

Public Engagement for Rural Communities in Larimer County, Colorado



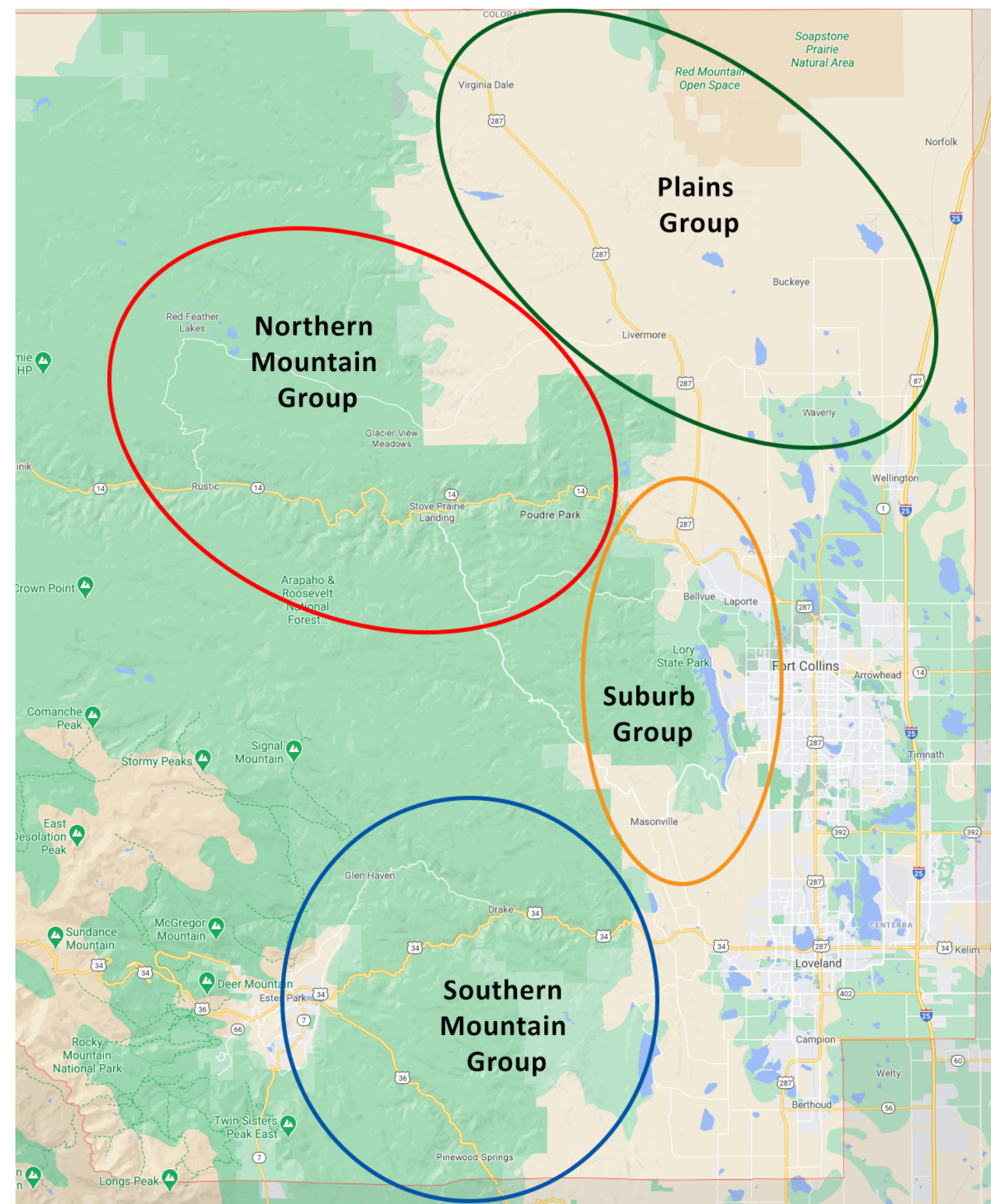
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Prepared for Larimer County

Introduction

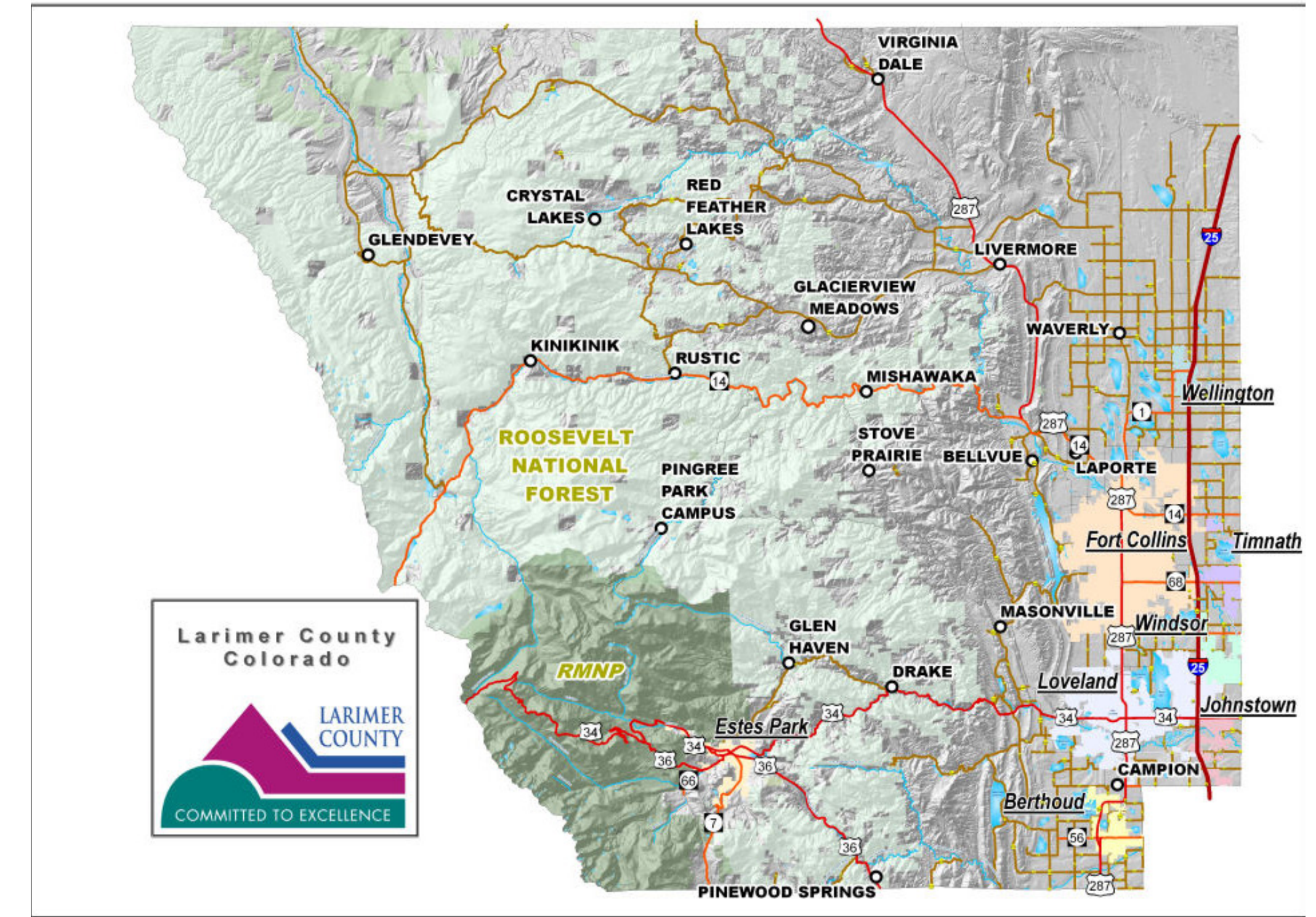
In the future, Larimer County aims to create subarea plans for the rural communities in the county. This capstone aims to provide a Community Engagement Plan for the rural centers and subareas of Larimer County during the initial engagement phase. The goal of this phase is to obtain input from the public regarding the communities' future and needs.

Methodology

Based on demographic data, land use, and topography/geography of each area, communities were divided into four groups: Northern Mountain, Southern Mountain, Plains, and Suburbs.

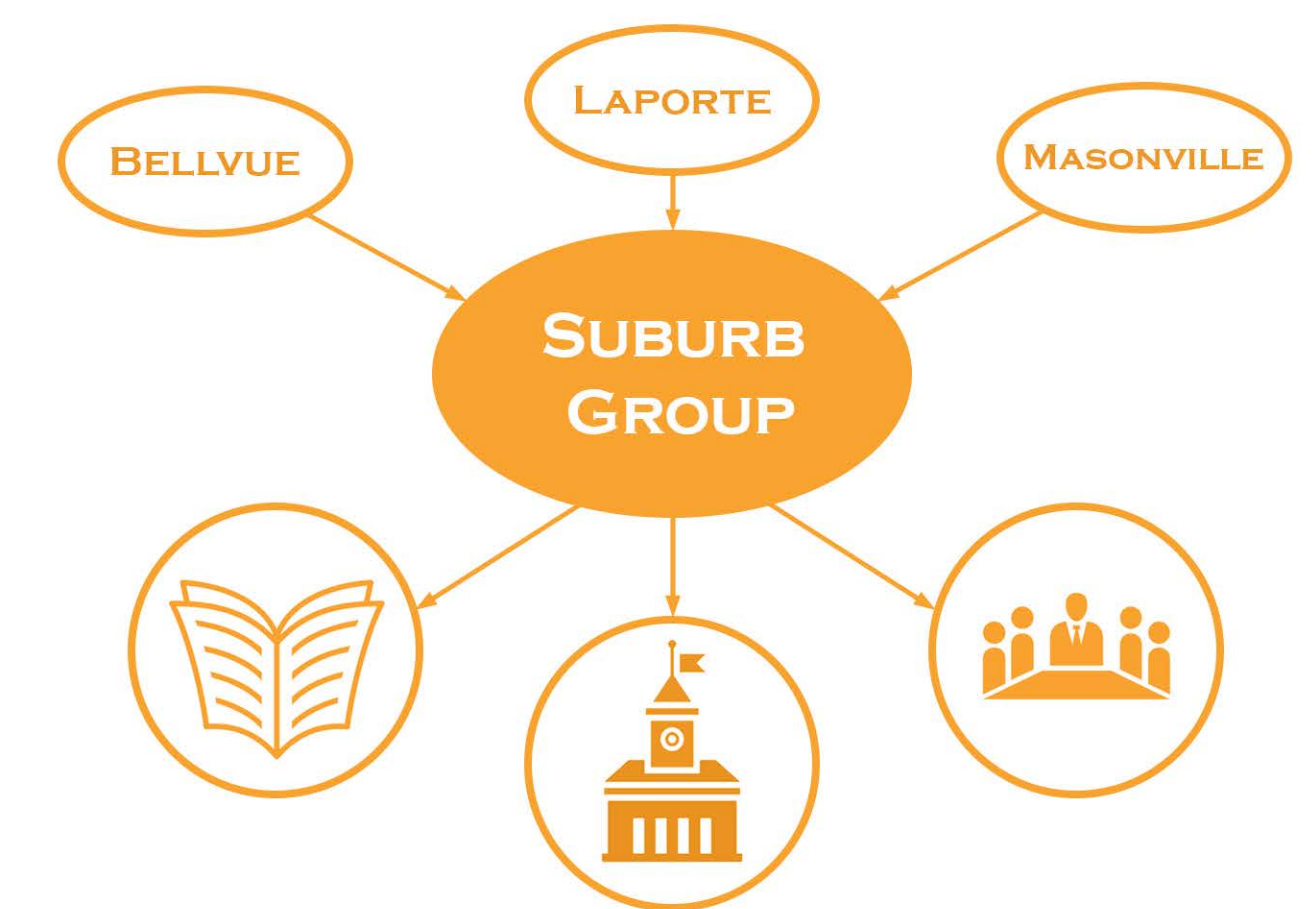
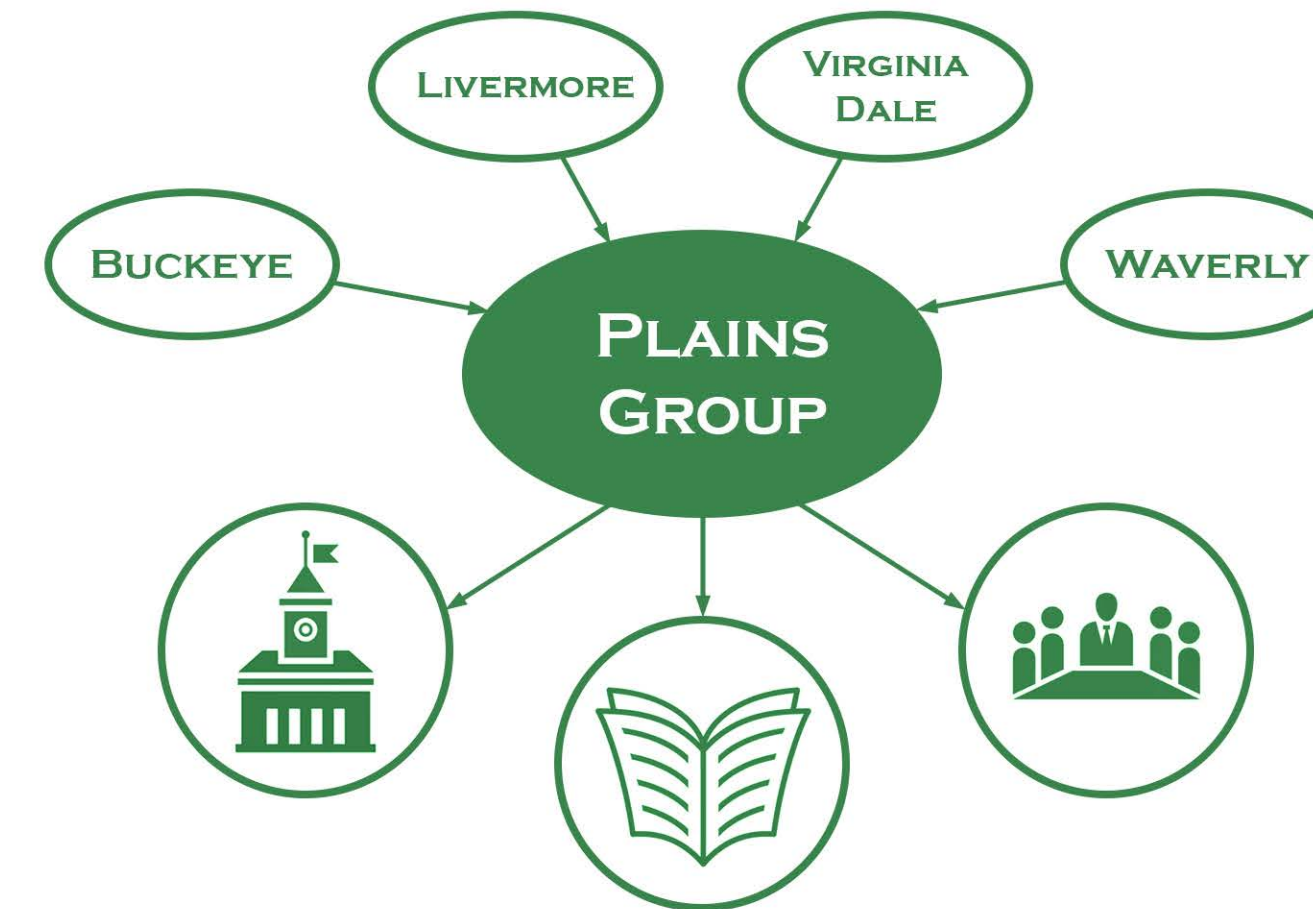
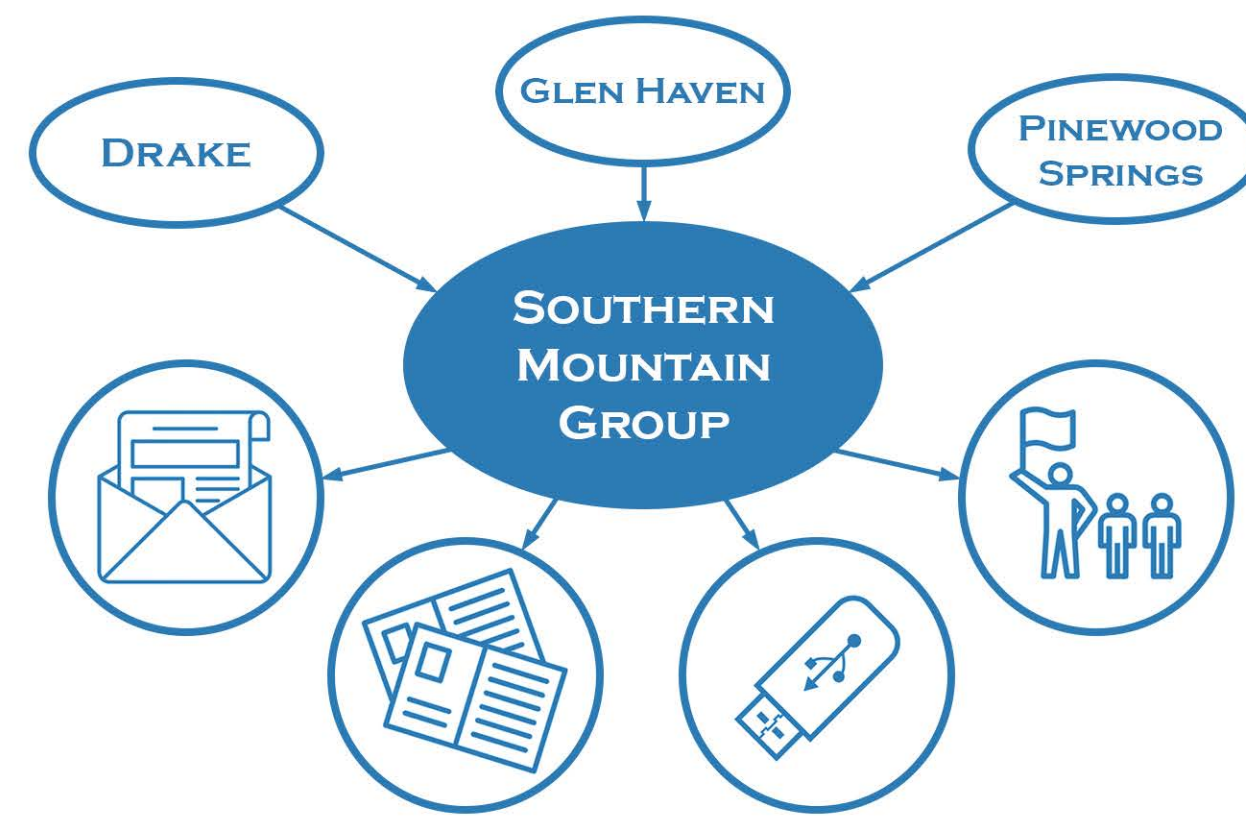
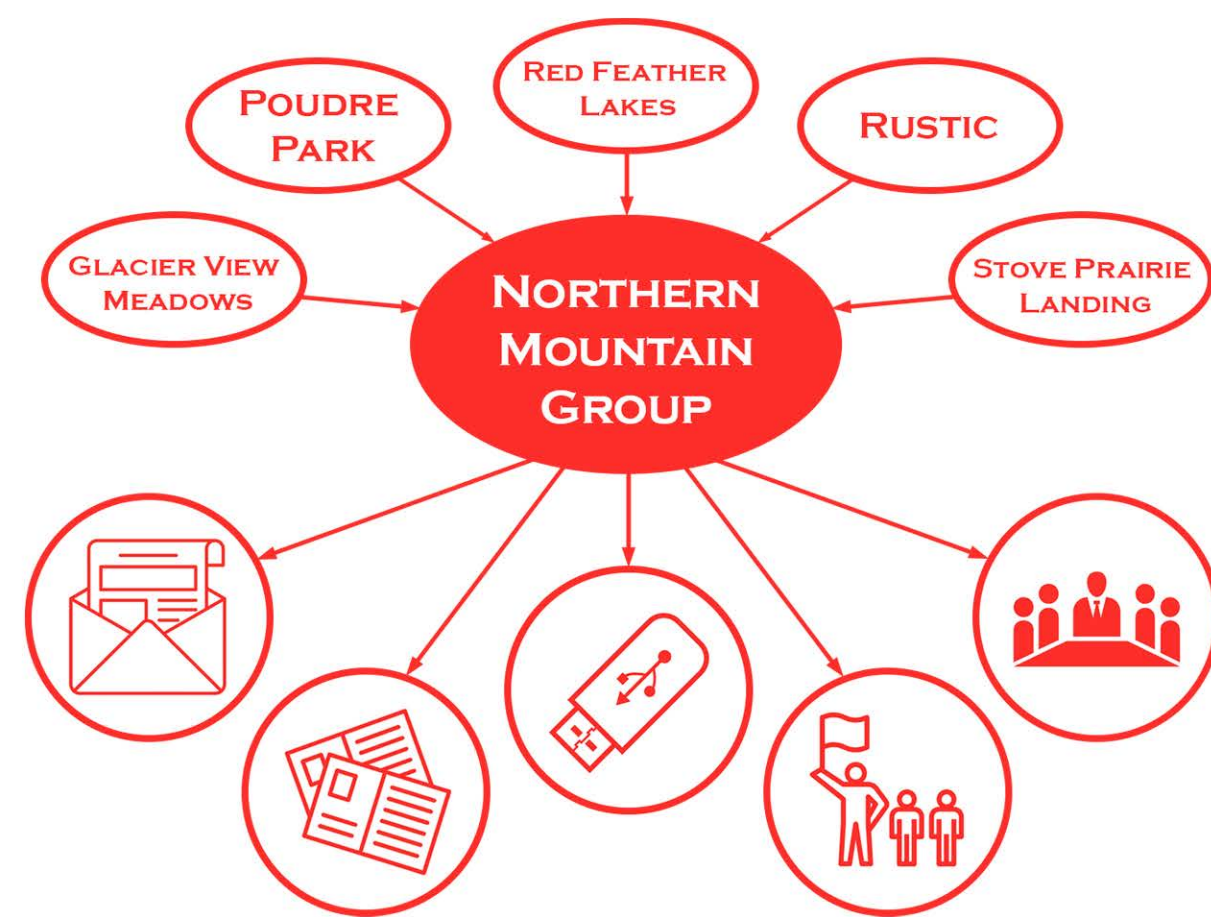


- ONLINE SURVEYS**
An online survey should be available for each stage of the planning process on the Larimer County website. A fillable form will be provided, inviting community members to share their comments and concerns for the subarea plan. This survey should be advertised in the other mentioned channels, such as news releases.
- WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATES**
A separate landing page for the subarea plan should be created on the Larimer County website. An e-newsletter providing details on the plan should be available to people who wish to sign-up. Social media outlets used by Larimer County should advertise the various ways to participate. Creating event pages on Facebook can provide public reminders for open houses, board meetings, etc.
- COMMUNITY MEETINGS**
Community meetings will allow people to engage planners and committee members. Visioning events would be useful in the early stages, and open houses can be used as the plans progress. In-person and virtual Zoom options for open house events should be available, with surveys or comment cards provided after presentations. In-person meetings should be strategically placed throughout each subarea.
- PARTNERSHIPS**
Larimer County can engage with local partners to expand their reach. North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization, school districts, fire districts, and other jurisdictions can form an intergovernmental committee to provide additional input on the subarea plans.
- FOCUS GROUPS**
Each subarea can offer specific meetings geared toward relevant topics and provide more targeted information. For example, a short-term rental focus group can be created for mountain communities and an agriculture focus group with the Agricultural Advisory Board for plains communities.



Recommendations

Rural communities in Larimer County have various challenges for community engagement efforts, including but not limited to, lack of cell/internet service, transient population, distance from the larger cities, and small populations. With these hurdles in mind, engagement strategies are suggested for each grouping. Some strategies are applicable to all groups and are indicated as such. Others are tailored to each group, with some strategies pertaining to multiple groups.



- HOA AND COMMUNITY NEWSLETTERS**
Red Feather Lakes Community Association and the Glacier View Meadows Association can provide updates in their newsletters regarding meeting dates, online surveys, and comment period deadlines. Other smaller HOA's should be included.
- MAIL-IN COMMENT CARDS**
Because many residents in the subarea do not reside locally full-time, comment cards can be mailed to their permanent addresses. This encourages homeowners to offer input for the subarea plan even when they are residing elsewhere. A link to the online survey should be provided on the card.
- FLASH DRIVE REQUESTS**
For larger documents, instead of printing hard copies to distribute, flash drives can be made available both by request and at publicly available community locations. Due to lack of reliable internet service, flash drives can provide access to documents that would otherwise be difficult to download.
- COMMUNITY LIAISONS**
Some communities have active citizens that participate in other Larimer County planning functions and have provided a valuable role to the county during previous community engagement processes. These members could voluntarily take a lead role in encouraging participation in their communities.
- BOARD MEETINGS**
The Red Feather Lakes Advisory Board should be given the opportunity to participate and provide valuable input. Although the Board meets once a month, additional dates can be added specifically for the subarea plan creation if needed.

- HOA NEWSLETTERS**
Glen Haven Association, Pinewood Springs Property Owners Association, and Cedar Springs Improvement Association can provide updates in their newsletters regarding meeting dates, online surveys, and comment period deadlines. Other smaller HOA's should be included.
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- OPEN HOUSES**
Due to the closer proximity to the downtown government building location and large spaces for public gatherings, open houses for the public should be held. These meetings should be held during various times of day to give citizens flexibility to attend. A brief presentation by staff can be included, but the meetings should be a mostly open format. Mapping exercises and comment boards are useful tools during the initial engagement stage.
- NEWS RELEASES**
Larimer County already has a working relationship with local newspapers for public notice regarding land use hearings. Notices in the papers requesting public input and directing readers to the website survey can provide an additional notification channel in a familiar media format.
- BOARD MEETINGS**
The Agricultural Advisory Board should be given the opportunity to participate and provide valuable input. Although the Board meets once a month, additional dates can be added specifically for the subarea plan creation if needed.

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- BOARD MEETINGS**
The Laporte Area Advisory Board should be given the opportunity to participate and provide valuable input. Although the Board meets once a month, additional dates can be added specifically for the subarea plan creation if needed.