



State of the County

February 10, 2024

Happy 150th birthday, Hinsdale County! Here is our 5th annual State of the County snapshot.

Respectfully, Commissioner Greg Levine, Commissioner Robert Hurd, Commissioner Kristie Borchers

MISSION Hinsdale County works to preserve the past while developing future opportunities.

VALUES Hinsdale County will promote citizen confidence through community engagement, transparency, accountability, strategic planning, collaboration, stewardship, and fiscal responsibility.

2023 Accomplishments

- Completed design process for County Operations Building (received Dept of Local Affairs DOLA planning grant \$25,000), including approval by Town of Lake City Historic Preservation Commission and State Historic; submitted \$2 million request (Congressionally Directed Spending opportunity); submitted \$1 million request (Energy Impact Assistance Fund); submitted \$442,635 Public Building Electrification Grant request; submitted \$100,000 Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities grant request; completed geotechnical survey of site.
- All Hazards Team set a new record for deployments, providing more financial support for county and community; 359 resources deployed; 66,382.50 work hours contributed.
- Executed grant contract for Multi-Modal Opportunity Fund (MMOF) for \$900,000 project on 4 mile chip seal project on County Road 30; hired engineering firm for design work.
- 2 Deputies earned Life Saver awards; implemented narcotic detection K9 program; added third full-time deputy (trained utilizing Law Enforcement Workforce, Recruitment and Retention Tuition grant, \$11,000); filled vacant full-time deputy position; added 2 volunteers to the Wildland Fire Response team; entered Agreements with Archuleta County, Rio Grande National Forest, Grand Mesa Uncompahgre Gunnison (GMUG) national forests, San Juan National Forest, and Town of Lake City; approved Operating Plan with Colorado Division of Fire Protection & Control.
- Built Search and Rescue (SAR) specialized response unit with off road capability and added specialized equipment (suburban donated by School); new Road & Bridge employee completed CDL training (Class A); purchased water tank kit and completely built and fabricated new water truck with firefighting capability for Upper Piedra; purchased new 2023 CAT backhoe for the Lake City crew; purchased a newer 2012 Western Star Heavy Haul Truck.
- Implemented online access of tax accounts and online tax payments for constituents; implemented credit card payments for traffic tickets (in person or over the phone); hired Deputy Treasurer.
- Painted historic courthouse; replaced Sheriff's Office generator; installed custom made security gate for courtroom; completed Coursey Annex improvements in meeting room; installed new window in administration office; processed 118 Town & County building permits; installed Crystal Peak/Larson trailhead sign; installed Votes for Women Trail marker.
- Installed 4 vault toilets in Wupperman Campground; began design work for replacement water system; partnered with Los Valles Conservation Corps for general campground work (funded by Great Outdoors Colorado GOCO Youth Corps grant); partnered with Colorado Parks & Wildlife and National Park Service to conduct boat inspections at Lake San Cristobal; installed inspection building; installed Peninsula Park trails with Hinsdale County Trails Commission and Los Valles Conservation Corps (funded by GOCO Youth Corps grant and Heritage and Trails Foundation, \$5,000); executed GOCO's Notice of Restrictive Covenants (Limitations on Sale) for Peninsula Park; executed grant contract and completed planning work for four miles of chip seal and installation of bike lanes along Lake San Cristobal (Multi-modal Opportunity Fund, no match grant of \$900,000); received 2024 GOCO Youth Corps grant (\$40,900).





- Completed redistricting of Commissioner districts with Colorado College.
- Completed 2022 audit, approved & implemented 2023 budget, approved 2024 budget; amended 7 employment contracts; approved 8 special event permits; 2 liquor license renewals; 2 special event liquor licenses; expanded contract for computer & information technology program.
- Initiated comprehensive .policy review.
- Adopted Secure Transportation Services program.
- Attended annual Mineral/Hinsdale and Archuleta/Hinsdale meetings; participated in 4 joint Town/County meetings;
- Contracted with firm to conduct inventory of County assets.
- Hosted Avalanche I class; hosted High-Angle Rescue class; in addition to backcountry suburban, added Utility Terrain Vehicle to Search and Rescue fleet (funded by State of Colorado FLEX grant \$58,820) and two snowmobiles and trailer (Ben Brownlee Memorial Fund, \$20,159.60 and State of Colorado year-end grant \$13,604); received private contribution for \$18,000 and San Juan Solstice Fund grant for \$2,200 to purchase 10 helicopter helmets with communication capabilities; implemented drone program for SAR missions, including FAA certification.
- Presented Lifetime Achievement awards to Bob Case, John Taylor, Jean Taylor.
- Hosted Memorial Day and Veteran's Day ceremonies; provided support for veterans.
- Secured grant funding to update County/Town Hazard Mitigation Plan and Community Wildfire Protection Plan; updated Emergency Operations Plan, updated Alert & Warning Plan; installed visual/audio upgrades to Lake City Area Medical Center meeting room (EMPG special project grant \$20,000).
- Provided all-volunteer team support for 911 & Emergency Medical Services (EMS) response; hired EMS Coordinator and paid, seasonal Paramedic; awarded Colorado EMTS Provider grant for QRV & new cardiac monitor (\$16,898.95); provided community outreach courses including CPR, AED, First Aid, Stop the Bleed, Community Life Savers; added donated 2014 Ford Explorer quick response to EMS fleet; deployed 2 Public Access Defibrillators in the community; awarded CREATE grant (\$4,232.76) to support certification of 3 new EMS Primary Instructors; formed HCEMS Education Advisory Group; planning and implementation of EMT Course in partnership with Pagosa Springs EMS & Upper San Juan Health Services District; hosted Senator Baisley and the State EMS Sustainability Task force for 2-day work session in Lake City; added 4 new drivers following Drivers Academy; Hinsdale County Peer Support Team continued; supported training of team member for Mental Health Resiliency Officer (MHRO); awarded Ben Brownlee Memorial Fund grant (\$3,270) and San Juan Solstice Fund (\$1,300) to support training and implementation of HCEMS Responder Wellness website; received donation of 2 Stryker PowerCot stretcher; hosted Advanced Comprehensive Airway course for HCEMS and Mineral County EMS; added CPR instructors; director awarded State EMS Executive of the Year by EMSAC & CDPHE; awarded CREATE grant to support EMT course beginning January 2024 (\$23,973.57).
- Licensed ambulances for service (including services with Mineral and Archuleta counties).
- Hinsdale County Marketing Committee published Visitor's Guide; received Colorado Tourism Office management grant; received Destination Development Mentor Program grant; executed Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with San Juan, Ouray, San Miguel, and Hinsdale counties for alpineloop.info; launched website; implementing Motorized Trails grant (\$82,000); participated on High Alpine work group; draft video completed; Silver Thread infrastructure tour; received Federal Highways Scenic Byway grant for 11 toilets, pavilion, safety pullouts, and observatory (\$640,250).
- Implemented Electronic Recording Technology Board (ERTB) grant (\$26,702.51).
- Completed Abstract of Assessment and Valuation.
- Approved 3 boundary line adjustments; vacated end of Spruce Street.
- Installed gates at Transfer Station; received Colorado State Forest Service Debris Mitigation Incentive program grant (\$15,000); offered reduced debris dumping rates for county residents.
- Partnered with Region 10, Visionary Broadband, Gunnison County Electric Association, and Town of Lake City to complete middle mile fiber project.



- Amended OHV ordinance with maximum fines; conducted OHV opinion poll.
- Proclaimed September as Suicide Prevention Month; approved 2 opioid settlement agreements; participated on the Southwest Colorado Opioid Regional Council.
- Received Colorado Parks & Wildlife Impact Assistance grant (\$7,283.16).
- Provided support to Town of Lake City for housing project; waived Building Use Tax.
- Opted in to Proposition 123 (affordable housing incentive programs).
- Received Resource Advisory Council (RAC) grant for Piedra River Trailhead improvements (\$66,188); purchased vault toilet; minor repairs to Debs Schoolhouse; purchased bench; Forest Service managed Bear Creek Fire in southern Hinsdale; completed Upper Piedra radio communication upgrades for Road & Bridge.
- Implemented RAC grant partnering with San Juan Mountains Association for recreation education in Upper Rio Grande and Alpine Loop; purchased Responsible Recreation brochures for Hinsdale/Mineral/Rio Grande counties and Rio Grande National Forest.
- Renewed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be Cooperating Agency with the GMUG national forests; executed IGAs for Conservation of Native Fish Populations (6 counties) and Undesirable Plant Management (Gunnison / Saguache); partnered with Archuleta County to treat noxious weeds; provided support for Deer Lakes dam reconstruction; reduced speed limit on County Road 30; participated in Risk MAP floodplain project; received Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) for sustainable outdoor recreation planning with Colorado University and Extension Service
- Received DOLA administrative grant (\$10,000) to evaluate solar array at Hill 71.

Department & Commission Goals & Strategic Actions 2024

ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS

- Partner to create a vibrant, business-friendly climate that enables citizens, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, and businesses opportunity to prosper.
- Promote economic development by supporting local organizations and events
- Partner with tourism-based organizations on efforts to market Lake City and Hinsdale County as a tourism destination and work to support destination management, responsible stewardship, and infrastructure needs
- Participate in alpineloop.info website with High Alpine counties
- Continue OHV education project in Upper Rio Grande
- Capitalize on opportunities for economic diversification
- Develop funding options/consider lease for workforce housing project with USDA Forest Service
- Participate in multi-jurisdictional workforce housing opportunities
- Seek funding for updating the Comprehensive Plan / Community Plan and input process
- Participate in Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP)

HISTORIC & NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote responsible stewardship of historic and natural resources.

Planning and Land Use

- Planning Commission to continue to streamline/update planning and zoning review procedures
- Update land use regulations
- Provide incentives for innovative and affordable housing through land use regulation updates
- Update land use fees
- Update regulations related to avalanche building hazards and other disaster mitigation efforts related to building and land use





Local Sites and Amenities

- Complete Asset Inventory & Assessment on all County infrastructure
- Seek funding for Sheriff's Office/Administration building
- Continue work with the Ute Team to further develop the Ute Ulay into a heritage tourism destination, including penstock stabilization (develop plan), install two interpretive signs, and general site clean-up; complete road easement
- Complete EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Brownfields grant
- Fund and implement infrastructure proposed for Lake San Cristobal peninsula and boat launch facilities to install ADA fishing pier; create and implement sign plan; update Conservation Covenant with acquired County lands; improve human-powered boat launch area; develop concepts for man-gate access; complete basic vision for Boat Shed
- Implement Colorado Youth Corps grant for assistance with Lake San Cristobal and Wupperman projects as well as Ute Ulay trails work
- Complete design of new water delivery system at Wupperman Campground; find funding and construct
- Replace signage as needed in Wupperman Campground; conduct general campground clean-up
- Review assessment work on Slumgullion Earthflow with Lake Fork Valley Conservancy.
- Continue minor restoration work at Debs Schoolhouse to include window sill repair and install bench
- Support Lake Fork Valley Conservancy's project of Philip H. Virden Dark Skies Observatory on Slumgullion Pass with Gunnison Ranger District
- Implement wayfinding sign plan if funding secured (with Main Street, Town, Scenic Byways, and Colorado Department of Transportation)
- Evaluate county-owned property for potential sale and highest/best use
- Consider agreement for long-term stewardship of Deer Lakes dam; monitor recreation site improvements
- Install replacement interpretive panels along America's Byways Silver Thread Scenic & Historic Byway; relocate Lake San Cristobal signs to ADA location
- Complete design aspect of Federal Highways Scenic Byways grant for 11 toilets, pavilion, safety pull-outs and observatory
- Develop project proposal for Upper Piedra multi-purpose site with partners
- Support efforts to install Piedra River Trailhead toilet and improve parking lot
- Participate in the Lake San Cristobal Fuels Project Planning with BLM

Noxious Weed Control

- Continue partnering with Archuleta and Gunnison counties for weed control
- Continue to serve on Gunnison Weed Commission
- Continue to review County Weed program for efficiency and effectiveness
- Provide information and education to landowners on noxious weeds and control

PUBLIC SAFETY

Provide a safe and secure community that protects life and property

Identify all-agency short-term and long-term emergency communication needs

Sheriff's Office

- Provide professional law enforcement services through responsive, caring, and dedicated service
- Continue to provide appropriate training opportunities that will enhance the capabilities of all office personnel and allow us to better serve our community
- Provide more effective and efficient communication with the public
- Continue to collaborate with and improve relationships with our state and federal law enforcement agencies (USFS, BLM, CPW, CSP) to provide more comprehensive and capable law enforcement services to the county



Emergency Management (EM)

- Continue to support an EM Program that includes preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response and recovery
- Refine, update, and develop plans and exercises to enhance the resiliency of Hinsdale County
- Support existing efforts for Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC), training and exercises
- Foster and build partnerships with San Luis Valley and West Region partners
- Complete 2024 EMPG work plan and enhance the Hinsdale Office of EM program
- Continue to develop the All-Hazards Team
- Initiate the update of the Hinsdale County/Lake City Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)
- Initiate update of Hinsdale County Community Wildfire Protection Plan as part of HMP

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- Continue practicing progressive prehospital medicine
- Foster a culture in Emergency Services of continual learning, leadership and respect
- Continue to advocate for illness and injury prevention in our community while providing residents and visitors with a trusted resource to utilize in times of crisis
- Foster and build partnerships with State EMS Training Center to enhance educational capabilities and opportunities locally
- Successful EMT course locally to adding much needed EMS team members to the EMS roster
- Work on transitioning EMS Director position
- Grant work to support a consultative visit by the State of Colorado to help guide the future of EMS operations in Hinsdale County
- Continue to support the important work of the Peer Support Team

COUNTY SERVICES

Provide resources to Elected Officials and Departments for efficient, high-quality services

Administration Office

- Provide professional and helpful assistance to residents and visitors
- Continue to review and streamline processes for greater efficiency and consistency
- Continue to provide positive and professional office culture
- Increase availability of online customer services, including web payments
- Continue to review budget and expenditures regularly for fiscal responsibility
- Review and obtain grant opportunities when applicable to supplement County budgets
- Continue ongoing policy review process
- Provide public information through website, email and social media
- Increase access to services in accordance with Americans with Disabilities act, including website and online documents
- Continuing to participate in position appropriate training and professional conferences
- Participate in ongoing county project planning
- Update addressing into GIS system
- Continue to support the Office of Emergency Management All Hazards Team
- Increase focus on information security and cybersecurity
- Collect data on long and short-term rentals

County Facilities Department

- Continue landscape maintenance
- Continue winter maintenance at Coursey Annex and Courthouse and Lake San Cristobal Peninsula
- Upgrade and re-organization of county storage facilities in preparation of new County Operations Building
- Prepare Butler Building for removal
- Work with design and construction team on new County Operations Building
- Courthouse exterior and interior maintenance



Assessor's Office

- Continue to ensure accuracy of property records
- Continue to implement Department of Property Taxation's rules and regulations
- Continue to ensure property values are fair and accurate
- Provide property owners with assurance of values during the intervening year 2024, consider all concerns and physically view properties if warranted
- Deputy Assessor continue training to secure Ad Valorem Appraisal License
- Continue updating the GIS system
- Develop Office policy on public accessibility of GIS Shapefiles
- Implement online property record search
- Review and Update Assessor Office Policies and Procedures

Building Official and Enforcement Department

- Provide high quality enforcement of adopted building codes and services for property owners, builders and contractors
- Focus on community public health and safety while working to maintain the quality and economic viability of construction
- Increase education on the importance of building codes and the building process - including permits and other requirements – with a public education campaign
- Continue to work with Colorado Water Conservation Board and FEMA on update of county's flood risk mapping project
- Work with partners and public on construction within potential natural disaster areas to help prevent loss of life and property
- Continue to provide required onsite water treatment system (OWTS) inspections for Silver Thread Public Health while providing OWTS education to homeowners
- Continue to provide education and assistance to property owners in relation to radon exposure
- Continue to provide online payment accessibility for building permits
- Continue to provide online access of building documents and applications
- Continue professional training and education
- Obtain certification in Colorado Small Water Systems
- Review Building permit fees
- Review Building Use Tax process
- Continue to work with regional partners on a variety of projects

Clerk's Office

- All County Offices are committed to being good Public Servants and team players by respecting the public and providing quality services with integrity and excellence. We work to be courteous and treat all equally with professionalism and efficiency.
- The Clerk's Office has had a full-time Deputy, Allison Athey for 2 years. She is a fantastic addition to the Courthouse and is doing a stellar job.
- The Clerk's Office will be conducting 3 Elections in 2024, which include the Presidential Primary, the Primary and General Election. With the Deputy and Election Judges this process is done with efficiency and transparency. The voter turnout in Hinsdale County is the highest in the State.
- Since 2018 the Clerk's Office has received 7 Electronic Recording Technology Board (ERTB) Grants to allow our historic records to be digitized and indexed into a web-based search program. We will continue to pursue grant funds from ERTB for Recording System upgrades/maintenance.
- The Clerk's office continues to index all recent and historic county documents into a County Search system. These county documents include: Contracts, Agreements, Intergovernmental Agreements, Land Use, Commissioner Minutes, Ordinances, Resolutions and Variances.
- To be provided with the resources needed for efficient, high-quality services.
- Increase storage for historic records.



Treasurer's Office

- Use and maintain a comprehensive accounting system within the Treasurer's office. This has been accomplished by the implementation of the Eagle Treasurer system and a more in-depth use of Incode, an evolving process in which the Treasurer's Office and the Finance Director will continue to work together.
- Gather pertinent information and implement the use of electronic statements for tax bills in 2025.
- Attend continuing education courses to maintain certification for County Treasurer/Public Trustee through the Extended Studies Program at Colorado Mesa University.
- Train Deputy Treasurer working through the office procedures and processes manual.
- Remain active with state and regional treasurer's groups.

Veteran's Office

- Fill Veterans Services Officer position
- Obtain required state training and certification
- Continue outreach to local veterans
- Attend monthly training programs with CO Dept of Military & Veterans Affairs
- Attend Colorado County Veteran Service Officer semi-annual training conferences, either virtually or in person
- Update Veterans Memorial in Veterans Park
- Continue Veterans Day and Memorial Day observations in Veterans Park
- Work with the Cemetery District Board on including the graves in the Hinsdale County Cemeteries in the Wreaths Across America program

Coroner's Office

- Carry out the duties of the Coroner's Office with professionalism and compassion
- Coroner and Deputies will attend 20 hours of American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator approved Continuing Education through the Colorado Coroner's Association to maintain certification
- Continue to develop written policies and procedures for the office
- Maintain a team of deputies for the office
- Conduct monthly team meetings and quarterly trainings
- Establish network with surrounding county coroners and identify additional resources
- Establish office space accessible to the public
- Acquire refrigeration unit

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Promote prosperous, collaborative, and healthy communities
- Support families, children, seniors, & all community members so they can prosper and thrive
- Deliver high-quality services throughout the valley
- Ensure sound infrastructure
- Continue prevention services for all
- Embrace health equity within our community
- Available health care access and resources for community members
- Participate in the Southwest Colorado Opioid Regional Council
- Establish MOU between Hinsdale County and Prowers County for hotline calls for child and adult protection. We also have a 24/7 on-call position to assure access to Child and Adult protective services.
- Continue to measure and meet goals related to the Colorado Department of Human Services C-STAT goals from CDHS are key goals to ensure the community is receiving timely and quality services.
- Monitor public assistance programs, (Medicaid, Food Assistance/SNAP), & adjust to changes within these programs
- Follow and support the universal Pre-K program as appropriate for our region The Early Childhood Council for Hinsdale and Gunnison Counties has been leading the work locally; The ECC has supported a successful implementation in the 2023-24 school year and will work on the opportunities to improve the enrollment process (online) for families for the 2024-25 school year.



TRANSPORTATION

Road and Bridge Department (R&B)

- Continue to maintain and repair all county roads, culverts and bridges
- Prepare CR 30 along lake for chip and seal project and support installation
- Upgrade and or rebuild equipment in the shop as time and budget permits
- Continue to work on all USFS Schedule A roads, culverts and drainages
- Continue to stockpile and screen gravel from multiple places around the county
- Continue our progress on regravelling CR 30 from the Winter gates to Grizzly Gulch and placing boulders all the way up
- Work on the high-country sections of both CR 20 and 30 to repair landslide areas that damaged those roads in past years
- Continue to improve and implement a safety program/culture for R&B employees
- Keep the Transfer station running as efficiently and improve as possible
- Oversee Debris Mitigation Hazard program (seek funding to offset costs)
- Purchase a used Motorgrader to replace one we sent to the south end and sale two of our existing graders
- Work with the Forest service to find a solution for a section of the Carson/Wager Gulch road
- Change the speed limit signs and add new ones on CR 30 past the inlet of the Lake
- Apply magchloride for County roads applied as early in the summer season as possible

COMMUNICATIONS

- Update the Communications Plan for Hill 71 with technical assistance
- Complete solar array evaluation at Hill 71 (including cost estimates) and seek funding
- Review opportunities to connect communications to the south with San Luis Valley REA
- Continue conversations with public land management agencies about the possibility of small repeaters in outlying areas for safety communication
- Finish Phase One of the fiber connection to Lake City and Community Anchor Institutions
- Create a Countywide broadband plan
- Pursue grant funding for Countywide broadband plan
- Continue to work with Digitcom to make transmission upgrades to the Southend communications tower
- Engage with other providers such as Commnet for wireless/cellular service in upper Piedra
- Continue effective partnerships with Region10, DOLA and Colorado Broadband Office
- Continue to pursue the FirstNet option for select Hinsdale County personnel
- Continue to work with Gunnison County on extending cell coverage north on Hwy 149 to Gunnison, specifically constructing a cell tower on Rose Ridge

Commissioner Robert Hurd, Commissioner Greg Levine, Commissioner Kristie Borchers, Treasurer/Coroner Lori Lawrence, Clerk Joan Roberts, Assessor Sherri Boyce, Sheriff Chris Kambish, Administrator Sandy Hines, Finance Director Lynn McNitt, Building Official Gabe McNeese, EMS Director Buffy Witt, Emergency Manager Phil Graham, Road & Bridge Supervisor Don Menzies, Gunnison/Hinsdale Health & Human Services Director Joni Reynolds, Veteran's Services Officer Erin Cavit



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ONE TEAM