

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Why Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is an official public document designed to guide the future development or redevelopment of a community in order to create and maintain a desirable environment and to promote public health, safety, and welfare. The plan is intended for use by public officials, citizens, and developers in making decisions about future development of the City of Delta and the surrounding area of Delta County.



*Opera House Park and Mural*

The plan addresses the relationships between the physical layout of the community, economic development, public facilities, the provision of government services and preservation of Delta's role as a regional center.

The plan provides a framework for managing growth in a manner that attempts to preserve and enhance the quality of life while fostering a healthy economy.

While the plan is an advisory document only, it is the basis for revising existing regulations and/or enacting new regulations and guiding project review recommendations. The plan affects new development and existing development.

The plan recognizes that protection of individual property rights is a fundamental legal and philosophical principle of the nation, the State of Colorado, Delta County, and the City of Delta. However, the plan also recognizes a common vision to preserve community character and environmental and scenic qualities, while enhancing economic opportunities and creating a more diverse economy. The plan attempts to strike an appropriate balance between the exercise of individual property rights, the environment, and achieving the common vision.

## *Creating the Plan*

Planning is a process that involves many steps, culminating in the preparation of a plan with maps and text. The steps leading to this plan included: engaging the public through various techniques; collection and analysis of pertinent data; developing a vision statement and desired future conditions for each planning element; developing alternative growth management scenarios; selecting a preferred growth scenario; evaluating policy options; and developing the comprehensive plan.

## *1997 City of Delta Comprehensive Plan*

This comprehensive plan is an update of the adopted 1997 City of Delta Comprehensive Plan. A matrix summary of the 1997 plan is contained in each chapter of this plan. Each of the 1997 plan elements is listed along with the status of progress as scored by the Steering Committee. Majority scores are reflected. Many of the goals, objectives and action items from 1997 have been completed or are in progress; however, some are incomplete. Goals, objectives and action items which are in progress or are incomplete, are acknowledged in this plan update.

## *Engaging the Public*

Citizen participation in the planning process was encouraged throughout the study. Five methods were used to solicit public input: meetings with the Steering Committee, interviews with community leaders, public workshops, a public opinion survey, and posting numerous interim progress reports and other documents on the City's website.



*Steering Committee Meeting*

*The Steering Committee* consisted of residents of the City of Delta appointed by the Delta City Council. This committee functioned as the primary working-level citizens' group, providing detailed comments on the community survey design and policy options and giving direction at public workshops.

***Interviews with community leaders*** comprising a cross section of Delta area citizens were conducted to obtain their perspectives on issues that should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan update. Also, these individuals were invaluable sources of information. See ***Appendix*** for a summary of the interviews.

***Three public workshops*** were held to solicit public input during the early, middle, and late phases of the planning process. Each workshop was preceded by an open house during which the public had an opportunity to view maps and other documents on display. The purpose of the first workshop was to present the results of the community survey, identify other issues and concerns not included on the survey, and to conduct a growth allocation exercise, which obtained citizen input about the general location and distribution of future residential growth. See ***Appendix*** for a detailed analysis of the first workshop.

At the second public workshop, land use and demographic data were presented along with several alternative growth management scenarios for public comment. The preferred growth management scenario and the draft comprehensive plan were presented at the third public workshop.

***A public opinion survey*** was completed in 2006 with assistance from City officials. The survey was mailed to 3,557 households in Delta and the surrounding area. A total of 1,026 surveys were returned (29% of those sent out), which is an excellent rate of return. The results of the survey were used throughout the plan to guide the direction of the plan.

***The City of Delta's website:*** The City of Delta Comprehensive Plan Update can be found on the City's website: [www.delta-co.gov](http://www.delta-co.gov). The site includes numerous progress reports and other information pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan that was developed during the planning process. Each report was posted as it was completed to keep web visitors abreast of the progress of plan development.

## ***Collection and Analysis of Data***

Existing information and studies were reviewed and analyzed. Data was obtained from interviews with key individuals as well as written reports and statistics prepared by the City, Delta County, state and federal agencies and other organizations.

### ***Land Use Inventory***

During 2006-2007, the consultants conducted a parcel-based land use inventory of Delta and the surrounding plan area. The field survey was correlated with the Delta County Assessor's parcel maps and data, particularly for parcels where it was difficult to determine the type of land use from the field survey alone. The purpose of the inventory was to identify and quantify various types of land uses and densities to serve as a basis for projecting future growth and developing alternative growth management scenarios. An

existing land use map was prepared which delineated the types of existing land uses, and tables were created summarizing the data.

*This comprehensive plan articulates various objectives that the citizens of Delta wish to see implemented to meet the Vision Statement. The City Charter and the various development regulations are designed as minimum standards. Those who choose to undertake development within the City and in areas adjacent to the City are encouraged to buy into the spirit of this plan and present development proposals that exceed the standards. Planned development is preferred over “engineered subdivisions” with additional amenities, quality of design and construction that will benefit the residents and advance the objectives of the Plan.*

## ***Statement and Desired Future Conditions***

Based on input obtained from the public participation process, a vision statement was developed, and statements of desired future conditions for each planning element were written to guide growth during the next 20 years. While the vision statement is broad and general, statements of desired future conditions reflect more specific values, issues and concerns. Desired future conditions, often called goals, are defined as long-term ideals or end products that are desired. Since they are ideals, desired future conditions are rarely fully achieved. Statements of desired future conditions were derived from citizens’ expressions of special values, issues, concerns and needs stated or implied in interviews with community leaders, at informal gatherings at local restaurants, at the first public workshop, and in response to the community survey. Statements of desired future conditions are presented with each planning element.

### ***Vision Statement for the City of Delta***

***Preserve and enhance Delta as an “All American City” in the heart of western Colorado, while retaining our community spirit, fostering economic growth, and prosperity to create an attractive and vibrant rural community for residents, businesses and visitors.***

## ***Development of Alternative Growth Management Scenarios***

Three alternative growth management scenarios were developed and presented to the Steering Committee for comment and then presented at the second public workshop for discussion and comment. The scenarios are described in detail in Chapter 3.

## ***Selection of a Preferred Growth Management Scenario and Development of the Future land Use Map***

Based on input from the Steering Committee and the second public workshop, a preferred growth management scenario and the draft future land use map were developed and presented to the Steering Committee and then to the public at the third public workshop.

***The Steering Committee recommends that planning for the higher growth scenario will put the City on a pro-active path to addressing potential growth impacts. Using the philosophy that it is better to be ahead of the curve than behind will allow the City to be better positioned to deal with whichever growth path it experiences during the next 20-30 years.***

## ***Policies and Action Items***

Desired future conditions are achieved by developing and implementing policies that provide guidance to city officials as well as individuals and businesses that seek a change in land use or propose new development.

- ◆ A policy is defined as a statement describing the general philosophy that guides decision making consistent with achieving a desired future condition.
- ◆ An action item is defined as a specific step that should be accomplished to implement a given policy.

The Steering Committee played a central role in developing and recommending policies and action items, which are presented with each planning element in the following chapters.

## *Community Roots*

Delta's unique geographical setting and its rich history create a strong sense of place and a special community character. Located at the confluence of the Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers, Delta is well situated at the crossroads of US 50 and State Highway 92. It is the gateway to the Gunnison River Valley and the rich agricultural lands located adjacent to Paonia, Hotchkiss, and the slopes of the Grand Mesa.

Considered the first identifiable human inhabitants of the region, the Fremont people traversed the valley during hunting and gathering trips and cultivated crops such as corn, squash and beans. After the Fremont disappeared around 1200 A.D., Ute bands, who were primarily hunters and gatherers attracted by the mild winters and proximity to abundant game, became the primary residents of the area. The Utes remained the dominant inhabitants until they were forcefully removed to Indian reservations in southwest Colorado and northeast Utah.



The Delta area was recognized by early settlers as a favorable location for fruit growing and other agriculture. A flourishing agricultural industry emerged at the east end of the valley as water was diverted from the Gunnison and Uncompahgre Rivers to fill the extensive network of ditches and canals.

Railroads were completed through Delta in 1890, providing easy access for local growers. Refrigerated railroad cars were the primary transportation method for shipping fruit until the late 1970s when truck transport became dominant.

Coal mining has played a significant role in the history of the Delta area. The Somerset mine area ships coal to the nation by rail which runs through Delta.

## *From the Past into the Future: Growth Trends*

During the past century, the population of the City of Delta has grown from 470 in the year it was incorporated in 1882, to approximately 7,782 in 2006, as estimated by the Colorado Office of Demography (COD). From incorporation to 1980 there was sporadic growth in the City. From the 1980's to the 1990's, Delta's population actually declined. In 1990 the City had a population of 3,789. The growth rate accelerated during the 1990s, partially due to rapid annexation, resulting in a population of 6,400 in 2000. According to COD population estimates, the city grew to a population of 7,674 by July 2004, an annual average increase of about 2.2 percent.

This Comprehensive Plan also addresses the area surrounding Delta, including the area within the water service area, which is referred to as the plan area. In Colorado, statutory authority for developing three mile plans is found in C.R.S. 31-12-105(c).

The estimated 2000 population of the Delta County was 43,355, which includes the City of Delta. Future population growth in the County will impact the regional economy and some City services. Growth of the City's surrounding area will also affect the amount of land needed for commercial land uses, most of which will continue to be located within the city or newly annexed areas. Thus, it is important to develop population projections for the County as well as for the city.

Figure 1-1 and Table 1-1 present alternative population projections for the City of Delta. Given the uncertainty of future local, regional, national, and international events and conditions, it is preferable to present future population growth as a range rather than as a single number. Figure 1-1 and Table 1-1 show projected population growth from 2010 to 2030 under low, moderate, and high growth scenarios. Figure 1-1 and Table 1-1 also indicate historic growth for the city from 1960 to 2006.

The three population growth scenarios are based on alternative average annual growth rates, which are derived from historical growth trends as well as projections developed by COD for Delta County. The rationale for the each alternative growth rate is described below.

- ◆ **Low growth (1 % average annual growth rate)** – Between 1960 and 1970, the City of Delta experienced a net loss of 168 persons, according to the U.S. Census, declining from 3,832 to 3,694. Between 1980 and 1990, the population of Delta declined from 3,931 to 3,789. Based on COD estimates, the city's population increased by only 1.6 percent from 2005 to 2006. Thus, it is possible, based on past and recent trends, that the City of Delta and the surrounding plan area could experience slow growth during the next 20 years.
- ◆ **Moderate growth (3.6% average annual growth rate)** – Between 1990 and 2000, the City of Delta population increased from 3,789 to 6,400, a 70% increase due in part to annexation. A steady growth rate continued from 2000 to 2006, according to COD, with the population increasing from 6,400 to 7,782. Predicting an economic recovery in Colorado and a strong national economy, COD projected that Delta County will grow to a population of about 81,350 by 2025, an average annual increase of 2.8 %. Thus, it is

possible, based on past trends and COD projections, that the City of Delta and the surrounding plan area could experience moderate growth during the next 20 years.

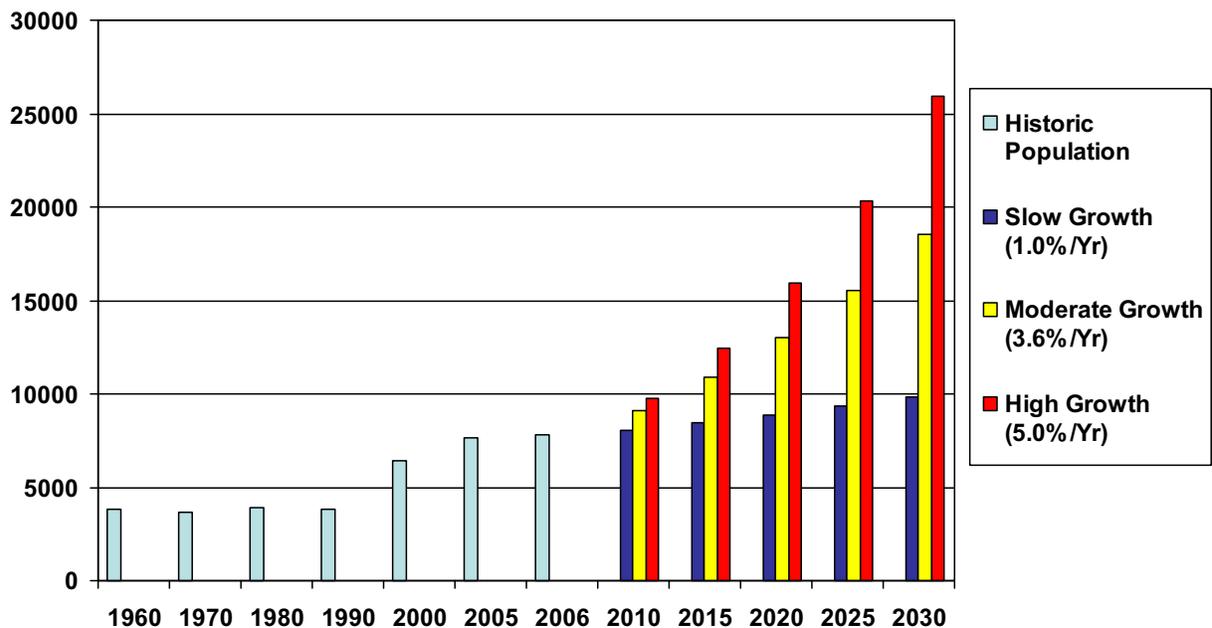
- ◆ **Robust growth (5% average annual growth rate)** – Periods of robust growth have occurred in the past, according to the U.S. Census. Between 1990 and 2000, the City of Delta population increased from 3,789 to 6,400, a 70% increase, due to annexation. Although such growth rates have not been sustained for more than ten years, it is possible, with the combination of Delta’s high quality of life and the impending retirement of Baby Boomers, that Delta could experience robust growth during the next 20 years.

Based on past trends, it is probable that growth rates will fluctuate during the next 20 years. However, periods of low growth could be sustained if the state and national economies stagnate, resulting in fewer newcomers. Periods of robust growth could be sustained with healthy state and national economies, and continued preservation and enhancement of Delta’s quality of life. With the hindsight of past growth trends and confidence that COD’s projections for Delta County are reasonable, it appears likely that net growth between now and 2025 will be in the moderate range.

Applying the alternative average annual growth rates to the City of Delta indicates a 2030 population ranging from a low of about 9,822 to a high of approximately 25,937 with a moderate rate totaling 18,544 (see Figure 1-1).

Table 1-1 indicates historic and projected future growth rates using slow, medium, and high growth rates. Table 1- 2 indicates regional growth rates for Delta, Mesa, and Montrose counties and the municipalities in those counties as well as the unincorporated area in each county. It is interesting to note the large unincorporated population in each county. Table 1-3 shows the State Demographer’s long range projection for growth for the State as well as Delta, Mesa, Montrose and Gunnison Counties from 2000-2030.

**Figure 1-1**  
**City of Delta Historic and Projected Population Growth**



**Table 1-1  
City of Delta Historic and Projected Population Growth**

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
<b>Historic Population Growth</b>	3832	3694	3931	3789	6400	7782					
<i>Projected Population Growth 2010-2030</i>											
<b>Slow Growth (1.0%/Yr)</b>							8050	8460	8892	9345	9822
<b>Moderate Growth (3.6%/Yr)</b>							9141	10909	13019	15538	18544
<b>High Growth (5.0%/Yr)</b>							9775	12476	15923	20322	25937

**Table 1-2**

	<b>April 2000</b>	<b>July 2001</b>	<b>July 2002</b>	<b>July 2003</b>	<b>July 2004</b>	<b>July 2005</b>	<b>July 2006</b>	<b>Amt</b>	<b>% 2005-2006</b>
Delta County	27,834	28,709	29,196	29,662	30,080	30,257	30,676	419	1.4%
Cedaredge	1,854	1,915	1,941	2,014	2,077	2,094	2,132	38	1.8%
Crawford	366	373	372	374	376	373	374	1	0.3%
<b>Delta</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>7,399</b>	<b>7,581</b>	<b>7,640</b>	<b>7,647</b>	<b>7,659</b>	<b>7,782</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1.6%</b>
Hotchkiss	968	979	977	977	972	960	956	-4	0.4%
Orchard City	2,880	2,913	2,907	2,976	3,075	3,141	3,180	39	1.2%
Paonia	1,497	1,553	1,554	1,555	1,551	1,534	1,531	-3	0.2%
Unincorporated Area	13,869	13,577	13,864	14,126	14,382	14,496	14,721	225	1.6%
<b>Regional Historic Population Growth</b>									
<b>MESA COUNTY</b>	116,255	120,128	122,469	125,143	127,946	130,662	135,468	4,806	3.7%
Collbran	388	602	618	628	637	642	657	15	2.3%
De Beque	451	462	471	478	497	504	508	4	0.8%
Fruita	6,478	6,787	7,270	7,725	8,507	9,393	10,349	956	10.2%
Grand Junction	41,986	44,788	45,675	46,850	48,314	49,422	51,631	2,209	4.5%
Palisade	2,579	2,645	2,691	2,737	2,802	2,842	2,941	99	3.5%
Unincorp. Area	64,373	64,844	65,744	66,725	67,189	67,859	69,382	1,523	2.2%
<b>MONTROSE COUNTY</b>	33,432	34,601	35,435	36,116	36,933	37,880	38,903	1,023	2.7%
Montrose	12,344	13,493	14,153	14,746	15,351	16,070	16,486	416	2.6%
Naturita	635	648	658	656	659	657	675	18	2.7%
Nucla	734	745	744	737	736	733	753	20	2.7%
Olathe	1,573	1,622	1,642	1,653	1,675	1,693	1,766	73	4.3%
Unincorp. Area	18,146	18,093	18,238	18,324	18,512	18,727	19,223	496	2.6%

Source: Colorado State Demographer

**Table 1-3  
Colorado Population Growth Projections- State and Counties 2000-2030**

State	Demographer's Office Estimate	July, 2000		July, 2005		July, 2010		July, 2015		July, 2020		July, 2025		July, 2030		% increase 2000- 2030
		SDO Projection														
<b>State</b>		4,338,789	4,718,562	5,207,801	5,729,168	6,285,135	6,816,932	7,321,292	68.7%							
<b>COLORADO</b>																
<b>Counties</b>																
Delta	43,355	49,375	58,196	66,453	74,038	81,350	89,369	106.1%								
Mesa	117,653	130,662	150,504	169,479	190,019	212,281	234,701	99.5%								
Montrose	33,671	37,880	43,875	51,861	59,063	66,972	74,693	121.8%								
Gunnison	13,963	14,264	15,233	16,507	17,880	19,168	20,267	45.1%								

Source: Colorado State Demographer SDO- Colorado State Demographer

## *Delta Comprehensive Plan 1997*

The Steering Committee for the updated comprehensive plan scored “key elements” they wanted to see included in the updated plan as follows:

<b>Key Element</b>	<b>Status</b> (C=completed, I=incomplete, P=in progress)
1. Accommodation of development in desirable locations by extension of City utilities and City investment in infrastructure.	P (substantially completed)
2. Development of a concise set of development regulations designed to promote efficiency, segregate incompatible land uses, and equitably assign the costs of growth and development.	P (code rewrite done 1999)
3. Implement plans to safely accommodate vehicular, pedestrian, rail and recreational traffic.	P (rail/truck route)
4. Annex areas around the City served by city utilities and avoid further extension of city water and sewer beyond the city limits as such exists from time to time.	C
5. Implement programs to curtail criminal activity and promote effective, efficient law enforcement and criminal justice system.	P
6. Manage and extend city utilities including water, sewer, electricity, and trash collection in an efficient manner to provide reasonable rates and quality service	P
7. Promote first class emergency services	C
8. Continue efforts to enhance community design and appearance, including historic preservation, housing rehabilitation, landscaping, street scape, store front improvements and urban forestry.	P
9. Provide quality parks and recreation services to meet the growing and diversified population.	P
10. Implement appropriate and cost effective practices and regulations to mitigate adverse environmental impacts and protect the quality of our air and water	ICP
11. Promote economic development by generating appropriate incentives that attract and retain job creating industries	P

“Delta believes in promoting growth in our community. We also want to mitigate the negative impacts that growth can bring. We are continually allowing citizens to review and adjust our ordinances which allows us to collectively review the proposed growth and encourage the positive elements the community is seeking as part of that growth.” (Page 12, Delta Comprehensive Plan, 1997)