

# ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Today, the foundations of Garfield County's economy remain very similar to the economic foundations that shaped this area well over 100 years ago: natural resource development, agriculture, regional services, and tourism. The county is notable for its concentration of population and development in the area's two major river valleys, and the counter-balancing of large expanses of public lands, and lightly populated arid plateaus in the remainder of the county.

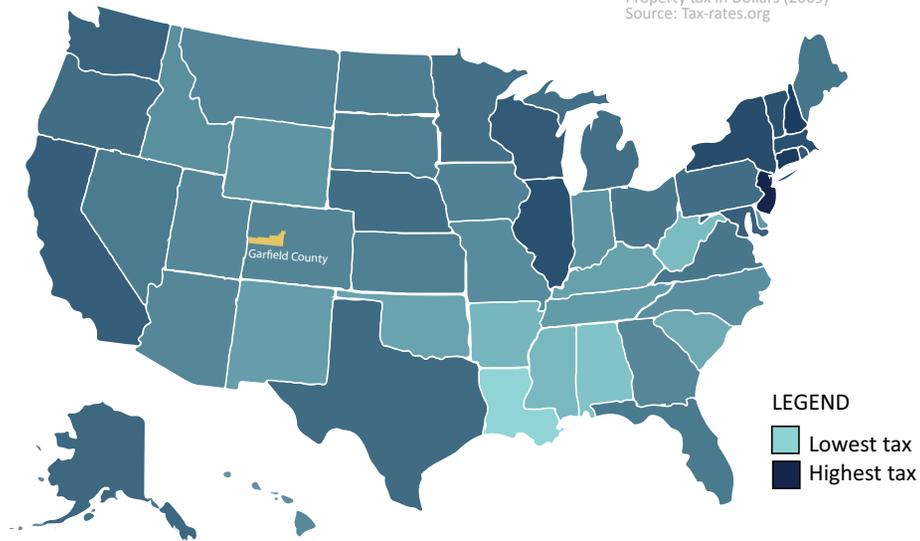
Garfield County, particularly the area between Rifle and Parachute, has many producing natural gas wells and large shale gas deposits. Emerging natural gas production technologies, coupled with rising gas prices, produced a notable energy boom between 2002 and 2009, and natural gas production continues to be a major contributor of the Garfield County economy.

Tourism has long been a staple of the Garfield County

economy, including the hot springs attractions in Glenwood Springs, outdoor recreation, and overnight accommodations associated with I-70, and a strong hunting and fishing services industry. In recent years, the tourism/second home industry in nearby Pitkin and Eagle counties stimulated significant construction, services employment, and residential housing development in Garfield County, particularly in the Carbondale and Glenwood Springs area. Over the past decade, increasing numbers of retirees have relocated to the area for its relatively mild climate, quality of life, world-class health care, recreation opportunities, and expansive open space.

Though there are similarities between municipalities when it comes to economic activity and a community's economic development approach, each municipality also has its differences.

Figure 20: Property taxes by State: Median Property tax in Dollars (2009)  
Source: Tax-rates.org



# TAXATION

According to taxfoundation.org, Colorado ranks 18th in the overall index for its business tax climate. This index evaluates the state's corporate tax, individual income tax, sales tax, unemployment insurance tax and property tax, as part of the Tax Climate Index. Coincidentally, the state also ranks 35th in the state and local tax collection per capita at a collection rate per capita of \$4,304. Colorado currently ranks ninth lowest of all states that have Corporate Income Tax at a rate of 4.63 percent, as of January 1, 2014. Per capita this equates to \$124 that sets Colorado at 31st of 50 states for its corporate tax burden.

The property tax rate is set and collected by the county. By state law, commercial and industrial property is assessed at 29 percent of market value. The median property tax in Garfield County, Colorado, is \$1,276 per year for a home worth the median value of \$341,600. Garfield County collects, on average, 0.37 percent of a property's assessed fair market value as property tax. Garfield County is ranked in the top one third (1,052nd of the 3,143) of counties in the United States, in order of the median amount of property taxes collected. The average yearly property tax paid by Garfield County residents' amounts to about 1.71 percent of their yearly incomes. Garfield County is ranked 1,758th of the 3,143 counties for property taxes as a percentage of median income (tax-rate.org).

Colorado has a Senior Property Tax Exemption. Colorado voters passed this exemption for senior citizens in the November 2000 election (also known as Referendum A). The law provides that 50 percent of the first \$200,000 of actual value for a qualifying senior citizen's primary residence shall be exempt from property taxation. In order to qualify for the exemption the senior must 1) have reached age 65 as of January 1, 2015; 2) have occupied the property for 10 years prior to January 1, 2015; and, 3) have filed an application for the exemption.

Colorado has a state sales tax of 2.9 percent. In addition to this sales tax, each county and local government also have its own sales tax. According to the state's constitution, any increase in sales taxes must be approved by the voters. For Garfield County, the residents have adopted a one percent sales tax and some areas of the county also have a transportation tax which partially funds the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority. This tax is set at one percent, and is in addition to the local sales tax rates. Sales tax collection is an important indicator of a municipality's fiscal health, as it is often upwards of 50 percent of a municipality's annual budget.

	Local Sales Tax	Transportation Tax	County Sales Tax	State Sales Tax	Total Sales Tax	Percentage of general fund budget (est.)
CARBONDALE	3.5%	1%	1%	2.9%	8.4%	55%
GLENWOOD SPRINGS	3.7%	1%	1%	2.9%	8.6%	41.8%
NEW CASTLE	3.5%	1%	1%	2.9%	8.4%	37.5%
SILT	3%	-	1%	2.9%	6.9%	36.9%
RIFLE	4.25%	-	1%	2.9%	8.15%	51.9%
PARACHUTE	3.75%	-	1%	2.9%	7.65%	49.9%

# SALES TAX

## GARFIELD COUNTY

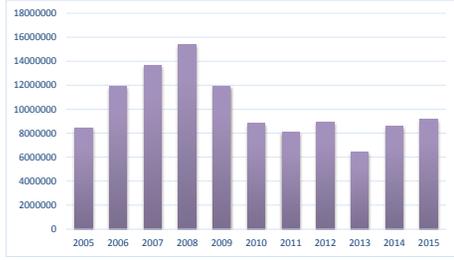
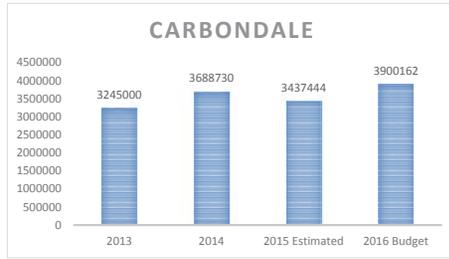


Figure 21: Countywide Sales Tax Collections

Sales tax collection on a countywide basis has been recovering since the low in 2011, caused by the Great Recession. The overall sales tax numbers for the years between 2011 and 2014 are skewed (and are low) due to state required refunds for over-collection of certain taxes by the state. Even with the county providing annual refunds, sales tax revenues have largely recovered and exceed collections in 2005. Another tax the state collects is the gasoline excise tax. This tax is set at 22 cents per gallon as of January 1, 2014, which places it as the 33rd lowest gas tax in the country.

## CARBONDALE

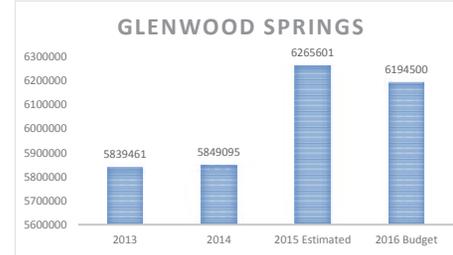
If one is interested in starting a business or relocating a business to Carbondale, the Carbondale Chamber of Commerce is an excellent resource. The chamber conducts visioning sessions with the Business Development Committee to explore options, opportunities, and have access to business mentors and resources.



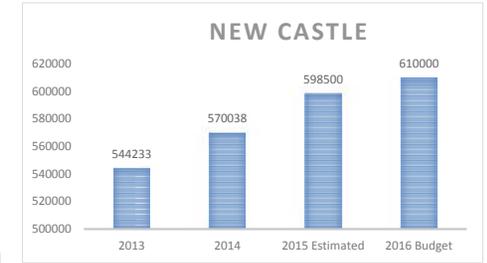
## GLENWOOD SPRINGS

The economic outlook is good in Glenwood Springs. The 2013 – 2014 comparison shows unemployment is low and holding steady at 3.8 percent. Sales tax collections continue to increase and were up over seven percent in 2014 over 2013. Of particular interest is the sales tax collection by area of the city, which shows increases in most areas, and especially in west Glenwood Springs, where a number of automobile dealerships are located. SIC code sales tax collections also note an increase in automotive sales, as well as dining. A number of new restaurants have opened downtown and the Downtown Development Authority has helped build two parking structures, complete new alley and street improvements, and has other downtown improvement projects in the design phase.

Glenwood Springs is a resort community of over 9,000 people, that entertains over 1.5 million tourists per year. There is a sales tax rebate program for retailers who make building improvements. Accommodations tax was up a healthy 15 percent in 2013 over 2014, and the city has exceeded pre-recession accommodation tax collections (2008).



The town offers mountain living, with a wide range of housing options and year-round outdoor recreation opportunities. The town is especially proud of its twelve popular restaurants. Sales tax receipts from its restaurants increased nearly six percent in 2014. Lakota Canyon Ranch and Golf Club is home to an award-winning golf course. Easy access to Interstate 70 and the Rifle Garfield County Airport, as well as a diverse job force, make New Castle attractive to light industry and retail investors. The town has a record of proactive support for business, including downtown improvements (streetscaping, public art, outdoor dining) and a new pedestrian bridge and trails which provide access to I-70 interchange businesses. The town staff and councilors are ready to discuss opportunities with developers and entrepreneurs. A range of incentives are available for qualifying businesses.



## PARACHUTE / BATTLEMENT MESA

Five thousand friendly folks call Parachute/Battlement Mesa community their home. They live in quiet, established neighborhoods, lively retirement communities, and well-planned multi-family developments. With a combination of rich history, modern amenities, and room to grow, the area offers the best of Western Colorado. The Town of Parachute and the adjoining unincorporated community of Battlement Mesa act as one, and are prime for business development – featuring interstate and railway accessibility, a skilled workforce, ample available land, and a healthy pro-growth sentiment. (continued)

## NEW CASTLE

New Castle has three commercial zones: Historic Main Street, the I-70 interchange, and the industrial zone south of the Colorado River. There are also mixed use zones in Castle Valley Ranch and Lakota Canyon Ranch. There are construction sites available in each of these zones.



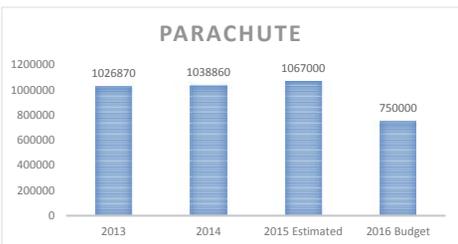
# PARACHUTE/ BATTLEMENT MESA

(continued)

This community is one of the fastest-growing on Colorado's Western Slope, and has ample available sites ready for residential and commercial developments in a variety of sizes. There are several commercial centers that offer storefront and office units. With multiple motels, an RV park, modular homes, and apartments, the community also has room for its workforce and, in regard to median home price is the most affordable area within Garfield County.

The community serves as the gateway to the natural gas rich fields of the Piceance Basin. Oil shale abounds in the cliffs north of town where research and exploration on its production potential continues today. After enjoying the booms and surviving the busts, Parachute has grown into a thriving community of quiet residential neighborhoods with supporting businesses and services. It is serviced by two railroads. Access to the railroads and the Interstate make this community a prime place to conduct business. Both Parachute and Battlement Mesa have ample commercial property available to support new business opportunities and professionally trained workforce. In a forthcoming comprehensive plan update, the town will identify annexation opportunities that will provide even more space to expand and do business.

The town is open for business and as their motto states, it is "A Safe Place to Land." Many economic development incentives are available and can be tailored to individual needs.



# RIFLE

Rifle's unique character has been shaped by a ranching and mining past. Rifle straddles the Colorado River, and lies at the foot of the dramatic Roan Plateau; a geographic formation containing some of the world's largest deposits of natural gas and oil shale. This unique regional economic center is building on its diverse place-based assets. Downtown Rifle offers typical western small town atmosphere, with antique shops, dining, and historic museums. Residents appreciate that Rifle is much more than quaint; it is a complete living and working town that offers a unique way of life. Rifle is a regional economic center, and an ideal environment to draw ideas, intellectual capital, and investments to the region.

Rifle proudly embraces stewardship of it's part of the river and watershed. As a gateway to Rifle's historic downtown, the Colorado River also adds greatly to the quality of life for those who call this place home.

The City of Rifle offers several forms of assistance and incentives to businesses and industries that meet the city's economic development goals. The city council may approve incentives such as fee waivers, infrastructure assistance, sales tax rebates, or other forms of financial assistance. City staff is dedicated to finding creative methods to make projects pencil out for developers and staff works closely with the Rifle Regional Economic Development Corporation (RREDC) to collaborate with the business community.

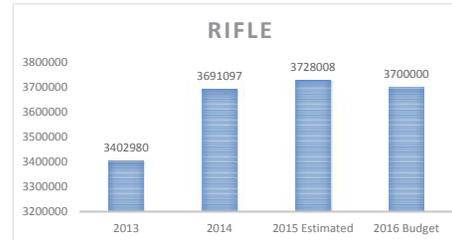
The city has many private lots available for commercial and industrial development. The city owns several downtown opportunity sites to partner with developers to bring retail, restaurant, office, and housing near downtown amenities such as the seven-plex Brenden Theater. In addition, the City of Rifle has developed the "Energy Innovation Center" with approximately 35 acres of industrial pad sites available for long-term lease with infrastructure already installed, and an additional 100 acres that the city intends to extend services to in the future. The City of Rifle seeks to attract energy-related employers to the site, including businesses related to natural gas, oil, solar, or biofuels.

As a western river town and a healthy energy village, Rifle, Colorado is primed for energy independence and

economic stability. Rifle is a unique western community that is embracing the energy of its place – including tremendous opportunities to grow, add jobs, and declare energy independence with off-grid technology. This community aims to sustain not only its balanced local economy, but its historic downtown, its classic mining and ranching history, its river, recreational and tourism assets, and its idyllic quality of life.

Today, Rifle is investing in alternative strategies to ensure a long-term, balanced and diverse economy that can supply reliable energy, innovation, and employment to the region and for a healthy cross-section of businesses. By actively committing to a forward-thinking strategy of renewable sources and distributed energy, Rifle is becoming a tech and energy showcase community.

Rifle has embraced the idea of providing for robust and diverse energy alternatives. Its Energy Innovation Center area offers 35 acres of industrial pad sites for long-term lease with infrastructure in place, with another 100 acres that the city intends to extend services to in the future.



# SILT

The Town of Silt offers an opportunity for business establishments to locate in this diverse community. The town has many properties in the newly improved downtown core, adjacent to Interstate 70, along State Highway 6 and 24, or in one of the many commercial developments along the Colorado River that have stunning views. It is not uncommon to see bald eagles, Great Blue Herons, deer, elk, foxes, coyotes, and hawks in the breathtaking landscape that is western Garfield County. Each entrance to the town has been planned commercially and the entire town offers great visibility for passing motorists. The town has sites between 5,000 square feet to over 85 acres of usable commercial

ground in numerous commercial areas, with all the necessary utilities, and can be easily subdivided and/or zoned to suit any business needs. The town has partnered with the Colorado Department of Transportation to do major improvements to the state highways, in order to accommodate any and all commercial uses proposed. Silt has at its disposal two feasibility studies regarding retail development that may provide commercial developers the demographic information that they would need to open and conduct business in Silt.

Not only does the town have a robust potential workforce, but the citizens' community values greatly support the concept of living, shopping and working locally. The Town of Silt is prepared to offer sales tax incentives or tax increment financing in order to entice commercial growth within town limits. The Silt Urban Renewal Authority is poised to present infrastructure cost reductions to potential commercial developers. Commercial landowners have indicated that they will be very competitive in offering their properties for sale or lease, and the town's pro-business staff and Board of Trustees will ensure that the development process goes as smoothly as it possible.

The town has completed \$1.4 million worth of Main Street improvements, including a wide sidewalk, landscaping, street furniture and street lighting. These improvements highlight the existing businesses in the downtown core, and attract new businesses to invest, by reducing the initial costs of development. In 2015, the Camp Colorado River Recreational Vehicle Park opened, with 67 spaces and a beautiful lodge on the edge of the Colorado River. The town will embark on a whitewater park feasibility study in the next few months to capitalize on the immense potential the river has to offer. The town is also extremely committed to walkability, boasting over four miles of trails in town.

