71,266	\$ 97,651
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 77	\$ 191	\$ 109

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Bayfield, Ignacio



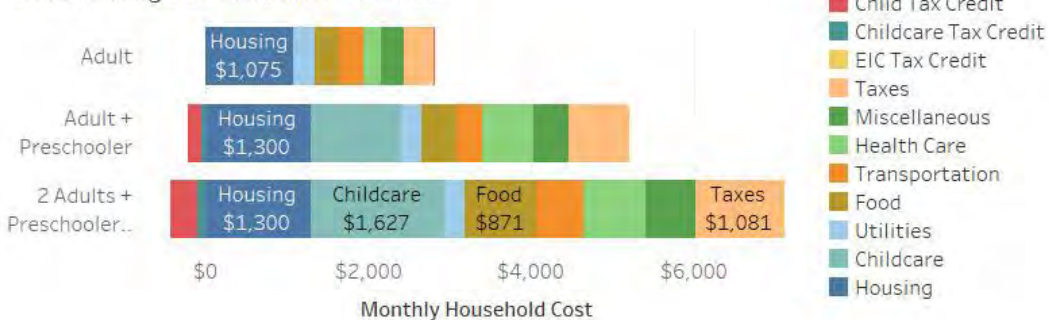
Montezuma County

Rental rates for housing in Montezuma County are among the lowest in the region, based on Fair Market Rent estimates. An estimated 13% of the jobs in Montezuma County support health services with an average annual wage of \$45,025. Across all industries the average annual wage is \$44,651. This is only 56% of the estimated livable wage (\$79,944) for a family of four (two working adults, a preschooler and one school-age child).

Cortez	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 MONTEZUMA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 1,075	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,300
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,084	\$ 1,627
Utilities (4)	\$ 263	\$ 263	\$ 263
Food	\$ 298	\$ 439	\$ 871
Transportation	\$ 296	\$ 304	\$ 585
Health Care	\$ 227	\$ 634	\$ 748
Miscellaneous	\$ 270	\$ 438	\$ 620
Taxes	\$ 376	\$ 731	\$ 1,081
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 15.94	\$ 28.27	\$ 18.93
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.11	1.96	1.31
Monthly Costs	\$ 2,805	\$ 4,976	\$ 6,662
Annual	\$33,660	\$ 59,710	\$ 79,944
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 65	\$ 140	\$ 101

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Cortez



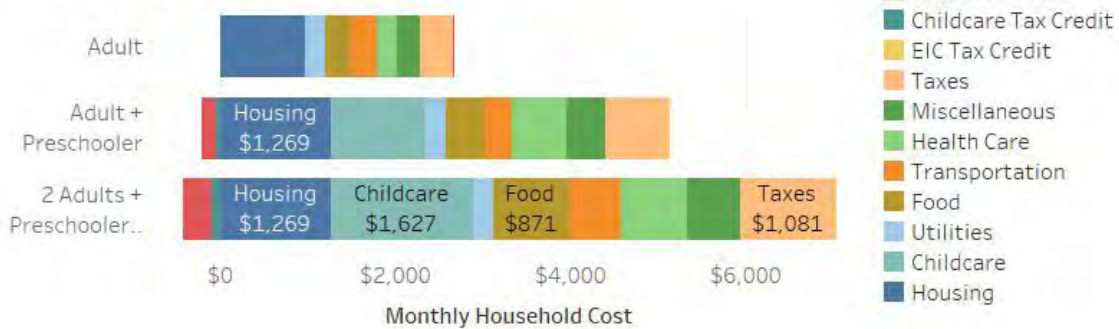
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in the Town of Dolores.

Dolores	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 MONTEZUMA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 966	\$ 1,269	\$ 1,269
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,084	\$ 1,627
Utilities (4)	\$ 229	\$ 229	\$ 229
Food	\$ 298	\$ 439	\$ 871
Transportation	\$ 296	\$ 304	\$ 585
Health Care	\$ 227	\$ 634	\$ 748
Miscellaneous	\$ 270	\$ 438	\$ 620
Taxes	\$ 376	\$ 731	\$ 1,081
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 15.13	\$ 27.90	\$ 18.74
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.05	1.93	1.30
Monthly Costs	\$ 2,662	\$ 4,911	\$ 6,597
Annual	\$ 31,944	\$ 58,930	\$ 79,164
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 65	\$ 140	\$ 101

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Dolores



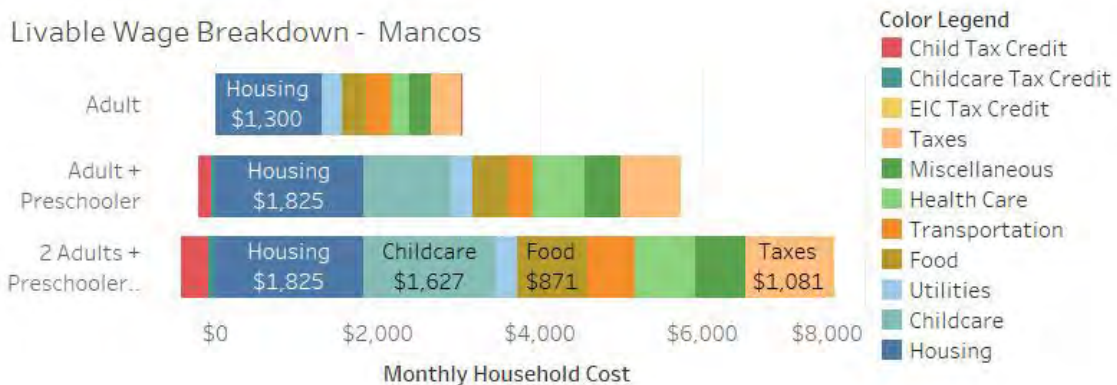
Livable Wages in SW Colorado – 2024 Update

Mancos has become a more attractive rental market in recent years, possibly due to high housing costs in the surrounding areas, i.e. Durango.

Mancos	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 MONTEZUMA COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age
Housing (2)	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,825	\$ 1,825
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 1,084	\$ 1,627
Utilities (4)	\$ 263	\$ 263	\$ 263
Food	\$ 298	\$ 439	\$ 871
Transportation	\$ 296	\$ 304	\$ 585
Health Care	\$ 227	\$ 634	\$ 748
Miscellaneous	\$ 270	\$ 438	\$ 620
Taxes	\$ 376	\$ 731	\$ 1,081
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 17.22	\$ 31.25	\$ 20.42
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.19	2.17	1.42
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,030	\$ 5,501	\$ 7,187
Annual	\$ 36,360	\$ 66,010	\$ 86,244
Emergency Savings (6)	\$ 65	\$ 140	\$ 101

* childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Mancos



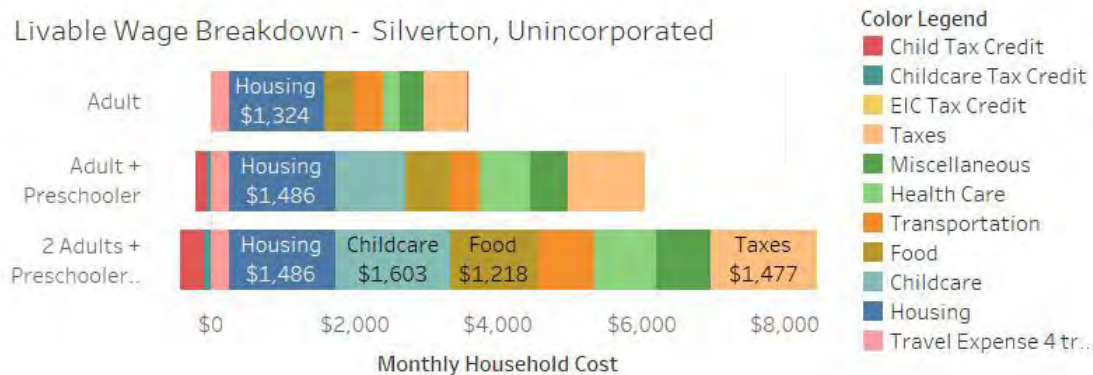
San Juan County

Fair Market Rents proposed by HUD are used to estimate housing costs in San Juan County. Many (24%) of the jobs in San Juan County/Silverton are in accommodation and food services, with an average annual wage of \$29,979. Across all industries the average annual wage is \$36,172. This is only 38% of the estimated livable wage (\$95,965) for a family of four.

Silverton, Unincorporated	(1bdr)	(2bdr)	(2bdr)
2024 SAN JUAN COUNTY MONTHLY COSTS (1)	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler + School-age*
Housing (2)	\$ 1,324	\$ 1,486	\$ 1,486
Childcare (3)	\$ -	\$ 975	\$ 1,603
Utilities (4)			
Food	\$ 418	\$ 616	\$ 1,218
Transportation	\$ 401	\$ 411	\$ 790
Travel Expense 4 trips x 100 miles x .625	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250
Health Care	\$ 239	\$ 705	\$ 864
Miscellaneous	\$ 342	\$ 531	\$ 743
Taxes	\$ 602	\$ 1,051	\$ 1,477
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Childcare Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (50)	\$ (100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$ -	\$ (167)	\$ (333)
SELF SUFFICIENCY WAGE			
Hourly Wage for each working adult (5)	\$ 20.31	\$ 33.01	\$ 22.72
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$14.42)	1.41	2.29	1.58
Monthly Costs	\$ 3,575	\$ 5,810	\$ 7,997
Annual	\$42,902	\$ 69,721	\$ 95,965
Emergency Savings	\$ 75	\$ 165	\$ 106

* school-age childcare costs estimated by UW

Livable Wage Breakdown - Silverton, Unincorporated



Summary

In summary, we found that in Region 9, Montezuma is the least expensive county, and Archuleta is the most expensive county to live for a family of four. Using housing costs specific to each community we found that Cortez and Town of Dolores are the least expensive communities in the region for a family. The Town of Pagosa Springs is the most expensive community in the region for a family due to the high cost of housing. Workforce housing policy and childcare initiatives are being discussed in all counties in the region.

Closing the wage gap between current wages and self-sufficiency wages require both **reducing costs** and **raising incomes**. Raising public awareness at the local level is also essential to closing the wage gap. In order to enhance the quality of life through fair wages a number of strategies may be useful.

- Reduce costs of housing and childcare.
- Build a coalition of workers, employers, government and organizations who work together in achieving a living wage.
- Educate workers, employers and government officials about the importance of creating a living wage.
- Publicly recognize employers who provide, or aspire to provide, a living wage.
- Advocate for improving minimum wages at the local, state and national level.

More information regarding demographics and the economies of the counties in Region 9 can be found at <https://www.region9edd.org/>.