

The Essential Questions and Answers



photo by Steve Vining

UTILITIES

If utilities are not readily available, the expense of obtaining them will be the responsibility of the purchaser. Be sure to learn just which utilities are and are not available, and if not available — what it will cost to obtain them. Once you have a home here, your heating bill in winter will most likely be your biggest utility expense. With this in mind, keep an eye out for property with good southern exposure to take advantage of the winter sun, and shop for an efficient heating system.

Electricity — Electric power lines run throughout the county, but not all properties are serviced. It is always best to purchase property that already has electric service close by, because it could be very expensive to run the necessary lines to your property. La Plata Electric handles the installation of all electric lines underground. In the past, many electric lines were put above ground where acreage parcels were involved. There are credits allowed, wherein all or part of the installation costs may be refunded over a period of time. The electric contractor on your new home will usually include the price of bringing the electric service from your lot line to the home with their total bid. Check with La Plata Electric for current policies and information. If there is no electric service available, solar energy is also a viable alternative here, because we have so much sunshine throughout the year.

Water — Central (city) water and sewer is provided in many subdivided areas of the county and city through the Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District (PAWS). A central water system can be a big benefit. Some areas rely on wells, where a property owner can apply for and receive a well permit. The issuance of well permits is strictly regulated, and the property will have to fall into certain acreage and location categories to be considered before being issued a permit. When drilling a well, be aware that you may or may not hit good water. Sulfur can be a big problem in some areas. Remember, dry years can result in dry wells — especially when they are not deep enough to compensate for drought periods.

PAWS FEES — There are several different fees associated with water and sewer services through the Pagosa Area Water and Sewer District (PAWS). Knowing which fees apply to your property is important. You can get this information by calling PAWS at (970)731-2691. **Water-OTHER** — The San Juan River Village (aka San Juan River Resort) has its own water and sewer system. The tap fee for water and sewer is \$6,000. Water and sewer availability for vacant land is \$33 per month. With a home, the cost is \$65 per month. Rates may change. Please call San Juan River Village Metro at (970)264-4218 for more current information.

Sewer — Central sewer is usually not available on properties larger than 3 acres. An individual septic system is required on these properties, the cost of which can range from a low of \$3,500 up to \$25,000 or more, with the predominate average being \$3,500 to \$5,000. Rocky ground or shallow bedrock are the usual

causes of more expensive systems. The San Juan Basin Health Department (SJBHD) has authority over septic systems, and a permit must be obtained. All systems must meet their specific standards. If you are concerned, check with the SJBHD about your ability to construct a septic system before you purchase.

Natural Gas — SourceGas (Formerly Kinder Morgan) provides natural gas service in the county, where applicable. Most areas do not have natural gas available. Local propane companies offer services all over the county as an alternative to natural gas.

Telephone — CenturyTel of Colorado provides land line phone service. Phone lines are available throughout the county; however, not all properties are currently serviced. If phone lines are not visible, check with the phone company as to availability. Phone lines are usually buried underground. DSL is offered in most areas through CenturyTel. Local cell phone service is available through either Alltel or Verizon.

Television — Television reception in the mountains can be very poor. Cable television or satellite tv service is used most often in our area, in order to get good, reliable reception. Rocky Mountain Cable provides local cable tv service, however, it is only available to a small minority of the community. Call them to check for availability at (970) 731-2211. Satellite service is provided DirecTV or the Dish Network.

Roads — Roads are an important concern here in Pagosa Country. A paved road is a luxury, as the majority of our roads are gravel. The county maintains some roads, and others are the responsibility of the developer or the property owners association. Maintenance of some roads is in contention, so be sure to check with the County or the property owners association to find out the status of your property's road maintenance. A special committee is currently developing a long-range plan to improve all the roads in the county.



EVERY COMMUNITY HAS ITS REAL ESTATE “GOTCHAS!”

The following are just some of the questions that you'll want to have answered when purchasing real estate in the Pagosa area:

- Are the roads maintained and plowed, and by whom?
- What utilities are available?
- Is the property in a fire protection district?
- Will you have to drill a well?
- Will you need to put in an individual septic system, and what permits will you need?
- How far is it to town, and will you want to make the trip in the winter?
- Does the area have covenants, and are they enforced?
- Is there an active property owners' association?
- What special tax districts are there?
- What are the taxes?
- Does it have good southern exposure to take advantage of the winter sun?

Go Real Estate shopping armed with the answers to these questions!