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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The Custer County Master Plan (Plan) was adopted by the Custer County Planning Commission April 10, 2002, and accepted by the Board of County Commission on April 10, 2002. The purpose of the Custer County Plan User's Workbook (Workbook) is to provide County staff, the Regional Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Adjustment, Planning Commission, the Board of County Commissioners, citizens, landowners, businesses and project applicants with a practical guide for using the Plan. Toward that objective, the Workbook includes a Plan reference guide, a summary of Plan objectives, and a project evaluation checklist.

The Workbook is organized into three sections:

- **Section One**

This Section describes the purpose and use of the Plan and Workbook, with a reference guide to Plan information.

- **Section Two**

This Section contains the "Goals, Policies and Actions" for the Plan, and a copy of the Plan Direction.

- **Section Three**

This Section outlines a checklist for the overall evaluation of subdivision and zoning proposals, relative to the Plan. The checklist is not intended as a replacement for procedures or requirements found in County zoning and subdivision codes, but as a handy guide to assist in evaluating project applications.

MASTER PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of the Plan is to anticipate the inevitable growth-related challenges in Custer County and to help shape future developed areas within the County. The Plan is considered an advisory document only and is not binding on the zoning discretion of Custer County. Although the plan is advisory, it serves as the basis for regulatory measures, primarily the Custer County Zoning Resolution and the Custer County Subdivision Regulations. The Custer County Master Plan also serves as the foundation for future intergovernmental agreements, capital improvement programming, and detailed studies and programs; it can be used as supporting documentation for pursuing grant-based activities.

The Plan should be consulted when reviewing Zoning Permit applications, updating the Custer County Zoning Resolution and the Custer County Subdivision Regulations, working on intergovernmental issues with Silver Cliff, Westcliffe, and other agencies, outlining work programs, preparing annual budgets, and evaluating the County's progress in meeting identified goals. The Plan should be also used to guide residents, land-owners, and project applicants concerning land planning and community development objectives within Custer County.

Although the Plan guides Custer County toward the future, it is also a "living" document adaptable to changes the future will bring. The County Planning Commission should review the Plan on an annual basis and propose revisions with changing circumstances, as appropriate. The entire document should be considered for public review and update no later than five years from its adoption.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

FORMAT

The Plan is formatted into three sections (Introduction, Planning Influences, and Plan Direction), each with descriptive text, supporting tables and relevant maps. Note that all Plan maps are for general planning purposes only, and are subject to update and changes.

The Introduction describes the purpose, process and use of the Plan. The Planning Influences section outlines the environmental, land use, and service and infrastructure conditions within Custer County that establish the context for creating planning goals, policies and actions. The Plan Direction establishes six basic planning areas within Custer County, with goals, policies, and actions organized into three major themes: Environment, Land Use, and County Services.

Three appendices are also included in the Plan document. Appendix A, *Glossary of Terms*, defines several planning-related terms found within the Plan. Appendix B, *Project Bibliography*, lists the publications and maps used during the preparation of the Plan. Appendix C is the Adoption Resolution.

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PLAN DIRECTION

The Plan Direction establishes six basic planning areas within Custer County: the Sangre de Cristo Planning Area, the Grape Creek Planning Area, the Foothills Planning Area, the Wet Mountain Planning Area, the Hardscrabble Planning Area, and the Cooperative Planning Area. Each Planning Area has a set of Plan Directions, identified on the Plan Direction map, which should be viewed as guidelines for public policy consideration and future land use decisions.

SECTION TWO: PLAN DIRECTIONS

GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Goals, policies, and actions that are organized into three major themes: Environment, Land Use, and County Services. The Plan Direction and the associated goals, policies and actions should be used in conjunction with the Custer County Zoning Resolution and Custer County Subdivision Regulations to guide the appropriate location, character, type, and intensity of new development.

Goals, policies and actions are defined as follows:

- Goals are the broad objectives to be achieved by the Plan.
- Policies translate the Plan goals into guidelines for decision-making.
- Actions are measures to implement the Plan and ultimately achieve a desired goal. Each action includes a timeframe for completion: short-term (one to two years); midterm (three to five years); long term (beyond five years), and on-going.

Environment Goals:

To protect Custer County’s natural, environmental and scenic resources, maintaining wildlife diversity, forest health, and access to public lands for current and future generations.

Environment Policies:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| E-1 | The County should encourage preservation of unique, sensitive or critical natural areas, lakes and streams, scenic vistas, wildlife habitats and aquifer recharge areas. |
| E-2 | The County should encourage the preservation, conservation and retention of all water resources. |
| E-3 | The County should encourage the protection of all mineral resources while ensuring that the impacts of extraction activities are mitigated. |
| E-4 | The County should encourage the protection of all forestry resources while ensuring that the impacts of timbering activities are mitigated. |
| E-5 | The County should encourage development practices in environmentally sensitive or constrained areas that promote the general health, safety and welfare of its residents and visitors without infringing on individual rights. |

SECTION TWO: PLAN DIRECTIONS

Land Use Goals:

To preserve Custer County's "rural" character traits - the existing agricultural economy; open space; scenic vistas; forestry and mining - through desired physical development and economic growth without infringing on property rights.

To support development of a stable, diversified, year-round economic base, as a sustainable economy is a necessary ingredient for the well-being of Custer County now and in the future.

Land Use Policies:

- LU-1** The County should consider environmental and fiscal impacts of development proposals.
- LU-2** The County should consider land protection techniques and site development options to maintain agricultural lands, forests, and open space.
- LU-3** The County should direct quality residential development into appropriate areas, with consideration of the impact of density on environmental and fiscal resources.
- LU-4** The County should support the retention, expansion and recruitment of businesses which are consistent with the quality of life Custer County citizens desire.
- LU-5** The County should direct commercial and industrial development into appropriate areas, with consideration for the type and impact of specific uses.
- LU-6** The County should discourage any development, excluding agricultural operations, adjacent to water courses; on productive ranch lands, particularly on hay meadows; in areas of demonstrated wildlife habitats; and in areas which would cause damage to significant natural features.
- LU-7** The County should encourage energy conservation in all phases of growth and development.
- LU-8** The County should encourage the development of housing available to persons of all income levels.
- LU-9** The County should create standards and procedures for the location, design and construction of secondary dwelling units.

SECTION TWO: PLAN DIRECTIONS

County Services Goals:

To encourage cooperative planning between federal, state, county and local government, school districts, special districts, businesses and citizens, and ensure the long-term, adequate provision of services and infrastructure within Custer County.

County Services Policies:

- CS-1** The County should encourage citizen participation, and assure them they can make a difference in government decision-making.
- CS-2** The County should promote a safe and well-maintained road system, with access provided for emergency vehicles where feasible.
- CS-3** The County should pursue initiatives that will decrease the amount of refuse deposited at the County Landfill to extend its life-cycle and better meet EPA requirements.
- CS-4** Septage facilities operated in Custer County should be designed and operated in compliance with all applicable local, state and federal regulations.
- CS-5** The County should support the use and expansion of libraries as places where people can meet, exchange information and learn.
- CS-6** The County should encourage the creation of additional post high school and adult educational opportunities, including additional academic courses and vocational training, through mutual planning by the County, towns, school districts and businesses.

SECTION TWO: PLAN DIRECTIONS

ACTIONS

Environment Actions:

- Create incentives, such as special use allowances in exchange for site sensitive development, to preserve open space and foster land stewardship of both open and developed land.
Timeframe: *On-going*
- Work with the Division of Wildlife, community groups and others to identify opportunities to preserve open space around wildlife habitat and migration corridors.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Develop a hydrological study in cooperation with the United States Geological Survey to determine the availability, quality and quantity of water in Custer County.
Timeframe: *Ongoing*
- Explore strategies with the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District, water right owners and other stakeholders for retaining the use of water within Custer County.
Timeframe: *Short-term*
- Develop a Mineral Resource Plan for the extraction of commercial mineral, sand and gravel deposits.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Prepare local regulations addressing matters of statewide interest (1041 regulations) for mineral resource areas to address potential future coal bed methane gas extraction and sand and gravel extraction.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Work with the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and other agencies to prepare wildland fire hazard mapping.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Update the Zoning Resolution and Subdivision Regulations, as appropriate to address development activities in environmentally constrained areas, such as on steep slopes, in wildlife corridors and wildfire hazard areas, and areas with adverse soil properties.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Work with the United States Forest Service, the Colorado State Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and other agencies to utilize their knowledge and resources to keep informed on Custer County's environmental health.
Timeframe: *Ongoing*

SECTION TWO: PLAN DIRECTIONS

Land Use Actions:

Update the Subdivision Regulations to:

- Incorporate a review process consistent with Planned Unit Developments.
- Provide submittal requirements that address overall impact as part of the approval process.
- Require that a water supply of adequate quantity and quality be available to support the intended use and fire protection needs.
- Require new developments to install utilities underground.
- Provide incentives, such as a Minor Subdivision review process, to consolidate lots that are smaller than the minimum lot size required into larger lots.
- Provide alternatives to traditional developments patterns, such as clustering and other site-sensitive platting techniques.
- Update definitions.
- Provide guidelines for weed control and wildfire prevention.
- Update provisions to be consistent with current case law and statutes.

Timeframe: Short-term

Update the Homeowner's Packet to:

- Provide guidelines on what constitutes quality residential development.
- Provide information on alternative energy and energy conservation practices.

Timeframe: Short-term

Update the Zoning Resolution to:

- Specify what type of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational uses are appropriate to be considered for Special Use Permits in specific zoning districts, and the conditions for mitigating any adverse impacts.
- Create review procedures for secondary dwelling units and specify the criteria for each zoning district.
- Require new commercial and industrial development to address aesthetic issues, such as, landscaping, architectural design, and screening.
- Create overlay districts to promote infill development and reduce the number of non-conforming lots, structures and uses by allowing dwelling units on existing residential lots less than the minimum lot size required, in Wetmore, Rosita, San Isabel and the Lake De Weese area.
- Determine the legal/regulatory requirements for the creation of an Airport Protection Overlay District.

Timeframe: Short-term

SECTION TWO: PLAN DIRECTIONS

Land Use Actions (Continued):

- Work with community groups and individuals to encourage the use of fully-shielded (no light emitted above the horizontal plane of the fixture) street and utility lights, without jeopardizing safety or creating unnecessarily high energy use.
Timeframe: On-going
- Work with the Colorado Historical Society, community groups and individuals to preserve and maintain historic and archaeological sites.
Timeframe: Long-term
- Establish a community Economic Development Committee.
Timeframe: Short-term
- Work with the State agencies and telecommunication utilities to provide facilities for high-speed digital data transmission, and to include Pueblo in the local calling area for all Custer County telephone users.
Timeframe: On-going
- Work with property owners and others to replat parcels and offer land swaps, as appropriate in areas such as Rosita, the Lake De Weese area, and San Isabel, to improve the viability of developing irregular or non-conforming lots.
Timeframe: On-going

SECTION TWO: PLAN DIRECTIONS

County Services Actions:

- Develop an intergovernmental agreement that addresses coordination of land use issues between the County and the incorporated towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe.
Timeframe: *Short-term*
- Periodically review policies, resolutions, ordinances and programs to assure that they are consistent with each other and with community goals.
Timeframe: *On-going*
- Develop a Capital Improvement Program that establishes funding priorities and specific improvements of public facilities, including physical access to public buildings, which are viewed as desirable or needed by the citizens.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Develop and implement a Geographic Information System (GIS).
Timeframe: *Ongoing*
- Develop a long-range transportation plan that specifies future County road improvements.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Identify roads by name and number with signs in a consistent manner throughout Custer County.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Work with private haulers and local citizens to support a cost-effective Recycling Center.
Timeframe: *Short-term*
- Investigate the feasibility of developing community water and sewer systems in Wetmore, San Isabel, Rosita and the Lake De Weese area.
Timeframe: *Long-term*
- Develop a countywide Septage Waste Disposal Facility Plan.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*
- Work with public, private and not-for profit interests to provide opportunities for education and recreation for all citizens through a shared use of all available facilities.
Timeframe: *Mid-term*

SECTION THREE: PROJECT EVALUATION

PROJECT EVALUATION

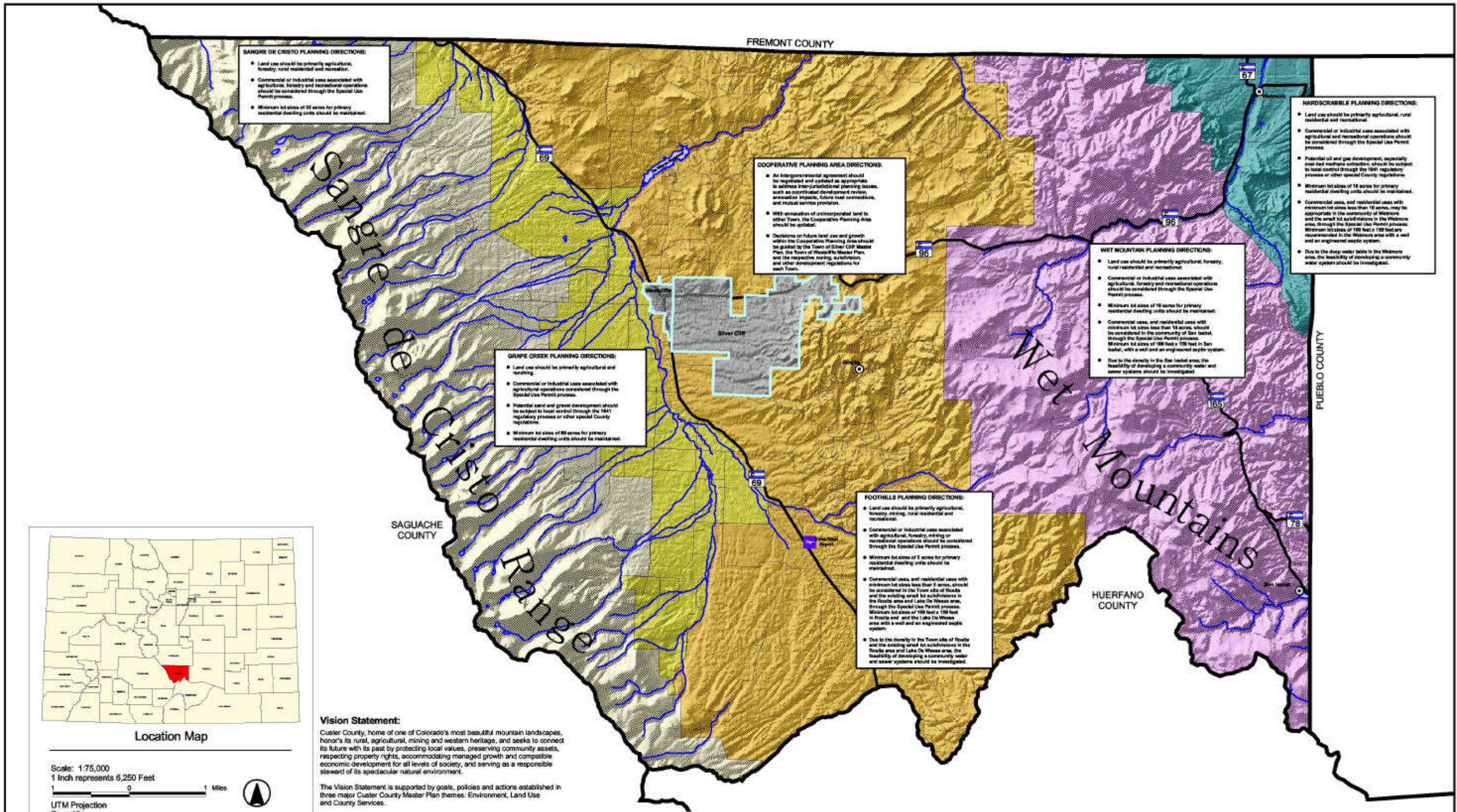
Project evaluation guidelines are considerations that the County staff, the Regional Planning Commission, Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners should use in the review of subdivision and/or zoning proposals. These guidelines may also serve the project applicant as a set of consistent criteria for whether project approval can reasonably be expected.

SUBDIVISION

- ❑ Compliance with the Plan Directions for each Planning Area within the Custer County Master Plan.
- ❑ Compliance with applicable Environment, Land Use, and County Services Goals and Policies within the Custer County Master Plan.
- ❑ Compliance with the Custer County Subdivision Regulations, as amended, including submittal requirements, design criteria, and plat specifications.
- ❑ Proposed subdivision provides assurance for the completion and maintenance of improvements.
- ❑ Application fees for the proposed subdivision are paid.

ZONING

- ❑ Compliance with the Plan Directions for each Planning Area within the Custer County Master Plan.
- ❑ Compliance with applicable Environment, Land Use, and County Services Goals and Policies within the Custer County Master Plan.
- ❑ Compliance with the Custer County Zoning Resolution, as amended.
- ❑ Compliance with Zoning Permit procedures.
- ❑ The building is erected, converted, enlarged, placed, or reconstructed, or the land used, for a purpose permitted in the zoning district in which the building or land is located.
- ❑ The building is erected, converted, enlarged, placed, reconstructed or structurally altered in conformity with the minimum lot area and setback requirements of the zoning district.
- ❑ The building is erected, converted, enlarged, placed, reconstructed or structurally altered within maximum building height requirements of the zoning district.
- ❑ The building is located on a subdivided lot, and there is only one dwelling unit per lot.
- ❑ Application fees for the proposed zoning action are paid.



SANDORE DE CRISTO PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

- Land use should be primarily agricultural, forestry, rural residential and recreation.
- Commercial or industrial uses associated with agricultural, forestry and recreational operations should be considered through the Special Use Permit process.
- Minimum lot sizes of 20 acres for primary residential dwelling units should be maintained.

COOPERATIVE PLANNING AREA DIRECTIONS:

- An Intergovernmental agreement should be negotiated and updated as appropriate to address inter-jurisdictional planning issues, such as coordinated development review, sewerage impacts, future road connections, and mutual service provision.
- With annexation of unincorporated land in other Towns, the Cooperative Planning Area should be updated.
- Decisions on future land use and growth within the Cooperative Planning Area should be guided by the Town of Silver Cliff Master Plan, the Town of Wettable Master Plan and the respective zoning, subdivision, and other development regulations for each Town.

GRAPE CREEK PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

- Land use should be primarily agricultural and ranching.
- Commercial or industrial uses associated with agricultural operations considered through the Special Use Permit process.
- Potential acid and gravel development should be subject to local control through the 1947 regulatory process or other special County regulations.
- Minimum lot sizes of 80 acres for primary residential dwelling units should be maintained.

WET MOUNTAIN PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

- Land use should be primarily agricultural, forestry, rural residential and recreational.
- Commercial or industrial uses associated with agricultural, forestry and recreational operations should be considered through the Special Use Permit process.
- Minimum lot sizes of 10 acres for primary residential dwelling units should be maintained.
- Commercial uses, and residential uses with minimum lot sizes less than 10 acres, may be appropriate in the community of Wettable and the small lot subdivisions in the Wettable area, through the Special Use Permit process. Minimum lot sizes of 100 feet x 100 feet in San Isidro, with a well and an engineered septic system.
- Due to the density in the San Isidro area, the feasibility of developing a community water and sewer systems should be investigated.

HARDSCRABBLE PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

- Land use should be primarily agricultural, rural residential and recreational.
- Commercial or industrial uses associated with agricultural and recreational operations should be considered through the Special Use Permit process.
- Potential oil and gas development, especially coal bed methane extraction, should be subject to local control through the 1947 regulatory process or other special County regulations.
- Minimum lot sizes of 10 acres for primary residential dwelling units should be maintained.
- Commercial uses, and residential uses with minimum lot sizes less than 10 acres, may be appropriate in the community of Wettable and the small lot subdivisions in the Wettable area, through the Special Use Permit process. Minimum lot sizes of 100 feet x 100 feet are recommended in the Wettable area with a well and an engineered septic system.
- Due to the deep water table in the Wettable area, the feasibility of developing a community water system should be investigated.

FOOTHILLS PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

- Land use should be primarily agricultural, forestry, mining, rural residential and recreational.
- Commercial or industrial uses associated with agricultural, forestry, mining or recreational operations should be considered through the Special Use Permit process.
- Minimum lot sizes of 5 acres for primary residential dwelling units should be maintained.
- Commercial uses, and residential uses with minimum lot sizes less than 5 acres, should be considered in the Town site of Roofs and the existing small lot subdivisions in the Roofs area and Lake De Wessan area, through the Special Use Permit process. Minimum lot sizes of 100 feet x 100 feet in Roofs and and the Lake De Wessan area with a well and an engineered septic system.
- Due to the density in the Town site of Roofs and the existing small lot subdivisions in the Roofs area and Lake De Wessan area, the feasibility of developing a community water and sewer systems should be investigated.



Location Map

Scale: 1:75,000
1 Inch represents 6,250 Feet

UTM Projection
Zone 13
Datum: NAD83

Vision Statement:
Custer County, home of one of Colorado's most beautiful mountain landscapes, honor's its rural, agricultural, mining and western heritage, and seeks to connect its future with its past by protecting local values, preserving community assets, respecting property rights, accommodating managed growth and compatible economic development for all levels of society, and serving as a responsible steward of its spectacular natural environment.

The Vision Statement is supported by goals, policies and actions established in three major Custer County Master Plan themes: Environment, Land Use and County Services.

Legend		Planning Areas	
Unincorporated Town	Sandore de Cristo Planning Area	Foothills Planning Area	Hardscrabble Planning Area
County Boundary	Grape Creek Planning Area	Wet Mountain Planning Area	Cooperative Planning Area
Lake			
Potential Stream			
Transportation			
State Highway			
Local Road			
Allotment			

This MAP is for general planning purposes only, and is subject to updates and changes. Any user should check with Custer County prior to use to be sure that the data shown is current. Because of the scale of this map, any user should not rely on it for the exact definition of any boundary or division line shown on said map.

This MAP is based on information from numerous sources and the accuracy of which is not guaranteed by Custer County. Custer County is not responsible and shall not be liable to the user for damages of any kind arising from the data or information shown on this map.

CUSTER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

PLAN DIRECTION

CUSTER COUNTY, COLORADO