Design Workshop and the County conducted five focus groups Nov 7th – 9th, 2022 to inform subsequent phases of the San Miguel County East End Master Plan. Over thirty people participated in each 1-hour focus group, including invitees considered subject matter experts in their respective fields, as well as community members. The planning team gave a brief presentation describing the Master Plan process and existing conditions in the planning area, then asked the groups a series of questions via Mentimeter, both multiple choice and open-ended, to get a better understanding of opportunities and challenges in each of five topic areas:

1. Tourism, Recreation & Visitors
2. Housing Considerations
3. Environmental Stewardship & Priorities
4. Mobility & Transportation
5. Equity, Inclusion & Livability

The key overall takeaways and those from each focus group are summarized below. When summarizing feedback, specific statements that were provided by participants are used and are generally not edited. Complete results from the focus groups are available on the County’s website.

Overall, feedback from the focus groups begins to identify some of the tensions within the community about the preservation of land versus the development of affordable housing, the perceived differing sentiments between long-time locals versus newer community members, and the balance of the natural environment with recreational uses. Similarly, some common themes are beginning to emerge, including a love of Eastern San Miguel County in terms of sense of place, community and natural beauty, an interest in increasing transit service and walkable places, and a desire to provide additional opportunities for all community members to participate fully.

OVERALL TAKEAWAYS

What Makes San Miguel County a Great Place
The natural landscape and strong community are the two main reasons San Miguel County is a great place according to focus group participants.

When it comes to nature, people love the scenic natural beauty of the area and its amazing features, including the San Juans, the Mesas, and the intact wildlife corridors. The majestic nature of the box canyon, fresh air and wide, open spaces attract residents and visitors alike. Conservation and respect for the natural world are paramount.

Looking at community, people love the area’s walkability, funky and quirky lifestyles, small town atmosphere, the amazing festivals and music scene, access to outdoor recreation (especially skiing) and active lifestyles, and
work/life balance. A sense of safety and a small-town atmosphere also make the County a special place, along with the history of the area, civic engagement, and lack of sprawl.

**Location of Growth and Development**
Focus group attendees provided high-level feedback about locations where growth and development are appropriate and inappropriate. Future phases of community engagement will dive into this issue in more detail, but the initial feedback is useful in understanding where participants might prioritize growth and development.

Areas identified as generally most appropriate for growth included
- Within existing towns
- Immediately adjacent to existing towns
- Within existing subdivisions in the County

When it came to identifying areas that are most and least appropriate for development, participants placed dots on a map. The map provides a general idea of this issue, and more detailed mapping exercises will occur in future phases.

Areas considered most appropriate for development are concentrated in the northern portion of the study area – Telluride, Aldosoro Ranch, Ilium, Ilium Valley, Mountain Village and Lawson. Only a handful of participants selected locations in the southern portion of the County, including San Bernardo, Trout Lake, and Ophir Needles. Areas considered least appropriate for development were more varied and scattered throughout the County. The highest concentration of responses is in the Deep Creek Mesa area, Ophir, and Alta.
Positive Impacts & Opportunities of Tourism
Out of nine choices, the top five positive impacts of tourism according to thirty-five respondents are:
- food & beverage
- services provided by tax revenues
- job opportunities
- economic development
- arts & culture

Community Assets Negatively Impacted by Tourism
According to thirty-two responses, community assets most negatively impacted by tourism include:
- crowding
- transportation congestion
- degradation of natural assets
- availability of housing
- trash

What, if any, are the most positive impacts and opportunities of tourism?

What, if any, community assets are most negatively being impacted by tourism?
Changes/Challenges Related to Tourism or Outdoor Recreation over Next 10-20 Years

According to focus group participants, major changes/challenges include:

- **Carrying Capacity & Recreation Infrastructure**: Degradation of trails from overuse, trail maintenance, permits required for trail use, outdoor user education, increased traffic, lack of parking, impacts of visitors on recreational amenities, increased pressure on Search & Rescue personnel, private property owners withholding easements for trails or guiding, impacts on wildlife and natural resources, SMART management of impacts.

- **Climate Change & Public Health**: Potential for wildfires, water quality and supply, collectively coming out of COVID-19 to determine together what responsible and sustainable growth look like.

- **Quality of Life**: NIMBYism and shortsightedness of some community members, short-timers not honoring what makes the valley magical, too many visitors negatively impact quality of life for full-time residents (e.g. long lift lines, single track bike trails becoming double track, etc.), loss of employee base to serve tourists, erosion of core culture of locals, Telluride becoming prohibitively expensive for regular folks, lack of housing and crowding vs. more trails and activities and more people entering tourism and recreation space.

- **Tourism Market**: Quality marketing, destination resort – flights not getting here, failure of ski company to maintain a world class resort, need to have clear target market (understanding carrying capacity and market to 'most beneficial guests'), too expensive for families, becoming a playground for the 1%, small minority of anti-tourist community members with loud voices, loss of community values, managing and limiting tourism and growth in a day and age when media and social media inherently 'over market' the region, allowing and promoting excessive development and density will negatively impact the environment and ultimately drive tourism away.

Tourism Trends in the Last Five Years

- **Types of Tourism**: Ecotourism, guests love short term rentals for kitchens, etc. vs hotels, day visitors are growing vs. weeklong visitors, the COVID-19 years were an anomaly and we will start seeing more balance moving forward (huge increase due to pandemic in 2020/2021, numbers have decreased a bit in 2022).

- **Community Trends**: Increased traffic on county roads, epic pass has destroyed the ski experience, use of Forest Service-trails, the region has officially been discovered, less involvement from second home owners in community, more backcountry use, more pressure on the natural environment, more education of local issues, COVID-19 stressed people out and put lots of stress on our community which caused a kneejerk reaction of people opposing more tourism – it seems like it has declined from that 2021 peak, shortened shoulder seasons, stabilization of the tourism economy.

- **Economic Trends**: Higher lodging prices, ADR pricing out summer family visitation, seems to be getting more expensive, quantity over quality - in other words, short visits with minimal spending that have detrimental impacts to area, versus longer stays with "vesting" in the area while here.

- **Tourism Clientele**: Less regular people can come visit, more people with more money, digital nomads / remote workers, increase in high end clientele, demand for luxury services, many second homeowners during peak seasons, the attitude of the super-rich has gotten more negative, former visitors become 2nd homeowners due to remote work, changes in spending, more neighboring states coming to visit.
Current Levels of Tourism
When asked about current levels of tourism (from ‘too little’ to ‘too much’), thirty-five respondents feel current levels lean closer to ‘too much’ than ‘too little.’

Historical & Cultural Assets that should be Protected
- **Historical Assets:** Opera house, downtown/Main Street, scenic byways, historic architecture (but not at the cost of the community being able to build affordable housing), Matterhorn Mill, Ames Hydroelectric plant, Telluride National Historic Landmark District, Ames Power story, the Courthouse and the mine, the museum, Pandora Mill, ranching heritage/buildings and agriculture, cheap ski bum housing
- **Cultural/Community Assets:** Mining heritage, tradition of great music, ski bum culture, the weird, funky, friendly, music loving, mountain town idea, festivals, Freebox, core ski culture, kids and elderly, affordable lodging, camping
- **Natural Features:** Valley floor, the Mesas (Deep Creek), ranching heritage, agricultural lands, open forest lands surrounding Telluride, wildlife and critical wildlife corridors, scenic views, high country pass roads, Last Dollar Road Wildlife, unique topography, fauna, and flora

Underserved Populations or Demographics Related to Outdoor Recreation & Barriers to Participation
- **Underserved Populations/Demographics:** Latinx community, disabled, Black community, kids, elderly, low-income earners
- **Barriers:** Economic/cost - ski area prices/tickets/gear are beyond many locals’ ability to pay – skiing is upper-class activity, limited available camping, various access alternatives, language barriers – lack of bilingual resources, lack of mentorship or invitations to join, not having enough time to participate (due to work), education, lack of knowledge/know how, difficult terrain for average hikers, non-snow melted sidewalks, lack of diversity

Celebrating Local Culture & Identity
According to focus group participants, the library offers a variety of programming that celebrates local culture and identity but could use more civic and land use education opportunities. The Opera House, live music and great festivals celebrating film and the arts also promote local culture and identity. Philanthropic activities and the ability to tap into private resources is also important. Local non-profit organizations and churches are also part of the local community fabric, along with free community events at the Warehouse. There are many arts groups and funding for the arts in the area, and partnerships between the community and Telluride schools.
While there are many organizations and events that celebrate local culture and identity, there is a need for more acknowledgment of Native American history and a need to bring together diverse cultural group and underserved communities, as there is currently a separation in Telluride due to these differences.

Tourism Economy Missing Services
- **Transportation**: Transportation options (especially after 2:00am), intercept parking, Uber/Lyft, infrastructure needs work, Yosemite example – visitors park outside Valley and take bus in
- **Lodging**: Affordable options, camp sites, mid-range hotel options, non-profit guest/performer/teacher housing
- **Health services**: Reliable medical care/good facility
- **Activities**: Winter activities that are not sports based, bike tours on trails, commercial outdoor tours on the valley floor, nature exploration, more family fun, café/good breakfast spot, diner at Lawson, covered swimming, recreation center
- **Personnel**: Losing employees and volunteers, more local ambassadors to let guests know what to do while they are visiting

Innovative Approaches to Tourism
- **Types of Tourism**
  - Eco-tourism
  - Podcasts for walking tours
  - Free opportunities
  - Mountain bike classes and tours on the valley floor
- **Sustainability**
  - Permits for certain trails use
  - Additional dispersed recreational opportunities (so impacts to existing facilities can be reduced)
  - Less cars, more bikes, intercept parking
  - Education on our natural resources
- **Marketing**
  - Target more hearty visitors
  - Focus more on international visitors
  - All inclusive, variety of activities
  - More education about history
  - Everyone is welcome!
- **Personnel**
  - Internships

County’s Role in Contributing to Tourism & Outdoor Recreation
Focus group participants think the County can play a variety of roles when it comes to tourism and outdoor recreation, including supporting these activities with infrastructure improvements and working collaboratively with local organizations, municipalities, and the larger region, including neighboring counties, the USFS and others, to engage everyone in collaboratively finding solutions.

One participant suggested the County convene regular outdoor recreation and tourism stakeholder meetings and collaborate with the Tourism Board. Providing open space and trails planning is another role mentioned. Business support is also important, as is open space conservation and protection of scenic corridors and other land use regulations that limit the negative impacts of these activities.
Big Ideas

- More financial support for trail cleanup/building
- More community outreach to diverse groups
- Fireside chats about history
- Trail crews
- Community dinners
- Local service projects
- Ambassadors

- More beginner friendly hiking and biking opportunities
- Towns need to work together
- Meet and greets with food vendors
- Redo mountain bike strategy (more trails and intermediate trails would be huge draw, Summit County example)
- Free fishing lessons
Most Limiting Factors to Addressing Affordability
The top five most limiting factors to addressing affordability according to forty-five focus group respondents are:

- limited developable areas
- infrastructure and water capacity
- community values
- zoning policies
- other

Building or Regulatory Tools to Address Housing Affordability and Displacement
Several building or regulatory tools were selected by thirty-four focus group participants, with the top five being:

- affordable housing mitigation fees
- restricting # of short-term rentals
- allowing duplexes, triplexes and four-plexes by right in all zone districts
- deed restriction requirements for ADUs
- requiring diversity in unit types and eliminating single-family housing only zone districts
County’s Role in Addressing Housing Needs
When asked what the County’s role should be in addressing housing needs, thirty-three respondents’ top five selections were:

- support local housing non-profits
- address through zoning or other land use regulations
- take a lead role to create housing opportunities in unincorporated areas
- enhance services provided by San Miguel Regional Housing Authority
- other

Underserved Populations or Demographics Related to Affordable Housing & Barriers to Entry
It is important to understand which populations or demographics are currently underserved when it comes to affordable housing. It is also critical to understand what the barriers to entry are when considering recommendations for the Master Plan update. According to focus group participants, the following groups are currently underserved:

- Latinx community
- Service industry workers
- Low-income residents
- Middle-income residents (do not qualify for affordable/low-cost housing, but cannot afford free market)
- Older adult population
- Seasonal workers
- Teachers and other public service workers

Innovative Approaches to Housing

- Public/private partnerships (collaborate with TMV and TOT)
- Streamlined processes to reduce time and cost to construct
- “Cluster” style tiny house developments to reduce impact but still house people
- Off-site construction, building modular
- Build on the Pearl Property and parcels in and adjacent to incorporated towns
- More incentives for home sharing
- Tiny homes, long-term camping
- Dormitory style housing for temporary workers
- Nontraditional zoning that allows more diversity
- Restricting square footage unless owners either pay into or offer work force housing
- Softening of HARC regulations for affordable housing projects
- Pearl property
- Zoning incentives for more local housing
- Short term rental caps
- Partnerships with local nonprofits and essential service providers
- Requiring businesses to including employee housing units in any new builds (hotels especially)
- Rent to own model through purchase program
- Providing property owners with subsidies to convert short term rentals to affordable housing
- Long term lease agreements for institutional users
- Regional collaboration
- Mixed deed restricted and non-restricted
- Land Trusts
- Raise height restriction in Shandoka areas
- Camper housing (e.g., Town Park)
- Nonprofit advocate for housing
- Revolving loan funds on rental housing that fund first time home buyer programs
- Work together with local builders and developers
- Require larger employers to provide more housing for their employees
- Offer opportunities for businesses to collaborate or buy into project
- Regulation and curbing of HARC’s inappropriate overreach
- Look to subsidies, incentives, and creative solutions (e.g., apps) to link people looking for housing with those who have it available
- Affordability
- Incentives for empty homes to allow residents to rent
- Real time monitoring of occupancy, unit types and other housing data
- Allow maximum density in already dense areas
- Build compact housing, aka NYC, on land available near current density

Housing Priorities for County
When asked what the County’s priorities should be when it comes to addressing housing, affordability is one of the key issues that need to be addressed. Another issue that is growing is the intensified displacement of local employees to areas farther down valley, away from Telluride and Mountain Village, leading to longer commute times, more traffic and increased environmental impacts. Several respondents feel the County has a responsibility to provide infrastructure and transportation.

Other priorities include addressing inventory shortages, small and medium scale solutions, land banking, water resources, keeping density closer to already developed areas to protect surrounding open and rural lands, providing infrastructure, making existing housing stock more accessible (e.g., cracking down on short-term rentals).

Several suggestions include adding Community Housing zoning as a tool to help the community, raising height restrictions, incentivizing vacant deed restricted properties to be developed in incorporated areas, allowing duplexes and ADUs in more zones, surveying local businesses about employees and housing.

Big Ideas
- Purchase and develop land near the Mill
- Businesses should provide their own housing
- Allow for density / height variances for projects that meet AH community goals - streamline the process
- TOT needs to work with Mountain Village
- Develop housing south in shell station on existing infrastructure
- County can focus on legislative efforts to help our region
- Include Spanish speaking population
- Enforce compliance on the existing deed restricted units
• Consider Valley Floor
• Innovative solutions to net zero building that would fit well in our climate and be affordable
• Update the residential job generation study
• Collaboration between TOT, MV, and SMC
• Create more water storage in the upper reaches of the watershed
• Important to understand the needs of the smaller communities like Trout Lake, Ophir, San Bernardo, Sawpit, etc., as they do not have the resources of the larger entities in the region

• Taxing vacant houses
• Reopen dialogue on “complicated” parcels close to town such as across from Shell Station and Pearl Property
• Use allowances for housing that exist on Valley Floor – do a land swap
• Regional housing plan
• More focus on rental housing
• Pearl property
• Open the valley floor back up to affordable
• Build on existing lots in Lawson and Ilium
• Regional approach rather than fragmented jurisdiction by jurisdiction approach
Environmental Stewardship & Priorities

**Most Significant Climate Related Changes in Past 20 Years**
Out of ten choices, twenty-eight respondents believe the five most significant climate changes in the past 20 years include:

- drought
- wildfire
- wildlife habitat loss
- weather fluctuations
- water and soil quality

**Most Significant Changes Impacting Lifestyles and the Environment in Past 20 Years**
Twenty-seven respondents felt that the most significant changes impacting lifestyles and the environment in the past 20 years include:

- conservation of open space
- mine tailings clean-up
- wetland remediation
- alternative energy options
Largest Land Use Conflicts with Natural Environment

The natural environment of San Miguel County is one of its greatest treasures. When thinking about the future, understanding where current land uses conflict with this environment will help the County make thoughtful choices. Focus group participants noted several areas where these conflicts cause issues. Some of the most mentioned include near the Mesas (ranch style housing), high country, wetlands, wildlife corridors, any uses around wells, in the more forested areas, high density outside towns, suburban sprawl development, Bridal Veil Basin, the north side of the Valley floor, the San Miguel River and remote lakes. Light pollution, due to development, though not a land use, is also an issue that conflicts with the natural environment.

Key Environmental Assets

There are many key environmental assets in San Miguel County. Some of the most mentioned include:

- the Mesas, high country vistas
- Deep Creek
- Water bodies (e.g., San Miguel River), watersheds, critical wetlands, riparian corridors
- Wildlife and wildlife corridors
- Large open spaces and USFS lands
- Air quality
- Clear night sky

Historical & Cultural Assets That Should Be Protected

Historical and cultural assets are important to understanding and maintaining a strong sense of community. Many of the assets mentioned are both historic and cultural. Indigenous cultural assets and ranching and mining heritage are particularly important, along with skiing history (especially 70s era/early ski area structures). Each of these areas include stories, buildings, and other artifacts and knowledge that can help people understand the special nature of the area.

Indigenous Culture

- Native American history
- HARC, native artifacts

Ranching & Mining Heritage & Culture

- Historic ranches, mining houses
- Buckley Wells Cabin

Local Area

- Towns of Telluride, Ophir, Placerville, Sawpit
- Downtown main street buildings
- Downvalley School House
- Courthouse, Museum
- Ames Power Plant
- Matterhorn Mill
- Pandora Mill
- Rio Grande Southern Railroad buildings and infrastructure, Depot
- Galloping Goose
- Transfer Warehouse
- Trout Lake Trestle

County’s Role in Supporting Environmental Stewardship

While there are many roles that might be nice for the County to play in supporting environmental stewardship, maximizing resources to provide the most benefit is critical to success. Some roles focus group members feel the County should play include:

- Regulatory role (creative zoning to allow for unique developments) and critical area planning (CAP goals)
- Direct incentive-based policy and funding to promote environmental stewardship
- Leadership in fostering a community of intersectional environmental thinking
- Leadership with multi-jurisdictional decision-making
- Education and promotion of environmental stewardship ethics
• Working with local, regional, state, and federal stakeholders (CPW and other state agencies, USFS, BLM - public land managers, environmental non-profits, DOW, SMPA)
• Leadership in reducing GHG emissions
• Participate in PES program to increase soil health and water retention

Largest Risks for Future of Environmental Resources
The largest risks for future environmental resources, according to twenty-eight respondents include:
• water scarcity
• development growth/loss of habitat
• wildfire
• tourism
• land use adjacency conflicts

Building or Regulatory Tools to Help Reduce Energy Use and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
In terms of reduction in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, twenty-eight respondents feel that the County should support the following regulatory tools:
• drought mitigation plans/standards
• drought resistant landscape requirements
• energy-efficient building codes
• home weatherization standards
• climate friendly building products and large-scale green waste collection program
Transportation or Land Use Tools to Help Reduce Energy Use and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

When asked what transportation or land use tools the County might support to help reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, the top five twenty respondents selected were:

- more walkable communities (locate homes close to jobs and services)
- more frequent transit service
- electric vehicles used for transit
- carpool/ride share parking
- more transit lines
- electric vehicle charging stations

Methods for Land Conservation

Twenty-three respondents thought the following were important methods the County should explore or strengthen related to conservation:

- regional growth policies/agreements
- incentives
- purchase of land from willing sellers
- transfer of development rights
- easements
Strategies to Conserve Rural Character
Twenty-five respondents feel the County should consider the following strategies to conserve rural character:

- use scenic view protection policies
- support sustainable agriculture
- encourage the increase of rural land that benefits the local area, like community gardens
- offer educational and arts programming activities that highlight this character
- utilize public art and wayfinding elements as placemaking tools

Big Ideas

- Regional non-profit collaboration
- Meet with Ophir, San Bernardo, Trout Lake communities
- Public transportation to Bridal Veil
- Emphasize to / educate visitors, part-time residents & locals about our environmental priorities
- Explore what can be done on the valley floor
- Proactively partner with government agencies (e.g., CPW, USFS) as well as nonprofits that are engaged in environmental stewardship
- Electric rail
- Prioritize wildlife corridors

- Campus for environmental research and education
- Consider a visitor tax to help support environmental impact
- Increase transit options
- Move hospital to center of region to reduce overall road traffic (same for grocery stores)
- Remote parking area down valley on 145
- Rebuild the relationship between Mountain Village and Vallev
- Regional EV Readiness Plan (under development)
- Look more closely at the impacts of the airport
Mobility & Transportation

Most Successful Strides toward Multi-Modal Transportation Options
In terms of mobility and transportation, focus group members feel the most successful strides toward multi-modal transportation options in the County include the gondola, bike path to the west of Telluride, the airport, SMART, the Galloping Goose! and Bustang.

Additional Transportation Programs/Policies to Improve Safety, Mobility & Accessibility
Focus group members had many examples of additional programs and policies the County could implement to improve safety, mobility, and accessibility.

Participants suggested expanding bus service (specifically hours and electrifying the fleet) and gondola service, along with consistent parking policies across all jurisdictions. Several participants mentioned increasing safety for bicyclists and walkers and expanding routes for these modes. A suggestion that businesses should be required to help subsidize ride sharing and/or encourage employees to use buses rather than single-occupancy vehicles was shared, and the ideas that there should be an out of county ride sharing option.

A suggestion was made that SMART routes adjacent to existing population centers should be expanded. Limiting development to existing transit corridors was also a suggested option.

Building housing close to towns so more people can walk, ride bikes, or take the bust to work, the grocery store, library, etc. Intercept parking near Placerville and better infrastructure that accommodates several modes of transportation would be beneficial. Look into European models- utilize existing historical mining infrastructure to potentially develop train system, other gondola or tram lines, funiculars.

Opportunities & Challenges for SMART (San Miguel Area Regional Transportation)
Focus group members mentioned several challenges that SMART will need to address in the future, including:

- Low ridership
- Limited funding and gondola responsibility
- Lack of extended hours, specifically to serve down valley communities or on-call services
- Inability to travel outside the county
- Lack of direct connections to certain communities and long commute times
- Greening the fleet
- Maintaining climate/environmental awareness with wildlife/nature preservation
- Traffic issues
County Road Services
Twenty-one respondents noted that access to public lands is well served by county roads, emergency evacuation is in the middle, and commuting and access to the regional transportation network are not served so well by county roads.

Primary Barriers to Taking Transit
Primary barriers to taking transit according to twenty respondents include:
- service hours not adequate
- bus does not go where I want it to go
- bus does not run frequently enough
- bus stops are difficult to access
- service is slow and the bus is often late or unreliable

What are the primary barriers to taking transit in Eastern San Miguel County?
Primary Barriers Related to Walking & Biking
Primary barriers related to walking and biking for twenty-one respondents include:

- lack of bike paths or lanes
- travel distances too far
- insufficient or dangerous crossings
- weather
- lack of sidewalks and trails

Transportation & Land Use Tools to Help Reduce Energy Use and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
The top tools the County might support to help to reduce energy and greenhouse gas emissions according to twenty-one respondents include:

- more walkable communities (locate homes close to jobs and services)
- electric vehicles used for transit
- more frequent transit service
- electric vehicle charge stations
- carpool/ride share parking
Equitable Mobility Strategies
Twenty-three respondents feel that San Miguel County should explore the following strategies:

- expand access to public transportation options to underserved areas
- leverage partnerships for improved mobility and access
- expand capacity of transportation infrastructure
- rideshare services

What strategies for equitable mobility should the San Miguel County explore?

Big Ideas

- Keep density close to town and existing resources
- Gondola connection to Lawson Hill and Ilium – add more density in both areas
- Electric busses to help the work force get from outer areas to town
- More shoulder room going into town
- Conduct updated employment generation study to see how many people commute to the region
- Cluster housing close to town to cut down on traffic congestion
- Carbon tax on private flight to TRA
- Upgrade chondola to full gondola to serve Meadows residents
- More and affordable commercial flights out of TEX
- If density is close in, then there’s less critical need for transportation
- It would be great to bus our workers like Aspen does or other mountain towns so that we can keep the spur moving
- Widening spur for safety and two-way pacific for safer ingress/egress from town
- Loop train from town to Lawson
- Strategic utilization of the valley floor edge as an alternate transportation solution
- A bus lane on the spur
Partnerships with Employers to Enhance Livability

Partnerships are important and can help enhance livability in communities. According to twenty-four respondents, the County could support the following:

- childcare
- access to health services/social programs
- reduced ski tickets
- free bus passes
- gear swaps

Satisfaction with Availability of Public Safety & Emergency Services, Health Care, Social Services

In terms of satisfaction with the availability of public safety and emergency services, health care, and social services, twenty-seven respondents were generally satisfied with public safety, emergency, and social services, but leaning toward not satisfied with health care.
Celebrating Local Culture & Identity – Effective Examples
Many examples of how the community celebrates local culture and identity were mentioned, including:
- Fourth of July celebration
- Bluegrass and other types of music, and parades
- Fireside chats
- Non-profit DEI work with Claudia Garcia Curzio
- Museum
- Rodeo/fair
- A variety of festivals celebrating various aspects of local culture and art
- Library programming – specifically Latinx outreach
- Rotating active art exhibits
- Sheridan Opera House
- Gay Ski week
- Street dance

Celebrating Local Culture & Identity – What Could be Added
While there are a variety of ways the community celebrates local culture and identity effectively according to focus group participants, there are also additions that could be beneficial for everyone who live and visits the area. Some of the ideas shared include:
- Cultural audit and Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion trainings
- More outreach to Native tribes and immigrant populations to include them in programming/festivals
- Educational programs about local mining and ranching history, wildlife
- Lean into creative innovative ideas and culture instead of getting stuck in the past
- Bilingual and low to no cost events
- Provide more resources for Latinx and native communities
- Assist organizations with short term housing for visiting contractors/artists/festival staff
- More support of family needs through social safety nets (e.g., supporting local non-profits)
- Local discounts to festivals to include more service level employees
- Build stronger relationships with towns and municipalities outside the core

Culture/Language Barriers Limiting Employment/Advancement Opportunities & Tools, Policies, Programs to Help
The most often cited barriers by focus group participants were language, lack of affordable housing, online and technology accessibility issues, non-documented residents fear of deportation, and lack of trade skills education.

County Support for Employee Recruitment & Talent
Participants feel that the County can support employers with employee recruitment and talent by helping with affordable housing close to jobs, and transportation.

Respondents also noted that the County could provide incentives for employers to provide local housing, specific skills training (e.g., bus drivers), professional development, employee benefits (e.g., health insurance, ski pass), and bilingual journeyman training.

County Support for Residents in Career Advancement
Participants identified ways the county could support careers in the community. This included: professional development, continuing education fund, equitable health plans, housing purchase assistance and tiered deed restriction policy so people can move up as their career develops, access to trade and college courses, job training, and transportation. Two additional ideas include supporting education options with regional university and trade schools and facilitating changing community college district to fall under the Colorado Mountain Colleges umbrella.
Promotion/Representation of Locally Owned, Women Owned, Minority Owned Businesses
Participants had suggestions for ways the County can promote and help represent locally owned, women owned, and minority owned businesses. Several ideas were suggested related to services and education including childcare, followed by a variety of ideas related to low/no-interest financial support, funding opportunities to subsidize commercial rental rates, deed restricted commercial spaces, supporting programs for startups (e.g., Telluride Accelerator), mentorship, Noel Night style events for these businesses throughout the year, partnering with Region 10, expanding allowed uses in Lawson and similar areas to promote more diverse businesses and ownership opportunities, more programs and resources to provide information and training to increase representation.

Support for Aging Populations and/or People Who Experience Mobility or Physical Barriers
Ideas for County support for aging populations and people who experience physical, or mobility barriers include:
- New medical facility with expanded care options that is close to housing
- Better public transportation and SMART services
- Diverse senior programming - housing and wellness programs and facilities/community center, home health programming
- Sidewalk maintenance and improvements (e.g., fixing bumps and cracks, clearing ice)
- Clear the ice
- Greater funding for palliative care in region
- More Bingo
- Look at deed restriction language so people can retire and keep their homes
- Help with education in different languages
- Ensure ADA regulations are enforced in businesses and around town

County Role in Addressing Housing Needs
Twenty-seven participants feel that the County could take a role in addressing housing needs in the following ways:
- enhance services provided by San Miguel Regional Housing Authority
- take lead role to create housing opportunities in unincorporated areas
- support local housing non-profits

What role(s) should San Miguel County play in addressing housing needs?

- Take a lead role to create housing opportunities in unincorporated San Miguel County
- Support local housing non-profits
- Enhance services provided by San Miguel Regional Housing Authority
- Other
Limiting Factors to Addressing Affordability
When considering factors that limit addressing affordability, twenty-four respondents selected the following:

- infrastructure capacity
- limited developable areas
- zoning/policies
- services (childcare, health, social, emergency, etc.)
- public funding and community values

Underserved Groups Related to Affordable Housing & Barriers to Entry
Groups that respondents consider underserved when it comes to affordable housing include middle-income earners, seniors, disabled populations, workers who don’t have financial means for down payment/two-month security deposits, Spanish speaking population (processes and paperwork not user friendly), working class and younger community members, young families, young professionals (due to AMI regulations), and undocumented residents.

Barriers to entry include lack of bilingual resources, NIMBYs (those who do not want affordable housing near them), lack of space for housing, historic preservation and open space values, and the fact that the cost of housing far outpaces wages.

Underserved Groups Related to Outdoor Recreation and/or Outdoor Green Spaces and Barriers to Access
In terms of groups that are underserved when it comes to outdoor recreation, respondents noted older residents, community members with limited mobility and/or other physical challenges, and the Latinx population.

Barriers to outdoor recreation or green spaces include cost for certain activities like skiing and mountain biking, trail widths not adaptive for people with mobility challenges, rugged terrain, lack of trailhead transit access, and lack of education about access to public lands.

County Support for Equity Across Race, Income, Gender, Sexual Orientation in Health & Healthy Life Outcomes
Respondents feel the County can work toward equity in health and healthy life outcomes by supporting and initiating DEI practices through inclusive hiring practices, language justice and educational opportunities, evaluating systems to ensure they are equitable and accessible, and hiring more diverse staff.
Another topic participants mentioned was mental health care and grant funding for social services, and progressive multi-family and multi-generational zoning policies, along with surveying immigrant populations to understand their needs.

**Big Ideas**

- Gondola from Lawson Hill to MV
- Gondolas connecting Lawson and other community areas
- Greater diversity in leadership
- Plenty of workforce housing and a thriving community
- Rec Center
- Ilium as a high-density workforce housing area
- Work more harmoniously with other jurisdictions
- Community spaces and resources, especially for positive development of youth
- Continued free access to the gondola for locals.
- A train for visitors, locals as a mode of transportation AND to provide scenic views along the river and from the housing units on the valley floor
- Be creative about ways to be inclusive by building affordable rental and ownership opportunities within and adjacent to the incorporated towns
- Transit solutions for numerous commuters
- Merge MV and Telluride
- Light rail on Galloping Goose
- Improve our infrastructure
- Access to outdoor recreation for all abilities and income statuses
- Affordable rental housing
- Create a services district, to this plan’s boundary
- We are a ski community…create affordable options for all
- Hold TSG accountable
- Link our regional areas together in a much better way
- Activity quiz to find the skills in different cultures
- Hospital with mental health services and Latinx access