

## **A Plan for Montrose County's Future**

### *July 2010 Connections*

*This month we thank Dennis Murphy for writing the following article for us on the Montrose County Master Plan. Dennis currently chairs the Montrose County Planning Commission. The plan provides a framework for decisions the Commission will be making that will define the way the county is subdivided and grows in population. The plan can be found on line at <http://www.montrosecounty.net/index.aspx?nid=308>, or you can visit or call Planning & Development, 317 South Second Street, Montrose, 249-6688.*

*At the last meeting, the planning commission identified several priorities for attention. Zoning and subdivision regulations are among them and will have an impact on future growth in our county. The Planning Commission is truly open to input from the public, and the Uncompahgre Valley Association encourages its members and readers of this message to take advantage of opportunities to participate in the details of implementation of the plan.*

*By Dennis Murphy, Montrose County Planning Commission*

On April 22, 2010 the Montrose County Planning Commission unanimously approved a motion to adopt the newly revised master plan. That's a good thing for many reasons; one being the planning commission (PC) wrote the master plan (with significant help from the county planners). Being the chairman of the Montrose County PC, I would have been shocked if any nay votes were cast.

Allow me to briefly review what a master plan is and why the county needs one. A master plan is an advisory document to guide land development decisions within the county while ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of the county citizens as a whole. The master plan is required by law for all counties in Colorado as stated in C.R.S. 30-28-106(1), "It is the duty of a county planning commission to make and adopt a master plan that guides the future, physical development of the unincorporated territory". The master plan is solely the responsibility of the planning commission. To become binding, actions in the master plan, need to be included in the county's land development regulations (e.g. zoning resolution, subdivision regulations, etc.).

Over the last few years, the PC experienced several recurring issues with agenda items at regular meetings. This along with a high rate of expected growth in the region for the coming decade or two gave the PC the impetus to craft an updated master plan. The PC also felt that crafting a plan during a down time for county growth makes for a smoother path to plan completion, as we all know it is better to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to planning.

The completed master plan contains approximately 250 action items that range from changes in the General Agriculture Zone, to managing for improved water quality and river corridor protection, to development restrictions on natural hazard areas, including flood or wildfire prone areas. Because of the geographic differences throughout the

county, these actions are specific to four discrete planning areas (North Valley, South Valley, the Maher area, and the West End).

Now that the master plan has been adopted the PC is going through another grueling task of prioritizing the many action items for implementation. I would encourage all residents of the county to review the plan (the plan can be downloaded from the Montrose County website) and provide us your ideas on what to tackle in the coming months. This brings to mind another feature of the master plan we felt important, and that was to include a means of simply amending the plan on a routine basis. Accordingly, amendments to the master plan may be considered on a quarterly basis during the months of January, April, July and October. Additionally, the PC will conduct an annual review of the master plan during the fourth quarter of each year to consider implementation actions, or needed updates to the plan.

A well thought out master plan should be a valuable document to assist in guiding the county's growth for the next 10 to 15 years. The Montrose County Planning Commission spent considerable time and energy crafting the current plan, which we hope serves the county well over the coming years.