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THE Durango HERALD

Weekend Edition

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LA PLATA COUNTY JAIL

Officials: Hospital returning inmates

County seeks answers after repeated returns raise medical concerns

BY JESSICA BOWMAN
HERALD STAFF WRITER

On a whiteboard in the nurses' office at the La Plata County Jail, a deputy has written: "When in doubt, send them out."

That phrase has become the jail's new maxim and was repeated during the La Plata County commissioners' annual jail tour to reflect a shift in how staff members respond to inmates' medical concerns.

The change follows the 2023 death of Daniel Foard, who suffered an internal medical issue that allegedly went unaddressed during several days in custody.

Last year, Foard's parents filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against the Board of County Commissioners, Sheriff Sean Smith, the jail's contracted health provider Southern Health Partners and others.

The lawsuit alleges staff members ignored Foard's increasingly urgent pleas for help and failed to recognize the severity of his condition. While the case remains in litigation, it has brought heightened scrutiny to the jail's medical care.

In response, jail officials say they have implemented stricter protocols for sending inmates out for medical evaluation.

There is just one problem: Mercy Hospital keeps sending them back.

According to a jail sergeant,

See **JAIL, 8A**

Durango's Animas River Trail is 50 years in the making



JERRY MCBRIDE/Durango Herald photos

Jessica Corley walks her dogs, Rufous, left, and Bonnie over one of the eight pedestrian bridges on the Animas River Trail on Thursday. Corley said she loves the trail and uses it every day. The Animas River Trail is a 50-year-long project that hasn't quite reached its end - Three Springs - but city officials say it is getting there.

Crown jewel

BY CHRISTIAN BURNEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

"Lovely, winding, soothing and peaceful" are how residents describe Durango's Animas River Trail, said Sweetie Marbury, longtime resident

and former city councilor. Often called the "crown jewel" of Durango by residents and city officials past and present, the Animas River Trail has been decades in the making.

About 50 years into development, the Animas River



Hal McLean rides his bike on the Animas River Trail on Thursday. The trail has been hailed as Durango's "crown jewel" by residents and city officials. It stretches nearly 9 miles from Oxbow Park and Preserve to the Dallabetta Park trailhead near River Road and La Posta Road (County Road 213).

Trail remains unfinished as the city works to complete a long-planned connection to Three Springs. When, exactly, that connection will be made, remains uncertain.

The trail extends from Oxbow Park and Preserve in north Durango to the Dallabetta Park trailhead near River

See **JEWEL, 8A**

Second homes prove tricky issue for Durango leaders

City's 12% vacancy rate lower than mountain resort towns, but housing concerns persist

BY CHRISTIAN BURNEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

The city of Durango has a high number of "vacant" or second homes compared to most communities but compared to mountain resort towns, the vacancy rate is notably low.

Local government officials say they feel optimistic about Durango's vacancy rates, although they acknowledge access to affordable housing remains a challenge.

Councilor Kip Koso said he's disappointed a recent bill that would have allowed municipali-

ties to implement vacancy taxes on second homes failed in the state Legislature.

The Colorado House Finance Committee rejected the Empty Home Tax bill on Feb. 9, according to Colorado Newswire.

"I was rooting for the vacancy tax to make it out of committee at the state level," Koso told *The Durango Herald* in February. "It's got so many, multiple applications, right? It's a disin-

centive for people to leave their vacation homes empty when we need workforce housing. It discourages second homeownership and vacant residences. I liked that it could be tailored for each individual community."

Durango Prosperity Officer Mike French said earlier this year an estimated 88% of 9,464 households within the city of Durango are occupied full-time - leaving about 12% of house-

holds vacant. He said the 12% vacancy rate was attributed to people who live in Durango seasonally, who own second homes in Durango and short-term vacation rentals.

There were about 135 managed and regulated short-term rentals in Durango as of early 2026, according to the city.

Koso said in an interview

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