



**COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN
2008**

COUNTY OF MORGAN
STATE OF COLORADO
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
2008

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MORGAN COUNTY HISTORY

Arapahoe, Kiowa, Southern Cheyenne, Sioux, and Pawnee Indians once roamed these plains in search of buffalo. In the 1800s, huge herds of cattle passed through Morgan County, traveling along the 1,500-mile route of the Texas-Montana Trail. The long drives were worthwhile, because a steer worth \$17 in Texas could be sold for \$75 in Montana. Westward immigrants pitted their resourcefulness against the harsh terrain. Morgan County was formed in 1889 from part of Weld County. Fort Morgan was built to protect mail and commerce; Brush and Snyder served as shipping centers on the great cattle ranges; and hunters, trappers, and homesteaders gathered in Goodrich, Hillrose, Hoyt, Orchard, Weldona, and Wiggins.

In the late 1800s, progressive business leaders envisioned lush fields on the prairie, and with irrigation the plains blossomed. Cattle and sugar beets have been cornerstones of the region's economy.

The discovery of oil in Morgan County created a mini-boom in the 1950s, when Log Lane Village emerged as a neighboring town to Fort Morgan. In 1977, Pawnee Power Plant was begun, and again the county's economy flourished.

Measuring 36 miles long and 36 miles wide, Morgan County encompasses 1,296 square miles. Morgan County is 36th among Colorado counties measured in square-miles, but is abundantly rich agriculturally with many irrigated and dry land farms as well as beef, sheep and dairy ranches. The City of Fort Morgan is the county seat.

Source: Morgan County Tourism Panel

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

I PURPOSE AND INTENT

A Comprehensive Plan is a description of the County's physical and social attributes, as well as a statement of goals and directions for the County to strive for during the next five to ten years. These goals are implemented through policies and the provisions of the County Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.

Once adopted, the general purposes of the Plan are to:

1. Provide direction for future development of the county.
2. Guide day-to-day development decision making.
3. Provide an information base for use by property developers, other government agencies and research groups.
4. Assist in coordinating various county government functions.
5. Provide a basis for developing specific and necessary regulations, which govern the physical development of the county.
6. Meet federal and state government requirements calling for the existence of a Master Plan to aid in the county's eligibility for assistance from these bodies.
7. Outline the most logical use of land in Morgan County in accordance with the Plan's goals, objectives and policies and sound planning principles.

II LEGISLATION

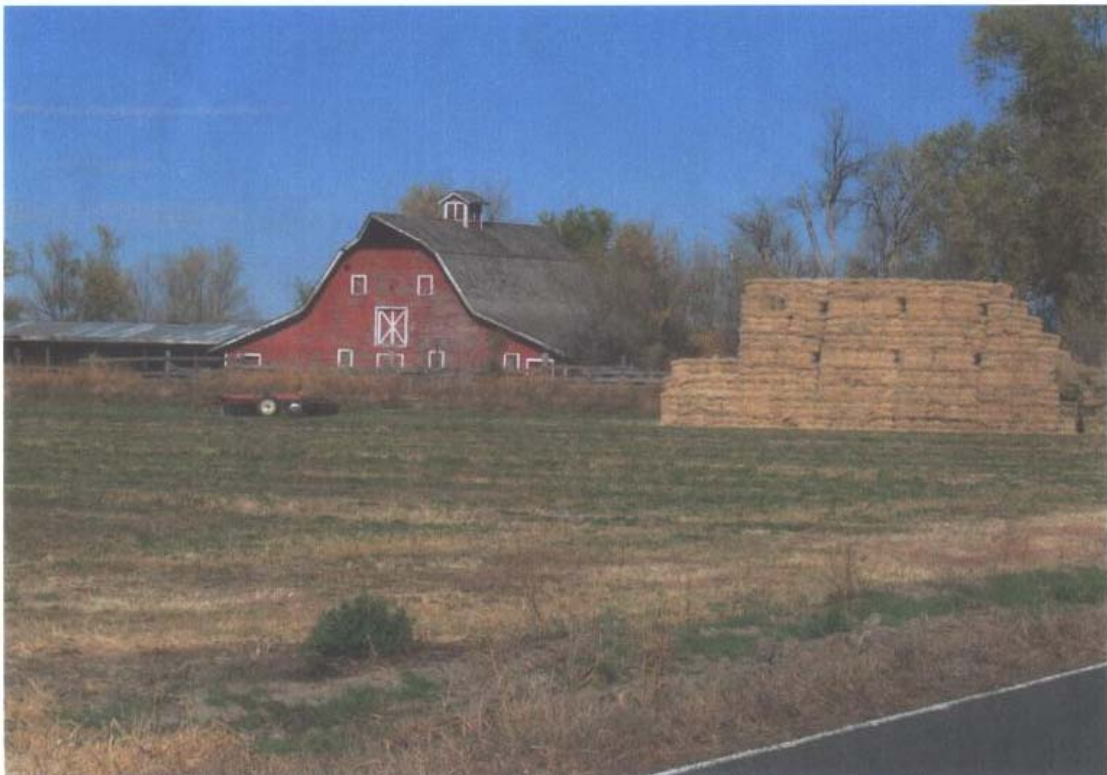
As a document, it must be stressed that the Plan is a guide for decision making. The Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners have formally approved it. It simply provides a framework for decision making for the present and the future. It may be used as a basis for requiring specific changes in development proposals and as a basis for comment in rezoning, pending annexation by county municipalities and other issues requiring formal government decisions.

This County Comprehensive/Master Plan is required by Sections 30-28-106 to 110, Colorado Revised Statutes, and contains the general requirements outlined in the statutes. This document constitutes the official growth guide for the county until amended by resolution of the Planning and Zoning Commission (and official approval of the Board of County Commissioners).

A plan must be continuously monitored and changed. Times and conditions change, and although the goals enumerated in the Plan may be worthy and prove to be far sighted, the policy objectives through which these goals are reached may have to be modified to coincide with the changed conditions. Thus, the Plan must be continuously reviewed and revised by the Planning Commission as time passes. The Plan should be formally reviewed and updated on a five to ten year schedule.

III THE PLAN

Each major section of the Plan is presented separately with background information, the goal(s), and implementing policies listed and a brief discussion of their intent. A summary of the Plans goals and policies follows in Chapter 2.



Chapter 2

PLAN SUMMARY

I INTRODUCTION

The Plan has been formulated as a tool for managing growth and development and to promote stability in the county. The Plan contains policies that are to be used in guiding decision making concerning planning issues. The major elements of the Morgan County Comprehensive Plan are summarized below. General policies found in this summary are not to be used as a substitute for specific policies contained elsewhere in the Plan.

II POLICY PLAN SUMMARY

A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Diversify the economy in Morgan County to broaden business employment opportunities for residents and to further economic growth.

- Promote economic growth and continue to support the county economic development plan.
- Continue to assist the Morgan County Economic Development Corporation.
- Encourage infill in existing business and industrial subdivisions.
- Cooperate with the municipalities to provide incentives for business development when appropriate.

B. ENVIRONMENT

GOAL: To preserve the manmade and natural environment in order to enhance the quality of life in Morgan County.

- Preserve flood ways as designated in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) of Morgan County for open space and drainage purposes.
- Participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) to reduce flood insurance premiums.
- Preserve wetlands and control drainage discharges to preserve water quality.
- Consider a project's impacts in relation to sensitive lands, geologic hazards, soils, slopes, and critical or significant wildlife habitats.
- Protect archeological and historical sites from development to reasonable extent.
- Protect the South Platte River bottomlands for open space and wildlife habitat.
- Develop mineral resources with permits requiring mitigation of adverse impacts to surrounding land uses.

C. LAND USE

1. County Wide

GOAL: To encourage development where: 1) it is in proximity to the activity centers; 2) the proposed development is compatible with existing land uses; 3) there is access to established public infrastructure (primarily road and utilities); and 4) where in outlying areas of the county there is access to utilities and there is little additional burden on rural services.

- Use the planned development process rather than the special review process to assess large residential development projects in isolated areas.
- Development projects may be required to pay for both on and off-site infrastructure improvements.
- Encourage new developments to annex into the municipalities prior to development.
- Include bordering county roads in annexations.
- Coordinate with municipalities for streets and utilities located within the municipalities planning area.



GOAL: The county will encourage the preservation of agriculture production lands in balance with pressures for land use changes to higher intensity development.

- Preserve agricultural lands in areas outside of municipality planning areas to the greatest extent practical.
- Discourage general rezoning of agricultural lands outside of designated development areas.
- Coordinate with the municipalities on land use allocations within their planning areas.
- Cooperate with other agencies helping agriculture producers.

GOAL: Improve Morgan County's image by dealing with community design issues in relation to land use.

- Enforce nuisance regulations and participate in clean-up programs.
- Buffer industrial uses from other uses.

2. Wiggins Area

GOAL: Help encourage economic development in the Wiggins area which will make it a viable alternative as a residential, commercial and industrial community.

- Encourage growth in existing commercial and industrial areas.
- Preserve agricultural lands adjacent to the town outside of the primary growth area.
- Encourage annexation of inliers and development next to town limits.

3. Fort Morgan Area

GOAL: Encourage growth to areas where developments can tie into the existing services or require developers to develop their own services.

- Encourage residential growth in conformance with the City's future land use plan.
- Encourage further commercial and industrial growth to the west of Fort Morgan in those areas with the ability to gain rail access.
- Encourage annexation of inliers and development next to city limits.

GOAL: Coordinate the mix of land uses adjacent to the city limits.

- Develop a joint city/county review process for land use within the City of Fort Morgan's Urban Growth Area.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

4. Log Lane Village Area

GOAL: Encourage development in areas that allow efficient extension of the town's infrastructure.

- Encourage annexation of inliers and smaller parcels adjoining town limits.
- Review regulations for those areas adjacent to Log Lane Village to ensure compatibility with the Village's regulations.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

5. Brush Area

GOAL: Encourage the annexation of inliers on the north and south sides of the City of Brush.

GOAL: Concentrate new developments around the city to take advantage of existing municipal services.

- Develop a joint city/county review process.
- Control access of new developments to county roads.
- Encourage infill in existing subdivisions.
- Encourage annexation of inliers and development adjacent to city limits.
- Encourage developers to seek annexation prior to development.
- Support development pattern that is proposed in the City of Brush future land use map.
- Support City of Brush economic development efforts.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

D. PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

GOAL: To provide adequate public recreation facilities and open space areas to meet resident's needs and contribute to improving the quality of life in the county.

- Consider subdivision exactions for public parks and open space easements when appropriate.
- Maintain the South Platte River areas as major open space.
- Encourage multiple uses of existing facilities.
- Use open space to buffer incompatible land uses.
- Require multi-family subdivisions to have adequate common open space.
- Encourage trail-ways in large developments.
- Conserve natural features in new developments.

E. UTILITIES, PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

1. Utilities

GOAL: To ensure that adequate and financially secure public utilities are provided to all developments in Morgan County.

- Require proof of sewer and water availability for new development.
- Require developers to provide proof of financial capability for new development.
- On and off-site facilities are the financial responsibility of the developer.
- Encourage public utility facilities, which are preferred over individual systems.
- Encourage water conservation.
- Take an active role in the planning and siting of new facilities.

2. Public Facilities and Services

GOAL: To develop essential public facilities and services which contribute to providing a high quality of life for residents of Morgan County.

- Discourage toxic waste dumpsites; toxic burial facilities will not be approved.
- Encourage the economical recycling of solid waste.
- Utilize intergovernmental agreements to facilitate the provision of essential services.
- Review new developments in terms of their impacts on essential services such as police, fire, medical service, and road systems.
- Encourage new developments to provide adequate fire flows to all structures where appropriate and feasible.
- Encourage centrally located medical facilities.
- Cooperate with the school districts to site new facilities.
- Encourage citizen participation in county government decision-making.

F. CIRCULATION AND TRANSPORTATION

GOAL: To provide the residents and businesses in Morgan County with a circulation system that connects the major county activity centers with the outlying communities of the county, regional employment generators and the rest of the state in the interests of providing economic opportunity, access efficiency and safety and improving the quality of life.

1. Traffic and Roads

- Require new developments to mitigate impacts to adjacent county roads.
- Require traffic generation studies for large developments.
- Develop access control plans for heavily used county roads.
- Encourage the development of super highways through Morgan County.

2. Air Travel

- Encourage the development of a regional airport.

3. Other Transportation Modes

- Encourage bicycle and pedestrian ways in new developments where feasible and/or appropriate.
- Encourage public transit where practical.
- Cooperate in planning for improved rail and vehicle access to existing developments.

G. COORDINATION STATEMENT

Federal, State, and Regional agencies are required to coordinate with Morgan County on all matters that may affect the local tax base, value of private property, economic stability associated with natural resources and agricultural production, the well being of the school systems and, in general, the well being of the local community, the people in it and their rights to operate, maintain and enjoy their property.

CHAPTER 3 PLAN SETTING AND ECONOMY OF MORGAN COUNTY

I LOCATION

Morgan County is primarily a rural entity located on the high plains of northeastern Colorado. It is configured 36 miles by 36 miles or 1,296 square miles. This calculates to 829,440 acres of which 11,520 acres are bodies of water. The County's land area is "divided", by Interstate Highway 76, and the South Platte River corridor traversing from west to east at the approximate center of the county. Fort Morgan, the county seat, is located approximately 80 miles northeast of metro-Denver and 50 miles east of Greeley.

II POPULATION

The County has a relatively stable population history varying from 18,000 to 27,000 during the past 50 years. Unlike many counties within Colorado, the change has not been represented by steady growth. In 1970 the population declined by approximately 1,000, increasing by 2,500 in 1980, dropping once again by approximately 500 persons in 1990, and a sizeable increase of approximately 5,200 in 2000.

Morgan County has five incorporated municipalities ranging in size from approximately 250 to 11,000 people. (census figures are detailed in a following table) Fort Morgan, Brush and Wiggins serve as market centers while Hillrose and Log Lane Village are primarily residential communities.

Unincorporated communities include Goodrich, Orchard, Weldona and Snyder. Road junctions having names and a few buildings are Adena and Hoyt. The first four unincorporated communities mentioned were set-up as railroad towns or thrived on traffic generated from U.S. Highway 6, the original major route out of Colorado to the east. This highway was replaced by Interstate 76, and with the dominance of Fort Morgan, Brush and Wiggins being the county's market centers, the small communities saw minimal growth.

2006 population estimates indicate that all areas of the county continue to see growth as they did from 1990 to 2000. The town of Wiggins is experiencing the biggest population influx with an increase of 30% from the 2000 census to the 2006 estimates and 58% increase from the 1990 census to the 2006 estimates. This is an indication of the easy commute to the front-range area and the increasing desire of families looking for a small town atmosphere.

County and Municipalities	1985	1990	2000	2006 estimate	2000-2006 Percentage increase
Morgan County	22,431	21,939	27,171	29,308	7.3%
Brush	4,292	4,165	5,177	5,425	4.6%
Fort Morgan	9,016	9,068	11,034	11,693	5.6%
Hillrose	189	168	254	298	14.8%
Log Lane Village	694	667	1,006	1,039	3.2%
Wiggins	508	499	838	1,197	30%
Unincorporated	7,732	7,371	8,922	9,654	7.6%

Source: State Demographer's Office

Population Estimates	2010	2015	2020
Morgan County	31,241	34,988	39,012
Brush	6,294		
Fort Morgan	13,461		
Hillrose	381		
Log Lane Village	1,519		
Wiggins	1,408		
Unincorporated	10,796		

Source: State Demographer's Office

Morgan County has a somewhat varied ethnic distribution with the majority of the population being White or Hispanic as indicated in the chart below.

White Alone	18,593	63.44%
Hispanic Origin of Any Race	10,212	34.84%
Black/African American	85	.29%
American Indian/Alaska Native	136	.46%
Asian Alone	52	.20%
Asian/Pacific Islander	48	.17%
Two or More Races	182	.62%

Source: Morgan County Economic Development Corporation

III TRANSPORTATION

Vehicular transportation needs in the region are accommodated by Federal and State highways, and county and municipal paved and gravel roads. The major east-west access to the area is provided by U.S. Interstate Highway 76, which bisects the county at its midpoint. I-76 connects, in Denver, to I-70, one of the main east-west routes within the interstate highway system. In addition, U.S. Highway 34 connects the towns of Loveland in Larimer County and Greeley in Weld County to I-76 at Wiggins. Colorado State Highways 71 and 52 provide north-south access to the area. Highway 71 provides a connection to Interstate Highway 70 at the Town of Limon to the south of Brush. Highway 71 continues north of Brush into Nebraska. Highway 52 extends north of Fort Morgan and connects with Colorado State Highway 14. Highway 52 provides access to Pawnee Buttes National Grassland.

The Heartland South Super 2 Highway proposed to connect the federally designated Ports to Plains Highway will connect Morgan County to the area from Texas to South Dakota. The Heartland South portion of the project has received state designation. Federal designation is pending.

There are numerous motor-freight carriers licensed to do intrastate and interstate business to and from Morgan County. Some of these companies are major carriers, which maintain permanent terminals in Fort Morgan or Brush. Of all the Rocky Mountain States, only Colorado receives Overland Common Point (OCP) rates from Pacific Steamship companies. OCP rates reduce cartage costs when an overseas shipment is destined for the Pacific.

Local air service is provided at two municipal airports located in Brush and Fort Morgan. The Brush airport is classified as a minor facility and Fort Morgan's airport is classified as intermediate.

Commercial air service is available at Denver International Airport (DIA) a 60-minute drive southwest of Fort Morgan. Denver and Northeastern Colorado are in a position to capitalize on its expanding international presence, becoming a world gateway to major cities around the globe. Morgan County has experienced population growth near the Highway 52 corridor south of Wiggins due to the easy commute to DIA.

Morgan County is served by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), an east-west rail mainline from Denver through Fort Morgan and continuing east to major Midwestern markets. In addition, Amtrak operates passenger rail service to Fort Morgan.

IV EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment in Morgan County has made a dramatic reversal over the mid-1980's when the county was nearly double the U.S. and Colorado averages. The reversal became complete in 1991 when the county dropped below the nation as well as the state. Morgan County has remained below the national and state averages since 1991, although the unemployment rate has risen in recent years. The most recent statistics suggest that the county appears capable of generating sufficient opportunities to both attract new workers and provide increased employment opportunities for existing workers. The following charts identify the county's labor force, unemployment rates, employment by industry and major employers.

MORGAN COUNTY LABOR FORCE

YEAR	LABOR FORCE	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYMENT	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
2003	14,627	14,052	575	3.9%
2004	14,891	14,262	629	4.2%
2005	14,200	13,525	675	4.8%
2006	13,973	13,346	627	4.5%

Source: Morgan County Economic Development Corporation

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

AREA	1987	1996	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007
United States	6.1%	5.4%	5.8%	6.0%	5.5%	5.1%	5.0%
Colorado	7.7%	4.2%	5.7%	6.0%	5.6%	5.0%	4.5%
Morgan County	13.1%	3.8%	3.6%	3.9%	4.2%	4.8%	Not available

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Number
Agriculture	642
Construction	558
Finance / Insurance / Real Estate	335
Government	2,216
Health Care / Social Assistance	1,205
Manufacturing	2,485
Mining	259
Retail	1,093
Services / Other	1,528
Professional / Technical	101
Transportation/Public Utilities	384
Wholesale	356

Source: Morgan County Economic Development Corporation

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Company	Product/Service	Employees
Cargill Meat Solutions	Beef Processing	1,860
RE-3 School District – Fort Morgan	Education	456
Wal-Mart	Retail	325
Morgan County	Government	320
Leprino Foods	Cheese Processing	272
Colorado Plains Medical Center	Hospital	256
Viaero Wireless	Cellular Provider	250
Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center	Assisted Living	215
RE-2 School District - Brush	Education	215
Western Sugar (seasonal)	Sugar Processing	210
City of Fort Morgan	Government	180
Teague Diversified	Feedlot	150
Xcel Energy	Utilities	127
Sunset Manor	Nursing Home	120
East Morgan County Hospital	Hospital	118
Valley View Villa	Nursing Home	111
Delta Oil Field Tank Company	Stainless Steel Fabrication	110
Livestock Exchange	Livestock and Feed	100
Morgan Community College	Education	100
RE-50J School District - Wiggins	Education	100
City of Brush	Government	100

Source: Morgan County Economic Development Corp

V AGRICULTURE

The most visible and prominent industry in Morgan County is agriculture. For years, Morgan County has been one of the richest agricultural counties in the State. Approximately 88% of the county land area is devoted to farming and raising livestock. It has been ranked in the top 3rd of counties for value of crops and livestock produced. The major crops grown in the county include corn, sugar beets, hay, wheat, potatoes, onions, pinto beans, alfalfa, barley, sunflowers, and turf.

Morgan County remains heavily influenced by agricultural employment as evidenced by the list of largest employers shown in a preceding chart. However, a trend into other economic opportunities has begun.

MORGAN COUNTY AGRICULTURE ACREAGE

LAND TYPE	2004	2005	2006	2007
Sprinkler Irrigated	86,060	88,556	92,647	91,316
Flood Irrigated	61,477	56,336	49,867	49,133
Dry	164,531	166,396	168,368	169,790
Grazing	402,954	402,318	401,996	401,834
Other	16,591	16,505	16,423	16,385
TOTAL	731,613	730,111	729,301	728,458

Source: Morgan County Assessor

The overall decrease in agriculture acreage is indicative of several factors including the cost of doing business and the lack of water. Many irrigation wells across the county have been shut down. This is a likely factor in the increase of dry land crop production.

VI INCOME

Morgan County has consistently lagged behind the state in per capita income. In 2002 the county's income was approximately 66% of the State's. This spread declined slightly in 2003 to 68%. The County's percentage dropped by 1 point in 2004 and remained at 67% in 2005.

PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME

YEAR	MORGAN COUNTY	COLORADO
2002	\$22,371	\$34,014
2003	\$23,184	\$34,059
2004	\$23,875	\$35,810
2005	\$25,030	\$37,510

VII RETAIL SALES

An indicator of the economic health of a region is the amount of retail sales generated. A few of the jurisdictions saw some decrease in retail sales between 2005 and 2006 while others saw increases. Overall the county has experienced a 7.43% increase in retail sales over the four years, 2004 through 2007. It is anticipated that future retail and industrial development will result in a steady increase over the next several years.

	2004	2005	2006	2007*
BRUSH	\$84,175,482	\$83,156,887	\$79,983,278	\$87,755,878
FORT MORGAN	\$277,603,045	\$287,566,578	\$284,438,992	\$287,725,491
HILLROSE	\$208,068	\$221,855	\$236,015	**
LOG LANE VILLAGE	\$1,614,761	\$2,023,653	\$1,586,956	\$1,838,007
WIGGINS	\$28,335,208	\$29,681,685	\$33,336,153	\$33,273,745
REMAINDER OF COUNTY	\$96,500,006	\$98,141,094	\$109,556,559	\$117,034,960
TOTAL	\$488,436,570	\$500,791,752	\$509,137,953	\$527,628,081

Source: Colorado Department of Revenue

*July 2006 to June 2007 ** Not available. Included in remainder of county.

VIII DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

A county's construction activity is also indicative of its general economic health since residents and developers do not construct new facilities or homes when economic weakness is present or anticipated. The number of residential permits issued in Morgan County during the past three years has steadily declined. The number of new residential starts dropped by more than 50% between 2005 and 2007. Commercial construction peaked in 2006. The commercial construction in 2006 includes a manufacturing facility near Brush, construction of a new Sears store (this has since been annexed into the City of Fort Morgan), and the construction of a new dairy. The new dairy accounts for about 80% of the construction value reported in 2006.

BUILDING PERMITS (Unincorporated Morgan County)

	Total Permits Issued	Residential	Value	Commercial	Value
2005	223	97	\$17,135,773	8	\$2,109,616
2006	224	68	\$11,282,624	19	\$10,942,941
2007	208	41	\$9,428,200	9	\$1,002,400

Source: Morgan County Planning & Zoning



IX RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE MARKET

Residential real estate sales have also declined over the past few years although the sales price continued to climb until 2007. Rural residential properties did not see the average sales price decline in 2007. The rural residential home cost rose enough in 2007 to cover the decline in the municipalities and still show an overall average sales price increase.

REAL ESTATE SALES

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total Number of Homes Sold	391	378	373	310
Average Sales Price	\$121,152	\$127,638	\$138,071	\$146,840
Brush	\$115,231	\$117,892	\$127,330	\$124,724
Fort Morgan	\$132,914	\$133,182	\$137,024	\$131,571
Wiggins	\$145,395	\$146,417	\$149,858	\$128,150
Other Towns	\$114,764	\$121,848	\$129,430	\$ 71,450
Rural Residential	\$169,964	\$207,153	\$208,123	\$220,567

Source: Morgan County Assessor
Morgan County Board of Realtors

CHAPTER 4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Morgan County and Northeastern Colorado have the highest percentage of manufacturing jobs of any region in Colorado. With 27 percent of employment in the manufacturing sector, Morgan County's economic base is quite diversified. Producers of mozzarella cheese, condensed milk, boxed beef, sugar, oilfield equipment, custom modular homes and farm equipment complement the diverse economy while still capitalizing on the agriculture industry sector.

The average annual wage for all economic sectors in 2007 reached \$29,432, this has improved from \$27,973 in 2006. This is a positive indicator, however Morgan County wages still lag behind the Colorado average at \$39,260. This disparity emphasizes the need to continue to diversify the economy by attracting new companies and supporting existing high growth businesses that require skilled employees and pay higher wages.

Morgan County's prime location on Interstate 76, combined with a lower cost of doing business and quiet, safe communities, have led to significant population and job growth in recent years. These factors, combined with economic development efforts to enhance the entrepreneurial environment in Morgan County, will foster sustainable businesses and lead to continued economic growth.

I ECONOMIC PLAN DIRECTIONS

GOAL: Encourage the location of new industry and the expansion of existing businesses that will provide employment opportunities and increase the tax base to strengthen the economy of Morgan County.

POLICIES:

1. Continue to work cooperatively with the Morgan County Economic Development Corporation and the municipalities to encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses and to attract new industry to Morgan County.
2. Encourage local contractors to bid on County capital improvement projects.
3. Support local, regional and state workforce development initiatives.
4. Continue to improve infrastructure to readily support the needs of future business/industry.
5. Evaluate incentive requests for new and expanding business/industry in accordance with the Morgan County Incentive Policy and in cooperation with municipalities.
6. Promote the sustainability of crops and livestock through value-added crop and livestock development.

7. Encourage economic diversity through entrepreneurial development programs.
8. Promote tourism in Morgan County through the Morgan County Tourism Panel, in cooperation with the Brush and Fort Morgan Chambers of Commerce.
9. Promote Morgan County as a location for state of the art and/or high tech industry.
10. Contribute to the Colorado New Energy Economy; work to attract and maintain renewable energy projects to capture this.
11. Federal, State, and Regional agencies are required to coordinate with Morgan County on all matters that may affect the local tax base, value of private property, economic stability associated with natural resources and agricultural production, the well being of the school system and, in general, the well being of the local community, the people in it and their rights to operate, maintain and enjoy their property.

CHAPTER 5 ENVIRONMENT

I CLIMATE

Typically, the average temperatures in Morgan County are quite mild. However, extremes do occur in both the winter and summer; the average maximum monthly temperature ranges from 39 degrees in January to 90 degrees in July. Evening temperatures drop about 30 degrees from the daytime highs; average minimum temperatures for the same two months are 10 degrees in January and 60 degrees in July. Overall; average daytime temperature for the months June through August is 86 degrees and December through February is 41 degrees. The average annual precipitation is 12.98 inches. 50% of the annual precipitation occurs in the months of May, June and July. December, January and March produce the majority of the County's 21.8 inches of average snowfall. While morning fog can be common along the South Platte River, Morgan County averages 330 days of sunshine annually.

II LAND FORMS AND SOILS

A. TOPOGRAPHY

Morgan County encompasses part of the agriculturally rich South Platte River Valley. The center of the county, Fort Morgan, has an elevation of 4,330 feet above sea level. Topographically, the river defines the lowest portion of the area and elevations increase to both the north and south. In addition to irrigated farming within the river valley, dry land farming is practiced in the north and south portions of the county. A significant sand hill area is located in the southern half of the county. Half of Empire Reservoir and all of Jackson Lake and Bijou No. 2 Reservoir are located in the western portion of the county.

The landforms of Morgan County consist primarily of typical Great Plains uplands and the broad valley of the South Platte River.

The upland topography varies from flat to rolling with broad valleys cut by intermittent streams flowing into the South Platte River. Approximately half of the upland areas are covered by wind blown deposits in the form of either sheet deposits or stabilized dunes. These areas are often fragile and may result in areas of wind erosion or blowing dust if proper agricultural or development practices are not followed.

The valley of the South Platte River and its tributaries, have active flood plains along the present drainage courses. These flood plains have been mapped and defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These maps, while accurate in a broad sense, may not define the edge of the flood plain with great precision. Inclusion or exclusion of a particular parcel of land in the FEMA flood plain is not a guarantee that it will or will not flood. In particular, land, which is in the possible inundation area of reservoirs, which would be flooded in the event of a dam failure, may not be included in the FEMA designated flood plains.

The drainages generally rise to the uplands in a series of terraces or steps. These may range in width from a few feet to several miles. The “steps” between terraces and between the terraces and the uplands may be locally steep forming areas of low cliffs or bluffs.

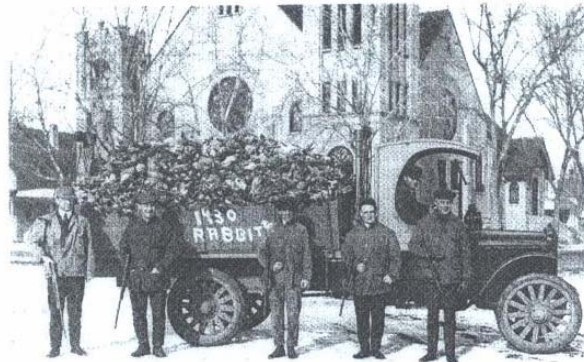
B. GEOLOGY

Morgan County is located in the Colorado Piedmont section of the Great Plains Physiographic Province. Underlying bedrock consists primarily of the Cretaceous Age Foxhills Sandstone and Pierre Shale that gently dips to the east.

C. GEOLOGIC AND NATURAL HAZARDS

The primary geologic hazard in Morgan County is unstable soils; soils that are sandy and subject to severe cave in during excavation. Much of the soils in the county are listed as severe for cutbanks.

Natural hazards recorded over the past 100 years range from rabbits, grasshoppers, drought to floods, tornados, hail and blizzards. During the period of 1905 through 2003, reports indicate 8 hail events (2" or greater), 12 tornados (F1 or greater) and 7 floods including major floods of 1935, 1965, and 1995. The breach of the Riverside and Weldon Valley ditches in 1997 resulted in damage exceeding \$1 million. Levees have been constructed around the towns of Wiggins and Weldon.



Circa 1920

“Are rabbits feet really lucky?”

D. SOILS

In general, the river bottom and terrace soils following the major drainages are better suited both for agriculture and residential development. However, certain areas may have high water tables. Usually, these sites are not suitable for development because of flood plain considerations.

Some upland soils may have severe shrink/swell characteristics which are either unsuitable for residential construction or require expensive engineering and construction mitigation measures to prevent structures built on these soils from being damaged. From

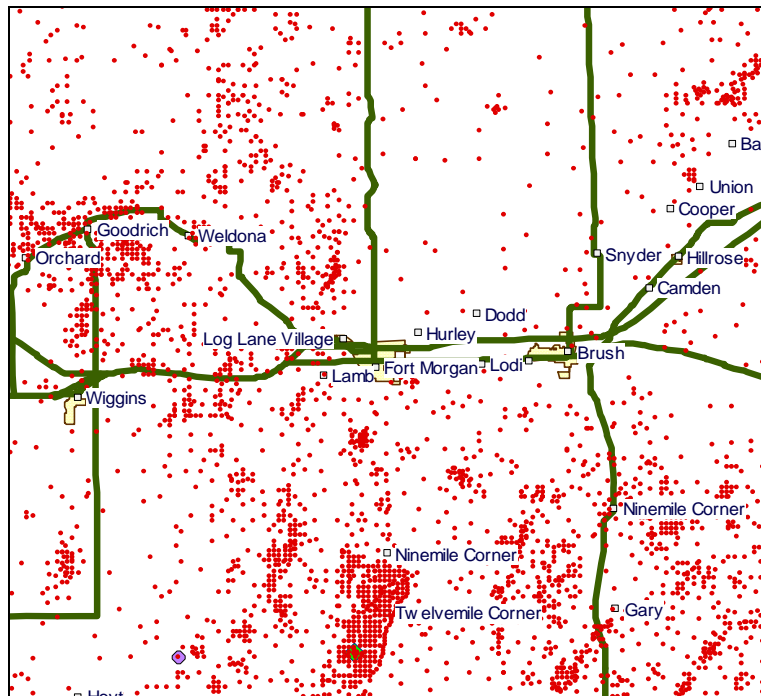
a land use perspective it is important that development is discouraged on these soils or, at a minimum, purchasers of property, prior to purchase, are notified of the soil characteristics so that they will be made aware of possible necessary mitigation measures.

It should also be noted that soil maps and descriptions are only general. Specific on site soil tests should be conducted to determine the presence or absence of unsuitable soils and the need for mitigation measures.

III MINERAL RESOURCES

Mineral resources in the county consist primarily of gravel and sand. These deposits are generally found along the river bottoms and are quite extensive. Increased pressure for development will encourage private operators to open new sand and gravel pits to meet the demand for these resources. Impacts to surrounding land uses from the development of these resources need to be mitigated through advance planning and through both on and off-site controls enforced by the county.

Oil and gas exploration and production is an industrial type land use, which can have a negative impact on other land uses. This is particularly true when interacting with residential uses. While the legal rights of the mineral owner or leaseholder prevents outright prohibition of oil and gas activities, even in sensitive or high impact areas, the county should continue to regulate oil and gas exploration and production in such a way that mitigating factors can be used to minimize negative impacts. These may include screening, noise mitigation, setbacks, hours of drilling operation, and access road construction standards. Particular care should be taken in the siting of tank batteries and associated production equipment.



Source: Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission

The above map shows all of the permitted wells in Morgan County including producing, dry and abandoned wells.

IV RENEWABLE RESOURCES

The production of fuels and electric power from renewable resources is relatively new in Morgan County. Although not in production at this writing there are plans for two ethanol plants, biodiesel production, and an anaerobic digester to produce electricity. Several meteorological towers have been placed throughout the county to study the possibility of wind generated power.

V VEGETATION

Morgan County is dominated by short grass prairie and riparian plant communities along the South Platte River Valley and adjacent to permanent bodies of water.

Domestic agriculture in the lowlands along the South Platte River, particularly in irrigated areas, create significant vegetative cover on the landscape. In general, these communities are divided into three sub groups; irrigated crops, cultivated hay crops and tame grass pastures. Unlike the natural communities, these communities can be changed or rotated by the producer and their boundaries are relatively fixed. The agriculture of Morgan County is discussed in more detail in the land use section of this plan.

VI WATER RESOURCES

The main hydrologic feature of Morgan County is the South Platte River. In addition to the natural runoff, there are numerous transmountain diversions from the Colorado River and the North Platte River watersheds. These diversions plus an extensive hydraulically connected ground water aquifer also contribute to the system. The aquifer is dependent upon seepage from the river and tributary stream channels; seepage from the many canals, ditches, and off stream storage reservoirs and deep percolation resulting from precipitation and the application of irrigation water to the land.

Water surface supplies in the South Platte River basin have been extensively developed for agricultural, municipal and industrial uses. Ground water is also being developed however, the limits of this development are being approached as conflicts between surface and ground water users emerge. Therefore, alternative water storage and supply systems will need to be developed in Morgan County in order to supply the needs of all types of land uses.

Hydrology, including both the availability of water and the disposal of water after it has been used, is a significant aspect and constraint on industrial, agricultural, and residential growth and development in Morgan County. The location of much of the non-agricultural development in Morgan County is dictated by the availability of potable water in adequate quantities. Confined animal feeding operations are also limited to location with adequate water supplies and facilities for water disposal.

Surface water quality of the South Platte River and the reservoirs in Morgan County is generally good. Variation in seasonal flows and reservoir water levels as well as agricultural runoff and treated sewage discharges result in some degradation of the water quality. There do not appear to be any current illegal discharges into surface waters in Morgan County.

Sources of public water supplies in the county are primarily ground water wells and Colorado-Big Thompson Project water brought to the county by pipeline. The municipalities have their own water supply systems while the Quality Water District serves rural areas and towns. Individual wells are common throughout the county. Ground water contamination is becoming an increasing concern in the county with residents voicing concerns regarding individual septic systems and feedlot seepage contamination.



VII AIR QUALITY

In general, Morgan County's air quality is very good. The main problem is fugitive dust during dry and windy days that can occur at any time during the year. Smog from the Denver Metropolitan area sometimes does not disperse by the time it reaches the county. In specific local areas, odors from feedlots, sewage treatment systems, agricultural product processing and industrial smokestacks can be irritating. Large developments such as the Pawnee Power Plant have been constructed to meet Colorado air quality standards for emissions.

VIII WILDLIFE

Morgan County supports a wide variety of game and non-game wildlife common to the plains environment. Critical and significant habitats, as designated by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and any threatened and endangered species are classifications for wildlife that require impact mitigation from development.

A 1995 inventory of Morgan County regarding wildlife habitat designated 78% of the county as low potential impact to wildlife habitat, 9% as moderate impact, and 19% as high impact. The high impact areas are concentrated along the South Platte River and its tributaries and the area around Jackson Lake and Bijou Number 2 Reservoir.

No endangered species have been reported in Morgan County. Threatened species reported in Morgan County are the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, greater prairie chicken and plains orange throat darter (possible).

IX ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND HAZARDS PLAN

GOAL: To preserve the manmade and natural environment in order to enhance the quality of life in Morgan County and to make environment considerations part of the land use decision-making process.

POLICIES AND STRATEGIES:

1. Preserve floodway areas as designated in the FEMA maps for Morgan County for open space and drainage facilities.
2. Encourage and cooperate in flood mitigation projects.
3. Ensure that development does not contribute to surface or ground water pollution through either discharge or increased storm water run off.
4. Wetland areas are to be conserved as open space in Morgan County.
5. New developments will be reviewed and judged on the basis of identification of sensitive lands and the mitigation techniques used to deal with the impacts of physical development upon the land. Where conformance to regulations of superior authority is involved, the county will request that developers obtain formal comments from these agencies prior to development approval.
6. Development proposals in areas considered to pose geologic hazards such as slope stability; poor drainage, ponding and high water tables, proximity to floodways, and slopes greater than 15% shall submit engineering investigations of the site for project review to ensure that environmental problems are mitigated during the course of development.
7. Development on slopes in excess of 15% shall maintain the maximum vegetative cover to protect soils and slopes from erosion. All graded areas, regardless of slope, shall be revegetated with native plants or a landscape plan devised and implemented after development.
8. Soil conditions shall be evaluated during development review in order to determine erosion, swelling and other soil properties and appropriate mitigation techniques to deal with soil related problems during and after construction.
9. Significant and threatened or endangered wildlife species or habitats, as designated by the county, are to be conserved to the greatest extent possible and land use proposals will be reviewed to ensure compatibility with wildlife and their habitats.

10. New developments that encroach on significant, threatened or endangered wildlife habitat, so designated by the county, must submit plans to mitigate these impacts. Plans will be reviewed in conjunction with the Colorado Division of Wildlife utilizing the Divisions significant wildlife species and habitat maps.
11. Historic sites, archaeologically sensitive areas and natural areas or landmarks as identified through site review, or designated for preservation by state and/or local authorities through future studies of historical resources form Morgan County shall be protected from harmful alteration or destruction. Protection techniques such as buffering, development of compatible land uses or other measures are to be investigated and an implementation plan proposed prior to development approval.
12. The county shall evaluate development proposals relative to their cumulative impacts and coordination with local and state air and water quality standards.
13. The extraction of mineral resources in Morgan County will only be permitted through the conditional or special use review process. Extraction projects must mitigate impacts of fugitive dust, noise, erosion, vibration, and water run off on surrounding land uses. Special consideration will be given to the road system used by heavy vehicles in relation to dust and traffic generation and their impacts on residential and agricultural land uses. Water quality of the existing rivers and streams may not be degraded during mining operation.
14. Encourage use of renewable resources and production of biofuels and electric power from such resources.

Chapter 6

LAND USE PLANNING

I INTRODUCTION

Planning land use ensures that orderly development occurs in Morgan County. Using this Comprehensive Plan as a guide, public officials as well as private citizens, can make land use decisions which will not unduly impact surrounding land uses and the natural environment and maintain respect for personal property rights. Through land use planning, adequate infrastructure and services necessary for quality developments can be identified which will be consistent with the goals and policies of the county.

A comprehensive plan was adopted in 1989. This plan was updated in 1996, 2002 and again in 2008. The three main activity centers in the county, Wiggins, Fort Morgan and Brush, can be used as center points for dividing the county into planning areas. Each of these three areas is unique as well as having similar characteristics. This document will discuss land use planning with respect to these three centers keeping in mind that each of these areas include smaller or sub areas that will be specifically addressed. In the past the county has considered the I-76 corridor, stretching across the center of the county from west to east, as the Planning Corridor. Although this corridor is not a separate planning area it will be addressed with each of the three activity centers.

II WIGGINS (West Activity Center and Planning Area)

A. WEST ACTIVITY CENTER

Wiggins is an incorporated town with a population of 1,197 (Department of Local Affairs 2006 projection). Its central focus is the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line which runs from the southwest to the northeast. Interstate 76 parallels this rail line to the north and serves as the northern boundary for the city. Wiggins is an agricultural/agribusiness based community located at the intersection of Interstate 76 and U.S. Highways 34 and 6 and State Highways 52 and 39.

County zoning around the Wiggins area is primarily Agriculture with areas of Heavy Industrial, Commercial, Agribusiness and Rural Residential. The Town of Wiggins has been very aggressive with annexations. Commercial and industrial areas to the east and south have been annexed leaving unincorporated inliers. Future development in these areas should be watched closely to be certain uses are compatible with existing, proposed and future uses inside the town limits. These areas should also be encouraged to seek annexation.

GOAL: Encourage the infill of the existing commercial and industrial areas within the town limits prior to rezoning additional unincorporated areas around the town. Direct residential development to areas that may benefit from annexation and community services.

In the 1980's the Town of Wiggins completed a water diversion system removing the town from the floodplain. Certain areas of the county, as well as those areas that have been annexed, may be able to benefit from the dike.

GOAL: Investigate and seek the removal of other areas from the floodplain that are inside the diversion area.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

B. NORTHWEST PLANNING AREA

Expansion of the Town of Wiggins north of Interstate 76 is unlikely due to the cost of providing utilities.

The areas north of the Wiggins activity center have become home to several very large dairy and feeding operations. It is important to monitor development in these areas, as many uses will not be compatible with livestock operations.

GOAL: Encourage placement of livestock facilities in areas with very low residential densities. It is important to be certain that water resources are ample and protected in relation to livestock operations.

The northwest quadrant of the county is largely agriculture. The unincorporated areas of Goodrich, Orchard, Weldona and Jackson Lake Village are all located in this area. The first three being zoned mainly Rural Community Residential with very small areas of Commercial.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

Jackson Lake Village is unique in that it is its own zone. This area consists of 350 extremely small lots originally designed as a camping/recreation area. In the last couple of decades the lots have been developed with mobile homes and an increasing amount of permanent residences. Quality Water serves this area. Holding tanks are utilized for wastewater.

GOAL: As the number of permanent, year around, residents increases Jackson Lake Village should be encouraged to incorporate.

GOAL: Encourage development of central water and wastewater systems. This could be accomplished through taxing districts and/or possible grant monies.

Jackson Lake is the largest recreation area in the county. The lake has become very popular for boating, fishing and camping. The majority of those utilizing the Jackson Lake facilities come from outside of Morgan County.

Areas north of Jackson Lake consist mostly of dry land farming. There are also several private and public hunting areas. The difficulty in obtaining ground water and lack of Quality Water service in this area restricts development of smaller residential parcels.

GOAL: Maintain the floodplain areas along the South Platte River as open space for recreation and wildlife preservation.

C. SOUTHWEST PLANNING AREA

This area, the Highway 52 corridor, has been and will continue to be one of the most active areas in the county. Denver International Airport and the easy access to the Denver Metro area via Highway 52 have made this area very attractive to commuters.

Many Planned Developments, Minor Subdivisions and single parcel Exemptions have been approved in this area. Lots ranging in size from 1 acre to 20+ acres have brought "City Dwellers" to the country seeking a slower paced lifestyle with smaller schools and the ability to have livestock.

Irrigated farming is becoming more difficult with the depletion of ground water. Farmers are finding residential development as the most profitable use of their land.

Most of these developments are covenanted communities that restrict housing to site built and manufactured housing.

GOAL: Encourage the development of community wastewater treatment facilities as more residential developments are completed in close proximity to other residential developments. This could be accomplished through taxing districts and/or possible grant monies.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.



D. WIGGINS EAST PLANNING AREA

The area east of Wiggins south of County Road Q has seen an increase in rural subdivisions and planned developments over the last several years.

GOAL: Encourage the development of community wastewater treatment facilities as more residential developments are completed in close proximity to other residential developments. This could be accomplished through taxing districts and/or possible grant monies.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

The area east of Wiggins between County Road Q and Interstate Highway 76 extending to Fort Morgan is developing large agriculture and industrial uses. The proximity of BNSF rail line is attractive to industrial uses.

GOAL: Encourage large agriculture and industrial uses in this area while protecting existing agriculture and residential uses.

III FORT MORGAN (Central Activity Center and Planning Area)

A. CENTRAL ACTIVITY CENTER

Fort Morgan is an incorporated city with a population of 11,693 (Department of Local Affairs 2006 projection). Fort Morgan is the largest city in Morgan County and also serves as the County Seat.

The City of Fort Morgan has strong agriculture roots and a sense of hometown community.

County zoning around Fort Morgan consists of everything from Industrial to Commercial to Residential and Planned Development. Highway 34 intersects Fort Morgan and is also a main entry to the city from both the east and the west. Most of the area along Highway 34, for several miles in both directions, is zoned Commercial. There exists an uncoordinated mix of land uses along Highway 34 that date back many years. Commercial enterprises range from auto oriented businesses, drive-in theater, salvage yard, retail, agricultural implements to the light manufacturing and seasonal produce market.

GOAL: Coordinate the mix of land uses adjacent to the city limits.

GOAL: Encourage commercial development east of the city limits along Highway 34 to the Fort Morgan Industrial Park.

GOAL: Encourage infill of existing industrial parks before considering rezoning.

GOAL: Encourage industrial and large agriculture uses west of the city along the Burlington Northern corridor between County Road Q and Interstate 76.

The Highway 34 corridor extending west of Fort Morgan to the interstate includes a mix of uses as previously discussed. In recent years there has been an increase in residential development in this area although the majority of this corridor remains zoned Commercial.

At the west end of this corridor, the Highway 34 – Interstate 76 interchange, is a mixed use area called Wayward Wind. The Wayward Wind complex includes a mobile home and recreational vehicle (RV) park, fuel station, convenience store and storage yard as well as other uses. A large motel sits empty and unused in this complex. The biggest issue for the motel is lack of adequate sewer service.

The City of Fort Morgan has been investigating the possibility of running city sewer lines to this area. This service would not only benefit the Wayward Wind complex but allow further residential and commercial development along this corridor.

GOAL: Cooperate with the City of Fort Morgan to complete the waste water system to the Wayward Wind complex.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

The Highway 34 corridor east of Fort Morgan, north to the Interstate and south to the BNSF Railroad is zoned primarily Commercial. The Commercial zoning continues east to approximately the City of Fort Morgan Industrial Park. This area has seen significant changes in recent years with the addition of the Wal-Mart complex.

East Railroad Ave., East 8th Ave., East Riverview Ave. and Barlow Road include inliers that would benefit from annexation. City utilities are existing in many of these areas.

Development on the north side of this corridor, along Interstate 76, should be closely reviewed as much of this area is located within the 100 year floodplain.

GOAL: Encourage annexation of inliers along the Highway 34 corridor.

GOAL: Encourage developers to obtain LOMA (Letter of Map Amendment) or LOMR (Letter of Map Revision) from FEMA to remove these areas from the floodplain prior to development.

Interstate 76 interchanges are the gateways to the community and are vital to attracting travelers into the community.

GOAL: Encourage development in the areas of Interstate interchanges while maintaining the aesthetic value.



B. NORTH CENTRAL PLANNING AREA

The planning area north of Fort Morgan consists mostly of residential zoning with small pockets of commercial and industrial. Various large lot to small acreage subdivisions exist in the areas north of Highway 34 to and along Highway 144 and north in proximity to Highway 52. Many of these subdivisions have existed for many years and are nearly built out such as Highway 144 Ranchettes, Centennial Acres, Morgan Heights and Rolling Hills. Other planned developments and subdivisions having been approved and created in the late 1990's and early 2000's such as Saddle Ridge, Blue Sky Preserve and River View Estates offer small acreage building sites with easy access to Interstate Highway 76.

With the completion of the Morgan Heights waste water system this is an area prime for moderate density residential development.

The Fort Morgan Municipal Airport is located five miles north of Fort Morgan on Highway 52.

GOAL: Coordinate development north of Fort Morgan with the City of Fort Morgan.

GOAL: Encourage commercial and light industrial development in the immediate vicinity of the airport.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.



C. SOUTH CENTRAL PLANNING AREA

The planning area south of Fort Morgan is also an area with mixed uses that have developed over the past several decades. The zoning in these areas consists of Estate Residential, Rural Residential, and Commercial. There is also a small area of Moderate Density Residential and a mobile home park.

The area south of County Road Q remains agriculture. Several minor subdivisions have been created in this area that may indicate this is an area to watch for residential development. It must be noted that there are livestock confinement facilities that must be protected and allowed to expand.

The area at the southwest corner of the city has great potential for development and is prime for annexation.

GOAL: Preserve and protect existing agriculture uses south of County Road Q.

GOAL: Coordinate development in the Nelson Road area with the City of Fort Morgan encouraging annexation.

IV. LOG LANE VILLAGE ACTIVITY CENTER AND PLANNING AREA

Log Lane Village, an incorporated community with a population of 1,039 (Department of Local Affairs 2006 projection), is limited in areas for growth. The South Platte River and the Upper Platte and Beaver Irrigation canal to the north, Western Sugar facilities on the east, the Fort Morgan Irrigation canal and State Highway 144 on the south borders the Village. Areas to the west have limited potential for annexation since the majority of the parcels are acreages and not conducive to the Village atmosphere.

Areas such as Splinterville, Forney Airstrip and Boyds Subdivision are areas that should be considered for annexation.

GOAL: Encourage annexation of those areas listed.

GOAL: Encourage commercial or light industrial development along Highway 144 in those areas available.

V BRUSH (East Activity Center and Planning Area)

A. EAST ACTIVITY CENTER

Brush is an incorporated city with a population of 5,425 (Department of Local Affairs 2006 projection). Brush is essentially a farming community with a pleasant small town atmosphere.

County zoning around Brush is similar to that around Fort Morgan. Rural Residential zoning is most prominent along the north, northwest and south borders. Highways 6 and 34 divide the area to the east of Brush. North of this division, zoning is primarily Commercial and Agri/Business. Also along the north side of Highway 34 is an area of Light Industrial zoning that encompasses the airport. South of Highways 6 and 34 zoning varies with Estate Residential, Rural Residential, Mobile Home, Commercial and Light Industrial. The zoning along the western border of Brush is primarily Agriculture.

A large portion of the City of Brush and continuing into the unincorporated areas from approximately S. Clayton St. (County Road 28) east to Highway 71, north including most of Munn's Addition and proceeding northeast following the BNSF rail line is located in the floodplain.

GOAL: Encourage the annexation of Munn's Addition and other small inliers along Mill St. and Colorado Ave.

GOAL: Encourage developers to obtain LOMA (Letter of Map Amendment) or LOMR (Letter of Map Revision) from FEMA to remove these areas from the floodplain prior to development.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

GOAL: Maintain open space buffer around livestock facilities.

Interstate 76 interchanges are the gateways to the community and are vital to attracting travelers into the community.

GOAL: Encourage annexation prior to development in the areas of Interstate interchanges.

GOAL: Cooperate with the City of Brush to enhance the aesthetic image of Brush by supporting quality development in these areas.

B. NORTHEAST PLANNING AREA

The area north of Brush is primarily irrigated farm ground. This area has seen some residential development through exemptions, minor subdivisions and planned developments. This area includes the incorporated Town of Hillrose with a population of 298 (Department of Local Affairs 2006 projection), and the small, unincorporated, Town of Snyder. Hillrose is primarily residential with a few commercial enterprises. There are several "fingers" on the south side of Hillrose that are outside of the town limits. These areas are prime for annexation and residential or commercial development.

The Town of Snyder is mostly residential with a small amount of commercial. The entire Town of Snyder is located within the floodplain, which makes development difficult but not impossible.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

GOAL: Encourage annexation to the Town of Hillrose those areas north of County Road W.

GOAL: Investigate possibilities of mitigation measures to remove the Town of Snyder from the floodplain.

C. BRUSH SOUTH PLANNING AREA

The area south of Brush is primarily grassland, pasture and dry land farming. This area has seen a steady increase in residential development primarily along the Highway 71 corridor. This development drops off drastically at County Road K.

GOAL: Discourage development in floodplain areas. Maintain floodplain areas as open space and recreation.

GOAL: Maintain open space buffer around industrial uses.

GOAL: Encourage residential development south along the Highway 71 corridor maintaining adequate buffers for future expansion of existing livestock confinement facilities as well as buffers for future highway expansions.

GOAL: Encourage the preservation of agricultural production land to ensure continuation of this important industry.

VI RURAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture is considered to be a highly valued resource in Morgan County. Conservation of agricultural resources and land is paramount and such land and resources must be

protected from adverse impacts resulting from uncontrolled and undirected business, commercial, industrial and residential uses. Agriculture areas are established to maintain and promote agriculture as an essential industry of Morgan County. Agriculture zones are established to provide areas for the conduct of agriculture activities and activities related to agriculture and agricultural production without the interference of other incompatible uses. Morgan County recognizes that non-agriculture uses, such as residences, occur in the Agriculture Zone, but that these uses are subordinate to agricultural uses.

GOAL: Encourage replacement of substandard housing units in the county with affordable housing.

GOAL: The County will encourage the preservation of agricultural enterprises when considering growth and changes in land use.

VI POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

A. POLICIES

1. The county will carefully review any proposed developments in areas, which are not adjacent to existing communities, and insure that these developments can be serviced with existing or planned infrastructure and that they are compatible with existing land use.
2. Develop a joint city/county review process for development that may have an impact on the municipality.
3. Require impact statements from municipalities for land use applications within that municipalities planning area.
4. Promote development of a diversity of housing types, densities, and prices to accommodate residents from a wide range of economic levels.
5. Applications will be evaluated for their impacts on public and quasi-public improvements such as roads, sewer, water, and drainage control and may be required to mitigate any impact. In terms of roads needed, the developer will construct improvements off-site unless negotiated otherwise with the county. All improvements are to be secured with financial guarantees to coincide with development improvements.
6. Utilize landscaped buffer areas around industrial and/or residential areas to minimize impacts to adjacent land uses of all types. Implement this policy by requiring the industrial or residential project to provide the buffer area.
7. Encourage commercial and industrial uses on wells and septic systems to connect to municipal systems when available.

8. Rural residential subdivisions, unless processed through a Planned Development, shall be for one single-family residence per lot.
9. After careful review, the County may allow placement of an additional, temporary residence for the care of ailing or aging family members.
10. The county will protect existing agriculture operations, allowing them to continue, while directing growth so as to not restrict private property rights.
11. The county will encourage developers to approach the nearby city about annexation prior to the platting of land in the county. In all annexation discussions with the cities, the county will exercise its rights and standing in these discussions as allowed by the laws of the State of Colorado.
12. The County will investigate regulations on use of ground water in development.
13. Provide a safe and stable environment for existing and future populations.
14. Acknowledge the comprehensive plans of the municipalities within the county.

B. STRATEGIES

1. Provide flexible land use regulations while encouraging development in area of adequate infrastructure.
2. Allow for creative design through a Planned Development process.
3. Review the County Zoning and Subdivision Regulations and Zoning maps regularly to ensure compatibility to this comprehensive plan and those of the municipalities.
4. Develop design standards that will protect neighboring property values.
5. Establish an airport influence area in cooperation with the City of Fort Morgan and the City of Brush.
6. Establish Intergovernmental Agreements with municipalities when advantageous.

The goals, policies and strategies in this section provide guidance for an appropriate pattern and pace of development, and they indicate how this development should relate to the existing and future quality of life in Morgan County.

This plan provides a logical framework for land use decision-making at the countywide level. Uniformly applying these goals, policies and strategies should result in a balanced and harmonious growth pattern.

Chapter 7

PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND TOURISM

I. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The county maintains one recreation area in the county, the fairgrounds in Brush. This area is utilized throughout the year for community, county-wide *and* private activities. The Colorado Division of Wildlife maintains a series of wildlife refuges along the South Platte River, primarily for waterfowl habitat. There are also numerous private refuge areas along the Platte that are interspersed with the public areas. The bottomlands of the South Platte River offer the greatest potential for open space preservation for the county. A combination of existing public lands, leases or easements could be developed to create a linear park between Fort Morgan and Brush. Trailways could be developed which by-pass the critical habitat areas while providing picnic and wildlife observation areas for hikers and bikers.

Jackson Reservoir is a state recreation and wildlife preservation area. This facility is located about three miles north of the Town of Orchard and is heavily used in the summer. Fishing, water skiing, boating, and jet skiing are enjoyed during most of the spring and summer. Ice fishing is generally good during the winter.

Water fowl and upland bird and game hunting provide extensive hunting recreation in the county. Hunting has also become an important economic benefit to the county. This resource could be expanded more to take advantage of the popularity of hunting, particularly along the South Platte River. The Denver Metropolitan Area provides a nearby market that could be tapped more efficiently under proper management and promotional guidance.

Purchases of land by the City of Brush for the purpose of acquiring water rights will create an opportunity for open space development. The county may want to investigate the possibility of jointly developing this property with the city as useable public open space; housing such facilities as a wildlife sanctuary and a plains arboretum where the public can view wildlife habitats in a plains environment.

II. PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

GOAL: To provide adequate public recreation facilities and open space areas to meet resident's needs and contribute to improving the quality of life in the county.

POLICIES:

1. The county will consider requiring developers to set aside, for private use or public donation, an appropriate amount of land to meet the recreational and open space needs of expected new residents in new residential subdivisions. Fees in lieu of land donation can be negotiated and ear marked for public park land or access easement purchases. Fees-in-lieu exactions will be considered for commercial and industrial subdivisions.

2. Land within the South Platte River floodplain is best utilized as being preserved as open space for the principal purpose of recreation. The county will work with the Colorado Division of Wildlife and landowners to purchase necessary easements or property to expand refuge areas, improve public access and to link public property together along the river.
3. The multiple use of recreation areas and public facilities will be encourage and facilitated.
4. The county will participate in joint public and private financing schemes to develop parks and recreation facilities with adequate staffing for all county residents. The county will consider these activities with the municipalities in appropriate locations.
5. Incompatible land uses are to be buffered from each other through the use of landscaping and open space preservation techniques.
6. New multi-family subdivisions and apartment developments will be required to include an appropriate *area* of the building site as open space and recreation areas for the subdivision occupants. Consideration will be given to single family and multi-family subdivisions to set aside five percent (5%) of land or an equivalent amount in fees-in-lieu for public parks or open space easements. Commercial and industrial subdivisions should be required to landscape a minimum of five percent (5%) of their developments and a one percent (1%) exaction of fees-in-lieu for public parks or open space easements.
7. Bicycle, equestrian and pedestrian trail-way systems should be planned and developed in all new subdivisions in such a way so as to link to planned or existing trail-ways in the municipalities where feasible. These trail-ways are for the purposes of recreation and to link public facilities and easements, parks and schools together.
8. The county will support municipalities efforts to expand and maintain their park systems.
9. Distinctive or unique natural features are to be conserved in new developments to the greatest extent practical. Cultural features and historic sites are to be identified and preserved where there is community interest and funding resources available to undertake preservation projects.

III TOURISM

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. It ranks among the top industries in Colorado, along with agriculture and manufacturing.

The Morgan County Tourism Panel is appointed by the County Commissioners to administer the tourism fund derived from a 1.9% lodging tax. The Panel, by statute, is committed to advertise and

promote tourism within the County. In 2000 the total travel spending in Morgan County was calculated to be \$27.7 million. Travel spending includes accommodations, eating and drinking, food stores, transportation, recreation (including hunting and fishing), and retail sales. Earnings in 2000 within the industry were \$7.5 million and tourism provided 600 jobs.

The Tourism Panel promotes area attractions, including:

- Jackson Lake State Park for outdoor recreation and water sports
- Prairie Trails Wildlife Area
- Gateway to Pawnee Pioneer Scenic Trails and Historic Byway
- 129 acres of neighborhood and community parks, including fishing ponds, camp grounds, skate park and BMX track, tennis and basketball courts, softball, baseball and soccer fields, and swimming pools
- Historic Rainbow Bridge, Carroll Hotel, Knearl School, All Saints Lutheran Church
- The Fort Morgan and Brush Museums
- Renowned hunting, fishing and wildlife watching
- Golf Courses
- Antique Stores
- Motocross Racing
- Stockcar Racing
- Morgan County Barn Quilt Tour



Community Events include:

- Tinman Triathlon
- Glenn Miller Festival
- Various Run/Walks and Bicycle Races
- Four-Day Rodeo Celebration
- Morgan County Fair
- Festival in the Park
- Brush and Fort Morgan Car Shows
- Antique Tractor Show
- Oktoberfest
- Ag Days
- Wiggins Fall Harvest
- Various Arts and Crafts Fairs
- Railroad Days
- Truck and Tractor Pull
- Disc Golf
- Rainbow River Fest
- Colorado Chapter of Family Campers and RV'ers
- Home and Garden Show

Source: Morgan County Tourism Panel

Chapter 8

UTILITIES, PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

I. UTILITIES

A. Water Supply

1. Morgan County Quality Water District (MCQWD)

The MCQWD system is a special district that was formed in 1976 and constructed in 1978 through the Farmers Home Administration. The MCQWD is a rural/domestic water supplier of drinking water to farms, homes and businesses.

a. Water Supply and Treatment.

Quality Water customers receive their water from the Hay Gulch, San Arroyo and Beaver Creek aquifers. The eight wells are appropriated approximately 2800 acre feet of water per year. The average household uses about 7/10 of an acre-foot of water per year. On average, the district supplies 60 million gallon of water per month or 2 million gallon per day (MGD). The peak summer demand can increase up to 3.8 MGD.

Since a groundwater source is utilized, treatment of the water is not necessary. MQWD is presently operating under a chlorination waiver issued by the Colorado Department of Health. The water quality is exceptional and monitored closely to maintain the quality.

b. Water Storage

The district maintains 2,750,000 gallons in three storage tanks.

c. Service Area

MCQWD serves approximately 2700 taps to residents of Morgan County and the surrounding area. The District serves the rural areas of Morgan and Washington counties, including the towns of Snyder, Hillrose, Goodrich, Weldona, Log Lane Village, Orchard and the Jackson Reservoir State Recreation Area. The system currently serves an area in excess of 650 square miles.

d. Distribution System

The distribution system consists of more than 500 miles of pipelines, from 2 inch to 16 inch in diameter.

e. Water Rights

The District works closely with The Engineering Company (TEC) to evaluate long term water demands and secure necessary water resources to meet future demands. The District has an ongoing program of water right acquisition. MCQWD currently holds appropriations of 2874 acre feet of water in District rights plus an additional 928 shares of Colorado Big Thompson (CBT) water. The District has reserved the option to purchase an additional 1500 units of CBT water. Furthermore, the District is currently a participant in the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISIP) that will yield up to 1000 acre feet of CBT water with storage of up to 5000 acre feet in the Glade portion of the NISP project.



2. Individual Water Wells

Many rural residences are served by individual domestic water wells. The Colorado Office of the State Engineer, Division of Water Resources governs drilling and placement of individual water wells. Wells within the county vary in depth from tens to hundreds of feet. Water quality also varies greatly from extremely soft to very hard and requiring treatment.

3. Municipal Water Systems

a. Town of Wiggins

The Town of Wiggins is considering expanding its water system over the next two years. The water system has proven adequate to serve the Town's population of approximately 1197 people. The system consists of two wells approximately 50 feet deep, located 1/2 mile south of Town. The wells have a capacity of 650 and 750 gallons per minute (gpm). The storage facility consists of a 500,000-gallon tank located in the southeast area of the town. The distribution system is generally made up of 4" to 8" cast iron pipe and some 10-inch plastic pipelines. Fire protection for the town is provided by fire hydrants.

b. City of Brush

The City of Brush is served by an eight well groundwater system, which taps the Beaver Creek Aquifer. Three newer wells have a capacity of 1200-1400 gpm while the five older wells have a 550-700 gpm capacity. The wells range from 115 to 140 feet deep. The storage facilities are two 2.35 million gallon (mg) tanks located on the south side of the city.

c. City of Fort Morgan

The City of Fort Morgan currently utilizes Colorado Big Thompson (CBT) water as the main source of potable water. The water is transported via a piping system from Carter Lake to the City treatment facility. The raw water is treated at the City's conventional water treatment plant located approximately 8 miles west of Fort Morgan City limits. The facility is designed to treat 10 mgd and produces high quality finished water. Seven mg of finished water storage is located near the facility for delivery to Fort Morgan customers. Finished water is delivered to Fort Morgan by 30-inch gravity pipeline approximately 11 miles in length.

The City utilizes the old water supply well system to irrigate large open space areas such as parks, school grounds and golf course.

4. Comments and Recommendations

The municipal water systems, which have been described, generally are only available to serve areas that are or will be within their respective city limits, with a few exceptions. For this reason development within the County has basically two options for water service: a) connection to the MCQWD or b) development of a new water system to serve developments. The second option must be done in accordance with local and State Health Department regulations and local fire protection regulations and is economically practical only for large-scale development.

Because the MCQWD was constructed to serve the rural population of the South Platte River Corridor there are several limitations to its ability to serve typical residential or commercial development. These limitations are:

a. Fire Protection

The MCQWD system was not designed nor is capable of providing fire flows required by development projects. Its fire protection capability consists of 2" fire hydrants located throughout the County used to fill tanker trucks, which provide typical rural fire protection. This level of fire protection is not acceptable for subdivision developments. Several

possible solutions to this problem however do exist, allowing utilization of the MCQWD system.

1) Storage Tanks

Water storage tanks can be constructed with developments to provide a sufficient quantity of water to be on hand in the event of a fire. Sizing of a tank is dependent on the size and type of construction in addition to the local fire jurisdiction requirements.

2) Sprinkler Systems

Some areas currently allow building sprinklers to be installed in lieu of adequate fire flows. Approval of the local fire jurisdiction is required for this method of fire protection.

b. Service Area

In order to be served by the MCQWD several conditions must be met. First, the area to be served must be within the District and Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. The procedure for inclusion into the district includes petitioning by the property owners to the District for inclusion and approval by the District Board. The District may require the developer to make improvements to the system necessary for the development to be served, in addition to raw water allocation and taxation by the District.

B. Sanitary Sewer Service

1. Existing Municipal Systems

a. City of Fort Morgan

In 1996, the City of Fort Morgan completed construction and began operation of its extended aeration treatment facility located 2 miles east of the city limits. The design capacity is 2.25 MGD: as of January 2002 actual loading is 0.9 MGD. The facility utilizes aerobic digestion to stabilize bio-solids prior to land application. The collection system consists of approximately 59 miles of pipe ranging in size of 6-inch through 36-inch diameter.

b. City of Brush

The City of Brush's treatment plant consists of primary and secondary clarifiers and trickling filters, and an anaerobic digester with gas recovery. The design capacity, 1.9 MGD, is well above the actual loading of .7 MGD. Brush does not experience the BOD loading problem, which Fort

Morgan does. The collection system consists of 8-inch -18-inch primarily clay pipe. Outfall is to the South Platte River via pipe and open ditch.

c. Town of Wiggins

The Town of Wiggins operates a treatment facility consisting of an aerated oxidation ditch with a mechanical clarifier, polishing pond and percolation/evaporation pond. The plant has a 100,000 GPD capacity and experiences loading of 53,000 GPD. The collection system consists of 8 and 10-inch generally clay pipe. The town's sewage system has proven adequate to serve the town's needs.

d. Other Municipal Systems

The Town of Hillrose operates a small sewage system, which serves the area within the town limits. Morgan Heights, Country Club Estates and Blue Sky Preserve are also served by a sewage system that has capacity for additional subdivisions in the area. The City of Fort Morgan serves the Town of Log Lane Village.

a. Snyder Sanitation District

The Snyder Sanitation District, a facility constructed in 1996, serves the unincorporated Town of Snyder. The Snyder Sanitation District has been approved by the County and appropriate health agencies to serve the platted area of the Town.

3. Septic Systems

Individual sewage disposal systems are an option for low-density residential development. The soils throughout the County generally allow adequate percolation for leaching fields. High groundwater can be a problem occasionally in certain locations. Design and construction of these systems must be in conformance with criteria established by the Northeast Colorado Health Department.

Minimum subdivision lot size for septic systems on lots served by community water systems are 1.0 acre, while lots with wells must have a minimum lot size of 2.5 acres.

a. Comments and Recommendations

It should be noted that design and construction of sewage systems require approval by the Northeast Colorado Health Department and the State Health Department. The State Health Department has established a policy of limiting the proliferation of small sewage treatment systems. Developments proposing small sewage systems will have a difficult time

obtaining state approval unless it can be shown they will eventually be part of a regional system.

C. Electric Power

There are three providers of electric power within the County; Xcel Energy, Morgan County Rural Electric Association, and the City of Fort Morgan.

The Public Utilities Commission has established Service areas for the three providers. Xcel Energy serves the City of Brush and Towns of Log Lane Village, Weldona, Snyder and Hillrose. In addition, they serve areas north and east of Fort Morgan and north and east of Brush to the Snyder/Hillrose area.

The Morgan County REA service area encompasses the remainder of the County with the exception of the city of Fort Morgan service area, which extends several miles beyond the City limits on the south, west and east sides.

It is felt that the availability of electric power should not limit growth within the County. Existing facilities should be expandable in addition to new facilities to allow service for any reasonable projected growth. It should be noted that the city of Fort Morgan electrical rates are significantly less expensive than the other two providers.

D. Storm Drainage

Both the cities of Brush and Fort Morgan have constructed storm water facilities over the years. These facilities generally serve less than half the incorporated city and help mitigate flooding damage rather than eliminate it.

Brush has occasionally in past years been flooded by Beaver Creek and currently is within the designated floodplain for the creek. However, according to the city the railroad crossing at Beaver Creek, partially responsible for the flooding, has been improved substantially.

Floodplain studies have been completed for the South Platte River, and portions of Badger, Beaver and Bijou Creeks within the County. Consequently, floodplain and floodway areas have been designated for these creeks, and the associated development restrictions within these areas exist. It should be noted that many additional natural drainage ways exist throughout the County and provisions need to be made for the conveyance of storm water through these drainage ways as development occurs.

Over the next several years The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be conducting additional studies for areas of the County that the County has requested be remapped. This may result in areas being included in or eliminated from the floodplain.

E. Natural Gas

The primary providers of natural gas within the County are the City of Fort Morgan, Xcel Energy, and Colorado Interstate Gas. The City of Fort Morgan's service area extends

several miles beyond the city limit to the east, west and south and to the city limits along the north side of town. Xcel Energy serves basically the remainder of the County.

Within Xcel Energy's territory, facilities are currently in place to serve the Town of Wiggins, farms adjacent to County Road 3 to the south, north of Wiggins and County Road 4 and east on Highway 34, Log Lane and west approximately two miles toward Weldona and the developed area north of Fort Morgan, Brush and its immediate surrounding area. Xcel Energy serves several farm taps southwest of Fort Morgan from Colorado Interstate Gas lines. The extension of services to the Hillrose/Snyder area and the Weldona/Orchard area is possible as future demands and economic justification develops.

F. Telephone

Qwest Communications and the Wiggins Telephone Association provide telephone service within the County. The Wiggins Telephone Association serves approximately 31% of the County. It serves the town of Wiggins and the remainder of their service area is the northwest and southwest corners of the County. The Wiggins Telephone Association is in Phase 1 of an upgrade project, which includes fiber optics to the home and 700 Mhz wireless data services. The Qwest Communications service area encompasses the remainder of the County including the Jackson Lake area and the South Platte River Corridor between Orchard and Hillrose, which is the majority of the County's population area. The existing telephone facilities can be expanded to serve whatever growth occurs in the County. Viaero Wireless, Verizon Wireless, and Sprint/Nextel provide cellular and wireless service in Morgan County. Viaero Wireless provides wireless residential phone service. Verizon Wireless and Viaero Wireless also provide high-speed data and internet services. Internet and data transmission are also provided by a variety of companies serving the County.

G. Telecommunications (non voice)

Morgan County has been recognized for having one of the most progressive business plans for telecommunications in rural Colorado. This careful planning and forward thinking has allowed Morgan County to be one of the first communities to be connected to the Colorado High Speed Digital Network.

The State of Colorado has contracted with Qwest Communications to complete a statewide fiber loop system with at least one connection in each county. Currently, Morgan County is developing a business case to show potential revenues, start-up deployment expenses, ongoing operating expenses and capital expenses in hopes of:

- Attracting telecommunications companies to Morgan County,
- Putting together a public/private partnership offering high-speed bandwidth, or
- Building a fiber backbone in part of the County with other solutions elsewhere in the County.

Morgan County, the City of Fort Morgan and the City of Brush are funding the revenue assessment and business plan jointly. In the first phase of developing the business case, the consulting team projected that high bandwidth revenues will be in the mid to high \$300,000s annually and as high as \$3.2 million over the next ten years. The good news is that high-speed data service providers are moving into Morgan County, and there will be competition regardless of what the county chooses to do itself pertaining to telecommunications infrastructure.

H. Utilities Planning

Although the county does not assume the responsibility of providing utility services, as do municipalities, it must make sure that these services are provided in all developments at the expense of the developer. Various techniques for financing utility development will be considered by the county during the development review process and all utility plans and designs are expected to meet state standards, at a minimum.

The provision of providing adequate and properly constructed utilities to developments is obviously rooted in a concern for the public health, safety and welfare and providing a quality living environment for residents. The county also has a concern that once special districts are formed, that they remain financially sound and avoid financial restructuring that burden existing residents with excessively high mill levies. Special districts will be required to demonstrate financial viability and adequate backing for long-term fiscal soundness.

GOAL: To ensure that all developments in Morgan County have adequate infrastructure and plans to expand utilities for future growth.

Utilities and Infrastructure Policies:

1. All new developments must show proof that adequate sewer, water, electric and telephone utilities will be provided to the proposed project at the time of Final Plat review. Gas service is to be provided when available.
2. New developments are to pay for the construction of utilities within the project boundaries and all off-site impacts resulting from the project on any existing systems.
3. New developments that cannot demonstrate that they will be able to provide stable financing to construct and operate adequate utilities will be encouraged to annex to existing municipalities, combine with existing special utility districts or the applications will be withdrawn from the development approval process.
4. New developments, other than large lot single family residential, will be encouraged to connect to water and sewer systems where available and feasible.
5. The county will discourage development planning on new industrial and commercial subdivisions until existing septic and well subdivisions have in-filled to

a level that will support development of central sewer and water systems or are annexed by a municipality.

6. Proof of adequate financial mechanisms to construct new or expand existing utility systems does not guarantee development approval or supersede and use policies related to the development review process.
7. Water conservation practices are to be encouraged in all developments.
8. Encourage dual water systems for irrigation in developments.
9. The County will coordinate with water and sanitation districts in planning for additional facilities to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure the delivery of cost-effective water and sanitation services to county residents.
10. Utility facilities are to be properly sited with due regard to environmental quality by minimizing impacts to agricultural and other surrounding land uses, visual quality, physical and biological resources.
11. Utility facility siting should consider the consolidation with or joint tower use, paralleling of existing facilities where appropriate with regard to sound environmental planning, system reliability, structural integrity and where economically feasible.
12. New generators of large amounts of industrial or agricultural sewage will be encouraged to develop their own treatment facilities rather than creating an additional load on existing municipal treatment systems.
13. Large subdivisions being served by domestic wells will need to prove quality, quantity and sustainability of the wells.
14. Develop a state-of-the-art broadband telecommunications infrastructure that will provide businesses and residents in Morgan County with options for quality voice, high-speed internet, video conferencing, and data transmission capabilities that are reliable, affordable, and scalable to allow for future upgraded services and capabilities.

II PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

A. Introduction

The county's primary role in providing public facilities and services traditionally involves all county residents in the areas of human services, law enforcement and judicial systems, road building and maintenance, solid waste disposal and personal property and real estate taxation and records keeping, economic development, planning, zoning and nuisance control. In the future, building construction supervision may be added. Other facilities and services such as fire protection, education, recreation, hospitals and utilities are the

responsibility of special districts, which taxes users in defined geographical areas of the county. Special districts need to be formulated to maintain quality and economical services to users in a fiscally sound manner over the long term.

The provision of public facilities and services to residents in the future will be important in order to provide a high quality living environment and to enhance economic growth and development. Land use decisions directly impact the economics of public facility and service provision to residents since spreading new land uses too thin across the county does not provide the economies of sale for efficient service delivery. Major principals of this Plan are to encourage development so that either annexation is facilitated or economies of scale are maintained in the area of public facility and service delivery. Further, that the expansion of these facilities and services proceed commensurate with continued growth. In addition, the responsibility for developing the public facilities and services falls top those individuals and entities causing the growth, which in turn generate the need. Therefore, any new special district development must prove that there is sound technical development and operational management within a fiscally sound structure before actual development decisions primarily in relation to careful evaluation of a special district's ability to function over the long term since their primary responsibility is to assure the provision of adequate facilities and services regardless of who builds or operates them. The development of a proper legal entity is not sufficient; new special districts must demonstrate that they have fiscal resources and the capacity to provide these services without transferring these responsibilities to other providers or ultimately the county.

GOAL: To develop essential public facilities and services which contribute to providing a high quality of life for residents of Morgan County.

B. Solid Waste

The county operates a landfill northeast of Fort Morgan and all other public jurisdictions and private haulers use this facility to dispose of solid waste. Under existing conditions or with some growth, this site is expected to be useable for at least the next forty-five years. The site consists of 115 acres, of which about 60 acres are partially filled.

Policies:

1. The county encourages special districts and the municipalities to develop the capability for land application of sewage sludge's similar to the program that the City of Brush uses for crop production rather than dumping these wastes.
2. Morgan County will not allow the establishment of a toxic waste dump burial site within its jurisdiction.
3. The county encourages the recycling of solid waste and will participate in recycling programs to the greatest extent that is practical for it to do so.

4. The county encourages the use of renewable resources for energy production.

C. Police and Fire Services

Morgan County maintains a complete Sheriff's Department with facilities located at the Justice Center Complex. This complex also houses administrative offices for the Sheriff's Department, communications center, maintenance facilities, courtrooms and a jail. An adjoining building houses the Fort Morgan Police Department. All municipalities are served and protected by their own police departments. The Colorado State Patrol policies state highways.

High Plains Correctional Facility, located in Brush, is a medium secure female only facility. The private facility is comprised of 278 inmate beds and has 85 employees.

Five special fire districts utilizing a combination of paid and volunteer staff provide fire protection. These districts encompass the three major municipalities and their environs plus the Hillrose/Snyder area and the New Raymer/Stoneham area. The rural areas outside of the district boundaries, as shown in map panel #3, are served only on a pay-for-services basis. As a consequence, fire protection in the remote rural areas may require more response time.

Policies:

1. New developments should be required to become part of any of the existing fire protection districts and to pay fees associated with impacts caused by inclusion into the district.
2. The county will encourage the development of intergovernmental agreements that encompass the fire districts in order to provide dependable and quick response service to county residents.
3. The county will encourage all existing and new fire protection districts to adopt similar fire codes.
4. The county will encourage the consolidation of fire districts when it can result in better service for residents.
5. Encourage developments to supply appropriate and commonly agreed to fire flows (water supply quantity land pressure) to all new structures and hydrants in the development.
6. Encourage residential subdivisions with lots less than five (5) acres in size to have fire hydrants throughout the development capable of delivering appropriate fire flows.

7. The county will consider developing a formula for reimbursement to existing fire districts for calls to remote rural areas outside of their district boundaries.

D. Medical Services

Medical services in terms of hospitals and medical clinics are provided for county residents in Fort Morgan, Brush, and Wiggins.

Colorado Plains Medical Center (CPMC) in Fort Morgan is a 50 bed acute-care facility with a Level III trauma center and 24 hour emergency room. CPMC also operates a family practice type clinic in the town of Wiggins.

Located in Brush, East Morgan County Hospital (EMCH) is a 25 bed critical-access hospital. EMCH also has a 24 hour emergency department and is a Level IV trauma center. EMCH is equipped with a two-bed sleep study lab.

Both hospitals boast state of the art diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation facilities.

High quality facilities for disabled, dependent and elderly are located in Brush, Fort Morgan and Wiggins. Care in these facilities range from independent and assisted living, extended care and long term care. Home health care and specialty clinics that bring in physicians specializing in allergy, endocrinology, neurology, orthopedics, and plastic surgery, to name a few are also available.

Several major medical centers are available within a one and one-half (1-1/2) hour drive of the county.

Policies:

1. Major development projects in the county will be reviewed for their proximity to emergency medical services.
2. The county will consider becoming involved, where appropriate and fiscally responsible, in ensuring the long-term operation and improvement of the hospital districts in the interest of providing quality and convenient medical services to county residents.
3. New major medical facilities are encouraged to be centrally located in relation to the resident populations they serve.
4. The county will encourage the consolidation of the hospital districts into one countywide hospital district.

E. Human Services

Morgan County provides approximately 30 social service programs through its Department of Human Services. The programs include, but are not limited to, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Old Age Pension, Child Support Enforcement, Child Welfare Services, Adult Protection Services, Day Care Services, Food Stamps and Medicaid. The bulk of the money used to pay for these programs comes from Federal and State funds, with a lesser portion from the county.

Policies:

1. The county will continue to support the Department of Human Services requests for general fund money and will assist in preparing the necessary documentation for funding requests to the Colorado State Department of Human Services.
2. The county will continue to provide adequate space and facilities to the Department of Human Services, utilizing both state and county monies.

F. Education

Four school districts provide for the education of the children of Morgan County. These taxing assess mill levies based on their needs and taxing authority to all property owners in the district. These four districts encompass the entire county.

SCHOOL DISTRICT	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	% Change 2003 - 2007
Brush: RE-2	1,588	1,537	1,514	1,577	1,552	-2.27%
Fort Morgan: RE-3	3,294	3,267	3,249	3,277	3,117	-5.37%
Weldon Valley: RE-20	210	215	206	207	225	+7.14%
Wiggins: RE-50J	613	620	613	604	586	-4.40%
County Total	5,705	5,639	5,582	5,665	5,480	-3.94%

Source: Colorado Department of Education

Although the County population has increased the overall student enrollment has decreased. The only school district showing an increase in enrollment is Weldon Valley located in the unincorporated community of Weldon. According to 2006 population projections the median age in Morgan County is 33.5 which could indicate that an increase in student enrollment may be seen over the next few years.

Morgan County also has two private schools that serve K-12. Riverview Christian School, located in rural eastern Morgan County, had a student enrollment of 76 in 2007. Trinity Lutheran Christian Day School, located in Fort Morgan, had a student enrollment of 71 in 2007.

A total of 54 children were home schooled in 2007.

Morgan Community College (MCC) is a professional community of educators, support staff, and administrators that provides academic and career opportunities for students of all ages and stages in their educational journeys. Using the advantages of technology, MCC makes higher education available across the largest service area of any community college in Colorado. A main campus located in Fort Morgan and five centers in Bennett, Burlington, Limon, Wray and Yuma serve 11,500 square miles of the eastern part of the state that includes the counties of Morgan, Washington, Yuma, Lincoln, Kit Carson and the eastern halves of Adams and Arapahoe. Course delivery methods include traditional classroom settings, interactive television instruction, guided study utilizing Blackboard WebCT Vista, and online options.

Specialized facilities on the Fort Morgan campus include science labs, nursing labs, computer labs, industry standard automotive service and automotive collision repair shops, technology equipped classrooms, a state of the art library, and bookstore. A new building on the main campus for Adult Basic Education further develops educational accessibility.

The college provides Associate Degrees in Arts, Science, Applied Science and General Studies. MCC also offers career and technical education programs that include automotive service, automotive collision repair, computer information systems, and multimedia. MCC has a highly regarded nursing school as well as ancillary health programs for physical therapist assistant, medical assistant, massage therapy, phlebotomy technician, medication aide, nurse aide, radiology technician, and emergency medical services.

MCC is home to the Small Business Development Center and the Agriculture and Business Management program. The college also provides workforce training and non-credit community education.

Policies:

1. The county will participate to the extent that it can in assisting the various school districts to provide quality academic and extracurricular programs for students.
2. In order to provide services more efficiently to county residents, the county will enter into intergovernmental agreements with other jurisdictions to provide services and develop public improvements.
3. The county will work with the school districts on any master planning efforts in order to provide proper locations for any new facilities.
4. The county will cooperate with the school districts in providing information for their planning efforts.
5. The county will encourage the utilization of the Small Business Development Center for citizens considering new business pursuits.

6. The county will encourage cooperation with MCC for training work force of new business/industry.

G. Libraries

a. Fort Morgan Public Library

Fort Morgan Public Library is largely supported by funds generated by the City of Fort Morgan, and is part of the community services that the City provides for its residents. The Library's annual budget for 2007 was \$523,277. There are 9,752 cardholders, almost half who live beyond the city limits.

Circulation of books and materials has climbed steadily since 1998, and was up 7% in 2006 to 113,247. Audio Visual materials include the following formats: VHS, DVD, talking books on CD, cassette, and Playaway, music CDs and art prints. Through the Statewide Interlibrary Fast Track (SWIFT) program, the library lends and borrows nearly 1,000 items per year. Internet use for adults and juveniles continues to be a major use of the library. One-on-one computer training is available. Several excellent databases of businesses, health care information, and academic articles for all ages are available on the library website, both in the library and offsite. The library is a participating member of AskColorado, an online resource for all Colorado residents, available 24/7. School classes visit the library to learn how to use the resources, and each spring, all kindergartners come to the library to receive a book for their very own. For preschoolers, there is a twice-weekly storytime and craft time. Family/adult programs are held for the public, including storytellers, musicians, and author talks, and traditional Mexican holidays are celebrated with Centennial BOCES, bringing many Hispanic families to the library.

The Community Room and the Children's Room may be reserved for meetings and programs.

b. East Morgan County Library

The East Morgan County Library (EMCL) district was formed in 1980 to serve the eastern half of Morgan County with approximately the same boundaries as the RE-2 Brush School District. As a special district, the library is funded by a 3.5 mill levy from all property owners that has generated \$535,000 in 2008. This district has been the recipient of donations, gifts and grants to provide additional services to the public. There are over 4,500 registered cardholders from Wiggins to Akron and from Merino to Last Chance.

Circulation of books and media has increased 385% since 1981 from 23,400 books to 90,119 items in 2006. Besides books, audios, videos, newspapers and magazines the library provides access to public computers and high speed Internet. On average the library staff welcomes 500 new patrons every year,

answers over 2,500 reference questions and sponsors programs for all ages such as the Summer Reading Club which promotes reading throughout summer months when children are not attending school. EMCL has also sponsored Colorado authors, magicians, musicians and storytellers as a means of introducing local talent to Morgan County residents. A local Spinners and Weavers Guild has held demonstrations at the library and three looms have been given to the library for use by patrons.

Besides the library building itself, (an addition to the original Carnegie building in 1984), the district is responsible for the maintenance of the entire city block of grass, trees, sidewalks, picnic tables and playground. The park has been the setting for neighborhood and city-wide picnics and group gatherings due to its central location.

Two meeting rooms are also available for public use. The upstairs of the Carnegie building has been refurbished into a beautiful meeting room for which there is a small reservation fee. The basement of the Carnegie building is used for Friends of the Library book sales and can be used for small group meetings at no charge.

Policies:

1. Provide a current inventory of publications in multiple formats for entertainment, general education and home schooled students.
2. Provide additional educational opportunities for area children.
3. Provide computer access to residents without high speed access or no access at all.
4. Provide tourists and visitors adequate computer terminals for e-mail access and remote wireless internet while away from home.
5. Provide technology and research capabilities for furthering education at any level or age.

H. County Government Administration

A three-member Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), who is elected on a countywide basis, governs Morgan County. Staffing of the various departments is adequate and the BOCC perform the overall coordination function as a committee. These officials are also paid a yearly salary that is intended to cover nearly fulltime administration of the county.

The BOCC is assisted in making land use decisions by a Planning and Zoning Commission, which they appoint. The commission consists of seven members.

Policies:

1. The county will encourage citizen participation in obtaining information in regard to budgetary matters, land use decisions and other relevant subjects in order to foster better communication between government and county residents and a greater understanding of the issues before the board.
2. In order to provide services more efficiently to county residents, the county will enter into intergovernmental agreements with other jurisdictions to provide services and develop public improvements.

Chapter 9

CIRCULATION AND TRANSPORTATION

I EXISTING CONDITIONS

A. Road System

Morgan County's basic road system consists of a major interstate highway and a mixture of federal, state and county roads. Interstate Highway 76 (I-76) bisects the county in an east/west direction providing a controlled access line to the west to Denver intersecting other highways (I-25 and I-70) in the interstate system and to the east to Omaha, Nebraska by connecting to I-80, which connects both coasts. Federal and state highways (34, 6, 52, 71, 144 and 39) connect the major activity centers in the county with regional centers such as Greeley and Sterling. These highways are laid out in a general grid pattern and are spread across the county. These roads are currently serving as the major arterials both within and external to the communities and the main connectors between them. In general, their level of service (LOS) is rated as A, which is basically free flowing with no interruptions. U.S. 34 carries significant local traffic between the communities of Fort Morgan and Brush and is the main connector between Akron in Washington County and Greeley in Weld County.

The development of the Ports to Plains and Heartland South highway projects may have a vital impact on future commercial and industrial development within the county. Ports to Plains Highway opens a direct route from Texas to Denver and will pass through Limon, a small community south of Morgan County. This project has been designated as a Federal Corridor making it eligible for federal monies.

An enhancement of the Ports to Plains, Heartland South, has been designated as a state corridor by the Colorado Dept. of Transportation. Federal designation is pending. This extension, State Highway 71, will begin in Limon and continue north through Morgan County across Nebraska and into South Dakota. Current plans call for the Heartland South to be a super 2- lane highway having wider lanes and shoulders and rest areas.

The county road system provides an infill collector system on an east/west/north/south grid pattern laid out at one-mile spacings. It is anticipated that future expansions of county activity centers will utilize these roads as major collectors because of the pattern and the spacing. Additional rights-of-way (ROW) may need to be obtained during the course of subdivision and development in the county and agreements structured during the annexation process by municipalities for ROW extensions on designated roads in order to properly build them.

B. Railroads

Rail service to Morgan County is excellent with service provided by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF). The BNSF rail line serves large as well as small communities

both east and west from the county and provides side tracks for loading of agricultural goods. Both manufactured and agricultural goods are easily transported out of the county by rail. Passenger service is provided by AMTRAK, which uses the BNSF line serving Denver and west coast and Fort Morgan plus other stops to the east. One daily stop in each direction in Fort Morgan is provided.

The Rail Relocation Implementation Study investigates the feasibility of moving a majority of the current through-freight rail traffic away from the Front Range corridor (Denver to Pueblo) to the Eastern Plains of Colorado. Participants in the study are BNSF, the Union Pacific Railroad (UP), the Regional Transportation District (RTD) as well as regional and local stakeholders.

The Study builds on Colorado Department of Transportation's 2005 Public Benefits and Costs Study which concluded that the public would accrue significant benefits should the rail relocation project move forward. The primary purposes of the Study are to better define and evaluate two preliminary rail bypass alignments; to determine the costs of the two bypass alternatives; to investigate what sources of funding are available; to determine how to finance the project, to determine what steps will have to be carried out to form a public/private partnership, and to develop strategies for implementing the necessary environmental reviews.

The operations of the existing UP and BNSF rail freight traffic are being modeled using Rail Traffic Controller (RTC) software. The railroad operational savings related to operating on one of the two new bypass alignments compared to current operations is a major element of the Study. The Study is also updating the benefits to the Public identified in the 2005 Public Benefits Study.

The Study has a significant public involvement component which will provide the public both an opportunity to comment on the various preliminary bypass alignments being evaluated and also to develop an understanding of the benefits, costs and issues associated with implementing the proposed project.

A map of the two proposed routes is included in the Appendix Section.

C. Airports

Commercial airline service for Morgan County is available in Denver at Denver International Airport (DIA), a little over an hours drive from Fort Morgan. This is one of the largest airports in the United States due to DIA's hub location in the United States' air traffic system.

Both Fort Morgan and Brush have municipal airports with VFR ratings and uncontrolled airspace.

Large businesses and corporations such as Cattlco, Walmart, and Cargill utilize the Fort Morgan airport.

D. Public Transportation

Interstate bus lines along I-76 through the county and the AMTRAK rail passenger service currently provides public transportation. Few stops are located in the county limiting their utility as a commuter service. Bus service is provided by Arrow Stage Lines with daily stops in Brush and Fort Morgan. A region wide shuttle service, County Express, provides service throughout Northeast Colorado and to the metro area upon request.

II CIRCULATION AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN

A. Introduction

The Circulation and Transportation Plan outlined below deals primarily with defining a collector and arterial network. The approach of this Plan has been to designate potential land use in the activity centers of the county and then to develop a circulation plan that is logically related to this land use pattern. In terms of roads, the existing county system is utilized to the greatest extent possible.

Public transit for the general population may become a consideration at the time that a large employment generator is located either within or adjacent to the county. As the county continues to see an increase in the number of commuters strategically placed park and ride carpool areas may be given consideration. This would be in cooperation with Colorado Department of Transportation.

Implementation of a bicycle/pedestrian pathway between the communities of Fort Morgan and Brush utilizing public land and right of ways should be studied. Developing this pathway will require the cooperation of numerous public jurisdictions and private landowners.

GOAL: To provide the residents and businesses in Morgan County with a circulation system that connects the major county activity centers with the outlying communities of the county, regional employment generators and the rest of the state in the interests of providing economic opportunity, access efficiency and safety and improving the quality of live.

POLICIES:

1. Traffic and Roads
 - a. New developments and subdivisions may be required to mitigate impacts to the existing road system in proportion to the increased loadings on the roads and increased congestion at intersections within and adjacent to the development. The resolution of access problems caused by the location of the development is the responsibility of the developer.

- b. All public roads within new developments are to be constructed to county specifications and may need to be paved at the discretion of the county and at the developer's expense. The exception to this policy will pertain to local public and private roads in very low density residential subdivisions; exceptions will be made at the discretion of the Board of County Commissioners.
 - c. Large, new development projects shall estimate traffic trip generations for review by the county during the proposal review process.
 - d. New business activity center developments shall include a comprehensive circulation plan and adequate and convenient parking.
 - e. The county has prepared and adopted a comprehensive set of road design specifications that apply to roads that are a part of the public road network. These specifications apply to all roads, both public and private.
 - f. Private roads generally will not be accepted into the county road inventory.
 - g. All new developments shall dedicate their share of the county road ROW for any county road on which they abut. The development of half roads shall not be allowed.
 - h. The control of access on county roads shall be implemented by discouraging driveway cuts on all road classifications higher than local access roads, developing access control plans for major collectors and arterials, requiring new developments to minimize the number of access points to the major road network.
 - i. Access onto state highways is discouraged and requires permitting by the Colorado Department of Transportation.
 - j. The county will support and promote the Heartland South Highway project.
2. Other Transportation Modes
- a. The county will encourage and participate in the development of public transportation as the need becomes evident.
 - b. Special transportation programs for special population groups will continue to be supported by the county to the greatest extent possible.
 - c. The county will cooperate with the municipalities of Fort Morgan and Brush to develop their airports in an efficient and cost effective manner.

- d. The county will establish truck routes in cooperation with the municipalities and will set weight limits that are compatible with the state. Truck routes are to be strictly enforced.
- e. The county will work with industrial and business developers and the railroads to improve the existing sidings and to plan new ones to accommodate new developments.

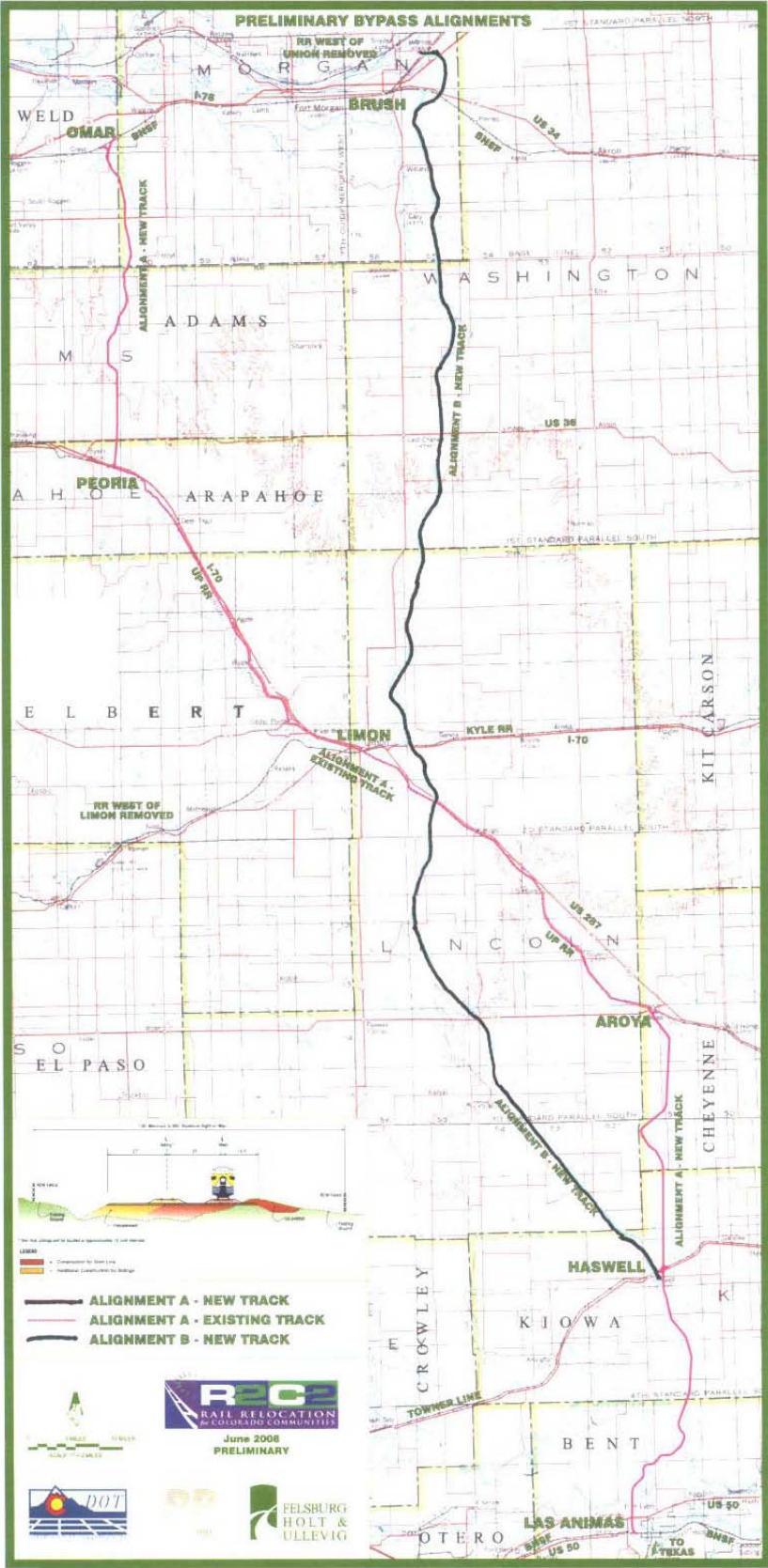


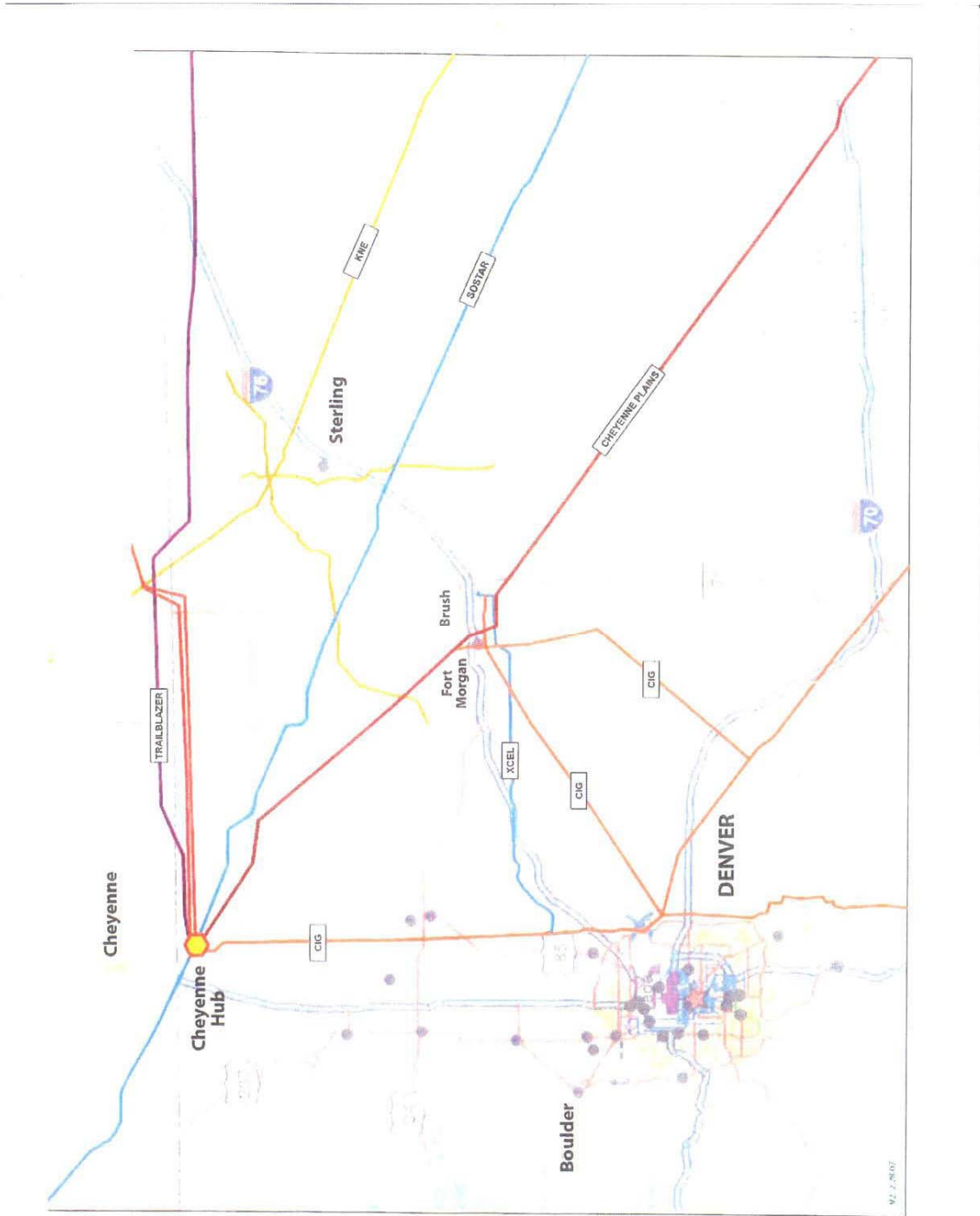
CHAPTER 10 IMPLEMENTATION

I ZONING & SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

The Zoning Regulations of Morgan County are reviewed, revised and updated on a continuous basis. The Zoning and Subdivision Regulations are intended to implement this Comprehensive Plan.

The Zoning and Subdivision Regulations and the permitting process' resulting from these regulations shall be maintained such that they are easily understood and permits can be processed without the aid of outside consultants.





GAS PIPELINES