Envisioning Our Tomorrows So We Can Advocate Today!
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The Northeast Colorado Regional Visioning Project was a grass roots effort where citizens were able to provide input into the future through town hall meetings, focus groups, electronically through Blogs, one-on-one conversations and online surveys and through printed materials.

The Board of Directors of Progressive 15 knew that by working together within the region and identifying those things that we can all support, we will be stronger in our advocacy so that our region will be more economically viable and the quality of life for the citizens will be enhanced.

The following pages outline the findings of these efforts.

David Foy
Chairman of the Board
Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining Company

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Overview of Project

Many Backgrounds        Many Voices        One Vision

The 15 counties in Northeast Colorado that are part of the Progressive 15 membership can have a vibrant and prosperous future, but to prepare, we must honestly and objectively decide what that future is to be. We must answer the tough questions and we must work together.

This report is not meant to be a replacement for all the work that individual towns, cities and counties have already completed. Nor is it intended to replace the work of the associations, groups or entities that have been focusing on their particular issues. In fact, no laundry list of projects will be produced.

This report is focused on ideas that were gleaned as being opinions held by all parts of the region and recognizing that while differences will exist and we can focus in on the things of mutual agreement. Before the process was over we had over 500 contacts for input.

Progressive 15’s hope is that this document will be used as a guideline for entities within the region as they complete their own visioning processes and strategic planning. Progressive 15 also hopes that elected officials and state & federal agencies will look at the report as a resource in developing policy and/or legislation so as to support our efforts for economic vitality and quality of life in the region.
Seven topic focused meetings were held over the summer of 2007. The topics covered were:

1. Agriculture
2. Infrastructure
3. Economic Opportunity
4. Community Development
5. Health Care
6. Education
7. Government

From the topic focused meetings it became clear early on, that even with varied topics the issues still remained the same.

Best Features of Region:

- Quality of Life
- Growth in “Green” Technologies
- Educational Opportunities
- Community Safety
- Communications Technology.

Items of Greatest Concern:

- Agriculture sustainability
- Water Limits
- Increasing Costs
- Presence of competition – both internal and external – as opposed to cooperation

Most important for the future:

- Meeting Local Needs Locally
- Renewable Energy
- Attracting Retirees
- Attracting and Retaining Young People
- Changes in Educational Needs
- Health Care Changes
- Meeting Transportation Needs
- Water and Agriculture
Next we look at the surveys, town hall meetings and one-on-one conversations. They showed the following:

**The Greatest Strengths** of the region were identified as:

- Environment
- Parks & Recreation
- Education
- Public Safety
- Community Diversity, Character, Feel

**The Greatest Concerns** for the region were:

- Employment
- Economic Development
- Arts & Culture
- Housing

Items that would have the **Biggest Impact** on economic prosperity and quality of life in the Northeast Colorado region in the next 25 years:

- Availability of Water
- Availability of Jobs
- Quality of K-12 education
- Growing local entrepreneurs
- Business Recruitment
- Preservation of Agriculture
The survey asked what would cause the respondent to move away from the region.
Next the survey asked what 3 things most impact your decision when selecting a town/area to live?
Survey Respondent Characteristics

- Most respondents were long time residents of the region – 59% over 10 years
- Every county was represented
- Most planned to stay in the region
- Overall they rated their communities’ livability as “good”.
- 47% felt they had “moderate impact” in making their community a better place
- They were active in public affairs – 86% has attended a public meeting or contacted an elected official
- Half were between 51 and 65
- 99% were Caucasian
- They were highly educated
- Respondents came from all 15 counties with highest from Logan and Morgan counties

Ft Morgan - 970-768-2230 or cathy@sagestrategies.biz
The 20 Year Vision

5 Key Focus Areas
Saving Our Agriculture Roots

- Cooperative Rural-Urban efforts to main adequate water in region
  - Local land use plans encouraging native species
  - Conversation
  - Regional water authority-water banks – water coops
  - Water Storage
  - Incentives to lease rather than sell water
  - Ground water monitored in real time
  - Timely resolution of water issues
- Development of Renewable Energy
- Education on the value of agriculture
  - Food, Fiber
  - Open Space
  - Carbon Credits
  - Renewables
- Agriculture producing/growing product – developing it and then marketing it
- Continued education on new technologies, trends and options
- Everything produced in agriculture can be put to some use
- Diversification of crops and exploration of optimum crops, cultivation techniques and marketing techniques more suited to arid climate
- Make sure regulations don’t come with unintended consequences and are based on sound scientific findings
- Value Added Agriculture
Regional / Internal Cooperation

- Rural – Urban Cooperation to enhance Progressive 15 region’s political effectiveness
- Recognize and develop the common economy
- Local governments partnering to share services, equipment and costs
- Land use planning requires local, regional and statewide perspectives
- Identification of locally-controlled solutions, pooling of resources and sharing of benefits to meet the region’s energy needs
- Identify problems that have the potential to be resolved on a multi-entity basis
- Regional leadership will become increasingly important
- Local control can co-exist with regional and state policies
Blending Our Heritage With Our Future

- Occupations, recreation, education and healthcare will support and promote the needs of young families
- An atmosphere will be created that provides retired individuals with access to recreation, transportation, employment and healthcare, and that helps them develop bonds to their community
- Preserving our historical footprint and community character for both economic and institutional memory
- Recognizing the diversity of our citizens and embracing and engaging all segments of our population
- Blue Skies, Open Space, Clean Water and Fresh Air have served us well and can be part of the solution for statewide goals
- Agriculture in our region provide some of the lowest cost food and fiber in the world and now can also serve the State as we look at a “Green” economy
- Reduction in Rural representation creates opportunities to educate and partner with our urban legislators
- Neighbors helping Neighbors will continue to be the norm
Sustainable Economy

- Equal and affordable access to communications technology across the region
- Diversity in economic base
- Growing local entrepreneurs
- Expansion of tourism in region
- Support downtown historical districts
- Development of Wind, Solar and Bio Diesel
- Development of Value Added Agriculture
- Small business will be supported in creating opportunities that allow them to compete in a global economy
- Education directly linked to job opportunities in the region
- Health care will be an economic driver for the region
- Infrastructure in place to support economic sustainability
  - Transmission lines
  - Roads
  - Water
- Affordable housing in place
- Recreational amenities, cultural activities, open space and parks in place to attract workers
- Regulations and laws that support growth and innovation in business
- Recruitment of business that is compatible with resources of the region
- Supporting expansion of local business
At The End of the Day......

- We Need To:
  - Recognize that change is inevitable and work to be pro-active
  - Recognize we are now in a global economy
  - Recognize that strong local, regional and state leadership will be needed
  - Recognize that partnerships and cooperation both internally and externally will be needed to secure our future

47% of survey respondents felt a regional vision and regional cooperation had a “big impact” on their county. Another 38% felt it had a “moderate impact”.
Transportation creates jobs. It's been that way throughout history; be it seaports, rivers, railroads or the roadways of today, economic growth is a natural byproduct of our highways and byways. And that's what the Ports-to-Plains Corridor is all about - bringing new jobs and opportunities to communities throughout the region.

A global economy means a world of opportunities for the communities along the Ports-to-Plains Corridor, and our success invariably depends on our connection to these new markets. Ports-to-Plains aims to provide that connection, while also improving highway safety and creating a secure, efficient corridor in which to move freight.

By developing the infrastructure to support the region's growing renewable energy market, Ports-to-Plains will help lead the charge in reducing our dependency on foreign oil - an approach that will inevitably lead to more investment in wind energy and biofuels. That means more investment in our communities. The result? More jobs for the people of our region.
In addition to food, livestock can provide opportunities for composting and methane digesting.
During the topic-focused meetings it was noted the rural housing development helped in bringing the youth back to their communities.
A big thank you to the people listed above. Over 200 invitations to participate were sent out and these people gave willing of their time and expertise. Our hope is that we have every name of the participants who took their time to attend meetings and answer phone calls. If a name was left out it was done so inadvertently.

Facilitators for the Process:

Blue Key Group - Loveland & Sterling

Non Profit Doctor – Fort Collins

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- Danyel Brenner, Senator Wayne Allard
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- Darlene Scott, Office of Economic Development
- Debbie Thomas, First National Bank, Burlington
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- Linda Rae Schaal, Schaal Drilling
- Helen Newberry
- Anna Wheeler
- Kim Hubbard, Pioneer Valley/Healthy Living Systems
- Kristine McClain, CHFA
- Julie Scruby, USDA-RD
- Jane Winslow, USDA-RD
- Cathy Shull, Progressive 15
- Survey, Blog & One-on-One Respondents
Supporting education is just plain smart.

At Qwest®, we believe in the power of education to change lives and enrich communities. We put our support behind pre-K through 12 education with initiatives that ensure students are ready to learn, teach parents their important role in student learning, and help teachers acquire new tools and skills. From fostering community involvement to facilitating investment in schools, we know how to hit the books. To find out more visit qwest.com/community.
Appendix

- Photo Credits

  - Cover Photo ........................................Northeastern Junior College
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It's easy to see that renewable energy brings economic stability to Northeastern Colorado. And Tri-State, your reliable wholesale power supplier, strongly supports the development of Colorado's renewable energy resources.

Tri-State is working with wind energy developers to connect new projects into the transmission grid. But today, the existing electrical transmission system is at capacity.

There is a solution. Your co-op's Eastern Plains Transmission Project, a proposed network of transmission lines throughout eastern Colorado, will increase the capacity to carry large amounts of renewable energy to electric consumers.

Thank you, Progressive 15, for supporting the co-ops in this important project. Together, we will open a door to a new energy opportunity in rural Colorado.

For more information about the EPT, visit www.tristategen.com or contact us at 800-274-3335 or Denver 333-7171.