

Source: Ouray News

Recommendations of the Study Group

March 27, 2009

Citizens in Ouray County might be forgiven if they think local government has gone study crazy. It did, creating the Study Group to study the Theobald build-out study and the RPR study of what it's going to take to keep up levels of county government services. (The Study Group recommends three other studies, so there).

The whole process has been three years in the making, and this week, the Study Group – which deserves hearty appreciation for its hard work and careful thought – rolled out its findings.

Turns out all these meetings and projections might actually provide a road map for better decision making in Ouray County's future.

The Study Group's recommendations deserve a full unedited viewing, and here they are.

1. Changes to the Land Use Code that encourage reduced housing unit density, especially in outlying areas, may reduce the rate of decline in Levels of Service (LOS). Encouraging development in the Urban Growth Boundary areas will also mitigate demands on service.
2. Additional sources of property taxes such as appropriate development of businesses and industry may reduce the rate of decline in LOS.
3. Breaking out cost of services by subsections of the county and basing the property tax structure or assessing certain fees based on additional costs may offset impacts on LOS. (Distance-based impact fee or taxation.)
4. Capital improvements to heavily traveled or badly deteriorated roads or administrative facilities cannot be funded by current taxing levels, impact fees or other funds. Other sources of funds such as bond issues or mil levies need to be considered. Development agreements and PUDs that directly impact use of certain roads need to include considerations for road improvement.
5. The RPI study clearly indicates that the county needs to develop a long-range strategic economic plan tied to land use planning. This may include the creation of an Economic Development Board in association with the municipalities. Additionally, it may be beneficial for the county to be involved in tourism development activities.
6. A communications plan to the public must be developed so that the LOS concept is fully understood and an opportunity must be given so that the public can indicate what is considered an acceptable LOS.
7. The information gathered in both the Theobald Study and the RPI Study must be shared with the municipal governments and, in particular the school systems, so that a comprehensive growth and economic strategy can be developed.
8. A specific VMT study for the county may help find a reliable method for assessing the impacts on roads based on location within the county.
9. Impact fees need to be uniformly assessed and collected to the extent the law allows. This will require a specific impact fee support study in order to justify fee levels.

10. The public needs to be informed as to what services the county provides are mandated and what services are discretionary.

11. The Study Group recommends that the BOCC enact procedures or ordinances to encourage or mandate the retention of water rights in the county via incentives in the Land Use Code.

The Study Group's complete findings can be viewed online at http://ouraycountycogov-volunteers.org/ouray_co_study_team/ouray_county_study_team.html