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**STATE OF COLORADO**  
JOHN A. LOVE, GOVERNOR

JOHN W. PATTERSON  
*State Planning Coordinator*

OFFICE OF  
**STATE PLANNING**

JAMES N. MILES  
*Director*

700 State Capitol Annex  
Denver, Colorado 80203

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March 13, 1969

TO: The Cortez Planning Commission

FROM: Research Services  
Colorado State Planning Office

Attached are the recommendations resulting from the reconnaissance survey made in Cortez during January, 1969. The State Planning Office will assist Cortez in the implementation of these recommendations.



Reconnaissance Evaluation Report

TO: The Members of the Planning Commission of Cortez .

FROM: Reconnaissance Assistance  
Colorado State Planning Office

Concerning: The reconnaissance study evaluation of

Cortez, Colorado .

This study was made: January 30 and 31, 1969 .

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I Explanations of Methodology and Purpose

The purpose of the reconnaissance study is to ascertain the planning needs for a community, county, or any combination of such. The reconnaissance methodology specifically seeks to discover variations because these needs vary with every geographic area. This "tailors" the proposed planning program to the individual area.

The methodology of the reconnaissance study is to utilize research, observation, and interviews to become knowledgeable concerning existing information about the planning area, existing plans or plan elements, the planning commission, and other pertinent bodies (public and private) who are related (formally or informally) to the planning commission.

This procedure allows an inventory to be made by the reconnaissance study personnel of the existing plans or planning-related information, and to evaluate the studied planning commission. This evaluation is made in terms of the planning commission's structure, procedures, effectiveness, and relationships with other related bodies.

Having evaluated all the information gathered in the reconnaissance study, the reconnaissance section makes the recommendations below. The State Planning Office offers any assistance in carrying out these recommendations.

## II General Observations and Conditions

Cortez is a home rule city which had a 1968 population (as estimated by the Division of Accounts and Control) of 7,850. It is the county seat for Montezuma County and located in the extreme south-west corner of Colorado. The city is in the heart of the Four Corners Region and one of three large municipalities (Durango, Colorado; and Farmington, New Mexico being the other two).

The city is bounded on three sides by rolling hills and on the South by Mesa Verde and the Ute Mountain. The city's growth is hindered on the south and west by canyons. There is a "basin" in the south-central part of town which experiences some drainage problems.

The economy of the city presently relies upon tourism, agriculture, forestry and mining. Government employment is also an important contributor to the economic base. The city has 80 acres north of town for industrial development.

Almost all city streets are paved with side walks, curbs, and gutters. Some streets in the south-central part of Cortez are presently gravel. There are presently no storm sewers.

The business area is, in reality, strip development along both U.S. highways within the city. The business district is unattractive and has

evidently not followed any designed pattern for good development. This has caused related problems such as lack of adequate parking facilities and vehicular movement, especially during tourism peaks. Although there were vacant business structures, these were dispersed throughout the city and do not indicate any general decline or stagnation in commercial activity.

Only one area of the city, south-central, contained a significant number of substandard dwelling units. Although there appears no general housing shortage, good housing for low income persons is nonexistent.

The city has many recreational facilities. These include a golf course, swimming pool, organized sports, a museum, and school playgrounds. A new library is being constructed with State Library assistance. A large park area east of Cortez is being contemplated along with a large community center.

The city is presently served by an airport south-west of town. It was remodeled in 1963 and brought up to Federal Aviation Standards. It is served by Frontier Airlines.

The city has a good water supply. A new water treatment plant was completed in 1961 which should effectively supply about 14,000 persons (according to engineering estimates). All water comes from the Dolores River which runs north of Cortez.

Approximately one-quarter of the city is not served by sanitary sewers. The percolation in this area is inadequate so health problems exist. Engineering studies are presently being made to supply this area with sanitary sewers, update the existing system where necessary, and construct a new primary plant. The existing primary plant does not adequately treat the sewage.

The city presently supplies its residents with police and fire protection, water, trash pickup, street and park maintenance, and related services. The city's budget depends mainly upon the one cent sales tax, water fees, and a 6 mill property tax for income.

III Planning Commission

The Cortez Planning Commission has been in existence for eleven years. Its level activity has been sporadic, depending upon planning problems or projects that have arisen.

The period of greatest activity was in 1958-59 when the Planning Commission developed the present comprehensive development plan. This plan has been utilized by the Planning Commission and City Council as a guide for growth and development.

The Planning Commission has assisted the Council on all matters concerning zoning and other codes. The City Council has almost always accepted and supported the Planning Commission's recommendations.

The Planning Commission should initiate a regular meeting schedule and develop official contacts with other planning or planning-related bodies.

A basic educational program to inform the Planning Commission of their powers and responsibilities may be a necessity to insure the best possible planning program.

IV Board of Adjustment

The Board of Adjustment is not utilized. This is evident because no appeal of any zoning matter has been taken to them. Their role in the planning program should be reassessed to see if they are being properly utilized.



V Planning Program Proposal

It is the recommendation of the Research Services Staff that a planning program is necessary to meet the needs and expectations of the city of Cortez.

The planning program should update existing planning studies and initiate any new studies that are necessary. The problems of low income and minority citizens should be closely studied and action programs proposed to eliminate detrimental conditions. A housing survey should be completed, pinpointing problems of deterioration and blight, and arriving at a long range plan to eliminate the existing poor housing and blighted conditions.

A detailed study of the central business district should be made including the factors of tourism, parking, and its relationship to the strip development. Plans for the proposed by-pass should be re-considered in light of the up-dated planning studies.

The study of parks and recreation facilities should consider the need and possible location of a multi-purpose recreational facility. The transportation study should consider the proposal for a regional airport to service the Cortez-Durango-Farmington area. The economic base study should propose action programs for promoting industrial development.

The planning program should develop subdivision regulations and study the need for the adoption of a housing code. Existing codes and ordinances should be studied and revised as necessary to reflect the updated planning program.

In the event that Montezuma County becomes interested in planning the entire county area, this program should be coordinated with their efforts. The possibility of an eventual joint planning program should be considered and encouraged.

VI Timing and Financing: Alternatives

The scope, timing, and financing of the planning program must be based upon decisions made by the Planning Commission and the City Council.

If the city wished to utilize assistance available from the Colorado State Planning Office, the planning program for this grant-fiscal year will cost Cortez one-third of the total cost. This cost must be a factor in any decision.

The cost and timing are both relative to who does the planning program for Cortez and what time period the city wishes the program completed in. In any case, the assistance provided by the Colorado State Planning Office will be based upon our fiscal-grant year, November 1 through October 31. Therefore, this initial part of the total program will be funded from the date of final contract approval to October 31, 1969.

The State Planning Office will give the city of Cortez any assistance necessary in arriving at decisions concerning the planning program.

