

## **BOOMS AND BUSTS – A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE**

From many recent press accounts, a reader would be led to believe that all of the impacts from past oil shale development were negative. That is not the case. In the 1970s, over \$100 million from the Oil Shale Trust Fund was distributed to local communities to improve infrastructure and services. During this same period, the town of Battlement Mesa was built with private oil shale industry funds (picture below). Battlement Mesa is now a thriving and diverse community in Western Colorado.

Citizens in the region are still enjoying the benefits derived from that oil shale era. It was a period when the Federal government was pushing for energy independence and offered financial incentives to build large synfuel plants. The communities in the oil shale region were not prepared for the influx of population that was projected to occur. A steep decline in oil prices and change in government policy resulted in the cancellation of most oil shale projects in the 1980s. Today the population in the region has grown, a robust energy business has evolved, and services and infrastructure have kept pace.

The area is much better prepared for an oil shale industry than it was 30 years ago. Nonetheless, funds will become available to communities from oil shale severance taxes, property taxes, and Federal lease bonus payments and royalties to improve infrastructure and services. Government policies should be put in place to ensure that these funds are made available to local communities in a timely manner.

