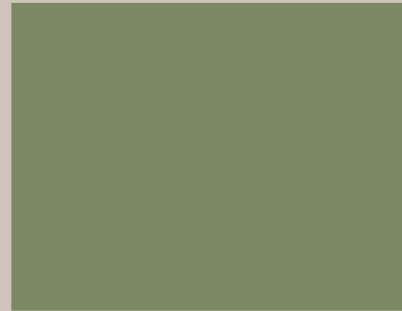


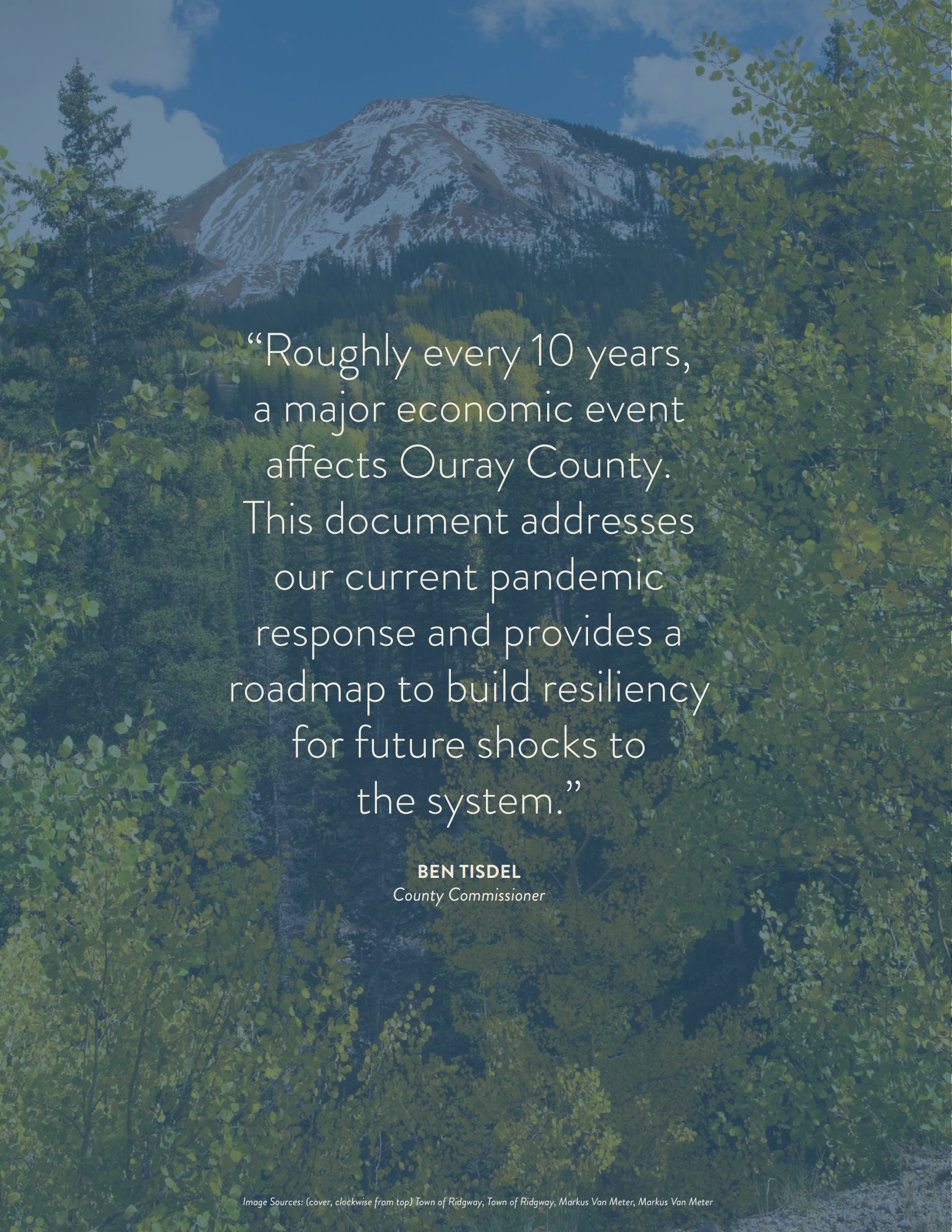
DRAFT

2020 OURAY COUNTY COVID-19 ECONOMIC RESILIENCY STUDY

FEBRUARY 25, 2021



In association
with MIG, Inc.



“Roughly every 10 years,
a major economic event
affects Ouray County.
This document addresses
our current pandemic
response and provides a
roadmap to build resiliency
for future shocks to
the system.”

BEN TISDEL
County Commissioner

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1

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Project Goal: “Provide the communities of Ouray County with an understanding of fiscal and economic challenges and opportunities, benchmarked to the COVID County health data set.”

In the spring of 2020, Ouray County learned it would face an unprecedented public health challenge. Along with other communities around the world, the COVID 19 virus migrated from continent to continent and had eventually made its way to Ouray County. Similar to the experience in other communities, the challenge has been daunting. Based on the tireless efforts of local staff members and the collective efforts across all jurisdictions and organizations, the community’s response has been effective, regarding both economic health and public health.

The purpose of this document is to provide an evaluation of the County’s economic and fiscal conditions and to provide clarity about the impacts attributed to COVID in 2020. Specifically, it focuses on the impacts of COVID between March and December of 2020. The document also includes information related to resources, which can be used as a guide for ways the community can position itself for future challenges to the system, which might be generated by another wave or mutation of the current virus or something entirely different. The overarching intent has been to help local residents business owners become:

- Informed about how to measure impact,
- Equipped to tap resources, and
- Proactive in terms of thinking about the challenge as an opportunity for resiliency.

These overarching goals have been captured in the project goal formed early in the effort to frame the project (also shown in quotes above on this page): “Provide the communities of Ouray County with an understanding of fiscal and economic challenges and opportunities, benchmarked to the COVID County health data set.”

Another theme that can be found in several of the chapters in this document addresses communication. The systems that have been used are described and illustrated in detail for both the State of Colorado has used as well as the structure used by jurisdictions within the County. The goal is to create clarity among residents, businesses, and guests about how decisions are made and how the information is disseminated. The document also includes some recommendations regarding the flow of information.



Image Source: Markus Van Meter

The methodology used to evaluate economic and fiscal conditions includes a combination of primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data sets include the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), and the Colorado Department of Revenue. Primary sources include a business survey, interviews with business representatives, and many discussions with elected officials and local staff. The methodology used for the analysis relies on an array of economic and fiscal data, coupled with listening to individuals who have been on the front line of the challenge. The goal is to generate data-driven report that has been calibrated based on local understanding.

As a point of clarity, the term county in some cases refers to the collective area that includes the City of Ouray, the Town of Ridgway, and the unincorporated areas surrounding these jurisdictions. In other cases, it refers specifically to the governance structure of Ouray County, led by the Board of County Commissioners. Because there is a need to refer to both concepts of the county, the specific application of the term has been clarified within each of the following chapters.

When capitalized, the reference is to the organization. When used with small case, it refers to the broader geography and community as a whole.

Finally, due to the unknown nature of the virus, particularly in the early stages, the saying that the community was ‘driving the car as it was building the car’ is aptly applied. During the process of writing this plan, there were many conversations with local residents. A theme that was expressed consistently among conversations with the business community and representatives from each of the three jurisdictions was the deep respect and admiration for the effort put forth by local staff. If nothing else, the pandemic has tested local systems and local personnel, and proven new levels of commitment and resiliency.

TRAJECTORY OF COVID

As of February 2nd, 2021, the United States recorded 26.2 million cases of COVID-19. The pandemic has affected the country in waves. The first cases appeared in late January 2020, but overall cases began to rise in March. Daily new cases reached an initial peak of 42,600 on April 6th, after which the rate of new cases gradually declined over the following months. The rate of new cases started to rise again in June, reaching a second peak of 75,100 new cases on July 24th. The rate of new cases fell again through August and September, creating the impression that the pandemic had stabilized. In October 2020, cases began to rise dramatically, reaching unprecedented levels in November and December. Most days in December recorded over 200,000 new cases, and by January 8th, 2021, the country reached a daily peak of 314,093 new cases. Based on this information, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown little sign of slowing down nationwide, although new daily cases have decreased in recent weeks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has followed a generally similar trajectory in Colorado. After initial waves in April and July, new cases in Colorado appeared to stabilize in August, reaching a 3-month low of 192 cases on August 30th. Starting in September, the number of new cases began to rise dramatically, reaching a high of 6,439 daily cases on November 13th. Daily new cases remained over 4,000 until mid-December, when the case rate began to fall. Colorado recorded a 2-month low of 1,400 new cases on December 27th, and after a brief uptick in early January, the case rate has continued to decline. As of February 3rd, 2021, Colorado recored a total of 397,998 cases

Ouray County recorded 211 COVID-19 cases and 3 COVID-19 related deaths as of February 3rd, 2021. For the first several months of the pandemic, Ouray County had few cases, recording 10 total cases by June 29th and 40 total cases by October 31st, 2020. As occurred statewide and nationwide, Ouray County experienced an uptick in cases in November, recording 12 daily cases and surpassing 100 total cases on November 16th. Since November, Ouray County has had between 1 and 2 new cases per day, indicating that the pandemic is continuing but that overall spread has stabilized.

In comparison to Colorado and to the United States as a whole, Ouray County has experienced a relatively low rate of COVID-19 infection. The county has had 43 cases per 1,000 residents, compared to 69 cases per 1,000 residents in Colorado and 80 cases per 1,000 residents nationwide.

While the reasons behind a relatively low COVID-19 infection rate are varied, Ouray County's proactive public health measures and adherence to state guidelines have played a role in containing the spread and minimizing the impact of the virus. The County responded quickly to the pandemic by closing certain attractions like the Ice Park, effectively preparing the County for the summer season. While the virus continued to surge at the national and state levels, Ouray County saw a reduction in new cases.

COVID-19 CASES

In comparison to Colorado and to the United States as a whole, Ouray County has experienced a relatively low rate of COVID-19 infection.

OURAY COUNTY

43

CASES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

COLORADO

69

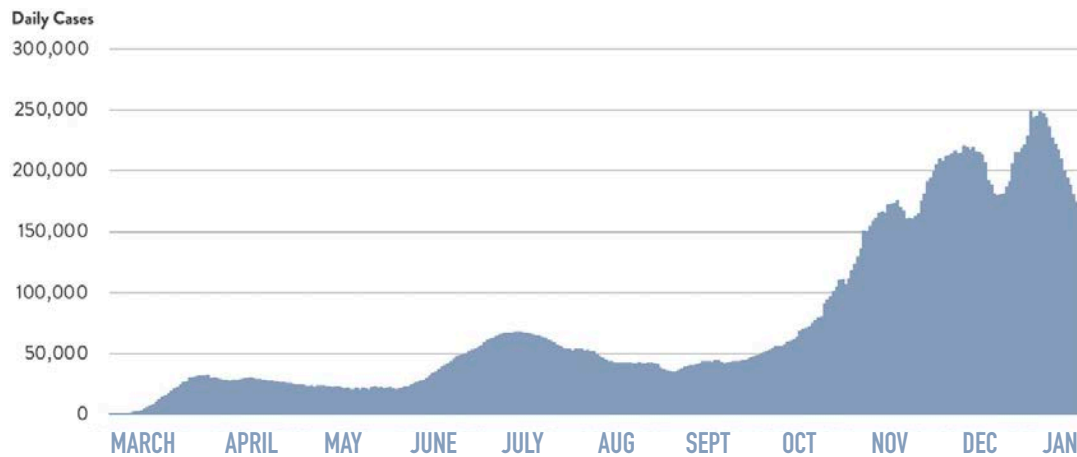
CASES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

UNITED STATES

80

CASES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

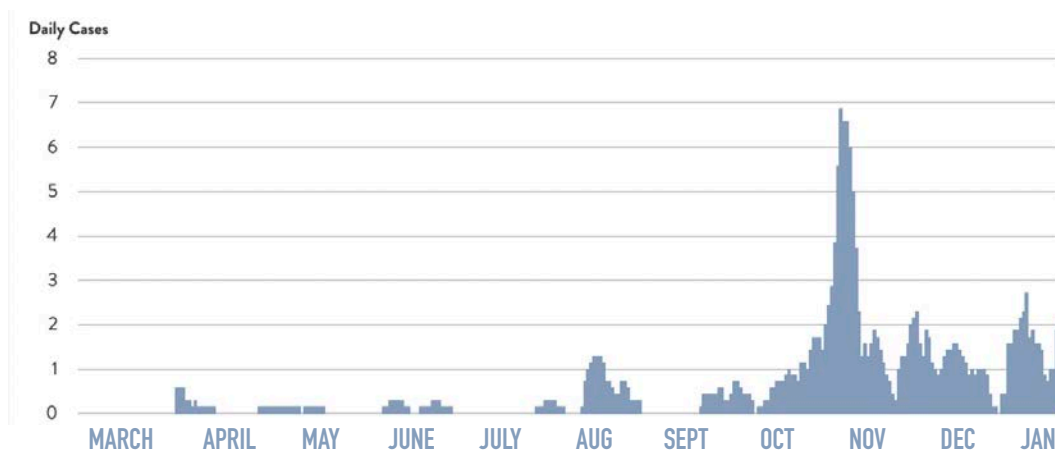
DAILY COVID-19 CASES, 7-DAY MOVING AVERAGE, **U.S.**



DAILY COVID-19 CASES, 7-DAY MOVING AVERAGE, **COLORADO**



DAILY CASES, 7-DAY MOVING AVERAGE, **OURAY COUNTY**



Sources: Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC)

2

COLORADO PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

As of September 2020, Ouray County has followed the public health orders associated with the State dial system.

SYSTEM STRUCTURE

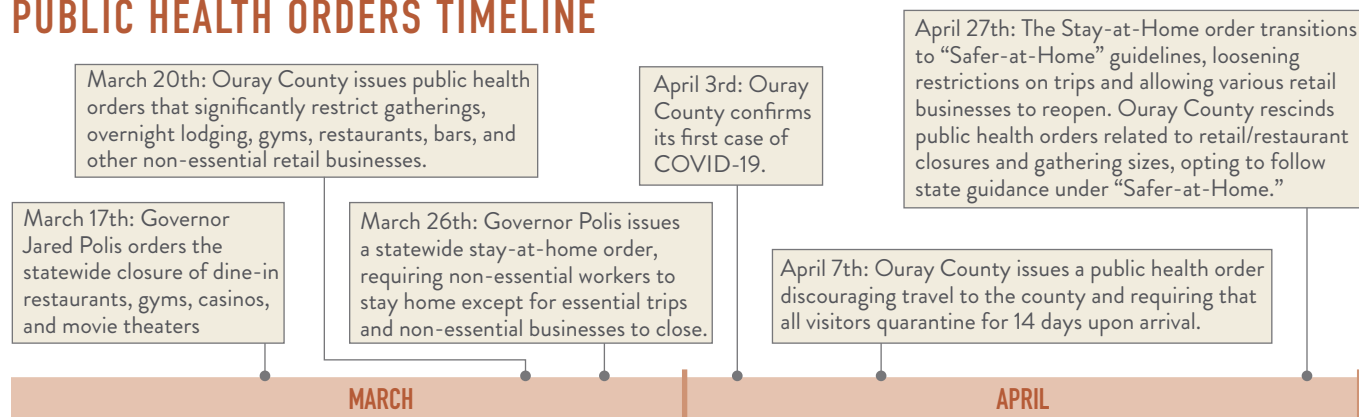
Colorado has a decentralized public health system in which counties are required to operate a local public health agency or participate in a district agency. Ouray County has its own public health agency, the Ouray County Public Health Agency, while other areas share an agency with multiple counties, such as San Juan Basin Public Health (La Plata and Archuleta counties) and Tri-County Health (Arapahoe, Adams, and Douglas Counties).

Local agencies are ultimately responsible to the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE), a State agency that is responsible for both health and environmental protection statewide. CDPHE establishes a set of core public health capabilities and

services that local agencies are expected to provide. The scope of core public health services may be limited by the amount of state and local funding available. Public health agencies may opt to share resources with neighboring health agencies to assure that core services are accessible. These capabilities and services are summarized on the following page.

Most relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic is the service of Communicable Disease Prevention & Control. The CDPHE defines this responsibility as locally and state coordinated investigation, testing, and prevention/control efforts to reduce the incidence and transmission of infectious diseases. This aligns with the efforts that the State has undertaken to control the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the COVID dial and its corresponding measures.

PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS TIMELINE



CORE PUBLIC HEALTH CAPABILITIES AND SERVICES

COLORADO'S CORE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

- ✓ Assessment and Planning
- ✓ Emergency Preparedness and Response
- ✓ Communications
- ✓ Organizational Competencies
- ✓ Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health
- ✓ Policy Development and Support
- ✓ Partnerships



**COMMUNICABLE
DISEASE PREVENTION &
CONTROL**



**CHRONIC DISEASE &
INJURY PREVENTION &
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
PROMOTION**



**ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH**

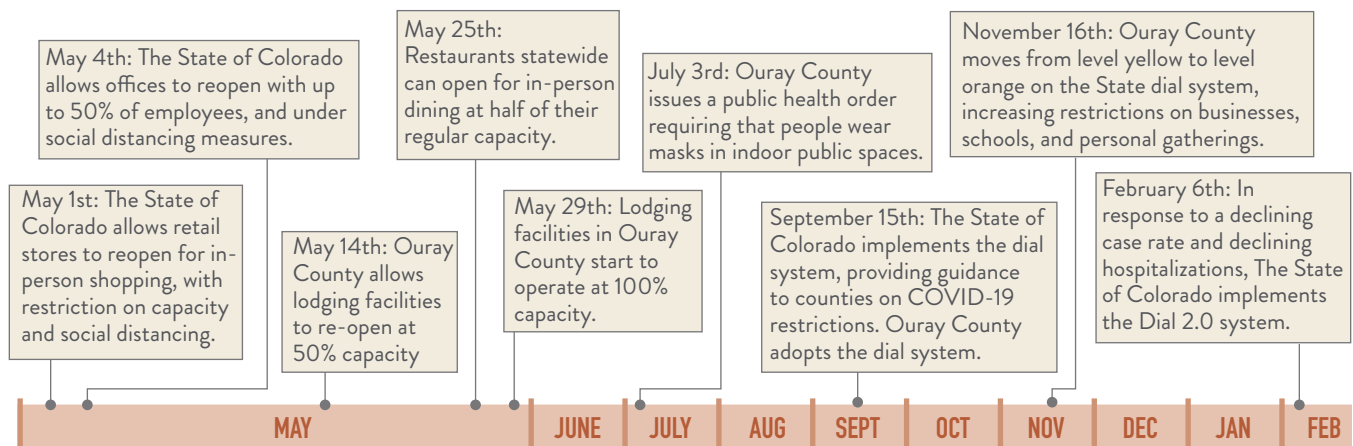


**MATERNAL, CHILD,
ADOLESCENT &
FAMILY HEALTH**



**ACCESS TO AND
LINKAGE WITH
CLINICAL CARE**

Based on graphic from CDPHE.



DIAL SYSTEM

On September 15th, 2020, the State of Colorado implemented a dial framework to guide policy on the COVID-19 pandemic. The dial consists of six levels, indicated by colors, that correspond to a particular level of COVID-19 risk. As shown in the graphic on this page, the colors range from Green (lowest level, relatively low risk) to Purple (highest level, extreme risk). This system is intended to provide clear and predictable guidance to counties in their response to the pandemic, ideally balancing county-specific circumstances with a strong state response to an urgent issue.

The CDPHE is responsible for assigning a dial level to each county. Once assigned, counties can move back and forth between levels. Levels are determined by the following criteria:

- **Percent of positive tests:** the percentage of tests that come back positive out of the total number of tests performed.
- **Number of new cases:** the cumulative number of cases over a two-week period, per 100,000 people. This measures community circulation.
- **Hospitalizations:** the trend of new hospitalizations. It examines the extent to which hospitalizations are increasing, declining, or stable.

Each level is determined by a particular combination of these criteria, which is summarized in the table on the following page. To move to a lower, less restrictive level (i.e. orange to yellow), counties must meet and sustain all three metrics for two weeks and consult CDPHE.

Although the dial system is supposed to adhere to these requirements in a consistent manner, it is sometimes the case that the State will move counties along the dial without those counties meeting all of the requirements. The State will consider other factors such as statewide hospital capacity and a statewide changes in case rates, along with broader concerns about economic activity.

Each level is associated with a particular set of restrictions that health departments must enforce. The restrictions allow for various amounts of social and economic activity, governing things such as gathering sizes, restaurant capacity, and office capacity. Restrictions at each level are summarized in the table on the following page.

COLORADO COVID-19 DIAL



STATE AND LOCAL RESPONSIBILITIES

With the implementation of the dial system, the State has taken on responsibility for creating policy around COVID-19 and communicating it to local public health agencies. Compliance with and enforcement of state public health directives is the responsibility of each public health agency. For example, as Ouray County is currently at Level Orange (as of January 2021), the Ouray County Public Health Agency is tasked with enforcing the capacity restrictions associated with Level Orange. Within the dial framework, Ouray County does not designate itself as Level Orange, but enforces its associated mandates.

Before the implementation of the dial system, the Ouray County Public Health Agency passed public health orders related to capacity restrictions, and masks. Since the dial system was established and once its public health orders expired, Ouray County has been following State directives. The structure of the public health system requires Ouray County to follow these directives. At the same time, Ouray County is permitted to implement public health orders that are stricter than those of the State, but is not permitted to implement public health orders less strict than those of the State. A proactive response to pandemic-related issues can benefit counties, however. When CDPHE determines Ouray County's dial level, it considers the extent to which the county has been proactive with mask enforcement, testing, and capacity restrictions. If the county has been proactive, the CDPHE is less likely to move it into a more severe category (i.e. from orange to red). This encourages counties to be proactive and thorough in their response to the pandemic.

DIAL 2.0 LEVEL DETERMINANTS & BUSINESS-RELATED RESTRICTIONS

LEVEL DETERMINANTS	CATEGORY	LEVEL GREEN Protect our Neighbors	LEVEL BLUE Caution	LEVEL YELLOW Concern	LEVEL ORANGE High Risk	LEVEL RED Severe Risk	LEVEL PURPLE Extreme Risk
	NEW CASES	Must achieve all 8 Protect our Neighbors metrics and complete the certification process	15–100 100,000 7 day	100–300 100,000 7 day	300–500 100,000 7 day	501+ 100,000 7 day	Statewide hospital capacity risks being breached; Crisis standards of care approaching
	PERCENT TESTING POSITIVITY		No more than 5%	No more than 7.5%	No more than 10%	10% or higher	
	HOSPITALIZATIONS		Hospitalized County Residents: Increasing, stable, or declining? (Regional capacity will also be considered)				

BUSINESS-RELATED RESTRICTIONS	OFFICES	50%* capacity		50% capacity, remote work is strongly encouraged	25% capacity, remote work is strongly encouraged	10% capacity, remote work is strongly encouraged	Remote work or Closed
	RESTAURANTS - INDOORS	50%* capacity or 500 people [†]	50% capacity or 175 people indoors (or up to 225 with calculator) [†]	50% capacity or 50 people (or up to 150 with calculator) [†]	25% capacity or 50 people [†]	Indoor dining closed. Take out, curbside, delivery, or to go	Indoor dining closed. Take out, delivery, or to go is open
	RESTAURANTS - OUTDOORS	6ft between parties outdoors, per local zoning				Open air with only groups of own household is open	Outdoor dining closed. Take out, delivery, or to go is open
	BARS	50%* capacity or 500 people [†]	Closed				
	NON-CRITICAL MANUFACTURING		50% capacity or 175 people indoors [†]	50% capacity or 50 people (or up to 100 with calculator) [†]	25% capacity or 50 people [†]		10% capacity or 25 people [†]
	GYMS/FITNESS		25% capacity or 75 people [†]	25% capacity or 50 people [†]	25% capacity, 25 people indoors [†] , or outdoors in groups less than 10	10% capacity, 10 people indoors per room [†] , or outdoors in groups less than 10. Reservations required	Virtual, or outdoors in groups less than 10
	CRITICAL AND NON-CRITICAL RETAIL		50%* capacity		50% capacity with increased curbside pick up, and delivery. Dedicated senior and at-risk hours encouraged		Non-critical retail closed. Curbside pick-up and delivery OK. Critical may operate at 50% capacity but should make significant efforts to reduce the number of people in-store as much as possible
	PERSONAL SERVICES	50%* capacity or 500 people [†]	50% capacity or 50 people [†]		25% capacity or 25 people [†]		Closed
	OUTDOOR GUIDED SERVICES		50% capacity or 25 people [†]	50% capacity or 10 people [†]	25% capacity or 10 people [†]		25% capacity or up to 10 only in your own household [†]

*Counties that enter Protect Our Neighbors are eligible to increase the percentage caps by 5% every month they continually sustain those metrics.

[†] When capacity limits are expressed as both a percentage of posted capacity and a total number of people, use whichever number is fewer.

**Educational institutions including museums, aquariums and zoos may operate indoors at 25% of the posted occupancy limit not to exceed 25 people using the Distancing Space Calculator per room.

3

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTIVES

The County's structure to address emergency events is presented in this chapter, with an emphasis on current and potential communication flows.

As noted in the previous chapter, the standards for how the County operates has been based on requirements issued by the State of Colorado, disseminated to each of the respective County Health Departments across the state. The purpose of this chapter is to document the local organizational structure as it relates to implementing the state mandates. Each County has latitude based on size, staffing, and unique attributes in terms of implementation. The diagrams and descriptions that follow are intended to summarize the approach that has been used in Ouray County with the purpose of:

1. Clarifying the information flow from the state (top down, bottom up and across the matrix);
2. Identifying ways to capture feedback from local organizations and individuals (bottom up and top down); and
3. Seeking ways to improve the processes, based on the real-time experience of the past nine months.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE

There is an existing system for addressing emergency conditions within the County contained in the *Ouray County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)*. "The purpose of the EOP is to provide general guidelines and to designate specific principles and resources for managing and coordinating overall response and recovery activities before, during and after major emergencies and disaster event. The Emergency Operations Plan has been developed in accordance with the requirements for local emergency planning established under the State of Colorado Emergency Act of 1992, and also meets the requirements of other state and federal guidelines for local emergency management plans and programs. The EOP will be updated annually through the Ouray County Multi-Agency Coordination Group, and as needed after any incident, to ensure that it remains an effective and accurate emergency management tool for officials, responders, and citizens of Ouray County." The last update was December 8, 2015. Updates and changes to the appendices have occurred after 2015 and may occur as needed.



Image Source: Town of Ridgway

The EOP has a general direction geared to natural disasters as well as backcountry rescue, which are logical points of focus given the natural setting of Ouray County. Pandemics are listed, but specific activities tailored to this type of emergency are limited.

There is a second plan known as the Multijurisdictional Multihazard Mitigation Plan (MMMP). The MMMP was last updated in 2019. “Ouray County, including the participating jurisdictions of the City of Ouray, the Town of Ridgway, and Log Hill Mesa Fire Protection District, has prepared this local hazard mitigation plan to guide hazard mitigation planning to better protect the people and property of the County from the effects of hazard events. This plan demonstrates the community’s commitment to reducing risks from hazards and serves as a tool to help decision makers direct mitigation activities and resources. The plan is intended to be a living document through ongoing implementation and regular updates every five years. The original plan was developed in 2008 and updated in 2013 and 2019. This plan was also developed to make Ouray County and participating jurisdictions eligible for

certain federal disaster assistance, specifically, the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs, as well as to make the County more disaster resistant”.

The Multijurisdictional, Multihazard Mitigation Plan has a section regarding Public Health Emergencies. It references public health pandemics that have been previously experienced, but it does not address a “worldwide pandemic” that we are experiencing today, COVID-19. We have learned from this pandemic and we recognize that this pandemic should be looked upon differently and may require a “long-term” pandemic or disaster classification. Furthermore, it may require a different command/management structure in order to be effective and sustainable. The following summary and set of recommendations are based on the experience of 2020 and are set forth to address needs of extended emergencies.

Under an emergency incident or declared disaster, there is a benefit of communicating the basic structure that the County uses for addressing a public health emergency.

As listed below, the County takes the following steps to ensure the public health conditions are being protected and addressed.

STEP 1

INCIDENT COMMAND

The initial step related to a public health concern is to recognize the event and establish an Incident Command. This step involves County staff, specifically the Emergency Manager and the Public Health Director. Depending on the findings from the staff conducting a review of the incident, they may determine that the occurrence will pass without potential for broader impact. In that case, no further effort is required of the County. Alternatively, they may find that the issue is significant, and warrants the activation of the County Board of Health.

STEP 2

COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

In Ouray County, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) serves as the Board of Health and meets on a quarterly basis, or more frequently. Based on the findings from staff related to the Incident Command, they can be called to order as needed. The focus of the Board of Health when convened is to review the findings from the incident and compare local conditions to the statewide context. Findings from the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) will be presented, and based on the degree of severity of conditions within the state and/or within the County, the Board of Health may determine to activate greater local resources in the form of Unified Command. Alternatively, they could suspend action at that time until greater need is determined to exist.

It should be recognized that much of the purview for action is vested at the state level of governance. As described in the previous chapter, much of the time, the County staff are implementors of state directives. Actions at the local level often pertain to communications and resources.

STEP 3

UNIFIED COMMAND

The Unified Command is formed with membership determined based on expertise and authority related to the specific emergency that exists. Each situation is unique, and thus the composition of Unified Command may differ from any previous time a Unified Command has been formed. It usually will involve county staff, municipal staff, as well as elected officials. Often there is just a single representative from each of the local jurisdictions. Based on their assessment of need and determination of action, they may request that the BOCC declare an official State of Emergency. With this designation, the County is eligible to tap into FEMA funding, and do so in an accelerated manner. Purchases can be made, within the federal protocol for reimbursement once the declaration is official. These resources enable County staff to move quickly and become operational at a speed that protects resident health in the face of an evolving threat.

STEP 4

POLICY GROUP

The first time the Policy Group has been convened has been part of the COVID 19 response, due to the complex, extensive, and ongoing nature of the challenge. In the future, as needed, the County may choose to reactivate the Policy Group, with the purpose of forming a broader coalition to address needs, to evaluate policy decisions, and to ensure the collective leadership within the region are engaged. The Policy Group involves all members of all elected boards, all senior staff, and mid-level staff as needed. Board involvement includes the City of Ouray, the Town of Ridgway, Ouray County, and can involve other boards, such as the local School Board, as needed.

The purpose of the Policy Group is to inform all decision makers in real time. Given that each board has, in effect, a quorum when the Policy Group convenes, all meetings are noticed and open to the public. Because it consists of a multiple set of different public bodies, no formal actions are taken during these meetings. Information is provided with the goal of keeping all entities fully aware of the nature of the challenge, the resources available, and potential actions that can be taken once each board returns to their standard scheduled meetings.

STEP 5

LOCAL CITY, TOWN, AND COUNTY ACTION

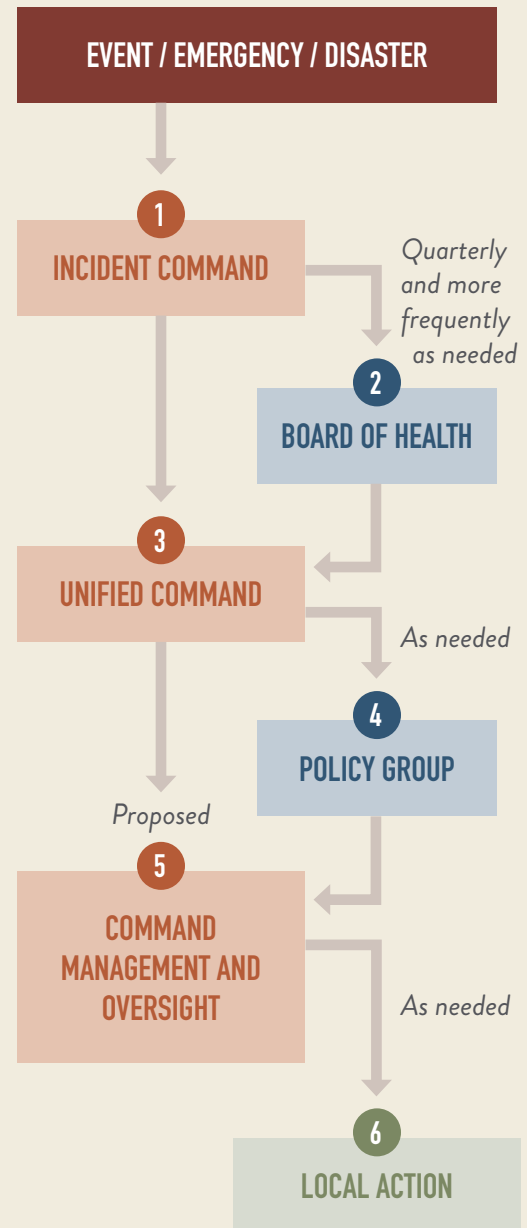
As needed and appropriate, the local governments can adopt resolutions, appropriate funds, and provide additional locally calibrated regulations, as needed or desired. It is within these forums of the individual meetings that they can take action, ideally in sync with those of the other regulating bodies, based on information shared within the Policy Group.

STEP 6

UNIFIED COMMAND MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

Most emergency conditions are resolved in a span of days or weeks, with a few extending into months. For those that are extended, it is recommended to form a Unified Command Management and Oversight group. The composition would reflect the location, type of event, and duration and would likely include senior staff and elected official(s) from the relevant jurisdictions. As most emergency events occur in the unincorporated area of the county, it is recommended that a County appointed or elected official (i.e. County Administrator, or Commissioner) chair the group and help identify the size and representation of members. A group such as this will be particularly relevant for long-term situations (like a pandemic) in which greater support to front line staff is needed, particularly in light of the need for long-term strategies related to community need, staff resources, sustainability and communications.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE FOR EMERGENCIES & DISASTERS





OURAY COUNTY
COURT HOUSE
1888

541

CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THE EXISTING STRUCTURE

During the course of developing this COVID Recovery Plan, many individuals from the public and private sector were interviewed. All were directly involved in the response that began in March 2020. All expressed respect and gratitude for the County staff, specifically citing the Public Health Director and the Emergency Manager as examples of ideal public servants professionally and personally committed to addressing the COVID challenge and improving the public health of the region. If there was one theme that emerged from the interviews about the existing structure, it related to the dissemination of information. Suggestions from a range of stakeholders as well as the consultant team are provided below:

1. Improve communications with all residents, guests, and businesses with better electronic forms of messaging. An example of this is to create a Facebook page, given the frequency and ease of accessing information by local community members on Facebook. The County could also consider creating a downloadable app specific to Ouray County that residents could easily tap for the latest regulations and resources, although this approach has particular challenges with implementation.
2. In addition, use written forms of messaging to improve communications with residents and businesses, especially those who do not have access to or actively use digital forms of communication. An example is distributing a printed mailer with information and with a phone number to call.
3. Improve two-way communications with businesses with direct email to owners and managers. There would be significant benefit with a two-way communication path with businesses that provides a channel for business to communicate to local officials. Examples include unique messaging that is more relevant to this group, as opposed to the general public. Also, fielding surveys and questionnaires provides real-time information about the economic landscape. Because sales tax collections and employment data are released by the state with significant lag, there is a need for up-to-date monitoring. For example, succinct monthly surveys that collect insights on employment cuts, changes in business activity, and perceptions about the overall economic conditions will provide elected officials with real-time data to help inform their policy decisions.
4. Because the database of email contacts is quite dated, it is recommended to activate a business license requirement with, among other data requirements, a current set of email contacts for every business within each jurisdiction. The purpose is to create better ways of listening and should not be interpreted as anything more.
5. Improve the flow of communication to the general public. It would be beneficial for the public to receive notifications from the County government on certain matters. Examples include vaccine information, public health orders, COVID-19 testing, and existing social/economic resources. This would essentially be a 'Reverse 911' and would help ensure that Ouray residents are informed of current situations and available resources.
6. Consider adding a Command Management Group, consisting of some combination of senior staff and elected official(s) based on the nature, location, and severity of the challenge. This is recommended for long-term situations, like COVID, which requires a sustained effort. This contrasts with current structure, which is geared to immediate action, and is typically in place over a shorter duration. The purpose would be to provide senior administration oversight to address community need, staff resources, sustainability and communications.
7. Recognize the need for a permanent Public Information Officer and assign tasks related outgoing messaging as well as incoming communications to this individual. (Note that the BOCC has funded this position and the County is underway with hiring this individual.)
8. Ensure that every voice is heard at the Policy Group by providing time on each agenda for the PIO to summarize all in-coming email (grouped by topic) and ensure that the themes expressed by Ouray County residents, business owners, and guests are heard by elected officials concurrently.
9. Update the *Ouray County Emergency Operations Plan* (EOP) and the *Multijurisdictional Multihazard Mitigation Plan* (MMMP) in a timely manner in 2021, following the conclusion of the current pandemic. As staff regains capacity, consider the concepts included in this document and incorporate into the adopted plans as appropriate.

4

STRUCTURE OF THE OURAY COUNTY ECONOMY

Public health is the portal through which economic vitality can occur. The Ouray County economy is interconnected and all sectors perform best when these relationships are strengthened.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ECONOMIC COHORTS

The economy of Ouray County is primarily driven by visitation. Countywide, 32 percent of all jobs are in the Accommodation and Food Services sector. This share is higher in the City of Ouray, which has half of all jobs in the Accommodation and Food Services sector, compared to 22 percent of all jobs in Ridgway. The mix of employment in Ridgway is comparatively diverse, with significant shares of employment in Construction, Retail Trade, Manufacturing, Agriculture, and Professional Services. Countywide, Public Administration is also a significant sector, comprising 10 percent of all jobs, most of which are in the City of Ouray.

Within the Accommodation and Food Services Sector, approximately 60 percent of the jobs are food service-related and 40 percent of the jobs are Accommodation-related.

Within Ouray County, approximately 50 percent of all jobs are located in Ridgway, 40 percent are located in the City of Ouray, and 10 percent are located elsewhere in the county. While the share of mining employment is currently

small, the Ouray Silver Mine is growing quickly and is expected to employ 160 people by mid-2021, which will represent approximately seven percent of countywide employment.

SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

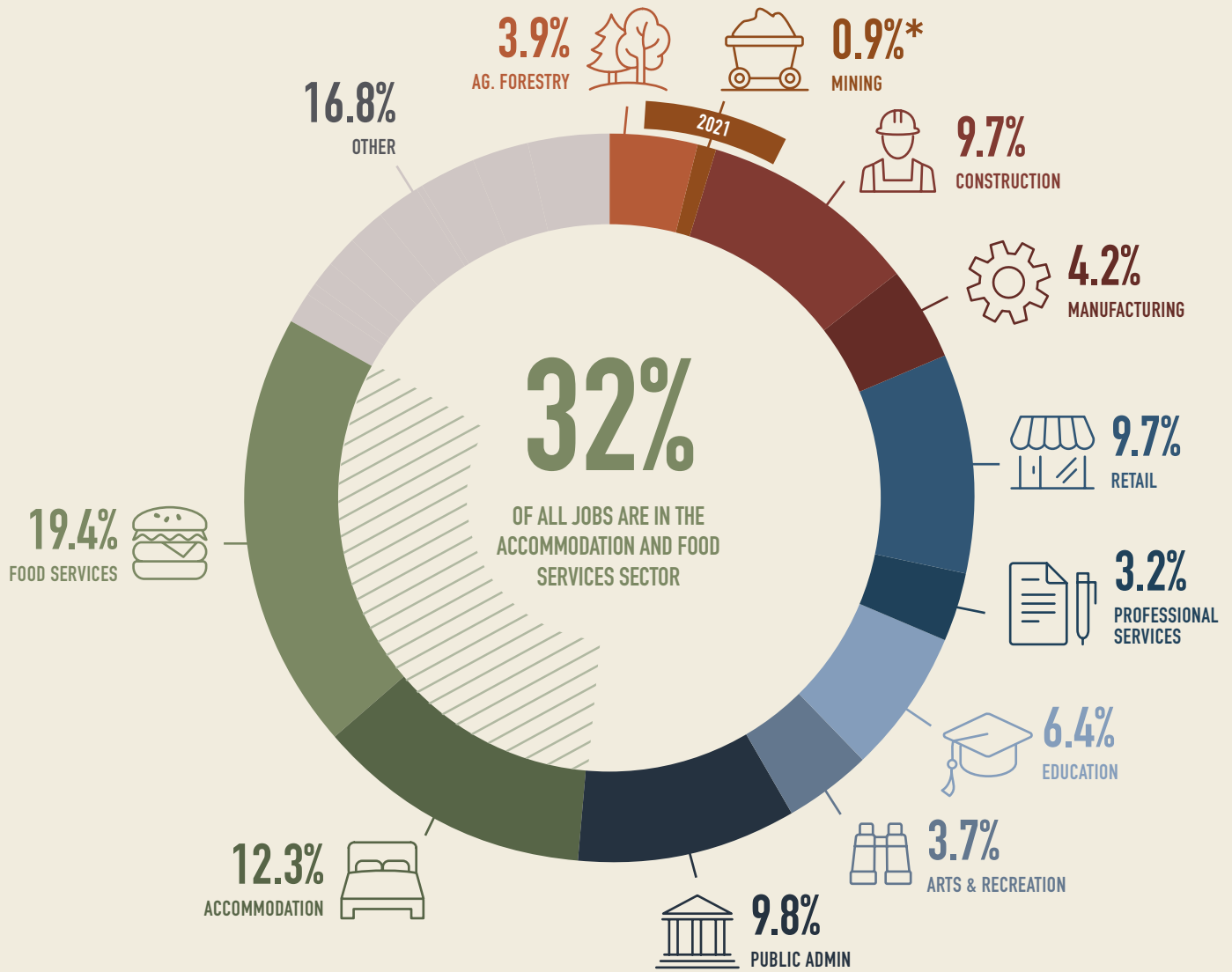
SECTOR	TOTAL	OURAY COUNTY
FOOD SERVICES	428	19.4%
ACCOMMODATION	271	12.3%
82 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION*	216	9.8%
23 CONSTRUCTION	214	9.7%
44-45 RETAIL TRADE	213	9.7%
61 EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	142	6.4%
31-33 MANUFACTURING	94	4.2%
11 AG FORESTRY	87	3.9%
71 ARTS & RECREATION	82	3.7%
54 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	71	3.2%
21 MINING*	20	0.9%
OTHER	368	16.7%
TOTAL	2,205	100%

Source: BLS; Economic & Planning System

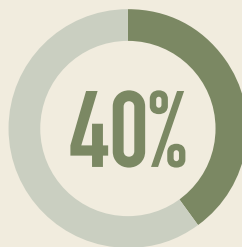
*"Public Administration" refers to people employed at local, state, and federal levels of government.

*Mining is expected to grow by 160 jobs by mid-2021, which will represent approximately 7% of countywide employment

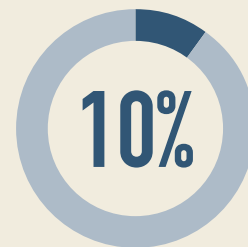
SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR IN OURAY COUNTY (2019)



OF ALL JOBS ARE
IN RIDGWAY



OF ALL JOBS ARE IN
CITY OF OURAY



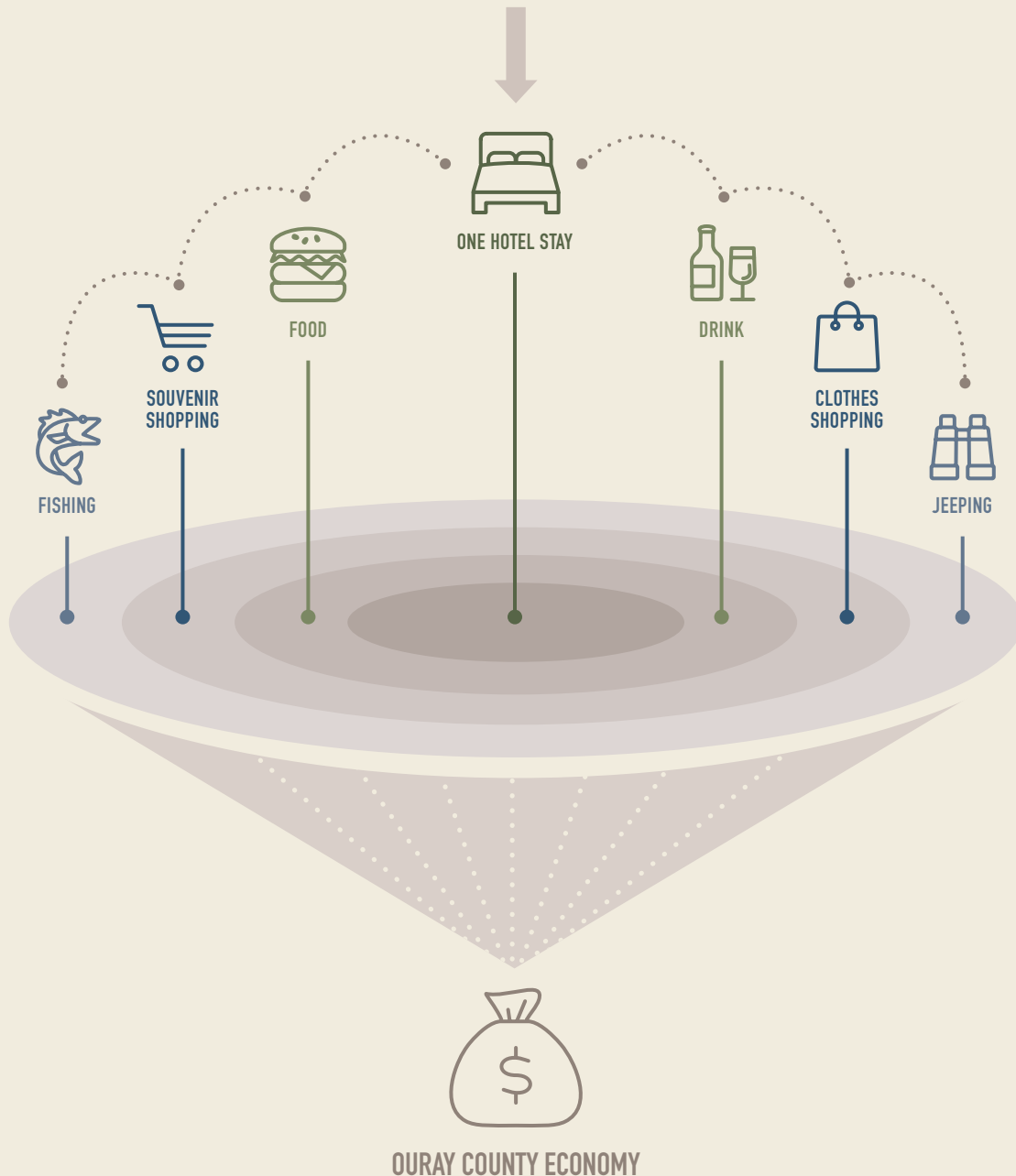
OF ALL JOBS ARE
ELSEWHERE IN COUNTY

*Mining is expected to grow to approximately 7% by mid-2021.

RIPPLE EFFECT



One purchase (a hotel room) leads to other purchases, increasing the amount of money flowing through the local economy.



RIPPLE EFFECT

The economy of Ouray County is interconnected. Spending in one sector will cause changes to other sectors, creating a ‘ripple effect’. For example, if a person purchases a hotel room for a night, it is likely that the person will also spend money on items such as food, coffee, and clothing in the area, putting money into the hands of local business. Additionally, guests will often engage in some form of backcountry excursion (jeeping, fishing, etc.) that will generate additional visitor spending. One purchase (a hotel room) leads to other purchases, increasing the amount of money flowing through the local economy. This dynamic is central to the economy of Ouray County, which is driven by hospitality-related businesses.

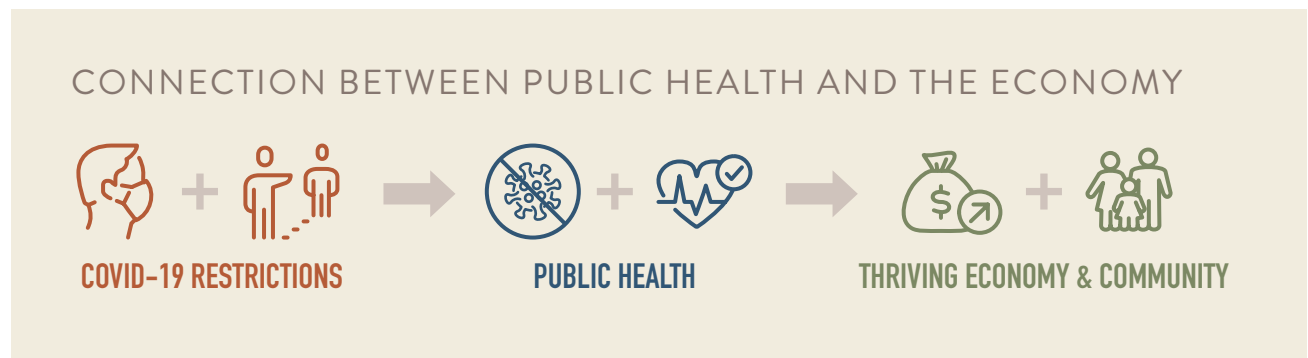
When economic connections are active, such as during a strong tourism season, the benefits are self-reinforcing; one dollar of spending generates several additional dollars of economic activity. At the same time, this dynamic makes Ouray County vulnerable to consumption-related shocks. When the connections are broken, the economy falls into a downward cycle. One dollar not spent means that several additional dollars will not flow through the economy, affecting a wide range of businesses and employees. If someone chooses to not book a hotel room, the hotel not only forgoes that revenue, but so do other local businesses like restaurants, boutiques, and breweries that the hotel guest would have likely patronized. It is essential to Ouray County’s economic health that these connections are sustained. All sectors do best, when these relationships are strong.

CONNECTION BETWEEN PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ECONOMY

These economic connections are central to the success of the Ouray County economy. As the COVID-19 pandemic has created an impetus for social distancing and minimizing person-to-person contact, sustaining these connections has become more difficult. Restrictions on business capacity and gathering size have limited the ability of most businesses to operate at a normal scale. While this has negatively affected business activity, the restrictions are necessary to fostering public health.

As long as the risk of COVID-19 remains a reality, the economy will be unable to thrive and the community will be unable to function as it normally does. Key to a healthy economy is resident and business confidence – if people do not feel safe going to large gatherings or to indoor businesses, then economic and social activity will be hampered, whereas if residents are confident that going to gatherings and business does not put them at risk of catching COVID-19, then economic and social activity will be able to carry on as normal.

Many Ouray County businesses shared this sentiment. Nearly 60 percent of businesses that responded to the survey indicated that ‘Health/COVID-19 Infection is their greatest concern with business continuity. Additionally, a common sentiment was that the ongoing risks of COVID-19 have made employee retention challenging, as the risk of exposure to COVID-19 while working is a source of stress for employees in the county. Considering the toll that COVID-19 has had on residents and businesses, safety is a necessary step in putting the economy back on track. Public health is a precondition to a thriving economy and community.



5

RESULTS OF THE BUSINESS SURVEY

The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for businesses in Ouray County, as described in detailed survey results. The business community reflects the resolve for resiliency and recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges to businesses in Ouray County. Capacity restrictions, social distancing, health risks, and closures have jeopardized the viability of many businesses. The survival and prosperity of businesses in Ouray County is essential to economic resiliency, as local businesses provide economic opportunity, local character, and vibrancy. This section examines the current sentiment of Ouray County businesses with an interest in determining that primary issues that businesses are facing, how they have responded to the pandemic, and how the County can best assist businesses moving forward. Ideally, this section provides insight into the ways that Ouray County businesses can move forward from the pandemic.

It is important to understand the competing economic trends that Ouray County has recently experienced. Certain metrics, such as job growth and increasing sales tax collections over the past decade, indicate a thriving local economy. Traffic data shows a significant uptick in visitor traffic in 2020, resulting from shifting travel patterns and desire to access outdoor recreation during a pandemic. While these factors bode well for Ouray County businesses, many businesses face considerable challenges, and the gains of strong economic activity have not been evenly distributed. Survey results present a mix of

sentiments – many businesses have struggled, while others have had normal, if not successful, years. Importantly, the survey indicates that COVID-19 has been accelerating trends that existed previously - particularly increasing housing prices and the ongoing expansion and necessity of E-Commerce. These issues create an imperative for businesses and policymakers to adapt to a changing reality.

DETAILS OF THE SURVEY

The business survey consisted of 20 questions on topics related to the impacts of COVID-19, responses to COVID-19, business continuity, relief programs sought out by businesses, and ideas that businesses have for policymakers in Ouray County. In total, 62 businesses responded to the survey through an online form, representing a 25 percent return of the 240 surveys fielded. A response rate over 20 percent is considered successful. As this survey is a snapshot in time with a relatively small sample size, it does not fully represent the long-term trends that Ouray County businesses have experienced. With this in mind, it would be beneficial for the county to conduct this type of business survey on a quarterly or yearly basis from a well-established distribution list to better assess the status of county businesses.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Several different types of businesses responded to the survey. The most common business types were as follows:



The remaining responses were distributed between 7 other types of businesses, including Manufacturing, Professional Services, Construction, and Health Care.

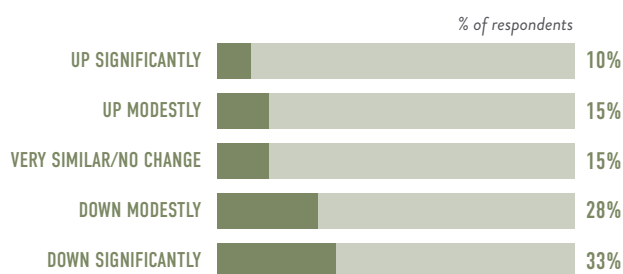
The majority of respondents—62 percent of total—were very small businesses, with 1-4 employees. In addition, 13 percent had 5-10 employees, 16 percent had 11-20 employees, and 8 percent had 21-40 employees.

PERFORMANCE IN 2020

To gauge the performance of businesses in 2020, the survey asked “How has the revenue of your business changed in 2020 versus?”. Approximately one-third of respondents indicated that their revenue is ‘down significantly’, while 28 percent of respondents indicated that their revenue is down modestly. In total, over 60 percent of businesses have seen lower revenues in 2020 than in 2019. By comparison, approximately one-quarter of respondents indicated that their revenues are either up modestly or up significantly, while fifteen percent of businesses indicated no change.

At the same time, approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated that no employees have been laid off in 2020, suggesting that businesses have not had to significantly cut staff.

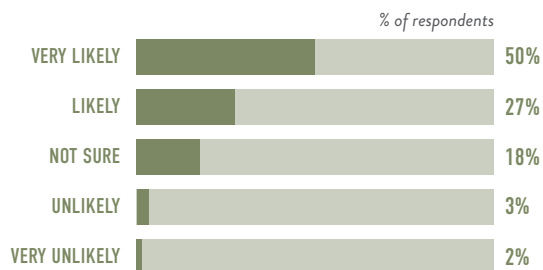
HOW HAS YOUR REVENUE CHANGED IN 2020 OVER 2019?



BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

The survey also asked businesses their expectations on how likely it is that they will be able to operate through 2021. While not a perfect measure of business performance, it illustrates business confidence in Ouray County. Overall, one-half of businesses indicated that it is ‘very likely’ that they will be able to operate through 2021, while over one-quarter said it is ‘likely’.

HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOUR BUSINESS WILL OPERATE THROUGH 2021?



BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

OF RESPONDENTS



62
BUSINESSES
RESPONDED

RESPONSES TO COVID



OPERATING AT
LIMITED CAPACITY



SHIFTING BUSINESS
TO ONLINE PLATFORMS



BUSINESS AS NORMAL

MAIN CONCERNS



HEALTH/COVID-19



EMPLOYEE RETENTION



HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY
FOR EMPLOYEES



CASH FLOW

INVESTMENTS NEEDED



48%
OF RESPONDENTS
NEED INVESTMENTS
FOR PPE



29%
OF RESPONDENTS NEED
INVESTMENTS FOR
ONLINE PLATFORMS

MAJOR THEMES

RESPONSES TO COVID-19

One of the main motivations of the business survey was to hear how businesses in Ouray County have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. The question of “How has your business responded to COVID-19?” led to the following insights:

- Half of respondents indicated that they are still operating, but at limited capacity
- 43 percent of respondents indicated that they are still operating, but with changed hours
- Only 11 percent of respondents indicated that they are temporarily closed. No respondents indicated that they are permanently closed
- Several businesses indicated that they have moved much of their activity online
- Some businesses indicated that ‘business as normal’ has carried on and that they have stayed busy

CHALLENGES AND IMPACTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented businesses across the country with challenges – some of which are new, some of which are challenges that businesses have always faced, but amplified. Between the necessity of social distancing and an economic recession, businesses have not been able to operate as is ‘normal.’ A crucial part of this survey is to see how businesses in Ouray County have been affected by the pandemic, which not only helps residents and other business owners better understand the current business climate, but also informs policymakers in Ouray County on how they should assist businesses both now and in the future, ideally helping policymakers foster economic resiliency in Ouray County.

The survey asked businesses “What are your primary concerns with the continuity of your business?” Responses to this question are summarized in the bar graph on this page. Over half of businesses indicated that Health/COVID-19 is a primary concern. This reinforces the notion that good public health is essential to business success. Cash flow was also cited as a concern by 46 percent of respondents, highlighting the potential importance of loan or grant programs to small businesses.

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIMARY CONCERNS WITH THE CONTINUITY OF YOUR BUSINESS?

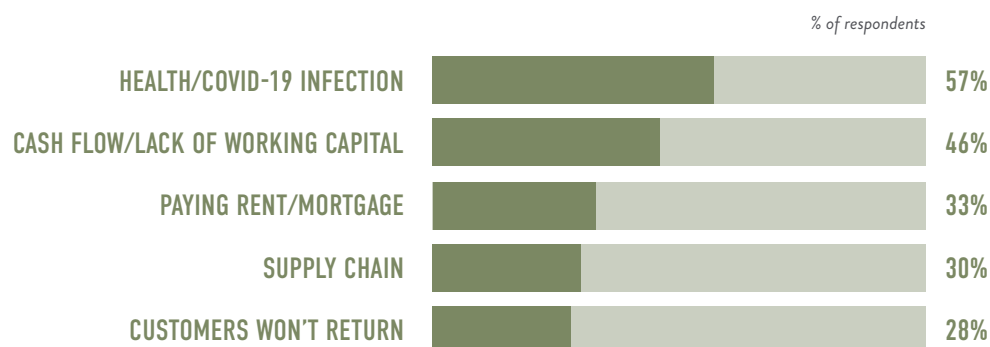




Image Source: Town of Ridgway

Throughout the survey, businesses provided input on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their operations in addition to what is described above. Based on these responses, the following themes emerged as the main challenges faced by business in Ouray County:

Employee Retention and Hiring

A common theme among respondents is that the pandemic has made staffing and employee retention especially challenging. While businesses in Ouray County have long had to deal with staffing issues, the pandemic has exacerbated them. The main reason behind this is that the pandemic has made for stressful work environments in which employees face significant health risks, which not only jeopardizes their physical health, but causes anxiety and a loss of morale. According to survey responses, this is especially true in the service sector, where restaurants and retail stores have continued to have in-person contact, putting employees at the frontline. Employee burnout was commonly cited as a barrier to employee retention, which stems not only from the stress of the pandemic, but also from the high volume of traffic that several Ouray businesses experienced over the summer. Several businesses struggled to find staff to meet this demand while ensuring employee and customer safety. Along

these lines, businesses have been dealing with this labor market reality that Ouray County has a thin applicant pool for available jobs, an issue that has only grown during the pandemic. Moving forward, staffing issues pose a challenge to businesses in Ouray County.

Challenges with Affordable Housing

Several businesses indicated that it is increasingly difficult for employees to find affordable housing in the area, causing employees in Ouray and Ridgway to move farther and farther out of the county. This poses a significant challenge to employee retention, as employees are discouraged from working at Ouray County businesses when they either have to spend a high portion of their income on housing, or have to commute from a long distance to work. It also makes employee retention difficult on the employer's end, as expensive housing means higher wages are required to retain employees and to keep them happy. While housing affordability is a longstanding problem in Ouray County, the pandemic has exacerbated the problem due to the 'Zoom Town' phenomenon in which remote working and other effects of the pandemic have enabled and encouraged an unprecedented number of people to move to rural areas, such as Ouray County, that have long



Image Source: Town of Ridgway

lacked the employment base to sustain a large base of mid- to high-income residents. As a result, housing prices continue to be pushed up, straining availability of affordable housing for employees in the region.

Building an Online Footprint

As the pandemic has created a business environment in which person-to-person contact is risky and limited, online commerce is increasingly crucial to business success. Several businesses expressed that they have transferred much of their business to or are working to expand their business to online platforms. In particular, one-third of respondents indicated that they need to invest in an online platform in order to adapt to the pandemic, most of which were Retail, Outdoor Recreation, or Food and Beverage businesses. On the other hand, one online-based manufacturing business in Ouray County has been performing very well during the pandemic as its model was well-suited to persist in the face of COVID-related restrictions and changes in behavior. A robust online presence will be essential to the success of many businesses in Ouray, both through the duration of the pandemic and post-pandemic.

Arts Organizations

One type of business that has been decimated by the pandemic in Ouray County are arts-based organizations. Due to the necessity of social distancing and the limited options for adaptation, arts events have practically come to a halt since March. To make matters worse, these businesses expressed that fundraising, which is a typical driver of arts organization success, has largely dried up. Until large events are safe again and resident confidence in public health recovers, this trend will continue. Arts organizations indicated that some form of support is imperative to their survival.

Positive Impacts

Several businesses indicated that they have done well during the pandemic and that they have not faced any major challenges. As Ouray County saw a marked uptick in visitation in 2020, some businesses were able to thrive despite the constraints of the pandemic.

Keep the WEST SLOPE STRONG

Take the Pledge: The Five Commitments of Containment



1
Wear a mask



2
Maintain 6 feet of physical distance



3
Minimize group size



4
Wash your hands frequently

5

Stay home when sick and get tested



It's up to us to keep Colorado healthy.

DO YOUR PART



Image Source: Town of Ridgway



Image Source: Town of Ridgway



Image Source: RidgwayColorado.com

Keep the WEST SLOPE STRONG

Shop Locally!

SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS

Invest in
our local
economy



It's up to us to keep Colorado healthy.

DO YOUR PART



Image Source: Markus van Meter



Image Source: Town of Ridgway



Image Source: City of Ouray

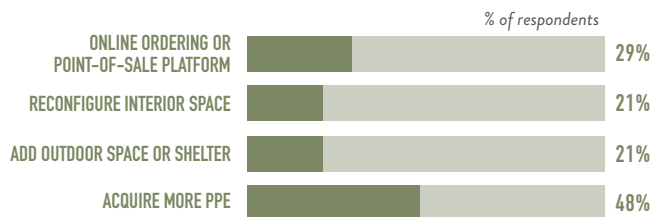
INVESTMENTS NEEDED

The businesses survey was interested in determining how businesses can adapt to the pandemic. When asked ‘Do you need to make any investments in your business to adapt to the pandemic?’, approximately 48 percent of respondents indicated that ‘Acquiring more Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)’ is an investment needed to adapt to the pandemic, while over a quarter indicated that they need to improve or invest in online ordering platforms.

These findings align with the sentiments related to the challenges that businesses have faced during the pandemic, especially those related to employee retention. Investments in PPE are seen both as a way to preserve the flow of business and to keep employees safe and healthy. Several businesses indicated that they have incurred significant expenses for PPE, air purifiers sanitizing, and mask enforcement, which is particularly taxing considering the revenue losses that many businesses have faced. In addition, several businesses expressed the need for rapid testing and vaccines. While these are obvious needs that are ultimately limited by nationwide availability, it shows the importance of communicating with businesses on when and how they can expect to access these things.

These findings also align with the common sentiment that many businesses need to build their online presence in order to stay strong moving forward.

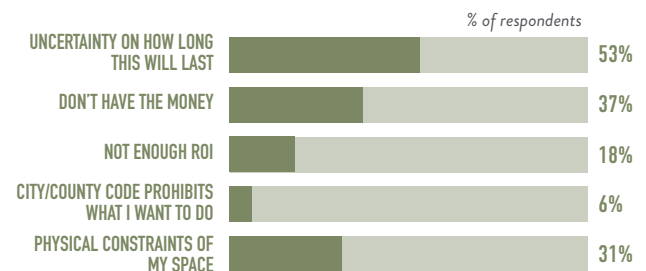
DO YOU NEED TO MAKE ANY INVESTMENTS IN YOUR BUSINESS TO ADAPT TO THE PANDEMIC?



INVESTMENTS BARRIERS TO MAKING NECESSARY INVESTMENTS

Also important to consider are the barriers that prevent businesses from making the investments discussed above. According to survey results, over half of respondents say that ‘uncertainty on how long this (pandemic) will last’ has prevented them from making these investments, while over one-third indicated that they do not have the money, 31 percent indicated that their space has physical constraint, and 18 percent indicated that the cost of the investments exceed the necessary return needed to justify the effort. In short, that the cost does not provide the needed Return on Investment (ROI).

IF YOU NEED TO MAKE INVESTMENTS IN YOUR BUSINESS TO ADAPT TO THE PANDEMIC, WHAT HAS PREVENTED YOU FROM MAKING THESE CHANGES?



6

ECONOMIC & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

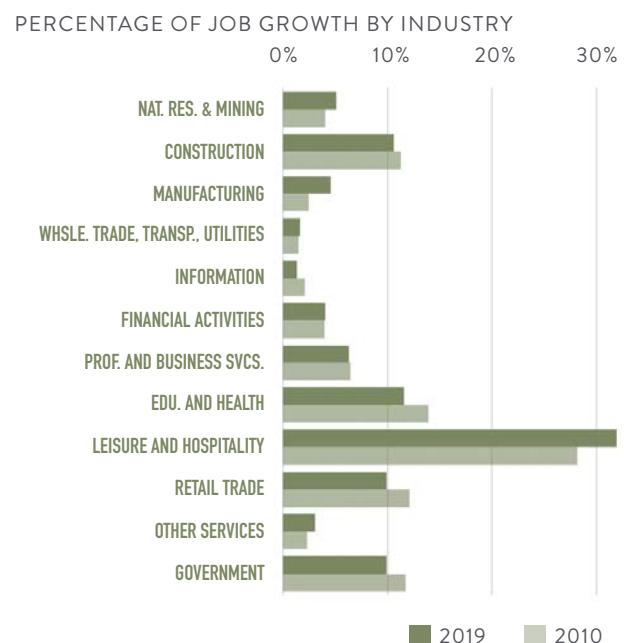
Over the past decade, the Ouray County economy has shown signs of vitality—job growth, population growth, and an expanding tax base. The past year has generated a mix of economic and fiscal conditions, with negative trends for unemployment claims and positive trends for fiscal revenues.

ECONOMY

Ouray County's economy has grown from 2010 through 2019, which was a period of strong economic growth in Colorado. Ouray County added approximately 525 jobs during this time period, a 21 percent increase and an annual growth rate of 2.1 percent.

The mix of jobs in Ouray County has remained relatively constant, however there are some changes that point to the potential to create more economic diversity. Natural resources and mining jobs grew by about 40 jobs to 5.1 percent of the total. Manufacturing industries, which includes brewing and distilling, more than doubled in size to nearly 100 jobs and 4.6 percent of the total. Professional and business services add 30 jobs; these types of jobs can be done remotely. At the same time, tourism jobs (leisure and hospitality) grew by nearly 200 jobs and is 32 percent of all jobs; with retail trade tourism and retail sectors comprise 42 percent of all jobs.

Nearly half of the jobs in Ouray County are held by self-employed people (proprietors), indicating the importance of entrepreneurship and small businesses.



ECONOMIC STORY IN OURAY COUNTY

JOB GROWTH



525
APPROX. NUMBER
OF JOBS ADDED

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

TOTAL JOBS



COUNTYWIDE SALES TAX



SINCE 2014
13.9%
SALES TAX GROWTH
PER YEAR

SALES TAX GROWTH RATE



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

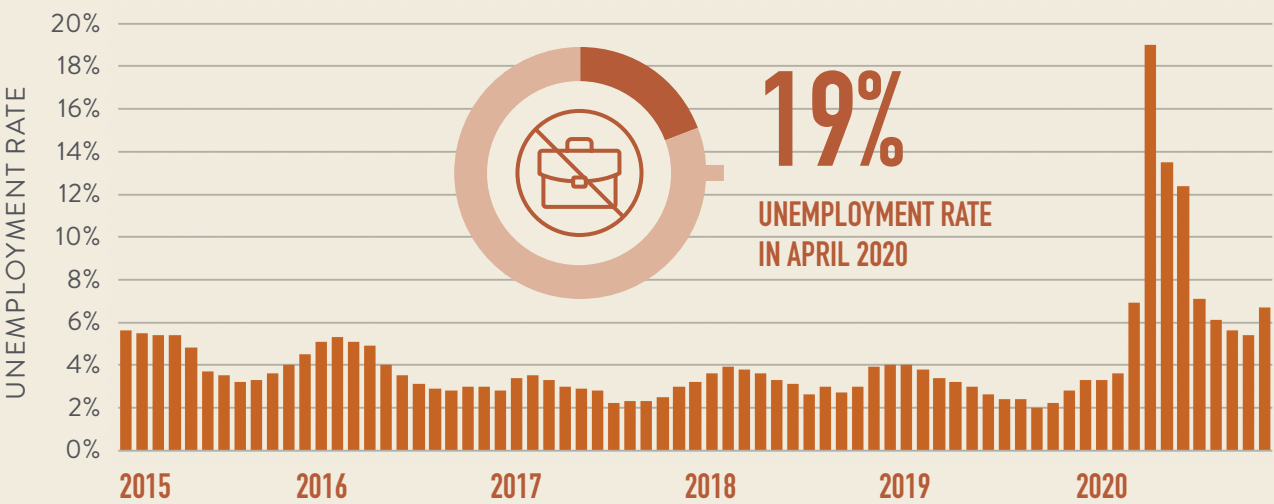




Image Source: Shutterstock

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

The unemployment rate in Ouray County was 6.7 percent in November 2020, the most recent available at this writing. Five percent is considered by many economists to be a stable or “natural” unemployment rate. Statewide unemployment is lower at 6.2 percent. Ouray and surrounding counties have similar levels of unemployment. San Miguel County however has been harder hit due to the shutdown of construction and the Telluride ski area in Spring 2020.

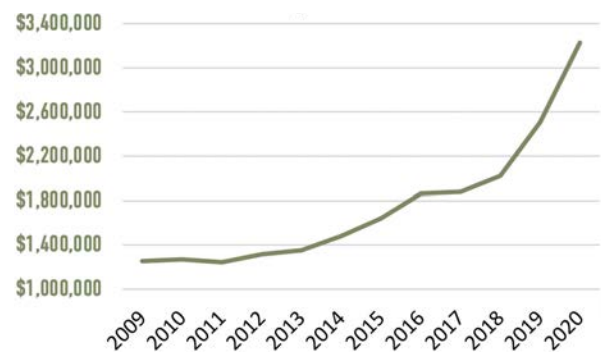
In 2020, unemployment rates were especially high in Ouray County. During a normal year, unemployment in Ouray County reaches a high of between 4 and 5 percent during the winter months due to seasonal changes in economic activity. In April of 2020, the unemployment rate reached 19 percent, considerably higher than the highest unemployment level reached during the Great Recession of 12 percent. The unemployment rate remained over 10 percent through June and has steadily fallen since then.

The number of unemployment insurance claims is an indicator of how many people are newly out of work on a weekly basis. This number was notably high in Ouray County in 2020. Ouray County recorded 690 claims in 2020, with new claims reaching a peak of 123 during the week of March 28th. This represents an average of 13 claims per week, which is significantly higher than the 2019 average of 3 claims per week.

The County collects a 2.55 percent sales tax countywide, making it an excellent indicator for economic activity for the entire County. Ouray County has experienced strong sales tax growth. Since 2014, sales tax has grown by 13.9 percent per year. From 2018 through 2019, it grew by 23.8 percent and by 28.9 percent from 2019 through 2020. Some of the recent increase is due to the collection of sales tax from online purchases. In 2020, much of the increase is also due to one of the busiest summer drive-to travel and outdoor recreation seasons on record, resulting from a change in vacation patterns during the pandemic.

Sales tax for Summer and Fall months in 2020 are up 15 to 30 percent over 2019. The data shown reflect the month the County receives the revenue, about six weeks after the actual sales occur (e.g., November sales tax is from mid-September sales).

COUNTYWIDE SALES TAX BY YEAR



UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, 2020, SELECT COUNTIES

MONTH	COLORADO	OURAY	MONTROSE	MESA	SAN MIGUEL
JANUARY	2.8%	3.3%	3.4%	4.1%	1.8%
FEBRUARY	2.9%	3.6%	3.6%	4.1%	1.7%
MARCH	5.4%	6.9%	7.5%	7.0%	3.5%
APRIL	12.2%	19.0%	12.3%	12.6%	22.9%
MAY	10.0%	13.5%	9.3%	9.1%	22.2%
JUNE	10.7%	12.4%	10.4%	10.1%	17.2%
JULY	7.4%	7.1%	6.5%	7.0%	9.4%
AUGUST	6.6%	6.1%	5.5%	6.2%	8.3%
SEPTEMBER	6.2%	5.6%	5.3%	5.7%	6.9%
OCTOBER	6.1%	5.4%	5.1%	5.7%	8.0%
NOVEMBER	6.2%	6.7%	5.5%	6.0%	11.2%
CHANGE	3.4%	3.4%	2.1%	1.9%	9.4%

Source: BLS; Economic & Planning Systems

COUNTYWIDE SALES TAX BY MONTH

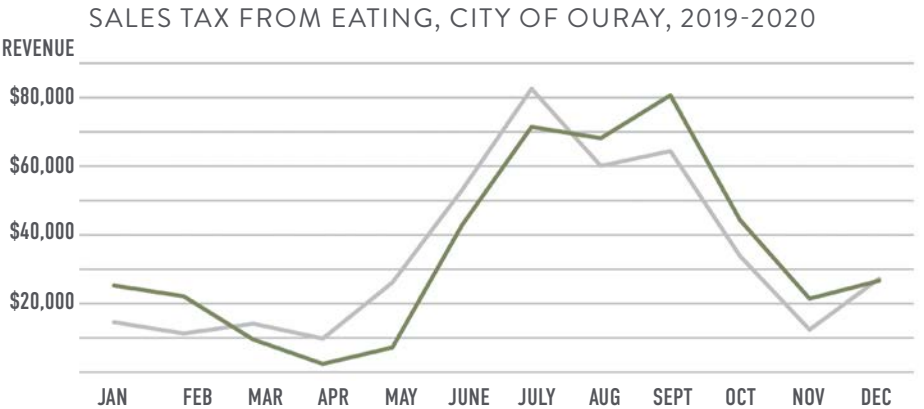
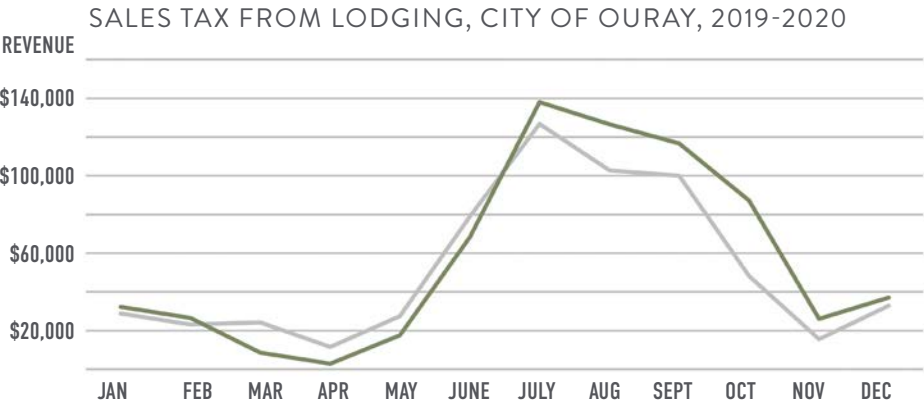
MONTH	2019	2020	% CHANGE
JANUARY	\$109,681	\$200,328	83%
FEBRUARY	\$155,481	\$233,448	50%
MARCH	\$146,011	\$194,803	33%
APRIL	\$129,376	\$169,125	31%
MAY	\$145,176	\$160,701	11%
JUNE	\$129,164	\$151,215	17%
JULY	\$162,633	\$186,826	15%
AUGUST	\$276,831	\$309,002	12%
SEPTEMBER	\$365,567	\$439,351	20%
OCTOBER	\$330,235	\$403,565	22%
NOVEMBER	\$327,608	\$439,610	34%
DECEMBER	\$227,588	\$339,617	49%
TOTAL THROUGH DECEMBER	\$2,505,350	\$3,227,590	29%

Source: Ouray County; Economic & Planning Systems

*The amounts above are countywide amounts, which include both the municipalities and county.

With a Supreme Court decision in 2018 determining that local governments can collect sales tax from online purchases, a common question has been around the composition of the growth in sales tax collections locally and the degree to which the growth is driven by e-commerce sales or by sales from local business. Because there is overlap in the timing of COVID-19 and the implementation of the new ruling, additional data has been included to provide clarity.

Sales tax collections from the City of Ouray offer insight into this issue. In 2020, sales tax collections for Lodging, Eating and Drinking, and Local Retail businesses all showed marked increases over collections in 2019, as shown in the figures below. This highlights the positive fiscal impact of a strong 2020 tourism season on main street businesses. While it is possible that remote sales have contributed to increased sales tax collections, available data indicates a relatively strong year for many Ouray County businesses, despite the conditions of the pandemic



— 2019
— 2020

Source: City of Ouray;
Economic & Planning Systems

HOUSING AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Ouray County's full-time population is growing, with just under 500 new residents since 2010. From 2010 through 2019, 320 new homes were built and there was an increase of 297 new households indicating that most new housing is being occupied by full time residents. The percentage of second homes has declined by 2.6 percent according to the latest estimates from the State Demography office.

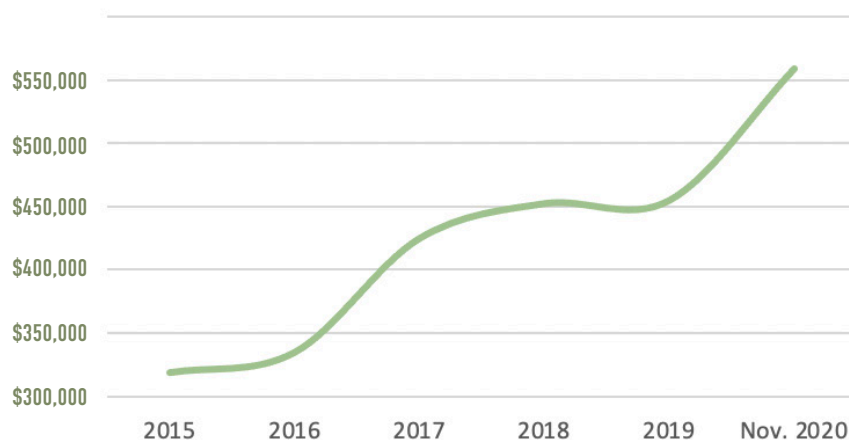
The mountain real estate market has appreciated significantly in 2020 driven by a desire to work remotely, and to have open spaces and recreation opportunities more distant from large cities. This "Zoom Town" trend has been driving up prices, accelerating trends that were already happening in Colorado. As of November 2020, the median single family home price in Ouray County was \$559,000. This is up from \$319,000 in 2015, which is 12.1 percent annual appreciation. These trends suggest an increase in people moving to Ouray County, and/or an increase in second home purchases which will continue to put pressure on the housing availability for local residents.

VACANCY RATES

DESCRIPTION	2010	2019	CHANGE
POPULATION	4,446	4,934	488
HOUSEHOLDS (OCCUPIED HOMES)	2,026	2,323	297
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	3,088	3,408	320
VACANT HOUSING UNITS (SECOND HOMES)	1,062	1,085	23
VACANCY RATE	34.3%	31.8%	-2.6%

Source: DOLA

MEDIAN SALES PRICE



Source: Colorado Association of Realtors

7

MOBILITY ANALYSIS

Ouray County saw an exceptionally high volume of visitors in 2020. While this brought economic benefits, it raised awareness regarding the need to balance these benefits with the preservation of natural and infrastructural assets going forward.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected how people move and travel. Capacity restrictions, risks of large gatherings, and the necessity of social distancing have shifted people away from traditional gathering places like restaurants, movie theaters, concert halls, stadiums, and stores. Travel patterns have also changed, with more people opting for road trips and outdoor recreation than flying and international travel. These trends have manifested themselves in Ouray County. During the summer and fall of 2020, Ouray County saw an influx of visitors beyond what it normally experiences despite the risks of the pandemic. This chapter examines data on mobility trends in Ouray County, relying on data from the state on device activity and on traffic data on Ouray County roads.

TRAVEL PATTERN CHANGES



**MORE ROAD
TRIPS**



**MORE OUTDOOR
RECREATION**

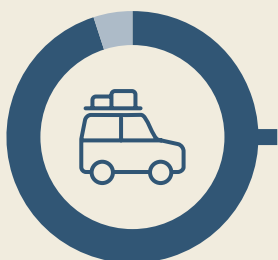
VISITOR ACTIVITY

The summer of 2020 was marked by a widespread desire for road trips and a desire to access areas with an abundance of open space, enabling people to avoid the risks of flying and crowds. Ouray, as a hub of outdoor recreation and natural beauty, was a common destination for road trippers. This is evident in the amount of out of county visitor activity that the county experienced through the summer season. As shown on the graph on the next page, the volume of activity from people outside of Ouray County rose significantly in May and June, peaking in July at a level seven to eight times higher than March and April levels.

Out-of-county activity decreased in August, but remained high until late October, when it stabilized to similar levels as in March and April. A high share of traffic in Ouray County is usually from outside of the county. In 2020, 83 percent of all activity was from outside of the county, compared to 79 percent in 2019. At the peak of the tourism season in July, 95 percent of all traffic was from outside of Ouray County. While Ouray has historically been a destination for visitors, it is notable that, even during a pandemic that created an imperative for people to stay at home, summer visitation remained strong.

VISITOR & TRAFFIC ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY FROM OUTSIDE OURAY COUNTY



IN JULY 2020,

95%

of all traffic was from outside of Ouray County.

VISITOR ACTIVITY AS PERCENT OF TOTAL ACTIVITY

2019

79%

2020

83%

ACTIVITY FROM OUTSIDE OF OURAY COUNTY, MARCH-DECEMBER 2020

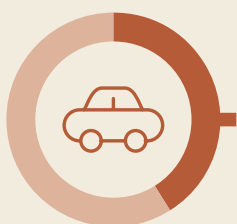
**7-8
TIMES**

the volume of activity from people outside of Ouray County in July compared to March and April levels



Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE)

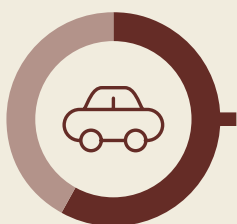
TRAFFIC ON OURAY COUNTY ROADS



IN 2020

41%

increase in daily traffic on County Road 361



IN 2020

58%

increase in daily traffic on CR-7

DAILY TRAFFIC ON COUNTY ROAD 361

2019

486

2020

688

DAILY TRAFFIC ON CR-7

2019

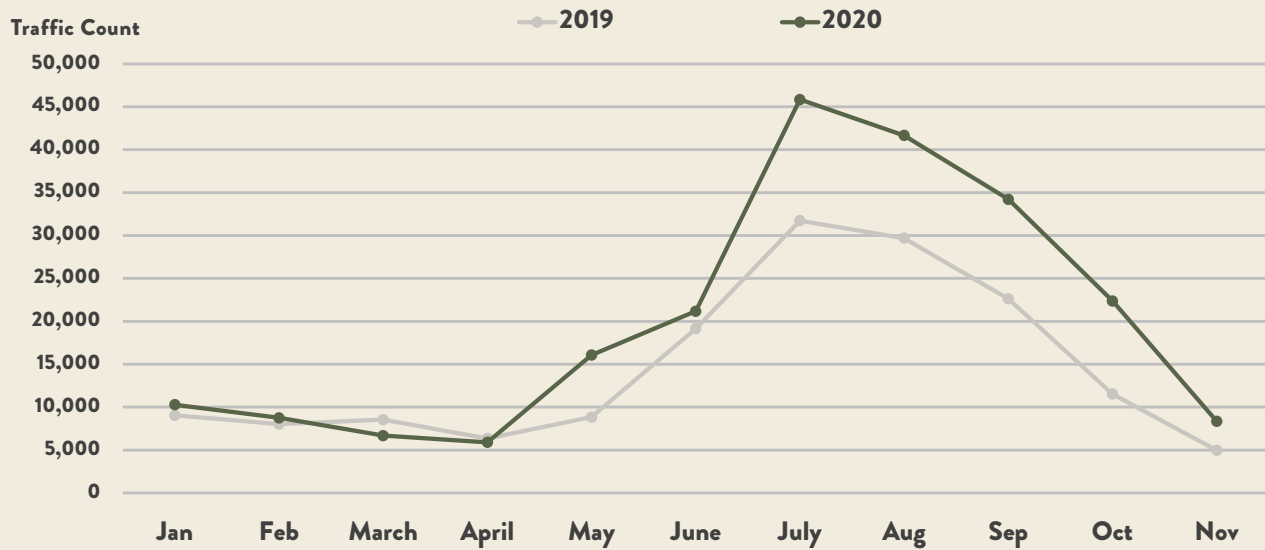
279

2020

441

TRAFFIC COUNTS

TRAFFIC COUNT BY MONTH, COUNTY ROAD 361 AT ICE PARK BRIDGE, 2019 VS. 2020



TRAFFIC COUNT BY MONTH, COUNTY ROAD 7, 2019 VS. 2020

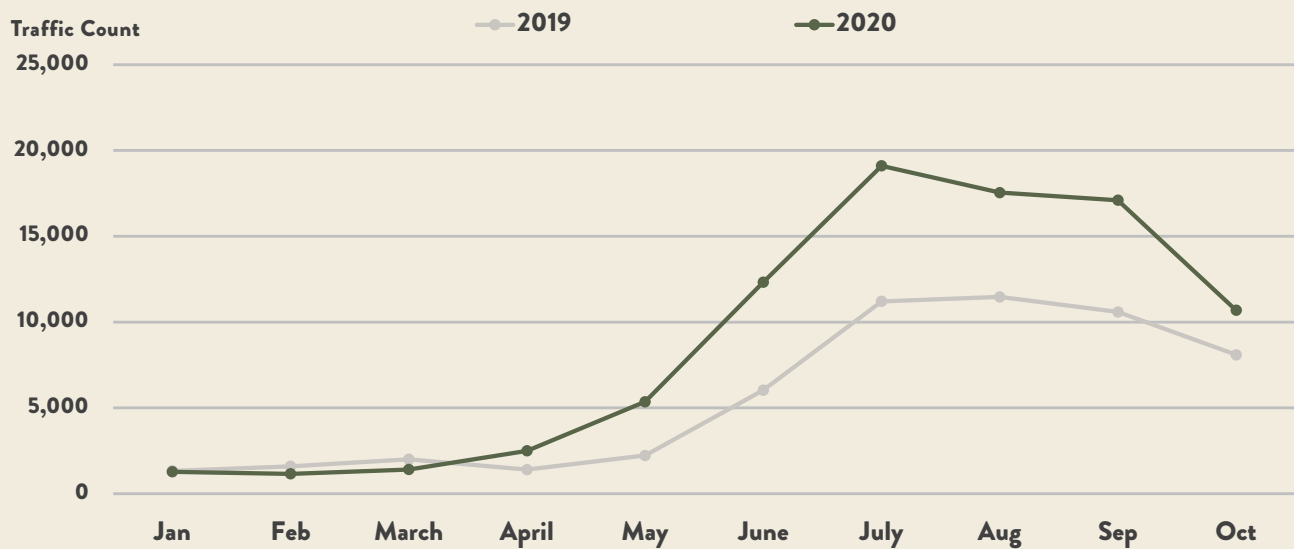




Image Source: RidgwayColorado.com

TRAFFIC ON OURAY COUNTY ROADS

Ouray County officials expressed that the summer of 2020 attracted a remarkably high volume of tourism and traffic compared to previous years, for many of the reasons previously described. This point not only emerged through stories and observations, but also through an examination of traffic data on several Ouray County roads.

County Road 361, which runs from U.S. Highway 550 on the south side of Ouray to Camp Bird, is commonly used for recreational purposes, as it offers beautiful scenery and National Forest access. In 2020, County Road 361 at the Ice Park Bridge saw an especially high volume of traffic, recording an average of 688 vehicles a day compared to 486 vehicles per day in 2019, representing a 41 percent increase. The difference in traffic volume was most pronounced in between June and September, the height of tourism season, when this section of the road recorded 143,000 vehicles compared to 103,000 vehicles in 2019. The difference between the years is shown in the top graph on the previous page.

County Road 7, which runs from State Highway 62 to the Blue Lakes Trailhead in the western part of Ouray County, is also a commonly used road for recreational purposes, as it leads to National Forest access. In 2020, County Road 7 recorded 441 vehicles per day, compared to 279 vehicles

per day in 2019, representing a 58 percent increase. The summer season brought a notably high volume of traffic; between June and September, County Road 7 recorded 66,000 vehicles, compared to 39,000 vehicles in 2019, as shown in the bottom graph on the previous page.

The traffic counts on these Ouray County roads illustrate a few important points. They demonstrate the surge in visitation and tourism that Ouray County experienced in the summer and fall of 2020, owing largely to the desire for road trips and outdoor recreation during a pandemic year. While Ouray County typically has a high volume of visitors seeking outdoor recreation in the summertime, 2020 brought exceptionally high volumes. This represents an economic bright spot during the pandemic in Ouray County – despite broader economic hardships, Ouray County’s economy benefited from strong tourism.

At the same time, increasing volumes of traffic and outdoor recreation have implications for Ouray County’s ability to manage its roads and natural resources. Higher traffic volumes on county roads mean that the county incurs greater expenses for maintenance and upkeep, which can negatively affect county finances. In addition, greater usage of natural assets, such as hiking areas, expand the need for active management and protection. To foster long-term economic health, it is important that Ouray County considers the impacts of tourism and recreation.

8

RESOURCE MANUAL

There is a broad range of resources available to residents and businesses in Ouray County. This chapter informs and equips residents and businesses to address current issues as well as to prepare for future challenges.

RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM

What is it?

The paycheck protection program (PPP) is a low-interest loan program to support small businesses. Loan payments are automatically deferred for six months, but businesses can apply to have the loan forgiven if it is used for eligible payroll costs, rent, mortgage payments, or utility payments. In order to receive full forgiveness, a business must spend 60% of the loan proceeds on payroll expenses.

The second round of PPP loans offers loans of up to \$2 million. The exact amount of the loan depends on the size of the business; it is equal to 250 percent of a business's average monthly payroll cost between February 15th, 2019 and June 30th, 2019. If a business was not operating during that period, it is equal to 250 percent of a business's average

monthly payroll cost between January 1st, 2020 and February 29th, 2020. For businesses in the hospitality and food service industries (e.g. restaurants, hotels), this amount increases to up to 350 percent.

Businesses can apply to have the loan forgiven under the following conditions:

- All employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks
- At least 60% of funds are spent on payroll over a covered period between 8 and 24 weeks
- Funding is used for expenses related to payroll, rent, mortgage, or utilities.
- Eligible expenses have been expanded to include certain operations expenditures, property damage costs, certain supplier costs, and expenses related to worker protection (ex. sanitizing, ventilation, PPE)
- Loan forgiveness process has been simplified to a one-page self-certification

How can it be used and benefit my business?

This program provides an infusion of cash to keep businesses afloat and to keep employees on payrolls. Since loan forgiveness is tied to keeping employees on the payroll for at least eight weeks, the program targets assisting existing employees.

Who is eligible?

- Any small business with fewer than 300 employees can apply.
- Business demonstrates that it had gross receipts in Q1, Q2, Q3, or Q4 of 2020 that were at least 25% below gross receipts in the same quarter in 2019; because of this requirement, it is imperative that businesses organize their financial records
- Businesses that have previously received a PPP loan, and have used the full amount of the first loan for eligible purposes

Application Process/Distribution

To access the second draw of PPP loans, businesses must fill out an application form and apply through a participating lender. The Small Business Administration (SBA) has network of SBA-approved lenders that participate in the program. Once matched with a lender, a business works with the lender to complete the application.

Because of the importance of having a strong relationship with an eligible lender, it is beneficial for businesses to reach out to and establish a relationship with small, community banks. These banks provide guidance on what is needed for a successful application, simplifying the process and increasing the likelihood of receiving PPP aid.

How effective has the program been?

The PPP, due to its scale, has been heavily subscribed among small businesses. According to survey results, 30 businesses out of 62 total respondents applied to the PPP in Ouray County. Out of these applicants, approximately 75 percent had their full loan request granted. Approximately one-third of loans were between \$10,000 and \$24,999, one-quarter were between \$100,000 and \$499,999, 20 percent were between \$50,000 and \$99,999, and 17 percent were for less than \$10,000.

RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES



PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM



EIDL PROGRAM



REGION 10 LOAN PROGRAM



ENERGIZE COLORADO GAP FUND

In general, businesses in Ouray County regarded the PPP program as effective. Approximately 63 percent of recipients who responded gave the program a score of 5 out of 5, indicating that the program was very effective, while 13 percent gave it a score of 3 out of 5, and 13 percent gave it a score of 1 out of 5.

ON A SCALE OF 1-5, HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE PROGRAM YOU APPLIED TO? 1 BEING NOT EFFECTIVE AND 5 BEING VERY EFFECTIVE





Image Source: Markus Van Meter

ECONOMIC INJURY DISASTER LOAN PROGRAM (EIDL)

What is it?

The EIDL program is an emergency loan program for small businesses impacted by the pandemic. Loans are up to \$150,000 and are long-term loans with a 3.75% interest rate and a maturity of up to 30 years.

The amount of the loan is based on the amount of economic injury that a business has incurred and by a business's financial needs. This is determined on a case-by-case basis by the Small Business Administration (SBA).

How can it be used and benefit my business?

Funds are intended to be used to fund working capital, including fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable, and other bills that have not been paid had the pandemic not occurred. The loan cannot be used to fund long-term debts or business expansion.

Who is eligible?

Businesses with less than 500 employees that have faced substantial economic injury are eligible. 'Substantial economic injury' means that a business has been unable to meet its obligations and pay its ordinary operating expenses. It also requires that businesses prove that they have been unable to access credit elsewhere.

Businesses can apply for both the PPP and the EIDL programs. However, funds cannot be used for the same purpose. Businesses are expected to document their uses of the funds.

Application Process/Distribution

Businesses must fill out an EIDL application, which is available through the SBA website. After an application is submitted, the SBA will send an inspector to determine the amount of economic damage the business has incurred. The applicant must provide a transcript of their tax return, as well as credit history, a balance sheet, and show an ability to repay the loan. The applicant is also supposed to provide collateral for loans over \$25,000; the SBA won't decline a loan for lack of collateral, but will require the borrower to pledge whatever is available. Real estate qualifies as collateral.

REGION 10 LOAN PROGRAM

What is it?

This program provides loans of up to \$10,000 at 4% interest to businesses that have experienced distress. The loans have flexible terms and offer a 90-day initial deferral period.

How can it be used and benefit my business?

The loan can be used to fund working capital or gap financing. It helps businesses stay operational through the period of economic distress caused by the pandemic.

Who is eligible?

Sole proprietorships, [partnerships, corporations, LLCs, and nonprofits are all eligible for the program. The program requires that business are experiencing some amount of distress and evaluates eligibility on a case-by-case basis. It asks questions such as:

- Do you have the cash flow to operate your business for a month with limited or no sales?
- Do you have a line of credit with your bank?
- Can you operate your business remotely? Are you a sole proprietor or do you have someone who can take over key management roles?
-

Application Process/Distribution

Business apply directly to the Region 10 League for Economic Assistance and Planning, which is an organization that supports businesses in six counties in southwestern Colorado. Interested businesses are to contact Dan Scinto at 970-765-3126.

ENERGIZE COLORADO GAP FUND

What is it?

The GAP fund is a program that utilizes public and private resources to provide loans and grants to small businesses in Colorado. This program provides grants of up to \$15,000 and loans of up to \$25,000.

How can it be used and benefit my business?

The program does not specify eligible uses. Ideally, it will help small businesses stay open and recover from the economic damage caused by COVID-19.

Who is eligible?

Sole proprietors, LLCs, partnerships, and other registered small businesses in Colorado are eligible. Nonprofits are also eligible. Applicants must meet the following additional criteria:

- Business has fewer than 25 employees
- Business is able to demonstrate the economic hardship it has faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic

The program gives priority to applicants with the following characteristics:

- Women, BIPOC, or veteran-owned
- In a rural area with a population of under 50,000
- In the tourism sector
- Limited access to capital and state/local grants/loans

Application Process/Distribution

The application is completed online through the Energize Colorado GAP Fund website. To demonstrate COVID-related hardship, it asks applicants to provide documentation, which can include bank records, profit and loss statements, point of sale receipts, tax filings, and expense receipts.

Energize Colorado offers mentoring to assist in filling out the application, including translation.



Image Source: RidgwayColorado.com

RESOURCES FOR RESIDENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has put great pressure on the ability of individuals and households to pay bills, access health care, care for children, and simply engage in necessary day-to-day activities, among other things. It is critical that Ouray County residents are able to access the necessary resources to address these challenges. The following information gives residents a clear idea of where and how to access the resources they need. It seeks to answer the question: Where do I go for help?

2-1-1 SERVICES

2-1-1 is a confidential and multilingual service connecting people to vital resources across Colorado. 2-1-1 streamlines services and provides one central location where people can get connected to the resources they need. With a database that is updated daily, 2-1-1 Colorado connects people to critical resources simply by dialing a three-digit number.

2-1-1 Colorado helps connect people with the following services:

- Housing & Shelter/Rent Payment Assistance
- Utility Assistance

- Food Assistance
- Legal Assistance
- Health Services/Healthcare
- Employment
- Childcare and Education
- Mental Health & Addiction
- Pregnant and New Parents
- Basic Needs & Financial Assistance
- Youth with Special Needs
- Aging and Disability
- Immigrants & Refugees

In Colorado, over a quarter of all 2-1-1 calls during the pandemic have been related to rent payment assistance, while 17 percent have been related to utility assistance, highlighting the prevalence of these issues during the pandemic. In Ouray County, approximately one-third of 2-1-1 calls between April and October were housing-related, a quarter were healthcare-related, and a quarter were information services-related.

Within Ouray County, residents have access to several resources related to financial assistance, health care, food assistance, social services, childcare, and utility assistance.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Good Neighbor Fund

The Telluride Foundation has operated the “Good Neighbor Fund (GNF)” for 15 years. GNF is a one-time emergency hardship funding program available for the workforce in San Miguel, Ouray, and west Montrose counties to cover emergency financial needs due to illness, health care costs, lack of work or having to care for children of family. The maximum grant per application is \$1,500 and applicants may apply every 3 years.

In order to be eligible for consideration, applicants must: currently live/work in Rico, San Miguel County, West Montrose County, or Ouray County and have done so for the past 1 year; have not (nor their spouse/partner) received a Good Neighbor Fund grant award in the past 3 years; demonstrate that they have exhausted all other resources; and show that they can maintain financial stability outside this non-recurring and unexpected crisis to remain living and working in the defined region.

It is important to review the following criteria before completing an application. Applicants must be able to provide proof of:

1. Residency in Rico, San Miguel County, West Montrose County, and/or Ouray County (e.g. copy of lease agreement)
2. Employment (current or former) in Rico, San Miguel County, West Montrose County, and/or Ouray County (e.g. copy of pay stub)
3. Statements demonstrating current financial need (e.g. copies of bills, balances forwarded)
4. All regular monthly financial commitments (e.g. electric bill, mortgage/rent due, car insurance, medical bill, phone, health insurance)

Good Neighbor Fund: ngnf@tchnetwork.org, 970-708-7096, <https://telluridefoundation.org/ouray-county-response-fund/>

RESOURCES FOR RESIDENTS



**2-1-1
SERVICES**



**FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE**



**HEALTH CARE/
MENTAL HEALTH**



**SOCIAL SERVICES/
ASSISTANCE**



**FOOD
ASSISTANCE**



**UTILITY
ASSISTANCE**



**CHILDCARE/
YOUTH**



SENIORS

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
AND RESOURCES PLEASE VISIT:

WWW.OURAYCOUNTYRESOURCES.COM

Ouray County Response Fund

Through the generosity of the residents of Ouray County, the Telluride Foundation has created the Ouray County Response Fund which has been set up specifically to support individuals residing in Ouray County. Residents of Ouray County may apply for financial support through this fund by completing a Good Neighbor Fund Application. Prior to filling out the application, residents are encouraged to read the Good Neighbor Fund Qualifications and Criteria. Residents of Ouray County are eligible for an award up to \$500 above the standard Good Neighbor Fund limit. Visit the Foundation's COVID-19 Community Resource page to learn about other resources available to residents of Ouray County.

Ouray County Response Fund gfn@tchnetwork.org, 970-708-7096, <https://telluridefoundation.org/ouray-county-response-fund/>

Church of The San Juans

In addition to being mindful to continue our congregation support, we are aware of the financial impact our community's preventative measures might have on hourly

workers and others that depend on weekly paychecks to make ends meet. If you are aware of anyone who is struggling because of the impact of social distancing, please have them contact Pastor Pam. Our discretionary fund is available to provide emergency support to people in need. If you have any questions during our period of suspension, please call Chuck Anderson at 970-626-2270.

HEALTH CARE/MENTAL HEALTH

Mountain Medical Center

Mountain Medical Center has been serving the medical needs of local residents and seasonal visitors alike since January 2000. We are a full service family practice medical center. Please call ahead (970) 626-5123. Also, if you are an established patient at MMC, we also have an integrated behavioral health therapist on site (Nathan Wagner, PsyD) and he offers TeleHealth services as well.

Center for Mental Health

Crisis: 970-252-6220

Appointment: 970-252-3200

The Center is still open for business. Ridgway and Montrose offices still have someone at the front desk. Offering video and telehealth options. Expanding crisis support (Crisis Walk-In center is open). Currently taking new clients. Center therapists are continually working with youth clients in the schools.

SOCIAL SERVICES/ASSISTANCE

Woman's Club of Ouray County

970-787-0510

If you are a resident of Ouray County, we have volunteers that are willing to help you if you are home sick, elderly or have a medical issue and you cannot go out into the community at this time! If you need groceries or a prescription delivered (these items must be purchased at a Ouray County business (Duckett's, Mountain Market or Stacie's Apothecary Shoppe in Ridgway. Volunteers will not be going to Montrose).



Image Source: Town of Ridgway

Hilltop Latimer House

1 (844) 990-5500

If you, or someone you know, is in an abusive relationship or has been sexually assaulted, call our 24-hour crisis line now.

Praise Him Ministries

970-626-5243

Providing four rolls of toilet paper free to any family or community member in need. Call or email and let them know that you're coming. Pick up at the site or contact them if you need delivery.

Bright Futures

Mary: 970-729-1578

Liza Cooney: (207) 632-8169

Bright Futures is offering phone assistance to navigate these resources and assist in any way they can.

Mutual Aid Forum

<https://www.pandemicoflove.com/>

Where citizens will be connected with patrons who are able to give to those who have immediate needs and are requesting help

Hispanic Affairs Project

Ricardo Peréz: 970.249.4115, www.hapgj.org

Visit us at: 1010 S. Cascade Ave Suite A1
Montrose, CO 81401

Ouray County Public Health

970-626-5484 - Ouray County COVID-19 Hotline

FOOD ASSISTANCE

Ouray County Food Pantry:

970-626-4273 or 970-626-5872

Open every Thursday from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Food donations can be dropped off during those hours. Anyone wanting to donate money can do so on our website or send a check to PO Box 903, Ridgway



Image Source: Town of Ridgway

Ouray Student Lunches

Starting Monday, April 20, student lunches will be provided at the Ouray School, Monday to Friday, 11 am to 12 pm.

To order, please call 970-318-6993.

Ridgway Schools

stephlyons@ridgway.k12.co.us

jdonovan@ridgway.k12.co.us

The school is working to provide lunches for Ridgway students.

Taco Del Gnar

970-626-9715

Open Tuesday-Saturday
12:00-7:00 pm.

Free bean & cheese burrito with carrots to kids, and 15% service industry discount to works in food & bev, police, fire, military, teacher, and medical facility staff.

Virtual Canned Food Drive

<https://wc-cf.org/donate-covid-relief/>

There is an option to select Ouray County so contributed funds will go directly to the Ouray County Food Pantry. Donations may be made either online or check mailed in.



UTILITY ASSISTANCE

LEAP

LEAP is a federally funded program that helps eligible hard-working Colorado families, seniors and individuals pay a portion of their winter home heating costs. Our goal is to help bring warmth, comfort and safety to your home and family by assisting with heating costs. Call HEAT HELP at 1-866-432-8435 for more information.

San Miguel Power Association

This program encourages any member experiencing financial hardship due to the coronavirus outbreak to call us during regular business hours. We will work with you individually to create a plan that works for you. In general, SMPA will not shut off power to people in this circumstance, however, the power still has a cost associated with it and it must be covered. Please call if you need help.

Black Hills Energy Assistance Program

Black Hills Cares helps eligible customers in need pay their Black Hills Energy bills or emergency energy-related expenses.

CHILDCARE/YOUTH

Voyager Youth Program

970-318-1218

We have a list of babysitters who are available to provide childcare for free or for very little cost.

Weehawken Dance Y

970-318-0150

Weehawken is offering free online dance classes to youth.

Pinyon Song

admin@pinyonsong.org

Pinyon Song is a non-profit licensed preschool that is willing to provide childcare to essential workers

Ouray Public Library

970-325-4616

OurayPL@gmail.com

The library currently is closed to the public. Patrons may request resources for home delivery. Residents who need to apply for federal or state benefits, but who lack home internet access or a computer, may make an appointment at the library. Library cards can be issued over the phone so that people can access all of the free digital resources (ebooks, digital audio, and databases)

SENIORS

Neighbor to Neighbor

<http://ourayneighbor.com/>

The County is home to a fiercely independent population of Senior, homebound and disabled individuals who want very much to stay in their homes, but cannot do so without help. Neighbor to Neighbor is an effort of neighbors helping neighbors by being fresh eyes and ears, providing companionship, transportation, a hot meal, monthly social events, handyman services, bookkeeping help and access to other resources that may be beyond their reach. Each Thursday we provide transportation to and from medical appointments and shopping in Montrose. It also has volunteers who are happy to pick up ordered food or prescriptions

9

BUSINESS STRATEGIES & TACTICS

Within the broader focus of this report, examples of tactical solutions can elevate economic conditions and help various sectors adapt to the impacts of the pandemic.

CREATIVE DISTRICT

The Town of Ridgway is certified by the State of Colorado as a Colorado Creative District. Growing creative industries is an important part of an economic diversity strategy to grow jobs in non-tourism (retail, food & beverage, and lodging) industries. The Creative District program is overseen by Colorado Creative Industries within the State's Office of Economic Development and International Trade. This is a competitive program in which communities can apply to be certified and recognized by the State as a community that contributes to the State economy through creativity, culture, and the arts. The formal benefits of the program are summarized below:

- A \$10,000 technical and professional assistance cash grant (with a local match);
- Two signs on state highways near the district; and
- Access to economic data on the impact of Creative Districts from the State and the Western States Arts Federation.

To be eligible for this competitive designation, a community needs to demonstrate that it has distinguishing physical,

artistic, and cultural resources and be a concentrated area of artistic and cultural activity. Other requirements include:

- A paid staff person (can be shared as a percentage of time with other functions)
- An advisory or governing board
- A strategic plan
- A minimum of \$10,000 in operating funds.

In addition, certification is another tool for organizing and building momentum around creativity and the arts in the local economy. The program provides another reason to focus energy in an organized way to grow an economic cluster around creativity culture.

Ridgway was awarded Creative District status in 2013. It was the outcome of a process that began during the State-led Bottom Up Economic Development Plan. Goal 3 of that plan was to participate in statewide efforts to grow creative industries, and the County and municipalities formed a Goal 3 Committee that recommended to Ridgway Town Council support and help lead this certification. The program is staffed by one staff person who splits time between the creative district and the Main Street Program.



Image Source: Markus Van Meter



Image Source: Town of Ridgway



Image Source: City of Ouray.com



Image Source: RidgwayCreativeDistrict.com



Image Source: RidgwayCreativeDistrict.com

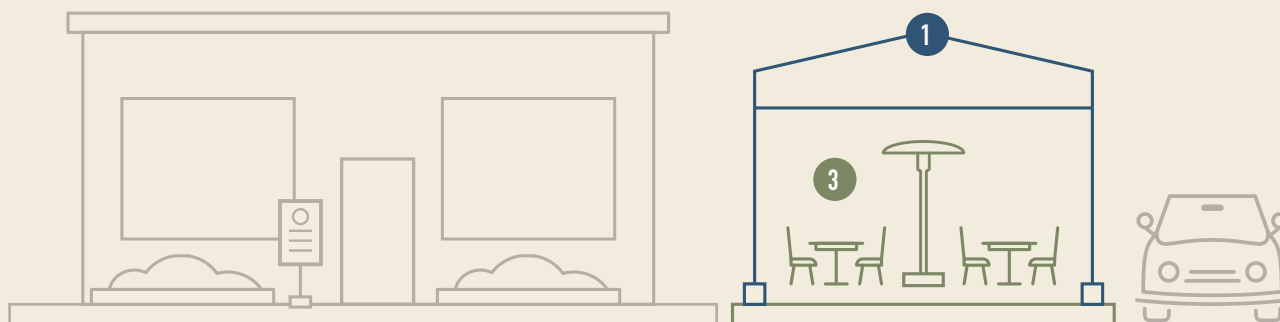


Image Source: RidgwayColorado.com



Image Source: Markus Van Meter

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS & TACTICS

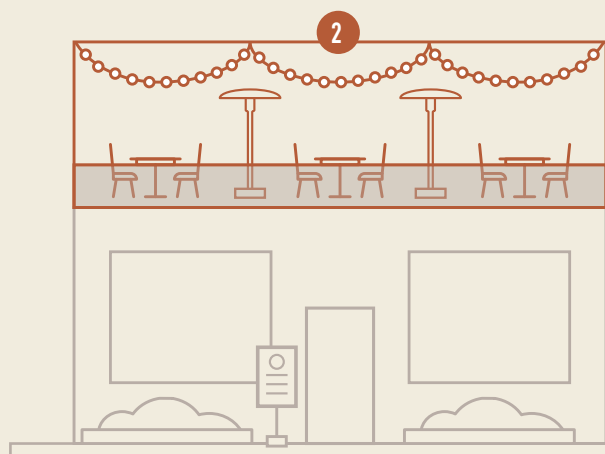


1 TEMPORARY SHELTERS

Temporary shelters such as tents can be used to expand space for customers for dining, merchandise display, fitting areas, or waiting areas. Local fire and electrical code needs to be followed for safety, and in particular tents should meet the NFPA 701 standard for flame propagation. Electrical heat and light may be allowed; gas heaters however cannot be placed inside the structure. Temporary shelters could also be used to offer an exclusive private guest experience at a higher price.

2 PERMANENT IMPROVEMENTS

The pandemic has motivated some business owners to make permanent investments they have been considering prior. Adding a roof and space heaters to patios or constructing covered outdoor decks are examples.

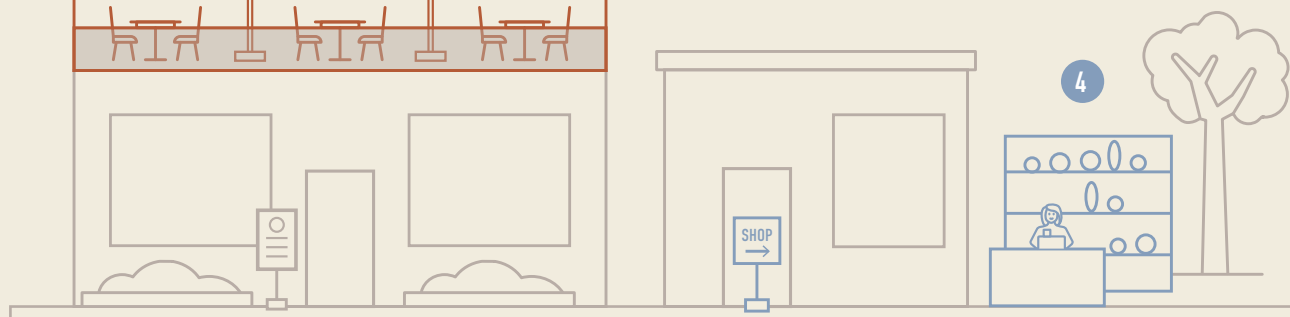


3 PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Allowing targeted use of sidewalks, alleys, and selected street closures or lane closures creates more possibilities for dining and merchandise display. This tactic can also create a livelier street environment that can draw more customers and pass-by-traffic attracted to the increased level of visible activity. Warm weather of course expands the possibilities and appeal for outdoor space, but this can also be a long-term tactic used to enhance the business and social environment for locals and guests.

4 REPURPOSING SPACE

Business and property owners can work together to put vacant space into productive use, as it would be unlikely to be leased/sold during these uncertain economic times. Using adjacent spaces can again create more space for dining, merchandise display, or activities like outdoor equipment rentals and fitting. Hotel conference space can also be easily converted to dining space.



BUSINESS TACTICS

The occupancy restrictions needed to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect life and health can have a negative impact on businesses. With fewer customers allowed and even closures, business revenues are vulnerable. There are however measures that entrepreneurial business owners can take to reduce the impacts of COVID-19 on revenues, protect their employees and customers, and even open the door for innovation that can be used going forward in more normal times.

There are three main types of tactics outlined in this Chapter: physical, operational, and organizational. Individual business owners and managers will be able to gauge their applicability to their own circumstances and needs. Local governments should be flexible on working with business and property owners to address any code or permitting changes that may be needed to allow use of public right of way or temporary shelters, for example.

PHYSICAL

By expanding the area available for customers, businesses may be able to comply with occupancy restrictions (e.g. 50 percent occupancy) and social distancing requirements while remaining open. Several examples that are in use throughout Colorado are given on the page to the left. Some of these are temporary investments; others can be permanent.

In considering these options, the definitions of indoor and outdoor space need to be clear. If indoor dining is prohibited for example, then not all of these tactics could be employed.

An indoor space is:

- Four walls with a ceiling
- Three walls closed and one open
- Two adjacent walls closed and two adjacent sides open

An outdoor space has:

- Two non-adjacent sides open with a roof
- Two adjacent walls closed and two adjacent sides open without a roof
- Ceilings, roofs, umbrellas, or canopies with no walls



Parklets use the public right-of-way to expand functional space for a business. Image source: ColoradoParklets.com



Winterized outdoor restaurant seating can take a variety of forms. Image Source: Denver Post



Sidewalk sales and curbside pickup have become more prominent during the pandemic. Image Source: BoulderDowntown.com



OPERATIONS AND ORGANIZATION

The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting the need for retail and food and beverage establishments to respond and adapt to the growth in online sales, ordering, and delivery platforms. For local businesses, this means having a strategy for touchless or low-touch ordering and delivery or pickup. In addition, there are broader tactics that can be taken on by business organizations and the larger community. The main tactics in this area are outlined below.



ONLINE POINT OF SALE

Having an intuitive online ordering platform is important during the pandemic. More broadly, it is also highly important when marketing to guests from more urban areas accustomed to the latest technology and convenience. In competing against online retail, it is essential.



CURBSIDE PICKUP

Businesses with convenient curbside pickup operations combined with a modern online point of sale platform will be better equipped to endure this pandemic, as well as to offer options to customers in the future.



CONSISTENT OPERATIONS

Businesses and economic development organizations can coordinate to develop consistent standards and signage for curbside pickup such as branded signage and dedicated short-term parking spaces. Consistent hours of operation are also important for any downtown or neighborhood business district regardless of the status of the pandemic.



RECURRING EVENTS

Rather than one-off or annual events that require a lot of advanced preparation and investment, developing low-cost recurring events creates “stickiness”. People return to these and they become a way to connect socially with the community. Parks, targeted street closures, or other unique facilities like Lee’s Ski Hill in Ouray can be used for informal events. Social distancing and other health and safety protocols are paramount during the pandemic.



COMMON CONSUMPTION AREAS

Colorado law allows local jurisdictions to license areas of their community for consumption of alcohol in common indoor spaces served by licensed businesses. This can be expanded into outdoor spaces through the establishment of an entertainment district. Many communities throughout Colorado are taking this approach regardless of the pandemic to offer more opportunities for social engagement and a new experience for locals and visitors.

10

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Ouray County economy has withstood a high degree of pressure in 2020. This chapter bridges past economic strategies to the current effort, recognizes much progress has been made, and points to actions the community should consider to improve economic conditions as we move past the pandemic.

This chapter presents the main findings and conclusions of this report. It offers recommendations on ways that Ouray County can foster economic resiliency. The information can be used as guidance for ways that Ouray County can position itself for future challenges, which could take the form of additional waves of the current virus, a future economic shock, or other emergency that strains the Ouray County economy and community. The findings are organized into four major categories: communications, readiness to access sources of aid, regional economic resiliency, and tactical recommendations. These findings all draw on information and analysis from previous chapters. Lastly, this chapter cites the findings from the 2011 bottom-up economic development strategy report, which is a valuable source of information to guide the county's efforts in building a resilient economy.

THE FINDINGS ARE ORGANIZED INTO FOUR MAJOR CATEGORIES



COMMUNICATIONS



READINESS TO ACCESS SOURCES OF AID



REGIONAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCY



TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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Image Source: Markus Van Meter

COMMUNICATIONS

1. IMPROVE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS WITH ALL RESIDENTS, GUESTS, AND BUSINESSES

Improve communications with all residents, guests, and businesses with better electronic forms of messaging. An example of this is to create a Facebook page, given the frequency and ease of accessing information by local community members on Facebook. The County could also consider creating an downloadable app specific to Ouray County that residents could easily tap for the latest regulations and resources, although this approach has particular challenges with implementation.

2. IMPROVE WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS WITH ALL RESIDENTS, GUESTS, AND BUSINESSES

In addition, use written communications to improve communications with residents and businesses, especially those who do not have access to or actively use digital forms of communication. An example is distributing a printed mailer with information and with a phone number to call.

3. IMPROVE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS WITH BUSINESSES

Improve two-way communications with businesses with direct email to owners and managers. There would be significant benefit with a two-way communication path with businesses that provides a channel for business to communicate to local officials. Examples include unique messaging that is more relevant to this group, as opposed to the general public. Also, fielding surveys and questionnaires provides real-time information about the economic landscape. Because sales tax collections and employment data are released by the state with significant lag, there is a need for up-to-date monitoring. For example, succinct monthly surveys that collect insights on employment cuts, changes in business activity, and perceptions about the overall economic conditions will provide elected officials with real-time data to help inform their policy decisions.

4. UPDATE BUSINESS EMAIL DATABASE

Because the database of email contacts is quite dated, it is recommended to activate a business license requirement with, among other data requirements, a current set of email contacts for every business within each jurisdiction. The purpose is to create better ways of listening and should not be interpreted as anything more

5. IMPROVE THE FLOW OF COMMUNICATION TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

It would be beneficial for the public to receive notifications from the County government on certain matters. Examples include vaccine information, public health orders, COVID-19 testing, and existing social/economic resources. This would essentially be a ‘Reverse 911’ and would help ensure that Ouray residents are informed of current situations and available resources.

6. PERMANENT PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Recognize the need for a permanent Public Information Officer and assign tasks related to out-going messaging as well as in-coming communications to this individual. (Note that the BOCC has funded this position and the County is underway with hiring this individual.)

7. PUBLIC COMMENT AT POLICY MEETINGS

Ensure that every voice is heard at the Policy Group by providing time on each agenda for the PIO to summarize all in-coming email (grouped by topic) and ensure that the themes expressed by Ouray County residents, business owners, and guests are heard by elected officials concurrently.

8. REVIEW OF OUTGOING MESSAGING

Ensure that outgoing messaging has the benefit of review by seasoned local government staff. Consider creating a parallel group to Unified Command, such as Unified Command Communications, that will provide direction (and nuance) for outgoing communications to the region.

READINESS TO ACCESS SOURCES OF AID

1. INFORMING RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

A barrier to accessing available resources and aid has been that residents and business have been unaware of their options. It is recommended to centralize and promote information on available resources for residents and businesses, ensuring that these groups are informed. This applies to local, regional, state, and federal sources of aid, as

outlined in Chapter 8. With the recent expansion of federal and state aid packages, readiness to access aid when it comes is important to the health of the local economy.

2. ORGANIZING FINANCIAL RECORDS

A common requirement for business relief programs is that businesses are able to demonstrate financial loss as a result of COVID-19. This means that businesses need to have organized financial records that can readily be shown on an application for aid. Assisting small businesses with organizing their financial records would enhance their ability to access sources of aid.

3. ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL LENDERS

Applying to the largest of the businesses relief programs, the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), involves working with a certified Small Business Administration (SBA) lender. To increase the likelihood of a successful PPP application, it is recommended that small businesses establish a relationship with local lenders. These lenders will often provide educational materials on how to create a successful PPP application and will guide businesses through the process, helping businesses access the aid they need.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

1. 2011 BOTTOM-UP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT GOALS

The 2011 bottom-up economic development report detailed a set goals that seek to foster economic resiliency. These goals, which include economic diversification, leveraging and expanding recreational assets, branding Ouray County, and obtaining broadband bandwidth, continue to be relevant. As the economy of Ouray County grows, it is imperative that economic opportunities are sustained for residents. Moreover, Ouray County’s economic health will depend on its ability to adapt to a shifting economic landscape and its ability to effectively deal with the next major disruption. Following these goals will bolster the county’s ability to sustain its economic health.

2. REGIONAL COOPERATION

Ouray County stands to benefit from cooperation between the City of Ouray and the Town of Ridgway. The economic activity the county might have been seen as autonomous historically; however, each sector is highly dependent on the others. For example, insufficient backcountry and in-town activity options will diminish interest in visitation, which will reduce demand for lodging, which in turn diminishes demand for the full spectrum of uses within the county. Any link within the economy is critical and has, essentially, similar degrees of importance for making the system flourish. Using these granular relationships as an example, the interdependency of all sectors with the county can be recognized.

In addition, it is recommended that Ouray County looks to leverage regional resources in its economic development efforts. There exist powerful linkages within Region 10-- the ICELab in Gunnison County and Westend Economic Development Corporation in Montrose County are examples of regional organizations that have successfully supported small business development. Looking to these organizations as models could bolster the prospects of success and economic diversification for businesses in Ouray County. Connecting with existing resources not only expands economic possibilities, but also spares the business community in Ouray County from having to 'reinvent the wheel', or to create an ecosystem of business support from the ground up.

3. COUNTYWIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (EDO)

Accordingly, economic vibrancy can be best achieved with a countywide economic development organization (EDO). This EDO is recommended as a way to bridge interests and promote the county in a unified manner. Developing an organizational structure would be an initial step, and requires a local set of champions. Leadership for an entity with this focus could be found within the elected officials of all three jurisdictions, working in sync and ensuring consistent representation among the three entities. Reaching this goal will also require establishing a respectful civic dialog around regional cooperation that reconciles differing viewpoints.

4. MARKETING ANGLES

It also presents an opportunity to reconsider the marketing angles used to attract visitation. As shown by the 2020 summer season, the Ouray County brand is very strong and has national recognition. A newly formed EDO may be tasked with reviewing traditional marketing investments based on the information learned in the past year. A shift in emphasis with a focus on enhancing the quality of the experience and quality over quantity, may generate greater margins of return to local business with an alienation on a range of systems, including infrastructure capacity, backcountry demand, and work force availability.

5. BALANCING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Over the past decade, Ouray County has shown signs of a prosperous economy – job growth, low unemployment, population growth, and a growing volume of visitors. And while the COVID-19 pandemic has had negative effects on the county economy, the economy was bolstered by a strong tourism year in 2020. It is conceivable that these trends will continue over the next several years. At the same time, it is important that Ouray County balances a growing economy with economic sustainability. This is especially critical with infrastructure and housing. On the infrastructure side, higher volumes of visitors and greater usage of outdoor recreation assets augments the need for road maintenance. On the housing side, housing prices in Ouray have been rising for several years. With the prospect of in-migration by professionals who work remotely, Ouray County could very well see housing prices continue to rise – the 'Zoom town' phenomenon. This has consequences for housing attainability for residents, especially those who work in service industry jobs, many of whom currently struggle to find affordable housing in Ouray County. This is an issue that is central to economic resiliency and one that the county should further examine.



Image Source: RidgwayColorado.com

TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ONLINE POINT OF SALE

Having an intuitive online ordering platform is important during the pandemic. More broadly, it is also highly important when marketing to guests from more urban areas accustomed to the latest technology and convenience. In competing against online retail, it is essential.

2. CURBSIDE PICKUP

Businesses with convenient curbside pickup operations combined with a modern online point of sale platform will be better equipped to endure this pandemic, as well as to offer options to customers in the future.

3. CONSISTENT OPERATIONS

Businesses and economic development organizations can coordinate to develop consistent standards and signage for curbside pickup such as branded signage and dedicated short-term parking spaces. Consistent hours of operation are also important for any downtown or neighborhood business district regardless of the status of the pandemic.

4. RECURRING EVENTS

Rather than one-off or annual events that require a lot of advanced preparation and investment, developing low-cost recurring events creates “stickiness”. People return to these and they become a way to connect socially with the community. Parks, targeted street closures, or other unique facilities like Lee’s Ski Hill in Ouray can be used for informal events. Social distancing and other health and safety protocols are paramount during the pandemic.

5. COMMON CONSUMPTION AREAS

Colorado law allows local jurisdictions to license areas of their community for consumption of alcohol in common indoor spaces served by licensed businesses. This can be expanded into outdoor spaces through the establishment of an entertainment district. Many communities throughout Colorado are taking this approach regardless of the pandemic to offer more opportunities for social engagement and a new experience for locals and visitors.

2011 BOTTOM-UP OURAY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND STRATEGY

In 2011, the Hickenlooper Administration issued an executive order to direct a statewide economic development strategy based on local and regional collaboration. The approach, known as a “Bottom-up” approach, sought to leverage local strengths and assets as the way to achieve economic prosperity.

Ouray County published a report in 2011 that presented the five goals. The report serves a basis for the goal of economic resiliency and provides insight into how Ouray County can foster it.

1. DIVERSIFY OUR OURAY COUNTY ECONOMY (BUSINESS RETENTION/ EXPANSION/ DEVELOPMENT) TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT IS HARMONIOUS WITH OUR OURAY COUNTY COMMUNITY VALUES, RURAL CHARACTER, MASTER PLANS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

Past recommendation: To achieve long-term economic resiliency and economic development that aligns with the county’s values and rural character, it is important that Ouray County work to diversify its economy. This goal encourages the development of industries related to renewable energy, agriculture, mining, creative industries, and ‘multi-faceted’ tourism.

Current observation: Pursuing this economic growth and diversification strategy is a common theme within economic development strategies. One of the best examples of an accomplishment of this goal is the diversification found with the newly reopened mine. While it is never a bad idea to continue to diversify the local economy, a more effective and realistic approach would be to reposition, rebrand, and refresh the local economy, and drive greater economic activity with an approach that delivers higher margins. Given the evolution the tourism market and the recognition of a limited number of places with the intrinsic beauty of Ouray County, the opportunity exists for this approach. A component of this goal is to establish a countywide

Economic Development Organization (EDO). Aligning the economic goals of Ouray and Ridgway would serve to facilitate economic cooperation and the coordination of resources, supporting the effort of economic diversification.

2. BRAND OURAY COUNTY

Past recommendation: The second goal of the 2011 plan was to brand Ouray County. This meant forming a marketing strategy to actively promote Ouray’s scenic beauty, unique natural assets and heritage, its friendly business climate, its arts, and its high quality of life.

Current observation: As of 2021, Ouray County has created a website, visit Ouray, that showcases Ouray’s assets and provides detailed information on travel to Ouray. Based on strong visitation trends over the past several years and especially in 2020, Ouray’s brand has demonstrated its appeal and success. In the coming years, Ouray County will likely continue to serve as a desirable destination. With outdoor recreation having a strong year due to the circumstances of the pandemic, its appeal will remain strong. The question going forward is how Ouray County can best manage its natural assets and infrastructure with high volumes of visitors.



3. CREATIVE DISTRICTS

Past recommendation: In response to the state passing HB 11-1031, which established the Creative Districts program, the 2011 plan called for Ouray County to define a Creative District within Ouray County. To achieve this goal, the plan recommended that Ouray County form a subcommittee to explore how the state would implement the program and to formulate an application to the program. The main goal of this effort was to use the Creative District program as impetus to promote creative industries and artists throughout Ouray County, aligning with a broader vision of diversifying the Ouray County economy.

Current observation: Ridgway was awarded Creative District status in 2013. It was the outcome of the aforementioned effort that began during the State-led Bottom-Up Economic Development Plan. The Town of Ridgway is certified by the State of Colorado as a Colorado Creative District. Growing creative industries is an important part of an economic diversity strategy to grow jobs in non-tourism (retail, food & beverage, and lodging) industries. In addition, certification is another tool for organizing and building momentum around creativity and the arts in the local economy. The program provides another reason to focus energy in an organized way to grow an economic cluster around creativity culture.

As part of the Creative District program, Ridgway is part of the ‘Colorado Creative Corridor’, a 331-mile trail that links Carbondale, Crested Butte, Paonia, Ridgway, and Salida. The corridor is intended to promote these towns as small, mountain communities that provide a common experience of a vibrant local art scene, and appears to have had a significant impact on the local community, its cultural composition, and economic activity.

4. EXPAND RECREATIONAL TOURISM ASSETS AND OVERALL INDUSTRY PROFITABILITY

Past recommendation: Ouray County should leverage and market its existing natural assets and to determine how it can develop new natural assets. This goal is aligned with the goal of enhancing the county’s brand, benefiting Ouray County by increasing visitation and supporting local businesses. While developing new assets is central to this goal, preserving existing natural assets and working within the bounds of existing infrastructure are similarly important.

Current observation: As visitation numbers in 2020 indicated, Ouray County has been a popular destination for visitors, especially those looking to access outdoor recreation. The growing volume of visitation and outdoor recreation has been economically beneficial, but going forward it will be important to examine the ways in which Ouray County’s physical infrastructure and natural assets (e.g., trails, campgrounds) have been affected by higher volumes and the ways in which the county can seek to preserve these assets for years to come.

5. MAKE OURAY COUNTY MORE VIABLE FOR BUSINESS AND TOURISTS - OBTAIN BROADBAND BANDWIDTH & REDUNDANCY

Past recommendation: The purpose of this goal was to work with Operation Link-Up from Silverton and utilities to achieve wired broadband from Ouray to Durango and over Ophir Pass to provide badly needed reliable high-speed internet to San Juan County and redundancy from having multiple closed loops on the western slope between Grand Junction and Cortez/Durango. Data had no direct pathway from Ouray to Durango, or New Mexico, etc. Promoting this type of reliable internet/data infrastructure will support businesses, residents, educational opportunities, and tourism.

Current observation: Local leadership has made significant strides in accomplishing this goal. As of the beginning of 2021, Ouray County is in Phase 2 of a \$5 million middle-mile fiber build for public health and telehealth, in partnership with Federal and State funding partners, and with the Region 10 regional buildout. This project is already supporting much-needed bandwidth for telecommuting and last-mile connections for homes and business throughout the County. The project began in 2019, completion is expected in summer 2021. This is an especially crucial economic resiliency strategy with the growing prevalence of remote work and necessity of internet-based applications. Remote work has been a defining feature of work life during the pandemic, and will likely continue to be both a standard and expectation for a significant portion of jobs.

