Imagine Alamosa County Comprehensive Plan Earns Colorado APA Honor Award

Alamosa County has been the economic and transportation hub of the San Luis Valley since the railroad arrived in 1878, transforming a tent city into a railroad town almost overnight. Incorporated in 1913 from portions of Conejos and Costilla counties, Alamosa has long been an agricultural community, and today it remains the region's center for banking, retail, healthcare, and other services today. Federally managed public lands, including the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Rio Grande National Forest, and Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge, have shaped the county's identity and, increasingly, its tourism economy.

As Alamosa County planned for the next several decades of change, it did so with a clear commitment to honor that heritage. Water supply and water rights remain the county's most valuable asset, and the county is committed to maximizing beneficial use while keeping water within the Valley. Agriculture continues to drive the local economy and culture, and the county's world-class open spaces and solar resources position it as a state leader in renewable energy–one it hopes to balance with real public benefit for local communities. The *Imagine Alamosa County Comprehensive Plan* charts a long-term vision for a resilient San Luis Valley, one shaped as much by its water, agriculture, and energy resources as by the people who call the county home.

Water, Energy, and a New Vision

Incorporating Colorado Senate Bill (SB) 24-174 requirements, the plan ensures efficient water use for agriculture and identifies the extent of area available for augmentation, pairing conservation with appropriate development opportunities. The plan also establishes a new energy overlay that directs renewable energy development to suitable locations, allowing growth without compromising the lifestyles and landscapes that define the Valley.

Shaped by Youth Engagement

What truly set this planning process apart was who helped shape it. Partnering with local high school teachers, the project team brought hundreds of students into a yearlong program built directly into the classroom curriculum. Over four in-depth workshops, students researched local issues, developed their own priorities, and presented their findings to County Staff, the Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners.

This wasn't a token engagement exercise. The effort was recognized by the National Council for Social Studies, earning a spot at the organization's 2025 national conference in Washington, DC, a rare form of outside validation for youth civic engagement in comprehensive planning.

Reaching Every Voice

Beyond students, the planning team reached underrepresented voices throughout the Valley. Agricultural operators and non-English-speaking residents contributed through dedicated focus groups, ensuring working lands and long-standing Valley traditions are protected for generations to come.

A Long-Range Vision Built By the County, For the County

Adopted in July 2025, the Imagine Alamosa County Comprehensive Plan weaves water conservation, agricultural sustainability, renewable energy, and inclusive public participation into a resilient future, a roadmap built by and for the people of Alamosa County.

Congratulations to the full project team on this well-earned recognition.