

BLM HQ RELOCATION: CITY DATA ON GRAND JUNCTION, CO

Prepared for: House Committee on Natural Resources
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ABOUT GRAND JUNCTION

Grand Junction, Colorado is the largest metropolitan area in western Colorado and is located on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains halfway between Denver and Salt Lake City, Utah. The Greater Grand Junction area includes the cities of Grand Junction and Fruita and the town of Palisade and has a **total population of 151,000**. Grand Junction is located in Mesa County and is home to **Colorado Mesa University** and the **Grand Junction Regional Airport**. The **Average Annual Wage** is \$42,692. **76% of Mesa County is public lands** and over **1500 federal employees** live and work in Mesa County from the Department of Energy, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Colorado National Monument. Grand Junction's economy depends on its public lands, whether it's responsible energy production, rangeland management, or outdoor recreation.

Everything within the BLM's mission can be researched, studied and put into practice in Mesa County, Colorado.

COST OF LIVING

- Grand Junction is the **most affordable** metropolitan area in Colorado.
- The **median price** of a Single Family Home is \$260,000.
- **Closing costs are**, on average, less than 1% of the loan amount.
- Average **time to close** is less than 30 days.
- Average **cost per square foot** for residential properties is \$164 s/f.
- **Median residential rent** is \$1250 per month or .98 cents per square foot.
- **Inventory:** There are approximately 200 homes and apartments listed for rent and over 650 active listings for sale at this time.

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

- Grand Junction has a variety of **move-in ready commercial office space** available for lease, as well as a number of prime lots available should the DOI choose to build to suit.
- Average lease rates are **\$15 per square foot for Class B office space and \$25 per square foot for Class A** office space. This includes utilities and NNN.

COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY

Colorado Mesa University is the **4th fastest growing university in the country** with a current enrollment of **11,000 students**. CMU has a variety of programs, including engineering,

COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY (CONT)

computer science, cybersecurity, health sciences and nursing, **agricultural science, geology, archeology, biological science,** and construction technology.

The **Redifer Institute** is home to multiple research and policy institutes at CMU. One of those institutes, the **Natural Resource Center**, promotes the adoption of natural resource and land use policies by Federal, State and local governments that support and promote the value of multiple use and sustained yield by providing scientific data and programmatic solutions to guide the development of future policy.

Another institute, the **Unconventional Energy Center**, conducts research projects that help energy development practitioners with regulatory predictability, reducing operating costs, increasing the effectiveness of extraction and reducing impacts on the environment. This institute positions Grand Junction as the epicenter of energy innovation.

AIR TRAVEL

The Grand Junction Regional Airport currently has **17 daily, direct flights to 8 locations**. Direct flight locations include Denver, Salt Lake City, Dallas, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Mesa and Chicago. Flights support both business and tourism travel. **There are 30 flights every day to Washington, DC with one connection.** In 2018, the City of Grand Junction passed a lodging tax to be used by the Air Service Alliance to increase direct flight destinations through a minimum revenue guarantee. The Alliance is currently considering San Francisco (to reach Asia).

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Mesa County has **seven Opportunity Zones**- the most of any county in Colorado. The combination of affordable real estate, a growing economy, and the tax incentive have made Grand Junction attractive to developers and investors. There are **multiple opportunity zone developments underway** throughout the City of Grand Junction, including multi-family housing, mixed-use commercial and Class A office space.

MESA COUNTY RELOCATION TASK FORCE

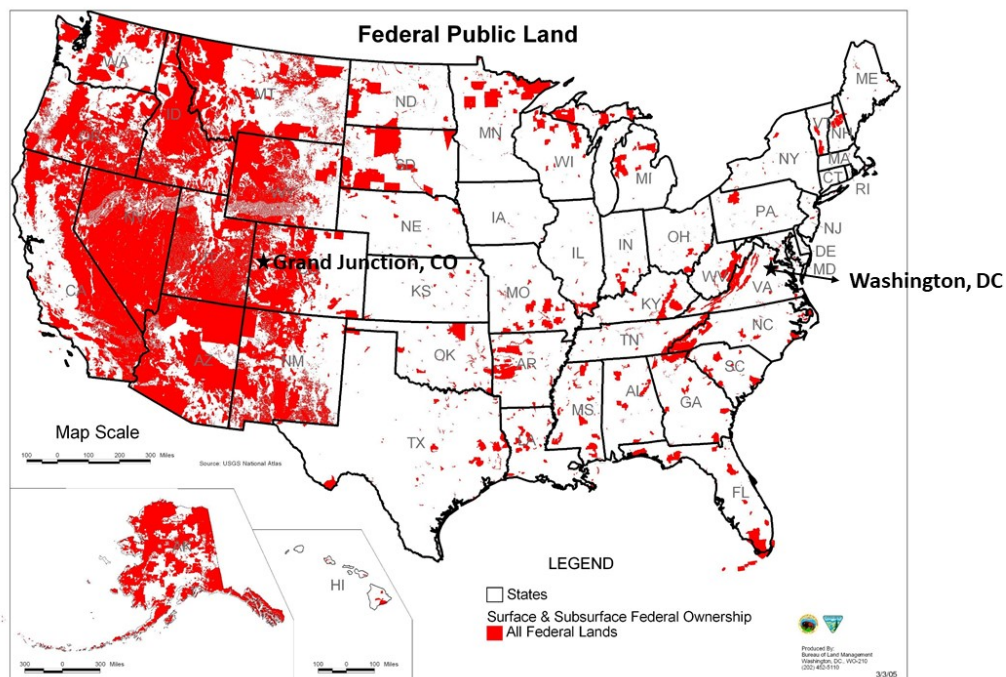
The Mesa County Relocation Task Force is a hands-on, customized team that will ensure an easy transition for all employees and their families. Services include:

- Pre-move visits to all employees and their families to provide information about the region and a **single point of contact** to assist families at all times.
- Our **Real Estate Team** will assist employees and their families in finding suitable housing and includes both rental and purchase assistance.
- Our **School Placement Team** will provide a complete inventory of all public, charter and private schools and assist all students and their families with enrollment, school calendars, academic programs, special needs, and extracurricular activities, including sports.

MESA COUNTY RELOCATION TASK FORCE (CONT)

- Our **Trailing Partner Program** will assist all spouses and partners with prioritized, personal job placement in the local region, as well as training programs and/or admission to Western Colorado Community College and Colorado Mesa University.

LOCATE YOUR BLM HEADQUARTERS WHERE THERE IS BLM LAND



OVERSIGHT HEARING TESTIMONY, EXPANDED

Grand Junction is the only metropolitan area in western Colorado with a population of 150,000. We are located about three and a half hours west of Denver on Interstate 70 halfway to Salt Lake City on the western side of the Rocky Mountains.

Mesa County, Colorado where Grand Junction is located, is 76% public lands. We have BLM land, US Forest land, National Park land, and State Park land. Our economy depends on that land and both the above ground and below ground natural resources that come from our public lands. Historically, we've been dependent on energy-specifically the natural gas in the Piceance Basin- as our only economic driver and have weathered the boom and bust cycles that come with the industry. However in recent years, our community has worked hard to diversify our economy by growing outdoor recreation manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing and aerospace. Recent job numbers show that all of these industries have grown while energy has remained stable, leading me to believe

that we should be able to weather a downturn in the energy industry in a way that we've never been able to do in the past.

In Grand Junction, we believe in an all of the above approach to economic development. What that means is that we believe that we can do it all on public lands in a way that both protects and conserves the very lands we rely on while balancing that use with an economy that depends on those lands. Colorado has the toughest oil and gas regulations in the country and the industry has responded using technology to severely reduce emissions while increasing production. Today we are able to extract fossil fuels in a safer and cleaner way reducing the impact on climate change, while also providing high paying jobs and direct economic impact to our rural communities.

With all of that energy production going on, we are also an outdoor recreation mecca. From my back door, I can hike in a national monument, mountain bike on world class single-track trails, kayak the Colorado river, ride my dirt bike, ATV or rock crawling jeep on BLM land, or just sit on my back porch and look at the abundant wildlife that wanders through- whether it's deer, bighorn sheep, pheasant, quail, bobcats, mountain lions or bear. If I hop into my car, I can hunt big game or birds, fish, snowmobile, cross country ski or downhill ski, within a 40 mile drive from my home. Colorado has the best public land hunting in the country and people travel from all over the world to hunt in my backyard.

It's not unusual to run across wild horses in Mesa County. They roam the desert area north of Grand Junction known as the Bookcliffs. It's also not unusual for a cease-fire to be called at the Cameo Shooting Complex managed by Colorado Parks & Wildlife because horses or bighorn sheep wander down into the complex. Just south of those desert lands are vast rangelands where local ranching families run cattle for beef production, which is Colorado's number one ag export. National Conservation Areas? We've got three. Wilderness Study areas? Check.

Colorado Mesa University (CMU) is the 4th fastest growing university in the country with a current enrollment of 11,000 students. The University is an incredible partner to our community with programs such as health sciences and nursing, engineering and computer science, agricultural science, geology, archeology, and biological science, creating talent pipelines that will both allow our local companies to grow and attract new business to the area in search of our highly qualified workforce.

Within CMU, the Redifer Institute is home to multiple research and policy institutes. One of those institutes, the Natural Resource Center, promotes the adoption of natural resource and land use policies by Federal, State and local governments that support and promote the value of multiple use and sustained yield.

Another institute, the Unconventional Energy Center, conducts research projects that help energy development practitioners with regulatory predictability, reducing operating costs, increasing the effectiveness of extraction and reducing impacts on the environment. This institute positions Grand Junction as the epicenter of energy innovation.

Both of these institutes work closely with our regional BLM office as they study, research and implement land use policies and procedures.

In other words, every single thing that the BLM does can be researched, studied and put into practice in Mesa County, Colorado.

Colorado is unique in that our state is cut in half by the physical barrier that is the Rocky Mountains, which run north to south through the center of our state. The vast majority of people, business, both private and public investment, along with 86% of the state GDP are located on the eastern side of the Rockies along the I25 corridor. However, the vast majority of public lands are located on the western side of the Rockies. In fact, this is true at the national level as well- 99% of public lands are west of the Rockies. These lands also make up, at least in the west, our most rural communities.

Politically and culturally, our country is experiencing a divide between our rural and urban communities that is unlike any other time in our history. The industries in rural communities are vastly different than those in urban cities. So are lifestyles, foods, languages, and education. The people that make up our urban communities don't physically see where the power to turn on their lights comes from, or where the beef in their burgers are raised, nor do they understand the long-term repercussions when they overcrowd and misuse our trails when they come to recreate.

In Colorado, having a 14,000 foot natural feature called the Rocky Mountains divide the state in two further complicates and exacerbates that divide. Accidents and weather often close our interstate- sometimes multiple times in a day- delaying freight deliveries that are vital to our west slope economy and also making travel to the state capital difficult, expensive and sometimes impossible. In Colorado, our urban rural divide isn't just political and cultural, but it's also actually physical. And that divide often complicates policy and decisions made at the state level for communities and industries that leadership are often unfamiliar with. And if this is a problem in our own state, how can it not be a problem to have a headquarters located 2000 miles away from the very lands they are supposed to manage?

The argument against moving the headquarters is based on a lack of trust. A lack of trust in BLM leadership to understand when they're being influenced and a lack of trust in the very communities that hold these lands so dear. Well I wouldn't trust somebody I'd never met either. So I invite you all out to Grand Junction to meet the very people who worry you so much.

I'd introduce you to Janie Van Winkle. Janie is a second generation beef rancher that grazes her cattle on public lands. She's been running cattle since she could sit on a horse and will eventually pass her business onto her son. Janie is the best conservationist I know because as a rancher, she understands, almost more than anybody else, that the lands that she drives her cattle over year after year have to remain healthy in order for her herds to remain healthy for generations to come.

I'd introduce you to Scott Winans. Scott is an engineer for a company called MRP that designs and manufactures mountain bike components. He's also the president of the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Association- a non-profit, mostly volunteer organization that builds, maintains and advocates for singletrack mountain bike trails. There is no better advocacy group for the proper maintenance and long-term health of our trail system. Try riding your bike on trails after



it rains or taking a short cut where there is no trail and you will get a quick and fierce explanation of proper trail etiquette, as you would deserve.

I'd introduce you to Quint Shear- a 5th generation Coloradoan and landman who could tour you through a number of well pads on his family's ranch that intertwine in and out of his favorite hunting and hiking grounds. With proper planning, these industries can coexist.

Speaking of hunting, I'm a public lands hunter and last fall went with my 12 year old son, Hank, on his first elk hunt. Being with him when he shot his first elk was one of the greatest experiences of my life. He is an incredibly conscientious hunter and conservationist and I am hopeful that he will one day hunt those same lands with his children.

The idea that BLM leadership shouldn't be influenced by the communities that live, work and play on our public lands is misguided. It tells me that you don't trust Janie, or Scott or Quint or people like us from rural communities all over the west to advocate for the highest and best use of our public lands. It also tells me that you don't trust your own leadership to know the difference between those with good intentions and those with bad. And that's ironic because last year in Washington, DC, there were 11,654 registered lobbyists that spent \$3.46 Billion influencing you. So I don't quite see why it's okay to be influenced by more lobbyists than most of these communities have in total population with more money than all of our annual budgets combined, but not okay to be influenced by the communities who know, love and protect our public lands best because they live, work and play on those lands every single day- sometimes over multiple generations.

Congressmen and women, on behalf of the people of western Colorado, I encourage you to support the move of the BLM headquarters to Grand Junction, Colorado- a place where there is actually BLM land.