

**A Publication of the  
Fort Lewis College  
School of Business Administration**

**LA PLATA COUNTY'S QUARTER 4, 2006 ECONOMY**

**National, State, and Local Unemployment Comparisons**

When comparing La Plata County with the national and Colorado economies with respect to unemployment and personal income, the local economy fares very well. La Plata County's unemployment rate continues to remain below both the national and the state's rates (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1 – Comparison of Unemployment Rates – National, State, Local**

<b>Area</b>	<b>2006 Annual Average</b>	<b>February 2007 Unemployment Rate (Preliminary)</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>
<b>La Plata County</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics and Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Labor Market Information

**ECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR LA PLATA COUNTY**

**Note:** Beginning with issue quarter to quarter comparisons will no longer be provided. Please contact Deborah Walker at the Office of Economic Analysis and Business Research (walker\_d@fortlewis.edu) if you would like to obtain quarter to quarter data.

**Tourism**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, ridership on the Railroad (not including special events) increased by 1.4%, visits to Mesa Verde National Park increased by 10.1%, enplanements increased 15.1%, and lodger's tax revenue (adjusted for inflation) increased by 16.9%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals in 2005 to totals in 2006, train ridership increased 0.5%, visits to Mesa Verde National Park increased by 11%, enplanements increased by 12%, and lodger's tax revenue (adjusted for inflation) increased by 7.2%.

**Retailing**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, retail sales, after adjustment for inflation, increased by 12.4%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals in 2005 to totals in 2006, retail sales, adjusted for inflation, increased by 9.2%

## **Employment**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, employment in La Plata County increased by 4.8%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals in 2005 to totals in 2006, employment increased by 7.2%

## **Agriculture**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, alfalfa hay prices, adjusted for inflation, increased by 10.5%, while calf prices decreased 10.2%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals in 2005 to totals in 2006, alfalfa hay prices (not adjusted for inflation) increased 5.6%, while calf prices decreased 1.1%.

## **Industrial Activity**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, industrial kilowatt-hours used increased 2.4%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals in 2005 to totals in 2006, industrial kilowatt-hours used increased 0.5%. Most industrial usage of electricity in La Plata County is to compress natural gas for transmission through gas pipelines.

## **Population**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, population (as measured by the number of new residential electric meters installed) in La Plata County increased by 2.5%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals in 2005 to totals in 2006, population (meters installed) increased 2.9%. The annual increase in the number of residential electric meters suggests that the population of La Plata County is continuing to grow. The population of La Plata County was estimated to be 47,980 in 2005 (the most recent number available from the Census Bureau).

## **Finance**

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals from July 2004 – June 2005 to July 2005 – June 2006, bank deposits increased by 11.6% from the first half of 2005 to the first half of 2006 (adjusted for inflation). Bank deposits are an important indicator of the economic health of the community as well as an indicator of the ability of local banks to make loans to consumers and business borrowers.

## **Fort Lewis College**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006 (fall semester headcount) Fort Lewis College enrollment decreased by 1%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals in 2005 to totals in 2006 (again using fall headcount), Fort Lewis College enrollment decreased by 1%. The college stabilizes the local economy on a seasonal basis because most spending by students occurs during the September through April time frame while tourism activity peaks during the summer months.

## **Construction**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, construction activity (as measured by the value of construction permits issued) in La Plata County decreased by 16%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals in 2005 to totals in 2006, construction activity (as measured by the value of construction permits issued) in La Plata County decreased by 7%. When just looking at La Plata County (only) permits issued, there was an increase of 22%. When looking at City of Durango (only) permits issued, there was a decrease of 38%.

## **Energy Prices**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** – Comparing the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, energy prices decreased by 26.5%. Energy prices can be very volatile, changing drastically from one quarter to the next.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing totals (annual average) in 2005 to totals in 2006, energy prices decreased by 4.8%. Energy prices are very important to La Plata County because the county is a major producer of natural gas. Rents and royalties, as well as property tax revenues associated with natural gas production, are significant sources of income to La Plata County.

## **Real Estate**

**Year to Year (Quarter Comparison)** - Comparing the La Plata County median residential housing price in the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006, the price (adjusted for inflation) increased by 4.4%.

**Year to Year (Annual Comparison)** – Comparing the La Plata County median residential housing price in 2005 to the same in 2006, the price (not adjusted for inflation) increased by 14%.

**TOURISM INDICATORS**  
**Fourth Quarter, 2006**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent Change From Previous Year's Fourth Quarter</b>
<b>Mesa Verde National Park</b>	58,112	+10.1%
<b>Durango &amp; Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (excluding special events)</b>	18,591	+1.4%
<b>Durango-La Plata County Airport</b>	30,586	+15.1%
<b>Lodger's Tax Revenue – 2006</b>	\$214,806	+16.9% (inflation adjusted change)

**TOURISM INDICATORS**  
**Annual Totals for 2006**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent Change From 2005</b>
<b>Mesa Verde National Park</b>	577,366	+11%
<b>Durango &amp; Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (excluding special events)</b>	165,916	+0.5%
<b>Durango-La Plata County Airport</b>	113,387	+12%
<b>Lodger's Tax Revenue – 2006</b>	\$881,867	+7.2% (inflation adjusted change)