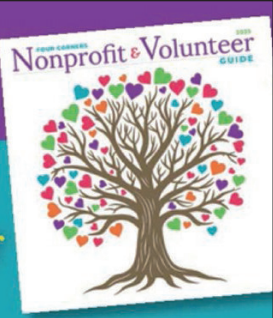


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LA PLATA COUNTY

Planning process under scrutiny

'Code Rights Project' aims to shed light on development rules

BY JESSICA BOWMAN
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Have you dealt with La Plata County's planning, permitting, building or legal processes?

If so, Jack Turner, the face of the newly launched Code Rights Project, wants to hear from you.

The Code Rights Project, which launched Tuesday, is a citizen-led effort aimed at strengthening the public's understanding of La Plata County's development regulations and advocating for fair, transparent governance.

"I think there's a pretty good sentiment across the county that something isn't working," Turner said. "Why does it take so long to get something done in La Plata County, relative to the rest of the state?"

Turner said he was asked to serve as the public face of the project by a group of residents and developers who have expressed serious concerns about the county's planning department, calling it slow, arbitrary and vindictive.

The individuals behind the effort have chosen to remain anonymous, citing fear of retribution that could impact their ongoing development projects. However, Turner said if the project receives enough public support, those involved plan to reveal their identities.

The project is expected to take several months. Its first goal is to document and make public any inefficient, unjust or abusive policies and practices within the

See **CODE RIGHTS, 8A**

Durango Community Recreation Center approaching peak use



JERRY MCBRIDE/Durango Herald photos

The aquatics area at the Durango Community Recreation Center is the most popular amenity at the site, said John Frobinette, recreation center manager. The center is open seven days a week and receives about 1,100 visitors daily.

Where do we go from here?

BY CHRISTIAN BURNEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Durango Community Recreation Center flexed a record number of users in 2019 before COVID-19 crashed in and deflated visitation by nearly two-thirds. In 2025, the recreation center has nearly regained its pace.

Recreation Center Manager John Frobinette said the recreation center, which is open seven days a week, has about 11,000 users daily.

The recreation center had nearly 374,000 annual visitors in 2019, according to Parks and Recreation data. The pandemic dragged visitation down to



Terri Oliger leads her one-hour nonstop class that combines HIIT, weight training and core strength July 3 in the Durango Community Recreation Center.

about 144,000 annual visitors over the course of 2020. The

recreation center's comeback was evident last year with

approximately 366,000 total visitors in 2024.

Assistant Recreation Director Kelli Jaycox said spin and fitness classes are so popular the recreation center can't fit everyone into the studio, spotlighting the need for more studio space. Waitlists are typically a given for Gametime, a youth recreation and licensed child care service, although new outdoor programs have been added this year along with staff increases to better serve the kids enrolled and keep up with demand.

Recreation Center Manager

See **CENTER, 8A**

Durango coder creates scavenger hunt for locals, tourists

What happens when reporter scanned random QR code, followed AI secret agent's directions?

BY ELIZABETH POND
HERALD STAFF WRITER

It all started with a puzzling poster on a traffic pole, a sneaky Reddit thread and a mysterious phone call from a deep-voiced stranger named "Agent Smith." Before I knew it, I was tumbling

headfirst into a top secret investigation right in the heart of Durango.

Reddit has been called a lot of things over the course of its existence: a marketplace of ideas, a mindless source of scrolling and a cesspool of human brain rot. "Instigator of small-town

top secret spy missions" is a new one; but that's exactly what it became for me when I stumbled across an especially intriguing post in r/Durango in early July.

I'll admit, I was suspicious at first. A nondescript poster left on a light post that included at least three telltale signs of potential phishing attempts set off immediate alarm bells for me. Most of the comments

on the Reddit post echoed this sentiment – except one, posted by user footfungusfreak. It read:

"I called the number, it seems like maybe a scavenger hunt or something? I spoke to an AI voice named 'Agent Smith' who told me to go to the train station to look for a statue."

I was intrigued. Emboldened by the faceless commenter's assurance that the trail was more



than just a spam attempt, and overcome with my own curiosity, I called Agent Smith myself in search of some much needed answers.

I didn't say much throughout the first few minutes of the call. As it turns out, that wasn't a problem for Agent Smith, a chatty, James Bond-esque AI secret agent

See **HUNT, 8A**


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