

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The following section serves as a brief introduction to this report. The executive summary covers highlights from different sections within the document.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After nearly ten years, Adams County is embarking on an ambitious plan to update three pivotal long-range documents through the Advancing Adams effort including the Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and the Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan (POST). Completed in coordination with the Advancing Adams planning teams, County staff, community and stakeholders, as well as previous planning efforts, this Existing Conditions Report represents the first step in laying the groundwork for the Adams County Comprehensive Plan update.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Adams County Comprehensive Plan is a long-range plan that considers the next 20 years. The

Plan provides overarching guidance for the future of a community in terms of population growth, land use patterns, conservation and economic considerations. Developed in partnership with the community at-large, the Comprehensive Plan captures the vision of the people and outlines policies, programs and projects that will move the County toward their shared goals.

WHY AN EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT?

The Existing Conditions Report provides information that reflects a snapshot in time in Adams County. The report reviews key demographics, employment and job information, environmental and sustainability considerations, and information about current land uses and the built environment.

The Existing Conditions Report effectively concludes Phase One of the planning process as it provides a foundational understanding of the County and serves as an effective launch point into Phase Two, when the Comprehensive Plan is formally crafted in terms of a visionary and operational document. The Comprehensive Plan will guide growth and the future of the County in terms of policies, recommendations, programs, projects and implementation information.

The Comprehensive Plan Existing Conditions Report captures information and preliminary analysis in four main areas including:

- **Plan Overview** – an introductory section that describes the plan purpose, plan values, planning process and a foundational understanding of the County’s demographics and growth projections;
- **Taking a Look at Adams County** – a topical investigation of Adams County considering five main themes including Community and Housing, Natural Environment, Built Environment and Connections, Economic Development and Cultural Heritage;
- **Five Strategic Corridors** – a section devoted to an existing conditions assessment of five corridors, including Federal Boulevard, Pecos Street, Washington Street, East 104th Avenue and East 120th Avenue from a land use perspective;
- **Looking Forward** – this final section provides an overview of work that will be completed in Phase Two of the planning process and introduces land use frameworks such as the 20-Minute

ADVANCING ADAMS PLANNING FOR A SHARED FUTURE



Figure 1: Advancing Adams Planning for a Shared Future

A FOCUS ON UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY

Existing conditions reports often consider and illustrate conditions surrounding municipalities and counties. This Existing Conditions Report document and the Phase 2 Comprehensive Plan are intended to focus on the unincorporated areas of Adams County and not intended to provide direction for municipalities.

Community and the Adams County Transect.

WHAT ARE THE KEY TAKEAWAYS?

Adams County has a rich history and is embarking on a Comprehensive Planning effort at a critical time. Demographics are changing, housing opportunities are continuing to tighten, and climate change is impacting the community. There are also significant opportunities to move forward toward the County’s vision to be the “most inclusive county in the Country.” Some of the key existing conditions that are outlined in this Report will provide the basis for the next steps in the Comprehensive Plan including:

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

- The Adams County population is expected to increase by 220,000 people by 2040, maintaining an

average growth rate of 1.6 percent. The average household size is three people, which is slightly higher than the state average of 2.52.

- Based on the most recent population projections from the State Demographer's office, the County will need, on average, an additional 3,371 units annually through 2040 in order to maintain the current average household size.
- The current housing stock consists primarily of single-family detached homes, which accounts for 62.4 percent of housing units; this housing type is what is typically being developed today. There are additional opportunities for housing type diversity to be added to the stock to support the growing population.
- Adams County has the highest percentage of population that speak a language other than English in the region, at nearly 2 percent.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- The County lies in the South Platte River basin, and while some water is stored in local reservoirs, much of the County's water comes from reservoirs in other river basins including the Colorado River Basin on the Western Slope.
- While there has been increased fragmentation of natural habitat due to development, there is a strong potential to link habitat into defined corridors that would allow freedom of migration and support native populations of flora and fauna.
- By 2050, it is projected that Adams County will see an increase in average temperatures by 2.5 to five degrees Fahrenheit, have more consecutive days over 95 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer months, and experience longer and more severe droughts.

- The power supplied to Adams County is becoming less carbon-intensive at a relatively rapid pace. Xcel Energy, which served approximately 160,000 premises in 2019 for both electric and gas, has committed to reaching 80 percent carbon-free electricity by 2030, and 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2050.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIONS

- The western and most populous portion of the County primarily features a suburban-style development pattern with limited walkable and mixed-use type destinations.
- Equity, sustainability and livability can all be addressed by strategically identifying geographic areas of increased density that also provide quality access to employment centers, essential services and amenities.
- Industrial land uses are essential to the economic vibrancy of Adams County, however, compatible land use adjacencies must be considered.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The unemployment rate in Adams County, without accounting for COVID-19 impacts, is relatively low at 7.3 percent.
- The distribution of employment in Adams County is mostly white collar, which accounts for 54.4 percent of total employment, followed by blue collar and services, which make up 27.4 and 18.2 percent respectively.
- Adams County's key and emerging industries are aerospace, aviation, bio/life sciences, food/agribusiness/ beverage, and manufacturing.
- While 84 percent of Adams County residents have a high-school degree or higher, only 25

percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. This represents a less educated population compared to the State, where 40 percent of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Riverdale Regional Park and Fairgrounds plays a pivotal role as a destination that hosts events and supports culture and heritage in Adams County.
- With some modifications, a framework like Transfer of Development Rights could play a larger role in supporting the existing agriculture and farming heritage through land conservation for the purposes of agriculture. The land use strategy of Transfer of Development Rights is a major pillar of the Adams County District Plan.
- Placemaking and public art can be leveraged as a tool to celebrate culture and heritage in Adams County, especially in the western and most populous portions of the County.

CORRIDORS

- The five strategic corridor areas are Federal Boulevard, Pecos Street, Washington Street, East 104th Avenue and East 120th Avenue. The corridors were selected according to the following criteria: be a principal or arterial roadway, have unincorporated lands, be subject to a study or upcoming improvements, fall within an Opportunity Zone, be identified for capital improvements, have redevelopment potential and proximity to multi-modal transit opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

Phase Two of the Comprehensive Plan process consists of three main steps which includes:

- Confirming land use frameworks that align with the values of the community and evaluating growth scenarios;
- Determining policies, recommendations, programs and projects;
- Developing an action plan with implementation and ongoing reporting guidance.

The Comprehensive Plan process is expected to conclude with a formally adopted plan in December 2021.