

**La Plata County Children, Youth and Family Master Planning Process
Committee Report**

Key Focus Area: Family Economics

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What was the vision your committee used to drive its process?

“Economic momentum for families to thrive”.

How did your committee define thriving in relationship to its key focus area?

The Family Economics committee focused on identifying a recommendation that would have the greatest impact on the likelihood that families would have access to the economic resources needed to ensure their children and youth would thrive. The reality that La Plata County is stratified (divided into groups based on status) was one area that continually surfaced during the committee’s research and deliberations. The research indicated that stratification is a primary reason that there is unequal access to the resources (money, services, supports, opportunities, etc.) families need to thrive. By focusing on what a stratified community looks like and how it is created, the committee was better able to explore the impact of La Plata being very divided; economically, culturally, geographically, and by age.

The Family Economics Committee defined their vision “economic momentum for families to thrive” as: *All families have equal access to the resources needed to move toward thriving without being excluded based on social or any other stratification. For this to be realized key stakeholders within the county will need to work more effectively together to ensure both the availability and accessibility of the necessary supports, services and opportunities and that people have the opportunity to earn a livable wage.*

The committee also contributed to, and supports, the Master Plan’s overall thriving definition:

“Thriving youth and adults are steadily growing towards and becoming people with a positive sense of self, nurturing and responsible family members, effective communicators, people who make healthy life choices, involved community members and responsible global citizens, innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process, exemplary workers and lifelong learners, and caring and ethical individuals.”

Based on research done by the committee, it was determined that there are a number of La Plata County service providers already helping those who are experiencing economic hardships. However, because of the sheer numbers of those currently experiencing economic related problems, these providers have little opportunity to apply their limited resources to the task of significantly reducing the system and social issues creating the problem. The Family Economics committee believes that its recommendation will not only increase the supports for those currently experiencing economic hardships, but will also address the larger system and social issues. The committee was committed to reversing the cycle of an ever-increasing number of residents who are struggling economically.

The reality is that there are more of the Master Plan’s thriving definition indicators that are impacted by economics than by any of the other of the committee’s focus areas. The committee believes that its

recommendation and the supporting strategies will positively impact all of the indicators, but will especially and directly apply to the following thriving indicators:

- Nurturing and responsible family members;
- People who make healthy life choices;
- Innovative problem solvers and applicers of a creative process;
- Exemplary workers and life long learners; and,
- People with a positive image of themselves.

What is your committee's strategic recommendation?

The Family Economic Committee's recommendation is that the County, with its multiple jurisdictions, service providers, employers and employees work together to ensure that everyone residing in La Plata County has the opportunity to earn a livable wage.

To reach this recommendation, the committee began by brainstorming an exhaustive list of possible solutions to improve family economics. This list was then combined and categorized into similar groups. The items on this list were then measured against the Master Plan's criteria requiring that final recommendations must be strength-based and strategic; impacting every family in the county. This purging created five strategies that were researched and discussed in depth. The following are those final five strategies:

1) Develop apprenticeships: This recommendation would create a way to make economic thriving work through education and youth development solutions. It would involve governments, schools and businesses working directly with youth. This would help remove the stratification within the community based on age by breaking down youth stereotypes through more positive and meaningful adult and youth interaction. It would also help adults better understand the economic value of youth, which in turn would lead to strategies for more meaningfully involving youth in leadership and decision making roles. The committee did not select this because it realized that both the Education and After School Programming and the Youth Development Committees were making recommendations that were aimed at addressing this.

2) Connecting communities and people: This recommendation was intended to reduce this area's promotion and celebration of what has been called "rugged individualism". While this trait has many admirable aspects and is considered positive and something to achieve by most people, our committee felt this mind-set actually contributes to keeping individuals, groups and even entire communities separate and apart. Combating the glorification of this ideal would help increase the likelihood that separations based on economics, class, age, culture or ethnicity would be reduced. Making this shift would obviously require creating an initiative that would produce real behavioral changes. The committee did not select this recommendation because it believes that the Neighborhood and Community Committee's recommendation and its corresponding strategies when implemented will successfully begin to address much of this recommendation's intent. We were unanimous, however, that it should be seen as a legitimate recommendation "finalist".

3) Work support services and programs¹: This recommendation would address the primary gaps within the continuum of workforce development services, supports and opportunities. One of the key ones is outreach to those families who are among the working poor and, therefore, eligible for services such as earned income tax credit, food stamps and childcare assistance. The goal of connecting eligible families to the benefits due them is to increase their expendable income. The committee also felt that efforts such as work support program fairs, one stop centers and/or centers for working families (based on the Annie E. Casey Foundation model), better partnerships between

¹ http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_767.html

local colleges and skill building for the working poor population, career mentoring programs for young people, job bank databases, and efforts to increase financial literacy all could be important elements of an improved comprehensive work support initiative. The committee also felt that there are probably enough programs, but that they needed to coordinate their services better. While this recommendation may be the most easily implemented of the five, it would probably be the most costly and may be dependent on additional manpower. The committee supports efforts to explore ways to ensure that work support services and program gaps are addressed through working better together.

4) **Education voucher system:** This recommendation would shift the power for the distribution of education-earmarked money into the hands of the families of school aged children and youth instead of the schools. The way these voucher systems work is that a family determines which is the right school for their child and then transfers their voucher to that school which would use that money and the money from other vouchers to provide the students attending that school an education. The theory behind a voucher system is that students would get better educations because school districts would need to compete for students by improving academics and other aspects of their schools. Over time some believe they would increase the likelihood that a young person's economic potential would increase resulting in their receiving better earnings as adults. Others believe that vouchers can also increase the stratification and create even create division than already exist. The levels of government who would need to be involved with this recommendation far exceed La Plata County and its school districts. For this reason and because there are too many potentially negative aspects to vouchers, this recommendation was not selected. The committee, however, continues to believe that increasing the voice of families and students in the educational system's decision-making is critically important.

5) **Livable Wage:** This recommendation supports the promotion of the policies and initiatives needed to ensure all residents employed in La Plata County have the opportunity to earn a livable wage. The committee did considerable research on Santa Fe, New Mexico's Living Wage Ordinance and its outcomes. Santa Fe implemented its livable wage initiative in January 2004 raising the hourly rate to \$8.50². This ordinance initially applied to city businesses of 25 or more workers (60%), but because of the success of the original ordinance it was amended in January 2008, to exempt no businesses from the living wage, which was raised to \$9.50/hour³. To date, a variety of living wage policies have been adopted in 140 cities, counties and tribal councils around the country⁴, including Santa Fe, Albuquerque and Sandia Pueblo, NM; Tucson and Pima County, AZ and Lawrence, KS in our neighboring states.

Along similar lines, the committee also discussed strategies for reducing the cost of living for those residing in La Plata County. Reducing how much it costs to live in the county requires that the issues of social exclusion, affordable housing, childcare, health costs, and transportation be more effectively addressed. All of these issues are directly linked to wage levels by depleting disposable income for already strapped families. Upon review, the committee realized that the county already has instituted comprehensive efforts to begin addressing affordable housing and transportation, while the CY&FMP Early Childhood Committee's recommendation assists low income families with child care costs. The committee supports all the existing and newly recommended efforts and hopes that this recommendation can be successfully aligned to them.

² <http://www.santafelivingwage.org/finalordinance.html>

³ <http://www.santafenm.gov/FAQ.ASP?OID=303;>

⁴ <http://www.livingwagecampaign.org/index.php?id=1958>

Recommendation Category: This recommendation will need to have **policies (ordinance[s])** approved to support it and an ongoing and comprehensive **initiative** adopted to ensure successful implementation of a cost of living reduction plan.

Policy recommendation: Each of La Plata’s governing bodies (County Commissioners, Durango City Council, Bayfield Board of Trustees, Ignacio Board of Trustees and, if interested, the Southern Ute Tribal Council) can either adopt its own livable wage ordinance, or can, as this committee recommends, work together to adopt a joint ordinance that also respects the individual differences of each jurisdiction. The committee recommends that regardless of whether an individual or a collective ordinance is drafted, ordinances should be patterned after the one adopted in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The committee understands that the ordinance(s) still will require a significant amount of research and will also require a concerted effort on the part of the key stakeholders to come to “the table” with a commitment to collaborate and a willingness to find compromise. Therefore, the committee also includes in its recommendation that a process be developed prior to the development of an ordinance that would bring the key stakeholders together to help ensure success leading up to the ordinance(s) and for the years following its adoption.

The committee also endorses the implementation of an initiative designed to reduce the cost of living in La Plata, thus increasing the likelihood that the living and minimum wages are more similar. To this end the committee supports the enhancement of the existing affordable housing and transportation efforts and endorses the recommendation of the Early Childhood Development Committee for a childcare certificate program for the county’s moderate and low wage earners.

What was the support data used to arrive at this recommendation?

Initially, the committee recognized that many La Plata residents need to work more than one job to “survive” and that the impacts on the entire family are huge, but can be especially devastating on the potential of children and youth to thrive. There was recognition and agreement that the current minimum wage simply doesn’t “cut it”. In La Plata County, two wage earner families still can’t make it on two minimum wage jobs, and for single parents the difficulties are compounded. When the disposable income for a family covers less than what is required for even the basics of living, they are forced to make undesirable choices such as working more than one job, working longer hours, making longer commutes, or giving up basic items such as health insurance and licensed childcare. There are also the less measurable, but often more problematic impacts, that include financial stress, spending less quality time with family, less child supervision, social exclusion, and community stratification.

Our communities have, to date, focused most of their energy and resources on the impacts of not having enough income, i.e., increasing affordable housing, providing more accessible and affordable transportation and reducing labor shortages than they do exploring and implementing strategies that will increase available income. The committee believes that establishing a policy that requires a living wage to be paid the county’s work force will reduce the need to address some of the many transportation issues because people will be able to live closer to their employment and the labor shortage the county is experiencing in entry-level positions would be greatly reduced if that part of the work force could afford homes and establish sustainable roots in the community.

Throughout our committee’s search for a key strategy, each committee member both identified and reviewed materials about family economics. Community members shared their stories based on their personal as well as professional experiences. These experiences included being one paycheck away from homelessness or debt to never having experienced real financial struggles. The committee recognized that thriving for many families currently appears as an unreachable goal; surviving is the goal.

Beyond the committee member's own experiences, data was collected from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs that looked at Region 9's different household types and the number of individuals and families in each wage income group below \$25,000 annually. Based on 2007 data, 1,059 families in La Plata County are part of our lowest living standard income level. This would include a family of 2 earning less than \$14,080, a family of 3 earning less than \$19,330, and a family of 4 earning less than \$23,860. Other research on indicators of family economic stress in La Plata County showed that, as of 2006, 1,347 children were eligible for free school lunches and 464 were eligible for reduced cost school lunches, which combined represents a 21.8% increase over 2003. In addition, 1,271 individuals and families received food stamps in La Plata County during 2006.⁵ The Colorado-based Bell Policy Center adds valuable data showing that Colorado is a particularly difficult state for low-income working families to thrive in economically⁶.

Livable wage data for 10 years, first available through La Plata's Operation Healthy Communities, and now through Region 9 Economic Development District, recognized that there is a difference between income levels of those defined as working poor, those eligible for public assistance, and those being able to have a basic quality of life. Region 9's livable wage formulas are not perfect, however, they do provide a consistent baseline that is localized based on southwest Colorado. That data has just been updated for 2008⁷. It has different amounts per community, but for purposes of this effort, the committee suggests focusing on what the livable wage is for a single person, recognizing that the amount would not be enough for a single parent with children.

Region 9 also measures a variety of economic data including the number of jobs per sector and the wages per sector. This data is updated every two years in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Updates are currently underway for another report about our communities' overall livability looking at health care, the environment, crime, education, childcare and senior citizen support.

In reviewing all the above data it became very clear that all the local jurisdictions/communities are interconnected and a change in one area, impacts all the other areas.

A critical indicator is that La Plata County is a community with a growing number of service/tourism jobs that do not provide incomes that are considered sustainable. There are also a growing number of 2nd home homeowners in the area. A closer look at the impact of this growth shows that it has also driven up the price of all housing in the county and because these homeowners tend to not have school aged children they are not supportive of new taxes or bond issues to support schools or youth organizations/services. All the referred to documents and data can be found at www.scan.org.

Of particular interest to the committee was the City of Santa Fe's decision to implement the livable wage criteria over time. The committee recognized that Santa Fe is similar to Durango, in particular, in that they are both tourist destinations, and the largest community in their county. Increasing costs of living, more commuting and high home prices are also similar issues facing both areas. Santa Fe's effort started in January of 2004 for employers with over 25 employees and required that all employees earned at least minimum wage, which was then raised per year. The Santa Fe livable wage ordinance is enforced by withholding business licensing to those who are shown to have violated the wage ordinance. This is really the only "stick" needed. Data is currently being collected on the impacts, but the committee was able to gather a lot of public opinion and initial information on this effort.

⁵ *Data sheets available upon request.*

⁶ *<http://www.thebell.org/PUBS/IssBrf/2005/06OpLostUpdate.pdf>*

⁷ *Available upon request.*

Please explain your committee’s justification for selecting this recommendation?

The committee understands that the purpose of this Master Plan is to create a community-wide shift from the more traditional focus on problem reduction to a focus that is more strength-based in the creating and implementing of supports, services and opportunities. Our committee all agreed that to create economic thriving for families it must start by bringing those at the bottom, up. Finding ways to have a families income be closer to “livable” is the most strength-based way to increase the likelihood that those in the bottom 25% of wage earnings are still able to help their children and youth thrive. While supporting our most needy is currently the primary responsibility of traditional social service programs, the committee believes that requiring a livable wage for all will have a far greater and more positive impact on our families and their ability to successfully raise our community’s children and youth. This committee wants to change the paradigm that says we need to view are needy as in need of services (recipients) to one that allows them to be viewed as resources and contributors because they are unshackled from their dependency on services and supports. The county cannot continue to increase the annual resources allocated to problem-reduction approaches only.

The committee absolutely supports further, but focused study, the exploration of what the exemption criteria, if any, would be and the gradual, yet consistent phasing in of a Living Wage Ordinance. The ultimate goal would not be to rely only on raising salaries to pay a true livable wage, but to couple the living wage ordinance with reductions in the cost of living, i.e., affordable housing, better public transportation, improved and affordable health and childcare, etc. It will be critical that a solution be found that can lead to the reductions in the costs required to live in the county, thus allowing the need for too high a livable wage scale to be avoided. The committee’s intent is not to cripple the viability or profitability of our businesses, but to find compromise that will better support our citizens. Everything is connected and shifting the county’s economic paradigm will require everyone seeing those connections and finding compromises that have some benefit for all.

If we truly value thriving families, we need to create change! There are examples of livable wage already being accepted by the community. When the regional Operation Healthy Communities first published livable wage data, area banks including the Bank of Colorado, First National Bank of Durango, and VECTRA raised entry-level salaries, as an aide in preventing employee turnover. Lets us begin by exploring and learning form these successes we have had within our own region and find ways to replicate them here in the county.

What is this recommendation’s overall intended impact on the healthy development of La Plata County’s children and youth and/or how will it support its families?

Below is a list of the possible positive impacts and outcomes that can occur by implementing a livable wage ordinance coupled with continued support for reducing the county’s cost of living. The Committee has divided these impacts and outcomes into four categories: Benefits to families, youth, businesses and the job market, and the community:

- Benefits for families
 - An increase in available and disposable income
 - More family time which allows struggling families to better model the importance of being a nurturing and responsible family member
 - Less reliance on assistance from others which increases one’s positive sense of self
 - Reduction in economic stress which enhances one’s ability to make healthier life choices, specifically reducing incidences of domestic violence
 - Having to work less to earn the same will allow the entire family to have more time to involve themselves in community activities increasing the likelihood that they become involved and contributing community members

- An increase in job security because it is easier to do one job well than it is to do two or more.
- Hopefully, more time will also mean more opportunities for workers to increase their skills enabling them to move up in their current employment or advance to a another higher paying job
- Benefits to youth
 - Young people will spend more time with the primary care givers in their lives which is one of the major contributors to thriving
 - Job internships and mentoring program opportunities will increase because these opportunities will be considered job training and wages therefore can be less.
 - Young people will greater access to needed services needed to thrive because families will have more disposable income
 - The percentage of young people with health insurance should increase with the increase of disposable income
- Benefits to employers and the job market
 - Business will experience fewer missed work days caused by the stress of multiple jobs and potential overlapping of employment schedules for those juggling multiple jobs
 - Both large and small businesses will experience increased job retention and lower recruiting and retraining costs
 - Based on data from the Santa Fe Living Wage Ordinance local employers, whether large or small, should experience no negative impact to the hiring or firing of employees.
- Benefits to community
 - A reduced number of families that are experiencing the lowest levels of poverty will in turn lower the number of remedial services, supports and opportunities needed to support this population
 - A gradual, yet steady reduction in the overall unemployment rate should be realized and maintained
 - When the community provides livable wages, especially for young people starting out, there is an increased likelihood that a greater number of youth will choose to remain or return to community to raise their families
 - Municipalities and other funding streams will be able to redistribute resources to more proactive services and less of the more expensive reactive services
 - More families will be able to live nearer to the their work increasing the value they will bring to neighborhoods
 - Living closer to work will also reduce traffic related issues
 - As the quality of life increases for families it will be easier to reduce stratification and social exclusion
 - Reduced incidences of domestic violence will greatly reduce or allow to be redirected the community's costs associated with the responses made by social services, health, and law enforcement agencies/departments
 - Work support programs can focus on single parent families for whom the single person livable wage won't really be enough
 - Increase wages will mean increase expenditures within the county, increasing the tax base

Who needs to be part of insuring this recommendation is realized?

Because this recommendation will certainly be one that generates debate, the committee did not believe it their place to assume the role of indicating why certain groups should come to the table. We do believe, however, that it is our role to identify the key stakeholders without which a viable ordinance can never be created.

Elected officials: Because much of the Family Economics recommendation is to create a living wage ordinance the most important stakeholders to this recommendation's success will be the elected officials from the four local government entities; the County, Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio. Prior to making their ordinance decisions, local leaders will need to enlist support and input from the wide range of key stakeholders impacted by a Livable Wage Ordinance and the cost of living adjustment strategies.

Businesses: Businesses are as important to the success of this recommendation as any stakeholder group. No company willingly chooses to increase its costs, without also having a realistic expectation that there is something positive coming of that decision. It is the committee's hope that key business leaders from a wide variety of for-profit and not-for-profit companies will participate in open and frank discussions with other key stakeholders to find equitable solutions that benefit all.

Individual citizens and professional groups and associations: To assist the local elected officials make the decisions that represent the best interests of all the stakeholder groups it will be critical for the citizens of the county and its jurisdictions to make their voices heard regarding the Livable Wage Ordinance. Engaging citizen and professional groups & associations in helping to create a responsible and successful ordinance will be critically important. Associations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development District must be active participants.

For this recommendation to be successfully implemented what shifts or changes (if any) are needed in the county's infrastructure?

- An increase in the emphasis being made to reduce the cost to live in La Plata County. Economic development needs to be viewed not just from the ability to increase the tax base, but to improve the quality of life for all citizens. Improved quality of life is less about making sure that services are available to fix the problems that may arise, and more about creating the opportunities that will allow individuals to effectively avoid or address their own issues.
- Everyone will need to embrace the importance of creating the "Economic momentum for families to thrive". This is very different than the traditional economic development practices that often focus more on creating jobs and building strong local tax bases. These obviously are important but often neglect those who, for whatever reason, aren't capable of securing these newly created jobs. Economic momentum is helping everyone to believe that they are moving in a positive direction economically.
- Businesses will need to be willing to work with other key stakeholders to find creative ways to increase the likelihood that an ever-increasing number of people have their economic momentum headed in the right direction.
- Citizens will need to rally in support of their tax dollars being used to lower the cost of living in the county. Addressing issues such as health and childcare, transportation and housing are all ways to increase thriving and also to keep the livable wage at a lower level.

What specific strategies for implementing this recommendation does your committee suggest?

The question following this one, "What is the recommended timeline?" will identify the larger strategies that the committee is recommending. These are recommendation that need to evolve over time, so flexibility is encouraged. The committee realizes that implementation may look different per community

and that there is likely to be pockets of resistance to change. We encourage that efforts be made to reach as much consensus as possible without jeopardizing the intent of the recommendation. Below is a list of smaller strategies to remain aware of and also to pursue.

- There is a lot of information on-line re: organizing communities to pass living wage ordinances and to answer the questions and concerns that surface in the process. This information should be collected, collated and made available to the commission/committee assigned the task of exploring how to proceed.
- Technical assistance should be obtained from the 140 communities that have already implemented a Livable Wage Ordinance. A visit to the Santa Fe NM municipality and business community would be appropriate based on that community's similarities to Durango/La Plata.
- The attorneys for the county/city should explore any pending litigation and/or the outcomes of any resolved litigation that occurred in the communities that adopted Living Wage Ordinances. The findings of these investigations should be made available to the commission/committee.
- Carefully select those who are appointed to the commission/committee. Elected officials need to make sure that those they appoint are representative of the community demographics as well as the key stakeholders of this issue. Since the desired outcome is an increase in the number of children, youth and families that thrive, individuals should be considered based on their ability to understand and support this vision and its connection to a family's economic momentum.
- As the commission/committee works to identify already existing or new strategies to select for the Cost of Living Reduction Plan, the Family Economics Committee wants to ensure that the outcome of thriving be the tool against which their efforts are also measured.
- As the committee clearly indicates in their timeline question response, it believes that the additional planning should come first, the staff should then develop the Cost of Living Reduction Plan and only after these initiatives have been in place for a period of time should the livable wage scale be determined and the Ordinance adopted. The Living Wage Ordinance is not a recommendation to force into effect too quickly, even though it is critically important.
- Investigate implementing a second home homeowner's tax that could offset any increased business costs.
- Explore the use of business licensing as a possible tool for enforcement of the Livable Wage ordinance, i.e., don't renew licenses unless business is in compliance with the livable wage ordinance. The City of Durango issues business licenses, but the County does not. To ensure that the Ordinance is fairly evaluated and that consequences for failing to comply are fairly administered, the County will need to also issue licenses.
- The committee believes that the Child Care Certificate Initiative recommended by the Early Childhood Development Committee should be adopted by the appointed commission/committee as a tool to lower the cost of living for moderate and lower income wage earners.
- The committee believes that the Neighborhood & Community committee's recommendation with its multiple strategies will also help to lower La Plata County's cost of living. When neighbors find ways to come together to help each other in intentional and organized ways, people will need fewer of the more costly services, supports and opportunities.
- The committee believes that the Youth Development Committee's recommendation will help to support the creation of mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities that can be used to help young people get to point where they can earn a livable wage.
- The committee believes that there will need to be certain exemptions for businesses within the Livable Wage Ordinance. These include, but are limited to, not having to pay the living wage scale while someone is in training, small businesses that are in their start up year, non-profits that employ customers so they can learn certain life skills, a business that had less than a 20% wage difference between top and bottom wage earners, or businesses of a certain size, etc.

- Assist businesses in identifying internal changes to how they run their businesses that may offset the loss of revenue created by the implementation of the Living Wage Ordinance.

What is your committee's recommended timeline for implementing this recommendation?

The implementation of this recommendation is dependent on the outcomes of further planning and negotiation efforts. Unlike most of the other recommendations in the Master Plan, the Family Economics Committee believes that a Living Wage Ordinance will experience significant resistance if there isn't an additional period of preparation prior to adoption. The role of the Family Economics Committee was not to do this work, but to identify the most strategic strategy(ies) within this focus area for increasing thriving. The committee believes that adopting a Living Wage Ordinance, while reducing the cost to live in the county is the most strategic and the most cost effective approach possible. The following is a tentative timeline for moving these recommendations forward:

June 2008 to January 2009

- Endorse the Master Plan recommendations
- Create a diverse committee/commission to explore both the Livable Wage Ordinance and the reduction of the local cost of living strategies. (This should be a group of individuals appointed by the County and approved by all participating jurisdictions. Representation should include people from all jurisdictions, for-profit and not-for-profit business leaders, elected officials, county/city/town managers, and citizens that will carry the voice of those who struggle economically.)
- Create and administer surveys that will access public opinion, while educating the community about the issues involved.
- Investigate the strengths/weaknesses and success/failures of the ordinances in the 140 communities across the country that have already instituted a Livable Wage Ordinance.
- Create a final report to be presented to all jurisdictions. (The following timeline suggestions are based on the assumption that the report will recommend proceeding with both strategies.)

2009

- Staff will be assigned the job of creating the language and structure of the ordinance. This ordinance may be a single countywide ordinance; four totally separate ordinances; or a combination of these two.
- Staff in partnership with leaders from the appropriate agencies/departments/organizations will begin to draft a comprehensive and coordinated cost of living reduction plan that will connect existing plans (i.e., Regional Housing Authority's Affordable Housing Plan) as well as new initiatives.
- Both the draft ordinance and the cost of living reduction plan will be presented for public input and revised accordingly.
- Baseline data will be established against which the success of the cost of living reduction plan will be measured.

2008 - 2010

- Initial strategies for implementing the cost of living reduction plan to reduce the cost of living in La Plata will be initiated.
- Subsequent strategies will be initiated, as appropriate, until the cost of living reduction plan is fully functional.
- Evaluation of these efforts will be applied to measure the strategies effectiveness and to better identify the level at which to set the initial Livable Wage Ordinance.

2011

- Livable Wage Ordinance adopted and enforced throughout La Plata County.

- Subsequent or newly created plan strategies will continue to be initiated as appropriate until plan is fully functional.
- Evaluation of these efforts will continue.

What possible costs does your committee foresee for implementing this recommendation?

Possible costs:

Depending on what happens when this recommendation is fully analysed, the committee divided the costs into two financial categories.

Less than \$8,000

- Endorsement of the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan
- Assignment of facilitating efforts to existing staff and elected officials.
- Possible site visits to Santa Fe NM, Lawrence KS, and/or Albuquerque NM
- Creation of a diverse Committee/Commission to explore both strategies
- Creation of the Livable Wage Ordinance and Cost of Living Reduction Plan measurement tools
- Implementation of education and marketing efforts as well as obtaining public comment

More than \$30,000

- La Plata County does not currently require businesses to be licensed and will need to change this if a Living Wage Ordinance is adopted. This may require staffing for this as another income possibility.
- Evaluating the efforts and adapting the strategies accordingly based on the findings.
- Money may be needed for research (pros and cons to business) and legal advice

Unknown

- Depending on the results of the Cost of Living Reduction Plan additional or expanded strategies and initiatives that will have significant initial costs may need to be funded.

Additional comments:

A list of resources looked at by committee is attached to the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan's master copy to which all citizens have access.