RIO BLANCO COUNTY
Colorado

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2028

Honoring Our Roots.
Planning Our Future.

Message from the Board of County Commissioners

Rio Blanco County is a unique and resilient community, shaped by its history, landscape, and the people who call it home. As the Board of County Commissioners, we are committed to responsible stewardship of public resources, transparent decision-making, and thoughtful planning that supports both current residents and future generations.

This Strategic Plan provides a clear framework to guide county policy, budgeting, and operations. It reflects our shared commitment to managing county assets wisely, strengthening core services, and making informed decisions that balance community needs with long-term fiscal responsibility. The plan is intended to bring clarity and consistency to how decisions are evaluated and how resources are prioritized.

We recognize that effective governance depends on collaboration. This plan was developed with input from county leadership and staff and is intended to support their work by providing clear direction and shared priorities. Equally important, it emphasizes openness and public engagement, ensuring residents have opportunities to understand and participate in decisions that affect the future of Rio Blanco County.

This Strategic Plan is a living document. As conditions change and new information becomes available, the plan will be reviewed and updated to remain relevant and responsive. Through ongoing collaboration, accountability, and thoughtful implementation, we remain committed to strengthening public trust and ensuring Rio Blanco County continues to be a place of choice to live, work, play, and grow.

Doug Overton
Commissioner
District 1

Jennifer O'Hearon
Commissioner
District 2

Callie Scritchfield
Commissioner
District 3

Executive Summary

The Rio Blanco County Strategic Plan provides a clear and practical framework to guide decision-making, budgeting, and operations over the coming years. Grounded in responsible stewardship, transparency, and long-term sustainability, the plan reflects the Board of County Commissioners' commitment to honoring the county's history and rural character while preparing thoughtfully for the future.

Rio Blanco County is a unique community with diverse geography, valuable public assets, and evolving fiscal conditions. This Strategic Plan recognizes the need to balance community expectations, service delivery, and financial responsibility. Rather than focusing on individual projects or departments, the plan establishes a consistent governance framework to support informed, defensible decisions that protect public resources, strengthen core operations, and maintain public trust.

The Strategic Plan is organized around two foundational pillars that guide all county actions and investments.

The first pillar, **Responsible Stewardship** of County Assets and Infrastructure, focuses on **how the County governs and manages what it owns.** This includes transportation systems, facilities, housing assets, airports, fleet and equipment, and other public infrastructure. Under this pillar, the County is committed to improving oversight, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and evaluating assets using transparent, data-driven criteria. These efforts support safe, functional, and financially sustainable assets, while allowing the County to thoughtfully consider reinvestment, restructuring, or divestiture when appropriate. Public engagement and long-term planning are central to these decisions.

The second pillar, **Transparent and Sustainable Fiscal and Workforce Stewardship,** focuses on **how the County manages public dollars and workforce investments.** This includes budgeting, purchasing practices, financial reporting, revenue policies, and employee compensation. The plan emphasizes strengthening internal controls, improving financial transparency, and ensuring decision-makers and the public clearly understand revenues, fund balances, and long-term financial obligations. A consistent and transparent approach to employee classification and compensation supports recruitment, retention, organizational clarity, and fiscal sustainability.

Public engagement and accountability are embedded throughout both pillars. Rio Blanco County is committed to open communication and meaningful public involvement, particularly when considering decisions that affect services, assets, or long-term direction. Public work sessions, workshops, and regular reporting are emphasized to ensure residents understand not only what decisions are made, but why they are made.

This Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document. It provides a shared roadmap for commissioners, staff, and the public while allowing flexibility to respond to changing conditions, new information, and emerging opportunities. Through thoughtful implementation, regular review, and alignment with annual budgets and work plans, Rio Blanco County seeks to strengthen governance, responsibly manage resources, and remain a place of choice to live, work, play, and grow for generations to come.

How to Use This Plan

This Strategic Plan is organized around two core pillars that guide how Rio Blanco County makes decisions, allocates resources, and plans for the future. Rather than listing individual projects or departments, the plan focuses on governing principles that apply across all county operations.

These pillars provide a framework for decision-making—helping the Board of County Commissioners, staff, and the public understand why certain actions are taken and how priorities are evaluated over time.

Pillar 1: Responsible Stewardship of County Assets and Infrastructure
This pillar focuses on **how the County manages what it owns.** It applies to all county-owned assets, including roads, bridges, facilities, housing assets, airports, equipment, and vehicles. Under this pillar, decisions are guided by consistent standards that consider long-term community needs, fiscal capacity, operational responsibility, and public accountability.

Actions under this pillar may include evaluating whether assets should be maintained, restructured, reinvested in, or, in some cases, reduced or divested. Public engagement, transparency, and data-driven analysis are central to these decisions.

Pillar 2: Transparent and Sustainable Fiscal and Workforce Stewardship
This pillar focuses on **how the County manages public dollars and workforce investments**. It includes budgeting, purchasing, financial reporting, revenue policies, and employee compensation. The goal is to ensure that county finances are managed responsibly, transparently, and in a way that supports long-term organizational stability and public trust.

Actions under this pillar emphasize clear policies, consistent oversight, and informed decision-making that balances service delivery with fiscal sustainability.

How the Plan Is Used

- **Strategic Priorities** describe the County's long-term direction under each pillar.
- **Goals, actions, and timelines** provide implementation detail and may evolve over time as conditions change.
- **Budgets and annual work plans** will be aligned with the pillars to ensure resources support the County's strategic direction.

Together, the two pillars ensure that decisions—large and small—are made with intention, transparency, and a focus on long-term stewardship for the benefit of current and future residents of Rio Blanco County.

Mission and Vision

At the heart of this Strategic Plan is a clear sense of purpose and a shared vision for the future of Rio Blanco County. The Mission and Vision statements define how the County serves its residents today and the kind of community it is working to sustain for generations to come. Grounded in local values, culture, and stewardship of the land, they provide the guiding framework for the Strategic Priorities outlined in this plan.

Mission

The mission of Rio Blanco County is to provide quality services with fairness, respect, and professionalism, reflecting our unique customs and culture.

Vision

Rio Blanco County is the place of choice to live, work, play, and grow, honoring our heritage, protecting our landscapes, and balancing agriculture, energy development, and recreation to collaboratively build a sustainable, resilient future for all.

Strategic Priorities

Rio Blanco County's Strategic Priorities reflect the Board of County Commissioners' commitment to responsible stewardship, transparency, and long-term sustainability. Together, these priorities establish a clear governance framework for managing county assets, public funds, and workforce investments—while maintaining flexibility to respond to changing economic conditions and community needs.

Rather than focusing on individual projects or departments, the County has organized its strategic direction around two foundational pillars. These pillars guide decision-making across operations, budgeting, and policy development, balancing near-term improvements with long-term planning, fiscal discipline, and public engagement.

Pillar 1: Responsible Stewardship of County Assets and Infrastructure

Under this pillar, Rio Blanco County will govern, manage, and evaluate all county-owned assets using consistent, transparent, and fiscally responsible standards. This includes transportation systems, facilities, housing assets, fleet and equipment, and aviation infrastructure.

Key focus areas in pillar one include:

Infrastructure & Facility Management
Oversight and management of airports, fairgrounds, parks, buildings, and other facilities will be strengthened through consistent management frameworks, clarified roles and responsibilities, and improved financial oversight. Facilities will be maintained to safe, reliable standards that protect public investment and support long-term use.

Transportation Decision-Making
Recognizing fiscal constraints and aging infrastructure, the County will establish a transparent, data-driven framework for evaluating county roads. This includes documenting ownership, condition, usage, and costs; engaging affected residents; and applying consistent criteria for maintenance, reduced service, or potential vacation. The goal is a flexible and defensible approach that balances access, safety, community impact, and fiscal reality.

Fleet and Equipment Stewardship
The County will manage vehicles and equipment through clear, data-driven standards that emphasize cost efficiency, fairness, and lifecycle sustainability. This includes establishing replacement criteria, implementing equitable interdepartmental cost-sharing policies, and testing alternative approaches, such as vehicle leasing, before broader adoption.

Asset Evaluation and Governance
The County will review its role in major assets and facilities to ensure alignment with long-term community needs and financial sustainability. This includes a comprehensive evaluation of Fairfield Housing to determine whether restructuring, divestiture, or continued county involvement best serves residents and taxpayers. Decisions will be guided by legal and financial analysis, public engagement, and clear accountability.

Together, these efforts ensure that county assets and infrastructure are managed holistically, responsibly, and in a manner that supports both current service delivery and future sustainability.

Pillar 2: Transparent and Sustainable Fiscal and Workforce Stewardship

This pillar focuses on how the County manages public dollars, purchasing authority, and workforce investments to ensure accountability, public trust, and long-term organizational stability.

Key focus areas in pillar two include:

Financial Transparency & Reporting
Commissioners and the public will be better equipped to understand fund balances, restrictions, and revenue sources through regular financial reporting and targeted workshops. The County will develop policies related to earned revenue to ensure revenues generated by county facilities are reinvested strategically and transparently.

Fiscal Management & Purchasing Oversight
The County will strengthen purchasing policies, including credit card use and approval protocols, to reduce financial risk and improve consistency and compliance. Updated policies will reflect best practices from comparable Colorado counties and reinforce clear internal controls and public confidence.

Employee Compensation & Workforce Investment
A county-wide employee classification and compensation system will be adopted, aligned with updated job descriptions and market data. This effort supports fair pay, consistent treatment of employees, improved recruitment and retention, and long, term fiscal sustainability, while strengthening organizational trust and stability.

Moving Forward
These Strategic Priorities are intended to guide policy decisions, budget development, and staff direction over the coming years. Progress will be supported through defined timelines, clear accountability, ongoing public engagement, and regular review by the Board of County Commissioners.

Collectively, the two pillars reflect Rio Blanco County's commitment to good governance, fiscal responsibility, and the thoughtful stewardship of resources on behalf of current and future residents.

Pillar 1: Responsible Stewardship of County Assets and Infrastructure

Strategic Priority: Infrastructure and Facility Management
Goal: Reorganize **fairgrounds** management by consolidating oversight into one Fairgrounds Manager within the Road & Bridget Department. Strengthen coordination between Road & Bridge (that will handle events and fairgrounds maintenance) and Facilities (that will handle building maintenance) to maintain facilities to a consistent standard and align with long-term priorities.
Outcomes: • Streamlined management structure with clear accountability. • Fairgrounds and Columbine Park facilities are maintained consistently across both Meeker and Rangely. • Improved user experience through upgrades to bathrooms, electrical system, and accessibility. • Transparent decision-making with input from the Advisory Committee representing stakeholders and taxpayers. • Integration of reorganization into the county budget and staffing process.

Strategic Priority: Infrastructure and Facility Management
Goal: Establish a unified Management and Operations Plan for both **airports**.
Outcomes: A consistent management and operational framework will be developed for both airports that: • Standardizes practices and ensures compliance with contracts and policies. • Improves financial oversight and maximizes return on investment. • Enhance operational efficiency and transparency for staff, commissioners, and the public. • Provide a clear path forward for long-term management, including consideration of professional airport management staffing.

Pillar 1: Responsible Stewardship of County Assets and Infrastructure

Strategic Priority: Transportation and Roadway Decision-Making
Goal: Evaluate county roads for potential vacation or reduced maintenance by confirming right-of-way ownership, documenting conditions and age, and assessing usage, accessibility, community impact, and financial constraints.
Outcome: The county will have a clear, documented framework for road management decisions that ensures transparency, fiscal responsibility, and flexibility. Roads will be evaluated consistently, with the ability to scale maintenance levels up or down as resources and community needs change.

Strategic Priority: Asset Evaluation and Governance
Goal: Explore and evaluate options for potential divestiture or restructuring of the county's role in Fairfield Housing.
Outcome: The county will review its role in Fairfield Housing, with input from residents and stakeholders, to determine whether restructuring, divestiture, or continued management is the best path forward. The decision will be transparent, fiscally responsible, and balanced with community needs and long-term financial priorities.

Pillar 1: Responsible Stewardship of County Assets and Infrastructure

Strategic Priority: Fleet and Equipment Stewardship
Goal 1: Minimize the number of vehicles in the fleet while maintaining efficiency for transportation • Implement a vehicle purchasing pause and establish replacement standards. • All vehicles purchased must be approved by BOCC. Future acquisition decisions will be based on actual need, usage, and staffing capacity rather than ad hoc requests. • Purchases will be made on an as-needed basis. It is not assumed that purchases will be made even if funds have been budgeted. • The county will develop consistent, data-driven standards.
Outcome: The county will establish clear policies, test innovative alternatives, and implement evaluation criteria to ensure vehicles are managed cost-effectively, fairly, and with long-term sustainability in mind.
Goal 2: Adopt formal interdepartmental fleet use and maintenance policies.
Outcome: All departments will operate under a transparent, standardized fee structure for vehicle use and maintenance. Costs will be equitably distributed, eliminating unintended subsidies(e.g., non-road departments covering road and bridge costs).
Goal 3: Pilot a vehicle leasing program in select departments.
Outcome: The county will test whether leasing vehicles provides cost savings and operational efficiencies, using pilot programs before making countywide decisions.

Pillar 2: Transparent and Sustainable Fiscal and Workforce Stewardship

Strategic Priority: Financial Transparency and Reporting
Goal: Enhance transparency and accountability in county finances by ensuring clear understanding of fund balances, restrictions, and revenue allocation.
Outcome: Commissioners will be equipped to make well-informed and transparent budget decisions, supported by clear reporting, fund balance reviews, and a policy framework that guides the allocation of earned revenue. This will build public trust and ensure that facility-generated income is reinvested strategically.

Strategic Priority: Fiscal Management and Purchasing Oversight
Goal: Review and strengthen purchasing policies, including the use of credit cards and purchasing approval protocols.
Outcome: Clear, consistent, and enforceable purchasing policies that reduce financial risk, ensure proper oversight, reduce number of county credit cards used by staff and build public confidence in the county's fiscal responsibility.

Strategic Priority: Employee Compensation and Workforce Investment
Goal: Develop and adopt a formal county-wide employee classification system aligned with updated job descriptions and pay scales.
Outcome: A consistent, transparent, and equitable compensation system will be in place, supporting fair pay, clear job classifications, and competitive benefits that strengthen recruitment, retention, and employee trust.

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