

**A Gilpin County
Primer For Living In The
HIGH COUNTRY
GILPIN COUNTY, COLORADO**



2005 Revised Edition

Board of County Commissioners

Jeanne Nicholson

Al Price

Forrest Whitman

P.O. Box 366

Central City, Colorado 80427

303-582-5214

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Larimer County Board of County Commissioners published *The Code of the West...the realities of rural living*. Commissioner John Clarke, author of the *Code*, allowed us to use his idea. Thus, some of the information in the *Gilpin County Primer* is taken directly from that parent booklet, some has been adapted and some is new to address specific Gilpin issues.

When we saw a good idea, we "appropriated" it. Should another county think the *Primer* is a good idea, pretend it is a couch out on the curb...it's yours for the taking.

EXPECTATIONS

The *Gilpin Primer* takes its purpose directly from the title of the Larimer County *Code of the West*: to inform newcomers about "the realities of rural living" in the high country. Although Gilpin County is commuting distance from the mile-high Denver metropolitan area, it is still rural.

Expectations are a key to successful living in the Gilpin part of paradise. If a newcomer's expectations are urban, disappointment and grief will follow. The rural mountain setting is neither better nor worse than rural flatland, suburban or urban settings. But the high country is different and requires one to want to live here. The elevation ranges from 1 1/3 up to 2 1/2 miles and the 13 days of summer are followed by a long, long winter...forget the three days of spring or fall. It takes effort, tenacity, a sense of humor and some preparation to enjoy living in rural Gilpin County. Folks who like it up here often consider city conveniences and amenities to be nuisances or worse. Some new residents only see a wonderful, idyllic, rural, summer mountain setting. So, they may be shocked a bit later when a bear destroys the BBQ grill on the deck, deer munch the marigolds, a coyote lunches on the cat, and the driveway disappears under 52 inches of snow...then, they become disenchanted and expect someone else to "do something" about it. Thus, the *Primer* is intended to touch on some key notions to help prospective or new residents match Gilpin County Reality with Expectations.

ABOUT THE 2nd EDITION

The *Gilpin Primer* was first produced in 1999. Much has changed in our County since then: we have an County Extension Agent, to answer weed questions, and a beautiful new Community Center as a recreation alternative. But much has not, which is why this "edition" is just a minor revision to update the common sense information in this book originally authored by County Commissioner Ken Eye, serving with Craig Nicholson and Web Sill. Read and heed!

INTRODUCTION TO PARADISE

LOCAL. Gilpin County is located about one hour west of the Denver metropolitan area. It borders the Continental Divide on the west and two large urban counties on the north and east, Boulder and Jefferson, and a larger rural county on the south, Clear Creek.

Gilpin encompasses approximately 150 square miles. The elevation ranges from 6,960 to 13,294 feet. Most of the land is forested below tree line and about 52% of the County is state or national forest. Of the approximately 60 subdivisions, about half are half full. Most homes are in the elevation range of 8,000 to 9,000 feet. About 2,000 lots are occupied and somewhat less are vacant; thus, most current new residential construction is "infill," which translates into neighbors getting closer than they used to be. The 1999 population is about 4,000 and about that number commute into Gilpin daily to work in the gambling industry. And since the 1960s, about 80% of the working residents commute out of the County to work. Thus, the reality is that this is a rural-like bedroom community with many visitors who come to gamble, to enjoy Golden Gate State Park or to access the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests.

Gilpin County and the towns of Central City and Black Hawk were the setting for metal mining from 1859 through the beginning of WWII. The Central City and Black Hawk area billed itself as the "richest square mile on earth" during the heyday of mining prior to the turn of the century. Although there is still "gold in them thar hills," the global mining economy is such that very little mining and milling occurs today although it is a legal use by right in many places. But a caution: the county is full of open mining holes. Some are still being worked and many are not. Trespassing is a bad idea. Tunnels and shafts are dangerous. Deadly. Stay out of them.

The new gold rush draws many visitors and is called limited stakes casino gaming. Starting in 1991, gaming is concentrated and limited to the cities of Black Hawk and Central City. This, too, is a form of metal mining that, at the turn of the new century, is still in the gold rush stage.

Gilpin County is at a crossroads. Will the rural-like mountain setting be preserved or will paradise be paved over?

CLIMATE. The 13 days of summer are bracketed by three days of spring and three days of fall. The rest is winter. That is a bit of an exaggeration; however, some years snow falls as early as mid-September and sometimes as late as mid-June. Sometimes there is very little snow all winter, and sometimes there is a lot. For example, in 1997-98 North County had a little over 201 inches of snow while the South County banana belt only had about 200 inches...at least in the areas below 10,000 feet.

HOME, JAMES. The James Peak area on the Continental Divide southwest of Rollinsville is a national treasure. Long, long before the transcontinental railroad punched a track through the Needles Eye atop Rollins Pass, or the Moffat railroad and water tunnel was bored under the pass to Winter Park on the western slope, the Northern Arapaho made hunting trails which are still used today by hunters and hikers.

HIGH COUNTRY REALITIES

THE RIGHT TO BE RURAL. Fundamental to the theme of *A Gilpin County Primer* is the concept: **the right to be rural.** Although self-reliance is required, rural neighbors need each other. A horse or two may live next door and there are natives living in the woods. Clean water, sanitation and access are your responsibility. What the weather reporters call a "big storm" is just another great day in paradise. Details to follow....

MASTER PLAN. Every citizen or prospective resident should read the *Gilpin County Master Plan*. It is a document dedicated to delineating Great Expectations. The County Commissioners are dedicated to creating and maintaining the best rural county in Colorado. The *Master Plan* recognizes that Gilpin County has limited flat habitable area; thus, "flatland" zoning regulations that separate differing land uses are not appropriate. The *Master Plan* is based on three principles, the first being NONIMPINGEMENT OF ADJACENT USES, supported by PRESERVATION OF THE MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT and ENCOURAGEMENT OF ECONOMIC STABILITY. The zoning regulations and most ordinances flow from the three principles.

The key concept is that different land uses, be they residential, commercial or forestry, may be adjacent, but uses *must not impinge* on their neighbors. Dust, light, noise, visual clutter, odors, pets, livestock, etc. must stop at the property line. Home business is encouraged as long as the residence looks, sounds and smells like a house and is used as a residence. Building and land use is encouraged that is compatible with the mountain setting. Alas, not everyone "gets it," but the fundamental notion is very rural: to be a good neighbor.

GROWTH. Gilpin County is on the verge of a great growth wave. National census estimates are that the two million Front Range population will swell to four million by 2020. Given that most of the 4000 current Gilpin residents came from somewhere else, and although it is tempting, it is neither appropriate nor possible to "raise the drawbridge." At issue is how we grow, not if we grow. If you are an old-comer, "...glad you're here"; and if you are a newcomer, "welcome."

The County Commissioners accept the responsibility to manage growth within the limits of County authority. How fast and how much we grow is important. There is a limit to the capacity of the fragile mountain environment. Exceed the limit, be careless with paradise, and there will be no more rural. Now we must get on with the job of being good neighbors who thrive economically and who take care of our fragile and precious mountain setting.

The County has made it very easy and inexpensive to eliminate platted lots through Boundary Line Adjustment or Boundary Line Elimination. This is one way residents can reduce the number of lots, eliminate potential next door construction, reduce taxes, protect views and increase privacy. Call the Community Development Department, 303-582-5831, for details.

GAMBLING. In 1991, limited stakes casino gambling became legal in Central City, Black Hawk and Cripple Creek (in Teller County). There are pluses and minuses to this fact. Although the gaming affects every County resident and visitor, impact varies depending on where you live, work, play and drive. The economic, social, employment and governance impacts are substantial. Gambling is one of the local forces driving growth; however, Denver population expansion is the major growth engine. It remains to be seen if the rural nature of the County can be maintained beyond the first decade of the millennium.

WATER, the REAL GOLD. The Ancient Mariner had it right: "Water, water, everywhere, Nor any drop to drink." Water is the real gold in the West. Four facts are critical. First, Western water law determines who owns and controls every drop of water. Second, the State, not the County, controls all water and wells. Third, a permit from the State Engineer is required to drill a well. And fourth, preservation of water quality is paramount, which is why the next section on sanitation is so long.

Most potable water in the County is produced by a well located on each property. Since 1972, State law decrees that any new residential well is for *in-house use only*. That means *no* outdoor watering of vehicles, flowers, gardens, lawns, livestock, chipmunks, etc. You must go to town to legally waste water on bluegrass lawns or at the car wash. Water conservation is a rural way of life. Low water flow devices and appliances are prudent and sometimes necessary, for it costs to pump water up 200 plus feet, it is imperative to protect the leach field, and many wells, particularly in dry years, do not produce more than a few gallons per hour.

Protection of the purity of well water, your drinking water, requires proper installation of wells, which the State of Colorado controls. Protection from ground water pollution is vital and most critical is protection of wells from failed septic systems. If your water supply fails, you just lost the ability to live comfortably in paradise, for the average home uses about 450 gallons of water per day per person. Hauling water is possible, but really is not a viable option.

SANITATION. Nearly all residences outside the two towns have an ISDS, i.e. Individual Sewage Disposal System, often called a "septic system." Again, Expectations. The urbanite expects whatever they flush to go away. The Gilpinite expects the flush to end up in the back yard.

In the back yard will be a 1000-gallon or larger tank in which bacteria digest liquid and solid waste. Undigested solids settle to the bottom of the tank. From the tank the remaining "black" water flows to a leach field where it soaks into the ground and the earth filters out impurities. Thus, 90% to 95% of the well water is returned to the earth where it (hopefully) is pure and reusable. Your wastewater will be used again, and you may not be the first in line.

Due to the importance of clean water and the growing population that is placing wells and septic systems closer and closer, Gilpin County requires an "enhanced" septic system for most new or replacement systems. On lots smaller than one acre or if the leach field is between 100 and 200 feet from any water source, an upgraded system is required. Less than 100 feet is not allowed. BEWARE: if your builder, septic installer or well-driller places a well or septic less than 100 feet apart, there will be NO certificate of occupancy issued until one or the other is moved.

ISDS systems work when cared for and fail when: 1) they are not pumped regularly; 2) bacteria killing chemicals are introduced; 3) non-biodegradables are flushed; 4) overload floods the field, and/or if; 5) the field is compacted. Thus, 1) pumping every two to five years is required; 2) Clorox, Drano, paint thinner etc. down the drain is a no-no; 3) plastics, cloth based paper or diapers are a big mistake; 4) too many people using too much water will flood the leach field; and 5) driving or playing on the leach field will compact it. New ISDS systems are inspected and likely are properly installed. If the field is a decade or more old...expect to replace it sooner rather than later.

REAL ESTATE, LAND & JUST PLAIN DIRT. Given the reality of the rural mountain setting, "*buyer beware*" takes on a whole new meaning. Dreams of a home in paradise can become a nightmare. Any reputable seller or sales agent will welcome your seeking a second opinion and your checking out the facts yourself.

Access. Just because there is a road or driveway does not mean a property has legal access, especially if the access is across property belonging to others. It is wise to get legal advice and to fully understand and document easements that may exist or be necessary to insure access. Do not accept the word of a seller or agent, especially if they tell you you can't be kept off your property. The "right" of access could require thousands in legal costs plus delay upon delay. There may be unrecorded power or other easements across your land, and land "behind" yours may require you to give an easement. Access disputes are becoming more common as folks move onto the in-fill lots. Some neighbors are just plain rotten and some are saintly, but for either, nail down the legal access in writing before closing.

There may be road or driveway maintenance issues. Although you can drive trouble free during the 19 days of non-winter, you may later discover a spot where the snow drifts 10 feet deep. And don't expect emergency vehicles to have much more luck than you. The County maintains public roads, but the level of maintenance and frequency varies depending on the class of road. Property owners are responsible for maintenance and snow plowing of all private roads and driveways. Heavy rains and rapid snowmelt can wash out or severely damage your driveway or private road. You may need to buy a snowplow to maintain your driveway. You may need to contract for maintenance and snow removal. Don't assume a neighbor will cooperate or share expenses. And don't wait until the snow flies to make these arrangements.

Be aware that the County does not clear the snow berm created across your driveway when public roads are plowed. It is not practical to individually clear two thousand driveways on 150 miles of road. Clearing the end of your driveway is your responsibility and one of the joys of rural living. Easier, too, if removed before being driven over or packed into a wall of ice.

Property Boundaries. You may be provided a plat of your property and there may be survey pegs, pieces of rebar or water pipe, fences, blazes on trees, or piles of rock marking alleged property boundaries, but unless you get a real survey by a licensed surveyor, you risk disappointment and grief. Your home, outbuildings, well and septic must be sited within specific distances of property boundaries and neighboring structures. This is not a place to save a few bucks.

Mineral Rights. Property may or may not have the mineral rights included with the land. Owners of mineral rights *have the right* to mine, which may change the surface on or near your property. Although a Special Review Use permit is required to mine, you need to know what minerals could be mined on or near your dream home. Check it out.

Homeowner Associations. Some subdivisions have homeowner associations. If so, you need to understand covenants and any specific conditions that may come with living or building there. Some association membership is voluntary; some control architecture; some have dues; and some control or prohibit animals. Know the covenants before you buy.

Land Uses Change. Zoning for residential, commercial or other uses tends to be stable; however, land use and density may change over time. Check out the zoning where you wish to buy and find out the zoning of adjacent and nearby lots. When you move in, the neighborhood changes for your neighbor, and the same will apply for you when the next new resident builds on the adjacent lot.

Buildability vs. Livability. Not all lots are buildable. Access, slope, septic and well distances may be inadequate. Be cautious before you buy. Check with folks living in the area, for even if a site is buildable, many factors affect livability.

Construction. Building your dream home in the high country is different from building down below. Your past experience building may not be adequate. The abbreviated building season, delivery surcharges, worker travel times, local labor and contractor availability and ever-increasing material costs drive up the per-square-foot figure.

Water and septic are big-ticket items. Access and utility easements may require time and cost. Can construction trucks get to the site? Check the zoning requirements. Get real about costs; for example, in addition to the cost of concrete per yard there is a truck time surcharge of \$1 or more per minute to and from the origination point which is an hour or more away. Delays are inevitable. Pick a contractor carefully and write an ironclad contract. Site design is important; for example, the driveway needs to work both in summer and winter and be adequate for emergency vehicle access. Some housing described as "affordable" may have inferior materials and workmanship and may be inadequate for the mountains. Often "affordable" is an euphemism for what was called a "cracker box" shortly after WW II. Get the facts before you start.

Building, special use, excavation, septic and other permits are required for the protection of old-timers and newcomers. To protect adjacent uses from impingement we have regulations, bureaucracy, inspectors and permits. Demand and verify that your builder gets the proper permits and inspections.

Utilities. Two different power companies plus a plethora of phone companies serve the County. Summer storms or heavy winter snows may knock out power and phones. Usually service is back on within a few minutes. However, it is possible to lose service for several

hours or up to several days, in which case frozen foods are at risk, the well won't pump, the furnace may not heat and the kitchen stove may not cook. Having a Plan B to compensate for the loss of power may require a small generator and alternative light and heat sources. Remember, when the lights go out, you are responsible.

Part of the County has three-phase power, but not all. Electric lines are not installed to every lot or property and to do so can get very expensive. Sometimes easements from private property owners may be needed to bring power to remote areas. Again, check it out.

A battery back-up and surge protector is a wise investment to protect computers and other delicate electronic equipment. Most areas have at least two phone lines available, but often only two. Be sure your needs can be met.

Deliveries. Not all of the County has U.S. mail delivery at roadside mailboxes. Mail delivery does not go into all subdivisions. In addition to those who must, many residents choose to use P.O. boxes in Central City, Black Hawk, Rollinsville, Pinecliffe or Nederland where the local service is personalized and the mail is secure.

UPS and FedEx deliver to most parts of the County, weather permitting. If this is important to you, check it out. "Next day" and "Overnight" delivery often translates to "Give it a few days."

Newspapers from the metro area are delivered to subscribers at most roadside mailbox locations, weather permitting and if the carrier feels like it. The three local newspapers—the *Central City Weekly Register-Call*, the *Gilpin County News* and the Nederland *The Mountain-Ear*, are available at various locations and by U.S. mail. Newspapers are must subscriptions if you want to be a part of the community.

The View. One of the reasons to live in Gilpin is to enjoy the spectacular views. Be aware that your view may change as neighbors near and far build their dream homes. One of the reasons for ridgeline building restrictions is to protect the views we have left. Two notions to keep in mind: first, what you do on your property will likely be in someone else's view, so be aware and considerate. And second, you do not *own* your view. If you want to control the view, you need to buy the land.

MOTHER NATURE. In the high country weather is neither good nor bad, it just IS. Happy residents enjoy the 19 days of spring, summer and fall as a contrast, not a relief, to winter. If this is not your idea of paradise, Gilpin is not your end of the rainbow.

North Facing & Other Slopes. North slopes see no or little direct sunlight in the winter. Snow builds up, heating bills mount and, come spring, driveway and road washouts can be unwelcome realities. When builders fill a natural drainage, the mountain above tends to not pay attention. When property owners fill in ravines or cut into hillsides, they may find that the water that drained through a ravine or sub-surface layer now drains through their basement...fills and cuts do not alter gravity.

Wind & Chill. Elevation and proximity to the Continental Divide generates fierce winter winds. Snowdrifts can build or repeatedly re-form; drifts may not melt until spring; and wind driven snow is often the consistency of concrete and difficult to shovel or plow. Some areas will be swept clear of snow, which is good for a driveway but bad for over a water line that may then freeze. High wind plus low temperature creates dangerous wind chill that will freeze exposed skin quickly. Children walking to, and waiting at, school bus stops must be adequately dressed, and it is recommended that their pockets be filled with large rocks.

Wildlife...Oh, Deer! Cash and the finance company can facilitate new neighbors, but Mother Nature has already provided neighbors that have been here for thousands of years: deer, elk, bear, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, beaver, raccoon, marmot, trout, hummingbird, chipmunk et al. The wild animals were here first and we are living/camping in their front yard. Some of the native neighbors eat pets, which is a reason to keep domestic pets confined and protected. A regional wildlife writer described a poodle on a deck as a "meatloaf with fur." The neighborhood bears are attracted to kitchen scraps, bird feeders, pet food etc. Folks who complain when the deer and elk eat their petunias have planted their garden at least 4000 feet too high and at least an hour too far west. Be nice to the wildlife or be gone.

Farmlife...Cows & Other Critters. The County has very little commercial farming or livestock raising. But where it exists, it is there first, there by right and deserves not to be condemned by urban development. If you buy or build next to a farm, expect agricultural activity. The "right to be rural" applies. Love it or avoid it.

Tamelife...Horses & Dogs. Part of rural life and the right to be rural is the ability to have pets such as a horse, dog, or llama. The real issue goes back to the *Master Plan* concept of non-impingement on adjacent property uses. There is something wrong with the picture when one neighbor can't have horses, donkeys, ducks, chickens or guinea hens that stay at home in a pen because dogs running at large from next door or over the ridge harass, maim or kill them. Responsible residents will keep corrals clean and dogs will be confined, reasonably quiet and controlled when out for a walk with their people. Be a good neighbor.

Plantlife...Native vs. Weeds. Gilpin County is serious about weed control and protecting our natural indigenous plants. Current and new residents need to educate themselves and act to control noxious weeds that crowd out native plants. Some weeds are so pernicious that they destroy the land use. By the time most folks get aware, it is too late. Contact the County Extension Agent at 303-582-9106 for information and assistance. Thanks for getting aboard.

Fire Protection vs. Tree Hugging. Wildland fire is always a threat. Lightning starts fires every summer, as does the train, campers/hikers, smokers and careless residents. Although building codes may require fire-related precautions, ultimately you are responsible to take the necessary steps to mitigate the fire danger around your dwellings. The State Forest Service and local fire departments wish to advise you. Please ask.

Many folks cherish trees, every last one of them. The threat of fire can not be eliminated. Trees rubbing on the roof pose a real fire hazard to both the house and the woods.

The "Darn Fool Clause" says it is OK if you burn your own house down. But if your house sets the woods on fire, and the neighbors are threatened or burned out, that is decidedly un-neighborly.

TRANSPORTATION. At least one four-wheel drive vehicle per family is needed. You may get along without a 4x4, but that insures there will be times you won't get out and won't get back for a few days. Those ready for prime time have an adequate 4x4 vehicle equipped with emergency clothing, winter tires, tow chain, jumper cables and tire chains.

During extreme (but normal) weather some or all local roads can be impassable. There are times when patience is the only reasonable tack while the road crew works overtime to clear a big dump of snow. Also, the roads are not plowed down to dirt because that destroys the road base, thus, expect to drive on snow packed roads much of the winter.

Parking is prohibited on public roads and rights-of-way, especially in winter. Vehicles parked or abandoned on the public roads will be towed, for they hinder or prevent snow removal and are a hazard to other motorists.

School bus routes serve the County; however, the kids may have to walk a considerable way and you will have to provide transportation to and from after school activities.

The 150 miles of County roads are dirt/gravel/rock. Thus, they sometimes are damaged by excessive water runoff, they get rough and dust is a given. You are responsible to drive appropriately for the road conditions. The good news is that several miles of road each year are being upgraded with proper drainage, six inches of road base and an application of dust suppressant. The roads will get better, but it will take a while to get to them all.

SCHOOLS & CHILDCARE. Gilpin County residents are working together to provide quality educational options and the best possible rural setting for our kids.

Public Schools. Gilpin County was divided between two public school districts over two decades ago. The consequences are: 1) Gilpin RE-1 School serves the southern half of the County and Boulder County RE-2 serves the northern half, 2) the Gilpin kids and families are split by school and after-school activities, and 3) the school tax disparity is significant, for the south half of the County pays a much lower school tax compared to the mill levy paid by the northern half. The disparity in cost is not indicative of the quality of education, for school performance is comparable.

Alternative Schools. The Gilpin RE-1 and Boulder RE-2 school districts provide alternatives for some students who do not thrive in a traditional setting. There are private school options in adjacent counties.

Montessori School. Within the Gilpin RE-1 school and adjacent Eagles' Nest Child Care Center is a private Montessori school. Rather than fight or compete, the locals decided to cooperate. Interesting concept, that.

Eagles' Nest. The Eagles' Nest Child Care Center is adjacent to the Gilpin RE-1 Public/Montessori School. This is a first class facility.

RECREATION. A long-held dream of many locals came true Memorial Day weekend of 2003 when a new Community Center was dedicated, complete with two swimming pools, walking track, basketball/volleyball courts, teen room, weight room, exercise equipment and craft room. Drop in, or sign up for a class or league by calling 303-582-1453.

LIBRARY. Gilpin residents blessed the County with a modern library, sited mid-county, that offers high-speed Internet and inter-library access. It is both an information resource and a community meeting center. This should be one of your first stops.

EMERGENCY SERVICES. Volunteer groups staffed by unpaid professionals respond to community emergencies, i.e., to your emergency. The service groups include four fire departments, fire auxiliary, search and rescue, and mine rescue. Law enforcement and the ambulance service are staffed by paid professionals.

Again, this is rural living—and dying. Response times vary with the season and are much longer than in a city. The folks who show up at your emergency may have had to close their business, drop off a kid or whatever to respond to your emergency call. They will be professional and know what they are doing. Keep in mind that you chose to live where the hospital is an hour or more away by road and 20 minutes by chopper...after the troops find you, stabilize you and load you.

The Mountain Family Medical Center has two useful locations. The north clinic is in Nederland, Boulder County. The south clinic is in Black Hawk. This brings excellent medical care a little closer to home, but these "neighborhood" clinics may be up to half an hour away and they are not open 24 hours. After-hours medical services require the ambulance or a trip to Boulder or Denver to a hospital emergency room.

VOLUNTEERING. If volunteering is not something you would ever consider, it could be rural living in the high country is not for you. Although country folks tend to be independent and like their privacy, we depend on each other. The neighbor you didn't bother to wave at all summer is more likely to help pull your Honda out of a snowy ditch than the folks from AAA. This County is the sum of the many volunteers who participate in emergency, school, library and other social activities. Join in!

COUNTY FAIR. A truly rural event is the annual Gilpin County Fair. Folks get to show off their pets, livestock, wares, skills, artistry and achievements. One of the few FREE fairs still operating in Colorado. Two days of fun, family and entertainment with food and booth vendors galore. Always the third weekend of the month in August.

Other events are occasionally held at the fairgrounds, and the Exhibit Building and the arena are otherwise available for other activities like horseback riding. Check with the Facilities Coordinator at 303-582-5214 for availability.

TRASH. Trash removal is a regular chore (we hope). There are several urban-like trash removal companies, but most people hoard or haul their own trash and recyclables to the County compactor. Your County pays as much to haul off recycled items as landfill stuff. Dropping off household trash is free; the fees charged for construction materials, etc., outrageous as they may seem, cover only about 1/3 of the cost.

Containment of trash is important. Loose kitchen trash is ugly and will attract unwanted visitors; namely, bears, dogs, raccoons and maybe the zoning inspector. If an animal or wind scatters your trash, it is up to you to clean it up. Please don't trash paradise.

TAXES. As noted above, the school district taxes are significantly different. Prior to legalized gambling in Gilpin's two incorporated towns, County property taxes were among Colorado's highest. The good news is the library and fire districts taxes are modest and, due to high property values in the gaming districts, the current County property tax rate is one of the lowest in the State.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES. County and urban services are very different, partly due to available revenue and partly because cities and counties are constitutionally different. Cities are independent and can do anything not prohibited by the State, whereas counties are an arm of the State and can only do what is specifically permitted by the State. Indicative of making the transition from urban to rural living would be to change the statement, "Why don't they..." to "Why don't I...."

Where to Find Us. Call the Gilpin County Old Courthouse at 203 Eureka Street, Central City at 303-582-5214, to get a listing and location of County departments and services. Come to the Old Courthouse; you will always be welcome. Our County's judicial services are located at the Justice Center at 2960 Dory Hill Road. The County web site at <http://co.gilpin.co.us> has a variety of topics. If you do not have a personal computer, you can view the web site while you visit the Gilpin County Library.

County Quarterly Newsletter. Find local information pertinent to all Gilpin County residents in the quarterly Gilpin County Newsletter. If you are not receiving one and you live in the county, please report it to 303-582-5214.

Board of County Commissioners. Your Commissioners can be contacted through the Old Courthouse noted above or at home, for Gilpin is a small rural county where your elected officials are available to you. Every Tuesday morning, the Commissioners hold their regular meeting. You can get on the agenda, you can speak during the "public comment" segment of every meeting, or you can observe. Also, the agenda and minutes of Commission meetings are available on the web site. We welcome your presence as we go about the work entrusted to us by the citizens of Gilpin County.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

This information summarizes some of the issues and notions residents have faced as they grew up in or moved to Gilpin Country. We hope this *Primer* helps you make informed and successful decisions about living in the high country. Is the "right to be rural" right for you? For some, it's a nice place to visit during the 19 days of spring, summer and fall. For others it is a paradise for year-round living. But for both, living in rural Gilpin County requires one to learn, prepare and, above all, be ready for the realities of living in the high country.