

## DESIGNWORKSHOP

Landscape Architecture  
Planning  
Urban Design  
Strategic Services

120 East Main Street  
Aspen, Colorado 81611  
970.925.8354  
designworkshop.com

## MEMORANDUM

To: Mesa County Staff: Greg Moberg and Sean Norris  
From: Anna Laybourn, Hillary Seminick, and Ashley McKnight  
Date: November 2, 2021  
Project Name: Mesa County Master Plan  
Project #: 6699, Task 1.3  
Subject: Creating the Research and Analysis Framework, Existing Plans and Data Memo

---

This memorandum is intended to fulfill scope deliverables for Creating the Research and Analysis Framework (Task 1.3). This document identifies the baseline data including existing plans and data that will be used to complete the Existing Conditions Report and Base Mapping deliverables indicated in Task 2.1. It also serves as guidance to the Colorado Regulatory Statutes' (C.R.S.) and the Department of Local Affairs' (DOLA) requirements for a Comprehensive Plan. Together, these set the framework for the next steps of the Plan's development.

For your review, please indicate if different data sources are available or should be considered by the plan team. The methodology is organized in these sections of the memo:

- a. Existing Plan Review
- b. Base Mapping
- c. Demographics and Population Projections
- d. Transportation
- e. Compliance With CRS and DOLA

### **EXISTING PLAN REVIEW**

Ten documents were identified by the client as relevant to the plan and requiring detailed review to pull items forward into the new plan. These plans aimed to touch on a broad spectrum of topics throughout the county following State requirements for a Master Plan. The documents to be reviewed are as follows:

1. Clifton Fruitvale Community Plan 2006
2. Gateway Rural Community Plan 2004
3. Glade Park Plan 2014
4. Loma Community Plan 2009
5. Mack Community Plan 2012
6. Mesa Powderhorn Plan 2012
7. Whitewater Community Plan (amended) 2011
8. Resource Management Plan 2020
9. Hazard Mitigation Plan 2020 (revision)
10. Mesa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan 2012

This plan review helps to identify key recommendations that directly impact the Master Plan, as well as those that may indirectly impact it. Throughout the review, several topics were recognized for the way in which they arose in each plan. These larger topics include housing, parks and open spaces, health and safety, transportation, policies, economic development, and community engagement. This analysis will allow Mesa

Together to acknowledge and grow from the County's already great accomplishments and ideas. More importantly to the scope of the project, reviewing the existing conditions within these documents also informs the Existing Conditions Report. This task offers an understanding of the County's vision from a variety of past documents.

*Table 1. Summary of Relevant Plans*

<b>Document Name</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Clifton Fruitvale Community Plan	This plan was made to help guide future development necessary to keep up with the significant growth in the area. This plan gives direction to specific management topics that together, build a sustainable future for growth, development, and redevelopment.
Gateway Community Plan	The Mesa Countywide Land Use Plan provides the general framework of the Gateway Rural Community Plan. This plan provides guidance for both the public and private sectors in making decisions regarding development in the Gateway Rural Community.
Glade Park Plan	Glade Park Plan is a component of the Mesa County Master Plan. It is made up of components including services, transportation, land use and natural resources. This plan contains existing conditions and findings that were analyzed to develop goals, policies, and actions for Glade Park.
Loma Community Plan	Loma has experienced significant growth throughout the years. As a result, the area needs a guidebook on how to best to continue such growth based on current conditions and future projections. The plan, made in conjunction with the public, touches on public facilities, transportation, neighborhoods, land use and community appearance.
Mack Community Plan	The residents of Mack Community value the areas rural appeal and the characteristics that envelops. The community hopes to keep these attributes despite the influx of growth within the community. As a result, this plan guides future growth for the area in a way to preserve the existing conditions while preparing for future growth impacts.
Mesa Powderhorn Plan	Mesa Powderhorn possesses many unique characteristics including rural and pastoral character, a strong sense of community, and key natural amenities. In order to maintain and grow upon these qualities, as well as others, the community plan develops goals, policies and actions for the area. Components of this plan include services, transportation, land use, community image and character, environment, parks, recreation, and open lands, and economic development.
Whitewater Community Plan	This plan is an update of the 1999 Whitewater/Kannah Creek Plan. Mesa County and Whitewater residents agreed that a new Community Plan was needed to determine and prepare for an acceptable level of growth and development. This plan recognizes the new growth pressures facing the area and suggests policies that both accommodate the present and anticipate future community needs.
Mesa County Resource Management Plan (RMP)	The RMP may influence development and implementation of federal policies, programs, and other decision making for resources that affect those within Mesa County and the whole county itself. The RMP establishes local policy regarding Mesa County's desired use and administration of federally managed lands in their jurisdiction over which they exercise no direct authority. This plan helps evaluate, articulate, and protect the community's interest (natural environment and resource protection) and access surrounding federal and public lands and resources.

<b>Document Name</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Mesa County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)	The county is vulnerable to several hazards. As a result, this plan was created to offer recommendations and mitigation tactics to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from such natural hazards.
Mesa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan	This document has been developed to address wildfire threat to communities in Mesa County, Colorado, and it provides recommendations to abate catastrophic wildfire and minimize its impacts to communities. Multi-jurisdictional agencies (federal, state, and local), organizations, and residents have joined together to develop this plan.

Five additional plans that have a relationship to the Master Plan scope were identified as part of this exercise. The Community Health Needs Assessment was requested by Mesa County to be considered during the initial scoping of the project. The Grand Valley 2045 RTP should be referenced during the Transportation and Mobility Analysis conducted by Fehr and Peers. The Mineral and Energy Master Plan should be reviewed by Spirit Environmental to ensure relevant discussions with the Energy/Extraction focus group stakeholders. The Future Land Use Plan of the current Master Plan should be reviewed to understand current development patterns and understand implications of any policy changes borne from the Mesa Together Master Planning process. The Land Use Incentives section of the current Master Plan should be reviewed to understand and examine the effectiveness of existing incentives.

*Table 3. Additional Plans*

<b>Document Name</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Community Health Needs Assessment (2020)	This assessment considers traditional public health data such as injury, disease and cause of death while also including social and institutional inequities and living conditions. In turn, these lenses aid understanding the changes in population and how those changes effect health outcomes, resources and opportunities
Grand Valley 2045 RTP Update (2020)	This plan identifies the types of investments, priorities and strategies needed to address transportation needs in the region. This plan will guide future investments that reduce congestion, improve safety, promote alternatives to the private automobile, enhance connectivity and comfort for pedestrians and cyclists, and increase reliability and frequency of the system.
Mesa County Mineral and Energy Master Plan 2011	This plan presents strategies to help protect Mesa County’s natural resources: the area’s minerals and energy. This plan provides maps, goals and policies for oil and gas exploration, development, and support services.
Mesa County Master Plan – Mesa Countywide Land Use Plan (1996)	This plan serves to reflect the ongoing evolution within Mesa County and help direct decision makers on the best ways to deal with and prepare for future growth and changes. It is expected that this plan will be updated into the future.
Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment (2021)	This report identifies the housing needs across the Grand Valley, with a focus on Grand Junction. This first phase of the overall study provides an analysis of housing stock, market trends, and community perceptions related to the Grand Valley’s housing context and potential housing needs. Phase II will present strategies and recommendations that are tailored to meet identified needs.
Mesa County Economic Development Plan	This plan presents the economic goals for Mesa County and roles of staff and departments to help foster a healthy economy. These goals include: Become an Epicenter for Energy Innovation, 2. Elevate the Community Profile, and 3. Support the Growth of Existing Business

## **BASE MAPPING**

Base Mapping is helpful in understanding the layout and overall network of Mesa County. Spatial data collected identify components including, but not limited to, land uses and transportation networks, population and growth projections, demographics, boundaries, and infrastructure. The data provided by the county, identified in Table 3, will be used for analyses of current and future conditions. The base map will be utilized to develop the following deliverables: Land use maps update, preliminary mapping that establishes focus/topic areas, and a memorandum describing any conflicts with land uses and existing policies.

*Table 3. County Provided GIS Files*

<b>Data Category</b>	<b>Layers</b>
Administrative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annexed properties</li> <li>2. Boundaries</li> <li>3. CIP Projects</li> <li>4. Cemeteries</li> <li>5. City Limits</li> <li>6. Districts</li> <li>7. Elections</li> <li>8. School Locations and Boundaries</li> <li>9. Enterprise Zones</li> <li>10. Fire Protection Districts</li> <li>11. Grand River Mosquito Control District</li> <li>12. Grand Valley Drainage District</li> <li>13. Incorporated Areas</li> <li>14. Irrigation Districts</li> <li>15. Sanitation Improvement Districts</li> <li>16. Voting Precincts</li> <li>17. Water Districts</li> <li>18. Zip Codes</li> </ol>
Environmental	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elevations</li> <li>2. FEMA Floodplains</li> <li>3. Fire Ban</li> <li>4. Slopes</li> </ol>
Facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Airports and Airstrips</li> <li>2. Communication Towers</li> <li>3. Facilities Service</li> <li>4. Fire Stations</li> <li>5. Hospital Districts</li> <li>6. Hospitals</li> <li>7. Police Stations</li> <li>8. Public Safety</li> <li>9. Schools</li> <li>10. Septic Locations</li> </ol>
Hydrography	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Canals</li> <li>2. Drainage Basins</li> <li>3. Lakes</li> <li>4. Rivers</li> <li>5. Stormwater</li> <li>6. Watershed Boundaries</li> </ol>

<b>Data Category</b>	<b>Layers</b>
Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consolidated Zoning Districts</li> <li>2. Future Land Use</li> <li>3. Grand Junction Comprehensive FLU Plan</li> <li>4. Land Development Projects</li> <li>5. Rural Planning Area FLU</li> <li>6. Zoning</li> </ol>
Property	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BLM Properties</li> <li>2. BLM Special Areas</li> <li>3. Building Footprints</li> <li>4. Colorado National Monument</li> <li>5. 911 Address Points</li> <li>6. National Forest</li> <li>7. Parks and Golf Courses</li> <li>8. Public Lands</li> <li>9. State of Colorado Lands</li> <li>10. Tax Parcels</li> </ol>
Surveys	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Census</li> <li>2. Deeded Rights-of-Ways</li> <li>3. Deposit Surveys</li> <li>4. GPS Monument Locations</li> <li>5. Historical Surveys</li> <li>6. Parcel</li> <li>7. Section Lines</li> <li>8. Subdivision Plants</li> <li>9. Township Lines</li> <li>10. Vacated ROW</li> <li>11. Vacant Lands</li> </ol>
Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1890 and 1892 ROW Proclamations</li> <li>2. Any traffic counts</li> <li>3. Bus Routes</li> <li>4. Crashes (including severity and bicycle/pedestrian-involved)</li> <li>5. County Roads</li> <li>6. Mile Markers</li> <li>7. On-street bicycle facilities</li> <li>8. Railroad Tracks</li> <li>9. Road Book ROW</li> <li>10. Road Centerlines (with number of lanes and street classification)</li> <li>11. Road Intersections</li> <li>12. Sidewalk inventory</li> <li>13. Trails</li> <li>14. Transit stops and routes</li> <li>15. Truck routes</li> </ol>

The table below entails additional data that is required for a full analysis of the County’s existing conditions. This data is helpful in offering greater context and infrastructure insight in the area.

Table 4: Additional data needs from Mesa County:

Subject	Data
Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Road Centerlines (with number of lanes and street classification)</li> <li>2. On-street bicycle facilities</li> <li>3. Transit stops and routes</li> <li>4. Sidewalk inventory</li> <li>5. Crashes (including severity and bicycle/pedestrian-involved)</li> <li>6. Any traffic counts</li> <li>7. Truck routes</li> </ol>

Table 5: Additional data that would be useful to fulfill State suggested elements if available include:

Properties	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Locations of historic and cultural resources</li> </ol>
Facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Location and extent of public utilities (whether publicly or privately owned)</li> <li>2. Special District Boundaries</li> <li>3. Location and extent of an adequate and suitable supply of water.</li> <li>4. Any proposed or projected needs for capital improvement projects (CIP).</li> </ol>
Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Location and extents of Three Mile Area plans, special area plans (adopted and valid Community Plans), or other intergovernmental agreements</li> </ol>
Hydrology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Floodplain management areas</li> <li>2. Wetlands (will use State dataset if County dataset is not available)</li> </ol>

## **DEMOGRAPHICS and POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

Mesa County is made up of several different communities. As a result, it is crucial to analyze different categories within the demographics of the county. The baseline condition analysis will provide an in-depth description of Mesa County’s demographics. The elements to be analyzed labor force, businesses and employment status, income, business type, and key facts such as age, population, average household size, and household income. We anticipate sourcing data from ESRI business analyst, data utilized in the Mesa Community Health Needs Assessment (2020), and State Demographer data to complete this assessment.

Table 5 displays the communities that will be examined for the data listed above. It should be noted that Carpenter, Gateway, Mack, Plateau City and Whitewater will not be reviewed due to a lack of demographic projection data.

Table 6. Mesa County Communities to be Analyzed

Community Type	Community Name
City	1. Grand Junction 2. Fruita
Towns	3. Collbran 4. De Beque 5. Palisade
Census-designated Places	6. Clifton 7. Fruitvale 8. Loma 9. Orchard Mesa 10. Redlands
Other Unincorporated Places	11. Molina

Population projections will be based on data available from the State Demographer. The State Demographer’s office is actively working on incorporating the 2020 Census counts into estimates and projections and anticipate data will be released by the end of October 2021. The county-level population estimates are built each year based on births and deaths as reported by CDPHE and an estimate of net migration based on records from IRS tax returns. The municipal level estimates are built on building permit data received annually in a survey to all local governments in Colorado. They base projections at the county level on a National and Colorado forecast of jobs which is shared to counties based on their direct basic jobs (those that drive growth and change within the county) as well as trends of different types of migrants (retirees, young adults for higher education, etc.). The State Demographer Staff would be very interested in working with our team to review the estimates and the projections when they are available. We may be able to request data regarding unincorporated area growth projections following that conversation.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Mesa County is about 3,341 square miles in area, and is supported by a network of transportation routes. The County is accessed by state highways and federal highway and interstate infrastructure. These include Interstate 70, US Highway 6, US Highway 50 and State Highways 65, 139, 141, 330, and 340. The Mesa County Road and Bridge Department manages and maintains an extensive network of County roads and rights-of-way. There are also several trails within the county. Among others, these include the American Discovery Trail, Dinosaur Diamond Prehistoric Highway National Scenic Byway, Grand Mesa Byway, Kokopelli Trail, and Old Spanish National Historic Trail. Fehr & Peers will utilize existing transportation data and plans in developing the High Injury Network, gaps in transportation infrastructure, and strategies to achieve transportation objectives.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH CRS AND DOLA**

All Colorado municipalities that possess a Planning Commission are required through Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) to develop a Master Plan. It is important that these requirements are reviewed and considered in developing Mesa Together. The standards laid out below must be met through the entire planning process from its initiation to its adoption. The paragraphs below also contain suggested elements that may contribute to the overall plan.

**Background:** Committee on Development and Growth in Colorado requires the Mesa County Planning Commission to develop, update, and adopt a Master plan for the physical development for unincorporated Mesa County. According to C.R.S. 30-28-106 *Adoption of Master Plan – Contents*<sup>1</sup>, a Master Plan is a guiding document for land development decisions. It shall not be deemed an official advisory plan unless adopted by the Planning Commission.

<sup>1</sup> <https://codes.findlaw.com/co/title-30-government-county/co-rev-st-sect-30-28-106.html>, accessed October 6, 2021

After adoption, Master Plan policies can be incorporated into the Land Development Code to ensure future development reflects the intention of the Plan.

**Elements of a Master Plan:** During the planning process, the present and future conditions of the municipality, with consideration to its relation to adjacent municipalities, must be carefully analyzed through surveys and studies. This ensures that the plan will best promote the “health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare” of a community’s present and future population.

#### Suggested Elements

The Master Plan should consider each of the following and include topics as applicable or otherwise deemed appropriate. These topics are a summary of the sections identified in the Colorado Regulatory Statute and are not intended to be the definitive source to determine compliance with applicable Statutes.

1. *Transportation routes:* including transportation plans prepared by the Mesa County Regional Transportation Office.
2. *Location of public places or facilities,* such as public schools, historic and cultural resources, airport infrastructure, parks and open space, state and federal wildlife areas.
3. *Location and extent of public utilities,* whether publicly or privately owned; and any proposed or projected needs for capital improvement projects (CIP).
4. *Location and extent of an adequate and suitable supply of water.* If the plan includes a water supply element, the Commission shall consult with the entities supplying the water to ensure sufficient supply and facilities for private and public infrastructure reasonably anticipated or identified in the planning process. The Master Plan shall not harm the allocation of water pursuant to Colorado constitution or applicable laws.
5. *Decisions on modification of public rights-of-way and other county land* as related to items 1-4 above.
6. *Methods for assuring access to appropriate conditions for solar, wind, or other alternative energy sources.*
7. *Economic analysis and future land needs assessment;* including incorporation of any regional planning agreements such as Three Mile Area plans, special area plans, or other intergovernmental agreements with a planning nexus.
8. *Floodplain management, identification of forests and agricultural areas, and food and water supply.*
9. *Land classification and use*
10. *Projections of population growth and housing needs.*
11. *Geologic hazards and other natural resource areas* such as threatened and endangered species, wetlands, floodways, wetlands, and wildfire hazards.

#### Required Elements

The following items are statutorily required of the Master Plan, where applicable.

1. The Master plan shall contain a recreational and tourism use element pertaining direction on providing for the recreational and tourism needs of residents and visitors pursuant to C.R.S. 30-28-106 (5).
2. The Master Plan of a county which includes mass transportation shall be coordinated with that of any adjacent county, region, or other political subdivision C.R.S. 30-28-106.
3. The Master Plan of a county shall also include a Master Plan for the extraction of commercial mineral deposits pursuant to C.R.S 34-1-304.
4. When county subdivision regulations require the payment of drainage fees, as provided in section 30-28-133(11), the Master Plan shall include the plan for the development of drainage basins.

**Public Engagement Requirements:** A community must be kept engaged throughout the planning process. From the initial stages of development, a public hearing is required. When the planning process begins, the public must be notified and engaged through public hearings and their notifications. Specifically, “the commission shall conduct public hearings, after notice of such public hearings has been published in a newspaper of general circulation in the region in a manner sufficient to notify the public of the time, place, and nature of the public hearing, prior to final



adoption of a master plan in order to encourage public participation in and awareness of the development of such plan and shall accept and consider oral and written public comments throughout the process of developing the plan.” C.R.S. 30-28-106(2)(a).

Public notification is also required for adoption of and amendments to the plan. However, it is recommended that community members are offered many opportunities to provide their input. In order to succeed, a plan needs community trust and buy-in. The most efficient way to achieve this is through developing the plan with the public.

**Adoption:** The Commission has two options for plan adoption. The first is to adopt the plan as a whole through a single resolution. A second option is to create successive resolutions to adopt successive parts of the plan. Prior to the adoption of the plan or any such part, amendment, extension, or addition, the Commission will notify the public and offer the opportunity for public comment. In case of disapproval, the Commission shall communicate its reasons to the Board of County Commissioners, which has the power to overrule such disapproval by a recorded vote of not less than two-thirds of its entire membership.

**Post-Adoption:** The Commission has power to educate the public regarding the plan. Shall the Planning Commission choose to, it may publish and distribute copies of the plan or its contents. The Planning Commission is required to provide updates to the division whenever a Master Plan is amended, revised, or updated.