

OURAY COMMUNITY PLAN 2004

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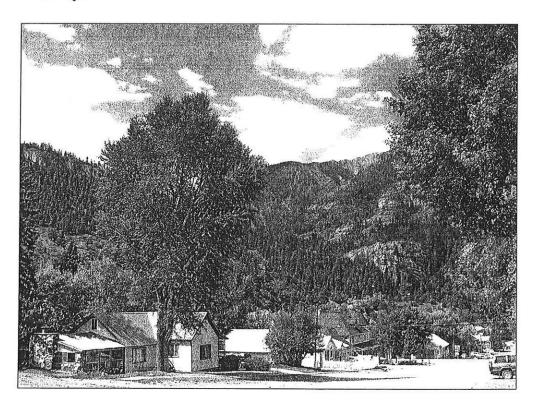
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A VISION STATEMENT FOR OURAY

Ouray is a family-oriented city with a strong sense of community and pride in its history. It enjoys a high quality environment, natural beauty and resources, historic character, social diversity and active community involvement. Its residents want to ensure that these unique attributes not be jeopardized, and that development and growth occur in a manner that protects and preserves Ouray's assets.

Ouray's residents recognize the need for a balanced and diverse economy. They want to maintain the current qualities that make Ouray a desirable place to live, work, play, and raise a family, while enhancing its public facilities and services.

The citizens of Ouray wish to provide for orderly and managed growth with respect for the capacity and quality of the natural environment, to improve and expand community functions and services, and to protect and enhance the historic character and the quality of life in Ouray.



Ouray combines small town character with a mountain setting.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

The Ouray Community Plan is a comprehensive, long-range guide for the future development of Ouray. The plan provides a basic framework of goals, objectives and policies to guide public and private investments. It will help elected officials and private entities make decisions that are consistent with the community's goals for the future. The plan will help preserve the character of the community, and it will provide some certainty or predictability for those who live, work, visit or invest in Ouray.

The Planning Process

The planning process for the original plan began in early 1992 with the collection of data about existing conditions in Ouray. In June, questionnaires were distributed and two town meetings were held to document residents' needs, concerns and aspirations for the future. The data was analyzed, opportunities and constraints were identified, and a first draft of goals, objectives, policies and actions was developed.

During the winter of 1992-93, three town meetings were held to discuss the proposed goals and policies. Community volunteers led discussion groups and recorded comments at the town meetings, and later helped edit the proposed plan. A public hearing was held in July 1993 for comment on the proposed plan. Following the hearing, the plan was revised and a final draft was prepared. The last phase of the process was implementation of recommended actions, which occurred after adoption of the plan by the City.

In 1995, major revisions to the City's land use regulations were adopted with the passage of the Ouray Land Use Code. These new regulations were promulgated in an effort to implement recommendations made in the Community Plan.

Nearly ten years after the 1993 Plan was adopted, the process of updating it began. Evaluating the need for an update was prioritized in the City Council's Work Plan for 2003 and the Ouray Planning Commission was given the lead role in this process. The project was first formally discussed at Planning Commission's April meeting. This was the first of eleven consecutive public meetings at which the update was discussed during 2003 and early 2004. Notices of all meetings were published and the *Ouray County Plaindealer* gave extensive and prominent news coverage to the update process.

To facilitate the process, review of the 1993 Plan occurred one section at a time, with a different Planning Commission Member taking the lead for each section. Review of the final section was completed in December and a final draft of the update presented at the Planning Commission's February 2004 meeting.

Early on in the update process, the consensus of Commission members was that the original plan was fundamentally sound, but certain statistics and data required updating. Also, recommendations that had been implemented since the plan's adoption needed to be documented. Aside from these additions, the updated plan embodies most if not all of the values expressed in the original plan, which demonstrates remarkable consistency in community values over the past 10 years.

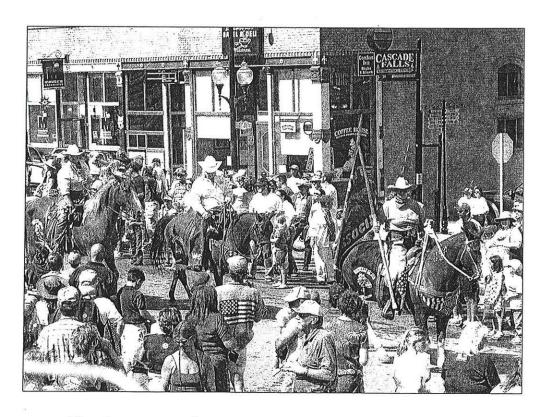
A Comprehensive Approach

The plan is comprehensive; it provides for a coordinated approach to problem solving by looking at environment, economics, population, culture, land use and community services and facilities simultaneously.

Adoption and Revision

The plan should be adopted by the Planning Commission by resolution, and it should be continuously used by the Planning Commission and City Council to carry out the stated goals of the community. The plan is advisory only, and adoption does not commit the City to any specific program or legislation. Community priorities will, as always, be determined by the willingness and ability to pay for facilities and services.

Goals are enduring and seldom change over time, but policies should be updated every five years or sooner, if necessary. Amendments to the plan must consider community-wide goals and objectives and should be accomplished with broad public participation.

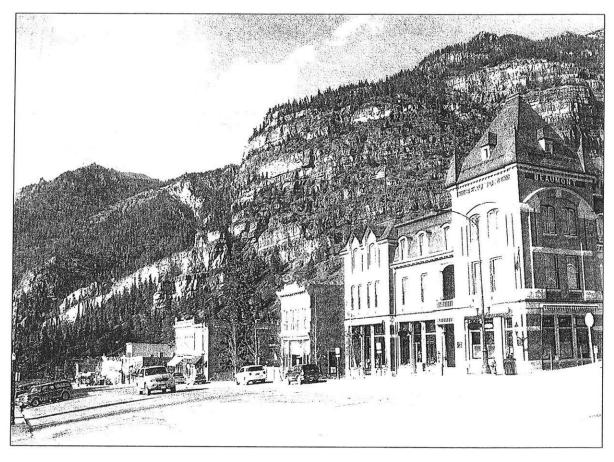


The strong sense of community is one of the things that attracts new residents to Ouray. Photo provided by the *Ouray Plaindealer*.

How to Use the Plan

The plan should be used to update zoning and subdivision regulations and performance standards. The Planning Commission should use it to evaluate individual development proposals for conformance with community goals. Elected officials and City staff should use the plan to guide sound public investments in community services and facilities. The plan should be used to assist other jurisdictions in the vicinity in understanding Ouray's goals, and to promote cooperation among local governments. The plan should be made available to private developers, landowners and residents to help voluntarily guide proposals in a way that will bring Ouray closer to its goals for the future.

Planning is a continuing process. The Ouray Community Plan should be consulted frequently in decision-making, and it should be made widely available to promote public knowledge of and support for the goals of the community. It should be reviewed every five years to determine whether an update is necessary and used continuously to promote sound planning for the future of Ouray.



The historic ambience of Ouray's Main Street district and neighborhoods appeals to tourists and other visitors.

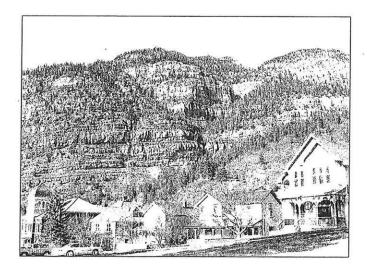
ENVIRONMENT

Ouray is uniquely situated in a mountain setting, which features dramatic views, clean air and water, proximity and easy access to public lands, geothermal springs, and abundant wildlife. These amenities have been major factors in making Ouray a desirable place to live. Ouray lies within the narrow valley of the Uncompangre River with undeveloped mountainsides and cliffs rising abruptly on the east and west sides of town.

Within the City limits, higher lands on the town's eastern and western edges were platted for development as part of the original townsite. The steep terrain creates a potential for natural hazards that include floods, rockfalls and debris flows. Soils in town are generally alluvial deposits from rivers and streams, except east of 6th Street where unconsolidated glacial drift forms the hillside. Natural vegetation and native forests of scrub oak, spruce and fir grow undisturbed down the hillsides, gradually giving way to the human landscape of the town. Most of the lands immediately outside the city limits and surrounding Ouray are privately owned mining claims or publicly owned lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

Analysis

Important issues and concerns stated by residents during the public comment period for the 1993 plan included protection of overall environmental and visual quality, protection of air and water quality, noise and dust control, protection of geothermal water resources, and protection of back country public lands and trails. Protection of the natural setting and open spaces that surround Ouray is very important to residents. Many residents expressed concern that environmental quality may be affected by future increases in population, development, industry and traffic.



Ouray's spectacular natural setting is an important component of its appeal for local residents and visitors.

Air Quality

Air quality is most affected by dust from unpaved roads during dry periods and by sanding operations on Main Street during winter months. Magnesium chloride is applied to unpaved streets during the summer months to control dust.

According to the EPA and C-DOT, magnesium chloride has no adverse environmental or health effects and is acceptable for use in dust abatement. Fine dust, designated PM-10 (particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter), from unpaved streets, winter road sanding and wood burning, has been shown to aggravate or provoke respiratory illnesses. A National Ambient Air Quality Standard has been established by the EPA for allowable levels of PM-10, but Ouray's air has never been sampled.

Tests conducted by the State Department of Health in towns similar to Ouray have shown that unpaved roads and sanding operations generate 90% of the harmful particulates in the air. Fireplaces, open burning, wood and coal burning stoves, restaurant exhausts and vehicle emissions account for the remainder of the harmful particulates. During the Plan update period, public comment continued to indicate that dust control and protection of air quality should be a high priority.

Radon, a radioactive gas produced by the natural decay of uranium and other elements in the soil, has been detected in some buildings in Ouray. Exposure to an elevated level of radon for a long time has been shown to increase the risk of developing lung cancer.

Ouray has limited performance standards to regulate impacts from industries in the C-2 zone. Zoning Ordinance 7-2-F.6 permits industrial or manufacturing operations "...from which no excessive volume of sound or vibrations is generated, or from which no dust, smoke, fumes, gas, noxious odors or other atmospheric effluent is disseminated."

Water Quality

Domestic water is supplied from Weehawken Spring. The City also owns additional surface water rights in both Weehawken and Oak Creeks. The recharge zone for the aquifer is not identified but appears to be at higher elevations in undeveloped lands. There is no immediate threat to water quality, but potential threats might include mining operations or other development activities in the recharge zone. Regular testing has shown Ouray's water to be free of microbiological and inorganic contaminates. Additional information on Ouray's water system can be found in the Community Services and Facilities section of the Community Plan.

The Uncompander River water quality has been reduced by the effects of earlier mining operations in the Red Mountain district; sedimentation, high acidity, dissolved metals and reduction of aquatic life are current problems. Remedial actions undertaken in 1993 on Idarado Mine properties involved stabilizing and revegetating mine tailings, rerouting water courses around mine dumps and in some cases sealing off old portals. These activities have begun to improve river water quality.

The natural geothermal water system consists of hot water moving continuously through aquifers in limestone and in the alluvial river valley. The recharge area is not known but may be in limestone outcroppings at higher elevations in the mountains east of Ouray. According to Colorado Geological Survey report 90-3, the quantity and temperature of

the water in the system should remain in equilibrium as long as hot water is not removed faster than it is recharged.

Flooding

Ouray periodically experiences damaging floods. Most of the town is built on the debris fans of Portland, Cascade and Oak Creeks, and on the alluvial flood plain of the Uncompanier River. Floods in Portland, Cascade, Oak, Skyrocket and Bridalveil Creeks typically occur as debris-flows, in which loose soil, rocks and organic debris flow with water in a dense slurry. Debris-flows occur during periods of heavy rain, usually in July or August, and in the past have come at intervals of 10 to 25 years. As a flood protection measure, the flows of Portland and Cascade Creeks have been channeled through concrete flumes within the city.

Flooding of the Uncompahgre River is a result of rapid melting of the mountain snow pack, sometimes augmented by rainfall, in May, June or early July. In 1985, a Flood Insurance Study was prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help local planners promote sound flood plain management and to establish base flood elevations and Flood Hazard Areas for insurance purposes. In 1995, an effort began to reevaluate floodplains of Portland and Cascade Creeks taking into account the reconstruction of the flumes nine years earlier. The study was initiated by FEMA in cooperation with the City and State Water Conservation Board. Though the study has yet to be finalized, it is hoped that the area encompassed by these floodplains will be reduced as a result of this effort.

In 1998, revisions to the Uncompandere River floodplain in the northern reaches of Ouray were approved by FEMA as part of the City's river restoration project. This effort reduced the size of the floodplain in the project area by one-half. Development in any designated Flood Hazard Area must conform to the City's existing flood plain regulations.

Wildlife

Deer and bear come into town throughout the year and deer are seen daily in the winter. During the comment period, public opinion about visiting wildlife was varied; some residents recommended management of the deer herd while others commented on the value and beauty of regularly seeing wildlife in town. Wildlife management is a function of the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Goal

Identify, conserve and protect the environmental qualities that make Ouray a special place.

Objectives

- 1. Minimize adverse environmental impacts, which can result from growth and development.
- 2. Actively plan for conservation and protection of unique natural resources.
- 3. Encourage land uses that are consistent with conservation of environmental quality and efficient use of natural resources.

- 4. Encourage practices that lead to the protection of the health of Ouray's citizens.
- 5. Prevent development of private and public property located in the recharge area of the Weehawken Spring aquifer.

Policies

- 1. Provide leadership to achieve cooperative planning with Ouray County, the U.S. Forest Service and other public and private entities for environmental quality and other mutual planning goals.
- 2. Continue to utilize public open space as a means of preserving and protecting the natural setting around Ouray. This may include the acquisition of private property for public open space.
- 3. Maintain or improve Ouray's air quality and water quality.
- 4. Support efforts to improve water quality in the Uncompangre River and the visual quality of the riverway.
- 5. Monitor development and use of geothermal water sources to prevent depletion of aquifer.
- 6. Ensure that proposed developments, including excavation and fill projects, respond to the soil, drainage, flood plain, erosion and surface geologic characteristics of the development site by proper engineering and construction.
- 7. Regulate development to maintain or enhance the environmental quality of Ouray.
- 8. Promote energy conservation, increase energy efficiency and use of renewable sources such as solar, wind, hydropower and geothermal.
- 9. Prevent development of visually sensitive private properties through acquisition for open space.

Recommended Actions

- 1. Establish a cooperative planning agreement with the U.S. Forest Service.
- 2. Maintain and expand the existing system of parks and public open spaces.
- 3. Consider more effective methods of dust control.
- 4. Make information available for Ouray residents regarding methods of reducing radon in buildings.
- 5. Identify wetlands and natural hazard areas such as floodways, floodplains, and debris-flow channels. Define performance standards to guide development in these areas.
- 6. Pursue land exchanges with the U.S. Forest Service that achieve mutual environmental goals.
- 7. Develop land use regulations that address the goals, objectives, and policies outlined in the Ouray Community Plan, including visual quality.
- 8. Pursue rehabilitation of the Skyrocket Dam structure.
- 9. Participate with Ouray County in efforts to improve Uncompangre River Water Quality.
- 10. Require bear-proof trash containers throughout the City.
- 11. Review design of flume crossings at Highway 550.

Accomplishments since 1993

- 1. Establishment of an "Intergovernmental Agreement" with Ouray County to guide decision-making on issues of mutual concern.
- 2. Expanded the existing system of parks and public open spaces.
- 3. Discontinued use of fly ash in road sanding.
- 4. Established a No Smoking policy for all City buildings and vehicles.
- 5. Continued monitoring flows of existing geothermal water resources.
- 6. Defined engineering requirements for steep or unstable slopes.
- 7. Required permits for excavation and fill.
- 8. Developed requirements for revegetation of road cuts and areas of excavation and fill.

POPULATION AND CULTURE

According to the 1990 Census, Ouray had a permanent year-round population of about 650 persons. The 2000 Census figures show Ouray's permanent population to be 813. During the summer the population grows to more than 1000 as part-time residents return. Ouray has an unusually high civic spirit with volunteerism providing a solid base of support for many civic and cultural activities. There is much pride in the community, and in its long history of mining, its Victorian architecture, and its traditions. Ouray's small size and unique cultural heritage are conducive to residents interacting, getting to know and taking care of each other.

Analysis

Residents continue to value retaining Ouray's small town, family-oriented character. Cooperation, caring, friendliness and tolerance for others are very important to this community. Residents said support for organizations and events, for volunteerism and involvement, and for the school and churches are important. Residents recommended further development of cultural activities, the arts and music.

Ouray is undergoing changes. The decline of mining, the growth of the tourism industry, the growth of Ridgway's economic base, investment in second homes by non-residents, an influx of new residents and a growing transient population are affecting the community. Residents do not want to see changes erode Ouray's small town character and essential attributes. The residents want to retain Ouray's unique qualities and special identity. Ouray should accommodate growth in a way that maintains community strengths.

Education, Culture and Recreation

Social and cultural events can help create a common spirit, which binds residents together. Educational and recreational programs can enrich the quality of life for all ages. Ouray's school, with preschool through 12th grade and about 200 students, is highly rated for its academic achievements.

Goals

- 1. Provide and maintain facilities in Ouray for comprehensive education from preschool through 12th grade and beyond.
- 2. Expand opportunities for education, the arts, cultural activities and recreation in Ouray.

Policies

- 1. Support civic and cultural events by continuing to make city-owned facilities available at affordable rates.
- 2. Continue to facilitate, sponsor and support cultural and recreational events.
- 3. Support creation of a countywide recreation district.
- 4. Encourage awareness, education and integration of minority populations within the community.

Recommended Actions

- 1. Encourage advanced education courses or a technical/vocational school in Ouray.
- 2. Improve community information sharing; install bulletin boards or information kiosks.
- 3. Sponsor City and County recreation and cultural programs.

Housing

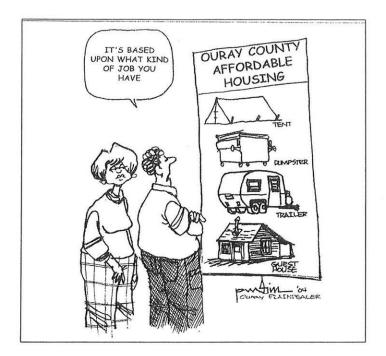
When the 1993 Plan was prepared, Ouray had approximately 500 housing units. Around 400 of the housing units were single family residences, 350 were houses and 50 were mobile homes. The remaining 100 units were apartments, condominiums and residences within commercial buildings.

City records for 2003 show that Ouray has about 592 housing units. Single family residences account for 453 of these, with 401 being houses and 52 mobile homes. Apartments and multi-family dwellings account for the remaining 139 units.

According to the 1990 Census, of the 480 housing units documented in that year, 290 were occupied and 190 were vacant. Of the 290 households, 211 were owner occupied and 79 were renter occupied. One hundred seventy nine (179) of the 290 households were families, while 100 of the households consisted of only one person. Twenty-one percent (21%) of Ouray's residents were over 59 years of age.

Figures from the 2000 Census show 374 occupied units (64.2%) and 209 vacant units (35.8%). Of the occupied units, 260 (69.5%) are occupied by owners and 114 (30.5%) by renters. Families make up 60.4% or 226 of all households identified by the 2000 Census. Average family size is 2.76 persons. Non-family households account for 148 or 39.6% of the total and householders living alone account for 128 of these. The average household size is 2.15. 17.7% of Ouray's population is 62 years and over.

During the update process, residents continued to express concern about affordable family housing, employee housing and housing for seniors. As in the 1993 plan, residents are concerned about the inadequate supply of rental housing and the high cost of purchasing a home.



As in many mountain towns, affordable housing is an ongoing concern in Ouray.

A continued increase in economic activity since the original plan was adopted, has created more jobs and the need for more employee housing; at the same time, no new low income housing has been added to the market. Much of the construction activity is occurring as infill of vacant lots, new high-end development in the North section of town, and redevelopment of existing properties in the older sections of town. Considerable new housing development is occurring in the North Ouray C-2 Industrial zone. Also in North Ouray, an annexation that would increase the area of the city by six acres has been approved. There is expected to be an increase in the number of annexation requests over the next 5-10 years. The cost of existing homes and vacant land continues to increase because of the accelerated demand for vacation homes, investment property and homes for new residents.

Goal

Encourage the supply of safe year-round low and moderate income housing in Ouray.

Objective

Provide housing opportunities for a stable and diverse population.

Policy

1. Evaluate Ouray's need for low and moderate income housing in conjunction with Ouray County housing needs.

Recommended Actions

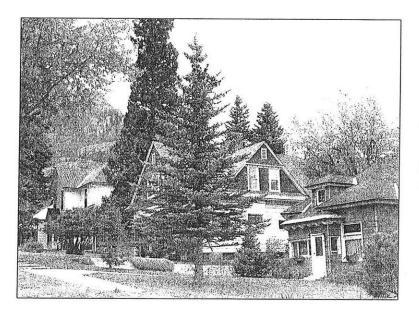
- 1. Form a housing study group to explore needs, opportunities and constraints and make recommendations regarding low to moderate income housing, employee housing and senior housing.
- 2. Develop policies to encourage affordable housing development through the use of incentives.

Historic Resources

The City of Ouray was nominated as a National Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, and is listed as resource number 50R585. In the Historic Resources Survey prepared in 1981 in support of Ouray's nomination as a National Historic District, Sullenberger and Baker wrote:

Ouray is a fine example of late 19th century architecture and a physical reminder of mining history in the San Juans. Its unique and magnificent setting, well preserved buildings, and relative lack of inharmonious modern intrusions make it a significant historical district. Furthermore, this significance is based on Ouray's historical and architectural integrity dating from the period 1886 to 1910. These years encompass the height of Ouray's importance as a supply center for nearby mining regions and they also saw the architectural maturing of the town from a rude frame-dominated camp to a brick and stone, prosperous city. In this framework, Ouray is important as an example of the process of urbanization on the mining frontier in the last decade of the 19th century (Smith 1967). Along with Silverton and Telluride, Ouray was the principal town in the San Juan mining district, ranked as the third largest producing mining district in Colorado between 1893-1915 and the first on the western slope. (Sullenberger and Baker, A Historic Resources Survey of Ouray County, Colorado: pg 100, Ms. Centuries Research, Inc., Montrose, Colorado, 1981)

Residents rate historic charm as one of Ouray's most desirable features. During the update process, concern was raised about the type of architecture being built throughout town and the need for design guidelines. Residents also said historic restorations and preservation of historic buildings should be encouraged and an historic preservation ordinance to protect historic buildings was suggested.



The Ouray National Register Historic District is regarded as both a cultural and an economic resource.

Goal

Preserve Ouray's historic resources.

Objectives

- 1. Protect the economic and cultural value of Ouray's historic resources.
- 2. Protect Ouray's designation as a National Historic District.
- 3. Keep community history and cultural heritage alive.
- 4. Encourage the continued use and preservation of historic buildings.

Policies

- 1. Recognize historic resources as irreplaceable community, economic and cultural resources.
- 2. Recognize that Ouray's designation as a National Historic District is a valuable economic and cultural resource, and that this designation can be removed by loss of contributing structures and new incompatible structures. Encourage preservation of contributing historic properties (buildings used to help obtain the designation).
- 3. Encourage new buildings, which are compatible with Ouray's historic character.
- 4. Encourage listing of individual buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 5. Recognize some historic mine structures as valuable resources, support efforts to conserve or protect them.
- 6. Promote the economic and cultural benefits of restoration of historic buildings.
- 7. Prevent adverse impacts of new or remodeled buildings, which may be much larger than Ouray's currently existing buildings, by developing guidelines for mass, scale, materials and design.

Recommended Actions

- 1. Create voluntary guidelines to assist owners in the rehabilitation and maintenance of historic buildings and to help achieve compatibility in new building design.
- 2. Assist owners with the application process for state and federal tax credits, grants for rehabilitation and listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 3. Investigate the value of an historic preservation ordinance, hold informational meetings, obtain citizen input, decide whether to promote conservation of historic buildings with voluntary guidelines or with ordinance.
- 4. Update the inventory of historic buildings every five years.
- 5. Publicize results of the updated survey of historic properties to promote public understanding of historic design and values- solicit comments.

Accomplishments Since 1993

- 1. Informational bulletin board installed at the Hot Springs Pool and Visitor Center.
- 2. Policy of prohibiting short-term rentals in the R-1 zone has been continued.
- 3. A study group was formed to explore on a countywide basis needs, opportunities and constraints regarding housing. The value of an historic preservation ordinance was investigated by holding public meetings to obtain citizen input on whether an ordinance or voluntary guidelines were preferred.
- 4. Initiated Architectural Inventory of Ouray National Register Historic District.

ECONOMY

Ouray began as a mining boom town in 1876. The boom faded in the early part of the 20th century and population declined, but mining continued as the most important economic activity through the 1960s. In the 1950s, summer tourism began to play an important role in the town economy and it now comprises the major component of Ouray's economic base.

According to the 1990 Census, major employers in Ouray were 1) self-employed workers including sole proprietorships, 2) government and 3) the school district. The largest industries were construction, retailing, lodging and restaurants. In 1990 there were 26 persons employed in mining in Ouray County. According to Region 10, there were 13 in 2003.

In contrast, the 2000 Census reveals that 48% of Ouray's workforce is employed in service, sales or office occupations, while management or professional occupations account for 35% and construction 13% respectively, of all local jobs. The largest industries by percentage are as follows: education, health and social services, 16%; construction, 13%; professional, scientific and administration, 12%; retail trade, 10%; and finance, rental, real estate, 10%.

Most commercial activity occurs during the primary tourist season between June 1 and October 1. In 1990, Ouray's sales tax receipts showed that about 70% of sales occur during that four-month period. July and August were the peak months of tourism, followed by September and June. As of 2003, 56% of all retail sales occur during the primary tourist season, which indicates that efforts to develop a more year-round economy are having an impact. Even so, many of Ouray's businesses, including motels, restaurants, Jeep rentals, gift shops and campgrounds, still serve the tourist industry and remain open during the summer season only. Nevertheless, indications are that the winter economy is improving due to public and private promotional efforts and winter facilities such as the Ouray Ice Park and the Ouray Hot Springs Pool.

Analysis

During the 1993 public comment period for the original plan, many residents expressed concern about the growth of the tourism industry and feared that the friendliness, caring and cooperation that are a part of life in Ouray might be undermined by commercialism. Public comment during the 2003 update of the plan indicates that residents have not seen this fear realized. Moderate economic growth continues to be supported, but not necessarily in the tourism industry. Most residents want to see economic growth that will provide greater diversity and a more stable, year-round balance to the economy, reducing the dependence on tourism.

In both 1993 and 2003, residents expressed a desire to have more opportunities for middle-income jobs and more employment opportunities for young families. Encouraging businesses that rely on telecommunications and computers is a popular idea. Efforts to

increase winter visitors in recent years may help provide a more even balance to economic activity. Despite these efforts, economic diversification remains a challenge.

Tourism now influences most aspects of Ouray's economy and well-being; it creates both advantages and disadvantages for the town and provides the base and strength for much of the economy. Maintaining the health of the tourism industry is important to Ouray's stability. During the current summer tourism season, between 1,200 and 1,600 overnight visitors stay in Ouray's vacation houses, lodging facilities and campgrounds every night. Ouray's population, and the corresponding economic activity and demand on public facilities and services, varies between the winter low of 813 permanent residents and summer daily peaks of as many as 3,000 residents, overnight visitors and day visitors.

This has resulted in a seasonal pattern with summer months characterized by full employment and inadequate housing, followed by winter months with decreased employment opportunities, yet still an inadequate amount of affordable employee housing. The lack of housing causes difficulties for employees as well as businesses, which sometimes must operate understaffed. Many employees commute from towns as far away as Delta. There has also been an increasing reliance on foreign-born transient workers.

Goal

Develop and maintain a strong and diversified economy that is consistent with the Ouray Community Plan.

Objectives

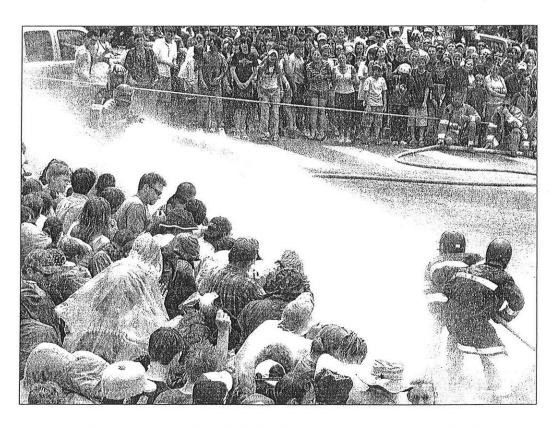
- 1. Develop a more diversified year-round economy.
- 2. Maintain and improve the health of the tourism and recreation industry.
- 3. Promote more year-round visitation while protecting the quality of the visitor experience.
- 4. Continue to recognize the goals, objectives and policies of the Ouray Community Plan in contracts with the Ouray Chamber Resort Association and other business development groups.

Policies

- 1. Promote economic diversification by supporting existing businesses, encouraging the expansion of professions and businesses that do not have a negative impact on the quality of the area.
- 2. Support efforts to promote year-round visitation.
- 3. Foster business development in accordance with Ouray's long-term goals as expressed in the Community Plan.
- 4. Actively plan for and manage demands on facilities and services created by increased business and residential activity.
- 5. Maintain City facilities and services to a high standard to make diversified private sector investment attractive.

Recommended Actions

- 1. Ensure that action to promote economic diversification and year-round marketing is undertaken by public and private entities, both by contract and by volunteer efforts as currently accomplished by contract with the Ouray Chamber Resort Association through distributions of the Lodging Occupation Tax and other public funds.
- 2. Ensure that visitor services are provided including information, parking, public restrooms, signage and public communication to enhance the visitor experience and to mitigate impacts on the community.
- 3. Support efforts to improve leading edge technology as it relates to businesses that rely on telecommunications and computer access.
- 4. Actively promote arts and crafts, performing arts, small conventions and heritage tourism accomplished in cooperation with the Ouray Chamber Resort Association, Ouray County Historical Society and others.



Ouray's Fourth of July Celebration is one of many events that entertains local residents and attracts visitors to the city.

Photo provided by the *Ouray Plaindealer*.

LAND USE

The land use pattern in Ouray reflects a concentrated, built-up central business district surrounded by Victorian-era residential neighborhoods. New residential developments have been built primarily on the outer edges of town, while new condos, townhouses and motels have been built in some older neighborhoods close to the town center. More recently residential development has expanded to the north in the annexed corridor along Highway 550 and the Uncompanger River. Both at the time of the original plan and in 2003, there is no concentrated industrial activity in Ouray.

Ouray established zoning regulations in 1972. Six zoning districts were created:

- P-1 Parks, Developed
- P-2 Parks, Conservation
- R-1 Residential
- R-2 Residential, High Density
- C-1 Commercial
- C-2 Commercial Industrial

Definitions, standards and permitted uses for each zone are found in Section 7 of the Ouray Land Use Code.

Analysis

Historically, residents have strongly supported maintaining the existing boundaries of the zoning districts; zoning districts have remained unchanged since their inception. Within the original town limits (from the municipal pool south), the zones were created to reflect existing land use patterns.

North Ouray (from the municipal pool north to Rotary Park) was designated C-1 and C-2. Most of this area was undeveloped when the zoning ordinance was created. Therefore, the C-2 designation for industrial uses in North Ouray did not reflect existing use; it was created to provide an opportunity for industrial growth. Lot coverage and minimum lot size requirements for the C-2 zone still reflect the low-density industrial uses that were anticipated, even though much of the recent development has been residential. Public comments during meetings in 2003 for input on the Plan update indicated concern over the apparent trend of converting C-2 land to residential uses.

During the public comment period for the 1993 plan, there was a lot of concern regarding how the North Ouray corridor will develop. Original suggestions for this area included maintaining public open space (Forest Service land or City-owned land) and access to it, creating pedestrian paths along the highway and river, landscaping around new development, and promoting mixed-use development to accommodate growth in housing, businesses and industry. The Uncompander River flows through the zone; some of the

land is affected by federal, state and local regulations governing floodways, flood plains and wetlands.

Soon after adoption of the 1993 plan, the City sponsored a planning effort aimed at lands in the North Ouray corridor. A Vision Statement was adopted that emphasized the importance of a comprehensive approach to the river and its associated floodplain. Implementation involved a major undertaking that has resulted in many of the policies and action items recommended in 1993 being accomplished. As of 2003, the Ouray Uncompanier River Restoration Project has restored the river channel and led to a renewal of the entire North Ouray corridor.

Concern was also expressed in 1993 for the strip of C-2 zoning that runs along the river through town from the Third Avenue bridge to the municipal pool. This area was originally an industrial zone that included the railroad right-of-way, the power plant and other businesses. Most of the industrial uses have been discontinued and the primary use of the land now is residential, lodging and camping. Several commercial businesses and the power plant still remain in the zone. In 1993, some residents suggested rezoning land in this area to R-1, R-2 or P-1 to reflect desired future uses. As of 2003, rezoning has not occurred, but neither has any industrial development.

During the comment period for the 1993 plan there was support for keeping businesses from expanding into R-1 (the current regulations seem to be acceptable). Some residents were concerned that more large motels in R-2 would adversely affect the current pattern of mixed use (houses, condos, bed and breakfasts and motels now blend together in R-2) – concerns included the creation of large paved areas required for motel parking lots, drainage problems caused by large parking lots, lack of landscaping and height of buildings.

Density and over development were areas of concern during the public comment period in both 1993 and 2003. Residents commented on the need to keep development in balance with the City's ability to provide community services and facilities. In 1993 residents stated that taxpayers should not have to pay for additional capital improvements required by new development. Since then policies and regulations have been adopted that require development to pay its own way. During development of the original plan, some residents thought two houses should not be allowed on one lot, and some said new subdivided lots are too small. There were many comments in both 1993 and 2003 stating that open space should be protected and that greenbelts, future parks, and landscaping are important to reduce the effect of increased density. Some residents said, in 1993 and 2003, that street and parking lot lighting and signs should be compatible with Ouray's character and natural setting.

Public comments in 2003 expressed the need to evaluate development trends in light of their effect on structures in Ouray's National Historic District. The possibility of establishing sub-districts or overlay zones within the boundaries of the historic district was discussed. There was also significant discussion about the need for design guidelines or standards aimed at guiding development so that the integrity of the City's historic resources is protected.

Goal

1. Plan for growth and redevelopment that maintains the high quality, small town character of Ouray, preserves and enhances the scenic beauty, natural resources, environmental quality and cultural assets that make Ouray a desirable place to live.

Objectives

- 1. Ensure that the City Code is structured to maintain the diversity and vitality of Ouray for residential, cultural and commercial/services.
- 2. Ensure that zoning and development requirements address adverse impacts resulting from conflicting land uses.
- 3. Reduce negative fiscal impacts on the City and its residents by new development.
- 4. Reduce environmental impacts and hazards created by new development.

Growth and Development

Policies

- 1. Cooperate with Ouray County and the Forest Service regarding sound planning for the area surrounding the City to accomplish mutual planning goals.
- 2. Require new development to pay its share of costs associated with its present and future demands on the community.
- 3. Create performance standards for new development.

Recommended Actions

- 1. Complete a density build-out analysis for the City to determine future capital improvement requirements for increased City services and facilities. Identify where there is a shortage in the capacity of public utilities and city facilities. Establish a process to regularly review and update the analysis.
- 2. Ensure that, as growth and development occurs, open space and access to it is maintained.
- 3. Plan for future parks and open space as needed.
- 4. Clarify subdivision regulations, which pertain to condominiums.
- 5. Consider revisions to the existing land use regulations to accomplish the goals, objectives and policies stated in the Community Plan.
- 6. Establish a cooperative planning agreement with the U.S. Forest Service.

Residential Neighborhoods

Policy

1. Preserve the existing housing stock to ensure quality residential areas.

Recommended Action

1. Develop regulations to create affordable housing opportunities.

Commercial and Industrial Uses

Policies

- 1. Encourage infill of vacant lots along Main Street and adjacent C-1 zoned properties.
- 2. Support efforts to create more pedestrian facilities and other facilities for outdoor use including benches, plazas, walkways and public restrooms
- 3. Continue to promote sign standards, which allow effective business identification while preserving Ouray's natural setting and traditional small-town character.

Recommended Actions

- 1. Evaluate the impacts of restricting residential uses in the C-2 zone.
- 2. Evaluate the impacts of restricting residential uses on the first floor, in the C-1 zone on Main Street between 4th Avenue and 9th Avenue.

Accomplishments Since 1993

- 1. Development is tied to the ability of the City to provide new services and facilities
- 2 Requirements were adopted to ensure that new development pays its share of improvement costs necessitated by the development.
- Utility corridors are planned, designed or implemented to avoid conflict with existing and future uses and to protect scenic and cultural resources.
- 4. Regulations for development in areas of known hazards are being enforced.
- 5. With landowners' participation, a comprehensive development plan for North Ouray (from the municipal pool to Rotary Park) was created that provides for maintenance of open space, adequate community services and facilities, parking and landscaping, pedestrian opportunities, improved safety on Highway 550 and other factors necessary to enhance the community while allowing for growth and development in this area.
- 6. New development now must include adequate provisions for pedestrians and landscaping elements.
- 7. A plan and associated policies for annexation have been adopted.
- 8. Regulations to allow Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) in any zone have been adopted.
- 9. The definition of building height has been revised to take into account the overall height of the structure and its relation to the slope of the building site.

- 10. A cooperative planning agreement with the County has been established.
- 11. Resolution of parking needs and traffic flow has been made a high priority.
- 12 Underground utilities to new developments are now required.
- 13. Performance standards to address impacts of new development have been established.
- 14. Adverse impacts on residential housing caused by motel development in R-2 have been mitigated.
- 15. Landscaping and lot coverage regulations for new commercial lodging in R-2 have been established to help maintain a balance between residential and commercial buildings.
- 16. Lot coverage regulation for paved parking surfaces have been created.
- 17. Density in the C-2 zone has been managed by establishing minimum lot sizes and revised lot coverage limits.
- 18. Lot coverage limits, parking requirements and minimum lot size for C-2 have been redefined to meet minimum standards for similar uses in other zones.
- 19. Guidelines for expansion of new residential, commercial and industrial uses in North Ouray have been established by a comprehensive development plan created by current landowners, residents and municipal staff.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Ouray government provides citizens with necessary services and quality of life through several arenas, including:

- Government
- Infrastructure
- Parks and Trails
- City Hall/Community Center and School
- Public Safety
- Utilities

Government

Ouray was incorporated in 1876. Ouray is a statutory city; it has not adopted a home rule charter. Ouray may govern its own affairs within certain limits, but authority to exercise powers is derived from State statutes. The City Council is comprised of five elected officials – two representatives are elected from each precinct and the Mayor is elected at large. Precinct One is located east of Main Street; Precinct Two is west of Main Street. There are four administrative departments, General Government, Public Works, Public Safety, and Parks.

Analysis

While much of Ouray's appeal for residents and visitors alike stems from its picturesque San Juan Mountain setting, this same asset can be a liability when it comes to providing municipal services. Terrain and climate of the mountains pose challenges in the delivery of utility services that municipalities in the "flatlands" do not have to face. Conversely, Ouray's small town character and sense of community fosters volunteerism, which facilitates the delivery of emergency services in particular. While not as refined or extensive as in urban areas, in most cases Ouray is fortunate to have an array of services that is more than adequate.

Facilities in Ouray compare favorably or exceed those found in other communities. The park system in particular is exceptional by any comparison. The community center, City Hall, public schools and library are also first rate for a community of this size.

Services and facilities provided by the City include potable and wastewater treatment, streets, sidewalks, drainage and flood control, parks, open space, community center, law enforcement, and fire protection. Other services and facilities such as electrical power, communications, library and business/community promotion are provided by a variety of private sector or non-profit entities.

Revenue to pay the cost of services provided by the City comes from a variety of sources including utility service charges and investment fees, park admissions, sales, property and

other taxes, as well as various other license and permit fees. In recent years grant funds have played an increasing role in City finances, but these revenues are typically used for capital improvements rather than the delivery of services.

Infrastructure

Water

Normal precipitation, is adequate to satisfy Ouray's current water requirements with some reserve capacity The City owns water rights at Weehawken Spring, Weehawken Creek and Oak Creek. All of the water currently used by Ouray, over one million gallons per day during summer months, comes from Weehawken Spring. The capacity of the spring, during periods of normal precipitation, is adequate to satisfy Ouray's current water requirements with some reserve capacity. Regular tests required by the Colorado Department of Health have shown Ouray's water to be free of microbiological and inorganic contaminates.

Under an agreement made in 1996, the City agreed to sell excess untreated Weehawken Spring water to BIOTA Pure, L.L.C. for bottling purposes. The agreement allows the City unlimited use of Weehawken Spring water, but after these needs are met BIOTA Pure is entitled to bottle the next 100,000,000 gallons per year, provided that during the months of November, December, January, February and March, all but 50,000 gallons bottled per day of BIOTA's use are subordinate to use by the Ouray Ice Park's needs as determined by the City.

Analysis

Ouray's water is disinfected with chlorine gas. Filtration is currently not required, however, the State may require a filtration plant in the future, a large capital expense. Major expenditures were incurred in 1993 to improve the spring source to comply with State requirements

Water is stored in a 500,000-gallon tank. Through a Water System Distribution Master Plan completed in November of 2003, the need to increase storage capacity, replace substandard mains, improve chlorination and system reliability, was evaluated. Much of the distribution system that delivers water throughout the city utilizes old steel pipes in poor condition. Ouray's varied elevations create pressure problems in some sectors of town. Pressure regulating valves have been installed but the problem is not entirely corrected and the valves require frequent adjustment and maintenance. The improvements identified in the Water System Distribution Master Plan will cost nearly \$2 million. In November of 2002 voters authorized borrowing up to half of that amount and it is hoped that the balance can be provided by future grants and City capital reserves.

During the public comment periods for the plan in 1993 and 2003, residents said the water system should be carefully managed to protect the supply, quality and distribution. Some residents said new developments should pay for the increased burden on services such as water and sewer. In recent years water investment fees have been increased to help fund future capital improvements. The higher fees will be paid by all new developments and the funds collected are reserved for use in capital improvements projects.

Wastewater Treatment

In July 1992 the city initiated construction of a new wastewater treatment plant which combined aerated lagoons with constructed wetlands. The new plant provided an increase in capacity while offering the benefits of constructed wetlands. It was to be visually pleasing, a sanctuary for small animals and waterfowl, emit less odor and discharge cleaner water into the Uncompander River than a conventional plant. When completed it was the largest constructed wetlands wastewater treatment plant in the State of Colorado, and the largest plant of its kind anywhere in the U.S. at this altitude.

Analysis

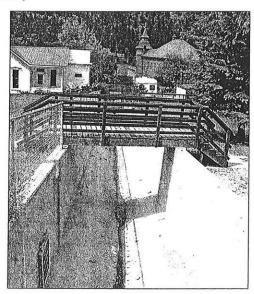
Many of the older sewer lines are jointed clay tile pipes that allow infiltration from groundwater sources into the system. Infiltrated water passes through the treatment plant and adds to the burden of treatment. Parts of the system have been replaced with newer concrete or PVC pipe and current policy is to replace at least 2,000 lineal feet of substandard pipe each year.

Currently, the treatment plant can process up to 363,000 gallons of effluent per day, which is about 38% more than the average flows during the summer season when flows are the highest. Improvements aimed at reducing odors were installed in 2002 and 2003 and other measures are being evaluated. Plans are being made to divert backwash water from the hot springs pool filtration system, now processed by the plant, to an auxiliary treatment structure buried in the pool parking lot. Estimates show that this could significantly increase capacity at the wastewater plant. In recent years, sewer investment fees have been increased to help fund future capital improvements. The higher fees will be paid by all new developments and the funds collected are reserved for use in capital improvements projects.

During the public comment periods in 1993 and 2003, residents said the system for wastewater collection and treatment should be carefully managed to prevent problems with effluents and to ensure adequate treatment capacity.

Streets and Drainage

Until recently, all of Ouray's streets, except Main Street were unpaved. In recent years, however, paving has occurred on lower Third and Seventh and upper Fifth Avenues The City's Public Works Department is responsible for maintenance that includes grading, drainage and snow removal. Dust control on gravel streets is achieved by at least one application of magnesium chloride during the summer. Ouray's Main Street is U.S. Highway 550. All aspects of Main Street, including parking, signage, auto and pedestrian traffic control are regulated by the Colorado Department of Transportation.



The Portland and Cascade Creek Flumes are important components in Ouray's drainage system.

Components of Ouray's drainage system include Portland and Cascade Creek Flumes, the new Fourth Street interceptor system, concrete valley pans, drop inlets, miscellaneous culverts and the streets themselves.

Analysis

During the public comment period for the 1993 plan, some residents said better maintenance of streets and flumes is a concern. They wished to see a reduction in bumps and ruts, better dust control for the streets and protection from "flumalanches" in Cascade Flume. In 1993, the City initiated action to prevent flumalanches in Cascade Flume. Some residents said better general clean up of streets, alleys and flumes is important and that random fill and dumping along street rights-of-way should be prevented. Some residents supported paving some of the busier streets in Ouray to improve dust control and drainage. A more complete analysis of dust in Ouray appears in the Environment section of the Community Plan.

Thanks to voter authorization, proceeds from a bond originally used to finance construction of the Portland Flume, were approved for use to pay for street paving. This revenue could pay for the paving of approximately one block per year, but since these same funds must also pay for flume maintenance, the City Council must prioritize between these two important areas of infrastructure.

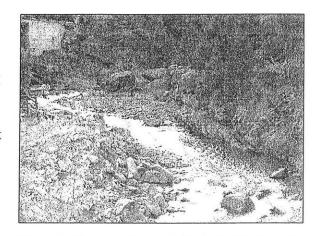
In 1993 some residents expressed concern that local community needs and pedestrian safety may not be adequately reflected in Colorado Department of Transportation policy, which places a high priority on moving vehicles efficiently and quickly along Highway 550, Ouray's Main Street. In response to these concerns, traffic lanes on Main Street were delineated to provide a center lane for freight unloading, one lane north and south and left turn lanes at each avenue intersection. Markings at all pedestrian crossings have also been made more distinct.

Bridges

Ouray's bridges include vehicular bridges over the Uncompangre River and Portland and Cascade Flumes, and pedestrian bridges over the river and flumes.

Analysis

Bridges over the Uncompahgre River have been replaced to comply with Colorado Department of Transportation standards. The Third Avenue bridge was replaced in 1989, the Box Canyon exit and entry bridges were replaced in 1990 and 1992 respectively and the Seventh Avenue bridge was replaced in 1992. Eighty percent (80%) of the cost of bridge replacement was paid by State grants. Due to deterioration of the wood structures, bridges over Portland and Cascade Creek flumes have gradually been reinforced with steel girders or heavier wood stringers. This increases their capacity to accommodate heavier loads from fire and garbage trucks.



Ouray's five creeks contribute to the town's character and their bridges are an important element of infrastructure.

Pedestrians

The sidewalks of Ouray are owned by the City. Residents are required, by city code, to repair, replace and maintain sidewalks, including snow removal, adjacent to private property. Sidewalks were originally provided in the older neighborhoods and the commercial district of Ouray, but have not been built in many newer areas of development. The Master Plan for parks and trails addresses future pedestrian circulation citywide and the City's sidewalk master plan provides an assessment of sidewalks in all parts of town.

Analysis

During the public comment period for the 1993 plan residents said increased pedestrian opportunities and safety are important to Ouray. Some said pedestrian safety should be improved along Highway 550 and at flume bridges. A pedestrian mall in the 300 block of Sixth Avenue (around City Hall) was suggested.

Modified traffic lanes on Highway 550 have reduced speeds and increased pedestrian safety as has upgraded pedestrian bridges over the flumes. A master plan for pedestrian enhancements in the 300 block of Sixth Avenue is now in process, overseen by the Beautification Committee.

Access to hiking trails and the Amphitheater road has been improved thanks to cooperative efforts between the City and the Ouray County Trails Group. Public transportation between Ouray and Montrose was suggested as was a shuttle bus from the pool parking area to Main Street.

During the comment period for the original plan, some residents said a park or walkway along the Uncompanger River should be considered. In 1989 design of a trail system along the river from Ouray to Delta was completed by the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Colorado at Denver. An organization, Uncompange RiverWay, Inc. was formed to help implement the plan.

Following adoption of the 1993 plan, the City, affected land owners and federal agencies embarked on a planning effort that ultimately led to the restoration of a one mile section of the river in the northern limits of the City. This project was completed in 2002 and features a pedestrian walkway on both sides of the river throughout the project area. This trail forms the southernmost section of the Uncompanger RiverWay project.