

LIVABLE WAGES

Community Vision – A healthy community has a diverse and sustainable economy that pays livable wages and offers meaningful work.

The cost of living continues to rise in communities in Southwest Colorado. In our region Cortez (Montezuma County) is the least expensive place for a family to live, while Rico (Dolores County) is the most expensive place to live. Nationally, inflation was about 13% from 2003 to 2007, and the minimum wage increased 33% (from \$5.15 to \$6.85 per hour). We see from the chart at right that the cost of living in our region increased from 25% to 49% during that time period.

Livable Hourly Wages by Area Southwest Colorado	2003	2007	% Change 2003 - 2007
	*Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm	*Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm	
Archuleta - Pagosa Springs	\$ 25.73	\$ 32.58	27%
Dolores - Dove Creek	\$ 22.04	\$ 32.54	48%
Dolores - Rico	\$ 26.68	\$ 38.92	46%
La Plata - Rural	\$ 25.44	\$ 33.64	32%
La Plata - Bayfield	\$ 25.44	\$ 34.31	35%
La Plata - Durango	\$ 26.02	\$ 33.60	29%
La Plata - Ignacio	\$ 24.29	\$ 33.16	37%
Montezuma - Rural	\$ 26.02	\$ 34.37	32%
Montezuma - Cortez	\$ 23.13	\$ 32.01	38%
Montezuma - Dolores	\$ 23.13	\$ 33.02	43%
Montezuma - Mancos	\$ 23.13	\$ 34.37	49%
San Juan - All	\$ 26.78	\$ 33.34	25%

* assumes 2 children requiring full time day care

What level of income is necessary to support a given size and type of household? A livable wage addresses the essential financial needs for basic living tools such as shelter, healthcare, childcare, and nutrition. When one earns less than a livable wage, he or she is forced to make undesirable choices such as working two or more jobs, working longer hours, making longer commutes, sharing a residence, or giving up basic items such as a telephone or insurance.

We prepared a basic expenditures budget, using costs drawn from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditures - for the nation as a whole - for 2005 (the latest available) and adjusted those costs for inflation, using the Denver/Boulder Consumer Price Index for 2007.

Basic Expenditures Budget for 2007	Single Person renting	Single Parent 1 child renting	Family of 4 renting*
Food	\$ 3,073	\$ 5,851	\$ 8,622
Vehicle expenses	\$ 2,368	\$ 4,532	\$ 5,962
Health Care (Incl. Insurance)	\$ 1,750	\$ 3,359	\$ 2,786
Clothing	\$ 980	\$ 1,657	\$ 2,850
Personal care products	\$ 328	\$ 583	\$ 732
Child Care ¹	\$ -	\$ 8,902	\$ 17,805
Entertainment	\$ 1,335	\$ 2,622	\$ 3,152
Utilities, Fuels & Public services	\$ 2,024	\$ 3,270	\$ 4,059
Pensions & Social Security	\$ 2,247	\$ 5,010	\$ 6,995
Miscellaneous	\$ 563	\$ 947	\$ 887
Total Expenses (excluding rent)	\$ 14,668	\$ 36,733	\$ 53,850
Adjusted expenses ²	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Consumer Expenditure Survey 2005 (www.stats.bls.gov/cex)

¹ Source: Tricounty Early Childhood Programs. Childcare expenses are averaged for all counties (\$4.28/hr) per child

² Adjusted to 2007 using Denver-Boulder Consumer Price Index (1.058)

* assumes 2 children requiring full-time day care

We then added expenditures for rent and childcare that are specific to our towns and counties. We did not complete this process for the Indian reservation areas of the region as many of their costs are subsidized. A mileage allowance was added for the communities of Silverton, Rico, and Dove Creek to recognize the extra distance that people in those towns must travel for many basic goods and services. The livable wage per hour for each community is summarized in the following tables, as well as how many jobs an individual would need (at minimum wage) to sustain just the basic needs of a household.

Notes: the minimum wage for Colorado is currently at \$6.85 per hour, effective July 24, 2007.

¹The livable wage per hour is calculated as Total Living Expenses / 2080 hour work year.

* In some communities local rent estimates are not available so estimates of fair market rent provided by HUD are used.

Archuleta County Pagosa Springs	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$599* per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$800 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$900 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 7,188	\$ 9,600	\$ 10,800
Total Living Expense	\$ 22,707	\$ 48,464	\$ 67,773
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 10.92	\$ 23.30	\$ 32.58
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.6	3.4	4.8

Dolores County Dove Creek	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$599* per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$450 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$800 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 7,188	\$ 5,400	\$ 9,600
Travel Expense (35 trips x 75 miles x .42)	\$ 1,102	\$ 1,102	\$ 1,102
Total Living Expense	\$ 23,809	\$ 45,366	\$ 67,675
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.45	\$ 21.81	\$ 32.54
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.7	3.2	4.7

Dolores County Rico	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$599* per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$1,450 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,900 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 7,188	\$ 17,400	\$ 22,800
Travel Expense (35 trips x 80 miles x .42)	\$ 1,176	\$ 1,176	\$ 1,176
Total Living Expense	\$ 23,883	\$ 57,440	\$ 80,949
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.48	\$ 27.62	\$ 38.92
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.7	4.0	5.7

Rural La Plata County	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$681* per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$900 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,350 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 8,172	\$ 10,800	\$ 12,996
Total Living Expense	\$ 23,691	\$ 49,664	\$ 69,969
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.39	\$ 23.88	\$ 33.64
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.7	3.5	4.9

La Plata County Bayfield	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$575 per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$950 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,200 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 6,900	\$ 11,400	\$ 14,400
Total Living Expense	\$ 22,419	\$ 50,264	\$ 71,373
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 10.78	\$ 24.17	\$ 34.31
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.6	3.5	5.0

La Plata County Durango	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$645 per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$717 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,077 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 7,740	\$ 8,604	\$ 12,924
Total Living Expense	\$ 23,259	\$ 47,468	\$ 69,897
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.18	\$ 22.82	\$ 33.60
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.6	3.3	4.9

La Plata County Ignacio	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$681* per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$600 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,000 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 8,172	\$ 7,200	\$ 12,000
Total Living Expense	\$ 23,691	\$ 46,064	\$ 68,973
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.39	\$ 22.15	\$ 33.16
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.7	3.2	4.8

Rural Montezuma County	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$681* per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$854* per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,210* per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 8,172	\$ 10,248	\$ 14,520
Total Living Expense	\$ 23,691	\$ 49,112	\$ 71,493
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.39	\$ 23.61	\$ 34.37
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.7	3.4	5.0

Montezuma County Cortez	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$450 per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$700 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$800 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 5,400	\$ 8,400	\$ 9,600
Total Living Expense	\$ 20,919	\$ 47,264	\$ 66,573
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 10.06	\$ 22.72	\$ 32.01
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.5	3.3	4.7

Montezuma County Dolores	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$650 per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$775 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$975 per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 7,800	\$ 9,300	\$ 11,700
Total Living Expense	\$ 23,319	\$ 48,164	\$ 68,673
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.21	\$ 23.16	\$ 33.02
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.6	3.4	4.8

Montezuma County Mancos	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$681* per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$650 per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$1,210* per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 8,172	\$ 7,800	\$ 14,520
Total Living Expense	\$ 23,691	\$ 46,664	\$ 71,493
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.39	\$ 22.43	\$ 34.37
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.7	3.3	5.0

San Juan County Silverton	Single Person renting 1 bdrm \$593* per month	Single Parent, 1 child renting 2 bdrm \$686* per month	Family of 4 renting 3 bdrm \$908* per month
Basic Expenditures (excluding rent)	\$ 15,519	\$ 38,864	\$ 56,973
2007 Rent Expense	\$ 7,116	\$ 8,232	\$ 10,896
Travel Expense (35 trips x 100 miles x .42)	\$ 1,470	\$ 1,470	\$ 1,470
Total Living Expense	\$ 24,105	\$ 48,566	\$ 69,339
Livable wage per hour ¹	\$ 11.59	\$ 23.35	\$ 33.34
# of jobs at minimum wage (\$6.85)	1.7	3.4	4.9