

2021 Gilpin County Community Needs Assessment Report



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



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INTRODUCTION

As the land-grant university in Colorado, CSU embraces its responsibility to serve all Coloradans. With a presence in almost all 64 counties, CSU Extension is a primary vehicle by which the university carries out this responsibility. Extension partners with communities to address important and emerging issues using research-based educational resources.

Extension understands the needs of communities across the state because we live in the communities we serve. In addition, from 2020 to 2021 we embarked on a year-long, formal community needs assessment (CNA) process to ensure that the educational resources we provide are driven by data. The overarching goal of the CNA was to more fully tell the story of our communities and Extension's role in them.

Extension used mixed methods to conduct this comprehensive CNA. A secondary data analysis allowed us to make use of pre-existing information about our communities such as demographic reports, strategic plans, economic development documents, and health assessments. Key informant interviews provided in-depth information where needed to fill in our understanding of select issues. Community surveys allowed us to quantify the prevalence of issues among a broad population of respondents.

After collecting data from the mixed methods assessment, each Extension office determined the set of issues for which it could have the greatest community impact. This process involved thinking about both needs and assets that we bring to the table alongside local, regional, and state partners. The County/Area Program Plan - a supplemental document to this report - lists the issues that the Extension office will address, goals for each issue, and the people/partners/programs involved to help us achieve these goals.

This report represents a point in time in our ongoing conversation about how CSU can best put our resources to work alongside Colorado communities. The Program Plan can be updated as needed to reflect the changing needs of communities and the solutions we co-create to address them. In this way, we hope to continue to build trust in Extension as the place where "university meets community".



SUMMARY: WHERE UNIVERSITY MEETS COMMUNITY



COMMUNITY MAKEUP

DEMOGRAPHICS

SELF-IDENTIFIED

**ETHNIC
MINORITIES**



6.9%

STATE: 20.8%

**UNEMPLOYMENT
RATE**



7.6%

STATE: 6.4%

**COLLEGE
DEGREE**



38.9%

STATE: 38.8%

**MEDIAN
AGE**



45.7

STATE: 36.6

**MEDIAN
INCOME**



\$65,747

STATE: \$73,219

**POPULATION
IN POVERTY**



2.9%

STATE: 7.2%

ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTS

**SECONDARY
DATA SOURCES**

17

Example source:
Gilpin County Quality of
Life Survey

**KEY
INFORMANTS**

5

Example source:
Cattle Producer

**SURVEY
RESPONSES**

105

Survey was distributed
broadly throughout the
community.

SUMMARY: WHERE UNIVERSITY MEETS COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Priority issues arising from our review of secondary data, interviews with key informants, and a community survey included:

- Access to healthy/nutritious/fresh foods
- Choosing sustainable landscapes
- Community emergency management
- Developing youth life skills
- Emergency preparedness
- Forest management
- Forest wildfire treatments/mitigation
- Healthy ecosystems
- Healthy homes and radon mitigation
- Maintaining a rural community quality
- Mental health/stress management for youth
- Mental health/stress management/suicide prevention
- Pest management
- Soil health
- Water quality

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

CSU Extension works in partnership with communities to co-create solutions to important and emerging issues. We aim to bridge community needs with dynamic, science-based educational resources from the university. Based on local needs and Extension and partner assets, we plan to work with the community in the following areas:

HOUSEHOLD, FAMILY & FINANCES

Because Gilpin County contains the fourth highest levels of radon among Colorado counties, we will work with partners to increase the number of radon tests conducted by residents.

NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

With forests in the county having increased in density due to fire suppression and under the growing threat of wildfire, we will work with partners to increase adoption of fire mitigation, defensible space, and emergency preparedness practices by residents.

PERSONAL PROPERTY, YARD & LAND

To address a variety of issues such as access to healthy foods, healthy aging, and advancing healthy ecosystems, we will work with the community to increase participation in community gardens and to support native species in landscapes.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

With higher-than-average youth suicide rates and mental health issues among youth, we will provide positive youth development with a focus on recreational opportunities and expanding access.



COMMUNITY NEEDS: FROM SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data was selected based on guidance from the state Extension office. In some cases, the availability of locally relevant data was limited. Key issues/needs were identified from our analysis of selected sources. The list of key issues/needs is therefore not exhaustive but should represent important issues/needs in the community.

SAMPLE SECONDARY DATA SOURCES

GILPIN
COUNTY
QUALITY OF
LIFE SURVEY
(2019)

COUNTY
PROFILE
(2020)

GILPIN COUNTY
COMMUNITY
HEALTH
ASSESSMENT
(2018)

ST VRAIN WILDFIRE/
WATERSHED
ASSESSMENT
(NORTH GILPIN)
(2012)

KIDS COUNT
(2020)

SURVEY OF
CRITICAL
WETLANDS IN
GILPIN COUNTY
(2011)

KEY ISSUES/NEEDS

- Access to broadband and technology
- Access to healthy/nutritious/fresh foods
- Animal/plant identification
- Bullying/harassment
- Economic and business development
- Equity/opportunity for diverse youth
- Food insecurity and affordability
- Forest wildfire treatments/mitigation
- Habitat and species protection
- Healthy homes and radon mitigation
- Identifying and removing invasive & noxious plants
- Land use/environmental management
- Mental health/stress management for youth
- Mental health/stress management/suicide prevention
- Personal/family financial management and planning
- Providing certifications for workforce skills/workforce skill development
- Quality of life
- Substance abuse prevention and treatment
- Support for completing high school
- Upgrade community infrastructure
- Water conservation and efficiency
- Water quality



COMMUNITY NEEDS: FROM KEY INFORMANTS

Key informants were selected based on issues uncovered through secondary data, community demographics including groups currently underrepresented in Extension programming, and staff discussions. Interviews and/or focus groups were conducted with key informants in order to increase our understanding of issues/needs in the community.

SAMPLE KEY INFORMANTS

P2P
COUNSELING
(2021)

CATTLE
PRODUCER
(2021)

JEFFCO
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT
(2021)

HOLISTIC
HOMESTEAD
MARKET
(2021)

GILPIN COUNTY
DEPARTMENT
OF HUMAN
SERVICES
(2021)

KEY ISSUES/NEEDS

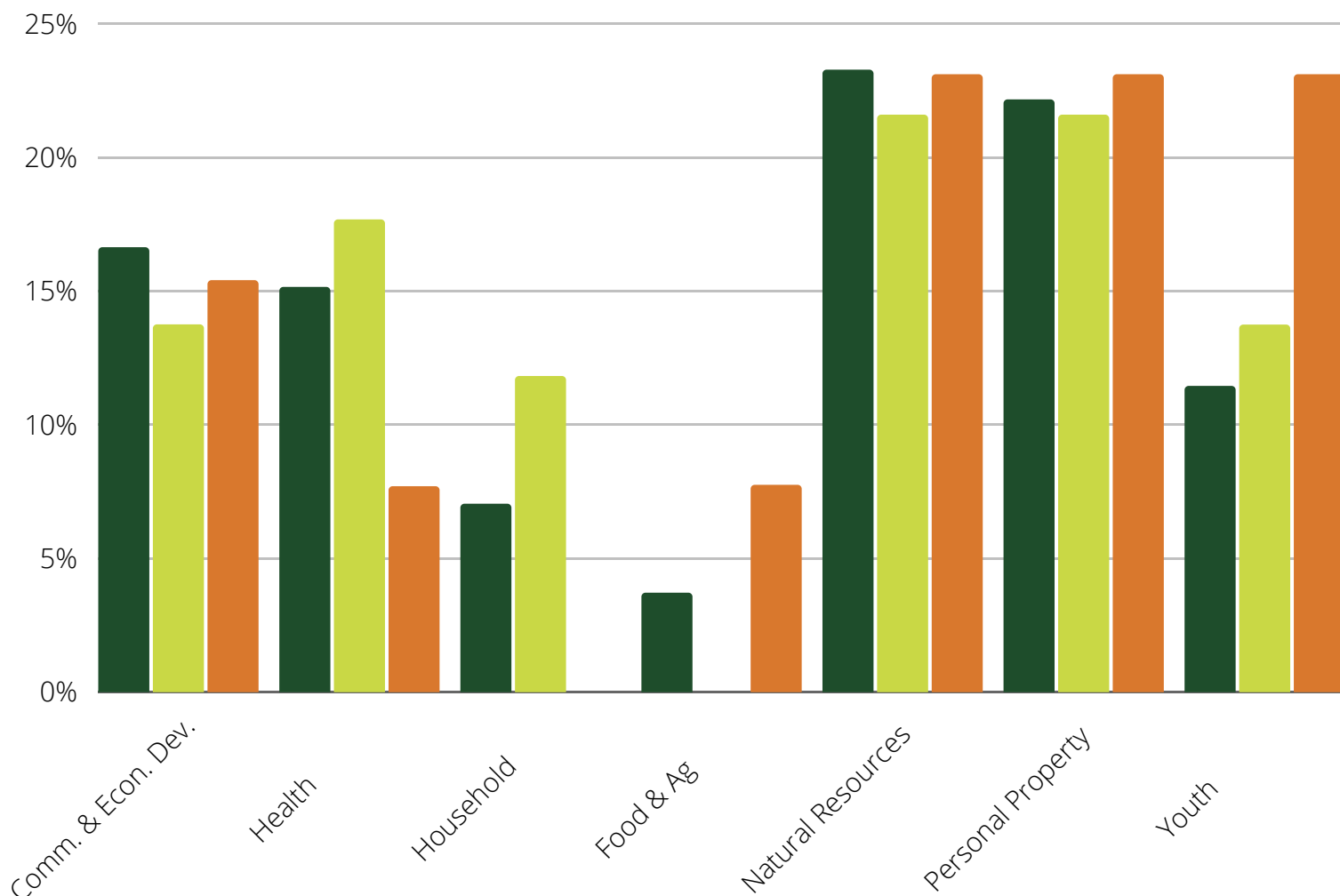
- Access to healthy/nutritious/fresh foods
- Food insecurity and affordability
- Healthy aging
- Lack of transportation
- Mental health/stress management for youth
- Mental health/stress management/suicide prevention
- Providing certifications for workforce skills/workforce skill development
- Small/hobby farm and ranch management
- Social isolation
- Support for affordable & accessible healthcare

COMMUNITY NEEDS: FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

A survey was conducted to assess the prevalence of key issues/needs in the community. The survey was disseminated as widely as possible, and we received 105 responses. Differences in race/ethnicity, education level, and gender between survey respondents and the community as a whole are highlighted. In the spirit of inclusivity, priorities are identified by topic area for all respondents, those who are unfamiliar with Extension, and self-identified ethnic minorities.

	Self-Identified Ethnic Minority	Bachelor's Degree	Female
Survey Respondents	4.8%	62.9%	74.3%
County	6.9%	38.9%	47.5%

Graph Legend





COMMUNITY NEEDS: FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

For each large topic area, priorities were selected by survey respondents. The lists below indicate the top tier of priority issues for all respondents, those who are unfamiliar with Extension, and self-identified ethnic minorities.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Community emergency management
- Creating a welcoming/safe/inclusive community
- Funding to support community initiatives
- Maintaining a rural community quality

HOUSEHOLD, FAMILY, & FINANCES

- Emergency preparedness
- Healthy homes and radon mitigation
- Parenting and childcare resources

FOOD & AGRICULTURE

- Drought impact and planning for agriculture
- Pest management
- Small/hobby farm and ranch management
- Soil health

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

- Access to healthy/nutritious/fresh foods
- Healthy aging
- Mental health/stress management/suicide prevention
- Safe home food preservation

NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

- Animal/plant identification
- Forest wildfire treatments/mitigation
- Healthy ecosystems
- Water quality

PERSONAL PROPERTY, YARD & LAND

- Addressing common and invasive pests and insects
- Choosing sustainable landscapes
- Forest management
- Identifying and removing invasive & noxious plants

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Developing youth leadership skills
- Developing youth life skills
- Mental health/stress management for youth
- Recreational opportunities



ASPIRATIONS MOVING FORWARD

This report, along with the supplemental Program Plan, documents high priority needs and Extension's plans to meet them in partnership with the community. As new issues emerge and resources become available, the Program Plan may shift. Colorado State University Extension aspires to ensure that future resources align with community needs across the state. Our aim is to be highly valued for inclusive, impactful community engagement in support of our land grant university mission.

REFERENCES

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This Program Plan lists the issues Extension will address in partnership with the community over the next five years. A description of the current situation for each issue provides context in support of the work. Goal statements address how Extension will facilitate solutions to the situations alongside target audiences. Goal achievement can be measured in a variety of ways over time, including the use of indicators for statewide issues. People, Partners, and Programs represent the resources Extension and the community are dedicating to achieve the shared goals. Some resources may be existing and readily available, whereas others may need to be acquired through new partnerships or funding. Depending on the availability of resources, some goals may address issues directly and fully whereas other goals might address a single contributing factor to an issue.

Issue	Situation	Extension Goal	People/Partners/Programs
Gardening/growing food	Residents ranked gardening as an important personal property issue in which education and resources would be most helpful (Gilpin County Community Survey, 2021). Water law, wildlife, and mountain temperatures pose challenges for gardening in Gilpin County. Gardening is a holistic way to address a number of high priority issues in Gilpin County including mental health, healthy aging, and access to healthy foods (Community Health Improvement Plan, 2019; Community Health Assessment, 2018). Gardening is beneficial to mental and physical health and provides healthy and affordable foods. Research shows that gardening is an activity that promotes healthy aging .	More residents grow food at the community garden.	We will continue managing our community garden and teaching residents how to grow vegetables in the mountains. Many plots in the community garden are accessible raised beds. We will continue to encourage growers to donate harvests to the Gilpin County Food Pantry. We plan to pursue partnerships with Gilpin County Public Health, Peak to Peak Counseling, Senior Services, and Holistic Homestead Market to combine gardening with local experts in mental health, healthy aging, and local food access.

Issue	Situation	Extension Goal	People/Partners/Programs
Forest wildfire treatments/mitigation	Gilpin County's forests have increased in density due to fire suppression. Gilpin has not had a major fire in over 100 years. Dense forests with little diversity pose higher fire and watershed health risks (intense fires, soil erosion and heavy debris flow into waterways). Residents ranked forest wildfire mitigation and emergency preparedness as the highest issues under natural resources and family/finance, in which education and resources would be most helpful (Gilpin County Community Survey, 2021).	Increase adoption of fire mitigation, defensible space, and wildfire emergency preparedness practices by Gilpin County residents.	We will continue to offer education on wildfire emergency preparedness, and site-specific recommendations for fire reduction defensible space practices. We will pursue grant funding to help offset the cost of these practices. We will continue engaging with important local partners such as Gilpin County Office of Emergency Management, Clear Creek Watershed and Forest Health Partnership, Colorado State Forest Service, Boulder Watershed Collective, Fire Districts, and Axe & Snax. We will pursue partnerships with Arapaho and Roosevelt USFS.
Choosing sustainable landscapes	Gilpin residents value the rural mountain character of the county and prioritize environmental sustainability (Gilpin County Comprehensive Plan, 2020; Gilpin County Community Survey, 2021). Native plants and wildflowers provide food for wildlife and pollinators, while noxious weeds form a monoculture and reduce wildlife habitat. Choosing native species in landscaping, and managing noxious weeds all contribute to sustainable landscapes.	Increase adoption of planting native species and controlling noxious weeds by residents.	The Gilpin County CSU Extension Director is contracted with the county to serve as the Gilpin County weed coordinator/manager. We will continue to offer educational opportunities for residents to learn how to identify and manage noxious weeds. We will continue to promote sustainable landscapes through our native plant demonstration garden, seed sales, site visits, and educational resources. We will pursue grant opportunities to help with the cost of weed management. We will pursue partnerships with Golden Gate Canyon State Park, USFS, and surrounding County weed managers.

Issue	Situation	Extension Goal	People/Partners/Programs
Healthy homes and radon mitigation	Gilpin County contains the 4th highest levels of radon in Colorado. Addressing radon in homes is a high priority for residents (Gilpin County Community Survey, 2021 and Gilpin County Community Health Improvement Plan, 2019). Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.	Increase the number of radon tests conducted by residents in Gilpin County.	We will continue to provide education and outreach on radon testing and mitigation. We will continue to partner with Gilpin Public Health to provide free radon testing kits. We will pursue partnerships with local realtors on this issue.
Youth Development Recreational Opportunities	In our CNA survey, households with youth reported the following would be most helpful for youth: social and recreational opportunities (20%); mental health and stress management (~18%); developing leadership skills (~18%); and developing life skills (~18%). In 2019, HSR 17 , which includes Gilpin, had higher rates than the state average of teen suicide attempts (10.1%), suicide ideation (22.3%), and signs and symptoms of depression (39.2%) within the past year, with higher rates among females, LGB youth, trans youth, and Native, Hispanic, and multiracial youth. The presence of “mentors and support for development of skills and interests” and “opportunities for engagement within school and community” are both protective factors for youth mental health .	Increase the number of youth ages 11-18 involved with 4-H afterschool program (EAGLE).	We will continue to provide the EAGLE program, which provides social and recreational opportunities for youth as well as skill development through a leadership team that incorporates youth engagement principles. We will continue to partner with Gilpin County Parks and Recreation to provide the program, with Resilience1220 to provide mental health programming, and work with the school district, public health, and human services to advertise the program to families. We will pursue partnerships with other youth-serving organizations, such as TEENS, Inc. and the Holistic Homestead, to expand program opportunities.