

## MEMORANDUM

To: Mesa County, Greg Moberg, Sean Norris  
From: Design Workshop: Anna Laybourn, Alison Bourquin,  
Date: April 15, 2022  
Project Name: Mesa Together, Mesa County Master Plan  
#: 6699  
Subject: Community Profile Draft

---

### **Community Profile Memorandum Purpose**

This report is intended to capture all currently available data regarding sustainability and resilience. Tasks also in progress or completed include review of transportation and sustainability and resilience. The compilation of these memos will represent an understanding of the Existing Conditions and Opportunities in Phase 1 of work. Key information from these memoranda will be selected for inclusion in the final document and some information may be used to express the existing conditions and broad overview of opportunities in public engagement/information efforts.

This report addresses the following:

- Purpose of the Master Plan
- Demographic Context
- Mesa County Communities
- Land Use

### **Introduction**

#### **Purpose of the Master Plan**

Mesa County is embarking on the journey of redeveloping its Master Plan after nearly 25 years. The County has transformed over time including an influx of new residents, dynamic shifts within the energy industry, expanding economic and business development and development pressures on agricultural lands. These changes present the need to create a new plan through coordinated efforts that reflects the vision of today's Mesa County community and lays the foundation for tomorrow's development.

This plan is an inspirational guideline for the future of Mesa County. It is important to acknowledge that there are limitations to what the Master Plan can do. For instance, this plan can only affect the unincorporated neighborhoods of Mesa County. It will not affect surrounding jurisdictions nor incorporated areas. The document will also not have immediate impacts. The goal is to inform land use policy decisions to reach the aspirations of the community. It is not a zoning code, detailed budget document, or set of requirements.

#### **What is a Master Plan?**

A Master Plan is a long-range Plan that envisions the next 20 years. The Master Plan is informed through community engagement. Utilizing the wishes of the community, the Plan acts as a strategic guidebook to help

guide policy decisions and priorities towards a shared goal over time. It offers direction for factors including land use patterns, increases in population, economic factors, and environmental considerations.

The Plan will be developed in coordination first and foremost with the community and stakeholders, as well as the Technical Advisory Committee and County staff. The Master Plan is also an integration of existing planning work. It utilizes previous planning efforts such as the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Clifton-Fruitvale Neighborhood Plan. Mesa Together, like the name suggests, will be created to reflect the vision of the community at large. It identifies a shared vision and outlines the steps to lead Mesa County towards their goals.

## **Requirements**

The requirements for this Master Plan are in accordance with the Colorado Regulatory Statutes' (C.R.S.) and the Department of Local Affairs' (DOLA) Comprehensive Plan standards. Elements that are suggested for such plans include: Transportation routes, location of public places or facilities, location and extent of public utilities and supply of water, decisions on public rights-of-way, energy access, land and economic needs, floodplain management, population projections, and natural resource/hazard analyses. Given that not all of these suggestions apply to Mesa County, only relevant topics will be used. While several elements are suggested, there are four elements that are required including recreation and tourism, mass transportation coordination with adjacent counties, regions, or other jurisdictions, extraction of commercial mineral deposits, and drainage basins.

In addition to the elements that are required, the statutes also lay out public engagement, adoption, and post-adoption requirements. C.R.S states that a community must be kept engaged throughout the entire planning process through public notifications and hearings. Relating to adoption, a commission may either adopt the plan as a whole or as successive parts.

## **Relevant Plans**

There are many planning efforts that took place within Mesa County prior to the Master Plan process. Combined, these plans set the foundation for this Master Plan. Mesa Together will utilize several relevant plans as an essential component to build upon during the planning process. A full summary of relevant plans has been provided in the Plan Review Summary Memo. Highlighted below are some of the key planning efforts most relevant to Mesa Together.

- 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 will give direction to specific management topics that together, build a sustainable future for growth, development, and redevelopment.
- Community Health Needs Assessment - The three primary goals of this assessment are to provide a current snapshot of the health status of Mesa County, to bring attention to areas of concern needing community action, and to fulfill assessment needs for all partners of our local public health system. This assessment is based in five social determinants of health: Economic Stability, Education, Health Care and Access, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Social and Community Context.
- Gateway Rural 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 - 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.

- Grand Valley 2045 RTP Update - 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 ped/cyclists, and increase reliability and frequency of the system.
- Loma Community Plan – This plan acts as 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 - This plan guides future growth for the area in a way to preserve the existing conditions while preparing for future growth impacts.
- 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 the Mesa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (MCCWPP).
- Mesa County Resource Management Plan - 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. This plan helps evaluate, articulate, and protect the community's interest and access surrounding federal and public lands and resources.
- Mesa County Hazard Mitigation Plan - 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 Mineral and Energy Master Plan - This plan offers strategies for Mesa County to analyze its current 's mineral and energy resources. With this analysis, the plan also sets goals for the future of these resources to help preserve and/or make them more sustainable. Through this plan, the County can help minimize the impact such resources have on the environment.
- Mesa Countywide Land Use Plan, Chapter 4 Rural Planning Area and Future Land Use Plan - The Land Use Plan provides direction for Mesa County on how best to develop. It does so through steering County policies and additional plans. The goals and strategies recommended in this plan are implemented into County policies and ordinances. Moreover, the Master Plan not only helps provide direction for general growth, but it also acts as a backbone for other neighborhood plans. While they are more strategic and should therefore supersede this plan, this plan sets guidelines for those following.
- 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/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.

### Process

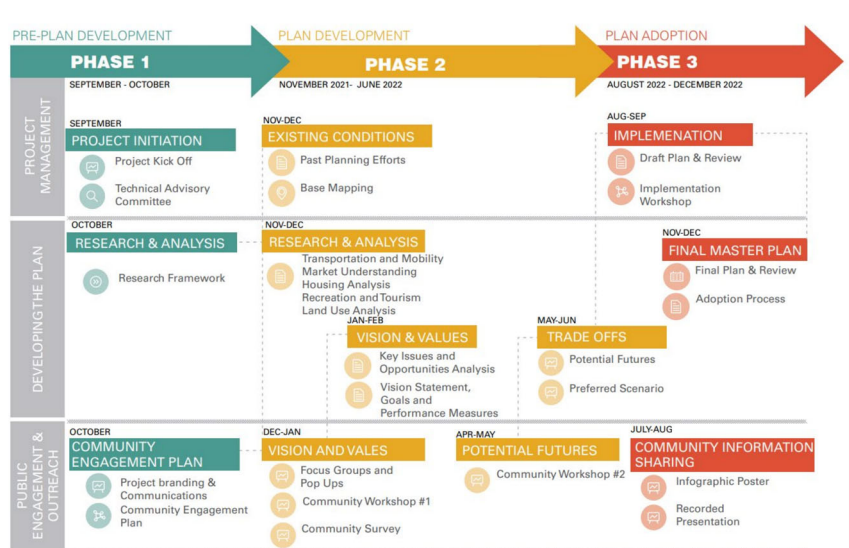
Mesa Together is split into three phases: Pre-Plan Development, Plan Development, and Plan Adoption.

Phase 1: Pre Plan Development: The project was initiated in September with a project kick off meeting and the development of a Technical Advisory Committee. Following the kickoff, the planning team researched past

plans and relevant information that would be used for analysis later on in phase 2. The Community Engagement Plan was developed in this stage.

Phase 2 – Plan Development: Phase 2 began by working to understand existing conditions. This was done through analyzing past planning efforts, developing analyses maps, and holding focus groups to gather the community’s opinion on different topics. The focus groups work to begin the development of a vision statement and understand community goals. Phase two lasts until June 2022 and within that time frame, community workshops and a community survey will also open to the public. Phase 2 gathers foundational information that will be used to develop the final plan.

Phase 3 – Plan Adoption: Phase 3 consists of drafting and revising the plan. This includes public hearings and workshops. After final approval, the plan will be shared with the public to ensure full comprehension.





**COMMUNITY PROFILE**

**Population**

According to data retrieved 2020 US Census, the State of Colorado has experienced population growth of 14.8% total over the past 10 years<sup>1</sup>. Many counties, including Mesa County, has contributed to this growth. Between 2010-2020, Mesa County’s population has increased by 5.9%, adding 8,548 new residents, totaling 155,703<sup>2</sup>. Below in Figure 1 illustrates population change by county in Colorado. Mesa County is in the 5,001 and 10,000 bracket.

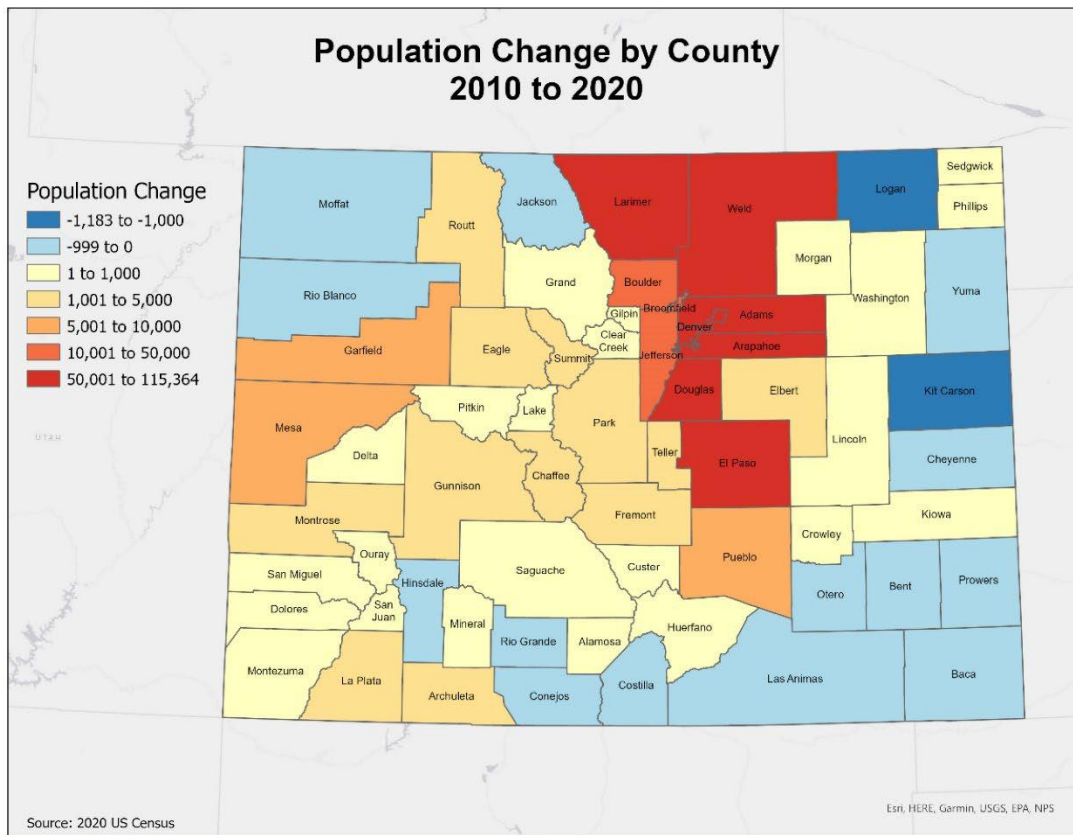


Figure 1. Population Change by County 2010 to 2020. Source: 2020 US Census

Table 1 shows the breakdown of Mesa County’s population growth by municipality<sup>3</sup>. Observing the 2010 to 2020 growth rates, Grand Junction experienced the largest growth within Mesa County at almost a 12% increase. With almost 7,000 new residents in Grand Junction, this makes up 78% of Mesa County’s population growth. Today, Grand Junction composes 42% of Mesa’s County population. Fruitvale and unincorporated Mesa County also experienced population growth. While Mesa County overall had growth, some municipalities, especially ones with smaller populations, lost residents. Collbran had the largest loss of almost half of their population at -47.9%. Palisade and De Beque also had small population reductions.

<sup>1</sup> Growing Forward, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

<sup>2</sup> 2020 Decennial Census

<sup>3</sup> Growing Forward, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

# Municipal Population

Geography	Population			Change, 2000 to 2010		Change, 2010 to 2020	
	2000	2010	2020	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Grand Junction city	41,986	58,566	65,560	16,580	39.5%	6,994	11.9%
Fruita city	6,478	12,646	13,395	6,168	95.2%	749	5.9%
Palisade town	2,579	2,692	2,565	113	4.4%	-127	-4.7%
De Beque town	451	504	493	53	11.8%	-11	-2.2%
Collbran town	388	708	369	320	82.5%	-339	-47.9%
Unincorporated Mesa County	64,373	71,607	73,321	7,234	11.2%	1,714	2.4%
Mesa County	116,255	146,723	155,703	30,468	26.2%	8,980	6.1%

- 78 percent of the growth in Mesa County between 2010 and 2020 occurred in Grand Junction.
- All places in Mesa County had less population growth between 2010 and 2020 than between 2000 and 2010.
- Because Grand Junction grew faster than the county since 2000, it has become a larger share of the total county population: 36% in 2000 to 42% in 2020.



Table 1. Population Change by Municipality. Source: 2020 US Census

## Age

According to data retrieved from the 2020 US Census, which is shown in Table 2, Mesa County’s median age is 39.9<sup>4</sup>. The largest age group in Mesa County is 55-64 years old, comprising 13.8% of the population<sup>5</sup>. The composition of age demographics in Mesa County indicate that most residents are likely middle-aged adults without children, a typical user group that often favors the convenience and lifestyle associated with more rural living conditions.

Community	Median Age (years)	Largest Age Group (years)
Mesa County	39.9	55-64
Grand Junction	39.3	25-34
Fruita	37.0	35-44
Collbran	38.5	15-19
De Beque	51.2	55-64
Palisade	45.3	55-64
Clifton	32.4	25-34
Fruitvale	42.2	55-64
Loma	43.9	55-64

<sup>4</sup> Demographic and Income Profile, ESRI Business Analyst

<sup>5</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Mesa County

Orchard Mesa	38.5	35-44
Redlands	53.0	55-64
Molina	63.3	55-64

Table 2. Median Age and Age Distribution. Source: ESRI Business Analyst

In the net migration shown in Figure 2, from 2000 to 2010 the highest spikes were in the late teens and mid-to-late 30s<sup>6</sup>. The migration trends for Mesa County indicate that the growth in the late teens could be from students attending college or children of the mid-to-late 30’s families moving in. Figure 3 shows how the median age in Mesa County has steadily increasing from 2015 to 2019<sup>7</sup>. This indicates that Mesa County will need to continue accommodating an aging population.

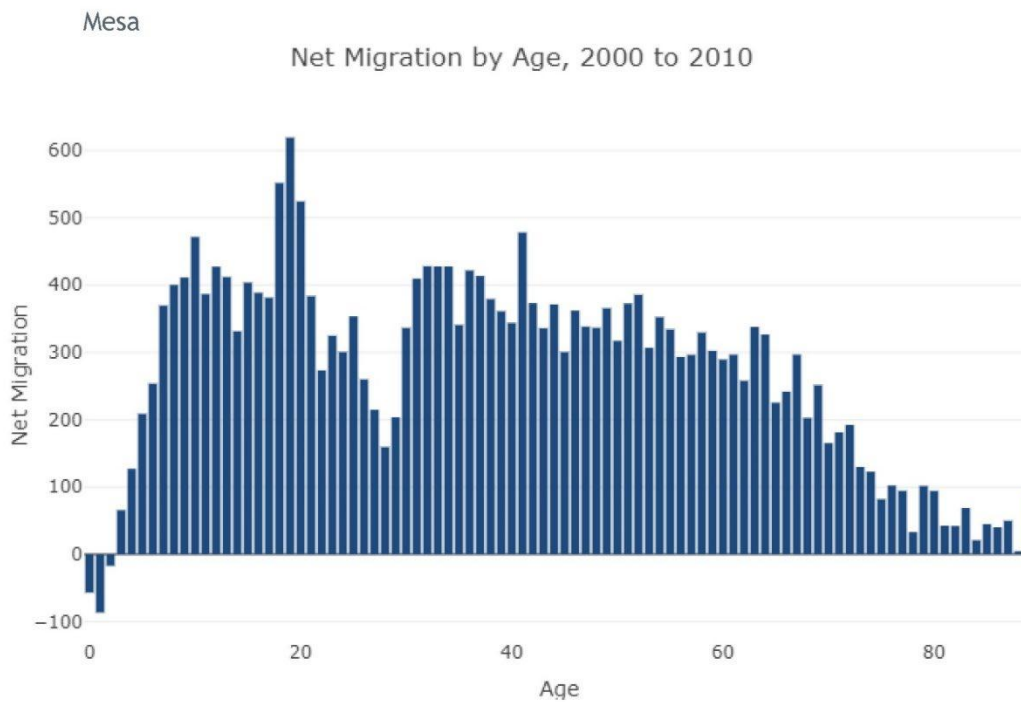


Figure 2. Net Migration by Age from 2000 to 2010. Source: 2020 US Census

<sup>6</sup> Growing Forward, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

<sup>7</sup> Growing Forward, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

### MEDIAN AGE IN MESA COUNTY (2015-2019)

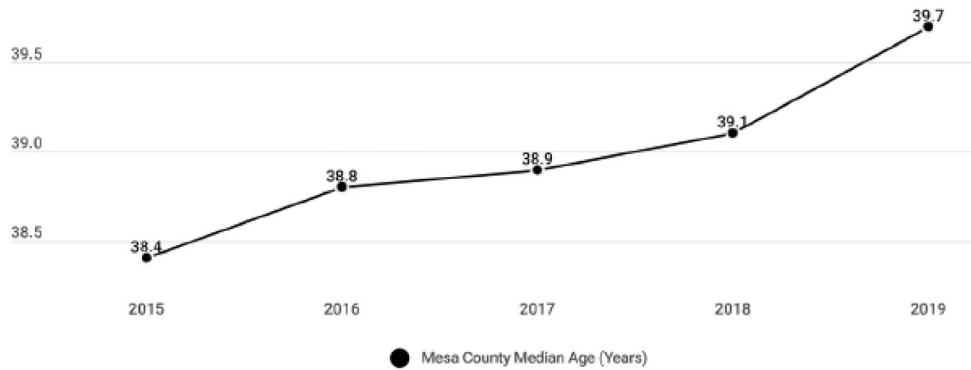
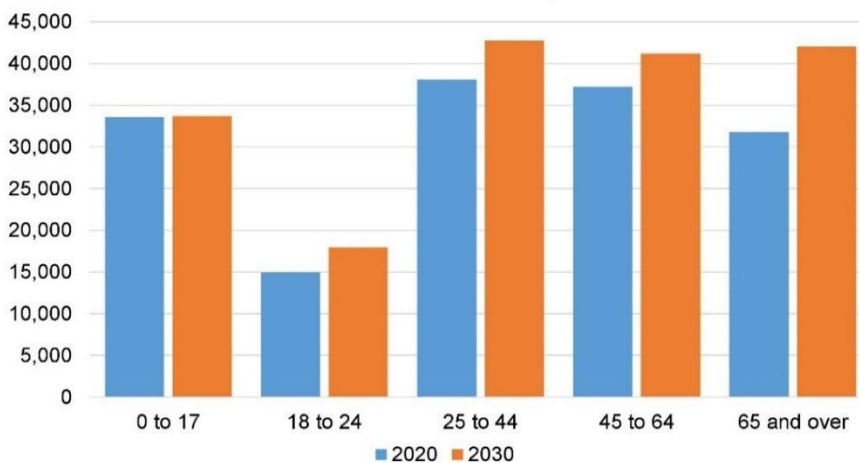


Figure 3. Median Age in Mesa County 2015-2019. Source: Mesa County Public Health - Community Needs Assessment

From the observations made examining the current age distribution, the following in Figure 4 displays the future age distribution in Mesa County by 2030, based on analysis from the 2020 US Census<sup>8</sup>. While all age groups will experience an increase in the number of residents, the 65-year-old and over age bracket will have the highest increase. This is most likely due to the current population of Mesa County aging.

### Forecast by Age Group Mesa County



	0 to 17	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 and over	Total
Change	162	2,954	4,693	3,983	10,213	<b>22,005</b>
Rate	0.5%	19.8%	12.3%	10.7%	32.1%	<b>14.1%</b>



<sup>8</sup> Growing Forward, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Figure 4. Age Forecast. Source: 2020 US Census

**Social Determinants of Health Profiles**

To predict how the population of Mesa County will change in the next few years, it is important to assess the Social Determinants of Health. These determinants are conditions that affect how residents will live in an area when it comes to their health and maintaining a decent quality of life<sup>9</sup>. The stronger performance of each determinant will indicate the success of Mesa County’s future in terms of population growth, healthy lifestyles and economic opportunities. The Social Determinants examined include education, resource access and health care<sup>10</sup>.

**Education**

A strong education plays a major role for quality life and economic growth within an area. Mesa County provides multiple access points to education. Not only are there multiple K-12 schools within the county, but there are also opportunities for higher education from Colorado Mesa University and Western Colorado Community College. Figure 5 shows the current enrollment status for each level of education currently in Mesa County<sup>11</sup>.

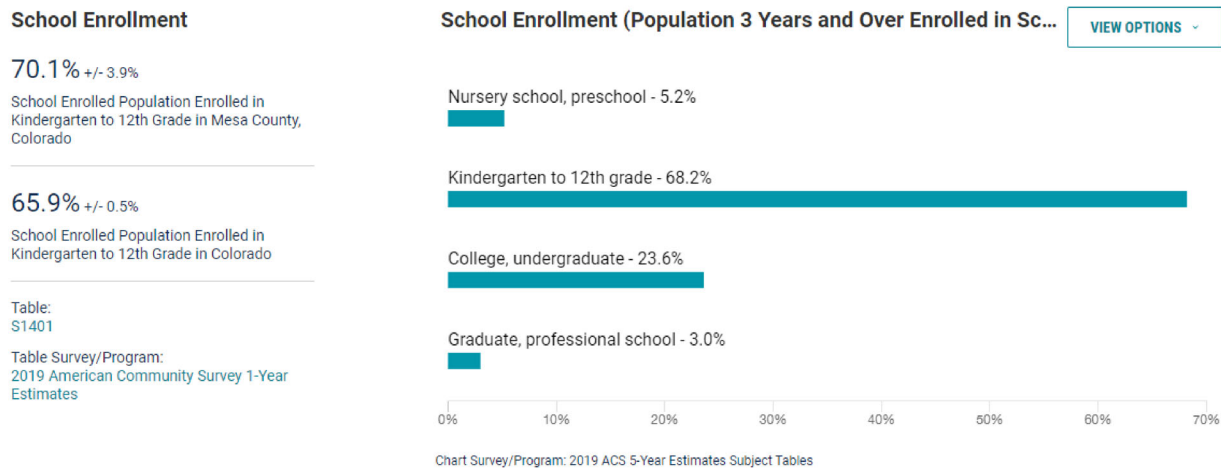


Figure 5. School Enrollment in Mesa County 2015-2019. Source: 2019 American Community Survey.

While K-12 has the highest enrollment of students (68.2%) followed by college (23.6%), nursery school/preschool is much lower. This could be due lack of childcare facilities, which will be assess later in the report. Figure 6 is a map of all the school districts within Mesa County<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

<sup>10</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

<sup>11</sup> Education, American Community Survey 2015-2019

<sup>12</sup> Mesa County School District 51 Map, Relocating to Colorado Grand Valley

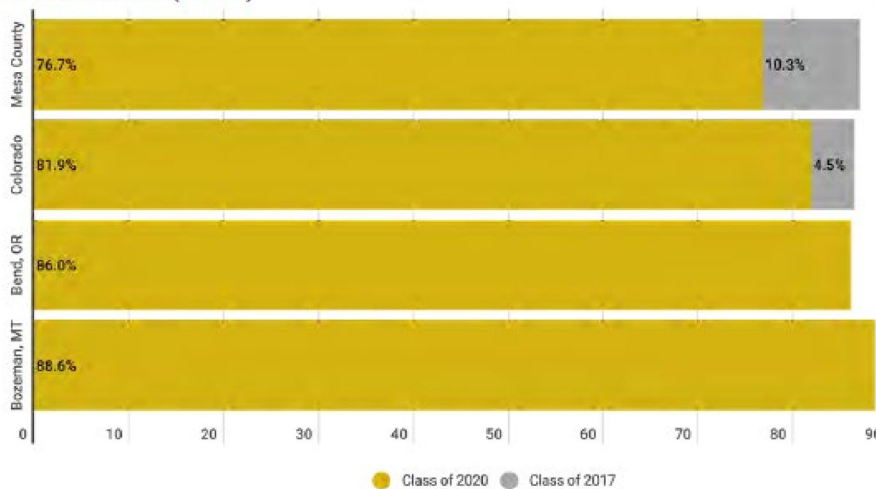




Figure 6. School Districts in Mesa County. Source: Relocating to Colorado Grand Valley.

One economic indicator for an area can be measured by examining the levels of education attainment. Figure 7 shows the high school graduation rate for Mesa County<sup>13</sup>. From 2017 to 2020, there has been a decrease in graduation. Factors that could have contributed to this decrease include the pandemic, transitioning to remote learning, job loss, etc. Figure 7 shows while this trend has also happened in the State of Colorado, it has not happened in areas similar to Mesa County, like Bend, OR and Bozeman, MT<sup>14</sup>.

**RATE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION IN MESA COUNTY, AND COMPARISON COMMUNITIES (2020)**



<sup>13</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

<sup>14</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health



Figure 7. Rate of High School Graduation in Mesa County, State and Comparing Communities.  
Source: Mesa County Public Health - Community Needs Assessment

Figure 8 displays education attainment comparisons of Mesa County to the state and country<sup>15</sup>.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG ADULTS IN MESA COUNTY, COLORADO, AND THE US (2015-2019)

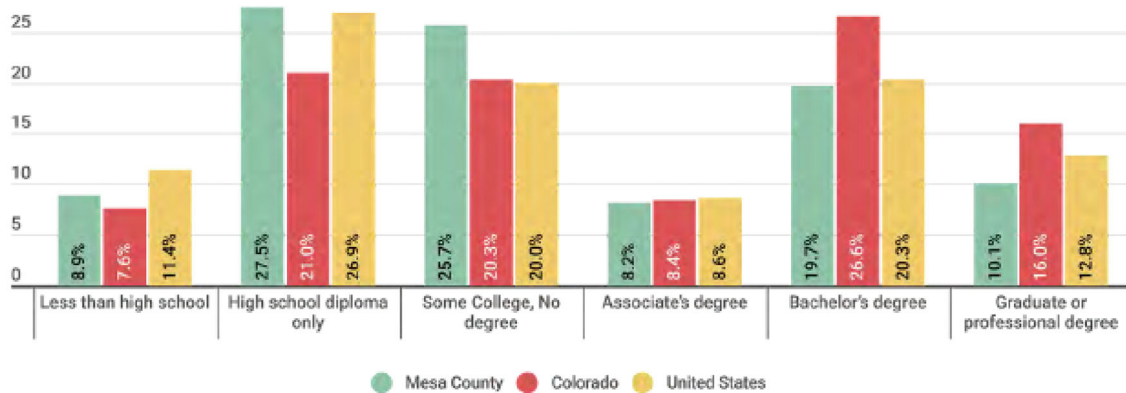


Figure 8. Education Attainment for the county, state, and United States. Source: Mesa County Public Health - Community Needs Assessment

The highest number of residents in Mesa County fall under the high school graduate, some college but no degree, and bachelor’s degree education attainment levels. While Mesa County exceeds the state and country in percentage of high school graduates, the state and country are both higher in percentage of residents with college degrees<sup>16</sup>. Figure 9 illustrates a map distribution where residents bachelor’s degrees live in Mesa County<sup>17</sup>. The distribution varies between each area in both incorporated and unincorporated.

<sup>15</sup> Demographic and Income Profile, ESRI Business Analyst  
Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health  
<sup>16</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health  
<sup>17</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

**PERCENT OF ADULTS (25+ YEARS) WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER BY CENSUS TRACT IN MESA COUNTY (2015-2019)**

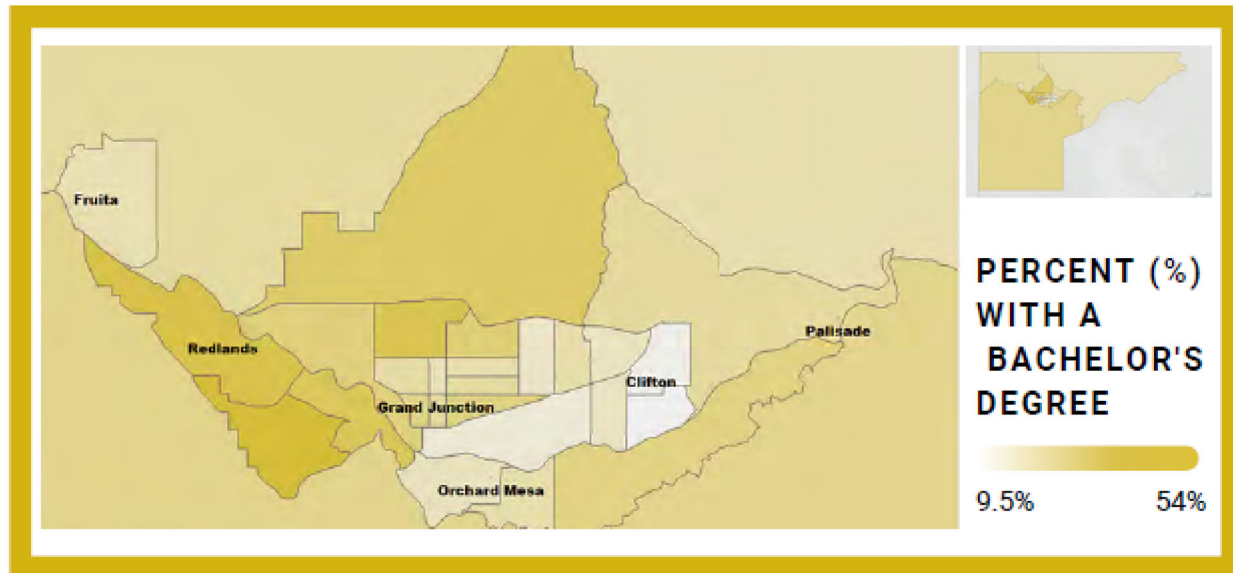


Figure 9. Bachelor's Degree. Source: Mesa County Public Health - Community Needs Assessment

Different levels of education attainment can result in a variety of career options available per person, affecting the income distribution for an area. Looking at these factors, this can indicate how the job market will perform. If it indicates that growth may occur, more money will come into the area, providing increased resources to current and future residents. Table 3 shows economic status based on each level of educational attainment within Mesa County<sup>18</sup>. Each level of higher education results in higher income attained, lower poverty rates, lower unemployment rates and lower amount of residents that are uninsured.

**ECONOMIC STABILITY MEASURES BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN MESA COUNTY (2019)**

	Home Owners	Median household earnings*	Poverty rate in population 25 years and older	Unemployment rate, 2015-2019	Uninsured (18-64)
Less Than High School Graduate	55.2%	\$26,838	17.7%	9.7%	34.2%
High School Graduate	70.0%	\$31,877	11.2%	7.3%	17.3%
Some College/Associate's Degree	63.4%	\$32,138	7.1%	5.4%	13.3%
Bachelor's Degree (or higher)	77.1%	\$43,457	4.2%	3.6%	5.5%

\*Median household earnings is lower than median income because it only includes wage-type income, not social security or retirement pensions.

<sup>18</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

Table 3. Economic Stability from Educational Attainment. Source: Mesa County Public Health - Community Needs Assessment

**Resource Access**

Access to essential resources can have significant impact on quality of life and economic growth. Grocery stores are vital for food, health and well-being for residents. Figure 10 shows 18 different food sources in Mesa County. These food sources include stand-alone grocery stores as well as Walmart/Target that sell food<sup>19</sup>. The map indicates that while Grand Junction has many resources, most municipalities outside of it do not.

**LOCATION OF GROCERY STORES AND MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CENSUS TRACT IN MESA COUNTY (2019 & 2021)**

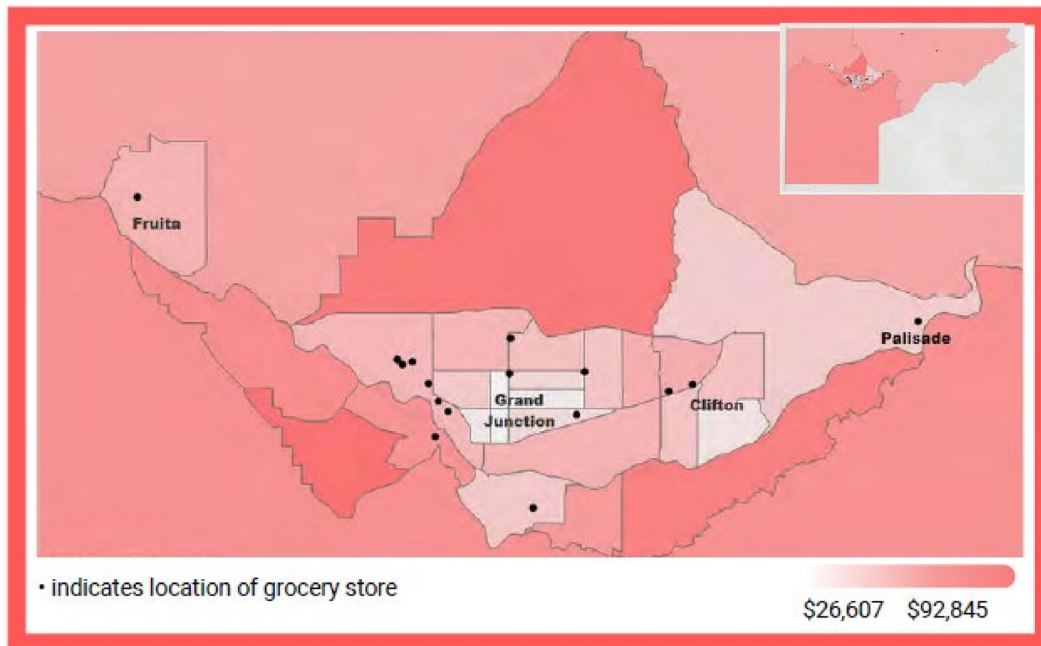


Figure 10. Grocery Store Access vs Median Household Income. Source: Mesa County Public Health - Community Needs Assessment

Childcare is also important, as it provides children quality care and gives families the opportunity balance work and life. Parents that would otherwise have to give up working to care for a child, which results in losing a source of income, would not have to do so if childcare is available. Childcare also gives access to early education. Today, Mesa County is classified as a childcare desert<sup>20</sup>. The county does not have proper access to childcare facilities throughout the entire area. Families must either commute long distances for childcare or cannot afford proper childcare. These families then are faced with the challenge of either giving up work to stay at home or neglect childcare. Figure 11 shows which areas in Mesa County are in the childcare desert designation<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

<sup>20</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

<sup>21</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

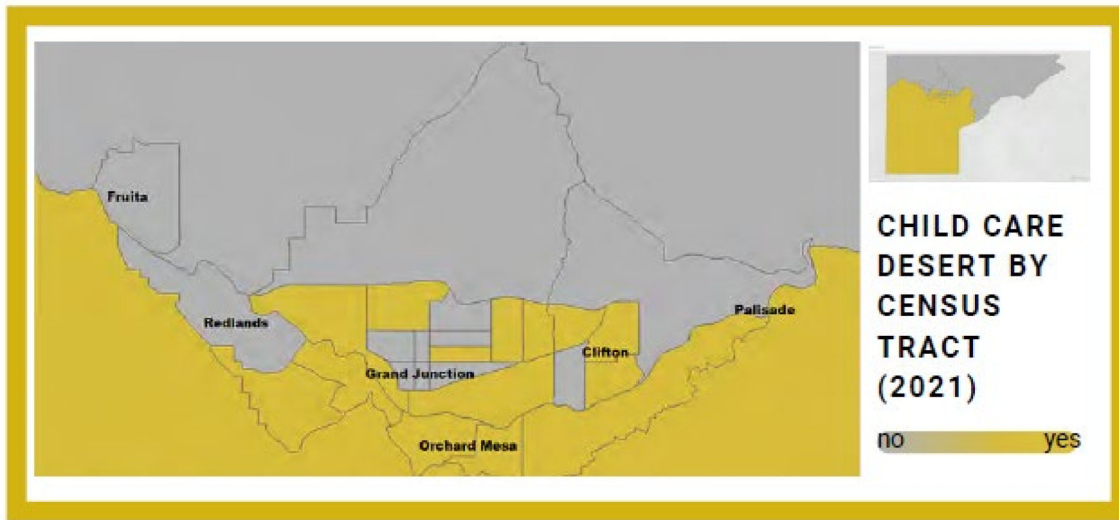


Figure 11. Child Care Deserts. Source: Mesa County Public Health - Community Needs Assessment

**Health Care**

Health care access is vital to ensure a good quality of life. To get access to affordable proper health care, insurance is utilized. Table 4 shows the percentage of insured vs uninsured residents<sup>22</sup>. Observing the table, about 9 out of every 10 residents have insurance. For those who are insured, it is almost split evenly between those who utilized public vs private insurance. Compared to the State of Colorado, Mesa County does have a higher percentage of residents who are uninsured or utilize public insurance. Public insurance comes from resources like Medicare and Medicaid while most private insurance comes through employment. Figure 12 shows in the sources of insurance in more detail<sup>23</sup>.

**PERCENT OF RESIDENTS REPORTING INSURANCE COVERAGE BY TYPE IN MESA COUNTY AND COLORADO (2019)**

Insurance Type	Mesa County	Colorado
Uninsured	9.2% (15,295)	6.5%
Public Insurance	43.8% (72,556)	33.7%
Private Insurance	47.0% (77,892)	59.8%

Table 4. Residents with Insurance. Source: Mesa County Public Health - Community Needs Assessment

**At-risk Populations and Vulnerable Communities**

Examining what classifies as an at-risk population, in Mesa County there are 17,831 households with a disability and 760 without a vehicle. Beyond the current population, according to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, other risk factors Mesa County needs to consider for its future is<sup>24</sup>:

<sup>22</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Mesa County Public Health

<sup>23</sup> Health Care & Insurance, American Community Survey

<sup>24</sup> Growing Forward, Colorado Department of Local Affairs



- Pandemic uncertainty
- Housing: supply, price, type, location
- International immigration
- Water
- Infrastructure and transportation
- State budget and policy
- Aging for the labor force
- Industry changes: boom, bust, competitiveness, etc.
- Natural disasters

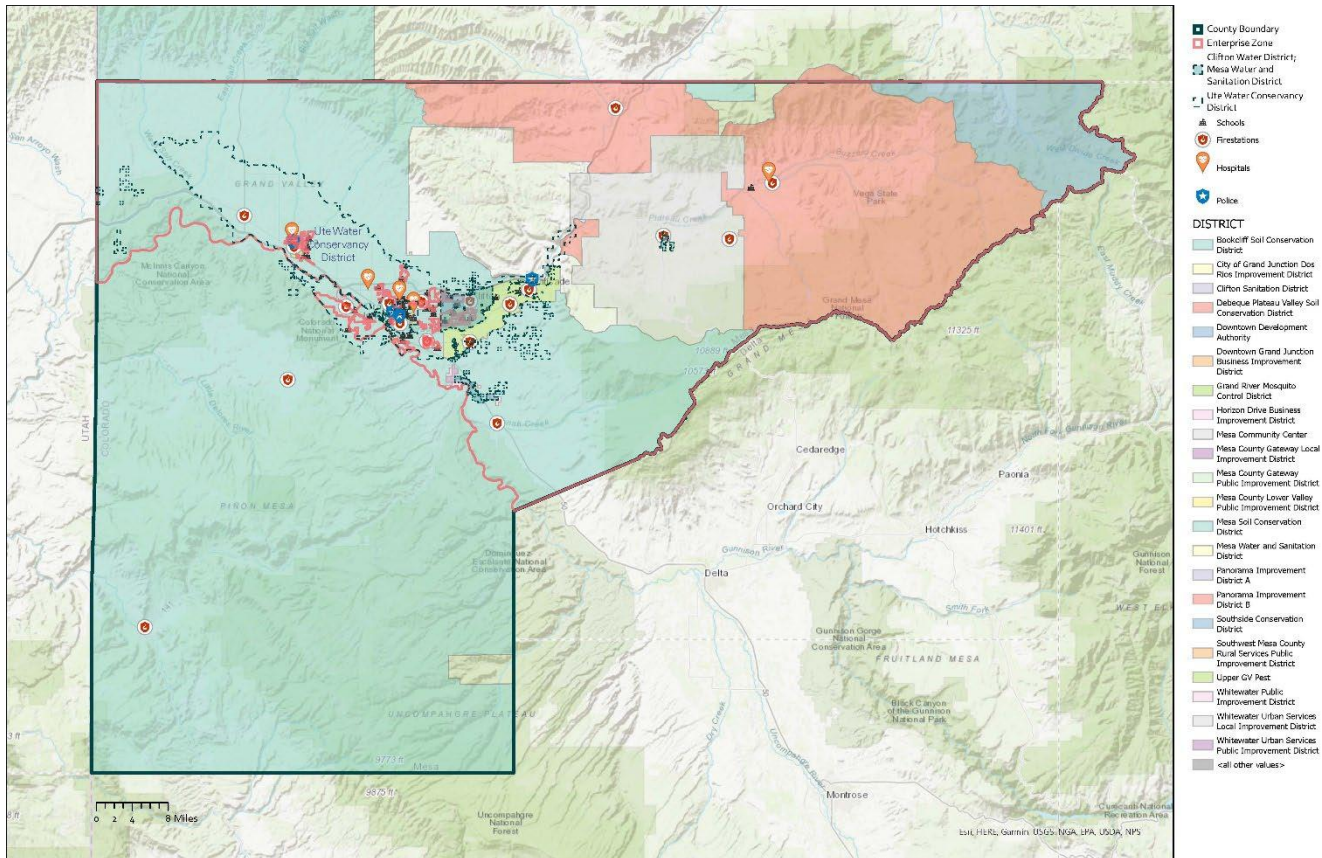


Figure 12. Mesa County Services and Public Facilities Access. Source: Mesa County, 2021

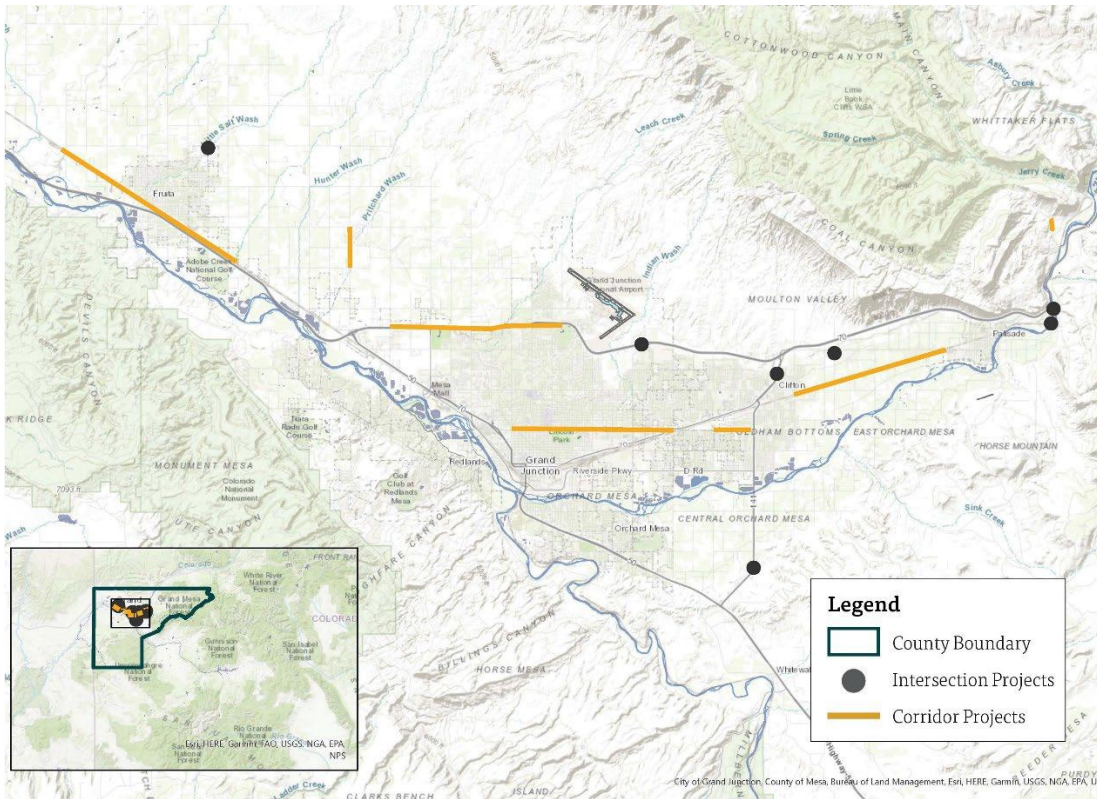
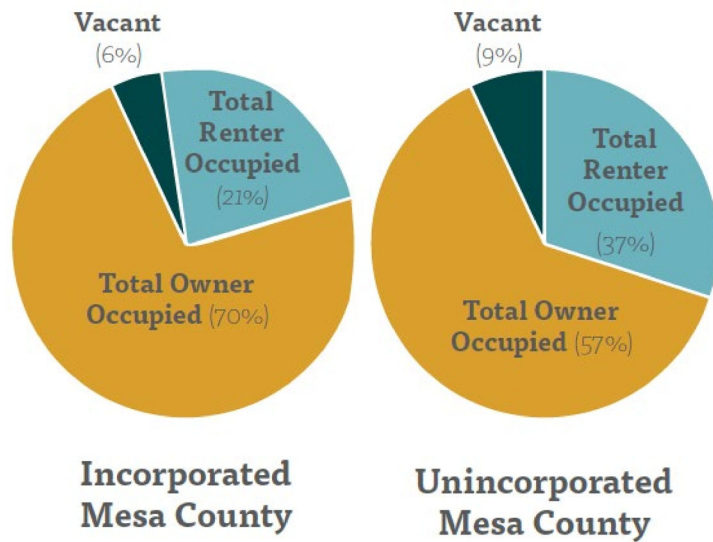


Figure 13. Future Transportation Infrastructure Improvements. Source: Fehr & Peers



Source: American Community Survey, 2015-2019

Figure 14. Mesa County Incorporated vs Unincorporated Housing Tenure and Type. Source: American Community Survey, 2015-2019



**Growth Trends**

Looking at how the population of Mesa County has changed over time is a strong indicator of how it will continue for the future. From Table 1, Mesa County has seen an increase in population within the last 20 years. There was a larger increase from 2000 to 2010 at 26% compared to a 5.9% increase from 2010 to 2020<sup>25</sup>. Figure 15 shows the net migration trends into Colorado from 2015 to 2019<sup>26</sup>.

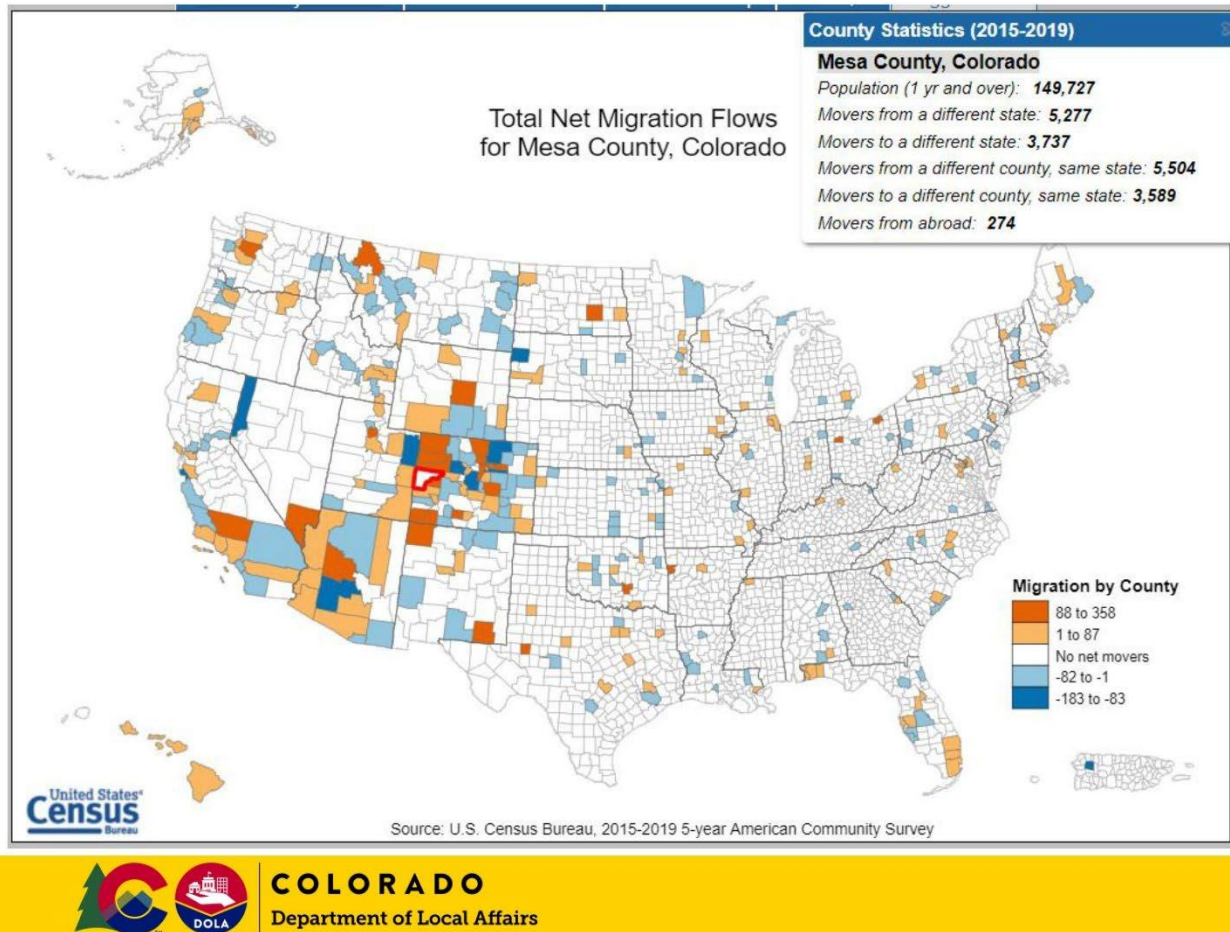


Figure 15. Net Migration Trends. Source: 2020 US Census

Observing the net migration trends, overall, more people moved into Mesa County than out. Of these new residents, most came from either a different county within Colorado or a different state. There was also a small number of new residents coming from a different country into Mesa County.

<sup>25</sup> Colorado State Demography Office, 2021

<sup>26</sup> Growing Forward, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

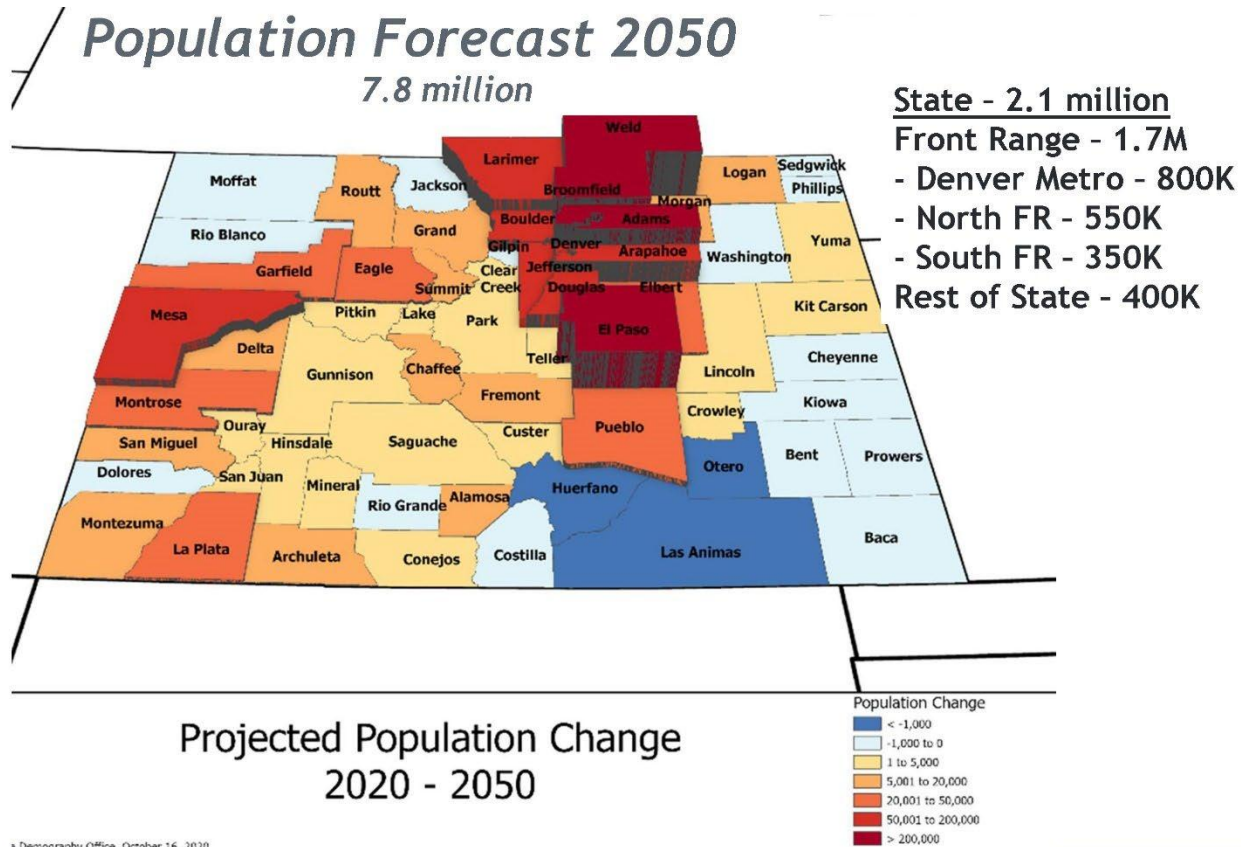


Figure 16. Colorado Population Forecast 2050. Source: 2020 US Census

Figure 16 illustrates the population forecast for the state of Colorado in 2050. While most of the population growth patterns will occur in the Front Range, Mesa County will also be experiencing a significant population increase<sup>27</sup>. Additional data regarding population growth can be found on page 20 of the economy, housing, and tourism memo. With this significant increase, Mesa County needs to consider how the area will adapt for more jobs, education opportunities, increased housing, and affordable housing.

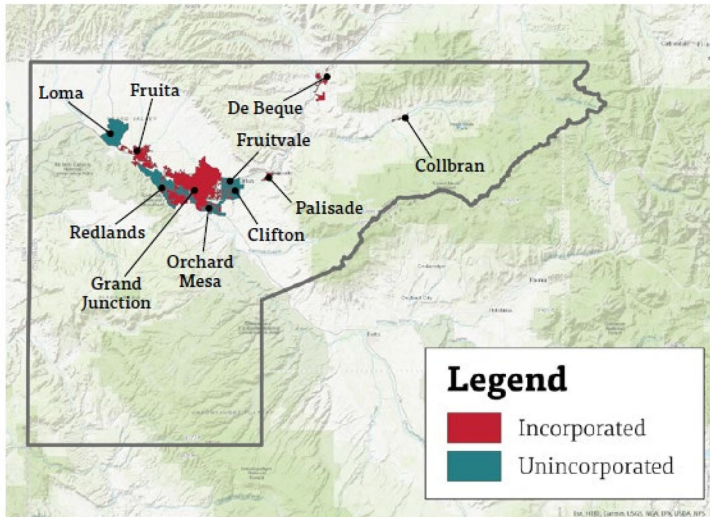
**Key Trends**

Based on the community profile, Mesa County has a lot of future growth coming. As the population increases, Mesa County needs to make more resources available to everyone for jobs, housing, health care and amenities. Resource management will also need to accommodate the groups that will experience the most growth in Mesa County. For example, looking at growth patterns, like the Age Forecast in Figure 4, the older population will have the largest increase in numbers compared to any other age group. To cater to this population increase, Mesa County will need to prioritize assets like health care and resource access to accommodate this change.

**Incorporated and Unincorporated Mesa County**

<sup>27</sup> *Growing Forward*, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Five municipalities – The City of Grand Junction, City of Fruita, Town of Palisade, Town of Collbran and Town of DeBeque – are within the County’s borders<sup>28</sup>. Aside from the municipalities, there are 3,268 square miles, that are considered unincorporated communities not defined as areas that are not governed by individual municipalities. Instead, these communities are governed by the County government.



\*The following are additional unincorporated areas, but are not included due to lack of census data: Molina, Mesa, Powderhorn, Glade Park, Gateway, Unaweep Canyon, Whitewater, Kannah Creek

Figure 17. Mesa County Incorporated and Unincorporated Communities Map. Source: Mesa County

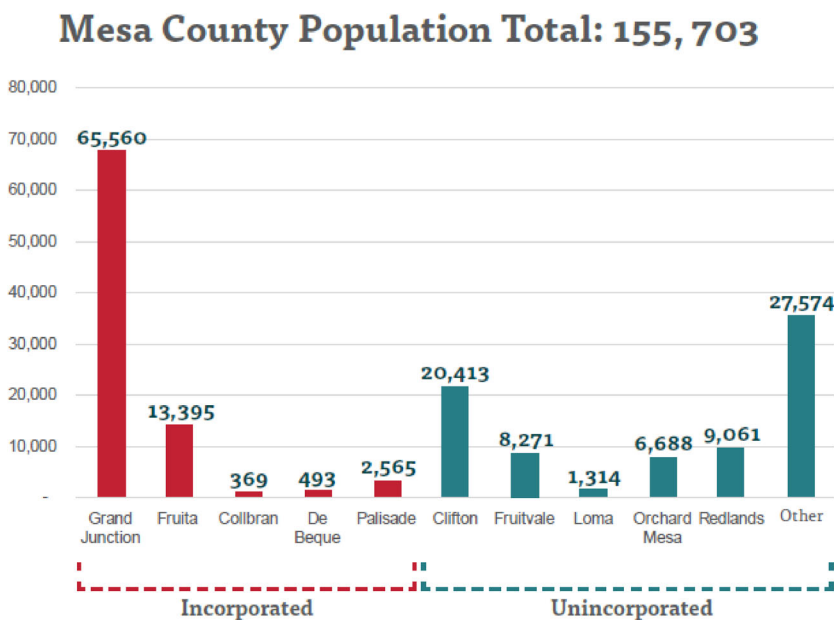


Figure 18. Mesa County Incorporated and Unincorporated Populations. Source: 2020 Decennial Census

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.mesacounty.us/residents/your-government/municipalities/>

## Community Areas.

While there are more unincorporated neighborhoods than listed below, those left out were not found to have obtainable data.

### 1. Clifton:

Clifton is the largest and most urbanized unincorporated neighborhood in Mesa County. It sits between Grand Junction and Palisade, centrally located within the Grand Valley. Clifton is approximately 6 square miles. According to 2020 Decennial Census, Clifton has a population of 20,413<sup>29</sup>. There are 10,145 total employees within the area. A majority of the labor force consists of white-collar positions<sup>30</sup>.

The neighborhood was established in 1900.<sup>31</sup> Since then, it has grown into a modern, urbanized area. Though the area has a large population for an unincorporated neighborhood, it has a small-town and family-oriented atmosphere. Most recent plan for Clifton (2006) splits the neighborhood into Central, South, and Northeast Clifton. Central Clifton is known as the historic center and downtown section of the neighborhood. A majority of South Clifton was developed in the late 1900's during Western Colorado's energy boom. Lastly, a significant amount of Northeast Clifton is on the eastern boundary of the neighborhood and due to its proximity, lacks public sewer treatment accessibility<sup>32</sup>.

### 2. Fruitvale:

Fruitvale has a population of 8,271 residents<sup>33</sup>. Like Clifton, it is also centrally located in the county. Out of the 4,035 employees in the area, white collar jobs make up majority of the labor force. The average household size of all 3,172 households is 2.63. Within those households, the median income is \$64,063<sup>34</sup>.

Fruitvale is west of Clifton and historically centered around the area's schools. Fruit orchards and packing sheds were a significant part of the economy until a moth infestation in 1920<sup>35</sup>.

### 3. Loma:

Loma is in the northwestern portion of Mesa County. It has a population of 1,314 people<sup>36</sup> and a median age of 20.5 years old.<sup>37</sup> There are 386 households, and the average size is 4.07. The median income for these households is \$120,183 and there are 826 employees<sup>38</sup>.

Loma was first inhabited by the Ute tribe until approximately 1881. Once homesteaders began settling, agriculture quickly became a key component in Loma's economy. Sugar beets and potatoes were dominant

---

<sup>29</sup> 2020 Decennial Census

<sup>30</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Clifton

<sup>31</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifton,\\_Colorado](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifton,_Colorado)

<sup>32</sup> Clifton-Fruitvale Community Plan, 2006

<sup>33</sup> 2020 Decennial Census

<sup>34</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Fruitvale

<sup>35</sup> Clifton-Fruitvale Community Plan, 2006

<sup>36</sup> 2020 Decennial Census

<sup>37</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Loma

<sup>38</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Loma



crops into the late 1900's. To this day, the community values the rural character of Loma highlighted by its openness, agriculture-based economy, and small housing<sup>39</sup>.

#### 4. Orchard Mesa

Orchard Mesa is a neighborhood centrally located in Mesa County. It has a population of 6,688 people<sup>40</sup> within its 102 acres. There are 89 businesses<sup>41</sup> in the neighborhood that accounts for 2,972 employees<sup>42</sup>. A majority of the employees have white collar jobs, and only 10.4% of Orchard Mesa is unemployed<sup>43</sup>. There are 2,444 homes in the neighborhood, and they have an average household size of 2.64 people and a median income of \$61,017<sup>44</sup>.

According to the last neighborhood plan for Orchard Mesa, the community has pride in preserving and reinforcing the aesthetic of the neighborhood through dense core areas. The Orchard Mesa community also highly values its agricultural background, open spaces and small-town feel. Due to its proximity to adjacent jurisdictions, Orchard Mesa is at risk of urban sprawl if future land use is not carefully considered<sup>45</sup>.

#### 5. Redlands

With a population of 9,061 people, Redlands is the second largest unincorporated neighborhood in Mesa County<sup>46</sup>. Of those 9,061 people, the average age is 50.3 years old<sup>47</sup>. The neighborhood has 4,219 employees<sup>48</sup> and 138 businesses<sup>49</sup>. White collar labor makes up majority of the neighborhood's labor force.<sup>50</sup> There are 3,570 homes in Redlands and the average household size is 2.47<sup>51</sup>. The average median income of all households is \$77,348<sup>52</sup>.

According to Redlands 2002 Neighborhood Plan, its lands contain key visually prominent areas including key corridors (Highway 340 and South Camp Road) as well as ridgelines along Monument and South Camp Road. Monument Road in particular is a visually significant corridor due to the access it provides to the Tabeguache trailhead and gateway element that it provides for the Colorado National Monument. The Redlands has a unique character through its diverse topography, visual elements, and openness. Though the neighborhood has a residential nature, it is typically used as a place for commuters<sup>53</sup>.

#### 6. Gateway

---

<sup>39</sup> Loma Community Pan, 2009

<sup>40</sup> 2020 Decennial Census

<sup>41</sup> Esri Demographic and Income Profile, Orchard Mesa

<sup>42</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Orchard Mesa

<sup>43</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Orchard Mesa

<sup>44</sup> Esri Demographic and Income Profile, Orchard Mesa

<sup>45</sup> Orchard Mesa Neighborhood Plan, 2014

<sup>46</sup> 2020 Decennial Census

<sup>47</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Redlands

<sup>48</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Redlands

<sup>49</sup> Esri Demographic and Income Profile, Redlands

<sup>50</sup> Esri Demographic and Income Profile, Redlands

<sup>51</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Redlands

<sup>52</sup> 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Redlands

<sup>53</sup> Redlands Neighborhood Plan, 2002

Gateway is yet another distinct unincorporated neighborhood in Mesa County. Demographical information could not be found for Gateway.

According to Gateway residents in the 2004 Community Plan, they value “A strong sense of community, small town values, agricultural and mining heritage and self-reliance” in their Gateway neighborhood. Wayside Chapel, the Community Center and Gateway School are key areas where community gathering takes place. In addition to the man-made structures that hold residents’ value, Gateway also contains natural elements that are cherished by the community. Canyon walls, mesas and ridgelines make up Gateway’s scenery<sup>54</sup>.

Tourists are an important part of the Gateway economy. They may enjoy the Gateway Canyons Resort and Auto Museum, kayaking, off-road tours, horseback riding and air tours. It is important that new development within the area is balanced with the historical values of the residents<sup>55</sup>.

## **7. Mack**

Demographics could not be found for Mack. However, according to Mack’s 2012 Community Plan, it is historically rural and values historical and traditional land uses such as open country living, agriculture, and wildlife and natural habitats. The community originally began as a railroad terminal and settlement. Around 1918, irrigated lands around Mack obtained a homestead drawing which enabled a farming community to arise. Like most unincorporated neighborhoods, service treatment limitations are an issue within Mack. US Highway 6 & 50 serve the area as key transportation corridors. Through these routes, Mack serves partially as a commuter community for Grand Junction<sup>56</sup>.

Given the area’s rural nature, the environment is a large consideration in Mack. Preserving outdoor lighting and visually prominent areas such as the highway and interstate ridgelines is a top priority<sup>57</sup>.

## **8. Molina**

Molina is an unincorporated neighborhood made up of 10 people. There are 4 total businesses in the area accounting for 9 employees. The median age in the neighborhood is 63.3 years old. There are 2 households with a median income of \$87,500<sup>58</sup>.

## **9. Glade Park**

Glade Park is 16 miles west of downtown Grand Junction. It is a former ranching and farming community. The remoteness of the area has arisen in alternative homes and a self-sufficient community. Demographics could not be found for Glade Park.

## **10. Powderhorn**

Powderhorn is widely known for being a mountain resort, but outside of the seasonal tourists, the neighborhood has year-round residents and a small-town community of its own. No demographics could be found for this neighborhood.

---

<sup>54</sup> Gateway Community Plan, 2004

<sup>55</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gateway,\\_Colorado](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gateway,_Colorado)

<sup>56</sup> Mack Community Plan, 2012

<sup>57</sup> Mack Community Plan, 2012

<sup>58</sup> Esri Demographic and Income Profile, Molina

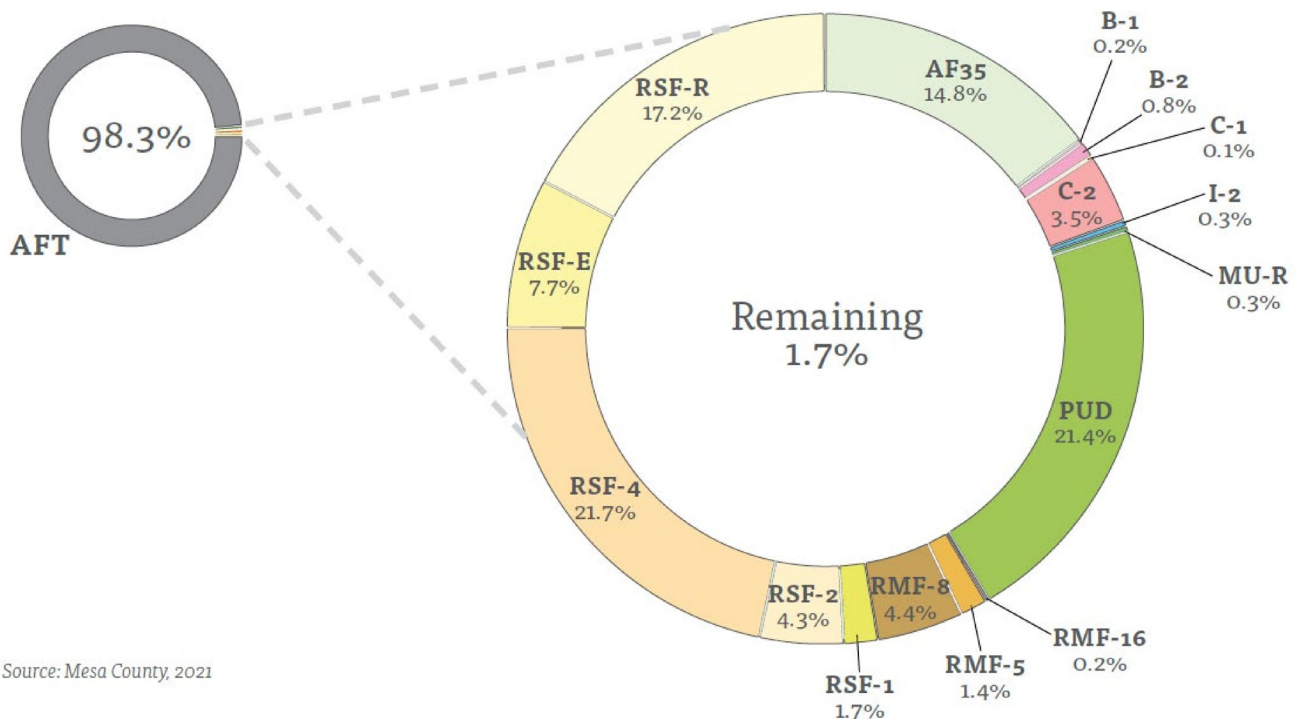


11. Whitewater

Whitewater is located along the banks of the Gunnison River in Mesa County<sup>59</sup>. In terms of demographics, no information could be found for this neighborhood.

LAND USE

Land uses in Mesa County are primarily zoned Agriculture, Forestry and Transitional (AFT) which allows for agricultural and low-density residential uses. The remaining area- which accounts for less than 2% of the total land area of the county- is nearly half single family residential with approximately 4% commercial and business uses.



Source: Mesa County, 2021

Figure 19. Mesa County Existing Zoning (Percent Acres). Source: Mesa County, 2021

<sup>59</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitewater,\\_Colorado](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitewater,_Colorado)

<b>Zoning Districts</b>	
<b>Rural Zoning Districts</b>	
Agricultural and Forestry District (AF-35)	Land for the protection and continuation of agriculture and forestry operations and the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands.
Agricultural, Forestry, Transitional District (AFT)	Agricultural operations and very low-density single-family residential development.
<b>Residential Zoning Districts</b>	
Residential Single Family - Rural (RSF-R)	Low-intensity agricultural operations and very low-density single-family uses on large parcels.
Residential Single Family - Estate (RSF-E)	Low-density, single-family residential development
Residential Single Family - 1 District (RSF-1)	Medium-low density single-family and duplex residential development
Residential Single Family - 2 District (RSF-2)	Medium-low density single-family and duplex residential development
Residential Single Family - 4 District (RSF-4)	Medium-density single-family and duplex residential development
Residential Single Family - 5 District (RSF-5)	Medium-density single-family, duplex and low-density multi-family residential development
Residential Single Family - 8 District (RSF-8)	Medium-high-density single-family, duplex and multi-family residential development
Residential Single Family - 12 District (RSF-12)	Medium-high-density duplex, multi-family residential development
Residential Single Family - 16 District (RSF-16)	Medium to high-density, multi-family residential development
Residential Single Family - 24 District (RSF-24)	High-density, multi-family residential development
Mixed Use - Residential (MU-R)	A mix of high-density multi-family residential and commercial uses.
Urban Residential Reserve District (URR)	Low density, single-family residential development. Subdivided lots are grouped with a larger lot reserved for future development.
<b>Urban Nonresidential Zoning Districts</b>	
Residential Office District (R-O)	Very low-intensity office uses on small sites in or near residential areas or between residential and commercial areas
Limited Business District (B-1)	Low-intensity neighborhood service and office uses
Concentrated Business District (B-2)	Concentrated retail, service and office uses in community downtown settings.
Limited Commercial District (C-1)	Retail, service, and office uses conducted entirely indoors.
General Commercial District (C-2)	Moderate-to high-intensity commercial uses
Limited Industrial District (I-1)	Light manufacturing uses within enclosed structures or developments
General Industrial District (I-2)	Heavy and concentrated fabrication, manufacturing and industrial uses
Mixed Use - Commercial District	Mix of commercial and high-density multi-family residential uses
Mixed Use - Old Town Clifton District (MU-OTC)	Mix of residential and commercial uses

Source: Mesa County, 2021

Figure 20. Zoning Districts Key. Source: Mesa County, 2021



## MEMORANDUM

To: Mesa County, Greg Moberg, Sean Norris  
From: Design Workshop: Anna Laybourn, Alison Bourquin  
RRC Associates: David Becher, Dave Belin  
Date: April 26, 2022  
Project Name: Mesa Together, Mesa County Master Plan  
#: 6699  
Subject: Economy, Housing and Tourism Draft

---

### Economy, Housing and Tourism Memorandum Purpose

This memo is intended to summarize relevant data regarding Mesa County's economy, housing, and recreation and tourism. Other memos prepared by others on the consultant team will include review of transportation, sustainability, and resilience, among other topics. The compilation of these memos will represent an understanding of the Existing Conditions and Opportunities in Phase 1 of the Master Plan Update work.

Key information from these memoranda will be selected for inclusion in the final document and some information may be used to summarize existing conditions and provide a broad overview of opportunities in public engagement/information efforts.

This memo is broken down into the following three sections:

- **Economy**
- **Housing**
- **Recreation and Tourism**

## ECONOMY

This section presents some key trends in Mesa County's economy, including primary industries, competitive advantages, opportunities, and economic forecasts.

### Key Trends in Mesa County's Economy

To summarize, the county has a diversified economy, with several sectors bringing outside dollars into the local economy, including health care, agriculture, tourism, federal and state government, varied services to the surrounding region, manufacturing, oil and gas, and other sectors. Also providing a foundation for Mesa County's economy are anchor institutions and infrastructure such as Colorado Mesa University, the Grand Junction Regional Airport, I-70, and access to water. Mesa County also benefits from relative affordability (cost of living and doing business) compared to much of the rest of Colorado, although housing costs have been rising. Also supporting the Mesa County economy are the natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and quality of life of the area, which help attract and retain companies and workers, including location-independent workers.

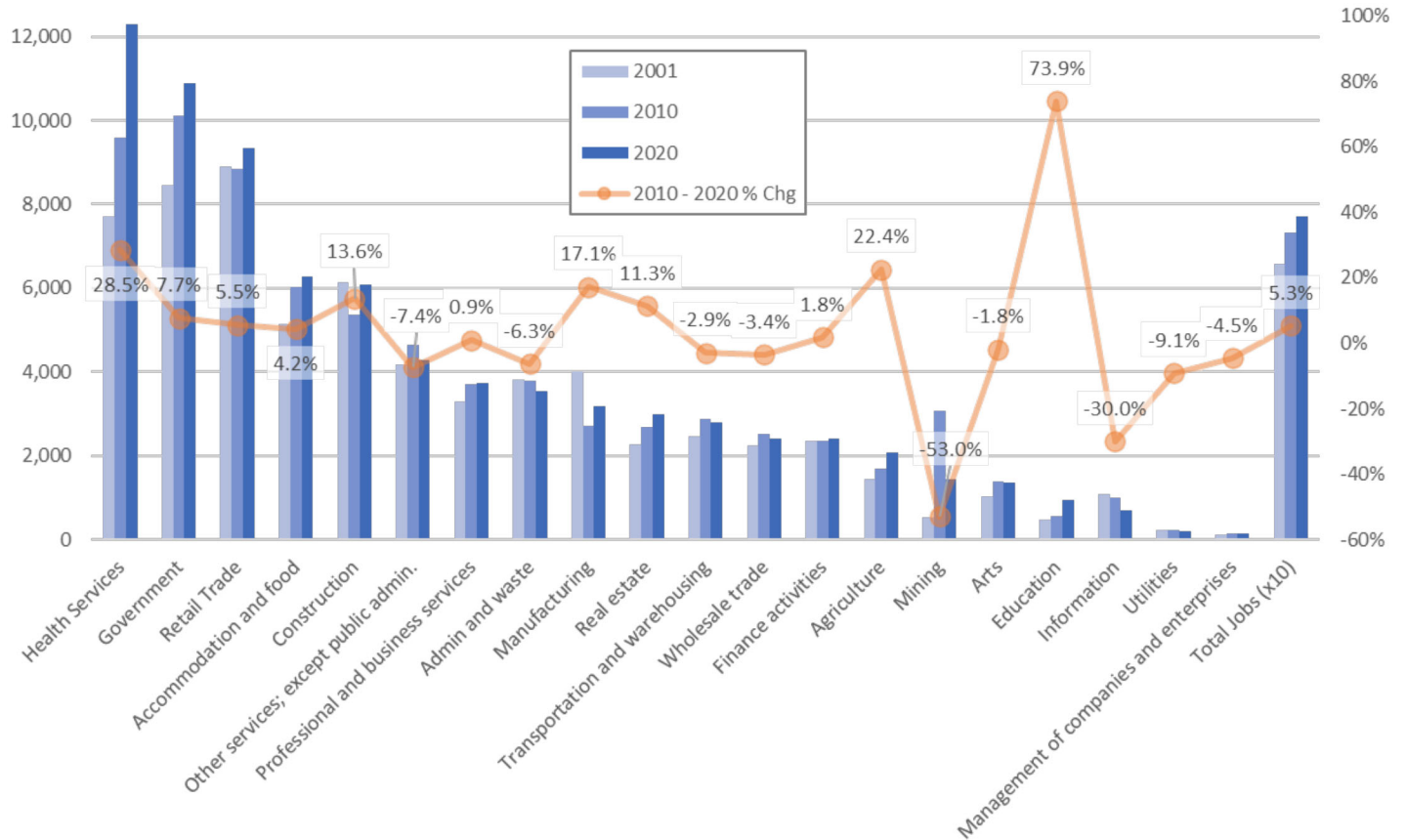
Current weaknesses of the Mesa County economy include workforce shortages, housing costs, and keeping local graduates in the area. Mesa County has also experienced a series of booms and busts in its economy in the past, often tied to ups and downs in the energy and construction industries. While jobs have bounced back quickly from the Covid-19 recession, job counts remained down for an extended period after the 2008-09 Great Recession, and do not yet appear to have fully recovered to the peak levels reached in 2008.

Looking ahead, Mesa County is anticipated to experience substantial job growth for the next three decades. The greatest absolute job growth over the next ten years is anticipated to be in health care/social assistance, followed by accommodations and food services and construction, and growth is anticipated in most other industry sectors as well. If the forecasted job growth (and population growth) materializes, it could mark a significant change from the more muted pace of development which has occurred since the Great Recession. Planning for an elevated level of future growth thus appears to be an important potential objective of the Master Plan Update.

### Current Industries and Employment in Mesa County

The three largest employment categories by industry sector in Mesa County in 2020 are Health Services, Government, and Retail Trade. The rate of growth from 2010 to 2020 for these three sectors was 28.5%, 7.7%, and 5.5%, respectively. Of note, agriculture employment increased by 22.4% over the past decade. See Figure 1 and Table 1 below.

**Figure 1. Mesa County Employment by Industry Sector, 2001 - 2020**



Source: Colorado State Demography Office.

**Table 1. Mesa County Employment by Industry Sector, 2020**

	2020 jobs	2020 % of basic jobs
<b>DIRECT BASIC JOBS:</b>		
<b>Traditional Basic Industries - Total</b>	<b>11,295</b>	<b>26.1%</b>
<i>Agribusiness</i>	2,987	6.9%
<i>Mining (incl. oil &amp; gas)</i>	1,447	3.3%
<i>Manufacturing</i>	2,313	5.3%
<i>Government (State &amp; Federal)</i>	4,548	10.5%
<b>Regional Center / National Services - Total</b>	<b>12,745</b>	<b>29.4%</b>
<i>Communications</i>	80	0.2%
<i>Construction</i>	1,911	4.4%
<i>Finance, Insurance and Real Estate</i>	363	0.8%
<i>Trade and Transportation</i>	1,755	4.1%
<i>Professional and Business Services</i>	952	2.2%
<i>Education and Health Services</i>	7,676	17.7%
<b>Tourism - Total</b>	<b>3,986</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
<i>Resorts (resorts, attractions, lodging)</i>	2,550	5.9%
<i>Service (dining, shopping, entertainment)</i>	378	0.9%
<i>Transportation (airfare, car rental, gas, etc.)</i>	572	1.3%
<i>Second Homes (construction, upkeep, sales)</i>	485	1.1%
<b>Households - Total</b>	<b>15,252</b>	<b>35.2%</b>
<i>Commuters</i>	1,821	4.2%
<i>HHs with Public Assistance Income</i>	2,990	6.9%
<i>Retirees</i>	7,973	18.4%
<i>HHs with Dividend / Interest / Rental Income</i>	2,468	5.7%
<b>TOTAL DIRECT BASIC JOBS</b>	<b>43,278</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>OTHER CATEGORIES OF JOBS:</b>		
<b>Indirect Basic</b>	<b>9,658</b>	<b>#N/A</b>
Total Basic (Direct Basic + Indirect Basic)	52,936	#N/A
<b>Worker/Local Resident Services (Non Basic)</b>	<b>24,496</b>	<b>#N/A</b>
Total Local Resident Services (HHs + Non Basic)	39,748	#N/A
<b>TOTAL - ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>77,432</b>	<b>#N/A</b>

Source: Colorado State Demography Office.



Mesa County’s jobs are primarily concentrated in Grand Junction. The City of Grand Junction currently accounts for approximately 75% of Mesa County’s jobs and 42% of its population (per Colorado State Demography Office). This pattern has implications countywide for transportation infrastructure, housing, public finance, and related planning concerns.

Corroborating this finding, in 2019 (per US Census ZIP Code Business Patterns), 89.3% of Mesa County private sector nonagricultural employment was in Grand Junction ZIP codes (not the same as the City boundary), with another 5.3% in Fruita ZIP 81521, 2.5% in Clifton ZIP 81520, 1.5% in Palisade ZIP 81526, and 1.5% elsewhere in Mesa County. See Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Mesa County ZIP Code Business Patterns, 2019**

ZIP	Name	Mid-March Employees		First Quarter Payroll (\$1,000)		Annualized Wage Rate (per 1st Qtr)	Establishments	
		#	%	#	%	#	#	%
81501	Grand Junction	19,731	36.3%	\$210,779	36.5%	\$42,731	1,324	29.0%
81505	Grand Junction	15,673	28.8%	\$169,797	29.4%	\$43,335	1,011	22.2%
81506	Grand Junction	6,884	12.7%	\$74,535	12.9%	\$43,309	438	9.6%
81504	Grand Junction	3,005	5.5%	\$37,851	6.5%	\$50,384	357	7.8%
81503	Grand Junction	1,677	3.1%	\$13,497	2.3%	\$32,193	299	6.6%
81507	Grand Junction	1,073	2.0%	\$8,172	1.4%	\$30,464	274	6.0%
81502	Grand Junction	559	1.0%	\$8,257	1.4%	\$59,084	43	0.9%
<b>Subtotal - GJ ZIPs</b>		<b>48,602</b>	<b>89.3%</b>	<b>\$522,888</b>	<b>90.4%</b>	<b>\$43,034</b>	<b>3,746</b>	<b>82.1%</b>
81521	Fruita	2,861	5.3%	\$32,769	5.7%	\$45,815	305	6.7%
81520	Clifton	1,334	2.5%	\$8,825	1.5%	\$26,462	167	3.7%
81526	Palisade	817	1.5%	\$6,116	1.1%	\$29,944	133	2.9%
81630	De Beque	214	0.4%	\$3,014	0.5%	\$56,336	30	0.7%
81524	Loma	199	0.4%	\$1,365	0.2%	\$27,437	66	1.4%
81624	Collbran	103	0.2%	\$1,089	0.2%	\$42,291	35	0.8%
81522	Gateway	74	0.1%	\$628	0.1%	\$33,946	3	0.1%
81643	Mesa	60	0.1%	\$263	0.0%	\$17,533	21	0.5%
81527	Whitewater	54	0.1%	\$524	0.1%	\$38,815	26	0.6%
81523	Glade Park	48	0.1%	\$341	0.1%	\$28,417	16	0.4%
81525	Mack	48	0.1%	\$426	0.1%	\$35,500	15	0.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>54,414</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$578,248</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$42,507</b>	<b>4,563</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: US Census, ZIP Code Business Patterns, 2019. Note: Data excludes most employment associated with government, crop and livestock production, railroads, and private households.

### Primary Industries

As summarized by the Grand Junction Economic Partnership, key industry sectors in Grand Junction include the following.

- **HEALTHCARE-** Grand Junctions’ largest local industry is health care, with five hospitals and over 11,000 (12,546 as of Q2 2020) employees serving over half million people across the Mountain West. The Healthcare and Social Assistance Sector represented both the largest

total quarterly wages in Q2 2021 (\$168,082,764) and the largest total wage change increase from Q2 2020 to Q2 2021 (\$15,992,724).

- **AEROSPACE/AVIATION**- Grand Junction has a cluster of aerospace and aviation-related businesses that includes innovative industry leaders such as West Star Aviation, Jabil Lewis Engineering, and NASA’s Orion Spacecraft supplier SG Aerospace & Gas.
- **AGRIBUSINESS**- The Grand Valley boasts over 30 wineries and is well known for its peaches and corn. There has also been substantial growth in recent years in the industrial hemp industry. Hemp farms and CBD oil manufacturing continues to expand throughout the region.
- **ENERGY**- Piceance Basin is the second largest natural gas reserve in the US, which has made energy a legacy industry for the region. Despite this, GDP generated by Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction fell by 57.2% between 2019 and 2020, with these jobs having fallen by about 30% from Q4 2019 to Q2 2021.
- **OUTDOOR RECREATION**- This is a very fast-growing industry in the region, particularly outdoor recreation manufacturing, which makes use of the available labor pool that formerly supported the energy manufacturing industry. While the job growth of other sectors were impacted severely from 2019 to 2021, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation saw very slight growth in the midst of the pandemic (about 3%)
- **TECH**- Another fast-growing sector, tech has expanded in recent years, specifically with geospatial, cybersecurity and software development companies that are both opening up headquarters and hiring locally for remote workers.

Source: <https://www.gjep.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/21-GJEP-Market-Overview-Web-FINAL-5.24.2021.pdf>

## Economic Base Analysis Summary

The Colorado State Demography Office (SDO) Economic Base Analysis provides information about economic activities that bring outside dollars into a community and the additional jobs that result from the spending of those dollars on local resident services. Business and economic activity is classified into one of three major categories: Base Industries, Indirect Basic, and Local Resident Services.

- 1) Industries that sell goods or services outside the local area are considered the base of the economy; these **Base Industries** contribute to the local economy because they bring in outside dollars to the community. Basic industries also generate additional secondary jobs in the economy that are classified as either “Indirect Basic” or “Local Resident Services.”
- 2) **Indirect Basic** employment results from base industry firms purchases of goods or services necessary for the operations of their business. These Indirect Basic firms are included in the Total Direct Basic employment count, but not assigned to a Base Industry category since they do

not directly sell to the outside customer. Additionally, these indirect basic jobs would be difficult to assign to an industry as they often provide goods and services to a variety of different base industries.

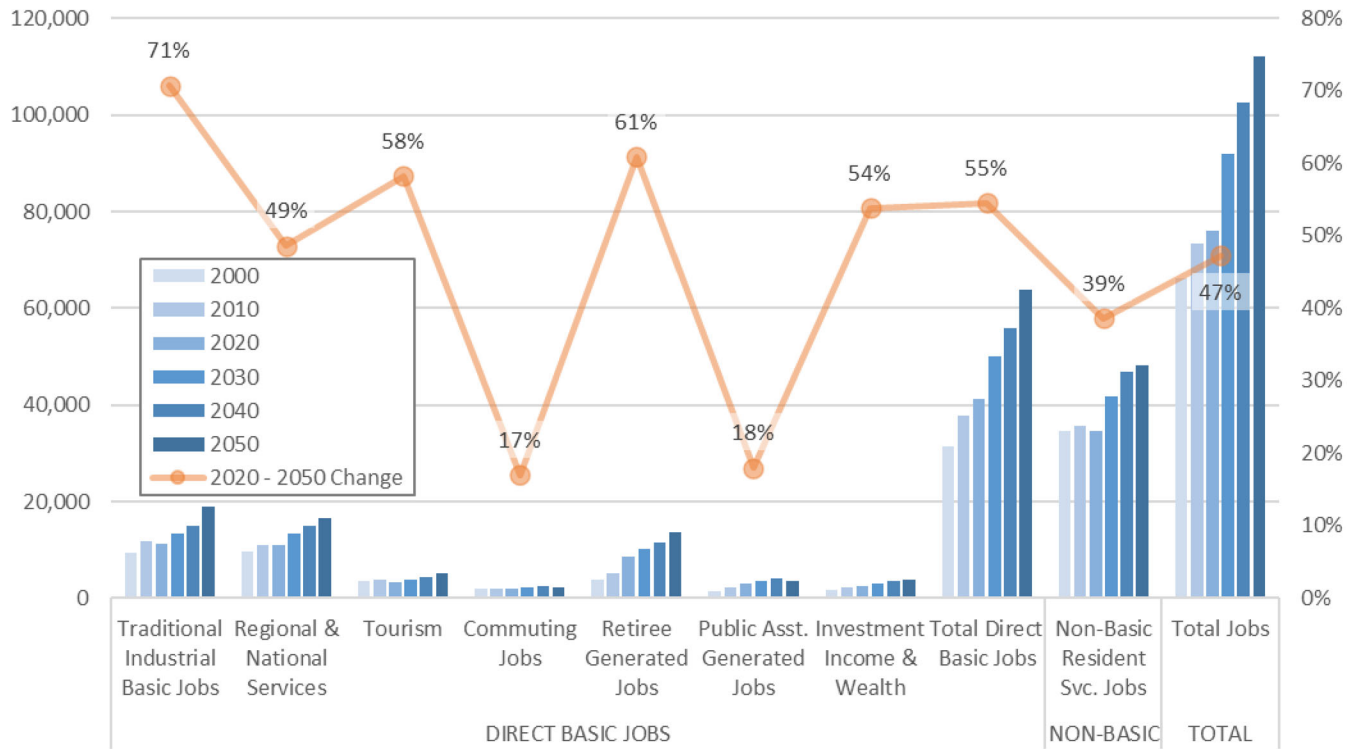
- 3) The earnings, rents, interest and profits generated by the base industries are often spent locally to purchase food, clothes, services (for example, health care), and to pay taxes. The jobs that this spending creates are classified as **Local Resident Services**. Examples of Local Resident Services jobs include most retailers, lawyers, public school teachers, and local police officers.

### Economic and Employment Forecasts for Mesa County

After slow growth over the past decade (gradual recovery from Great Recession, then a sharp contraction and recovery from Covid-19 impacts), Mesa County is projected to experience substantial job growth going forward. The Colorado State Demography Office projects growth from 77,598 jobs in 2020 to 93,027 jobs in 2030 and 104,829 jobs in 2040.

The projections include job growth across all basic industry groups: traditional basic industry jobs (combination of agribusiness, manufacturing, state/federal government, mining/oil & gas), regional and national services, tourism, and retiree-generated jobs. Of note, certain sectors are projected to grow at a slower pace for job generation, including commuting jobs and public assistance generated jobs. Employment by basic industry category shows that Non-Basic Resident Service jobs, Traditional Industrial Basic jobs, Regional and National Service jobs are the top three categories of industry in Mesa County. The projected growth by industry category shows that Traditional Industrial Basic jobs will increase by 71% from 2020 to 2050, while Retiree Generated jobs will grow by 61% and Tourism jobs will increase by 58%. See Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2. Mesa County –Employment by Basic Industry Category, 2000- 2050**



Source: Colorado State Demography Office.

**Table 3. Mesa County Industry Nonagricultural Employment Projections - Long Term**

	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Total Employment Change	Total Percent Change
Health Care and Social Assistance	11,265	14,723	3,458	31%
Retail Trade	8,203	8,659	456	6%
Accommodation and Food Services	6,066	7,781	1,715	28%
Construction	4,578	5,940	1,362	30%
Educational Services	4,919	5,823	904	18%
Manufacturing	3,011	3,200	189	6%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,649	2,966	317	12%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,237	2,877	640	29%
Transportation and Warehousing	2,325	2,783	458	20%
Local Government	2,619	2,727	108	4%
Admin. & Support and Waste Mgt & Remediation Svcs	2,565	2,422	-143	-6%
Finance and Insurance	1,999	1,983	-16	-1%
Federal Government	1,759	1,955	196	11%
Mining	1,122	1,742	620	55%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,090	1,113	23	2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	791	1,060	269	34%

Public Administration	1,024	963	-61	-6%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	527	718	191	36%
Information	559	493	-66	-12%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	148	159	11	7%
Utilities	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential
Wholesale Trade	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65,796</b>	<b>76,971</b>	<b>11,175</b>	<b>17%</b>

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment – Labor Market Information, <https://www.colmigateway.com/vosnet/analyzer/DataDownload.aspx?returnto=indproj>

### Priorities for Growth in Mesa County

According to focus groups conducted for this Master Plan, the top priorities for future economic development in Mesa County are staying diversified, attracting new businesses, keeping local graduates in the areas, agritourism, working with non-profit organizations, and responsible/smart growth.

- Infrastructure improvements like broadband, rail, multiple city centers, attainable housing, and more incentives for businesses to move to the area.
- Smaller commercial districts spread throughout the county and closer to more residential neighborhoods are supported, including Clifton, Mack/Loma, Orchard Mesa, Fruita, and North Grand Junction.

**Figure 3. Master Plan Focus Group Key Findings and Top Priorities, 2021**

### Focus Group: Economic Development

**Topics Discussed:** Development growth and land use, economic strengths; economic weaknesses; business support strategies; partnerships and regional approaches.

#### Where are we today?

- Focus group participants generally felt that the direction of economic development in the region is somewhat headed in the right direction. It is improving but there is room for improvement.
- The Mesa County economy is growing and becoming more diverse.
- The strengths of the Mesa County economy are health care, education, agriculture, tourism, recreation, and small businesses.
- Current weaknesses of the Mesa County economy include the lack of workforce, challenges with affordable/workforce housing, distance to the Front Range or other major metro area, and keeping graduates in the area.



- Focus group participants commented about gaps in the economy that include higher paying jobs/industries, innovative businesses, education, and the cost of housing.

#### **What are the trends?**

- Focus group participants generally felt that pace of development is just about right but these trends vary greatly throughout the County. Some areas are growing too fast and others are “just right”.
- Regulations are outpaced by the speed of the private sector. It is important to be nimble and respond to market demands.
- Historically the foundation of the economy was oil and gas, but in the past five years has diversified with growth in healthcare, tourism, and tech industries.
- Affordable housing is a consistent concern, lending to difficulty attracting and retaining talent.
- Unincorporated areas adjacent to municipalities are faced with development pressures to accommodate growth and struggle with providing services that the public expects in those locations.

#### **Where to next?**

- Top priorities for the future economic development of Mesa County are staying diversified, attracting new businesses, keeping graduates in the area, agritourism, working with non-profits, and responsible/smart growth.
- Opportunities exist for the county to partner with a variety of organizations on economic development issues, including land trusts, non-profits, local food production/agribusiness, and the various municipalities.
- Improvements that would benefit local businesses include infrastructure like broadband and rail, multiple city centers, attainable housing, and more incentives for businesses to move to the area.
- There is a general desire to see services and goods being more closely available to neighborhoods, and to decentralize commercial development in favor of smaller commercial districts throughout the Grand Valley.
- Future commercial development should focus on Clifton, Whitewater, Mack/Loma, Orchard Mesa, Fruita (particularly the business park and Fruita South), and North Grand Junction

Source: Mesa County Master Plan Focus Group, December 2021

## 2015 Consumer Awareness & Perception Study

Outdoor recreation, (agri)tourism, manufacturing, and healthcare are key sectors for growth identified in the **2015 Consumer Awareness & Perception Study** focus groups. Additionally, results of the community leader survey agree that these sectors are strong assets of Mesa County.

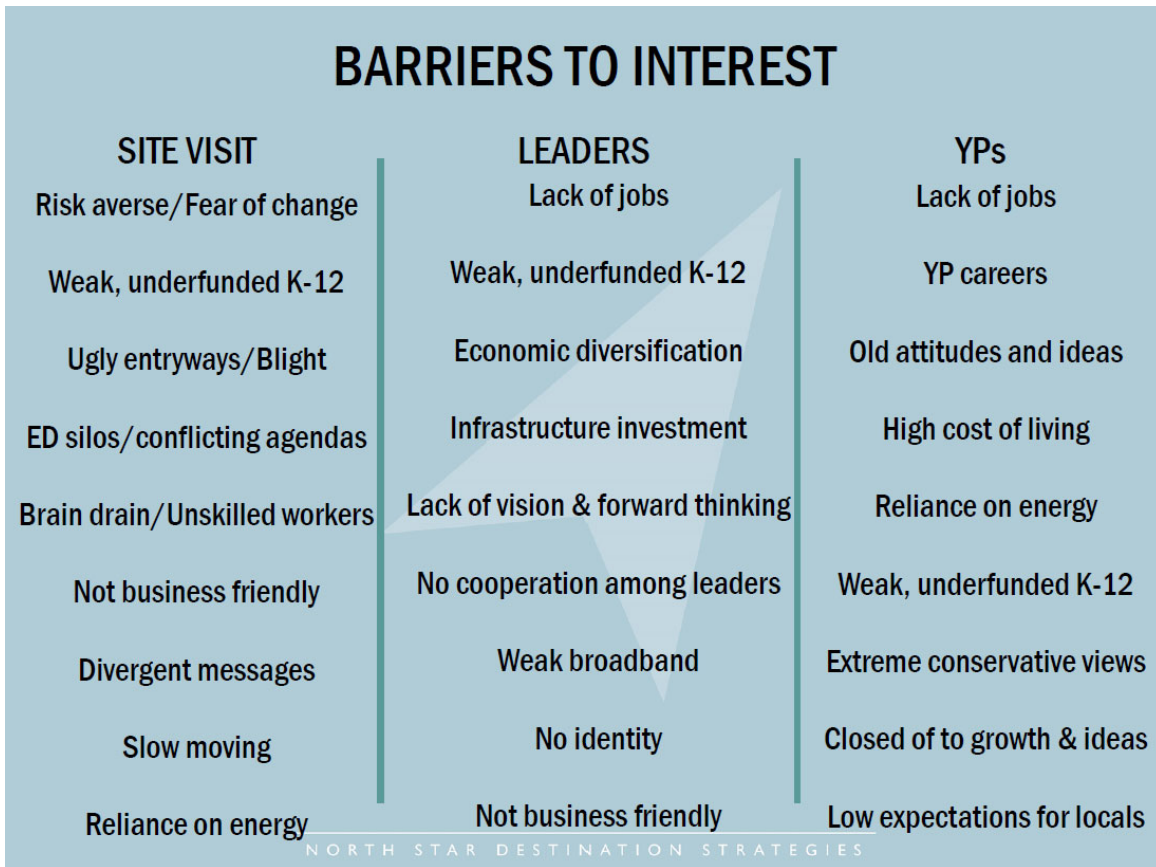
**Figure 4. Consumer Awareness & Perception Study (Sectors to Prioritize), 2015**



Source: Consumer Awareness & Perception Study

There is an expectation that to build these sectors, the community needs to either recruit or “home grow” high-skilled workers. To address this, community leaders believe that K-12 education needs more funding, cost of living needs to be addressed, and business incentives / a friendlier approach to businesses would bring in higher paying careers.

Figure 5. Consumer Awareness & Perception Study (Barriers to Address), 2015



Source: Consumer Awareness & Perception Study

The consumer awareness & perceptions study noted that some of the assets and opportunities of Mesa County are its outdoor recreation areas and the tourism sector.

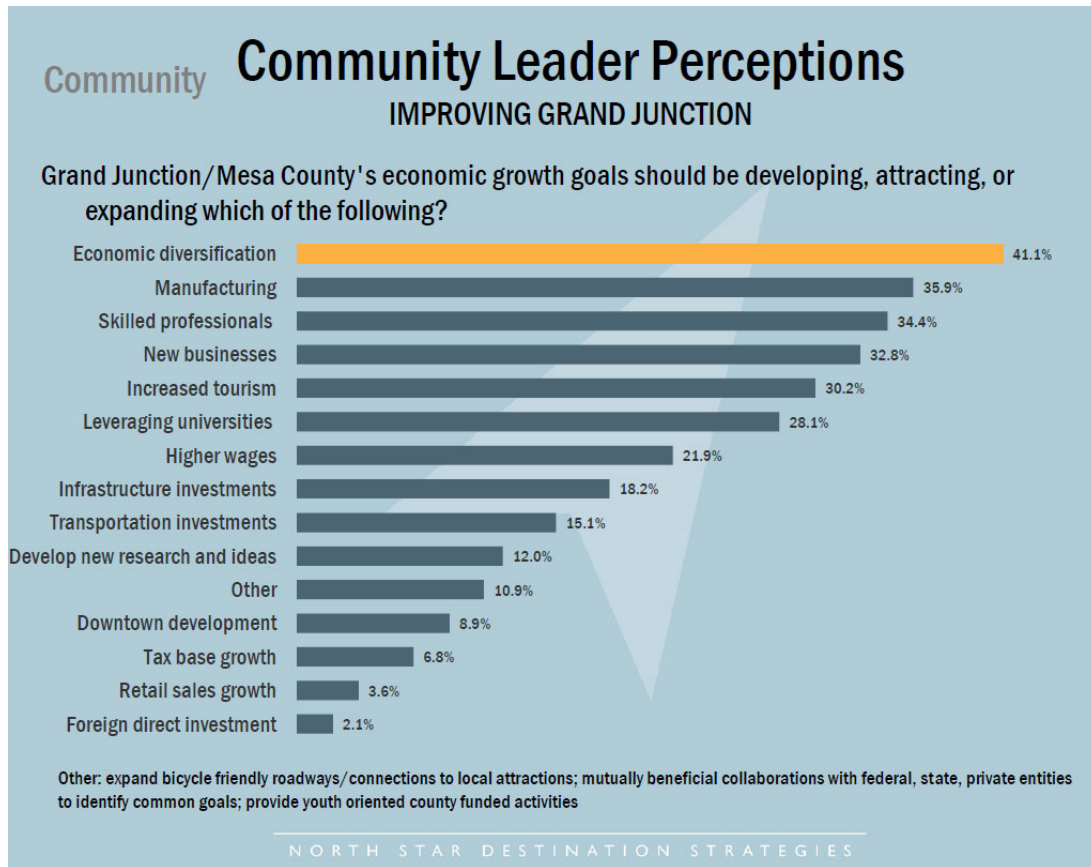
Figure 6. Consumer Awareness & Perception Study (Opportunities), 2015



Source: Consumer Awareness & Perception Study

Based on the 2015 Consumer Awareness & Perception Study, the business community is looking to the future with economic priorities that capitalize on Mesa County’s advantages and address weaknesses. Community leaders see economic diversification (including outdoor recreation/tourism), manufacturing, building a skilled labor force, and building new businesses as the next economic growth priorities for Mesa County.

**Figure 7. Consumer Awareness & Perception Study (Community Leader Perceptions), 2015**



Source: Consumer Awareness & Perception Study

### Mesa County is Relatively Affordable

Regional price parities (RPPs) measure the differences in price levels across states and metropolitan areas for a given year and are expressed as a percentage of the overall national price level. The RPP allows for comparisons of buying power across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, or from one metro area to another, for a given year. States with the highest RPPs in 2020 were Hawaii (112.0), New Jersey (111.2), and California (110.4); the RPP in the District of Columbia was 111.5. States with the lowest RPPs were Mississippi (87.8), West Virginia (88.0), and Arkansas (89.2).

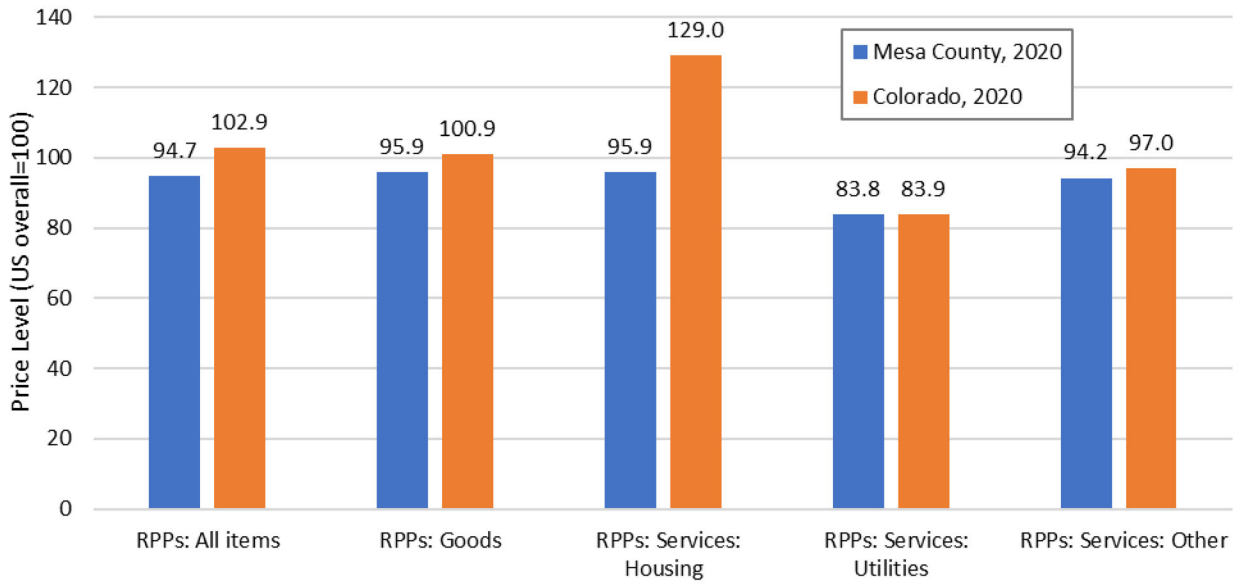
The release also includes new estimates of 2020 regional price parities for the metropolitan areas and revised data for the states and metropolitan areas for 2008 to 2019.

In Mesa County, RPPs for all items are below the average for Colorado and the U.S. overall and have been for the past decade (2010-2020). See Figure 8. In particular, RPP for housing is noticeably lower in Mesa County compared to Colorado benchmarks. RPP for utilities are nearly identical in Mesa County



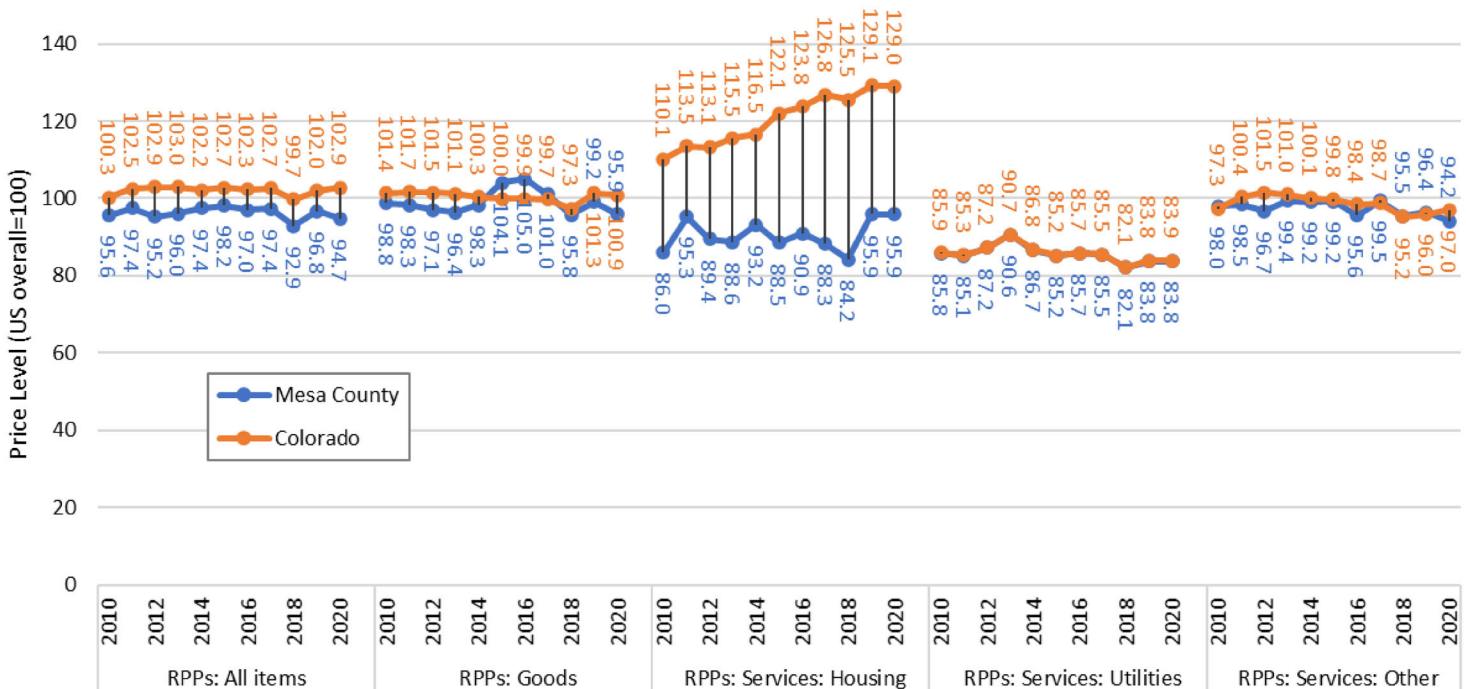
and Colorado and mixed for Goods (some years Mesa County’s RPP is higher than Colorado’s, some years it is lower). Other Services RPP in Mesa County is generally at or below Colorado levels.

**Figure 8. Regional Price Parities: Mesa County vs. Colorado, 2020**



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis.

**Figure 9. Regional Price Parities: Mesa County vs. Colorado, 2010 – 2020**



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Compared to the Denver Metro Area, the Grand Junction area has substantially lower costs for doing business, has lower single-family home cost, and a shorter round-trip commute time. In fact, Mesa County has the second-lowest property tax burden in the entire Mountain West region. See Figure 10 below.

**Figure 10. Grand Junction vs. Denver Cost of Living Statistics, 2021**

## COST OF LIVING & DOING BUSINESS

	GRAND JUNCTION	DENVER
AVERAGE SINGLE-FAMILY HOME PRICE	\$299,209	\$538,629
MEDIAN PROPERTY TAX	\$1,150	\$1,479*
AVERAGE COMMERCIAL COSTS	OFFICE: \$17.15 SHOP/YARD: \$7.98 RETAIL: \$14.44	OFFICE: \$30.32 SHOP/YARD: \$10.60 RETAIL: \$21.62
AVERAGE ROUNDTRIP COMMUTE	39 MINS.	52 MINS.

Commercial office space costs in Denver are nearly twice as high as in Grand Junction.

Mesa County has the **second lowest** property tax burden in the Mountain West Region—that's second least expensive in Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, and Utah.

*\*Average assessed across six counties that make up central Denver.*

A house in Grand Junction is nearly half the price of one in Denver.

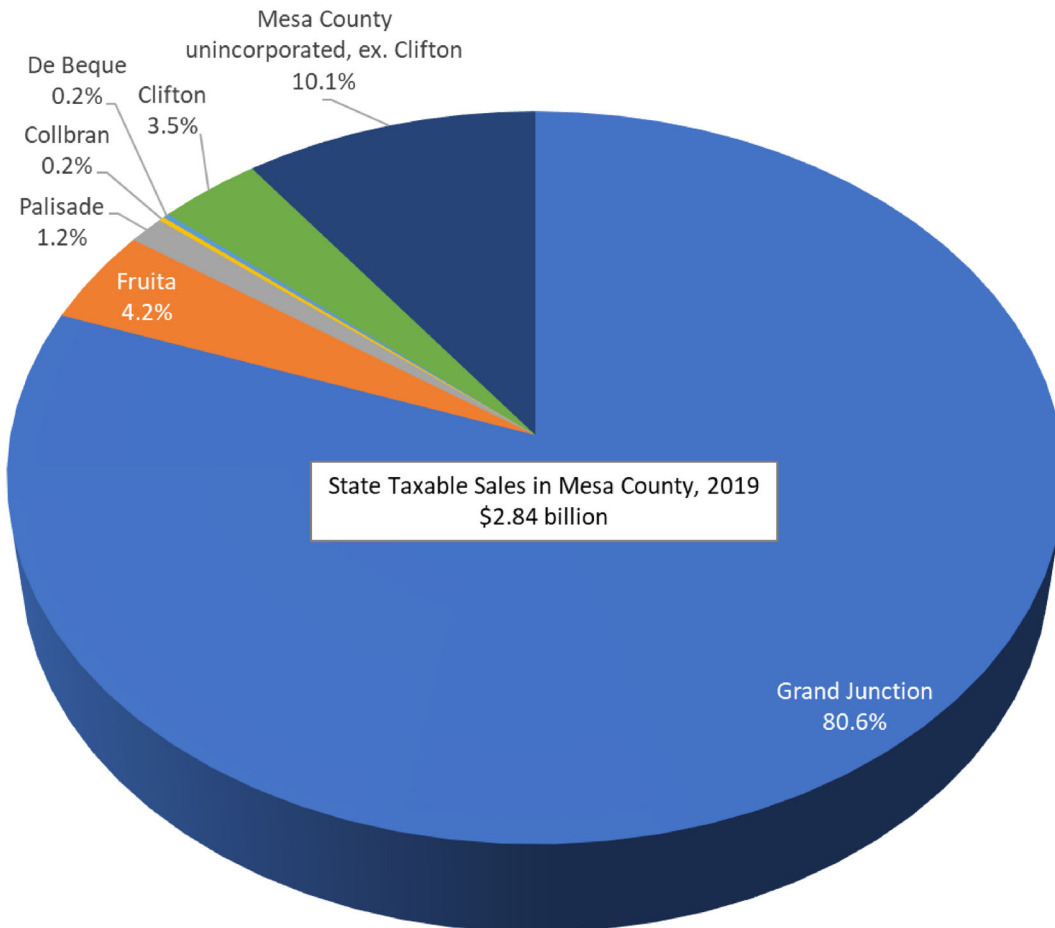
Residents in Denver spend 56 more hours a year commuting than those in Grand Junction. Imagine what you could do with those 2+ extra days per year!

Source: Grand Junction Economic Partnership, <https://www.gjep.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/21-GJEP-Market-Overview-Web-FINAL-5.24.2021.pdf>

### Sales Tax Collections

By geographic area, of all sales tax collected in Mesa County in 2019, 80.6% was generated by Grand Junction. Fruita (4.2%), Clifton (3.5%), Palisade (1.2%), Colbran (0.2%) and DeBeque (0.2%) contributed smaller shares of total sales tax. The remaining 10.1% of sales tax was attributed to unincorporated areas of Mesa County.

**Figure 11. Mesa County State Taxable Sales by Geographic Area, 2019**



Source: Colorado Department of Revenue.

The principal business taxpayers in Mesa County are listed in Table 4 below. While no longer ranking towards the top of employment in Mesa County, the Oil & Gas sector makes up 4 of the top 10 principal tax generators in the area, tied with utility services.

**Table 4. Mesa County Principal Taxpayers, 2010-2020**

Mesa County, Colorado PRINCIPAL TAXPAYERS December 31, 2010 and December 31, 2020					
Taxpayer	Type of Business	2010 Assessed Valuation	Percentage of Total Assessed Valuation	2020 Assessed Valuation	Percentage of Total Assessed Valuation
Laramie Energy, LLC	Oil & Gas	\$ **	**	\$ 97,110,870	34.11%
Public Service Company of Colorado (Xcel)	Utility	40,069,700	18.98%	74,745,000	26.25%
Union Pacific Railroad Company (prev Southern Pacific)	Railroad	14,226,400	6.03%	28,223,900	9.91%
Spectrum Pacific West, LLC	Utility	**	**	16,086,890	5.65%
Collbran Valley Gass Gathering, LLC	Oil & Gas	16,571,750	7.02%	16,030,120	5.63%
Grand Valley Rural Power Lines Inc	Utility	**	**	14,244,100	5.00%
Enterprise Gas Processing, LLC	Oil & Gas	13,324,870	5.85%	11,643,980	4.09%
Qwest Corporation (prev US West)	Utility	18,737,700	7.94%	10,500,700	3.69%
SG Interests I, LTD	Oil & Gas	**	**	8,531,800	3.00%
SM Mesa Mall, LLC	Shopping Mall	11,055,160	4.89%	7,574,280	2.66%
OXY USA, Inc.	Oil & Gas	48,888,220	20.72%	*	*
Helmerich & Payne International Drilling	Oil & Gas	25,286,690	10.72%	*	*
Delta Petroleum Corporation	Oil & Gas	25,078,430	10.83%	*	*
Nabors Drilling USA, LLC	Oil & Gas	22,727,600	9.83%	*	*
Totals		<u>\$ 235,966,520</u>	<u>100.00%</u>	<u>\$ 284,691,640</u>	<u>100.00%</u>

Source: Mesa County Assessor's Office  
 Based on a 2010 certified assessed valuation of \$2,314,433,540  
 Based on a 2020 certified assessed valuation of \$2,178,595,800  
 \* Not in the top 10 in 2020  
 \*\* Not in the top 10 in 2010

Source: Mesa County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, 2020.

**Table 5. Mesa County Assessed Valuation by Geographic Area and Property Type, 2021**

<b>Geographic Area</b>	<b>Assessed Value, 2021</b>	<b>Percent</b>
City of Grand Junction	\$1,171,105,176	50.7%
City of Fruita	\$159,797,754	6.9%
Town of Palisade	\$30,156,320	1.3%
Town of De Beque	\$7,231,530	0.3%
Town of Collbran	\$2,906,130	0.1%
Unincorporated Mesa County	\$939,941,600	40.7%
<b>Mesa County total</b>	<b>\$2,311,138,510</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Property Type</b>	<b>Assessed Value, 2021</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Residential	\$1,178,692,360	51.0%
Commercial	\$591,626,940	25.6%
State Assessed - Public Utilities	\$164,026,100	7.1%
Industrial	\$135,852,120	5.9%
Oil & Gas	\$117,673,170	5.1%
Vacant Land	\$78,058,010	3.4%
Agriculture	\$40,383,670	1.7%
Earth & Stone	\$4,791,350	0.2%
Strategic Mining	\$34,790	0.0%
<b>Total Assessed Value</b>	<b>\$2,311,138,510</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Exempt	\$519,768,500	
<b>Total Assessed Value, including Exempt</b>	<b>\$2,830,907,010</b>	

Source: Mesa County Abstract of Assessment and Summary of Levies, 2021.



## HOUSING

### Key Trends in Housing in Mesa County

Following is a summary of selected notable housing trends and issues in Mesa County. It includes information about population trends, available housing, unit types, average rents, and cost of housing by various housing types. The population of Mesa County is projected to increase, with demand for housing increasing along with the population. While housing costs in Mesa County are relatively affordable compared to the rest of Colorado, some gaps exist in the available housing for residents.

### Population Growth Trends

Reflecting aftereffects of the 2007 to 2009 “Great Recession,” Mesa County’s population growth moderated in 2010-2020 (increase of 8,755 residents) compared to 2000-2010 (+29,504 residents) and 1990-2000 (+24,506 residents). Mesa County’s unincorporated area has been experiencing slower growth than the incorporated areas.

Over the 2010-2020 period, incorporated areas population grew by 8.7%, while unincorporated areas grew by 3.0%. Viewed another way, 75% of the County’s population growth in 2010-2020 occurred in municipalities, while 25% occurred in unincorporated areas.

Over the 30 years of the 1990-2020 period, population in incorporated areas of Mesa County grew by 110.1%, while unincorporated areas grew by 36.2%.

To the extent that municipalities are better able to offer urban levels of service, they are arguably better able to support growth. As such, the disproportionate growth of municipalities in the past three decades (1990 – 2020) is arguably a positive pattern for Mesa County.

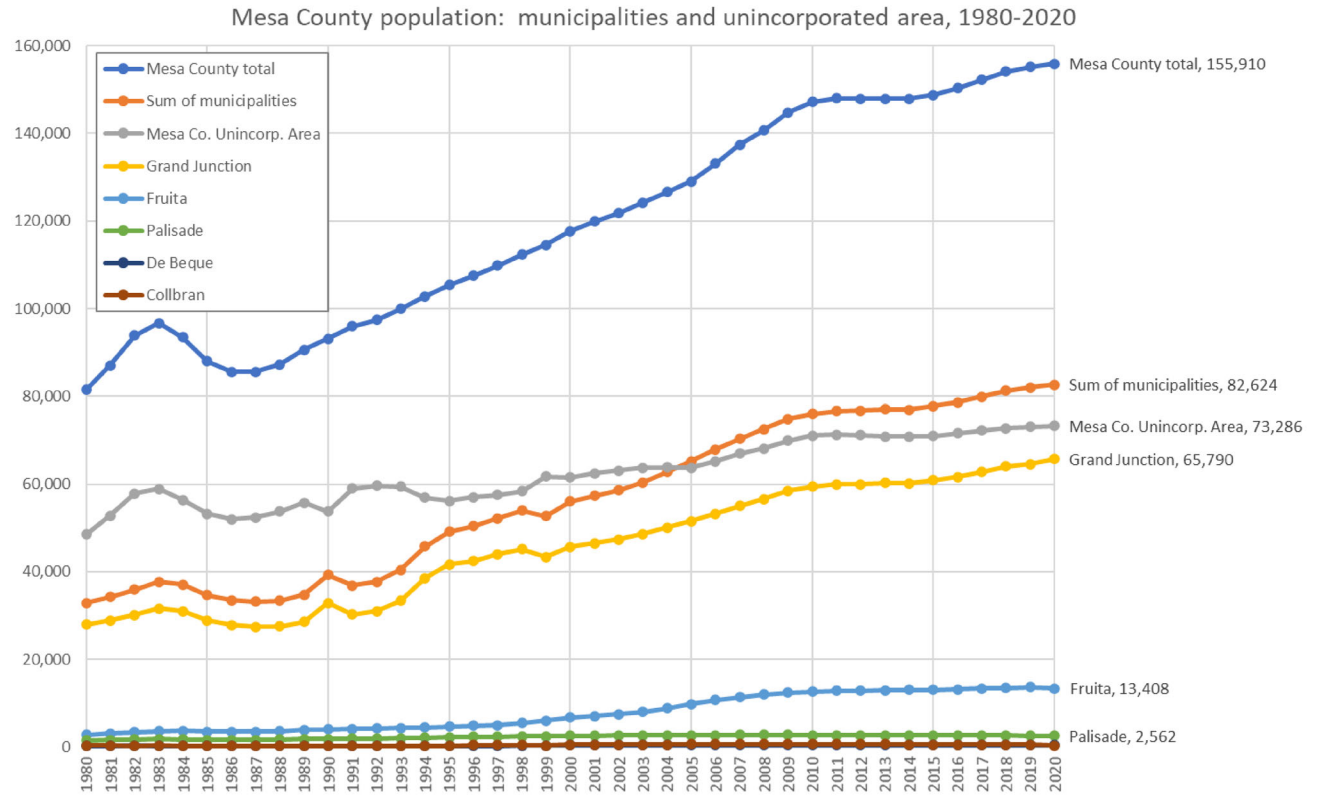
Mesa County currently has substantial population in both unincorporated areas (73,286 residents in 2020, or 47.0% of total county population) and incorporated municipalities (82,624 residents / 53.0% of county total). Grand Junction is by far the largest of the County’s municipalities (65,790 population in 2020), followed by Fruita (13,408), Palisade (2,562), De Beque (494) and Collbran (370). See Table 6 and Figure 12 below.

**Table 6 .Population Trends by Mesa County Community, 1980 - 2020**

	Mesa County total	Mesa Co. Unincorporated Area	Municipalities						
			Total	Grand Junction	Fruita	Palisade	De Beque	Collbran	
1980	81,530	48,590	32,940	27,956	2,810	1,551	279	344	
1990	93,145	53,824	39,321	32,893	4,042	1,871	257	258	
2000	117,651	61,581	56,070	45,678	6,727	2,585	473	607	
2010	147,155	71,124	76,031	59,426	12,680	2,721	500	704	
2020	155,910	73,286	82,624	65,790	13,408	2,562	494	370	
2020 vs. 2010	5.9%	3.0%	8.7%	10.7%	5.7%	-5.8%	-1.2%	-47.4%	
2020 vs. 1990	67.4%	36.2%	110.1%	100.0%	231.7%	36.9%	92.2%	43.4%	
% of 2020 population	100.0%	47.0%	53.0%	42.2%	8.6%	1.6%	0.3%	0.2%	
1980-1990 growth	11,615	5,234	6,381	4,937	1,232	320	-22	-86	
1990-2000 growth	24,506	7,757	16,749	12,785	2,685	714	216	349	
2000-2010 growth	29,504	9,543	19,961	13,748	5,953	136	27	97	
2010-2020 growth	8,755	2,162	6,593	6,364	728	-159	-6	-334	
Share of 1980-1990 growth	100%	45%	55%	43%	11%	3%	0%	-1%	
Share of 1990-2000 growth	100%	32%	68%	52%	11%	3%	1%	1%	
Share of 2000-2010 growth	100%	32%	68%	47%	20%	0%	0%	0%	
Share of 2010-2020 growth	100%	25%	75%	73%	8%	-2%	0%	-4%	

Source: Colorado State Demography Office.

**Figure 12. Population Trends by Mesa County Community, 1980 - 2020**



Source: Colorado State Demography Office.

## Housing Unit Trends

Over the 2010-2020 period, the total number of Mesa County housing units has increased by 7.5%, to 67,696 total units, up 4,708 units over the decade.

Housing units have grown at a somewhat slower pace in the unincorporated portion of the county (up 5.1%, to 30,851 units in 2020) than in the municipalities (up 9.5%, to 36,845 units in 2020).

The number of vacant, unoccupied housing units has declined countywide (-11.5%) and in both the unincorporated (-10.2%) and incorporated (-12.7%) areas of the county over the 2010-2020 period, likely reflecting strengthening economic conditions and consequent absorption of the vacant housing stock into occupied housing units.

The population living in group quarters – a small share of the population (2.5% of the 2020 population) – declined by 14.4% over the 2010-2020 period, with dips in both the unincorporated area (8.3%) and municipalities (-14.7%).

The average number of persons per household edged down slightly over the past decade countywide (-2.3%) and in both the unincorporated (-2.2%) and incorporated (-2.4%) areas.

### *Housing Units by Tenure, 2015-2019 Five-Year Estimates*

Overall, in the 2015-19 five-year period, most of Mesa County's housing units were owner-occupied (63%), while 30% were renter occupied and 7% were vacant. See Table 7 below.

- Unincorporated Mesa County had a higher share of owner-occupied units than the municipalities (70% vs. 57%), a lower share of renter-occupied units (21% vs. 37%), and a higher share of vacant units (9% vs. 6%).
- Viewed another way, the unincorporated part of Mesa County had 47% of the county's total housing units, including 53% of the owner-occupied units, 33% of the renter-occupied units, and 56% of the vacant units.
- Within unincorporated Mesa County, the Clifton CDP had a comparatively high share of renter-occupied units (32% of units were renter-occupied), while the Redlands CDP and Fruitvale CDP both had comparatively low shares of renter-occupied units (12% each).
- The comparatively high share of owner-occupied units and low share of renter-occupied units in unincorporated Mesa County is correlated with the makeup of the housing stock. The housing stock skews comparatively heavily to single-family detached units and mobile homes in the unincorporated area (discussed next).

**Table 7. Housing and Population Measures by Mesa County Community, 2010 - 2020**

Measure	Mesa County total	Mesa Co. Unincorp. Area	Municipalities					
			Total	Grand Junction	Fruita	Palisade	De Beque	Collbran
<b>Total Housing Units</b>								
2020	67,696	30,851	36,845	29,649	5,519	1,255	214	208
2010	62,988	29,353	33,635	26,786	5,127	1,279	222	221
2020 vs. 2010	7.5%	5.1%	9.5%	10.7%	7.6%	-1.9%	-3.6%	-5.9%
<b>Occupied Housing Units</b>								
2020	63,269	28,730	34,539	27,729	5,258	1,184	182	186
2010	57,985	26,992	30,993	24,699	4,738	1,180	188	188
2020 vs. 2010	9.1%	6.4%	11.4%	12.3%	11.0%	0.3%	-3.2%	-1.1%
<b>Vacant Housing Units</b>								
2020	4,427	2,121	2,306	1,920	261	71	32	22
2010	5,003	2,361	2,642	2,087	389	99	34	33
2020 vs. 2010	-11.5%	-10.2%	-12.7%	-8.0%	-32.9%	-28.3%	-5.9%	-33.3%
<b>Total Population</b>								
2020	155,910	73,286	82,624	65,790	13,408	2,562	494	370
2010	147,155	70,283	76,872	60,246	12,695	2,726	500	705
2020 vs. 2010	5.9%	4.3%	7.5%	9.2%	5.6%	-6.0%	-1.2%	-47.5%
<b>Household Population</b>								
2020	152,086	73,075	79,011	62,289	13,376	2,486	490	370
2010	142,688	70,053	72,635	56,569	12,487	2,611	498	470
2020 vs. 2010	6.6%	4.3%	8.8%	10.1%	7.1%	-4.8%	-1.6%	-21.3%
<b>Group Quarters Population</b>								
2020	3,824	211	3,613	3,501	32	76	4	0
2010	4,467	230	4,237	3,677	208	115	2	235
2020 vs. 2010	-14.4%	-8.3%	-14.7%	-4.8%	-84.6%	-33.9%	100.0%	-100.0%
<b>Persons Per Household</b>								
2020	2.40	2.54	2.29	2.25	2.54	2.10	2.69	1.99
2010	2.46	2.60	2.34	2.29	2.64	2.21	2.65	2.50
2020 vs. 2010	-2.3%	-2.2%	-2.4%	-1.9%	-3.6%	-5.0%	1.6%	-20.4%
<b>Housing Vacancy Rate</b>								
2020	6.5%	6.9%	6.3%	6.5%	4.7%	5.7%	15.0%	10.6%
2010	7.9%	8.0%	7.9%	7.8%	7.6%	7.7%	15.3%	14.9%
2020 vs. 2010	-17.7%	-14.1%	-20.3%	-17.0%	-37.8%	-26.5%	-2.3%	-29.0%

Source: Colorado State Demography Office. Note: 2010 population by geographic area differs slightly in

*Housing Units by Units in Structure, 2015-19 Five Year Estimates*

Altogether, in 2015-19, single family detached units accounted for 69% of the Mesa County housing inventory, while 21% were attached units and 10% were mobile homes. See Table 8 below.

- Unincorporated Mesa County had a higher share of single-family detached units than the municipalities (76% vs. 64%), a higher share of mobile homes (13% vs. 7%), and a lower share of attached units (11% vs. 29%).
- Viewed another way, the unincorporated part of Mesa County had 47% of the county’s total housing units, including 52% of the single family detached units, 63% of the mobile homes, and 25% of the attached units.
- Within unincorporated Mesa County, the Clifton CDP had a comparatively high share of mobile homes (23% of units were mobile homes) and attached units (17% of units), and a small share of



single family detached units (60% of units). In contrast, the Redlands CDP and Fruitvale CDP were composed of very high shares of single family detached units (87% and 90% respectively).

**Table 8. Housing Units by Units in Structure, 2015 – 2019 Five-Year Estimates**

Geography	Housing Units in Structure, 2015-19				Share of Housing Units by Units in Structure, 2015-19				Housing Units in Structure by Area, 2015-19			
	Total	1-unit,		Mobile home	Total	1-unit,		Mobile home	Total	1-unit,		Mobile home
		detached	Attached			detached	Attached			detached	Attached	
Mesa County	66,599	46,144	13,740	6,687	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	69%	21%	10%
Unincorporated areas:												
Mesa County unincorp.	31,469	23,788	3,460	4,210	47%	52%	25%	63%	100%	76%	11%	13%
Mesa County unincorp., ex. CDPs	12,331	9,449	1,248	1,623	19%	20%	9%	24%	100%	77%	10%	13%
Total of Census Designated Places	19,138	14,339	2,212	2,587	29%	31%	16%	39%	100%	75%	12%	14%
Clifton CDP	8,377	5,023	1,388	1,966	13%	11%	10%	29%	100%	60%	17%	23%
Redlands CDP	4,001	3,489	448	64	6%	8%	3%	1%	100%	87%	11%	2%
Fruitvale CDP	3,380	3,038	124	218	5%	7%	1%	3%	100%	90%	4%	6%
Orchard Mesa CDP	2,923	2,431	252	240	4%	5%	2%	4%	100%	83%	9%	8%
Loma CDP	457	358	0	99	1%	1%	0%	1%	100%	78%	0%	22%
Total incorporated areas:												
Grand Junction city	27,873	17,240	9,058	1,560	42%	37%	66%	23%	100%	62%	32%	6%
Fruita city	5,586	4,253	748	585	8%	9%	5%	9%	100%	76%	13%	10%
Palisade town	1,273	623	421	229	2%	1%	3%	3%	100%	49%	33%	18%
De Beque town	219	120	29	68	0%	0%	0%	1%	99%	55%	13%	31%
Collbran town	179	120	24	35	0%	0%	0%	1%	100%	67%	13%	20%
Total municipalities + CDPs	54,268	36,695	12,492	5,064	81%	80%	91%	76%	100%	68%	23%	9%
County Census Divisions:												
Grand Junction CCD	39,848	26,305	10,633	2,884	60%	57%	77%	43%	100%	66%	27%	7%
Clifton CCD	12,205	7,978	1,957	2,270	18%	17%	14%	34%	100%	65%	16%	19%
Fruita CCD	10,305	8,339	963	1,003	15%	18%	7%	15%	100%	81%	9%	10%
Collbran CCD	1,413	1,192	96	125	2%	3%	1%	2%	100%	84%	7%	9%
Whitewater-Kannah Creek CCD	1,205	914	32	259	2%	2%	0%	4%	100%	76%	3%	21%
Glade Park-Gateway CCD	1,195	1,118	30	47	2%	2%	0%	1%	100%	94%	3%	4%
De Beque CCD	428	298	29	99	1%	1%	0%	1%	100%	70%	7%	23%

Source: American Community Survey, 2015-19 five-year estimates.

Note: Breakouts by units in structure exclude RVs, boats and other types of housing. These accounted for 28 total units in 2015-19.

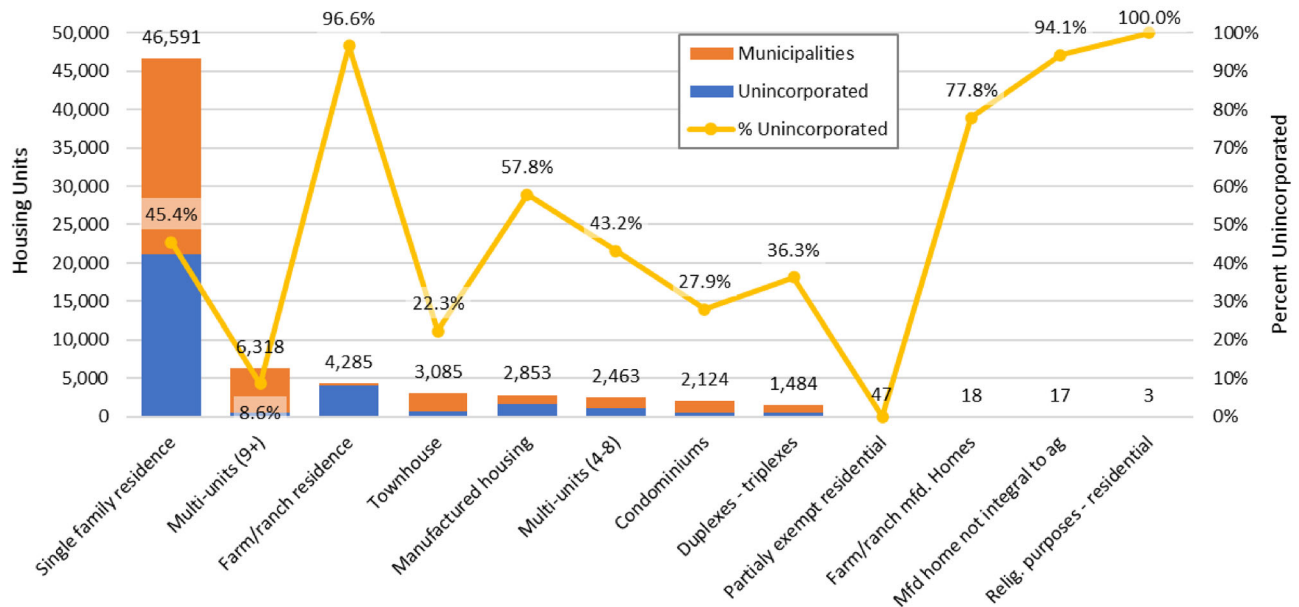
### *Housing Units by Unit Type, 2021 Mesa County Assessor Data*

The Mesa County Assessor data largely corroborate 2015-19 ACS data discussed above and provides some additional detail. The Assessor data identifies approximately 30,384 housing units in unincorporated Mesa County.

- The largest share of these housing units are single family residences (21,138 units / 69.6%).
- Following are farm/ranch residents, which comprise a mix of unit types, including stick-built homes and manufactured homes (4,139 units / 13.6%).
- Manufactured homes (except farm/ranch residences) number 1,649 units (5.4% of inventory).
- Most remaining units are attached units, including apartments with 9+ units (542 units), apartments with 4-8 units (1,064 units), duplexes/triplexes (539 units), townhouses (687 units), and condominiums (593 units).

Altogether, the unincorporated part of the county accounts for 43.9% of the county’s total residences. The unincorporated area accounts for a large majority of the county’s agricultural residences (96.6%), most of its manufactured housing units (57.8%, excluding farm/ranch residences which are classified as manufactured housing), and an appreciable share of its single-family residences (45.4%), while accounting for a smaller share of its apartments, duplexes, condos, and townhomes (22.1% in aggregate).

**Figure 13. Mesa County Housing Units by Type and Geographic Area, 2021**



Source: Mesa County Assessor Database.

*Measures of Housing Values and Housing Costs, 2015-19 Five Year Estimates*

Owner-occupied housing units differ in value across the county. In Mesa County as a whole, the median value of owner-occupied units was \$227,000 in 2015-19, as estimated by owners. (Values are likely to have significantly increased since then as a result of recent housing appreciation). See Table 9 below.

- By CDP, median values range from \$309,200 in the Redland CDP to \$143,500 in the Clifton CDP.
- By municipality, median values are higher in Grand Junction (\$237,000) and Fruita (\$223,500) than in other municipalities (\$132,800 - \$177,100).

Monthly owner costs tend to parallel housing values, with higher costs in areas with higher values.

- For housing units with a mortgage, median selected monthly owner costs were \$1,313. For housing units without a mortgage, median selected monthly owner costs were a much lower \$347.
- Gross rents tend to be somewhat cheaper than monthly mortgage costs (for units with a mortgage).
- The median gross monthly rent in Mesa County as a whole was \$963.

- By CDP, median monthly rents varied from \$873 in Clifton CDP to \$1,331 in Redlands CDP.
- By municipality, the median monthly rent was lowest in Collbran (\$770) and Palisade (\$801), and highest in Fruita (\$1,169).

**Table 9. Selected Measures of Housing Values and Costs, 2015 – 2019 Five-Year Estimates**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Median value of owner-occupied units</b>	<b>Median selected monthly owner costs: housing units with a mortgage</b>	<b>Median selected monthly owner costs: housing units without a mortgage</b>	<b>Median gross monthly rent</b>
Mesa County	\$227,000	\$1,313	\$347	\$963
<b>Census Designated Places:</b>				
Clifton CDP	\$143,500	\$1,051	\$397	\$873
Fruitvale CDP	\$202,600	\$1,273	\$279	\$1,178
Loma CDP	\$275,700	\$1,458	\$430	n/a
Orchard Mesa CDP	\$189,400	\$1,179	\$339	\$1,154
Redlands CDP	\$309,200	\$1,582	\$333	\$1,331
<b>Incorporated areas:</b>				
Collbran town	\$132,800	\$1,075	\$326	\$770
De Beque town	\$145,600	\$1,194	\$353	\$925
Fruita city	\$223,500	\$1,258	\$367	\$1,169
Grand Junction city	\$237,100	\$1,339	\$341	\$935
Palisade town	\$177,100	\$1,196	\$396	\$801
<b>County Census Divisions:</b>				
Clifton CCD	\$175,600	\$1,195	\$383	\$874
Collbran CCD	\$299,600	\$1,538	\$379	\$955
De Beque CCD	\$212,900	\$1,327	\$337	\$917
Fruita CCD	\$274,900	\$1,478	\$382	\$1,112
Glade Park-Gateway CCD	\$373,300	\$1,778	\$322	n/a
Grand Junction CCD	\$219,600	\$1,285	\$331	\$981
Whitewater-Kannah Creek CCD	\$308,400	\$1,501	\$353	\$961

Source: American Community Survey, 2015-19 five-year estimates.

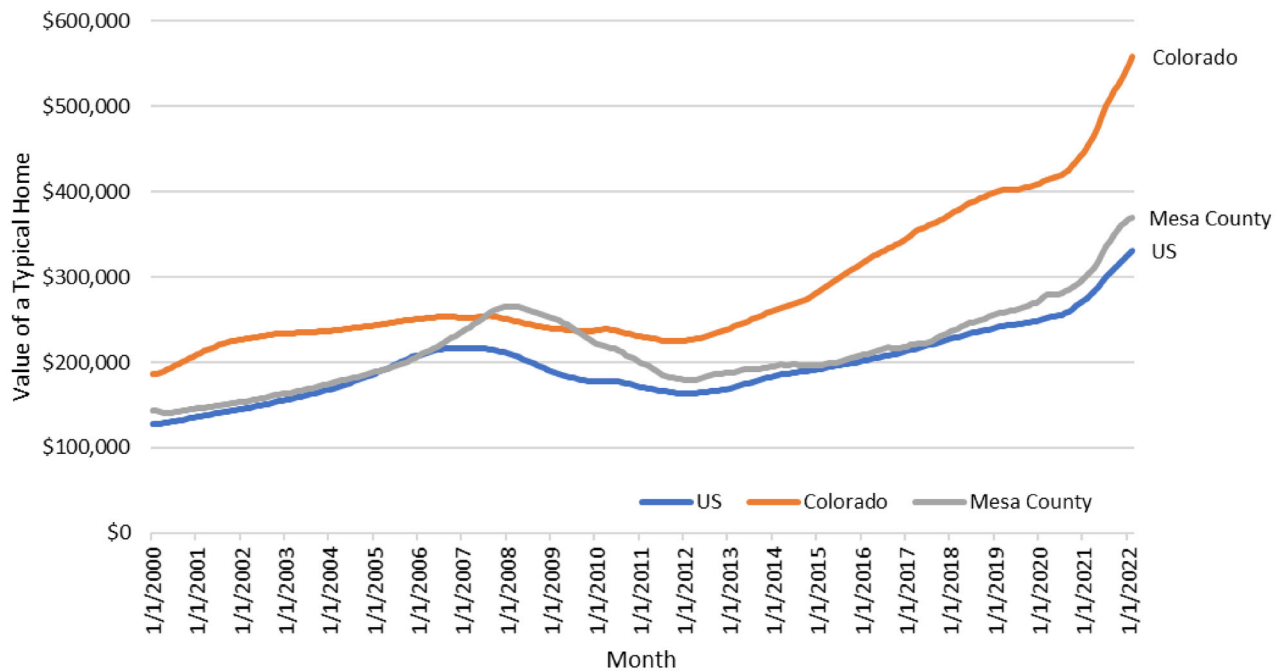
### *Housing Values, February 2022 and Multi-Year Trends*

Additional measures of housing value trends and patterns, including more current value estimates, are available from the Zillow Home Value Index, which is a smoothed, seasonally adjusted monthly estimate of the typical value of homes (including single family homes and condominiums) in the 35th to 65th percentile range.

Typical home values in Mesa County have surged in the past two years, paralleling sharp gains in Colorado and the U.S. Between February 2020 and February 2022, Zillow estimates that the value of a typical home in Mesa County has increased by 34%, similar to 35% in Colorado as a whole and 32% in the U.S. The value of a typical home as of February 2022 was approximately \$370,000 in Mesa County –

about 11% higher than the typical home value nationwide of \$332,000, and 34% lower than the typical home value in Colorado of \$558,000. See Figure 14 below.

**Figure 14. Zillow Home Value Index: Value of a Typical Home in Mesa County, Colorado, and U.S. January 2000 – February 2022**



Source: Zillow.com

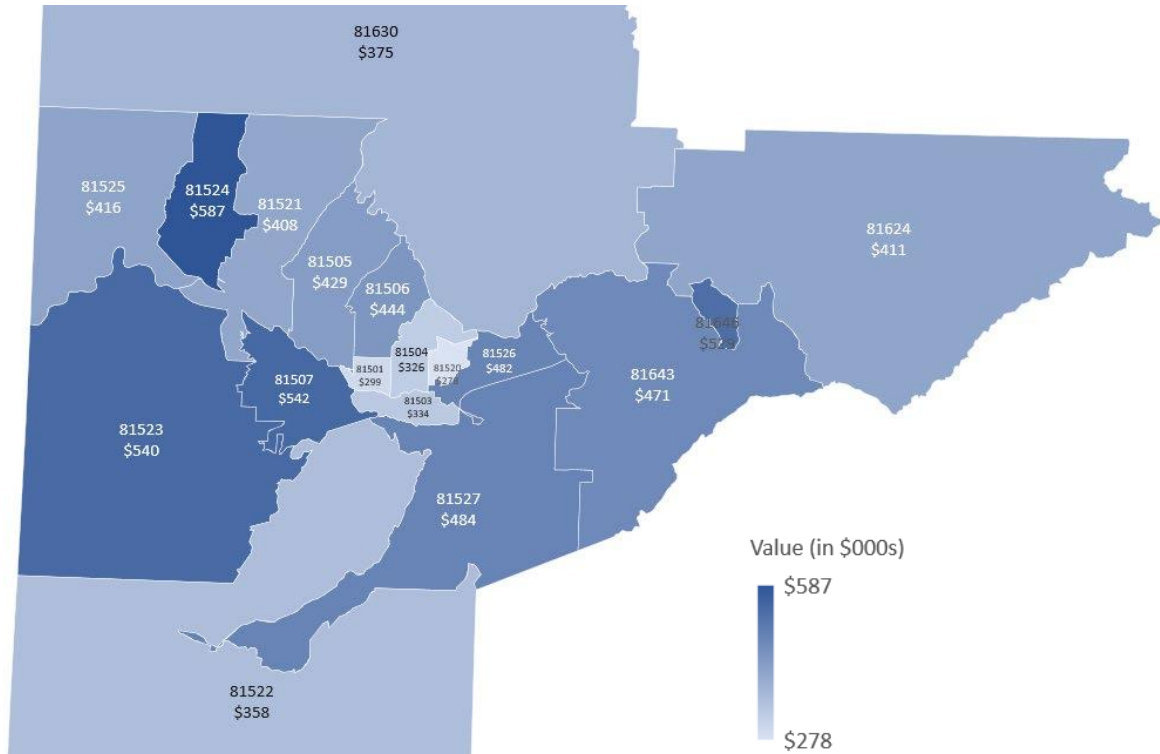
Looking back in time, Mesa County has experienced significant fluctuations in home values. The value of a typical home in Mesa County rose during the ‘housing boom’ of the 2000s, peaking at approximately \$265,000 in early 2008. Mesa County was estimated to have a higher typical home value than Colorado as a whole between approximately July 2007 and July 2009. Mesa County also experienced high levels of housing construction during this boom period.

Reflecting the impacts of the “Great Recession,” Mesa County experienced an extended period of housing value declines following its 2008 peak. The value of a typical home in Mesa County is estimated to have dropped to a low of approximately \$179,000 in March 2012, before beginning a gradual recovery. It was not until September 2019 when the value of a typical home in Mesa County is estimated to have again reached the pre-recession peak of \$265,000. Home construction also decreased during this post-recession period, and employment also experienced a decline followed by a long, gradual recovery.

Zillow further estimates that home values have increased sharply across all ZIP codes in Mesa County over the past two years. By ZIP code, Zillow estimates that the value of a typical home as of February

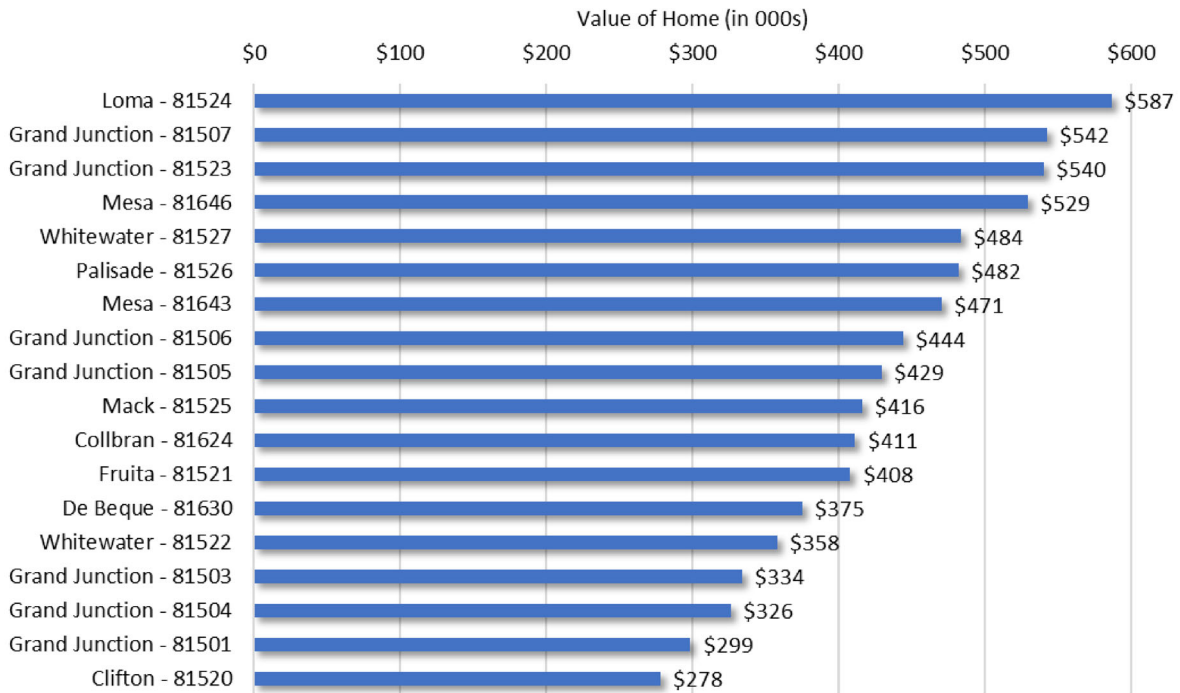
2022 varies from approximately \$278,000 in ZIP 81520-Clifton to \$587,000 in ZIP 81524-Loma. See Figure 15 Below.

**Figure 15. Zillow Home Value Index: Value of a Typical Home (single family/condo) in Mesa County – by ZIP Code, February 2022**



Source: Zillow.com

**Figure 16. Zillow Home Value Index: Value of a Typical Home (single family/condo) in Mesa County – by ZIP Code, February 2022**



Source: Zillow.

### Housing Affordability in Mesa County

The acceleration in home values in recent years in Mesa County has raised concerns about affordability for residents and potential impacts on economic growth. The recent acceleration in home prices has been paralleled by increasing home construction activity (discussed later), particularly in Mesa County’s municipalities (and especially Grand Junction). Unincorporated Mesa County, by contrast, has had steady rates of home construction during the recent run-up in values (as discussed earlier).

To the extent that increased prices signal increased demand for housing, home construction activity might be expected to continue at elevated levels in Mesa County going forward, at least until economic and/or housing market conditions change. Expansion of the supply of housing may help to moderate further increases in housing prices, subject to possible changes in construction costs (land, labor, materials).

At the same time that Mesa County is experiencing housing affordability challenges for residents, its housing remains comparatively affordable relative to Colorado as a whole. This relative level of affordability represents a comparative economic advantage, which may help Mesa County attract residents and employers going forward.



### *Housing Units by Ratio of Household Income to Housing Costs, 2015-19 Five-Year Estimates*

Household income can be compared to housing costs to assess the affordability of housing. Housing is commonly considered affordable when a household pays less than 30% of its income on housing costs (including utilities). Households which pay in excess of 30% of their income on housing are commonly characterized as “cost burdened.”

In Mesa County as a whole in the 2015-19 period, 52% of renter households were cost burdened, as were 29% of owner households with a mortgage, and 9% of owner households without a mortgage. The incidence of cost burdens largely similar between the unincorporated and incorporated portions of Mesa County.

Among renters, the incidence of cost burdens was 50% in the unincorporated areas and 53% in the municipalities. Among owners with a mortgage, the incidence of cost burdens was 31% in the unincorporated areas and 27% in the municipalities. Among owners without a mortgage, the incidence of cost burdens was 9% in the unincorporated areas and 9% in the municipalities.

### *2021 Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment (prepared by Root Policy Research for the City of Grand Junction)*

The 2021 Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment report analyzed some important information about issues related to housing in Mesa County. This section summarizes this report and presents some key findings from that study.

#### Findings Related to Renters

The renter market is severely under-served in Mesa County with more than half (53%) of renters being either cost burdened or severely cost burdened. As an additional squeeze on this community, rent prices in Mesa County and Grand Junction have both increased 21% from 2010 to 2019. This situation may be underappreciated (possibly) due to the high percentage (69% in Mesa; 62% in Grand Junction) of single-family homes in Mesa and Grand Junction and their continued support in the permitting process through to today. There are roughly 6,000 renting households in Mesa County that earn less than \$25,000 per year and would require units priced at \$625/month.

Both Mesa County and Grand Junction recorded 21% increases in median gross rent from 2010 to 2019 (\$810 to \$981 and \$770 to \$935, respectively) (p.61 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

- “Extremely tight ownership and rental markets persist, with low rental vacancy rates and a shrinking inventory of for-sale homes.” (p. 7)
- “There is a “gap” or shortage of 2,168 units affordably priced for renters who earn less than \$25,000 per year in Grand Junction. In Mesa County overall, there is a rental “gap” of 3,736 units for these low-income households.” (p. 7)
- “In Grand Junction and Mesa County, 2% of households—or about 400 households in Grand Junction and 1,400 in Mesa County—are overcrowded.” (p.71)

**Table 10. Cost Burdened Households by Tenure and Mortgage Status, 2015 – 2019 Five-Year Estimates**

Geography	Housing units with a mortgage			Housing units without a mortgage			Occupied units paying rent		
	Housing units with a mortgage	Owner costs >=30% of household income	% Owner costs >=30% of household income	Housing units without a mortgage	Owner costs >=30% of household income	% Owner costs >=30% of household income	Occupied units paying rent	Gross rent >=30% of household income	% Gross rent >=30% of household income
Mesa County	28,071	8,228	29%	13,598	1,224	9%	18,823	9,796	52%
Unincorporated areas:									
Mesa County unincorp.	14,831	4,599	31%	7,167	644	9%	6,089	3,057	50%
Mesa County unincorp., ex. CDPs	5,180	1,735	33%	3,478	235	7%	1,979	1,023	52%
Total of Census Designated Places	9,651	2,864	30%	3,689	409	11%	4,110	2,034	49%
Clifton CDP	3,940	1,264	32%	1,243	241	19%	2,626	1,425	54%
Fruitvale CDP	1,972	583	30%	747	26	3%	391	110	28%
Redlands CDP	1,879	484	26%	1,170	109	9%	439	104	24%
Orchard Mesa CDP	1,639	510	31%	456	33	7%	617	395	64%
Loma CDP	221	23	10%	73	0	0%	37	0	0%
Total incorporated areas:	13,240	3,629	27%	6,431	580	9%	12,734	6,739	53%
Grand Junction city	10,063	2,671	27%	5,049	413	8%	10,717	5,729	53%
Fruita city	2,753	802	29%	936	72	8%	1,484	775	52%
Palisade town	261	101	39%	371	83	22%	451	200	44%
De Beque town	110	30	27%	27	5	19%	49	19	39%
Collbran town	53	25	47%	48	7	15%	33	16	48%
Total municipalities + CDPs	22,891	6,493	28%	10,120	989	10%	16,844	8,773	52%
County Census Divisions:									
Grand Junction CCD	15,884	4,486	28%	7,584	637	8%	13,253	7,104	54%
Clifton CCD	5,354	1,853	35%	2,384	343	14%	3,352	1,693	51%
Fruita CCD	5,150	1,426	28%	2,428	137	6%	1,965	927	47%
Whitewater-Kannah Creek CCD	659	192	29%	239	44	18%	69	10	14%
Glade Park-Gateway CCD	489	100	20%	548	14	3%	15	0	0%
Collbran CCD	347	109	31%	315	39	12%	111	38	34%
De Beque CCD	188	62	33%	100	10	10%	58	24	41%

Source: American Community Survey, 2015-19 five-year estimates.

Note: Results exclude housing units for which income to housing cost ratios cannot be computed.

**Figure 17. Median Gross Rent, 2010 and 2019**

	2010	2019	Percent Change
<b>Grand Junction</b>	\$770	\$935	+ 21%
<b>Clifton</b>	\$741	\$873	+ 18%
<b>Fruita</b>	\$867	\$1,169	+ 35%
<b>Palisade</b>	\$692	\$801	+ 16%
<b>Mesa County</b>	\$810	\$981	+ 21%

Source: 2010 Census, 2019 5-year and 1-year ACS, and Root Policy Research.

Note: 2019 1-year ACS data used for Mesa County. Data refer to all types of rental units.

The number of cost-burdened renters increased 5 percentage points from 2010 (48%) to 2019 (53%) in Grand Junction. More than 5,700 renters are cost burdened ( $\geq 30\%$  income paid to housing costs) and of them, 2,800 are severely cost burdened ( $\geq 50\%$  income paid to housing) (p.41 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

For anything equal to or less than a 2-bedroom rental, a renter would require an income of \$34,440 to not be cost burdened. (p.64 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

“One third of renters (about 6,000 households) living in Mesa County earn less than \$25,000 per year. These renters need units that cost less than \$625 per month to avoid being cost burdened.” There is a gap of 3,736 units for these low-income homes (p.73 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

On the other hand, there is a surplus of 3,700 units priced for rent between \$875 - \$1875 (p.73 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

#### Findings Related to Homeowners

23% of homeowners in Mesa County are cost burdened (8% severely so). In Grand Junction, a somewhat lower 20% of homeowners are cost burdened (8% severely so). (p.67 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

“The median sold price in Mesa County has increased from \$256,400 in 2019 to \$309,000 in March of 2021, an increase of 20.5%.” (p.7 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

“Among product types, condos and townhomes are considerably more affordable than single-family homes: 72% of condos and 30% of townhouses were sold below \$200,000, compared to 12% of single-family homes.” (p.54 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

39% of homes sold in 2020/21 were affordable for households with income below 80% AMI (p.55 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

73% of the 0 to 30% AMI purchases (and 33% of the 31 to 50% AMI purchases) used cash for their purchases in 2020/21. This finding representing a 53 percent increase in use of cash from 2019, indicating that home buyers with cash are crowding out traditionally financed households in the most affordable price-points (p.59-60 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

In terms of demographics, the report notes that, “Owners are more likely to be non-Hispanic White. Homeowners are underrepresented among minority communities except among Asian residents...” (p.65 *Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, 2021*)

As well, the number of active listings in Mesa County has been declining since 2014, dropping from nearly 1,200 listings in March of 2014, to 156 listings in March 2021 (p.60-61 *Grand Valley Housing*

*Needs Assessment, 2021*). This decline represents the reduction in supply of available housing for potential home buyers in Mesa County.

### Housing Construction Multi-Year Trends

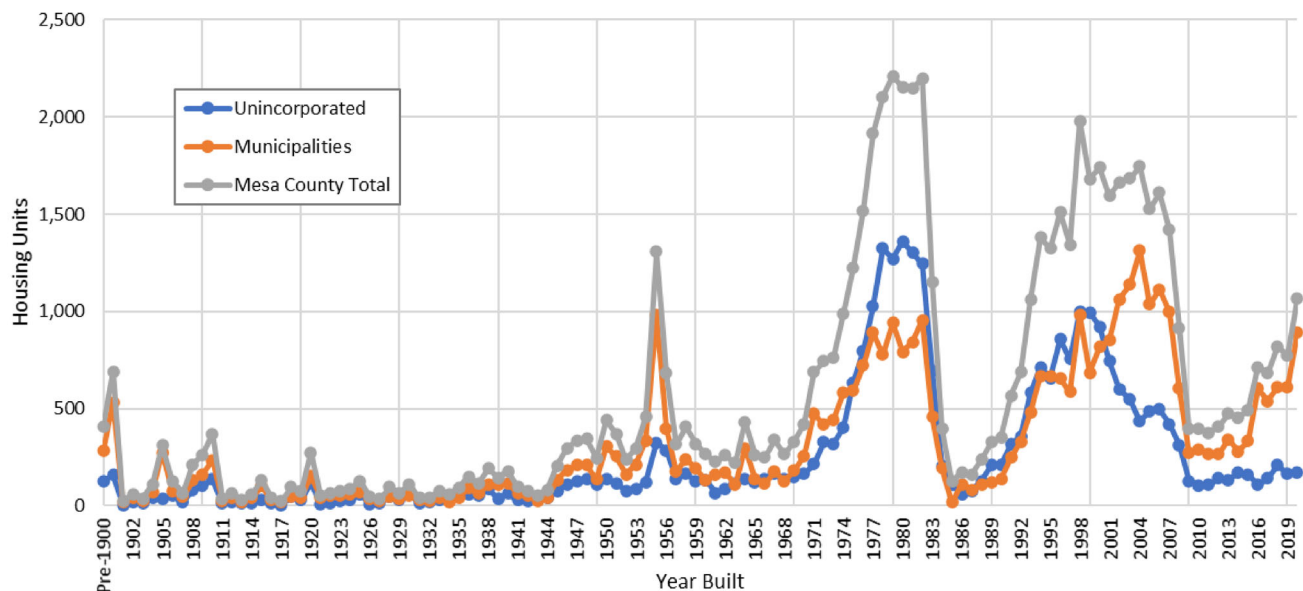
Based on Mesa County Assessor data, home construction has experienced multiple cycles of growth and decline over the past several decades.

One boom occurred in the mid-1970s through early 1980s, before abruptly ending with the oil shale bust. Mesa County experienced its greatest annual volumes of housing unit growth on record between 1978 and 1982. Unincorporated Mesa County experienced more absolute growth than the municipalities during the boom, although both areas experience substantial growth.

After a lull through the mid to late 1980s, housing construction then experienced an extended multi-year period of strong growth, with more than 1,000 units added annually from 1993 through 2007.

Construction of homes in unincorporated Mesa County rose to a peak in 1998-99 at about 1,000 units annually. However, construction volumes then trended down over the next decade, and have remained flat at a reduced level since 2009. By contrast, housing construction continued to grow through the 2000s in Mesa County’s municipalities (until the housing bust). See Figure 18 below.

**Figure 18. Mesa County Housing Units by Year Built and Geographic Area**



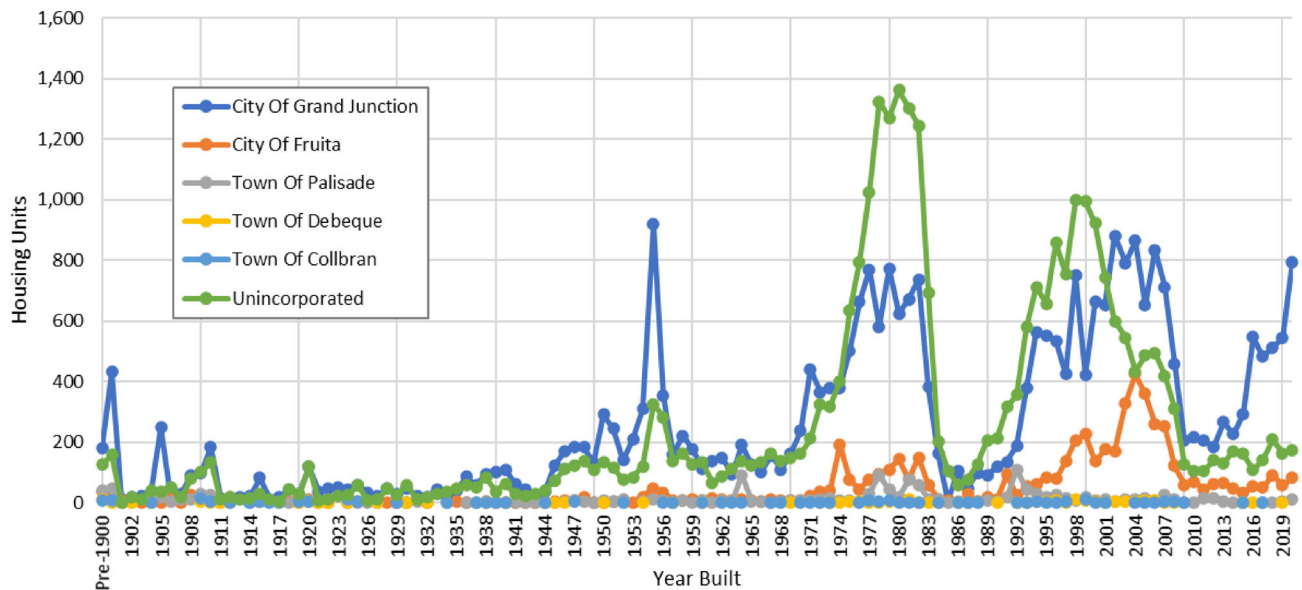
Source: Mesa County Assessor Database.

Finally, following a Great Recession lull in the early to mid-2010s, housing construction has again picked up beginning in 2015. The municipalities have accounted for a disproportionate share of new construction in the most recent upturn, continuing a trend since the early 2000s, while the resurgence has yet to be felt in unincorporated Mesa County, where growth has trended up much more moderately.

Among the municipalities, Grand Junction has accounted for most of the growth in housing units recorded since 2016. As by far the largest municipality, it has also accounted for the largest share of municipality growth in prior periods. See Figure 19 below.

Fruita experienced its greatest volumes of growth in the late 1990s through late 2000s. Growth has been more muted in Fruita during the most current growth period (since 2016). Consistent with their smaller sizes, Palisade, De Beque, and Collbran have experienced much lower levels of absolute growth than other parts of the county.

**Figure 19. Mesa County Housing Units by Year Built and Geographic Area (including city/town breakouts)**

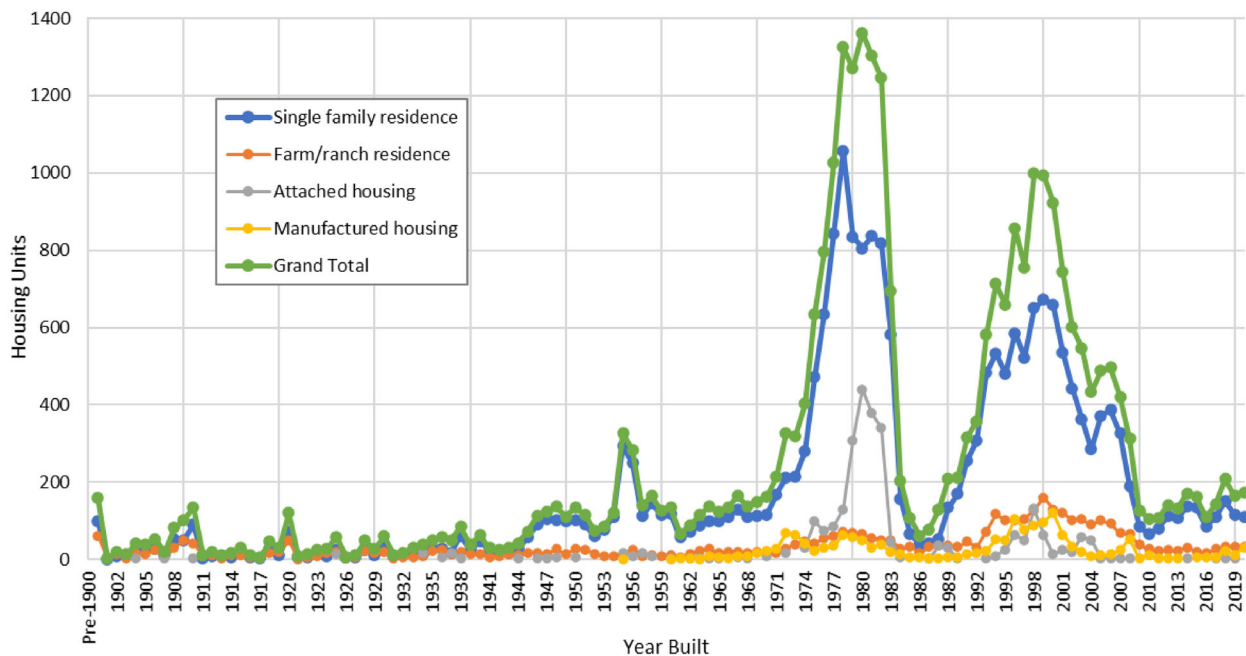


Source: Mesa County Assessor Database.

Within unincorporated Mesa County, single family residences have accounted for most new construction over time. See Figure 20 below.

Attached housing experienced especially high levels of growth during the late 70s/early 80s construction boom, and to a lesser extent during the late 1990s. Farm/ranch residences have generally paralleled the cyclical fluctuations in overall housing construction, with the greatest increases occurring in the mid-1990s to mid-2000s period. Growth in manufactured housing units has also generally paralleled overall construction patterns, with a peak in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

**Figure 20. Housing Units by Type by Year Built, Unincorporated Mesa County**



Source: [http://emap.mesacounty.us/Vacant\\_Land/Default.aspx](http://emap.mesacounty.us/Vacant_Land/Default.aspx)



### Projected Future Mesa County Housing Demand

Following its moderate rate of growth in the 2010s, Mesa County is projected to grow more rapidly over the next 20 years (per Colorado State Demography projections). Total Mesa County households are projected to grow by 12,436 from 2022 to 2032 and by 13,093 from 2032 to 2042. See Table 11 below.

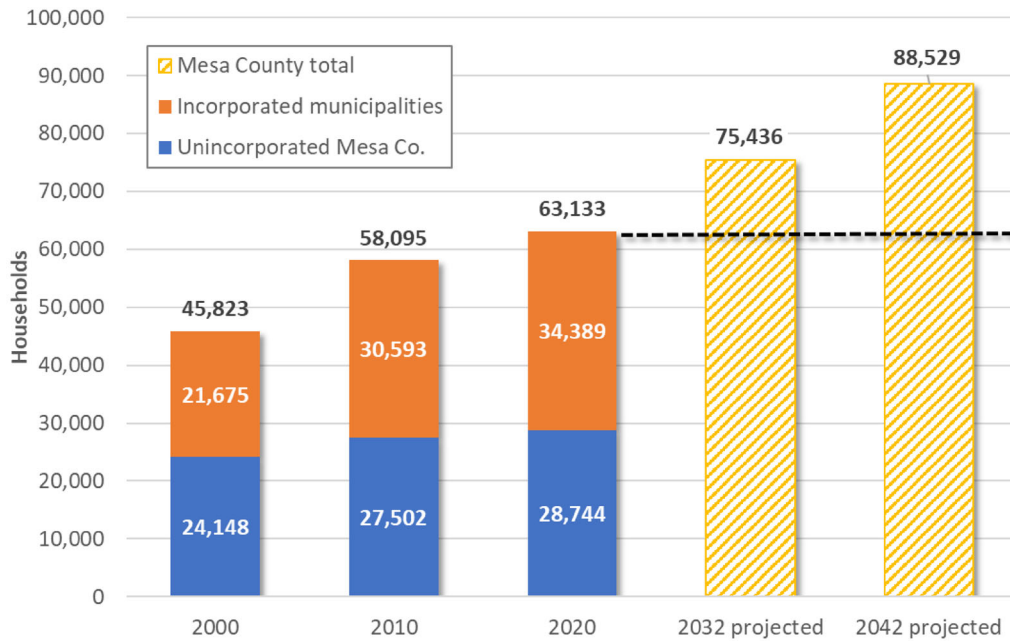
Note that unincorporated Mesa County accounted for 26% of Mesa County’s total housing unit growth from 2000 to 2010, and 32% of the county’s housing unit growth from 2010 to 2020.

**Table 11. Projected Growth in Mesa County Households, 2022 – 2042**

Measure	2022-2032 growth	2032-2042 growth	Source
Projected growth in total Mesa County households (incorporated + unincorporated)	12,436	13,093	Colorado State Demography Office
Unincorporated Mesa County household growth @ 25% share of total County growth (low scenario)	3,109	3,273	Unincorporated Mesa County captured 26% of total Mesa County housing unit growth in 2000-2010
Unincorporated Mesa County household growth @ 29% share of total County growth (mid scenario)	3,627	3,819	Average of low and high scenarios
Unincorporated Mesa County household growth @ 33% share of total County growth (high scenario)	4,145	4,364	Unincorporated Mesa County captured 32% of total Mesa County housing unit growth in 2010-2020

Going forward, Unincorporated Mesa County might expect to grow by 3,000 to 4,000 households per decade (300-400 households per year) if the unincorporated county captures a similar share of the County’s total growth as in the past two decades.

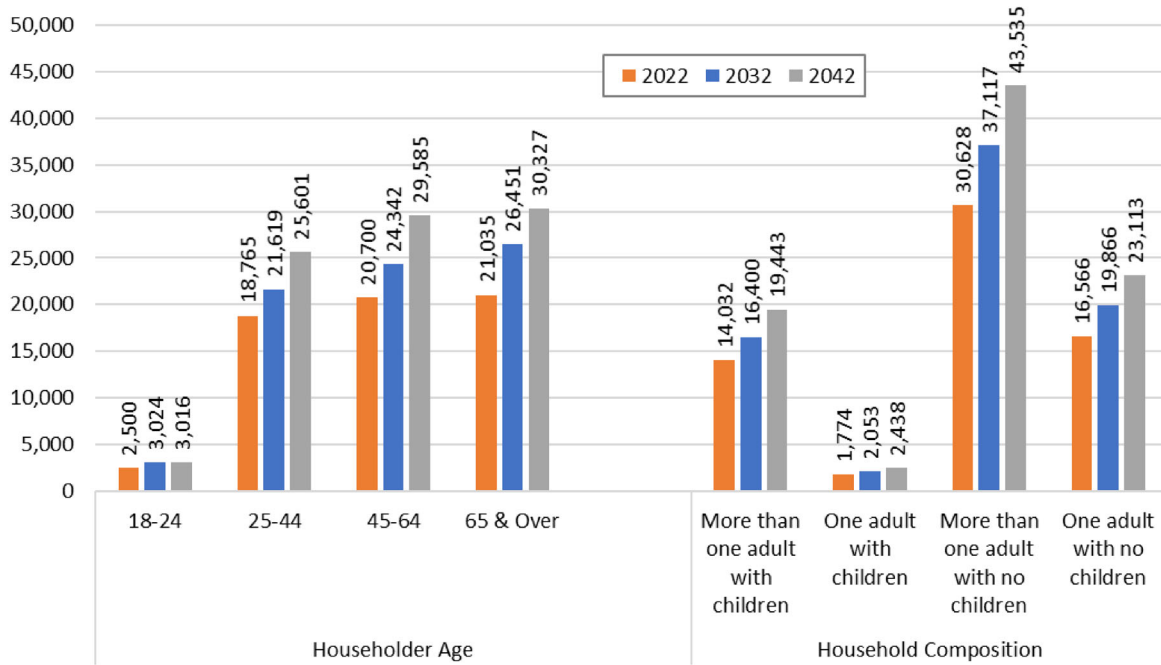
**Figure 21. Mesa County Households, 2000 – 2042 (projected)**



Source: Colorado State Demography Office.

Future household growth is projected to occur across a range of ages and household types (single and multiple adults, with and without children) over the next 20 years.

**Figure 22. Projected Mesa County Households by Age of Householder and Household Composition, 2022 – 2042**



Source: Colorado State Demography Office.

### Vacant Residential Parcels

Mesa County currently has extensive amounts of vacant residential land inventory. Altogether, as of January 2022, Mesa County was estimated to have 1,788 vacant platted parcels across 2,027 acres, and an additional 18,204 acres of residential vacant non-platted land across 759 parcels. See Table 12 below.

The unincorporated portion of Mesa County was estimated to have 555 vacant platted parcels, or 31% of the County’s total.

The unincorporated area was estimated to have fully 92.7% of the county’s total residential vacant non-platted acreage (approximately 14,998 out of 16,178 total acres), primarily in the Rural Plan Area (12,285 acres), and to a lesser degree in the Mesa Powderhorn Plan Area (1,253 acres), Urban Development Boundary Area (1,090 acres), Loma Community Plan area (183 acres), Mesa Powderhorn Plan Area (182 acres), and Gateway Rural Community (3 acres).

Altogether, 87.0% of vacant residential acreage is in the unincorporated county, primarily in the Rural Plan Area (70.7%), while 13.0% is in the municipalities, including 11.4% in Grand Junction.

Among the municipalities, Grand Junction has the largest volume of platted and non-platted vacant parcels and acreage.

**Table 12. Mesa County Vacant Residential Parcels as of January 27, 2022**

Geographic Area	Vacant Platted Parcels			Vacant Non-Platted Parcels			Total #			Total %	
	Count	Acre	Avg acres/parcel	Count	Acre	Avg acres/parcel	Count	Acre	Avg acres/parcel	Count %	Acre %
All Mesa County	1,788	2,026.98	1.13	759	16,177.66	21.31	2,547	18,204.64	7.15	100.0%	100.0%
Unincorporated Area	555	833.79	1.50	661	14,997.68	22.69	1,216	15,831.47	13.02	47.7%	87.0%
Urban Development Boundary Area	78	115.11	1.48	100	1,090.49	10.90	178	1,205.60	6.77	7.0%	6.6%
Rural Plan Area	322	587.31	1.82	437	12,285.22	28.11	759	12,872.53	16.96	29.8%	70.7%
Loma Community Plan	30	36.88	1.23	6	182.90	30.48	36	219.78	6.11	1.4%	1.2%
Mack Rural Community	26	37.14	1.43	14	182.34	13.02	40	219.48	5.49	1.6%	1.2%
Mesa Powderhorn Plan Area	94	42.25	0.45	97	1,253.46	12.92	191	1,295.71	6.78	7.5%	7.1%
Gateway Rural Community	5	15.10	3.02	7	3.27	0.47	12	18.37	1.53	0.5%	0.1%
Incorporated areas	1,233	1,193.19	0.97	98	1,179.98	12.04	1,331	2,373.17	1.78	52.3%	13.0%
Collbran	10	2.97	0.30	3	3.17	1.06	13	6.14	0.47	0.5%	0.0%
De Beque	58	14.47	0.25	0	0.00	#DIV/0!	58	14.47	0.25	2.3%	0.1%
Fruita	145	81.32	0.56	8	177.34	22.17	153	258.66	1.69	6.0%	1.4%
Grand Junction	987	1,087.28	1.10	84	996.48	11.86	1,071	2,083.76	1.95	42.0%	11.4%
Palisade	33	7.15	0.22	3	2.99	1.00	36	10.14	0.28	1.4%	0.1%

Source: Mesa County, [http://emap.mesacounty.us/Vacant\\_Land/Default.aspx](http://emap.mesacounty.us/Vacant_Land/Default.aspx)

In addition to the residential vacant land supply, there are small amounts of vacant land in Mesa County which are designated for townhomes (87 parcels across 11.90 acres) and duplexes / triplexes (1 parcel / 0.14 acre).

**Table 13. Mesa County Vacant Townhouse Parcels as of January 27, 2022**

Geographic Area	Vacant Platted Parcels		Vacant Non-Platted Parcels		Total #		Total %	
	Count	Acre	Count	Acre	Count	Acre	Count %	Acre %
All Mesa County	87	11.90	0	0.00	87	11.90	100.0%	100.0%
Unincorporated Area	7	0.49	0	0.00	7	0.49	8.0%	4.1%
Rural Plan Area	7	0.49	0	0.00	7	0.49	8.0%	4.1%
Incorporated areas	80	11.41	0	0.00	80	11.41	92.0%	95.9%
Fruita	14	0.84	0	0.00	14	0.84	16.1%	7.1%
Grand Junction	66	10.57	0	0.00	66	10.57	75.9%	88.8%

Source: Mesa County, [http://emap.mesacounty.us/Vacant\\_Land/Default.aspx](http://emap.mesacounty.us/Vacant_Land/Default.aspx)

**Table 14. Mesa County Vacant Duplex/Triplex Parcels as of January 27, 2022**

Geographic Area	Vacant Platted Parcels		Vacant Non- Platted Parcels		Total #		Total %	
	Count	Acres	Count	Acres	Count	Acres	Count %	Acres %
All Mesa County	1	0.14	0	0.00	1	0.14	100.0%	100.0%
Grand Junction	1	0.14	0	0.00	1	0.14	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Mesa County, [http://emap.mesacounty.us/Vacant\\_Land/Default.aspx](http://emap.mesacounty.us/Vacant_Land/Default.aspx)

Looking forward, potential topics for consideration include:

- Ensuring an adequate land supply for future residential growth in different locations, particularly in areas experiencing high demand for growth.
- Ensuring parcel sizes matched to market preferences, while taking into account considerations such as land use efficiencies, affordability, preservation of open spaces, etc.
- To the extent that much of the vacant residential land inventory is in unincorporated Mesa County, while most of the recent construction activity has occurred in the municipalities (especially Grand Junction), annexation activity and county-municipality coordinated planning might be ongoing topics and considerations going forward.

### Affordable Housing Policies and Actions

According to a Colorado Counties, Inc. survey in 2021, Mesa County is taking several steps to address affordable housing issues. These steps include authorizing ADUs by right in single family zoning districts, reducing local development review or fees, zoning for tiny homes, and having a density bonus program.

Affordable housing needs/priorities in Mesa County include workforce housing development, support for regional coordination/PPPs/non-profit developer support, behavioral health resources, and expanding modular home/tiny home development.

Mesa County has experienced workforce challenges and an increase in the homeless population as a result of affordable housing challenges.

- Mesa County collaborates with housing authority(ies) and nonprofits for collaboration on affordable housing projects.

**Table 15. Housing Occupancy by Area, 2015 – 2019 Five-Year Estimates**

Geography	Housing Units by Occupancy, 2015-19				Share of Housing Units by Occupancy, 2015-19				Housing Unit Occupancy by Area, 2015-19			
	Total	Owner-occupied		Vacant	Total	Owner-occupied		Vacant	Total	Owner-occupied		Vacant
		renter-occupied	renter-occupied			renter-occupied	renter-occupied					
Mesa County	66,599	42,093	19,649	4,857	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	63%	30%	7%
Unincorporated areas:												
Mesa County unincorp.	31,469	22,182	6,563	2,724	47%	53%	33%	56%	100%	70%	21%	9%
Mesa County unincorp., ex. CDPs	12,331	8,681	2,222	1,428	19%	21%	11%	29%	100%	70%	18%	12%
Total of Census Designated Places	19,138	13,501	4,341	1,296	29%	32%	22%	27%	100%	71%	23%	7%
Clifton CDP	8,377	5,298	2,714	365	13%	13%	14%	8%	100%	63%	32%	4%
Redlands CDP	4,001	3,065	479	457	6%	7%	2%	9%	100%	77%	12%	11%
Fruitvale CDP	3,380	2,749	416	215	5%	7%	2%	4%	100%	81%	12%	6%
Orchard Mesa CDP	2,923	2,095	643	185	4%	5%	3%	4%	100%	72%	22%	6%
Loma CDP	457	294	89	74	1%	1%	0%	2%	100%	64%	19%	16%
Total incorporated areas:												
Grand Junction city	27,873	15,274	11,008	1,591	42%	36%	56%	33%	100%	55%	39%	6%
Fruita city	5,586	3,742	1,533	311	8%	9%	8%	6%	100%	67%	27%	6%
Palisade town	1,273	657	456	160	2%	2%	2%	3%	100%	52%	36%	13%
De Beque town	219	137	54	28	0%	0%	0%	1%	100%	63%	25%	13%
Collbran town	179	101	35	43	0%	0%	0%	1%	100%	56%	20%	24%
Total municipalities + CDPs	54,268	33,412	17,427	3,429	81%	79%	89%	71%	100%	62%	32%	6%
County Census Divisions:												
Grand Junction CCD	39,848	23,653	13,648	2,547	60%	56%	69%	52%	100%	59%	34%	6%
Clifton CCD	12,205	7,885	3,504	816	18%	19%	18%	17%	100%	65%	29%	7%
Fruita CCD	10,305	7,642	2,134	529	15%	18%	11%	11%	100%	74%	21%	5%
Collbran CCD	1,413	662	125	626	2%	2%	1%	13%	100%	47%	9%	44%
Whitewater-Kannah Creek CCD	1,205	910	133	162	2%	2%	1%	3%	100%	76%	11%	13%
Glade Park-Gateway CCD	1,195	1,053	15	127	2%	3%	0%	3%	100%	88%	1%	11%
De Beque CCD	428	288	90	50	1%	1%	0%	1%	100%	67%	21%	12%

Source: American Community Survey, 2015-19 five-year estimates.



## RECREATION AND TOURISM

This section presents information related to recreation and tourism in Mesa County. These related topics are largely viewed positively by residents as adding to the quality of life and the character of Mesa County, as well as contributing to the economy by bringing outside spending from visitors. This section includes information about assets and opportunities for recreation and tourism in Mesa County.

### Key Trends in Recreation in Mesa County

Recreation in the county is seen as a major positive factor to the quality of life for residents of Mesa County. The role of the county should be to support coordination across jurisdictions, convene stakeholders, and collaborate with interest and user groups.

#### Recreation Facilities

Mesa County has an extensive trail network throughout various parts of the county. Of note, the Riverfront Trail System, which follows the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers and connects the City of Fruita, through the City of Grand Junction, to the Town of Palisade.

The Colorado National Monument is a popular resource for local recreation, with 43 miles of hiking and biking trails. The park had record visitation in 2021, with 500,000 visitors, up from 435,000 in 2020 and 397,000 in 2019. Park attendance is lowest in the winter months (averaging about 27,000 visitors per month in December, January, and February), and peaks in late spring/early summer (averaging about 54,000 visits per month in May, June, and July). The park attracts both residents and tourists.

#### Recreation in Mesa County

Based on focus group feedback, trails along the canals was an example of an area where the county could get involved to support recreation, along with more bike lanes and paths around the county. Investments in the riverfront, bike lanes/paths, public transportation, a rec center, more trails, and education would benefit both residents and visitors. A more extensive trail and bike path network could benefit students getting safely to school.

Mesa County should foster partnerships with a variety of entities, including school districts, land trusts, the BLM, and river front trail organizations. Currently, a fragmented approach to recreation exists, with numerous different jurisdictions all pursuing their own interests.

Lower income populations are currently underserved in terms of access to outdoor recreation. Other populations mentioned as being underserved for access to outdoor recreation include the elderly, homeless residents, and the physically challenged population. Providing access to these populations would be an improvement to the quality of life for these residents.

Healthy Mesa County promotes recreation as a public health benefit, with a goal to “(p)romote health through well-constructed and inclusive neighborhoods, trails, sidewalks and open spaces.” Additionally, the organization’s website also highlights sports and recreation opportunities as a means to “improve

social and emotional wellbeing through positive relationships among individuals and their support systems in our communities.” <https://healthymesacounty.org/active-communities/>

### Recreation Challenges and Opportunities

Like the comments about tourism, planning for resident recreation will be important as the population of Mesa County grows and more people participate in recreation. Protecting wildlife habitat and corridors is an important consideration moving forward. Key opportunities for recreation in Mesa County include a more extensive trail and bike path network, sustainability, shade trees, and recreation programs for residents.

### Key Trends in Tourism in Mesa County

Tourism is an important component of the economy in Mesa County. According to the Colorado State Demographer, tourism accounts for 10% of the jobs in Mesa County, or an average of 4,246 jobs over the past five years (2016 to 2020). The number of tourism jobs in 2020 was 2,986, down by 11.3% from 2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that these jobs will rebound as the tourism economy improves in Mesa County and in Colorado.

### Tourism’s Contribution to the Mesa County Economy

The contribution to the Mesa County economy from tourism is significant. Overnight visitors to Mesa County accounted for \$230 million in direct expenditures in the county in 2020, which was down 20% from 2019 due to the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, total overnight visitor spending was trending upwards in Mesa County, rising to \$287 million in 2019 from \$220 million in 2011, an increase of 30.5%, according to Dean Runyan Associates.

Tourism spending in Mesa County in 2020 generated \$9.3 million in local tax and \$6.8 million in state tax (Dean Runyan Associates).

The primary sectors for direct visitor expenditures include food service/restaurants (\$72 million in 2019), accommodations (\$68 million), retail sales (\$41 million), visitor air transportation (\$36 million), arts, entertainment, and recreation (\$28 million), local transportation and gas (\$24 million), and food stores (\$18 million). Clearly, tourism spending impacts many sectors of the Mesa County economy, beyond hotels and restaurants.

The 2022 Colorado Business Economic Outlook reported that Mesa County tourism spending generated \$464 million in economic impact (including indirect and induced impacts) in 2019. The same report estimates that 900,000 overnight visitors stayed in lodging properties in the county in 2019. The visitor economy accounts for 30% of the City of Grand Junction’s sales tax base.

### Outdoor Recreation’s Role in Tourism

Several attributes of Mesa County are attractive to visitors and have been driving an increase in tourism in the past several years. Outdoor recreation, in particular mountain biking and hiking, is becoming increasingly popular and drawing more visitors to the County. As documented in a study of the Mesa

County tourism economy from 2016 by Summit Economics, outdoor recreation is a growing and attractive asset for Mesa County visitors. The most popular activities include mountain biking, skiing (Nordic and downhill), hiking, horseback riding, OHV (off-highway vehicle) riding, scenic drives/tours, target shooting, river boating, and hunting. The county has over 10,000 miles of recreational trails on a variety of different properties

One recent highlight is the outdoor recreation economy is the Palisade Plunge, a 32-mile mountain bike trail that commences at the top of the Grand Mesa and descends over 6,000 vertical feet to the Colorado River at Palisade. It is anticipated that the Palisade Plunge will become an iconic mountain bike trail that will bring visitors from around the country to Mesa County. Additionally, the trail is predicted to bring as much as \$5 million in visitor spending to Mesa County

Other components of tourism in Mesa County include business travel, medical travel, and education-related travel to Mesa County (primarily Colorado Mesa University events and activities).

#### Visitor Demographics and Trip Characteristics

Of the visitors to Mesa County (traveling at least 50 miles to the county), 45% were Colorado residents, while 51% were from elsewhere in the U.S., and 4% were from outside the country. (Guest Research survey, 2015/16, n=1,104). The visitor survey sample skewed somewhat old, with 10% aged 34 and under, 13% 35-44, 23% 45-54, 28% 55-64, and 25% 65+.

Most visitors were leisure visitors (95%), as opposed to business travelers (5%). Top trip purposes included vacation (44%), visiting friends/relatives (16%), stopping en route to another destination (11%), special event/festival/concert (8%), and individual business travel (4%).

Most visitors stayed overnight (71%), with 17% visiting for the day, 7% passing through, and 5% seasonal residents/second homeowners. Among visitors staying overnight, the largest share stayed near I-70 in Grand Junction (45%), with 23% staying in the downtown Grand Junction area, 12% in Fruita, 8% in Palisade, and 12% elsewhere.

Travelers were most likely to visit the area on Friday (51%), Saturday (57%), and/or Sundays (45%), with smaller shares visiting other days of the week.

Most tourists traveled by personal car (71%), with more modest shares traveling by rental car (12%), plane (7%), RV/camper (5%), train (2%), and motor coach (1%).

Popular places to visit and activities in Mesa County include restaurants (70%), shopping (38%), the Colorado National Monument (35%), wineries/breweries/distilleries (34%), hiking (28%), visiting friends/relatives (22%), orchards (18%), museums/arts/cultural activities (15%), concerts/festivals/special events (13%), visiting public lands (12%), family attractions/parks (9%), mountain biking (7%), and road biking (7%).

Interestingly, 35% of visitors have considered moving to the Grand Junction area, and 9% have considered relocation/starting a business in the Grand Junction area.

While the survey did not capture very many business travelers, Colorado Mesa University, and other local businesses (including hospitals and other health care) certainly generate visits to Mesa County. While no measure for medical tourism currently exists for Mesa County, the area's largest local industry is health care, with five hospitals and over 11,000 (12,546 as of Q2 2020) employees serving over half million people across the Mountain West.

#### Hotel and Convention Facilities

As of 2015, there were over 3,000 hotel rooms in Mesa County, with over 53,000 square feet of meeting space at those hotels. In addition, the Two Rivers Convention Center in Grand Junction boasts 23,000 square feet of meeting space for conferences and conventions. Additionally, Airbnb.com lists over 300 units for rent in Mesa County. The occupancy rate at hotels in Mesa County in October 2020 was 67%, 19 percentage points above the national average of 48%.

#### Grand Junction Airport (GJT)

More than 500,000 passengers traveled through GJT in 2019, breaking half a million passengers for the first time ever. While passenger traffic declined in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (dropping by about half), 2021 passenger traffic was rebounded to slightly exceed 2019's total (518,171). (Grand Junction airport statistics)

The economic contribution of GJT to the regional economy is estimated at \$710 million, according to a study published by the Colorado Division of Aeronautics in January 2020.

#### Tourism Challenges and Opportunities

Key challenges for tourism include crowd management, available lodging, coordination across the county, and other infrastructure needs to support a sustainable level of tourism. There is a need for more trash receptacles, bathrooms, and other support facilities at trailheads. As well, planning for increases to participation in outdoor recreation (from both visitors and residents) will help to mitigate potential overcrowding that other popular outdoor recreation destinations have experienced in recent years.

Future opportunities for tourism are likely to be centered on outdoor recreation, including Colorado River access, cross-country and downhill skiing, mountain biking, trails, and open space usage in general.

## MEMORANDUM

To: Mesa County, Greg Moberg, Sean Norris

From: Design Workshop: Anna Laybourn, Alison Bourquin,  
Spirit Environmental: Conor Merigan, Renaldo Gonzales

Date: April 22, 2022

Project Name: Mesa Together, Mesa County Master Plan

Project #: 6525

Subject: Environment and Resilience Research Draft

---

### Environment and Resilience Memorandum Purpose

This report is intended to capture all currently available data regarding Mesa County's natural environment, environmental trends and resilience. Tasks also in progress or completed include review of transportation, economic trends, and housing trends. The compilation of these memos will represent an understanding of the Existing Conditions and Opportunities in Phase 1 of work.

Key information from these memoranda will be selected for inclusion in the final document and some information may be used to express the existing conditions and broad overview of opportunities in public engagement/information efforts. This report addresses the following:

- **Geography and Climate**
- **Water, Flood and Drought**
- **Resilience**
- **Energy**
- **Natural Resources**
- **Agriculture**

### Geography & Climate

Mesa County, named after the many renowned mesas within the area, is located in a river valley along the western border of Colorado. The land is full of red sandstone spires and occupies 3,309 square miles spanning 2,138,288 acres. Mesa County's significant physiographic attributes are the Colorado River and its tributaries; the Gunnison and Dolores rivers; the Uncompahgre Plateau; Unaweep Canyon; Grand Mesa; the Bookcliffs; and the Grand Valley. Elevations in Mesa County vary from nearly 4,400 feet ("ft") to 11,236 ft. The Metropolitan area is surrounded by the Colorado National Monument and the Grand Mesa National Forest.

### Temperature and Climate

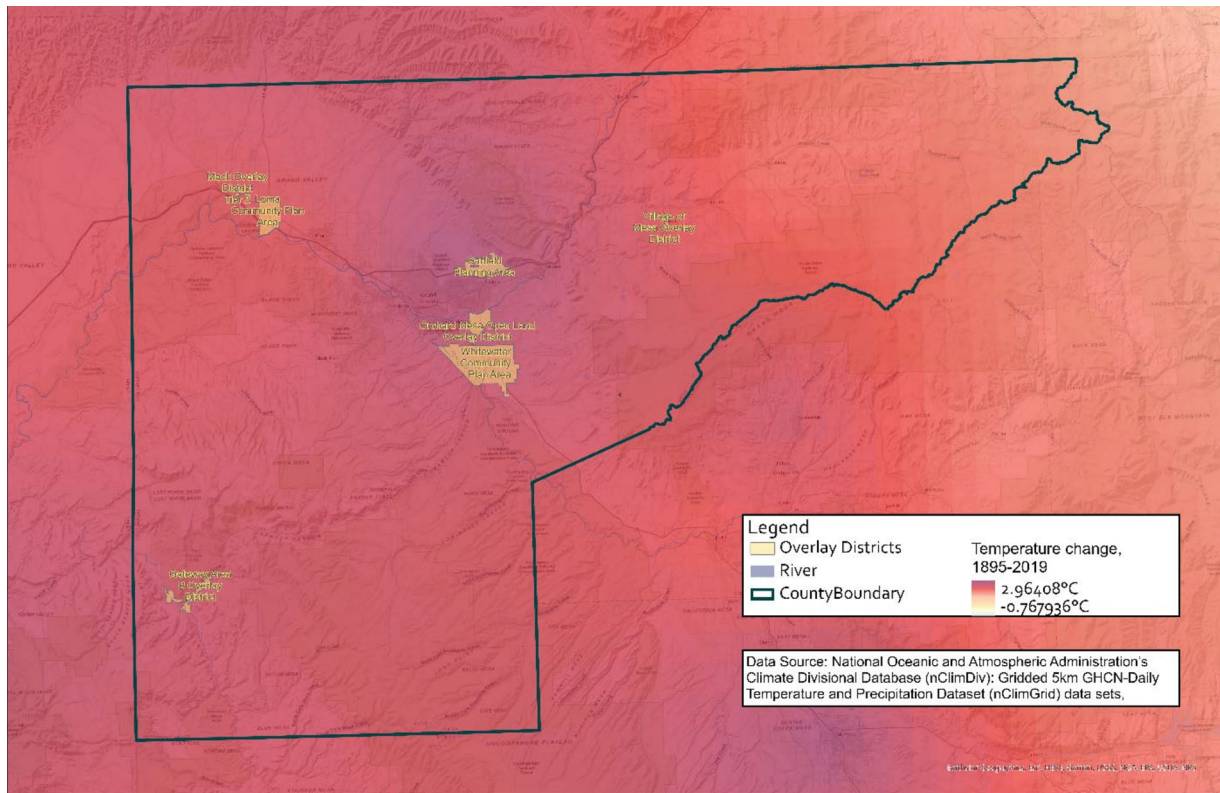
The County is located in a geographical region that has experienced a 2° Celsius average temperature increase between 1895 and 2019. (Eilperin 2020). Possible long term impacts of increased temperatures include increased drought, less snowpack/snowpack melting earlier, increased wildfire danger, and more variable weather conditions. If these trends persists over the planning horizon, Mesa County can look to science-based models to anticipate not only what the likely impacts might be, but also what potential actions can be undertaken to continually take a proactive stance and mitigate the negative impacts in ways that provide a multitude of benefits to County residents and businesses. In addition, there may be opportunities associated with higher concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere including an extended growing season as those inputs provide additional resources for crop growth. By taking a measured approach to all of the potential positive and negative impacts, Mesa County can be prepared for a range of future conditions and plan for them appropriately.



In 2021, Mesa County recorded its 6<sup>th</sup> driest year to date over the previous 128 years, with 1.04 fewer inches of precipitation than average (NOAA 2022). The following statistics demonstrate long term temperature changes and recent trends; while these are representative of actual conditions it should be recognized that climate and weather fluctuate over time.

- Mesa County +2.3° Celsius annual temperature change 1895-2019
- United States +1.0° Celsius annual temperature change 1895-2019
- Mesa County had 49 days of extreme heat with maximum temperatures above 90°F during May-September 2019
- In July of 2021, the city of Grand Junction reached 107 degrees, breaking its record high of 106 degrees.

**Figure 1. Mesa County Historical Temperature Change Map**

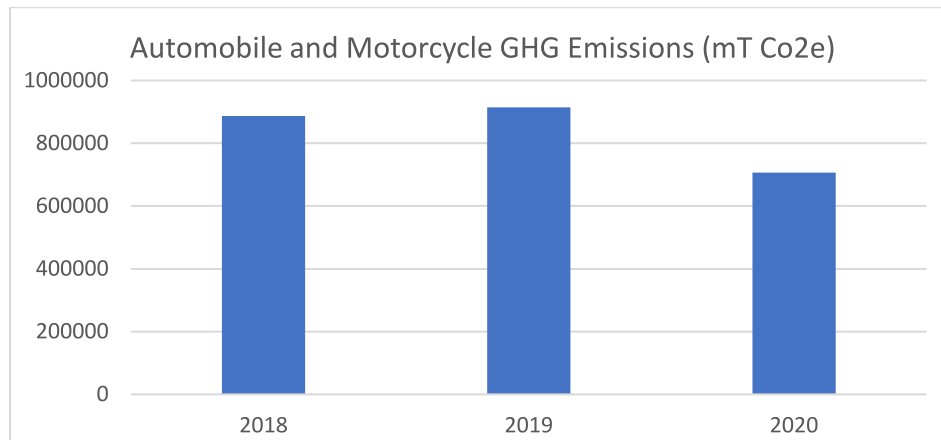


### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

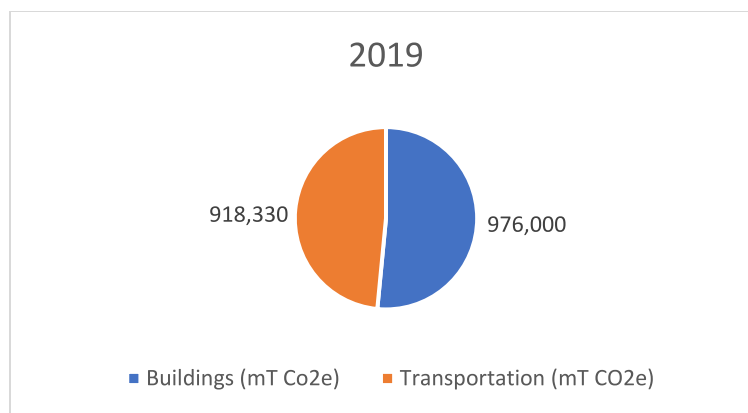
According to data from Google gathered via advanced algorithms based on user data and information published by local utility providers, Mesa County residents and businesses have historically emitted just under a million metric tons of greenhouse gases ("GHGs") annually from building and industrial energy consumption and another approximately 900,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide from driving and transportation. The Google data provides a free and consistent source of information on transportation and building energy use and greenhouse gas emissions that can be used to track progress over time. Transportation and buildings are the two (2) most significant sources of GHG emissions, though other sources such as landfill gas and wastewater treatment process gas are also present. 2020 saw a dip in GHG emissions, especially on the transportation side due to Covid travel reductions, so 2019 is suggested as a more typical "baseline" year.



**Figure 2. Automobile and Motorcycle Emissions 2018-2020**



**Figure 3. 2019 Mesa County primary GHG emissions**



**Geography & Climate: Key Understanding**

- The County can focus on reducing the urban heat island effect by developing buildings and infrastructure that increase vegetation and utilize reflective and cool roof methods at little or no cost increase for builders.
- The County can aid vulnerable populations by creating a database of high-risk individuals, leading outreach, and promoting accessible community heating and cooling facilities.
- Supporting electric vehicles and infrastructure will reduce local air pollutants as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Focusing on adaptive tree species that provide shade and thrive in hotter and drier conditions will give the residents cooling shade and reduce ambient air temperatures.

**Water, Flood, and Drought**

Water supply in the Grand Valley area is critical for irrigation. Landowners have senior water rights but the water is encountering issues of salinity and selenium (Colorado Water Plan). There are three (3) recognized Threatened and Endangered fish species within a 15 mile stretch of the Colorado River from Rifle toward Grand Junction in Mesa County.

### Surface water

Mesa County relies on the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basin for water. The Colorado River is a critical element of all the streams in Mesa County; they are all direct or indirect tributaries. Three (3) of the largest tributaries, the Gunnison, Dolores, and San Miguel, flow through Grand Junction, the largest city in the county.

### Environmental

The Gunnison River is the state's second-largest river, from its headwaters along the Continental Divide and its confluence with the Colorado River near Grand Junction. The Gunnison circles between mint trout fisheries, public recreation areas, heritage ranches, and rugged whitewater, fed by snowmelt runoff from some of the most elevated mountains in the Rocky Mountains. The Gunnison River is threatened by ecosystem contamination and undergoing remediation. Mercury and selenium are ubiquitous contaminants for fish residing in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Although selenium is an essential source of nutrition for humans and animals, beyond a small dose, it can be deleterious (Antweiler). A 2020 study of fish tissues sampled for selenium over the last 50 years found the Gunnison River has the most occurrences exceeding the fish health benchmark (PloS One 2020). Remediation programs such as the Gunnison River Basin's Selenium Management Plan, the Selenium Control Program, and the Bureau of Reclamation's Gunnison Basin Selenium Management Program seeks to reduce unhealthy amounts of selenium in the ecosystem.

### Snowpack

Snow accumulates in the high country of Mesa County in the winter months, providing a natural reservoir for water storage and an influx of water into the waterways in the spring and summer. Flooding can occur in Mesa County due to snowmelt runoff, primarily in May, June, and July, with hotter temperatures melting the snow at higher elevations. The county's mountainous areas receive higher rainfall than the low-lying valley, where the climate is often arid. Colorado's snowpack water is distributed throughout the region via a complex system of dams, pipelines, and irrigation canals. Data reveals Mesa County's snowpack is dwindling and melting earlier. In response, water evaporates sooner because the ground absorbs more heat.

### Wells

- Wells support many aspects of society and provide water in areas where it is scarce. Wells provide access to groundwater in underground aquifers that supply water for homes, irrigation, and industry.
- Groundwater is often a cost-effective and efficient resource for public water supplies.
- There were 2,431 water wells inventoried in Mesa County as of November 14, 2016.

Permitted uses of these wells include:

- 58.5% (1,421 wells) for domestic use or household use only
- 31.8% (772 wells) are not listed or listed as "other," which includes monitoring wells
- 4.0% (98 wells) for geothermal use
- 3.2% (78 wells) are permitted for commercial, industrial, or municipal purposes
- 1.5% (37 wells) for irrigation
- 1.0% (25 wells) for watering livestock

### Wetlands and Water Resources

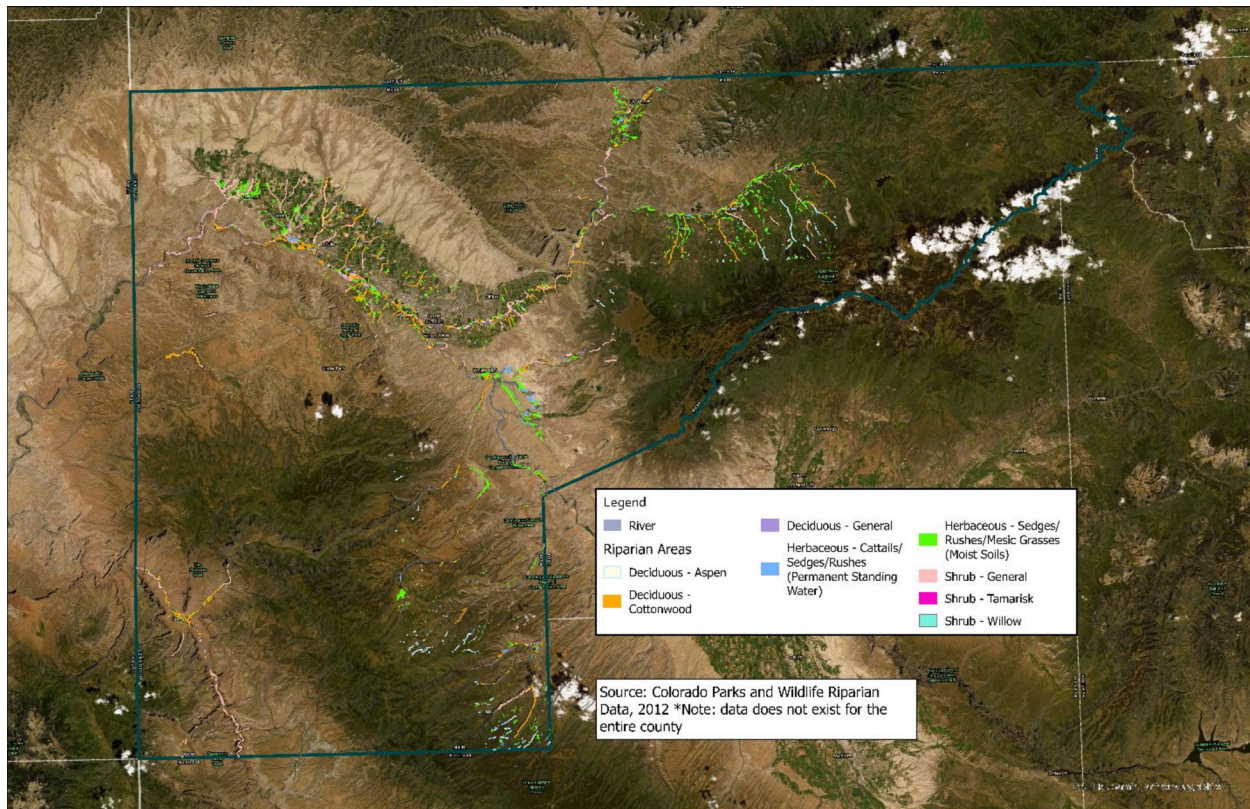
Wetlands and water resources are essential ecological components of Colorado's landscape. Wetlands are invaluable for water retention and flood attenuation, water filtration, stormwater runoff, nutrient removal and transformation, groundwater recharge, groundwater discharge, sediment stabilization and retention, and wildlife habitat. Wetlands within Colorado comprise less than 3% of the landscape; however, over 75% of wildlife species rely on these wetland systems at some point in their lives.

Within Mesa County, there are three (3) main types of wetland systems: freshwater emergent wetlands, riverine/riparian wetlands, and forested scrub-shrub wetlands. Freshwater emergent wetlands are typically found in meadows, in low areas intercepting groundwater, and around ditches and stock ponds. Examples of freshwater emergent wetlands are wet meadows, emergent marshes, fens, and seeps and springs. Vegetation varies with

hydrology and elevation; typical vegetation seen in these systems are Horsetails (*Equisetum sp.*) and scouring rushes (*Hippochaete sp.*), rushes (*Juncus sp.*), sedges (*Carex sp.*), common reed (*Phragmites australis*), and cattails (*Typha latifolia*).

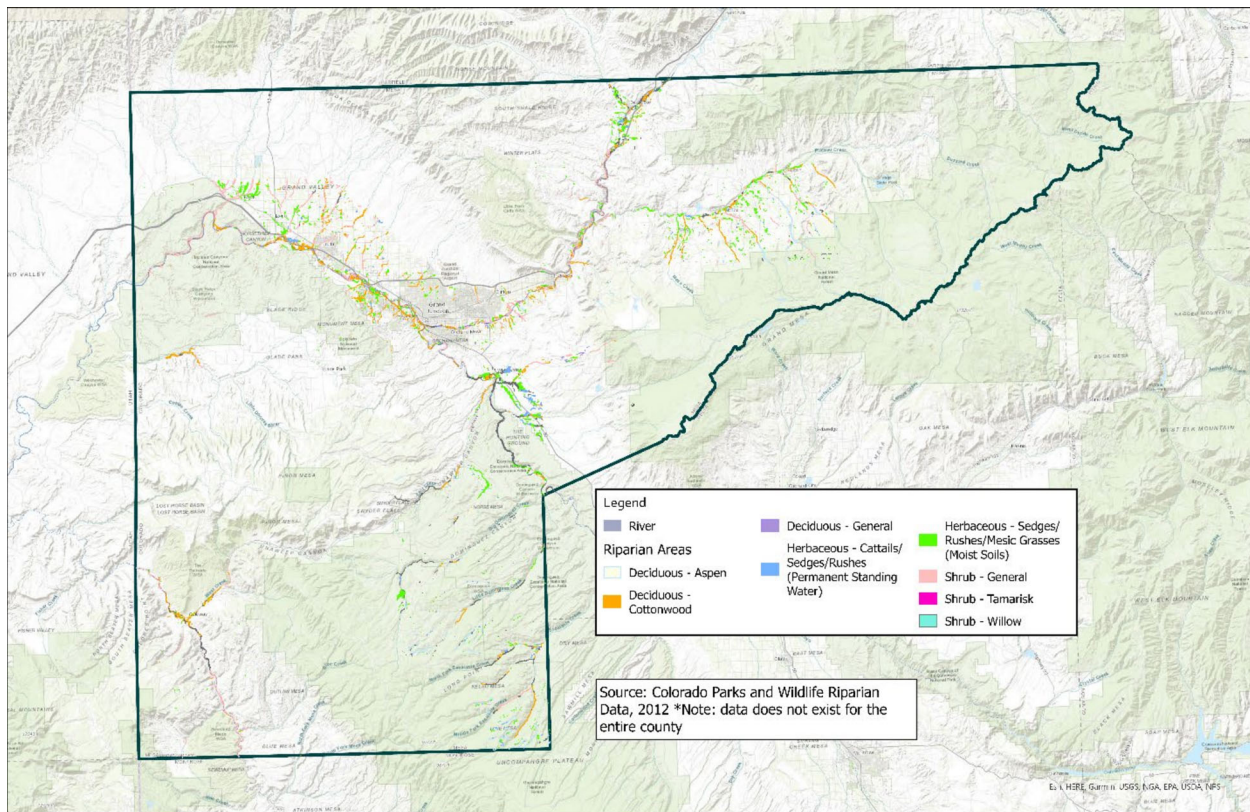
Riparian areas are adjacent to most intermittent and perennial streams and ephemeral channels. Riparian areas can also be found around lakes and ponds. Riparian areas in Mesa County are typically dominated by cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides* or *Populus Angustifolia*), skunkbrush (*Rhus trilobata*), and coyote willow (*Salix exigua*). Many areas within Mesa County have also been invaded with tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*), a species that consumes up to 20 gallons of water per day and deposits salt into the soil altering the soil chemistry for native species.

**Figure 4 Mesa County Aerial Riparian Map**





**Figure 5 Mesa County Topography Map of Riparian Areas**



Freshwater scrub-shrub wetlands mix freshwater emergent wetlands and riparian areas but typically without a tree canopy. These systems hydrology is usually characterized by groundwater interception or overbank flow from adjacent streams. They are frequently located adjacent to stream channels or at the base of the foothills where snow accumulation and groundwater interception occurs. Their overstory is often composed of coyote willow, tamarisk, and skunkbrush, with a sparse understory comprised of vegetation similar to emergent wetlands such as Horsetails, sedges, and rushes.

Freshwater ponds and lakes within Mesa County are limited and of high importance to agricultural, drinking water, livestock, and wildlife. For additional information about some of the critical wetlands and riparian areas in Mesa County, review the Colorado Natural Heritage Program 2002 report "Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Mesa County." Table 1 below details information about the resources found within the county based on publicly available GIS data.

**Table 1. Wetland and Water Resources in Mesa County**

Resource Type	Number of Resources	Resource Area
Freshwater Emergent Wetlands	5,278	11,309.14 acres
Forested Scrub Shrub Wetlands	2,178	5,298.56 acres
Riparian/Riverine Wetlands	10,150	36,550.87 acres
Freshwater Ponds	6,638	3,396.78 acres
Lakes	99	3,718.91 acres

Source: Mesa County GIS Department

Mesa County has areas of high biological significance and a wide-ranging assortment of wetlands that maintain a diverse number of plants, animals, and plant communities. The diversity of plant and animal species and their habitats symbolize Mesa County's "natural heritage." The 2003 Colorado Natural Heritage Program's "Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Mesa County" found that numerous wetlands have been lost or severely altered from their pre-settlement state. The main contributing factors were agriculture, grazing, development, construction of reservoirs, water diversions, and gravel mining. A comprehensive wetland protection and management program proactively plans for administering human activities and overseeing the species or habitat of interest.

- 32 wetland and riparian sites of biodiversity importance are designated as Potential Conservation Areas ("PCAs")
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program ("CNHP") considers sites to include wetlands that merit conservation efforts
- Colorado River Corridor and Unaweeep Seep are significant sites
- Threats observed at the Potential Conservation Areas
  - Hydrologic Modification
  - Residential Development
  - Oil and Gas Development
  - Incompatible Grazing
  - Logging
  - Recreation
  - Roads
  - Non-Native Species
- Known to occur in, or are associated with, wetlands in Mesa County from CNHP's list of rare and imperiled plants, animals, and plant communities include:
  - At least 34 major wetland/riparian plant communities
  - 8 Plants
  - 9 Birds
  - 6 Fish
  - 3 Amphibians
  - 2 Invertebrates

**Table 2. Mesa County Potential Conservation Areas**

Mesa County Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs)			
Colorado River	Pinon Mesa Canyon	Granite Creek	East Salt Creek at Sugarloaf Peak
Gateway	Pinyon Mesa	Park Creek at Vega Reservoir	Lily Lake
Dolores Canyon South	Salt Creek	Rough Canyon	Little Dolores River
Escalante Canyon	Sewemup Mesa	Park Creek at Vega Reservoir	Long Canyon
Fruita and Monument Canyons	Unaweeep Seep	Suphur Gulch Spring	No Thoroughfare Canyon
Gunnison River	Vega Reservoir	Unaweeep Canyon	Skyway Point
John Brown Canyon	Big Dominguez Creek	West Salt Creek	Willow Creek
Mee Canyon	Echo Canyon at No Thoroughfare Canyon	Big Creek	West Creek at Fall Creek

**Groundwater**

Groundwater in Mesa County is linked with the four (4) principal regional aquifers of the Colorado Plateau and more minor local aquifers. Discharge provides critical flow to many small streams in Mesa County and is vital to the health of many riparian communities.

**Aquifers**

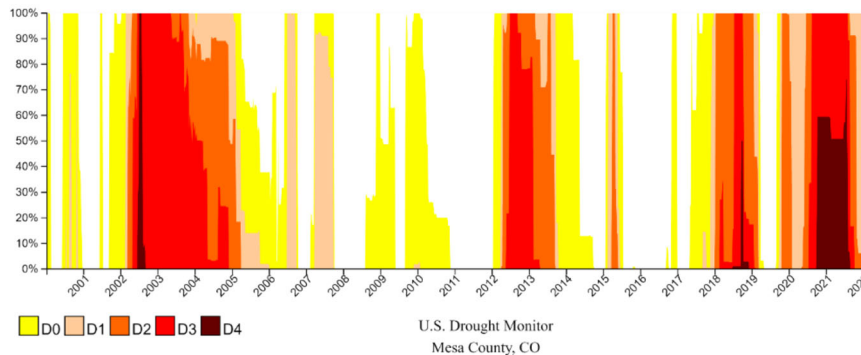
The various water-yielding divisions have been grouped into four (4) principal regional aquifers. All four (4) aquifers underlie Mesa County and discharge in different geographical locations within the county. Local aquifers support seeps and springs throughout the county. The four aquifers are;

1. Uinta-Animas aquifer
2. Mesa Verde aquifer
3. Dakota-Glen Canyon aquifer
4. Coconino aquifer

**Drought**

Members of the the focus groups held as part of the process identified the need to focus on water conservation and opportunities to scale back water use and innovative water recapture and reuse to prepare for potentially drier conditions in the future. Recent drought history and predictions indicate that drought conditions over the past several years have been especially severe. While short term patterns cannot reliably predict future conditions, changing climate impacts indicate a higher likelihood of additional drought occurrences in the future.

**Figure 6. Historic Drought Conditions 2000-2022**



**Water, Flood and Drought: Key Understanding**

- County agencies can lead by example by utilizing water efficiency strategies at county facilities.
- Conservation measures are most effective when they have public support. The county can promote voluntary home water conservation in the community (using a dishwasher instead of handwashing, repairing household plumbing leaks, installing water-efficient fixtures and appliances, auditing irrigation systems for efficiency).
- Agriculture conservation measures can be highly successful in reducing agricultural water use. The county can campaign for efficient farm Irrigation techniques such as low-energy targeted spray irrigation.
- The county can educate the Industrial and commercial sector about water conservation best practices (Meter/Measure/Manage)
- The county can promote local government leadership, facilitating intergovernmental relations, regionalism, and collaboration. Drought management strategic planning includes emergency management, financial management, and innovation and technology.



## Resiliency

Mesa County faces numerous potential threats from natural hazards to man-made hazards, and maintaining a resilient approach will include careful consideration of the most pressing threats in various areas. According to the Mesa County Hazard Mitigation Plan, the highest hazard threats are wildfire, floods, and rockfall. While some of the most significant consequences to infrastructure are in the I-70 corridor, these threats need to be carefully considered and planned for along with the lower hazard events that may be more frequent, including heat events, extreme weather, and even fluctuations in economic conditions.

### Hazard Management and Vulnerabilities

In various physical phenomena, natural and human-caused disasters disrupt people, property, economies, and the environment. Natural disaster management incorporates strategic preparation and response to disasters and includes a systematic approach to disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

**Table 3. Hazard Impacts and Probability**

HIGHEST POTENTIAL HAZARDS IN MESA COUNTY			
Hazard Type	Occurrence	Magnitude/Severity	Hazard Level
Wildfire	Highly Likely	Limited	High
Flood	Highly Likely	Critical	High
Landslide/Rockfall	Highly Likely	Critical	High

Table is based on past events, impacts, and future probability for each of the hazards

Source: Mesa County Hazard Mitigation Plan

- The expected loss in Mesa County
  - Expected loss each year due to natural hazards is relatively low compared to the rest of the United States ("US")
  - Per the National Risk Index:
    - Mesa County, CO: 11.96
    - Colorado Average: 11.73
    - National Average: 13.33
- Social groups in Mesa County
  - Have a Relatively Low susceptibility to the adverse impacts of natural hazards compared to the rest of the US (National Risk Index)
- Communities in Mesa County
  - Have a Relatively Moderate ability to prepare for anticipated natural hazards, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions when compared to the rest of the US (National Risk Index)

### Resilience: Key Understanding

- One potential path is to maintain healthy, diverse woodlands while reducing wildfire hazards. The County can minimize the risk through land use planning and utilizing Fuel Breaks (strips/blocks of vegetation) that have been modified to slow and control wildfire.
- The County can require fire-resistant construction strategies, especially in fire-prone areas.
- The County can promote Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) that administer the responsibility and implement actions that reduce wildfire risk.
- The County can incorporate flood mitigation strategies in local planning that decrease the exposure to flooding hazards, including; limiting development in floodplain areas, adopting building code and development standards that ensure communities can withstand flooding, and stormwater/runoff management strategies.

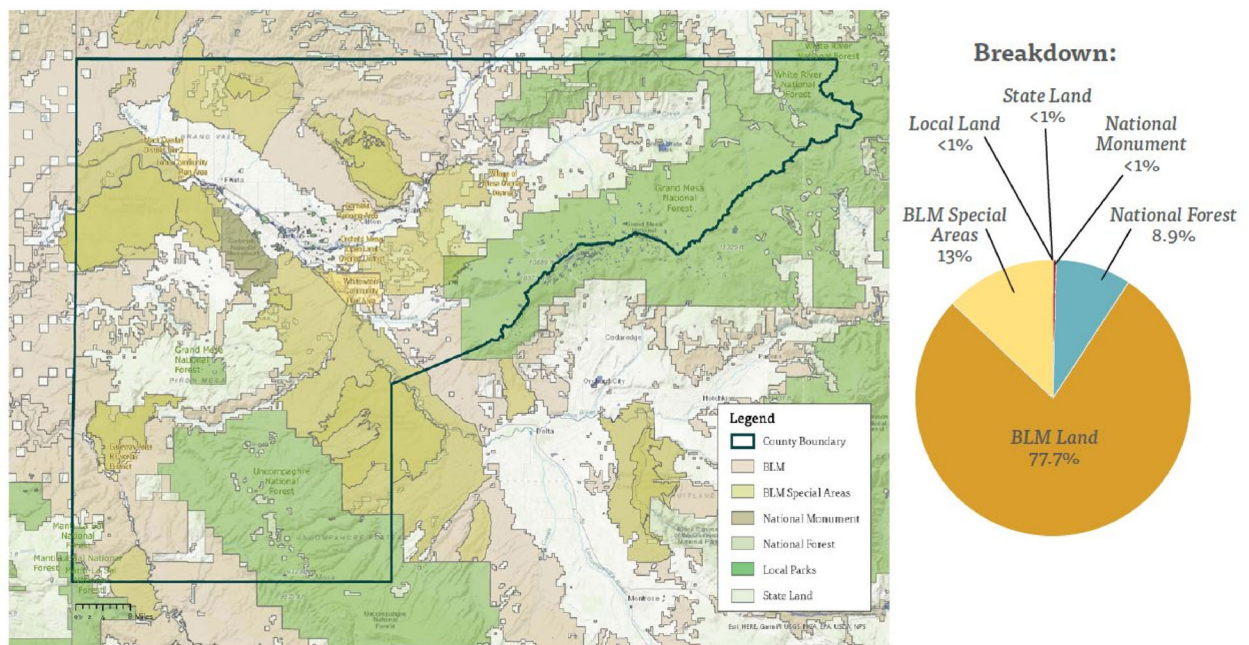
- The County can decrease the vulnerability to landslides by enhancing data and mapping on community landslide risks. Examining development practices and removing existing buildings/infrastructure from landslide hazard areas

### Natural Resources

Mesa County's Natural Resources Management Plan completed in 2020 provides context for the Natural Resources section from an historical perspective, and was used as a guiding document. Natural resources are vital to the health and prosperity of Mesa County as they sustain life for residents while maintaining an ecological balance. Preservation and conservation of exhaustible resources protect wildlife, nature, and human health. In addition, natural resources play a critical role in sustainable growth. As the population of Mesa County increases, the consumption of nature's exhaustible resources also increases, creating scarcity. Proper management of natural resources ensures future generations will have access to the resources.

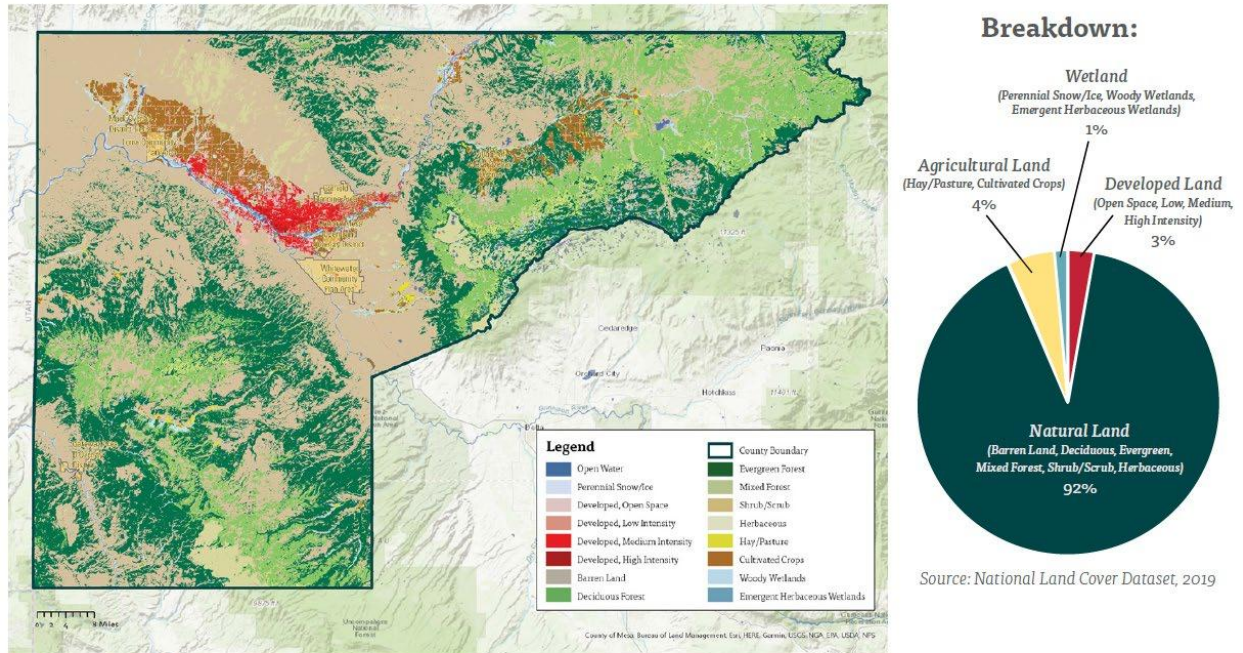
The following are important considerations for natural resources in Colorado,

- 4<sup>th</sup> largest county in Colorado
- 2,138,288 acres, of which 1,556,246 acres or 72.7% of lands are federally owned/managed
- 3,729 acres are state lands
- 935,000 acres of federal mineral estates
- According to the National Historic Preservation Act ("NHPA") and the National Register of Historic Places ("NRHP"), Mesa County has 35 sites listed in the National Register
- The Colorado National Monument is 20,500 acres with over 46 miles of trails
- 285,916 acres of roadless land in Mesa County
- Access to parks – 59% of people living in Mesa County live within half a mile of a park
- The Colorado average of people living within half a mile of a park is 74%



Source: Mesa County, 2021

Figure 21. Mesa County Public Land Map. Source: Mesa County, 2021



Source: National Land Cover Dataset, 2019

Figure 22. Mesa County Land Cover Map. Source: National Land Cover Dataset, 2019

### High Priority Habitats

Priority habitats warrant a higher sense of conservation urgency, and are based on the Natural Resource Plan. They can be designated as areas with one or more of the following attributes:

- Comparatively high wildlife density
- High or significant wildlife species richness
- Significant wildlife breeding habitat
- Significant wildlife seasonal ranges
- Significant movement corridors for wildlife
- Wildlife habitat of limited availability and/or high vulnerability

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designations are BLM-managed areas “where special management attention is needed to protect important historical, cultural, and scenic values, or fish and wildlife or other natural resources” (Bureau of Land Management, 2016). An ACEC may also be designated to protect human life and safety from natural hazards (Bureau of Land Management, 2016).

**Table 4. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

ACEC	Acreage		
The Palisade	32,200		
Unaweeep Seep	85		
Roan and Carr Creeks	33,600		
Juanita Arch	1,600	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Total Acreage	
Sinbad Valley	2,400		
Rough Canyon	2,800		
Indian Creek	2,300		
Atwell Gulch	2,900		
Pyramid Rock	1,300		
Badger Wash	2,200		
Dolores River Riparian	7,400		
Mt. Garfield	2,400		
South Shale Ridge	27,800		
<b>Total</b>	<b>118,985</b>		

Mineral Resources

According to the USGS Mineral Resources Data System, there are 375 mines in Mesa County. The Bureau of Land Management's Locatable Minerals Program has 10,380 active mining claims in Colorado.

**Table 5. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

List of Exploitable or Exploited Mineral Commodities in Mesa County	
Barite (Barytes)	Beryllium
Clay	Copper
Dimension Stone	Feldspar
Fire Clay	Fluorite (Fluorspar)
Gold	Gypsum & Anhydrite
Mica	Molybdenum
Silica	Silver
Sulfur	Uranium
Vanadium	

Grand Junction Cheney Disposal Site

- Uranium mill tailings control site
- Formerly called the Cheney Disposal Cell
- 18 miles southeast of Grand Junction
- This disposal site is the "only government-owned, noncommercial disposal facility in the country."
- Contains roughly 4.4 million cubic yards of contaminated processing site materials
- COVID-19 relief and federal spending bill reconsidered how long the Cheney disposal site will continue to operate



- Currently, the cell is at 95% capacity, yet this new relief could extend its opening through 2031 or until it is full

### Air Quality

According to the United Nations Environmental Programme, air pollution has also been found to increase the risk of lung cancer, heart disease, and acute respiratory infections (UNEP). While air pollution impacts residents of all ages, babies and young children are more at risk.

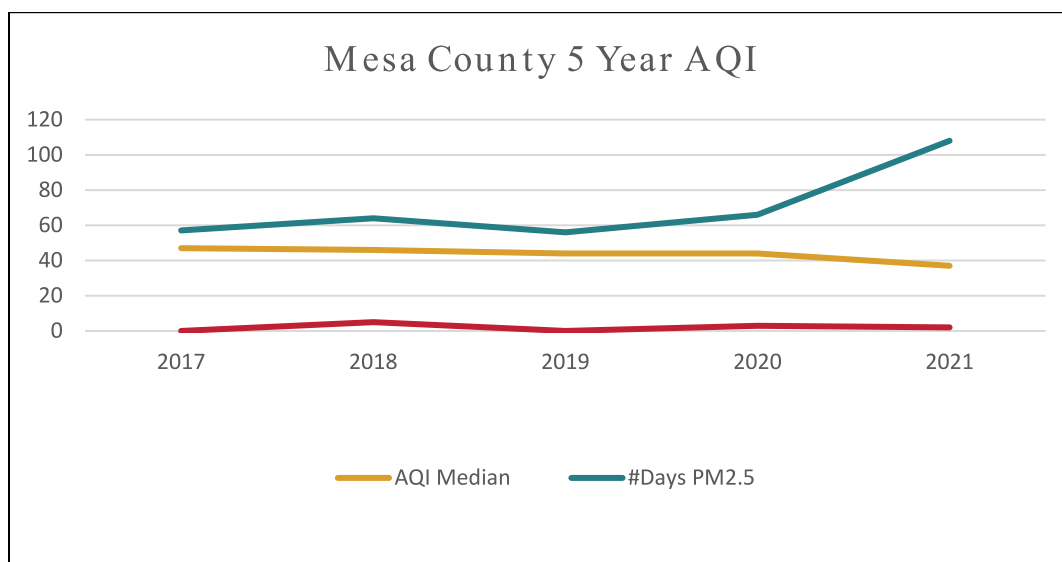
- Particulate matter is a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air (EPA). Some particles, e.g., dust, dirt, soot, or smoke, are big or dark enough to be witnessed by the naked eye, while others are so little they can only be detected using an electron microscope (EPA). Air Quality: Particulate Matter – The national standard for annual PM2.5 levels is 12.0µg/m3\*. When PM2.5 levels are above 12, air quality is more likely to affect your health. In 2016, the annual median level of PM2.5 in Mesa County was 6.4µg/m3.

\*Micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m3)

**Table 6. Mesa County Air Quality**

Year	AQI Median	#Days PM2.5	#Days Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
2017	47	57	0
2018	46	64	5
2019	44	56	0
2020	44	66	3
2021	37	108	2

**Figure 7. Mesa County Air Quality Graph**



Source: EPA Air Quality Index Report

Legend: AQI Median

- Half of daily AQI values during the year were less than or equal to the median value, and half equaled or exceeded it.
- # Days PM2.5
- PM2.5 describes fine inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller.
- # Days Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
- Number of days in the year having an AQI value 101 through 150.

#### **Natural Resources: Key Understanding**

- The County can foster conservation design that adopts sustainable development that protects the county's natural environment, landscape, open spaces. Farmland and natural habitats while maintaining the character of the communities. Establishing the development with conservation philosophy.
- The County can promote landscape-scale conservation that aims to merge the conflicting conservation and economic development objectives across the county. The approach can employ continual learning and adaptive management and monitoring.
- Growth can focus on mitigating unfavorable ecological effects of future development.
- The County can support recreation activities like hunting and fishing that encourage economic development.
- The County can look to utilize more citizen-based air quality monitoring to pinpoint trouble spots, validate concerns and work with responsible parties to mitigate where reasonable

#### **Energy**

Energy has long played a significant role in Mesa County there is an opportunity to continue in the future. Fossil fuel extraction in Mesa County is primarily natural gas with some pockets of oil. A robust pipeline infrastructure ensures efficient movement of resources to market. The plentiful sunshine and relative scarcity of potential wind resources have led to many residents and businesses utilizing solar photovoltaics.

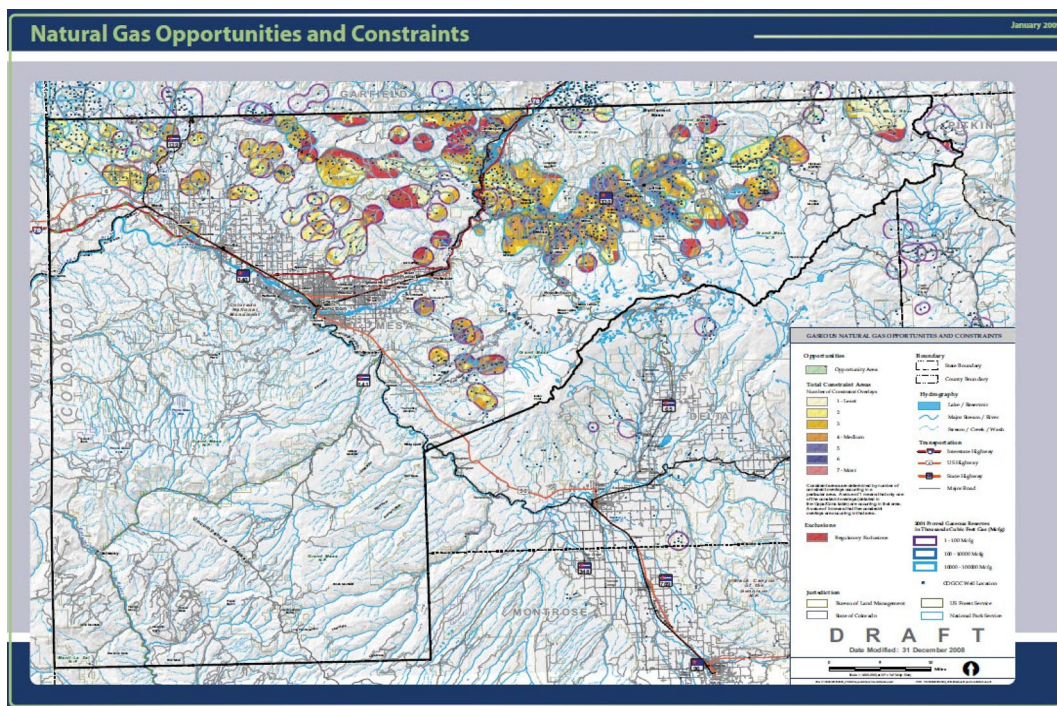
#### **Traditional Energy**

The natural gas pipeline infrastructure is concentrated in the northern portion of Mesa County and has access to multiple primary interconnects, allowing distribution to major markets. While many transmission lines may share common right of way, including abandoned lines, there is the potential to leverage the working lines and/or right of ways to move other fuels to markets.

Energy development opportunities have been monitored more closely in the past by Mesa County, but lack of use and maintenance requirements led to the abandonment of the GIS-based tool. The tool used several data sets to focus on conflicts and opportunities related to energy resource development, and other land uses. That historical data may still help inform future land use decisions, especially when updated.



Figure 8. Historical Map Example – Mesa County 2011

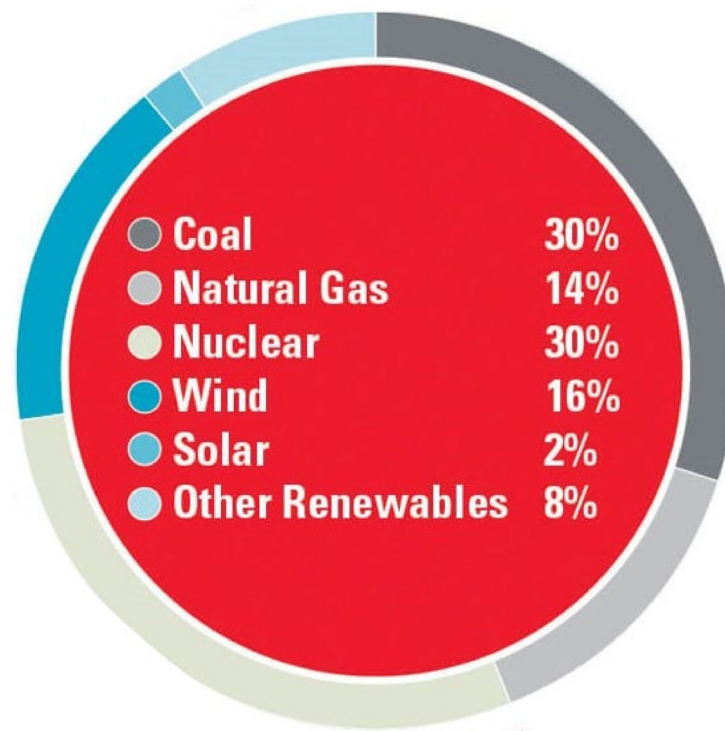


### Energy Utilities and Solar

Xcel Energy ("Xcel") is the largest electric and natural gas providing utility in Mesa County by total energy. Grand Valley Power provides electricity to more rural Mesa County, and since they purchase wholesale electricity from Xcel, all electricity in the County effectively comes from the same sources. Companies such as Black Hills Energy/Source Gas provide natural gas to customers in non-Xcel Energy territory. In addition, a variety of propane companies offer propane where natural gas distribution pipelines are not available.

As of 2020, Xcel's fuel mix is primarily natural gas and coal (64%), with a high percentage of wind and limited solar and hydropower. Both Xcel and Grand Valley Power have aggressive low-carbon energy targets for electricity. At the same time, Xcel has also recently committed to using certified natural gas with lower emissions intensity than typical natural gas.

**Figure 9. 2021 Xcel Energy Resource Mix for Colorado**



According to Xcel Energy, there are at least 2300 solar photovoltaic systems connected to their system in Mesa County, and a relatively high percentage of residents and businesses participate in solar energy programs, energy conservation programs, carbon offset programs, and demand reduction programs.

**Energy: Key Understanding**

- Energy leadership across all sectors utilizing traditional fuels, certified natural gas, and solar energy has a strong foundation in Mesa County.
- Increasing community solar sites and eased permitting would potentially provide greater amounts of solar energy in the County at minimal expense to the County.
- The County can leverage hydrogen/future fuels by taking advantage of pipeline infrastructure for potential opportunities.
- The County can encourage microgrids for resiliency, taking advantage of state and federal programs to build resilient community centers in case of power outages.

## **Agriculture**

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture by the USDA, Mesa County represents 1% of state agriculture sales. In 2017, there were 2,465 farms in the County (+9% since 2012) representing 342,534 acres of land (-11% since 2012). The average size of farms was 139 acres (-19% since 2012), indicating a shift to smaller farms over the period. The share of sales is split between crops (49%) and livestock/poultry and products (51%). Farmland use is primarily pastureland (60%) and a combination of cropland, woodland, and other uses. The total acres irrigated is 76,221 representing 22% of farmland. 58% of farms are valued at less than \$2,500, representing 58% of the total. There are 1,974 farms sized 1-49 acres representing 81% of farms. An important data point to note; there are 326 producers under the age of 35 out of 4,378 producers.

The last agricultural census undertaken was in 2017, with another ongoing in 2022 that won't have data available until 2024. These trends are useful but will need to be considered in light of the outcomes of the 2022 agricultural census data.

### **Agriculture: Key Understanding**

- The County's agricultural future is at the cross-section of environmental and human health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity.
- Continuing to offer favorable agricultural land development policies, especially targeted towards smaller farms, could expand the agricultural base and continue the trend of smaller farm owners participating in the local economy.
- The number of small farms in Mesa County is vital to the community's economy and well-being. The county can support small farm enterprises that create a more resilient food system, reduce food miles, and build stronger communities.
- The county can encourage regenerative farming practices that restore soil health and conserve land and wildlife. The community benefits from farms that sequester carbon and produce nutrient-rich foods and high-quality livestock.
- The county can promote planting diverse crops with numerous ecosystem and health benefits that also improve soil and pest controls.

## Sources

- CDA. (2022). *Tamarisk Biocontrol* [State Government]. Colorado Department of Agriculture. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1\\_AOA8oCj4Cprizbb6n\\_NmnLT9Xuj8Pvohji0z2WCcms/embed?start=true&loop=true&delayms=3000&usp=embed\\_facebook](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1_AOA8oCj4Cprizbb6n_NmnLT9Xuj8Pvohji0z2WCcms/embed?start=true&loop=true&delayms=3000&usp=embed_facebook)
- CNHP. (2022). "Colorado Wetland Information Center: Habitat Quality." *Colorado Wetland Information Center* (blog). Accessed February 25, 2022. <https://cnhp.colostate.edu/cwic/condition/habitat/>.
- Coal mining and selenium*. (n.d.). Wernerantweiler.Ca. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://wernerantweiler.ca/blog.php?item=2015-02-07>
- Colorado parks and wildlife*. (n.d.). Colorado Parks and Wildlife. <https://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/StateWildlifeActionPlan.aspx>
- Colorado State Forrest Service. (n.d.). Wildfire Risk Assessment Public Viewer. <https://co-pub.coloradoforestatlas.org/#/>
- County, M. (2020). *Mesa County Hazard Mitigation Plan*.
- data-2C-beyond-the-limit-usa: The Washington Post's analysis of NOAA climate change data for the contiguous United States*. (n.d.).
- Day, N. K., Schmidt, T. S., Roberts, J. J., Osmundson, B. C., Willacker, J. J., & Eagles-Smith, C. A. (2020). Mercury and selenium concentrations in fishes of the Upper Colorado River Basin, southwestern United States: A retrospective assessment. *PloS One*, 15(1), e0226824. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0226824>
- Eilperin, J. (n.d.). *This giant climate hot spot is robbing the West of its water*. Washingtonpost.Com. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/climate-environment/climate-change-colorado-utah-hot-spot/>
- Environmental public health indicator*. (n.d.). Cdc.Gov. <https://ephracking.cdc.gov/showIndicatorPages.action?selectedContentAreaAbbreviation=25&selectedIndicatorId=175>
- Epa, U. S., & OAR. (2016a). *Air quality - cities and counties*. <https://www.epa.gov/air-trends/air-quality-cities-and-counties>
- Epa, U. S., & OAR. (2016b). *Air Quality Index report*. <https://www.epa.gov/outdoor-air-quality-data/air-quality-index-report>
- Epa, U. S., & OAR. (2018). *Fires and your health*. <https://www.epa.gov/pm-pollution/fires-and-your-health>
- Epa, U. S., & OAR. (2016c). *Particulate matter (PM) basics*. <https://www.epa.gov/pm-pollution/particulate-matter-pm-basics>

- Flood maps.* (n.d.). Fema.Gov. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps>
- Geography - mesa county, Colorado.* (n.d.). Mesacounty.U.S. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://www.mesacounty.us/residents/about-us/geography/>
- Groundwater resources.* (n.d.). Colostate.Edu. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://waterknowledge.colostate.edu/hydrology/groundwater-resources/>
- Gunnison river.* (2016, March 9). American Rivers. <https://www.americanrivers.org/river/gunnison-river/>
- Joe Rocchio, Georgia Doyle, Peggy Lyon and Denise Culver. (2002). *Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Mesa County.* Colorado Natural Heritage Program.
- Map.* (n.d.). Fema.Gov. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/map>
- Mesa County, Colorado mines.* (n.d.). Western Mining History. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://westernmininghistory.com/mine-county/colorado/mesa/>
- Mesa County, Colorado, USA.* (n.d.). Mindat.Org. <https://www.mindat.org/loc-14313.html>
- Mesa county conditions.* (n.d.-a). Drought.Gov. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://www.drought.gov/states/colorado/county/mesa>
- Mesa county conditions.* (n.d.-b). Drought.Gov. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://www.drought.gov/states/Colorado/county/Mesa>
- Mesa county GIS viewer.* (n.d.). Mesacounty.U.S. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://emap.mesacounty.us/viewer/>
- National Risk Index.* (n.d.). Fema.Gov. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from <https://hazards.fema.gov/nri>
- Peggy Lyon, Chris Pague, Renee Rondeau, Lonnie Renner, Charles Slater, and Camille Richard. (1996). *Natural Heritage Inventory of Mesa County Colorado.* Colorado Natural Heritage Program.
- Priority habitats definition.* (n.d.). Law Insider. <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/priority-habitats>
- Programs: Energy and minerals: Mining and minerals: About: Colorado.* (n.d.). Blm.Gov. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/mining-and-minerals/about/colorado>
- Sebol, Lesley A., Katheryne H. McGee, Erinn P. Johnson, and P. E. Barkmann. (2017). *"OF-17-01 Geology and Groundwater Resources of Mesa County, Colorado." Geology and Groundwater. Open File Report.* Colorado Geological Survey.
- Rocchio, J., Doyle, G., Lyon, P., & Culver, D. (2002). *Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Mesa County.* 368.



[https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/47121/Surv\\_Crit\\_Wet\\_Rip\\_Mesa\\_2002.pdf?sequence=1](https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/47121/Surv_Crit_Wet_Rip_Mesa_2002.pdf?sequence=1)

US EPA, O. (2015, April 9). *Why are Wetlands Important?* [Overviews and Factsheets].  
<https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/why-are-wetlands-important>

USGS -- *Groundwater Watch*. (n.d.). Usgs. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from  
<https://groundwaterwatch.usgs.gov/StateMap.asp?sa=CO&sc=08>

*Watershed boundaries*. (n.d.). Mesacounty.us. Retrieved February 25, 2022, from  
[https://opendata.mesacounty.us/datasets/959e792d72c94a6aa9621379305a6a0d\\_0/about](https://opendata.mesacounty.us/datasets/959e792d72c94a6aa9621379305a6a0d_0/about)

Wikipedia contributors. (2021, January 25). *Dolores River*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Dolores\\_River&oldid=1002659524](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Dolores_River&oldid=1002659524)

Wikipedia contributors. (2022a, January 19). *Mesa County, Colorado*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mesa\\_County,\\_Colorado&oldid=1066566349](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mesa_County,_Colorado&oldid=1066566349)

Wikipedia contributors. (2022b, February 20). *Colorado River*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Colorado\\_River&oldid=1073046816](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Colorado_River&oldid=1073046816)

*Wildfire risk assessment public viewer*. (n.d.). Coloradoforestatlas.Org. Retrieved February 25, 2022,  
from <https://co-pub.coloradoforestatlas.org/#/>

Xie, Y., Lin, M., Decharme, B., Delire, C., Horowitz, L. W., Lawrence, D. M., Li, F., & Séférian, R. (2022).  
Tripling of western US particulate pollution from wildfires in a warming climate. *Proceedings of  
the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 119(14), e2111372119.  
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2111372119>

Y2 Consultants, LLC and Falen Law Offices. (2020). *Mesa County Resource Management Plan*.

*Young and old, air pollution affects the most vulnerable*. (2018, October 16). UNEP.  
<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/blogpost/young-and-old-air-pollution-affects-most-vulnerable>



## MEMORANDUM

To: Mesa County, Greg Moberg, Sean Norris  
From: Design Workshop: Anna Laybourn, Alison Bourquin, Fehr & Peers: Carly Sieff  
Date: April 15, 2022  
Project Name: Mesa Together, Mesa County Master Plan  
Project #: 6699  
Subject: Transportation Research Draft

---

### TRANSPORTATION MEMORANDUM PURPOSE

This report is intended to capture all currently available data regarding transportation in Mesa County. Tasks also in progress or completed include review of sustainability and resilience, economic trends, and housing trends. The compilation of these memos will represent an understanding of the Existing Conditions and Opportunities in Phase 1 of work.

Key information from these memoranda will be selected for inclusion in the final document and some information may be used to express the existing conditions and broad overview of opportunities in public engagement/information efforts. This report addresses the following:

- **Prior Planning Efforts**
- **Existing Transportation System (Roadway, Bicycle and Pedestrian, Transit, Freight)**
- **Safety Analysis**
- **Existing Policies & Programs**
- **Key Trends**

### TRANSPORTATION INTRODUCTION

This memo explores the current Mesa County transportation system, analyzes crash locations and safety concerns, describes existing policies and programs, and explores key transportation trends. This foundational knowledge will inform efforts through the Mesa County Master Plan to strengthen the transportation system by addressing network gaps and safety concerns and to expand alternative travel options as Mesa County grows.

#### **Prior Planning Efforts**

Mesa County has several planning efforts that provide an important foundation for the Master Plan. Ten prior planning efforts inform the transportation element of the Mesa County Master Plan: *Grand Valley 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update, Fruita Circulation Plan,*

*Clifton Fruitvale Community Plan, Community Needs Health Assessment, Gateway Rural Community Plan, Glade Park Plan, Loma Community Plan, Mack Community Plan, Whitewater Community Plan, and the Mesa/Powderhorn Plan.*

Several themes in these plans address the future of mobility in Mesa County. The first is multimodal travel. The *Grand Valley RTP*, for example, envisions a 2045 transportation network for Mesa County that offers residents, employees, and visitors a variety of travel options. Smaller community plans also emphasize these multimodal travel opportunities. The *Clifton Fruitvale Community Plan, Gateway Rural Community Plan, and Mack Community Plan* all integrate non-motorized transportation into the set of strategies for accommodating increasing transportation demand that will result from growth of the county.

Another common theme amongst these previous planning efforts is for transportation facilities to balance access to recreation with preservation of the natural environment. For example, the *Mesa/Powderhorn Plan* proposes a detached multiuse path along SH-65.

The final common theme from the ten plans is better integration of transportation planning with land use planning. These previous plans discuss the need to balance circulation with parking and multimodal travel needs, and to align mobility demands with the development review process to ensure that municipalities provide appropriate transportation facilities to support each land use.

The *Grand Valley RTP*, the most recent regional plan for the county, includes a collection of projects that represent the highest priorities for Mesa County and its local communities. These include improvements to US-6 (North Avenue) that will make the corridor easier to navigate for all users, the continuation of capacity and geometric improvements to I-70B, and multimodal corridor enhancements like an extension of the Riverfront Trail. This prioritized project list, as well as the vision and goals from previous plans, will be important in informing the Master Plan.

## **EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

### **Roadway Network**

The westernmost segment of I-70 in Colorado is in Mesa County. With this, Mesa County plays an important role in the state's roadway and freight network. Similarly, interstates and highways (**Figure 1**) influence much of the county's development. The City of Grand Junction has long represented a crossroads of the west. With connections east to Denver and numerous mountain towns, and west to Moab, Salt Lake City, and Las Vegas, passenger and freight east-west traffic travels along I-70, therefore passing through and/or stopping in Mesa County. Their location along I-70 and US-6 significantly influences cities like Grand Junction and Fruita.

Beyond the I-70 corridor, US-50, SH-65, and SH-141 provide major connections through the variable topography of the county and to the south to towns including Montrose, Ridgway, and Telluride. To the north, SH-139 extends toward Dinosaur National Monument.

During public outreach for the *Grand Valley 2045 RTP*, community members expressed concerns about growing traffic congestion in the area. However, the Grand Valley travel demand model forecasted that most major corridors will operate with minimal congestion at peak hours. The model forecasts that there will be some corridors with minimal congestion, including I-70 through Grand Junction, US-50 just west of Whitewater, and SH-141 between the Colorado River and US-50. The community also expressed concern about road maintenance on roadways, particularly SH-340, US-6, and US-50, with residents citing roadway surface conditions as a travel impediment.

Maintenance and resilience to disasters such as flooding, mudslides, rock falls, avalanches, and fires will become increasingly critical. Segments of I-70 have been closed in response to rock falls, mudslides, and avalanches in the recent past. Because the roadway network often lacks redundancy, or multiple routes between the same points, these closures can cause major travel disruptions, congestions, and additional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from drivers needing to significantly change their route. Beyond congestion, these closures can hinder evacuation efforts in the case of a serious disaster and impede critical freight routes. As these occurrences become more frequent, they endanger locations with only one major roadway in and out. The *Grand Valley 2045 RTP* modeled the effects of roadway closures at key locations (such as I-70) and suggested detours. Mesa County might also consider ways of building redundancy into the roadway network, such as building ancillary roads at key locations that would significantly destabilize traffic operations if closed in an emergency.

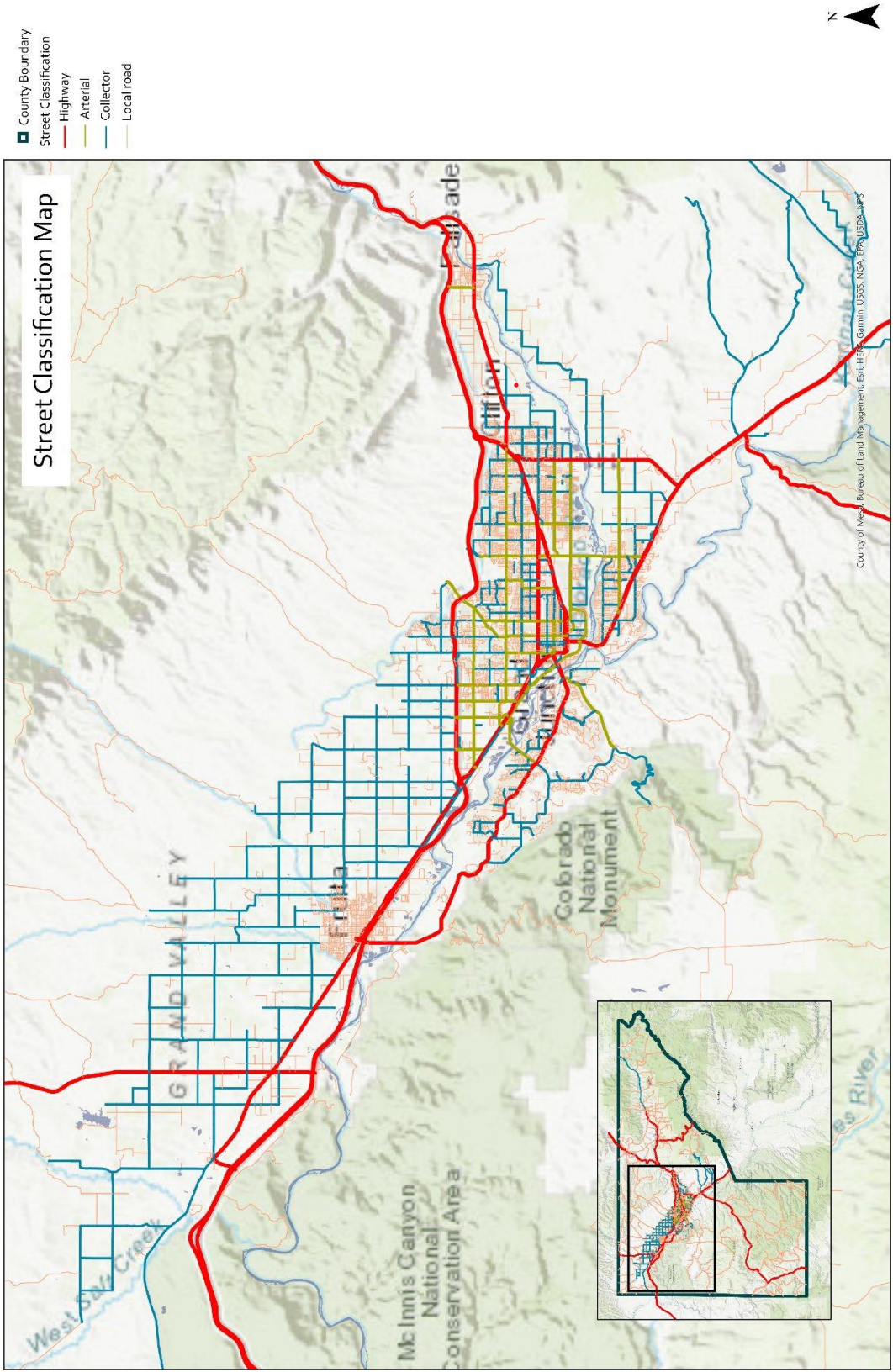


Figure 1: Mesa County Street Classifications

## **Bicycle and Pedestrian Network**

The sidewalk network of Mesa County is generally limited to the denser areas of Grand Junction and on the east side of the city – and even in those locations, sidewalks are often missing or of substandard width (**Figure 2**). Neighborhoods in north Grand Junction also mostly lack sidewalks. During public outreach for the *Grand Valley 2045 RTP*, community members expressed concerns about insufficient or missing sidewalks in the area.

The Colorado River Trail, which travels across the county from Loma through Fruita, Grand Junction, and Palisade, is a significant asset for those walking, rolling, and biking in the Grand Valley. It offers a safe, separated facility for outdoor recreation and transportation both locally and regionally.

Numerous other multiuse bicycle and pedestrian trails and soft surface trails exist in Grand Junction and north of the Colorado National Monument (**Figure 3**). These facilities support both recreation and transportation around the Grand Valley. Mesa County also has a gridded network of designated bicycle facilities, which include both striped bike lanes and signed bike routes. However, the bike network lacks some key connections between facilities in downtown Grand Junction, such as the west segment of Patterson Road and the central segment of N 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Additionally, existing facilities may not be comfortable for all users, as even on high-speed, high-volume roadways, they lack a protective barrier between people biking and driving.



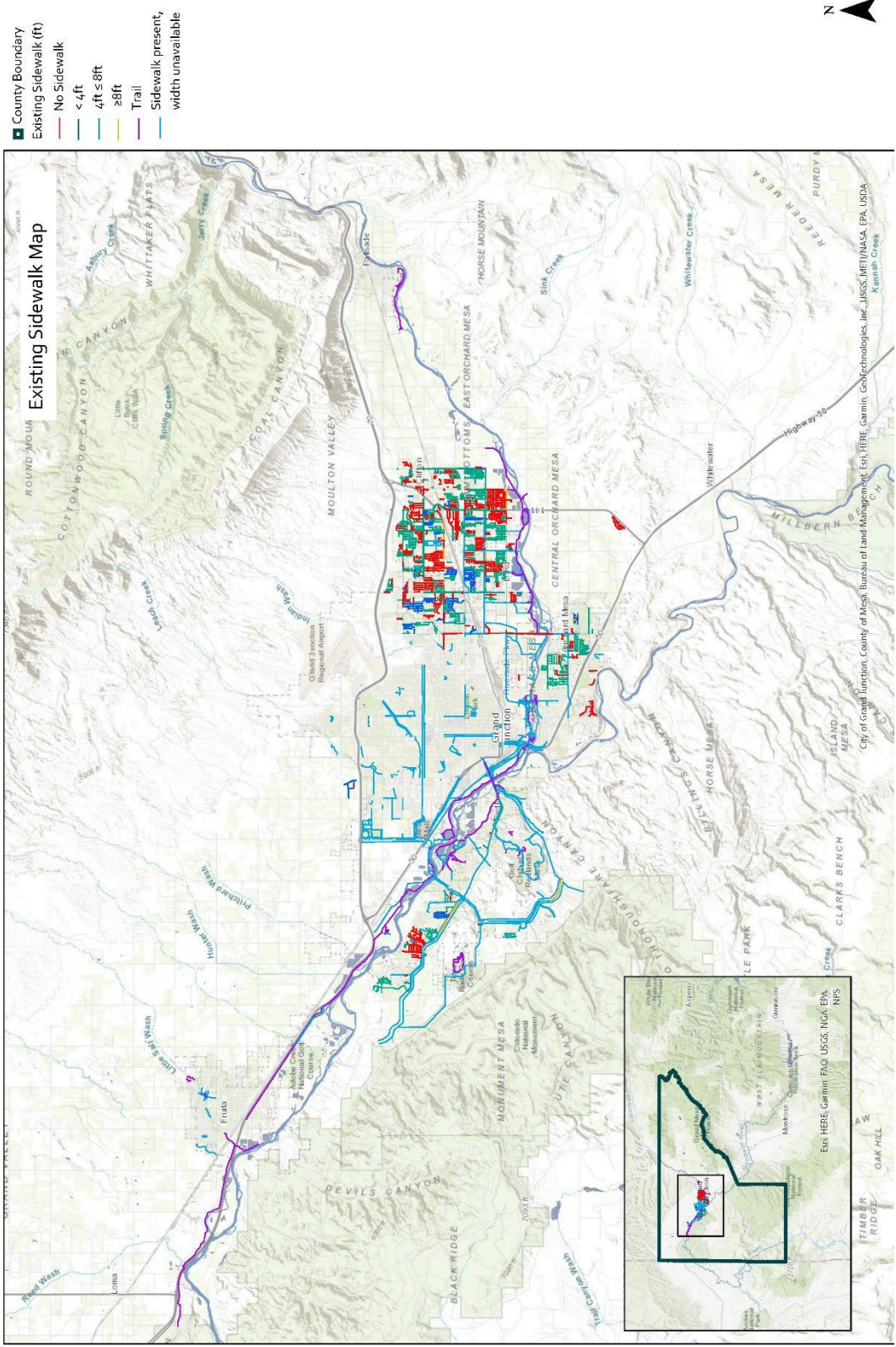


Figure 2: Mesa County Sidewalks (Note: Data unavailable where sidewalk symbology not shown)





## Transit Network

Grand Valley Transit (GVT) operates 11 bus routes within Mesa County, connecting the City of Grand Junction, the City of Fruita, the Town of Palisade, and some unincorporated parts of the county within the metropolitan area (**Figure 5**). These routes generally operate hourly Monday through Saturday from around 5 am to 8 pm and cost \$1.50 per trip. Thursday through Saturday, Route 1 between downtown and the Grand Junction Regional Airport is called the DASH. During these times it is free of charge and operates every 30 minutes from 4:15 pm to 11:05 pm. GVT also operates paratransit service for older adults and people with disabilities that prevent them from using the fixed route system. Paratransit service provides door-to-door service for qualified users within  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles of the fixed route-service. It cost \$3.00 and must be booked in advance of the trip.

Ridership of Grand Valley Transit increased between 2000 and 2011 and declined between 2011 and 2016, according to the agency's 2018 Strategic Plan (as shown in **Figure 4**). Routes 5 and 9, which serve Midtown and North Avenue, generate significantly higher ridership than other routes in the system. In 2015, fixed route service had 815,000 annual boardings and paratransit and dial-a-ride service had 18,000 annual boardings.

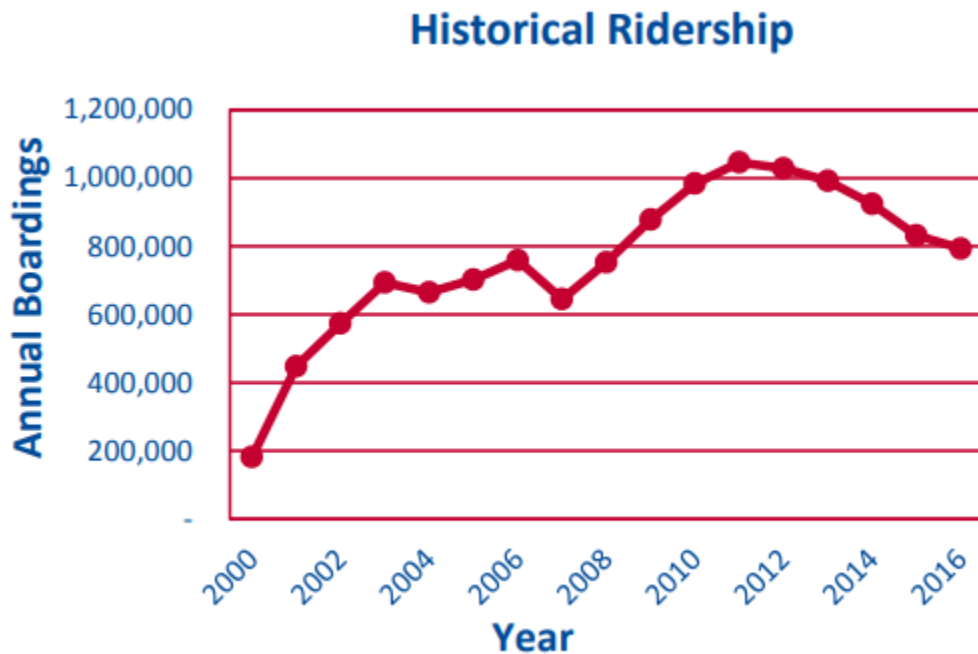


Figure 4: Historical Grand Valley Transit Ridership (source: GVT 2018 Strategic Plan)

Starting in November 2021, GVT instituted temporary service reductions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These reduced the frequency of the DASH to hourly service and reduced

Saturday service hours by five hours. During public outreach for the *Grand Valley 2045 RTP*, community members' primary concern about using transit was poor frequency of service.

The GVT Downtown Operations Facility serves intercity buses in addition to local transit. Bustang, operated by CDOT, provides three routes that serve between Grand Junction and Denver, Telluride, and Durango (one to four times daily in each direction). Greyhound also offers three trips daily between Grand Junction and Denver in each direction. The Amtrak California Zephyr also passes through Grand Junction on its route between Chicago and San Francisco. Ridership on the California Zephyr route has consistently grown in recent years, with most riders boarding in Mesa County using the service to travel locally rather than for long distance interstate trips.

Mesa County updated its *Coordinated Transit and Human Services (CTHS) Transportation Plan* alongside the *Grand Valley 2045 RTP*. The CTHS Plan examines regional transit options in Mesa County and the role of transit and human services providers in coordinating these options. The plan summarizes existing transportation providers in the region, analyzes transportation gaps, discusses emerging transportation trends, and determines strategies to address transportation needs by coordinating providers and funding improvements.





## Freight

As a transportation hub in the western U.S., Grand Junction facilitates the movement of east-west commerce and freight. Primary truck routes in Mesa County include I-70, US-6, and US-50 (**Figure 7**). Trucks move most of the freight that enters and exits the region. Mesa County supports significant interstate and regional truck travel due to its location and status as a producer of agricultural products, manufactured goods, and energy. Top commodities imported into and exported from Mesa County include consumer products and distribution center shipments, energy industry products, agricultural grain, and machinery and equipment. Mesa County exports more than doubled between 2009 and 2013 (**Figure 6**).

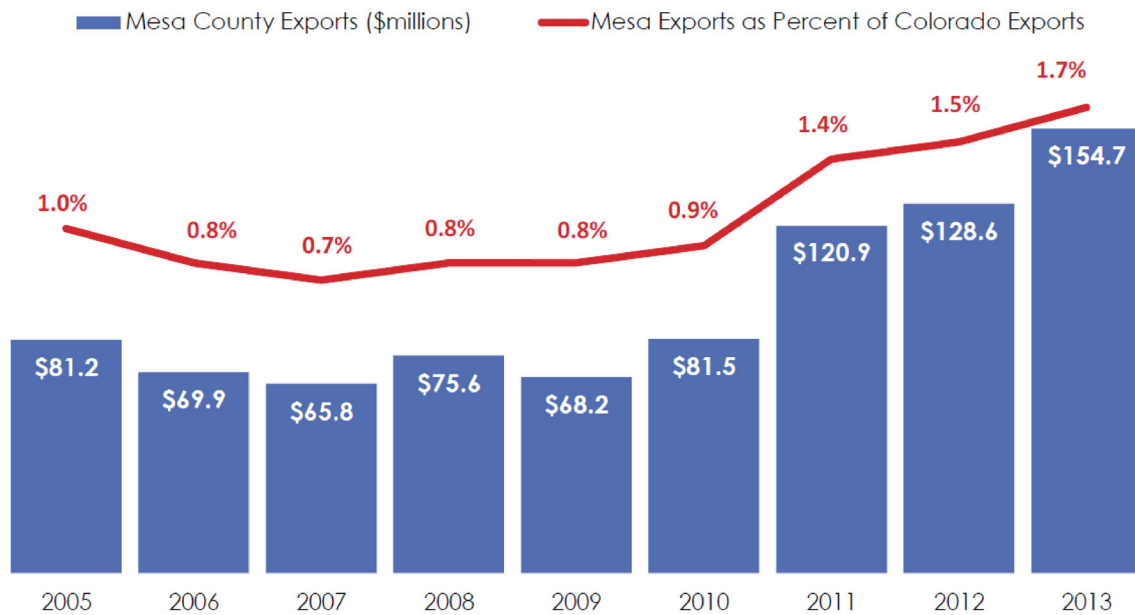


Figure 6: Value of Exports Produced in Mesa County, 2005-2013 (Source: Transresearch, Colorado Department of Transportation, 2014)

Growth in e-commerce and rapid package deliveries requires additional fulfillment centers in urban areas to distribute goods. The City of Grand Junction has invested in the development of new fulfillment centers in the past five years.

Two Class I freight railroads (railroads with annual operating revenue of half a billion dollars or more) operate in the region – Union Pacific and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF). Combined, these railways operate 2,236 miles of track statewide, moving wholesale products, shipping containers, coal, aggregates, agricultural grains and products, scrap metal, and food products.



The Grand Junction Regional Airport provides air cargo support services, primarily through FedEx and belly cargo carried in passenger planes. Over 90% of the region's 9.7 million pounds of air cargo in 2018 was handled by FedEx. Air cargo movements have grown significantly in recent years, with the Grand Junction Regional Airport supporting 1.5 million more pounds of air cargo in 2019 than in 2013.

Mesa County's freight network has demonstrated the ability to accommodate increasing demand. The value of goods being exported from Mesa County has steadily increased for the past 15 years and the share of all goods exported from the state that originate in Mesa County has also increased. The manufacturing and freight industry occupies an important role within the Mesa County economy.

Despite this investment in freight historically, the movement of goods to and through Mesa County can be unreliable and inefficient, due in large part to road closures, rail delays, and a rapidly growing demand for regional and urban freight. The County should continue to consider ways to reliably and efficiently facilitate the movement of goods, as demand shifts and infrastructure becomes more vulnerable to natural disasters.

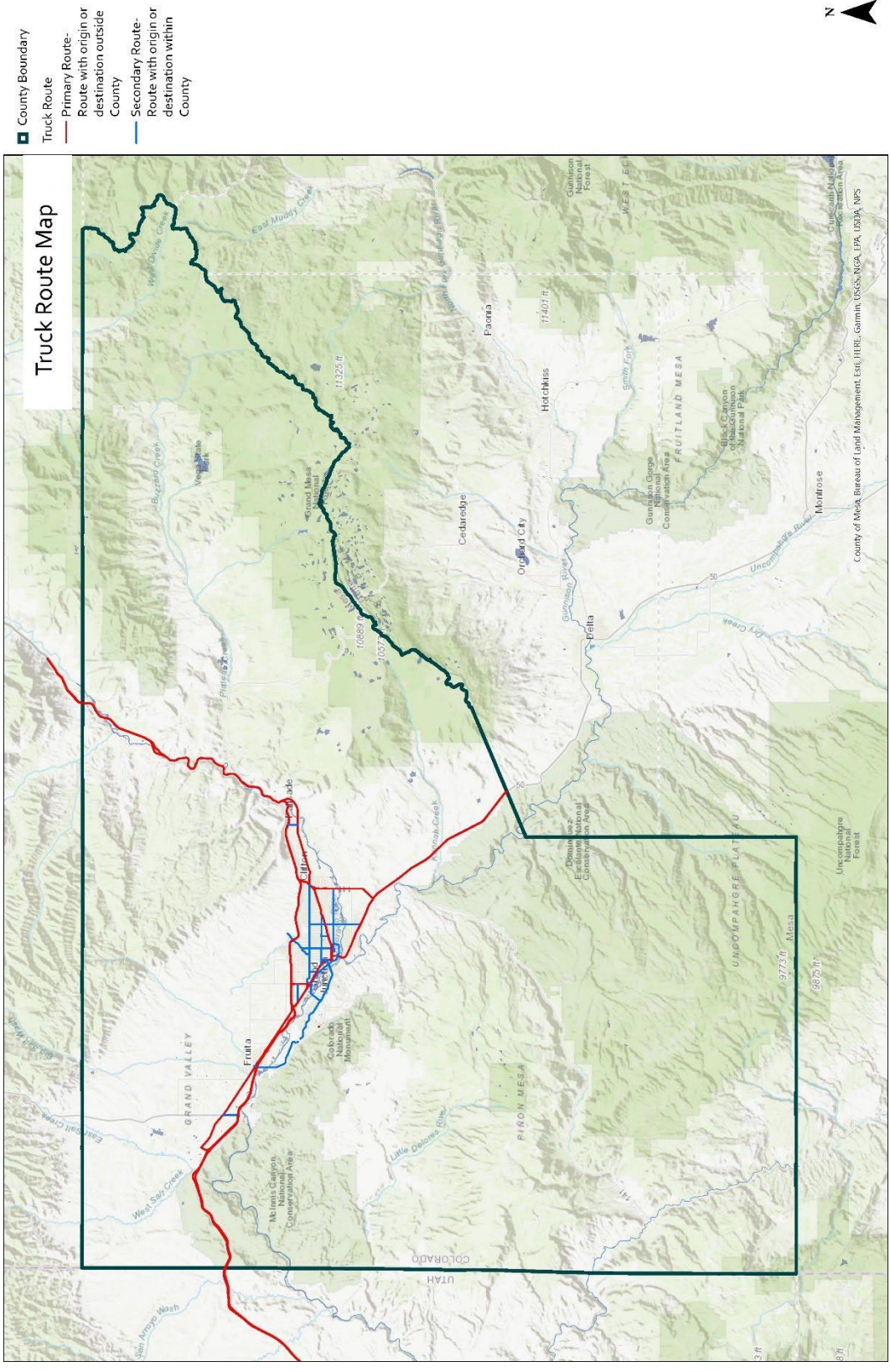


Figure 7: Mesa County Truck Routes

## **SAFETY ANALYSIS**

### **Overview**

This section reports findings from an analysis of all traffic crashes that took place in Mesa County from 2015 to 2019, as reported by the County.

There was a total of almost 13,000 crashes on the Mesa County roadway network from 2015 to 2019. **Figure 8** shows the density of crashes along roadways in the county. Most crashes occurred in downtown Grand Junction, Fruita, and along the I-70 corridor. Crashes also frequently occurred along other major interstates and highways like SH-340 and US-50 coming in and out of downtown. These roadways likely host more crashes because of high vehicle volumes and speeds.

### **High Injury Network**

**Figure 9** shows Mesa County's High Injury Network, or the roadways where the highest concentrations of crashes occur. While all crashes were considered in determining the High Injury Network, locations with crashes where someone was killed or severely injured (KSI crashes) were weighted more heavily. I-70 was not included because the interstate accounts for a disproportionately high number of crashes and is not under the jurisdiction of Mesa County.

The High Injury Network includes the following roadways:

- 29 Road
- N 12th Street
- N 7th Street
- N 1st Street
- Riverside Parkway
- Horizon Drive
- Patterson Road
- Elm Avenue
- Grand Avenue



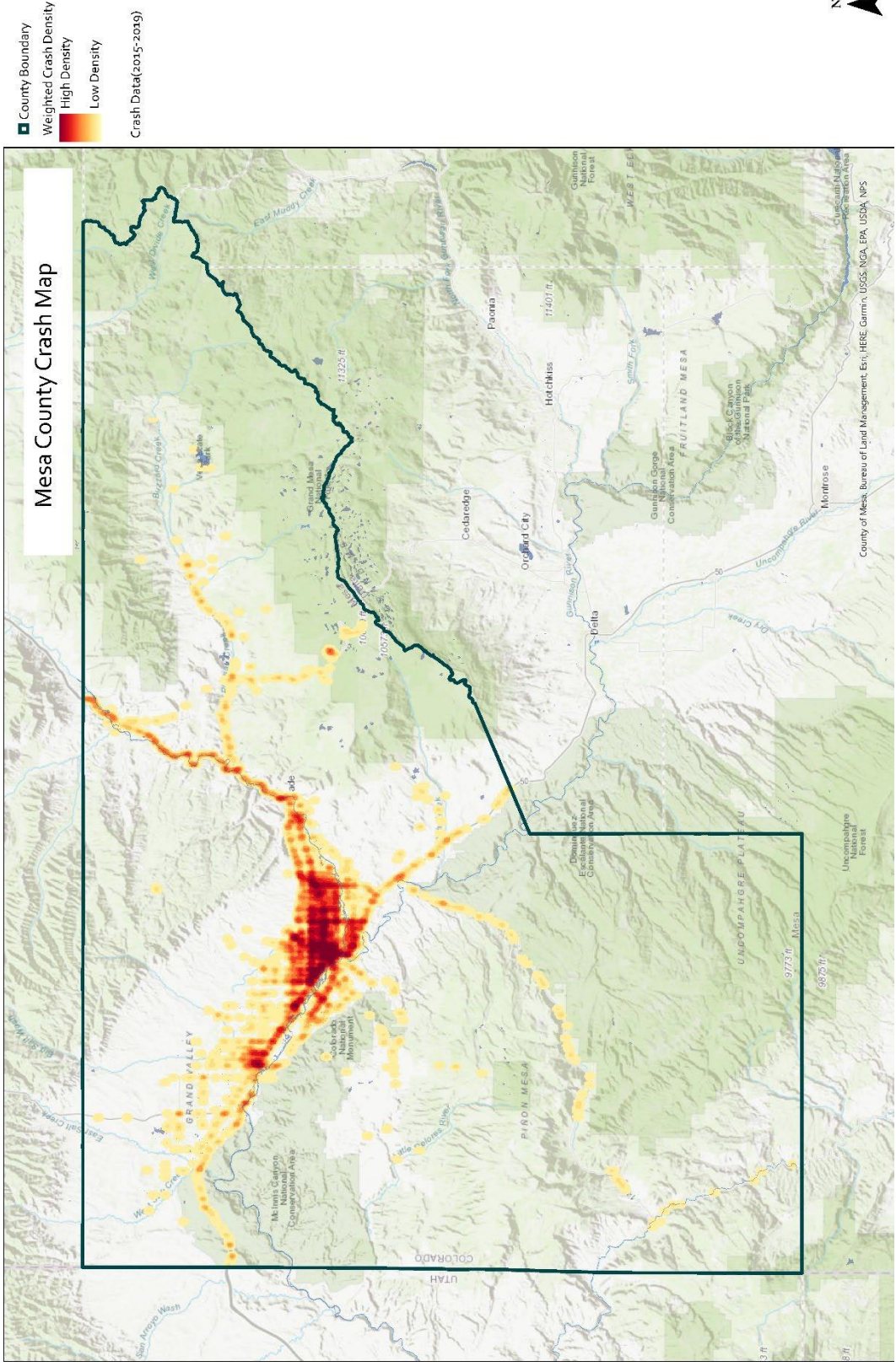


Figure 8: Mesa County Traffic Crash Density (2015-2019)



County Boundary  
 High Injury Road Network

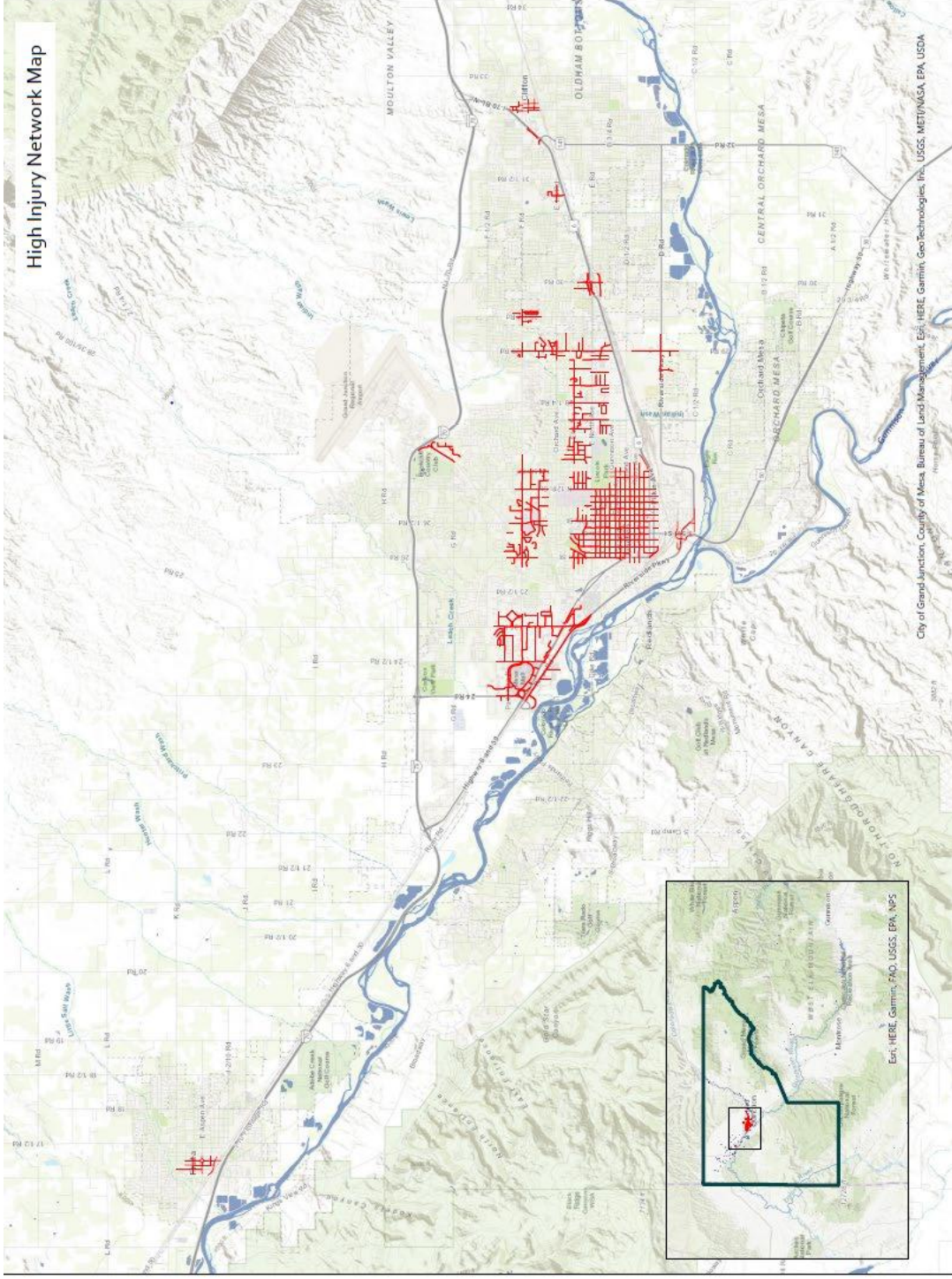


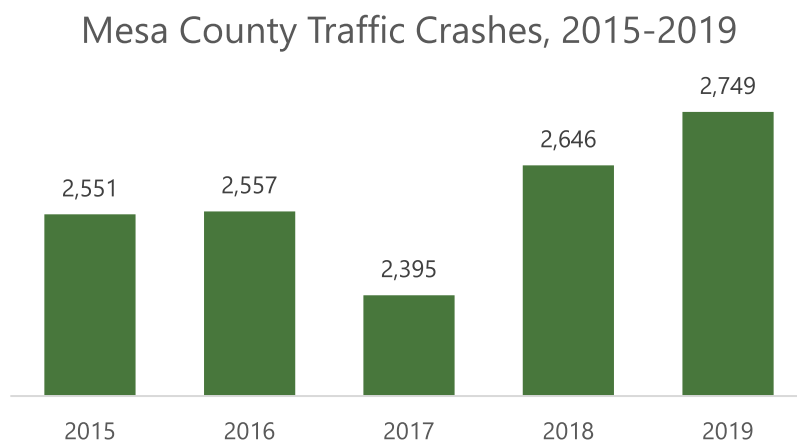
Figure 9: Mesa County High Injury Network



## Crash Analysis

### *Crash Volumes by Year*

After remaining relatively steady in 2015 and 2016 and falling in 2017, traffic crashes increased in Mesa County in the years following for the available data (**Figure 10**). Between 2015 and 2019, an average of 2,580 crashes occurred each year. Mesa County should consider this increase in crashes from 2017 to 2019 in greater detail and continue to track crashes over time to understand the cause of this increase and ensure that the trend does not continue upwards.



*Figure 10: Mesa County Traffic Crashes, 2015-2019*

### *Killed and Severe Injury (KSI) Crashes per Year*

There were 395 KSI crashes on roadways within Mesa County between 2015 and 2019. **Figure 11** shows that KSI crashes steadily declined between 2015 and 2017, before leveling off in 2018 and increasing slightly in 2019. The increase in KSI crashes has followed alongside the rise in traffic crashes overall since 2017. On average, there were 65 crashes resulting in serious injury and 16 crashes resulting in a fatality each year.

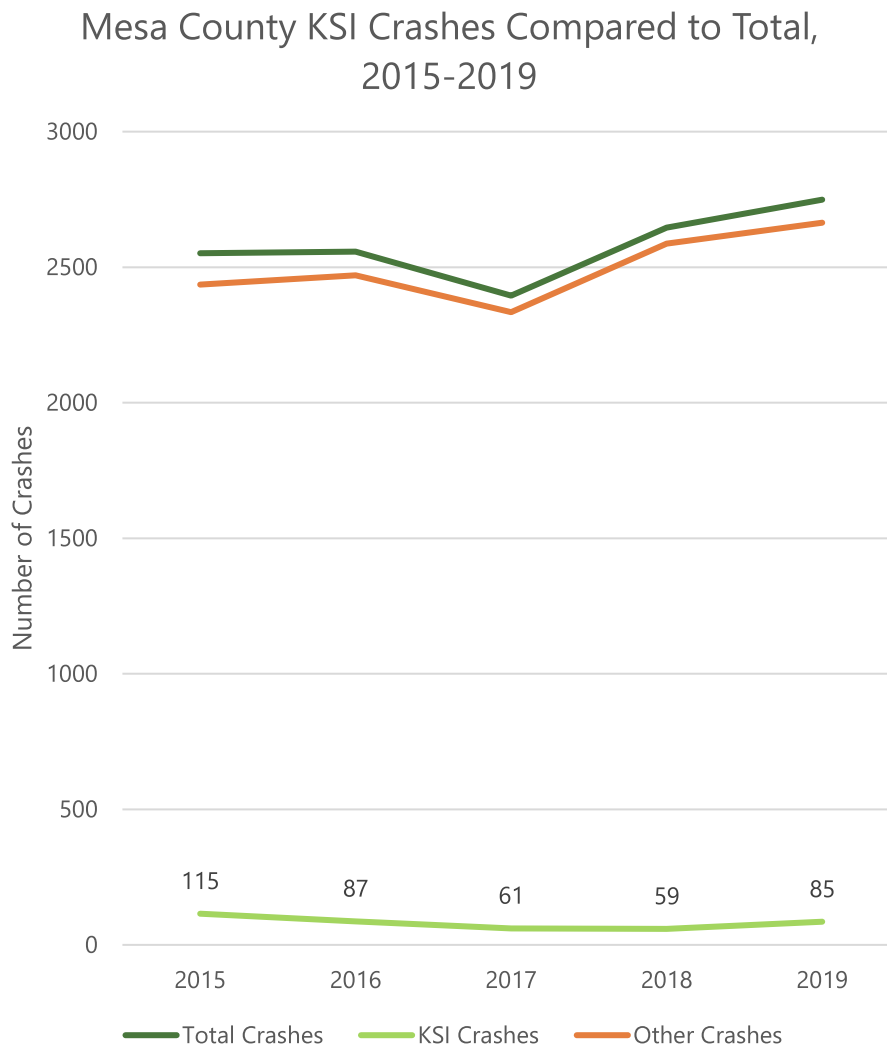


Figure 11: Mesa County Killed and Severe Injury (KSI) Crashes, 2015-2019

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes**

A total of 273 bicycle-involved crashes and 172 pedestrian-involved crashes were recorded in Mesa County from 2015 to 2019, mostly in downtown Grand Junction and a few key intersections (**Figure 13**). The highest number of bicycle-involved crashes occurred in 2017 (71 crashes) while there were an average of 54 bicycle-involved crashes per year during the five year period that was studied. On average, 34 pedestrian crashes were recorded each year. Pedestrian crashes have steadily increased since 2015, with a slight leveling off in 2019. The majority of bicycle crashes (65%) and pedestrian crashes (63%) occurred at intersections or intersection-related areas of roadways. **Figure 12** shows the number of bicycle and pedestrian crashes that occurred each year.

The county should continue to invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to provide comfortable and safe places for active transportation modes. A more detailed analysis of the cause and location of crashes can help inform the type of treatment appropriate to improve safety for these vulnerable modes. By creating dedicated facilities, the county will also promote an increase in people walking and biking; this increase in mode share has been shown to also reduce crash rates due to drivers' expectation of sharing the road with other users.

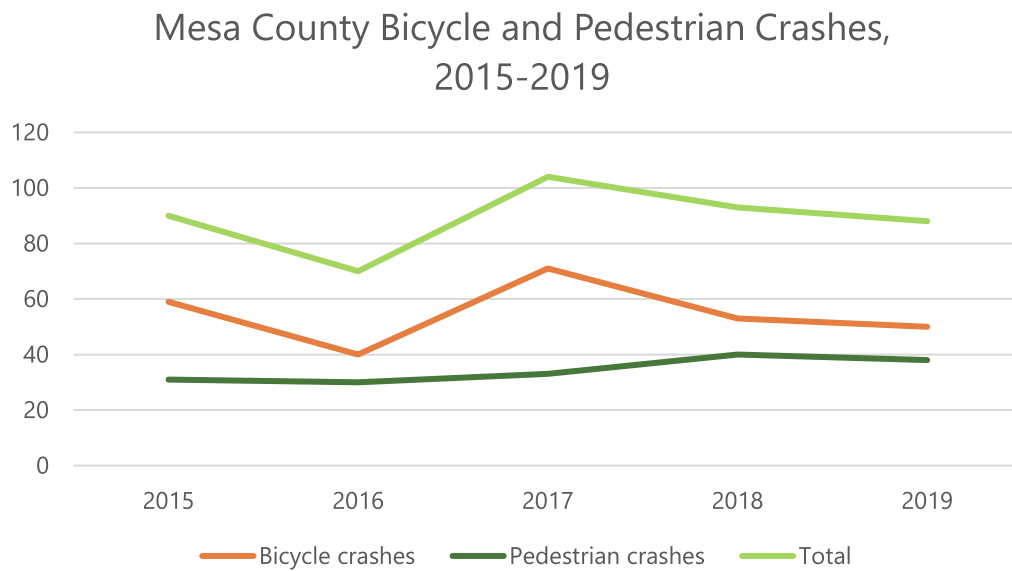


Figure 12: Mesa County Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes, 2015-2019

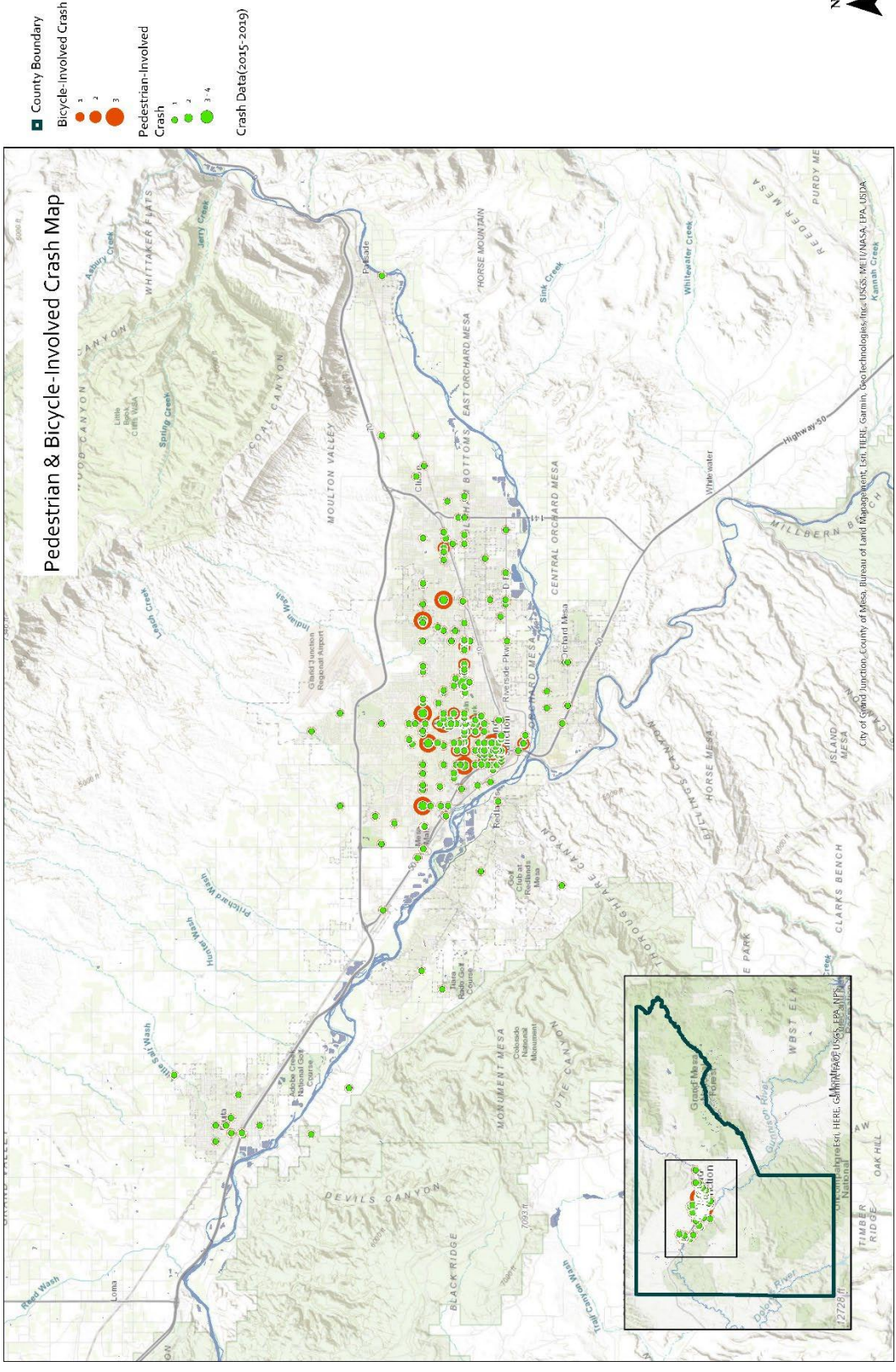


Figure 13: Mesa County Bicycle and Pedestrian Crash Locations. 2015-2019

### Crash Type

The most common types of traffic crashes in Mesa County during the 2015-2019 period were rear ends, broadside crashes, and sideswipes (**Figure 14**). For crash types like broadsides, approach turn crashes, and bicycle and pedestrian crashes, targeted infrastructure improvements have the potential to address specific safety concerns at key crash locations. These improvements could include signal timing changes such as adding protected left turns or phases for people walking/biking, intersection geometry enhancements that increase sightlines, and comfortable and protected sidewalks and bike facilities that provide greater separation between people walking and biking.

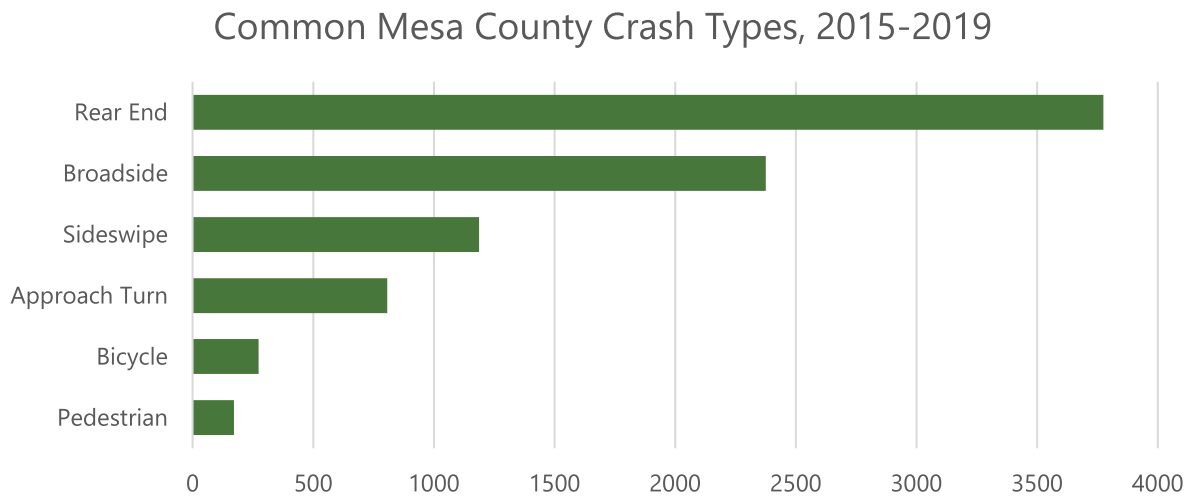


Figure 14: Mesa County Traffic Crashes by Type, 2015-2019

### Driver Movement

The most common movements associated with traffic crashes in Mesa County during the 2015-2019 period were left turns, right turns, changing lanes, and U-turns (**Figure 15**).

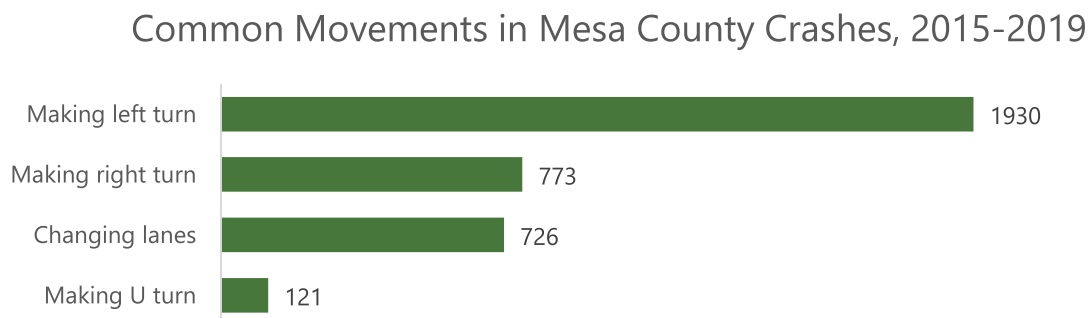


Figure 15: Common Movements in Mesa County Crashes, 2015-2019



## **EXISTING POLICIES & PROGRAMS**

The Mesa County Design Standards in addition to the Transportation Engineering Design Standards (TEDS) provide guidance on planning, permitting, design, and construction of roadways and transportation infrastructure in the county. The standards include rules on transportation-related items such as traffic studies, access requirements, roadway design, multimodal facility design, and bridge construction.

The Adopt-a-Road program helps the county perform road maintenance. Through the Mesa County Adopt-a-Road program, organizations can commit to maintaining a segment of roadway for at least a year in exchange for recognition on roadway signage. Adopters perform litter cleanups at least three times annually.

Through the Safe Routes to School program, Mesa County staff examined pedestrian and bicycle access to 16 elementary schools and eight middle schools. Staff developed reports that identified locations around each school with safety concerns or access barriers, performed walk audits and developed walk route maps, and surveyed parents for input. District-wide recommendations included providing crossing guard equipment, funding infrastructure improvements, and identifying "Walking & Wheeling Champions" at each school to promote these mode choices. The City of Grand Junction also uses a portion of its federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) distribution for Safe Routes to School infrastructure improvements like sidewalk upgrades and ADA-accessible crossings.

## **KEY TRENDS**

### **Population and Economy**

Changes in population, economic conditions, land use, and demographics drive demand within the transportation network. While forecasts do not predict that Mesa County will add as many residents and employees as once estimated, they do predict the county will grow and experience some additional travel demand. As stated in the additional Mesa Together existing conditions memoranda, Mesa County has an older population than the State. This population has been increasing since 2015." and that "The largest age group is in the 60-64 range. As the Mesa County population ages, the transportation system will likely need to accommodate older adults who no longer drive with new travel options. These shifts also mean that travel demand may shift away from the peak commute hours of the traditional working population.

While Mesa County's economy is predominately based in service industries, economic diversification may bring new forms of travel demand. As the County attracts more visitors to the area drawn by outdoor recreation opportunities, expanded tourism will drive growth in the accommodation, leisure, and hospitality industry. Recreational tourists and business visitors to the region may have different travel needs. These trips are more likely to occur on weekends

and may be peakier certain times of year. Industries with greater employment bases, such as healthcare, education, and retail will drive commute trips. Strong growth in manufacturing in international sales and exports in the outdoor products and services industry requires channels for moving goods and draws people recreating from around the country. The regional transportation network influences the stability of the regional economy.

Additionally, remote work became more common across the country as the COVID-19 pandemic spawned improvements in communication technology and the desire for work-life flexibility. While cities with a service-based economy may not see many local workers shift to remote working, Mesa County has drawn outside workers with the ability to work remotely. Rather than traditional commute trips, these remote workers make more recreation and shopping trips at off-peak times. This has the potential to flatten and spread typical travel peaks, as shown in data collected by INRIX, a location-based aggregate of big data on travel patterns.<sup>1</sup> This may reduce the need for expanded vehicle infrastructure.

### Key Planned Transportation Improvements

Mesa County has several intersection improvements, corridor enhancements, and bridge improvements identified in the Capital Improvements Program that are a significant priority for the county. These projects are shown in **Figure 16** and described below:

- Corridor Improvements:
  - North Avenue from 1<sup>st</sup> Street to I-70B: Roadway resurfacing, medians for access control, and multimodal improvements
  - US-6A: Capacity, safety, and geometric improvements from 15 Road to I-70B
  - US-6C: Capacity, safety, and geometric improvements on US-6C from I-70B to 33 Road
  - I-70B from 24 Road to 15<sup>th</sup> Street: Widening from Rimrock East to Grand Avenue and construction of a new intersection at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Grand Avenue
  - Cameo Road: Roadway improvements north of I 9/10 Road
  - E Road from Agape Way to 31 Road: Constructing a full urban cross section with a center turn lane, curb and gutter, and sidewalks
  - 22 Road from I Road to J Road: Widening 22 Road to add paved shoulders. This would be a continuation of the previously widened portion of 22 Road from H Road to I Road
  - North River Road: Adding four-foot shoulders to both sides of the roadway

---

<sup>1</sup> Badger, E. (2021). A Little More Remote Work Could Change Rush Hour a Lot. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/11/upshot/rush-hour-remote-work.html>

- Intersection Improvements:
  - I-70B and F ½ Road: An extension to Smallwood Drive and realignment of F ½ Road to improve traffic flow, and planned median
  - 29 Road Interchange: Studying a new interchange at I-70 and 29 Road
  - SH-141 and Springfield Road: Intersection upgrade to improve operations with both turn lanes and acceleration/deceleration lanes
  
- Bridge Improvements:
  - End of North River Road at Colorado River: Bridge rehabilitation
  - 34 Road south of G Road: Replacing an existing bridge
  - 185 Road and K.99 Road: Replacing an existing bridge



## **Opportunities in Emerging Mobility**

Transportation is evolving quickly in the Grand Valley and globally. As technology shifts, additional transportation modes become available, infrastructure and vehicles communicate in new ways, and travelers have more information to guide mobility decisions. The Mesa County Master Plan offers an opportunity to assemble a policy framework that will facilitate a seamless integration of emerging mobility options at the county scale.

Shared mobility services like bike and scooter share, car share, and ride-hailing became popular as an affordable form of travel in recent years. These app-based platforms allow users to have short-term access to a mode of transportation, as needed. Especially for short trips, shared mobility can help Mesa County residents and visitors access work, goods, and services without a private automobile. The County can also explore data-sharing agreements with the mobility providers to better understand local travel patterns.

Mobility as a Service (MaaS), an increasingly common way to plan and book travel, describes technology platforms that unite multiple providers of public and private transportation within one app. Instead of searching and paying for bike share, scooter share, ridehailing, and transit separately, users can select and book the most convenient mode for their trip in one place. MaaS apps offer affordable subscriptions or pay-as-you-go service through economies of scale. They also reduce the cost of transportation by making it possible for users to travel without the expense of owning and maintaining a personal vehicle. Mesa County should leverage this technology to educate users on first and final mile connections between transit, as well as other alternatives to driving.

Rapidly evolving technologies that may significantly impact the Mesa County transportation system also include electric vehicles (EVs), autonomous vehicles (AVs), and connected vehicles (CVs). State and federal governments continue to provide regulatory and financial incentives to encourage EV adoption by private vehicle owners and transit agencies as they replace fleet vehicles. The nationwide effort to electrify vehicles depends upon the proliferation of charging infrastructure. CVs communicate with other vehicles on the road and connected infrastructure like traffic signals, while AVs are self-driving cars that sense the street environment to navigate. While manufacturers predict they may benefit users by improving safety and increasing transportation convenience, they also have the potential to increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as people accept longer commutes that allow them to multitask during the trip.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mesa County continues to envision a future where residents have access to recreational opportunities, a strong local economy, and opportunities for residential and commercial development. As they prioritize this sustainable growth, a high quality of life depends on



transportation to and from these amenities. The Mesa County Master Plan will build upon previous planning efforts to ensure that Mesa County keeps pace with the rapidly evolving new mobility landscape and maintains resiliency by identifying key pinch points and opportunities for bypassing connectivity barriers. It will emphasize multimodal connections, particularly those that connect Mesa County's communities traveling by foot, bicycle, or transit. It will identify opportunities to leverage the transportation network to promote economic development. The Mesa County transportation network can provide continued travel reliability for existing community members and accommodate travel demand tomorrow may bring.