



Colorado Community Sustainability Guide

A Self-Assessment Tool for Local Governments

Today, more than ever, communities are faced with managing shrinking budgets, maintaining aging infrastructure, and providing more services with fewer resources. It can be difficult for a local government to stay on top of it all. However, it is important – maybe more so in tough economic times – to examine where a community can create efficiencies and plan sustainably for the long run. First a community must assess where they are, then determine where they want to be and what’s important, create an action plan or a priority “to do” list, and finally figure out ways to track progress made on achieving those priority goals.

There are many good reasons to take stock of where a community is making progress and where it lags behind on different matters. This type of data gathering is often referred to as a “community assessment.” A community assessment can help identify issues, gaps and trends. For example, a community may find it challenging to bring in new businesses. An assessment may show the community does not have enough quality affordable housing that new employers look for when deciding where to locate. The community may decide one goal is to implement policies and regulations to increase affordable housing (e.g., develop a housing needs assessment, create an inclusionary zoning policy, create a housing authority, ask developers to address affordable housing gaps in annexation agreements, etc). Once the actions they take are implemented, they can track progress by following the community’s jobs-to-housing ratio, track the number of new affordable housing units, and so on.

The Department of Local Affairs, with help from several state and local government and nonprofit partners, has prepared this self-assessment tool to help provide a structure for communities to have a dialogue to consider needs with an integrated, comprehensive perspective, and prioritize those needs in order to enlist potential technical and financial assistance from the state and other service providers. This assessment tool is designed simply to help communities identify areas in which they want to focus attention in order to achieve sustainability goals. To maximize the outcome of the community’s efforts, an outcome-based action plan and metrics should follow.

The Colorado Community Sustainability Guide examines **twelve** different areas for communities to assess toward the goal of improving community sustainability and quality of life:

- **Financial Condition**
- **Water and Wastewater Infrastructure**
- **Land Use Planning**
- **Transportation and Mobility**
- **Workforce Housing**
- **Economic Development and Workforce Readiness**
- **Schools and Educational Opportunities**

Each community will define sustainability differently, depending on its circumstances, history, culture and values. One broad, generally-accepted definition from the Brundtland Commission states, “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

- **Environmental Quality**
- **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy**
- **Natural Disaster/Emergency Planning and Preparedness**
- **Public Health and Human Services**
- **Community Identity**

Why a Community May Want to Use This Tool

The Department of Local Affairs offers financial and technical assistance on a wide range of topics of concern to local governments. Our experience shows that coordinating and integrating different planning and operational efforts creates effective, lasting change, especially if the efforts are enhanced by regional collaboration. If programs are not integrated, planning and development occurs in narrow subsets, and a community’s efforts may conflict with one another, impeding true progress. Colorado communities are each searching for sustainable solutions to complex issues.

Sustainable community development takes our traditional planning efforts – transportation, land use, economic development, public health, etc. – and integrates them. Without this approach, we risk wasting resources, missing opportunities, continuing unintended consequences of narrowly-focused decision-making, and reducing our communities’ overall health and quality of life.

This tool is designed to guide a community dialogue on all aspects of community development in which local governments play a role. It can be used to help communities understand how so much of what local governments do is interrelated – for example, land use affects transportation, transportation systems affect public health, and so on. Keeping the focus on balancing economic vitality, environmental integrity and social health ensures progress toward sustainable and livable communities. ***The goal of this tool is to promote an informed dialogue that will lead to sustainable community development.***

How to Use This Assessment Tool

The department has designed this tool to allow community leaders to conduct a fairly rapid and wide-ranging appraisal in order to assess the status of their local systems, policies and infrastructure. The assessment can serve as an excellent precursor to a new strategic plan or a municipal/county master plan update. The questions chosen are diverse in nature. A community may not be able to answer all of the questions, owing to its size or rural nature. There are no “one size fits all” solutions in local government, and in compiling this list of questions DOLA has merely tried to identify the more common themes that arise during discussions on technical and financial assistance needs.

Note: *DOLA recommends this assessment tool be followed by a planning effort that will lead to clearly stated goals and objectives.* An action plan will provide a framework to help keep the community on track. As you answer the questions, rank them according to importance. Questions or Issues ranked “very important” will help build your action plan. Finally, progress on the objectives can be measured, tracked and reported to the community (see DOLA’s indicators guide). These final steps help maintain the momentum of the effort and bring a level of accountability necessary to sustain the program. Although each community will decide how to use this tool, below is the department’s recommendation for how your community might proceed and achieve the best results.



Although every question may not apply to every community, this tool is most useful if examined in whole. All communities, regardless of size, will want to address most of the diverse topics included.

Commit and Communicate. First the community leaders should publicly commit to this process. Appointing a person or small group of people to coordinate the process will help keep the effort on a timely schedule, so as to not lose momentum. Your community may even decide to hire, appoint or “elect” an independent and objective third party to help coordinate and facilitate the assessment discussion.

Gather Stakeholders. Next, decide as a community to perform this self-assessment. Quickly examine the assessment tool to observe all the topic areas and questions. Then decide who should be involved in the assessment discussion, including local government officials and staff; community groups representing major issues, income blocks, and ethnicity; nonprofits who deal with health, growth, environment, and more. The questions listed here are not to be answered quickly but rather discussed, so everyone has a clear understanding of who is doing what on each topic. The goal is to develop ideas for where improvements can be made.

Perform Assessment. The coordinator or facilitator will help the group set up a timetable to perform the assessment. Will small groups be formed, with a variety of necessary experts from different groups, to initially answer the questions and then report and make recommendations to the larger group at a later meeting? Or will everyone go through the assessment together, with each informing the dialogue from his/her own perspective and expertise? Decide and commit to the approach and timeline together. As you answer questions, rate them according to importance/relevance. If a question raised an important issue or an information or policy gap, highlight that issue and build a list of the important issues to consider next in your planning effort.

Create an Action Plan. Once your community has finished the assessment, now what? The community has made a significant effort to assemble all the necessary people for input on the assessment. Build on this same group to develop a plan to tackle the questions and issues raised. Start with the questions your group rated as “very important,” and decide what is important about those questions. The group will want to find agreement on common policies, strategies to implement those policies, and then objectives that will state with more specificity how the strategies will be realized. An outcome-based approach will maintain focus on how the policies, strategies and objectives will implement the shared vision and will make it easier to measure progress. Objectives should be specific, include timelines and assign a responsible party to ensure completion. Consider how progress will be measured.

Measure, Report, Revisit. Measure your success and continue to get input from new stakeholders to verify the action plan remains relevant and useful. You may want to seek out baseline measurements for specific indicators to verify your community’s results against, such as average vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for the state versus those VMTs generated in your community. Revisit these questions and your action plan each year, involving new people and resources as necessary into the discussion. Be sure to report the results to your community, including any information that could be perceived as negative. An honest reporting will maintain a necessary level of trust. You can publish the results in a glossy report, online, in utility bills, through the media, via local access television, or try other techniques to report results to the public. See DOLA’s indicators guide for more ideas and samples.

Land use, transportation, public health and safety – all the topics included in this assessment are interrelated, and work in one area impacts other areas. Using this comprehensive approach allows a community to truly become more sustainable.

Finally, use our office as a resource. The Department of Local Affairs' mission is to help strengthen Colorado's communities. We are committed to helping communities identify their own values and helping them succeed in finding and implementing solutions. Contact your [DOLA regional manager](#) for assistance. Also, use our website as a clearinghouse; we have provided information and links to help you build your understanding of these complex and interrelated issues. We also would appreciate any feedback you have for improving this tool. Visit dola.colorado.gov/cdo and click on "sustainability" for more information.

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Financial Condition

“Financial condition can refer to a government’s short-term ability to generate enough cash to pay its bills, or its ability to generate enough annual revenue to meet budgeted expenditures, its long-term ability to pay all the costs of doing business, and ultimately its ability to provide services at the level and quality that are required for the health, safety, and welfare of the community and that its citizens desires.”

-International City/County Management Association, “Evaluating Financial Condition”

As your team answers each question, circle how important that question, answer or issue is to your community at the present time. After you’ve answered all the questions, the team can discuss the rankings. The goal is to have a short list of priority issues to address on each topic or page. Priority issues can include conducting a study to find the answer(s), or changing a policy or regulation, for example.

0 = not important 1 = somewhat important 2 = very important

- 0 1 2 Is the community’s current fiscal situation acceptable? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community maintain available reserves to cover three months of operating expenses? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community conduct long-range financial planning? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a current credit rating? If so, is the community’s credit rating acceptable? _____
- 0 1 2 Is the community able to maintain or increase fund balances from year to year? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community exhausted its ability to issue debt? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community monitor its finances using annual trends for five or more years? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community compare its finances to peer communities? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community analyze its major sources of revenues? Does it reach consensus on a revenue forecast? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community evaluate the effect of changes to its revenues and expenditures? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community re-evaluate tax and fee exemptions? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community evaluate the provision of services to residential and non-residential constituents and balance needs with the budget? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community understand and re-evaluate constitutional, statutory, charter, and policy revenue limitations? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have written financial management policies that are formally reviewed periodically? _____

Tools & Resources

County and Municipal Financial Compendium, Division of Local Government, Department of Local Affairs http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/resources/financial_compendium/index.html

International City/County Management Association (ICMA) – Evaluating Financial Condition: A Handbook for Local Government 4th edition, 2003. <http://icma.org/press/>

National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting (NACSLB) - Recommended Budget Practices: A Framework for Improved State and Local Government Budgeting, 1998. <http://www.gfoa.org/services/nacslb/>

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) - Recommended Best Practices: Governmental Budgeting and Fiscal Policy, Various Best Practices Reports. http://www.gfoa.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=120&Itemid=134

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

“Our nation's water and wastewater infrastructure is literally crumbling beneath our city streets. The hidden problem for America is 70 to 100 year old water and sewer lines that don't have the capacity to respond to today's population growth and vastly increased water use and reuse.”

- Minnesota Congressman James Oberstar

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- 0 1 2 Do the community's water and wastewater systems meet applicable water quality standards? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community monitor the rate of water loss or unaccounted for water in its drinking water system? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a capital improvement plan (CIP)? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community implemented best management practices in such areas as response rate to water leaks, general maintenance requests and taste and odor complaints? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community conducted studies on the cost of new services or the increasing costs of current services? _____
- 0 1 2 Are the community's water and wastewater systems managed in the context of an asset management plan? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community routinely clean segments of its wastewater collection system lines to remove roots and accumulated bio-solids? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community routinely flush, clean, and repair its water storage tanks? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community established drinking water and wastewater treatment performance standards and does it continually seek to meet or exceed those standards? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the rate structure encourage conservation? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community know its projected municipal and industrial water demands at least twenty-five years out? Does it have a plan and the financing in place to meet those needs? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a plan and enforceable policies in place to ensure an adequate supply of clean water for its future citizens? _____

Tools & Resources

DOLA's "Developing a User Rate and Fee System"

http://www.dola.state.co.us/dlg/ta/utility/fee_system.html

DOLA's "Utility Fees, Rates and Collections"

http://www.dola.state.co.us/dlg/ta/utility/docs/Fees_Rates.pdf

Colorado Water and Sewer Funding Coordination Committee

http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/ta/utility/funding_coord.html

Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) - has resources on low interest loans and grants from water projects <http://cwcb.state.co.us>

CWCB – Resources for creating a water conservation and drought plan

<http://cwcb.state.co.us/Conservation/DroughtPlanning/DroughtMitigationPlanning/DroughtMitigationPlanning.htm>

Effective Utility Management: A Primer for Water and Wastewater Utilities

http://www.epa.gov/waterinfrastructure/pdfs/tools_si_watereum_primerforeffectiveutilities.pdf

Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards

http://books.google.com/books?id=9RoKgUR-xYAC&dq=Municipal+Benchmarks:+Assessing+Local+Performance+and+Establishing+Community+Standards&printsec=frontcover&source=bn&hl=en&ei=SxU5Sq2gBo-KswPL_Yn-Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4#PPP5,M1

Benchmarking Wastewater Operations – Collection, Treatment and Biosolids Management

http://www.webookshop.com/acatalog/info_D73001WR.html

Benchmarking Performance Indicators of Water and Wastewater Utilities: Survey Data and Analyses Report

<http://apps.awwa.org/ebusmain/OnlineStore/ProductDetail/tabid/55/Default.aspx?ProductID=6604>

Ensuring a Sustainable Future: An Energy Management Guidebook for Wastewater and Water Utilities, January 2008, Environmental Protection Agency

http://www.epa.gov/waterinfrastructure/pdfs/guidebook_si_energymanagement.pdf

Land Use Planning

"Successful communities don't just happen; they must be continually shaped and guided. A community must actively manage its growth and respond to changing circumstances if it is to meet the needs of its residents and retain the quality of life that initially attracted those residents to the community."

- Growth Plan, City of Grand Junction

As your team answers each question, circle how important that question, answer or issue is to your community at the present time. After you've answered all the questions, the team can discuss the rankings. The goal is to have a short list of priority issues to address on each topic or page. Priority issues can include conducting a study to find the answer(s), or changing a policy or regulation, for example.

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- 0 1 2 When was the comprehensive/master plan last updated? Does it continue to reflect the appropriate policies and strategies? Is it used as a guide for development and other decisions? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a recently-updated land use code? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a building code? An energy efficient building code (e.g., IECC 2009)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have intergovernmental agreements with neighboring jurisdictions governing the type, rate and/or density of growth in the areas around the existing community boundaries? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have adequate financing mechanisms (such as impact fees) to help keep up with the costs of development? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community attempt to locate mixed uses (including critical amenities, major employers, shopping and affordable housing) near transit? _____
- 0 1 2 Is there a plan or goal of ensuring connectivity between open space, trails, public spaces, recreation amenities, jobs, housing and schools? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have an economic development plan? If so, does the community's land use plan work to implement the goals of the economic development strategy (such as ensuring adequate workforce housing)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community work with the school district(s) on issues such as school siting, development application review, and safe routes to school? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community attempted to determine the number and type of new housing units that will be needed to accommodate the current/future demand? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a capital improvements plan (CIP)? If so, does it implement the goals of the master/comprehensive plan, such as a goal for enhancing broadband access or other community priorities? _____

Tools & Resources

Department of Local Affairs Office of Smart growth website has the following resources and many more:

- Planning 101 workshops
- [Model municipal and county land use codes, green building, and water efficient landscaping](#)
- [Sample local government plans, policies and regulations](#)
- [Using Economic and Population Forecasts for Community Planning](#)
- [Colorado Demography Office](#)
- [Best Practices in Natural Hazards Planning and Mitigation](#)
- [Colorado Smart Growth Scorecard](#)
- [Updating Your Comprehensive/Master Plan and Land Use Code: Strategies & Resources](#)
- [Ten Questions to Ask When Adopting or Revising a Master Plan](#)
- [Planning for Growth – Intergovernmental Agreements in Colorado](#)
- [Colorado Brownfields Handbook](#)

[American Planning Association, Colorado Chapter](#)

Growing Smart (American Planning Association's model state and local legislation)
<http://www.planning.org/growingsmart/index.htm>

Smart Codes (American Planning Association's model land development regulations)
[Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute](#)

[Western Planning Resources](#)

[Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute](#) and the [Sustainable Community Development Code](#)

[Denver Regional Council of Government's Regional Sustainability website](#) and [starter kit](#) for local governments

Sustainable Urban Development Resource Guide (American Society of Landscape Architects)
<http://dirt.asla.org/2009/08/05/sustainable-urban-development-resource-guide/>

[Local Government Commission](#) (information on healthy, walkable communities and more)

Tri-County Health Department's Land Use and Planning Services
<http://www.tchd.org/land.htm>

Creating a Regulatory Blueprint for Healthy Community Design (ICMA)
<http://icma.org/main/ld.asp?ldid=19338&hsid=1&tpid=31&t=0>

"Retrofitting Suburbs: Instant Cities, Instant Architecture, and Incremental Metropolitanism"
(Harvard Design Magazine)
http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/research/publications/hdm/back/28_DunhamJonesWilliamson.pdf

"Energy Benefits of Urban Infill, Brownfields, and Sustainable Urban Redevelopment"
(Northeast-Midwest Institute)
http://www.nemw.org/images/stories/documents/energy_benefits_infill_brfd_final_12-08.pdf

Transportation and Mobility

"Mobility is not only concerned with a system of transport...it's the whole understanding of a city. Therefore, the important questions are not about engineering, but about how we live – health, education, housing and social needs."

- Community Transportation Plan, City of Decatur, GA

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- 0 1 2 Does the community have a current transportation master plan addressing diverse transportation options and mobility issues for the next 5 years, 10 years, and 20 years? ____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a plan for the necessary funding to maintain the roadway infrastructure at its current condition and for projected expansion? ____
- 0 1 2 Does the community collect transportation infrastructure improvement fees from developers to offset the impact on the transportation system? ____
- 0 1 2 Does the community consider transportation impacts in its land use decisions? Does it have an integrated land use and transportation plan? ____
- 0 1 2 Does the community consider social, economic and environmental effects of its transportation decisions? ____
- 0 1 2 Does the community coordinate with neighboring local communities, CDOT, and/or other relevant local and state agencies when making transportation and land use decisions impacting transportation systems of regional/state significance? ____
- 0 1 2 Does the community include bicycle and pedestrian options with all its roadway projects, and are adequately-sized sidewalks and bike lanes/routes required in new developments? ____
- 0 1 2 Does the school district include bicycle and pedestrian use in school siting decisions as well as its transportation plan? ____
- 0 1 2 Have you examined whether your community may be requiring too much parking, thus increasing unused space and encouraging auto-only transportation? ____
- 0 1 2 How many people commute in and out of the community for jobs? For entertainment? For retail shopping? (average vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per person) ____
- 0 1 2 Does the community promote energy efficiency through transportation planning (e.g., charging stations for public and private electric vehicles, bicycle parking, parking incentives for car and van pools and/or fuel-efficient vehicles, etc)? ____

Tools & Resources

Pedestrian and Transit-Friendly Design: A Primer for Smart Growth

http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/ptfd_primer.pdf

Parking Spaces, Community Places (EPA guide)

<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/parking.htm>

Measuring the Air Quality and Transportation Impacts of Infill Development (EPA guide) http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/impacts_infill.htm

National Complete Streets Coalition <http://www.completestreets.org/>

Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities <http://www.ite.org/bookstore/RP036.pdf>

Governor's Biofuels Coalition

<http://www.colorado.gov/energy/index.php?/renewable/category/governors-biofuels-coalition/>

Calculate Walkability

<http://www.walkscore.com/>

Workforce Housing

"The strengthening of political culture, the reclaiming of a vital and effective sense of what it is to be public, must take place and must be studied in the context of very specific places and of the people who struggle to live well in such places."

-Daniel Kemmis, "Community and the Politics of Place"

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- 0 1 2 What is the jobs-to-housing ratio in your community? Is it where it needs to be so that residents can live and work in your community? _____
- 0 1 2 Is the availability of housing an asset or liability when trying to attract new employers? _____
- 0 1 2 How many people in your community spend more than 30% of their income for housing? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community conducted a housing needs assessment or housing strategic plan, and begun implementation? _____
- 0 1 2 Is there a local housing authority, regional housing authority, or a local government entity (with a staff position) that addresses housing in your community? _____
- 0 1 2 What are the vacancy and foreclosure rates in your community? _____
- 0 1 2 Is there a provision in your community for housing special needs populations (e.g., homeless, victims of domestic violence, seniors, developmentally or physically disabled and others)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the local government show support for affordable housing activities by providing such items as fee waivers, additional funding, inclusionary zoning, energy efficiency programs, etc? _____
- 0 1 2 Is the affordable housing located near transit or within walking distance of jobs, shopping, schools and recreation? _____
- 0 1 2 Do the community's land use and building codes require energy efficiency and green building? Are there programs to assist affordable housing developers with these requirements? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community allow manufactured housing in most residential zones? _____

Tools & Resources

- Colorado Division of Housing (<http://dola.colorado.gov/cdh/index.html>)
Affordable Housing: A Guide for Local Officials
(<http://dola.colorado.gov/cdh/localgovts/documents/ALL%20PAGES.pdf>)
Community Housing Needs Assessments
(<http://dola.colorado.gov/cdh/developers/documents/Needs%20Assessments/Needs%20Assessments.htm>)
- Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (<http://www.chfainfo.com>)
Resource Library (http://www.chfainfo.com/news/data_library.icm)
- Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (<http://www.coloradocoalition.org>)

Economic Development and Workforce Readiness

"Economic development represents the creation of wealth, primary through the attraction of investment. Economic development and its concomitant wealth creation provide the financial resources and tax base that make community development possible. You can't have one without the other."

- National Rural Economic Developers Association, "Building a Sustainable Community"

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- 0 1 2 Has your community assessed the major industries, places of employment and total number of jobs? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community know its primary economic drivers and how they are forecast to change over time? If so, is the community aware of what skills are demanded by the drivers and is there an educational system designed to prepare workers for these occupations? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community attempted to list the benefits/opportunities and constraints of doing business in your community, including availability and accessibility to the internet? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have an economic development plan detailing the goals and objectives of the community, including downtown development? If so, does it list the types of jobs, household incomes, community service demands and commuting requirements created by these goals? _____
- 0 1 2 Are there training and development programs for small businesses or potential entrepreneurs? _____
- 0 1 2 Are there any agencies or departments dedicated to downtown development issues (downtown development authorities, urban renewal districts, improvement districts, etc.)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have any financing mechanisms for paying for improvements to downtown? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have any policies or incentives for cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields (properties with real or suspected contamination issues)? _____
- 0 1 2 Is the downtown in a historic district? If so, what are the parameters? _____
- 0 1 2 Are there any downtown or other special commercial or industrial district design standards in place, including standards for signage? _____
- 0 1 2 Is the downtown pedestrian-oriented? Is the downtown connected to the rest of the community through sidewalks, trails, public transportation and with clear signage? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community conducted an inventory of downtown that records the amount of retail, service, empty storefronts, vacant lots, second floor uses, historic buildings, etc.? _____

Tools & Resources

DOLA Downtown Development Programs, including the Community Revitalization Partnerships <http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/fa/ddp/index.html>

Downtown Colorado Inc. <http://downtowncoloradoinc.org>

DOLA Demography Office: <http://www.dola.state.co.us/dlg/demog/index.html>

Colorado Brownfields Handbook <http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/osg/brownfields.htm>

Office of Workforce Development: <http://www.coworkforce.com/cwdc/CWDC.asp>

Office of Economic Development and International Trade:
<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/OEDIT/OEDIT/1162927366334>

Colorado Rural Development Council: <http://www.ruralcolorado.org>

Ten Steps to a Living Downtown: <http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/moulton.pdf>

Economic Development and Smart Growth (IEDC guide)
http://www.iedconline.org/Downloads/Smart_Growth.pdf

Strong Schools and Educational Opportunities

"The only thing more costly than education is ignorance."

-Anonymous

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- 0 1 2 Has the community examined population forecasts by age? _____
- 0 1 2 Is the school district fiscally secure? Do they have the funds they need to offer the necessary programs for all students? _____
- 0 1 2 Do all residents have access to affordable, quality K-12 schools and programs? _____
- 0 1 2 Are there adequate (in number and quality) licensed preschools? _____
- 0 1 2 Do area residents have reasonable access to community colleges and other workforce training opportunities, and are those programs linked to the estimated and projected needs of the community and region? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community performed an inventory of educational and enrichment opportunities for all residents, provided by various groups? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the school district review development applications and otherwise work with the municipalities and counties to coordinate planning? _____
- 0 1 2 Are schools connected to the rest of the community through adequate safe streets and trails and is it possible for many kids to walk or bike to school? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community strive to create and maintain collaborative partnerships with schools, libraries, businesses and local government? _____
- 0 1 2 Do schools, local governments and others share facilities (e.g., fields, gyms, pools, meeting rooms)? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the school district examined possible energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades? Has the district considered the Governor's Energy Office High Performance Schools program for new construction or the Energy Performance Contracting program for existing buildings? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community involve K-12 and higher education institutions in public affairs, civic education, etc? _____

Tools & Resources

Local Governments and Schools: A Community-Oriented Approach (ICMA and SGN guide) <http://icma.org/documents/SGNReport.pdf>

Schools for Successful Communities: An Element of Smart Growth (EPA guide) <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/schools.htm>

Governor's Energy Office
<http://www.colorado.gov/energy/index.php?/commercial/k-12-schools>

Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting (EPA guide) http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/school_travel.htm

Environmental Quality

"When the well's dry, we know the worth of water."

-Benjamin Franklin

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- _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a baseline assessment of all natural resources that, because of their proximity, are considered valued assets and as such are worthy of protection, such as prime agricultural or ranch land, water rights, mineral rights, endangered or protected species, key wildlife habitat areas, etc? _____
 - 0 1 2 Does the community measure air and water quality levels and have a plan in place to improve environmental quality? _____
 - 0 1 2 Does the community have or is it near areas that have natural resources (such as oil and gas, coal) that are currently being extracted or are available for extraction? If so, has the community adopted plans and policies to mitigate the negative impacts of those industries? _____
 - 0 1 2 Are there brownfields sites in the community that could be remediated to allow business, residential, mixed use, parks/open space, or public use? If so, are these sites being pursued for clean-up and redevelopment? _____
 - 0 1 2 Does the community have a watershed protection plan, agreements, and regulations in place to address water protection? _____
 - 0 1 2 Does the community work together to reduce water consumption and improve sustainable water supply options for residents, businesses and government balanced with needs for recreation and the environment? _____
 - 0 1 2 Do the comprehensive plan and land use regulations protect natural resources such as streams and lakes, wildlife habitat, unique landforms, scenic vistas, etc? _____
 - 0 1 2 Does the local government work to minimize sprawling development and its impact on wildlife, air and water quality (from congestion and dust from highly-used unpaved roads), etc? _____
 - 0 1 2 If agriculture and ranching are important elements of the community, is there reliable information on soil health and water availability to direct efforts to sustain these businesses? _____
 - 0 1 2 Does the community work together to reduce energy use and improve renewable energy options for residents, businesses and government? _____
 - 0 1 2 Does the water provider(s) of your community have a water conservation plan? Does it use a tiered rate structure for water billing, or other conservation incentives? _____

Tools & Resources

Local Government Guide to Mitigating the Impacts of Oil and Gas Development (2009 – coming soon from the Department of Local Affairs)

AWARE Colorado Water Protection Toolkit
<http://www.awarecolorado.org/toolkit.pdf>

Colorado Brownfields Handbook
<http://dola.colorado.gov/osg/brownfields.htm>

Colorado Model Green Building Program
<http://dola.colorado.gov/osg/modelcodes.htm#GreenBuildingProgram>

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)
<http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CategoryID=19>

Governor's Energy Office <http://www.colorado.gov/energy/>

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/>

Colorado Department of Natural Resources <http://dnr.state.co.us/>

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy

"The challenge for governments is to adopt policies that address the increasing energy demand but within the long-term context of climate change. Many elements can be considered: rapidly developing and supporting a suite of renewable energy technologies with an emphasis on increased energy efficiency; carbon caps and trading; and, of course, looking hard at ways of reducing and localizing energy demand."

- Peter Garrett, Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Australia

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- 0 1 2 Does your community have a sustainability coordinator or other staff dedicated to energy efficiency and conservation? _____
- 0 1 2 Has your community had energy audits conducted on public buildings and operations and on key businesses? _____
- 0 1 2 Do your local governments model energy efficiency and conservation through hybrid fleets, recycling, energy efficient equipment (e.g., LED lights) or other means? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community have a recycling or other waste diversion program? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community conduct any educational outreach to teach citizens, students and businesses about energy efficiency and conservation? _____
- 0 1 2 Has your community adopted an efficient energy code or green building provisions in its land use and building codes (e.g., IECC 2009)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community encourage the use of energy efficiency or renewables measures through programs (e.g., weatherization) and regulations to its residents, businesses, schools and other governmental entities? _____
- 0 1 2 Do your community's development patterns and transportation systems help reduce the use of energy and resources? _____
- 0 1 2 If identified as a community goal, does your community have a climate change plan developed that sets measurable goals and objectives, and addresses mitigation efforts? Does it address impacts on vulnerable populations such as seniors, children or lower income individuals? _____
- 0 1 2 Has your community conducted any studies (such as a greenhouse gas emission inventory) to determine its carbon footprint? _____

Tools & Resources

Governor's Energy Office <http://www.colorado.gov/energy>

DOLA's Model Green Building Program
<http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/osg/modelcodes.htm#GreenBuildingProgram>

DOLA's Water Efficient Landscape Design – Model Ordinance

Colorado Climate Action Plan
<http://www.colorado.gov/energy/images/uploads/pdfs/5f7e2afe6caecefd248d140d0514895a.pdf>

Governor's Energy Office Workbook for Local Government Energy and Environmental Sustainability: A Guide to Getting Started
www.colorado.gov/energy/in/uploaded_pdf/GEO_workbook_for_local_government.pdf

Colorado Building and Energy Codes Survey Results Report (GEO)
<http://www.colorado.gov/energy/images/uploads/pdfs/811e58ad92d2082ad9ca63b4430ba6f5.pdf>

A Comparative Analysis of Sustainable Community Frameworks:
<http://www.icleiusa.org/action-center/affecting-policy/Sustainability%20Framework%20Analysis.pdf>

RMLUI's Sustainable Community Development Code
<http://www.law.du.edu/index.php/rmlui/sustainable-community-development-code>

Colorado Carbon Fund: www.ColoradoCarbonFund.org

EPA's Climate Change program <http://epa.gov/climatechange/index.html>

ICLEI's Best Practices for Climate Protection: A Local Government Guide
http://www.colorado.gov/energy/in/uploaded_pdf/Best_PracticesLocalGov.pdf

ULI's "Growing Cooler: The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change"

APA's Planners Energy and Climate Database
<http://www.planning.org/research/energy/database/index.htm>

Emergency Planning and Preparedness

"We should exercise foresight now, as the ordinarily prudent man exercises foresight in conserving and wisely using the property which contains the assurance of well-being for himself and his children. . . We want to see him exercise forethought for the next generation. We need to exercise it in some fashion ourselves as a nation for the next generation."

-- President Theodore Roosevelt, 1908

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- _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community identified all natural and technological hazards, as well as other security issues, that impact the community? Has the community considered and planned for the vulnerabilities to those hazards (especially for critical facilities, such as hospitals)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a local emergency manager or designated planning and mitigation staff (e.g., certified floodplain manager, wildfire mitigation officer)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a drought preparedness plan? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community's master/comprehensive plan and capital improvement plan address natural and technological hazards? _____
- 0 1 2 Do the land use regulations address natural and technological hazards (e.g., floodplain, snow load, geologic instability, wildfire, etc.)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have an emergency operations plan and a dedicated Emergency Operations Center (EOC)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a warning system, evacuation plan, or sheltering plan? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a single point-of-contact (e.g., public information officer) for dealing with news media and the public during emergencies and disasters? _____
- 0 1 2 Do elected and executive-level officials participate in the emergency management planning process, including exercises? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a continuity of operations/continuity of government (COOP/COG) plan? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have a disaster recovery plan? Does it consider how the community will meet the needs of vulnerable populations (elderly, school children, people with disabilities, pets, etc)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does the community have formal, written mutual aid agreements? _____

Tools & Resources

Colorado Division of Emergency Management (CDEM)

<http://dola.colorado.gov/dem/index.html>

Colorado Geological Survey (CGS) <http://geosurvey.state.co.us/>

Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) <http://cwcb.state.co.us/>

Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) <http://www.csfs.colostate.edu/>

Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CSFS)

<http://csfs.colostate.edu/pdfs/cwpphandbook.pdf>

Community Wildfire Protection Plans: Guidelines for Implementation (CSFS) <http://csfs.colostate.edu/pdfs/cwwpguidelinesfactsheet.pdf>

Are You Plains FireWise? (CSFS)

http://csfs.colostate.edu/pdfs/plains_FW.pdf

Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) <http://dnr.state.co.us/>

CWCB – Resources for creating a water conservation and drought plan

<http://cwcb.state.co.us/Conservation/DroughtPlanning/DroughtMitigationPlanning/DroughtMitigationPlanning.htm>

DOLA’s Best Practices Guide to Natural Hazard Planning and Mitigation

<http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/osg/docs/Hazard%20BPR.pdf>

2008 State of Colorado Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan

http://www.dola.state.co.us/dem/mitigation/plan_2007/2008_plan.htm

FEMA’s multi-hazard mitigation planning guidance

<http://www.fema.gov/plan/mitplanning/guidance.shtm#2>

FEMA’s mitigation planning “How-To” guides

<http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=1661>

National Weather Service Regional Offices

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/wrh/nwspage.php>

Public Health, Safety and Human Services

"In today's world... we need to be sensitive to the concerns of others... no one can afford to think in purely local terms."

-Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

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0 = not important 1 = somewhat important 2 = very important

- 0 1 2 Has your community completed a Health Assessment Plan or health impact assessment? _____
- 0 1 2 What are the trends for violent crime rates? Does your community plan and design neighborhoods to reduce the threat of crime (e.g., lighting)? _____
- 0 1 2 Is your community designed so that walking and biking are viable, safe transportation options for many (including school kids)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community track the number of children with adequate health care, vaccinations and insurance? Have barriers been identified and addressed? _____
- 0 1 2 Is there a health component in the community's comprehensive plan, land development code and transportation plan? Does your community review and comment on health issues in development review plans? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community monitor and reduce transportation-related air pollutants, such as ozone, sulfur dioxide and particulate matter? _____
- 0 1 2 Are clinics, hospitals and other health services accessible to low income individuals and seniors? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community provide opportunity for the surgeon general's recommended levels of physical activity at all grade levels during school hours? _____
- 0 1 2 Do your schools restrict vending machine snacks and drinks and offer healthy meals? Do they have adequate funding to subsidize healthy meals (breakfast and lunch) for all children who need it? _____
- 0 1 2 Is your community prepared for mass medical care emergencies (e.g., flu epidemic)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community have urban gardens, farmers' markets, or other ways of encouraging/promoting locally grown food? If your community is primarily rural, has it discovered ways to get local food to urban markets? _____
- 0 1 2 Are there adequate (in number and quality) day care providers in your community for children, the disabled and the elderly? _____

Tools & Resources

National Association of County and City Health Officials www.naccho.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) – Healthy Community Design
www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces

CDCP's Active Community Environments Initiative
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm>

Walking Info.Org – Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center
<http://www.walkinginfo.org/index.cfm>

Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Smart Growth Program
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth>

American Planning Association
<http://www.planning.org>

Leadership for Healthy Communities (LHC)
<http://www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org/>

LHC's Action Strategies for Healthy Communities Toolkit
http://www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=352&Itemid=154

Active Living by Design
<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/>

Local Government Commission
<http://www.lgc.org>

Livewell Colorado
<http://www.livewellcolorado.org/>

Creating a Regulatory Blueprint for Healthy Community Design (ICMA)
<http://icma.org/main/ld.asp?ldid=19338&hsid=1&tpid=31&t=0>

National Center for Safe Routes to Schools
<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>

Community Identity

"A society can be no better than the men and women who compose it."

- Adlai E. Stevenson

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- 0 1 2 Has the community identified historical and cultural places of significance, and has it taken steps to protect and enhance these resources? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community have public spaces which can be used for community events and organizing (e.g., public plaza, regional park/fairgrounds)? Are they used often? _____
- 0 1 2 Is there a master plan for your community's recreation amenities so they are linked and accessible? (e.g., is there a plan to maximize the efficient layout of trails so they connect to schools, residential, commercial, job and recreational uses?) _____
- 0 1 2 Are the community's recreation and cultural amenities accessible to typically underserved populations, such as disabled, low income, elderly, and non-English speakers? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community provide neighborhood park and recreation facilities in new developments? Do they meet generally-adopted standards of parks/amenities necessary to serve a community with your population size? _____
- 0 1 2 Is your downtown and/or town center(s) adequately supplied with public spaces, trails, and cultural amenities such as public art, a community theater, and more? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community utilize agreements to share facilities, e.g. with schools and others? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community addressed measures to protect the community's identity through plans, policies and regulations (such as land use regulations, sign code, big box criteria, etc)? _____
- 0 1 2 Has your community taken steps to inspire more volunteerism and community service? _____
- 0 1 2 Has the community reviewed population forecasts by age and household income to determine what types of community services will be needed? Who will provide for these needs (government, non-profit, etc.)? _____
- 0 1 2 Does your community have a high voter registration and voter turnout? Is it representative of all income and ethnic groups in the community? _____
- 0 1 2 Do local governments go beyond what is statutorily required to obtain community input? _____

Tools & Resources

National Recreation and Park Association

<http://www.nrpa.org/>

Children and Nature Network

<http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

National Association of Recreation Resource Planners

<http://www.narrp.org/>

Community Arts Network

<http://www.communityarts.net/>

Public Art Resource Project

<http://www.pcad.edu/publicartresourceproject/links.html>

Project for Public Spaces

<http://www.pps.org/>

Partners

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*Never doubt that a small,
group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can
change the world. Indeed,
it is the only thing that
ever has.*

-Margaret Mead

"Reflection is the beginning of reform."

- Mark Twain