Northwest Colorado
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

2026 NWCCOG Council Retreat

The Hoffmann Hotel
30 Kodiak Drive, Basalt, CO 81621

NWCCOG Economic Development District

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2026–2031

Working Draft V10

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About NWCCOG Economic Development District

Region 12 began in 1973, formed by an Executive Order signed by then-Governor of Colorado John A. Love (signed 11/17/1972). This Executive Order established planning and management districts within the State of Colorado for the purpose of encouraging state and local planning agencies to work together for the most effective operation of government. Fourteen such regions were established by this Executive Order. Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) was established by a Memorandum of Understanding between the counties and municipalities within the region by 1976, thereupon adopting Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws which were periodically updated.

This Executive Order was in response to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968, which placed certain responsibilities upon the states for coordination of Federal, State and local plans and projects. Through this Act, the President of the United States called for procedures which would encourage state and local planning agencies to work together in using common or consistent planning bases and in sharing planning facilities and resources, and utilization of common boundaries for planning programs/funding assisted by the Federal Government. The Act also was based on the philosophy that planning from the local level upward preserves the goals and objectives of local government, and that this preservation of local goals would be enhanced by a system of planning and management districts.

In 2007, the Colorado Attorney General's office confirmed that councils of government are associations of political subdivisions of the state, and for purposes of the statutes governing mineral leasing fund and local government severance tax fund, they are deemed political subdivisions and therefore may accept grants from the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) from these funds. The term "political subdivision" can be interpreted to refer only to individual entities. However, these statutes must be read in conjunction with CRS 29-1-202 and -203, C.R.S. (2006) in which Part 2 of article 1 of title 29 was enacted to permit and encourage governments "to make the most efficient and effective use of their powers and responsibilities by cooperating and contracting with other governments.

The 2008 financial crisis hit the region causing one of the first major economic setbacks in a generation of rampant growth. The lengthy downturn sparked many new regional discussions and perspectives. As early as 2012, at the urging of the membership, NWCCOG began formal pursuit of Economic Development District status through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to be recognized as a District. In July of 2016, EDA approved the proposed Articles of Incorporation and By-laws for the Economic Development District under the umbrella of NWCCOG, which were then ratified by the membership. Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) remains a voluntary association of county and municipal governments in a 6-county region in northwest Colorado that believes that working together on a regional basis provides benefits that could not be obtained alone. NWCCOG remains flexible to respond to the ever-changing challenges and opportunities of the region. The Council, made up of representatives from each member jurisdiction, directs the activities of NWCCOG. The NWCCOG staff is responsible for carrying out the Council's direction. In its more than 50 years, NWCCOG has evolved into an organization that addresses a wide spectrum of issues and opportunities of interest to individual member jurisdictions and the region. Funding for the Economic Development District through the EDA Partnership Planning Grants has remained static at $70,000 per year which in the beginning was enough to fund the new program activities and a staff person. The grant requires a 100% match by the region, though in recent years, the total of $140,000 is barely enough to fund wages plus overhead for a Director-level position. This, in addition to what as of July is a 5 month delay on federal funding for the PPG grants across Colorado have limited the scope and vision of the program. When Rachel Tuyn announced a career change in August of 2025, the EDD Board and NWCCOG Council have been in a holding pattern not wanting to hire a new position with the 3-year PPG grant ending in early 2026, and application submitted in February of 2026 for the next 3-year PPG grant in limbo

Section 1: Summary Background

Section 2. Assessment and Analysis

a): Elements of CEDS Document

According to Economic Development Administration (EDA) guidance, every Economic Development District across the nation, to remain in good standing with the EDA to receive funding must carry out the drafting of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every 5 years. Stripped to essence, publication of a perfunctory document with minimum engagement may accomplish that much, may not inform activity or coordination over its lifespan, and just meet the checkbox requirement to have a document. Most regions do not look at it that way, and leverage the opportunity to recognize sub-regional efforts, communicate common needs and establish a framework and strategy for what they do every day. At the very least, it provides the opportunity to benchmark with SWOT, publish some goals and be able to look back through the evaluation framework to visualize progress or non-progress. The process for developing the plan and month-to-month use of the document varies widely, as do the formatting and quality of the documents. For some regions it is a commonly agreed-upon blueprint, strategic and action plan rolled into one document that draws upon local needs and themes that, presumably, the content of which individual businesses, sectors, local agencies, local governments and related entities may be acutely aware of and actively addressing themselves. An ideal CEDS document draws upon sub-regional strategic, comprehensive plans and reports, efforts underway, known needs, and attempts to find "golden threads", throughlines, common themes which this document is calling Pillars. These may be repetitive of other local plans because they should be inclusive of those plans.

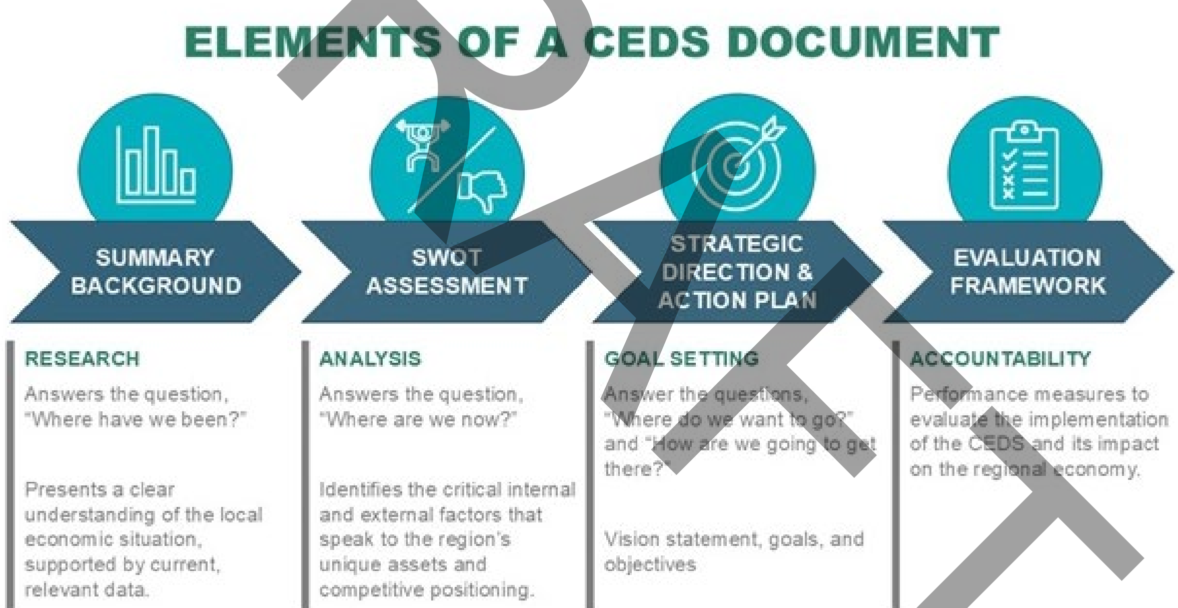
NWCCOG is the host for the Economic Development District in Region 12, manages the EDA Partnership Planning Grant assisting partners who apply for EDA grants under the strategic umbrella supplied by the CEDS and oversees grant compliance. Some larger Districts have large staff who manage programs, multiple funding streams, infrastructure and major economic hubs like ports. In Region 12, EDA partially funds one employee at NWCCOG who keeps the District in good standing, coordinates meetings of the Economic Development District Board of Directors, shares relevant data, convenes stakeholders, and whatever a single individual can do with limited funding (the grant is overmatched by NWCCOG Member Dues) across a varied, and rather sophisticated rural resort region. There are aspirations of leveraging stakeholders active in this work more robustly, being a forum for advancement of challenging regional initiatives and responding to challenges in a more coordinated regional manner. This CEDS cycle aims toward that aspiration, but is reliant on financial support from NWCCOG Members, and active stakeholders, and leadership that makes participation engaging, meaningful and maybe even exciting.

Here is how a CEDS is explained on eda.gov:

> *Simply put, a CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region.*[2] *It is*

a key component in establishing and maintaining a robust economic ecosystem by helping to build regional capacities (through hard and soft infrastructure) that contributes to individual, firm, and community success. The CEDS provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity building efforts would best serve economic development in the region. The CEDS should take into account and, where appropriate, integrate or leverage other regional planning efforts, including the use of other available federal funds, private sector resources, and state support which can advance a region's CEDS goals and objectives. Regions must update their CEDS at least every five years to qualify for EDA assistance under its Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs. In addition, a CEDS is a prerequisite for designation by EDA as an [Economic Development District (EDD)](#).

Here is a graphic borrowed from Mid-Ohio Regional MORPC Planning Commission:



b): SWOT Analysis

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a mandatory element of a CEDS. This SWOT analysis integrates the 2021–2026 CEDS baseline with all new information gathered during the May 7, 2026 summit. Items marked [NEW] emerged from the 2026 CEDS engagement process and were not identified in the previous CEDS.

Strengths Current 2026

1. **Housing & Community Stability**
    a. [NEW] Active housing programs producing units at scale again, changing resort community composition
    b. [NEW] Deed purchase programs proliferating. Began with Vail InDeed, continued WP, Avon and Eagle County Bold Housing Moves also in Roaring Fork Valley Good Deeds
    c. [NEW] Most NWCCOG municipalities have a variety of strategies for increasing the number of workforce housing units.
2. **Workforce and Talent Development**
    a. Educated, entrepreneurial workforce and strong small business culture
    b. Colorado Mountain College Campus locations across entire region except Grand County
    c. Some apprenticeship pipelines in place like CareerWise
    d. [NEW] Talent Pipeline: Eagle County Schools auto mechanics program, Hayden welding institute a private sector entity producing high-earning trade graduates from high school
3. **Economic Diversification and Transition**
    a. Northwest Loan Fund provides access to capital
    b. [NEW] Geothermal energy emerging as regional asset (Eagle County Building, Hayden business park, Vail exploration grant)
    c. [NEW] There are three state-certified Colorado Creative Districts in the NWCCOG 6 county region. Steamboat Springs Creative District (Steamboat Creates), Silverthorne Creative District and Grand Lake Creative District (Colorful Creatives) as well as several folk schools emerging. New projects under those districts include Grand Lake Space to Create.
4. **Destination Stewardship**
    a. World-class outdoor recreation and public lands
    b. Natural beauty and quality of place that attracts talent and visitors
5. **Regional Infrastructure & Governance**
    a. Public middle mile Broadband infrastructure (Project THOR) covers all Region and beyond
    b. [NEW] Civic engagement innovation to involve younger generations in community governance: under-18 board requirements (Hayden's YEP, How the F series, L3 program)
    c. [NEW] Hayden's entrepreneurial governance model attracting 25–45 demographic
    d. [NEW] Regional Transportation Authorities (RTA) created. CORE Transit is an RTA that replaced ECO Transit in Eagle County, Routt County Regional Transportation Authority was established in 2025, next needs funding. Summit County paused plans to form an RTA in late 2025, keeping the current county program, Summit Stage
6. **Economic Resilience**
    a. [NEW] Winters Without Snow adaptation: Grand Lake's proven post-snow diversification (4.3% revenue growth despite zero snowmobile season)
    b. [NEW] Second home economy continues to fuel philanthropy through NPOs
    c. [NEW] Resort operator financial resilience through season pass strategies

Weaknesses Current 2026

7. **Housing & Community Stability**
    a. Severe housing shortage across full income continuum (300% AMI cannot buy in Roaring Fork Valley)
    b. High cost of living: housing, healthcare, childcare
    c. Social and wealth inequity masked by resort community averages
    d. Deed-restricted housing may provide insufficient equity building for families
8. **Workforce and Talent Development**
    a. Lack of career pathways for young professionals beyond hospitality, construction and trades

   b. [NEW] Aging-out workforce, also philanthropic-minded, volunteer-minded engaged second homeowner cohort without clear replacement pipeline
   c. [NEW] 2% unemployment = more jobs than people, can't fill positions even when created

9. **Economic Diversification and Transition**
   a. Economy dominated by single low-paying sector (tourism 45–51% of jobs)
   b. [NEW] Coal transition fiscal cliff: Routt County and Hayden must replace $55M of $58M assessed value in 10 years
10. **Destination Stewardship**
   a. [NEW] Front Range Water use reduction target of 20% conservation by Denver Water only met with 2%, actual. Changing user habits and mindsets is a major challenge everywhere in rapidly altering drought conditions.
11. **Regional Infrastructure & Governance**
   a. Inadequate inter-regional transportation
   b. I-70 congestion increasing frustration by tourists, travel times for all, closures impact delivery of goods, and cost businesses and local governments millions of dollars by the hour.
   c. [NEW] Regional coordination still aspirational in some areas like talent cannibalizing, pay competition (example: police, planners, motivated NPO staff)
   d. [NEW] Civic engagement still eludes working families, workforce generally, and generational gap: traditional meetings inaccessible to people working 2+ jobs
   e. [NEW] Municipal debt capacity limited—small town budgets cannot support large bond issuances to address major infrastructure replacement/upgrade needs
   f. [NEW] State regulations from Water Control Commission on wastewater plants unreasonable costs for little actual ROI pushing unnecessary costs on residents
   g. [NEW] CEDS historically focused on what COG staff can do rather than community-wide strategies
12. **Economic Resilience**
   a. [NEW] Financial risk from bad snow years has shifted from resorts to local businesses and governments

Opportunities Current 2026

13. **Housing & Community Stability**
   a. Affordable land in Jackson and Grand counties for development
   b. [NEW] Vacancy tax as revenue tool (Vail exploring; Eagle 48%, Pitkin 80% vacancy rates)
   c. [NEW] Real estate transfer tax reauthorization—redirect locked RETT funds to current priorities
   d. [NEW] Inclusionary zoning as replicable policy across communities
   e. [NEW] Regional housing placement optimization—build where it makes geographic sense
   f. [NEW] Leveraging existing housing stock (Vail InDeed, lease-to-locals) alongside new construction
14. **Workforce and Talent Development**
   a. [NEW] Trade schools and folk schools as year-round non-tourism economy
15. **Economic Diversification and Transition**
   a. Remote work in-migration as potential economic diversification tool
   b. Growth in healthcare and professional/technical sectors
   c. [NEW] Geothermal as coal transition solution—repurpose mine waste heat, thermal energy bill advancing
   d. [NEW] Light industrial hubs in transition communities (Hayden/Catons Pocket)
16. **Destination Stewardship**
   a. [NEW] Post-slow-season "breathing room"—strategic window while visitor pressure is lower
   b. [NEW] Event-driven winter economy (concerts, festivals) to reduce chairlift-rider dependence
17. **Regional Infrastructure & Governance**
   a. [NEW] Micro-engagement formats for civic participation

b. [NEW] AI adoption for government efficiency and youth engagement
c. [NEW] Cross-jurisdictional RTAs as governance model for other regional challenges

18. **Economic Resilience**
    a. [NEW] Second homeowner engagement programs as philanthropy pipeline

Threats 2026 Current

19. **Housing & Community Stability**
    a. Housing prices continue to outpace wage growth at all income levels
    b. [NEW] Young professional flight: "Three Zillow listings, all $3,000 for a shared apartment"
    c. [NEW] Net migration needed but housing shortage prevents absorption of new residents
20. **Workforce and Talent Development**
    a. Workforce loss to more affordable communities outside the region
21. **Economic Diversification and Transition**
    a. [NEW] Coal plant closures creating fiscal cliff in Routt County without adequate transition timeline
22. **Destination Stewardship**
    a. Climate change: wildfires, drought, loss of snowpack
    b. Overcrowding and environmental degradation of public lands
    c. [NEW] Smoke seasons degrading summer economy and quality of life regardless of fire location
    d. [NEW] Water scarcity from low-snow years affecting municipal systems and recreation economy
23. **Regional Infrastructure & Governance**
    a. [NEW] TABOR constraints locking revenue tools into outdated purposes
24. **Economic Resilience**
    a. [NEW] Winters without reliable snow as recurring—not one-off—economic reality
    b. [NEW] Resort operators marketing ski passes not towns—corporate strategy decoupled from community welfare

c): International Peer Research Summary and Local Comparisons

Pre-2026 EDD Summit research by Stephen Kuban analyzed 15+ international and domestic resort regions facing similar challenges. The following table highlights the most actionable innovations and how they could translate to the NWCCOG region, and some innovations already occurring within the region.

Region	Key Innovation	NWCCOG Translation
Whistler, BC	75% of workforce housed locally target; municipal housing authority owns 8,000+ bed units	Set a hard regional benchmark for workforce housing. Accountability through measurement.

Big Sky, MT	Cold Smoke Project: $60M resort tax bonds for 389-unit land trust on 99 acres	Use existing resort tax and marketing district authorities for housing bond issuances.
Mammoth Lakes, CA	Leased to Locals: $2K–$24K incentives to convert STRs to workforce housing	Expand Vail InDEED concept with cash incentives for STR conversion.
Jackson, WY	65% workforce housing target; deed-restricted housing excludes remote workers	Decide explicit regional stance on remote worker access to deed-restricted housing.
Queenstown, NZ	Multi-level governance: council + national government + Maori tribes in single partnership	Formalize cross-jurisdictional governance through NWCCOG with shared deliverables.
Tahoe (CA/NV)	Bi-state regional planning agency rewriting development rights for affordable multifamily	Use NWCCOG as cross-county coordinating body for housing and land use policy.
Niseko, Japan	Glasgow Declaration signatory; using powder reputation to launch premium agriculture/wine	Develop post-snow economy while current tourism product is still strong.
Davos, Switzerland	My Climate Fund: guest carbon contributions matched by businesses, kept 100% local	Explore visitor contribution models for local resilience and infrastructure investment.
Colorado High Country	CC4CA is Colorado Communities for Climate Action, a powerful coalition of local governments including Aspen, Avon, Eagle County and Breckenridge that advocates stronger state and federal climate policy.	Exists, NWCCOG EDD could more explicitly align with advocacy efforts, consider a staff person at NWCCOG focused on Energy Policy.
Eagle County, CO	Climate Action Collaborative is a broad coalition of over 30 local organizations, businesses and	Already exists, expand to other jurisdictions.

	governments working together to reduce carbon emissions across Eagle County.	
Summit County, CO.	High Country Conservation Center is a nonprofit that leads local sustainability efforts through efficiency programs, waste reduction and zero waste initiatives in Summit County.	Already Exists. Expand to other jurisdictions.
Hayden, CO	Geothermal business park as municipal utility; inclusionary zoning; entrepreneurial governance	Already in the region. Scale and replicate models to other transition-ready communities.
Grand Lake, CO	Event-driven winter with snowmaker investment; creative district; 4.3% growth without snow	Already in the region. Share model across communities facing snow-reliability risk.
Mountain Towns	Eagle County, Summit County, Aspen, Avon, Breckenridge, Dillon, Eagle, Silverthorne, Vail and Winter Park are all Anchor Communities of this international organization. Organization holds annual summit and promotes/supports those active in this area	Already in the Region led primarily by the international ski towns and counties who have been active in climate change, emissions reductions and each have own action plans. Expand NWCCOG's support of MT2030 and encourage additional communities to take their climate action plans to another level.
Breckenridge, CO	In the 5-Year Blueprint, the Town has adopted a goal of increasing it's deed-restricted housing units to 2,200 by 2030 increasing from 1,665 units in 2026. A long-term goal of 47% of town workforce housed within town limits, and a balance target of 35%	More jurisdictions adopting hard target housing goals

	resident housing to 65% vacation resort lodging.	
Breckenridge, CO	At the Alta Verde Workforce development, [town has committed $6 million to this project that will achieve Net Zero]() designation. Total development costs for the workforce project come to $76.1 million while the TDC for the LIHTC project was $32.3 million.	

Biggest Gaps Between NWCCOG and Peer Regions

Hard housing targets: Whistler (75%) and Jackson (65%) publish firm benchmarks. NWCCOG has no equivalent regional metric.

Tourism revenue recycling: Davos and Niseko use tourism revenue directly to fund climate adaptation and economic diversification. NWCCOG communities have resort taxes and marketing districts but have not redirected them at comparable scale.

Post-snow planning: International regions are explicitly planning for winters without snow. Most US peer documents treat low-snow as a risk to mitigate, not a reality to design around. Grand Lake and Vail's experience this winter suggest NWCCOG is beginning this transition.

Cross-jurisdictional governance: Tahoe and Queenstown have formal multi-government structures with real authority. NWCCOG coordinates but does not govern. The Routt County RTA is the closest analog to peer governance models.

Section 3: Strategic Framework — Six Pillars

The 2021–2026 CEDS used four pillars: Workforce, Economy, Community, and Resiliency. Based on today's discussion, we recommend evolving to five pillars that directly align with the Colorado State CEDS ("Elevating Colorado 2025"). This alignment strengthens federal funding eligibility while reflecting the region's actual priorities.

The key changes: Housing becomes its own pillar (it was too large and cross-cutting to nest elsewhere). Resilience becomes a cross-cutting lens applied to every pillar rather than standing alone (every conversation about resilience immediately landed in one of the other domains). The regional flavor comes from the strategies underneath each pillar, not from having a different structure than the state.

Summary of NWCCOG Pillar Alignment with Elevate Colorado, State CEDS Document

NWCCOG Pillar	State CEDS Pillar	Key Focus Areas
Housing & Community Stability	Housing	Permanent deed-restricted housing, inclusionary zoning, vacancy tax, second home stewardship, regional housing placement
Workforce & Talent Pipeline	Job Creation + Business Development	Young professional retention, trade education, civic engagement innovation, childcare infrastructure, net migration strategy
Economic Diversification & Transition	Growing Key Industries	Coal transition, light industrial, geothermal energy, creative economy, four-season business development, remote worker strategy
Destination Stewardship	Quality of Life + Tourism	Post-snow tourism product, shoulder season development, event-driven economy, residents-first orientation, resort-town relationship
Regional Infrastructure & Governance	Community Infrastructure + Resources	Transportation (RTAs, transit), water security, energy infrastructure, cross-jurisdictional coordination, AI/tech adoption

✦ Pillar 1: Housing & Community Stability ✦

Supporting NWCCOG reports:

- NWCCOG 2023 Workforce Housing Report
- Social & Economic Effects of Second Homes (2004)
- NWCCOG Community Metrics Project (2024)
- NWCCOG Regional Statistics Analysis (2026)

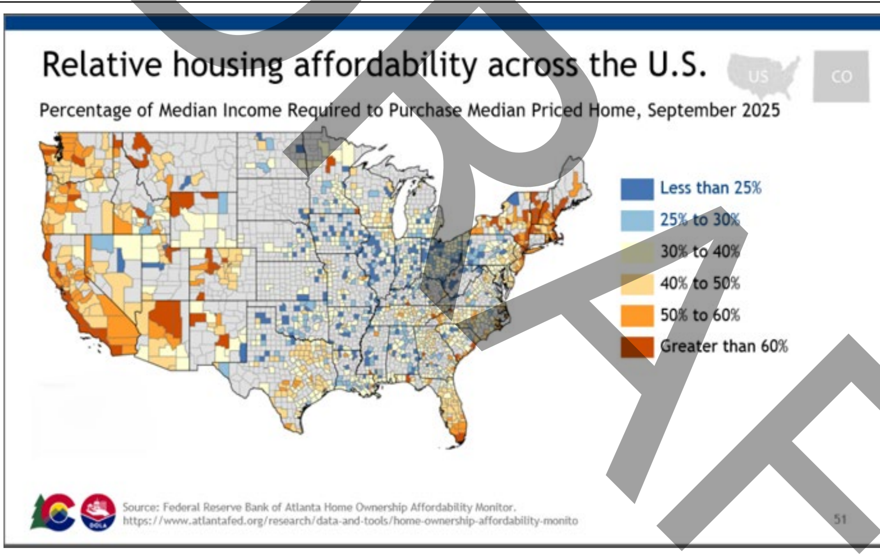
Elevate Colorado 2025, State CEDS Alignment: Pillar 1 — Housing

Each of NWCCOG's counties has recently done a Housing Needs Assessment, for instance:

- Eagle County Regional Housing Needs Analysis 2025 by EPS, RRC and HFH.
- Summit County Housing Needs Assessment 2023 by Root Policy Research
- Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study 2019 by EPS
- Grand County Annual Data Report, staff from various sources
- Fraser River Valley Housing Needs Assessment Update 2022, by Williford LLC, WSW Consulting and Urbanrural Continuum
- Yampa Valley Housing Authority (YVEA) Housing Market and Demand Study 2025, by EPS and RRC
- NWCCOG 2023 Workforce Housing Report, by staff
- Elevating Colorado (state CEDS), by OEDIT

Placed as the top Strategic Theme, Goals and Strategies of the Colorado State Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2025, Housing emerged as the single most discussed topic across every session of engagement in preparation for the NWCCOG (Region 12) CEDS. The top strategy for the state is to "partner" across various listed stakeholders including local governments to "create attainable housing options for both homeowners and renters" (p. 39) It has been said that all local policy conversations eventually circle back to this issue – schools, childcare, healthcare, infrastructure and taxation, for instance. Housing is the binding constraint on workforce, economic diversification, civic engagement, and community continuity. Resort communities within the NWCCOG region have been groundbreaking on public housing strategies for decades and continue to innovate and build units. NWCCOG's 2023 Workforce Housing Report contained a Housing (Policy) Tools Matrix which revealed many more active housing strategies than the previous CEDS captured (p. 12), though a scan across the county needs assessments show that the scale of need still vastly exceeds supply. Even at 300% of area median income, homeownership is out of reach in parts of the region.

There is no shortage of data by county though some counties have municipalities and sub-areas that are not covered by a report, such as is the case with Grand County where Winter Park, Fraser to Granby are studied while Hot Sulphur Springs and Kremmling are not. The Fraser River Valley assessment notes that COVID and a wave of “out-of-area households” as well as the East Troublesome Fire and a surge in Short Term Rentals all conspired to increase costs and reduce the percentage of homes occupied year-round (p 9). In many cases, such as Eagle County’s 2025 report drills down using geographic subareas common to each of our mountain resort counties such as “Upper-Valley, Mid-Valley and Down-Valley.” That report cites in a summary of findings on page 4, “about 40 percent of all housing units are vacant as second homes or vacation rentals.” Also, “the median home sale price “has increased dramatically in Eagle County, especially since 2019” to 2023 when it climbed to $1.3 million.

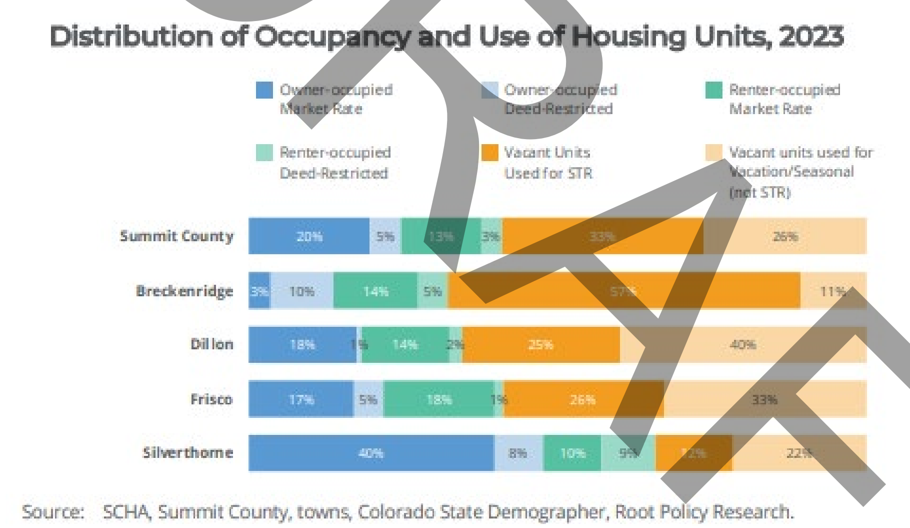


Colorado State Demographer Slide Deck, 2026 NWCCOG Regional Economic Summit, (Slide 51)

One of the traits that four of NWCCOG’s six county’s share with the most desirable places to live, mostly destination visitor, retirement, coastal, or the most urbanized zip codes in the United States is high housing costs. This map from the Colorado State Demography office visualizes this challenge.

Summit County's Housing Needs Assessment in 2023 highlighted another factor that is prevalent across NWCCOG counties, but most acute in Summit and Grand Counties. This is the Distribution of Housing by Use from that report noting the two gold colors on the right side of the spectrum which are Vacant Units Used for STR or for Vacation/Seasonal (not STR) which when compared with the far left blue, Owner-Occupied Market Rate shows the vast disparity. Also of note, is where local government policy is most apparent in the light blue which reflects owner-occupied Deed-Restricted units by percentage.

Pitkin County and the City of Aspen, partner with the Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority (APCHA), which is the largest and oldest workforce housing authority in the region. It manages 1,400 rent controlled and deed restricted units. Pitkin County reports a "housing shortage of roughly 1,500 units" while the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valley's (Glenwood to Parachute) requires approximately 7,200 new affordable housing units according to a 2019 Regional Housing Study. This "work-shed" from Aspen down the Roaring Fork spans three counties, converging with the Colorado River Valley at Glenwood Springs, that corridor has a high level of coordination/collaboration with Transit through a regional transit authority (RAFTA), but lacks the same coordination among local governments and interested stakeholders that other up-valley to down-valley work-sheds that exist within a single county have when it comes to addressing housing at a sub-regional level. There are groups attempting to bridge that gap such as the [West Mountain Regional Housing Coalition](), a tax-exempt non-profit which has been highly active in several initiatives, including the Good Deeds Program and working with residents of the Cavern Springs Mobile Home Park to help preserve the 98-unit community through a resident-ownership initiative.



Source: Summit County Housing Needs Assessment 2023, p. 6

Pitkin County has been on the cutting edge of preserving mobile home parks, and the Good Deeds program is similar to initiatives across the region that sprung up after Vail introduced the InDeed program, illustrating the preservation of affordability for existing housing stock is as strategically important as (and much cheaper than) construction of new units. This is why strategy 1.1 and 1.2 below, though not necessarily the "low hanging fruit," continue to be the best bang for the buck in workforce/affordable/attainable housing across the region.

Pillar 1: Housing & Community Stability			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
1.1 Scale Permanent Deed-Restricted Housing	Expand Vail InDEED and lease-to-locals programs regionally Expand municipal housing authority models (Hayden purchased entire neighborhood; Silverthorne built 400 units on land bought a decade ago) Require 100% developer mitigation for new developments (Snowmass model) Fund housing at all income levels: seasonal workers through ER doctors (Vail's full-continuum approach) Pursue resort tax bonds for land trust acquisitions (Big Sky's $60M model)	Eagle, Summit and Pitkin Counties, as well as Vail (InDEED), Avon, Eagle and Basalt (Good Deeds), Breckenridge, Frisco, Silverthorne and Winter Park exist in 2026. Additional jurisdictions implementing similar programs is the framework.	Towns, counties, housing authorities
1.2 Leverage Existing Housing Stock	Incentivize short-term rental conversion to workforce housing (Mammoth Lakes model: $2K–$24K incentives) Support existing homeowner programs: Eagle County Bold Housing Moves, RFV Good Deeds	Update spreadsheet on Housing tools matrix p. 12, from 2023 Workforce Housing Report. With comparison.	Towns, housing authorities, property owners

Pillar 1: Housing & Community Stability			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
1.3 Adopt Inclusionary Zoning Across the Region	Replicate Hayden's 5+ unit threshold with fee-in-lieu option Establish community-specific housing needs assessments to calibrate requirements Target the "missing middle": family-sustaining housing, not just entry-level	Only Grand County, Fraser, Granby, Dillon, Frisco, Gypsum, Kremmling, Minturn and Winter Park DON'T have IZ in NWCCOG Region in 2026.	Town councils, planning departments
1.4 Expand Revenue Tools for Housing	Explore vacancy tax (Vail council priority; Eagle 48%, Pitkin 80% vacancy) Advocate for real estate transfer tax reauthorization; redirect locked RETT funds to current housing priorities Increase lodging tax allocation to housing (Glenwood model: $500K leveraged to 250 units)	Update list from 2023 NWCCOG Workforce Housing Report.	Town councils, county commissioners, state legislators
1.5 Steward the Second Home Economy	Celebrate and include second homeowners as community members, not scapegoats Create engagement programs for second homeowners (philanthropy, board service, civic participation) Study second home economic contribution:	NWCCOG issue RFP for "update" to the 2004 **"Social and Economic Effects of Second Homes"** report and publish.	Chambers, foundations, town councils

Pillar 1: Housing & Community Stability			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	philanthropy, foundations, local spending Differentiate policy for aging long-term owners vs. new investment purchasers		
1.6 Optimize Regional Housing Placement	Stop competing for housing within the region; build where land, infrastructure, and geography allow Map regional land availability and infrastructure capacity for housing development Coordinate deed restriction standards across jurisdictions	This is being done behind the scenes in Eagle County. Find out if this is a topic at Mayor/Manager meetings, promote discussion about the idea.	NWCCOG, county planning, housing authorities
1.7 Update NWCCOG 2023 Workforce Housing Report	Has measures for many of the above Actions, can include a 4-year comparison	NWCCOG Publish update.	NWCCOG EDD Staff with Consultant
1.8 Monitor Sentiment regarding balance between tourism and community	Tracking of ballot measures for STR and altering funding from Tourism toward community benefits as a measure of shifts in the continuum identified in the 2024 Community Metrics Project and 2026 Regional Stats Analysis Project.	Look for other measures besides community surveys and voting of this. Opposition to projects, etc.	NWCCOG and CAST
1.9 Preserve Manufactured &	Support resident-ownership conversions (Pitkin County's 98-unit	Number of manufactured/mobile-home units preserved	Counties, housing authorities, West Mountain Regional

Pillar 1: Housing & Community Stability			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
Mobile Home Communities	Cavern Springs Mobile Home Park model) Establish right-of-first-refusal, opportunity-to-purchase, and acquisition funds for at-risk parks Extend Good Deeds / InDEED-style deed restrictions to preserved manufactured units	or converted to resident or community ownership since 2026	Housing Coalition, CHFA
1.10 Lower Construction Costs through Modular & Regional Procurement	Aggregate regional demand for factory-built/modular housing (e.g., Fading West pipeline) Standardize deed-restriction and design specs to enable repeatable, lower-cost builds Pursue joint procurement and pre-approved plan sets across jurisdictions	Cost-per-door and delivery-time comparison for modular vs. site-built deed-restricted units delivered in-region	Towns, counties, housing authorities, regional builders
1.11 Unlock Public & Underutilized Land for Workforce Housing	Inventory USFS, BLM, CDOT, school-district, and municipal parcels suitable for housing Pursue federal land conveyances and public-private ground leases Prioritize sites with existing infrastructure and transit access (ties to Pillar 5)	Acres/parcels of public or underutilized land entitled or conveyed for workforce housing since 2026	Counties, towns, USFS/BLM, school districts, NWCCOG

Pillar 1: Housing & Community Stability			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
1.12 Expand Attainable Homeownership & Down-Payment Assistance	Grow for-sale deed-restricted ownership, not just rentals, targeting the "missing middle" up to 300% AMI Regionalize down-payment assistance and shared-equity / community land trust models Coordinate with Proposition 123 and the Colorado Statewide Housing Plan funding streams	Deed-restricted for-sale units created and households served by down-payment assistance since 2026	Housing authorities, CHFA, counties, towns
1.13 Close Sub-Regional Data & Coverage Gaps	Commission housing assessments for uncovered areas: Jackson County (Walden), Kremmling, and Hot Sulphur Springs Standardization methodology across county Housing Needs Assessments for regional comparability Build a shared regional housing dashboard from existing assessments	Share of NWCCOG population and municipalities covered by a current (≤5-year) housing needs assessment	NWCCOG EDD, counties, YVHA / APCHA / housing authorities

✦ Pillar 2: Workforce and Talent Development ✦

Supporting NWCCOG reports:

- NWCCOG 2021 Regional Assessment of Child Care
- NWCCOG Behavioral Health Landscape Assessment (2026)
- NWCCOG Community Metrics Project (2024)
- NWCCOG Regional Statistics Analysis (2026)
- 2021 Mountain Migration Report

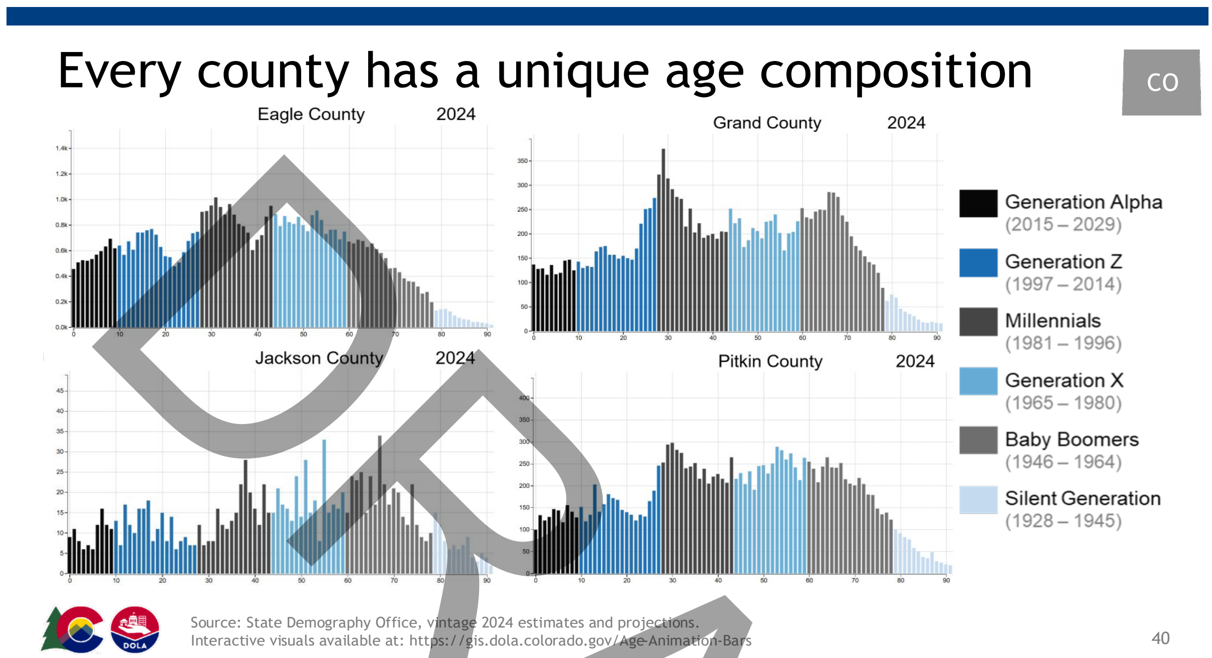
Elevate Colorado 2025 State Alignment: Pillar 2 — Job Creation + Business Development

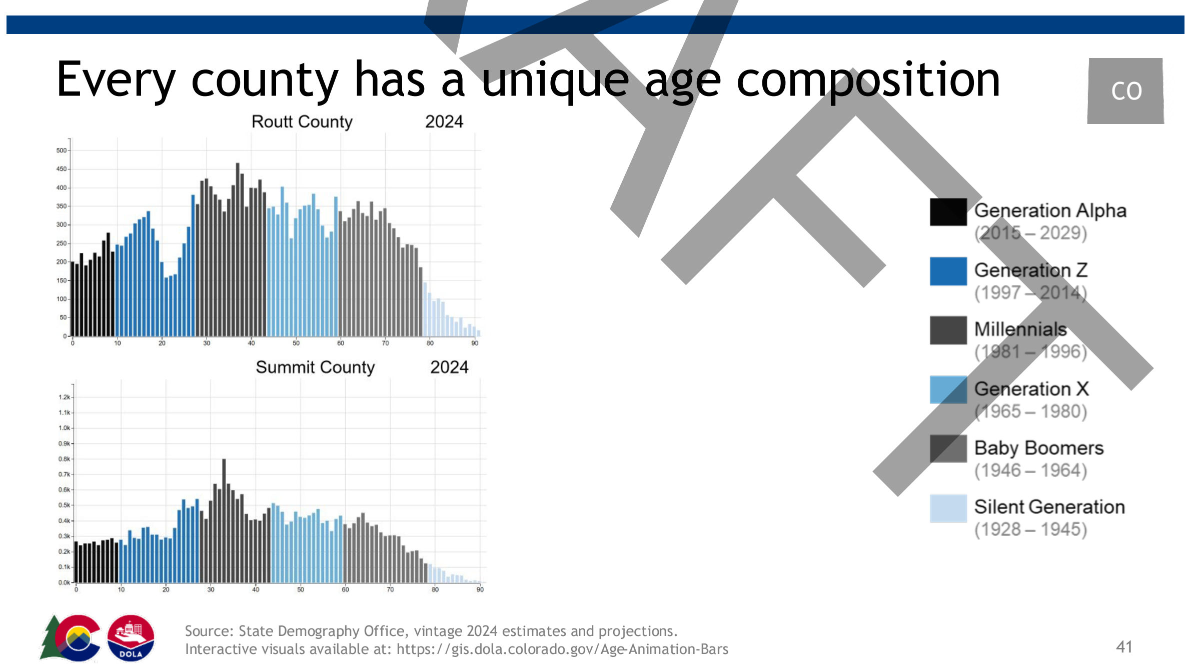
The state strategy of job creation and business development are not as high priority for the NWCCOG region as is developing and retaining talent. Community leaders often lament the inability of children raised in the region to remain due to high housing cost combined with a service economy that has many more low wage jobs than not. That said, entities such as Colorado Mountain College which has campuses across the region, and the Vail Valley Partnership which both recognize that this is partly due to a lack of vision or a disconnect between businesses including healthcare and construction that have lucrative career paths with youth. With unemployment at roughly 2%, the region's challenge is not creating jobs but filling them. The workforce pipeline has two gaps: attracting and retaining young professionals (25–45), and developing career pathways that make staying in the region viable long-term. Net migration must increase to fill existing positions, but housing is the prerequisite. Civic engagement innovation is part of this pillar because retaining young people requires giving them voice and agency in community decisions.

The state demographer points out that lower workforce participation and aging matter for a variety of reasons including, more competition for talent, shifts in demand for goods and services, the dynamic of income sources and amounts shifting, all reflected in downward pressure on tax revenue at all levels and upward pressure on government expenditures (slide 37). The age composition of the Counties illustrates this conundrum.

Colorado has not produced enough children to replicate the slow aging-out of the Baby Boom generation. That was concealed by two other factors that a parade of demographers for the past 4-5 EDD Summits have brought up – in-migration from other states, and immigration. For many years as it grew from a rural to an urbanized state from the 1950s when the ski areas were launched, into the 1970s before there was Interstate 70 through the region, before airports in Eagle, Pitkin and Routt counties expanded for commercial travel, in-migrating talent continued to rise, peaking in the 1990s. That talent came to Colorado for the State's (once) well-funded Universities, a growing tech industry, lifestyle industries such as craft beers and outdoor equipment all contributed to a growing cache and, let us not forget the ski lifestyle.

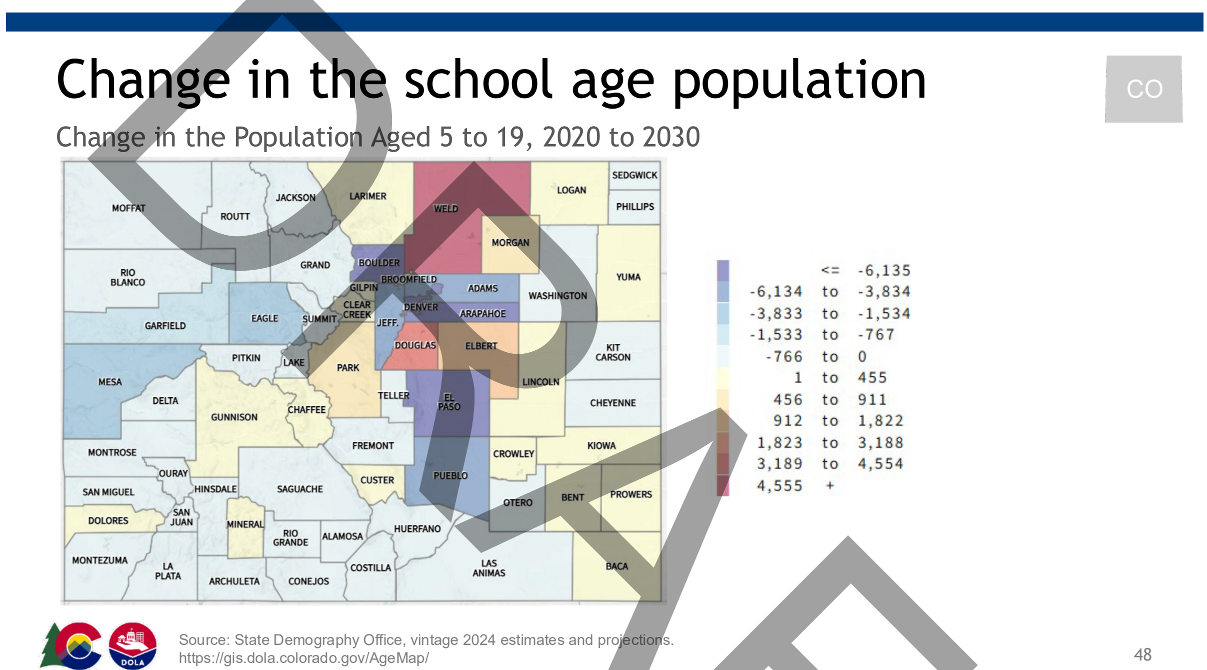
How many origin stories in the high country begin with, "...I was taking some time off before starting law school," or "my friends and I decided to travel across the country to see Colorado... I got a job for the winter and never left." At least two generations of imports then stayed to raise families?





Colorado State Demographer Slide Deck, 2026 NWCCOG Regional Economic Summit, (Slide 40, 41)

The growing economies also drew both legal and undocumented immigrants. Up until the 2008 housing crash decimated that segment of the workforce, there was a job and other opportunities for just about anyone who arrived who was willing to work. Since TABOR, Colorado higher education, K-12 education and local governments suffered not being able to keep up those high funding levels and reputations that come from growth periods. As NWCCOG communities continue to see residents who build lives, careers and raised families for most of their lives now sell off their homes at once-unimaginable prices, they take their equity, their social networks and energy with them. In their place, Colorado



Colorado State Demographer Slide Deck, 2026 NWCCOG Regional Economic Summit, (Slide 48)

communities that were “down valley” are seeing a downward trend in school enrollment, and increasingly an imported older population who built their wealth elsewhere buying in, bringing different expectations for services than those who are exiting. While Pitkin, Grand and Eagle Counties have broader age distribution, Summit Countys, continues to see young adults in their mid-20s, inflow, then within a few years leave. Five to ten years ago, those folks often stayed well into their 30’s and 40’s.

For the first time in half a century, NWCCOG counties are beginning to see a net out-migration. The forces at play with this trend are evidenced throughout this report and are likely irreversible since they are driven less by local factors than national affordability and demographic forces, global economic and environmental forces. The world is changing and has changed irrevocably since the last CEDS produced immediately in the wake of COVID. NWCCOG has an opportunity to stand as a leader for the region in driving approaches to prepare our communities for these changes that will challenge fiscal sustainability of our local governments, threats to our natural resources, preparations for "winters without snow" as well as the demographic trends outlined herein. Times are challenging, but this does not need to be a depressing endeavor. Coloradoans are famously resourceful – even those we tend to import (when we did import) are resourceful. A college counselor at CSU liked to say, "don't ever tell an 18-year-old there is something they cannot accomplish." Amid the shock of so many changes at once, leaders still emerge, and local governments don't have much choice but to persevere on behalf of their residents.

NWCCOG's membership is comprised of municipalities and counties. Our strongest governmental links tend to be with these rather than metro districts, special districts (fire, water, sewer) or school districts. One of the strongest assets in the region is Colorado Mountain College, which has been responsive to demand for workforce development by adding degree programs, including fire, nursing, HVAC and other trades. Strengthening the relationship between school districts so that local governments better understand the trends occurring there, and with CMC so that further connections can be made. This would be a real improvement to NWCCOG's contribution to Economic Development in the region.

NWCCOG plays a key role in collecting data and turning it into actionable reports. These cover topics like workforce housing, behavioral health services, early childhood viability, and economic and tourism trends. Reports such as the Regional Statistics Analysis 2026, the 2024 Community Metric project, and the seminal 2021 Mountain Migration report serve as springboards for community conversations and regional information sharing. Continuing to be a source of original research for the region while leveraging that work more actively is an internal goal for NWCCOG staff which can be assisted by active participation from the membership in bringing ideas, communicating benefits and disseminating the work.

Pillar 2: Workforce & Talent Pipeline			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
2.0 Promote Aging In Place as a workforce strategy	See Vintage Program Goals and The Four-Year Area Plan, Region 12	Contained in Plan	NWCCOG Vintage, (Area Agency on Aging Program)

Pillar 2: Workforce & Talent Pipeline			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
2.1 Retain Young Professionals Through Civic Integration	Require youth representation on boards and commissions (Hayden model: under-18 requirement) Expand YEP (Young Emerging Professionals) model valley-wide Scale the “How the F” practical skills series: homebuying, insurance, financial literacy Adopt micro-engagement formats for people working 2+ jobs (Kris Mattera recommendation) Shift council/commission meetings to accessible times; explore hybrid and asynchronous input	Survey jurisdictions across region on youth involvement in government initiatives and create report.	Town councils, VBP, chambers, school districts
2.2 Build Trade and Career Education Pipelines	Expand CareerWise apprenticeships across the five-county region Support trade education: replicate Hayden’s welding institute model (high schoolers earning $80K/year) Develop Grand Lake’s folk school (leather, woodworking) as a trade education and tourism asset	Create comprehensive survey of initiatives currently underway. Promote expansion of those and additional.	School districts, CMC, Vail Valley Partnership’s CareerWise program, employers

Pillar 2: Workforce & Talent Pipeline			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	Connect Colorado Mountain College programs to regional employer needs		
2.3 Childcare as Workforce Infrastructure	Build childcare capacity using Hayden's model: assess need quickly, act without multi-year studies Expand Silverthorne's Wildcard Preschool model (licensed for 75 children, infant through pre-K) Explore employer-supported childcare cooperatives for smaller communities	Publish addendum to [2021 Regional Assessment of Child Care industry]() with updated accomplishments and initiatives since.	Towns, employers, nonprofits
2.4 Attract Net Migration Strategically	Decide regional stance on remote workers: recruitment tool or housing pressure? Develop targeted recruitment for critical shortage occupations (healthcare, trades, education) Ensure housing is available before marketing job opportunities Leverage Hayden's affordability advantage as a regional talent gateway	Discuss gov and private sector's ability to impact these trends, take action if viable.	Chambers, employers, housing authorities, NWCCOG
2.5 Support County-level Behavioral (mental) Health efforts	Research by GPS consulting for publication of NWCCOG Behavioral Health Landscape Assessment identified	Discuss with Council level of NWCCOG involvement.	NWCCOG Staff with constellation of mental health professionals across region.

Pillar 2: Workforce & Talent Pipeline			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	possible roles for NWCCOG to play in this field.		
2.6 Leverage AI and Technology for Government Efficiency	Adopt AI tools for planning, synthesis, and public engagement (as modeled in this summit) Train government staff on AI for faster analysis and response Use technology to create asynchronous civic participation channels reaching younger demographics	Are there further roles for NWCCOG to play in leading as it did with presentation at 2026 EDD Summit? Report in from Regional BB Director, train the trainer.	Town managers, IT departments, NWCCOG
2.7 Strengthen Partnership with Colorado Mountain College	Revitalize EDD Meetings to attract CMC staff back to relevant content and discussion topics.	Participation	NWCCOG Membership and Staff
2.8 Build a Regional Labor-Market & Talent Data Function	Partner with the State Demography Office and CDLE to track workforce participation, wages, and shortage occupations by county. Fold labor-market indicators into NWCCOG's Regional Statistics Analysis and Community Metrics work Publish an annual talent dashboard to guide recruitment and program design	Annual regional talent dashboard published; number of jurisdictions and employers using the data	NWCCOG EDD, State Demography Office, CDLE, CMC

Pillar 2: Workforce & Talent Pipeline			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
2.9 Integrate Immigrant & Seasonal Workers into the Workforce	Expand ESL, credential-recognition, and workforce-navigation services for immigrant and seasonal workers. Coordinate H-2B / J-1 seasonal-worker housing and onboarding with employers Connect immigrant entrepreneurs to the Northwest Loan Fund and small-business support	Immigrant and seasonal workers served by integration programs; seasonal positions filled since 2026	Employers, nonprofits, CMC, NWCCOG, chambers
2.10 Improve Job Quality and Career Ladders in the Service Economy	Promote employer best practices on wages, benefits, and scheduling for service-sector workers. Map career ladders from entry-level service jobs into trades, healthcare, and management Recognize and certify “employer of choice” businesses across the region	Wage growth and retention in target service occupations; number of certified employers	Chambers, Vail Valley Partnership, employers, CMC
2.11 Support an Aging Workforce & Business Succession	Provide business-succession planning for aging local business owners (ties to the Northwest Loan Fund). Create a phased-retirement and encore-career pathways to retain experienced workers	Local businesses completing succession plans; older-worker participation retained since 2026	NWCCOG (Alpine AAA), chambers, Northwest Loan Fund, employers

Pillar 2: Workforce & Talent Pipeline			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	Coordinate with the Alpine Area Agency on Aging on workforce and services for older adults		

✦ Pillar 3: Economic Diversification & Transition ✦

Supporting NWCCOG reports:

- 2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (when published)
- 2021 Mountain Migration Report
- Northwest Loan Fund Client Profiles 2013-2022

Very few of NWCCOG's 25 municipalities and 6 counties or their economic partners such as Routt County Economic Development Partnership or the Vail Valley Partnership have a specifically labelled "economic development plan" largely because many weave economic development and related topics into their strategic plan and drill down into one topic such as a Regional Housing Needs Assessment is required by Senate Bill 24-174, the Sustainable Affordable Housing Assistance Act. This makes gleaning local economic development efforts a challenge as does Eagle County's forgoing a traditional written document available as a PDF for a web based Strategic Plan that has "Learn More" tabs for each sub strategy. That document has one priority area, "Promote Thriving Communities" which touches on housing, early childhood, and workforce. Another priority area is "Protect our Mountain Ecosystem" which includes sub areas such as Advance a Clean Energy Economy" and "Reduce Wildfire Risk Countywide" which this document would sort into "Resilience." The Eagle County Regional Housing Needs Analysis 2025 is a good example of a drill down. Each of Eagle County's sub-area has a responsible staffer and link to their program web page. "Build Tomorrow's Workforce Today" webpage has a "Key Occupations and Sector Analysis Overview" as well as sector reports in PPT form for Construction; Healthcare & Social Assistance; Accommodation & Food Services; Arts, Entertainment & Recreation; Education, Childcare & Youth Services; and First Responders. There is also an attached PPT presentation that serves as the Community Comparison Report. These are Google Drive files rich in data without analysis.

Elevate Colorado 2025 State Alignment: Pillar 3 — Growing Key Industries

This goal is one that many skeptics have described as a wasted effort in our region. Certainly, calls for heavy manufacturing, which has never been present, or brownfield revitalization don't resonate. The remaining mines within the NWCCOG region, Climax mine which shares a border with Lake, Summit and Eagle Counties, and the Henderson Mine which shares a border with Grand and Clear Creek Counties remain operational with minimal staffing levels. Historically mining along with sheep and cattle grazing served by the now closed Tennessee Pass rail line, were the entire economy for the area. Today, preserving working ranches and "view corridors" with Conservation Easements and other protections from county open space funds is less about saving agricultural production, than preserving heritage. The ski areas changed all that. With the high price of land and built spaces, it is difficult to incubate ideas through early failures and strains. There are many other places around the country with better Geography of Jobs, regional innovation hubs which often gravitate near state universities, or cheap warehouse space, places not-yet-found, or dilapidated from past booms, needing reinvestment. None of that describes NWCCOG region. And yet, this pillar is perennial, perhaps because places like Steamboat Springs have become outdoor industry idea and branding places, even if production usually takes place overseas. There are other parts of the state better positioned for niche agriculture, peaches, wineries, and locally produced sauces, spices and honey.

The region's economy was built on mining, then ranching, then skiing. Tourism still accounts for 45–51% of jobs in most counties, with low wages that cannot support the cost of living. Diversification has been a goal for decades but remains largely aspirational—DiAnn Butler, Grand County Economic Development Director: "Diversification is always a goal, but the reality of today is still tourism." The coal transition in Routt County adds urgency: Hayden faces the loss of $55M in assessed value within a decade. One challenge of this is that Routt is in the NWCCOG region, but in a neighboring economic development region which is better suited for the coal mining and power generation Just Transitions discussion. The NWCCOG Energy program has discussed opening a fourth warehouse space in Craig to lead in workforce retraining, that program already has a foothold there by providing services. At the other end of the political spectrum, many NWCCOG member jurisdictions are leaders in groups such as Mountain Towns 2030 and other Climate Change groups. NWCCOG could lean into this new energy economy for economic development purposes, supporting the majority of its membership while needing to bring traditionally agricultural and resource extractive parts of the region along respectfully.

One thing that 2026 CEDS engagement underscored is this which should be a cautionary point: "the region needs concrete diversification actions, not more diversification strategies."

The final strategy in this section leans into regulatory strategies for diversifying income to local governments through selective taxation and fees, strategies which may belong in the Housing section, or in a strategy section with a different title.

Pillar 3: Economic Diversification & Transition			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
3.0 Local Business Support (NWCCOG)	Northwest Loan Fund, expand capacity for more loans, and funding streams	Increased Staffing in 2026 watch coming years number of jobs, loans, new clients	NLF

Pillar 3: Economic Diversification & Transition			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
3.1 Support Local Communities with Broadband through Project THOR	Take budget, governance, and operational structure to a long-term sustainable level Explore alternate operations, including coordination with the State Community Broadband Office (CBO)	TBD — pending the State CBO strategy and whether it includes a middle-mile plan supporting Project THOR	NWCCOG (Project THOR)
3.2 Local Business Support (non-NWCCOG)	Increase access to capital Entrepreneurial support		NWSBDC, Named Economic Development Professionals in each Jurisdiction, Town of Eagle Economic Vitality Committee
3.3 Celebrate and Encourage Colorado Creative Districts			
3.4 Develop Light Industrial and Non-Tourism Economy	Designate Hayden/Catons Pocket as regional light industrial hub (58-acre business park with geothermal) Place light industrial, manufacturing, and logistics where geographic sense dictates—not in resort cores Support four-season small business diversification (DiAnn Butler: businesses pivoting beyond ski rentals)	Identify which NWCCOG jurisdictions support these uses, hold summit of those entities. Gypsum, Hayden, Kremmling, Steamboat.	Towns, Routt County ED Partnership, county economic development, NWCCOG

Pillar 3: Economic Diversification & Transition			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	Develop broadband-dependent industries leveraging Project THOR infrastructure		
3.5 Build the Creative and Trades Economy	Three NWCCOG members have creative districts. Scale Grand Lake's Space to Create folk school as year-round destination and workforce pipeline Leverage Silverthorne's new arts district designation for creative economy development Support artisan, maker, and trades businesses as non-tourism economic base Connect creative economy to tourism product (art festivals, craft weekends, studio tours)	Support existing, help with networking and other interested places.	Creative districts, chambers, towns. OEDIT, DOLA.
3.6 Develop Geothermal and Renewable Energy as an Industry	Expand Hayden's geothermal municipal utility model to other communities Pursue Vail's geothermal exploration ($1.73M grant from Perma Construct) as regional pilot Leverage thermal energy bill (passed CO House May 7, 2026) for project development Explore repurposing coal mine waste heat for community heating systems	Can NWCCOG find grant funding for interested parties?	Towns, utilities, state energy office
3.7 Increase and Diversify the Tax Base	Explore vacancy tax implementation (Vail's top-10 council priority)	Advocacy for Policy changes are measured by	Town councils, county

Pillar 3: Economic Diversification & Transition			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	Advocate for statewide real estate transfer tax ($750M–$1.5B annual potential at 1%) Redirect existing RETT revenues from outdated purposes (open space in landlocked valleys) to current needs Develop fee-in-lieu and impact fee structures that capture development value for community investment	adoption of new policy.	commissioners, state legislature
3.8 Grow the Outdoor Recreation Industry & Brand Economy	Recruit and retain outdoor gear, apparel, and guiding businesses, building on Steamboat's outdoor-industry brand Partner with the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office (OREC) on business attraction and grants Link recreation assets (trails, rivers, resorts) to local product design, testing, and manufacturing where feasible Market the region as a base for outdoor-industry headquarters and design talent	Outdoor-industry firms and jobs added or retained in the region since 2026	OEDIT/OREC, towns, chambers, resorts, NWCCOG
3.9 Expand Entrepreneurship & Access to Capital via the Northwest Loan Fund	Scale the Northwest Loan Fund to seed and grow non-tourism small businesses Establish coworking, maker, and incubator space that lowers the cost of early-stage failure	Loans deployed, businesses started or retained, and jobs created through NLF and incubation since 2026	NWCCOG (Northwest Loan Fund), CMC/SBDC, chambers, towns

Pillar 3: Economic Diversification & Transition			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	Provide technical assistance and mentorship through CMC and Small Business Development Centers Prioritize founders in transitioning communities (Hayden, Kremmling, Craig-adjacent)		
3.10 Leverage Project THOR Broadband for a Knowledge & Remote Economy	Close last-mile gaps that connect households and businesses to the Project THOR middle-mile network Recruit remote workers and location-neutral businesses to diversify beyond tourism Build digital-skills and telehealth capacity through CMC and health providers Track broadband as core economic-development infrastructure (ties to Pillar 5)	Last-mile connections and remote-worker/business growth since 2026	NWCCOG Broadband / Project THOR, providers, towns, counties, CMC
3.11 Strengthen Health Care & Higher Education as Economic Anchors	Treat regional hospitals (Vail Health, St. Anthony Summit, others) and Colorado Mountain College as anchor employers and diversification engines Support anchor-institution expansion, workforce training, and local procurement Grow healthcare and education career pathways as higher-wage alternatives to seasonal tourism	Anchor-institution employment and program growth; higher-wage jobs added since 2026	Hospital/health districts, CMC, counties, NWCCOG

Pillar 3: Economic Diversification & Transition			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	Coordinate anchor investments with housing (Pillar 1) and workforce (Pillar 2)		
3.12 Manage the Coal Transition as a Regional Priority	This would have to be in conjunction with AGNC. Support Hayden's 10-year fiscal transition plan as a regional model Develop workforce retraining from energy skills to adjacent industries (welding, geothermal, construction) Pursue Northwest Colorado Energy Initiative funding and federal transition grants Study Campbell County, WY carbon innovation center model for regional application	Routt County is in AGNC's EDD, but is in NWCCOG's Membership. Bridge this with support as supported by local officials.	Hayden, Routt County, NWCCOG, state/federal agencies, Just Transitions, DOLA, AGNC

✦ Pillar 4: Destination Stewardship ✦

Outstanding Local Plans include:

- The Aspen Challenge: Aspen Destination Management Plan (ADMP) 2022-2027 by the Aspen Chamber Resort Association (ACRA)
- Glenwood Springs Destination Management & Strategic Marketing Plan 2025-2027 "authorized by" Glenwood Springs Tourism Management Board
- Vail's Stewardship Roadmap: A Community Positive Ten-Year Vision for a Thriving Visitor Economy by Better Destinations, MMGY NEXTFactor and The Travel Foundation.
- Grand County Tourism Revitalization Plan 2024, by Antero Group.
- Breckenridge Destination Management Plan by The Breckenridge Tourism Office with InterVISTAS Consulting and NEXTFactor Enterprises Inc.
- RRCR Conservation & Recreation Strategy (January 2025) by The Keystone Policy Center for the Routt Recreation & Conservation Roundtable (RRCR)

Elevate Colorado 2025 State Alignment: Pillar 4 — Quality of Life + Tourism

This pillar is in dynamic tension across the region.

Since inviting four members of the Insights Collective (IC) to share their perspectives on *Dynamics Impacting Resort Communities* at NWCCOG's 2022 Regional Economic Summit the year after COVID and our publication of the Mountain Migration Report (researched and written by WSW Consulting Inc. and Rees Consulting), a rich dialogue has continued on the the topic to this day between NWCCOG and members of the Insights Collective at subsequent Economic Summits, in Reports and in regular conversations. The 2024 Community Metrics Project provided deep research by IC that resulted in a dense White Paper and various other documents. That work aligned with surveying done by IC in a number of our communities including Vail and Aspen, and levers pulled by voters in 2022 across the region modifying lodging taxes to address other community needs than marketing, and Short-Term Rental (STR) tax measures, see pages 75-77 of our 2023 Workforce Housing Report.

From the Community Metrics Project emerged the concept of a continuum, like a see-saw with Tourism on one seat and Community on the other. Like much of what happened following COVID, the balance away from a focus on tourism in resort communities echoed in tourism-adjacent municipalities and counties. To be clear, the flywheel for the resort economy continues to be visitation and the money from outside flowing in. The big players such as Vail Resorts continue to pour money into marketing, while local leaders becoming acutely aware finite resources are steering discretionary marketing and revenues from regulating short term rentals back into infrastructure and programs to benefit the changing faces of their residents. Like the entire country, the resort region is increasingly a place of renting workers and working families needing local government interventions to remain in place while wealthier newcomers gentrify neighborhoods, nooks and crannies of the community where they were never expected.

Tourism is this region's economic engine and will remain so. The question is not whether to have tourism but how to steward it. The 2025–26 winter exposed a structural shift: resort companies, insulated by season pass revenue, are no longer financially vulnerable to bad snow years. Towns are. Jason Blevins: "Resort operators can't look to them for help anymore. It's up to mountain towns." This pillar is about towns taking ownership of their tourism destiny while maintaining quality of life for residents.

NWCCOG has continued to be at the forefront of exploring the continuum between community focus and tourism focus. The NWCCOG/CAST Community Assessment Project from 2024 is one example. Presentations from the

Something is different in recent years from traditional destination marketing. The Breckenridge Tourism Office was one of the earliest to set the trend in their May 2019 document which cites four destination master plan goals:

*Deliver a balanced year-round economy driven by destination tourism by 2024
*Elevate and fiercely protect Breckenridge's authentic character and band – our hometown feel and friendly atmosphere
*More boots and bikes, less cars
*Establish Breckenridge at the leading edge in mountain environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

Communities within the NWCCOG region and their Destination Marketing Organizations have leaned heavily into educating visitors. Vail's "community positive ten-year vision" document adopted in June of 2023 shows the change up-front. The quote on the document's title page encapsulates the vision perfectly:

I hope to see our mountain community protected, less people moving away because they can't find housing, less crowding on the hiking and ski trails, more sustainable measures, more mental health resources, funding, help for those who need it and can't afford it. - Vail Resident Survey Respondent.

The City of Glenwood Springs, through its administrative partner The Glenwood Springs Chamber Resort Association notes a "shift in focus from simple promotional marketing to holistic destination management." Not all of the major resort communities in NWCCOG region are served by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO). Routt County's Destination Management Plan operates through a coalition called the Routt Recreation and Conservation Roundtable. Communities are also taking a very long view with Grand PLACES 2050 and shorter strategy documents like the (RRCR) document.

Pillar 4: Destination Stewardship			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
4.1 Develop Post-Snow Tourism Products	Replicate Grand Lake's event-driven winter model (snowmaker investment, weekend festivals bringing 5–10K visitors). Develop indoor and non-snow winter experiences (concerts, cultural events, wellness tourism) Plan explicitly for recurring low-snow winters—not as crisis response but as standard operating procedure Message the new reality: Vail's NPS went UP 10 points when expectations adjusted		DMOs, towns, event organizers, resorts
4.2 Strengthen Shoulder Season Economy	Develop late May–June and mid-August–October programming (Keystone's identified priority) Package multi-day experiences that keep visitors spending locally, not just passing through Invest in summer/fall trail and recreation infrastructure Support businesses in developing year-round rather than seasonal revenue models		DMOs, chambers, recreation districts, businesses
4.3 Manage Tourism Rather Than Maximize It	Adopt destination management plans with residents-first orientation (Glenwood Springs model)		DMOs, town councils, resort operators

Pillar 4: Destination Stewardship			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	Stop marketing peak periods; focus marketing on shoulders and emerging products Develop tourism carrying capacity metrics and manage to them Recognize the post-pandemic “breathing room” as a strategic window for rebalancing		
4.4 Redefine the Resort-Town Relationship	Acknowledge that resort companies’ pass-driven business model has decoupled their financial risk from towns’ Negotiate community benefit agreements with resort operators Develop town-owned or town-branded tourism products independent of resort operations Ensure resort marketing includes community identity, not just pass sales		Town councils, resort operators, DMOs
4.5 Protect the Natural Assets That Drive Tourism	Manage wildfire and smoke risk as tourism and quality-of-life threats across all seasons Invest in water quality and stream health—stressed fish and low rafting flows are summer economy killers Prevent environmental degradation on public lands through managed access Integrate environmental resilience into all destination		Counties, USFS, recreation districts, water districts

Pillar 4: Destination Stewardship			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	marketing and product development		

✦ Pillar 5: Regional Infrastructure & Governance ✦

Supporting NWCCOG reports:

- 2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (when published)
- 2022 NWCCOG Regional Survey of Budgeting Practices
- 2021 NWCCOG Transportation Gap Analysis Assessment

Elevate Colorado 2025 State Alignment: Pillar 5 — Community Infrastructure + Resources

Needs Intro

List County and Municipal Strategic Plans in separate appendix

Infrastructure and governance are the connective tissue that makes every other pillar work. Transportation, water, energy, and cross-jurisdictional coordination came up repeatedly—not as standalone resilience topics but as prerequisites for housing, workforce, diversification, and destination stewardship. This pillar absorbed what was previously "Regional Resilience" because resilience is a lens applied to everything, not a sector that stands alone.

Pillar 5: Regional Infrastructure & Governance			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
5.0 Understand the Funding Gaps for Capital Projects	Survey the infrastructure needs of member jurisdictions	TBD	NWCCOG, with DOLA and the Metro District Association
5.1 Expand Regional Mobility	NWCCOG's Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC), led by the Mobility Director are actively working across transit organizations and mobility stakeholders	Update 2021 Transportation Gap Analysis Assessment	NWCCOG Mobility Manager, RTCC
5.2 Expand Regional	Build on Routt County's newly established Regional		RTAs, CDOT, towns, counties,

Pillar 5: Regional Infrastructure & Governance			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
Transportation	Transportation Authority as a governance model Expand public transit options along I-70 and Highway 40 corridors (Jacob Zook's #1 priority) Address Highway 40 safety crisis (400% increase in accidents, Craig to Steamboat, 2020–2025) Develop transit connections that serve workforce commuter patterns, not just tourist flows (example: use findings from the 5304 planning grant study from Parachute-Silt to expand local transportation options in these communities. Pending funding, findings should be available late 2027.) Develop transit connections across jurisdiction lines using integrated technology, expanded routes, IGAs, etc.		ECO Transit, RTCC/NWCCOG Mobility Program, Colorado River Valley Economic Development Partnership
5.3 Secure Water Resources	Plan for low-snow years as water system management crises, not just ski industry problems Invest in water storage, conservation, and distribution infrastructure Integrate water security into housing and development	QQ should establish a strategic plan like this document involving multiple partners	QQ, Water districts, counties, state water agencies

Pillar 5: Regional Infrastructure & Governance			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	planning (can infrastructure support growth?) Protect stream health for both ecological and economic reasons (rafting, fishing = summer economy)		
5.4 Build Energy Infrastructure for Transition	Scale geothermal networks (Hayden's municipal utility model with 15-year cost recovery and 80-year warranty) Explore repurposing existing energy infrastructure (coal mine waste heat, power plant sites) Pursue federal and state energy transition funding for renewable infrastructure Use energy infrastructure as economic development anchor (Hayden's geothermal business park)	There is no geothermal go-to entity or person in the NWCCOG region. Identifying whether that is necessary and what that looks like will be a measure of success.	Towns, utilities, state energy office, federal agencies
5.5 Strengthen Cross-Jurisdictional Governance	Stop cannibalization: coordinate regional placement of housing, industry, transportation and infrastructure Establish shared regional committees with real mandates and deliverables Use NWCCOG as coordinating body for cross-county strategy implementation Align CEDS strategies with existing subarea plans (Pitkin	NWCCOG should adopt a strategic plan.	NWCCOG, all member governments

Pillar 5: Regional Infrastructure & Governance			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
	Vision 2050, Eagle Strategic Plan, Grand County 7 Core Objectives, etc.)		
5.6 Build Wildfire and Disaster Resilience	Develop regional wildfire preparedness and evacuation coordination Plan for smoke season economic impacts across all tourism seasons Invest in forest health and fuel management as economic protection Create mutual aid frameworks for disaster response across the five-county region	There are multiple entities and districts, including interagency groups in this area, though there is currently no regional policy tracking which is something requested by Council.	Counties, fire districts, USFS, emergency management

✦ Pillar 6: Economic Resilience ✦

Supporting NWCCOG reports:

- 2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (when published)
- 2022 NWCCOG Regional Survey of Budgeting Practices

Elevate Colorado 2025 State Alignment: Economic Resilience (confirm mapping)

Confirm Elevate Colorado pillar alignment and add supporting NWCCOG reports.

Economic resilience is the region's capacity to anticipate, withstand, and recover from shocks—climate, market, and disaster—without losing its economic identity. Where Pillar 5 addresses the physical and governance infrastructure of resilience, this pillar focuses on the economic dimension: the fiscal health of local governments, the durability of small businesses and the workforce, and the region's exposure to a single defining risk—winters without snow. The goal is to plan for volatility as the norm rather than the exception, so that a bad snow year, a downturn, or a disaster becomes a managed event rather than a crisis.

Pillar 6: Economic Resilience			
Strategy	**Actions**	**Evaluation Framework**	**Owners**
6.0 Plan for Winters Without Snow	Treat recurring low-snow and no-snow winters as a baseline planning scenario, not an emergency response Model the fiscal impact of declining ski-season revenue on local government budgets and sales-tax collections Accelerate winter revenue that does not depend on snow (see Pillar 4	TBD	NWCCOG, counties, towns, DMOs

	destination products) Size reserve and stabilization funds to withstand a poor snow year without service cuts		
6.1 Strengthen Local Government Fiscal Resilience	Encourage member jurisdictions to set reserve targets appropriate to their revenue volatility Reduce over-reliance on sales and lodging tax by broadening the local revenue base where feasible Coordinate a shared regional playbook for responding to economic downturns Build on the 2022 NWCCOG Regional Survey of Budgeting Practices	TBD	NWCCOG, county and municipal finance offices, DOLA
6.2 Build Small Business and Workforce Resilience	Expand access to capital, technical assistance, and continuity planning for small businesses Support businesses in shifting from seasonal to year-round revenue models (links to Pillar 4) Strengthen local food, goods, and service supply chains to reduce	TBD	SBDC, chambers, workforce center, NWCCOG

	external dependency Develop rapid-response tools to retain jobs and talent during shocks (links to Pillar 2)		
6.3 Diversify Against Economic Concentration Risk	Reduce structural dependence on tourism and construction as the region's sole economic drivers (links to Pillar 3) Grow shock-resistant sectors: health care, remote and knowledge work, outdoor-industry manufacturing, energy transition Track economic concentration and diversification metrics across the five-county region	TBD	NWCCOG, local EDCs, counties
6.4 Prepare for Climate and Disaster Economic Shocks	Quantify the economic exposure of wildfire, smoke, drought, and flooding to tourism, property, and employment Coordinate business-continuity and disaster-recovery economics with the resilience infrastructure in Pillar 5 Pursue federal and state resilience and recovery funding	TBD	Counties, emergency management, NWCCOG, state agencies

	ahead of, not after, events		
6.5 Establish Regional Economic Monitoring and Early Warning	Build a shared regional dashboard of leading indicators (snowfall, sales tax, lodging occupancy, employment) Use the data to trigger coordinated regional response before a downturn deepens Report annually through the CEDS Evaluation Framework (Section 5)	TBD	NWCCOG, member governments

Section 4: Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Framework is developed at the next stage of Strategy, when the general goals

Section 5: Annual Progress Reports

Status – like annual progress annotated.

Section 6: Next Steps

This v3 working draft reflects a full day of stakeholder input. The following steps are recommended to advance the CEDS renewal:

1. Comment Period: All summit participants are encouraged to continue commenting on this document through the shared Google Drive folder. Specific feedback on strategies, actions, and owners is most valuable.

2. Community Validation: Each county and municipality should review the pillar framework and strategies for alignment with their existing plans and priorities.

3. Owner Assignment: Placeholder owners need to be replaced with specific organizations and individuals who will champion each strategy.

4. Action Prioritization: Identify which actions can be implemented immediately (quick wins), which need 1–2 years of development (medium-term), and which require 3–5 years (long-term).

5. Draft CEDS Completion: NWCCOG EDD staff will use this working draft as the foundation for the formal CEDS document, due before the September 30, 2026 expiration of the current plan.

6. Resilience Integration: Each pillar's strategies should be stress-tested against climate, economic, and demographic scenarios to ensure the plan is robust to the region's most likely disruptions.

Appendix A: How This Document Was Built

Preparation: This CEDS was assembled with AI reading and synthesizing extensive research assembled by NWCCOG including the CEDS from the prior 5-year period, numerous planning documents by municipalities, counties, economic development entities within the region as well as media coverage of current issues. NWCCOG hired Stephen Kuban, CEO & Principal, Kuban Transit Solutions in March of 2026 to collaboratively develop "An Interactive AI Workshop: Building Regional Strategy Live" facilitation which occurred on the afternoon of May 7th, 2026 at the Silverthorne Pavilion. Using that baseline data, Kuban led a panel of economic development experts from across the region through a discussion, and included extensive audience participation. In this manner the core work of AI was able to leverage extensive interaction with humans.

The Workshop began with the current Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and current County-level economic strategic planning documents which were uploaded prior to the presentation. Kuban lead a panel of representatives from NWCCOG Member Counties in a discussion, with live audience interaction. The objectives for the work product were

1) to engage audience in discussion of regions economic issues that will provide first engagement for upcoming CEDS due in September, providing framework for a series of calls resulting in final document,

2) to produce a report within a week summarizing input, and

3.) to teach participants how to use AI through learning-by-doing.

This First Draft of this document was synthesized live during the NWCCOG Economic Development Summit on May 7, 2026 in Silverthorne, Colorado. Over 60 regional stakeholders participated in a full-day workshop combining morning presentations, an afternoon expert panel, and real-time audience contributions via a shared Google document. Kuban recorded each of the morning sessions and used AI to blend their content into the draft. Those presentations featured Kate Watkins (State Demographer), Brian London and Carl Ribaudo of Insights Collective, a Tourism Think Tank (statistical analysis of the five-county region), Kami Collins, Rural Opportunity Representative West for the State of Colorado's Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), and Erik Williams, Director of Community Development for the Vail Valley Partnership who presented on their Workforce strategy which they call CareerWise (a Colorado apprenticeship model). The afternoon panel, facilitated by Stephen Kuban included Jason Blevins (Colorado Sun, Co-founder), Jacob Zook (City of Glenwood Springs, Economic Development Specialist), DiAnn Butler (Grand County, Economic Development Director), Matthew Mendisco (Town Manager of Hayden), and Mia Vlaar (Town of Vail, Economic Development Director).

AI tools were used throughout the day to transcribe, synthesize, and organize the discussion in real time. International peer research covering 15+ resort regions globally was conducted in advance and shared with the room. This v3 draft reflects the full day of input, including audience comments on the shared document.

What We Heard at the Regional Economic Summit

Presentations

State Demographer (Kate Watkins): The region is growing but aging. Summit County projects 12.4% growth by 2030, but Jackson County faces an 8.4% population decline. The 25–44 age cohort is shrinking in most counties, creating a leadership and workforce pipeline gap. Net migration is the primary growth driver, not natural factors such as birth and death.

Regional Statistical Analysis (Brian London & Carl Ribaudo): Insights Collective performed interviews with Mayors and Managers in the Winter of 2026 to build a survey for leaders across the region, resulting in a report published in July of 2026. Their presentation was a sneak preview summary of that work. Tourism dominates employment (45–51% in most counties) but wages lag. Average annual wages range from $47,060 (Grand) to $59,852 (Eagle). The region has more jobs than workers—unemployment at roughly 2%—

and the gap between jobs and available workforce is the binding constraint, not job creation.

OEDIT (Kami Collins): Colorado's state economic development office provides grants, tax credits, and technical assistance. The rural and resort communities in this region often don't look "needy" on paper because resort wealth masks real local struggles.

CareerWise Colorado (Erik Williams): The Vail Valley Partnership is one of the three sub-regional Economic Development organizations within the NWCCOG Economic Development District. They and their CEO have won national awards for their model, business practices and services. Attendees of the 2026 Regional Economic Summit were treated with a snapshot of one of those programs, a Swiss-model youth apprenticeships placing high school students in professional career tracks. Expanding into the region with Eagle County as a hub. Addresses both workforce pipeline and young professional retention.

Key Themes

Housing is the region's most active arena—and the region deserves more credit. Vail is adding 1,100 residents through new housing (a 23% population increase). Glenwood Springs leveraged $500K in lodging tax into 250 units. Hayden's municipal housing authority purchased an entire neighborhood and has 145 deed-restricted units coming online up to 160% AMI. Snowmass requires 100% developer mitigation. Silverthorne built 400 units on land purchased a decade ago. Eagle County's Bold Housing Moves and the Roaring Fork Valley's Good Deeds program are producing results. The challenge is scale: even at 300% AMI, you cannot buy a home in the Roaring Fork Valley.

The worst snow year in memory was a stress test—and the region adapted. Resort operators reported only 4–5% live ticket revenue declines thanks to season pass strategies. The financial risk has shifted to towns. Grand Lake had zero snowmobile revenue but town revenue grew 4.3% because of event-driven diversification. Vail's net promoter scores went UP 10 points once expectations adjusted. Jason Blevins: resort companies are now largely immunized from bad snow years. It is now up to mountain towns to own their economic resilience.

The coal transition is the most urgent fiscal story in the region. Hayden must replace $55M of $58M in assessed value within 10 years as coal plants close. Yet Hayden is also the only community on the Western Slope with 25–45 as its fastest-growing demographic, driven by relative affordability and entrepreneurial governance. Their model: act fast, skip studies when the need is obvious, build childcare and housing without waiting for perfection.

Civic engagement innovation is already happening. Hayden requires under-18 members on every board. Vail Valley Partnership launched Young Emerging Professionals (YEP). The "How the F" series teaches young adults practical life skills for $20 per session. But the room acknowledged: traditional evening meetings exclude people working 2+ jobs, and micro-engagement formats are needed.

Regional coordination is talked about more than practiced. Matthew Mendisco: "We try to cannibalize each other's programs instead of asking where does it make the most sense to build?" Light industrial makes sense in Hayden, not Steamboat. Housing should go where land is available. The Routt County Regional Transportation Authority just passed—a concrete step toward cross-jurisdictional governance. Highway 40 accidents increased 400% from 2020 to 2025.

Second-home economies anchored by Part-Time Owners are an undervalued asset. Jason Blevins: second home economies probably eclipse tourism economies through philanthropy, foundation giving, and board service. The risk is the aging-out of engaged 1990s-era buyers without an equally engaged replacement cohort. The room urged: celebrate second homeowners as community members, don't blame them for housing ills. But also consider vacancy taxes (Vail exploring, Eagle County 48% vacant, Pitkin County 80% vacant).

Geothermal energy emerged as a surprise regional asset. Hayden's 58-acre business park will be fully heated/cooled by geothermal network run as a municipal utility. Vail received a $1.73M grant for geothermal exploration. Eagle County just completed a model Geothermal project converting the county building entirely to meet 2030 emissions goals. Colorado's thermal energy bill passed the full House today. Coal mine waste heat could be repurposed rather than building new.

Appendix B: List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Figures & Graphics