

# Durango...

## Your Hometown



**A primer for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and up,  
introducing you to the history, geography and  
government of the City of Durango**

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**City website: <http://www.durangogov.org/>**

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Welcome to your City! By working through the activities in this workbook you will learn more about the community in which you live, play, and study. This booklet is just a beginning; there is so much more to learn about Durango. We invite you to visit City Hall, the Public Library, the Police Department across the street from City Hall, and also your local fire station. Durango is YOUR hometown—so have fun learning about its history and be a part of its future!



### Did you know?

- Durango was one of the first cities in the nation to adopt the “**council-manager**” form of government. This means that instead of having a **Mayor** manage the day-to-day operations of the City, the City council appointed a **City Manager** to be the chief administrator of the City. The first City Manager, Andrew Hood, served from 1915 to 1919. Mr. Hood was an undertaker by profession (these days, he would be called a mortician); his company, Hood Mortuary, is still in business in Durango today at the north end of East Third Avenue.

## City of Durango Government

Durango, Colorado, county seat of La Plata County, is a **home rule city** with a council/ manager form of government (as described above). According to the Colorado Constitution, “home rule” means that the citizens have “the full right of self-government in local and municipal matters.”

The Durango City Council shapes the future of the City government by passing regulations and ordinances and by adopting policies. Durango voters elect Council members in an election held on the first Tuesday in April in every odd-numbered year. It has been this way since the start. Councilors serve for a term of four years. Nowadays, all five City Council members serve the community at-large; they do not represent specific voting precincts of the City, as they did until 1915.

City Council meets in regular session on the first and third Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers in City Hall. It holds study sessions on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month; these are less formal. All of these meetings are open to the public; you may attend if you want to. At least three City Council members must be present to conduct business. You can watch City Council meetings on DGOV (Durango Government Access Television). You can read the minutes of City meetings on the City’s website, starting with the minutes of the very first City Council meeting that was held on May 16, 1881.



Civics Standard 1.1  
Benchmarks K-4 (a)

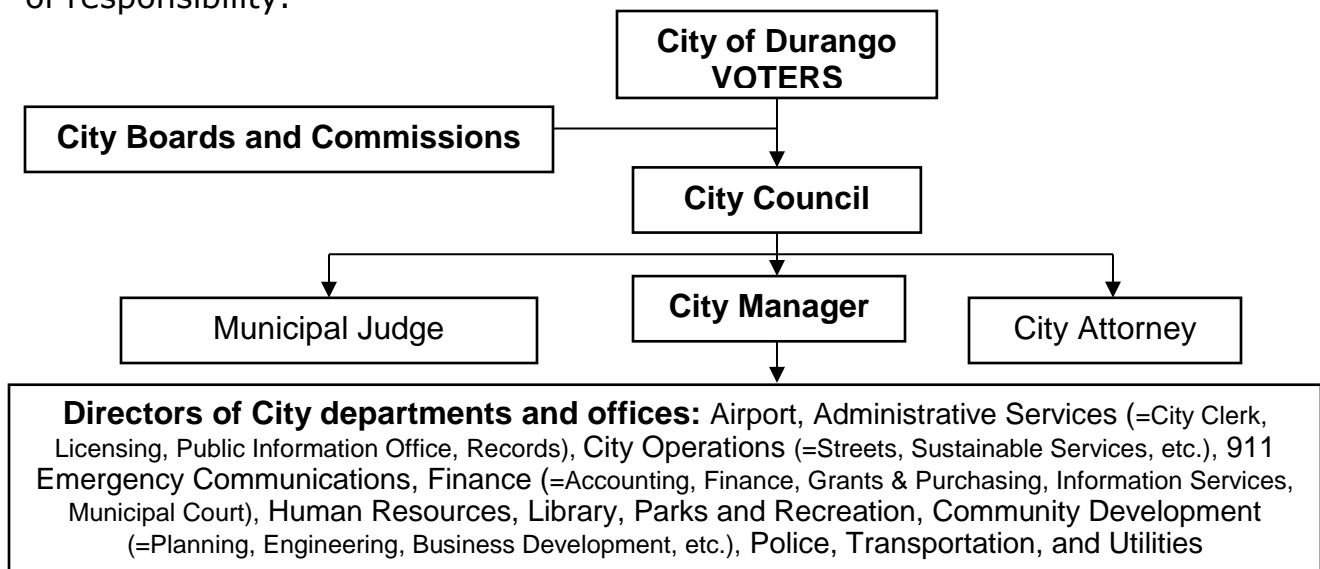
History Standard 5.2  
Benchmarks K-4 (a)

 <p><b>City Manager</b> Ron LeBlanc</p>	 <p><b>Mayor</b> Melissa Youssef</p>	 <p><b>Mayor Pro Tem</b> Dean Brookie</p>
 <p><b>Councilor</b> Chris Bettin</p>	 <p><b>Councilor</b> Kim Baxter</p>	 <p><b>Councilor</b> Barbara Noseworthy</p>

The **Mayor** is the head of the City government and runs all Council meetings, but has no regular administrative duties and no power of veto. The Council members vote each April to decide who will be the Mayor and who will be Mayor Pro Tem. The Mayor Pro Tem runs Council meetings when the Mayor is not available, and (by tradition) becomes Mayor the next year.

The **City Manager** is the City's Chief Administrative Officer, and reports to the City Council. His job is to see that the City follows the policies and directives and accomplishes the goals and objectives that the City Council has set. He also develops the City's budget each year and makes sure that the City keeps to the budget Council adopted. Unlike the federal government, the City cannot spend more money than it has.

Approximately 350 people work full-time for the City of Durango. Also, many citizen volunteers serve at no pay on City **Boards and Commissions** that make recommendations to the City Council and City staff in their areas of responsibility.



# Right to Vote



Voting is a method by which groups of people make decisions. Of the three major levels of government in the United States (federal, state, and local), none affects citizens more directly than local (city and county) government. The Office of the **City Clerk** manages every City of Durango election. Do you remember when the City holds its elections? (The answer is on page 1.)

Third graders just like you will be voters one day. If you have a good understanding of the candidates **and** of Durango, you will be better prepared to make wise choices when you mark your election ballot, to choose virtuous leaders who will make good rules for our community.

Sometimes, just one vote in an election turns the tide. It's like when a free throw at the buzzer has sent basketball teams to the finals—or a kicked conversion has earned football teams the chance to play in a bowl game—or a tie-breaking run has put baseball teams into the World Series. One-point victories are common in sports. They are always suspenseful and exciting! Likewise, your vote counts. If you do not vote, you are not exercising your responsibility to help make the decisions and the changes that affect *your* hometown. You will have given up an important responsibility that is yours as a citizen, expressing a "voice" that people in other parts of the world wish they had.

Your most important responsibilities as a citizen are to be informed about what is happening in your community and to vote at each election. To be eligible to vote in City elections, you must be a legal citizen of the United States, a resident of Durango, and at least eighteen years old at the time of the election.

## How many years is it before *you* can vote?

Age at which you can vote	18
Subtract your age	- ____
Number of years until you can vote	____

**Activity:** With the other students in your class, have a classroom election on something that you all consider important. Students should vote by "secret ballot." Show the results on a bar chart after they are all counted. (To see an example of a bar chart, turn toward the end of this booklet and find the chart of Average Highs & Lows in Durango.)

(Tip: Here's a link to an easy online tool for creating bar charts:  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/graphing/classic/bar.asp>  
—the X axis is the horizontal one; Y axis is the vertical one.)

# Federal, State and City Laws

Our United States Constitution (including the Bill of Rights) describes the basic rights of every person in America. These are called our **constitutional rights**. **Laws** are made to protect and/or define these rights. Laws are rules that we all must follow. Durango’s City Councilors agree to uphold the US constitution and the constitution of the State of Colorado.

Numerous groups of people pass laws for us to follow. The U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C. (part of the federal government) makes many laws. One example of a federal law is that you are not allowed to break into a bank and steal money. The Colorado State Legislature in Denver also makes laws. These laws are called **statutes**. One example of a state law is that schools in Colorado must be in session at least 160 days every year. Your Durango City Council also makes laws. These laws are only for Durango and they are called **ordinances**. The City of Durango has passed more than 2,000 ordinances since 1883. One of our Durango laws is that dogs must be kept in their yards. If they go with you for a walk, they must be on a leash.

Some of the very recently passed ordinances are fun to read (all of the Durango ordinances, along with thousands of other records of City government, are available for you to read on the Web). In 2009 Council passed a law that says that people may have hens and chickens within the City, but no more than 6, and no roosters. (Why no roosters; do you have an idea?)

The City of Durango also has a constitution, but ours is called a **charter**. The charter can only be changed (“amended”) or completely replaced (1978 is the last year we adopted an entirely new charter) if the people of Durango vote to approve the proposed changes at a special election. The last time the people changed Durango’s charter was in April of 1997.

## Activity:

In which type of legal document is each of these found? Match it with the correct type.

- “The history and civil government of the state of Colorado shall be taught in all the public schools of this state.”
  - “The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America.”
  - “The form of government of The City of Durango shall be the Council-Manager Plan...”
  - “Be it resolved...that the Secretary of War be authorized to settle with the proper authorities of the Territory of Colorado, for the services of the first regiment of Colorado mounted militia...” (passed on 7/28/1866).
  - “An Ordinance Requiring All Able Bodied Male Persons in the City of Durango between the Age of Eighteen and Fifty-Five to Engage in Some Useful Occupation, Employment, Business Trade or Profession during the Crisis Resulting from the Present War.”
- U.S. constitution
  - U.S. law
  - Colorado statute
  - City of Durango ordinance
  - City of Durango charter

Civics Standards 1.1, 1.3, and 2.3  
Benchmarks K-4 (a)

# Where in the U.S.A. is Durango, Colorado?

## Activities:

Find our state on the map of the United States, and label it, **Colorado**.

Look at the lower left corner of our state, where this and 3 other states make a **+** sign. We live close to the only part of the nation where four states touch—that's why this is called the **Four Corners**. Put a dot with your pencil where you think **Durango** is located, and label it.



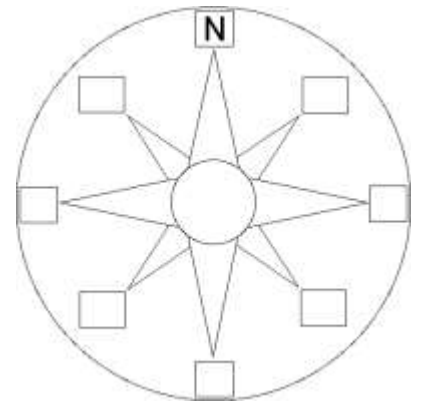
Geography Standard 1.2  
Benchmarks K-4 (b)

## Where is Durango in relation to other features of the Four Corners states?

Look at the map of the Four Corners states below. The Compass Rose has been drawn showing North only. Complete the Compass Rose by writing the abbreviations of the other directions in the boxes provided. Use standard abbreviations: N=North, S=South, E=East, W=West, NE=Northeast, NW=Northwest, SE=Southeast, SW=Southwest.

Now, study the map and answer these questions:

1. Is Santa Fe north or south of Denver? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are the Rocky Mountains in the eastern or western part of Colorado? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is the state of New Mexico basically east or south of Durango? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is the state of Kansas east or west of Durango? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is the state of Utah west or south of Durango? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which direction is Colorado's ★capital city (Denver) from Durango? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Which direction is Farmington? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What state is Farmington in? \_\_\_\_\_



Geography Standard 1.2  
Benchmarks K-4 (b)



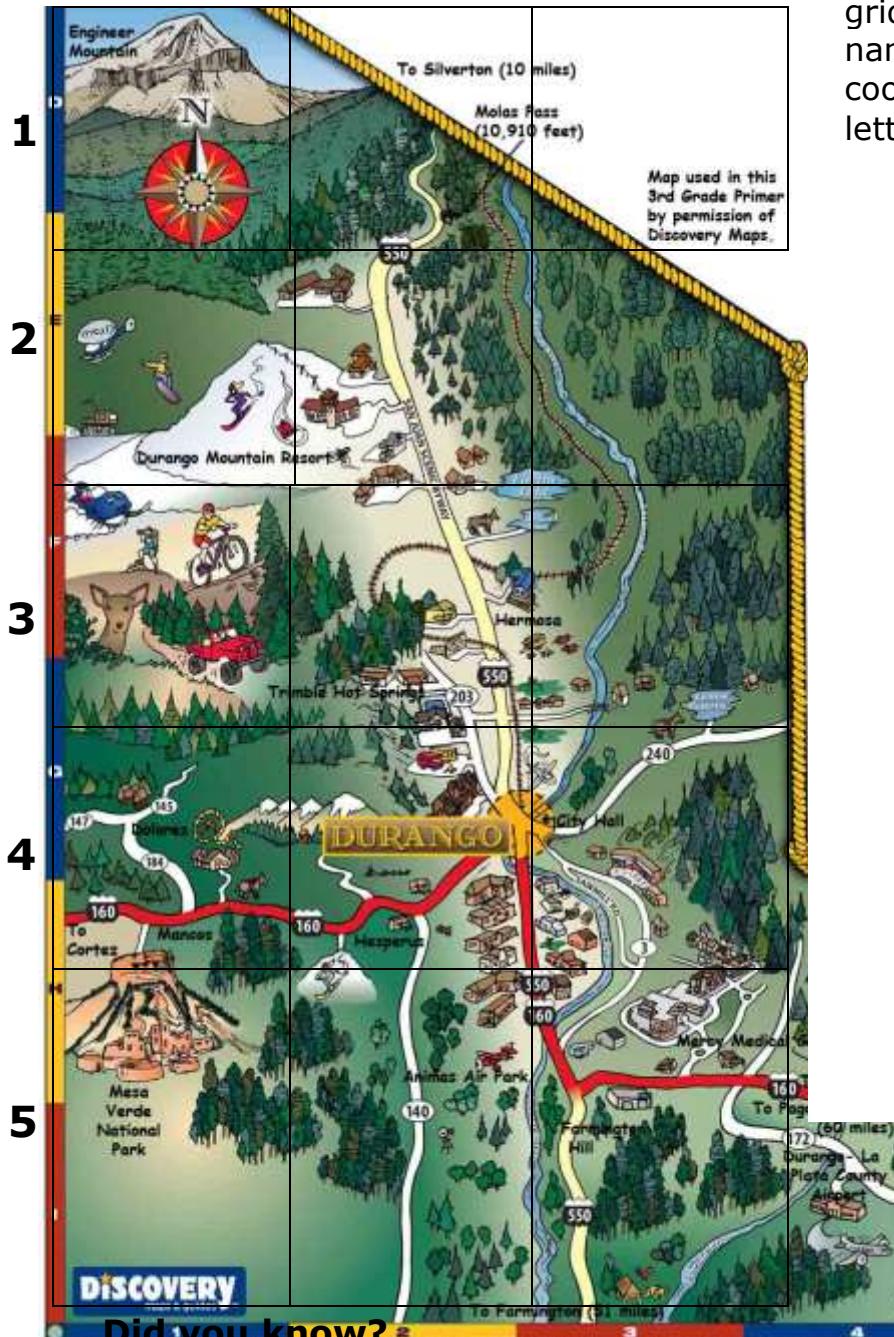
# La Plata County

We live in the City of Durango, which is in La Plata County. "La plata" is Spanish for "the silver." There are more than 3,100 counties in the U.S. Our county has a total area of 1,700 square miles. Like most counties in the West, ours is larger than the entire state of Rhode Island. However, 21 of the states—including North Dakota!—each have more square miles of *water* than the total square miles we have in our entire *county*!

We **do** have *mountains*! Colorado has more 14,000-foot peaks than any other state. The San Juan Mountain range here in the s.w. corner has more high peaks than anywhere else in Colorado. This range includes hundreds of "thirteeners" (peaks at least 13,000 feet high). More snow avalanches fall here than anywhere else in the U.S.

**Activity:** The map below shows our county and some features beyond it. Use the grid to locate the following place names on the map, and write the coordinates (the number and the letter) on the lines:

Use the grid to locate the following place names on the map, and write the coordinates (the number and the letter) on the lines:



- Durango Mountain Resort \_\_\_\_
- Mercy Medical Center \_\_\_\_
- Engineer Mountain \_\_\_\_
- Mesa Verde National Park \_\_\_\_
- Molas Pass \_\_\_\_
- Durango City Hall \_\_\_\_
- Farmington Hill \_\_\_\_
- Electra Lake \_\_\_\_
- Lemon Reservoir \_\_\_\_
- Hermosa \_\_\_\_
- Dgo.-La Plata County Airport \_\_\_\_
- Animas Air Park \_\_\_\_
- Hesperus \_\_\_\_
- Haviland Lake \_\_\_\_
- Trimble Hot Springs \_\_\_\_

Geography Standard 1.2  
 Benchmarks K-4 (b)

C

D

7

D

- Study the history of *Durango* and you will know a lot about the history of the *American West*. Most of the important themes of "The Wild West" are here: mining, railroads, saloons, problems of law and order, and how to keep the buildings from catching fire and burning down.

## History of Durango

The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Company formed Durango along the banks of the Animas River in September 1880 to serve the San Juan mining district. Lots of silver (and later, even more of gold) was being discovered in the mountains ever since gold fever struck in 1872 and resulted in the settlement of mining towns like Silverton, 50 miles north. Durango had a more tolerable climate and a good supply of water and coal to run the smelters to refine the ore to isolate the precious metals. The railroad company chose a site south of the *town* of Animas City for its depot. It bought up the land in the eventual downtown Durango area using various different names to conceal what it was doing. The land was purchased for less money this way. When the train steamed through Animas City on its way north in 1881, it didn't even stop there!

Your hometown was named after Durango, Mexico. As the story goes, Colorado's former territorial governor A. C. Hunt was traveling through Durango, Mexico at the time when the name for the new town was being decided, and thought the two regions looked similar. The word Durango originates from the Basque word "Urango" meaning "water town" or "well watered place." There is also a Durango, Spain. The three Durangos are sister cities and have exchanged gifts and formal visits of their officials.

Native Americans had camped along the banks of the Animas River for thousands of years. Archaeologists are finding evidence that this area experienced a population boom in the latter part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century—about 1,200 years ago. Some think more people lived here then than now!

When the Spanish explorers Dominguez and Escalante passed through on August 9, 1776—at the same time that the founders of our nation were meeting in Philadelphia—the Animas River had already been named (El Río de las Ánimas).

*Back to our story about Durango...* Hundreds of gold miners had camped out in this area in 1860, but within a year of its founding in 1880, Durango had a population of 2,400 and really began to grow. People arrived from many countries to work in the smelters and mines and on the railroad.

Today tourism is an important aspect of Durango's economy, and the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad continues to run on the spectacular narrow gauge railroad that was carved through the mountainsides along the Animas River Valley more than 100 years ago.

## Early Jobs in Durango

Many immigrants left their homes in foreign lands and ended up living in Durango. Most of them were of **Anglo-American** origin (from **Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland**), but some were from Eastern Europe, **Italy**, and Scandinavia (**Danes** and **Swedes**). 27 **Chinese** and 34 **African** Americans lived here in 1894. **Mexican**-Americans established a community south of 6<sup>th</sup> Street (around where Sacred Heart Catholic Church is now), and in areas south of Durango called Mexican Flats and other names.

Typically, Cornish and English men from the British Isles were the highest paid miners, working in the gold and silver **mines** near Silverton, whereas Eastern Europeans worked in the much more dangerous coal mines. American-born Hispanic people were shut out of employment at mines (today, we would call this racial discrimination). Many of them worked at the **smelters** south of town (this work was even more dangerous than mining) and for the Denver and Rio Grande Southern Railroad. Locomotives and smelter chimneys blackened the air over Durango. A weekday when no smoke was billowing out of the smelter smokestacks and the railroad roundhouse was a sad day for those men who earned a living there. Other workers were **farmers** (Animas City was a farming town, with fruit orchards), **blacksmiths, cowboys, cops, nurses, agents, masons, photographers, cooks, saloon keepers, firemen, bankers** and **businessmen**. By the year 1910, **Chinese** people in Durango had established a small business district on 10<sup>th</sup> Street where they had **steam laundries** and a restaurant.

**Activity:** In the word search puzzle below, circle the Durango workers' nationalities and the names of jobs they held and work they did in the early years of Durango (most of the words are **in bold** in the 2 paragraphs above). What inventions or changes have replaced some of these jobs?

W	E	L	S	H	N	E	M	S	S	E	N	I	S	U	B
F	A	R	M	E	R	E	N	A	D	T	O	C	S	O	A
O	F	L	R	D	N	A	L	G	N	E	O	H	W	G	R
F	R	Y	E	R	R	E	K	N	A	B	A	I	E	A	D
N	I	A	L	S	T	E	A	M	L	A	U	N	D	R	Y
I	C	H	I	N	E	S	E	A	T	N	T	A	E	O	L
A	A	S	F	O	H	H	C	O	O	K	O	T	A	C	A
T	N	U	R	S	E	K	A	B	C	M	L	Y	I	I	T
I	E	P	I	A	S	T	R	O	S	E	G	O	V	X	I
R	E	N	I	M	F	I	R	E	M	A	N	B	T	E	L
B	A	C	I	R	I	S	H	S	T	T	A	W	A	M	E
D	O	T	R	E	P	E	E	K	-	N	O	O	L	A	S
P	H	O	T	A	G	R	A	P	H	E	R	C	L	I	P

History Standards 1.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 4.2, Benchmarks K-4 (a)

# City Budget

The City of Durango has to have money so it can provide services to its citizens and nearly 5,000 licensed businesses. It uses revenue to pay its bills and expenses. Most of the revenue for the City comes from something called **sales tax**. Because it is a home rule city, Durango collects the sales tax directly from each company that does business within the City (this is another function of the City Clerk’s Office, along with running the City elections and keeping the records of the City). When you buy a toy at the store for one dollar, eight more cents are added on to the price you pay, as sales tax. Three of those 8 cents goes to the City (the other 5¢ goes to the County and the State). The City also takes revenue from all the people who own houses, buildings, or land in Durango. This is called **property tax**. (Most of the property taxes go to the School District, not to the City.)

Once the City Manager knows how much revenue the City is taking in, he can plan a budget and submit it to the City Council to approve. Council must decide what services the City should provide, using the revenue the City expects to receive in the coming year. Listed below are some of the important services that the city must provide:

- |                      |                   |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Fire fighting        | Sewage treatment  | Ambulance service |
| Playgrounds          | Police protection | Traffic lights    |
| Library books & CDs  | Paving streets    | Trash collection  |
| Clean drinking water | Filling potholes  | Recycling         |

**Activity:** Our sales tax is about eight (8) pennies for each dollar. If you buy the following items, what is your total cost, including sales tax?

Item	Price	Tax	Total with tax
1 health bar	\$1	+	=
1 tee shirt	\$10	+	=
2 books	\$12	+	=
1 baseball glove	\$29	+	=
1 apple	\$.50	+	=
<b>Total amounts</b>		<b>+</b>	<b>=</b>

Civics Standards 2.1 and 3.2  
Benchmarks K-4 (a)

Mathematics Standard 6  
Benchmarks K-4 (3)

Economics Standard 2.3  
Benchmarks K-4 (a)

## Police Department

The Durango Police Department is part of our City government. Police officers have the important job of maintaining public safety and making sure that the laws are followed. The head of the department is called the Chief of Police.



Police officers drive through Durango every day and every night (even while you are asleep) to protect the people here. The patrol officers drive black and white police cars (the older cars are white with blue trim; some cars are unmarked).

Sometimes, the police must arrest criminals. They also give traffic tickets to people who are speeding, driving on sidewalks, or failing to stop at red lights. When these things happen, the people may have to go to Municipal Court and talk to the judge about what happened. In Municipal Court, a person can be fined and told to pay money, do some service work for the community, or maybe even go to jail.

When someone calls 911, a dispatcher answers. Someone is always on duty to take your call...any time of the day or night. This person asks you some questions about the emergency you are reporting, and passes that information on to the police or to the firefighters or medical response crew.

If you are in danger and need help, call 911. The first thing the dispatcher will ask you is "What is the address of your emergency?" The second question will always be "What phone number are you calling me from?" The dispatcher will also ask you what kind of emergency you are having. You will need to speak very clearly and do a good job of answering questions.

### **AN EMERGENCY AT HOME**

1. Dial the emergency phone number: **911**.
2. Say, "This is an emergency phone call," and tell the dispatcher what the emergency is.
3. Say the address where you are, and the phone number you are calling from.
4. Listen to any additional directions the dispatcher gives you.



**Activity:** The puzzle below contains a special message from your police department. Do the math problems, get the answer, and then go to the chart below to find the letter that goes in the blank.

$2 \times 7 =$	_____	_____		
$21 - 16 =$	_____	_____		
$40 - 18 =$	_____	_____	$7 + 12 =$	_____
$17 - 12 =$	_____	_____	$2 \times 10 =$	_____
$3 \times 6 =$	_____	_____	$45 - 27 =$	_____
			$1 \times 1 =$	_____
$5 \times 4 =$	_____	_____	$9 + 5 =$	_____
$14 - 13 =$	_____	_____	$39 - 32 =$	_____
$26 - 14 =$	_____	_____	$17 - 12 =$	_____
$17 - 6 =$	_____	_____	$15 + 3 =$	_____
			$53 - 34 =$	_____
$50 - 30 =$	_____	_____		
$8 + 7 =$	_____	_____		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X

The picture on the right shows new police cars at the Durango Police Substation, located near Mercy Regional Medical Center, which is east of the city in the Three Springs Planned Development.



Mathematics Standard 6  
Benchmarks K-4 (3)

Health Standard 2.3  
Benchmarks K-4 (e)

## Did you know?

- Durango has the second oldest paid fire department in the state.  
(Pueblo, Colorado was the first city in Colorado to pay its fire fighters.)

## Durango Fire Protection District

The City of Durango does not have its own fire department, but has a 15-year voter-approved contract with the Durango Fire Protection District (DFPD) for fire protection and emergency medical response services through the end of 2028. **Phone 911 if there is a fire or medical emergency.**



DFPD maintains 16 stations, 3 of which are staffed by paid fire fighters and medics. Volunteers run the other 13 stations. The main fire station is in Bodo Industrial Park. One of the other staffed fire stations is a City-owned property near the Animas River, in the River City Hall building that is next to the old power plant where the children's museum is now located. DFPD crews serve a large area: at least 325 square miles.

Always remember that matches and lighters are tools, not toys. Never play with them. If your clothes should ever catch fire, DO NOT RUN! Instead, put your hands on your face and STOP, DROP, and ROLL in a back and forth motion to put out the fire.

The fire engine is called a "pumper." That is because firefighters connect a hose to the fire hydrant in the street and use the powerful engine to pump water onto the fire. Pumper trucks can also take water out of rivers and ponds to fight fires.

As you know, fire engines have very loud sirens and loud horns. This warns people that there is an emergency and to move out of the way.

**Activity:** Things that burn easily are **flammable**. Look at the list of words below and circle the items you think are flammable.

apple	box of matches	clothes	paper
water	ceramic dish	curtains	wood
rake	mattress	bathtub	glass bottle

# Fire Safety Quiz

## What would you do if...

- 1) You were in a smoke-filled room?
  - a) Stand up and try to walk out.
  - b) Crawl on the floor to escape.
  
- 2) Your clothes caught fire?
  - a) Stop, drop and roll on the ground or floor.
  - b) Run for help.
  
- 3) You were in a tall building and there was a fire?
  - a) Find an exit and walk down.
  - b) Take the elevator down.
  
- 4) There was a fire outside your door? (You feel the door and it is hot.)
  - a) Find another way out.
  - b) Open the door.
  
- 5) You found a pack of matches?
  - a) Throw them away.
  - b) Give them to an adult.
  
- 6) Someone was trapped inside a burning building?
  - a) Go back inside yourself.
  - b) Inform firefighters where you think the person is.
  
- 7) You were in a burning house?
  - a) Phone 911, then escape.
  - b) Escape and call the fire department from a neighbor's house or by using a cell phone.
  
- 8) You were the first family member out of a burning house?
  - a) Follow the plan for a meeting place.
  - b) Wait by the nearest fire hydrant.



## Did you know?

- Durango was one of the first cities in the nation to have electric street lighting. In 1885 (6 years before the world's first commercial use of alternating current in Ames, near Telluride) a group of Durango citizens organized the Durango Light and Power Company which delivered the first electric service by 1887. They *had* been considering using gasoline for lights.

## Fire Safety Quiz Answers

- 1.b. Hot air and smoke rise. Stay down low to the floor.
- 2.a. Doing this will smother the fire.
- 3.a. Never use an elevator in a building that is on fire.
- 4.a. Don't open a hot door. Find another way out.
- 5.b. Don't throw matches away. Another child might pick them up.
- 6.b. Never go back into a burning building.
- 7.b. Do not stop to call. Get out as quickly as possible.
- 8.a. Go to your pre-arranged place so your other family members can check to make certain everyone is out.



Health Standard 3  
Benchmarks K-4 (d, e)

## Parks and Recreation

The **Durango Parks and Recreation Department** provides and maintains parks and recreational facilities for the community's wellbeing and enjoyment. The department maintains nearly 60 sites, including parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space areas (about 1,800 acres in all) in and around Durango. These include a ski area, an ice rink, over 30 parks located throughout the City, open space natural areas, the 6+ mile bike and pedestrian trail that follows the Animas River through town, and the recreation center with its swimming pools, exercise equipment, climbing wall and athletic courts.

**Park** workers keep very busy by maintaining healthy turf grass with regular mowing and trimming. They prune the trees and plant new ones. They also grow and plant pretty flowers for us to look at. They paint park buildings and repair playground equipment. The Parks and Recreation Department also offers many recreational activities.



The **Forestry Division** maintains more than 7,000 trees in the City. The City has a Tree Cost Share Program to assist homeowners in planting trees on the edges of their property in the public right of way. The City pays half of the cost of the tree and the labor to plant it. The City prunes the tree, but the homeowner is responsible for watering the tree and maintaining the ground around it.

The **Cemetery Division** maintains Durango's 40-acre Greenmount Cemetery, which dates back to the early 1900s. More than 10,000 graves are at Greenmount, with sections specifically set aside for such groups as Elks, Catholics, Masons and veterans. The Animas City Cemetery is less well known; it is an unmaintained historic City of Durango cemetery, located off of North College Drive on your right as you're heading up to the College.

Have you ever walked through the Greenmount Cemetery, reading the gravestones? You may notice some names that are familiar to you. Some of the people whose names are on the gravestones are still very much alive! They bought the grave site ahead of time, perhaps because another member of their family is already buried there.

**Optional activity:** With a trusted adult, walk through a small section of Greenmount Cemetery with a notepad. Look at the gravestones and write down the birth and death years of 20 people. Subtract the year of birth from the year of death. That gives you the approximate age of the person. Now add those 20 age figures together and divide them by 20. That gives you the average age of the twenty persons in your sample.

# Water

Water gets dirty, whether it is coming from lakes and rivers or from our sinks, toilets, or sewer drains. Before we can drink it, we must clean it. This is one of the responsibilities of the **Utilities Department**, along with maintaining all of the City's streets. Providing an adequate supply of clean drinking water has been one of the largest expenses and biggest challenges for Durango since almost the very beginning, more than 130 years ago.



The water that comes out of the faucets in Durango has been cleaned at the water treatment plant. Find this on the map. What are the sources for that water? Follow the movement of the water through the system of buried pipes that carries water from the reservoirs to our homes, schools and other buildings. Having clean drinking water is very important to your health.

The City also has a wastewater treatment plant, located near the recreational fields at Santa Rita Park, which cleans dirty water from our sinks, toilets, and sewer drains, and sends it into the Animas River. After we flush our toilets or wash our hands, the water is carried through a separate system of wastewater underground pipes downhill to this water treatment plant. If we dumped sewage or the soapy water from washing clothes directly back into lakes and rivers, the fish—and the people living downstream from us in Aztec and Farmington—could get sick.

**Activity:** around the margins of this page, list a dozen (12) uses for water.

Science Standard 4      Benchmarks 3-5 (3)

## Did you know?

- *General* William Jackson Palmer and his Denver & Rio Grande Railroad carefully planned the layout of Durango, featuring a tree-lined boulevard with homes and churches, as they had done with Cascade Boulevard in another railroad city, Colorado Springs. [**Boulevard** is a French word modified from a Middle Dutch word in 1768 meaning “bulwark”; it is “a broad, often landscaped thoroughfare.”] The City planners reserved the land near the Animas River for lumberyards, slaughterhouses, and other noisy, sometimes smelly and dirty businesses. First Avenue (later re-named Main) had the hotels, stores, restaurants, and saloons. (The City restricted the location of these bars to certain blocks and only on the west side of the main street.) Second Avenue would have the high school, library, County Courthouse, City Hall and Jail (originally located just downstairs from the sleeping apartments of the “Fire Boys” and their bedbugs in the back of City Hall), and would serve as a buffer for the calmer Third Avenue Boulevard.
- Part of what is in the City of Durango today used to be the town of Animas City. After many decades of debating the issue, voters approved the incorporation of Animas City (north of the original city of Durango) by special election in 1947.

## Planning and Community Development

Good communities don’t just *happen*. People must **plan** them. Planning helps our city prepare for change. The City’s Planning Department helps City Council find ways to keep Durango a pleasant, well-ordered and economically successful place to live and work and do business.

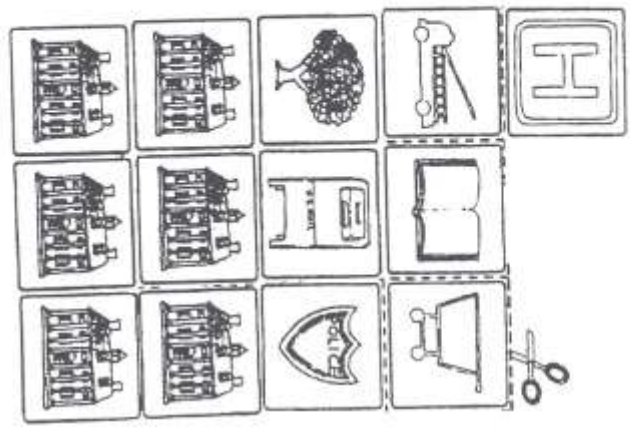
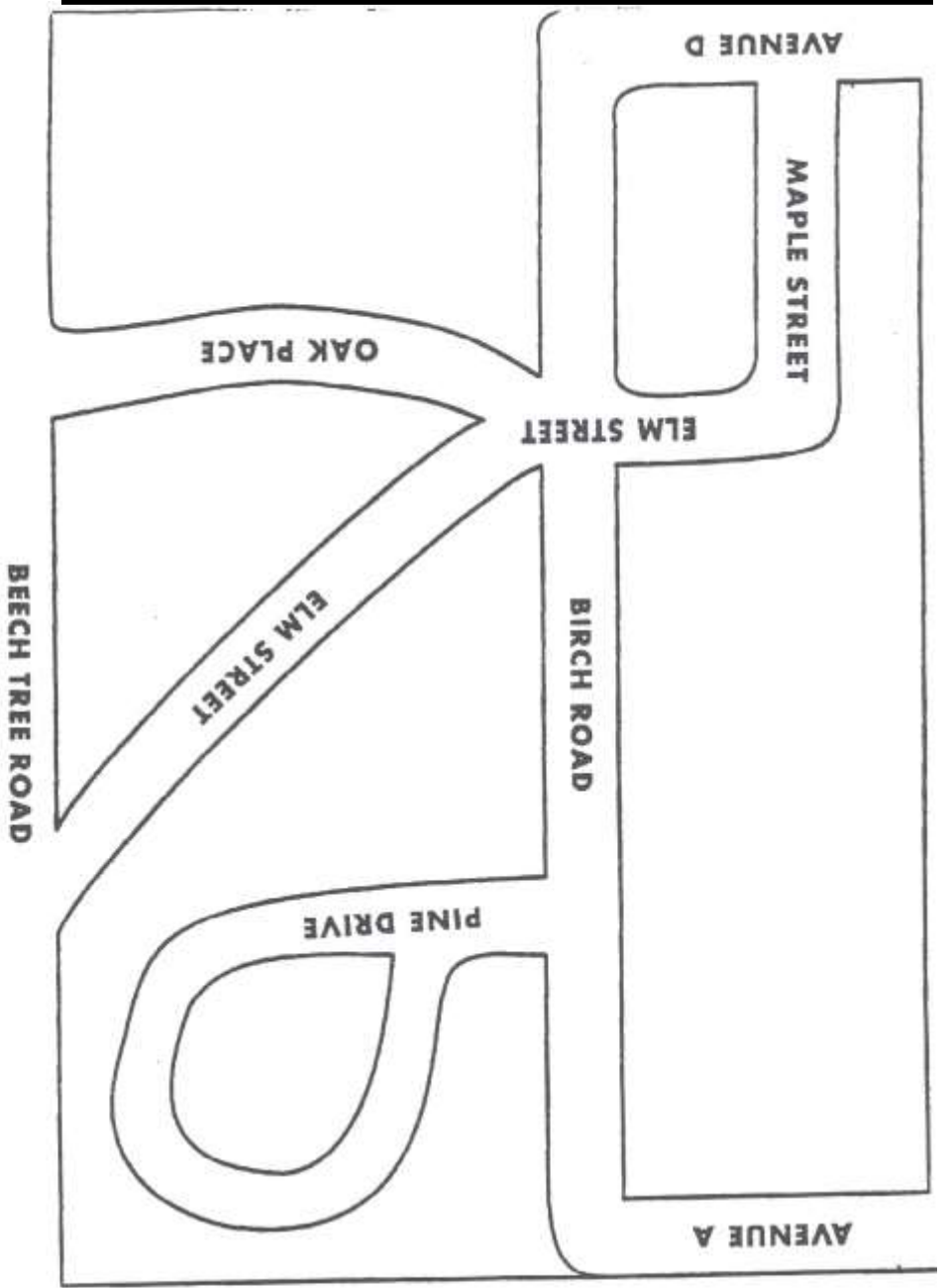
For example, to keep city streets from getting too busy, planners figure out how to move the traffic more efficiently, perhaps by redesigning intersections or by building a new road (as of 2016, Durango had 4,253 street signs and 380 miles of asphalt pavement). Planners also recommend where to put the stop signs and traffic lights, and where the fire stations should be located to keep the people safe. As neighborhoods grow, planners make sure there are parks and bike paths and spaces to dump the snow. Planners also have ideas about where the shopping areas and gas stations should be located. If it were not for planners, you might have a very busy car wash built right next to where you live. Before there were city planners, people would be crowded into cities helter-skelter. In some cities, when they run out of land for expanding the city outward, they built *up*! Write down the names of three cities that have many tall buildings (we call them skyscrapers).

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity:** What has changed, and what has stayed the same in the past hundred years of building, planning, and rebuilding in Durango?

Civics Standard 1.1  
Benchmarks K-4 (b)

Geography Standards 4.4 and 4.5



If you were in charge of planning a neighborhood in our city, you would have to make many decisions. Cut out the map symbols on this page and paste them on the parts of the street map where you think they should be placed. You will have to decide where to put people's houses as well as a fire station, library, hospital, police station, park, post office and grocery store. Think carefully about where these things are located. For example, would it be a bad idea to put the fire station on the far edge of the town? Do you think people would like to live next to a busy grocery store?

## Did you know?

- Until the airport was opened in 1946, it was located in Durango on the mesa where Fort Lewis College is now. Will Rogers landed there in 1935. He stayed at the Strater Hotel and remarked that Durango was "out of the way, and...glad of it." This was his last trip: his plane crashed a few weeks later in Alaska (it ran out of gas, apparently).



## Airport

Durango is fortunate to have an airport with such a long runway: 9,201 feet (and 150 feet wide). When an air show was held here many years ago, the world's most expensive aircraft at the time, the billion-dollar B1 Bomber, landed here. Planes may take off and land at any time between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. The airport's motto concludes with "you can slow down when you get here." Numerous travelers have experienced the truth of that statement.

The airport receives approximately 50 inches of snow annually. The airport uses three large plows (22-foot blades), two 20-foot broom sweepers, two rotary snow blowers that can move 3,500 tons of snow per hour, a rotary snow blower that moves 2,000 tons per hour, a 20-foot wing plow and a 14-foot wing plow (mounted on front loaders), and other smaller equipment to clear snow from the facility.

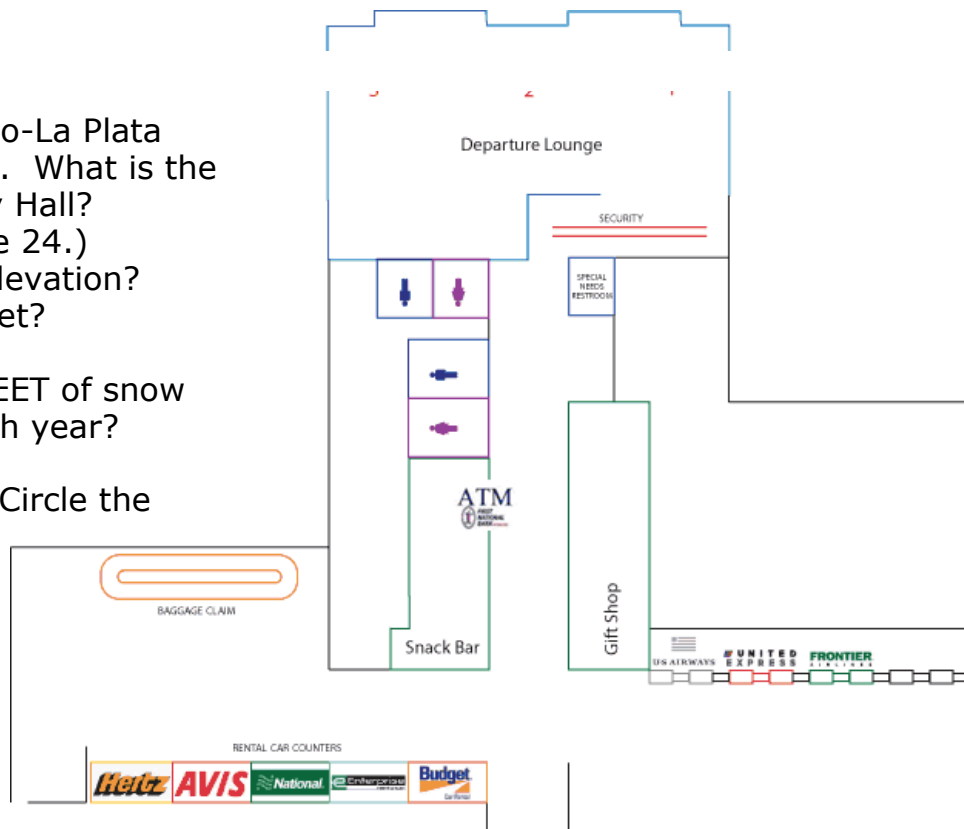
The Durango-La Plata County Airport is co-owned by the City of Durango and La Plata County. You are welcome to call the airport and ask for a tour.

## Activities:

The elevation of the Durango-La Plata County Airport is 6,685 feet. What is the elevation of Durango at City Hall? (See the Fact Sheet on page 24.) Which place is at a higher elevation? What is the difference, in feet?

Approximately how many FEET of snow does the airport receive each year?

Can you read a floor plan? Circle the location of the departure lounge where passengers wait to get on a plane, then draw a line to that lounge from the rental car booths in the lobby.



# Animal Shelter

The Durango Animal Shelter is not a City department. The La Plata County Humane Society runs it, but the City of Durango and La Plata County share in its expenses. The Shelter also brings in a very large amount of money each year through the sales at its thrift store.

**Animal control officers** of the City and the County enforce animal laws (can you remember the ordinance we mentioned on page 4 about chickens?). These officers are responsible for picking up lost, abandoned, and/or injured dogs and cats (and also dead animals found on City roads). These dogs and cats are kept at the animal shelter near Wal-Mart, with the hope that someone will come in and take one home to keep as a pet.

***Owning a pet is a big responsibility.***



## Activity:

Pets can be lots of fun and can be loyal members of your family. They also need care, though. Below are some of the things you need to do to help your pets stay healthy. Match the words in the list to the blanks in the sentences.

Pets need lots of fresh, cool \_\_\_\_\_ every day.

Like you, pets need regular exercise. To exercise your pet, play with it or take it for a \_\_\_\_\_.

If you let your pet outside, make sure all \_\_\_\_\_ are closed or that it is on a \_\_\_\_\_ so your pet cannot run away and get hurt.

Pet "doctors" are called \_\_\_\_\_.

Pets need \_\_\_\_\_ to keep from getting diseases like rabies from wild animals.

A pet needs a clean \_\_\_\_\_. This helps your pet stay clean and healthy.

Just like you, pets need nutritious food every day, not candy or junk food. However, an occasional \_\_\_\_\_ is a welcome reward for good behavior, especially if it is nutritious, too!

Caring for your pet is a way of demonstrating your \_\_\_\_\_ for your pet.

1. Cage or bowl

2. Gates

3. Love

4. Treat

5. Vaccinations

6. Veterinarians

7. Leash

8. Walk

9. Water

## Library

The Library is a fun place to visit any time, but in the summer it is even more fun because of the Summer Reading Program. If you sign up, you may go to special programs and puppet shows, get treats, make crafts, and maybe earn prizes while you read! There are other fun things to do at the library, too, like use computers and listen to story-tellers.

To borrow books, CDs, or DVDs, you will need a library card, so ask your parents to sign you up for one. The card is free.

Durango has one main library, and branch libraries in the Sunnyside and Fort Lewis Mesa elementary schools.



**Activity:** Write the name of your favorite story-time character (examples: Amelia Bedelia, Charlotte, Berenstain Bears, Curious George, Madeline). Then give three reasons why this character is your favorite.

---



### Other City Services

As you have seen already, the City of Durango spends part of its tax revenues on **improving the quality of your life:** books to read, playgrounds, and swimming pools. This also includes creating safer bikeways, providing a bus service that connects all parts of the City—including the free trolley that goes up and down Main Avenue—and **recycling** plastic, paper, cardboard, glass, aluminum and electronics so that less trash is dumped into the landfill.



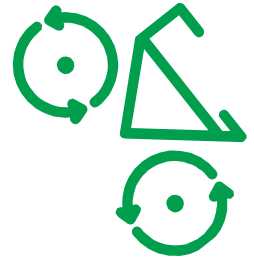
Economics Standard 2.3  
Benchmarks K-4 (b)

Geography Standard 5.3



## Bike safety

When you bicycle on the roads of Durango, you have the same rights and the same responsibilities as drivers. Thus, you must:



1. Stop at stop signs and red lights.
2. Go with the flow of traffic, NOT against it. Move in the same direction that the traffic around you is moving.
3. Use hand signals when you are about to turn left or right.
4. *Not* bicycle on the sidewalks.
5. *Not* weave in and out of traffic or make sudden turns without looking behind you and around you first.
6. If you are riding with a friend, bicycle one behind the other. Never ride side by side on the road.

Bicyclists face special hazards. You have very little protection against those mammoth heavy vehicles that are sharing the road with you. Your best protection is to *use* your head (think smart!) and *protect* your head. In addition to always wearing a helmet, these are some basic principles for safe cycling:

1. If you expect to be bicycling when it is dark, attach long strips of reflective tape to the frame of your bicycle and attach reflectors to the front and back of your bike and on the spokes of both wheels.
2. Keep your bike in good functioning condition, and keep your tires inflated to the proper air pressure.

### Did you know?

- One study found that over a quarter of the local emergency medical response bicycle accidents involved head injuries. More than half of these were categorized as "urgent or life threatening."



## Pedestrian safety

"Pedestrian" comes from the Latin word *ped*, referring to the foot. (When bicycling, you place your foot on the *pedal*.) In 2005, 18-year-old Maria Michta race-walked 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) in under 24 minutes, 10 km. (6.2 miles) in 48 minutes, and 20 km. (12.4 miles) in under 1 hour and 50 minutes (source: [www.usatf.org](http://www.usatf.org)). How's that for motivation?! Here are some basic rules for safe walking around Durango:

1. Walk on the sidewalk or on the pedestrian path if available—not on the road.
2. If you must walk on the edges of a street, walk facing the oncoming traffic, and stay as far from the traffic as you can.
3. If walking when it is dark, use a flashlight and/or wear outer clothing that is bright and/or white and/or reflective so motorists will see you.
4. Before crossing a street, always look left and right. If there is a pedestrian crossing signal, wait until it blinks to give you the go-ahead to cross.

# Fact Sheet – Durango, Colorado

The name "Durango" is derived from a Basque word that means "Urango," meaning "water town" or "well watered place."

Durango was established as a Town in 1881 and became a City in 1886.

Form of government: City Council/Manager.

Assessed valuation of all property within City limits:

**2010:** \$537.4 million      **2000:** \$205.9 million      **1990:** \$100.9 million

**Geography and Location** Size: 6.8 square miles. Elevation at City Hall: 6,523 feet.

Durango is located in Southwestern Colorado, in the Four Corners.

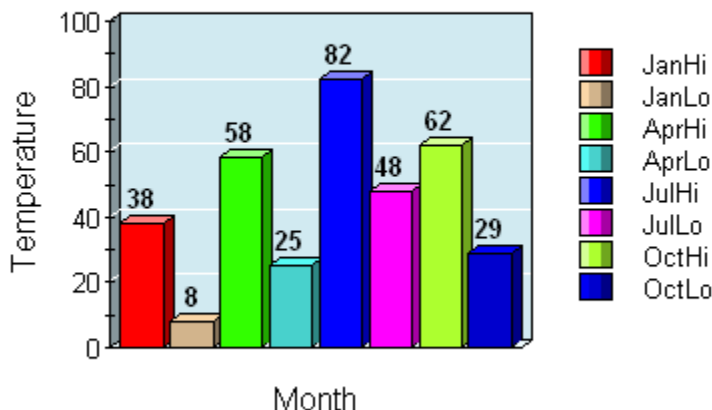
Durango is served by US Highways 160 (the Old Spanish Trail) and 550. US 550 is a 4-lane high-speed divided highway most of the way to Albuquerque (215 miles, from City Hall to City Hall). North of Durango, US 550 is nicknamed the Million Dollar Highway.

The Animas River runs through Durango. The Rocky Mountains and the San Juan Mountains are to the North, East and West. The San Juan Mountains are Colorado's largest mountain range by area: 10,000 square miles in southwest Colorado.

**Climate** (source: Weather.com on 1/20/10)

- On average, the warmest month is July.
- The highest recorded temperature was 102°F in 1973 and again on July 5, 1989.
- On average, the coolest month is January.
- Lowest recorded temperature was -35°F in 1963.
- August is the average wettest month.
- Durango has about 300 days of sunshine a year. In June the sun shines an average of 12.4 hours a day—84% of the total daylight hours.

## Average Highs & Lows



## **Estimated Population over Time**

Year	Population	Year	Population	Year	Population
890	perhaps many thousands?	1930	5,400	1970	10,333
1890	2,726	1940	5,887	1980	11,649
1900	3,317	1950	7,459	1990	12,439
1910	4,686	1960	10,530	2000	13,922
1920	4,116			2010	16,887

**Age** (2010 census data; sources: <http://censusviewer.com/city/CO/Durango/2010> & <http://www.city-data.com/city/Durango-Colorado.html>) Median age: 31 Under 18: 2,644 (15.7%) Age 18-64: 12,605 (74.6%) Age 65+: 1,638 (9.7%) Durango's population grew 21.3% since 2000.

**Ethnicity** White: 85.1%, African-American 0.6%, Native American 6.3%, Asian 0.8%, other racial backgrounds 4.1%, and from two or more races 3.0%. Hispanic or Latino persons of any race comprised 12.3% of the population (up from 10.3% in 2010).

**By Gender** 51% male (8,607 persons); 49% female (8,280)

Geography Standards 4.1 and 4.3

Mathematics Standard 3, Benchmarks K-4 (1)

## **Areas of Interest, Annual Events and Recreational Aspects**

- Durango Mountain Resort (25 miles to the north)
- Mesa Verde National Park (entrance is 35 miles to the west)
- Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad
- Fort Lewis College
- Music in the Mountains summer music festival and conservatory
- Iron Horse Classic (bicyclists race the steam locomotive to Silverton)
- Whitewater rafting, kayaking and canoeing on the Animas River
- Outdoor activities including hiking, mountain biking, road biking, backpacking, rock climbing, hunting, off-roading, year-round fishing, kayaking and golfing

## **Summary Quiz about Durango**

**Use the Fact Sheet (previous page) and other pages in this Primer to answer these questions about your City.**

1. What are the two major highways that pass through Durango? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many miles long is the bike/pedestrian trail along the Animas River? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many acres does the Parks and Recreation Department manage? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the elevation of Durango at City Hall? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Look at the bar graph showing Durango's climate. Which is the coldest month? \_\_\_\_\_ Which is the warmest month? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many miles is Albuquerque from Durango? \_\_\_\_\_ Which highway is the fast way to drive to Albuquerque? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What was Durango's population in 1990? \_\_\_\_\_ When did we *lose* population? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How has the assessed value of Durango property changed since 1990? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many people under the age of 18 lived in Durango in 2010? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many hours of sunshine does Durango have in an average June? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What are 3 of the quality-of-life services\* that the City of Durango provides?  
(\*These are City services that we appreciate and enjoy, which are not *essential*.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. List 2 Durango-area attractions where kids can learn and can be active.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Language Arts Std. 4  
Benchmarks K-4 (d)

Mathematics Standard 3  
Benchmarks K-4 (1)

Mathematics Std. 6  
Benchmarks K-4 (3)

# CONGRATULATIONS!

You have completed the ***Durango...Your Hometown*** workbook and now know a lot more about your City. You have learned about how the City operates and some of the services it offers. You know what is unique, important, and interesting about your city. You know many new vocabulary words, too! Match the words you have learned with their meanings.

Budget	A rule that we must follow
Undertaker	A type of fire engine
Vaccination	Revenue collected from owners of houses, buildings, or land
Boulevard	Something that can catch on fire easily
<i>Ped</i>	A plan for spending money
Law	Money that the City collects through taxes
Statute	Medicine your pet is required to receive if it is going to live in the City
Elevation	A person whose business is to prepare the dead for burial and to arrange and manage funerals
Flammable	How high above sea level a place is
Pumper	A broad thoroughfare, oftentimes landscaped
Revenue	A law passed by the state legislature
Property tax	Part of a Latin word referring to the foot

## Interesting facts from the Durango City Council minutes

At the Council meeting of 10/16/1894, Fire Chief George Goodman (who years later was elected Mayor of Durango, and after that, City Commissioner) stated that "in view of the near approach of cold weather I would recommend that storm doors be put in at the bottom of stairway of City Hall building; without them it will be impossible to warm the rooms on the upper floor."

On 7/2/1895, City Council agreed to reimburse Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Scoville for **lace curtains** that were damaged when rocks flew from the streets when the City was blasting—but on the condition that the Scovilles give the City the damaged curtains.

The City Council regular meeting minutes of 2/1/1898 reported that a pile of **boulders** was obstructing upper Main Ave. and that the horse stalls at City Hall needed to be repaired.

On 5/16/1899 the City's Police Force was reduced to one man besides the City Marshal. The Marshal was authorized to hire one additional man to act as a policeman and to aid in the impounding of stock found running at large within the city limits. The City agreed to pay for the feeding of one horse year round, so long as the Marshal provided the horse.

On 7/2/1901 the City Council read a letter from U.S. Indian Agent J. O. Smith regarding the City's \$100 bill for the care of Paniuse, a Ute Indian **small pox** patient.

On 11/17/1903, City Attorney Davidson and Assistant City Attorney Spickard reported on research into the western **boundary of the City** (whether it was on the center or on the eastern edge of the Animas River) and responsibility for bridge repairs near Gradens Mill (near the present-day Doubletree Hotel).

Beginning of the **Durango Public Library**: in its meeting on 11/15/1904 (read about it on page 118 of the digitized minutes) Council appointed a committee to investigate the advisability of accepting an offer to donate public library books to the City and to secure a suitable location for the proper keeping of the library.

**Speeding** was already a problem in Durango 100 years ago. In its meeting of May 3, 1910, Council established speed limits of 10 miles per hour in the business district and 18 MPH elsewhere. The minutes of 6/18/1912 mention that

there were many alleged speeding violations by “autoists.” The City Marshal was authorized to rent a stop watch for 30 days or for as long as he needed, to enable him to enforce the speed ordinances and arrest the speeding drivers.

The City of Durango used to issue automobile licenses. City Council approved the first **automobile licenses** on June 21, 1910—to Dara C. White and The Pioneer Consolidated Company.

On 11/23/1910, Mr. A. J. Carlson asked the City for \$10 because his feelings had been hurt when a City official removed his horse from off the streets. Council laid this request on the table, which meant that it made no response.

In its regular meeting on 4/16/1912 Council considered buying a modern motorized **fire truck** to replace the City’s horse drawn vehicle. The actual fire truck is on display in the Railroad Museum at the Durango Train Depot.

What’s a city without a **Dog Catcher**! On 8/19/1913 Council hired a dog catcher, and allowed him to keep \$1 (paid by the dog’s owner) for each arrest he made for violation of the dog license ordinance. On 6/2/1914 the only “pay” Council allowed the Dog Catcher was \$1 for each dog he impounded (if he impounded at least 25 dogs); if fewer, his pay was reduced to 50 cents per dog.]

At its 1/21/1913 regular meeting Council heard complaints from residents of Main Ave. and 15th Street about school boys who had been breaking out windows during their **snow ball fights** etc. on their way to and from school. The City Clerk was instructed to write Superintendent of Schools E. E. Smiley to take up the matter with the pupils and warn them that the City would enforce its ordinances regarding throwing snow balls and rocks.

On March 3rd, 1914, the 2 p.m. meeting of Council took a recess to enable the Fire Department to make a trial run with a new horse that was replacing “Mack”, an old **Fire Horse** who was sold to James Conway for 3 tons of timothy hay valued at \$36. The new horse must have pulled the fire wagon satisfactorily; the Commissioners agreed to buy him for \$250.

On 7/6/1915 Mr. J. C. Rawlins was allowed \$5 a month as the City **Pound Keeper** and was instructed to drive all foreign horses out of the City.

The agenda for the regular Council meeting on 12/7/1982 included approval to buy an **x-ray device** to screen carry-on baggage at the Durango-La Plata County Airport, as recommended by Frontier Airlines.

# Nine Durango biking laws:



- 1. Bicyclists must follow the same laws as drivers of motor vehicles.**
- 2. Don't run a red light** on your bicycle. The fine is at least \$40.
- 3. Don't run a stop sign** on your bicycle. It usually costs \$65—but by law it COULD cost a cyclist up to \$1,000 and/or 90 days in jail!
- 4. Don't be a careless rider.** Always wear a helmet. Use a headlight, taillight, and reflectors at night. Make eye contact with drivers. Never assume that drivers see you or that you have the right of way. Expect the unexpected; your first responsibility is to avoid a crash.
- 5. Don't bicycle on the public sidewalk in the Central Business District.** Cyclists have been fined \$20 for that. This rule goes back more than 100 years in Durango. An 1892 City Ordinance set the minimum fine for someone caught riding a bike on a public sidewalk at \$5 (i.e., \$125 in today's dollars). In 1903 Council heard reports that people were cycling on sidewalks and told the "Committee on Printing" to have suitable notices printed and posted.
- 6. Walk—don't ride—your bicycle across the street and/or sidewalk when you're crossing it in a designated crosswalk.** You must get off and walk across.
- 7. Look both ways** before cycling across an intersection, and use hand signals to indicate left or right turns, slowing, and stopping.
- 8. Ride in the right lane**, except when passing another vehicle, preparing for a left turn, or avoiding hazards. Always ride with the flow of traffic; never against. Ride on the paved shoulder whenever possible. Biking on the wrong side of the roadway can cost a bicyclist \$98 in fines and court costs.
- 9. Leave adequate distance between you and the vehicles ahead of you and around you.** The Bicycle Safety Act requires drivers to give cyclists at least 3 feet of space on the roadway when passing.) Ride single file. Only ride two abreast when you are not impeding traffic or when all cyclists are on the shoulder—and never on the curving roads of a canyon.



By using this primer, you will know more about Durango than 99% of the people who live here! It is full of facts and interesting notes about your hometown.

An added bonus for you: by working through this book you will meet some of the educational standards for your education.

**Additional free online downloads:** go to the City of Durango website at <http://www.durangogov.org/> and click through How Do I/ View/ City Records — or go straight to the <http://www.durangogov.org/index.aspx?NID=190> search page. Then, in Search Options, *Select Search Type = Histories* and enter (for example) \*primer\* [with the asterisks] in the Subject box to retrieve this booklet.

(1) Change your Subject search term to \*mayors\* and you will pull up a 62-page **pictorial history of Durango's mayors from 1881 to today.**

(2) Change your search term to \*historical minutes\* and you will see this result: ***Introduction to Historical Minutes and Ordinances of the City of Durango.*** Here, you can read interesting historical facts from thousands of City Council minutes and ordinances that are all available for you to see on the City's website— from the very first meeting on May 16th, 1881 to current.

Note: The last section of the *Introduction to Historical Minutes and Ordinances* is a set of study questions to further guide you in learning about the history of Durango by reading primary sources that are available online from the [records search page](#).

Please email any comments on this primer to [todd.ellison@durangogov.org](mailto:todd.ellison@durangogov.org)