

# Prowers County

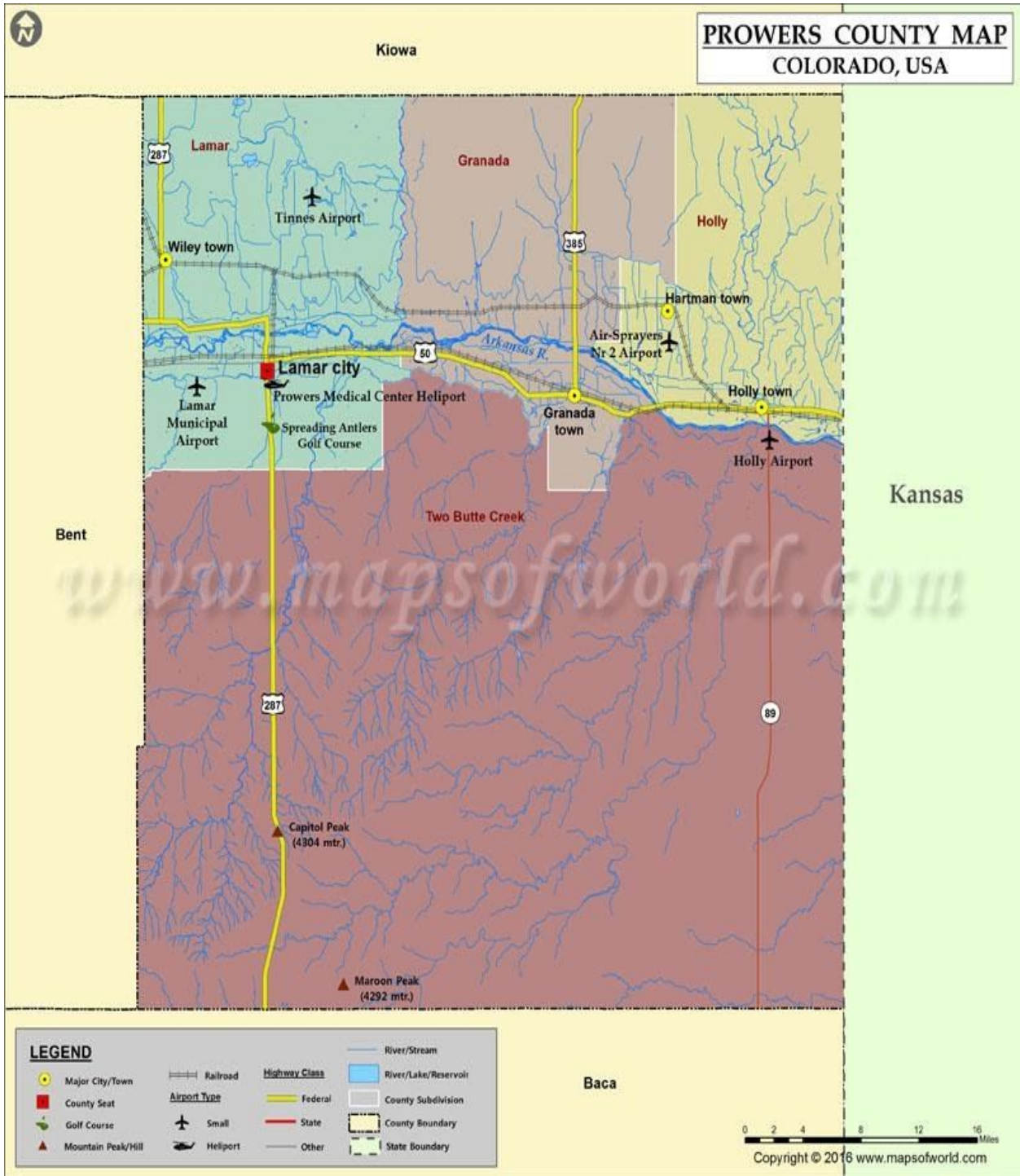


## 2017 CEDS

Prepared by Southern Colorado Economic Development District  
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**SUMMARY BACKGROUND**

Prowers County is located in the lower Southeastern corner of Colorado on the Kansas-Colorado border. The County is 1,645 square miles with a population density of 7.9 per square mile. The average elevation is 3,600 feet.

Prowers County was established in 1889 and named after Legislator John Wesley Prowers. The Santa Fe Trail runs through Prowers County and served as an important route for commerce and cultural exchange in the development of the West in the mid 1800’s. Prowers County is vastly populated with wildlife, which brings in several hunters and watchers each year. In addition to the wildlife, western atmosphere and historical sites, Prowers is rich in agriculture and renewable energy resources.

**County Commissioners:**

Wendy Buxton-Andrade  
Ron Cook  
Henry Schnabel

**Legislative Districts:**

Congressional District: 4  
Senate District: 1  
House District: 64

**County Seat:** Lamar

**Population**

The population of Prowers County for 2015 was 11,954.

**Population by Age**

Under 5 years of age	912	5 to 9 years	827	10 to 14 years	1,015
15 to 19 years	978	20 to 24 years	779	25 to 34 years	1,341
35 to 44 years	1,455	45 to 54 years	1,575	55 to 59 years	760
60 to 64 years	850	65 to 74 years	964	75 to 84 years	568
85 years and older	335				

**Population by Community**

Granada	488
Hartman	76
Holly	765
Lamar	7,391
Wiley	382
Unincorporated	2,791

## **Poverty**

In 2015, Kids Count reported 61.8% of school age children qualified for free/reduced lunch and 29.9% of children under 18 years of age were living in poverty compared to 14.9% in the State.

[www.kidscount.org](http://www.kidscount.org)

## **Housing**

The average household size is 2.48 compared to an average family size of 2.64 for the State.

The homeownership vacancy rate is 2.1% and the rental vacancy rate is 10%.

[www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov)

According to the National Low Income Coalition, affordable rent represents the generally accepted standard of not spending more than 30% of gross income on gross housing costs. The fair market rent in 2015 for Prowers County was \$648 for a two bedroom home. In order to afford rent at this amount, a household in Prowers County must earn \$26,320 annually. At the minimum wage of \$8.31 hour, one minimum wage earner would have to work 61 hours per week.

[www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org)

## **Education**

Four districts provide K-12 education in Prowers County. Higher education is available at Lamar Community College.

The 2014 Census American Community Survey estimates that 80.3% of the total population 25 years of age and older has attained a high school diploma or higher. 13.9% have attained a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

[www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov)

## **Agriculture**

In 2012, Prowers County had 1,021,915 acres of agricultural land. There are 553 farms, with an average of 1,848 acres. The market value of products sold was \$318,249,000 of which \$64,897,000 (20%) were crop sales and \$253,352,000 (80%) was livestock sales. The average per farm was \$575,495. Government payments in 2012 were \$6,892,000 with an average per farm of \$19,919.

[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)

### **Travel Impact**

Dean Runyon and Associates report that \$18.2 million dollars were spent by visitors to Prowers County in 2015. Not only does travel affect the revenues to a community, but jobs must be created to maintain services to visitors. Approximately 517 full and part time jobs were attributed to travel and tourism in Prowers County in 2015 with \$8.9 million dollars in earnings, \$624,200 in local tax revenue and \$481,400 in state tax revenue.

[www.deanrunyon.com](http://www.deanrunyon.com)

### **Local Economy**

The current unemployment rate for Prowers County is 2.9% in October 2016. The average earnings for Prowers County is \$35,408 in 2014.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

### **SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis**

The starting point for a credible economic development strategic plan is a SWOT analysis. By working with Prowers County stakeholders the following was identified:

#### **Strengths**

- Wide open land to develop
- People willing to develop projects
- Transportation opportunities – Major crossroads – Ports to Plains
- Ag opportunities
- College
- Hospital/Clinic
- Outdoor recreation
- Beautiful weather
- Low risk lifestyle
- Cost of living
- City infrastructure
- Hub location/transportation hub
- Capital available
- Nursing homes
- Tourist camp Amache
- Low property taxes and cost of living

## **Weaknesses**

- Remote location
- Low wages
- Lack of amenities
- Dependency on agriculture
- High poverty/low educational attainment
- Lack of access to funding
- Drought
- Lack of jobs
- Housing
- Aging population
- High utility costs
- Decreasing population
- Water shortage
- Lack of industrial park
- No skilled industry
- Workforce
- Few manufacturing jobs
- Shopping opportunities

## **Opportunities**

- Agri-business expansion and recruitment
- Industrial park available for development
- Areas to create shopping centers
- Nature and history in the area
- Large areas for warehouse – easy in/out for shipping
- Main street revitalization
- Trades training
- Agriculture product – hemp
- Wind energy
- Dairy expansion
- Walking trails
- Family activities

## **Threats**

- Lack of industrial buildings
- Federal/State mandates
- Drought
- Tenuous US and world economy
- People moving to Colorado for marijuana
- Retail leakage
- Lack of medical providers
- Government regulations or mandates
- Old vacant structures
- Aging farmers
- Drugs

**Prowers County has identified a number of strategic priorities. These include:**

### **Goal: Develop Housing**

The lack of housing stymies economic growth and diversity when businesses can't recruit employees because there is no place for them and their families to live. Aging housing with asbestos issues and a lack of low price housing stock have been identified as factors contributing to a housing crisis.

### **Goal: Main Street Development**

Expanding on current resources and creating new jobs is a focus for Prowers County. The development of Prowers County main streets will increase the visibility of current businesses and put Prowers County in a position to compete for employers.

### **Goal: Improve telecommunications**

Areas without adequate telecommunications such as broadband, cell service, etc., have fewer opportunities for businesses to start, grow and succeed, and are less desirable places to live for employees and families. Expanding on broadband services will also allow citizens to operate at home businesses.

### **Goal: Agri-business expansion and recruitment**

Prowers County is ideally situated to develop an agri-business industry. Expansion and recruitment of industries such as Dairies and Hemp have been identified as a focus for Prowers County.



**Goal: Trades Training**

Southeastern Colorado including Prowers County is lacking in trades professionals. Developing training programs for the trades such as welding, plumbing, electrical, etc. is a priority focus for Prowers County.

**Resiliency**

In the event of a disaster, the Southern Colorado Economic Development District (SCEDD) plays a support role to other partners in planning and recovery efforts following a disaster.

**Prowers County Emergency Contact Information:**

**Staffon Warn**

**719-336-2674**

**[staffon.warn@prowerscount.net](mailto:staffon.warn@prowerscount.net)**

