

APRIL 2021

# Advancing Adams Comprehensive Plan

Existing Conditions and Opportunities Report



ADVANCING **ADAMS**  
PLANNING FOR A SHARED FUTURE





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Washington Street South of 70th Ave

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

## 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

# ADVANCING ADAMS PLANNING FOR A SHARED FUTURE



Figure 1: Advancing Adams Planning for a Shared Future

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.

# PLAN OVERVIEW



Pecos Street Between US-36 and 70th Ave

This section includes:

- Plan Purpose
- Plan Values
- Planning Process
- Plan Vision
- Introduction to Adams County

## PLAN PURPOSE

The Adams County Comprehensive Plan defines a bold vision that will guide future growth aligned with the community's values. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan will lay the foundation for two concurrent planning efforts, the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) Master Plan, as well as all other upcoming long-range plans.

The Advancing Adams Process is divided into two phases. Phase 1 focuses on an understanding of existing conditions in Adams County. This document provides a summary of these existing conditions, and lays the

groundwork for the Comprehensive Plan.

Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Planning effort will begin in April 2021 and will document a series of policies and recommendations that will shape the future of Adams County.

The Comprehensive Plan for Adams County will answer three critical questions: What? Why? How?

The "What?" are the actionable and measurable policies and recommendations that will shape the future of Adams County. These will be drafted according to topical areas and organized under aspirational goals and objectives. This content will

be drafted in Phase 1 and refined with client and community collaboration in Phase 2.

The "Why?" are the core values from which each of the policies and recommendations can be justified. The values were established by Adams County leadership with input from residents.

The "How?" is related to implementation. This portion of

the planning work will largely be completed during Phase 2 of this planning process, after many of the policies and recommendations are established and confirmed with the Adams County community.



Figure 2: Purpose of Comprehensive Plan

## WHAT WILL ADAMS COUNTY BE LIKE IN THE YEAR 2040?

### THE ADAMS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WILL PROVIDE A VISION FOR THE FUTURE AND GUIDANCE ON HOW THE VISION CAN BE ACHIEVED.

#### PLAN VISION

The Comprehensive Plan serves as a policy and operations tool that guides the County toward the vision of being the most innovative and inclusive County in America for all families and businesses. The plan will be a broad and implementable document that addresses future development and code needs, including technical zoning or development standards requirements, as well as overarching policies/statements about engaging the community, addressing economic development, equity and sustainability in all its forms.

## PLAN VALUES

As part of the initial work on Advancing Adams, three initial core value lenses have emerged. These will ultimately guide the final Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Master Plan (TMP), and Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan (POST), but are included in the Existing Conditions Report as they can guide how the data is viewed. Each analysis step, recommendation and policy will be evaluated for alignment while embracing a holistic and metrics-based approach, using these values.

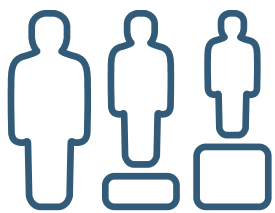
**1. Equity:** The vibrance and strength of a community emerges from diversity and equity. Equity can be measured through distribution of resources, affordability and access to services and experiences, as well as balancing land uses with environmental justice. Adams County will celebrate and leverage a diverse community through

equitable land planning as the region continues to grow in population and various ethnicities and identities.

**2. Sustainability:** By committing to build smarter and retrofitting existing development to include new technologies and efficiency, all while embracing a holistic and metrics based approach, sustainability will be part of Adams County's identity.

**3. Livability:** Adams County has numerous multimodal and walkable districts that support a human-scaled, comfortable and memorable experience. This plan will help to further enhance livability through the thoughtful integration of artful placemaking strategies and urban design best practices that celebrate the culture of Adams County and further contribute to livability.

### EQUITY



Equity: Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

### SUSTAINABILITY



Sustainability: The practice of creating and maintaining conditions to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the same needs elsewhere or in the future.

### LIVABILITY



Livability: sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities.

Figure 3: Core Value Lenses



ADVANCING ADAMS  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



ADVANCING ADAMS  
PARKS, OPEN SPACE & TRAILS



ADVANCING ADAMS  
TRANSPORTATION

Figure 4: Advancing Adams; The Three Plan Updates

## PLANNING PROCESS

Advancing Adams: Planning for a Shared Future is a planning effort that includes the update of three plans simultaneously:

- **Comprehensive Plan**
- **Transportation Master Plan (TMP)**
- **Parks, Open Space & Trails Master Plan (POST)**

This trio of updates will create a coordinated vision, comprehensive set of policy goals, recommendations and strategies that work together to encourage sensitive development, robust economic development, a connected and efficient multimodal transportation network, and parks, open space and trails that are used by all residents all the time. Planned thoughtfully, these updates will help to ensure Adams County will remain “the most innovative and inclusive county in America.” Advancing Adams will lead to a safer, resilient, more equitable and more prosperous county. We will integrate equity,

sustainability and livability into each plan to ensure residents of today and future generations will benefit from a shared vision to Advance Adams.

### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW

The Comprehensive Plan will serve as an overarching policy and operations tool to guide our County toward the vision of being “the most innovative and inclusive county in America for all families and businesses.” It will set the tone for improving all aspects of quality of life. The plan will be an overarching and implementable document that addresses future development and land use needs, engaging the entire community, addressing economic development, equity and sustainability.

This is the “big picture” plan that lays the groundwork and provides direction for the TMP and POST updates. At the same time, work on these two plans will also help inform goals and recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan. The integration



of the TMP and Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the connection between land use and transportation. The Comprehensive Plan sets a vision for an equitable, vital, and sustainable County through future development and code needs. These policies, standards, and zoning will shape, and are shaped, by existing and future transportation infrastructure, programs, and policies. Specifically, along five strategic corridors, these plans are closely integrated in order to create a comfortable and functional character and user experience that is developed holistically.

This is the plan that will help us “holistically improve quality of life.”

### TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

The Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will set the foundation to drive county short and long-term transportation and transit investments. Through the planning process, projects, programs and policies will be identified that help create a successful multimodal transportation network for people of all ages and abilities. It will be a network that is connected, efficient, comfortable, easy to navigate and convenient. Creating an attractive transportation system will ensure Adams County remains one of the top places to live, work and play in the Denver metro region.

This is the plan that will “get us moving”.

### PARKS, OPEN SPACE & TRAILS MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

Adams County’s parks, open spaces and trails are fantastic amenities for residents and wildlife alike. The Great Outdoors of Colorado are one of the main reasons people come here to live. The Parks, Open Space & Trails Master Plan (POST) will provide recommendations to ensure equitable access to parks, open space and trails. It will point to strategies that help preserve and enhance important wildlife habitat and corridors, natural and scenic resources and agricultural lands, lay the framework for expanding trail connections and providing a richer variety of recreational opportunities for everyone.

The Transportation Master Plan is working closely with the POST Plan in both the process and Plan product. Specifically, these plans are collaborating on the trail network. The TMP is focused on providing access to key destinations and trails through on-street facilities and filling in gaps in the trail network where they primarily serve as transportation. The POST Plan is focused on trails where they primarily serve as recreation.

This is the plan that will help us all “enjoy the outdoors”.

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Advancing Adams is inspired and informed by residents, stakeholders and County and City staff. Moving

forward together, these groups shared their concerns, visions and goals for the County as a whole, for its transportation system and its parks, open space and trails throughout the planning process. Engagement is divided into two distinct phases – Phase 1: Grounding and Phase 2 – Plan for the Future. During Phase 1, the project team prepared a public education campaign to inform residents about the plan updates, listened to community members to get a strong understanding of existing conditions and facilitated activities that allowed residents and stakeholders to analyze and discuss opportunities for the future. Input from these activities informed and helped guide the plan direction.

Taking place in 2020, engagement was directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual engagement was

used throughout the process and in-person meetings were only held when, and if, appropriate.

### SCHEDULE

#### PHASE 1: GROUNDING (EXISTING CONDITIONS & ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITIES)

#### REACHING OUT

During the entire phase, several outreach methods were used to get the word out to the community and “meet people where they are.” A dedicated project website with an introductory video was launched at the end of November 2020, press releases were provided to local media, flyers were posted in strategic locations in English, Spanish and Burmese, local morning radio programs interviewed key project partners, social media posts were



Figure 5: Advancing Adams Plans Schedule

posted periodically, and email messages were sent to project partners, who in turn shared the information with their networks.

### **ENSURING INCLUSIVITY**

During the Winter of 2020, community group meetings were held to inform those who have not been as involved in these types of planning processes historically about Advancing Adams. These meetings were held in Spanish and English with stakeholders representing community development, housing, economic development organizations, faith-based groups, aging adult advocates, youth representatives, among others. The team also facilitated briefing presentations with various Boards and organizations representing a variety of interests. Key partners included the Community Resource Network, Tri-County Health, Adelante Community Development, local faith organizations, RISE Colorado, Cultivando, Village



Image Credit: Design Workshop

**Figure 6:** Adams County Engagement Meeting

Exchange Center, and CREA Results. These conversations reached over 2000 underrepresented individuals in Adams County – educating about Advancing Adams and inviting them to get engaged in the process.

Youth engagement was an important component of this process. For Phase 1, the project team shared an interactive youth activity workbook with school districts and youth program partners so that young residents can share their ideas to provide a vision for the future that younger generations will support and champion.

### **DEEP LISTENING**

In December 2020, the project team conducted technical focus groups with staff, regional partners, representational business owners and other stakeholders throughout the County. With over 150 attendees total, these sessions covered topics including Agriculture, Economic Development, Outdoor Recreation and Programming, Housing, Open Space Funding, the Pecos Street corridor, and the Federal Boulevard corridor. Fifteen deep dive individual stakeholder interviews were also conducted to understand the specific concerns of those involved with economic growth, recent development, multi-modal transportation, concurrent planning efforts, sustainability, and recreation.

### **ENGAGING ALL**

In November 2020, the first community-wide bilingual public

survey was posted online utilizing an interactive dashboard which let the public explore the process and existing conditions in depth. Over 1000 people have engaged with the dashboard to date, and this interactive dashboard will remain live to continue educating residents about the existing conditions of the County.

In February 2021, a virtual public meeting was held in English and Spanish to give the public an update on the planning process and provide an opportunity for residents to share their thoughts on plan topic areas with County staff and the project team. Nearly fifty members of the public gave their input via live polling during the meeting and engaged with the project team during the Q&A portion of the meeting. These recordings were then posted online with the second community-wide bilingual public survey.

### **KEY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS**

Through the variety of outreach and engagement methods mentioned above, the project team was able to receive valuable input to integrate into the existing conditions reports for each of the three plans. While some feedback was specific to each individual plan, other comments were applicable to Advancing Adams as a whole.

Below are some key engagement findings sorted by theme that were heard by multiple stakeholder groups over the last four months.

### **Today and Tomorrow**

When asked what one word best describes Adams County today, popular responses were: growing, diverse, and progressing. These words capture the spirit of Advancing Adams: Planning for a Shared Future as this planning process aims to plan for the growing and diversifying population of the County with innovative recommendations. As the population of Adams County continues to grow, residents and stakeholders feel that the top considerations that should be used in future decision-making include inclusivity, affordability, equity, and resiliency. These are not only reflected in the three value lenses of the plans (Equity, Livability, and Sustainability) but also key ideas addressed in each individual plan.

### **Community and Housing**

A key topic that was raised throughout engagement opportunities was access to housing for all residents of Adams County. Participants identified opportunities to ensure current housing types remain in Adams County, particularly mobile homes, as well as diversifying the housing stock to include more multi-family options.

Additionally, linking housing access with transit access was often identified as a critical aspect of land use planning so that future residents can better utilize transit to commute. From interviews and focus groups to listening sessions, there were consistent comments regarding

incentivizing housing diversity so developers can provide the housing types the County needs, as well as focusing on allowing additional densities around transit services.

From an economic development perspective, there was a clear focus on recognizing displacement and gentrification impacts, in addition to homelessness, and working to address those at a policy level in the Comprehensive Plan. The risk of displacement was identified in a Housing focus group as the number one issue in relation to housing the anticipated population increases over the next 20 years.

To learn more about the existing conditions for this topic, refer to page 60.

### Natural Environment

Overall, access to water resources was identified as an important consideration for the Comprehensive

Plan to evaluate through land use scenarios that will be developed in Phase 2. This topic was specifically raised in focus groups and interviews for Agriculture, Housing, and Economic Development, as well as during the Virtual Public Meeting. Additionally, natural resources and wildlife protection were identified in the first public survey as a high priority to address in the Advancing Adams process. Resiliency and sustainability were also identified in the Public Open House meetings as two of the top considerations the County should use in future decision-making processes.

The Natural Environment was identified in the first public survey as one of the top themes that needs to be addressed by the Comprehensive Plan. This was also a topic that came up throughout the engagement as being of critical importance. Given that the County is currently in the process of updating the County-wide Sustainability Plan, the Comprehensive Plan team interviewed the Sustainability Plan team to understand progress and opportunities to coordinate work as the process moves into Phase 2. The most important coordination topics include land management in terms of new development, promoting compact development and mixed uses, multimodal transportation networks, air quality and emissions, renewable energy sources, standards for industrial land uses and environmental justice and sustainable agriculture.



Figure 7: Big Dry Creek Trail

Participants often identified riparian areas and other critical habitats as notable features to protect in Adams County, and suggested opportunities to combine their preservation with recreational opportunities.

To learn more about the existing conditions for this topic, refer to page 74.

### Built Environment and Connections

Some of the ideas discussed later in this document address the 20-minute community and an Adams County transect. Participants were asked at a high level about these ideas to understand if the Comprehensive Plan framework is headed in the right direction. A majority of participants, across all engagement opportunities, were supportive of the idea to implement the 20-minute community for western portions of Adams County. Some participants desired more information before making a decision, which will be a key aspect of outreach and analysis in Phase 2 of the Advancing Adams work.

Importantly, the 20-minute community focuses on ways to provide more equitable access to amenities and services in the County through connected networks and increased density. Participants in the overall Advancing Adams process identified elements that could be considered for inclusion as the project enters Phase 2, including seeking opportunities for trails to provide both a recreation and transportation purpose, connecting

services through roads, sidewalks, bike paths, and trails, and providing safe access to places for pedestrians and bicyclists. Providing equitable access to recreation and parks is a priority for many. Some frequent suggestions about how this could be achieved include expanding program options, working with partners, and addressing the quantity and quality of facilities in all areas.

Additionally, opportunities to improve infrastructure were identified, including broadband access.

To learn more about the existing conditions for this topic, refer to page 100.

### Economic Development

Fostering economic growth was a theme that crossed much of the engagement. There is a recognition that Adams County's economy is diverse and that diversity – from agriculture to technology – should be



Figure 8: Farm in Adams County

supported. The access Adams County provides to rail, air, and interstates was identified in a number of interviews and focus groups as critical for attracting and retaining businesses.

Participants recognized that the Colorado Air and Space Port (CASP) is a unique asset in Adams County. The area is currently the subject of an ongoing subarea planning effort with two critical aspects for ongoing coordination with the Comprehensive Plan including alignment with future land use planning and overall economic development strategies.

Participants also identified the importance of maintaining historic agricultural lands and businesses. Ideas focused on opportunities to incentivize sustainable agricultural practices, supporting Agritourism, and ensuring zoning allows innovative uses (such as corn mazes) while also protecting the use of land for active agriculture farming.

In interviews with developers and businesses along the Federal and Pecos corridors, a focus on connectivity and compatibility was raised. Ensuring access to the interstate for any industrial lands was identified as the number one consideration for those businesses. Additionally, there was a recognition that these corridors may have diverse land uses in the future and that planning for those long-term changes is important. Developers also identified a need for additional incentives for projects that have a

County-wide impact on jobs and the economy especially when costly remediation is required.

Finally, the importance of equitable economic development was raised by participants through ideas such as providing housing near commercial centers, particularly for immigrant communities, implementing policies that support historic neighborhoods like Welby, and as mentioned in the Community and Housing section, actively seeking to minimize impacts of displacement at a County-wide policy level.

To learn more about the existing conditions for this topic, refer to page 112.

### Cultural Heritage

Overall, the concept of cultural heritage in Adams County takes the form of several sub-topics including agriculture, historic assets, placemaking and public art, as well as cultural destinations and events.

Agricultural land use is of particular importance on the eastern portions of the County. Agriculture hubs like Historic Splendid Valley, hold particular importance for innovative concepts like food access and security, Agritourism and sustainability practices. The Agriculture Focus Group identified these key trends and provided ideas about how they might be successfully integrated, especially through partnerships.

According to the Agriculture Focus Group, historic assets in the County, as defined by the community at-large and History Colorado could be leveraged and protected through partnerships with the state and municipalities, as well as the potential implementation of a County-wide historic designation program.

Cultural heritage was consistently identified as a way to leverage and create an inclusive and vibrant community. Placemaking elements that contribute to quality urban design and public art, as well as a potential Creative District were identified as potential implementation ideas.

Cultural destinations that reflect agricultural heritage or diversity were identified as relevant examples of ideas that could be integrated into the Adams County Comprehensive Plan either as singular destinations or a district where programming can be offered and community events can also be held. Participants indicated that diversity in Adams County deserves to be celebrated with more cultural festivals, a better focus on local art and music, and recognition of the rich history of the County.

To learn more about the existing conditions for this topic, refer to page 124.

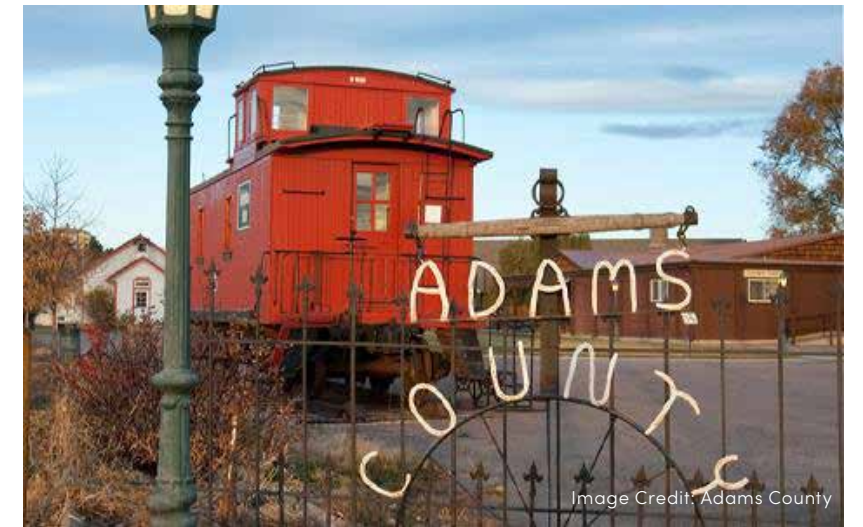


Figure 10: Adams County Museum



Figure 9: Adams County Fair

## PLAN VISION

The vision for the 2021 Comprehensive Plan builds upon the County's goals to be the most innovative and inclusive county in America. The Comprehensive Plan will provide the guidance necessary to move forward on a shared vision for the future.

## VISION STATEMENT

The proposed vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan is:

“The Comprehensive Plan serves as a policy and operations tool that guides the County toward the vision of being the most innovative and inclusive County in America for all families and businesses. The plan will be a broad and implementable document that addresses future development and code needs, including technical

zoning or development standards requirements, as well as overarching policies/statements about engaging the community, addressing economic development, equity and sustainability in all its forms.”

The statement is derived from initial community input, as well as the needs of the County to have a document that is broadly applicable for long-term planning and visioning as well as zoning and development review.

## DRAFT KEY THEMES

This Report is divided into five key thematic areas to weave the existing conditions data together. These themes are anticipated to carry forward into the final Comprehensive Plan. We anticipate the organization of Plan content be housed within five preliminary themes: Community

and Housing, Natural Environment, Built Environment and Connections, Economic Development and Cultural Heritage. These are identified as broad, compelling ideas and topics that are essential for the current Comprehensive Plan to address. These guiding themes will support the plan's recommendations, strategies and action steps.

## COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

Adams County is growing, and the needs of future residents from a housing and placemaking perspective must be addressed. The Plan will explore the best locations for residential development and the types of housing units that can best serve the County's residents. Preservation of existing housing is critical, and additional housing growth is best provided where services already exist

to ensure residents have access to the services they need to carry out their daily lives.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

As a central component of a holistic view of sustainability, the natural environment will play a significant role. Climate change is an existential threat continuing to worsen with broad ramifications for our residents. Through a combination of adaptation and carbon reduction (mitigation) strategies, Adams County will show leadership and environmental resilience. Additionally, the Plan will take a broad view of environmental functions including biodiversity, the role of water, air quality and consider how health and the natural environment relate in order to address sustainability holistically.



Image Credit: Design Workshop

Figure 11: Residential Area Near Midtown



Image Credit: Design Workshop

Figure 12: Pelican Ponds



Image Credit: Design Workshop

**Figure 14:** RTD Station on Federal Boulevard



Image Credit: Design Workshop

**Figure 13:** Commercial Activity on Pecos Street

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIONS

New development will happen in Adams County, including new roads, new housing, new commercial, industrial, agricultural development, and new districts. This Plan will consider the best locations for growth and the types of connections that will be needed. New developments will also impact adjacent neighbors' properties; this plan will explore policy recommendations to mitigate those impacts to ensure new development is connected and benefits the broader community. The form this new development takes will be important as well, and the plan will help ensure that new construction is environmentally friendly and supports resident health.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Adams County must serve the future population by ensuring that economic growth happens in the right places and economic sectors are diversified enough to provide jobs for a regional workforce with a wide spectrum of skills.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

A strong working class history and agricultural heritage are part of Adams County's regional identity and will continue to be in the future. These assets can be celebrated through public art, events like the Adams County Fair and neighborhood identity that builds placemaking and local pride.



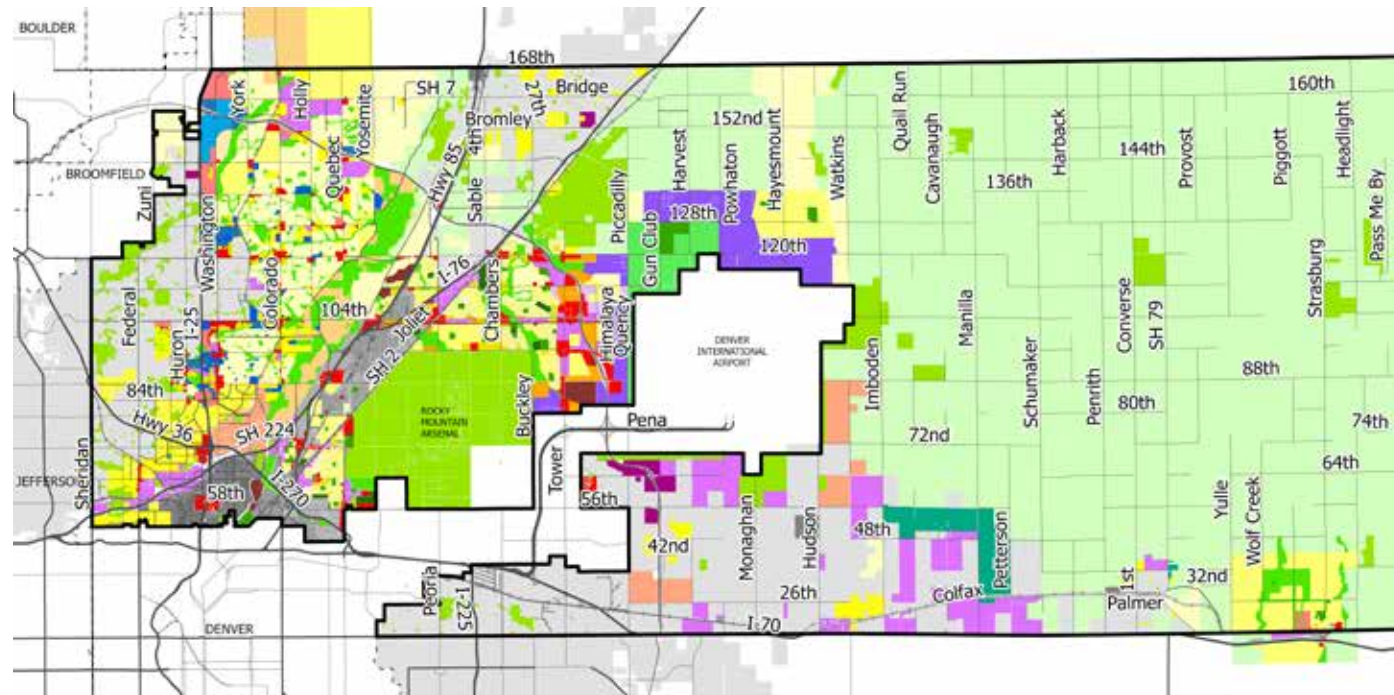
Image Credit: Design Workshop

**Figure 15:** Public Art at the Rotella Park



Image Credit: Adams County

**Figure 16:** Adams County Fair



Data Source: Adams County 2012 Comprehensive Plan, DRCOG

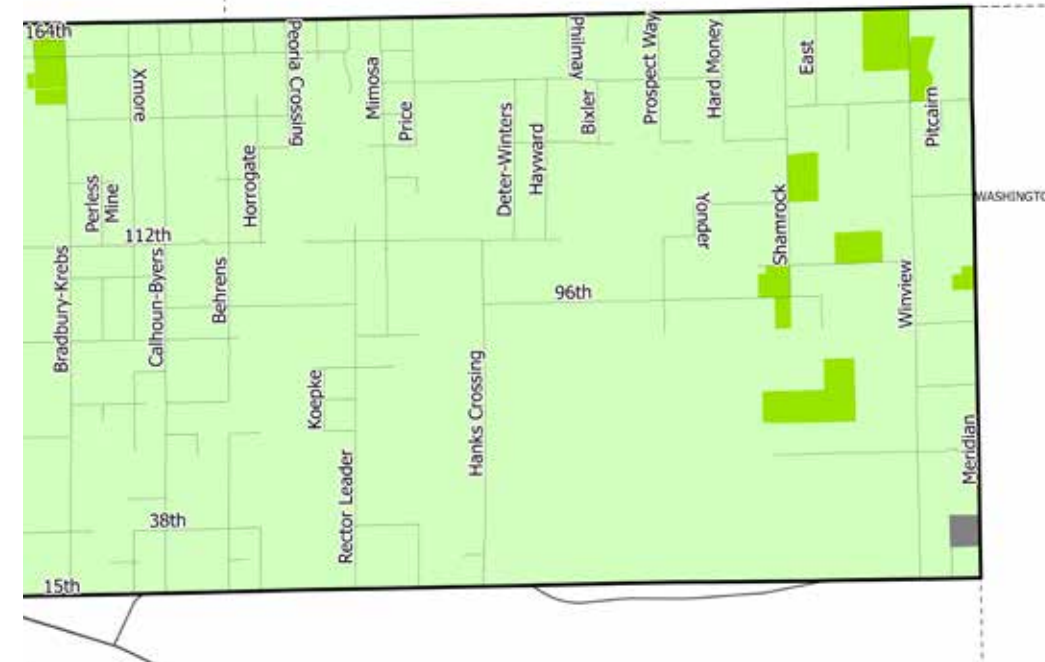
**LEGEND**

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Mixed Use/ Employment
- Low Intensity Mixed Use
- Activity Center
- Industrial
- Parks and Open Space
- Public
- Estate Residential
- Urban Residential
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

**INTRODUCTION TO ADAMS COUNTY**

The Advancing Adams Comprehensive Plan will set forth a visionary path for the future of Adams County over the next 20 years. In order to do that effectively, a high-level initial understanding of the baseline existing conditions is documented here. The Comprehensive Plan will synthesize “who and what is Adams County?” and “what is the best future for Adams County that serves everyone?” to deliver on the County’s goals of a broad, guiding policy document that is understood and implemented throughout the County.

Three baseline topics are documented in this section: Past Planning Efforts, Geography and Demographics.



NOT TO SCALE

**PREVIOUS PLANS SUMMERY**

Since the 2012 Comprehensive Plan was completed, Adams County has completed many planning efforts. These have included sub-area plans such as the Welby area plan in 2014 and the ongoing plan for the Colorado Air and Space Port, as well as topic specific plans like the 2018 Balanced Housing Plan. These efforts provide critical guidance to the Comprehensive Plan and Advancing Adams will build off the analyses and recommendations in these planning efforts. This section highlights some of the key planning efforts that are most relevant to the Comprehensive Plan effort.

**2014 WELBY: WHERE DEEP ROOTS GROW. A COMMUNITY PLAN FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

The Welby area is approximately four (4) square miles and is generally located north of I-76, east of I-25, south of 88th Avenue, and west of the South Platte River. The Welby Plan (Where Deep Roots Grow, a Community Plan for Future Development) focuses on the history of the area and identifies opportunities to support its unique uses and location. “Welby’s beginnings were very much tied to its rich lands supporting many years of robust agricultural production and later truck farms. With time, however, this production was not as viable and with the construction of the Valley Highway (I-25) in 1958 and later I-76, industrial uses began emerging in the area. The transition

from agriculture to industrial was the beginning of major changes to the community, especially to its infrastructure and lack of amenities (e.g. grocery store, recreation center, etc.) for residents. The Welby Plan represents the product of hard work and innovative ideas on how to build on and transform existing assets, reinvest, and maintain a vibrant community that attracts investments from both inside and outside of Welby.” (Page 1 of Plan)

The Welby Plan provides details on how to build on and transform the existing conditions, as well as reinvest in and maintain the vibrant community that attracts investments from both inside and outside of Welby. The plan seeks to create lively corridors and neighborhoods through seven strategic goals: economic development; environment; history and culture; infrastructure; public safety; recreation, open space, and agriculture; and vibrant neighborhoods.

#### **2014 THE FEDERAL BOULEVARD FRAMEWORK PLAN**

In anticipation of the two new rail transit stations planned for Federal Boulevard, Federal Station on the Gold Line and Westminster Station, the Federal Boulevard Framework Plan was developed in order to manage growth on the corridor that is expected to occur as a result of the transit improvements. The study area is a 2.25 mile segment of Federal Boulevard between 52nd Avenue and

72nd Avenue. Plan recommendations included: using a variety of zoning mechanisms to facilitate different types of development; improving the balance between different transportation modes so that vehicular access is maintained while pedestrian and bicycle connectivity is enhanced; and aligning east-west streets that cross Federal Boulevard to create more direct paths of travel.

This plan was created to thoughtfully manage the growth and redevelopment that is anticipated from the infrastructure developments in southwest Adams County. The plan focuses on urban design and streetscape environments, bicycle and pedestrian safety, market feasibility, and engagement of the many communities along the corridor. The findings helped set 20 recommendations to be considered in future developments.

#### **2015 SUSTAINABLE ADAMS COUNTY 2030 PLAN**

The Sustainable Adams County 2030 plan was created to guide the County’s efforts in the coming years towards a more socially, environmentally, and fiscally sustainable standing. The Plan identifies four cornerstones of sustainability and sixteen goals to encourage broad impact and implementation. The four cornerstones are Responsible and Innovative Regional Leadership, Waste Management and Reduction, Conservation of Energy and

Resources, and Respect for Adams County’s Heritage. The County is currently working on an update to this plan, seeking to further progress sustainability in all its forms within the County.

#### **2016 SOUTHWEST ADAMS COUNTY MAKING CONNECTIONS PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Making Connections Plan focuses on “formulating a sound and rational basis for guiding development, redevelopment and supporting infrastructure for 13,177 acres of unincorporated Southwest Adams County.” (page 4) The plan identifies and prioritizes opportunities for multi-jurisdictional and public-private partnerships and investment.

It is important to note that “Southwest Adams County includes a larger ‘Triangle of Opportunity’ formed by the Welby Station on the planned N Line just inside the City of Thornton to the northeast, the National Western Center Station of the A Line just inside Denver to the south, and the Sheridan Station of the G Line just inside the City of Arvada to the west... Both the larger and smaller Triangles of Opportunity create significant investment opportunities for Southwest Adams County.” (page 3) This makes the area, as the plan phrases it, “poised for investment.”

The Making Connections Plan serves as a guiding tool for development, redevelopment and supporting infrastructure for the unincorporated

land in southwest Adams County. “The Plan focuses on economic return on investment while being strategic and equitable for the existing community, neighborhoods, and businesses.” (page 4)

#### **2016 ADAMS COUNTY / BRIGHTON DISTRICT PLAN**

“Adams County and the City of Brighton partnered to draft the District Plan to study the feasibility of preserving farmland in southern Brighton that remains valuable for food production, while allowing for a range of development opportunities that consider the most efficient and sustainable use of the land. This plan helps decision-makers guide investment in the area for compatible residential, commercial, and industrial development, as well as farmland conservation, and local food and agritourism promotion.” (page 11) The District Plan is driven by the need to preserve the identity and heritage of Brighton. As the area’s farming heritage and local food economy are being affected by the development, the plan seeks to help decision-makers guide investments in the area that are better tailored for all stakeholders effected.

#### **2017 DRCOG METRO VISION PLAN**

The Metro Vision Plan is a regional plan adopted by the Denver Regional Council of Government (DRCOG) to address the common issues beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of the counties and municipalities of the



Denver region. This plan serves as a tool to promote regional cooperation and advise local jurisdictions. The plan is guided by five principles and aims to tackle a plethora of topics shared by the region, including development; connectivity; natural and built environments; health, inclusiveness, and livability; and the economy. Metro Vision is mindful of the challenges and opportunities in the region. As such, the plan incorporates common performance measures for most challenges, as well as sections that highlight their importance, previous successes in tackling them, and a special “making progress together” section.

### **2018 BALANCED HOUSING PLAN**

The County commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) to create a thorough economic and demographic description of the County. The findings were presented to various stakeholders who provided valuable input and possible solutions. This input also helped build the framework for developing the County’s Balanced Housing Plan (BHP). The BHP’s purpose is “to take the information collected from the HNA and stakeholder input, and present defined goals and outcomes through a multifaceted and collaborative approach.” (page 7)

“Over the last decade Adams County has experienced a wide range of economic and demographic transitions.” (page 7) These transitions made the County a desirable

destination for many seeking an inclusive community that provides plenty of lifestyle opportunities. In addition to that, Adams County’s housing climate and geographic location have also contributed to its population growth – fifth largest and second fastest in the region. This growth alongside the housing stock demands has “pushed housing prices to a point where many residents struggle to either find attainable housing or maintain their housing.” (page 7)

This plan addresses the housing challenges in Adams County and seeks to build a platform that will allow all areas of the County to support a spectrum of housing types to meet the needs of the County’s diverse and growing population.

### **2018 CLEAR CREEK CORRIDOR PLAN**

Clear Creek runs approximately seven miles through southwest Adams County from Sheridan Boulevard to the South Platte River Confluence. Adams County currently owns approximately 178 acres of open space adjacent to Clear Creek. A regional trail and several trail access points have been developed through this corridor, but currently few other amenities are located along the corridor. The Clear Creek Corridor Plan provides a basis for future improvement projects that will provide a variety of recreational amenities while protecting and enhancing the natural systems in the Clear Creek

corridor. The goals of the plan include improving safety, making trail connections to surrounding neighborhoods and new transit areas, providing amenities that are lacking in the surrounding neighborhoods, improving habitat and ecological systems, and identifying locations for bank stabilization and restoration projects.

### **2018 RIVERDALE REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

The Adams County Parks, Open Space & Cultural Arts Department worked to update the Riverdale Regional Park Master Plan. The park serves as a respite for people, contains an abundance of wildlife, provides a variety of recreational opportunities, and houses the Adams County Fairgrounds, Adams County Museum, and two 18-hole golf courses. Today, Adams County is trying to meet and balance the needs of the Regional Park clientele and visitors while looking to the future. A comprehensive master plan will ensure stewardship of natural resources, meet recreational demands of a growing regional population, as well as study the continued marketability and financial viability of the improvements to the regional facility.

### **2020 HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

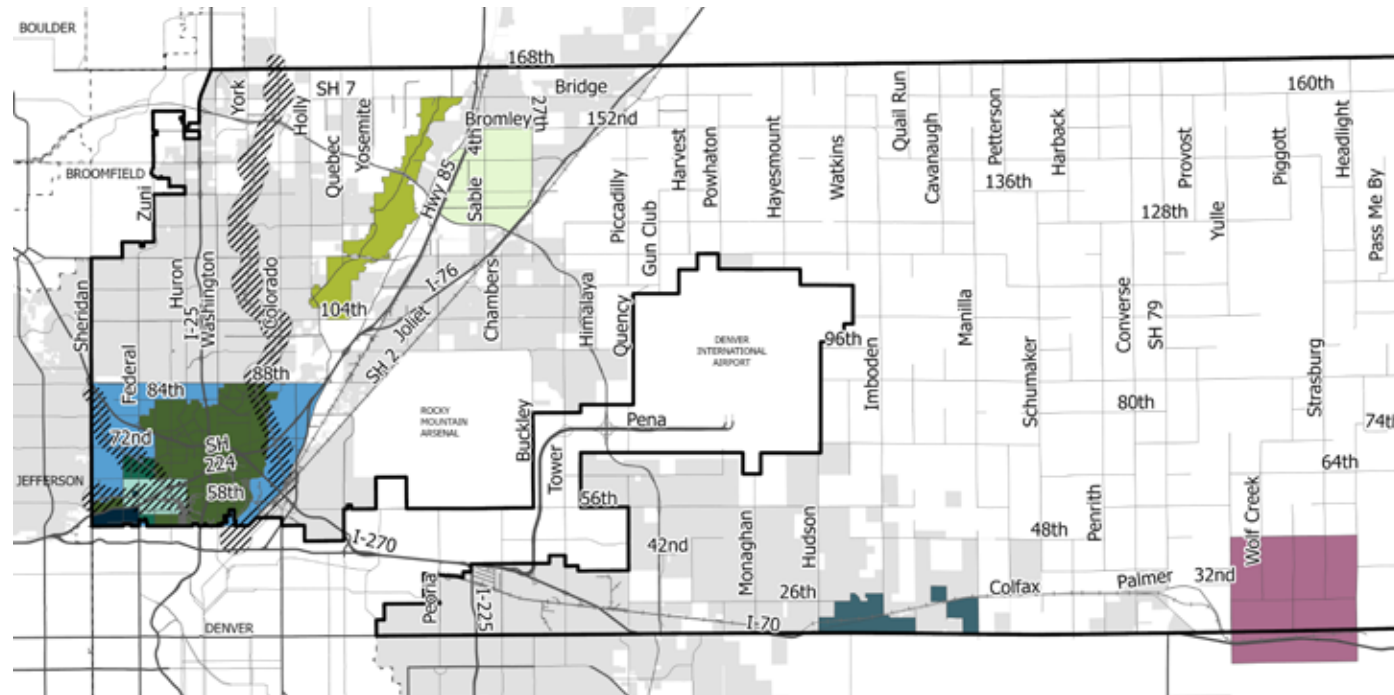
Adopted in November of 2020, the Hazard Mitigation Plan broadly addresses opportunities to reduce or eliminate long-term risks related to disasters and hazard events. The plan

includes a risk assessment for different hazard types, and identified potential mitigation strategies to minimize risks to people and property. The plan, completed in partnership with the Town of Bennett, City of Brighton, City of Commerce City, and Denver Water, outlines a Mitigation Action Plan for each. The Plan identifies thunderstorms, tornado/damaging wind, and winter weather as hazards of high significance. The Plan is “meant to be a living document that guides and integrates mitigation activities throughout the County.” (Page 1-2)

### **2021 COLORADO AIR AND SPACE PORT (CASP) SUB AREA PLAN**

The Colorado Air and Space Port (CASP) was originally built in 1984 as the Front Range Airport to increase air cargo and general aviation business. In 2018, it was designated as Colorado’s first spaceport and the name changed to CASP. CASP is located on 3,100 acres of land, and provides opportunities to support business and technological advancement. It will serve as America’s hub for commercial space transportation, research and development. In order to deliver on the promise of CASP, a sub area planning effort is currently underway to identify a vision for the area and guide future development. While it is not currently located near significant residential areas, development around CASP is increasing, and the

## MAP 2: SUBAREA PLANS MAP



Data Source: Adams County, CDPHE, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE

### LEGEND

- |  |                                    |  |                       |
|--|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
|  | TOD and Rail Station Area          |  | Adams County Boundary |
|  | Berkley Neighborhood               |  | Railroads             |
|  | Clear Creek Transit Village Vision |  | Roads                 |
|  | Clear Creek Valley TOD             |  | Municipal Boundaries  |
|  | Federal Boulevard Framework Plan   |  |                       |
|  | Riverdale Road                     |  |                       |
|  | SW Framework                       |  |                       |
|  | Strasburg FLU                      |  |                       |
|  | The District                       |  |                       |
|  | Watkins Comp                       |  |                       |
|  | Welby Subarea Plan                 |  |                       |
|  | Making Connections                 |  |                       |

plan seeks to provide guidance for future land uses and infrastructure.

### 2021 SQUARE LAKE SUB AREA PLAN

Adams County and the City of Arvada are currently collaborating on a plan for the Square Lake area for the County, located between W. 60th Avenue on the north to W. 52nd Avenue on the south, and between Tennyson Street on the east to Sheridan Boulevard on the west. The area includes important rail resources, including the G-Line and commercial rail, as well as opportunities for new development on underutilized and vacant parcels.

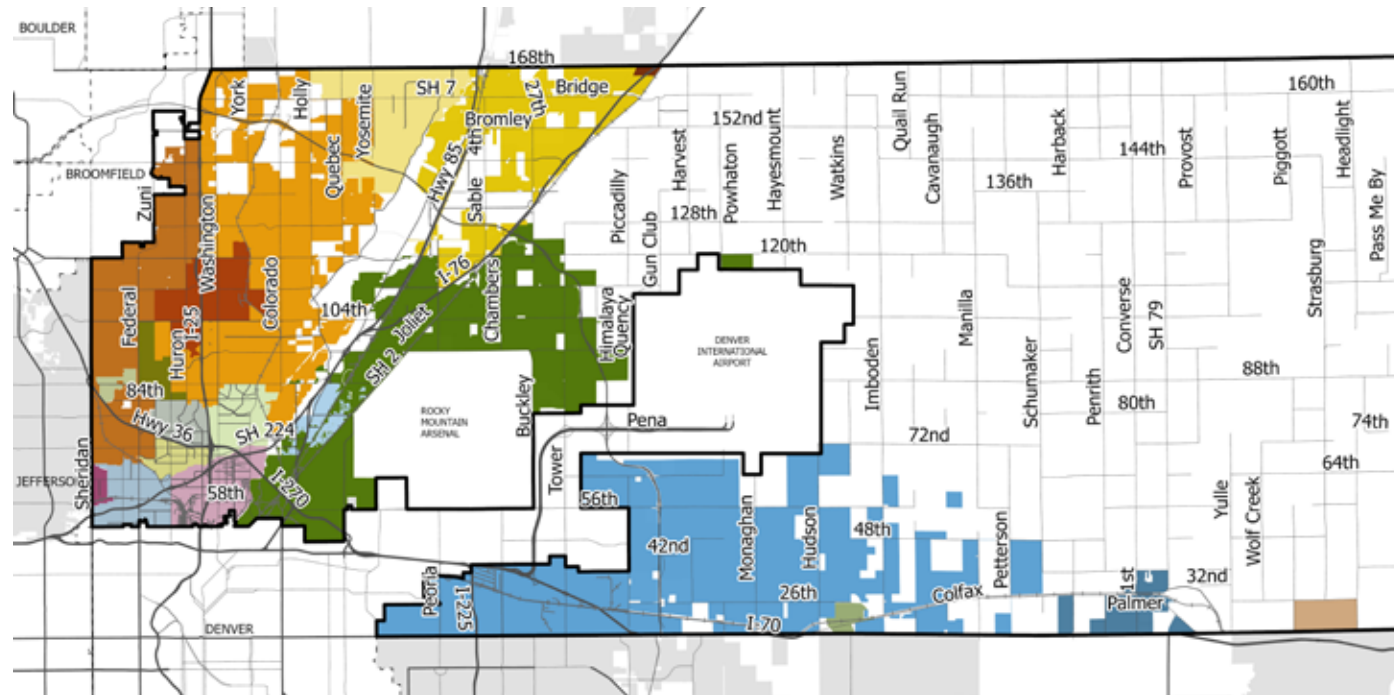
### OTHER ONGOING PLANNING EFFORTS

In addition to these completed or active planning efforts, the County is exploring the creation of a County-wide Water Plan that would address how water is used throughout the County. While the County is not a direct water provider, its authority over land use decisions impacts where and how water is used. Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Plan will explore land use scenarios and the incorporation of water planning principles.

## PLANNING EFFORTS SINCE 2012

- 2014 WELBY: WHERE DEEP ROOTS GROW. A COMMUNITY PLAN FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
- 2014 THE FEDERAL BOULEVARD FRAMEWORK PLAN AND HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT
- 2015 SUSTAINABLE ADAMS COUNTY 2030 PLAN (IN THE PROCESS OF BEING UPDATED)
- 2016 SOUTHWEST ADAMS COUNTY – MAKING CONNECTIONS – PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
- 2016 ADAMS COUNTY / BRIGHTON DISTRICT PLAN
- 2017 DRCOG METRO VISION
- 2018 ADAMS COUNTY BALANCED HOUSING PLAN
- 2018 CLEAR CREEK CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN
- 2018 RIVERDALE REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN
- 2020 HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN
- 2021 COLORADO AIR AND SPACE PORT (CASP) SUB AREA PLAN (ANTICIPATED COMPLETION IN 2021)
- 2021 SQUARE LAKE SUB AREA PLAN (ANTICIPATED COMPLETION IN 2021)

### MAP 3: MUNICIPALITIES AND PLACES



Data Source: Adams County, CDPHE, DRCOG

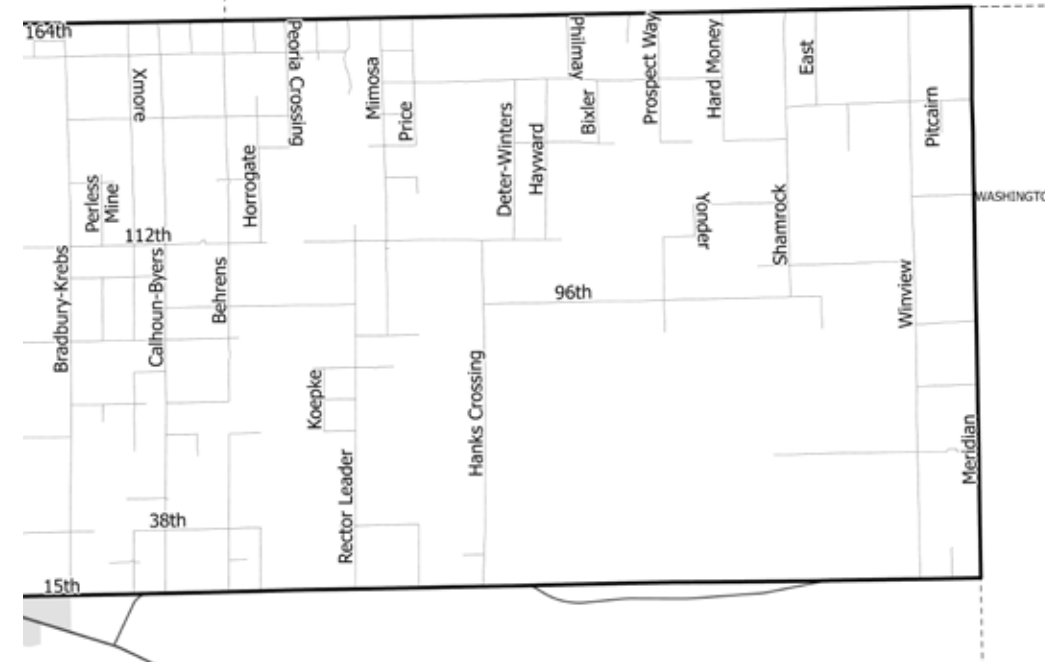
#### LEGEND

- City Boundaries
- Census Designated Places
- Arvada
- Aurora
- Bennett
- Brighton
- Commerce City
- Federal Heights
- Lochbuie
- Northglenn
- Thornton
- Westminster
- Berkley
- Derby
- North Washington
- Shaw Heights
- Sherrelwood
- Strasburg
- Todd Creek
- Twin Lakes
- Watkins
- Welby
- Adams County Boundary
- Roads
- Municipal Boundaries
- Railroads

#### GEOGRAPHY OVERVIEW

Adams County, Colorado (1,182 square miles) is located in the northeast quadrant of the state with the Denver metropolitan areas defining the western portion of the County and agricultural rural areas in the east. Denver International Airport is not located within the County boundary, but the County surrounds the airport almost entirely on the western portion, northeast of Denver.

Adams County abuts seven adjacent counties (clockwise from northwest corner): Broomfield City and County, Weld County, Morgan County, Washington County, Arapahoe County, Denver City and Jefferson County.

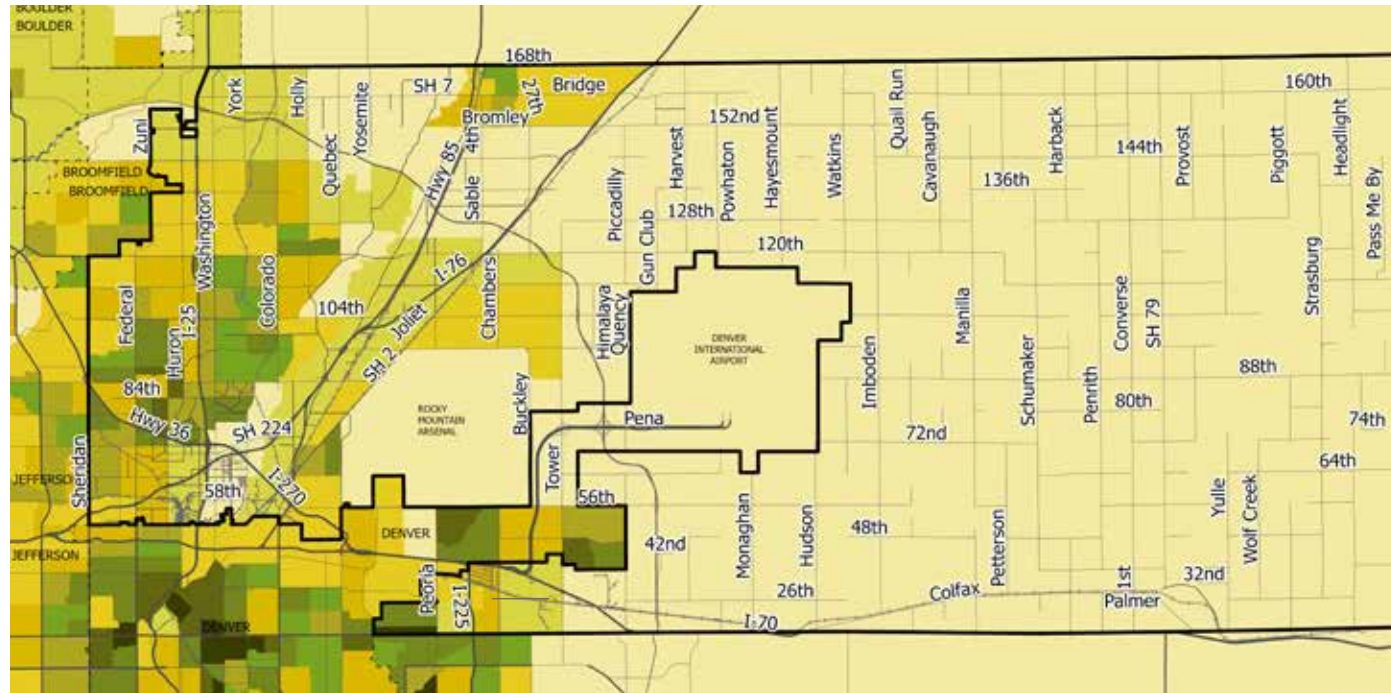


NOT TO SCALE

Table 1: Communities and Jurisdictions in Adams County

COMMUNITY NAME	TYPE	LOCATION IN MULTIPLE COUNTIES
Arvada	City	Jefferson
Aurora	City	Arapahoe and Douglas
Bennett	Town	Arapahoe
Berkley	Census-designated place	
Brighton (County seat)	City	Weld
Commerce City	City	
Derby	Census-designated place	
Federal Heights	City	
Lochbuie	Statutory Town	Weld
Northglenn	City	Weld
North Washington	Census-designated place	
Shaw Heights	Census-designated place	
Sherrelwood	Census-designated place	
Strasburg	Census-designated place	Arapahoe
Thornton	City	Weld
Todd Creek	Census-designated place	
Twin Lakes	Census-designated place	
Watkins	Census-designated place	Arapahoe
Welby	Census-designated place	
Westminster	City	Jefferson

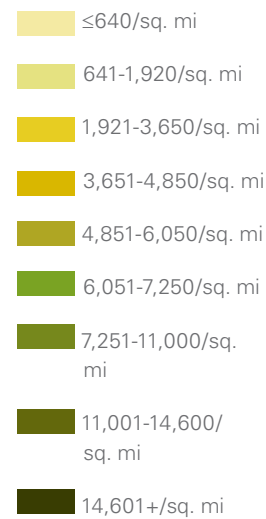
## MAP 4: POPULATION DENSITY BY CENSUS TRACT



Data Source: Adams County, ESRI - ACS 2020, DRCOG

### LEGEND

2020 Population Density



NOT TO SCALE

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Population and Households

According to data from the state demographer, the population of Adams County in 2020 was expected to be 528,857, which is approximately 16.4 percent higher than 2010, or a growth rate of 1.6 annually. Growth is projected to remain steady over the next five years at 1.8 percent annually (8.9 percent overall) reaching a population of 580,775 by 2025.

The population of unincorporated Adams County in 2020 was 100,558. That number has grown by around 16 percent since 2010.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ESRI demographic data. This data includes current-year estimates and 5-year projections of U.S. demographic data. Esri develops the annual demographic datasets using a variety of sources, beginning with the latest base, then adding a mixture of administrative records and private sources to capture changes.

Population growth is expected to occur most significantly and rapidly in the westernmost portions of Adams County that are closer to Denver and other urban centers.

Within the high-growth areas, growth is projected to be concentrated along the Platte River Corridor, most notably on the northern portion.

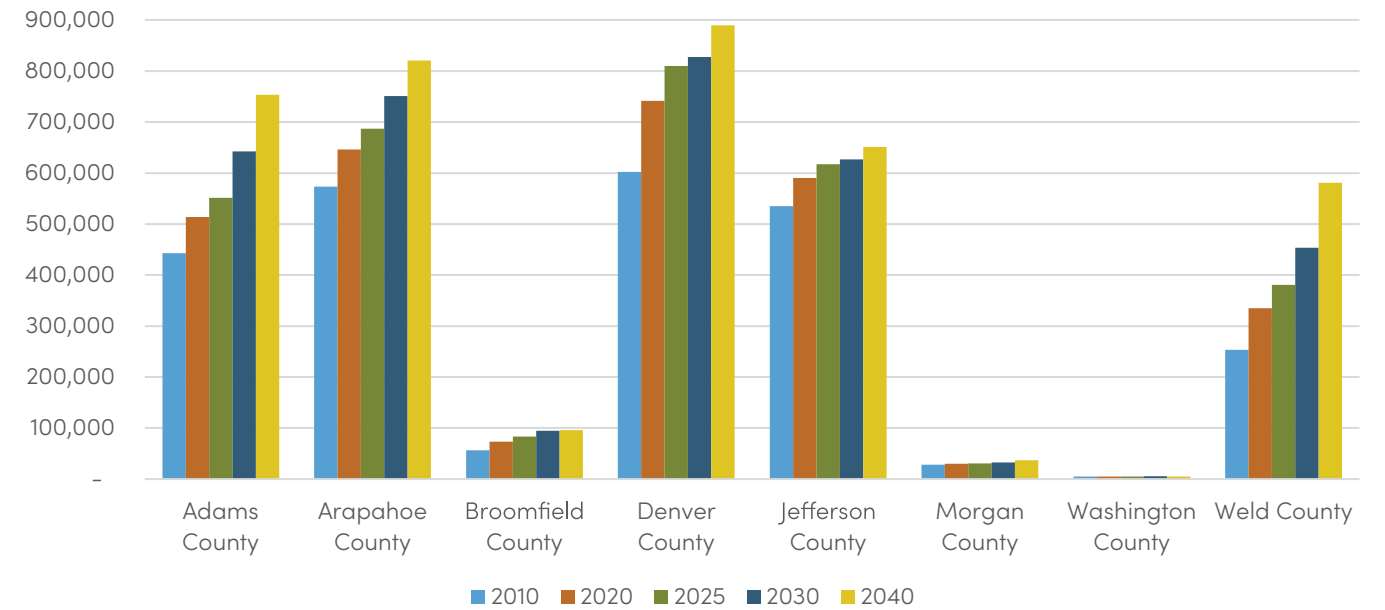
Brighton and Commerce City are expected to be the highest growth municipalities in the County. Although not represented in the available ESRI data, insight into County growth with the Aurora Highlands development would cause Aurora to be added to the list of high growth municipalities.

Table 2: Growth Comparisons to Adjacent Counties

	POPULATION				PERCENTAGE CHANGE	
	2010	2020	2030	2040	2010-2020	2020-2040
Adams	443,711	528,857	637,554	748,318	19.2%	41.5%
Arapahoe	574,819	664,990	738,737	805,299	15.7%	21.1%
Boulder	295,605	330,975	363,507	395,397	12.0%	19.5%
Broomfield	56,107	72,825	94,053	97,976	29.8%	34.5%
Denver	604,879	737,855	824,805	887,132	22.0%	20.2%
Douglas	287,124	354,332	408,792	448,475	23.4%	26.6%
Jefferson	535,651	586,065	625,644	650,289	9.4%	11.0%
Colorado	5,050,332	5,842,076	6,686,512	7,460,600	15.7%	27.7%

Source: State Demographer, 2020

Figure 17: Population Growth (20-Year Horizon)



Source:  
 - 2010, 2020, and 2025 Population Data Retrieved from ESRI. 2020 Data  
 - 2030 and 2040 population data retrieved from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. 2020 Data

Due to delays in the distributions of the 2020 United States census data, this report is utilizing a combination of 2020 Colorado State Demographer data and ESRI population data. The final Adams County Comprehensive Plan will employ the use of 2020 United States census data with the assumption that it will be available in 2021 prior to the completion of the document.

DID YOU KNOW?

528,857

ADAMS COUNTY'S  
POPULATION  
TODAY (2020)

748,318

ADAMS COUNTY'S  
POPULATION IN  
THE FUTURE (2040)

1.6%

ANNUAL  
POPULATION  
GROWTH  
IN ADAMS  
COUNTY



1.6%

ANNUAL  
POPULATION  
GROWTH IN  
COLORADO  
STATE

Data from Colorado State Demographer's Office, 2019

Adams County has 177,002 total households, which has grown by about 15.1 percent since 2010 (1.5 percent annually), almost the same rate as the population growth. Household growth is also expected to remain steady over the next five years (1.4 percent annually) and continue on the same trajectory as population growth reaches 189,510 households by 2025.

Average household size has grown slightly from 2.85 in 2010 to 2.88 in 2020 and is expected to grow to 2.89 by 2025.

Family households account for 70 percent of total households and are expected to remain roughly the same over the next five years.

Table 3: Households (20-year Horizon)

	HOUSEHOLDS				PERCENTAGE CHANGE	
	2010	2020	2030	2040	2010-2020	2020-2040
Adams County	154,154	177,002	232,567	278,033	14.8%	57.1%
Arapahoe County	224,494	251,512	298,146	328,991	12.0%	30.8%
Broomfield County	21,542	28,277	37,133	39,536	31.3%	39.8%
Denver County	264,050	324,602	379,955	417,278	22.9%	28.6%
Jefferson County	218,376	239,637	262,077	273,455	9.7%	14.1%
Morgan County	10,295	10,890	11,526	12,933	5.8%	18.8%
Washington County	1,978	2,033	1,989	1,973	2.8%	-3.0%
Weld County	89,610	117,943	161,044	209,763	31.6%	77.9%

Source:  
- 2010, 2020, and 2025 Population Data Retrieved from ESRI. 2020 Data  
- 2030 and 2040 population data retrieved from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. 2020 Data

Age

The median age in Adams County is 34.1, which is up from 32.4 in 2010 and expected to continue growing slowly over the next five years.

Age distribution is skewed toward adults between the age of 25 and 44, accounting for the largest age segment at 29.6 percent of the population.

The County also has a larger portion of children (less than 14 years of age) than the state average, representing 23 percent of the population. This can be attributed to a larger number of young families.

The 65+ age group accounts for 11.3 percent and is expected to grow the fastest of any age segment, accounting for 12.4 percent of the population by 2025.

Table 4: Median Age

	MEDIAN AGE
Adams County	34.1
Arapahoe County	37.3
Broomfield County	37.9
Denver County	35.4
Jefferson County	42.2
Morgan County	37
Washington County	46.1
Weld County	34.8

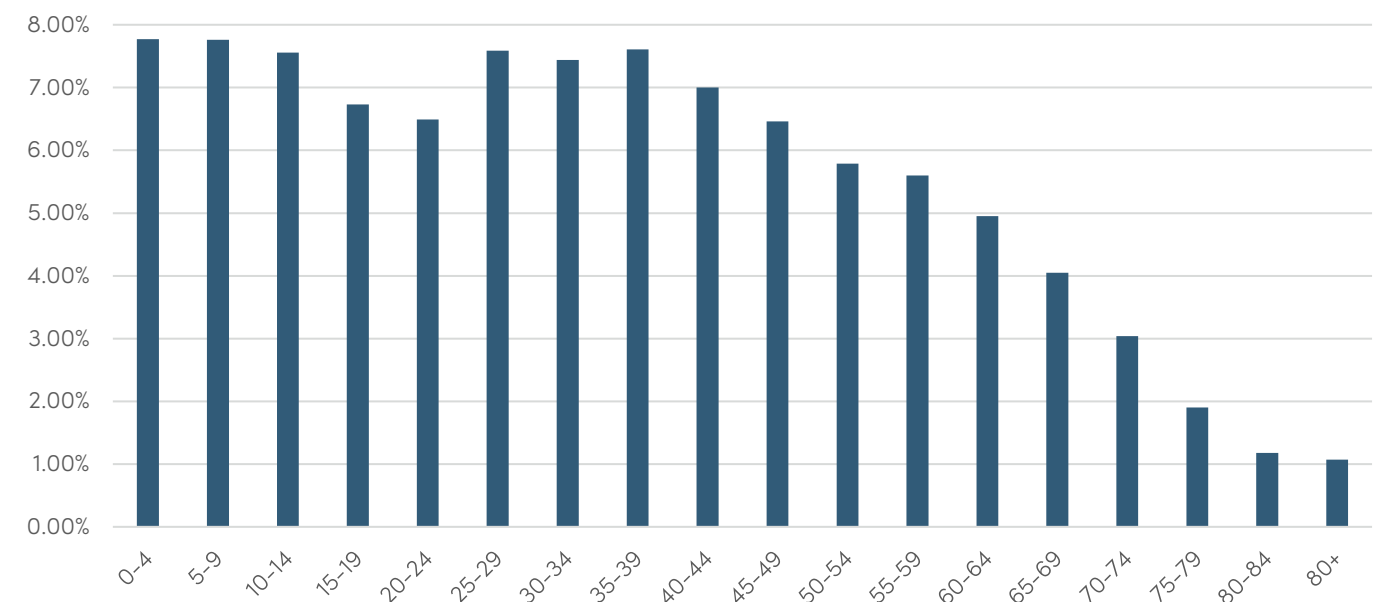
Source: Esri, 2020

DID YOU KNOW?

AGE

Adams County residents are younger than the surrounding areas with a large segment of young families with children.

Figure 18: Age Distribution in Adams County (2020)

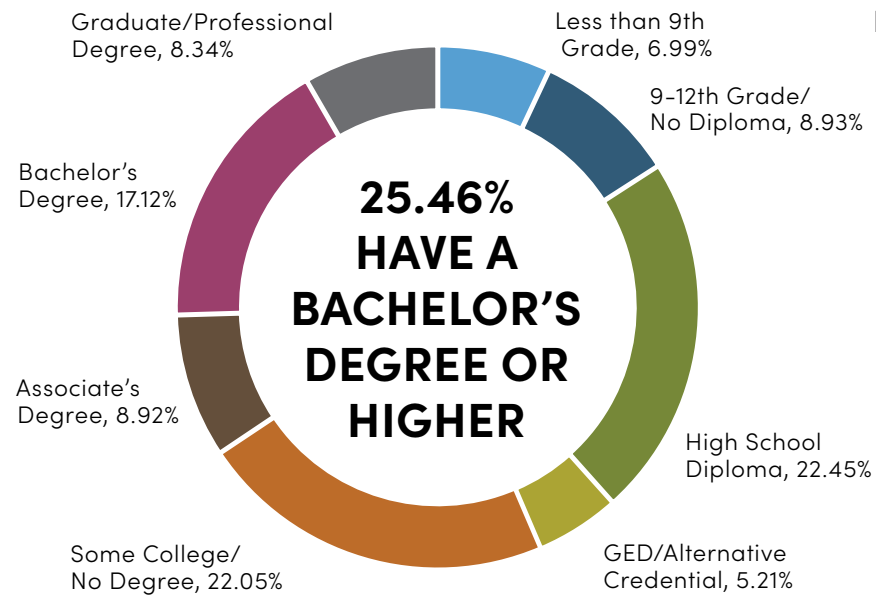


Source: Esri, 2020

### Education

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.

**Figure 19:** Education Attainment in Adams County



Source: Esri, 2020

**Table 5: Education Attainment, County Comparison**

	LESS THAN 9TH GRADE	9-12TH GRADE/ NO DIPLOMA	HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	GED/ ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIAL	SOME COLLEGE/ NO DEGREE	ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	GRADUATE/ PROFESSIONAL DEGREE
Adams County	6.99%	8.93%	22.45%	5.21%	22.05%	8.92%	17.12%	8.34%
Arapahoe County	2.95%	4.05%	16.55%	3.15%	20.16%	8.58%	28.32%	16.23%
Broomfield County	1.36%	1.52%	11.52%	2.20%	17.17%	8.48%	35.99%	21.76%
Denver County	5.63%	6.12%	12.72%	3.39%	16.24%	5.35%	30.48%	20.07%
Jefferson County	1.49%	3.65%	16.13%	3.40%	20.92%	7.96%	28.90%	17.54%
Morgan County	9.08%	9.67%	24.33%	6.19%	22.20%	9.35%	12.06%	7.12%
Washington County	1.73%	5.55%	26.70%	4.78%	32.64%	11.47%	12.73%	4.40%
Weld County	4.65%	6.47%	22.01%	4.61%	24.24%	9.31%	19.58%	9.13%

Source: Esri, 2020

### Race and Ethnicity

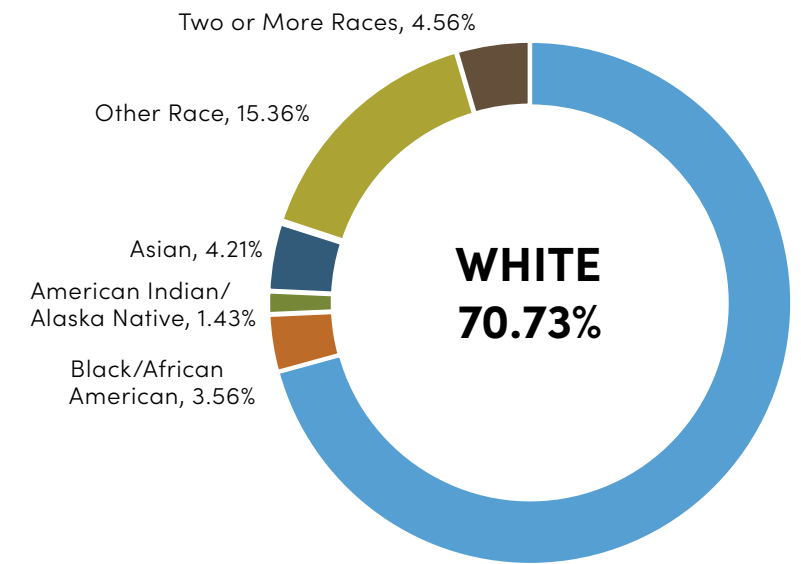
Adams County residents are predominantly white with 70 percent of the population reporting being white alone.

Other races make up for a small percentage of the population with Black, American Indian and Asians accounting for 3.6 percent, 1.4 percent, and 4.2 percent respectively.

However, with 15.4 percent of the population reporting as “some other race alone” and 4.6 percent reporting as “two or more races,” the County has a significant number of non-white residents that is expected to continue growing.

The current Diversity Index is 73.8 and Adams County is expected to become more diverse over the next five years, reaching a diversity index of 75.1 by 2025.

**Figure 20:** Race in Adams County



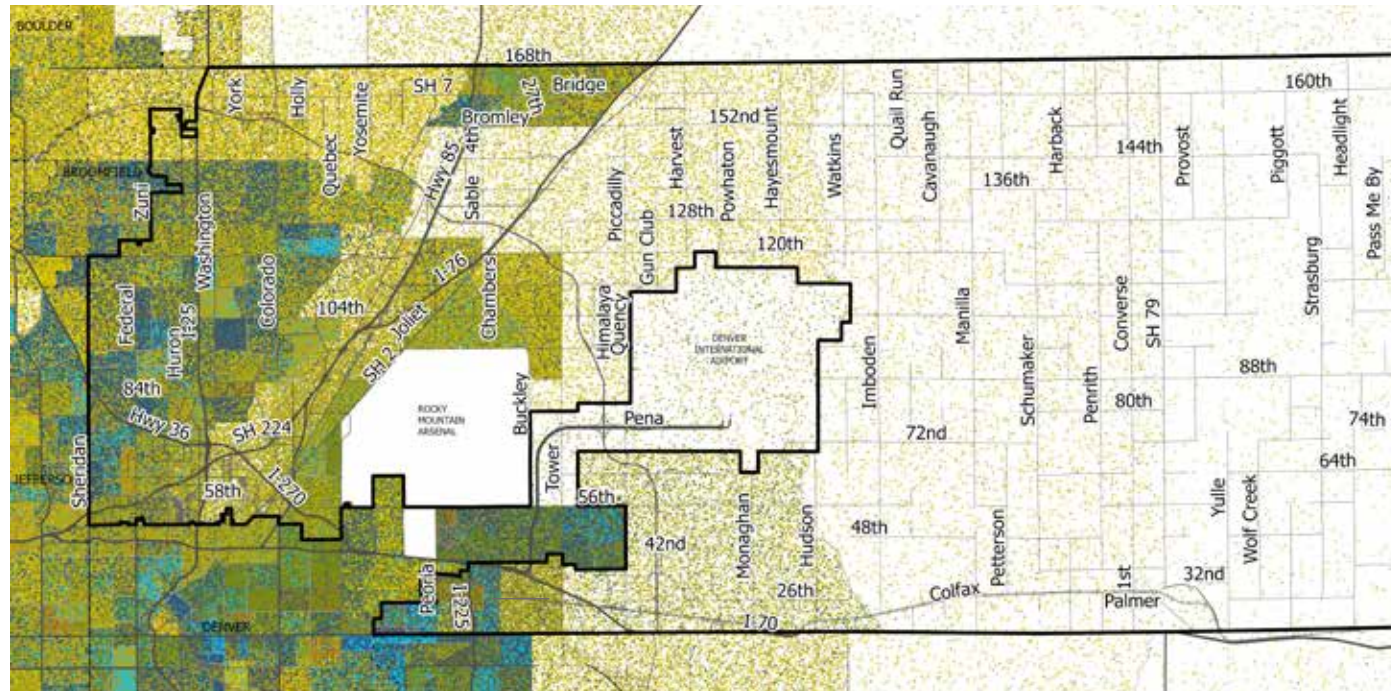
Source: Esri, 2020

**Table 6: Race, County Comparison**

	WHITE	BLACK/ AFRICAN AMERICAN	AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	PACIFIC ISLANDER	OTHER RACE	TWO OR MORE RACES
Adams County	70.73%	3.56%	1.43%	4.21%	0.15%	15.36%	4.56%
Arapahoe County	69.79%	10.75%	0.78%	6.44%	0.25%	7.10%	4.89%
Broomfield County	84.17%	1.46%	0.61%	6.50%	0.11%	3.64%	3.50%
Denver County	66.68%	10.21%	1.28%	4.55%	0.20%	12.16%	4.92%
Jefferson County	87.17%	1.30%	0.89%	2.95%	0.09%	4.41%	3.19%
Morgan County	76.93%	3.43%	1.22%	0.69%	0.12%	14.83%	2.78%
Washington County	93.43%	1.21%	0.14%	0.30%	0.06%	2.75%	2.11%
Weld County	78.57%	1.57%	1.03%	2.04%	0.13%	12.80%	3.86%

Source: Esri, 2020

**MAP 5: POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY BY CENSUS TRACT**



Data Source: Adams County, CDPHE, ESRI - ACS 2020, DRCOG

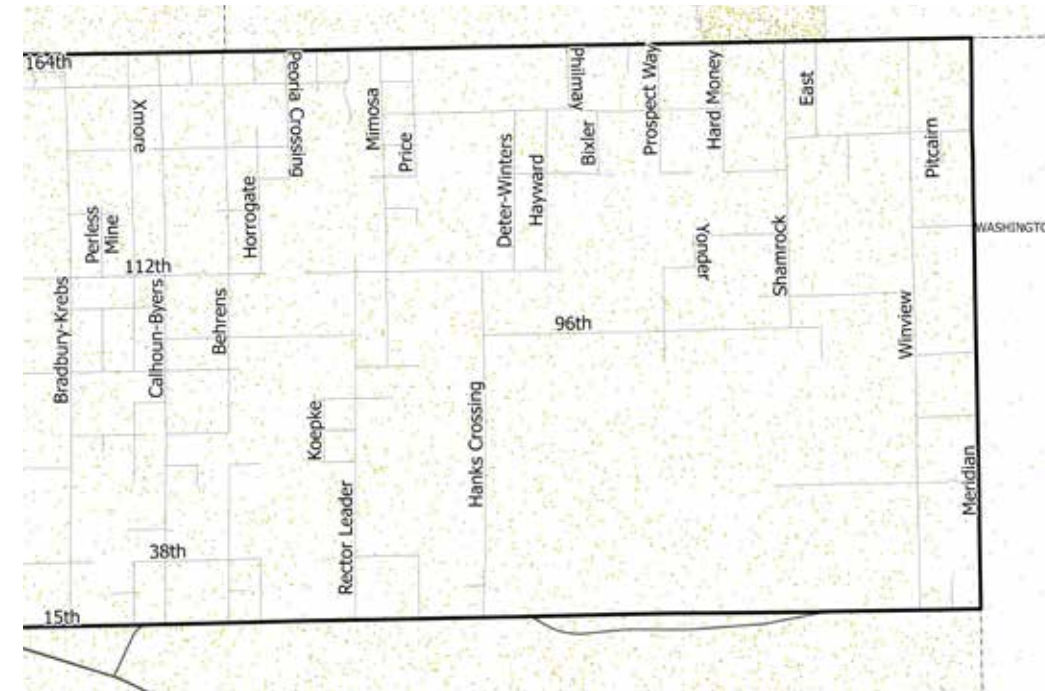
**LEGEND**

2018 Population By Race/Ethnicity. 1 Dot = 1 Person By Tract

- White (Non Hispanic)
- Hispanic
- Black (Non Hispanic)
- Native American (Non Hispanic)
- Asian (Non Hispanic)
- Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic)
- Other (Non Hispanic)

A diversity index is used to understand the racial and ethnic make up of a specific geography. The Diversity Index is based on the Census block group level and ranges from 0 (no diversity) to 100 (complete diversity). As described by ESRI, when using this data "if an area's entire population belongs to one race group and one ethnic group, then an area has zero diversity. An area's diversity index increases to 100 when the population is evenly divided into two or more race/ethnic groups."

In Adams County, nearly 40 percent of the population identifies as Hispanic, and it is expected to increase in the future. The US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines "Hispanic or Latino" as "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race."



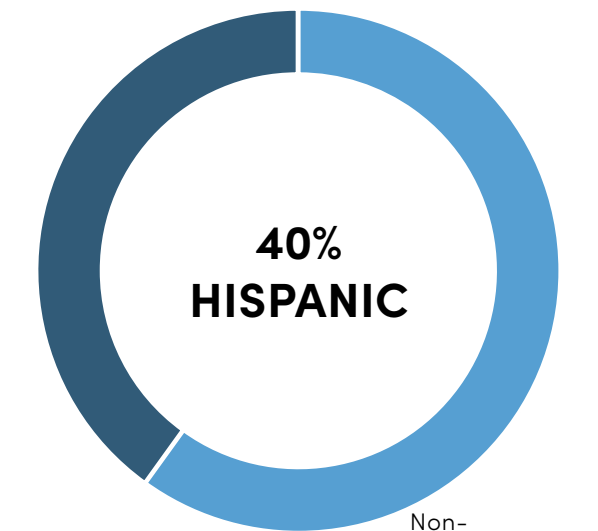
NOT TO SCALE

**Table 7: Hispanic Population, County Comparison**

	HISPANIC POPULATION
Adams County	40.05%
Arapahoe County	19.23%
Broomfield County	12.42%
Denver County	32.50%
Jefferson County	15.16%
Morgan County	35.86%
Washington County	10.51%
Weld County	33.66%

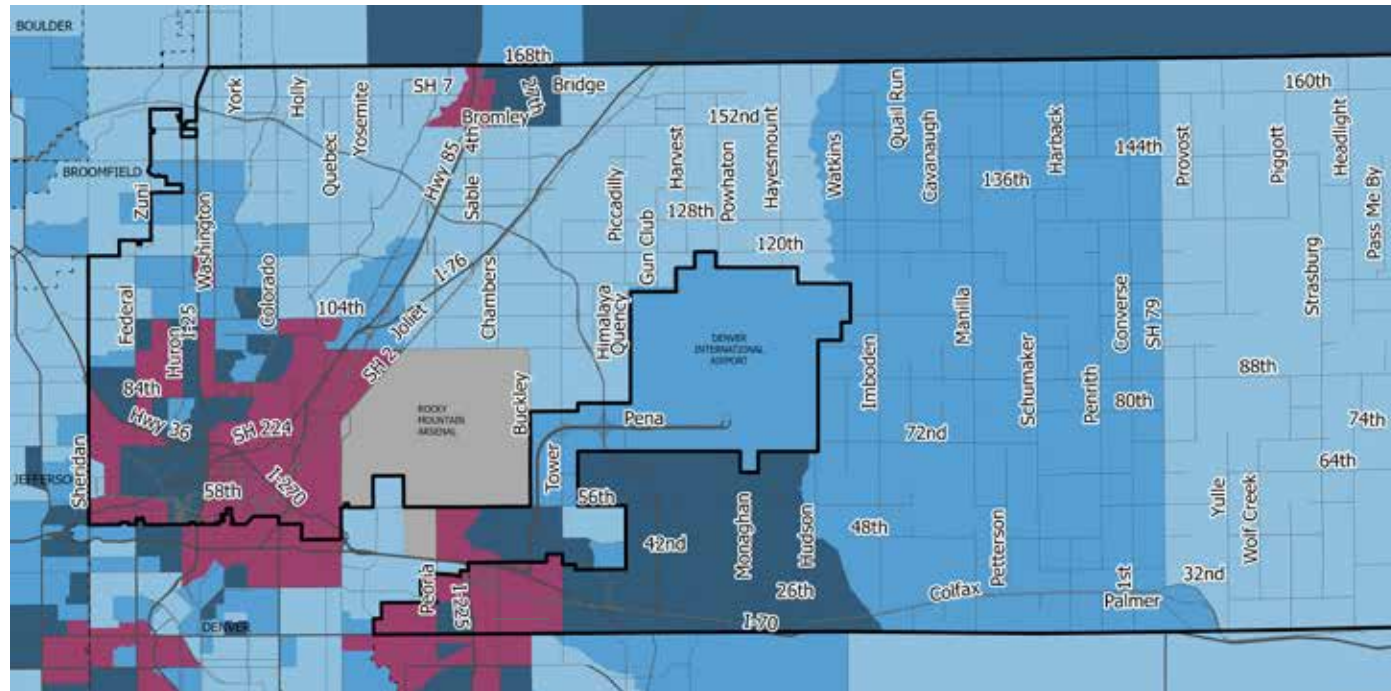
Source: Esri, 2020

**Figure 21: Adams County Hispanic Population**



Source: Esri, 2020

## MAP 6: CDC VULNERABILITY BY CENSUS TRACT



Data Source: Adams County, CDPHE, CDC, DRCOG

### Vulnerability and At-Risk Populations in Adams County

Within Adams County, the Centers for Disease Control provides insight into vulnerability at the census-tract level, as seen in Map 5. Additionally, the County can be compared to other surrounding Counties through a tabulation of at-risk population data as seen in Table 8.

### What is CDC Vulnerability Data?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) assembled composite data to document levels of vulnerability for populations at the census-tract level. The index uses 15 variables that are defined by the U.S. Census. Although the index was developed to assist in disaster planning, the criteria used to determine vulnerable populations is relevant for the Comprehensive Plan

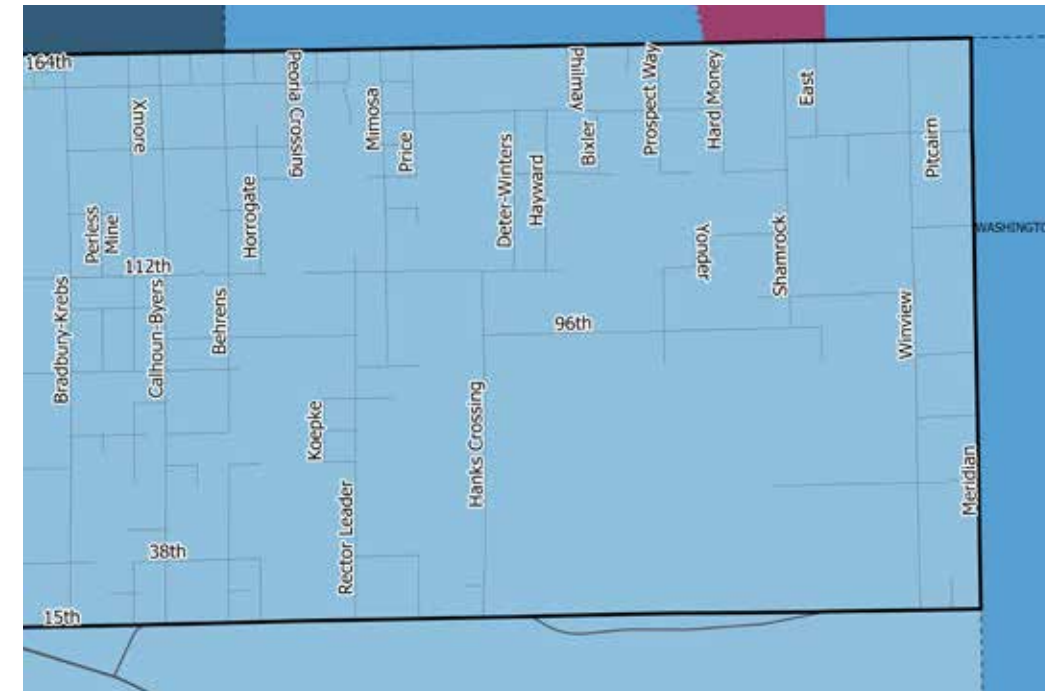
effort in that it can indicate the at-risk population and census tracts that represent a population that may be vulnerable for housing displacement and have a significant amount of overlap with environmental justice indicators. Four themes and social factors are used to generate the index listed below.

#### Socioeconomic status:

- below poverty
- unemployed
- income
- no high school diploma

#### Household composition and disability:

- aged 65 or older
- aged 17 and younger
- older than age five with a disability
- single-parent households



### LEGEND

Overall SVI - Tracts

- 0.00 - 0.25  
Lowest  
Vulnerability
- 0.25 - 0.50
- 0.5 - 0.75
- 0.75 - 1  
Highest  
Vulnerability
- Data unavailable

NOT TO SCALE

#### Minority status and language:

- minority
- speak English "less than well"

#### Housing type and transportation:

- multi-unit structures
- mobile homes
- crowding
- no vehicle
- group quarters

Table 8: At-Risk Population, County Comparison (2018)

	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS DEFINED AS AT RISK	HOUSEHOLDS WITH 1+ PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY	HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS/ SNAP	HOUSEHOLDS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL	OWNER HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO VEHICLES	POP 18-64 SPEAK ONLY A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH
Adams County	42.26%	22.47%	9.18%	9.33%	1.27%	1.93%
Arapahoe County	33.44%	18.02%	6.45%	8.00%	0.96%	0.93%
Broomfield County	26.57%	16.85%	2.94%	5.78%	0.99%	0.46%
Denver County	37.88%	16.86%	8.12%	11.71%	1.18%	1.61%
Jefferson County	31.61%	19.02%	4.38%	7.18%	1.03%	0.29%
Morgan County	49.38%	25.87%	12.62%	10.31%	0.58%	1.60%
Washington County	42.79%	22.38%	7.23%	10.77%	2.41%	0.10%
Weld County	37.19%	19.94%	7.29%	8.84%	1.12%	0.83%

Source: Esri, 2018





### Median Household income

Adams County’s Median Household Income (MHI) of \$70,282 tracks closely with that of the State of Colorado. Although still slightly lower than the state’s MHI of \$73,219, the County’s household income growth has outpaced the state over the past decade.

Table 11: Income distribution by Household, shows a large portion of low to middle income households. About 12 percent (12.2 percent) of households earn less than \$25,000 annually which is a smaller percentage of households than the state at 14.8 percent. About 20 percent (20.6 percent) of households earn between \$35,000 and \$50,000 annually. About 35 percent (35.1 percent) of households earn \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually representing a larger portion of low to middle-income households compared to the rest of the state at 30 percent. The County has fewer high-income households than the state with 32.1 percent of households earning more than \$100,000 annually compared to 35 percent in Colorado.

### Household spending

Median Disposable Income for households in Adams County is \$55,546 and household expenditures average \$76,495 per year.

Housing costs account for the largest portion of average household expenditures at 31.6 percent, followed by food, transportation and pensions/social security at 12 percent, 11.8 percent and 10.7 percent respectively.

Healthcare and entertainment/recreation are the next largest expenditures accounting for 7.2 percent and 4.1 percent of total spending respectively.

Table 9: Median Household Income & Per Capita Income

	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	PER CAPITA INCOME
Adams County	\$70,282	\$30,608
Arapahoe County	\$78,532	\$41,239
Broomfield County	\$95,777	\$47,937
Denver County	\$69,541	\$45,079
Jefferson County	\$87,055	\$45,182
Morgan County	\$51,762	\$23,923
Washington County	\$51,118	\$27,254
Weld County	\$77,497	\$34,036

Source: Esri, 2020

Table 11: Income distribution by Household

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS	
	ADAMS COUNTY	COLORADO
<\$15,000	6.3%	7.9%
\$15,000-\$24,999	5.9%	6.9%
\$25,000-\$34,999	7.4%	7.3%
\$35,000-\$49,999	13.2%	11.5%
\$50,000-\$74,999	19.9%	17.3%
\$75,000-\$99,999	15.2%	13.6%
\$100,000-\$149,999	19.1%	17.9%
\$150,000-\$199,999	7.4%	8.5%
\$200,000+	5.6%	9.2%

Source: Esri, 2020

Table 10: Household Spending

COUNTY	AGGREGATE HOUSEHOLD INCOME (MILLIONS)	ANNUAL BUDGET EXPENDITURES (MILLIONS)	% OF ANNUAL BUDGET EXPENDITURES TO AGGREGATE HOUSEHOLD INCOME	RETAIL GOODS EXPENDITURES (MILLIONS)	% OF RETAIL GOODS EXPENDITURES TO AGGREGATE HOUSEHOLD INCOME
Adams	\$15,711	\$13,539	86.2%	\$4,036	25.7%
Arapahoe	\$26,645	\$22,805	85.6%	\$6,752	25.3%
Broomfield	\$3,520	\$2,988	84.9%	\$882	25.1%
Denver	\$33,362	\$28,681	86.0%	\$8,322	24.9%
Jefferson	\$26,653	\$22,628	84.9%	\$6,732	25.3%
Morgan	\$708	\$616	87.0%	\$191	27.0%
Washington	\$135	\$121	89.7%	\$42	31.2%
Weld	\$11,369	\$9,747	85.7%	\$2,937	25.8%

Source: Esri, 2020

## TAKING A LOOK AT ADAMS COUNTY



Pecos Street Between US-36  
and 70th Ave

This section takes a deeper look into Adams County through five key themes. These themes are:

- Community and Housing
- Natural Environment
- Built Environment and Connections
- Economic Development
- Cultural Heritage

# COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

Adams County is growing, in population and diversity. This Plan will address the needs of the future populations by determining the best locations for housing growth and the types of housing units that can best serve them.

## COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

### HOUSING

#### Quantity and projected growth

As of 2020, Adams County has 181,504 housing units, which have grown by about 11.3 percent since 2010 (1.13 percent annually). Housing unit growth has lagged slightly behind population and household growth but is expected pick up speed over the next five years - growing by 1.4 percent annually and reaching 193,851 units by 2025. Data based off of Colorado State Demographer's Office does not differentiate housing needs for incorporated vs. unincorporated Adams County.

A very basic method of evaluating housing supply and demand is

to assess housing need based on population growth and household size. The County's average household size has increased from 2.85 in 2010 to 2.88 in 2020. The table below projects the total number of housing units needed in the County in order to maintain the current average household size based on population estimates from the Colorado State Demographer's Office. The County will need an additional 3,371 units per year in order to the maintain current household size through 2040.

#### Housing mix

The current housing stock consists primarily of single-family detached homes which account for 62.4 percent of housing units.

Table 12: Adams County Projected Housing Needs

	POPULATION EST.	HOUSING UNITS NEEDED	TOTAL UNITS NEEDED AFTER 2020	ANNUAL PRODUCTION NEEDED
2025	580,775	193,592	15,075	3,015
2030	637,554	212,518	34,001	3,400
2035	694,085	231,362	52,845	3,523
2040	748,318	249,439	70,922	3,546

Source: Colorado State Demographer's Office

Table 13: Housing Inventory by Type, County Comparison\*

	1 DETACHED UNIT*	1 ATTACHED UNIT*	2 UNITS*	3 OR 4 UNITS*	5 TO 9 UNITS*	10 TO 19 UNITS*	20 TO 49 UNITS*	50 OR MORE UNITS*	MOBILE HOMES	BOAT/RV/VAN/ETC.
Adams County	106,773	12,585	1,397	4,693	7,760	11,979	9,777	5,100	10,900	74
Unincorporated Adams County	23,666	1,765	391	872	801	1,278	1,332	369	2,495	7
Arapahoe County	139,355	25,038	2,007	6,759	14,508	23,019	19,336	15,768	2,518	310
Broomfield County	17,015	1,582	85	709	979	1,632	1,960	2,937	743	5
Denver County	141,639	24,736	8,047	10,012	14,016	26,671	33,480	54,223	1,149	72
Jefferson County	155,836	21,945	2,567	7,751	12,496	15,326	11,917	8,288	2,493	92
Morgan County	8,284	267	233	282	366	469	211	196	1,404	6
Washington County	2,076	38	17	32	33	14	6	0	185	5
Weld County	77,790	3,675	2,324	3,108	4,092	3,369	2,236	1,807	7,729	68

Source: Esri, 2018  
\* 2018 Housing in Structure

Most multi-family units are in medium to large complexes (10-50 units) and account for nearly 13 percent of the housing stock.

There is also a significant number of mobile homes which account for 6.4 percent of the housing stock. As of mid 2019 there were 21 mobile home parks in unincorporated Adams County.

The housing stock is slightly older with a median year built of 1986, likely attributed to an older supply of single-family detached homes in the County.

#### Housing tenure (rent versus own)

Housing tenure is heavily skewed toward owner-occupied units, which represents 63.4 percent of all units. Vacancy has decreased significantly since 2010 from 5.7 percent to 2.5 percent currently. Vacancy is expected to continue decreasing over the next five years as more renter households occupy these units. The impacts of COVID-19 on housing tenure and

vacancy is unknown at this time but economic turmoil impacting employment may have an effect on the County's housing.

### DID YOU KNOW?

69%  
SINGLE-FAMILY

#### HOUSING MIX BY UNIT TYPE

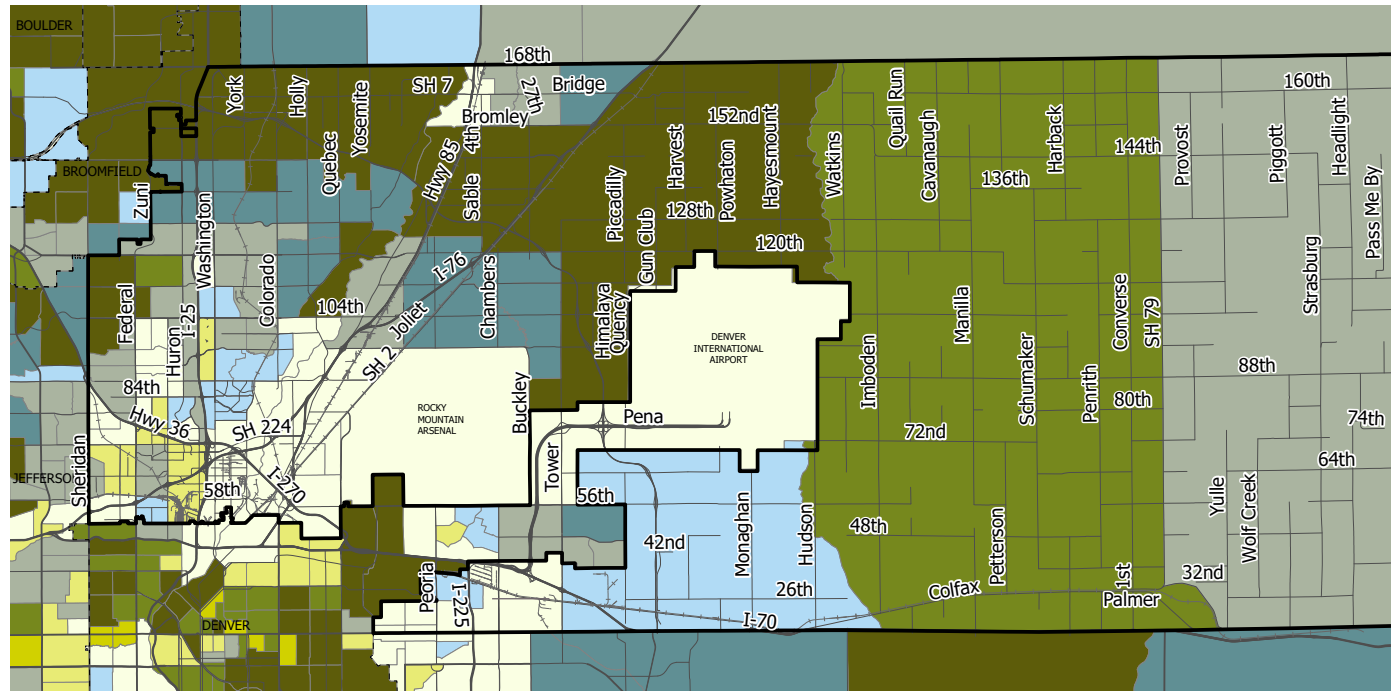
14.2%  
2-19 UNITS

8.7%  
20+ UNITS

6.4%  
MOBILE HOMES



**MAP 8: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY (OWNERSHIP) AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME BIVARIATE**



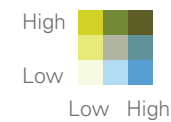
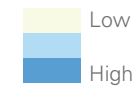
Data Source: Adams County, ESRI - ACS 2020, DRCOG

**LEGEND**

2020 Median Home Value



2020 Median Household Income



Note: data displayed by census tract

NOT TO SCALE

**Housing affordability**

Median home value is currently \$340,749 and expected to grow rapidly over the next five years (2.3 percent annually) to reach \$380,749 by 2025.

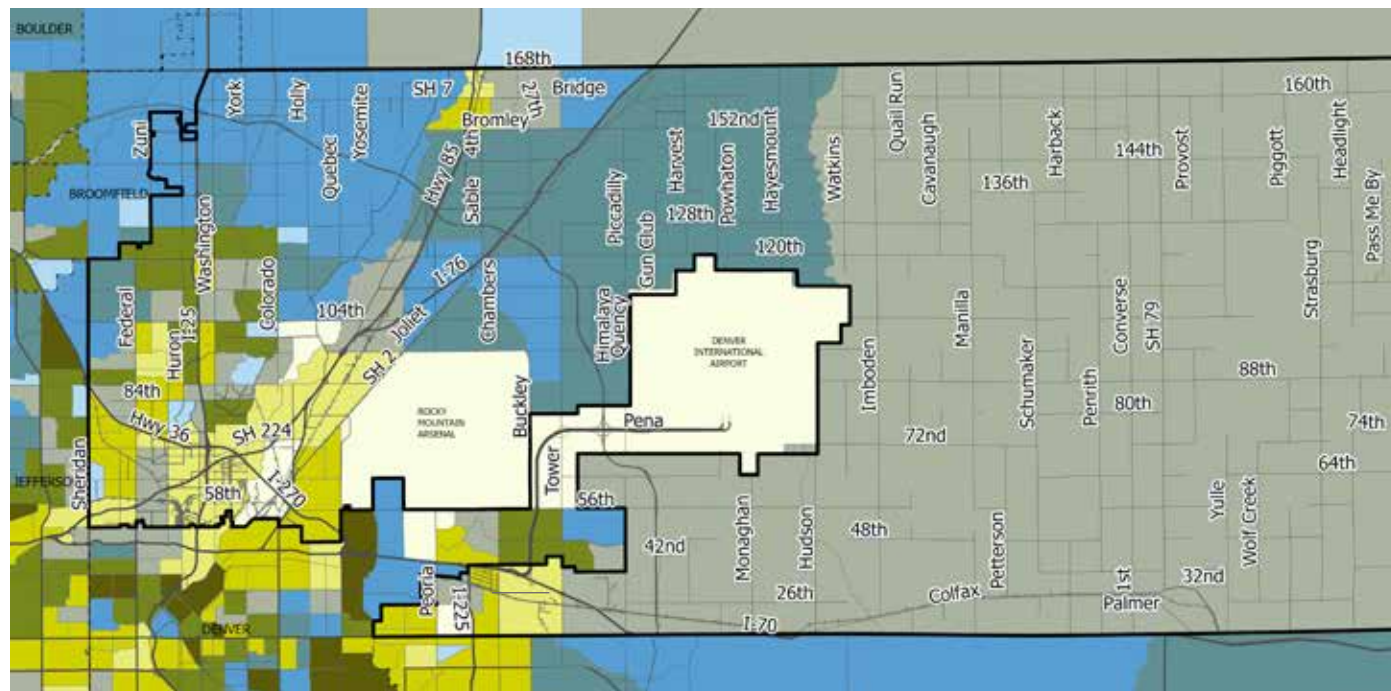
Average rent across all rental housing types is \$1,150 in Adams County which is just slightly higher than the state average of \$1,136.

An affordability index measures a household's ability to afford an item. A value of 100 represents a household earning the median income for the area, with a number over 100 indicating less affordability, and a number under 100 indicating more affordability.

The housing affordability index for Adams County is 120 with a percent of income for mortgage of 20.3 percent. This is slightly higher than the state's affordability index of 115 with a percent of income for mortgage of 21.9 percent.

Despite its proximity to Colorado's center of economic activity, Adams

**MAP 9: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY (RENTAL) AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME BIVARIATE**



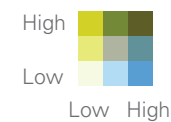
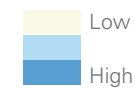
Data Source: Adams County, ESRI - ACS 2020, DRCOG

**LEGEND**

2020 Median Gross Rent



2020 Median Household Income



Note: data displayed by census tract

NOT TO SCALE

County is tracking relatively closely with statewide affordability indices.

### Missing Middle

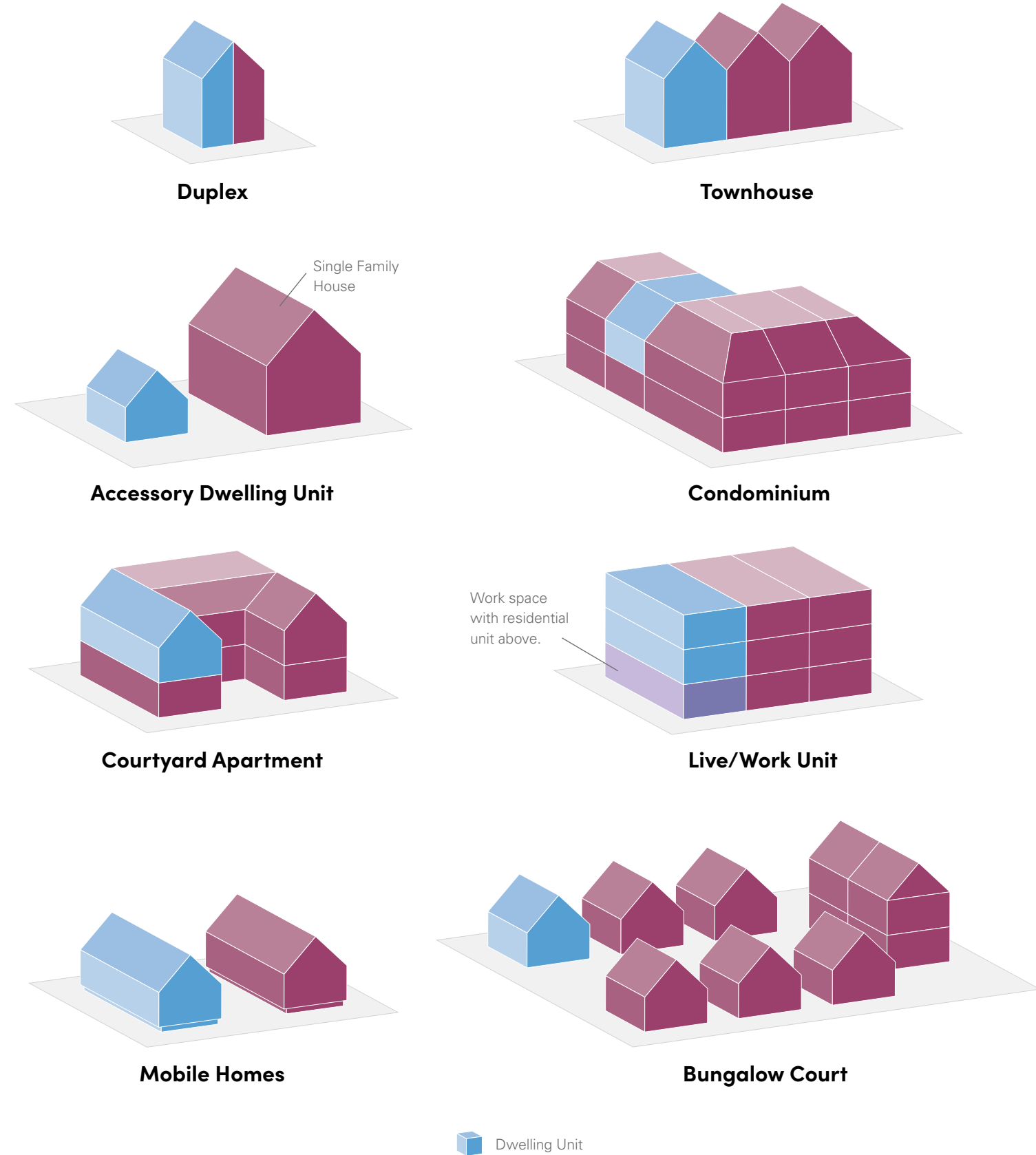
While overall supply and demand is important, housing supply should also meet the diverse needs and preferences of households within the County. Households in Adams County represent a wide range of incomes, ethnicities, sizes, and other dynamics that are best served by varied housing typologies. While some households may prefer low-density, single-family detached homes, others may prefer smaller, multifamily units with more density. These households are generally willing to sacrifice size for a more walkable, mixed-housing community. As Adams County continues to grow and diversify, the County should prioritize the housing of varying densities, sizes, and price points to provide residents with the widest possible variety of housing choices to reflect their needs and life cycle.

Cities and Counties around the country are suffering from a “missing middle” housing problem where middle housing refers to structures that have more density than one-unit developments but are not as dense as mid-rise unit apartment complexes. Five types of housing units were identified in the 2018 Housing Needs Assessment as being missing middle housing types: one-unit attached, two units, three to four units, and five to nine units. In 2015, these middle housing units accounted for 15.6

percent of housing supply and have grown slightly to account for 16.3 percent today.

Beyond having enough units to house the County’s population, a healthy housing market has supply that is balanced and aligned with the preferences and needs of its households. The 2017 Housing Needs Assessment identified the County’s “missing middle” housing issue as a lack of medium density housing units including condos, townhomes, duplexes, and smaller multi-family dwellings. The study noted that 18.4 percent of the population would prefer these middle housing units but that they only accounted for 15.4 percent of the housing stock.

As of 2019, medium density housing units still only account for 16.4 percent of the County’s housing stock although the demographic segments preferring these units have continued to climb. With millennials, baby boomers, young professionals and new families growing to account for more and more of the County’s population each year, the demand will almost certainly continue to rise. Providing missing middle housing presents an opportunity to increase housing options for a variety of income levels and develop a smaller footprint of land in order to do so. An evaluation



**Figure 22:** Housing typologies contributing to a diverse housing stock

of allowable housing types by zone district will be performed in Phase 2 in collaboration with community engagement efforts.

### Demand for Housing

On a basic level, the 2018 Housing Needs Assessment found that the County does not have enough housing based on population projections and average household size. This trend has only continued. 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.

As of 2015, it was projected that the County would need to add 3,500 to 4,000 units per year in order to maintain an average household size of 2.85. As of 2020, average household size has increased to 2.88 persons per household, decreasing the annual need of new housing to 3,371 units per year.

### Housing Costs

In terms of median home values and median gross rents, housing costs in Adams County have continued to outpace income growth. The 2017 Housing Needs Assessment found that median household income growth (24.6 percent) had lagged significantly behind home value growth (32.7 percent) and rent growth (47.4 percent). As a result, the number of cost-burdened households, who pay

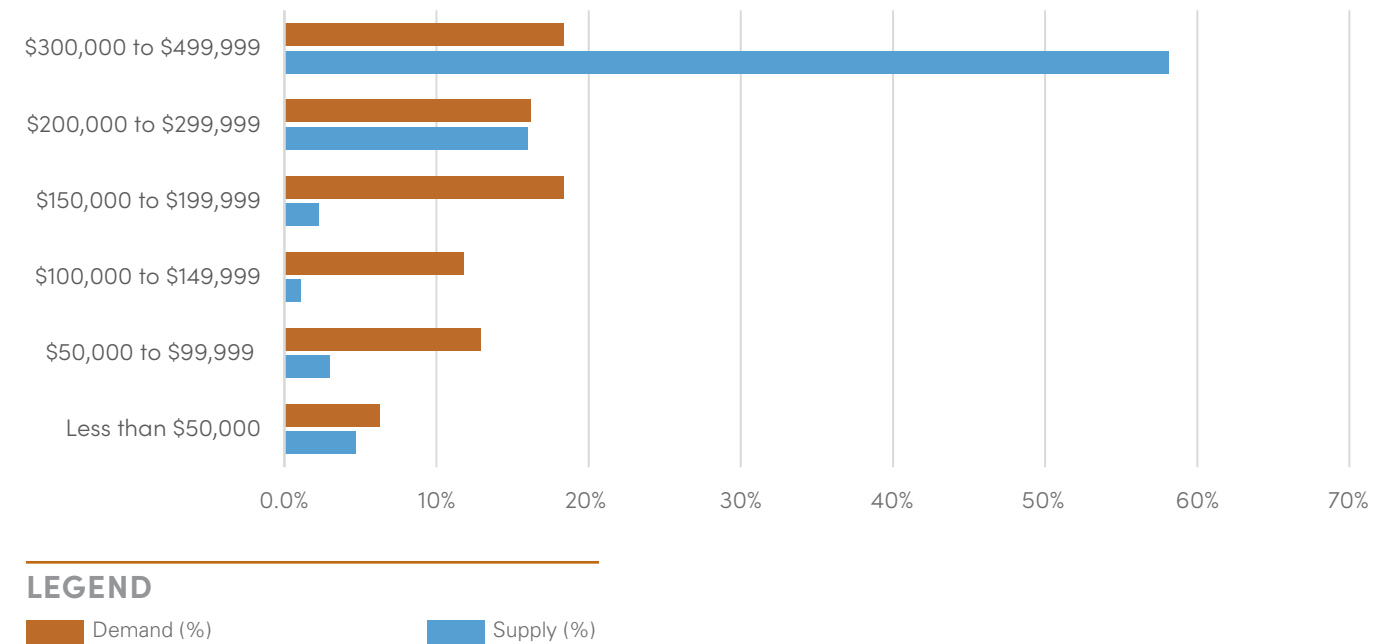
more than 30 percent of their income for housing, increased among all household types.

With median home values growing almost twice as fast as income, homeowners with and without mortgages will likely be impacted by an increase in the assessed value of property, resulting in increased property taxes. Rising property taxes may force some homeowner to sell their properties and relocate to rental housing, which has also become less affordable. As more households become cost-burdened, dependency of public services is likely to increase as well.

Findings in the 2020–2024 Adams County Consolidated Plan indicate that housing affordability remains a critical issue in Adams County. Systemic issues related to affordability have been compounded by explosive population growth within the Denver Metro area. The Plan found that “the current availability of housing units does not meet the needs of households at all income levels in Adams County.”<sup>1</sup> Issues related to affordability are particularly severe for extremely and very low-income renters, however, problems with affordability extend to low and moderate income households as well. Additional findings within The Plan related to affordability include the following:

<sup>1</sup> 2020 – 2024 Adams County Consolidated Plan | Adams County Government (adcogov.org) Retrieved from <https://www.adcogov.org/sites/default/files/2020-2024%20Adams%20County%20Consolidated%20Plan%20Draft.pdf>

Figure 23: Housing Supply Vs. Demand (2019)



#### LEGEND

■ Demand (%)      ■ Supply (%)

Source: Colorado State Demographer’s Office

- Most of Adams County rental units (46%) are in the \$1,000 to \$1,499 range according to the 2017 ACS, which is well above what renters with housing needs can afford. The greatest need for housing assistance in Adams County is for renters earning \$25,000 and less, needing rents under \$600 per month (including utilities).
- Regional housing pressures and price increases are impacting both owner and renter occupied housing affordability in Adams County. The median home value in Adams County increased 106 percent between 2000 to 2017, while the median rent rose by 83 percent between 2000 and 2017.
- Renters earning less than \$25,000 per year have a hard time finding rental units they can afford. There are an estimated 3,254 rental units in Adams County, 6 percent of total rental units, with rents \$600 or less per month (accounting for utilities). There are 12,231 renters who need

### DID YOU KNOW?

**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE**  
**2.88** IN ADAMS COUNTY (2020)      **2.51** STATE OF COLORADO (2021)

**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**  
**\$75,804** ADAMS COUNTY      **\$77,127** STATE OF COLORADO

**TOTAL # OF HOUSING UNITS**  
**178,517** IN ADAMS COUNTY 2019      **165,046** IN ADAMS COUNTY 2015

rents this low leaving a gap of 6,372 units.

- Most rental units in Adams County fall in the \$800 to \$1,999 range (77% of all rentals) which is not affordable to low income renters.

### Affordability Gap

In addition to increasing housing costs, the median sales prices of homes in Adams County have continued to soar, resulting in growing affordability gaps. The 2018 Housing Needs Assessment found that affordability gaps in Adams County had increased at all income levels between 2006 and 2015, but particularly for households at or above the median household income level.

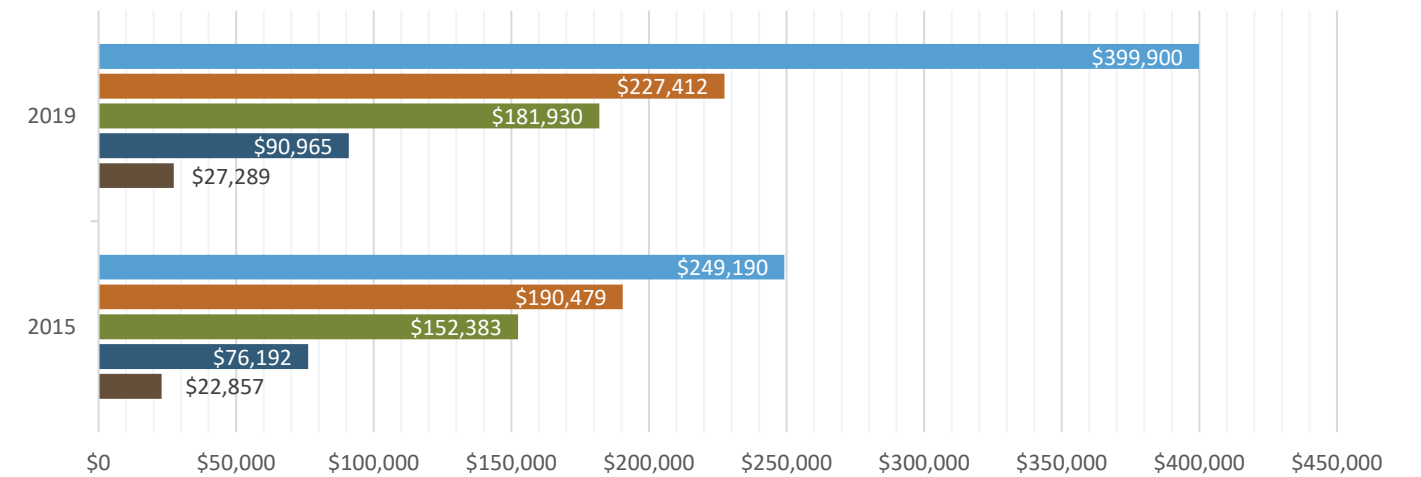
As of 2019, we see that the trend has continued with gaps increasing at all income levels, but most significantly for households at or above the County's median household income level. For households earning 100 percent of median household income, the affordability gap has increased nearly 200 percent from 2015 to 2019. The gap for households earning 80 percent, 50 percent and 30 percent of County median household income has increased by 125 percent, 79 percent, and 65 percent respectively since 2015.

The additional housing needed to close the affordability gap is unlikely with recent rates of construction and will require a dedicated effort from the County to provide options for all income levels.

### Preservation of Existing Housing

Adams County includes a significant amount of older housing stock, and has one of the highest percentages of mobile homes in the Denver-metro area. The current housing provides a critical portion of accessible and attainable housing for the community. As growth pressures continue, there is a risk that these housing units could disappear, and residents could be displaced. Ensuring policies that preserve existing housing units is critical to ensuring continued affordability in the County.

Figure 24: Adams County Affordability Gap (2019)

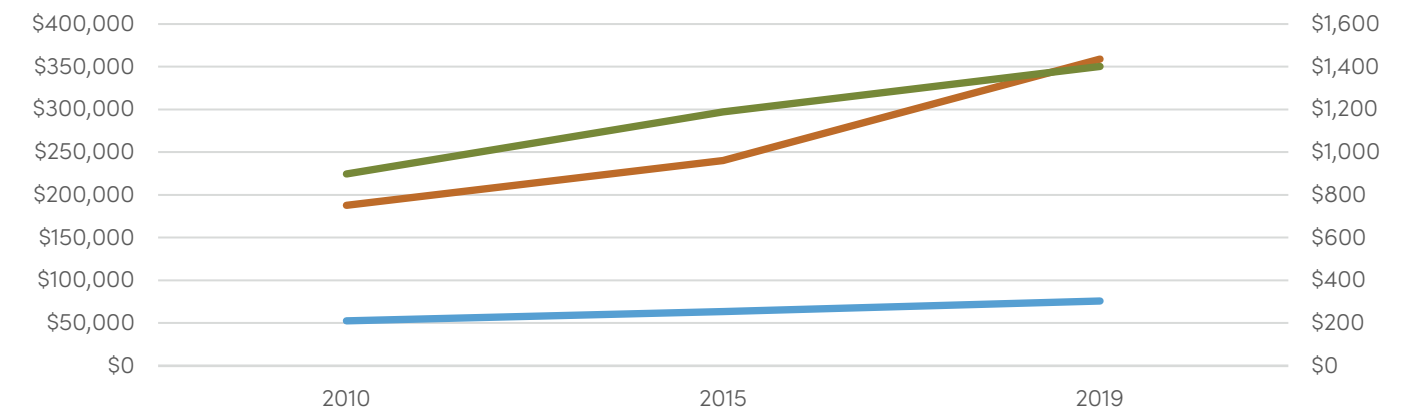


#### LEGEND

- Home Price Affordable to HH's earning 100% of MHI
- Home Price Affordable to HH's earning 80% of MHI
- Home Price Affordable to HH's earning 50% of MHI
- Home Price Affordable to HH's earning 30% of MHI
- Median Sales price

Source: Colorado State Demographer's Office

Figure 25: Adams County Affordability Gap



#### LEGEND

- Median Household Income
- Median Home Value
- Median Gross Rent

Source: Colorado State Demographer's Office, 2019



## COMMUNITY AND HOUSING:

### STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis provides the foundation of understanding for the Adams County Comprehensive Plan. Although the analysis is structured like four distinct quadrants, there is actually an interplay between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

- **Strengths** describe what the County excels at and what makes it distinct. Strengths should be supported and amplified where possible.

- **Weaknesses** stop the County from reaching full potential. They are areas where the County needs to improve. Weaknesses can become opportunities.
- **Opportunities** refer to favorable external factors that could give the County an advantage. Opportunities can turn into future strengths.
- **Threats** refer to external factors that have the potential to harm the County. Threats should be minimized, mitigated and/or proactively planned for.

**Table 14: Community and Housing SWOT Analysis**

Note: A checkmark indicates a relationship between the SWOT analysis content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Planning process and plan creation.

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>POPULATION DIVERSITY</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Adams County boasts population diversity.	✓		
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Lack of place-based recognition of population diversity and international residents.	✓		✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Linking place-based strategies with the people who live there such as international markets which could dovetail with economic development goals.	✓		✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» Population diversity could decrease if housing affordability and displacement mitigation are not proactively planned for.	✓	✓	✓

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Adams County is one of the fastest growing Counties in Colorado, projecting an additional 200,000 residents over the next 20 years.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» The development of new housing units lags behind the pace of population growth.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Develop housing at a pace that matches population growth, in strategic infill locations within proximity of employment centers and transit.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» Without the development of adequate housing supply, several threats could result including an increase in the homeless population, displacement for at-risk populations and decreased affordability.	✓	✓	✓
<b>HOUSING PRODUCT DIVERSITY AND AFFORDABILITY</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Adams County is generally more affordable than other options in the Denver metropolitan area. (Note: the southwest portion of the County shows gross rents at a similar level as Denver according to the map in Existing Conditions Report.)	✓		✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Adams County's for sale housing stock is mostly single-family residences and the County does not currently have much supply of for sale multi-family units.	✓	✓	✓
» Additional housing in unincorporated Adams County is more expensive for the County than commercial development.		✓	
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Increasing density in some locations (such as proximate to employment centers and transit) by providing more "missing middle" and attainable for sale housing.	✓	✓	✓
» Explore the creation of an affordable housing program or other programs such as height incentives in exchange for the provision of affordable housing (may require change to State Law).	✓	✓	✓
» Explore solutions to accommodate the existing homeless population including provisions for homelessness prevention and housing assistance.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» The Construction Defect Law, a Colorado State Law, is a barrier for developers to provide more for sale multi-family housing.		✓	
» The cost of land and new infrastructure is a barrier to the development of new affordable housing.		✓	✓

# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Climate change is an existential threat we all must face. Through a combination of adaptation and carbon reduction (mitigation) strategies Adams County will show leadership and environmental resilience.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ENVIRONMENT

Adams County is classified as a Central Shortgrass Prairie ecoregion (or biome) with the major habitat being temperate grasslands,

savannas and shrublands. The relative aridity of the grasslands is a defining characteristic, with a typical one to two month drought period in the summer, unlike tall and mixed grass prairies to the east. The soils in the undeveloped regions are generally

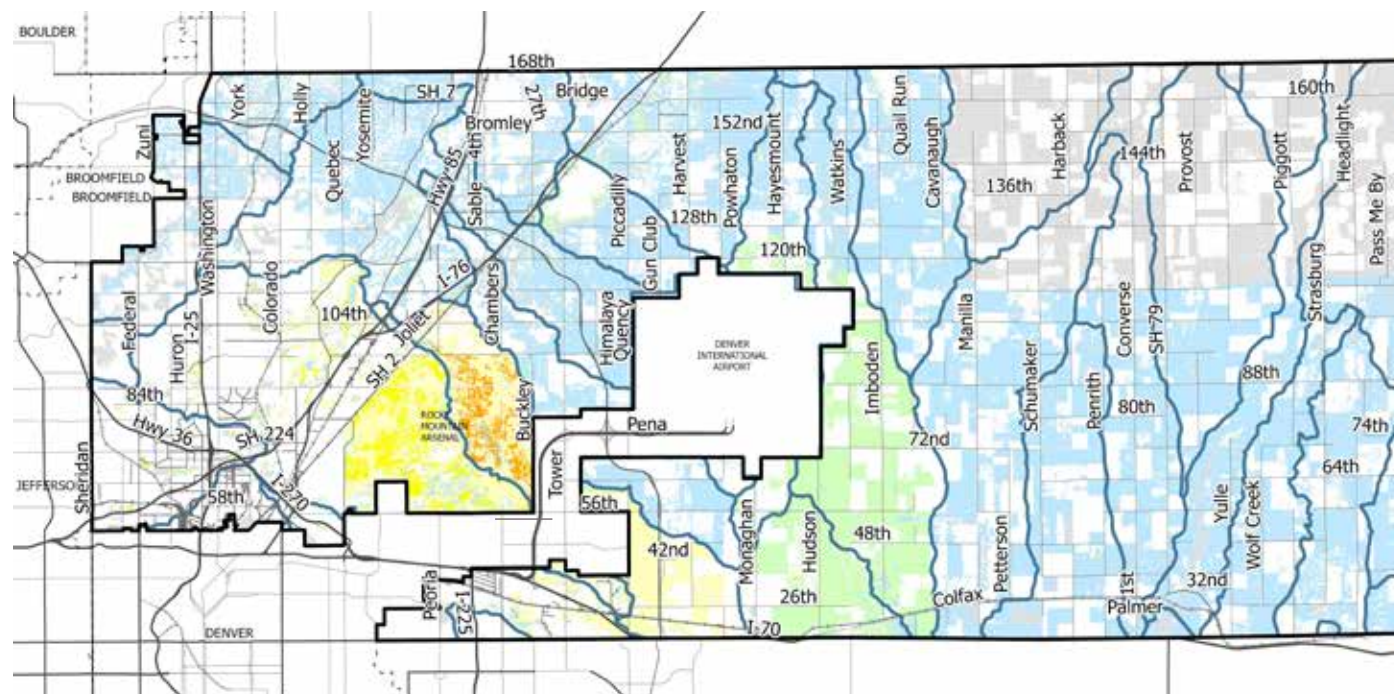
nutrient-rich, and store most of their carbon below ground in the soil and root structures of the prairie grasses.

While historically the keystone species was the bison who maintained much of the environment by applying grazing pressure, the region is inhabited now by a plethora of animal species adapted to living in the open such as pronghorn antelope, prairie dogs, and cattle. There may be state and/or federally listed species in the area including burrowing owls, Prebbles jumping mice, and Ute Lady's Tresses orchids, though occurrences are not extremely likely and would be most concentrated proximate to water bodies.

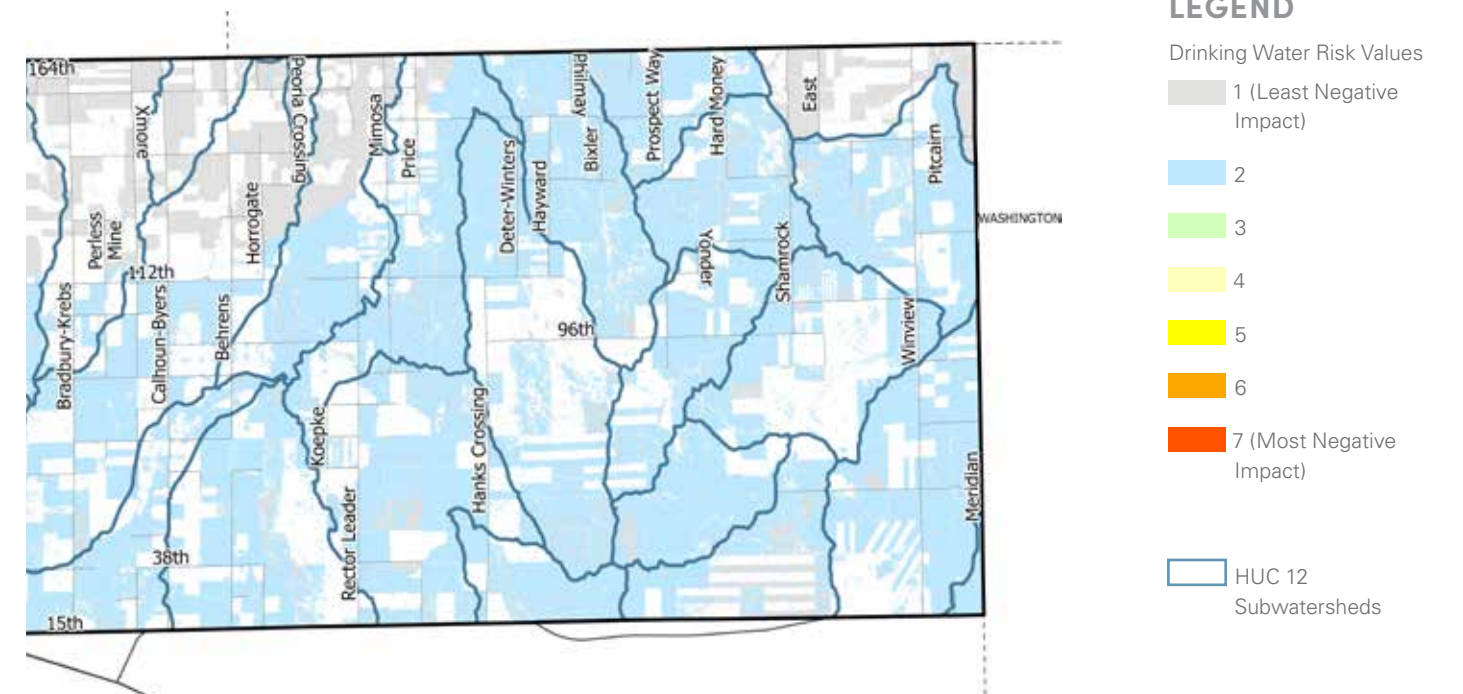
While there has certainly been increased fragmentation of habitat due to development, there is still a strong potential to link habitat into defined corridors that would allow freedom of migration and support native populations of flora and fauna. The relative abundance of un- and underdeveloped prairie in the County is an opportunity for the County to look at strategic planning to preserve, restore and combine these natural areas with recreation activities and cultivate areas of higher total ecological and resource value.

Human activities have created significant negative impacts to the natural environment in Adams County, with ongoing air quality

## MAP 10: SUBWATERSHEDS AND DRINKING WATER RISK



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Spirit Environmental, CDPHE, CONHP, NHD



**LEGEND**

Drinking Water Risk Values

- 1 (Least Negative Impact)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 (Most Negative Impact)

HUC 12 Subwatersheds

NOT TO SCALE

impacts, contamination of land and water, and habitat destruction leading to impaired areas in various degrees. Climate change is expected to exacerbate these impacts; the additional carbon dioxide concentrations and seasonal changes are expected to increase things like pollen count further deteriorating air quality, potentially causing more allergy issues. The locations of the more significant landfill and industrial contamination correlate with the historical and existing locations of populations of residents that are typically less affluent and more diverse than Adams County residents as a whole. A better understanding of the underlying environmental justice issues and conditions will help to mitigate those moving forward, and will be explored in the Phase 2.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Adams County has abundant solar resources and relatively marginal wind resources, providing differing pathways for utilization. The solar availability, measured in terms of average annual direct normal irradiance, ranges from roughly six to 6.25 Watts/square meter, which is more than sufficient to justify installations of both solar photovoltaics (PV) and concentrated solar. According to the recently developed Brightfields GIS database and tool, there are a number of marginal land use sites in Adams County with a high potential for solar development. Avoiding higher value

sites and looking for opportunities to co-locate solar with agricultural uses or otherwise less useful land can provide a multitude of benefits and avoid underutilization of high value land in the County. The potential for community scale solar in the County is significant, and solar is a viable option for powering residential, commercial and industrial uses. The high quantity of land considered marginal due to poor environmental conditions, can also be seen as a potential opportunity to develop solar energy sites that are compatible with such lands under the right conditions. There are already community solar gardens developed in the County, and the potential nexus of innovation and potential will be an opportunity for the County to explore.

The wind resource is less robust. While wind in the area can be gusty and gets better the further east one goes, reaching wind power class three in some areas, the potential for electricity generation by wind is rather limited overall.

In terms of resource storage and underground reserves, there are limited water resources and moderate mineral and fossil fuel resources. 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 West Slope. Local aquifers include the Fox Hills aquifer, the Arapahoe aquifer, and the Laramie Foundation, though

all are seeing some level of depletion and are not relied upon for significant quantities of water outside of domestic wells.

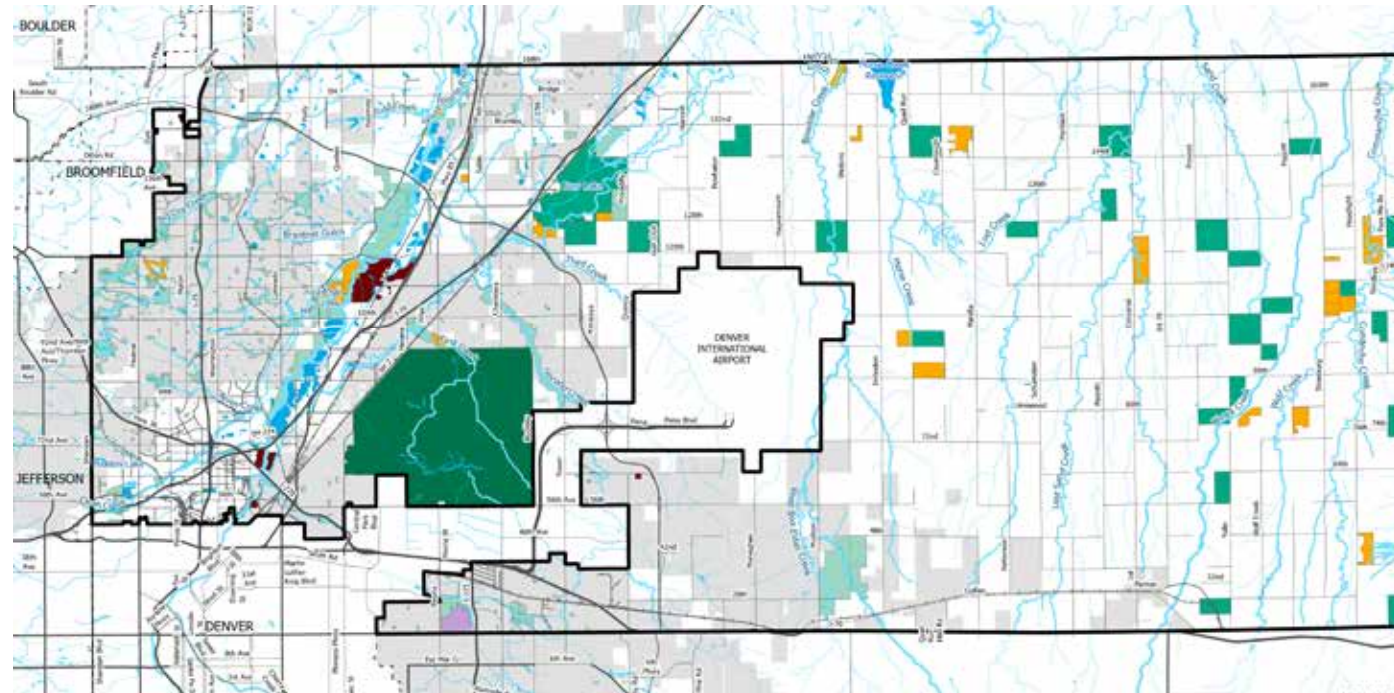
In terms of below ground mineral resources, the County does have shale deposits containing fossil fuels, a number of which have been drilled. However, the lack of infrastructure, particularly pipes to take excess produced natural gas, has limited extraction to date. State regulations limiting the ability of producers to flare off excess natural gas will be important to planning best and feasible long term utilization of these assets.

The primary ecological resources within County borders consist of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and Barr Lake State Park in addition to County owned resources. The Rocky Mountain

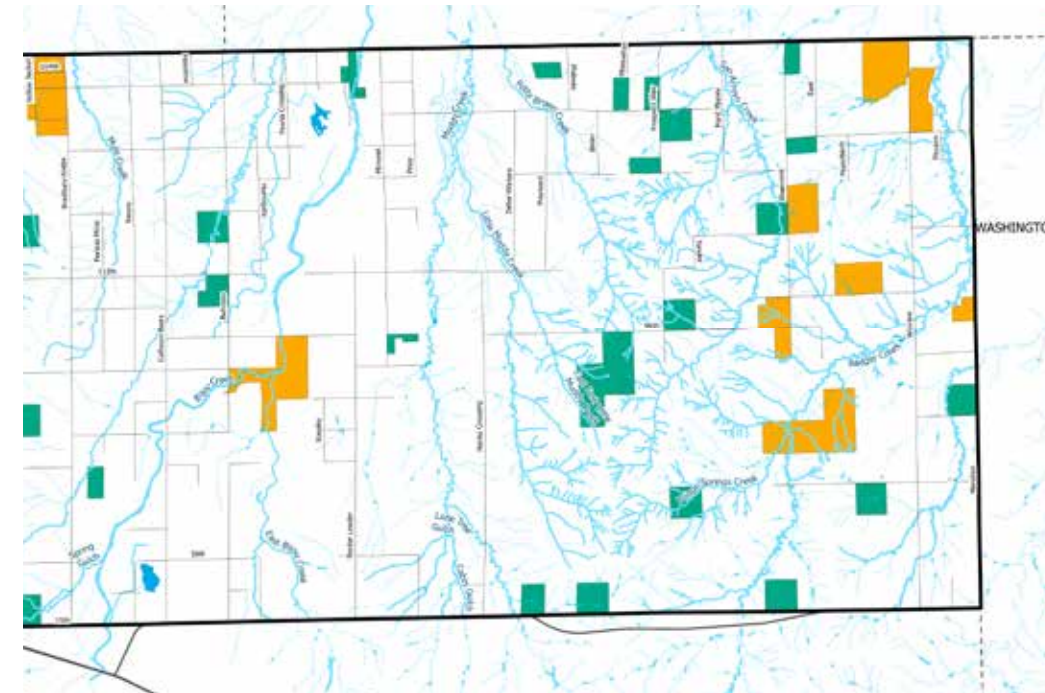
Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge is a success story where a polluted site was transformed into the largest urban wildlife refuge in the country, home to over 300 species of animals, ongoing restoration efforts, and a robust visitor education program. Barr Lake is a Colorado State Park home to an abundance of bird species, additional refuge acreage, and recreational and educational opportunities for visitors and residents.



**Figure 26:** Solar Farm in Unincorporated Adams County



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, COMaP / CHNP



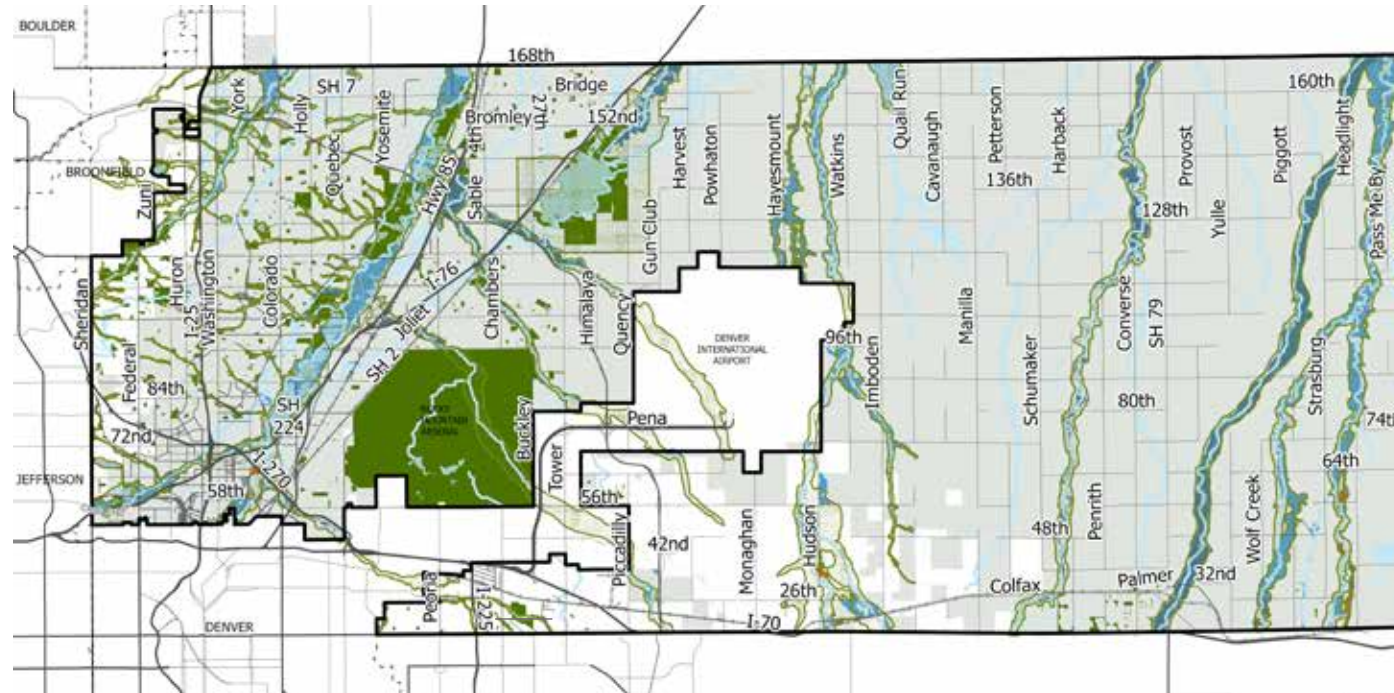
**LEGEND**

- COMaP Owner
- Misc. Federal (BOR, DOD, Misc)
- BLM
- NPS
- USFS
- USFWS
- Tribal
- State
- Local
- NGO/LandTrust
- Private Conservation
- Private

NOT TO SCALE 

**PROTECTED LANDS**

Generally, protected lands are fragmented throughout the County. Rocky Mountain National Arsenal and Barr Lake State Park are two examples of protected lands with a substantial acreage compared to others. The South Platte River appears to have relatively consistent protected lands along the stretch from the County boundary to the north to the boundary to the south, with the exception of a few gaps south of the Clear Creek confluence. Clear Creek also boasts protected lands from the County boundary to the South Platte confluence. Big Dry Creek in the northwest of the County also features a collection of protected lands.



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG

**ECOLOGY**

The Natural Resource Conservation Overlay (NRCO) provides protection for the natural, wildlife, agricultural, and cultural resources that are crucial to the community’s character and economics. The overlay also sustains and enriches the County’s quality of life.

While some areas of Adams County are protected with a Natural Resource Conservation Overlay, many important areas are not, including Horse Creek which flows to Horse Creek Reservoir, Lost Creek, and others east of Denver International Airport. Areas that are protected with the Natural Resource Conservation Overlay or other state / national protection include Box Elder Creek, Kiowa Creek, Wolf Creek, Comanche Creek, Bijou Creek, East Bijou Creek, and Muddy Creek. A few

pockets of high and medium density Wildland Urban Interface occurs in Aurora, just east of I-255.

Different flood zones can be found in MAP 12 and MAP 13. The following is a list of these zones with a brief description for each:

- Zone A: An area inundated by one percent annual chance flooding, for which no Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) have been determined.
- Zone AE: An area inundated by one percent annual chance flooding, for which BFEs have been determined.
- Zone AO: An area inundated by one percent annual chance flooding (usually sheet flow on sloping terrain), for which average depths have been determined;



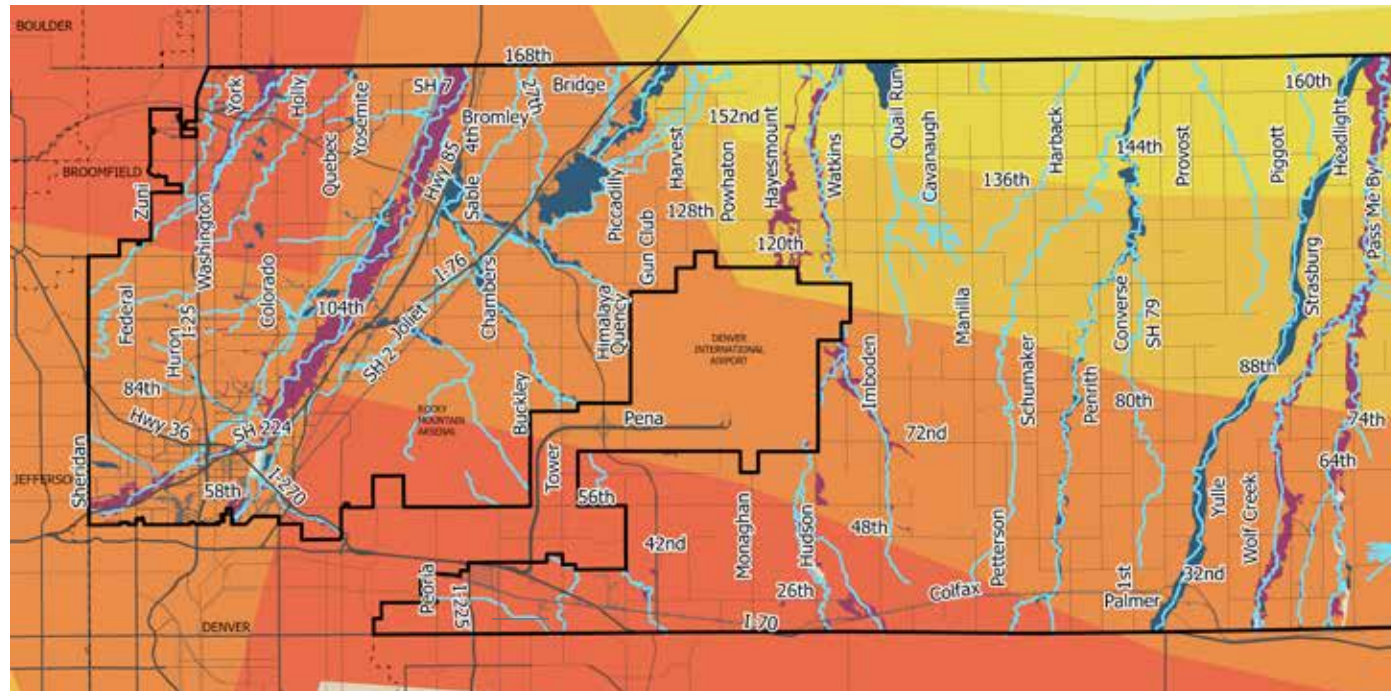
**LEGEND**

- Natural Resource Conservation
- Flood Zones
  - A
  - AE
  - AO
  - X
- Adams County
- Community Park, Open Space, and Regional Park

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flood depths range from one to three feet.

- Zone D: An area of undetermined but possible flood hazards.
- Zone X: Areas determined to be outside 500-year floodplain determined to be outside the one percent and 0.2 percent annual chance floodplains.



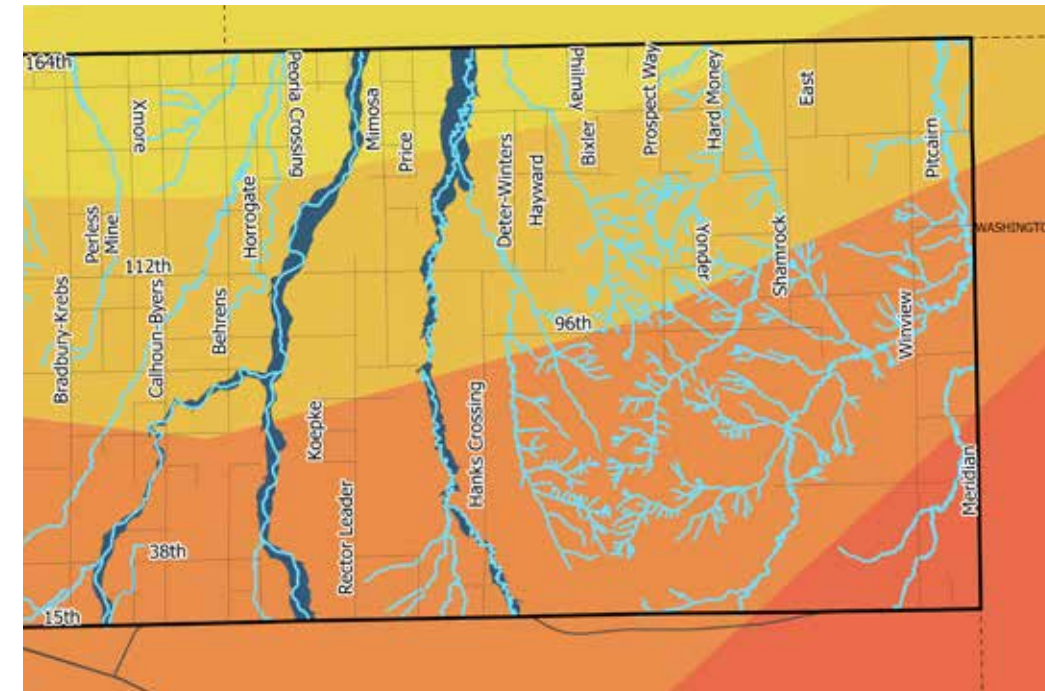
Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Spirit Environmental

**CLIMATE**

The climate in the region is classified as cold semi-arid local steppe (BSk) under the Koppen-Geiger climate classification system, which effectively recognizes the relatively high altitude interior location combined with dry conditions and significant diurnal temperature swings between daytime and nighttime. The semi-arid conditions and relatively hot summertime temperatures are anticipated to be exacerbated under the impacts of increased carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere for the foreseeable future. By 2050, the primary projections for the area include: an increase in average temperatures by 2.5 to five degrees Fahrenheit, more consecutive days over 95 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer months, more extreme

weather from warmer air cells, and longer and more severe droughts. Another way to conceptualize this change would be that by 2050, the climate in Adams County could more closely resemble that of present day El Paso, Texas.

Colorado as a state will experience additional impacts, especially related to water supply with earlier spring runoff anticipated, but the increased severity of droughts and the impacts from high heat in the summer will need to be incorporated into the planning process. Both mitigation strategies to actively minimize carbon emissions and adaptation strategies to prepare for these changing conditions will need to be employed to minimize future disruptions.



**LEGEND**

- Flood Zones
- A
- AE
- AO
- 36 months temperature departure from normal
- 0.2
- 0.4
- 0.6
- 0.8
- 1
- 1.2

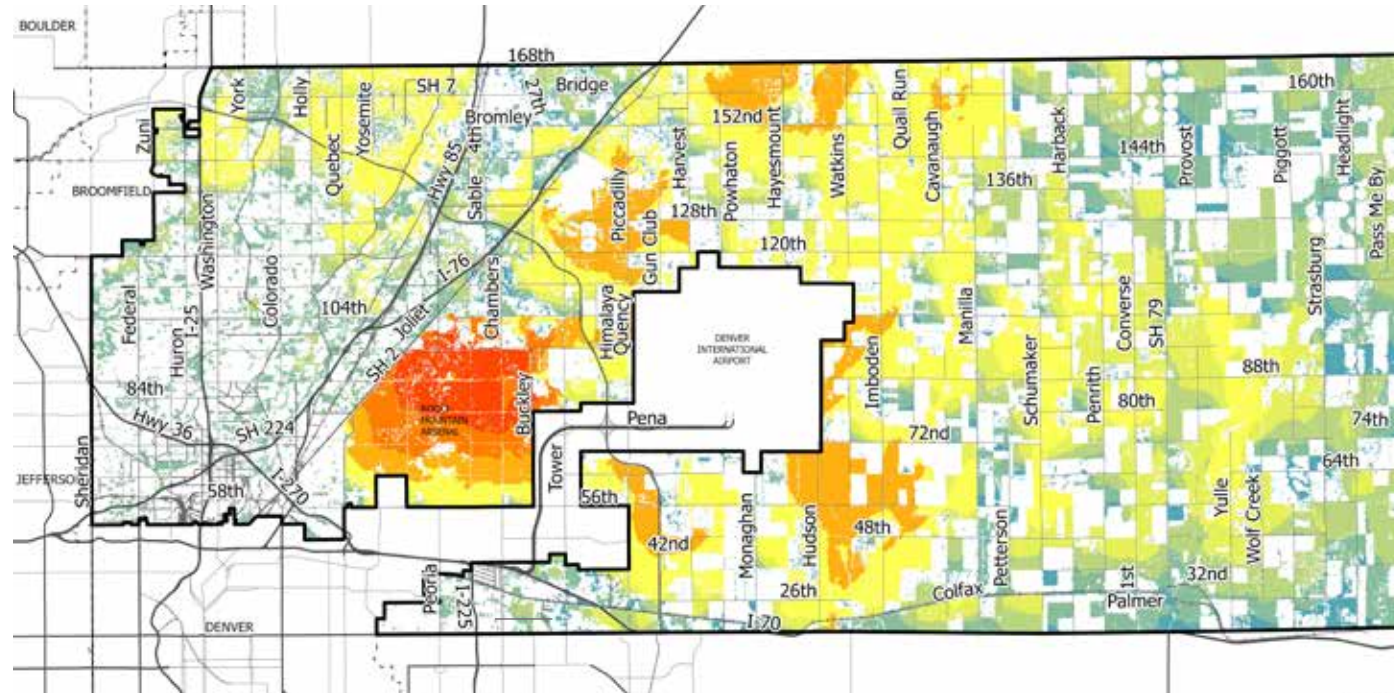
NOT TO SCALE

One of the largest mitigation strategies, carbon neutrality, is outside the direct control of the County, but has significant impacts on residents and business owners. The power supplied to Adams County is getting 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, and is on target to reach those goals. United Power, the County's other electricity provider, currently buys their power from Tri-State Generation and Transmission<sup>1</sup>, which provides more carbon-intensive electricity, but they are moving toward

a lower carbon portfolio. There is a possibility United Power may exit their agreement with Tri-State per recent filings before the Public Utilities Corporation (PUC), in part to bring more low carbon generation online.

As part of the County's update to their existing sustainability plan, there will be an increased focus on carbon accounting and impact strategies alongside other elements of sustainability including water conservation and social equity. Looking at ways to complement and coordinate these plans will result in more effective long-term outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unitedpower.com/united-power-files-puc-tri-state-exit-price>



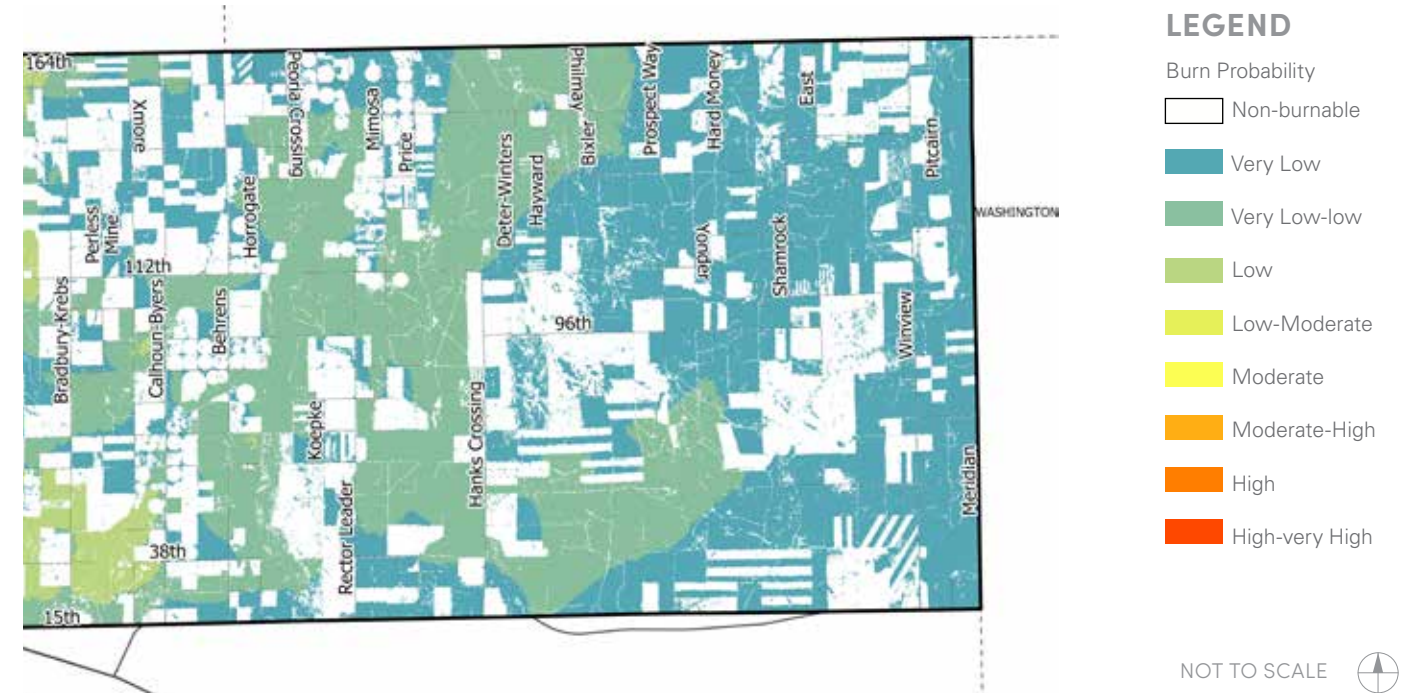
Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Spirit Environmental, CSFS, USDA

**EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS AND FIRES**

In addition to drought, climate change in Adams County will exacerbate the impacts of discrete extreme weather events such as wildfires, flooding, and more severe winter storm events. The Adams County Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies risks from tornadoes/ damaging winds, winter weather and thunderstorms as highly significant at the County level and effectively lays out risk mitigation plans. Most climate projections indicate that wildfires will increase in frequency and severity in Colorado by the mid-21st century due to the projected warming. While wildfire risks are generally low in Adams County, there are areas of higher fire risk generally concentrated around the more urbanized parts of the County that may see those risks

increase with higher temperatures and less summertime precipitation.

The topographical and environmental conditions in Adams County lend themselves to rapid and effective fire responses, but the grasslands do lend themselves to rapidly spreading if low intensity fires, and the risks in more urbanized areas of the County from fire are significant. Fire risk is higher in areas where building density limits fire fighting ability and is less about vegetation in Adams County. The air quality impacts to the County from regional fires as well as those on County lands can be significant in themselves, with air quality indices reaching unearthly levels and smoke impacting already at-risk populations more than those living with less ambient air pollution.



**LEGEND**

Burn Probability

- Non-burnable
- Very Low
- Very Low-low
- Low
- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High
- High-very High

NOT TO SCALE

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis provides the foundation of understanding for the Adams County Comprehensive Plan. Although the analysis is structured like four distinct quadrants, there is actually an interplay between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

- **Strengths** describe what the County excels at and what makes it distinct. Strengths should be supported and amplified where possible.

- **Weaknesses** stop the County from reaching full potential. They are areas where the County needs to improve. Weaknesses can become opportunities.
- **Opportunities** refer to favorable external factors that could give the County an advantage. Opportunities can turn into future strengths.
- **Threats** refer to external factors that have the potential to harm the County. Threats should be minimized, mitigated and/or proactively planned for.




**Table 15: Natural Environment SWOT Analysis**




Note: A checkmark indicates a relationship between the SWOT analysis content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Planning process and plan creation.

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN ADAMS COUNTY</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» The existing ecological resources in Adams County are celebrated through the preservation of Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Refuge and Barr State Park, among many other protected lands throughout the County.		✓	✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Habitat fragmentation is an issue and has been identified in the Parks, Open Space and Trail Plan.		✓	✓
» Development within the floodplain that contributes to habitat fragmentation.		✓	✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Preserve, link and layer existing undeveloped and underdeveloped prairie with recreation in the County through greater parks, opens space and trail corridor connectivity. The weak links in the system will be determined in the Parks, Open Space and Trail Plan.		✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» Climate change could impact the quality of ecological resources in Adams County, including increased temperatures and more extreme droughts and storm events.	✓	✓	✓

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>LOCAL WATER RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Local reservoir resources are limited in Adams County. Some water resources in Adams County are from outside sources while other water resources serve/provide water for districts located outside the County.	✓	✓	
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Adams County has an opportunity to conduct a total water resource inventory and assess water needs for conservation purposes while smartly growing the County through a methodical approach.		✓	
» Adams County has an opportunity to secure additional water resources and reduce potable water consumption through conservation and non-potable strategies.		✓	
» DOLA will provide technical assistance on request for incorporating water supply and demand planning into comprehensive plans, developing key items like drought triggers and indicators.		✓	
» Water conservation regulations can be effective at various scales, from xeriscaping in the rights of way to including water use plans with certain permits.		✓	
» Develop a plan to extend recycled water infrastructure County-wide including distribution and treatment facilities.		✓	
» Investigating the possibility of greater coordination between the County and water suppliers. (Note: Per the 2019-2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan, there are 45 water and sanitation districts located throughout the County.)		✓	
<b>Threat</b>			
» Without addressing limited local water resources, the County will be required to limit the number of residents and businesses that can be supported.	✓	✓	✓
» Aquifers are experiencing some levels of depletion.		✓	
» The County could postpone public hearings and the development process if applicants cannot address the water requirements with the State Water Resource office.		✓	
<b>FOSSIL FUEL RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Moderate fossil fuel resources are available.		✓	
<b>Weakness</b>			
» There is not a "Just Energy Transition Plan" or policies in place regarding fossil fuel extraction.		✓	
» Lack of pipelines and processing plants limit the ability of operators to extract natural gas resources in a more environmentally friendly manner.		✓	



ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES			
	 EQUITY	 SUSTAINABILITY	 LIVABILITY
<b>SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC</b>			
<b>FOSSIL FUEL RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Although fossil fuels can be extracted because of availability in Adams County, there is a preference for transitioning to renewable energy sources like solar.		✓	
» Establish a “Just Energy Transition Plan” and corresponding policies for fossil fuel extraction.		✓	
<b>Threat</b>			
» Fossil fuel extraction could contribute to dependency on a nonrenewable resource.		✓	
» Extraction and production contribute to and exacerbate air quality issues and inhibit progress toward state-mandated greenhouse gas and specific criteria pollutant emissions reductions.		✓	✓
<b>RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Some of the energy in Adams County is being transitioned to zero carbon or reduced carbon. Xcel Energy’s current plan calls for 80 percent of portfolio from renewable resources by 2030 and 100 percent carbon free by 2050, while United Power is actively exploring options to increase their renewable energy portfolio.		✓	
» In 2019, Adams County updated solar regulations to allow stand alone solar power generation.		✓	
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Untapped potential in solar power generation throughout the County. Considering the vast potential of solar power generation in Adams County, the solar production could be improved and expanded.	✓	✓	
» There is a barrier for residential access to existing renewable energy sources.		✓	
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Encourage more permissive and encouraging solar energy adoption regulations and distributed generation and storage regulations community wide, such as via a neighborhood solar cooperative program like Solar United Neighbors.		✓	
» Encouraging or requiring renewable energy, either on site or via a certified offset program to reach certain carbon targets is an effective tool to reduce carbon in the built environment.		✓	
» Establish a “Renewable Energy Plan” and a “Solar for All Plan” to support and provide additional guidance for policies.		✓	
» Take advantage of new Brightfields tool to identify marginal County lands appropriate for solar development.	✓	✓	

ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES			
	 EQUITY	 SUSTAINABILITY	 LIVABILITY
<b>SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC</b>			
<b>Threat</b>			
» Airport overlays could impose restrictions on the locations of solar production areas due to glare. (This threat can be explored more and mitigated through collaboration with municipalities and FAA, Colorado Air & Space Port (CASP) and Denver International Airport (DEN.) Large solar installations have been increasingly competing with farmland, and without more cooperative models or other viable land for solar, agricultural uses could be threatened.		✓	
<b>WILDFIRE RISK</b>			
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Adams County does not have a Firewise community designation or a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.		✓	
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» The lowland grasses and agricultural areas make for relatively easy firefighting, allowing the County to focus on areas of higher risk.		✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» Although ranked much lower than other climate-related risks, wild fire is a risk to Adams County especially in the areas identified in the Hazard Mitigation Plan.		✓	
» Smoke from proximate and regional fires will continue to pose real threats to residents and need to be mitigated.		✓	
<b>FLOOD RISK</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Adams County has substantial waterway natural resources.		✓	
» The Hazard Mitigation Plan lays out effective and prioritized flooding mitigation strategies for the County.		✓	
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Habitat fragmentation is prevalent along South Platte and Clear Creek.		✓	
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» There is an opportunity for the County to be proactive about flood prone areas and those that will be flood prone areas as FEMA maps are updated in order to minimize risk to community members.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» If updated FEMA maps are not anticipated, then community members could be at risk for flood hazards.	✓	✓	
» Loss of riparian corridor and habitat increases risks of flooding.		✓	
» Some property owners in Adams County floodplains do not have flood insurance.	✓		✓
» The flood risk significance has been deemed high in the Hazard Mitigation Plan		✓	

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>DROUGHT</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» The State of Colorado prepared a State Drought Mitigation and Response Plan and accompanying vulnerability assessment to identify areas of greatest concern. This document lays out a process for state-wide drought response.		✓	
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Adams County already has limited potable and water resources and drought strategy should be coordinated at the State level with the State 2020 Drought Planning document.		✓	
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» The State 2020 Drought Planning guidance document for local agencies can be used to incorporate drought planning into the comprehensive plan process.		✓	
<b>Threat</b>			
» Without a coordinated proactive response to drought, agriculture and other land uses will be at great risk in Adams County.		✓	
<b>WEATHER EVENTS</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» The Hazard mitigation plan ascribes a high significance to the risks of winter weather, thunderstorms, and tornadoes.		✓	
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Enhanced building standards and vegetation mitigation strategies can reduce severe impacts from the highest ranked hazards in Adams County including thunderstorms, tornadoes and damaging winds and winter weather.		✓	
» Strategies for implementation can be coordinated with the Hazard Mitigation Plan.		✓	
<b>Threat</b>			
» Without proactive planning, severe weather events have the potential of damaging property and possibly injuring residents.	✓	✓	✓



Figure 28: Adams County Fire Rescue Community Event



Figure 27: Barr Lake



Figure 29: South Platte River Trail

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIONS

New development will happen in Adams County; new roads, new housing and new districts. This Plan will consider the best location and best structures for growth and the types of connections that will be needed.

### BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIONS

#### CORRIDORS AND TRANSPORTATION

Adams County is served by a multimodal transportation network, with regionally significant interstate highways passing through the County, bus and rail transit that are provided by the Regional Transportation District (RTD), and on- and off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities that provide local access and regional connections. The mix of land uses in the County dictates unique opportunities and challenges for the transportation network. The more developed western portion of the County is served by interstate highways that provide travel opportunities to regionally significant destinations like Denver and Fort Collins. The more rural eastern portion of the County is home to a network of unpaved roadways and travel demand that stems more from agriculture and goods movement than from commuting. The Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will consider how to balance meeting existing travel

demand in the developed portion of Adams County through a variety of transportation modes while ensuring future development in the east can experience improved regional connectivity appropriate for rural areas.

The southwestern portion of Adams County functions as a gateway between Adams County and the City and County of Denver. The Southwest Framework Plan identifies I-70, I-25 and I-76 as critical corridors to include landscape enhancements, streetscape improvements, and signage provisions. Other corridors identified by Adams County include Federal Boulevard, Pecos Street, Washington Street, 104th Avenue, and 120th Avenue, which will be included as corridor plans in the Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Plan. By addressing the land use, aesthetic conditions, and opportunities to expand travel options on the major gateways into Adams County, the TMP can improve both the user experience and safety outcomes along the corridors.

In addition to the key roadway corridors, transit service in Adams County has been expanding as a result of new commuter rail lines being constructed through the RTD FasTracks program. With three new transit lines and 12 stations within the County, two of which are in unincorporated Adams County, the western portion of the County is poised to have a shift in development patterns toward more urbanized, walkable communities. In anticipation of these changes, the County developed the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Rail Station Area Planning Guidelines in 2006. These Guidelines are intended to provide basic guidance for creating unified station area plans that are compatible with the County's character while providing community benefits through increased access to services in more pedestrian-scale environments. The TMP will seek to build upon the growing rail transit system by exploring opportunities for improved bus service as well as innovative mobility options for the less densely populated portions of the County. It should be noted that the size of Adams County dictates that transit be targeted to strategic locations since it may be impractical to provide transit service to all County residents. Additionally, a future land use strategy has the potential to increase density around transit stations as a way to service more residents and create needed housing units.

The County trails system ties together transportation, parks and open space, and land use planning. The Clear Creek Trail, for example, provides east-west travel opportunities through the western portion of the County for cyclists and pedestrians and connects to the South Platte River Trail. The 2017 Clear Creek Corridor Master Plan identified opportunities not just for improving access to the trail, but also to guide development along the trail. The Transportation Plan is an opportunity to leverage the success of both the County trail system and the regional trail system supported by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) to establish more multimodal infrastructure throughout the County.

#### ZONING

The County has a significant number of zone districts and special overlays, and the 2012 future land use map similarly includes a number of different categories.

The Adams County Development Standards and Regulations identify a series of zone districts and overlay zone districts. This information is helpful in understanding the development of new zone districts in Adams County since the 2012 Comprehensive Plan.

The 2012 Comprehensive Plan proposed a number of zone district changes. In 2017, a TOD zone district was created, but it has not been utilized to date. In 2020, a new mixed-

use commercial zone was adopted to support development along key corridors. The 2012 Comprehensive Plan recommendations related to zoning will be evaluated in Phase 2 in collaboration with the community.

### OPEN SPACE

The Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) plan is an update to the adopted 2012 plan. The updated plan will emphasize subareas and focus areas including opportunities for parks and recreation service in urban unincorporated areas of the County; the Clear Creek and South Platte River Corridors; and the regional park and its surrounding areas. The 2012 Plan emphasized agricultural conservation and open space acquisition. Since then, the County has been successful in acquiring lands which is leading to a shifted focus to how to best utilize, enhance and manage those assets. Another new component will be the inclusion of Cultural Arts and how it becomes embedded into the practices that the plan informs, especially in the corridor areas.

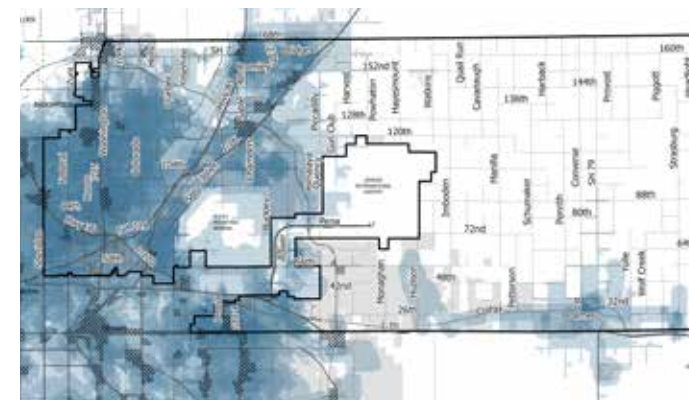
### SERVICE AREA MAPS

The Looking Forward Chapter on page 161 features an innovative strategy for a 20-minute community. The concept of a 20-minute community is grounded in the value lenses for the planning process. It represents an equitable distribution of services and amenities that create walkable and livable communities and supports sustainability goals by reducing the dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.

The maps on the following pages represent service areas for different services and amenities in Adams County such as grocery stores and parks. Most of the service areas are within a one mile walking radius from the destination although the service areas for hospitals and higher education destinations are a ten minute drive.

The purpose of this mapping series is to illustrate highly served areas of the County as well as the gaps that exist.

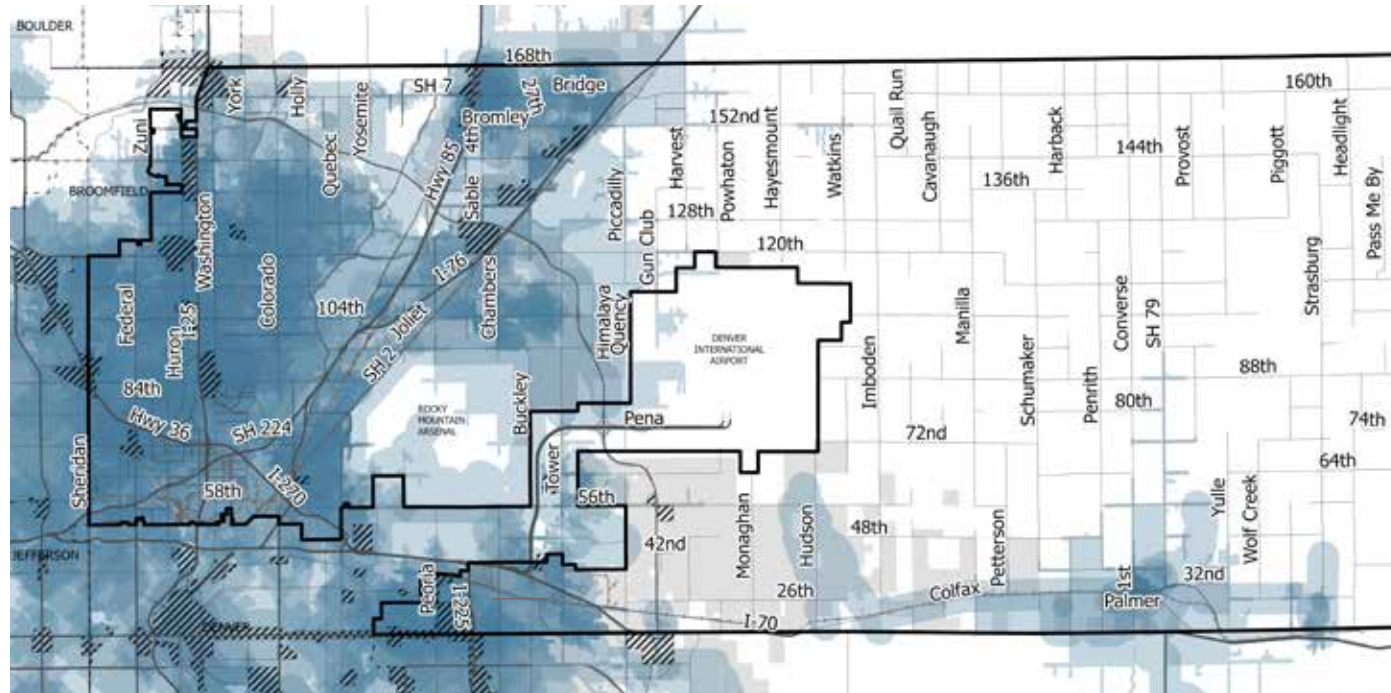
As the County grows and adds residential development, it is important to look at the proximity of services that residents need - childcare, food, libraries, etc. - with a goal of planning for these services to be provided within a 20 minute walk.



20-Minute Community Composite Map

20-MINUTE COMMUNITY COMPOSITE MAP SHOWS A SPECTRUM OF HIGH AND LOW CONCENTRATIONS OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND AMENITIES ON THE WESTERN MOST POPULATED PORTION OF ADAMS COUNTY

Figure 30: Individual Amenities and Services Layer to Create a Composite Map



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

- Service Areas
- DRCOG Urban Centers
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads

**Composite 20-Minute Community Analysis Map**

The 20-minute community framework is appropriate for the urban areas of the County, predominantly in the western portion of the County. Some small towns throughout the County could also seek to achieve the 20-minute community framework. This framework is not applicable to other, more rural areas of the County, where agricultural uses and conservation are more appropriate.

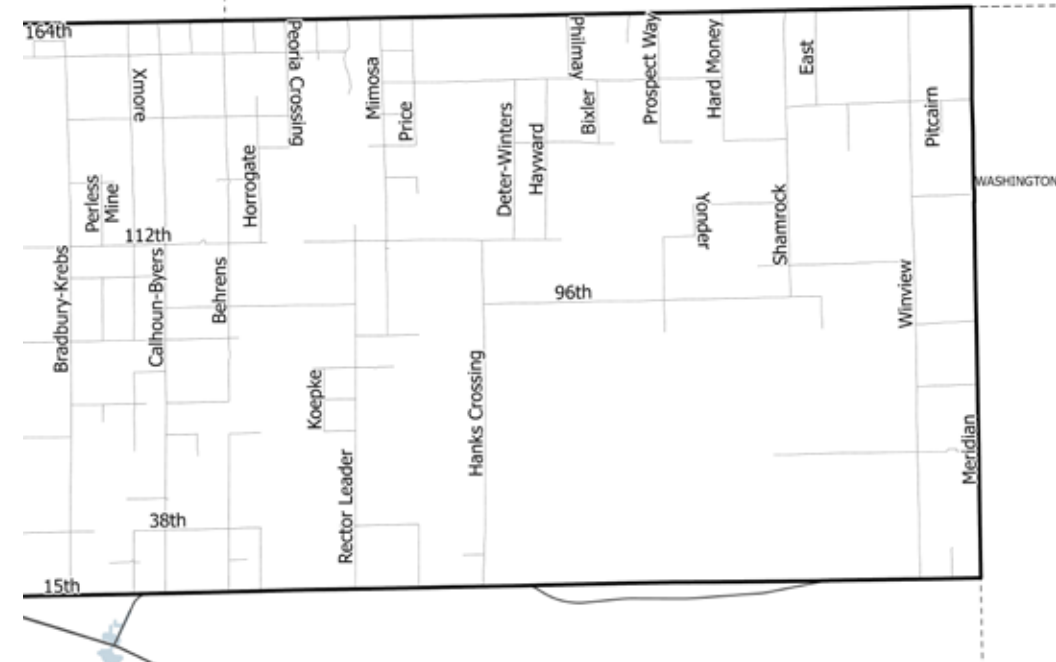
MAP 15 shows a composite of all the service areas in Adams County. The data includes all areas of Adams County including municipal areas, to provide a complete picture of service and access levels throughout the County. However, it is important to note that this document and the

Advancing Adams effort as a whole focuses and makes recommendations about areas of unincorporated Adams County. Each mapping element of the 20-minute community aspiration contributes to:

- An equitable distribution of services and amenities,
- Sustainability because of a reduced dependence on the personal vehicle, and
- Livability because these destinations are located within a safe and comfortable walk from residential areas.

Mapping elements of this composite map include the following at one mile service areas, which is approximately a 20-minute walk:

- Full service grocery stores and farmers markets
- Transit stops
- Parks and open space



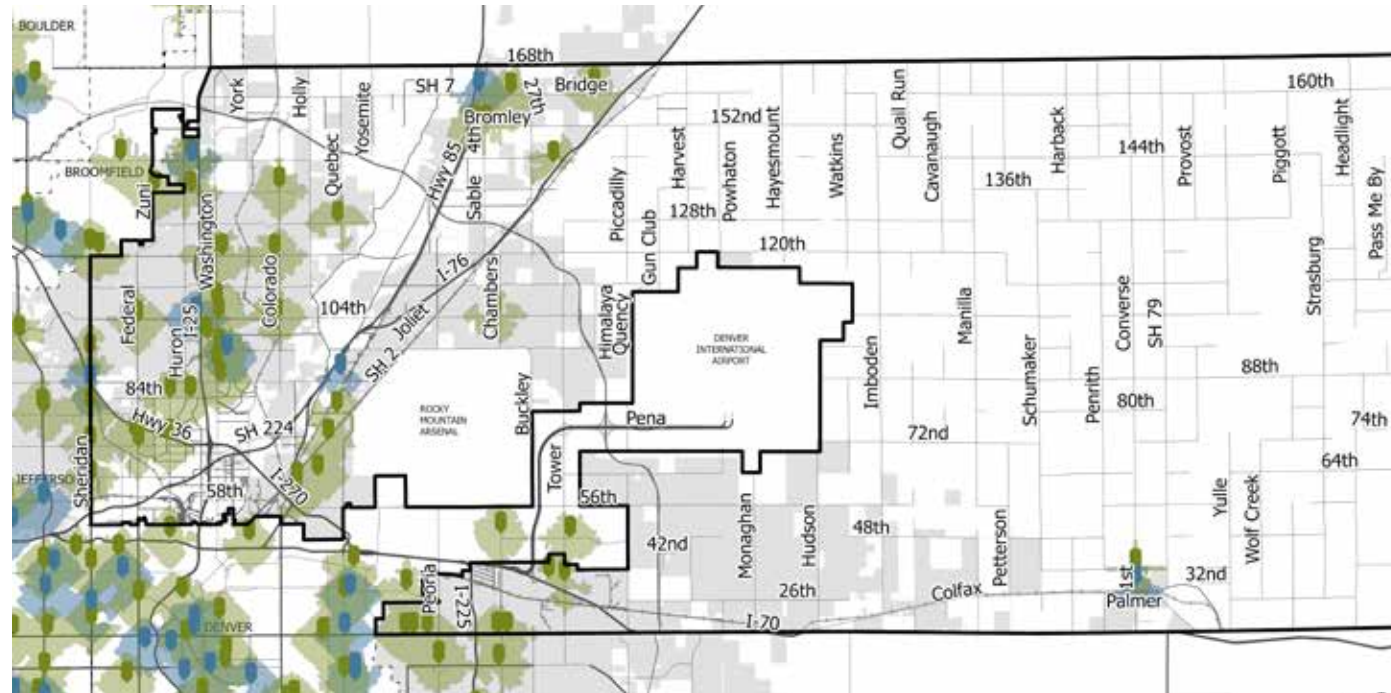
- Trails
- Early education and child care centers
- Kindergarten through grade 12 schools
- Public libraries

Elements of this composite map include the following at a 10-minute drive time service area:

- Urgent care facilities and hospital locations
- Higher education, community college and training centers

The individual maps can be viewed on the next pages.

**MAP 16: FULL SERVICE GROCERY AND FARMERS MARKETS (20-MINUTE WALK)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, ESRI, USDA, Design Workshop

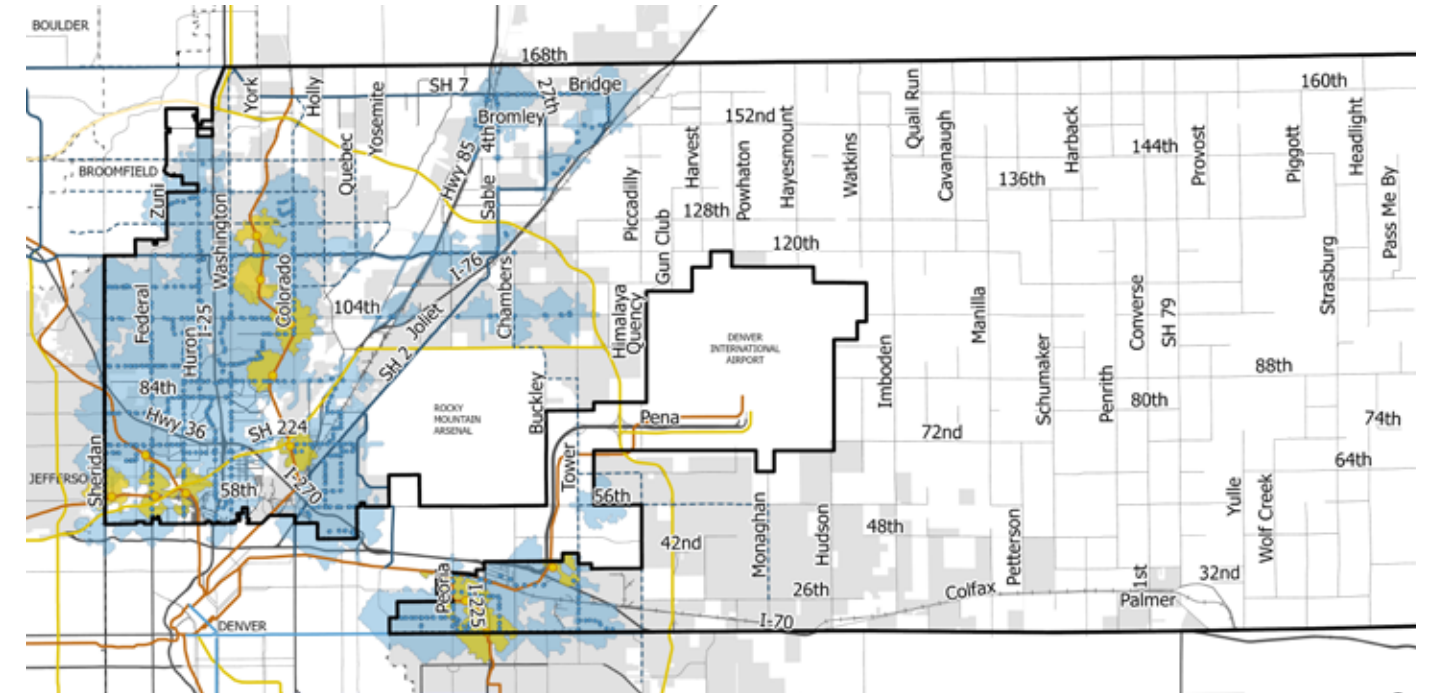
NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

- Farmers Market
- 1 Mile
- WIC Approved Stores
- 1 Mile
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

Grocery store and farmers market locations are somewhat limited in Adams County, even in the western most populated portions of the County. While a complete coverage of grocery service areas may not be achievable for Adams County as a whole, with added density, grocery stores as well as many other retail and services will be justified in adding more locations.

**MAP 17: TRANSIT STOPS (20-MINUTE WALK)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Fehr & Peers, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

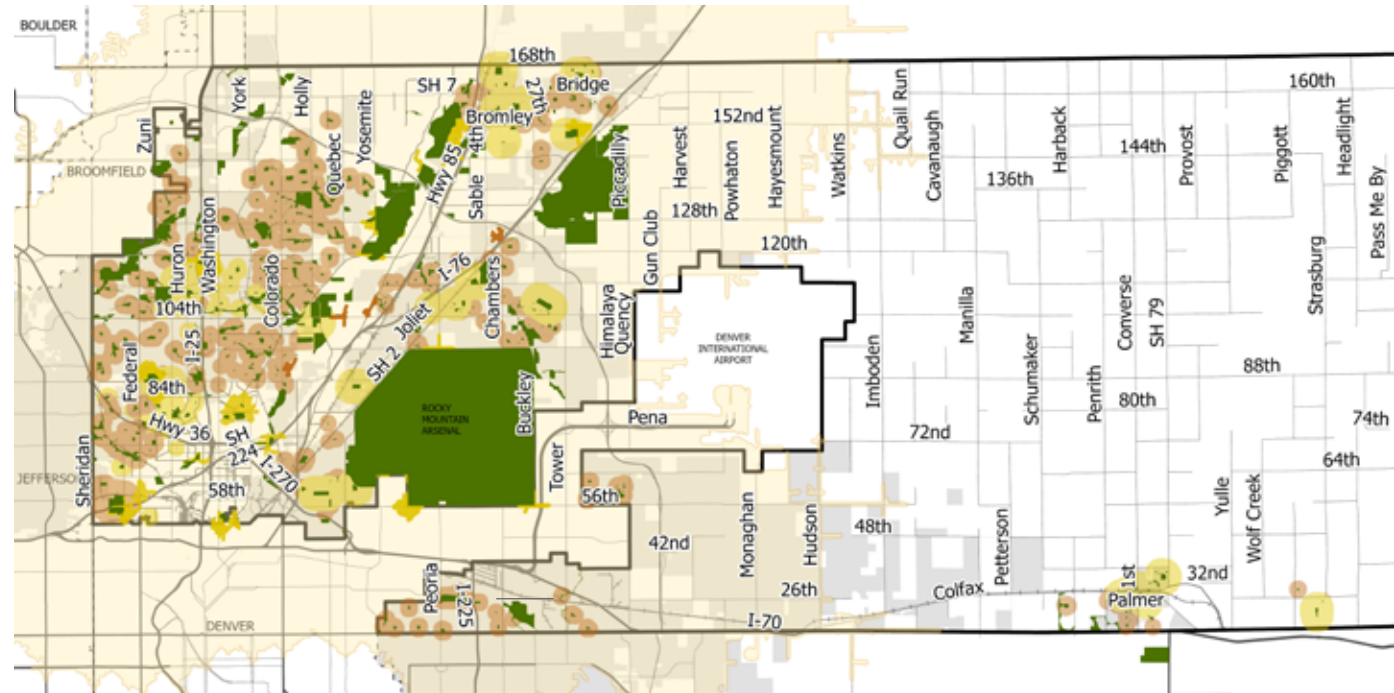
- Transit
- Tier 1 BRT/Busway
- Tier 1 Base Rail
- Tier 2 Potential BRT/Busway
- Tier 2 Potential Rail
- Tier 3 Conceptual
- RTD Bus Route Planned
- Bus Stops
- Rail Stops
- 1 Mile
- 1 Mile
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

The western portion of Adams County is generally well served by a transit network within the E-470 loop with some notable gaps along the South Platte River corridor and east of I-76.

In terms of land use opportunities, the areas with the best transit connectivity would be well suited for increased density. Increased safe multi-modal connections are also an opportunity.

As population density and demand increases in unserved or underserved parts of the County, route frequency and expansion can be reevaluated.

**MAP 18: PARKS AND OPEN SPACE (10-MINUTE WALK)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

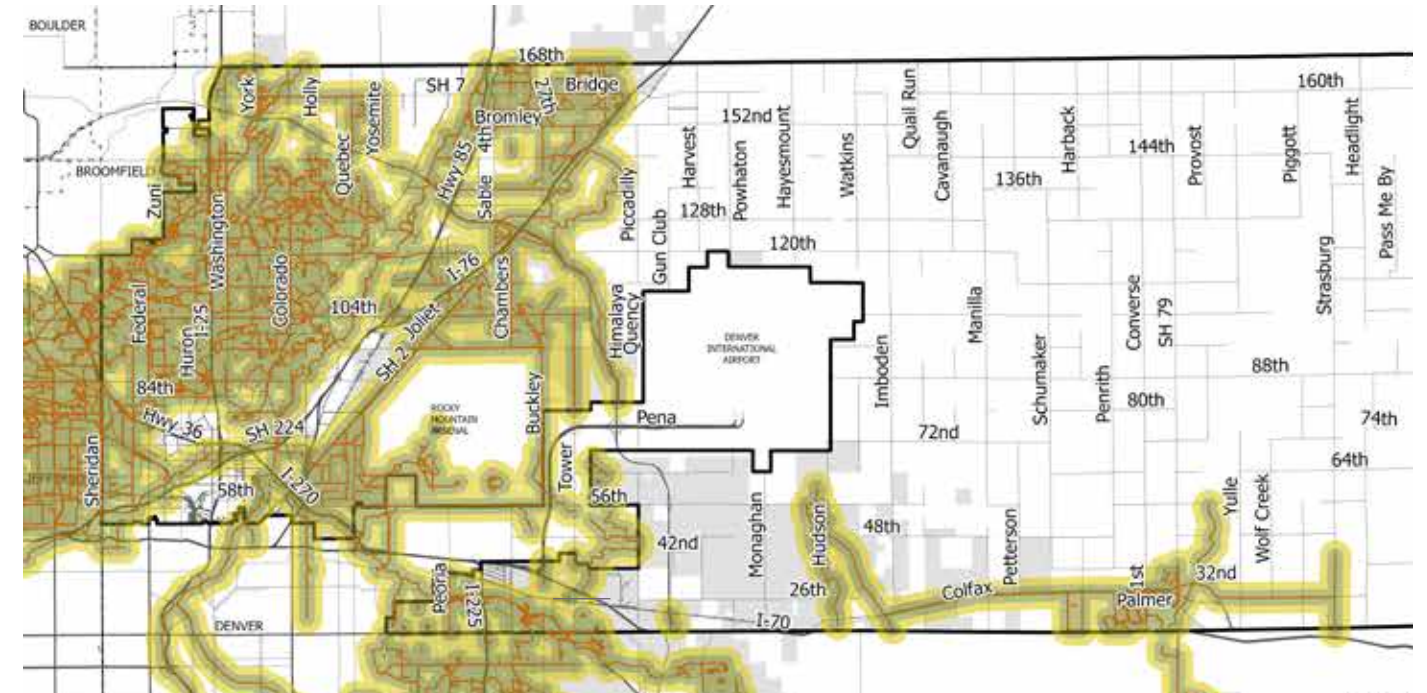
**LEGEND**

- Parks and Open Space
- 0.25 Mile Buffer
- 0.5 Mile Buffer
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

Generally, the western and most populated portions of Adams County are well served by parks and open space. A few exceptions include:

- Northwest and north central Adams County, west of Highway 85 and east of I-76
- Southwest Adams County around Washington Street south of I-270. Although, west of Federal Boulevard features parks and open space assets
- The Highway 85 corridor features a gap in parks and open space, however, these areas are primarily industrial land uses
- The area between Highway 85 and I-76 along E-470 also features a gap in parks and open space

**MAP 19: TRAILS (10-MINUTE WALK)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

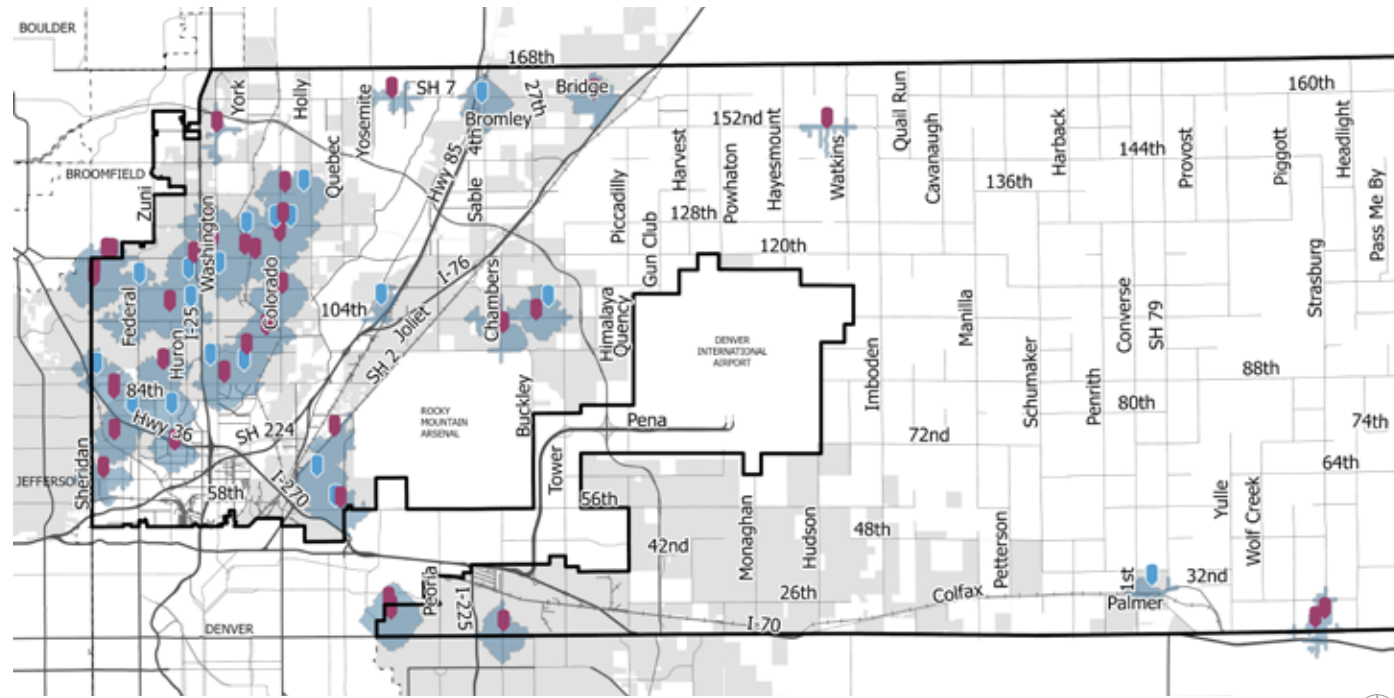
**LEGEND**

- Trails (Municipal, County, and Regional)
- 0.25 Mile Buffer
- 0.5 Mile Buffer
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

Municipal, County and regional trails are an asset in the western and most populated portions of Adams County. The biggest opportunities for spur connections include the following locations:

- West of Highway 85 in Todd Creek area
- Along Highway 85 in Commerce City
- Along Highway 36, west of Washington Street
- Between Pecos Street and Washington Street along the border with Denver County

**MAP 20: EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE CENTERS (20-MINUTE WALK)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

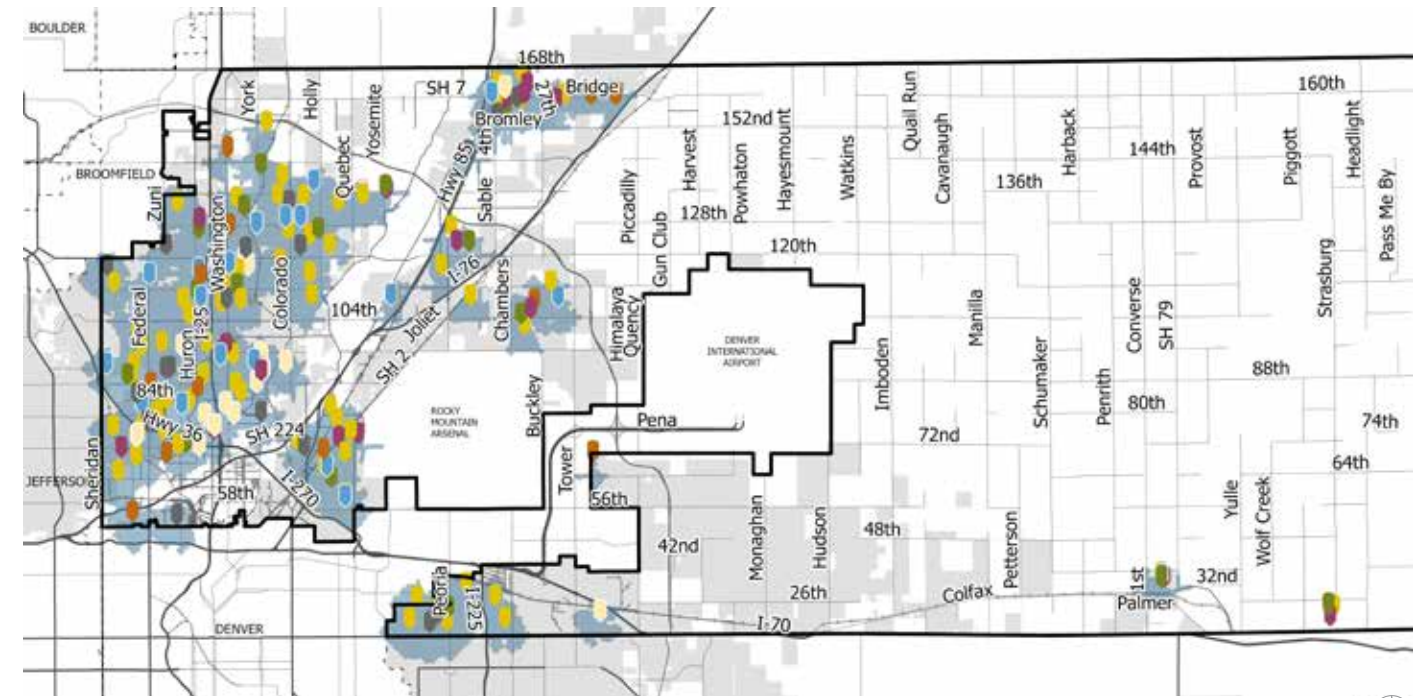
- Early Education
- Child Care Center
- 1 Mile
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

Early education and child care centers are one of the various elements that contribute to livability. Generally the western and populated portions of Adams County are well served by these facilities with some gaps to note:

- Northern Adams County
- Southwest Adams County
- South Platte River corridor

The County has an opportunity to play a role in the development of these assets for the community's benefit in locations that are currently underserved.

**MAP 21: KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 12 SCHOOLS (20-MINUTE WALK)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

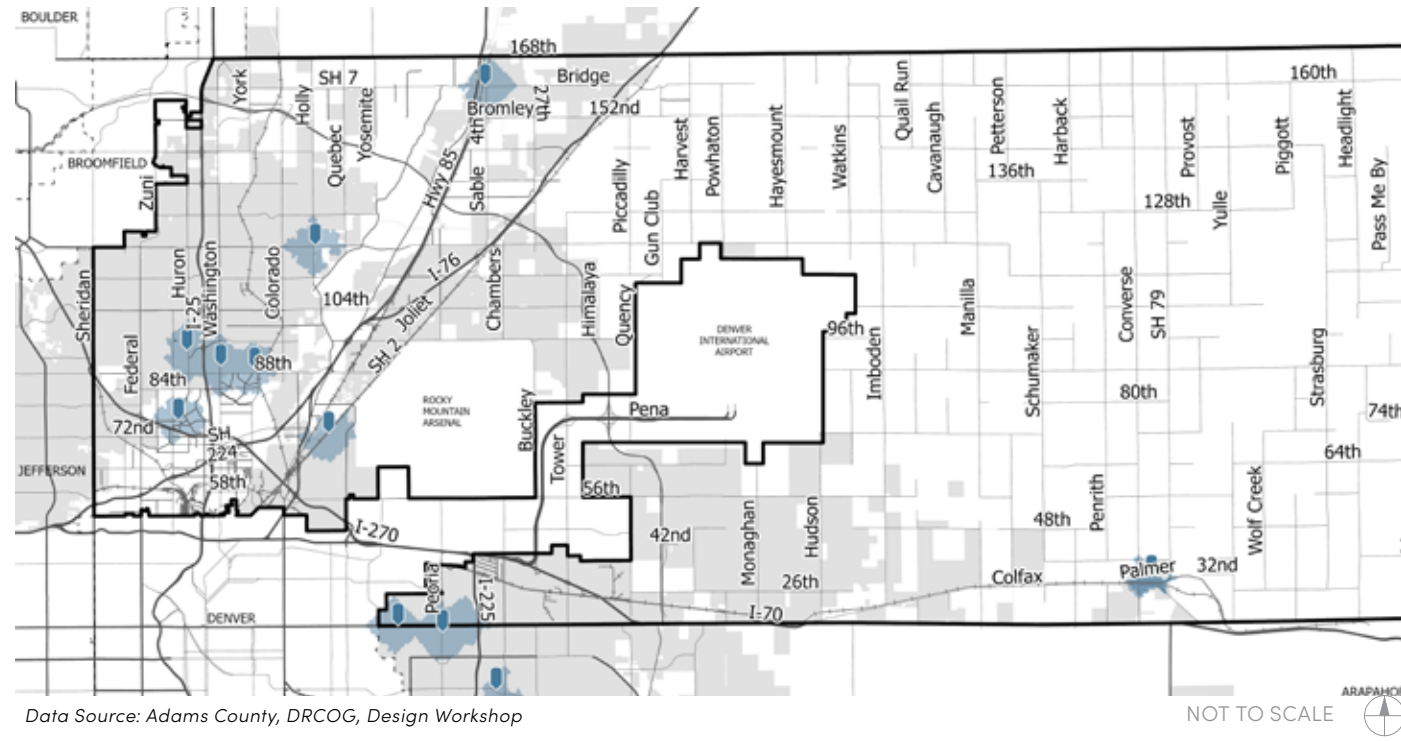
- Charter
- Early Education
- Elementary
- High
- Middle
- Other
- Private
- 1 Mile
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

Kindergarten through Grade 12 schools are generally well served in the western and populated portions of the County. Some gaps to note include:

- Northwest Adams County
- Southwest Adams County
- South Platte River corridor



**MAP 22: PUBLIC LIBRARIES (20-MINUTE WALK)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

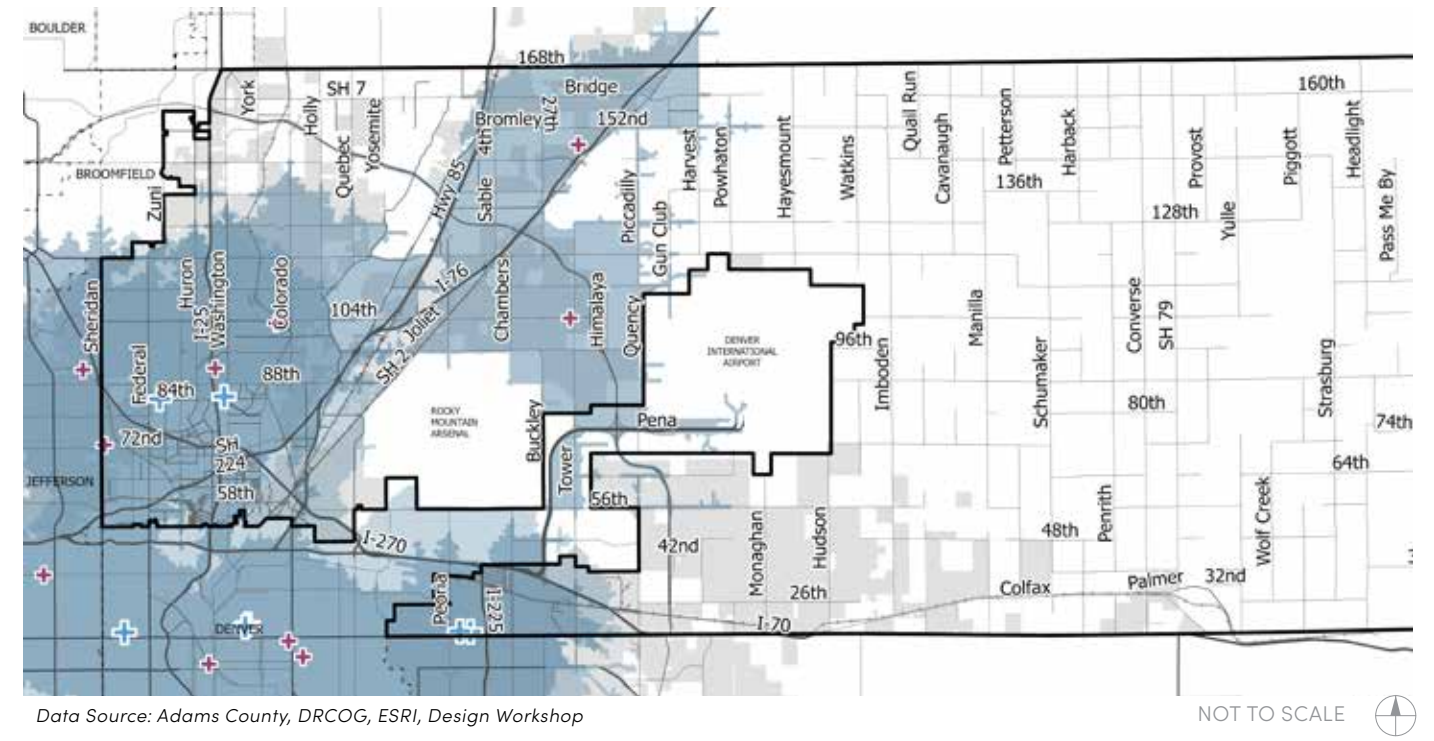
NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

- Libraries
- 1 Mile
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

While the County is served by a number of libraries, very few residents live within a one mile walk shed of a public library. There may be an opportunity to improve overall proximity of library resources to the community through additional library assets. Additionally, creative solutions to provide library access can be considered including mobile libraries, partnerships with schools and higher education facilities to offer public access to libraries, promotion audio books and services online or a delivery logistics program.

**MAP 23: HOSPITALS AND URGENT CARE FACILITIES (10-MINUTE DRIVE)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, ESRI, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

- Urgent Care Service Areas
- 10 Minute Drive
- Hospital Service Areas
- 10 Minute Drive
- + Urgent Care Medical Facilities
- + Hospitals
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

Hospitals and urgent care facilities are generally serving the western portion of Adams County with the exception of Northwest Adams County.

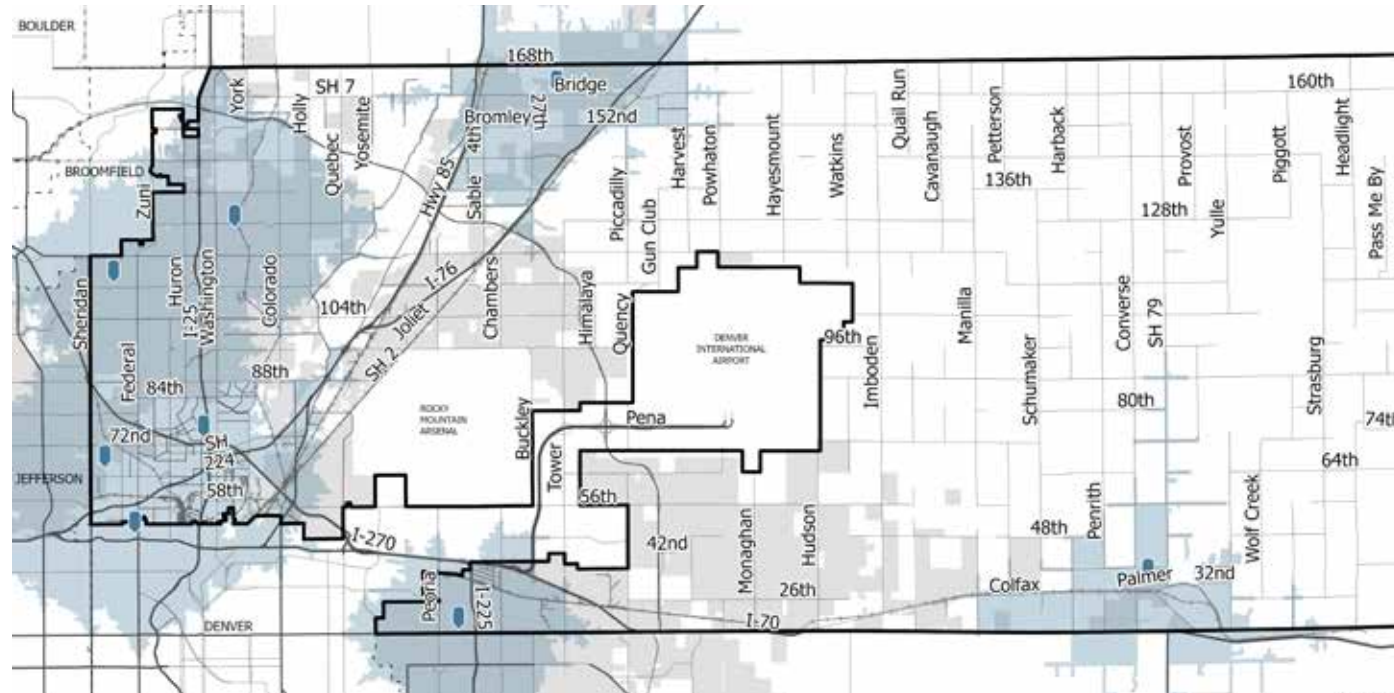
Bennett and Strasburg also feature limited access to hospitals and urgent care facilities but added density may be required to justify the investment of new facilities.

As a more rural area, the eastern portion of the County has less access to urgent care facilities. There may be opportunities to improve this infrastructure in towns located in the County.

Hospitals and urgent care facilities provide a regional service, and are not expected to be within a 10 minute drive from all residents without an increase in population density. However, because not all Adams

County residents have access to a car, it is important to use this relatively short drive time to understand what areas of the County might need additional transit service and how the location of emergency services could be adjusted to ensure equitable coverage in the County.

**MAP 24: HIGHER EDUCATION, COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND TRAINING CENTERS (10-MINUTE DRIVE)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

- Higher Education, Community College or Training Center
- 10 Minute Drive
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

Generally, the most populated areas of the County are well served by higher education, community colleges and training centers. Some of the destinations shown in MAP 24 include:

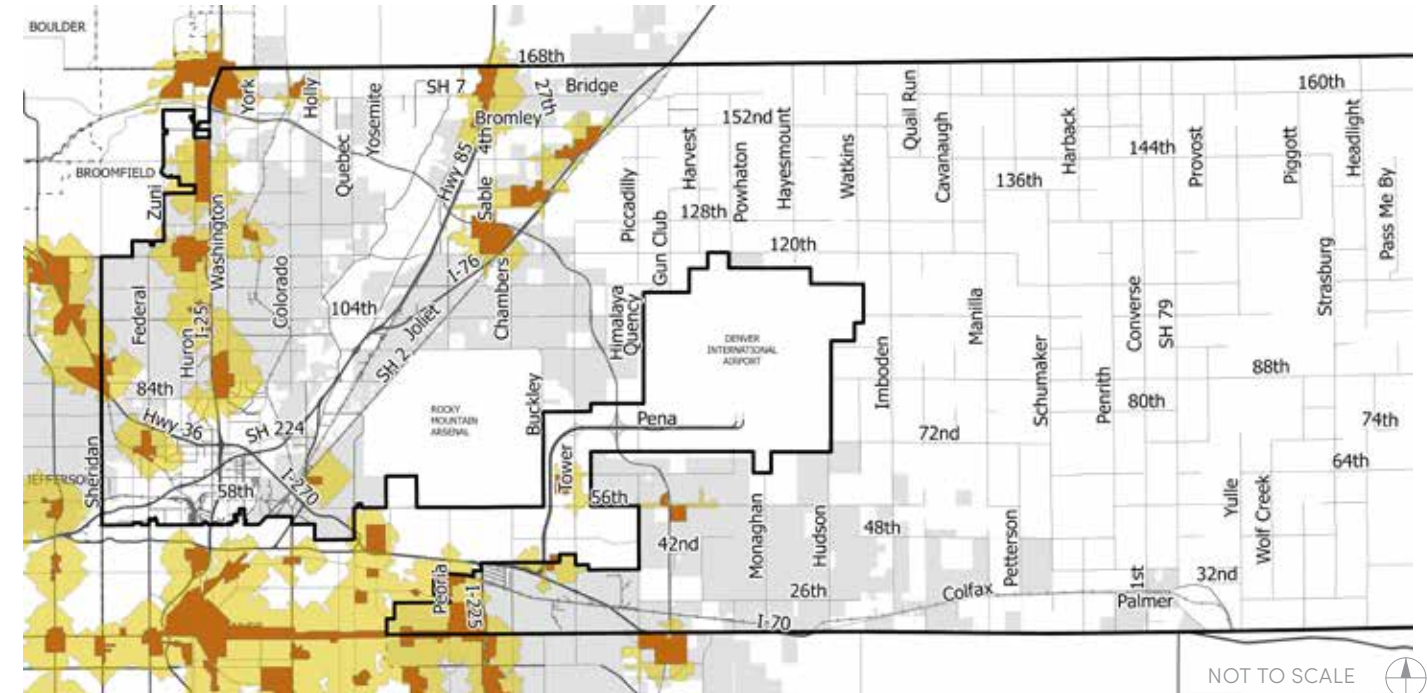
- DeVry University-Colorado
- Front Range Community College
- Pima Medical Institute-Denver
- The University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Regionally, the County is well served by higher education institutions. These include the University of Colorado system (CU Denver, CU Boulder, and CU Anschutz Medical Center), Regis University, University of Denver, and a number of Community Colleges, and Metropolitan State University of Denver.

Higher Education institutions are generally considered to be regional

facilities and are not intended to only serve a population within a ten-minute drive. As with hospitals, the drive time metric indicates where additional transit service could be beneficial, and where community colleges and training centers could fill some of the service area gaps.

**MAP 25: DRCOG URBAN CENTERS (20-MINUTE WALK)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

- DRCOG Urban Centers
- 1 Mile
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Areas

In Phase 2, we will complete the land use analysis component of the planning process. One of our inquiries will strive to answer: Where should Adams County grow? The DRCOG Urban Centers is one strategy.

In the DRCOG Metrovision Plan, performance measures for increasing Urban Centers density in terms of housing and employment are outlined in DRCOG's 2040 plan. Overall, a 25 percent increase in regional population-weighted density is identified from 4,850 people per square mile in 2014 to 6,062 people per square mile in 2040.

What does this mean for housing and employment in Urban Centers?

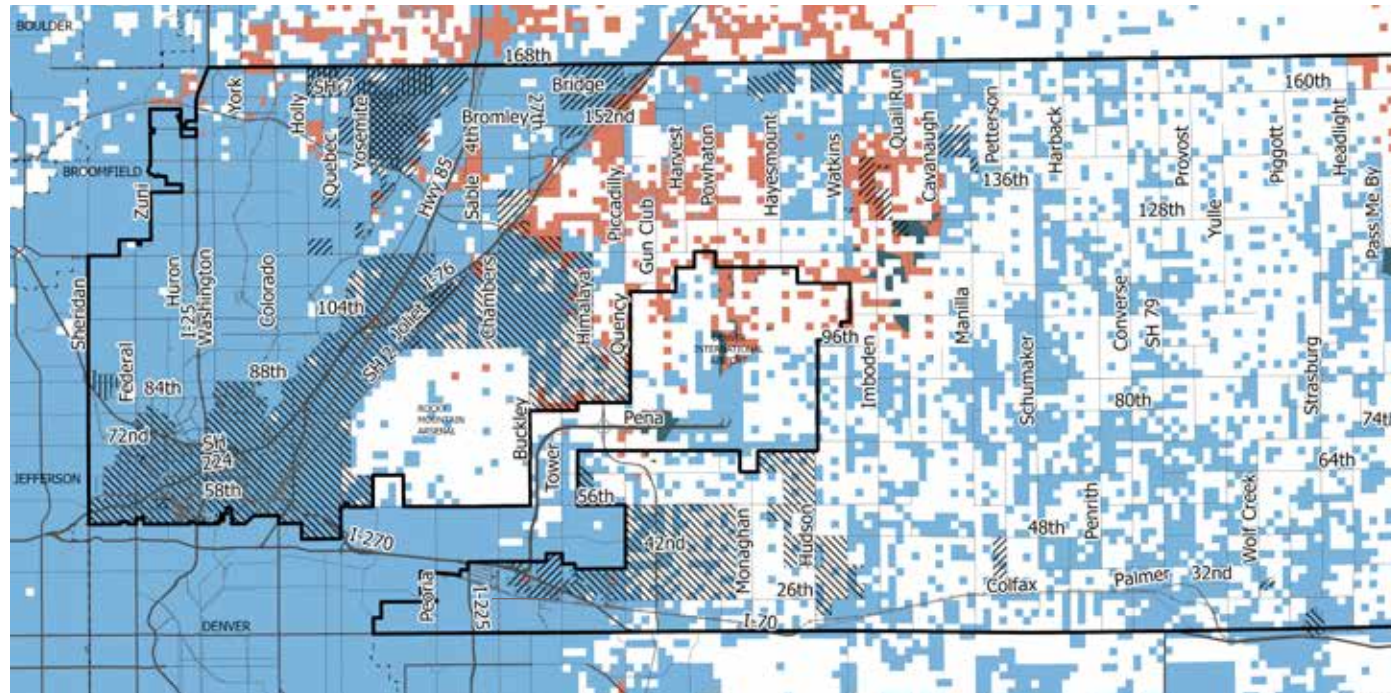
- In 2014, Urban Centers accounted for 10 percent of the region's

housing. In 2040, the goal is to increase the metric to 25 percent.

- In 2014, Urban Centers accounted for 36.3 percent of the regions employment. In 2040, the goal is to increase the metric to 50 percent.

The County has an opportunity to support DRCOG's guidance and increase density in Urban Centers.

**MAP 26: UTILITY SERVICE AREAS IN UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Colorado Governor's Office of Information Technology, ESRI, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

Metro, Water or Water and Sanitation Districts within unincorporated Adams County

- Metro
- Water
- Water and Sanitation

Broadband Service Levels according to the Colorado Broadband

- Served (Reported service meets 25 Mbps download standard)
- Unserved (Reported service does not meet 25 Mbps download standard)
- Priority (reported service is 10 Mbps download or less)
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads

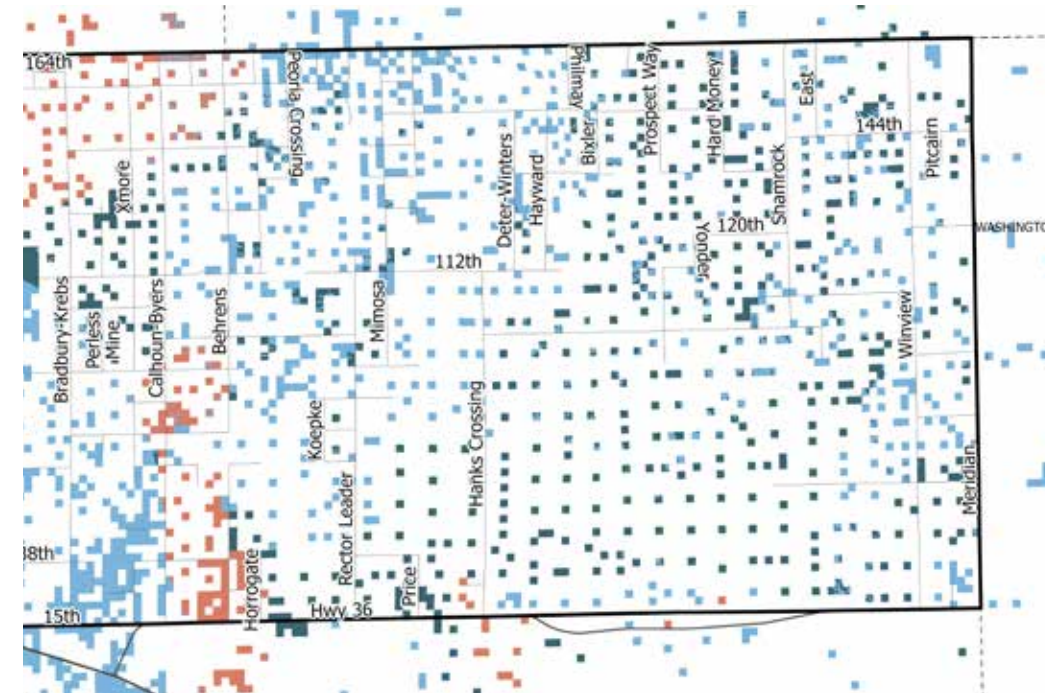
Note: Water and Sanitation districts provided by municipalities are not indicated on this map with the interest of focusing on conditions in the unincorporated areas of the County.

**UTILITY SERVICE AREAS**

Water, sanitation and broadband access and capacity are some of the most significant barriers to growth in Adams County.

In terms of water and sanitation, the County has an opportunity for a two-pronged approach of increasing efficiency to reduce water use in addition to exploring ways to add capacity and understanding the amount of water available for future development.

While there may be opportunities to add additional capacity, it is important to first focus on available water resources. This is an opportunity area for the County to review and potentially adjust requirements and allowances related to anticipated growth demands.



NOT TO SCALE

Working to better inventory water supply and demand and developing a more complete understanding of hydrological resources will help the County in determining the best ways to work with providers and develop appropriate regulations that will balance water use and conservation. A complementary water planning effort will help to direct most appropriate future land use regulations within the comprehensive plan.

Building out more non-potable water systems such as the one utilized by the South Adams County Water and Sanitation District in the northern part of that district would enable greater resource efficiency, and could be coupled with conservation measures to reduce the total potable water consumption County-wide.

From an internet connectivity perspective, there are opportunities to move toward a more robust network, particularly given the changes occurring related to work-from-home during COVID-19. Broadband service is typically provided by private service providers, so there is some potential for County partnership, or including these considerations in requirements for new development.



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIONS:

### STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis provides the foundation of understanding for the Adams County Comprehensive Plan. Although the analysis is structured like four distinct quadrants, there is actually an interplay between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.




- **Strengths** describe what the County excels at and what makes it distinct. Strengths should be

supported and amplified where possible.

- **Weaknesses** stop the County from reaching full potential. They are areas where the County needs to improve. Weaknesses can become opportunities.
- **Opportunities** refer to favorable external factors that could give the County an advantage. Opportunities can turn into future strengths.
- **Threats** refer to external factors that have the potential to harm the County. Threats should be minimized, mitigated and/or proactively planned for.

**Table 16: Built Environment SWOT Analysis**

Note: A checkmark indicates a relationship between the SWOT analysis content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Planning process and plan creation.

ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES			
	 EQUITY	 SUSTAINABILITY	 LIVABILITY
<b>SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC</b>			
<b>COMMUTER RAIL AND TRANSIT</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» New commuter rail lines and transit stations serve the western urbanized portions of Adams County.			✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» There is not a consistent pattern of population density around existing rail and transit stops in order to serve more population by this service.	✓		✓
» There is a lack of consistent and reliable transit service outside of the urbanized areas and a lack of bicycle and pedestrian connections to the transit stops.	✓		✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» There is an opportunity to increase density around existing transit and rail stops in order to serve more population. Service can be expanded to meet demand in the future.	✓		✓
» Focus capital improvement projects on improving sidewalk connections and connecting bike lanes from adjacent neighborhoods to rail and transit stops.	✓		✓
» Plan for seamless connections from all transit modes to enhance convenience of the service.	✓		✓

### ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES



EQUITY



SUSTAINABILITY



LIVABILITY

#### SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC

##### Threat

» If population density is not added to rail and transit stops then fewer residents in the County will consider transit a convenient mode of travel, thus perpetuating the use of single-occupancy vehicles.	✓		✓
» COVID-19 related RTD budget impacts could have lasting consequences on existing services and future expansion.	✓		✓

#### REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEMS

##### Strength

» New investments in regional trail systems serve the western urbanized portions of Adams County.	✓		✓
» New regional multimodal trail connecting to the South Platte and Clear Creek trails.	✓	✓	✓

##### Weakness

» Trail access is not consistent throughout the County – even in locations with trails in close proximity such as trailhead access to the Clear Creek Trail from Pecos Street.	✓		✓
--	---	--	---

##### Opportunity

» Now that the trail networks are established, better connections can be made between the trails and the County residents through spur trails and trailheads.	✓		✓
» Trail and trailhead design needs to be comfortable and safe in order to encourage more use such as public art and vegetation management.		✓	✓
» Other opportunities should be explored to determine ways to enhance comfort and safety of Adams County trails.		✓	✓
» Additionally, there is an opportunity to invest in trail opportunities that serve eastern Adams County residents.	✓		✓

##### Threat

» If additional trail connections are not addressed, then the use of single occupancy vehicles could be further perpetuated rather than multi-modal options.	✓		✓
--	---	--	---




#### DISTRIBUTION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND AMENITIES (20-MINUTE COMMUNITY)




##### Strength

» Mostly equitable distribution of essential services and amenities in the western portion of the County with a few gaps to address (more to come in the land use analysis).	✓		✓
--	---	--	---

##### Weakness

» Some gaps in access to healthcare, grocery stores, childcare centers are identified.	✓		✓
--	---	--	---

ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES			
	 EQUITY	 SUSTAINABILITY	 LIVABILITY
<b>SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC</b>			
<b>DISTRIBUTION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND AMENITIES (20-MINUTE COMMUNITY)</b>			
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Use economic development tools to provide for private development essential services and amenities like grocery stores and hospitals and leverage County resources to provide for public amenities like parks and libraries.	✓		✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» If the distribution of essential services and amenities are not addressed, then the plan values for equity, livability and sustainability cannot be fully attained.	✓		✓
<b>ZONE DISTRICTS AND DENSITY</b>			
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Limited implementation of zone districts from the 2012 Comprehensive Plan.	✓	✓	✓
» Lack of density and destinations around transit stations and limited walkable districts.	✓	✓	✓
» Developer dependence on Planned Unit Developments (PUD) to provide developments like the Midtown neighborhood.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Creating zone districts that match the County vision will ensure that PUD zone districts can be reduced and zoning categories can provide the standards to guide density and compatible uses throughout the County.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» If the County does not update zone districts to reflect the future Comprehensive Plan, then the County will have less control over future land uses and density in Adams County.	✓	✓	✓
» The use of PUD instruments will be continually utilized by developers which are difficult for the County to administer and challenge the ability to ensure built environment goals are achieved.		✓	
<b>CHARACTER AND IDENTITY OF ADAMS COUNTY</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Adams County has strong character and identity in terms of agriculture heritage especially with the success of Riverdale Regional Park and ongoing work with Historic Splendid Valley.			✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Character and identity of Adams County is lost in the mosaic of jurisdictions.			✓
» Auto-dominated gateway corridors from Denver lack character and identity.			✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Character and identity could be different for different areas of Adams County.			✓
» Character and identity supports sense of place and could lead to additional tourism and/or new developments.			✓

ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES			
	 EQUITY	 SUSTAINABILITY	 LIVABILITY
<b>SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC</b>			
<b>Threat</b>			
» If Adams County does not address character and identity then there will be reduced sense of place in the County and potentially lost tourism and new development revenues.			✓
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Some areas of the County do not have an environmental justice issue with the adjacency of industrial/hazard sites and residential.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» There are areas of the County that are of concern regarding the adjacency or lack of land use transition between industrial/hazard sites and residential.	✓	✓	✓
» Some industrial uses have close proximity to higher-occupancy uses such as schools and offices.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» The future land use plan can address environmental justice issues by creating land use transitions between industrial/hazard sites and residential to ensure equity and livability for all residents.	✓	✓	✓
» Additionally, policies can be adopted to create more performance standards for industrial uses to limit the impact they may create on adjacent land uses.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» Public health and noise could be an issue for residents adjacent to industrial/hazard sites.	✓	✓	✓
<b>AIRPORT OVERLAYS</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Airport overlays provide safety for Adams County residents.	✓		✓
» The overlay districts protect the airports from liability and create buffers to ensure the airports can operate safely and potentially expand operations in the future.			✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Airport overlays provide some land use restrictions on large areas of the County.			✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Compatible land uses can be determined for the airport overlay areas considering what the Federal Aviation Administration allows versus other jurisdictions.			✓
» The CASP subarea plan is already addressing this in their planning effort, in which this plan can align.			✓

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>AIRPORT OVERLAYS</b>			
<b>Threat</b>			
» Numerous airport overlay districts to consider in land use planning on the central and western portion of the County (DIA and CASP).			✓
<b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Adams County features good infrastructure in terms of transit and regional trails which can be leveraged in creating more sustainable developments throughout the County, especially on the western and urbanized portions of the County.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» The County can do more to encourage density and sustainable practices.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Encourage more green space and drought tolerant shade plantings in land use regulations either through development standards and regulations or code.		✓	✓
» Increase density especially around transit corridors supporting the 20-minute community aspiration and protecting greenfield space from low density development in the County.		✓	✓
» Include or require/incentivize Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations throughout the County such as at fuel stations or in certain new developments.		✓	
» Provide incentives or land use regulations to require projects of a certain size to meet third-party sustainability standards (LEED, Envision, Living Building Challenge, WELL).		✓	
» The standards for green infrastructure and low impact development could be standardized for new development requirements in Adams County.		✓	
» Create a needs assessment and integrated plan for renewable energy resources, transportation plan and EV infrastructure.		✓	
<b>Threat</b>			
» Climate change will increase pressures on development that will progressively increase in severity and necessitate a longer-term view.	✓	✓	✓
<b>EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS</b>			
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Allowing and/or requiring schools and churches to serve as community resiliency centers in times of need.	✓	✓	✓
» Plan for enough back-up power and configurations in existing and new facilities to accommodate community members' needs.		✓	



Figure 31: Aerial of Colorado Air and Space Port

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Adams County must serve the future population by ensuring that economic growth happens in the right places and economic sectors are diversified enough to provide jobs for a spectrum of skills across the regional workforce.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Adams County, which has been one of the fastest growing communities in the Denver Metro area for the past two decades, represents 10 large municipalities, more than 14,000 companies and over half a million residents.

With abundant land available for new development, an ideal location in Central Colorado and exceptional infrastructure in place to serve a diverse range of businesses, Adams County has the potential for increased economic capacity.

A low cost of living and easy access to recreation and entertainment opportunities make the County attractive to new businesses and employers.

Significant capital investment and economic development strategies, including incentives, have fueled job growth in the area. The County ranked

No. 1 for U.S. Job Growth in 2019 according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

#### Adams County major employers

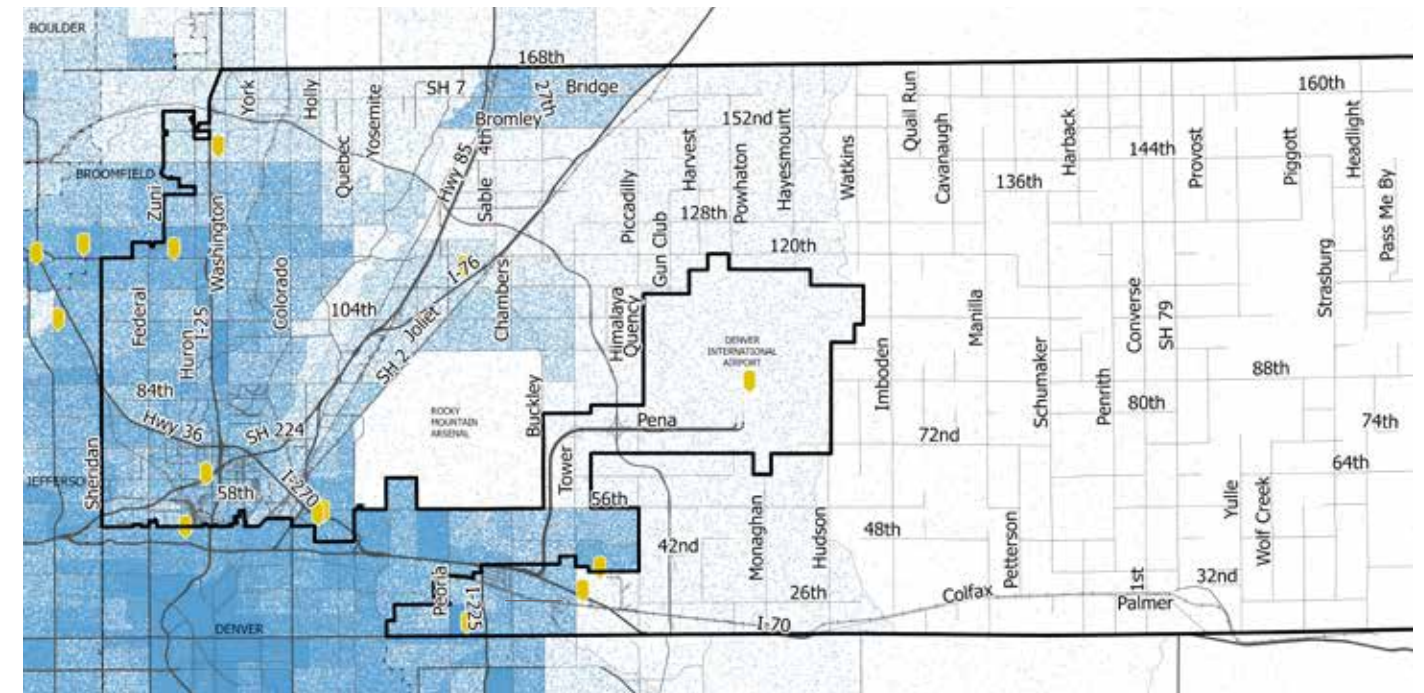
According to data from the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, the largest employers in Adams County for 2020-2021 were:

- UCHealth: University of Colorado Hospital
- Children's Hospital Colorado
- Amazon
- United Parcel Service
- FedEx
- Sturgeon Electric
- Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center
- Maxar Technologies
- SROriginals
- HealthONE: North Suburban Medical Center

Denver International Airport is located outside the County boundary but provides many jobs for County residents.

A critical employment center in Adams County, the Colorado Air and Space Port (CASP) supports nearly 500 jobs with an annual payroll of \$32

## MAP 28: DAYTIME POPULATION BY CENSUS TRACT AND MAJOR EMPLOYERS



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, CDPHE, ESRI - ACS 2020, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

### LEGEND

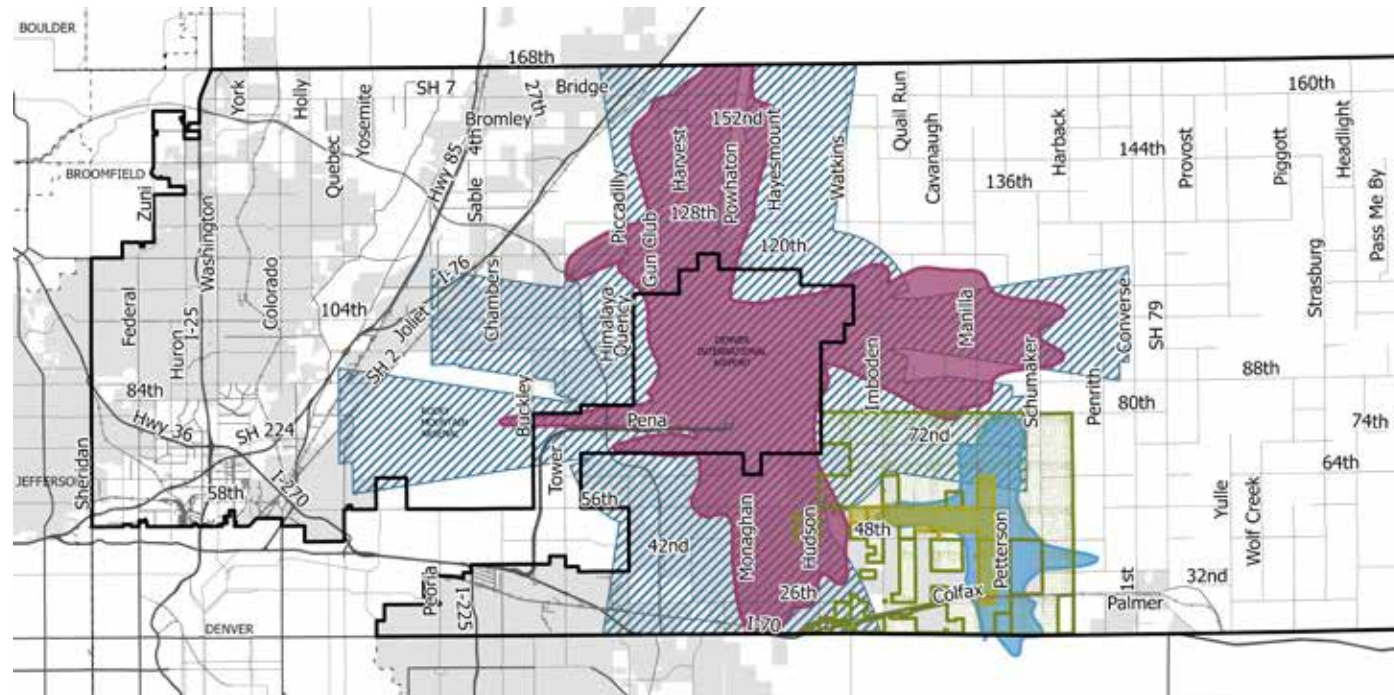
Census Tracts Jobs

- 1 Dot = 1 Person
- Adams County Boundary
- 2020 Daytime Population Workers
- ++++ Railroads
- Roads
- Major Employers according to Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation

million. The 3,100 acre area serves as America's hub for commercial space transportation, research, and development, as well as the location of a Colorado National Guard armory, CDOT Aeronautical Division, and a Colorado State Patrol office.

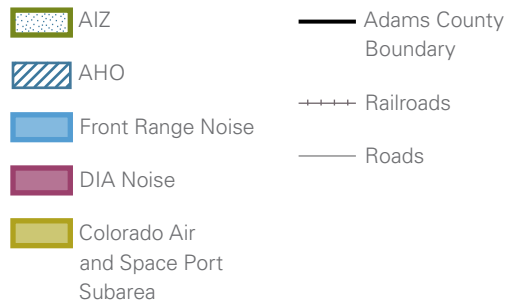


## MAP 29: AVIATION INFLUENCE AREAS



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, CASP - Design Workshop

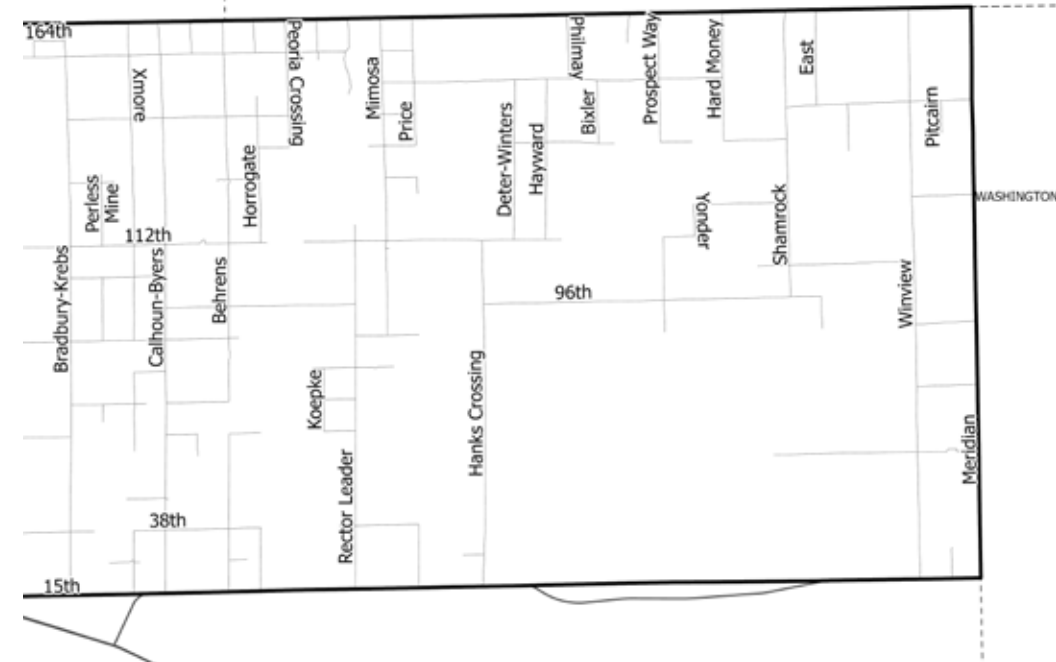
### LEGEND



### AVIATION

The Airport Height Overlay (AHO) provides protection for residential and non-residential land uses where aircraft frequently flies low to the ground during takeoff and landing. Natural and man-made objects are regulated in this overlay in order to avoid hazards.

The Airport Influence Zone (AIZ) provides areas that are fitting for economic development and safe operation of air carrier and/or general aviation airports for public use. This zone also provides for notice and disclosure to property owners in areas where aircraft activities would constitute a nuisance.



NOT TO SCALE 

The County is currently working on a subarea plan for the Colorado Air and Space Port (CASP), which will update and replace the land use vision articulated in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan for this area. This Comprehensive Plan update will align the land use strategy across documents to ensure consistency in the land use vision for this critical area. Updates to land uses are anticipated to reflect aviation, manufacturing and innovation industries and a business park concept that are identified in the subarea plan.

## WORKFORCE AND LABOR PROFILE

According to 2020 data from ESRI Business Analyst, there are 14,172 businesses in Adams County employing 196,673 total employees.

The unemployment rate, without accounting for COVID-19 impacts, is relatively low at 7.3 percent and 264,459 of the population over the age of 16 being employed.

Skills training is available from several nearby universities as well as higher education opportunities with the County including: Regis, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Front Range Flight School and Front Range Community College, Colorado's largest community college.

The Education Consortium and Workforce/Business Center are evidence of the County's prioritization of developing the workforce.

## EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRY (INCLUDING COVID-19 IMPACT)

The work distribution 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.

Employment by industry in Adams County is led by Services which accounts for 43.2 percent of total employment, followed by Construction and Retail Trade representing 12.9 and 10.6 percent respectively.

Key and emerging industries are aerospace, aviation, bio/life sciences, food/ agribusiness/ beverage, and manufacturing.

The economy is supported by blue-collar industries such as construction, retail and services.

## COVID-19 IMPACT

Adams County has been growing rapidly over the past 20 years, providing a generally strong economic development picture.

However, like communities across the country, COVID-19 has impacted Adams County. By mid-May 2020, unemployment reached almost 15 percent nationally and 11 percent in Adams County.

The impacts of COVID-19 on the long term economy are still being understood, and will be incorporated into these planning efforts.

## Economic Development Land Use Analysis

There is an opportunity to focus industrial development in current industrial areas and reduce industrial expansion into existing agriculture and/or housing areas. Requirements like parking, landscaping, and buffers can impact the amount of land required for industrial development. These requirements may need to be adjusted to enable this land use pattern change.

Additionally, there may be an opportunity to activate or transition

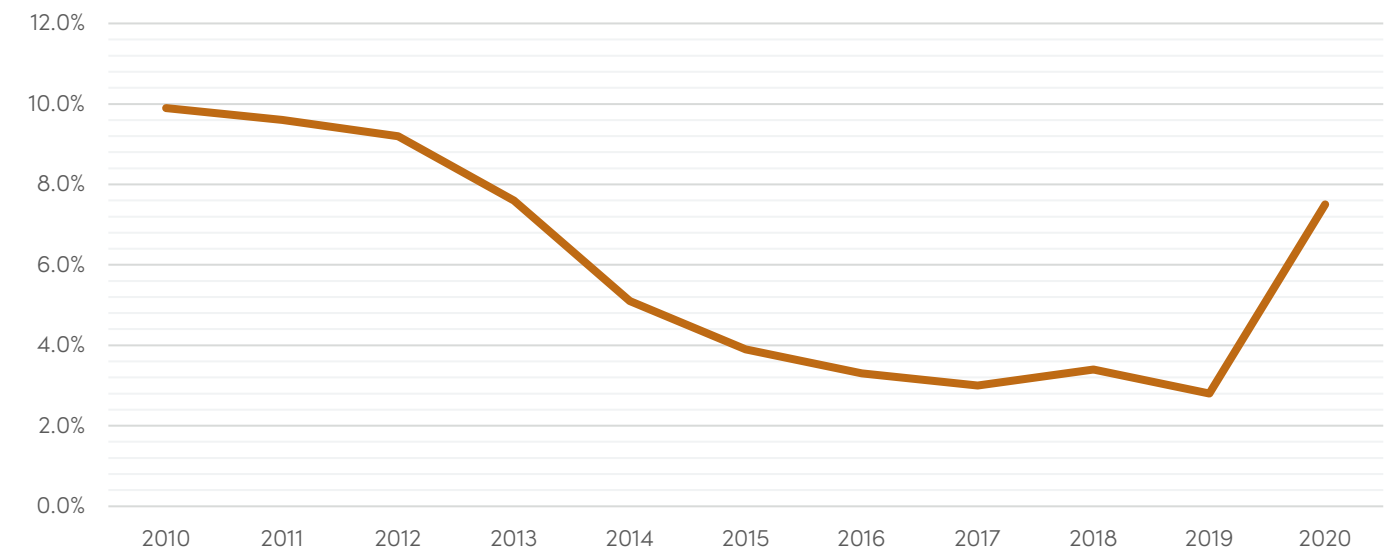
underutilized parcels through incentives or reductions in mitigation requirements in order to provide for appropriate uses such as solar job centers, commercial destination, energy production, clean tech, or warehousing on existing brownfields and hazard sites.

Table 17: Unemployment

	2020 UNEMPLOYED POPULATION (AGE 16+)	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2020)
Adams County	20,738	7.30%
Arapahoe County	28,205	7.40%
Broomfield County	2,487	6.10%
Denver County	29,868	7.00%
Jefferson County	23,554	6.70%
Morgan County	1,300	8.00%
Washington County	165	5.90%
Weld County	12,770	7.50%

Source: Esri, 2020

Figure 32: Unemployment in Adams County for the Past Decade



## DID YOU KNOW?

**14,172** BUSINESSES IN ADAMS COUNTY EMPLOYING **196,673** TOTAL EMPLOYEES

**7.3%** UNEMPLOYMENT RATE WITHOUT ACCOUNTING FOR COVID-19 IMPACTS

**54.4%** WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES

**27.4%** BLUE COLLAR EMPLOYEES

**18.2%** SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Data from ESRI Business Analyst 2020 Report

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

### STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis provides the foundation of understanding for the Adams County Comprehensive Plan. Although the analysis is structured like four distinct quadrants, there is actually an interplay between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

- **Strengths** describe what the County excels at and what makes it distinct. Strengths should be

supported and amplified where possible.

- **Weaknesses** stop the County from reaching full potential. They are areas where the County needs to improve. Weaknesses can become opportunities.
- **Opportunities** refer to favorable external factors that could give the County an advantage. Opportunities can turn into future strengths.
- **Threats** refer to external factors that have the potential to harm the County. Threats should be minimized, mitigated and/or proactively planned for.

**Table 18: Economic Development SWOT Analysis**

Note: A checkmark indicates a relationship between the SWOT analysis content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Planning process and plan creation.

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>INDUSTRIAL LAND USES</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Strong industrial sectors located in Adams County contributing to job creation and economic resiliency.	✓		✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Some industrial land uses can be incompatible if adjacent to residential or restaurant/retail areas.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Permitting large scale renewable energy installations in industrial zones.		✓	✓
» Secure more manufacturing and clean, indoor industrial uses that have fewer impacts on adjacent land uses.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» The expense incurred by developers cleaning up historic industrial uses could add risk to their projects.		✓	
» Lack of incentives or resources for developer-led hazardous waste mitigation efforts.		✓	

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>PRIVATELY PROVIDED ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND AMENITIES DESTINATIONS IN ADAMS COUNTY (CHILDCARE CENTERS, HOSPITALS, GROCERY STORES, WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL, TRADE SCHOOLS AND JOB TRAINING CENTERS, ETC)</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Some successful collaboration with developers to bring essential services and amenities to the residents such as the childcare center in the Midtown project.	✓		✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Not all essential services and amenities destinations in Adams County are equitably distributed.	✓		✓
» Broadband internet access is a challenge in Adams County.	✓		✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Foster economic development of essential services in gap areas in the County. (Note: implementation will be addressed in Phase 2 but this could be achieved through a neighborhood-based economic development strategy).	✓		✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» Reliance on private essential services can result in less equitable distribution throughout the community.	✓		✓
<b>OPPORTUNITY ZONES</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Nine designated Opportunity Zones in Adams County including one north of the Federal Boulevard corridor area and one at the Washington Street corridor area, among others.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Opportunity Zones should be leveraged to provide the most benefit for existing and new residents.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» With new development, housing displacement is a risk.	✓	✓	✓
» Lack of federal incentives or guidance to identify the potential future for the Opportunity Zones.	✓	✓	
» Improvements to Opportunity Zone areas could lead to gentrification.	✓		✓
» The timeline for investment can be unpredictable.	✓	✓	✓
» There is a threat that the improvements will not directly benefit the existing neighborhood.	✓		✓



SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	 EQUITY	 SUSTAINABILITY	 LIVABILITY
<b>AVAILABLE LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» The County has ample land for future development on infill sites where infrastructure exists, areas near transit and areas not yet developed.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Protections in unincorporated Adams County are not currently in place to protect against rampant greenfield development in the eastern portions of the County. Although a barrier to greenfield development is the lack of existing infrastructure and distance from services like transit.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» The Advancing Adams effort affords the opportunity to put forth policies regarding how new development within existing neighborhoods can mitigate risks of gentrification and address other impacts	✓		✓
» Adding density to areas with existing development and redevelopment of existing parcels could reduce the impacts to Adams County greenfield sites.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» Continuous development on greenfield sites could reduce water, ecological and agriculture resources.	✓	✓	✓
» Risk of displacement to existing residents and businesses as redevelopment causes a rise in property values.	✓		✓

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE

A strong working class of people and agriculture is part of Adams County's regional identity and will continue to be in the future. Adams County can celebrate these assets through public art, events like the Adams County Fair and neighborhood identity that builds placemaking and local pride.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

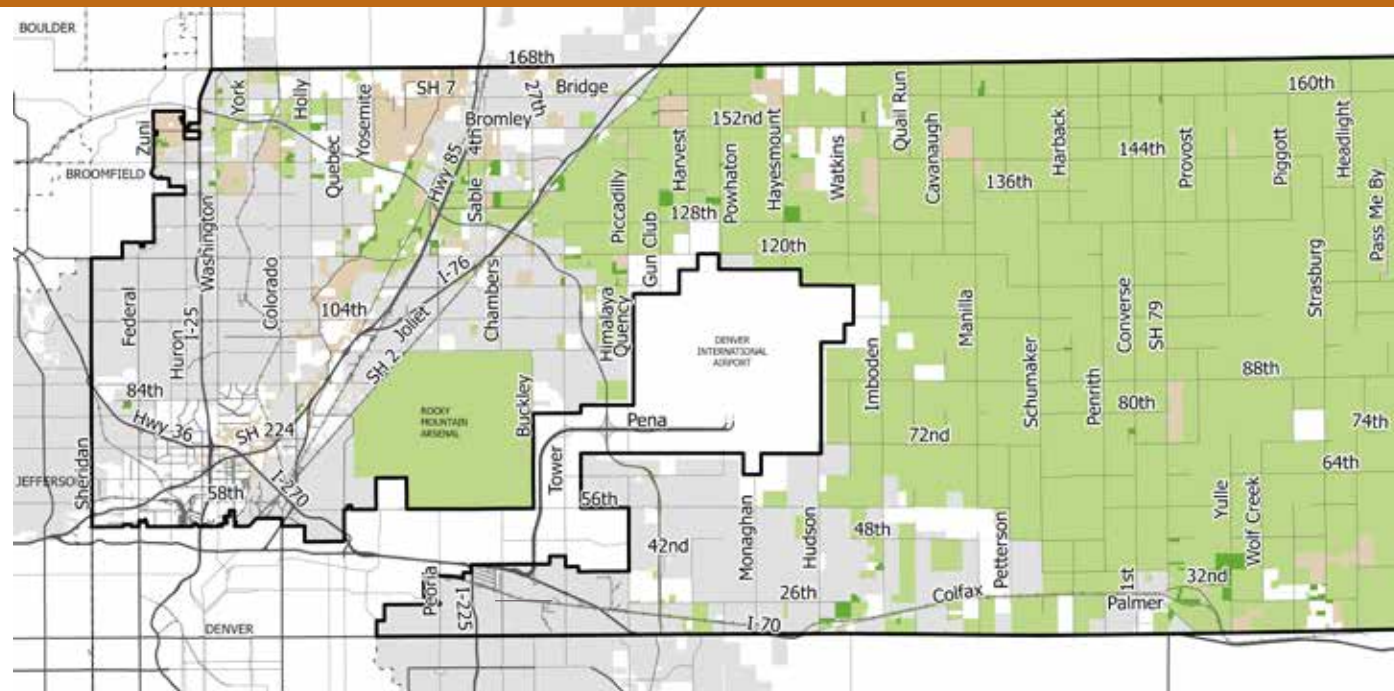
Agriculture, historic assets, scenic views and a vibrant future of artful expression and events will define the future of Adams County.

## AGRICULTURE

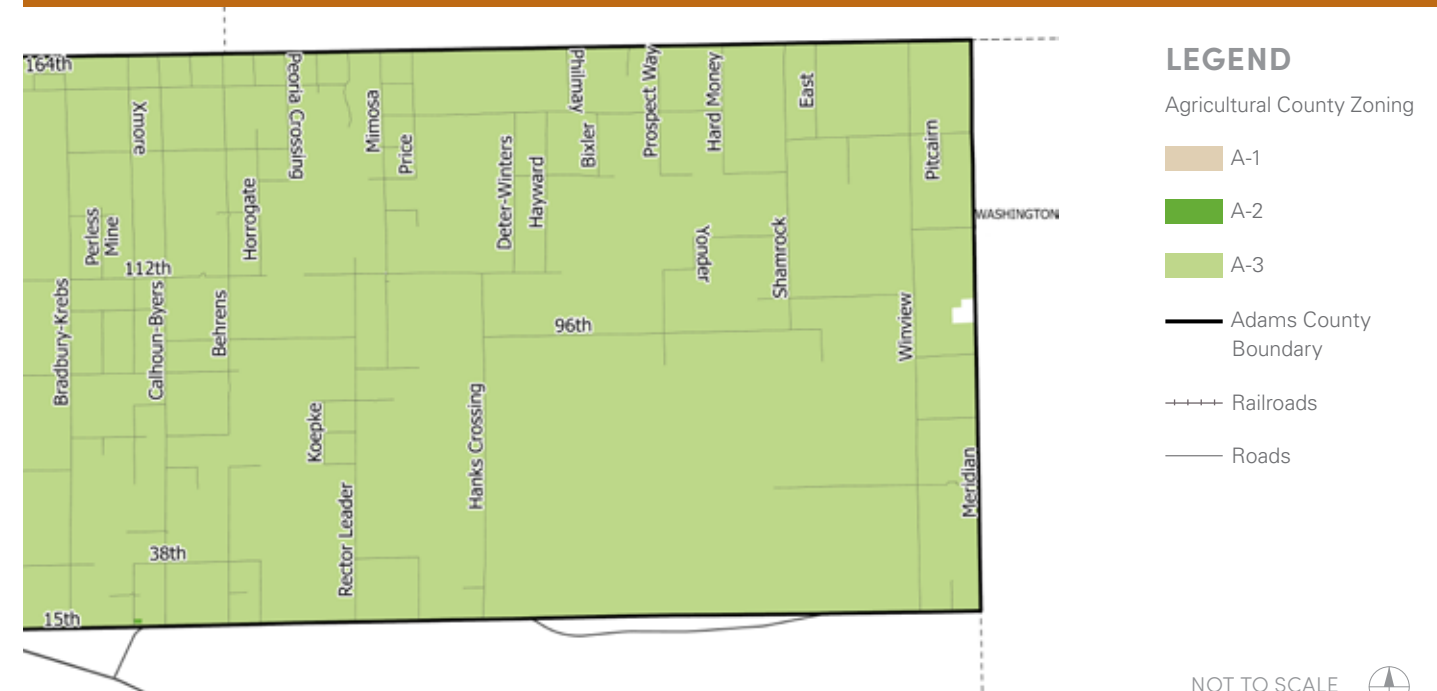
The existing agricultural land uses are a significant cultural heritage component of Adams County. A large percentage of the County, mostly located on the eastern portion of the County, is dedicated to agricultural uses and the popularity of the Adams County Fair at Riverdale Regional

Park is a testament to this valuable heritage. The District Plan (for Historic Splendid Valley) identifies multiple land use typologies that can both accommodate growth and preserve the local culture such as: farms, community supported agriculture, farmers markets, cottage food industries, community gardens, food processing facilities and gardens integrated with school campuses. The challenge is to ensure that these land uses are viable from a market perspective if they are located in other areas besides the District Plan where they were specifically recommended. County insights indicate that the community has an interest in progressive agricultural-based commercial uses such as event barns, farm stands, and farm-to-table dinner venues in Agriculture zone districts.

MAP 30: AGRICULTURAL ZONING



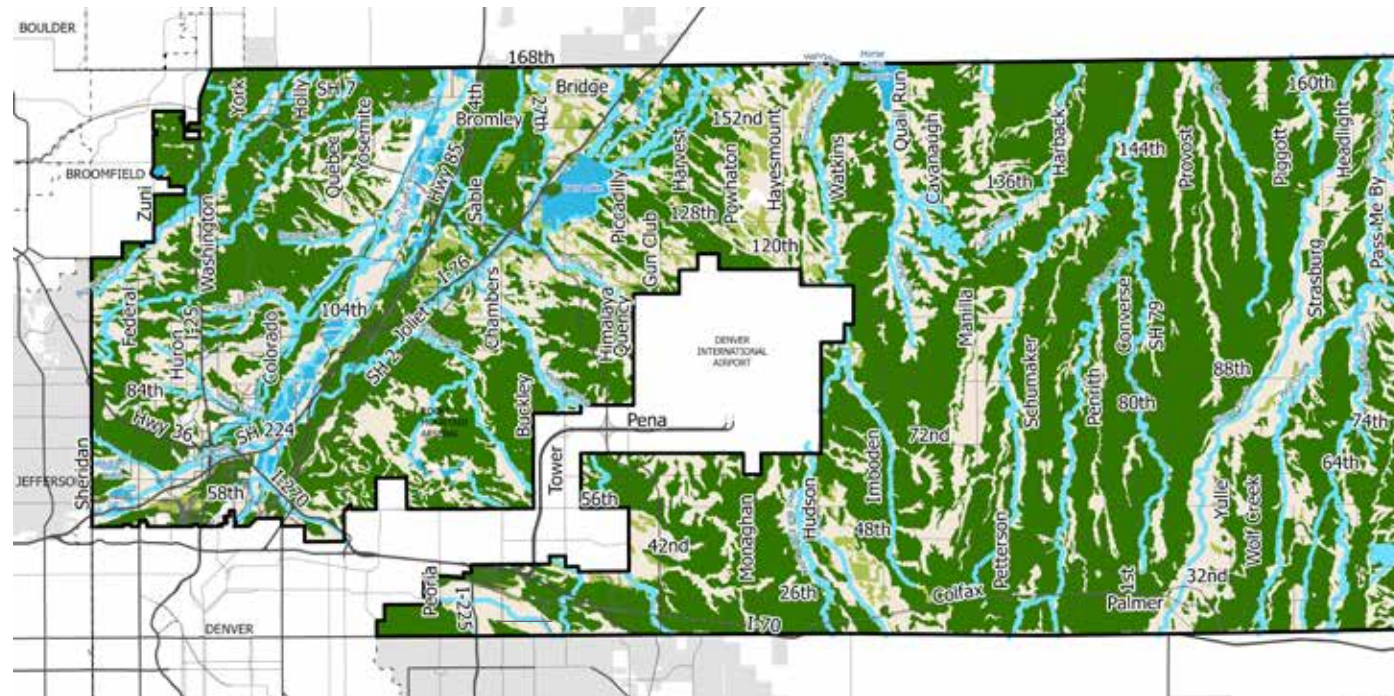
Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG



**LEGEND**  
 Agricultural County Zoning

- A-1
- A-2
- A-3
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads

NOT TO SCALE



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, NRCS, USDA

### Economics of Agriculture in Adams County

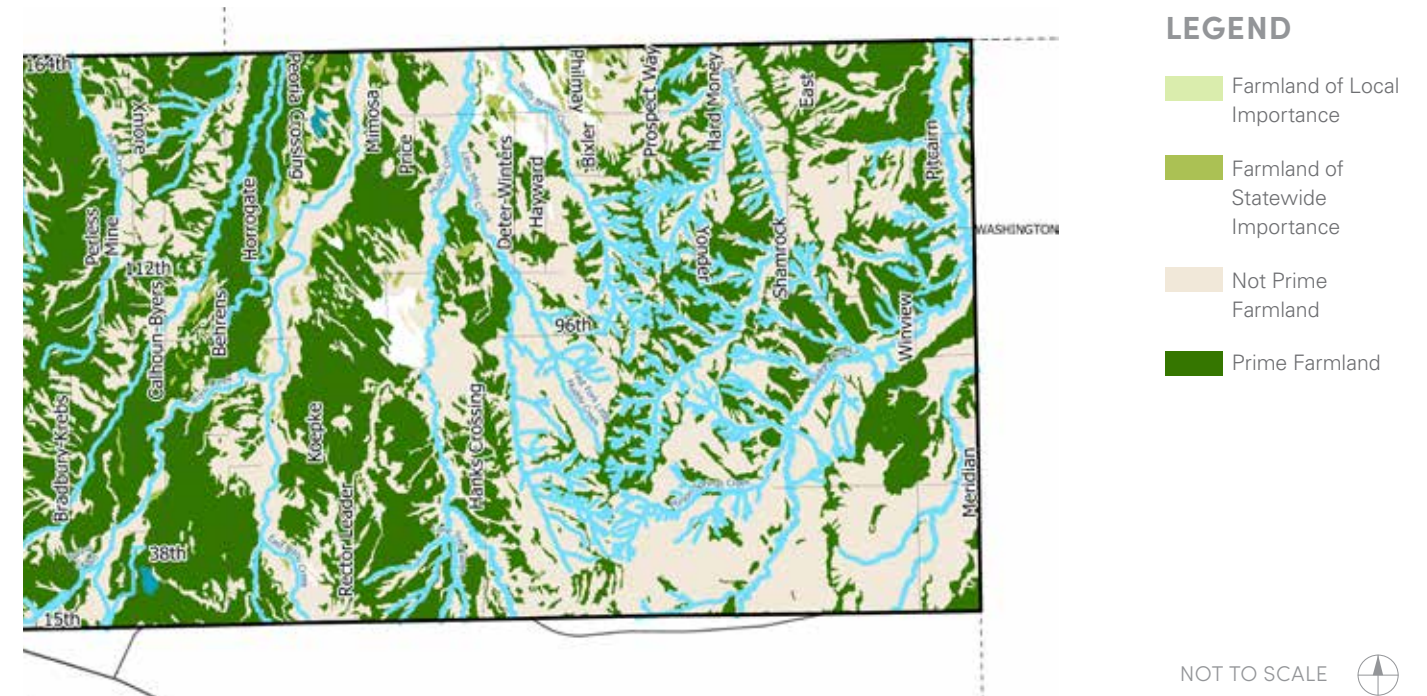
According to the USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture, 93 percent of the county land area (705,289 acres) is classified as “land in farms.” This is defined as the value of sales of agricultural products of more than \$1,000 annually. In Adams County this is a total of 905 farms. While the number of farms in Adams County grew by eight percent from 2012 to 2017 with two percent more acres of land in farms, farm-related income decreased by 26 percent. Although the market value of products sold increased by nine percent, expenses and lower government payments challenged average net cash income. Only 15 farms in the County have a value of sales reported to be over \$50,000

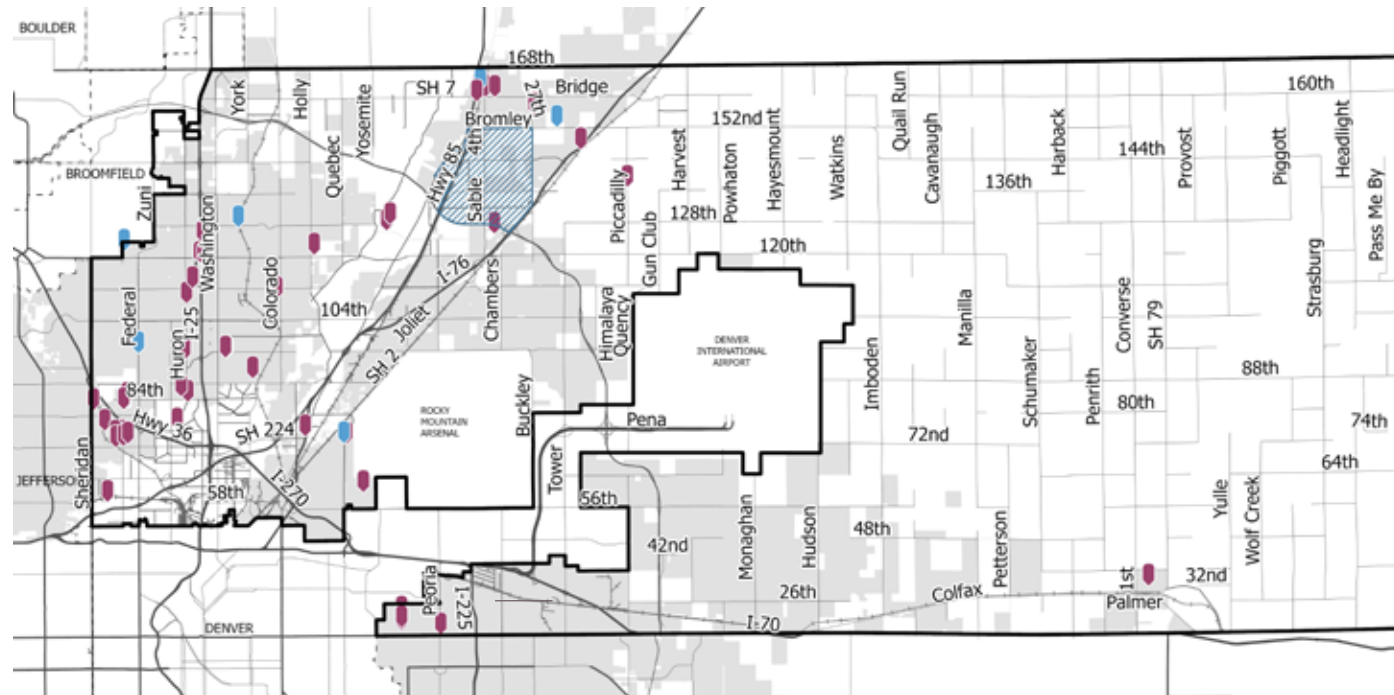
annually and 45 percent of farms are considered small in size 10 to 49 acres<sup>1</sup>.

### Agriculture Soils and Prime Farmland

The agriculture zoning map shows most of the eastern portion of Adams County zoned as A-3 for agriculture uses, however, not all of the agriculture zoned areas are identified as prime farmland according to USDA classifications. The relationship between agricultural land uses and locations of prime farmland can be evaluated in Phase 2 of the planning process.

<sup>1</sup> Census of Agriculture, Adams County Profile, 2017





Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, History CO, Design Workshop

LEGEND

- Historic agriculture assets (HistoryColorado.org)
- Other historic assets (HistoryColorado.org)
- Historic Splendid Valley
- Municipal areas
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads

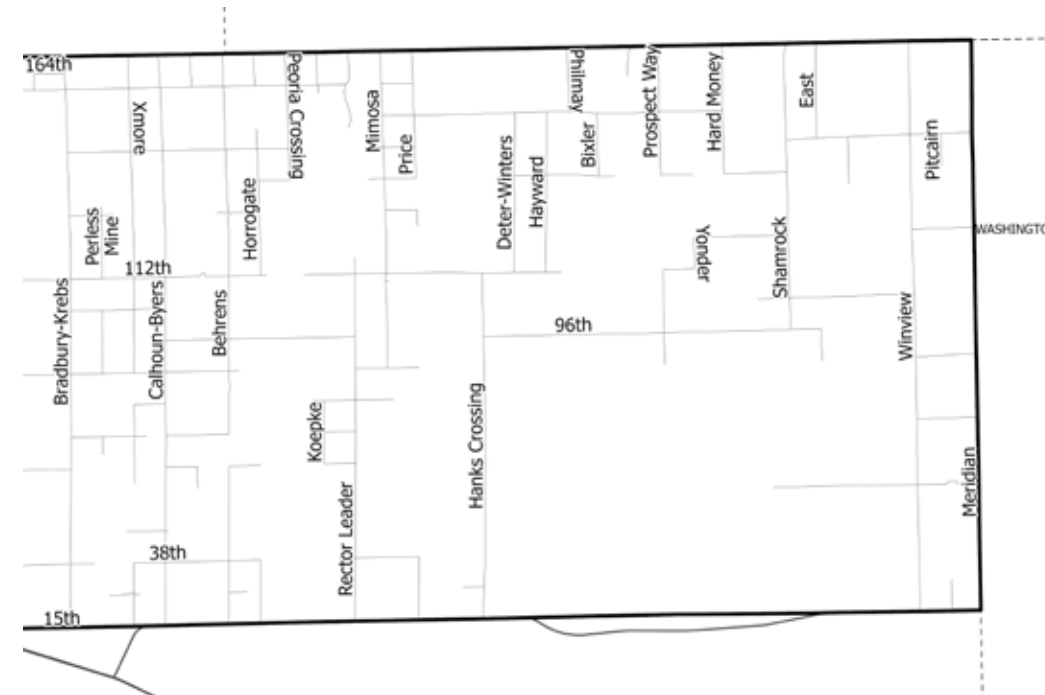
CULTURAL ASSETS

MAP 32 shows historic and cultural asset points<sup>2</sup> from the History Colorado program as well as the boundary for Historic Splendid Valley.

The agriculture-related assets from the History Colorado program include:

- Bromley Farm / Hishinuma Farm
- Colorado Sanitary Canning Factory
- Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator Company
- Gottlieb and Rose Egli House
- Metzger Farm
- Savery Savory Mushroom Farm Water Tower
- Thede Farmhouse

<sup>2</sup> HistoryColorado.org



NOT TO SCALE

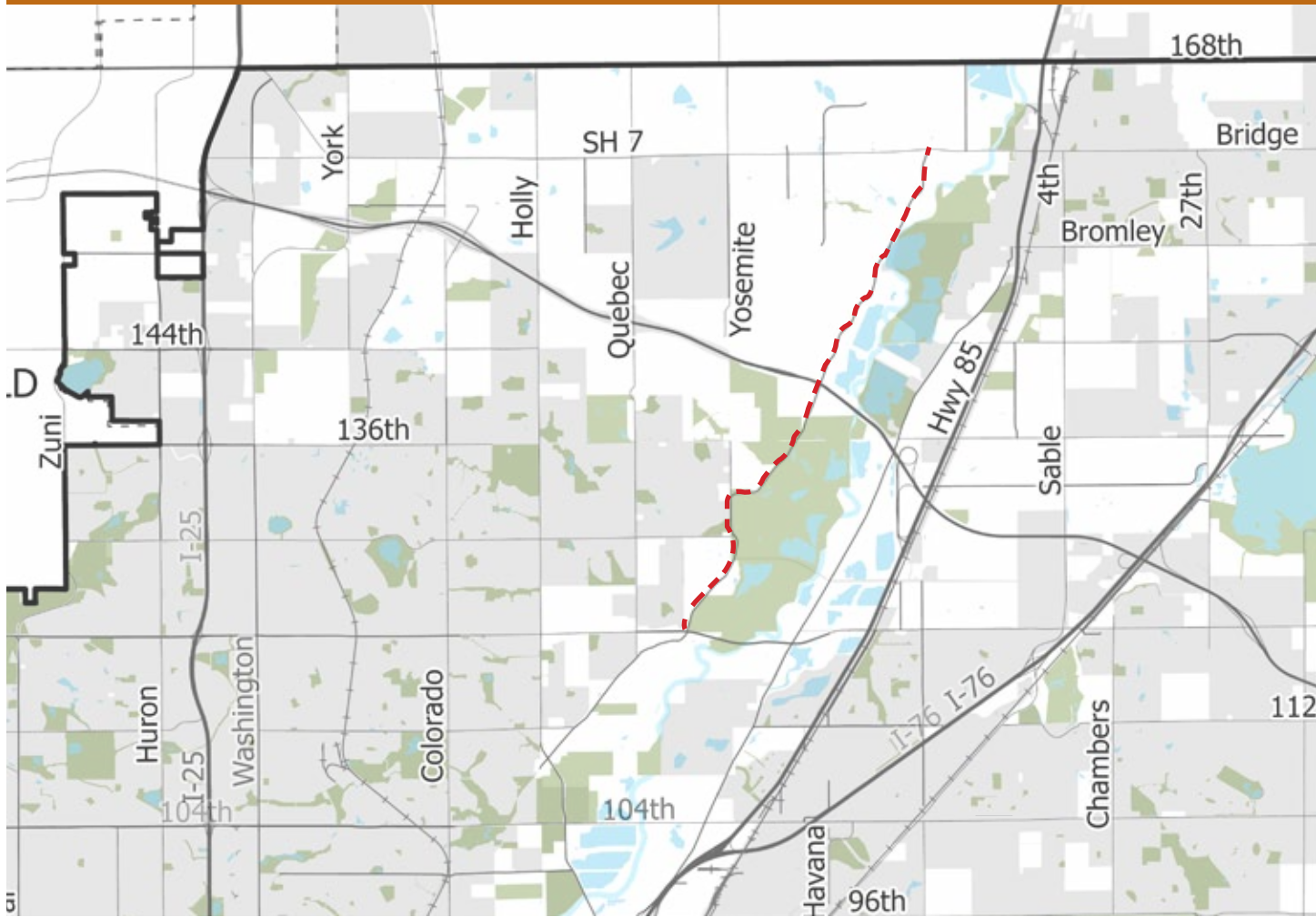
Other historic assets from the History Colorado program are also indicated and they include:

- Adams County Courthouse (Brighton City Hall)
- Bowles House
- Brannan Sand and Gravel Pit #8, Lake Sangraco and Boat Complex
- Brighton High School
- Bruderlin House
- Cline School
- Denver Tramway Street Car #4
- Engelbrecht Farm
- First Presbyterian Church (Brighton)
- Fitzsimons General Hospital, Main Hospital Building
- Granville Fuller House
- Harris Park School
- M.J. Lavina Robidoux House
- Riverside Cemetery
- St. Stephens' Lutheran Church
- Union High School

- Westminster University (Bellevue College)
- William J. Gregory House
- Wilson House (Centennial House)

While there are a number of historic assets in Adams County, the County does not have its own historic preservation program and has not sought designation as a Certified Local Government by the state. Because preservation of historic assets is strongest at the local level, the County could consider such a program to protect cultural and historic assets that are located in the unincorporated portions of the County.

**MAP 33: RIVERDALE ROAD SCENIC BYWAY (AS PROPOSED)**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

- - - Riverdale Road
- Adams County Boundary
- Municipal Area
- Railroads
- Parks and Open Space
- Roads
- Lakes and Streams

**Scenic Byway Key Plan**



**POTENTIAL SCENIC BYWAY**

The 2005 Riverdale Road Corridor Plan outlined a plan to preserve Riverdale Road and the South Platte River Valley for future generations. One of the recommendations was to establish a scenic byway designation for a stretch of Riverdale Road as indicated in MAP 33. This recommendation is still valid but has not been implemented yet.

Some of the scenic preservation guidelines mentioned in this plan includes:

- Limiting the scale of development

- Preventing future access points to Riverdale Road
- Preserving trees and vegetation
- Preserving and enhancing historic structures
- Preserving farmland
- Fostering community stewardship, and
- Developing a scenic corridor management plan

**PUBLIC ART AND EVENTS**

Public art and events also contribute to the culture and heritage in Adams County. Advancing Adams has an opportunity to learn from the past but also look forward to new and innovative ways to celebrate the County.

The Adams County Fair is one of the most cherished events in the County as it celebrates the rich agricultural heritage of the County. The fair and rodeo date back to 1888 before the official formation of the County. The early years of the Fair were held at the present-day site of the City of Brighton Government Center on

South Fourth Avenue. The first official Adams County Fair was held in October 1904. In 1964, the Fairgrounds were relocated to its current home in Riverdale Regional Park. The Adams County Fair continues to be a popular event that celebrates the rich agricultural heritage.

In addition to agriculture, the County also has a rich history of industry, including sand and gravel mining and agricultural processing, and a rapidly growing population with increasing diversity. These are all elements of the County that can be celebrated in a multitude of ways. Public art and placemaking investments are strategies that celebrate the character of a community through visual identity. Even practical elements like wayfinding signage are an opportunity to offer expression. Public art and placemaking will be evaluated further for policies and implementation details in Phase 2.



**Figure 33:** Adams County Fair at Riverdale Regional Park



## CULTURE AND HERITAGE: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis provides the foundation of understanding for the Adams County Comprehensive Plan. Although the analysis is structured like four distinct quadrants, there is actually an interplay between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

- **Strengths** describe what the County excels at and what makes it distinct. Strengths should be supported and amplified where possible.
- **Weaknesses** stop the County from reaching full potential. They are areas where the County needs to improve. Weaknesses can become opportunities.
- **Opportunities** refer to favorable external factors that could give the County an advantage. Opportunities can turn into future strengths.
- **Threats** refer to external factors that have the potential to harm the County. Threats should be minimized, mitigated and/or proactively planned for.

**Table 19: Culture and Heritage SWOT Analysis**

Note: A checkmark indicates a relationship between the SWOT analysis content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Planning process and plan creation.

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>RIVERDALE REGIONAL PARK AND FAIRGROUNDS</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Riverdale Regional Park and Fairgrounds as a cultural and heritage asset for the County.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Some lack of clarity on the allowable uses.			✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Ongoing code work to define allowable uses.			✓
» Celebration of the Japanese-American farming heritage.	✓		✓
» Creation of the Riverdale Road Scenic Byway.			✓
» Access improvements along East 120th Avenue.			✓
» Current capital improvements plans.			✓
<b>COUNTY AGRICULTURE</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Preserved small-scale agricultural land uses west of the DIA including Historic Splendid Valley.		✓	
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Some agriculture production areas utilize methods that are not adaptive for climate change including water intensive crops, monocrop production and/or annual tilling practices.		✓	

SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
» Permaculture practices and hydroponic practices could be more supported by the County.		✓	
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Gather input of agriculture land owners on land use accommodations to help them adapt to anticipated climate change.		✓	✓
» Allowing and encouraging the diversification of crops including industrial crops and biofuels that may be more suited for drier conditions.		✓	
» Permitting additional agriculture uses like regenerative agriculture, permaculture and hydroponics and encouraging their adoption by removing any regulatory barriers, especially adjacent to high value ecological sites.		✓	
» Incorporate land management practices and provide County support for no-till farming to sequester carbon and maintain soil fertility with reduced use of fertilizers.		✓	
» Address any regulatory barriers to allow more crop production for local consumption.		✓	
» Ensure there are no land use restrictions to allow both agriculture and renewable energy production for solar often referred to as agrivoltaics unless prohibited by existing conservation easements		✓	
» Update regulations to allow agriculture land owners to use their properties in more flexible ways that support agri-tourism and other community benefits.	✓	✓	
<b>Threat</b>			
» Development pressures to convert agricultural lands into residential greenfield development.	✓	✓	✓
(Note: these topics will need to be coordinated with the water resource/supply analysis under "local water resources" in the "Natural Environment" section.)			
<b>ADAMS COUNTY PLACEMAKING AND PUBLIC ART</b>			
<b>Strength</b>			
» Successful local artist curation process with projects like the mural and musical instruments at the Federal Boulevard RTD station/ Gateway Park.			✓
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Lack of placemaking and local art that celebrates Adams County.			✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Protections for Adams County historic assets through a formalized County historic preservation program if a County program will provide additional support or resources to local historic assets above and beyond the State program (to be determined in Phase 2).			✓
» Alignment with and leverage of the 2030 State Historic Preservation Plan. Explore incentives for adaptive reuse development projects.			✓

ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES			
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
<b>SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC</b>			
<b>ADAMS COUNTY PLACEMAKING AND PUBLIC ART</b>			
<b>Threat</b>			
» Adams County historic assets could be at risk if adequate protections are not established.			✓
<b>COLORADO CREATIVE DISTRICTS</b>			
<b>Weakness</b>			
» Adams County does not boast a Colorado Creative District designation.	✓		✓
<b>Opportunity</b>			
» Adding one or more Colorado Creative Districts in Adams County as a way to celebrate character and identity and attract tourism (note that tourism would overlap with Economic Development theme).	✓		✓
» Improve walkability and bikeability in prototype areas that could secure a Creative District designation and serve as an initial incremental improvement along corridors.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Threat</b>			
» The lack of walkability and bikeability along some corridors can create a barrier to securing a Creative District designation.	✓	✓	✓



Figure 36: Event at Clear Creek Valley Park



Figure 34: Sign at 104th and McKay Rd



Figure 35: Bull Riding

# FIVE STRATEGIC CORRIDORS



Washington Street and 88th  
Avenue

This section includes:

- Corridor selection process
- Corridor context
- Federal Boulevard
- Pecos Street
- Washington Street
- East 104th Avenue
- East 120th Avenue

## CORRIDOR SELECTION OVERVIEW

As part of the Advancing Adams planning process, the County identified five strategic corridors for taking an in depth look at planning issues. The five corridors (identified on MAP 32) are Federal Boulevard, Pecos Street, Washington Street, 104th Avenue and 120th Avenue.

The County utilized several criteria to select and define the extents of the five strategic corridors, including the following characteristics:

- » Be a principal arterial roadway;
- » Have unincorporated lands adjacent to it;
- » Be subject to a study or upcoming improvements within the municipality;
- » Fall within an Opportunity Zone area;
- » Be identified for improvements in the Adams County 5-year Capital Improvement Plan;
- » Have redevelopment potential – significant current development activity, large areas of undeveloped land or land assemblage; and
- » Be in proximity to multi-modal transportation opportunities.

## CORRIDOR CONTEXT

Understanding the overall context of the corridors provided an important baseline from which to evaluate future opportunities. This document outlines the current conditions of these five strategic corridors. Phase 2 will explore future opportunities for them.

MAP 35 and MAP 36 summarize the major surrounding influential parcels and regional connections in proximity of each of the Five Strategic Corridors.

### NORTH TO SOUTH CORRIDORS

This section details key context considerations for the different corridors, divided by the North to South corridors and the East to West Corridors.

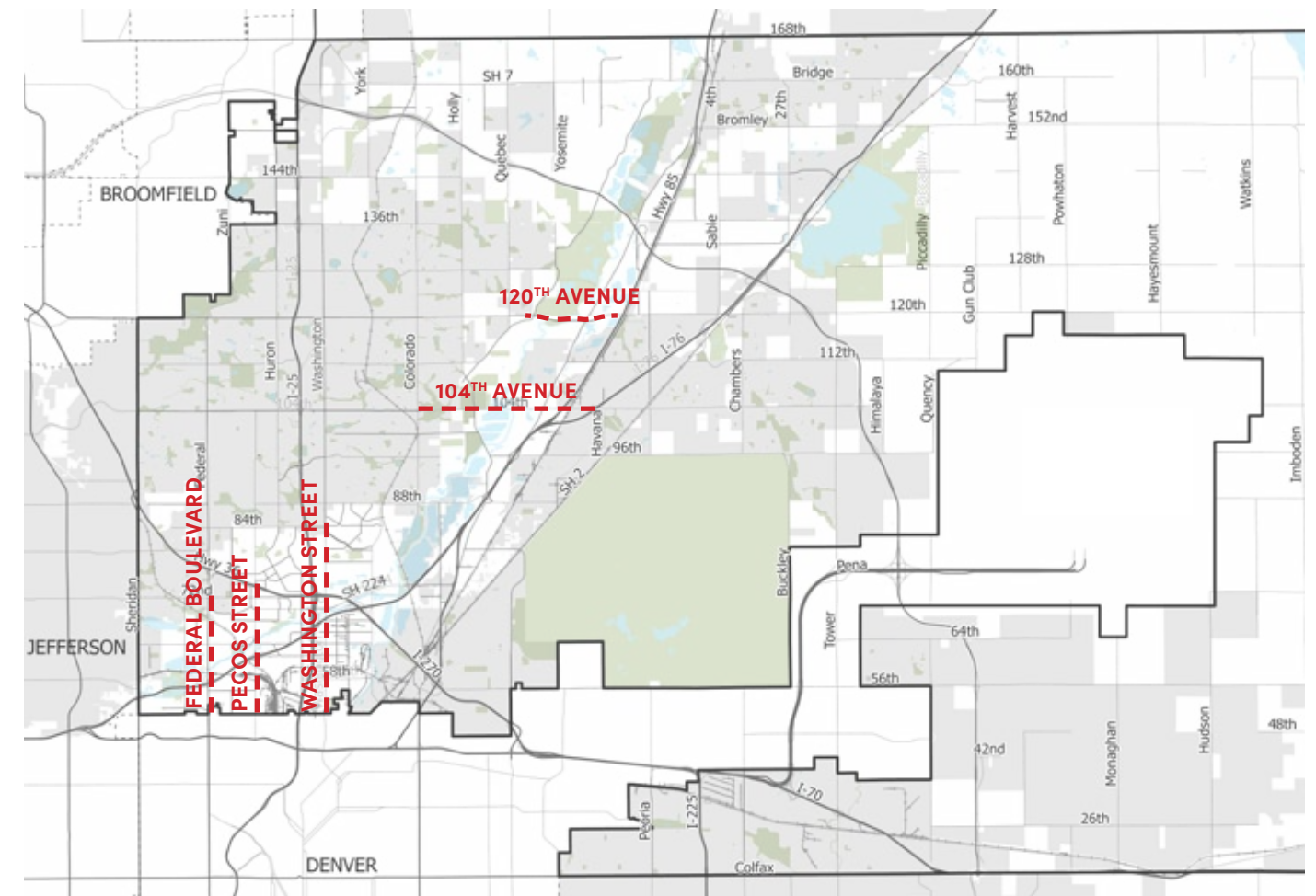
#### National Western Center

The National Western Center, located in Denver south of the Washington Street corridor planning area, is the product of collaboration between multiple large entities who sought to create a space that serves as an urban hub for food and agricultural discovery. The complex is set to be completed by 2024 and will host an array of educational, recreational, and tourist opportunities.

Table 20: Five Strategic Corridors Summary Table

	LENGTH	SOUTHERN OR WESTERN BOUNDARY	NORTHERN OR EASTERN BOUNDARY
FEDERAL BOULEVARD	2.5 miles	West 52nd Avenue	Little Dry Creek
PECOS STREET	2.75 miles	West 52nd Avenue	Highway 36
WASHINGTON STREET	4.5 miles	East 52nd Avenue	East 88th Avenue
104TH AVENUE	3.75 miles	Colorado Boulevard	I-76
120TH AVENUE	2.5 miles	Riverdale Road	Peoria Street

MAP 34: FIVE STRATEGIC CORRIDORS KEY PLAN



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

### LEGEND

- Corridor Locations
- █ Parks and Open Space
- █ Municipal Area
- █ Lakes and Streams
- Adams County Boundary
- Roads
- ++++ Railroads

NOT TO SCALE

## MAP 35: NORTH TO SOUTH CORRIDORS CONTEXT



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop, Google Earth Imagery

NOT TO SCALE

### LEGEND

- - - Corridor locations
- Adams County Boundary
- Opportunity Zones
- 1 National Western Center
- 2 River North Arts District (RiNo)
- 3 South Welby area, primarily industrial and agriculture with some residential
- 4 Midtown
- 5 Pecos Logistics Park
- 6 Federal Boulevard Opportunity Zone
- 7 Washington Street Opportunity Zone

### River North Arts District (RiNo)

The RiNo Arts District, located in Denver south of the Washington Street corridor, was a former industrial hub in four historic neighborhoods. After industries moved out, artists moved in and later worked with local neighborhood leaders and the City and County of Denver to revitalize the area and foster a creative community. Today the area has grown and attracted many events and developments.

### South Welby Area

This area of Welby, located in the unincorporated portion of the County to the east of the Washington Street planning area, has been transitioning away from its agricultural heritage to a light industrial area with some residential developments. However, some agriculture parcels still exist and contribute to local character. The noticeable amount of zoning changes in the area has created a diversity of land uses that are challenged by inadequate infrastructure, including roads. The 2014 Welby Plan provides a framework for the future of this area.

### Midtown

Once an industrial area, today Midtown in unincorporated Adams County is a modern neighborhood just outside the City of Denver. Since 2012, this area has grown to become one of the largest developments within five miles from downtown Denver. Midtown is expected to hold 1,300 homes and 11,000 square feet of retail space. The area is zoned as a Planned Unit Development (PUD), and is located along Pecos, just north of the corridor planning area.



Figure 37: Midtown

### Pecos Logistics Park

A 67-acre industrial park (with capacity for 1.15 million square feet of building space) in unincorporated Adams County at the northwest corner of North Pecos Street and West 56th Avenue. The Logistics Park broke ground in the summer of 2020 with PepsiCo Beverage as its first tenant. It is located adjacent to the Pecos corridor planning area.



Figure 38: TruStile Doors New Facility

<https://www.denverpost.com/2020/07/31/pepsi-signs-on-new-warehouse-adam-county-project/>

### Opportunity Zones

Two Opportunity Zones are located in this area. The Federal Boulevard Opportunity Zone is located at the Census Tract to the northwest of the corridor study. The Washington Street Opportunity Zone is located along the southern portion of the Washington Street study area. Opportunity Zones are areas that have been designated as economically distressed where new

investment and development may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. They are a relatively new economic development tool that can be used to increase investment in Adams County.

<https://www.adamscountyrep.com/opportunities/opportunity-zones/>

## MAP 36: EAST TO WEST CORRIDORS CONTEXT



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop, Google Earth Imagery

NOT TO SCALE

### LEGEND

- Corridor locations
- 1 Riverdale Regional Park and new Animal Shelter
- 2 Route to Denver International Airport
- 3 Riverdale Road, proposed County Scenic Byway (2005)
- 4 Route to E470
- 5 Platte River Trail

## EAST TO WEST CORRIDORS

### Riverdale Regional Park and Riverdale Animal Shelter

This park has served as a vital space for the community to connect, learn, and celebrate their traditions and heritage. The County in 2018 released its Master Plan for the park that seeks to allow the County to maintain much of the park's historic uses as well as incorporate new ones in the future

whilst improving the parks visitation, conditions, and experiences.

In the fall of 2020, the County opened the new Riverdale Animal Shelter on the south end of the Riverdale Regional Park.

### Route to Denver International Airport

Both CO-2 and I-76 lead to E-470, the controlled access toll road that provides a route to Denver International Airport.

### Riverdale Road

The County has expressed their desire to transform this corridor into a scenic byway. The Riverdale Road Corridor Plan was adopted in 2005. This road lies primarily in the floodplain of the South Platte River Basin. It has certain historic and natural elements to it and is surrounded by agricultural and mineral extraction activities. Along the road are some estate residential uses and water reservoirs. The gravel mines have mostly turned into reservoirs.

Additionally, the County is in the process of converting a site of an old private shooting club and historic landfill site to a potential solar array. The site is located along Riverdale Road, to the north of 120th Avenue. Working with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the County has completed initial demolition and soils cleanup, and regrading and capping of the landfill.

### Route to E470

From Riverdale Road a connection can be made to E-470, the controlled-access toll road.

### South Platte Trail

This trail is considered a lightly trafficked trail that is partially paved, allows dogs on leashes and features lakes, wildflowers, and scenic views. There are options for a number of activities along the trail such as hiking, biking, and bird watching.



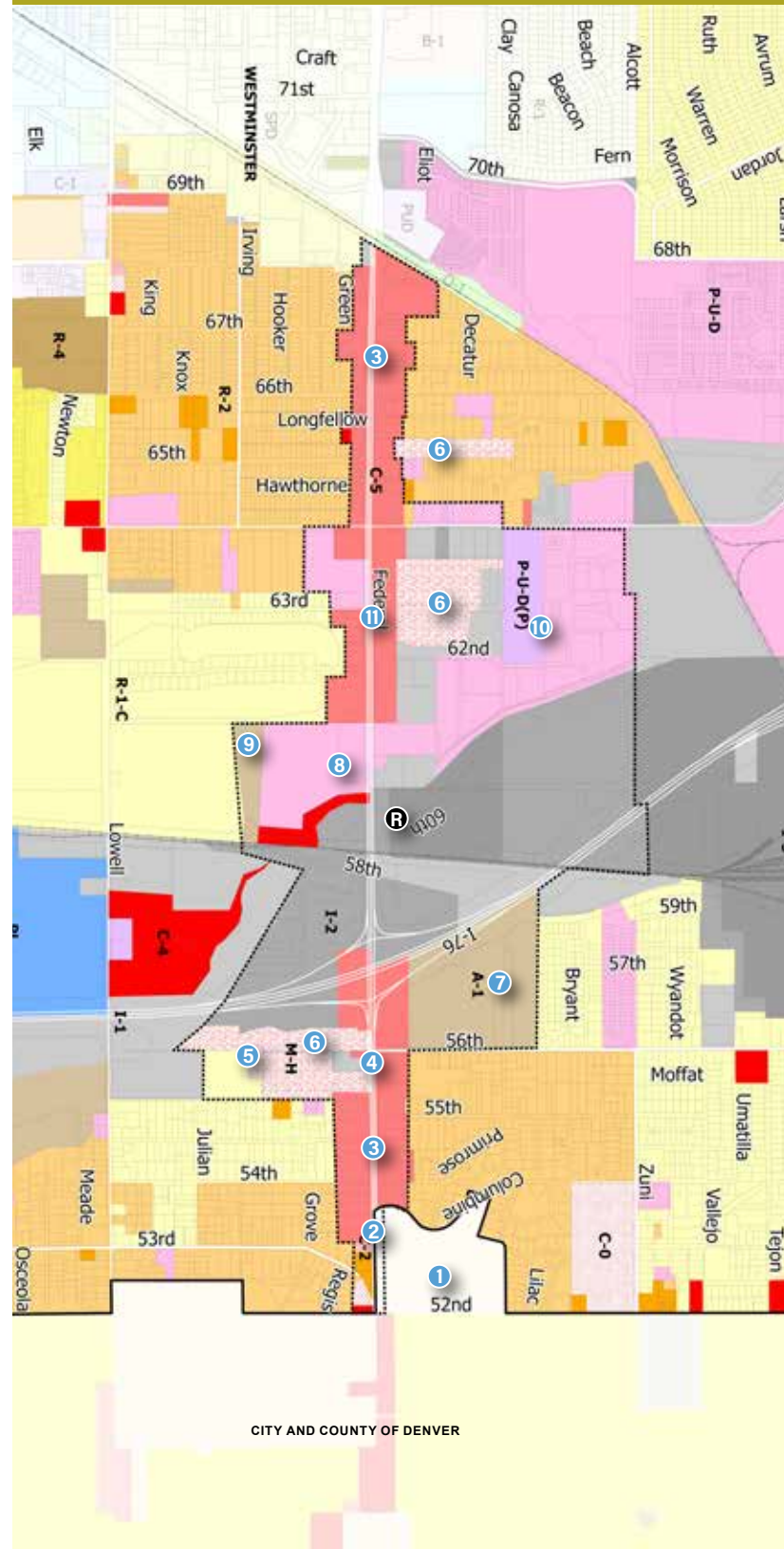
Image Credit: Design Workshop

Figure 39: Riverdale Regional Park



Image Credit: Adams County

Figure 40: Riverdale Animal Shelter Groundbreaking



**LEGEND**

**Adams County Zoning**

- Residential-1-A (R-1-A)
- Residential-1-C (R-1-C)
- Residential Two-Family (R-2)
- Residential Moderate Density (R-3)
- Residential High Density (R-4)
- Planned Unit Development (PUD)
- Planned Unit Development (PUD(P))
- Agricultural-1 (A-1)
- Industrial-1 (I-1)
- Industrial-2 (I-2)
- Industrial-3 (I-3)
- Commercial-0 (C-0)
- Commercial-1 (C-1)
- Commercial-2 (C-2)
- Commercial-4 (C-4)
- Commercial-5 (C-5)
- Mobile Home Dwelling (MH)
- Public Lands, Parks, Open Space, and Facilities (PL)

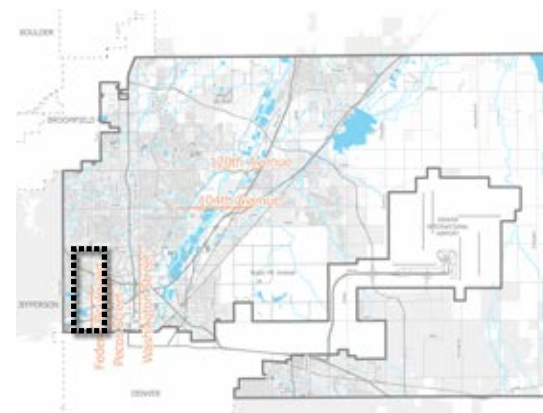
**Westminster Zoning**

- Single-family Medium Density (R-1)
- Multi-family High Density (R-4)
- Commercial (C-1)
- Industrial (M-1)
- Planned Unit Development (PUD)
- Open/Agriculture (O-1)
- Specific Plan District (SPD)

**Other**

- RTD Station
- Corridor Area

**Corridor Key Plan**



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

1 : 36,000

**Analysis Notes**

- 1 Aria development on West 52nd Avenue
- 2 Mixed housing and commercial uses
- 3 Autocentric commercial and services
- 4 Cowboy monument and strip mall commercial activity near West 56th Avenue
- 5 Electrical substation
- 6 Mobile Home Parks
- 7 Farmland
- 8 Clear Creek Transit Village, approved PUD (currently undeveloped)
- 9 Small family farm
- 10 Industrial PUD including potential marijuana growing facilities
- 11 Street cross-section changes from four to six lanes

**FEDERAL BOULEVARD**

**EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS**

**Zoning and Land Uses**

Along this corridor, the zoning of the unincorporated areas is primarily commercial and industrial, with a number of mobile home parks. Communication and coordination with Denver and Westminster will be needed to ensure the compatibility of land uses along the Federal Boulevard corridor.

Four mobile home parks in varying degrees of upkeep are located along this study area including: Deluxe RV Park, White Rock, Centennial and Rustic Ranch. All provide much needed affordable housing in proximity of transit.

**Environmental Justice**

The Federal Boulevard corridor has some environmental impacts due to past industrial land uses. The County received an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) brownfields grant and completed a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment for five parcels in

the vicinity of Federal due to known contamination in the area from past uses. These historic uses include landfills, gravel mining operations, industrial facilities and a network of highways, rail lines and freight yards that crisscross the Clear Creek Valley corridor.

**Transportation and Mobility**

The TMP addresses the transportation and mobility of this corridor in great detail. A critical linkage to the Comprehensive Plan is the overall character of Federal Boulevard as an auto-dominated corridor. While the uses in the area warrant additional walking and biking facilities, there are no designated bicycle facilities, and the pedestrian network is inconsistent. There are a significant number of curb cuts and large parking lots along the corridor.

The RTD 31 route runs along Federal Boulevard to connect to the Clear Creek Federal commuter rail station. The route frequency occurs in 15 minute intervals during peak times of the day with high ridership, even throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal/Clear Creek Station along

the RTD G-Line is a major asset to the corridor.

### Parks, Open Space and Trails

As identified in the POST Plan in more detail, the study area currently lacks adequate parks or open space to serve the nearby population. However, Gateway Park adjacent to the RTD station is responding to this need by providing open turf grass areas, artful murals, interactive musical instruments and seating. The Clear Creek Trail is an active trail with significant potential. Additionally, there are anticipated improvements along Little Dry Creek, including gathering spaces, parking, and water amenities.

### Environment

The Federal Boulevard corridor suffers from water and drainage issues like the water quality, an undersized stormwater system and flooding that occurs regularly at the railroad.

### Wayfinding, Character and Image

The Federal Boulevard corridor lacks a connected character that integrates green elements like trees, pocket parks, or green alleys and cultural elements like placemaking and public art. Overall, the corridor lacks cohesive urban design elements.

### Additional studies

Adams County is currently collaborating with the City of Federal Heights and the City of Westminster on the Federal Boulevard Multimodal

Transportation Study. The study area is eight miles of the Federal Boulevard corridor within the three jurisdictions from 52nd Avenue to 120th Avenue. This study will take a more in-depth look at addressing the challenges of safety for all users, the volume and speed of vehicular traffic, inconsistent pedestrian and bicycle facilities, limited connectivity to trails and first and final mile destinations and need for improved transit service and amenities. Advancing Adams is coordinating with this concurrent study to develop a set of recommendations that is consistent between these two efforts.

Additionally, the Federal Boulevard Framework Plan and corresponding Health Impact Assessment from 2014 provides guidance for land use concepts.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- » The Federal Boulevard study area can be a central business hub for Adams County given the diversity of businesses and likelihood that new development will happen in this area.
- » As redevelopment is anticipated, policies should be explored to minimize displacement for residents living in the many mobile home parks in the area.
- » Completion of the brownfields grant and Environmental Site Assessment program along Federal Boulevard.



Figure 42: Autocentric Commercial Activity



Figure 43: Aria Developments on 52<sup>nd</sup>



Figure 41: Autocentric Commercial Activity North of West 64th Avenue on Federal Boulevard



- » Reduce and minimize impact of incompatible land use adjacencies through updates to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and zoning changes.
- » The area around the Federal/Clear Creek Station has the potential for transit-oriented development that includes a dense, attainable residential housing type depending on environmental mitigation requirements.
- » The potential to make comfortable connections to the Clear Creek Trail also exists, including an at-grade crossing to Clear Creek.
- » Walkable and bikeable roadway improvements including bike facilities, wider sidewalks and street trees.
- » There are opportunities for future trail connections from the RTD Station to the Clay Street Community Trail.
- » Additional parks, programming and trail connections would be a benefit for this area. The Gateway Park is becoming more actively used and has significant potential to be a catalyst for additional connections in the area. Additional residential density could justify the

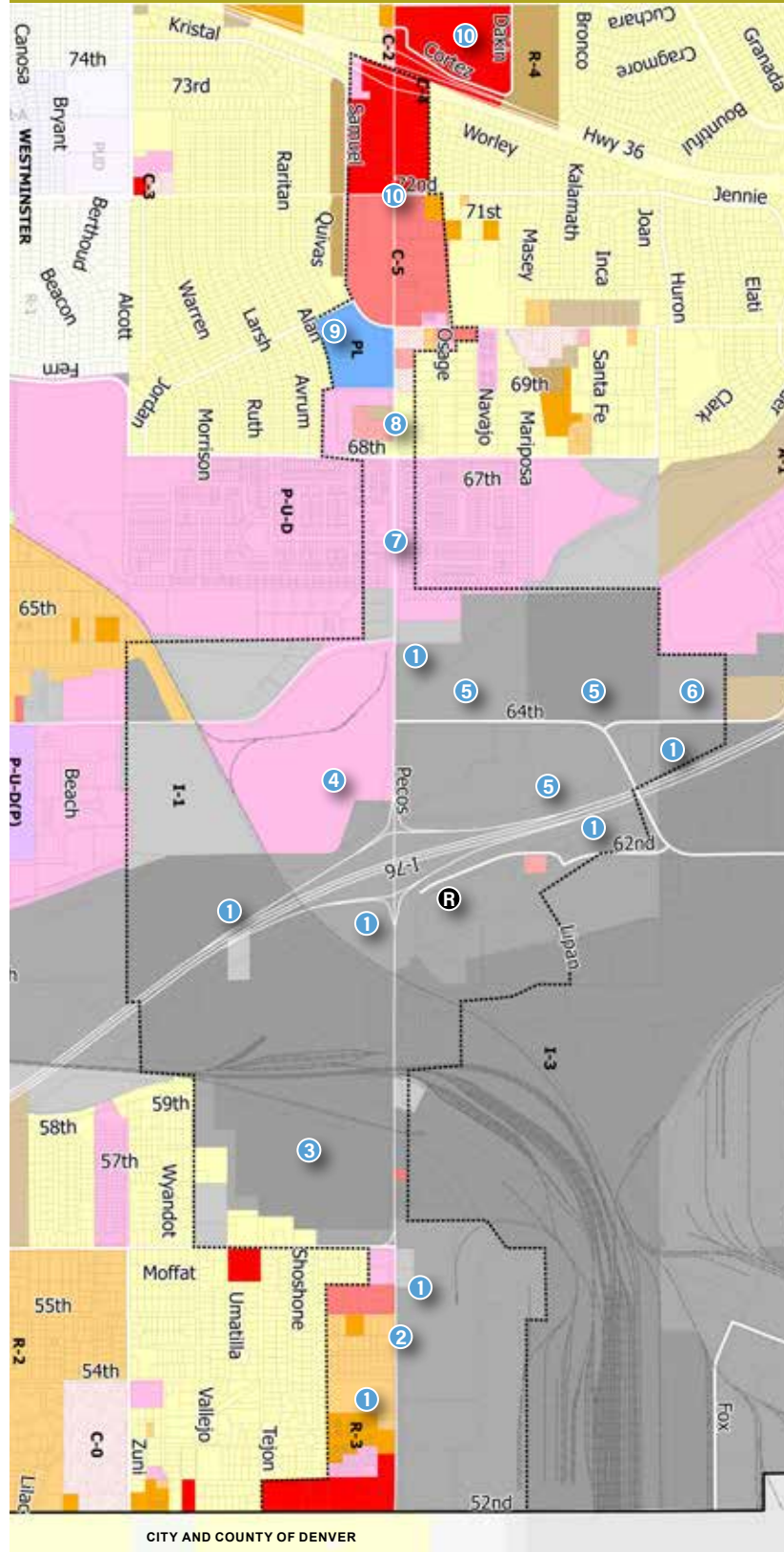
- addition of an urban plaza public space concept.
- » Low water use xeriscape landscaping is a strategy to introduce more plants to greenspace areas without reliance of excessive irrigation.
- » This corridor has the ability to serve as a gateway into Adams County and set a tone that is distinct yet relatable to Denver and Westminster through the use of district branding and placemaking.
- » Align land use concepts with the Federal Boulevard Corridor Framework Plan and the Health Impact Assessment and the current planning effort with the Federal Boulevard Corridor Study team.



**Figure 44:** Bus Stop at the Clear Creek/Federal RTD Station



**Figure 45:** Federal and West 60th Avenue Looking South



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

1: 24,000

**LEGEND**

**Adams County Zoning**

- Residential-1-C (R-1-C)
- Residential Two-Family (R-2)
- Residential Moderate Density (R-3)
- Residential High Density (R-4)
- Planned Unit Development (PUD)
- Planned Unit Development (PUD(P))
- Agricultural-1 (A-1)
- Commercial-0 (C-0)
- Commercial-2 (C-2)
- Commercial-3 (C-3)
- Commercial-4 (C-4)
- Commercial-5 (C-5)
- Industrial-1 (I-1)
- Industrial-2 (I-2)
- Industrial-3 (I-3)
- Public Lands, Parks, Open Space, and Facilities (PL)

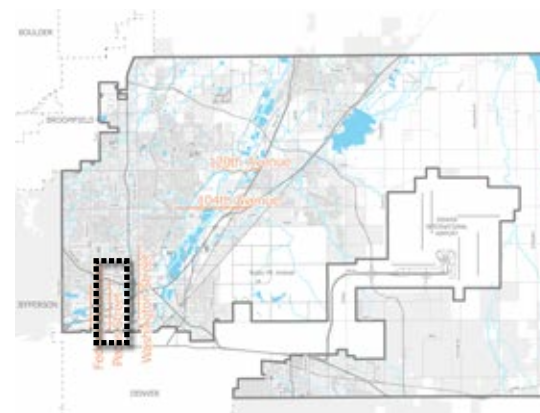
**Westminster Zoning**

- Single-family Medium Density (R-1)
- Planned Unit Development (PUD)

**Other**

- RTD Station
- Corridor Area

**Corridor Key Plan**



**Analysis Notes**

- 1 Vacant and underutilized Lots in industrial areas
- 2 Pecos Street Project (CIP Project)
- 3 Future Pecos Logistics Park area
- 4 Gravel mine areas
- 5 Storage lots and Parking lots for construction vehicles and logistics trucks.
- 6 Area for proposed Amazon facility
- 7 Midtown
- 8 Few vacant lots in commercial residential area
- 9 Elementary School and Fire Station
- 10 Autocentric commercial and services

**PECOS STREET EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS**

**Zoning and Land Uses**

The Pecos Street corridor includes a mix of commercial, industrial, and PUD lands, with some residential zoning. The southern portion of the corridor is primarily zoned for industrial uses. These uses are well served by adequate roadway infrastructure, access to I-76 and the railway yards.

Two upcoming logistics-related developments in the industrial area, Pecos Logistics Park and Amazon, will likely provide employment opportunities for Adams County residents. The Amazon facility proposed along West 64th Avenue and Pecos Logistics Park is being built south of the railroad along West 56th Avenue.

The southwest portion of the study area includes a mix of commercial and residential uses, presenting an incompatible adjacency with the surrounding industrial uses.

To the north, the Midtown neighborhood is centrally located along the Pecos Street corridor study area. The County assisted the developer in assembling key parcels to enable the redevelopment process. The development is modeled after a new urbanist concept with walkable streetscapes, housing diversity, and a median located on Pecos Street that supports pedestrian mobility and placemaking appeal.

North of the Midtown neighborhood is a mix of autocentric commercial and services in addition to a few residential units, an elementary school campus, and fire station.

Currently, Pecos Street does not appear to have a coherent land use approach considering the diversity of land uses that sometimes are incompatible.

**Environmental Justice**

The Pecos Street RTD station is located over an old landfill. Although the County sought to create additional land uses in this area, the presence of methane gases limits the uses

that could be placed here. This has resulted in the primary use as a park-and-ride lot.

Urban trees cannot be supported on this former landfill because of the contaminants that are present.

Pecos Street features numerous instances of no land use transition or a minimal transition between residential and industrial uses which may contribute to environmental injustices in the area.

### Transportation and Mobility

Walking from the Midtown neighborhood to the Pecos Street RTD station is not comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists despite the short one mile distance and presence of sidewalks. This is due to heavy truck traffic, no on-street parking or demarcated crosswalks, limited street trees and no appealing adjacent retail that typically helps to create pedestrian comfort. Furthermore,



Figure 46: Pecos Junction

pedestrian crossings are also lacking for east-west connections along Pecos and nearby the station. There are limited ADA connections throughout this corridor.

Westbound trucks make a channelized turn onto Pecos Street, which poses conflicts with pedestrians trying to access the station.

RTD's route 19 travels along Pecos Street, with some of the highest ridership stops in the County, at 72nd and 76th Avenues. This route also connects to the Pecos Junction commuter rail station, serving the B and G Lines. Most bus stops along Pecos Street currently lack stop amenities like shelters and benches. Enhancing the bus stops could help improve the transit user experience along the corridor.

Varying street conditions exist along Pecos Street such as unpaved roads that connect to Pecos, narrow roadways from the bridge to I-70, and various widening projects that do not allow for consistency and wayfinding for drivers along the corridor.

As outlined in the TMP, the County is implementing some improvements on Pecos Street between 52nd Avenue and Cargill Drive, which will significantly improve connectivity south of the rail station.

### Parks, Open Space and Trails

There is a significant opportunity to improve parks and trails access in the Pecos Street study area, as

outlined in the POST Plan. Some park space is located within the Midtown Neighborhood, however, those amenities are only for residents of Midtown.

There is a lack of access to the Clear Creek Trail from Pecos Street except via an unofficial social trail that traverses a steep slope.

Recreation facilities can be coordinated with the recreation amenities already implemented by the Mile High Flood District. These will be explored more as part of the POST Plan effort.

### Environment

As indicated in the Clear Creek Corridor Master Plan, flooding and drainage are an issue in this study area. This could be due to undersized infrastructure and failing irrigation laterals, as well as being within the Clear Creek floodplain, all of which impact the water quality.

### Wayfinding, Character and Image

Midtown's housing and streetscape along Pecos itself could serve as a broader placemaking approach for Pecos Street, particularly moving north on Pecos from Midtown. While Midtown has a Metro District that assists with maintenance of character and wayfinding assets, the character and image of Midtown could provide a starting place for an aesthetic, brand, and district.



Figure 48: Area Between US-36 and 70th Avenue



Figure 47: Midtown Development

The Clear Creek Trail is a location to expand a wayfinding program to guide trail users to and from the trail portals.

## OPPORTUNITIES

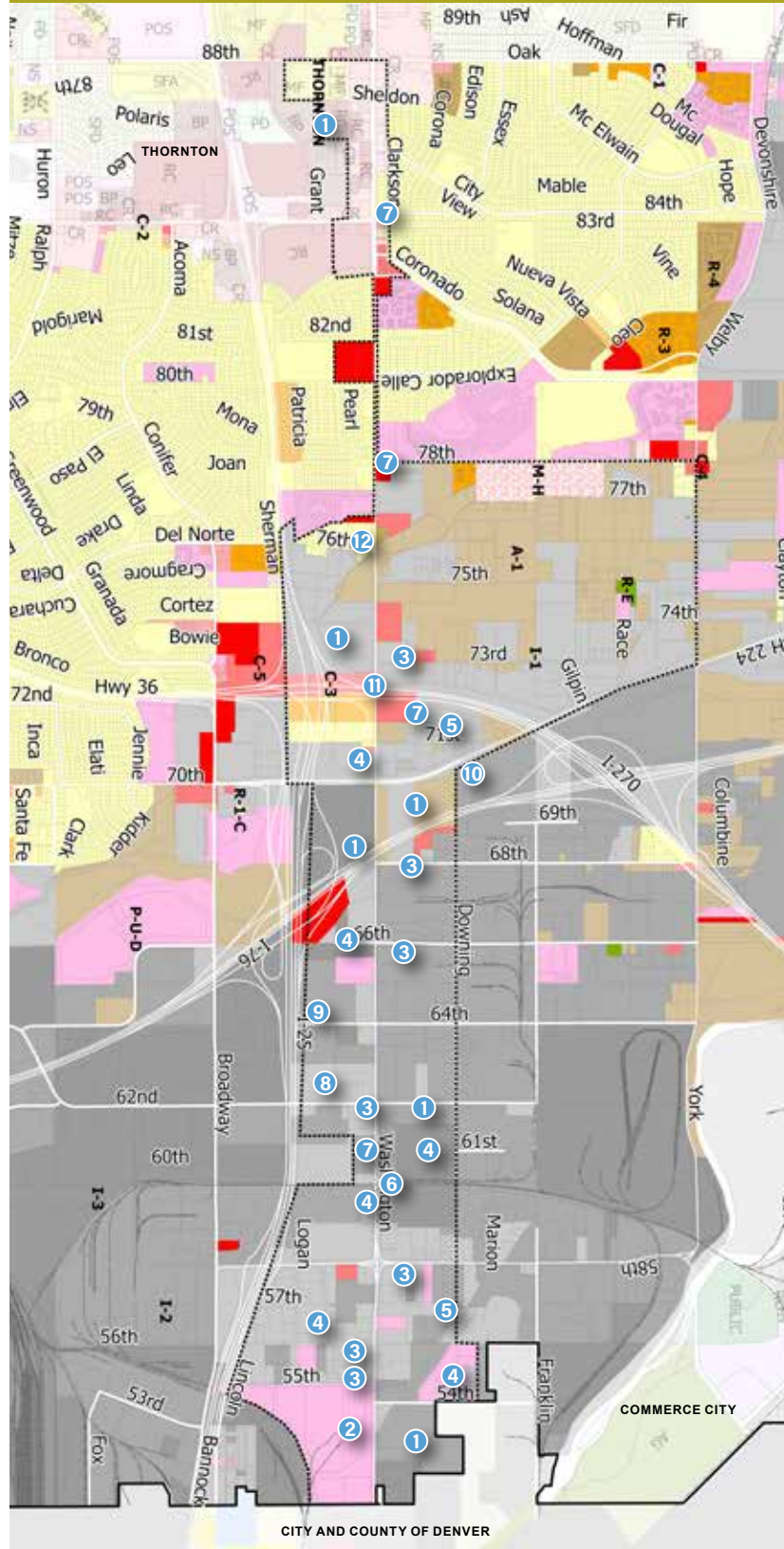
- » Higher density residential development could be introduced in the northern portion of the corridor, near Midtown, due to the strategic location between two freeways and the close connection to the transit station allowing for the development of a mixed-use transit-oriented development district that could include both neighborhood and regional uses to leverage nearby residential growth.
- » Careful consideration of appropriate land uses along the southern portion of the corridor is critical given the potential brownfield remediation that is required.
- » Pecos Street corridor has some exciting employment opportunities underway including the new Amazon facility and the Pecos Logistics Park. Combined with other industrial uses in this area, this will create an effective employment center for Adams County.
- » Landscape buffers could be better utilized and more substantial to assist in creating an equitable transition that supports livability and public health. Other ideas to create these placemaking transitions include the installation of public art, wayfinding, lighting, and street furniture.
- » There is an opportunity to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the RTD Pecos Station. Adams County Public Works is currently studying these items.
- » An off-road multi-use trail that includes pedestrian bridges over Clear Creek could be an alternative to pedestrian sidewalks

as a primary route from the Midtown Neighborhood and other nearby housing to the Pecos Street RTD station.

- » Low water use xeriscape landscaping is a strategy to introduce more plants to greenspace areas without reliance of excessive irrigation.
- » Bike lanes can be added to Pecos Street to create multimodal connections to Midtown.
- » Walkability can be improved through widening sidewalks, especially as they connect to the RTD station.
- » There is an opportunity to address the environmental flooding hazards by looking critically at the riparian health and habitat of Clear Creek.
- » There is an opportunity to expand a public art plan for this district at key locations like on the bridges, at transit stops, and as part of property redevelopment to enhance placemaking.



**Figure 49:** Industrial Activity Behind Residential Areas on West 67<sup>th</sup> Avenue Looking South

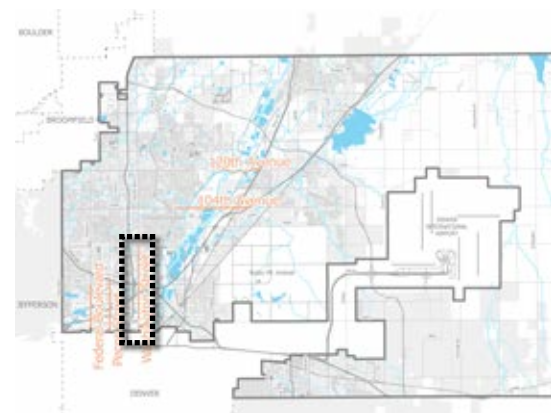


Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop 1: 36,000

**LEGEND**

<b>Adams County Zoning</b>	
<b>Thornton Zoning</b>	
<b>Commerce City Zoning</b>	
<b>Other</b>	

**Corridor Key Plan**



**Analysis Notes**

- 1 Vacant lots
- 2 Crossroads Commerce Park PUD (business park)
- 3 CIP Projects
- 4 Industrial areas
- 5 Storage
- 6 Cross section goes from four to six lanes
- 7 Autocentric commercial strips or activity
- 8 Denver Merchandise Mart
- 9 Academy of Charter Schools campus
- 10 Clear Creek and Trail
- 11 I-270 Corridor Environmental Assessment (regional project)
- 12 Large residential lots with some vacancies

**WASHINGTON STREET**

**EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS**

**Zoning and Land Uses**

Washington Street is a north-south Principal Arterial with three distinct characters across its extent—1. the northern segment is primarily autocentric commercial; 2. the section next to Welby has a unique character with a mix of uses; and 3. south of I-270 is primarily light industrial.

The Welby area between East 78th Street and I-270 features primarily small-scale agriculture and light industrial from I-25 to the west and Welby Road to the east. Fragmented autocentric commercial parcels are present along Washington Street.

Despite the agricultural land uses in Welby, this area of Washington Street lacks adequate food access to serve the population. A new grocery store or year-round farmers market could satisfy this need.

About two miles south of the study area, Washington Street intersects with Brighton Boulevard in the River North Art District of the City and County of Denver, which is a

successful destination neighborhood with an industrial heritage and artful creative placemaking. The appeal of this district makes it an appropriate case study for Washington Street to consider.

Another nearby destination to the south is the National Western Center. With an agriculture heritage, the Welby area is well-suited to better align and connect to this destination and resource.

**Environmental Justice**

With such a strong focus on industrial uses, this corridor does not offer many residential units. While not directly on Washington Street, there are many residences in Welby that would be well-served by more commercial/neighborhood focused uses along Washington in the area of and to the north of East 73rd Avenue. There is also evidence of homeless persons populating the triangular land area between I-25, I-270 and I-76.

**Transportation and Mobility**

Overall, Washington Street is a road that accommodates large truck traffic associated with the adjacent industrial uses, especially south of I-76.

Very wide roads with high traffic volumes, high speeds, large trucks and noise create

an unpleasant experience for bicyclists and pedestrians.

To the north of Welby and near Thornton, the autocentric commercial strips feature frequent curb cuts creating conflicts for pedestrians. This area also includes narrower attached sidewalks that are less comfortable for pedestrians. Limited street trees further contribute to a lack of walkability.

Without a vegetated buffer between the sidewalk and the roadway, attached sidewalks create an uncomfortable pedestrian experience.

Many barriers for pedestrians and cyclists create challenges for connectivity such as highways, rivers and railroads. At grade crossings in the Welby area are especially difficult for pedestrians and cyclists without adequate space allocated for all mode users.

RTD's route 12 serves Washington Street at 30-minute frequency seven days per week. The existing bus stops on Washington Street do not provide riders with a comfortable place to wait for the bus. The attached sidewalks leading to the bus stops means that transit riders must wait for the bus adjacent to traffic.

### Parks, Open Space and Trails

The Washington Street Corridor bisects the Clear Creek Trail. The Welby plan envisions another open space/park to improve connections to the South Platte River. Both the Clear Creek Trail and the South Platte Trail can serve as important amenities for both residents and employees in this area.

The proximity and heritage of the National Western Center would justify improved connections from Welby including a dedicated equestrian trail.

### Environment

Streetscape planting with trees along Washington Street is a challenge because of the lack of irrigation for the right of way.

### Wayfinding, Character and Image

The Washington Street corridor is in critical need of a bold vision and placemaking appeal.

The corridor has many assets like the small-scale agriculture in the Welby area and a strong industrial heritage south of I-76. Thoughtful policies for land and water rights will be required to protect the sense of heritage during the comprehensive planning process.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- » With a unique mix of light industrial, residential, and agricultural character, Washington Street has the potential to strengthen its identity and become the Creative Center of Adams County that includes a dynamic food hub destination.
- » To support a creative destination, affordable artist live work units can be introduced.
- » A renewable energy production area solar farm is an innovative idea for this small wedge of land between I-76, I-270 and I-25.
- » Wider sidewalks that allow pedestrians more area to move could be added to this corridor. There is also an

opportunity to improve sidewalk conditions for ADA-compliance which would include adequate width, slope and curb ramps with detectable warning texture.

- » There is an opportunity for bus shelters and amenities along Washington Street, especially since there are a lack of trees and shade.
- » The road network can be improved between the Welby area and the National Western Center to better connect local small-scale farms with the heritage and resources at the Western Center. Some suggestions include adding equestrian trails or an unpaved multi-use path that links the National Western Center to the Riverdale Regional Park.
- » A walkable road diet with lane width and vehicle speed reduction is viable between East 73rd Avenue and East 78th Avenue.
- » Safe connections for pedestrian and bike access to the trails in this area could provide recreation and commuting opportunities. There are also opportunities for a public gathering space in Welby and within the industrial areas south of I-76. The typology of public spaces would follow a land use approach.
- » In terms of trails, there is an opportunity to connect to Clear Creek by creating at-grade trail connections from Washington Street.
- » There is an opportunity to improve drainage to Clear Creek



Figure 50: Autocentric Activity



Figure 51: Industrial Areas

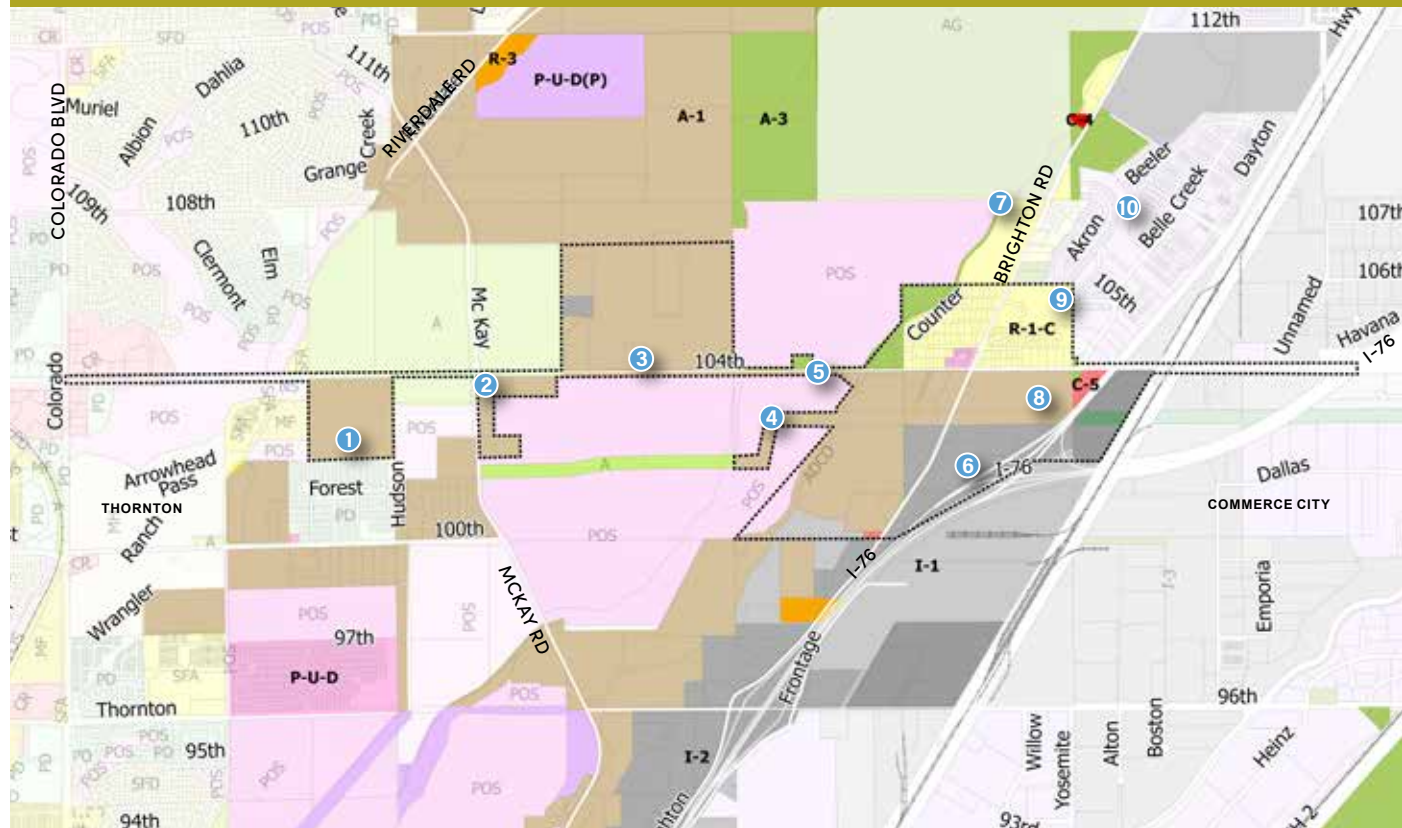


Figure 52: Residential Lots Near East 78th Avenue

through the use of surface-treatment stormwater BMPs such as bioswales and other systems that slow runoff and filter pollutants. In the event easements are created to support green infrastructure, additional off-road trails can also be introduced.

- » Typical elements the County funds in CIP projects have the opportunity to contribute to the sense of place. Placemaking elements like light fixtures, pavement surfaces, retaining walls, wayfinding, public art and bus shelters can all play a role in contributing to the brand of the Welby area and the Washington Street industrial area.

# MAP 40: EAST WEST CORRIDOR - EAST 104TH AVENUE ZONING ANALYSIS



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

## LEGEND

### Adams County Zoning

- Agricultural-1 (A-1)
- Agricultural-3 (A-3)
- Residential-1-C (R-1-C)
- Residential Moderate Density (R-3)
- Industrial-1 (I-1)
- Industrial-2 (I-2)
- Industrial-3 (I-3)
- Commercial-4 (C-4)
- Commercial-5 (C-5)

### Commerce City Zoning

- Planned Unit Development (PUD)
- Agricultural (AG)
- Single-Family Detached Residential (R-1)
- Multi-Family Residential (R-3)
- Public (PUBLIC)

### Thornton Zoning

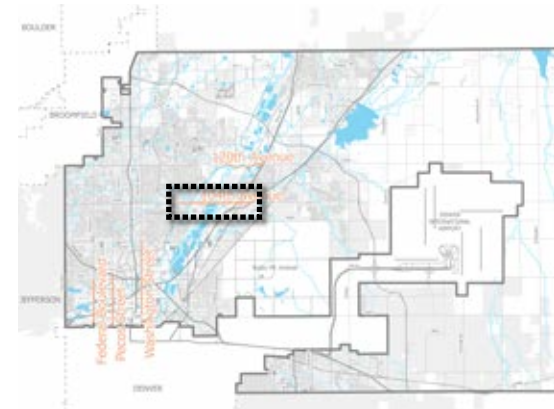
- Single-Family Detached (SFD)
- Single-Family Attached (SFA)
- Multifamily (MF)
- Agricultural (A)
- Parks/Open Space (POS)
- Planned Development (PD)
- Community Retail (CR)

### Other

- Corridor Area

1 : 36,000

### Corridor Key Plan



### Analysis Notes

- 1 Agricultural Land
- 2 Commercial and light industrial uses with areas that have piles of aggregates
- 3 Elaine T. Valente Park and Open Space
- 4 Empty and unused spaces
- 5 Connection to the South Platte trail
- 6 Light industrial uses and warehouses
- 7 Future nature playground and Adams County planned trail connection to South Platte Trail
- 8 Agricultural land that might be underutilized
- 9 Relatively large and undeveloped parcel
- 10 Belle Creek Neighborhood (Commerce City)

## EAST 104<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE

### EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

#### Zoning and Land Uses

The East 104th Avenue corridor stretches between Colorado Boulevard to the west and I-76 to the east. This corridor also intersects with municipalities - Thornton to the west and Commerce City to the east.

The land uses within the unincorporated areas in the study area are primarily agriculture with some residential and industrial uses.

The residential units in this area are suburban-style and relatively low density. Primarily older residential units are located to the west and more recently built residential units are located to the east. Commercial uses are primarily strip malls.

#### Transportation and Mobility

East 104th Avenue is a high volume route and provides access to I-76, Highway 85, and Denver International Airport for passenger vehicles and truck traffic.

At the intersection of East 104th Avenue and Highway 85, a grade separated crossing is currently being considered. Issues with this intersection include a rapid decrease in speed limit from 65 miles per hour to 30 miles per hour upon approach at this intersection. The multiple turn lanes and wide right turns create an uncomfortable experience for pedestrians despite the presence of dedicated crosswalks.

The railroad crossing presents a challenge for pedestrian and cyclist traffic. Additionally, the Brighton Boulevard intersection presents safety challenges especially for cyclists.

Transit service on the corridor is provided by RTD's 104 route, which has relatively low ridership. Transit access on the corridor is limited due to both the existing low density land uses but also a lack of sidewalks and comfortable places to wait for the bus.

Overall, this corridor lacks a multi-modal approach, in particular for accessing Elaine T. Valente Open Space and the existing South Platte Trail. Some progress is currently

underway to create a trail connection from the Belle Creek Neighborhood (Commerce City) and the South Platte Trail.

Toward the east of the County, East 104th Avenue transitions to an unpaved dirt road east of Imboden Road.

### Parks, Open Space and Trails

There are multiple trail projects underway in this area, including a new trail connection between the Front Range Trail and the South Platte Trail near Brighton Road and East 104th Avenue, as well as a trail connection between the Belle Creek Neighborhood and the South Platte Trail.

### Environment

Environmental assets along East 104th Avenue includes the South Platte River. Some flooding and stormwater issues have the potential to be addressed.

### Wayfinding, Character and Image

The character of this portion of East 104th Avenue is rural and park-like. This character can be built upon as redevelopment and roadway improvements occur over time.

The different jurisdictions along this corridor presents a challenge in developing a consistent land use vision, as well as coordinating transportation improvements. However, this also presents an

opportunity for partnerships and collaborations.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- » Given the proximity of the local municipalities in this area, a key opportunity for this corridor is to foster partnerships with adjacent municipalities on a land use vision for this corridor.
- » Updated and new sidewalks, transit stop facilities and improved bicycle routes will all contribute to a multi-modal approach along this corridor.
- » Trail connections have the potential to be located along the East 104th Avenue roadway.
- » Given the current road configuration and existing character that is present between US 36 and Federal Boulevard, East 104th Avenue could become an east-west Parkway with planted medians and other elements that would support a smaller scale feel and more rural appeal.
- » Similar to East 120th Avenue, this corridor crosses the South Platte River. There is an opportunity to introduce a variety of stormwater BMPs and restoration projects via a Nature Park concept. This could assist with the periodic flooding that occurs around the river and build resilience into the ecosystem. Concepts related to the river should be coordinated with the planning group working on the South Platte River Corridor Plan.



Figure 53: Residential Area



Figure 55: Grandview Ponds



Figure 54: Access to trail and crossing of South Platte River



Figure 56: Undeveloped Spaces



Figure 57: Brighton Road intersecting 104th Avenue



# MAP 41: EAST WEST CORRIDOR - EAST 120TH AVENUE ZONING ANALYSIS



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

1 : 22,000

## LEGEND

### Adams County Zoning

- Agricultural-1 (A-1)
- Agricultural-2 (A-2)
- Agricultural-3 (A-3)
- Residential Estate (R-E)
- Public Lands, Parks, Open Space, and Facilities (PL)
- Planned Unit Development (P-U-D)
- Industrial-1 (I-1)
- Industrial-2 (I-2)
- Industrial-3 (I-3)
- Commercial-2 (C-2)
- Commercial-3 (C-3)
- Commercial-4 (C-4)
- Commercial-5 (C-5)

### Thornton Zoning

- Single-Family Detached (SFD)
- Parks/Open Space (POS)

### Commerce City Zoning

- Planned Unit Development (PUD)

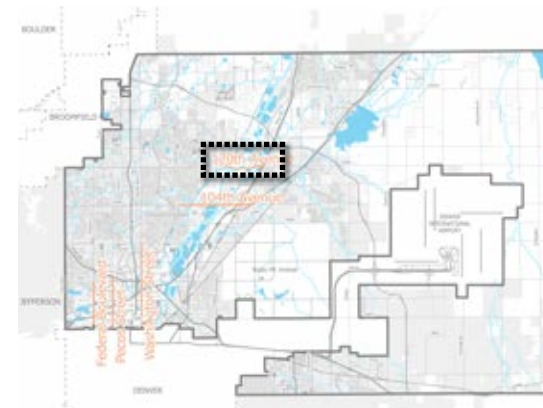
### Brighton Zoning

- Light Industrial (I-1)
- Mixed-Density Residential (R-2)
- Public Lands (PL)
- Restricted Retail and Services (C-2)
- Planned Unit Development (PUD)

### Other

- Corridor Area

### Corridor Key Plan



### Analysis Notes

- 1 Underutilized or undeveloped spaces
- 2 Connection to the South Platte Trail
- 3 Riverdale Regional Park
- 4 Vacant plot with potential; basin south of 120th Ave
- 5 Speer Inert Landfill Site. Large vacant areas around.
- 6 Agricultural land
- 7 Large lot with parked trucks
- 8 Some undeveloped parcels
- 9 Empty lot near Residential PUD
- 10 River Run Park

## EAST 120<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE

### EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

#### Zoning and Land Uses

The East 120th Avenue corridor stretches between Riverdale Road to the west and Peoria Street to the east. This corridor also intersects with municipalities; Thornton to the west and Commerce City and Brighton to the east.

East 120th Avenue features mostly large lot estate residential development with some agriculture and the gateway access to Riverdale Regional Park.

#### Transportation and Mobility

East 120th Avenue is a roadway that traverses the entire width of Adams County from east to west. In this study area, it is a wide right of way that alternates between two and three lanes in each direction.

In the future, access to US 85 will be discontinued from East 124th Avenue, which will result in increased demand

for the access at US 85 and East 120th Avenue. Currently, US 85 and East 120th Avenue experience congestion during the morning commute. A potential solution has been studied to grade separate the intersection. Although the concept has support from the railroad, funding has not been allocated.

Pedestrian and cyclist connectivity issues prevent even nearby residents from visiting Riverdale Regional Park by foot or by bike.

#### Parks, Open Space and Trails

Riverdale Regional Park is a remarkable asset along this corridor. The 2012 Riverdale Regional Park Master Plan identified an opportunity to integrate civic amenities and facilities within the park such as the recent Animal Shelter. Other potential civic uses and developments can be explored to further establish Riverdale Regional Park as a destination for nature and culture.

#### Environment

Environmental assets along East 120th Avenue includes the South Platte River

and Riverdale Regional Park. Some flooding and stormwater issues have the potential to be addressed.

### Wayfinding, Character and Image

There are unique opportunities along the East 120th corridor to define the character and image of the area. This stretch of corridor functions as a transition from east to west in the County especially for those travelling to and from Denver International Airport.

Additionally, Riverdale Regional Park is a major asset that serves as a destination that connects municipalities and neighborhoods along the corridor. The main entrance to the park is located directly off East 120th Avenue with gateway signage.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- » A key opportunity for this corridor is to foster partnerships with adjacent municipalities to determine a common vision for the roadway, improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to Riverdale Regional Park and facilitate coordinated implementation. The corridor should feel more scenic in nature as it leads up to Riverdale Regional Park and intersects with the proposed scenic byway at Riverdale Road.
- » The County should confirm if this roadway is best suited as a State Highway since that consideration has been suggested by some County leaders.
- » Feasibility and funding should be established to grade separate

the interchange with US 85 to accommodate the increase in traffic anticipated in the area with the closure of the East 124th Avenue access to the highway.

- » The East 120th Avenue corridor area could be a potential connector portal for access to a variety of regional trail systems and destinations via a loop trail. Connections can be made to a variety of destinations of natural and cultural heritage and creating a memorable experience for residents and visitors. The regional trail loop would connect the Denver International Airport, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, National Western Center, South Platte Trail, Clear Creek Trail and the Colorado Front Range Trail.
- » Similar to East 104th Avenue, this corridor crosses the South Platte River. There is an opportunity to introduce a variety of stormwater BMPs and restoration projects. This could assist with the periodic flooding that occurs around the river and build resilience into the ecosystem. Concepts related to the river should be coordinated with the planning group working on the South Platte River Corridor Plan.
- » East 120th Avenue has significant opportunity for a recognizable character which could be inspired by the area's history, a threshold between the eastern and western portion of the County as well as the environmental assets that include the South Platte River and Riverdale Regional Park.



Figure 58: Local Single-Family Housing



Figure 60: Scenic View from Riverdale Regional Park



Figure 59: Southern entrance to Riverdale Regional Park



Figure 61: Undeveloped Areas



Figure 62: Large Crossing at Brighton Road with Trail Access and Bus Stop

# LOOKING FORWARD



Federal Boulevard Between  
67th Ave and 70th Ave

This section includes the draft Land Use Framework and next steps relevant for Phase Two.

## LAND USE ANALYSIS DRAFT FRAMEWORK

As the Advancing Adams process moves forward, the Comprehensive Plan team will explore potential development scenarios for the County, including along the five strategic corridors. While this will be detailed in Phase 2 with significant community input and guidance, two initial tools for a land use analysis framework have been identified as foundational aspects for the next Phase:

1. the Adams County Transect
2. 20-Minute Community

## ADAMS COUNTY TRANSECT

The Adams County Transect represents the types of development patterns that can be found in Adams County and, to some degree, their ideal adjacencies that represent a sequence of logical density that transitions incrementally from high to low and low to high.

The least dense of the areas is Natural. This area is mostly undeveloped land and natural areas that may have a recreation component.

The next area is Rural. This area includes large lot residential and large-scale agriculture.

After Rural is Suburban. Suburban type development mostly consists of single-family homes and strip mall or big box store type commercial.

The next Adams County Transect is Urban Edge. This development pattern includes low-rise buildings with walkable block patterns. Residential typologies are all varieties of multi-unit housing.

The most dense of the Adams County Transect is the Urban Activity Center, which includes medium-rise building with walkable block patterns in a mixed-use context. Residential typologies are all multi-unit housing.

Campus Districts is another development pattern that is typical of a campus type appearance, a collection of related buildings such as a hospital or government center.

The final Adams County Transect is Industrial. This type of development pattern is distinct for Adams County since it is such a prominent land use in some areas. By defining this development pattern in the Adams County Transect, criteria can be determined for where this is best suited and what planning considerations should be established such as buffers and adjacencies.

Review the "Adams County land use framework: Adams County Transect" on page 164 for more information.

Importantly, within each transect there are considerations for transportation and mobility, as well as parks, open space and trails, providing a critical linkage to the Transportation Master Plan and the Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan are encompassed

in the Advancing Adams planning effort.

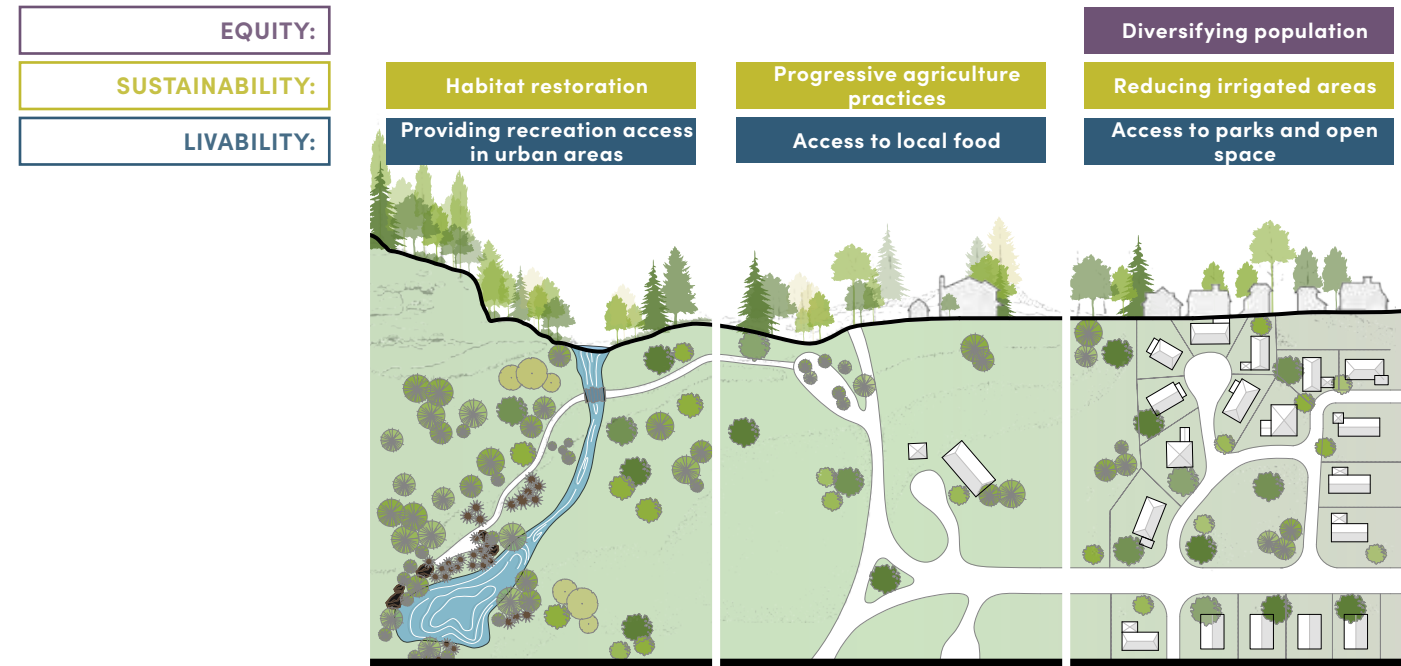


Figure 64: Pecos Street Between US-36 and 70th Ave



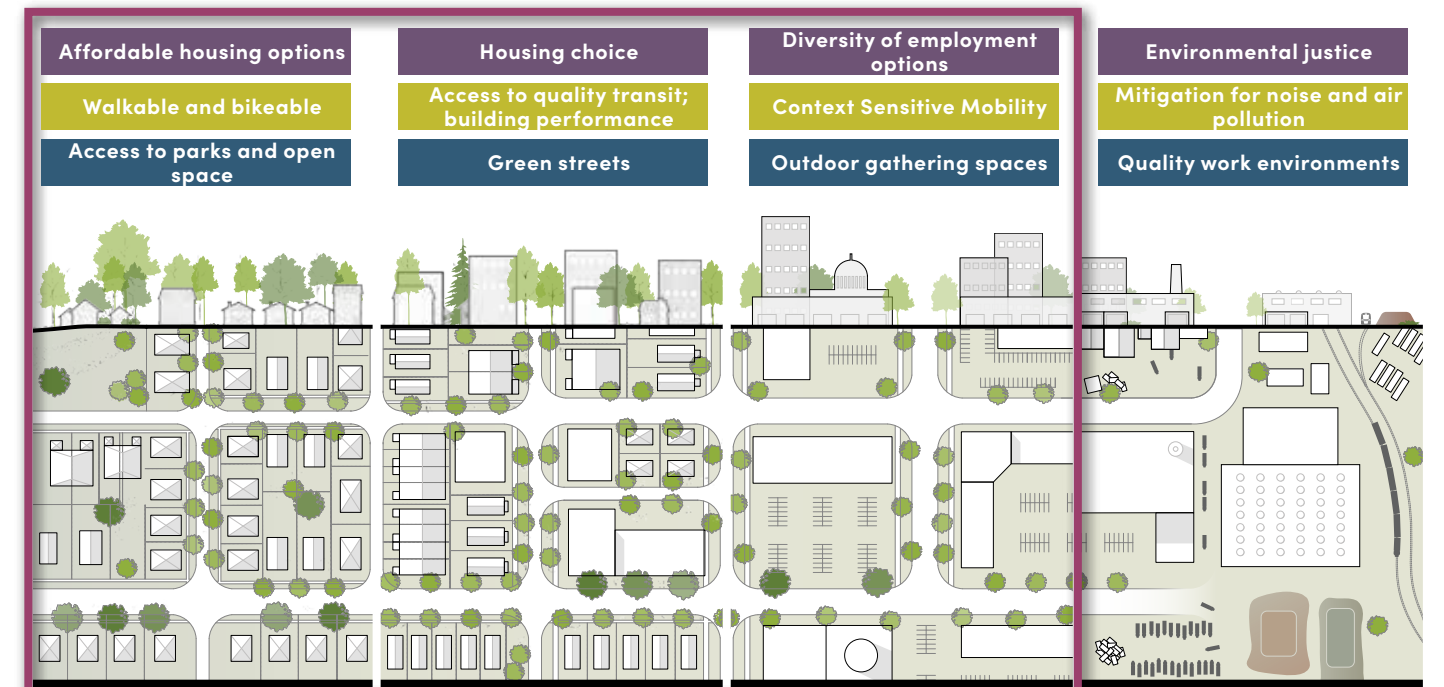
Figure 63: Industrial Areas on Washington Street between 54th Ave and I-76

VALUE LENS CONSIDERATIONS:



	NATURAL	RURAL	SUBURBAN
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Undeveloped and mostly intact lands generally reserved for parks and open space.	Areas located outside towns and cities that host a less dense population.	Residential areas often located at the periphery of urban areas.
<b>LAND USES</b>	» Parks and open space (and other protected lands)	» Large-scale agriculture » Residential Low » Parks and Open Space » Institutional	» Residential Medium » Residential Low » Commercial Regional » Commercial » Institutional » Industrial High » Industrial Low » Parks and Open Space » Small-scale Agriculture » Neighborhood Retail
<b>DEVELOPMENT PATTERN</b>	Naturalized area with some recreation development. Few small scale buildings or structures may be found for accessory uses.	Generally no rigid or strict urban form exists. Roads and parcels mostly follow a rural-scale grid or the topography. Buildings are typically set back from the road and mostly consist of residential homes and agriculture-related structures.	Block patterns are generally irregular with curvilinear streets. Alleys are not common. Buildings are typically set back from the street and range in scale. (Residential density will be determined in Phase 2)
<b>PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS</b>	» Open space » Natural areas » Conservation lands » Trail Connections	» Open space » Natural areas » Conservation lands » Trail Connections	» Open space » Parks » Trail Connections
<b>MOBILITY</b>	Large areas within this transect may not be accessible by cars. Areas that are accessed by cars include small parking areas. Trails and bike paths may be found. Availability of transit may be limited to some trailheads or nodes.	Mostly reliant on cars. Availability of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure might be limited. Transit services most likely unavailable.	More reliant on cars, but with areas that are walkable, accessible and bikeable with access to transit along major roadways and access to parks and open space.

20-Minute Community Aspiration Areas (see page 166)



	URBAN EDGE	URBAN ACTIVITY CENTER	CAMPUS DISTRICTS	INDUSTRIAL
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Transitional density between the Urban Activity Center and Suburban areas.	The most dense areas of the County with a high mix of different uses typically in multi-story, mixed-use building forms in a walkable environment.	Areas that serve a specific purpose, usually highly specific based on uses that could range from institutions to creative districts.	Industrial lands that host a variety of different industrial uses.
<b>LAND USES</b>	» Residential High » Residential Medium » Commercial » Institutional » Mixed Use » Parks and Open Space » Neighborhood Retail	» Residential High » Commercial » Institutional » Activity Center » Mixed Use » Parks and Open Space » Transit Oriented Development » Neighborhood Retail	» Residential High » Residential Medium » Commercial » Institutional » Activity Center » Mixed Use » Industrial High » Industrial Low » Parks and Open Space	» Commercial Regional » Industrial High » Industrial Low
<b>DEVELOPMENT PATTERN</b>	Walkable regular block patterns with a mix of alley access (as available) and street access. Buildings are lower scale and built along the street with minimal setback that allows for a small front yard or porch. A mix of residential building types and some neighborhood-scale commercial and retail. (Residential density will be determined in Phase 2)	Walkable block patterns are regular with consistent alley access (as available). A minimum of two-story buildings with minimal setback and/or building "build to" line. Shops and businesses on first floor with offices or residences on upper floors. Open space takes the form of urban plazas. (Residential density will be determined in Phase 2)	Block patterns, building form, and building scale vary based on the specific use. Some campus districts will present in the form of a campus and others may appear more like an Urban Activity Center pattern.	No consistent urban pattern, building form, or building scale. Each varies based on the specific use.
<b>PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS</b>	» Parks » Trail Connections	» Parks » Trail Connections	» Open space » Parks » Trail Connections	
<b>MOBILITY</b>	Some reliance on cars, but still walkable and bikeable with access to transit, parks and open space.	Minimal reliance on cars, a "park once and walk district" with high levels of pedestrian and bicycle use and good access to high-capacity transit. On street parking with parking garages or surface lots within the core of the blocks.	The transportation network varies by district, typically responding to specific conditions due to land use, built form and surrounding context.	Heavy reliance on cars and trucks. Relatively lower level of pedestrian and bicycle activity even though sidewalk and bicycle access are important in these areas. Some areas may have good access to high-capacity transit.

## 20-MINUTE COMMUNITY ASPIRATION AREAS

Many communities across the world, big and small, are using the 20-minute city<sup>1</sup> as a strategy to implement livability and equity-minded policies that also support sustainability goals. Governments at various scales are embracing the forward-thinking concept at the national level down to the city level including Boulder; Melbourne, Australia; Detroit, Michigan; and Portland, Oregon. Communities like Ottawa and Minneapolis are also aspiring to this concept but by a different name - Intensification.

<sup>1</sup> The 20 Minute City was jointly authored by adjunct professor John Stanley from the Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies at the University of Sydney Business School, Dr Janet Stanley social policy adviser for Stanley & Co, and Stephen Davis, industry development and planning manager for BusVic

### What is a 20-minute community?

The 20-minute community is an urban planning concept where essential services (such as grocery stores) and amenities (such as public parks) are accessible within a 20-minute low stress walk, bike ride or transit ride.

In reference to the Adams County Transect, the 20-minute community is an appropriate goal for more dense areas of Adams County including the Urban Activity Center and Urban Edge. These two areas represent the 20-minute community inner ring as depicted in Figure 65. Campus Districts are included in the outer ring since those areas are primarily where institutions such as hospitals and higher education campuses can be found.

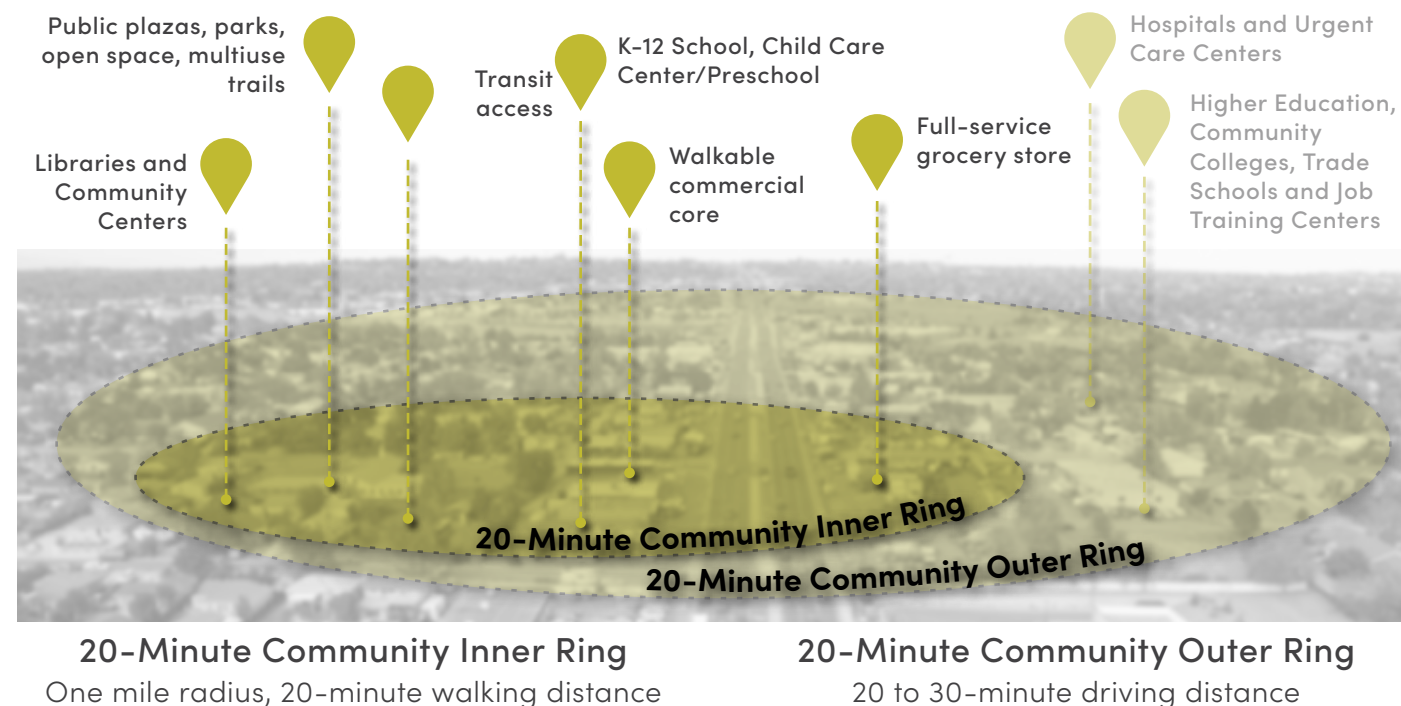
The 20-minute community concept aligns with the intent to achieve an equitable distribution of amenities, services, facilities and low stress multi-modal transportation facilities that provide access to those destinations. The 20-minute community is one framework to achieve the County's goal and measure progress over time.

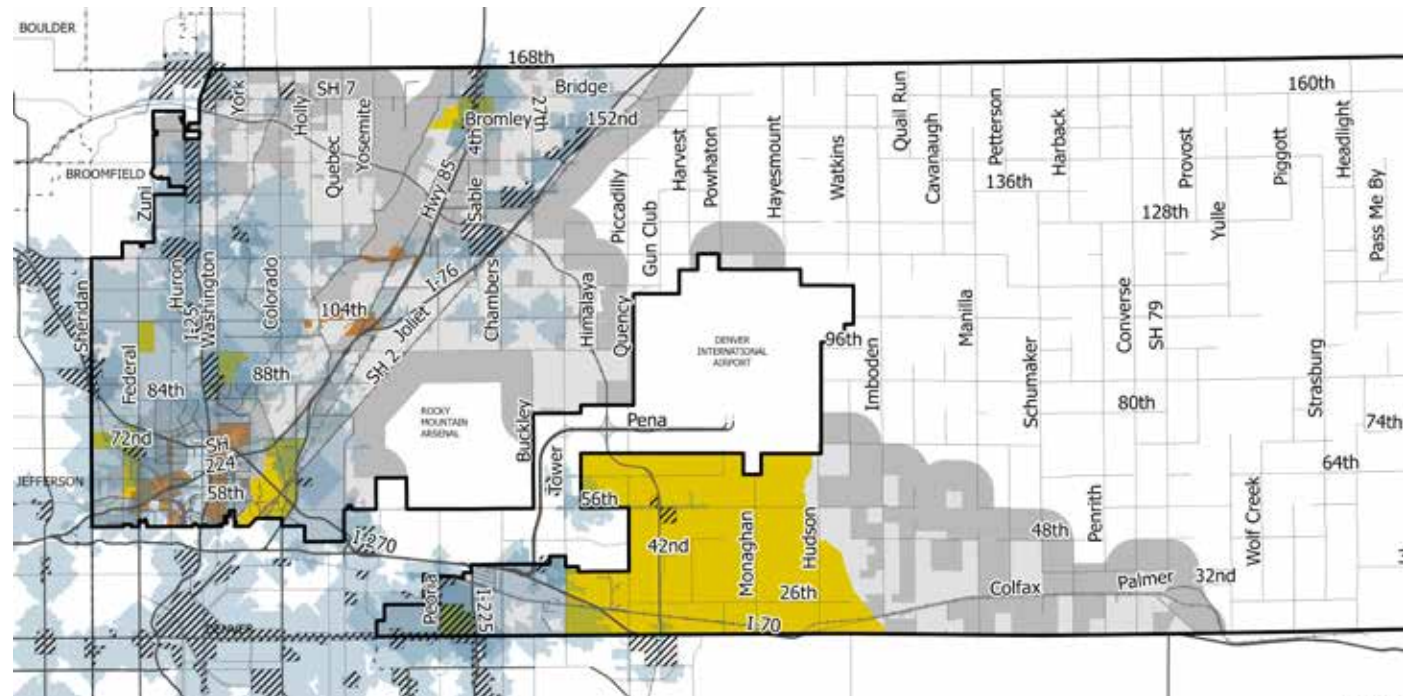
### 20-Minute Community and the Five Strategic Corridors

The Planning team is in the process of evaluating the County as a whole for successful communities and gaps in the 20-Minute Community framework, and this work will be advanced in Phase 2 of Advancing Adams. When this analysis is complete, we can then identify how land use changes can assist in promoting the effort to equitably distribute essential services and amenities throughout the County.

Initially gaps in parks service areas and accessibility to transit stations were indicated as two equity and livability concerns for the three North South corridors.

**Figure 65:** Adams County Land Use Framework 20-Minute Community Aspiration Areas
















Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE 

**LEGEND**

-  Urban Centers Service Area (1 Mile)
-  Bus Service Area (1 Mile)
-  Rail Service Area (1 Mile)
-  DRCOG Urban Centers
-  Opportunity Zones by Census Tract
-  Corridor Subareas
- Buffer
-  1 Mile
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Adams County Boundary
-  Railroads
-  Roads

**POTENTIAL AREAS FOR GROWTH AND CHANGE DRAFT FRAMEWORK**

Phase 1 represents the existing conditions and opportunities for the land use analysis component of the Comprehensive Plan. Some initial opportunities for growth areas include: areas in proximity to urban centers, transit stops, opportunity zones, strategic corridor areas and/or areas within one mile of municipal areas. These are initial ideas about where growth can occur and where density can be focused for the future of Adams County. These generalized ideas for growth areas will be analyzed further in Phase 2 in collaboration with the client, stakeholders and general public.

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## NEXT STEPS

This Existing Conditions Report concludes Phase One of the Comprehensive Plan planning effort. It lays the groundwork for Phase Two where recommendations will be crafted that will forge a path forward to help achieve the vision for Adams County to be “...the most innovative and inclusive County in America for all families and businesses.”

In Phase Two of the planning process, this baseline information will be paired with feedback from the public. Additionally, recommendations will be coordinated across concurrent planning efforts including the Transportation Master Plan and Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan. Projects, programs and policies will be prioritized with guidance for implementation.

Future land use categories and land use scenarios will be used as a tool to evaluate various strategies for managing growth in a way that is proactive and aligned with the County values of equity, sustainability and livability.

Additionally, new data from the 2020 Census is anticipated to be available later in 2021. Phase Two will integrate the most recent data in the Adams County Comprehensive Plan.

Phase Two and the updated Adams County Comprehensive Plan is expected to be complete in December 2021.

Phase Two of the Comprehensive Plan Process will explore three main questions for the community at-large through the lenses of the County’s values:

### 1. How does the County want to grow?

The population of Adams County will increase by about 200,000 people in 20 years. In Phase Two, land use frameworks will be evaluated through multiple growth scenarios to determine the best option for Adams County.

### 2. What are the tools to keep Adams County on track?

Policies, recommendations, programs and projects are all pieces of the puzzle that help Adams County accommodate growth into the future while staying true to the core values.

### 3. How can we get there?

In Phase Two, an action plan will be developed that provides clear implementation steps and ongoing reporting guidance to keep the Comprehensive Plan moving the County forward with equity, sustainability and livability in mind.

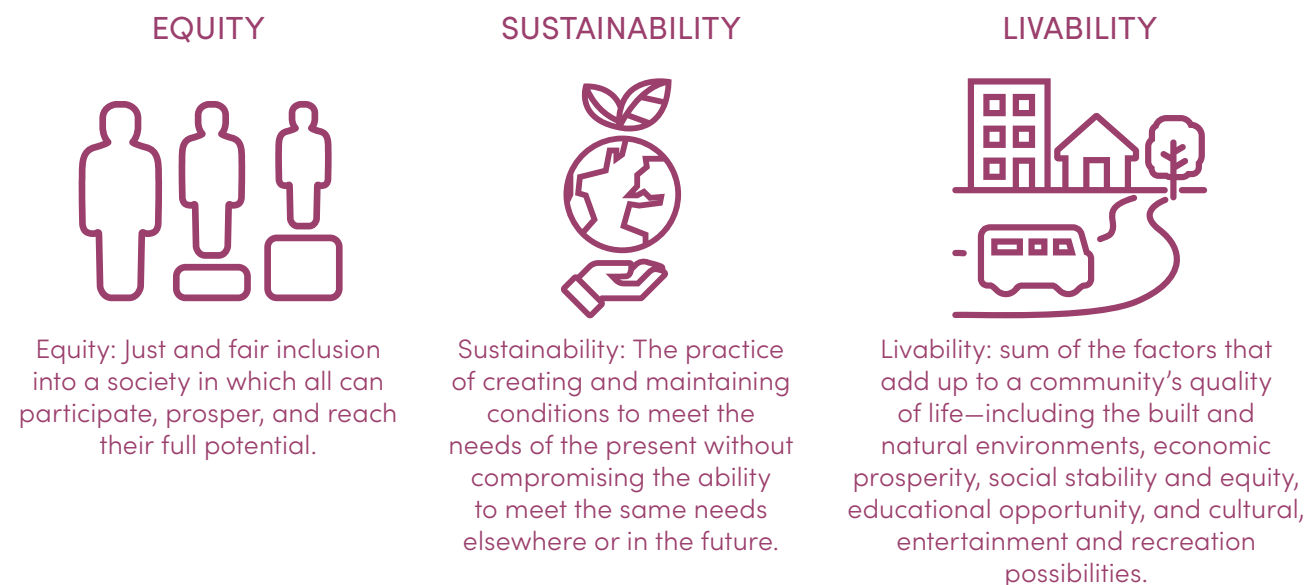


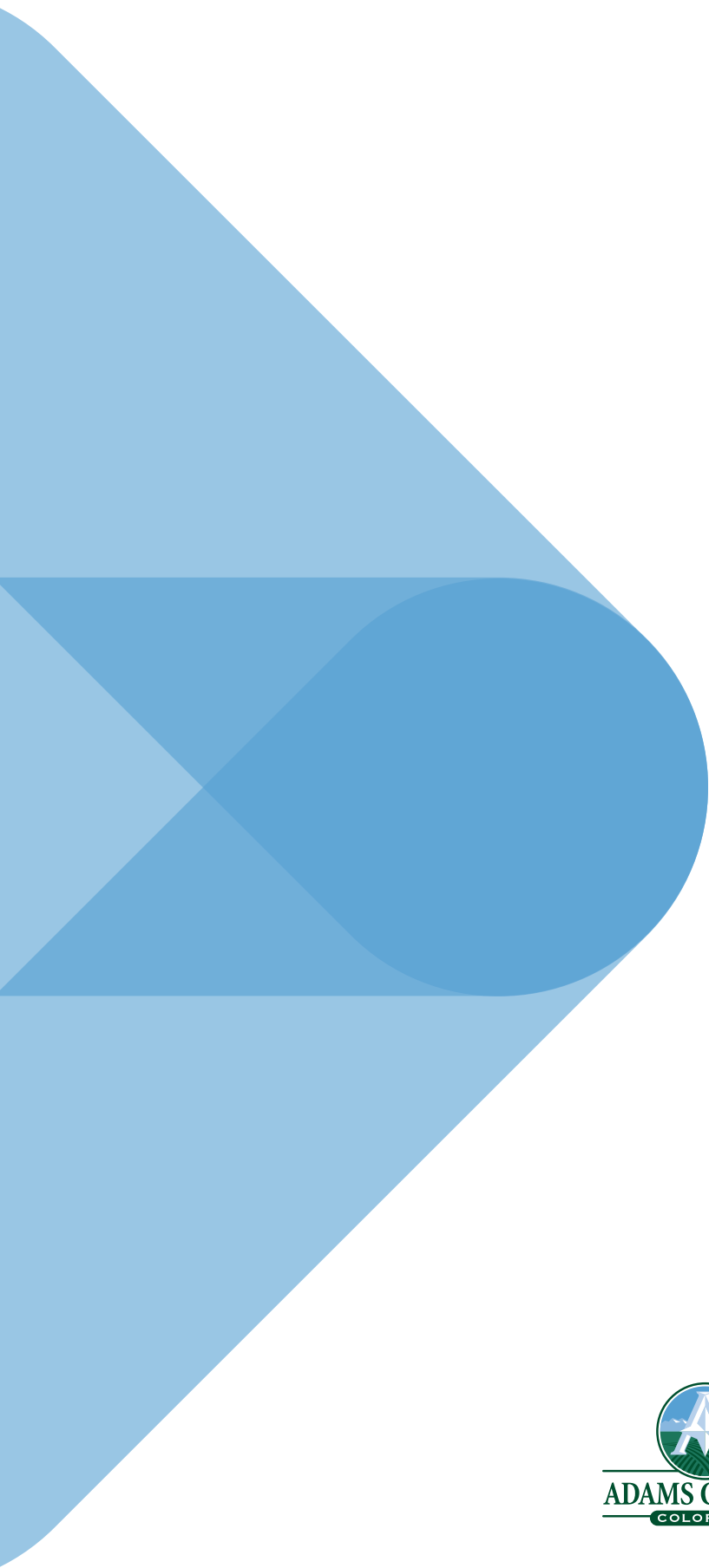
Figure 66: Core Value Lenses

## PHASE TWO OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS CONSISTS OF THREE MAIN STEPS WHICH INCLUDES:

- CONFIRMING FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES AND 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 in December 2021 with a formally adopted plan.





ADVANCING **ADAMS**  
PLANNING FOR A SHARED FUTURE

