



To: La Plata County Board of County Commissioners

From: League of Women Voters of La Plata County

Re: Comprehensive Plan

Date: Nov. 8, 2011

The La Plata County League of Women Voters has long advocated comprehensive planning. Since the 1980's we have had a position, reached after study and consensus in our local group, which echoes state and national positions, that supports comprehensive long-range planning with consideration of environmental, public-health, social and economic impacts of actions. We support coordinated planning among units of government, governmental agencies and the private sector and encouraging and incorporating diverse public input into the planning process. With this background, the League followed the county's development process for its contemplated long range plan with interest, including having members who participated in the public planning meetings and on the Work Group. We, as most other interested parties, did not see every item we wished for included in the draft plan. That is what is to be expected from months of talking, listening and working things out among a large and diverse group of people with different priorities. But we did see the draft plan as a fair statement of the realities in this county which promised to lead to planning and action by the County government that reflected the desires of our citizens. LWVLPC strongly supported this. Now we see a final plan developing that is hardly recognizable as the document that was hammered out from the work of so many of us over such a long time.

For example, The League of Women Voters of Colorado studied Sustainability in 2009-2010 and came to consensus on this topic. This means the concept of Sustainability, which we define as a balance in meeting current environmental, economic and human needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet the same goal, now is a stated principle of the League of Women Voters of Colorado. This is a position that was not taken because of any international entity mandating it, but because league members in Colorado came to an agreement that these are values in which we believe and want to use in our lives. The Draft Plan also recognized this value and provided it as a tool on which to base County actions. But this critical component of our county planning has been completely eliminated from the final plan.

The LWVLPC has taken a position supporting a balanced transportation system so that all forms of transportation are accommodated. We're concerned that our natural resources be recognized and that hazards that could result from development be addressed. We support the use of a variety of energy sources with predominant reliance on renewable resources and incorporating alternative sources of energy whenever viable. We were encouraged by the recognition of air quality issues in the Draft Plan. But, we are concerned that we will not see any of these points survive and remain in the Final Plan.

Perhaps equally concerning to the League is the appearance of disregard by some of the Planning Commissioners of the hard work done by residents of this county in creating the draft plan. Over the last two years there were an incredible number of meetings attended by interested citizens from all over the county and all with different issues that were important to them. But they all listened to each other respectfully and attempted to understand and allow for these diverse needs in this plan. To see this work given so little consideration must only reinforce the unfortunate belief by so many that the individual has no impact on government.

What the League saw four months ago as a Draft Comprehensive Plan for La Plata County that reflected the desires of County citizens, that gave the County a robust tool for planning growth and progress, and that it could strongly support no longer exists. What is emerging from the Planning Commission is an ineffectual document that has little connection to the needs of the entire county. This will be something we can not support and hope that you will not, either.

The League of Women Voters of La Plata County

Patricia Pegram
President