

La Plata County
CONNECTIONS

SPRING 2022

**LA PLATA COUNTY
BUILDS TOWARD A
BRIGHT FUTURE**

**BUDGET OVERVIEW:
INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY**

**SANDRALYNN JOHNSON
HELPS AT-RISK YOUTH WITH
4-LEGGED FRIENDS**



La Plata County
Colorado

ACCOUNTABILITY · INTEGRITY · RESPECT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



8



10



12



16

3

2022 Goals and Priorities

4

La Plata County
at a Glance

5

2022 Budget Overview
Investing in O ur Community

8

Horse Sense

10

Keeping La Plata Families
Safe and Strong

12

Serving La Plata County
Seniors Is a Team Effort

14

Building for the Future –
and the Present

16

Be Wildfire Ready

18

A Note from the Treasurer

19

A Message from the Assessor

WELCOME!

A welcome message from Matt Salka, the 2022 Chair of the Board of County Commissioners



I was born in Portsmouth, VA, the son of a military family, and moved to La Plata County in 2000. My grandfather served in the Navy during WWII, and my father also served in the Navy for 25 years. I received my degree in information systems from Fort Lewis College and after graduation started a small IT business and a second business in pest control.

Before my election as La Plata County Commissioner in 2020, I served as mayor, trustee and planning commissioner for the Town of Bayfield. I also served on the Mill Street Revitalization Committee, as Secretary of the La Plata Economic Alliance and on the Southwest Transportation Planning Region board. Like my fellow commissioners, I currently serve on numerous boards and commissions. A list of the Commissioners' boards and commissions assignments is available at co.laplata.co.us; click "Board of County Commissioners" under the "Departments" tab."

As Board of County Commissioners Chair (BoCCC) for 2022, I look forward to working with many interested parties throughout La Plata County to bring affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband internet to all homes and businesses. Also high on our list is working with the Regional Housing Alliance (RHA) and other housing organizations to help give working families more housing options in La Plata County. With housing shortfalls, the dispersed camping at Purple Cliffs needs to be addressed. It's imperative that La Plata County be a part of creating a managed camp for the unhoused. Purple Cliffs is not working for the county; a managed camp is essential, and working with the City of Durango to help offer other housing options is key. I also intend to address the scourge of opioid addiction in La Plata County and find meaningful treatment solutions for both our addiction and mental health crises.

I welcome constituents to call me at 970-382-6217 or email me at matt.salka@co.laplata.co.us to discuss county issues of interest or concern at any time.

LA PLATA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Clyde Church, District 1

Commissioner Marsha Porter-Norton, District 2

Commissioner Matt Salka, District 3

2022 GOALS & PRIORITIES

Each year, the Board of County Commissioners holds a retreat to establish goals and priorities for the coming year. The list serves as a consistent reference that the elected officials use to inform all decisions and projects throughout the year. Here's what they've identified for 2022:



**Encourage and diversify
economic development**



**Improve long-term
sustainability for county
services, infrastructure
and assets**



**Protect and preserve the
environment through the
responsible management
of natural resources,
development of effective
partnerships and promotion
of environmental stewardship**



**Strive to make La Plata
County the premier employer
in the Four Corners region**

LA PLATA COUNTY AT A GLANCE:

Statistics are based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates as of July 1, 2021.

POPULATION

55,638

(51,334 as of 2010 census)



49.6%

Female



51.4%

Male

↑ 18.2%
Age 65+

↓ 18.6%
Under 18

LAND AREA:

1,692

square miles

COUNTY ROADS:

653 miles

(222 mi. paved,
431 mi. unpaved)

ETHNICITY

White alone	88.2%	Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander alone	0.1%
American Indian & Alaska Native alone	0.7%	Two or more races	2.6%
Black or African American alone	0.7%	Hispanic or Latino	12.8%
Asian alone	0.7%	White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	78.3%

OTHER FAST FACTS

(data through 2019)



3,291
Veterans



2.7%
Foreign-born
persons



21,794
Households



2.47
Persons per
household



90.4%
Households with
a computer



77.7%
Households
with broad-
band internet



9.4%
Language other
than English
spoken at home



95.5%
High school
graduate or
higher (age 25+)



44.2%
Bachelor's
degree or
higher (age 25+)



La Plata County
Colorado

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Investing in our community

The La Plata County Board of County Commissioners is pleased to present the La Plata County 2022 budget. County staff has employed a pragmatic approach to developing this budget, focusing on investing in efforts that further the County's strategic goals and the program priorities set by the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC). This budget represents a financial plan allocating resources to reflect La Plata County's elected officials to invest in the community's health, safety and welfare. The 2022 budget has been developed from the diligence and commitment of elected officials and staff in each La Plata County department, and we are proud of the result. The 2022 budget before you exemplifies the dedication that the La Plata County government has in serving the citizens of our community while building public trust through sound fiscal stewardship.

2022



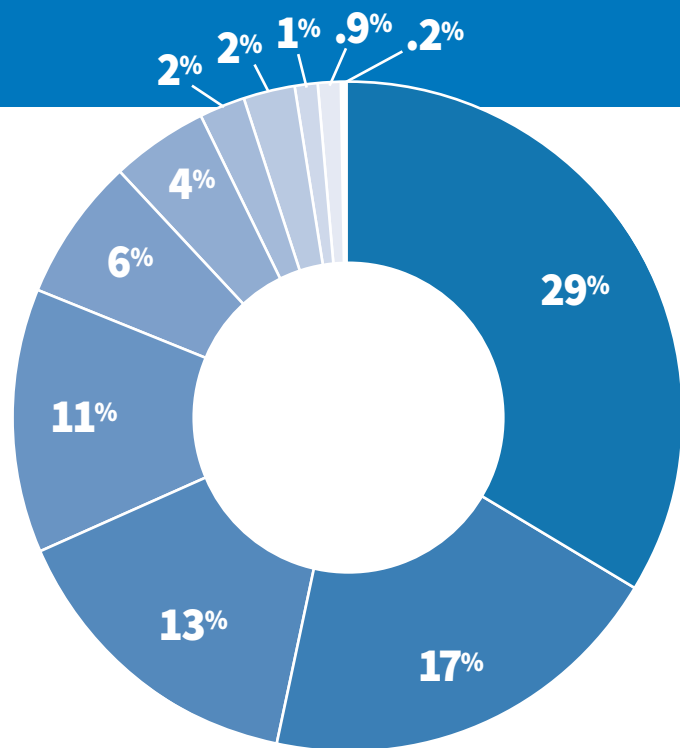
Ensuring
public
safety



Supporting
our
neighbors



Planning
for the
future

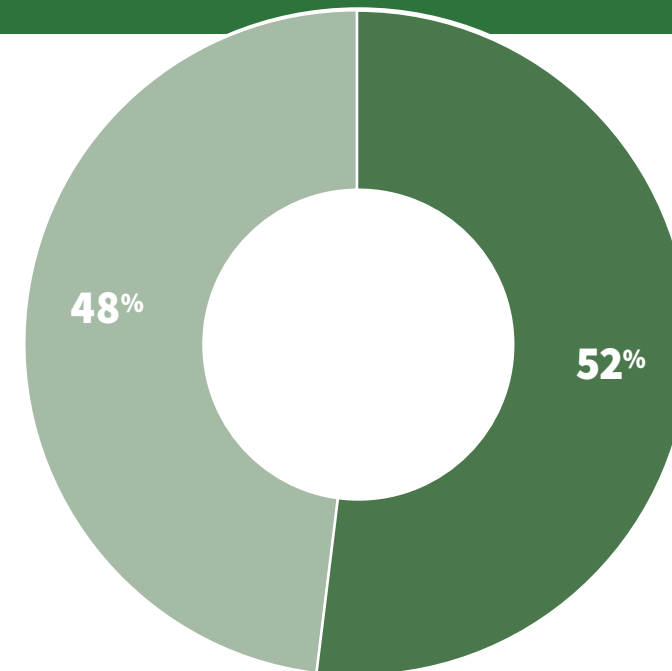


COUNTYWIDE OPERATING REVENUE*

Sales Tax: \$24.5M	29%
Property Tax: \$14.7M	17%
Intergovernmental: \$11.25M	13%
Intragovernmental: \$9.6M	11%
Charges for Services: \$5.4M	6%
Highway User Tax Fund (HUTF): \$3.1M	4%
Misc.: \$1.9M	2%
Specific Ownership Tax: \$1.6M	2%
Other Taxes: \$831,700	1%
Transfers In: \$807,103	0.9%
Severance Tax: \$211,056	0.2%

\$85.1 MILLION **↑ 26.1%**

*2022 budget also includes app. \$10.9 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds, which will be allocated for pandemic-relief-related projects



COUNTYWIDE OPERATING EXPENSES

Personnel: \$37.7 MILLION	52%
Salaries and benefits for 426 regular employees who deliver services including:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Government: 156 employees • Public Safety: 135 employees • Health & Welfare: 80 employees • Public Works: 42 employees • Capital Equipment: 8 employees • Recreation & Culture: 5 employees 	
Operating: \$34.3 MILLION	48%
Operating expenses include training, software, utilities, fuel, etc.	

\$72 MILLION **↑ 10.3%**

2022 GOALS & PRIORITIES



Encourage and diversify economic development



Improve long-term sustainability for county services, infrastructure & assets



Protect and preserve the environment through the responsible management of natural resources, development of effective partnerships and promotion of environmental stewardship

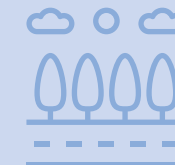


Strive to make La Plata County the premier employer in the Four Corners region

BUDGETED CAPITAL PROJECTS FOR 2022



Florida River bridge deck replacement at CR 240 & CR 245
\$1M



Mill and overlay of 2 miles of CR 501
\$1M



Mill and overlay of 4.22 miles of CR 141/Wildcat Canyon
\$2.11M



Infrastructure and road improvements for CR 213/La Posta Road
\$2.5M



County courthouse renovations
\$0.41M



Regional weather radar
\$2.1M



HORSE SENSE

LA PLATA COUNTY FAMILY THERAPIST SANDRALYNN JOHNSON RELIES ON 4-LEGGED FRIENDS TO HELP AT-RISK YOUTH

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES FAMILY THERAPIST SANDRALYNN JOHNSON RELIES ON HORSES LIKE STERLING AT HORSE EMPOWER TO HELP LA PLATA COUNTY CHILDREN WORK THROUGH TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES IN THEIR LIVES.



When it comes to family therapy, La Plata County is able to offer help that few communities can match.

To wit, we have Sandralynn Johnson, a licensed professional counselor and family therapist in the county's Department of Human Services (DHS). And because of Sandralynn, La Plata County can offer a service unique to our part of the world: equine therapy. Sandralynn has been certified in equine-assisted therapy for several years, and after a year and half with DHS, she decided it was time to put that skill to use.

"I kept saying, 'Let's do this,' but COVID was getting in the way," Johnson said during a session at Horse Empower in rural La Plata County. The facility is on owner Kim Hardesty's family ranch and her horses have become an invaluable asset to Sandralynn's work. And now, it's gone from "Let's do this" to "We're doing this."

"Many of the kids who come through our office have some kind of serious dysregulation problem — whether it's anger, obsessive/compulsive disorder, depression — this is what traumatized kids need; they need to get into their bodies," Johnson said. "One way for them to regulate their nervous system is to be around big animals."

The horses range in size — 700-pound Tracker is the smallest, but most are in the 1,200-pound range, including the senior member of the 9-horse team, Canyon, who has been with Hardesty for 17 years. Sharing space with such a formidable presence puts a lot of responsibility on the kids. The youth have to figure out how to work with that for the desired results, be it problem-solving or confidence building. "The horses, because they're sentient, have their own thoughts, habits and behaviors," Hardesty said. "When you're working with an animal that large with its own ideas, you're going to start building confidence and self-esteem on a basic and then a practical level."

Johnson said most of her young clients receive 10 sessions with the horses — "I don't know that anyone needs therapy indefinitely," she said. It's an extension of attachment theory. If a person can learn how to regulate their nervous system, they can feel more connected. And if they feel more connected to themselves, they can feel more connected to another, and then they can feel safe. In this case, however, that secondary connection is with an equine partner, not another human being.

we go to 'How do you get that horse over to that corner over there?' If you're not clear and focused and have an eye on the goal, you're never going to get there with a horse because if they know you're not present and being intentional and moving toward that goal, they're going to do whatever they want because they have a different idea. This is not magic — the horses are real."

"It's not magic, but it is magical," Johnson added.



KIM HARDESTY, OWNER OF HORSE EMPOWER, AND SANDRALYNN JOHNSON GET A SMILE OUT OF LUNA.

"Anger is a defense mechanism," Johnson said, "One of the things I do right off the bat is have the kid put their belly right up to the horse's belly. They're out here in a situation they can't control, just like whatever situation they may find themselves in — they've been hurt. I help draw parallels that can help them. Today, we had a foster kid who's getting moved, and that's a bummer. I was helping him to breathe, get into his body for five minutes. Giving him the experience of what it's like to get his nervous system calmed down."

Hardesty explains it from there: "Once she can accomplish that with a client, then

Sandralynn's unique method earned her the Innovation Award at the 2021 La Plata County Employee of the Year honors. One of her anonymous peers who nominated her for the award summed up her efforts thusly:

"Thank you Sandralynn for all of your dedication, perseverance, and going way, way above and beyond your job description to get creative and help families. You are helping La Plata County Child Welfare be an example for the rest of the state. This whole experience has taught us that anything is possible if you keep trying!"



Keeping La Plata Families SAFE & STRONG

LEFT: COURTNEY RAY'S PEERS HONORED HER WITH THE LEADERSHIP AWARD AT THE 2021 LA PLATA COUNTY EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR CELEBRATION FOR HER WORK WITH AT-RISK CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

RIGHT: COURTNEY RAY'S TEAM AT HUMAN SERVICES IS, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: CASE AIDE ASHLEY ULIBARRI, ONGOING CASEWORKER ALLI PARKER, SUPERVISOR COURTNEY RAY, ONGOING CASEWORKER WILMA MUELLER, ONGOING CASEWORKER ISABEL DUBOIS, AND CHAFEE CASEWORKER SARAH LOH.

"My biggest priority is ensuring the team has what they need to feel successful in their roles, making sure I'm showing up for them in a way that's emotionally supportive."



Child Welfare caseworkers have one of the most difficult jobs in La Plata County. It's an often-repeated mantra but also a fact of life in the county's Department of Human Services (DHS) that DHS employees' first interactions with many of their clients take place on what may be the worst day of that person's life. And when children are involved, every decision takes on even more gravity.

Courtney Ray, Child Welfare supervisor, shares, "We see some really tough stuff and we still see the parents as people worth partnering with because we believe in the

capacity for change. We believe that every family has signs of safety, and it's our job to help find those signs with the family."

The "Ongoing" unit in Child Welfare supervised by Ray includes three caseworkers and two case aides. This team works closely with children and their parents, assessing safety and risk on a constant basis and trying to connect families with the services they need to overcome their challenges. Most of these families are involved with the court system in civil dependency and neglect cases, and it is the caseworkers' job to coordinate and communicate with attorneys and advocates while putting the best interests of the children first. This entails building relationships with parents

and family members to help them find and voice their own goals in what can help them be safer parents for their children. The team also supervises visits between children and their parents in their homes or in the community, as well as transporting them to appointments with therapists, health care providers and other support systems. It involves meetings with school personnel to develop the best plans for children who may struggle in school because of the trauma they have been through in their personal life.

The challenges are real, and Ray and her team are justifiably proud of their track record. Only 1.8% of all children involved with La Plata's Child Welfare system in 2021 needed

to be removed from their homes in order to ensure their safety. This means that 98.2% of all children were able to safely remain with their families due to the safety actions the families are able to build and maintain within their homes. And in the instances when families are not able to be safely reunited, the Ongoing team works diligently to help the child and family members remain connected to each other in creative ways.

"My biggest priority is ensuring the team has what they need to feel successful in their roles, making sure I'm showing up for them in a way that's emotionally supportive," Ray said. She's obviously had a positive impact on her team and many others, as they and her

peers honored her with the County Leadership Award at La Plata County's 2021 Employee of the Year ceremony in December. "Courtney is committed to always trying to find the best resources and supports for kids and families," said Martha Johnson, La Plata County's Director of Human Services. "Whether it is a teenager in conflict with their parents or a baby who was in an unsafe home, Courtney's goals are to keep kids safe and to keep families together, if that can be safe for the kids. She also strives to provide Human Services staff members with what they need while they are working in an often-stressful job."

Those who work in Child Protective Services are dedicated to the families they serve

and provide one of the most important support systems in La Plata County government. "My team loves what they do and it shines in their work. I'm so proud of what they do, and I think our families can feel that," Ray said. "We're meeting families when they're at their absolute worst. And we're seeing stressors within family systems that have been exacerbated by COVID. While we can't always fix everything, we can sit with people and listen and offer them a lot of compassion that they may not get anywhere else."

LINDA BROCKWAY AND THE CREW AT THE DURANGO-LA PLATA COUNTY SENIOR CENTER COOK DAILY FOR AREA SENIORS.

SERVING LA PLATA COUNTY SENIORS IS A TEAM EFFORT

BAYFIELD RESIDENTS CAN STAY CLOSE TO HOME AT THE PINE RIVER SENIOR CENTER

The La Plata County Senior Services' culinary team prepares more than a thousand meals each week for area seniors for the Durango-La Plata County Senior Center and for home delivery. Many of the meals are delivered to homes via Meals-on-Wheels volunteers and county staff. The remainder are delivered directly to the Pine River Senior Center (PRSC), where 15 to 20 senior citizens gather for lunch on Wednesdays and Fridays. COVID-19 restrictions caused a lengthy shut-down, but after much discussion, Bayfield town officials agreed that meals could be delivered to the center and consumed on-site with safety precautions in place. La Plata County resumed congregate meals in June of 2021;

however, health concerns continue to dictate home meal delivery rather than indoor dining.

"We're here for the humanity of friendship and community," said Charlene Johnson, a board member of Pine River Seniors.

"We're here for the humanity of friendship and community."

Bayfield's senior meal service represents 18% of the total meal budget, according to Carol Melcher, Food Services Manager for the

county. Nutrition guidelines adhere to Area Agency on Aging standards and are overseen by a staff dietician. The focus is high-quality, wholesome and delicious food.

The PRSC also hosts games, fitness activities, potlucks, crafts and more on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The pool table is well-used by several attendees, including one Durango native and former professional pool player, John Trujillo. The center has also hosted vaccine clinics in partnership with SaveOn Pharmacy and San Juan Basin Public Health. The county's veterans' services officer, Greg Dotson, holds monthly office hours at 11 a.m. on the second Wednesday of the month at the center.

The Pine River Senior Center is a non-profit that was first formed in 1981, and was very active in the fundraising for the current building, which opened in 2008. The 5,000-square-foot building cost \$1.5 million, with La Plata County donating \$250,000 in cash plus the land for the site, estimated at about \$150,000. Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) granted \$700,000 and the Town of Bayfield contributed \$250,000. Garry Hillyer from Southwest Ag presented a \$10,000 contribution. Donations from the senior citizens, First National Bank, Lewis True Value, La Plata Electric, Southern Ute Tribe, Pine River Rotary, FCI Construction, Bayfield Lions Club, Calvary Presbyterian Church Crusaders, Bill

Faust, Alpine Bank and hundreds of others contributed the balance.

When asked how she found the Senior Center, Vicky Mozgai said, "We had just moved to Bayfield and were having lunch at Brenda's Old West Café. Bayfield local Phyllis Ludwig introduced herself, and the rest is history."

Longtime Bayfield area locals and transplants enjoy the ability to gather with friends, share a meal, and stay updated on everyone's comings and goings. To sign up for meals, call 970-382-6435.

The Senior Citizens' Board is led by Lee Roy Powers as president, Anne Rudolf as vice president, Maureen Cleveland as secretary, and Vicky Mozgai as secretary.

Holiday meals have always been special occasions; Christmas 2021 was celebrated with prime rib. Summer months allow for dining on the spacious south-facing deck. Pine River Senior Center is available for rental by private parties, to celebrate birthdays, graduations and even Christmas Eve. To inquire about a rental, call 970-884-9544 x109.



VICKI, LUANN, DALLAS, DAN, CHARLENE, LEE ROY, ANN AND KAY ARE JUST A FEW OF THE BAYFIELD RESIDENTS WHO MEET REGULARLY TO SHARE MEALS AT THE PINE RIVER SENIOR CENTER.



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE – AND THE PRESENT

When COVID-19 changed the way people do business early in 2020, La Plata County was not immune to the many disruptions that hit every segment of American society. Amid the chaos, the county proudly unveiled several new or renovated buildings, but we were unable

to celebrate them with the fanfare they deserve — ribbon cuttings were just one of the many social casualties of the pandemic. Each building is a valuable asset for county residents and allows our employees to fulfill their responsibilities in a safe and comfortable environment.



SHERIFF’S OFFICE

283 Girard Street, Bodo Park – 17,752 first-floor refit + 4,657 second-floor addition = 22,409 sq. ft.

This was formerly the site of the Colorado Army National Guard and has been completely refitted as the new home of the La Plata County Sheriff’s Department. The repurposed building includes a gym and kitchen for the deputies and staff as well as workspaces, offices and large meeting rooms.

LA PLATA COUNTY MORGUE

744 Turner Drive, Bodo Park – 3,137 sq. ft.

It may not be the most glamorous of the new county buildings, but an efficient and convenient morgue is essential in light of La Plata County’s ever-growing population. This past winter, the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners thanked Hood Mortuary and the Phelps family for years of cooperation, as Hood was used by contract for the county’s autopsies. But with this new building, Coroner Jann Smith has a dedicated, state-of-the-art facility for this important, but often forgotten, work.



ASSESSOR, CLERK & TREASURER (ACT) BUILDING

679 Turner Drive, Bodo Park – 14,389 sq. ft.

This beautiful edifice has quickly become one of the most visited of all of La Plata County’s buildings. Home to the Assessor’s, County Clerk’s and Treasurer’s offices, the ACT building conveniently houses all three of these high-traffic offices in one location. It’s also where county residents go to register vehicles and obtain license plates.



SEARCH & RESCUE BUILDING

336 Turner Drive, Bodo Park – 2,626 sq. ft.

This 2,550-square-foot building was constructed on an empty lot that was part of the National Guard Armory property, now the Sheriff’s Office. Opened in May 2020, it replaced a 720-square-foot building that was on loan for years by the Rod Barker family, longtime former owners of Durango’s Strater Hotel. Whereas equipment had previously been kept at several locations throughout the county, this brand-new facility allows crews to keep all of their equipment under one roof. As Ron Corkish, head of La Plata County Search & Rescue put it:

“I’m not certain that the English language can express how ‘over the top thrilled’ we are to have space for maintenance and training, and the pride that comes with such a structure improves the bonding of the team as a unit. The county manager, Board of County Commissioners and Sheriff (Sean) Smith made this one of their top initiatives and is what really led to its completion.”

The new location reduces response time, and its proximity to the Sheriff’s Office and Office of Emergency Management in Bodo Park is ideal for assisting with any public safety issue that arises.

BE WILDFIRE READY

FIRSTHAND WILDFIRE SAFETY TIPS: KNOW WHEN TO EVACUATE AND HOW







Wildfire is a part of life in South-west Colorado. In 2021, La Plata County joined with the City of Durango and the Durango Fire Protection District to create the Wildfire Watershed Protection Fund to prepare for the inevitable through mitigation and prevention efforts. However, we thought it might be best for La Plata County residents to hear firsthand from one of their own what it's like to experience being displaced from home due to the imminent threat of a wildfire. Chelsea Cochran is a La Plata County employee in the Department of Human Services. She was also evacuated from her home during the 416 Fire in 2018. Here, she offers her experience for her neighbors and others who may face the same situation for when — not if — it happens again.

EVACUATION TIPS *By Chelsea Cochran*

It's hard to know when to leave when you are on pre-evacuation notice, but it is usually best to get out of the way of the emergency personnel as soon as possible, so don't hesitate to leave the premises before you absolutely have to. Head to the evacuation center if one has been set up, and if necessary, you can figure out where you will be staying afterward. Other times, there is no notice, and you have to get out right away, so it's good to have a plan in mind ahead of time.

THE "SIX P'S OF EVACUATION"

I did not come up with this portion of the list, but these are the most important bases to hit when evacuating. Try to be as thorough as possible, because once you leave, sometimes you aren't allowed to go back and grab something you might have forgotten.

-  **PEOPLE:** Everyone in the household should be accounted for and have ID with them.
-  **PETS:** Be sure to remember their food, carriers and supplies.
-  **PAPERS:** Important documents and policies.
-  **PRESCRIPTIONS:** Along with other daily vitamins, supplements or medications.
-  **PERSONAL COMPUTERS:** Or cell phones, tablets and their chargers.
-  **PHOTOGRAPHS:** And other small, irreplaceable keepsakes or jewelry.

ALSO USEFUL

These are items I found helpful when I was evacuated, or things I wished I had brought. You may find some or all of these items come in handy depending on your situation.

-  **PASSWORDS:** OK, I know you aren't supposed to write them down, but I keep mine in a little book and it saved me so much trouble when I was evacuated. You may have to set up your technology in a different environment, and you will need this if that happens.
-  **CAMPING GEAR:** So you can sleep or cook anyplace, if needed.
-  **CLOTHING:** Obviously, but dirty laundry is great to bring because it's all the stuff you wear most often and you'll probably have time on your hands to spend at the laundromat (with free Wi-Fi).
-  **SNACKS AND ACTIVITIES:** Especially if you have younger kids who get restless easily.
-  **SEASONAL ITEMS:** You will probably be spending at least a little time outside, so be sure to have sunblock, hats, jackets or outerwear — or whatever you think you will need for the time of year.
-  **TOOLS AND UTILITIES:** When I was evacuated, we were at a remote campsite with a generator. We ended up needing various items such as flashlights, tools, duct tape, power strips, extension cords, and LOTS of water.
-  **FRIENDS:** This one is SUPER important. Get to know your neighbors, exchange contact information and check on everyone. Combine your resources and network. Because of the 416 Fire, I am now really close with all of my neighbors and we worked together to get everyone out safely. Start your networking now, so when the time comes, everyone knows they can lean on each other!

1. THIS WAS THE OMINOUS VIEW OF HERMOSA HILL THAT GREETED CHELSEA COCHRAN AND HUNDREDS OF OTHERS DURING THE 416 FIRE IN 2018.
2. A NEIGHBOR CREATED AND CIRCULATED THIS SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE MAP, SO NEIGHBORS KNEW WHERE TO GO WHEN IT WAS TIME TO EVACUATE. HAVING A PLAN AHEAD OF TIME CAN SAVE PROPERTY AND LIVES!
3. THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY WILDFIRE DOESN'T STOP WHEN THE FLAMES ARE EXTINGUISHED. THIS FORD TAURUS WAS PARTIALLY SUBMERGED IN THE POST-FIRE FLOODING CAUSED BY THE BURN SCAR
4. SCENES LIKE THIS FROM THE 416 FIRE IN 2018 ARE WHY ALL AREA RESIDENTS SHOULD HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE LONG BEFORE THE FLAMES ARRIVE. (PHOTO BY JERRY MCBRIDE/DURANGO HERALD)

 Sign up now for weather & emergency alerts from Code Red on the La Plata County website: co.lapлата.co.us/emergency

A NOTE FROM THE TREASURER



Tax notices were mailed to La Plata County property owners at the end of January. These are the “once-a-year” notices all property owners receive and are the only notices that will be sent. If taxes are not paid by June 15, a delinquency notice will be mailed to property owners in July.

Taxpayers can pay in either two half payments or one full payment. Partial payments cannot be accepted. The due dates for 2022 are as follows:

» **First half: Monday, Feb. 28**
(already passed)

» **Second half: Wednesday, June 15**
» **Full payment: Monday, May 2**

Interest is incurred on past-due payments, per the schedule on the back of the tax notice.

The Treasurer ensures that property taxes are collected and distributed to the municipalities and 45 special districts that serve our residents, including schools, fire districts and metro districts. Services paid with tax revenue vary throughout the county — i.e., a home in Bayfield will pay a different amount of property tax than a home of similar value in Durango. Each tax notice details the taxing entities for that property and how much property tax goes to each taxing entity.

Important note: Property owners need not actually receive the notice to be responsible and liable for the property tax. If you do not receive the notice, you may obtain one at the La Plata County website by visiting co.laplata.co.us/pay_taxes, or call the Treasurer’s Office and one will be emailed to you.

For mortgages with an escrow account, the notice is a record. Please do not make a duplicate payment with the Treasurer’s Office. If a duplicate payment is received, whoever paid second will be refunded.

In light of COVID-19 protocols, the Treasurer’s Office encourages property owners to pay by electronic means, including credit card, debit card or automated clearing house (ACH). For ACH payments, visit co.laplata.co.us/pay_taxes on the Treasurer’s page and enter the routing number and bank account number. There is no additional fee for paying by ACH. Please be aware that checks mailed through the U.S. Postal Service could incur delays in processing.

For additional questions and information, call the Treasurer’s Office at 970-382-6352.

YOUR PROPERTY TAX DOLLARS HELP TO FUND:

SNOW REMOVAL



ROAD MAINTENANCE



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE



A MESSAGE FROM THE ASSESSOR

In Colorado, property values used for taxation are updated every two years based on sales that occurred the prior two years. Tax year 2022 is an intervening year; the only changes to values will be on properties that had some kind of change. The County Assessor is required to value and classify property as it existed on January 1 every year. So, for any property that had a change in either improvements or classification in 2021, the changes will be reflected for tax year 2022 that will be mailed out May 1. The value and classification will be used to establish the taxes owed on the property in 2023.

The Assessor’s office used approximately 2,400 sales to value property in La Plata County for the 2020 level of value. As of January 1, we have reviewed more than 5,000 sales and still have six months to go — that’s an increase of almost 50%. These sales are showing increases in value in most sectors, some substantially. All property owners will receive a Notice of Value on May 1, 2023 that will reflect these market sales.

Some types of properties have a value change every year, including discounted subdivision lots, agricultural land and commercial properties. Agricultural land requires actual use every year to qualify it and is valued based on what it can produce as opposed to the market value. As agricultural property is sold or redeveloped, the use is reevaluated to determine if the new owner is still using the land for the primary purpose of obtaining a monetary profit from agricultural uses. If not, the classification is changed.

All commercial properties in La Plata County were reviewed in 2021 for the 2020 market value and for effects from COVID-19



shutdowns, and many values were adjusted. For tax year 2022, these adjustments will remain. In 2023, all commercial properties will be valued based on market sales that occurred July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022, with no further adjustments.

Property owners who feel their value or classification is incorrect may appeal to the Assessor. You may contact us via our online portal beginning in May; by writing to the La Plata County Assessor at 679 Turner

Dr. Suite A, Durango, CO 81303; calling us at 970-382-6228; or visiting in person at our office on Turner Drive in Bodo Park. The office is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For additional questions and information, please visit co.laplata.co.us/departments/assessor_s_office/.



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