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# Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan

Existing Conditions and Opportunities Report  
90% Draft



ADVANCING **ADAMS**  
PLANNING FOR A SHARED FUTURE





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Adams County Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) Master Plan is designed to help guide the County in future park, open space and trail management and development to better serve the community while sustaining and conserving natural environments. This plan reflects the mission and goals of the Adams County Parks, Open Space and Cultural Arts Department of cultivating an integrated system that ensures equitable access for all residents to parks, trails and open space properties; identifies areas for future growth; preserves and enhances important wildlife habitats and corridors, natural and scenic resources, and agricultural lands; expands trail connections; and broadens recreational opportunities. This plan is an update to the 2012 Open Space, Parks and Trails Master Plan, and has been developed concurrently with the County's Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Master Plan.

The planning process is divided into two phases. The first phase is the analysis of existing conditions and opportunities, and the second phase is where the findings from the earlier phase, along with public input and projections, are used to produce the vision for the master plan. This report documents the first phase existing conditions and opportunities.

## ESTABLISHING A VISION

The primary goals of this master plan update are:

1. To ensure the County's parks, trails and open space lands meet the needs of a growing and diverse population;
2. Enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors;
3. Ensure that important natural resources and unique county characteristics are protected.

The master plan is guided by a vision statement: "Cultivate an integrated system that ensures equitable access for all residents to parks, trails and open space properties; identifies areas for future growth; preserves and enhances important wildlife habitats and corridors, natural and scenic resources, and agricultural lands; expands trail connections; and broadens recreational opportunities." It also sets five key themes throughout:

1. Natural resource, agricultural land and wildlife habitat protection and riparian enhancement
2. Equitable outdoor recreation and creative gathering places
3. Partnerships, regional coordination and stewardship
4. Dynamic trail connections
5. Equitable park offerings

The County has identified four concentration areas for this plan:

1. Clear Creek and the South Platte River corridors
2. Riverdale Regional Park
3. Existing parks and urban/unincorporated areas
4. Recreation opportunities.

Adams County residents enjoy public access to 772 properties classified as parks, open space and trailheads. Thirty-one of these properties are owned and managed by the County, including four community parks, one regional park, 15 open spaces, and 11 trails/trailheads. Several major parks and open spaces are owned and managed by other federal, state and jurisdictional entities. These include the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, Barr Lake State Park, Heron Pond/Heller Open Space, and Westerly Creek Park. Municipalities and townships within Adams County also have their significant share of park and open space acreage. The existing trails in the county stretch out to 559 miles with the most notable being the South Platte River Trail and the Clear Creek Trail. Adams County manages 40.75 miles of these trails. Visitation numbers to parks, open space and trails were over half a million in 2019, up 40 percent since 2017.

The county has had steady population growth mostly occurring in the urbanized southwest portion. The County currently provides about 54 acres of existing publicly accessible parks, open space, and trails per 1,000 residents. To maintain this ratio compared with projected population growth, the County will need to provide an additional 500 acres by 2030, and combined other entities within the County an additional 6,500 acres will be needed. Approximately 32 percent of Adams County's

residents are not currently within a 5-minute walk of a neighborhood park or a 10-minute walk from a community or regional park. Most of the underserved areas are unincorporated Adams County:

- Northwest and northcentral Adams County, west of Highway 85 (Todd Creek) and east of I-76
- Confluence Area / southwest Adams County around Washington Street south of I-270
- The Highway 85 corridor features a gap in parks and open space, however, these areas are primarily industrial uses
- The area between Highway 85 and I-76 along E-470
- Aurora, south of Denver International Airport

Most residents are, however, within a 15-minute drive from a regional park and almost two-thirds of Adams County's ethnic/racial minority groups and at-risk populations are located in areas that are within walking distance to parks, a number similar to that of the county's general population. This service analysis does not take into account access to active recreation facilities such as recreation centers, swimming pools and athletic fields. Not all residents have access to these types of facilities.

## MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

### Funding Sources

In 2020, voters in Adams County overwhelmingly supported making the 0.25 percent sales tax for open space permanent. Proceeds from this tax, which have funded more



than 538 projects with more than \$212 million over its first 20 years, will also support many of the goals and objectives of this master plan. These funds are distributed in three ways. Sixty-eight percent is awarded through a competitive grant program, 30 percent is distributed back to the jurisdiction where the tax was generated, and two percent is allocated to administration costs. Other funding sources are available through the lottery-funded Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) program, which has allocated nearly \$30 million to Adams County through 126 grants since 1992.

### **Evaluation of Lands**

The master plan includes a section dedicated for the evaluation of lands for future parks and open space consideration. This section of the plan outlines four different criteria used to perform a weighted Geographic Information System (GIS) suitability assessment: Agricultural Conservation, Wildlife Habitat/Natural Lands/Riparian Conservation, Needs/Suitability for Recreation, and Scenic Views. This analysis shows high values for environmental/wildlife habitat conservation along key waterways. High value for agriculture conservation is shown in a variety of locations such as the Historic Splendid Valley, South Platte River Greenway, and central and eastern areas of the County. Some incorporated areas that have populations more densely located within/surrounding them

are identified as desirable filling existing recreation gaps in provision. This analysis will be used in a future phase of the project to identify with public input priority areas for land conservation or acquisitions.

### **CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND INFLUENCES FOR PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS**

The existing conditions evaluated within this report point to a range of opportunities for more exploration in the second phase of the master plan process along with identification of strategies and actions.

#### **Equity**

Equity is just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Equitable park offerings means "ensuring everyone receives the appropriate investment for where they are", understanding that "some communities need more investment because they have historically been underserved" (NRPA 2020 equity definition). The opportunity exists throughout this master plan to establish equitable spaces for outdoor recreation, community gathering, connectivity, and experiences in nature.

#### **HOMELESSNESS**

Homelessness is a societal issue that can only be mitigated when involving a range of stakeholders, which oftentimes includes park and recreation agencies. Adams County

has several organizations, initiatives, and resources in place that assist homeless individuals and those who are at risk of becoming homeless. The Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan along with supporting management plans, regulations, site plans and policies can address questions such as:

What can be done to increase visitation to park, open space and trail assets by everyone to build civic trust?

How can the departments support inclusion and create opportunities for social connections among diverse groups?

How can parks departments link unsheltered populations to services and avoid the type of enforcement mitigation of displacement and loss of possessions that has proven to complicate and exacerbate poverty and health conditions?

How to reduce discomfort some people feel from viewing the circumstances of unhoused individuals that may cause them to be dissatisfied with a space or not visit it? What physical characteristics would reduce association with high-risk environments?

What actions can be taken to discourage and respond to behavior that is anti-social unsafe, or a criminal act? How maintenance standards can be upheld?

It is critical that parks and recreation providers take a problem-solving

approach to homelessness and work as part of a collaborative response to this issue. Parks and recreation providers need to focus on community education, training, design of their assets and working with service providers.

### **Sustainability**

#### **SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES**

Adams County has the opportunity to lead in environmentally sustainable practices through its operations and maintenance approaches to parks, open spaces and trail resources. The County is currently undertaking a sustainability audit and plan creation for their internal operations. Areas to address environmental sustainability for parks, open space, and trails include water conservation, green infrastructure and energy conservation. The County has adopted philosophies towards sustainability, placing equal value and importance on environmental protection, social responsibility, and fiscal management. This will be reflected in the master plan.

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Understanding the extent and potential magnitude of climate change impacts provides the County with future-thinking opportunities to plan for and make reasonable decisions in both adapting to and mitigating these climate impacts. Anticipating the coming climate changes will allow the County to prioritize applicable adaptation

strategies to ensure community members are able to continue to enjoy a high quality of life as environmental challenges are magnified. At the same time, by recognizing the impacts of high versus low emissions scenarios, Adams County can take steps to reduce the future impacts by focusing on greenhouse gas emissions reduction mitigation strategies and other practical measures to minimize negative impacts proactively.

#### WATER RESOURCES PROTECTION

Water resource protection is important in Adams County for providing critical wildlife habitats, maintaining a balanced stormwater runoff system at a regional scale, buffering development impacts, and protecting floodplains for flood control.

Waterways provide opportunities for public use and experiences. This plan will outline ways to protect water resources, limit excessive water use, and implement low-water landscaping opportunities.

#### **Livability**

##### ARTS, CULTURE, EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Adams County is dedicated to the growth and evolution of the arts in its communities with a vision to be an inclusive community where everyone can enjoy a rich diversity of arts and cultural experiences. The opportunity exists to integrate arts and culture into all aspects of parks, open space and trail planning. In doing so, citizens feel connected and included in public

spaces, a sense of place is defined, amenities are visually attractive, and experiences that are offered are diverse and build community - all contributing to the overall quality of life.

#### DIVERSE RECREATION NEEDS

Special opportunities and challenges exist within the county for outdoor recreation. The county is culturally and linguistically diverse, and residents are enthusiastic about outdoor recreation in many forms. The senior population desires outdoor experiences that go beyond walking, while youth are looking for specialized play experiences including connecting with nature and inclusive and accessible environments. Self-directed recreation is increasing in popularity. Nature based activities such as birdwatching, fishing, and nature exploration are seeing an increase in participation. Trails and regional connections are critical to the population for both recreation and transportation. A goal identified in this plan is to ensure residents have close access to places for recreation, to help in the connection of the population to health, fitness, and nature experiences.

#### FOOD ACCESS AND AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT

Agriculture has historically been an economic staple for the County

and provides the rural atmosphere character that residents associate with. Utilizing open space funds to preserve working farms, ranches and agrarian lands is critical in both preserving this rural character and traditions of the county, but it is also important in filling gaps in food access that may exist for some populations. The Historic Splendid Valley planning work has set up a framework for highlighting some of the county's agricultural resources. The County endeavors to promote and support the local food economy through strengthening the public's awareness of the local food system, educating youth, and celebrating the county's rich heritage and resources.

#### REGIONALISM

Collaboration across the regional landscape that Adams County sits within is important to furthering objectives within this master plan. Working with local agencies, adjacent counties, and regional entities creates a cooperative setting for which to support big visions, programming and budgetary efficiencies, environmental stewardship, and connect trail corridors. Existing efforts include the South Platte River Coalition, Clear Creek Coalition, E-470 Trail connection planning, and considerations for connecting Riverdale Regional Park to the National Western with a multi-purpose trail that supports equestrian use.



# OVERVIEW



South Platte River

The following section presents an overview of Adams County and the planning process. It includes:

- Plan Purpose
- Plan Values
- Planning Process
- Plan Vision
- Concentration Areas
- Adams County Context
- Role of the Department
- Previous Plans Review
- Plan Successes since 2012



## PLAN PURPOSE

Planning for the entirety of Adams County is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to envision how the County will improve the quality of life for its residents in terms of land use, transportation and parks and open space. The vision needs to be comprehensive and innovative enough to address the defining challenges of the times, yet flexible enough to be adapted in the future.

Adams County Park, Open Space and Trails Master Plan reflects the mission and goals of the Adams County Parks, Open Space and Cultural Arts Department (ADCO POSCA) for planning, managing and maintaining natural and outdoor recreation amenities of regional significance. ACPCRD creates and plans for an interconnected and growing system of parks, trails, open space and facilities that:

- Preserve and maintain areas with ecological, cultural, agricultural, and historical significance;
- Balance resource stewardship with quality customer service and visitor experience; and
- Promote inter-jurisdictional cooperation to create a seamless system of parks, open space, trails, and facilities in all of Adams County.

**The plan establishes the foundation for the County’s decision making related to open space.** The role of the County is to support parks, open space and trails projects that have clear public value, protect public interest and provide public

access to desired, needed and well-designed facilities. Land acquisitions are viewed with a priority lens that support development, operation and/or maintenance facilities for parks and open space. The County can only acquire land from willing landowners.

The County Open Space Sales Tax, first approved by voters in 1999 and renewed by voters in 2020 indefinitely, provides a means for the County to support the recommendations of the Master Plan. The tax proceeds are used solely to:

- Preserve land that protects water quality;
- Protect wildlife areas, wetlands, rivers, and streams;
- Preserve farmland and associated water rights;
- Protect open space in order to limit sprawl and create/enhance community buffering; and
- Create, improve and maintain parks, trails, and recreation facilities.

## UPDATE TO THE 2012 PLAN

The last Open Space, Parks and Trails Master Plan, adopted in 2012, was a strong plan that has guided the department’s work for the last eight years. Many of the parks, open space and trails issues noted in that plan continue to be relevant today, including the continued need for trail connectivity, regional partnerships, farmland preservation, open space acquisition and development. The current plan will continue to explore these themes while also taking a cue from the Adams County Vision to be

the most innovative and inclusive county in America for all families and businesses. It will ensure that the latest technology available will be used to manage the County’s vast park and open space properties and wildlife habitats. In addition, this plan will also focus on equitable park distribution and provide the County with data which will help determine what access to parks and open space amenities looks like for all Adams County residents.

## 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, and Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan and are included in

this Existing Conditions report. Each analysis step, recommendation and policy will be evaluated for alignment with 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 improved internal operations and property maintenance



Figure 1: Core Value Lenses



methods (e.g. efficient irrigation, water-wise landscapes) as well as conservation and enhancement of natural resources, sustainability will be part of Adams County's identity.

### 3. LIVABILITY

Parks, open space and trails are major contributors to the quality of life in Adams County, and livability is enhanced through provision of these places within close proximity and easy access to where people live, work, and go to school. This plan will help to further enhance livability through the thoughtful integration of artful placemaking strategies, cultural events/programs and parks design best practices that celebrate the culture of Adams County and further contribute to livability.

### 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 spaces 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.

### 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)**

These 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 multi-modal transportation network, and parks, open spaces 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. Adams County 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

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.”

## ADVANCING ADAMS PLANNING FOR A SHARED FUTURE



Figure 2: Advancing Adams Planning for a Shared Future Branding

### Relationship to the Transportation Master Plan

The Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will set the foundation to drive short and long-term transportation and transit investments. Through the planning process, projects, programs and policies will be identified that help create a successful multi-modal 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.

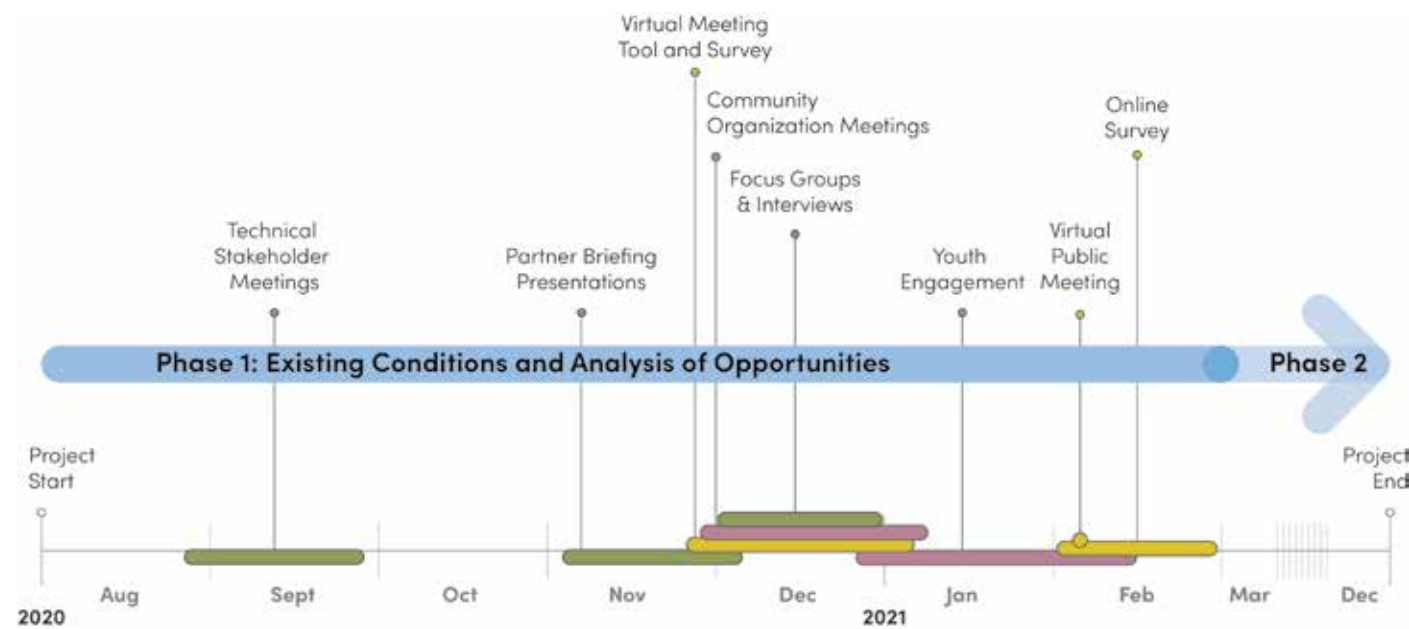
This is the plan that will “get us moving”.

### SCHEDULE

The plan updates are organized in two distinct phases. Phase 1 started in August 2020, and Phase 2 will conclude in December 2021.

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

Phase I is an existing conditions analysis, and for the Park, Open Space and Trail Master Plan, an update to information and goals explored in the 2012 Master Plan. The plan will also have a focus on five study corridors, (Federal Boulevard, Pecos Street, Washington Street, 104th Avenue, and 120th Avenue), aligning with the focus areas of the Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Master Plan.



**Figure 3:** Advancing Adams Plans Schedule (Comprehensive, POST and Transportation Master Plans)

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

### INSURING 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 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.

- Adams County 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.
- Outdoor Recreation and Trails:
  - » Providing equitable access to recreation and parks is a priority for many. Some suggestions heard multiple times on how this could be achieved include expanding program options, working with partners, and addressing the quantity and quality of facilities in all areas.
  - » Trails should better serve transportation and recreation purposes, and therefore also better connect to community locations like schools, libraries, residential areas, etc.
  - » Riparian areas and other critical habitats are a notable County asset. The opportunity to combine preservation with recreation should be considered.

- Agriculture:
  - » Zoning and development considerations will be important in order to incentivize sustainable agricultural practices.
  - » Partnerships in the County could expand opportunities for urban food access and agritourism.
- Arts and Culture:
  - » 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.
- Housing:
  - » Housing needs to be better developed concurrently with transportation so residents can utilize transit to commute.
  - » Diversity of housing type is paramount when discussing affordable housing options.

### Engagement Summary Findings

#### AGRICULTURE

The Agriculture focus group identified several agricultural technologies and innovations including carbon sequestration, turning waste (especially food waste) into energy, agritourism, regenerative agriculture, STEM and agricultural education, and food hubs for local producers that would advance agriculture within the county. The suggestions that were presented to encourage these trends involved revisiting zoning regulations to provide a greater support for certain programs and practices, collaborating with providers such as the CSU Extension and the National

Western Center, connecting agriculture to urban living, encouraging agritourism especially along Highway 84 and the Historic Splendid Valley, and allowing farms to better market their goods.

Some big ideas that were generated included a cultural trail concept at the fairgrounds, integrating art into areas by reflecting culture through design, and promoting the idea of becoming a certified Colorado Creative District. The latter could include presenting agricultural products (like culinary, wine, cheese production, etc.) as a creative industry; developing a warehouse district to embrace Hispanic culture; and celebrating a district that is walkable and preserves the buildings and historical integrity that emphasizes strong economies and community wealth building through the lens of agricultural heritage.

#### OPEN SPACE FUNDING

The Open Space Funding focus group began with an assessment of the County's open space grant program and a celebration of its voter approved extension. One of the successes of the current grant program that the focus groups outlined was having funds available to invest in regional outdoor amenities, including regional parks and trail connections, as well as investing with local cities in their parks and outdoor spaces. Even when projects were not an obvious fit for the grant, the County was successful in expanding its reach

and looking to other agencies for funding, such as DRCOG and CDOT.

The priorities for open space conservation included providing recreational access to biking opportunities, skills courses closer to residences, and water-based recreation activities. Public access along waterways like Clear Creek should also be considered at a greater level, as well as consideration of conserving cultural landscapes and scenic views. That includes farmlands like what is found in the Welby area and the Historic Splendid Valley, areas with local food production, waterways like Kiowa Creek Area and Fulton Ditch, and Peaks to Plains.

#### OUTDOOR RECREATION AND TRAILS

The Outdoor Recreation focus group discussed current recreation trends in the region. The activities that are rising in popularity include opportunities to participate in water sports (paddleboard, canoe, kayak, and fishing), skateboarding (in non-traditional skate parks), active field sports (a greater demand for soccer fields and year-round lighted fields), pickleball, geocaching, and horseback rentals (at Barr Lake). More and diverse playgrounds (inclusive and nature playgrounds) and better connectivity of trails were also mentioned. A listening session on the topic of Access to Recreation, Trails and Parks indicated the need for trail resources that are accessible, serve transportation and recreation, and are well-maintained and safe for

users. Connectivity to open spaces and other trails is important.

Suggestions to better serve underrepresented groups included providing Wi-Fi in public spaces, developing more walking clubs for seniors, creating more opportunities for expression and creativity, lowering fees for existing programs like soccer, and working with nonprofits like ViVe Wellness.

According to the participants, the facilities that Adams County needs more of to fill certain gaps are mountain bike trails, inclusive playgrounds, rural parks, bilingual signage, camping opportunities, pump tracks, active sports fields, trail amenities, introductory camping facilities, and urban farming. Community members that participated in a virtual meeting indicated they would like to see more local park opportunities, investments in park or nature experiences within a 10-minute walk of their homes, equitable maintenance and offerings in existing parks and open spaces and partnering with community organizations to provide more inclusive outreach and recreation activities. The County also needs to address the quantity and quality of its facilities, as well as develop better connections to regional assets like the South Platte River Trail, National Western Center and Riverdale Regional Park.

#### PHASE 2: PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Phase II takes the findings from Phase I and with public input and projections, and synthesizes the vision for the Master Plan. Strategies to address the plan themes and recommended actions will be outlined in this forthcoming phase and final plan document.

#### PLAN VISION

The vision for the 2021 Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan encompasses Adams County's objectives for providing outdoor and recreation services to its residents and visitors, while protecting and preserving natural resources for future generations.

The vision statement includes elements from the successful 2012 plan and new elements that provide a more encompassing vision. The 2012 plan vision statement highlighted an integrated system, conservation of agricultural lands, wildlife habitats and corridors and the protection of natural



## WHAT IS ADAMS COUNTY'S VISION STATEMENT FOR THE 2021 POST MASTER PLAN?

**WE WILL CULTIVATE AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM THAT ENSURES EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR ALL RESIDENTS TO PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE PROPERTIES; IDENTIFIES AREAS FOR FUTURE GROWTH; PRESERVES AND ENHANCES IMPORTANT WILDLIFE HABITATS AND CORRIDORS, NATURAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES, AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS; EXPANDS TRAIL CONNECTIONS; AND BROADENS RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.**



and scenic resources. These areas of focus continue to be essential for the County and this new plan. Equity, sustainability, and livability reflect County and broad community values and are important to highlight today, as are acknowledging the County's recreational opportunities, including trails.

## KEY THEMES AND GOALS

This plan is organized around five key themes that support the Plan Vision. They inform future recommendations, strategies, and action steps created in phase two of the plan development. The five key themes are:

### 1. NATURAL RESOURCE, AGRICULTURAL LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITAT PROTECTION AND RIPARIAN ENHANCEMENT

Residents want the County to protect, conserve and enhance natural resources, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and riparian areas. These lands create a balance of systems that are unique to the character of Adams County and contribute greatly to the health and stability of its ecosystem.



Figure 4: Pelican Ponds

Table 1: Key Theme No. 1 - Natural Resource, Agricultural Land and Wildlife Habitat Protection and Riparian Enhancement

	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
» Protect and enhance important ecological and scenic resources such as riparian areas, wetlands, floodplains, prairie grasslands and unique landforms.		✓	✓
» Protect and enhance important and existing wildlife habitats and corridors, provide for species movement through the County.		✓	
» Provide for adequate land around riparian habitats to ensure a sustainable species richness and to prevent the diminution of critical wildlife habitat.		✓	
» Create habitat linkages to regional open spaces for species of importance, such as the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, Barr Lake State Park, and river corridors.		✓	
» Improve water quantity and quality to assure a continuing quality of life in Adams County by implementing stormwater management best practices to minimize runoff and encourage infiltration, protecting and enhancing wetland habitats and riparian zones.		✓	✓
» Buffer development impacts from water resources including rivers, lakes, and streams and their adjacent riparian habitats.		✓	
» Protect, in as natural a state as possible, floodplains and flood hazard areas for flood event conveyance and storage. Enhance these corridors with vegetation to reduce erosion and siltation.		✓	
» Restore and enhance disturbed lands in and around river, creek and drainage corridors.		✓	
» Utilize water aesthetically and sustainably. Create opportunities for people to learn about this important resource.		✓	✓
» Preserve and protect the viability and character of high-quality agricultural lands in the County.		✓	✓
» Maintain the integrity of sensitive agricultural lands by keeping recreational or other potentially disturbing uses separate where necessary.		✓	
» Consider agricultural lands and their viability to serve as natural area protection.		✓	
» Consolidate land conservation to avoid fragmentation of agricultural practices and conflict of urban and rural activities.		✓	✓
» The South Platte River and Clear Creek Corridors are important natural resources, scenic amenities, and recreational assets within the County. Cultivate management and safety measures to promote healthy ecological conditions and greater public use and experiences along these corridors and at the confluence of the two rivers.	✓	✓	✓
» Support / Enhance Community Buffers		✓	✓
» Preserve lands (and water rights) that provide local food production and opportunities for people to learn about agricultural practices	✓	✓	✓

Note: A check mark indicates a relationship between the goal's content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the planning process and plan creation.



Figure 5: Playground in Adams County

## 2. EQUITABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION AND CREATIVE GATHERING PLACES

Embracing regional arts and culture will help create equitable and diverse opportunities for county residents to access outdoor recreation and imbue the unique characteristics of the county into those experiences.

Table 2: Key Theme No. 2 – Equitable Outdoor Recreation and Creative Gathering Places

	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
» Utilize the park and open space system to support a range of recreational experiences from larger regional parks to community level parks as well as serving a variety of age groups and user-types year-round.	✓		✓
» Provide sensitive and unobtrusive trail development and a mix of well-balanced recreational activities within the open space system while preserving and enhancing the natural characteristics of the County.		✓	✓
» Provide parks, open space, and trails which meet the needs of county residents.	✓		✓
» Provide public access to these places close to where people live, work, attend school, near community centers, and transportation hubs so they are convenient for people to experience every day.	✓		✓
» Interpret the natural, cultural and historic resources located within parks, open space sites, and into neighboring areas.		✓	✓
» Provide recreation infrastructure such as fields and courts to meet recreation demands within the County. (soccer, pickleball, etc.)	✓		✓
» Utilize parks, open space and trails resources to highlight and promote regional arts and culture throughout the County.			✓
» Provide platforms for people to connect to people through the design of public spaces, as well as the programming of activities within them.	✓		✓
» Provide “Colorado Experiences” through supporting recreation infrastructure that allows users to build confidence and skills in adventure sports in controlled, close to home locations. (such as water sports, mountain biking and nature play).	✓		✓
» Provide events of cultural significance that bring the community together and work to enhance the County Fair to be a more inclusive and culturally significant event.	✓		✓
» Create special outdoor gathering places that embrace science and culture.			✓

Note: A check mark indicates a relationship between the goal's content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the planning process and plan creation.

## 3. PARTNERSHIPS, REGIONAL COORDINATION AND STEWARDSHIP

approaches for environmental education and stewardship.

Collaboration and cooperation among County departments, regional entities, and land managers will help build unified visions for conservation, align philosophies on management, create opportunities for programming and budget efficiencies, and outline

Table 3: Key Theme No. 3 – Partnerships, Regional Coordination and Stewardship

	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
» Encourage partnerships between departments within Adams County including Planning, Public Works, Sustainability, Community and Economic Development, and Neighborhood Services for a more collaborative approach that promotes environmental considerations for all county projects.		✓	✓
» Enhance and create partnerships between municipal parks departments, neighboring county open space and parks departments, the private sector, nonprofit sector, schools and universities, other agencies like flood districts, land and water conservation organizations to cultivate stewardship and environmental education.		✓	✓
» Pursue joint conservation efforts between neighboring counties to save resource dollars and provide more efficient conservation of agricultural lands that cross County boundaries.		✓	✓
» Identify a series of creative land protection strategies that benefit both landowners, the County and the community at large, and the region.		✓	✓
» Fund and provide for environmental education and interpretation to help residents, students and open space users learn to appreciate the wealth of natural, cultural and scenic resources.	✓	✓	✓
» Educate users of parks and trails to minimize environmental impacts.	✓	✓	
» Support educational efforts that engage citizens in their role as stewards of our natural and cultural resources.	✓	✓	✓
» Work with regional coalitions to develop unified visions for natural resources, such as the South Platte River Corridor and Clear Creek Corridor.		✓	✓
» Seek partnerships with pertinent agencies to gain efficiencies in the areas of maintenance, education, enforcement and support services to the community.			✓

Note: A check mark indicates a relationship between the goal's content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the planning process and plan creation.





Figure 7: Clear Creek Trail

#### 4. DYNAMIC TRAIL CONNECTIONS

Improving connectivity, linkages and safety throughout the county's trail resources will create a dynamic system that is user friendly and offers a variety of trail experiences.

Table 4: Key Theme No. 4 - Dynamic Trail Connections

	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
» Improve the trail network to better serve as both a place to recreate and for non-motorized transportation. Develop opportunities and facilities for a variety of trail experiences such as hiking, walking, cycling, and equestrian use. Ensure these developments accommodate all ability levels and interests from beginner to expert users.	✓	✓	✓
» Work to ensure that the Open Space system is linked together through a robust trail system including not only County properties but open space properties owned by other agencies.			✓
» Provide trail and open space linkages and connections where essential, along and across major vehicular circulation rights-of-way. When possible provide for grade separated trail crossings of major roadways to ensure user ease and safety.	✓		✓
» When possible, provide pedestrian, equestrian, and bikes routes separate from traffic to promote a quality experience for trail users. Otherwise, when in proximity and direct interaction with vehicular routes, ensure users' safety is well accounted for in the development of parks, open space, trails, and recreation elements.	✓		✓
» The South Platte River Trail and Clear Creek Trail are important regional trail spines through the County. Promote healthy ecologies within riparian corridor areas while providing quality trail user experiences.		✓	✓
» Coordinate trail recommendations with the Transportation Plan, linking access to transit and multimodal transportation.	✓	✓	✓
» Promote partnerships to make thoughtful connections.	✓	✓	✓
» Develop infrastructure to address the overwhelmed transportation corridors' increasing capacity through parallel multimodal transit features.		✓	✓

Note: A check mark indicates a relationship between the goal's content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the planning process and plan creation.

#### 5. EQUITABLE PARK OFFERINGS

Equitable park offerings means "ensuring everyone receives the appropriate investment for where they are", understanding that "some communities need more investment because they have historically been underserved" (NRPA 2020 equity definition).



Figure 8: Rotella Park

Table 5: Key Theme No. 5 - Equitable Park Offerings

	ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES		
	EQUITY	SUSTAINABILITY	LIVABILITY
» Evaluate equity for park investment, quality, and offerings	✓		✓
» Inclusively engage surrounding residents in planning for parks or their improvements.	✓		✓
» Infill local park opportunities in unincorporated areas to provide opportunities within areas facing service gaps, embracing a goal of a park within a 10-minute walk of all non-rural residences.	✓	✓	✓
» Provide inclusive playgrounds and nature playgrounds at county facilities including Riverdale Regional Park.	✓		✓
» Address internal operations and practices of the department regarding diversity, equity and inclusion.	✓		✓
» Strengthen partnerships with community organizations that inclusively provide outreach, programs, and recreation offerings to diverse populations.	✓		✓
» Encourage Adams County's staff to stay in touch with current trends and new concepts in the industry.	✓	✓	✓
» Partner with other municipal agencies and special districts, such as Hyland Hills, to provide increased access to recreation facilities and programming.	✓		✓

Note: A check mark indicates a relationship between the goal's content and the plan value lenses (equity, sustainability and livability). Details of this relationship will be further evaluated during Phase 2 of the planning process and plan creation.



## CONCENTRATION AREAS

Four areas of concentration have been identified for this update.

### CLEAR CREEK AND THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER CORRIDORS

The South Platte and Clear Creek river corridors are important natural resources for the County, providing diverse ecological systems and critical wildlife habitat, scenic amenities, recreational and mobility assets, and opportunities for economic development and restoration. This master plan will explore current conditions, management recommendations, and techniques to apply to the river corridors for more efficient operations and maintenance for habitat restoration and increased public safety. It will also assess the river corridors for increased trail connections and access to parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities.



Figure 9: South Platte River

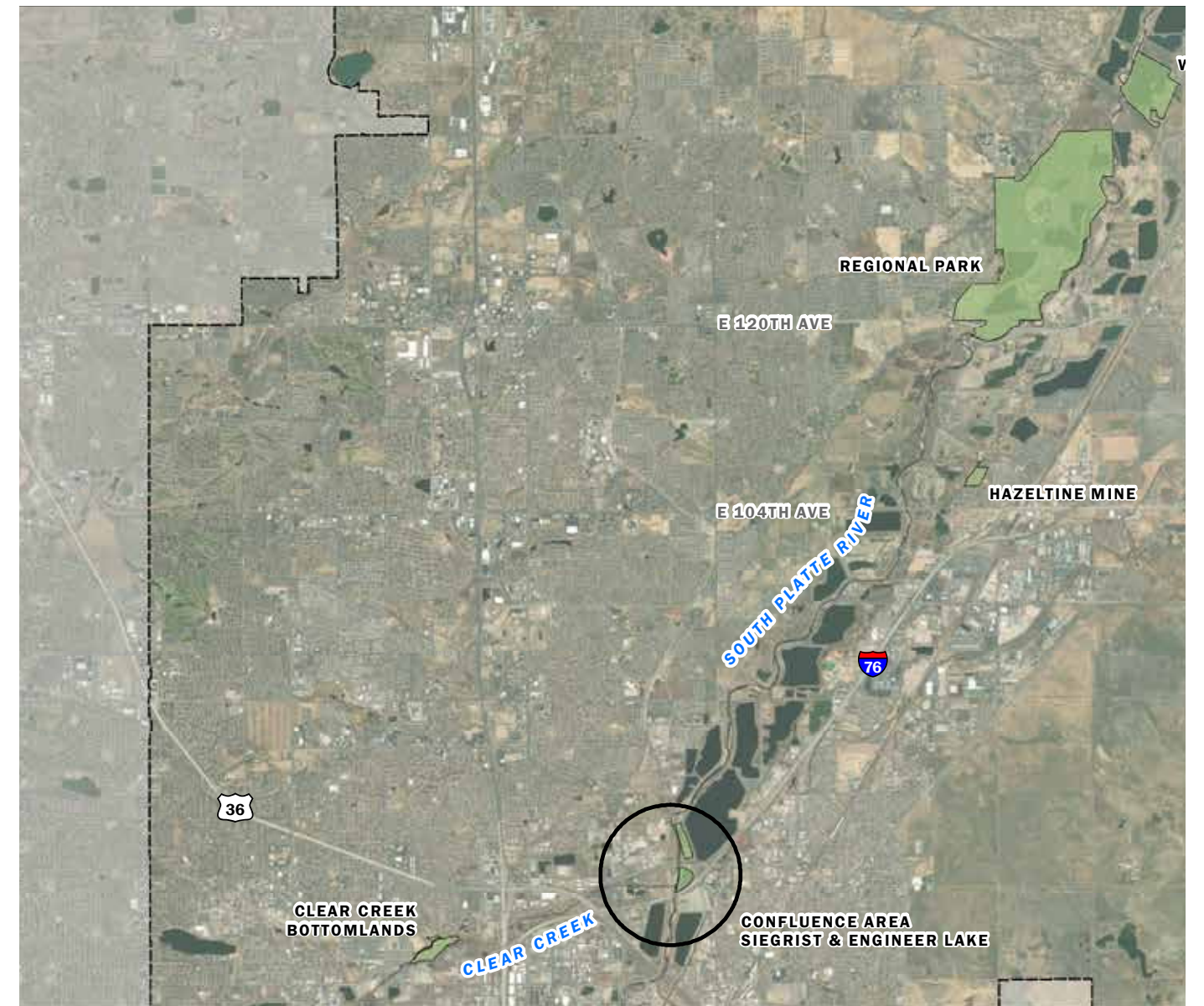
## RIVERDALE REGIONAL PARK

Riverdale Regional Park is approximately 1,197 acres in size and contains the County fairground facilities, two 18-hole golf courses, park facilities, and 233 total surface acres of ponds and lakes. A master plan was adopted in 2018, promoting a vision forward and building momentum for the future of this asset. The County has acquired several parcels in close proximity or adjacent to the park including Riverdale Bluffs, Willow Bay and Van Scoyk parcels, providing great opportunities for holistic inclusion of these assets into the overall Parks, Open Space and Trails master plan update. Partnerships with Todd Creek Metropolitan District and South Adams County Water & Sanitation District for Mann Lakes have been established and there are other further planned developments south of Henderson Road and west of the South Platte.

## EXISTING PARKS IN URBAN AND UNINCORPORATED AREAS

Some of the county's unincorporated communities have not been able to keep pace with the provision of parks and accessible open spaces for their growing populations. This master plan will analyze access to parks and distribution in the County to identify gaps and opportunities for infill projects, as well as ways to mitigate existing mobility barriers to access.

## MAP 1: CONCENTRATION AREAS



Data Source: Great Ecology

NOT TO SCALE

### LEGEND

- Master Plan Priority Areas
- Adams County Boundary

### Key Plan

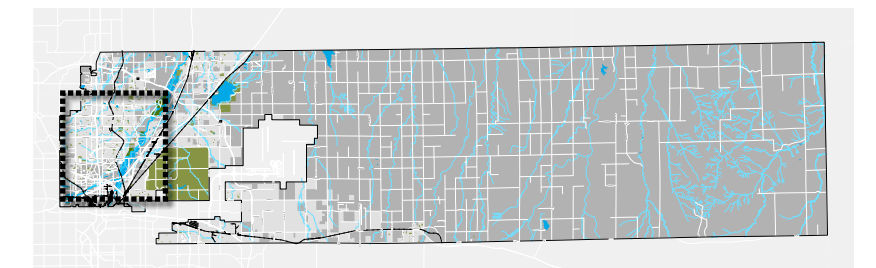






Figure 10: Riverdale Regional Park



Figure 11: Fishing Access



Figure 12: Playground and Community Amenities

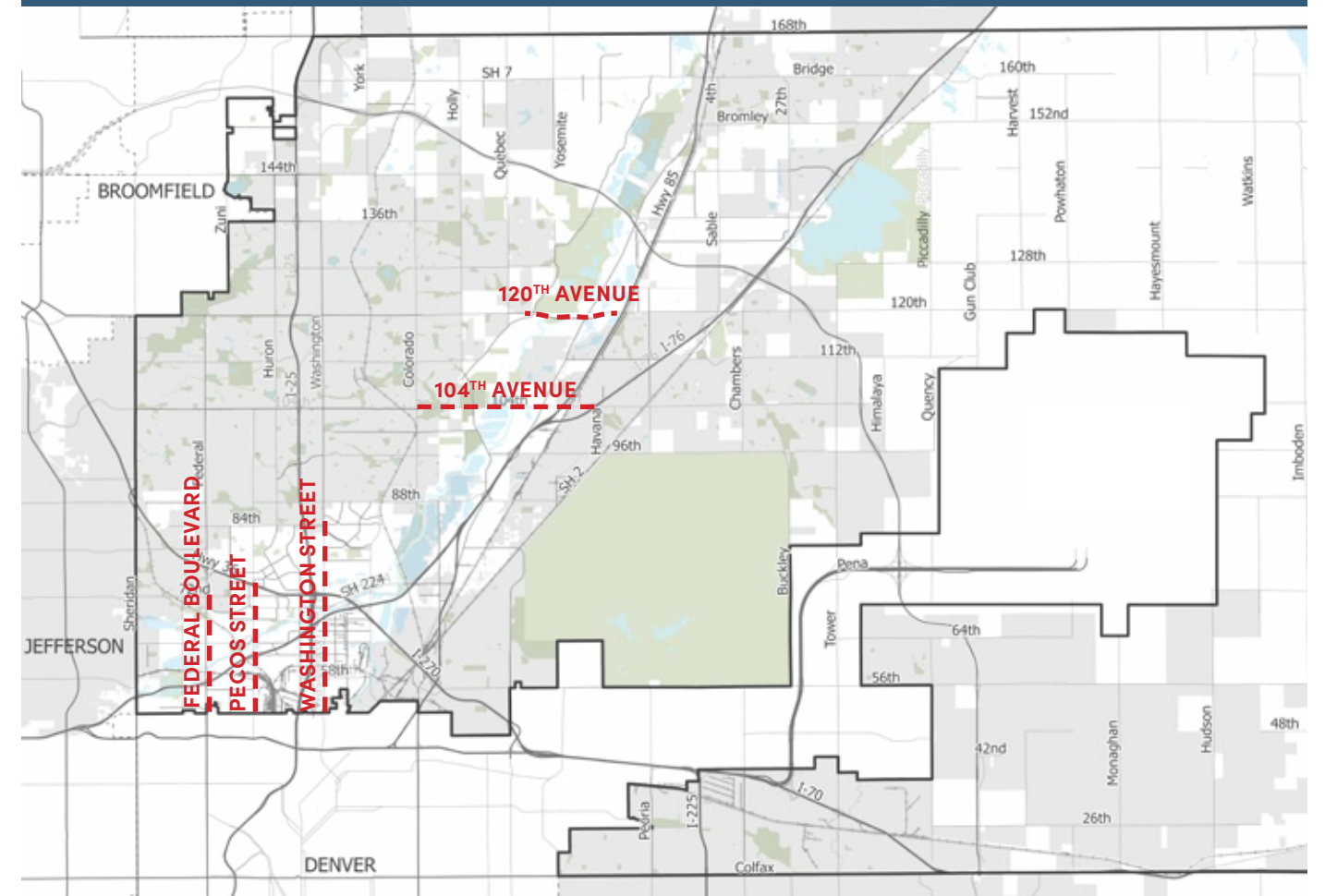
## RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Adams County Parks, Open Space and Cultural Arts Department intends to focus on more passive outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, biking, fishing and water access (the "Colorado Experience"). This master plan will explore recreation opportunities, including athletic fields, playgrounds, bicycle facilities, outdoor event spaces, and water-based sport access to fill needs throughout the county. A focus of recreational opportunities will look at connecting visitors and residents to a true "Colorado Experience" close to home. While the recreation focus is not directly on active elements like team sports, athletics, recreation center offerings and swimming pools, the County will look for opportunities to provide recreational infrastructure and amenities to support the services and programming of partner agencies, municipal recreation departments and special districts.

## 5 STRATEGIC CORRIDORS

In addition, this master plan aligns with concurrent planning efforts that focus on five strategic corridors that are located in a section of this document. This plan evaluates the corridors and identifies opportunities for open space, parks, and trails enhancement within the corridors of Federal Boulevard, Pecos Street, Washington Street, 104th Avenue and 120th Avenue as shown in Map 2.

## MAP 2: FIVE STRATEGIC CORRIDORS KEY PLAN



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE

### LEGEND

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

## ADAMS COUNTY CONTEXT

This Master Plan update reflects the ever-evolving conditions of Adams County, addressing the evolution of the community make-up, changing development and environmental conditions, and the celebration of achievements and progress forward since past plans.

## LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE

Adams County covers 1,182 square miles, located in the northeast quadrant of the state along the Colorado Front Range. The county is northeast of Denver, with dense metropolitan development defining

the western portion of the County and rural agricultural areas dominating the eastern plains. The Denver International Airport (DIA) extends into Adams County's agricultural lands just east of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, however DIA is not located within the County's boundary.

The county abuts seven adjacent counties: Broomfield County, Weld County, Morgan County, Washington County, Arapahoe County, Denver County and Jefferson County. It includes 20 communities - eight cities, 10 are census-designated places, one town and one statutory town.

### LEGEND

City Boundaries

- Arvada
- Aurora
- Bennett
- Brighton
- Commerce City
- Federal Heights
- Lochbuie
- Northglenn
- Thornton
- Westminster

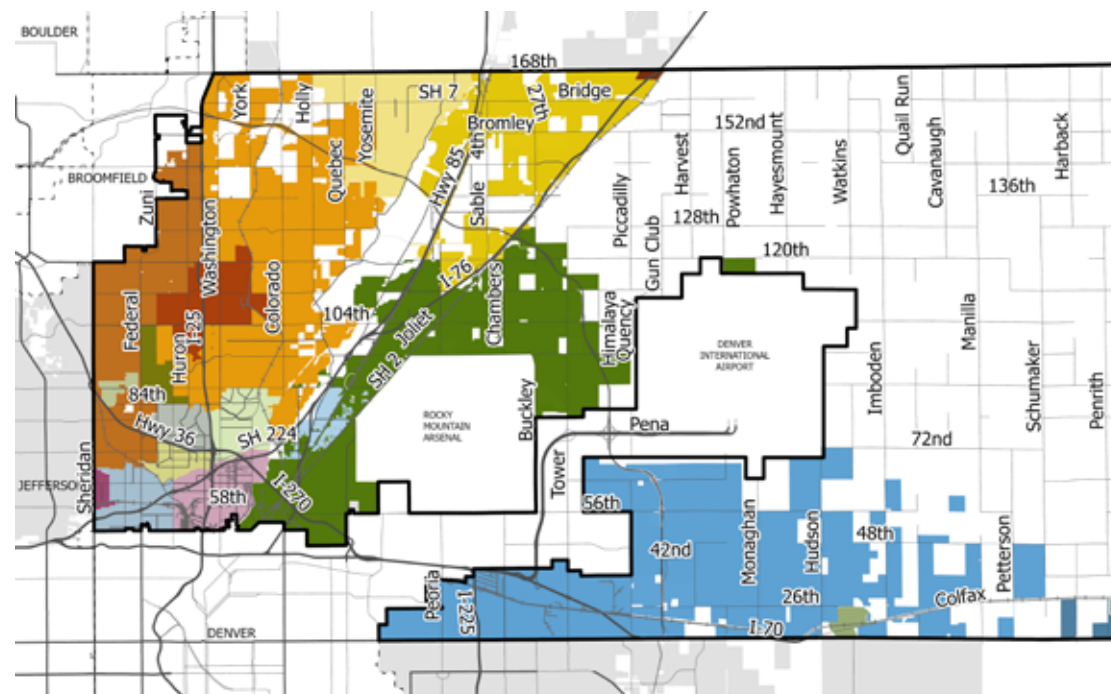
Census Designated Places

- Berkley
- Derby
- North Washington
- Shaw Heights
- Sherrelwood
- Strasburg
- Todd Creek
- Twin Lakes
- Watkins
- Welby

- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads
- Municipal Boundaries

NOT TO SCALE

### MAP 3: MUNICIPALITIES AND PLACES

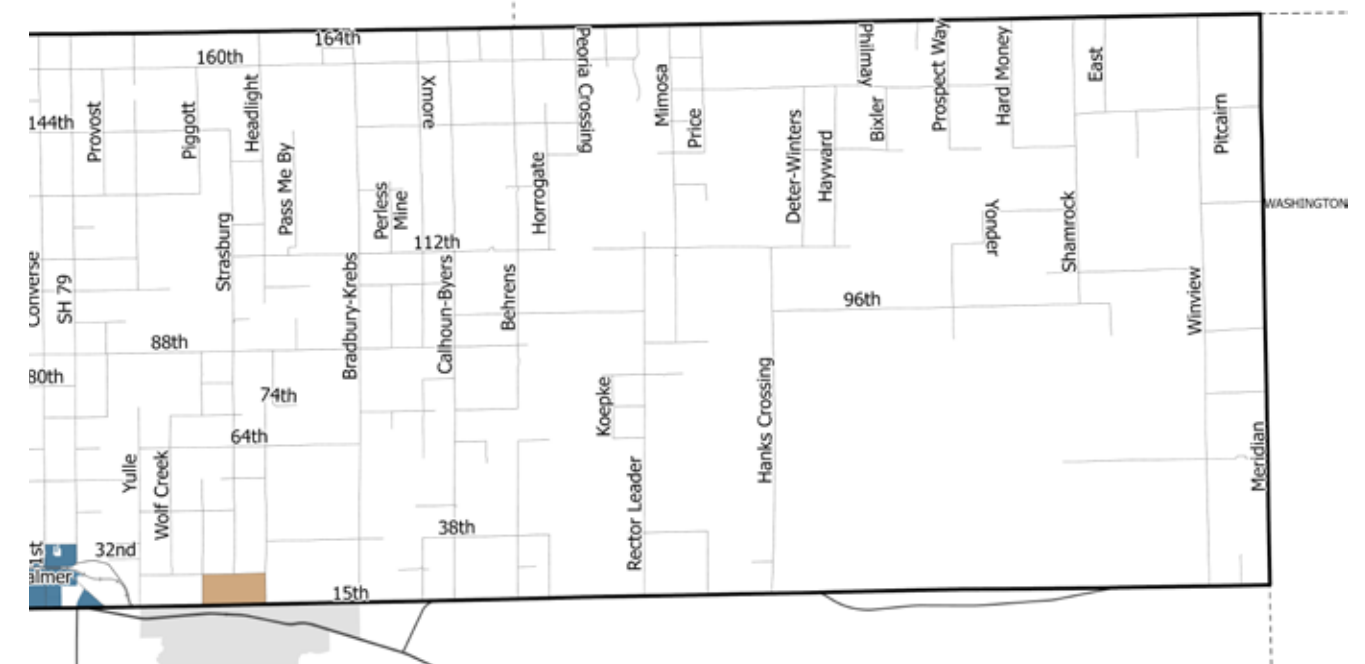


Data Source: Adams County, CDPHE, DRCOG

Table 6: Communities and Jurisdictions in Adams County

COMMUNITY	TYPE
Arvada	City
Aurora	City
Bennett	Town
Berkley	Census-designated place
Brighton	City (County seat)
Commerce City	City
Derby	Census-designated place
Federal Heights	City
Lochbuie	Statutory Town
Northglenn	City
North Washington	Census-designated place
Shaw Heights	Census-designated place
Sherrelwood	Census-designated place
Strasburg	Census-designated place
Thornton	City
Todd Creek	Census-designated place
Twin Lakes	Census-designated place
Watkins	Census-designated place
Welby	Census-designated place
Westminster	City

Adams County is greatly influenced by development and agricultural practices. The bulk of the county is vegetated with native or introduced grasses that create the Short Grass Prairie environment, used for grazing or maintained as crop land, with nearly 705,289 acres categorized by the UDSA as "lands in farms". However, over the past 15 years developed area land cover has increased by 28%, agricultural lands have increased by about 2%, and vegetative land cover has decreased by nearly 9%.





## DEMOGRAPHICS

Planning for parks, open space and trails requires a strong understanding of the people who use these resources today, and anticipating shifts or changes in the future.

According to 2020 data from the state demographer, Adams County has a total population of 528,857, which is approximately 16.4 percent higher than the 2010 population (1.6% annual growth). Growth is projected to remain steady over the next five years and is expected to occur most significantly and rapidly in the western portions of the County that are closer to Denver and other urban centers. Areas where growth is projected to be concentrated are along the

Platte River Corridor, most notably in the northern portion. The highest growth municipalities are Brighton, Commerce City, and Aurora. These cities currently have some of the highest concentrations of population as shown in MAP 4: Population Density by Census Tract.

Adams County has 177,002 total households, which have grown at almost the same rate as the population and this growth is expected to remain steady over the next five years. As family households account for 70% of total households, the average household size has grown slightly from 2.85 in 2010 to 2.88 in 2020.

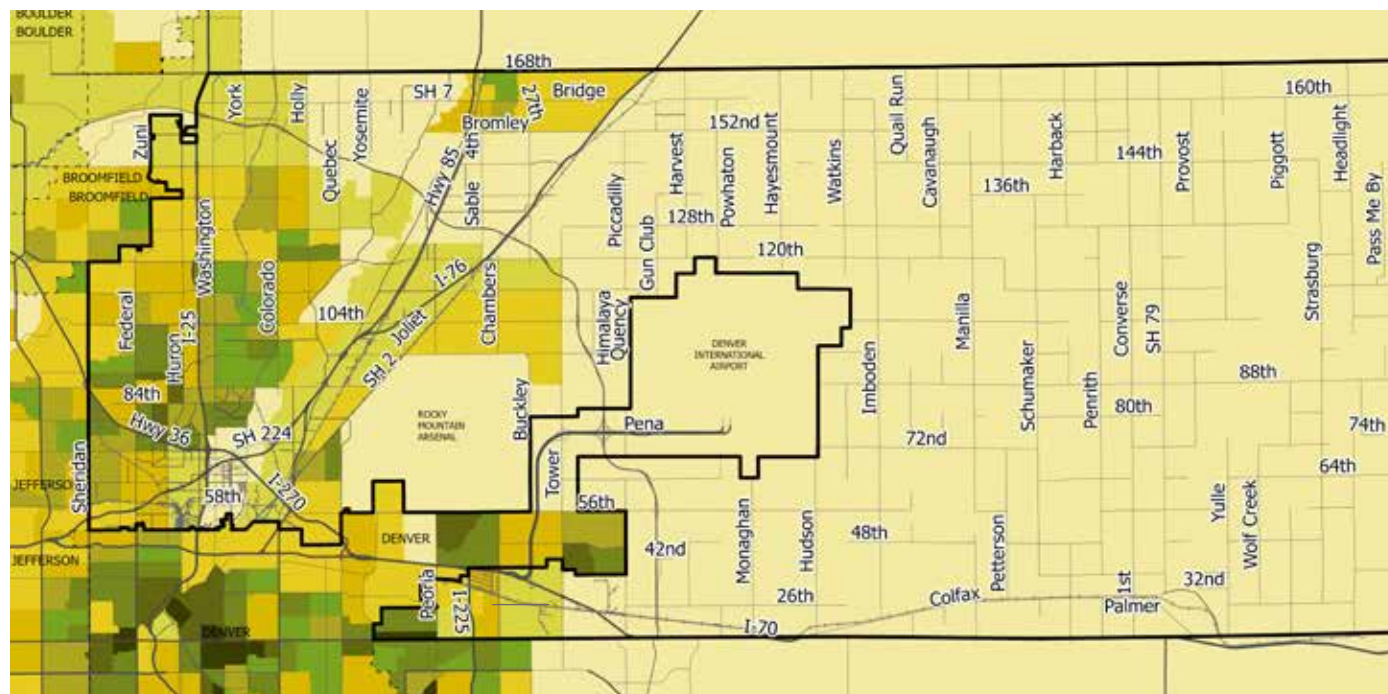
The median age in 2020 was 34.1, up from the 32.4 in 2010, and expected to continue increasing slowly over the next five years. Adults between the age of 25 and 44 account for the largest age segment of the population, at 29.6%. They are followed by children (less than 14 years of age) who represent 23% of the population, a larger portion than the State average. This can be attributed to a larger number of young families. Seniors (65+) account for 11.3% and are expected to grow the fastest of any age segment.

### DID YOU KNOW?

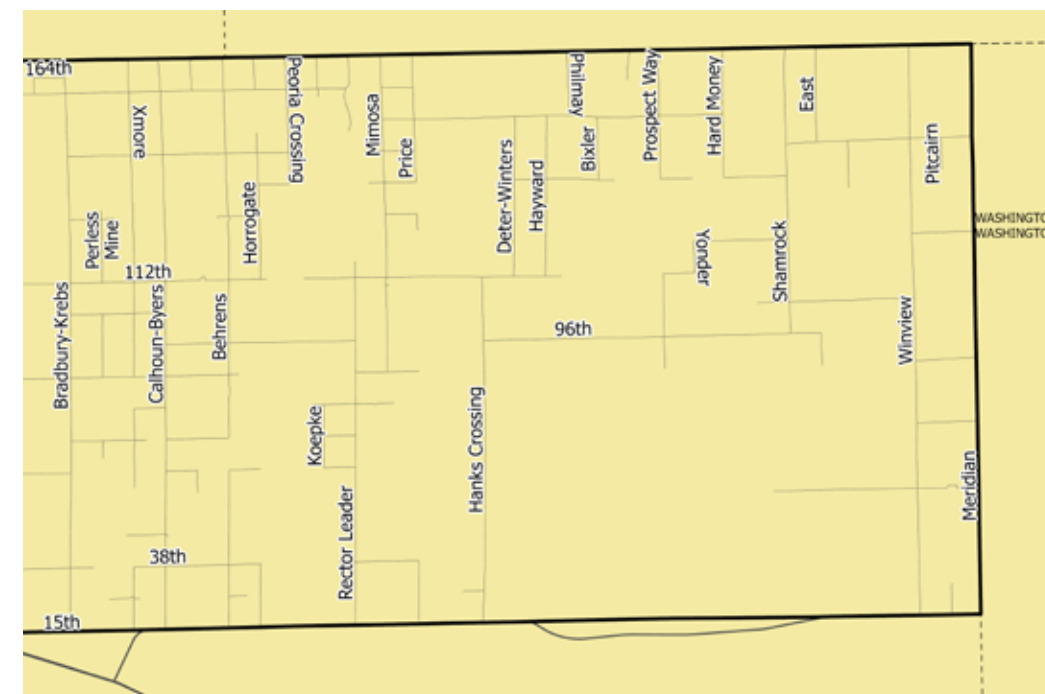
#### YOUTHFUL ADAMS!

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

## MAP 4: POPULATION DENSITY BY CENSUS TRACT



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



### LEGEND

2020 Population Density

- ≤3700/sq. mi
- ≤7300/sq. mi
- ≤11000/sq. mi
- ≤14600/sq. mi
- ≤18300/sq. mi

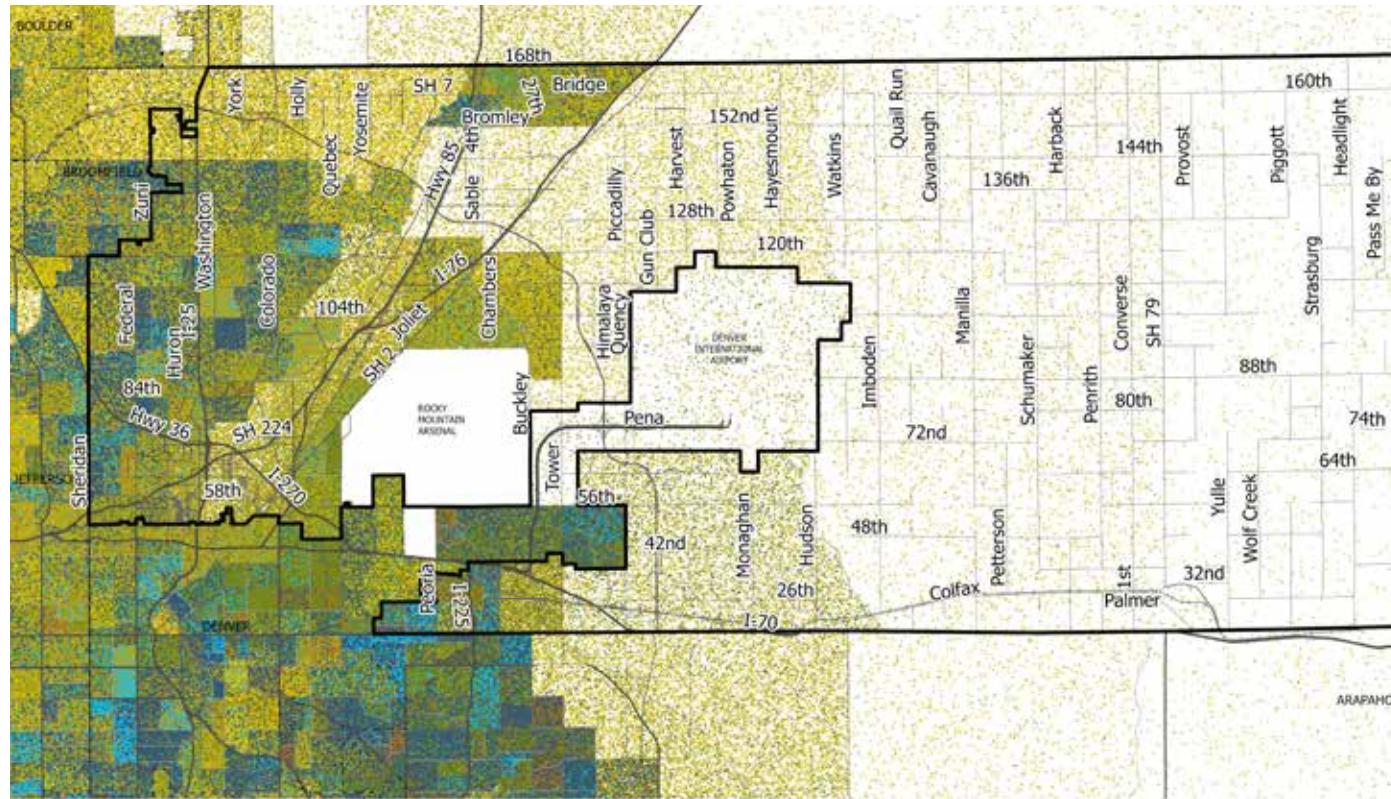
— Adams County Boundary

++++ Railroads

— Roads

NOT TO SCALE

## MAP 5: RACIAL/ETHNIC SCATTER



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

NOT TO SCALE

### 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)
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads

County residents are predominantly white with 70% of the population reporting being white alone. The Hispanic population is expected to continue growing and account for 41.7% of the population by 2025. Other races/ethnicities make up a small percentage of the population with Black, American Indian and Asians accounting for 3.6%, 1.4%, and 4.2% respectively. The county also has a significant number of non-white residents that is expected to continue growing. This will help Adams County become more diverse over the next five years, taking the current diversity index from 73.8 to 75.1 by 2025. MAP 5: Racial/Ethnic Scatter demonstrates how a greater diversity of ethnicities is

currently concentrated in the western portion of the County.

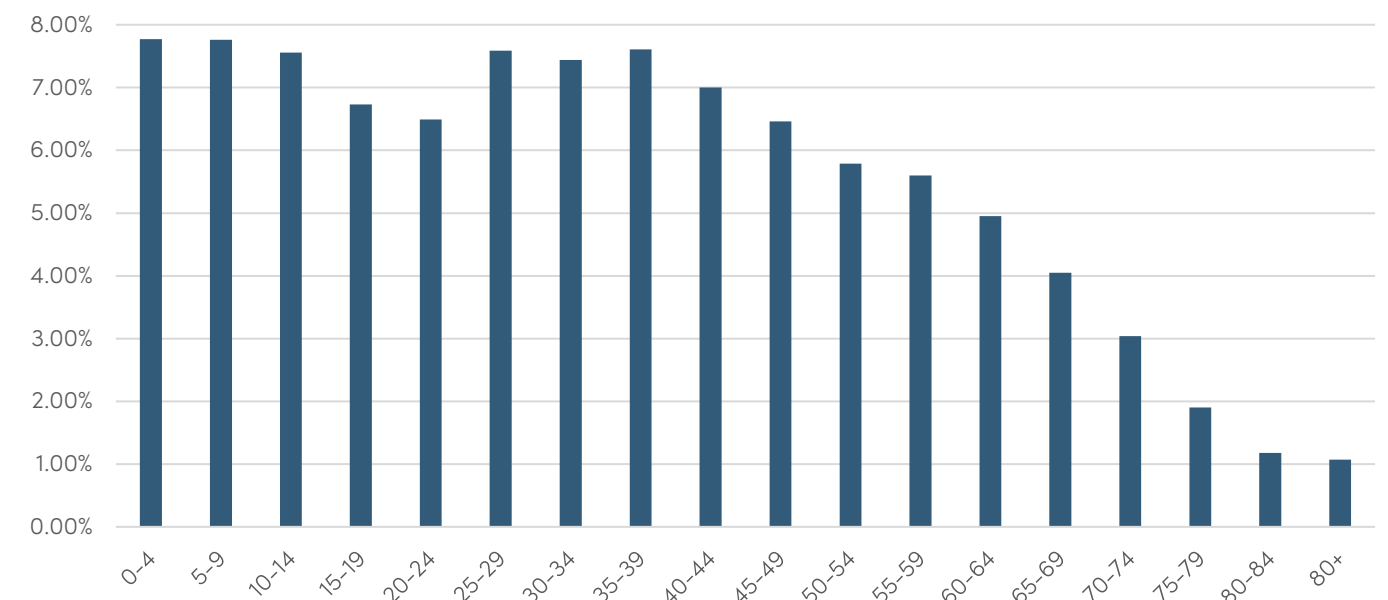
Twenty-four percent of households have at least one person with a disability, compared to 22% of households in the State of Colorado. Currently, 10 percent of households receive food stamps and 10 percent are below the poverty line in Adams County, compared to 8 percent and 11 percent respectively in the State of Colorado. Table 7: Income Distribution by Household further details the spread of income levels within Adams County compared to the state.

Table 7: Income Distribution by Household

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	% OF HOUSEHOLDS ADAMS COUNTY	% OF HOUSEHOLDS 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

Figure 13: Age Distribution in Adams County (2020)



Source: Esri, 2020



## AGRICULTURE

Adams County has long boasted an agricultural economy and heritage. The soils are among the best in Colorado for crop production. The U.S. Geological Survey land cover index indicates that Adams County has 443,350 acres of cultivated crops and pasture land, while the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service sites 705,289 acres of “land in farms” which is defined as any place from which \$1,000 or more in agricultural products were produced and sold. This has seen a slight increase of 2% since 2012, as reported in the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture. The number of farms in this timeframe increased by 8%,

while the average size of the farm experienced a decrease in acreage by approximately 5%, from 821 acres to 779 acres. There was an overall County-wide farm acreage increase of about 14,761 acres. Land in farms by use indicate 83% in cropland and 15% in pastureland. 97% of the 905 total farms identify as family farms.<sup>1</sup>

These numbers indicate that Adams County is a leader in Front Range agriculture production. The top crop is wheat for grain at 193,026 acres, compared to the next highest acreage of corn for grain at 42,882 acres. Dryland-farmed wheat, concentrated on lands east of Brighton and north of Strasburg, is the County’s dominant

<sup>1</sup> USDA 2012 and 2017 Census of Agriculture

yield crop. Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas and wheat are grown in large quantities and represent the bulk of the crops produced in the county. Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod also comprise a significant portion of sales from Adams County farms.

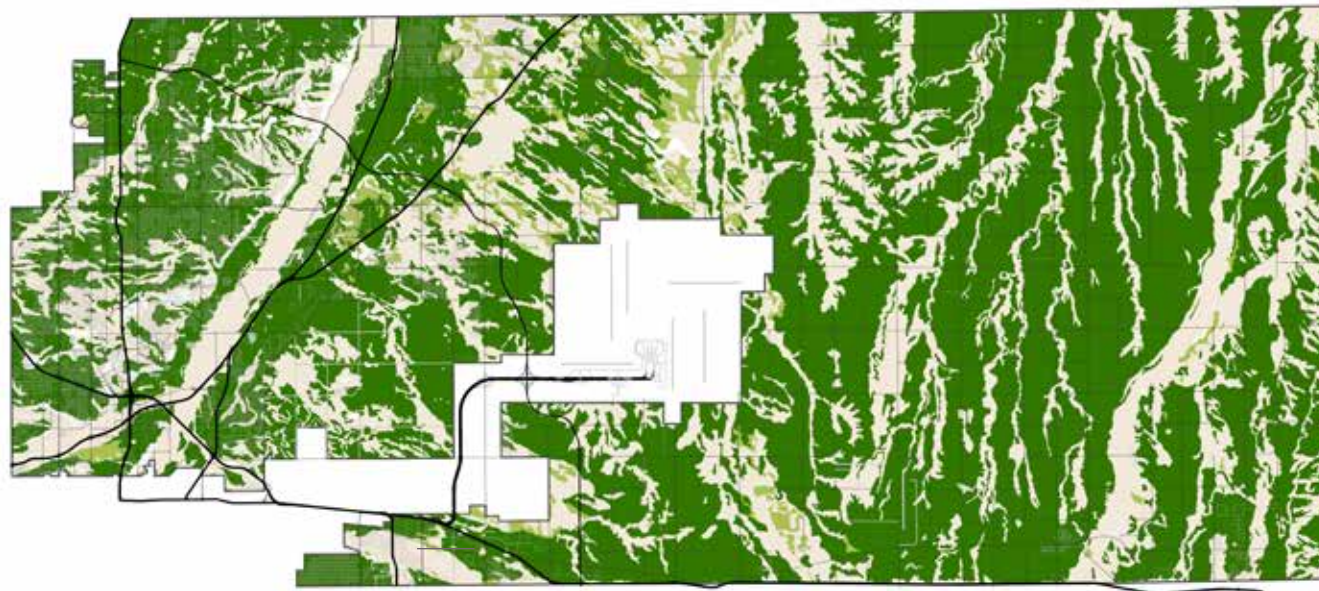
The agricultural vegetative cover is dominated by dryland crops/fields and rangeland throughout the western three quarters of the county, with irrigated crops/fields throughout. Row crops, irrigated pasture and dry-farm crops are located in the eastern quarter of the County. Soils classified as Prime Farmland of State-Wide Importance cover 7.8% of the county (54,554 acres) while an additional 72% (546,828 acres) are classified as Prime

Farmland if Irrigated. The market value of agricultural products sold increased from \$116,464,000 in 2012 to \$126,500,000 in 2017.

Cattle ranches, which are often combined with raising other foods, exist throughout the County, but are concentrated in the east. Cattle is the largest livestock component in Adams County. Dairy farming, which was historically very important in the County, still exists but has exhibited up and down cycles throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Some of the most productive agricultural land in the county borders urban population centers.

### MAP 6: SOIL PRODUCTIVITY



Data Source: USDA NRCS



#### LEGEND

Soil Farmland Classification

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Farmland of Statewide importance
- Not Prime Farmland

NOT TO SCALE



## ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT

The County is responsible for preserving and maintaining areas of significant ecological, cultural, agricultural, and historical significance. The Adams County Parks, Open Space & Cultural Arts Department is responsible for planning, management, and maintenance of the County parks system, including developed parks, open spaces, facility rentals and trails. The Department seeks to balance resource stewardship with quality customer service and visitor experiences, and work to promote inter-jurisdictional cooperation to create a well-connected, equitably accessible, and inclusive system of parks, open space and trails resources throughout the county. The Arts and Culture division of the department is dedicated to the growth and evolution of the arts among Adams County's

communities and seeks to provide everyone with the opportunity to enjoy a rich diversity of art and culture experiences.

## OVERVIEW OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PROPERTIES

There are 772 publicly accessible properties classified as parks, open spaces, and trailheads in the county. This amounts to more than 27,000 acres of land.

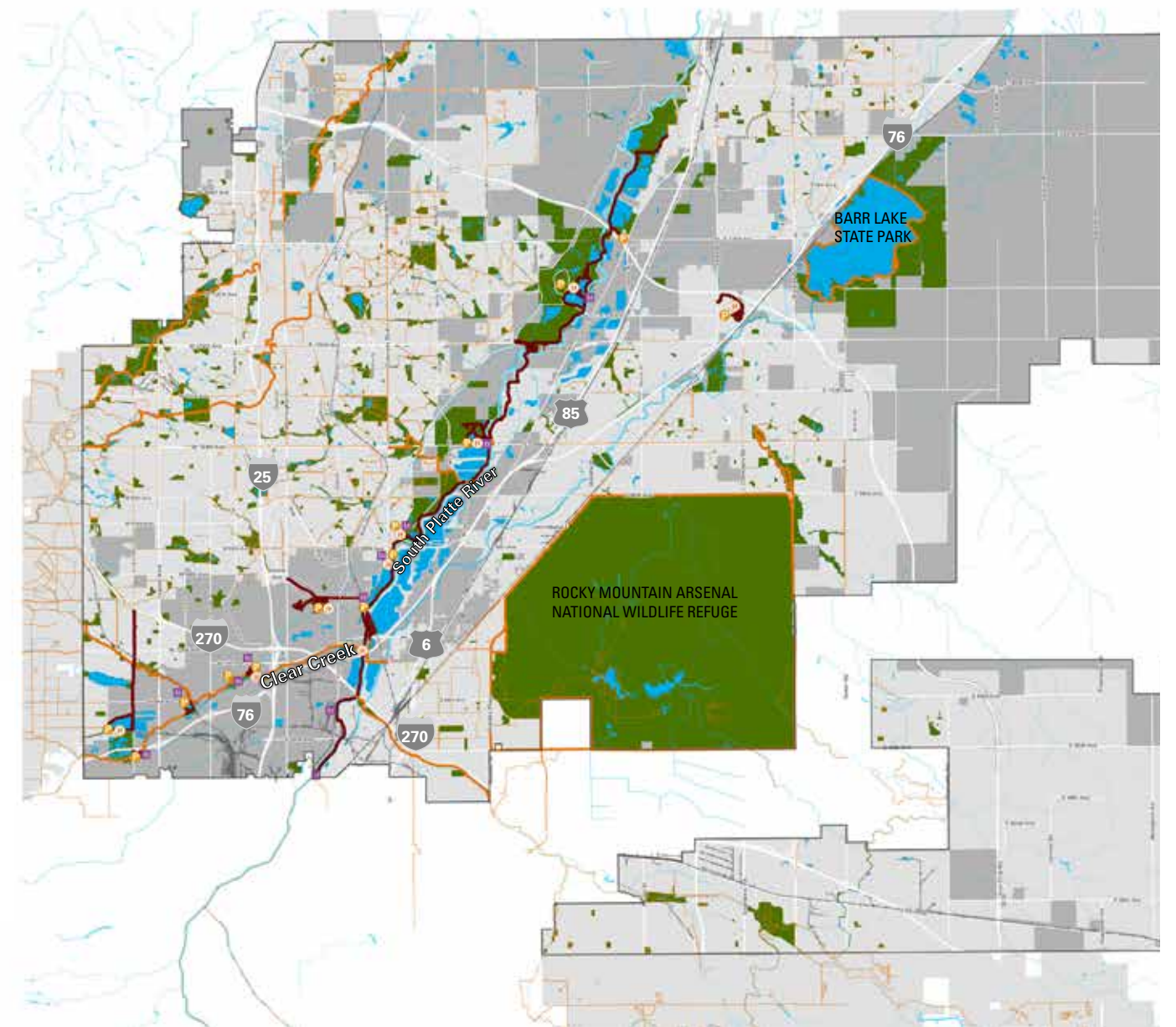
**The County owns and manages 31 of these properties, including four community parks, one regional park, 15 open spaces and 11 trails/trailheads.**

Ten municipalities in Adams County own and manage 735 of the other spaces. Thornton, Westminster, and Commerce City have the highest acreage of publicly accessible parks and open space (roughly between 1,400 and 1,900 acres). MAP 7 labels the most significant Adams County managed/owned properties.



Figure 14: Pelican Ponds

## MAP 7: EXISTING PARKS AND PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

### LEGEND

Adams County Trails	Parks, Open Space and Trailheads	Adams County Boundary
Regional Trails	Parking	Railroads
Municipal Trails	Restroom	Streams and Lakes
	Trailhead	Municipal Boundaries
		Unincorporated



DID YOU KNOW?



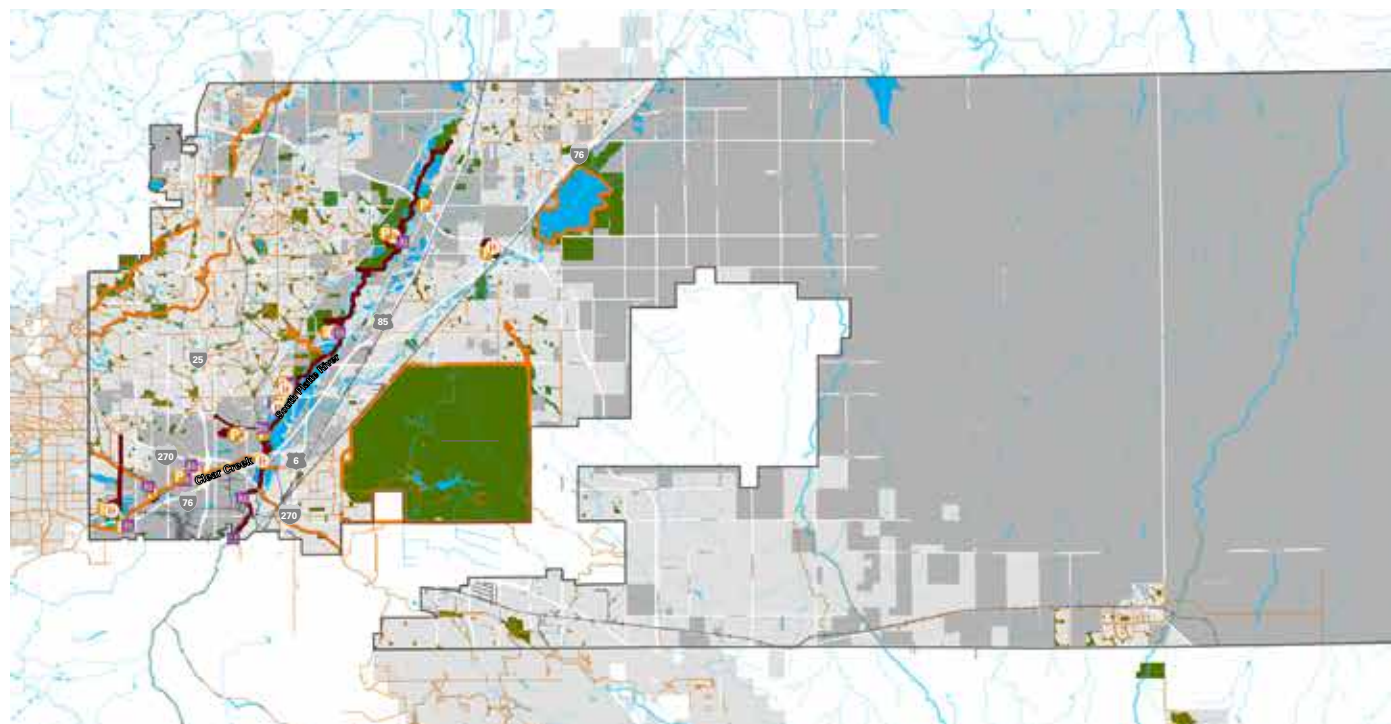
**559** MILES OF EXISTING TRAILS IN THE COUNTY

**40.7** MILES OF EXISTING REGIONAL RECREATION TRAILS IN UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY MANAGED BY COUNTY STAFF

**TRAILS OVERVIEW**

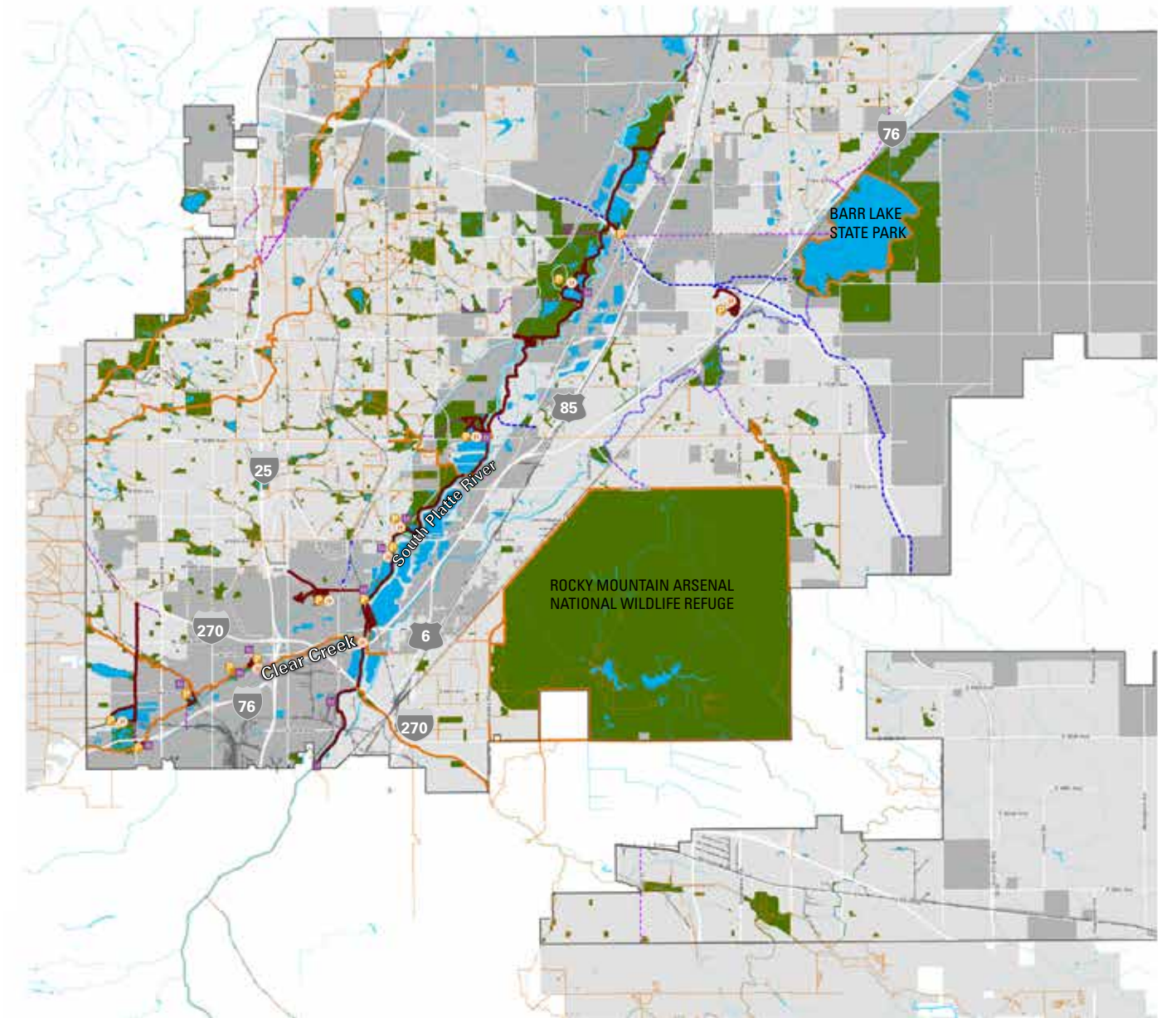
A growing network of paved and unpaved trails for pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians stretches through Adams County. While most of the trails are concentrated in the western portion, a few municipal trails expand east beyond Strasburg. The most significant regional trail connectors managed by Adams County include the South Platte River Trail and the Clear Creek Trail. The County would like to create connections to the National Western Complex in the future.

MAP 8: EXISTING RECREATION TRAILS



NOT TO SCALE

MAP 9: EXISTING RECREATION TRAILS



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

**LEGEND**

- Priority Planned Trails
- Future Trails (2012 High Priority, County Identified)
- Adams County Trails
- Regional Trails
- Municipal Trails
- Parks, Open Space and Trailheads
- Parking
- Restroom
- Trailhead
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Streams and Lakes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Zoning Unincorporated

## PREVIOUS PLANS REVIEW

The first Master Plan for Adams County Parks and Community Resources Department, Adams County Open Space Plan: A Balanced Environment for the Future, was completed in December 1998. This plan discussed issues, identified goals, and provided an inventory of existing resources specific to agricultural resources, environmental resources,

and regional trails. The most recent update to this process was conducted in 2012. As we look forward to a new Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan, it is important to review and understand the planning and decisions leading the County to where it is today. Below is a table of reference plans, followed by a description of the key plans that have relevance for this plan.

**Table 8: List of Adams County Plans Reviewed**

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS	2017 DRCOG Metro Vision	2015 The Sustainable Adams County 2030
	2016 Making Connections Plan	2012 Comprehensive Plan – Imagine Adams County
	2016 District Plan	
PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS PLANS	2018 Clear Creek Corridor	2016 88th Avenue Open Space Master Plan
	2018 Riverdale Regional Park Master Plan	2012 Adams County Open Space, Parks & Trails Master Plan
	2017 Artfully Adams, Adams County Arts & Culture Master Plan	2009 Adams County Regional Park Fairgrounds Master Plan
OTHER PLANS	2017 Thornton Parks and Open Space Master Plan	2005 Mineral Extraction Plan
	2014 Welby Subarea Plan	2004 South Platte Fishing Lakes and Open Space Action Plan
	2014 Federal Blvd. Framework Plan	2004 Adams County Comprehensive Plan
	2010 Westminster Wildlife and Natural Resource Management Plan for Open Space Properties	2003 City of Thornton Parks and Open Space Master Plan
	2010 Northglenn Open Space Management Plan: A Framework for the Future	2003 The Southwest Adams County Framework Plan
	2009 Adams County Trails Guide (map)	2002 88th Avenue Open Space Plan
	2009 Thornton Parks and Open Space Master Plan	2001 Arvada Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan
	2008 Adams County Regional Park Master Plan "Update South and Northeastern Areas"	2000 Commerce City – Prairieways Open Space Action Plan
	2008 52-85 Trail Master Plan: A Regional Segment of the Colorado Front Range Trail	1999 Adams County Regional Park Master Plan
	2008 Rotella Park Renovations Master Plan	1998 Adams County Open Space Plan
	2008 Berkeley Neighborhood Plan	1997 South Platte River Heritage Corridor Plan
	2005 Second Creek Greenway Master Plan	1996 A Conservation Vision for Barr Lake State Park
	2008 Southwest Adams County Framework for Future Planning	1996 Adams County Transportation Plan
	2005 Riverdale Road Corridor Plan	1990 The Emerald Strands – Cooperative Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan for the Area Surrounding the new Denver International Airport

## COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

### DRCOG Metro Vision – 2017

The Metro Vision Plan is a regional plan adopted by 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 the plethora of topics shared by the region; two of which are the natural and built environments. A section of the plan is dedicated to the outcome of ensuring the region values, protects and connects people to its diverse natural resource areas, open space, parks and trails. This section identifies "Ideas for Implementation" relate to collaboration, education, policies and regulation, and investments. Metro Vision recognizes and addresses many challenges and opportunities in the region. The plan incorporates common performance measures for most challenges, as well as sections that highlight their importance, and previous successes in tackling them. A special "making progress together" highlights the benefits and challenges of producing food locally and leveraging agriculture's economic benefits.

### Making Connections Plan – 2016

This 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. The plan includes projects ideal for multi-jurisdictional partnerships and public-private partnership and investment. The Plan focuses on economic return on investment while being strategic and equitable for the existing community, neighborhoods, and businesses. It includes a section on park and trail improvements bundles which identify new County parks and trails and a set of improvements to the existing properties. The estimated cost is set between \$13.5 to 14 million and highlights 6 bundles, US 36 Connections, Allen Ditch Trail, Welby Neighborhood, Federal to Sheridan, Clear Creek Trail Replacement, and Twin Lakes Park Renovation.

### District Plan – 2016

Adams County and the City of Brighton partnered in 2016 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.

The plan is focused on the area now referred to as Historic Splendid Valley. The goals of this plan are to preserve agricultural land and heritage, encourage local food production, and promote agritourism.



### The Sustainable Adams County 2030 – 2015

The plan identifies four cornerstones of sustainability and sixteen goals that are integral to ensuring the long term environmental, social and fiscal sustainability of Adams County. The cornerstones are Responsible and Innovative Regional Leadership, Waste Management and Reduction, Conservation of Energy and Resources, and Respect for Adams County's Heritage. The document outlines a set of goals, some of which are relevant to parks and open spaces including:

- Promoting the health and wellness of the County's residents through various opportunities

- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills, energy consumed from non-renewable sources, and the use of potable water at parks
- Maintaining the conservation of acres of high-quality agricultural lands
- Increase residents' access to fresh foods and supporting and promoting farmers markets, farm stands, and community gardens

### PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND TRAILS PLANS

#### Clear Creek Corridor Plan - 2018

Clear Creek runs approximately seven miles through southwest Adams County from Sheridan Blvd. to the South Platte River Confluence. The County currently owns approximately 178 acres of open space adjacent

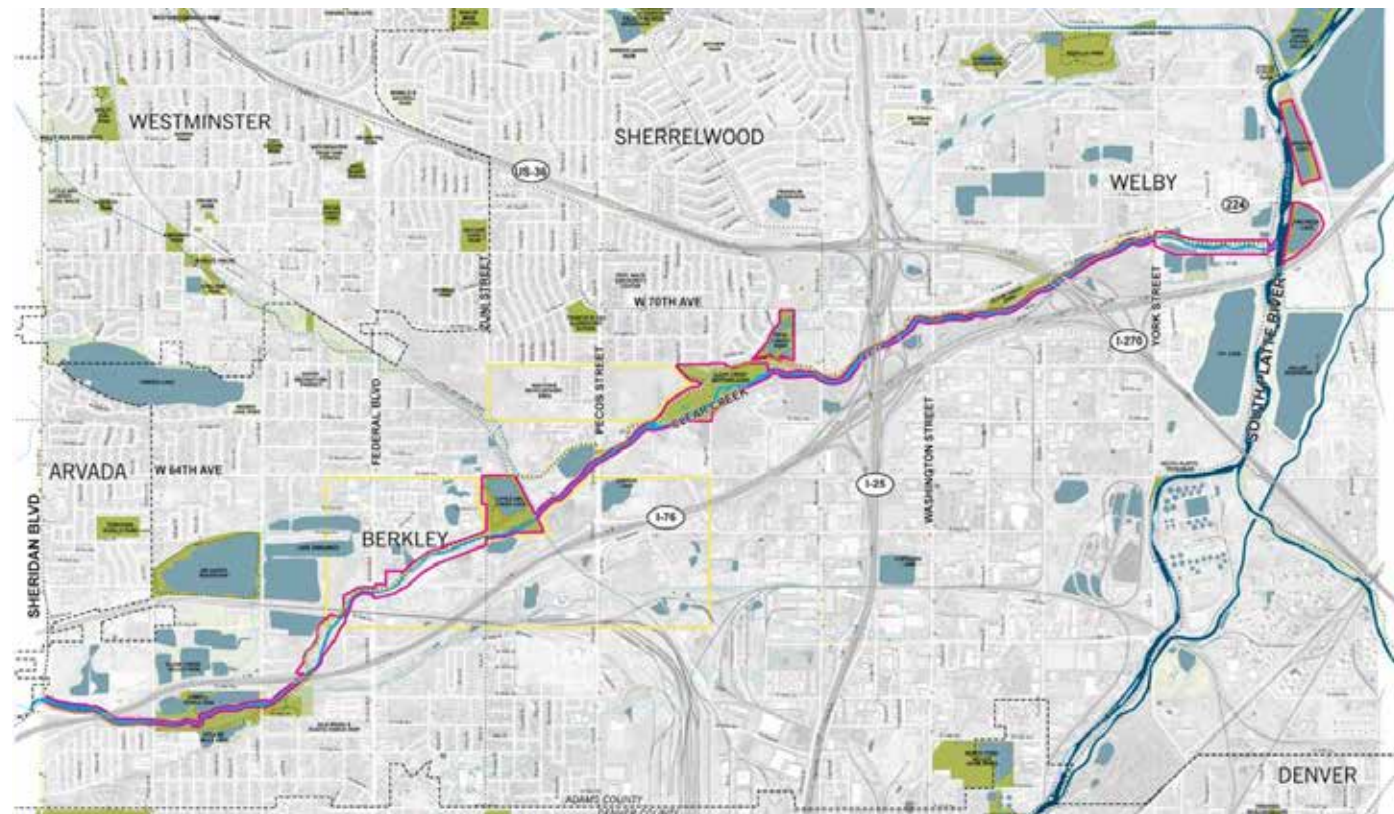


Figure 15: Clear Creek Corridor

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 will provide 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. Safety and lighting were concerns during the planning process. The need to balance appropriate lighting with environmental (dark sky) habitat considerations was considered.

#### Riverdale Regional Park Master Plan - 2018

The Adams County Parks, Open Space & Cultural Arts Department and a consultant team led by Design Workshop are working together 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. The County is trying to meet and balance

the needs of current Regional Park clientele and visitors while looking to the future. Goals include ensuring stewardship of natural resources, meeting recreational demands of a growing regional population, as well as studying the continued marketability and financial viability of the improvements to the regional facility.

#### Artfully Adams, Adams County Arts & Culture Master Plan - 2017

As part of its mission to become the most inclusive and innovative county in America for all families and business, Adams County released its Artfully Adams Plan to further enhance the area's quality of life. Four indicators were used to mark the progress of the plan: inclusivity, sense of community, opportunities to attend cultural activities, and opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation or enjoy nature. The plan includes a section for implementation as well as an inventory that lists the venues organizations, events, and policies within different areas of the County.

The plan highlights four major goals, each with their own set of strategies:

- Create opportunities for the county's diverse and growing population to engage in art and culture
- Connect artists and art and culture organizations in the county to one another
- Promote the county's artists and arts and culture organizations
- Leverage the county's park and recreation assets by enhancing arts and culture experiences

### 88th Avenue Open Space Master Plan - 2016

The 88th Avenue Open Space area, located near the South Platte River, has long been an area the County wanted to use for recreational development. The plan proposed improvement projects to restore and enhance surface water, wetlands, groundwater, and riparian and grassland habitat along the South Platte River in Adams County and the City of Thornton. These projects have been completed and the open space is now known as Pelican Ponds Open Space.

Public accessibility of the restored natural resource areas will increase recreational opportunities, including wildlife viewing, and will enhance the public's understanding of the importance and value of wildlife and the need for restoration to compensate for the fast pace of Front Range development.

Pelican Ponds Open Space has great potential, especially the north and south ponds. Adams County, in partnership with Mile High Flood District, has hired the consultant team to develop this master plan for habitat restoration, adding habitat viability with wetlands, and improvements to riverbank and lake aquatic habitats. Another major scope of this project is recreation-based improvements. They include: trailhead access, a parking lot, restrooms, picnic shelters, fishing access improvements, Nature

Play, primitive trails, education and interpretation.



Figure 16: Pelican Ponds

### PLAN SUCCESSES SINCE 2012

Adams County has achieved significant accomplishments since the 2012 Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan was completed. The greatest areas of progress include the continued allocation of open space grant funds for parks, open spaces, and trails to municipalities and partners throughout the county. Adams County Open Space Sales Tax is celebrating 20 years of success. Over these years, more than 538 projects have received funding, totaling more than \$212 million dollars invested into parks and open space across the county.

The County has created a local food production district with the Splendid Valley and Local District Plan. With the current plan update, open space and agricultural preservation will remain a focus of achieving the vision of the 2012 plan.

The County has created a visioning master plan for Riverdale Regional Park and will continue to focus on implementing aspects of that plan for improving the park and fairground facilities. The County has acquired Willow Bay near the regional park, along with the Bluffs, and is engaged in long-term planning for those sites as well.

The 2012 plan called for local park infill projects when appropriate. The County has added Gateway Park, Lowell Ponds Open Space, Pelican

Ponds Open Space and completed renovations at Twin Lakes and Rotella Park. Finding additional park land throughout the county to address service gaps in unincorporated and disadvantaged areas remains a priority.

The South Platte Trail has expanded from 104th Avenue to Riverdale Regional Park, and now on to Brighton.

The County is also in the process of establishing a Ranger and Naturalist program to include patrolling parks, open space and trails properties to provide visitor safety and resource protection, education, interpretation and ensuring compliance with parks rules and regulations.



# TAKING A LOOK AT ADAMS COUNTY

The following section takes a more detailed look into the existing conditions of the County through the lens of five key themes. These themes are:

- Equitable Park Offerings
- Dynamic Trail Connections
- Natural Resource, Agricultural and Wildlife Habitat Protection and Enhancement
- Outdoor Recreation and Creating Gathering Places
- Partnerships, Regional Coordination and Stewardship



## INVENTORY OF EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Adams County owns and manages 31 parks, publicly accessible open space, and greenway/trailhead properties totaling 2,166 acres (see Table 10: Existing Inventory of County Maintained Parks and Open Spaces with Public Access). In addition, Adams

Table 9: Park Types in Adams County

TYPE	PROPERTIES	ACRES	%
Community Park	34	477	1.72%
Open Space	332	5,106	18.4%
Regional Park	13	18,573	66.92%
Trail/Trailhead	68	978	3.53%
Neighborhood Park	321	2,206	7.95%
School Facility	4	9	0.03%
Total	772	27,754	100%

Source: Adams County GIS, Municipalities GIS, DRCOG 2018, Classified by Design Workshop 2020

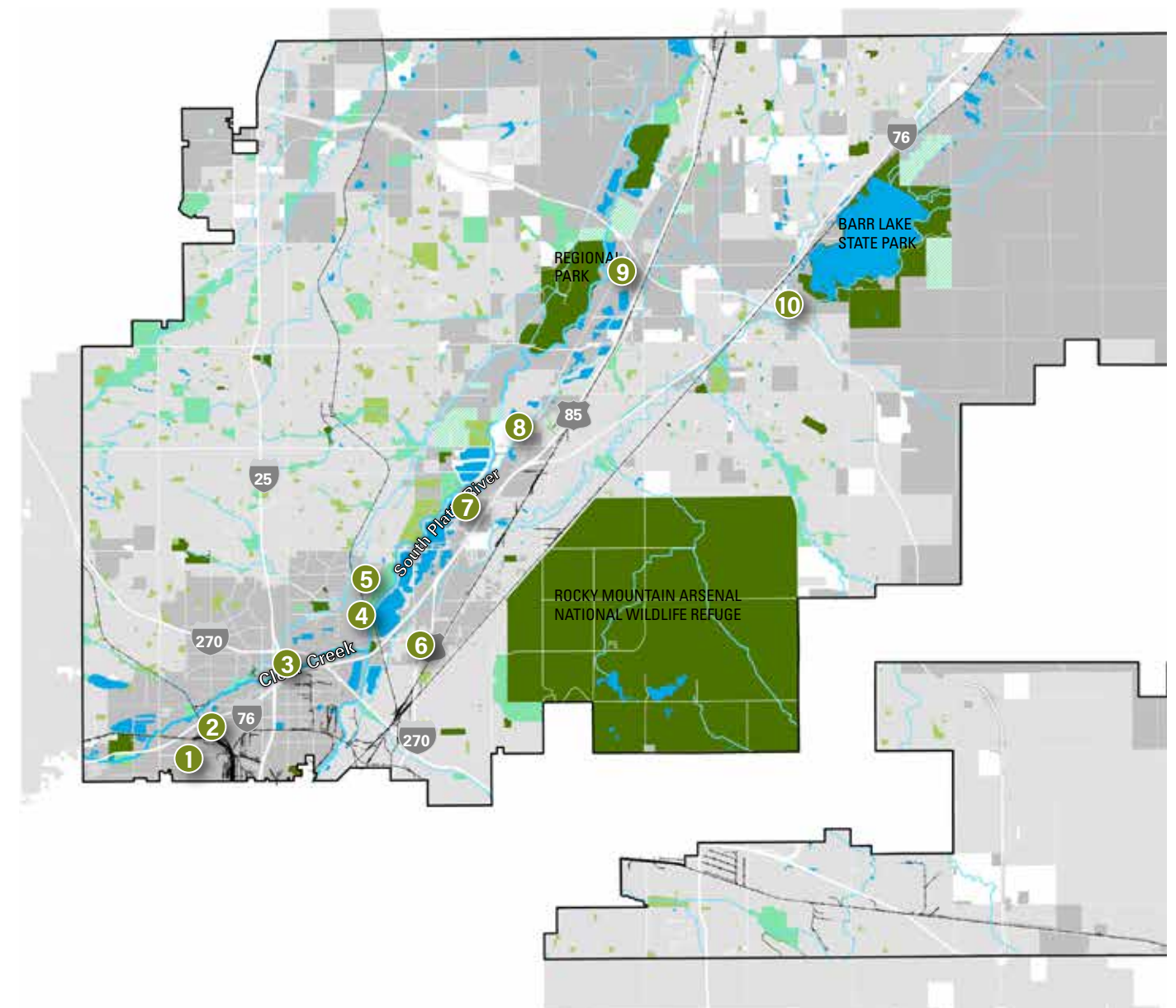
County manages thousands of acres of land and water for conservation purposes that do not include public access. Recreation, outdoor sports, neighborhood parks and access to green space are provided by a number of other entities and jurisdictions such as special districts, schools and homeowner associations within the county.

Parks and open spaces in Adams County have further been classified into community parks, neighborhood parks, regional parks, open space, school facilities, and trail/trailheads. Neighborhood parks and open space are the most prolific, with 321 and 332 properties, respectively, as shown in Table 4.

## ADAMS COUNTY RECREATION OFFERINGS

With a broad purpose statement to “significantly enhance quality of life, enrich communities & INSPIRE” Adams County supports recreation for County residents in a variety of ways, through providing spaces for active and passive recreation, offering education programming and administering grant and shareback programs that support municipal and special district recreation. Many of Adams County properties focus on recreational opportunities that are desirable and compatible with open spaces and natural settings. These include passive recreation activities, like wildlife watching, walking and biking, which can offer constructive, restorative, and enjoyable opportunities outdoors.

## MAP 10: MOST PROMINENT ADAMS COUNTY MANAGED PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

### LEGEND

Neighborhood Parks (Municipal Other)	Adams County Boundary	1 Lowell Ponds	7 Pelican Ponds Open Space
Community/Regional Park	Railroads	2 Gateway Plaza	8 Elaine T. Valente Open Space
Open Space W/ Public Access	Streams and Lakes	3 Twin Lakes Park	9 Riverdale Regional Park
Open Space Without Public Access	Municipal Boundaries	4 Rotella Park	10 Government Center Natural Park
	Unincorporated	5 City View Park	
		6 Engineer Lake	

## DID YOU KNOW?



**772** PARKS AND OPEN SPACES WITHIN ADAMS COUNTY ARE PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE

THAT'S **27,896** ACRES!

**31** OF THESE PROPERTIES ARE IN UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY & OWNED AND MANAGED BY THE COUNTY

THAT'S **2,166** ACRES!



**Table 10: Existing Inventory of County Maintained Parks and Open Spaces with Public Access**

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	USE	ACRES	PARKING	RESTROOMS	PICNIC	RESERVATION	PLAYGROUND	LOCAL TRAILS	REGIONAL TRAILS	WILDLIFE	NATURE PLAY	BASKETBALL	VOLLEYBALL	HORSESHOES	DISC GOLF	GOLF COURSE	SWIMMING	FISHING
55th & Lowell Trailhead	Trail/Trailhead	Trailhead	9.4	X						X									
Big Dry Creek Greenway (Coday)	Open Space	Open Space	12.9																
Brighton Road Trailhead	Trail/Trailhead	Trailhead	2.7	X						X									
City View Park	Community Park	Park	4.4					X											
Clear Creek Bottomlands	Open Space	Open Space	36.1							X	X								
Coronado Parkway	Trail/Trailhead	Trail	2.8							X									
E-470 Open Space	Open Space	Open Space	17.8							X	X								
Elaine T Valente Open Space	Open Space	Park	2.1	X	X	X		X	X	X	X								X
Engineer Lake	Open Space	Open Space	18			X				X	X								X
Hazeltine	Open Space	Park	19.3					X											
Government Center Natural Park	Open Space	Park	19.5	X		X		X	X		X								
Kalcevic Gulch	Open Space	Drainage	3.6	X						X									
Little Dry Creek Lake	Open Space	Drainage	31.1	X					X	X	X								X
Lowell Ponds	Open Space	Open Space	43.2						X		X								X
Pelican Ponds Open Space	Open Space	Park	210	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X							X
Riverdale Regional Park	Regional Park	Park	1197	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
Riverdale Bluffs Open Space	Open Space	Open Space	226								X								
Rotella Park	Community Park	Park	39.3	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X					X
Sandhofer Open Space	Open Space	Open Space	10.8						X		X								
Siegrist Lake	Open Space	Open Space	19.1						X		X								X
Steele Street Park	Trail/Trailhead	Trailhead	4	X						X									
TRI Property/Big Dry Buffer	Open Space	Open Space	36.3																
Twin Lakes Park	Community Park	Park	14.6	X	X			X	X	X									X

Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS data

## COUNTY AMENITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The table to the left provides an inventory of County maintained parks and open space that provide public access. Facilities or supportive amenities for both active and passive recreation are listed for each space.

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACES PROVIDED BY OTHERS

Municipalities provide the majority of neighborhood scale parks in Adams County. The Adams County Open Space Sales tax grant and shareback program helps to financially support these municipally managed properties. Table 11 provides more information about the three Special Parks and Recreation Districts: Hyland Hills, Strasburg, and Bennett, and portions of the municipalities within Adams County.

Six other parks and open spaces are owned and managed by other federal, state, and county entities. These include significant properties of:

- Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (owned and managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Services, 15,965 acres classified as publicly assessable)
- Barr Lake State Park (owned and managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 786 acres classified as publicly accessible)
- Heron Pond/Heller Open Space and Westerly Creek Park (both owned and managed by City and County of Denver, 43 acres classified as Publicly Accessible)

Regional parks make up about 62% of Adams County's acreage of parks and open space.

## PARKS VISITATION

In 2019, the visitation number for Adams County's parks was estimated at 540,000, 38.8 percent greater than the number registered in 2017.<sup>1</sup> A substantial increase in visitors was seen in the five years prior to 2020. In 2019, 96,963 people visited the County Fair at Riverdale Regional Park, an increase of 27.5 percent.

<sup>1</sup> These visitation numbers are derived from estimates of rentals and daily average visitation estimates across County-owned parks.

**Table 11: Acreage of Parks Located in Adams County by Jurisdiction**

TYPE OF MANAGER	PRIMARY MANAGING ENTITY	ACRES
County/Municipality	Adams County	2,186
	City of Thornton	1,770
	City of Westminster	1,612
	City of Commerce City	1,628
	City of Brighton	1,132
	City of Aurora	1,245
	Hyland Hills	478
	City of Northglenn	430
	City of Federal Heights	116
	City of Arvada	12
	Town of Strasburg	13
	Town of Bennett	250
	Other Public Entities	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Colorado Division of Wildlife		786
Other	Joint - City and County of Denver	58
	NGO/Land Trust	1127
	Private Conservation	16,226

Source: Adams County GIS, Municipalities GIS, DRCOG 2018, Classified by Design Workshop 2020.

Notes: Excludes Golf Courses

## PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS PER POPULATION

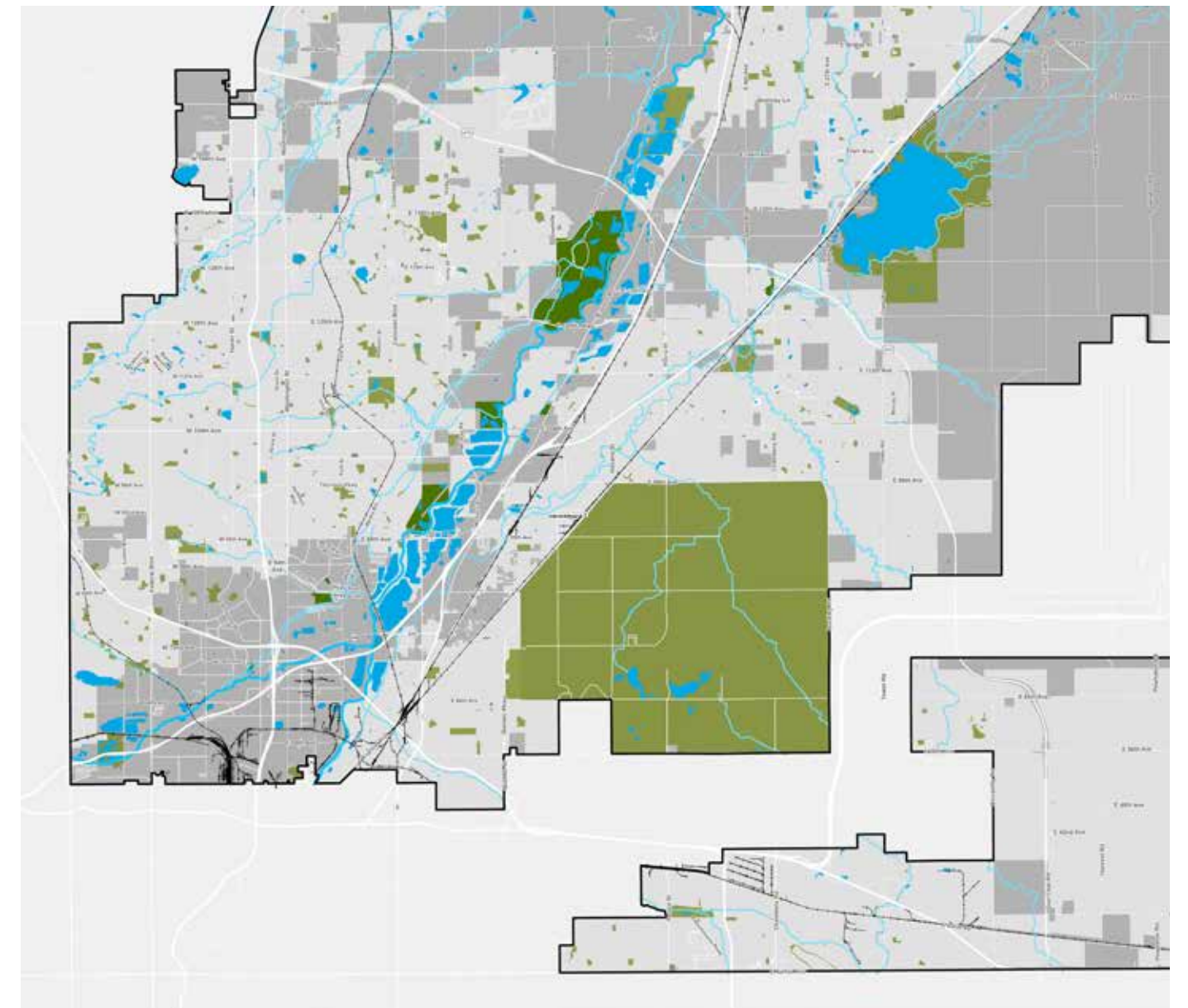
Identifying the number of acres of each park and publicly accessible open space type provided for every 1,000 residents is one way<sup>1</sup> to track how well the County is serving its current population and anticipate population growth needs. With a population of 517,885, Adams County currently provides 4.18 acres of publicly accessible parks and open spaces per 1,000 residents, or .004 acres per capita. This includes County managed greenways, trails and trailheads. With the county population projected by the state demographer

<sup>1</sup> This method is suggested by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)

to increase by about 120,000 people by 2030, to approximately 637,551 persons, Adams County will have to increase the acreage of the publicly accessible spaces they manage by roughly 500 acres to maintain the current provision levels. The County's plans to prepare more of their open space properties for public access in the future will be one way to increase this provision.

Including the developed and active park provision by other entities within (state, municipal, and recreation districts), the County provides insight into overall availability of passive and active outdoor recreation provision. Within the County there are 787 parks and open spaces that are publicly

## MAP 11: ADAMS COUNTY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

### LEGEND

- Adams County Parks and Open Space
- Municipal/Other Jurisdictions Parks and Open Space
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Streams and Lakes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Unincorporated

### DID YOU KNOW?



#### ALL JURISDICTIONS IN ADAMS COUNTY TOGETHER PROVIDE

**54** ACRES OF EXISTING PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAYS FOR EVERY 1000 RESIDENTS

#### ADAMS COUNTY OWNS/MANAGES

**4.8** ACRES OF EXISTING PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAYS FOR EVERY 1000 RESIDENTS

BY 2030, THE POPULATION WILL GROW FROM

**517,885 TO ~637,551**

TO MAINTAIN CURRENT LEVELS OF PROVISION/PERSON

**6,500** ACRES OF PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACES, PARKS AND GREENWAYS SHOULD BE ADDED

TO MAINTAIN CURRENT LEVELS OF PROVISION/PERSON

**500** ACRES OF PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACES, PARKS AND GREENWAYS SHOULD BE ADDED



accessible (do not require fees or limit access to members) totaling 27,896 acres. This equates to 53.87 acres of parks and publicly accessible open space per 1,000 county residents, or .053 per capita, a bit higher than the total for County managed properties only.

Adams County's ratio for publicly accessible parks and open space land is about five times that of the national average. However, it is important to note that developed parks with sports and other active recreation activities that have clear carrying capacity for people must be assessed differently

than open spaces, state and regional parks.<sup>2</sup> Collectively, with all the jurisdictions and entities in Adams County, maintaining the current level of provision of acreage per person of publicly accessible parks, open space, trails and greenways would require roughly another 6,500 acres to be added to the overall system by 2030.

<sup>2</sup> Open spaces correspond to the presence of land assets, environmental and cultural resources, natural amenities, and community values. Parks and open space in Adams County are not as clearly delineated in their use as National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) ratios for useful comparison.

**Table 14: County Maintained Parks and Open Spaces with Public Access**

PARKS	NUMBER OF PROPERTIES*	PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE	ACRES / 1,000	ACRES / 1,000
		PROPERTY ACRES	POPULATION IN 2019 (517,885)**	POPULATION IN 2030 (637,551)**
Adams County Managed Parks	5	1,256.20	2.43	1.97
Adams County Open Spaces (Publicly Accessible)	15	846.70	1.63	1.33
Adams County Greenways/Trailheads	11	64.00	0.12	0.10
<b>Total Adams County Publicly Accessible Open Spaces, Parks, Trails, and Greenways***</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>2,166.27</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>3.40</b>
Other Jurisdictions' Open Spaces, Parks	389	2,749.00	5.31	4.31
Other Jurisdictions' Open Spaces, Open Spaces (Publicly Accessible)	344	4,705.00	9.09	7.38
Other Jurisdictions' Open Spaces, Greenways/Trailheads	16	913.00	1.76	1.43
Publicly Accessible Open Spaces, Parks, Trails, and Greenways Owned and managed by City and County of Denver, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife	6	17,211.50	33.23	27.00
<b>All Existing Publicly Accessible Open Spaces, Parks, Trails, and Greenways</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>27,744.77</b>	<b>53.57</b>	<b>43.52</b>

Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS data

\*Number may not always be indicative of the number of named properties, but rather the number of parcels

\*\*Population data and projections from the Colorado State Demographer August 2020.

\*\*\*Property purchases near Regional Park not included, if considered publicly accessible, total rises to 15.6 acres.

DID YOU KNOW?



ADAMS COUNTY'S RATIO OF PARK AND OPEN SPACE LAND FOR EVERY 100 RESIDENTS IS ABOUT

**5 TIMES**

THE NATIONAL AVERAGE!

## INVENTORY OF EXISTING TRAILS

A total of 559.3 miles of existing trails are located within municipalities and unincorporated areas of Adams County. The County manages 40.75 miles, which include 17.5 miles along the South Platte River and 7.6 miles along the Clear Creek River. The South Platte River Trail (SPRT) stretches from the Chatfield Reservoir in Littleton to Highway 7 in Brighton, well past the Elaine T. Valente Open Space in Thornton. This trail provides connections to the Clear Creek Trail and the Cherry Creek Trail, and Sand Creek Trail through Denver. SPRT is one of the most popular in the county with many municipal spur trails connecting to it.

**Table 15: Trails by Municipality Jurisdiction**

MUNICIPALITY	TOTAL LENGTH (MILES)
Arvada	3
Aurora	64.85
Bennett	2.1
Brighton	45.4
Commerce City	65.9
Federal Heights	4.7
Northglenn	36.4
Westminster	63.6
Thornton	185

*Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG*

**Table 16: Trails by Municipality Jurisdiction**

	TOTAL LENGTH (MILES)	DEFINITION
Priority Planned	16	These trails were mapped based on Adams County's already planned trails, identified as top priority.
Future Trails	39 (36 Miles of 2012 High Priority and 3 County Identified)	Includes trails listed as High Priority planned from the 2012 POST plan as well as trails identified by Adams County as planned.
Existing Trails - Adams County	40.75	Trails under Adams County jurisdiction (classification based on data received from Adams County)
Existing Trails - Regional	47.8	Trails that are regional, under other jurisdictions (classification based on data received from Adams County). Includes RMANWR perimeter trail.
Existing Trails - Municipal	470.75	Local trails under municipal jurisdictions

*Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG*



**Figure 18: Riverdale Regional Park Path**



**Figure 19: Clear Creek Trail**



**Figure 20: Little Dry Creek Trail**



**Figure 21: Niver Creek Trail**



**Figure 22: Sand Creek Trail**



**Figure 23: Big Dry Creek Trail**



## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE SERVICE AREAS

A 5- to -10-minute walk to access parks and open space is a goal that ensures residents have a convenient means to reach outdoor recreation space. This may lead to more frequent use, and thereby contribute to improving the health and well-being of all residents. Most people can walk a half-mile in about 10 minutes, cutting out the need for commuting to such opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

There are currently 54,837 residential addresses within Adams County that are not within a 1/4 mile (5-minute walk) of a neighborhood park or a 1/2 mile (10-minute walk) from a community or regional park. That equates to ~ 31.6 percent of all residential addresses in the county outside of a comfortable walking distance (indicated in MAP 14 as “Residences farther than ¼ mile of a park”) from these parks, and 68.4 percent are well served with the location of parks. MAP 13, MAP 14, and MAP 15 display these park service gap areas and highlight the residential address points that do not have parks within walking distance. While these residential areas without good park access are spread throughout the county, the majority of underserved residences in unincorporated Adams County are in the southwest portion of the county. The major areas of Unincorporated Adams County that

<sup>1</sup> This walking distance analysis also took into account barriers to access, such as crossing major highways, rivers, and railroad. True entry points to parks were also factored in to more accurately acknowledge distance.

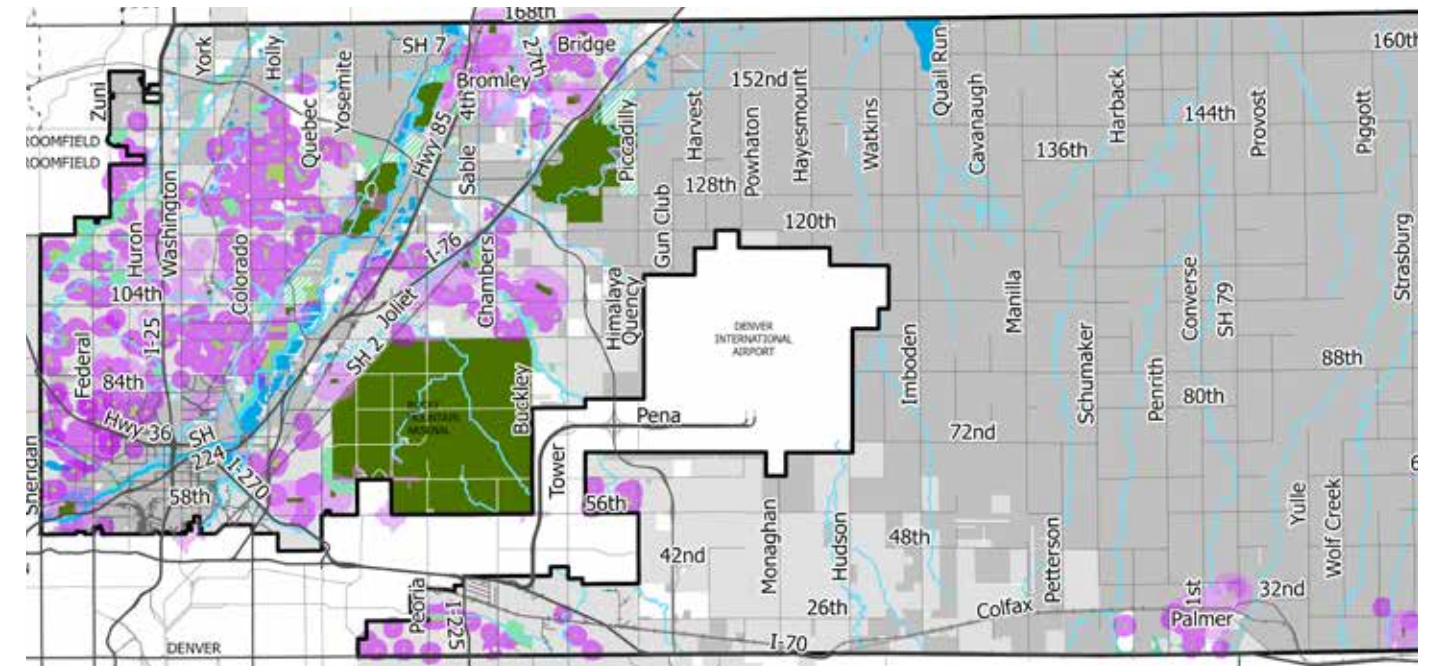
### LEGEND

- Areas within 1/4 mile of a neighborhood park
- Areas within 1/2 mile of a community park or regional park within Adams county
- Neighborhood Parks (Municipal Other)
- Community/ Regional Park
- Open Space W/ Public Access
- Open Space Without Public Access
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Streams and Lakes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Unincorporated

### LEGEND

- Residences within ¼ mile of a park
- Residences farther than ¼ mile of a park
- Neighborhood Parks (Municipal Other)
- Community/ Regional Park
- Open Space W/ Public Access
- Open Space Without Public Access
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Streams and Lakes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Unincorporated

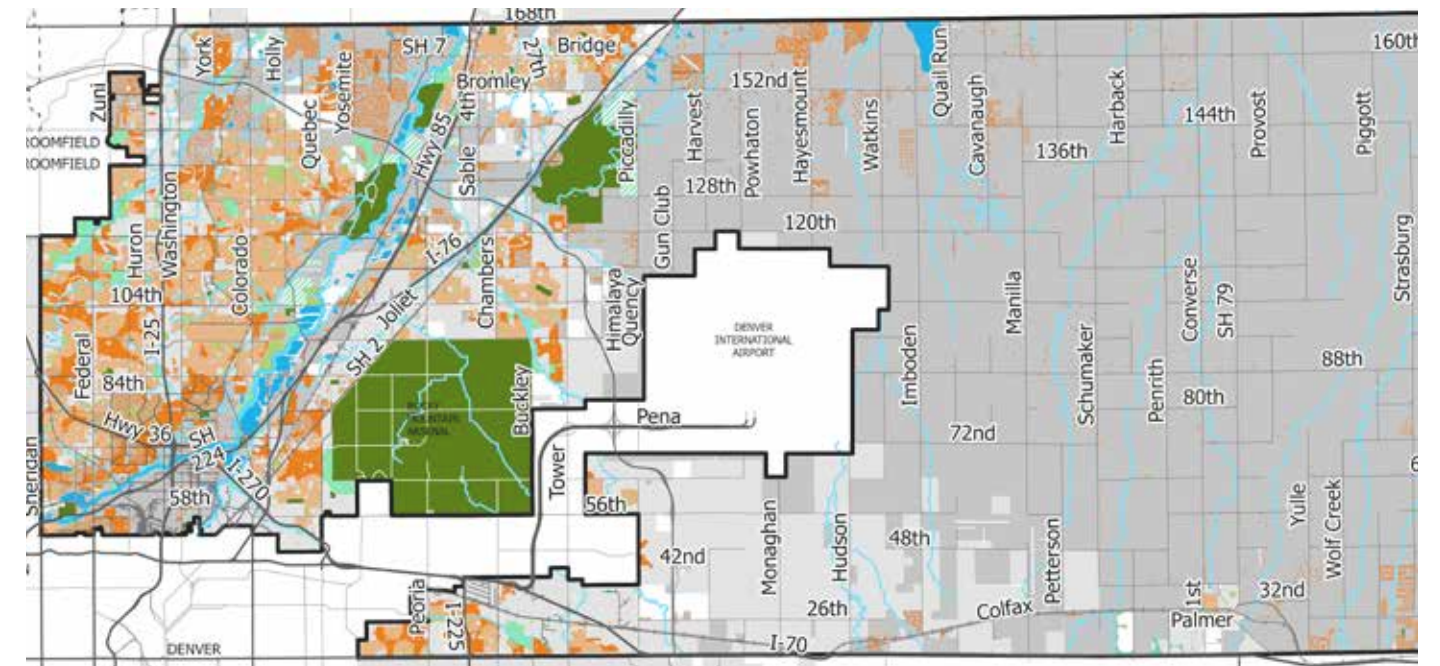
## MAP 13: PUBLIC ACCESS SERVICE AREAS



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE

## MAP 14: PARK SERVICE AREA GAPS - RESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE



these residences can be found in include:

- North of Clear Creek between Federal Boulevard and Washington Street
- The northwest corner of the county by Big Dry Creek
- The area by Todd Creek west of Riverdale Road
- The southwest corner of the county between Pecos Street and Zuni Street
- West of Federal Boulevard and between 92nd and 88th Avenues
- East of I-76 and between 88th and 76th Avenues
- Rural areas north of Strasburg
- Rural neighborhoods north of DIA and around the northern portion of Hayesmount Road

Most residences are within a 15-minute drive of a regional park (including adjacent County parks),

### LEGEND

- Residences within ¼ mile of a park
- Residences farther than ¼ mile of a park
- Neighborhood Parks (Municipal Other)
- Community/Regional Park
- Open Space W/ Public Access
- Open Space Without Public Access
- Adams County Boundary
- ++++ Railroads
- Streams and Lakes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Unincorporated
- Service Gaps

**Table 17: Park Service Area Gaps**

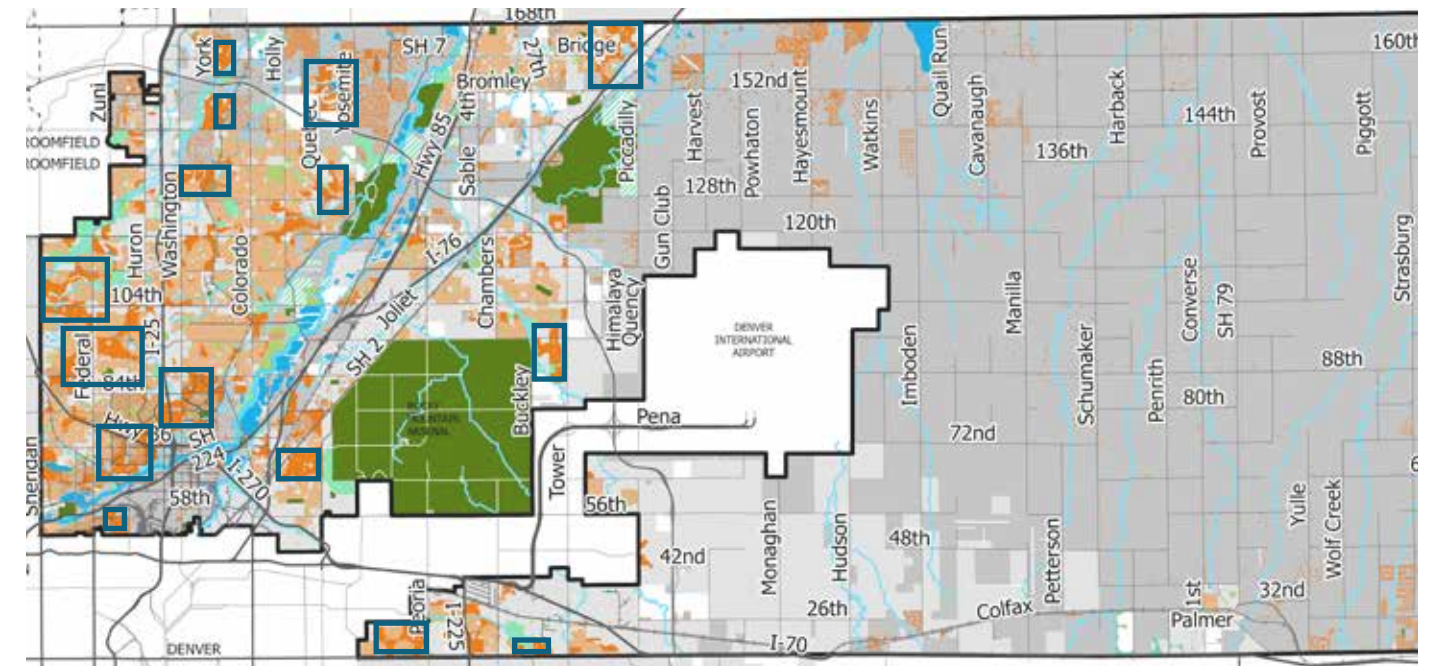
	DEFINITION	QUANTITY
Residential Address without Service	Residential Address points that are not within a 1/4 of a neighborhood park or a 1/2 mile from a community or regional park within Adams County.	54,837 addresses
Residential Address with Service	Residential Address points that are within a 1/4 of a neighborhood park or a 1/2 mile from a community or regional park within Adams County.	118,574 addresses
Residential Address without Regional Park Service	Residential Address points that are not within a 15 minute drive of a regional park (includes properties in surrounding counties).	3,625 addresses
Residential Address with Regional Park Service	Residential Address points that are within a 15 minute drive of a regional park (includes properties in surrounding counties).	173,409 addresses

Source: Adams County GIS, Municipalities GIS, DRCOG 2018, Classified by Design Workshop 2020

### LEGEND

- Areas within 15 Minute Drive from Regional Park
- Neighborhood Parks (Municipal Other)
- Community/Regional Park
- Open Space W/ Public Access
- Open Space Without Public Access
- Adams County Boundary
- ++++ Railroads
- Streams and Lakes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Unincorporated

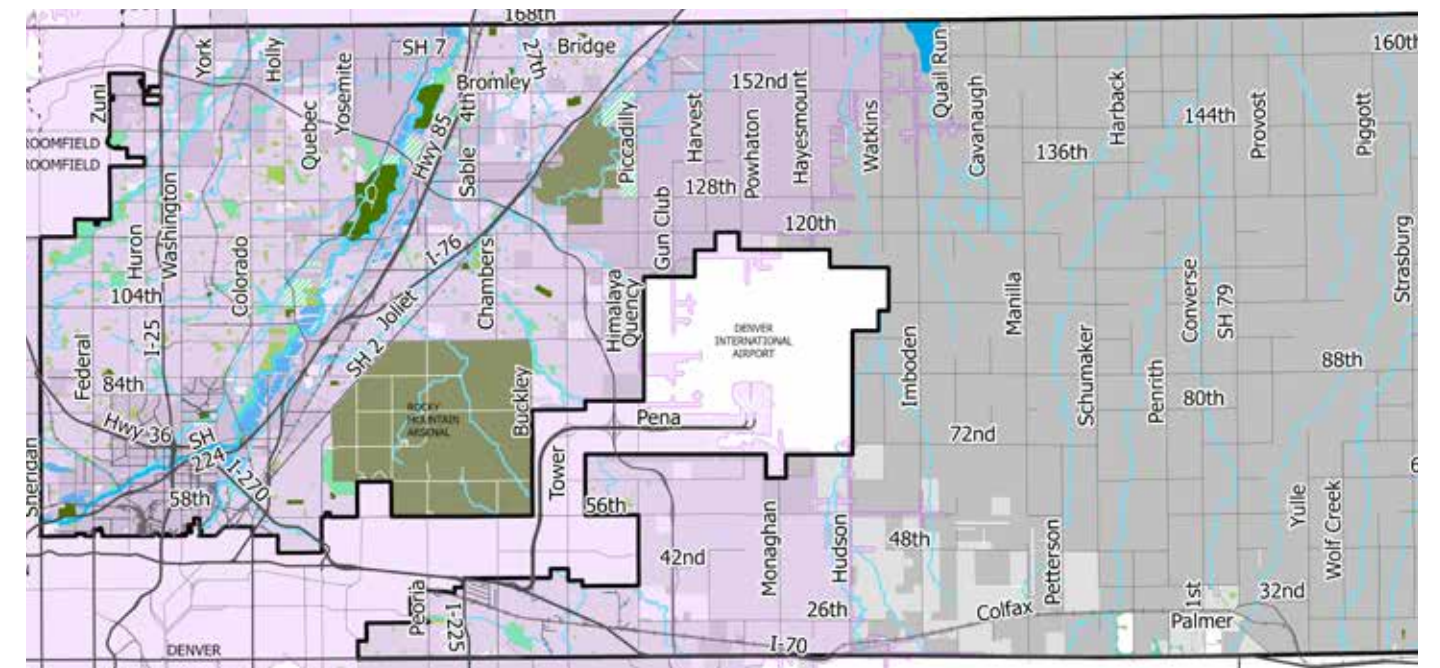
### MAP 15: PARK SERVICE GAPS



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE

### MAP 16: REGIONAL PARK SERVICE AREA - 15 MINUTE DRIVE



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE



with only two percent living beyond that driving distance (as shown in MAP 16). This indicates good geographic distribution of regional parks, however access to these parks, via multimodal and transit options must be considered when looking at equity in access. As development expands to the east, additional regional park expansion may be necessary to service these areas.

This service analysis does not take into account access to active recreation facilities such as recreation centers, swimming pools and athletic fields. Not all residents have access to these types of facilities.

## REFERENCE DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

### PARKS DISTRIBUTION AND EQUITY

Looking at the geographic distribution of parks and open spaces in terms of the demographic groups they serve reveals significant information. The areas served by parks within walking distance has only a slightly higher percentage (27.4%) of the population being youth (ages 0-17) than those areas that are without parks in walking distance (26.7% are youth). Slightly higher percent of seniors (11.69%) make up the percentage of the population in the areas without

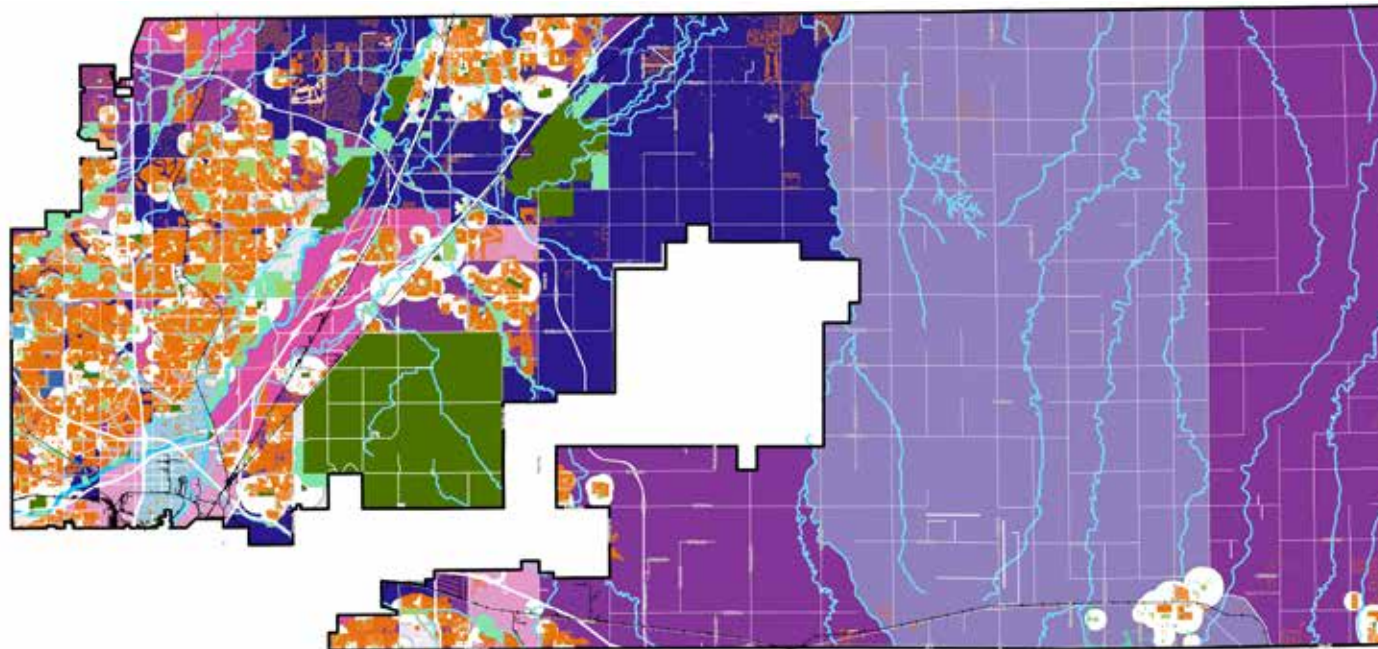
parks in walking distance than the areas with parks (11%).

Racial minorities make up about half of the population within current park walking distance with the largest groups being Hispanics (making up about 40%), Black (3.4%), Asians (4.43%), Pacific Islanders (0.16%), and American Indians (1.47%). Roughly two-thirds of Adams County's ethnic/racial minority populations are located within walking distance to parks; similar to the percentage of the total population within parks service areas. However, some of the areas of greatest diversity are in the southwestern portions of the county,

areas that also lack accessible parks as shown in MAP 19.

Roughly two-thirds of households below the poverty level are also within current park service areas. Overall, the median household income is higher for residents outside of the public park service areas (\$72,184), than households within the service area/walking distance (\$69,458). This can be explained by wealthier neighborhoods being served by private/HOA parks and large lot rural residences not seeking close proximity to public parks.

## MAP 17: PARK SERVICE AREA GAPS - AGE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERIZATION



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE

### LEGEND

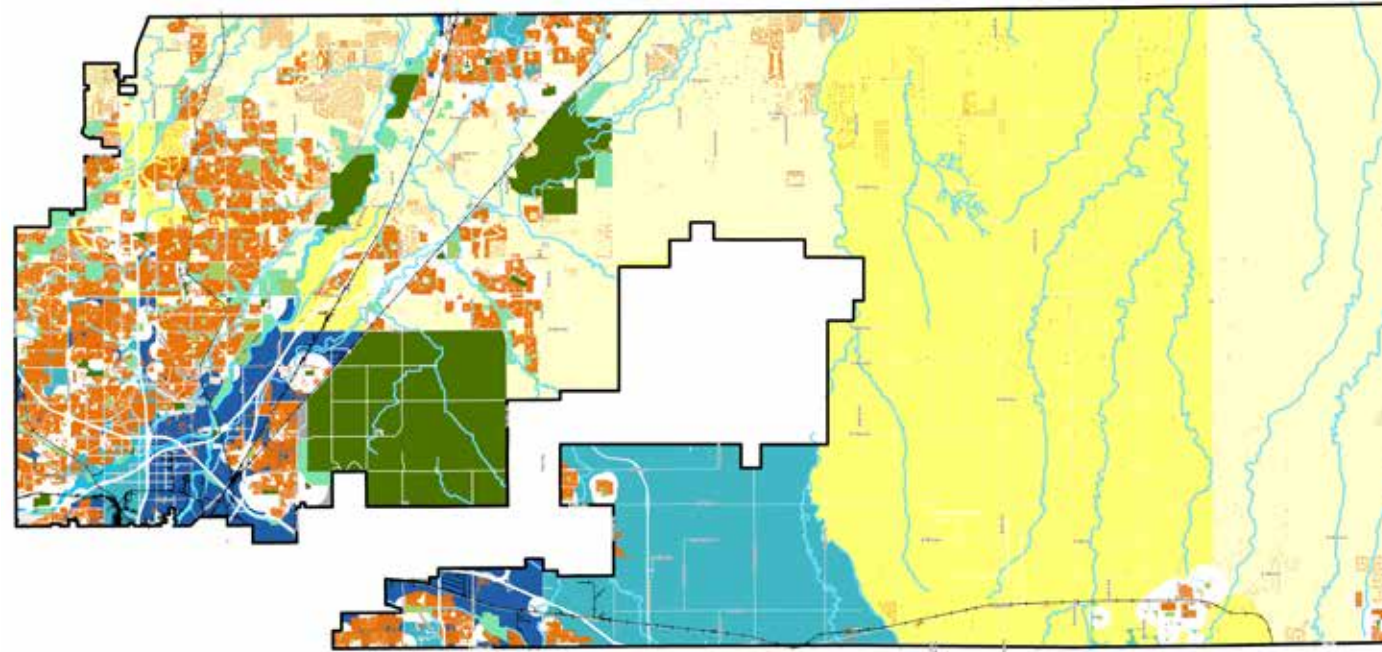
- Residential address
- Neighborhood Parks (Municipal Other)
- Community/Regional Park
- Open Space W/ Public Access
- Open Space Without Public Access
- High population of children
- Low population of both children and seniors
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Streams and Lakes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Unincorporated
- High population of both children and seniors
- High population of seniors

Table 18: Park Open Space Access (within 1/4 mile of a neighborhood park or within 1/2 mile of a community park)

		NO	YES
Age	# of children (ages 0-17)	45,711	93,922
	% of children (ages 0-17)	26.75	27.4
	# of seniors (65+)	19,974	37,770
	% of seniors (65+)	11.69	11.02
Income	Median Household Income	72,184	69,458
	Minority Population #	85,867	172,669
Race / Minority Population	Minority Population %	50.25	50.37
	Black Population #	6,635	11,640
	Black Population %	3.88	3.40
	American Indian Population #	2,298	5,038
	American Indian Population %	1.34	1.47
	Hispanic Population #	68,726	136,996
At Risk Population	Hispanic Population %	40.22	39.96
	# HH below poverty level	5,247	11,276
	% HH below poverty Level	10.16	10

Source: Esri, 2020, Enriched data in ArcGIS Pro (aggregated by Block Group)










## MAP 18: CDC SOCIAL VULNERABILITY CHARACTERIZATION



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

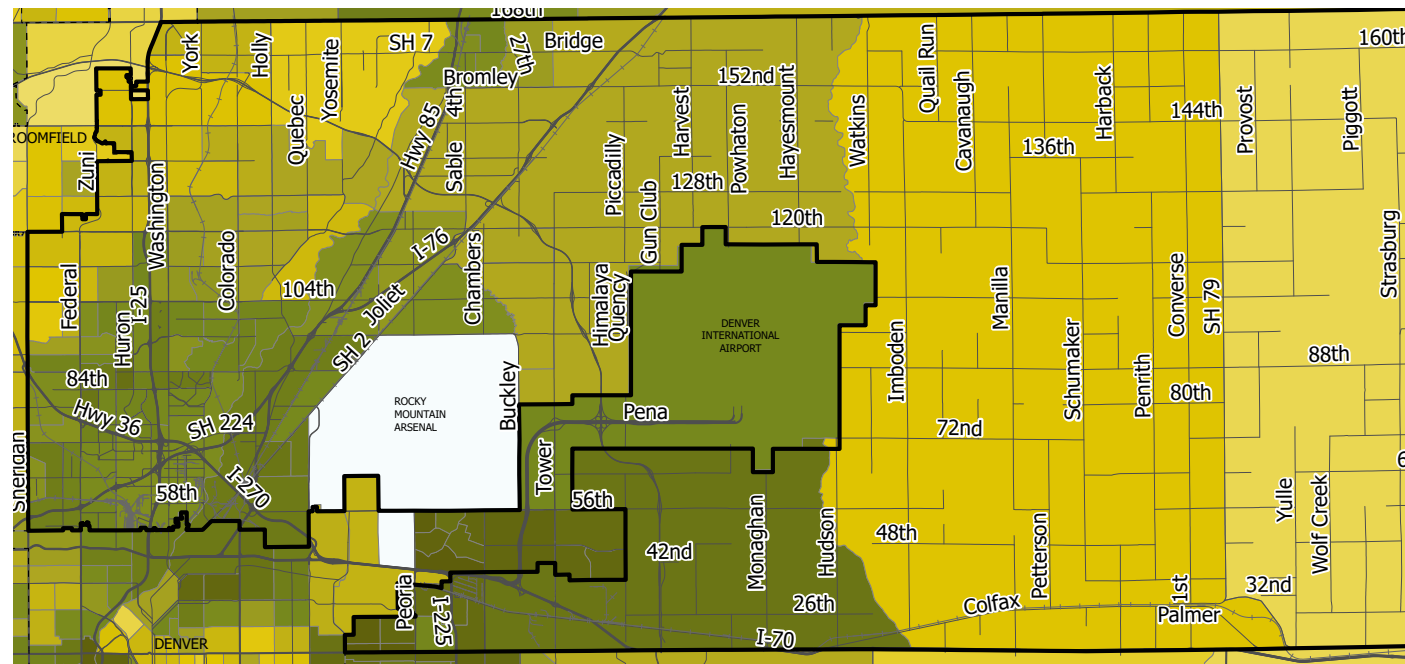
NOT TO SCALE 

### LEGEND

-  Residential Address Point
-  Open Space W/ Public Access
-  Open Space Without Public Access
-  0.00-0.25 (lowest Vulnerability)
-  0.25-0.50
-  0.50-0.75
-  0.75-1.00 (Highest Vulnerability)
-  Neighborhood Parks (Municipal Other)
-  Community/Regional Park
-  Adams County Boundary
-  Railroads
-  Streams and Lakes
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Unincorporated

However, another important point of data for evaluating equity in park distribution is that much of the areas identified by CDC Social Vulnerability Index as the highest levels of vulnerability (combination of assessing socioeconomic status, household composition, Race/Ethnicity/language, and housing/transportation) is located in the southwestern portion of the county (MAP 18); an area with park provision gaps.

## MAP 19: DIVERSITY



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE 

### LEGEND

-  2020 Diversity Index - High
-  2020 Diversity Index - Low
-  Adams County Boundary
-  Railroads



## FUNDING SOURCES

### ADAMS COUNTY OPEN SPACE SALES TAX

Adams County voters overwhelmingly (82.76%) supported making the ¼ percent sales tax for open space permanent through the 2020 ballot measure. This sales tax was enacted in 1999 as a 1/5 of one percent Open Space Sales Tax authorized through 2006, and then in 2004, it was increased to ¼ of one percent to remain through 2026. Now permanent without a sunset, the proceeds of this tax will continue to be used for preserving land to protect water quality; wildlife areas; wetlands, rivers and streams; farmland; protecting open space to limit sprawl; and for creating, improving, and maintaining parks, trails and recreation facilities, funding projects County-wide. The taxing entities contributing to the Open Space Sales Tax are: City of Arvada, City of Aurora, Town of Bennett, City of Brighton, City of Commerce City, City of Federal Heights, City of Northglenn, City of Thornton, City of Westminster, and Adams County.

Through the first 20 years of the program, more than 538 projects have received funding in cities and unincorporated areas throughout the county, totaling over \$212 million.

Funds are distributed three ways:

- 68% is awarded through a competitive grant program

- 30% is distributed back to the jurisdiction where the tax was generated
- 2% is allocated to administration costs

The program includes a provision for a citizen Open Space Advisory Board, appointed by Adams County Board of Commissioners, to review and recommend projects for funding. A seven-member board (four members from unincorporated areas, three from cities and towns), representing all geographical areas of the County, reviews all grant applications and recommends funding allocations to the Board of County Commissioners.

The types of projects that can be funded through the grant program include: the purchase, construction, and maintenance of: horse, bike or running trails; natural areas with limited development for fishing, hiking, walking or biking; wildlife preserves; lakes for fishing with accessible walks, docks, picnic areas and restrooms; conservation easements on agricultural land; environmental education programs; lands and waterways as community buffers; river and stream corridor land; unimproved floodplains; wetlands; preservation of cemeteries; picnic facilities; and the purchase, construction, equipping and maintenance of: sports fields, golf courses, and recreation centers.

The new measure allows funds to be distributed through a competitive grant program and no longer defines an allocation dedicated towards active versus passive projects. Grant

applications allow for these passive projects, active projects, and also Mini-Grants over the course of two grant cycles per year (March/spring cycle and September/fall cycle).

Passive Project applications are for lands with significant natural resource, scenic and wildlife habitat values; lands that are buffers maintaining community identity; lands that are to be used for trails and/or wildlife migration routes; lands that will be preserved for agricultural or ranch purposes; lands for outdoor recreation purposes limited to passive recreational use; and lands with other important values such as scenic and historic sites that contribute to municipalities' natural and cultural heritage.

Active Project applications are for lands for programmed park purposes and other recreational uses such as sports fields, swimming pools, golf courses and recreation centers.

Mini Grant applications (amount does not exceed \$5,000) are for uses defined in either of the above sections but are geared towards smaller community projects, neighborhoods and joint projects with youth and non-profit organizations.

In 2020, the Adams County Board of Commissioners (BOCC) awarded \$10,593,118 to 33 projects, and in 2019, \$10.6 million was awarded to 20 projects.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.adcogov.org/news/adams-county-commissioners-award-49-million-open-space-grants>

## OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

In Colorado, grants are also available through the lottery-funded Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) program for entities to acquire, expand and improve local parks; outdoor recreation and environmental education facilities; conserve open space; and construct, maintain, plan and design trails. GOCO has allocated nearly \$29,200,000 through 126 grants to projects within Adams County since the program's inception in 1992. This includes the conservation of 3,093.44 acres of land.<sup>2</sup>

Notable recent project that have received GOCO funding include the Morimitsu Farm/Historic Splendid Valley (2020, \$750,000 grant); various outdoor learning spaces; floodplain restoration; Willow Bay Acquisition (2017, \$3,000,000 grant); the South Platte River Trail (2014, \$600,000 grant); and the Colorado Front Range Trail (2014, \$950,000 grant).

<sup>2</sup> <https://goco.org/find-projects/county/adams-county>

## EVALUATION OF LANDS FOR FUTURE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Adams County has been strategic in identifying locations to acquire parkland to serve recreation needs, conserve open space to protect wildlife habitat and water resources, and preserve important agricultural resources. Mapping of these resources combined with assessing their ecological and community values informs these strategies.

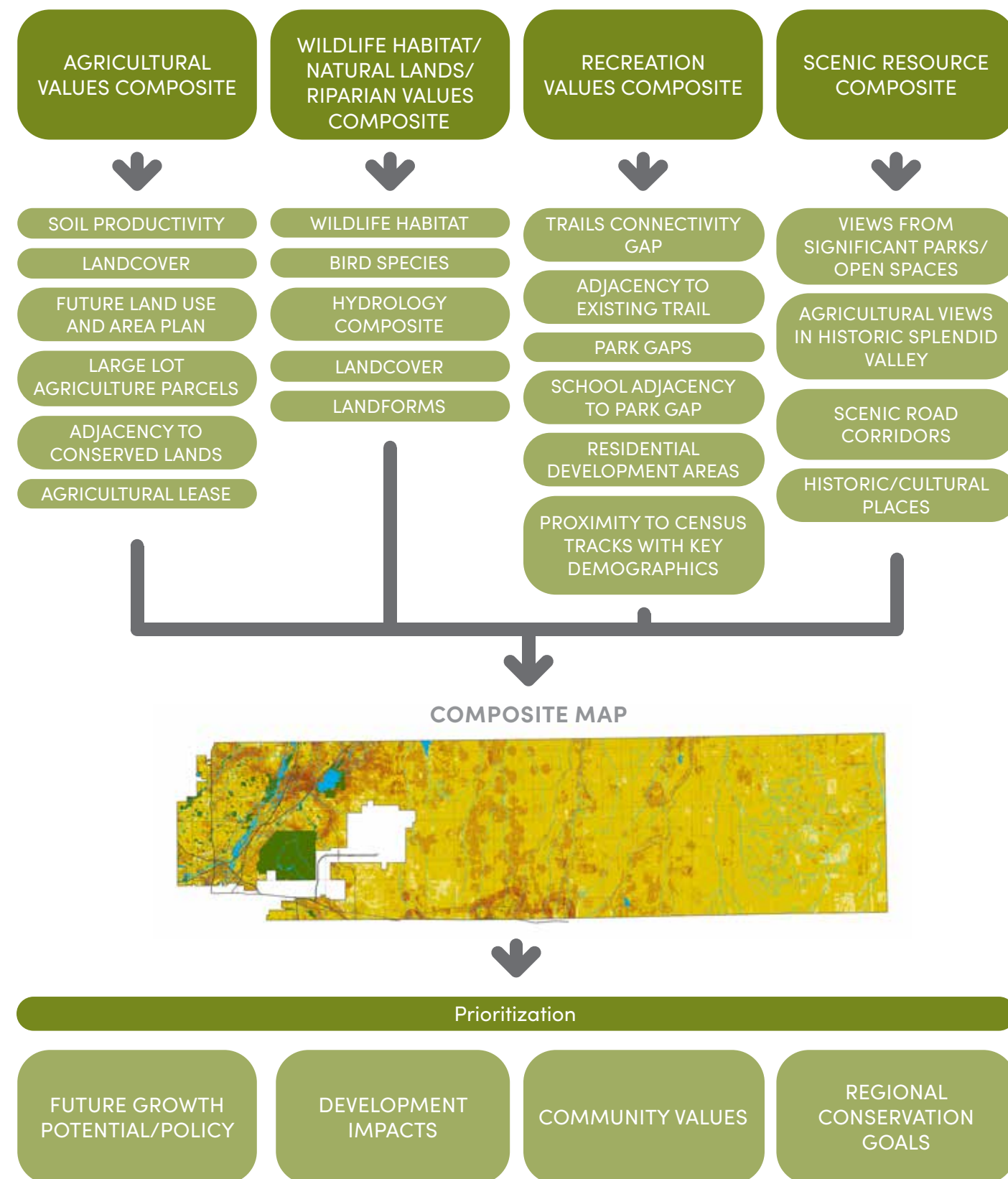
### METHODOLOGY

Parks and open spaces benefit the county by maintaining and preserving environmentally important lands and providing the public with opportunities to interact with nature. These areas have a direct relationship with the health and wellbeing of residents as they provide them with opportunities to engage in physical activity and provide mental and emotional benefits of spending time in nature. Geographic Information System (GIS) data from a range of county, state, and other sources was utilized to create a database of characteristics to assess for potential parks, open spaces, and priority conservation areas. The land evaluation analysis and weighting of data is informed by outside expert input, where appropriate. Composite mapping illustrates desirability for future parks and open space through defining areas that may be more sensitive to development, more susceptible to development pressures, and

more appropriate for conservation through assessing various land characteristics. This methodology provides a framework for prioritization and decision making for future open space or park acquisitions, determining locations for future trails, and evaluating the appropriateness for access or increased protection levels. Additional factors of desirability not available in county-wide GIS data, such as water rights association with property and property conditions, are assessed at a later time when evaluating specific individual properties for acquisition.

As the master plan moves into Phase 2, the outcomes that the analysis reveals will be vetted with the public and stakeholders, helping further define priority areas.

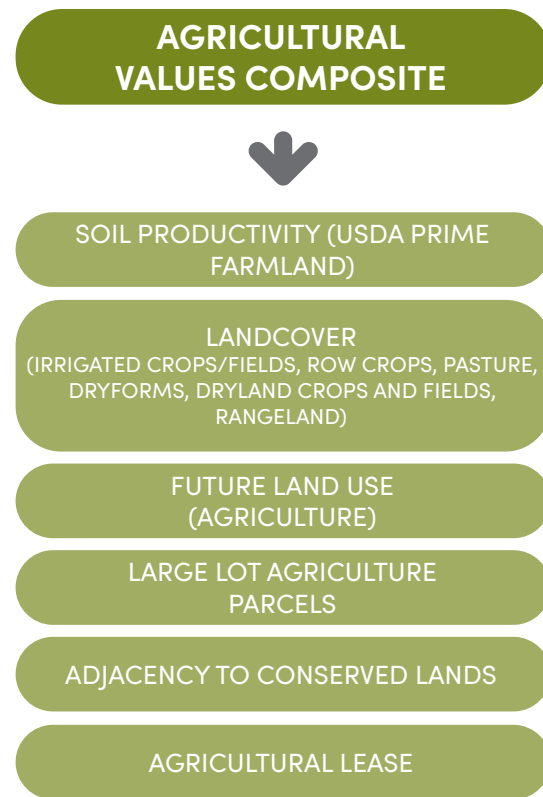
Figure 24: Map Assessment Criteria for Parks and Open Space Suitability



Source: Design Workshop



**Figure 25:** Diagram of Agricultural Values Composite Components and their Weighted Values



## AGRICULTURAL VALUES

One purpose of the Open Space Sales Tax is to preserve farmland and associated water rights. The County prefers to protect natural areas or farmland using conservation easements unless public access and recreation are important.

As municipalities continue to grow, their expansion encroaches on agricultural operations. In addition, tension between agricultural and non-agricultural uses is occurring because of restrictions on normal farming practices when residential and commercial uses encroach on agricultural areas. Agriculture in the western part of Adams County has

and will continue to experience the most dramatic shifts and changes.

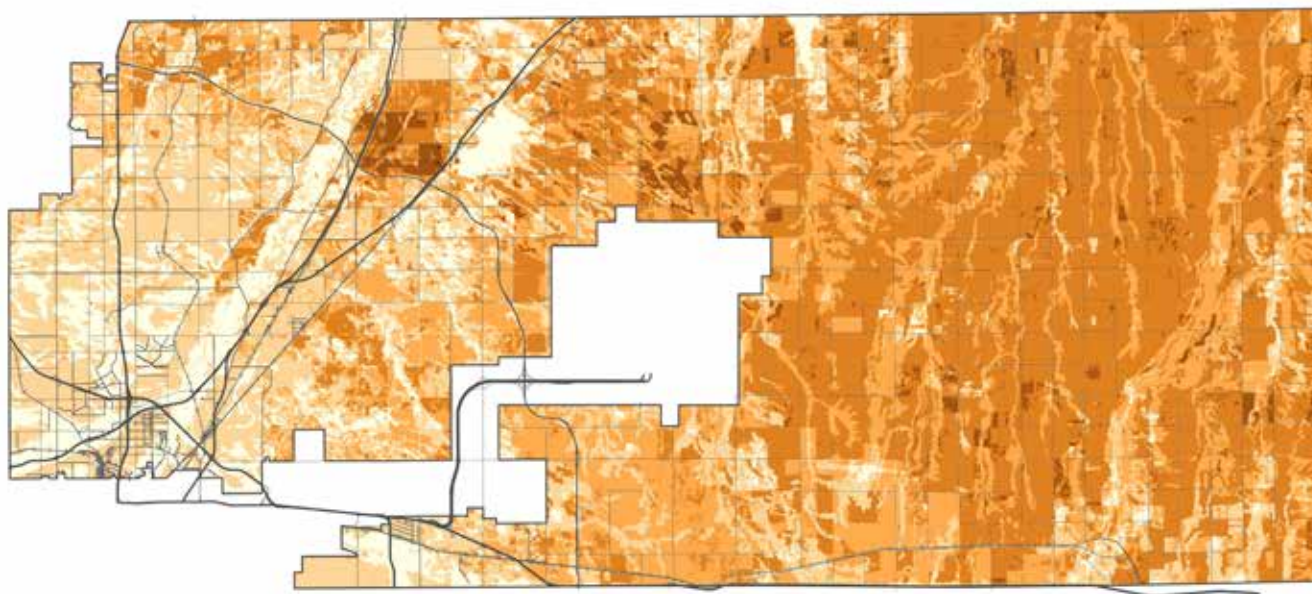
The assessment in MAP 20 identifies areas that possess the greatest value for agricultural protection. Agriculture criteria includes lands defined as prime farmland by the USDA, areas currently used for crop production, rangeland, areas currently irrigated and those identified as agriculture land use and/or lease. The ranking also values large agricultural parcels over smaller segmented parcels and those adjacent to existing conserved lands.

Overall, the mapping shows a scatter of locations of high value agricultural resources, with the greatest concentration in the central part of the

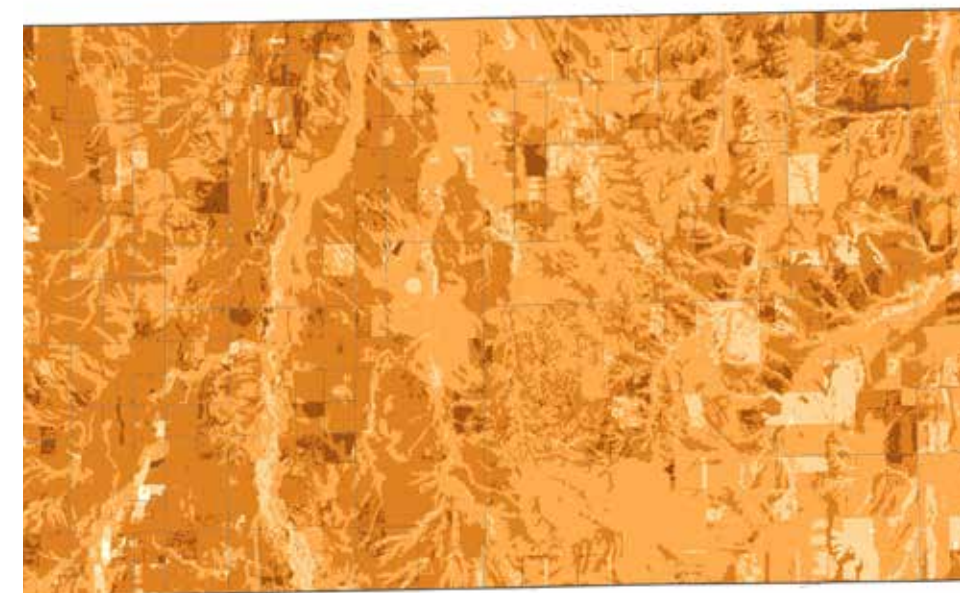
county and within the Splendid Valley District.

Another great challenge for agricultural sustainability is water resources. Due to climate change, the snowpack is expected to melt earlier and any extra precipitation in the winter is likely to be absorbed and sent downstream earlier in the season, leaving Adams County with less water in the growing seasons and height of summer. Water Supply issues and the seasonal variations in temperature and timing of precipitation could also affect crop variables and harvests. Agriculture in Colorado currently experiences water supply gaps (difference between supply and demand) that are projected to increase in the future

## MAP 20: AGRICULTURE VALUES COMPOSITE



Data Source: Design Workshop, USDA NRCS, Colorado View GIS Data, Adams County GIS, CPW



### LEGEND

Agricultural Values

High

Low

NOT TO SCALE



if climate conditions are hotter and supplies diminish. The Colorado Water Plan projects irrigated acreage to decrease due urbanization, planned agricultural-to-municipal water transfers, and groundwater sustainability issues. An increased likelihood of drought conditions in the state will cause more difficulties for agriculture and may lead to more land sitting fallow, continued transfers and require ongoing innovation in agricultural practices.

### Land Cover

One of the components assessed under the Agricultural composite is land cover mapping illustrating vegetation types. The bulk of Adams County is vegetated with native or introduced grasses in a prairie-like

environment used for grazing or maintained as cropland with nearly 705,289 acres categorized by the USDA as “lands in farms”. However, over the last 15 years, developed areas land cover has increased by 28%, agricultural lands have increased by about 2%, and vegetative land cover has decreased by nearly 9% in total.

Land Cover mapping describes development and encroachment over time in further detail. Table 19 shows significant decreases in Deciduous Forest (56.7%), Evergreen Forest (43%), Mixed Forest (33.3%), and Woody Wetlands and Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands (27.7%, and 18.2% respectively) between 2001 and 2016, with increased medium and high intensity developed lands.

**Table 19: Adams County Land Cover Data**

NLCD LAND COVER CLASS	ACRES (2001)	ACRES (2016)	% CHANGE
Open Water	5,197	6,003	13.4%
Developed, Open Space	27,772	33,463	17%
Developed, Low Intensity	26,984	31,056	13.1%
Developed, Medium Intensity	17,417	24,877	30%
Developed, High Intensity	6,144	8,896	30.9%
Barren Land	273	262	-4.3%
Deciduous Forest	207	132	-56.7%
Evergreen Forest	48	34	-43%
Mixed Forest	12	9	-33.3%
Shrub/Scrub	4,669	4,231	-10.3%
Herbaceous	225,206	197,516	-14%
Hay/Pasture	4,758	6,582	27.7%
Cultivated Crops	430,136	436,770	1.5%
Woody Wetlands	2,400	1,880	-27.7%
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	7,021	5,939	-18.2%

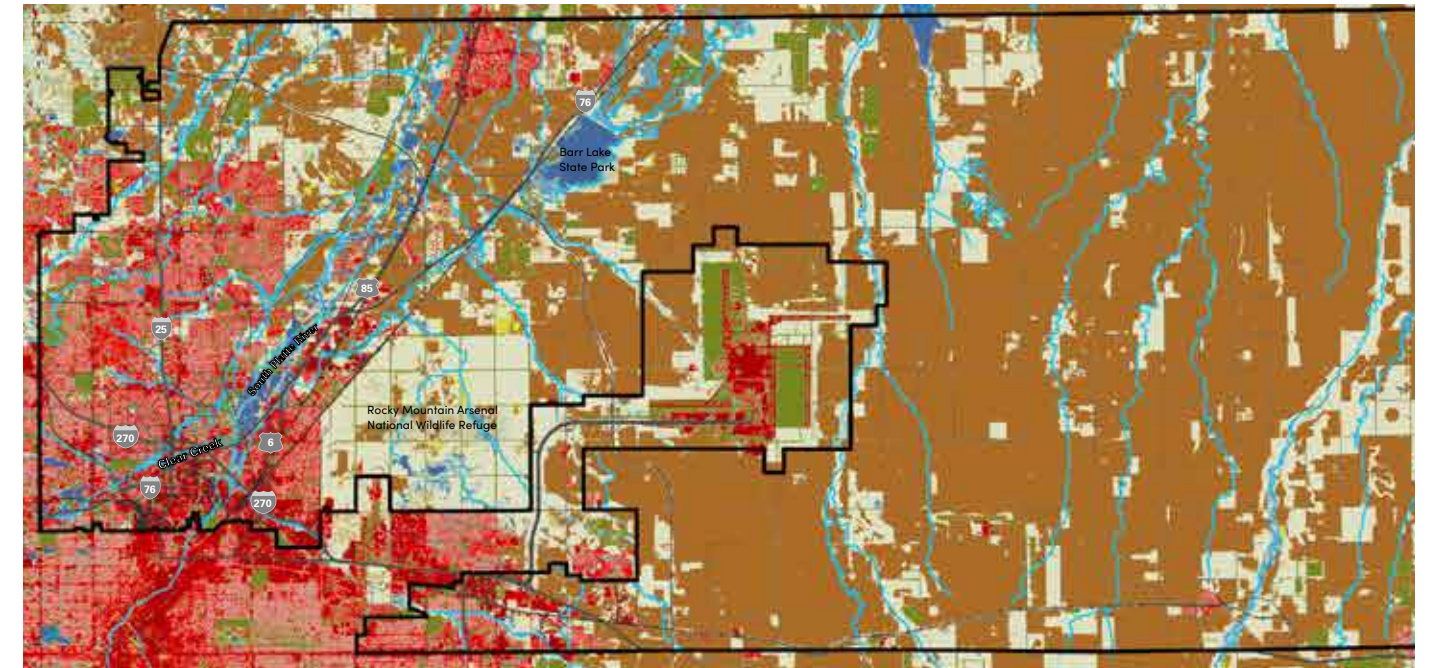
Source: USGS 2016, Classified by Design Workshop 2020

### LEGEND

- Developed Low Intensity
- Developed Medium Intensity
- Developed High Intensity
- Developed, Open Space
- Cultivated Crops
- Hay/Pasture
- Open Water
- Rivers/Creeks
- Wetlands
- Evergreen/Mixed/Deciduous Forest
- Shrub/Scrub
- Herbaceous
- Barren Lands
- County Boundary
- Railroads

Source: Data from National Land Cover Database (NLCD)

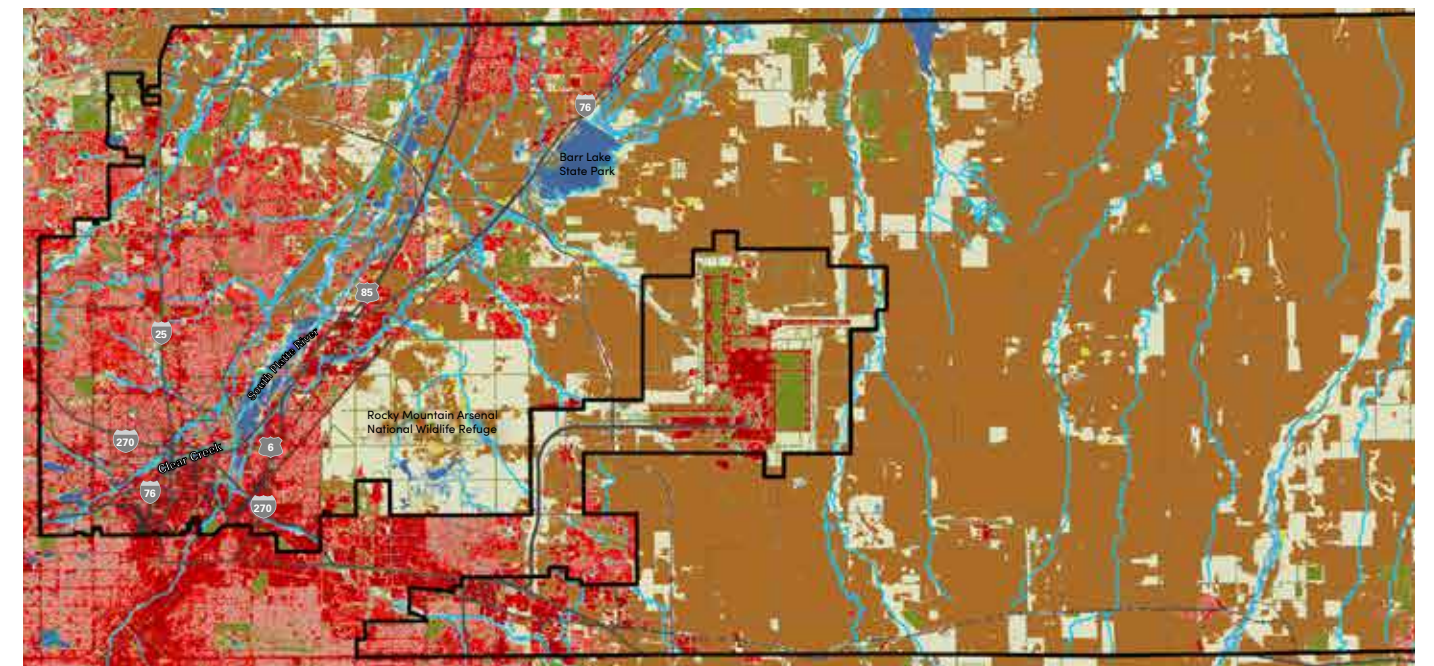
## MAP 21: LAND COVER 2001



Source: NLCD 2001, Classified by Design Workshop 2020

NOT TO SCALE

## MAP 22: LAND COVER 2016



Source: NLCD 2016, Classified by Design Workshop 2020

NOT TO SCALE



**Figure 26:** Diagram of Wildlife Habitat/ Natural Lands/ Riparian Values Composite Components and their Weighted Values



### WILDLIFE HABITAT/ NATURAL LANDS/ RIPARIAN CONSERVATION

Other purposes of the Open Space Sales tax are for preserving lands that protect water quality, wetlands, rivers and streams and also protecting wildlife habitat areas. The ecological landscape diversity and quality of the county's natural environment is strongly valued by county residents, contributing to quality of life and character. Wildlife habitat and the presence of bird species has a strong relationship to the type of water availability, landforms, and vegetation landcover in Adams County. A composite map of all these factors is shown below (Map 23) and indicates the highest value is along the South

Platte River, Clear Creek, within Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, and Barr Lake State Park, but also some locations that lack conservation surrounding the airport and creeks along the eastern plains.



**Figure 29:** Rocky Mountain Arsenal

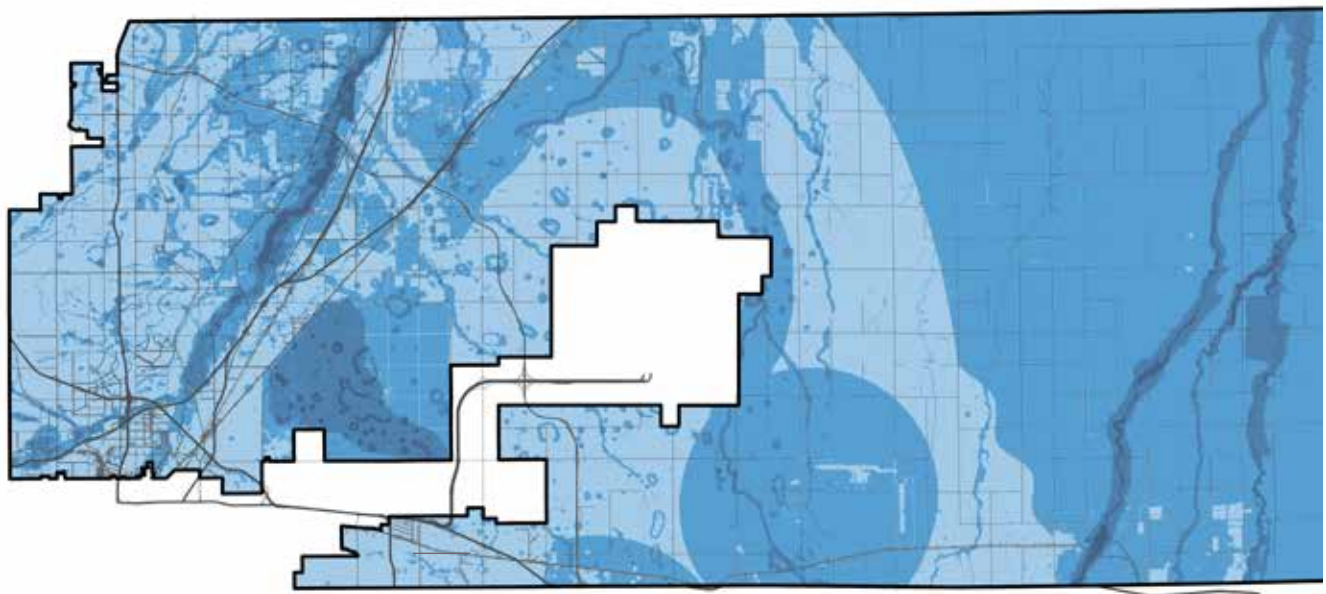


**Figure 28:** Riverdale Regional Park



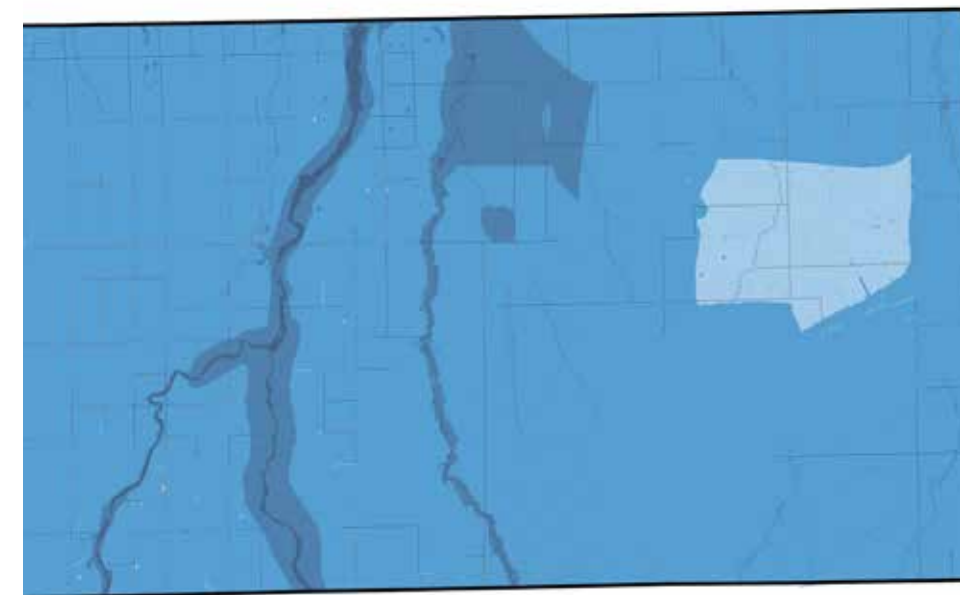
**Figure 27:** South Platte

## MAP 23: WILDLIFE COMPOSITE MAP



Data Source: Adams County and Design Workshop

## LEGEND



**LEGEND**

Weighted Overlay Scale

- High Value (6)
- Low Value (0)

NOT TO SCALE



## Vegetation

The bulk of Adams County is vegetated with native or introduced grasses in a prairie-like environment used for grazing or maintained as cropland. Even though extensive areas of grass exist in the county, few are shortgrass prairies. These are the lands of the historic great herds of bison, the home of Colorado's state bird, the Lark Bunting, which most Coloradans have never seen, and the habitat for many other plains animals. Adams County has the opportunity to help re-establish shortgrass prairies and educate people about the importance of this natural resource.

Trees are not plentiful in eastern Adams County and naturally exist

only along portions of the drainages and water bodies. The drainages and edges of the water bodies are important vegetation corridors due to their often rich diversity of plant material. They are also an integral part of the prairie grassland environment.

The populated, western portion of Adams County is highly urbanized with most natural areas concentrated around the Clear Creek and South Platte River Corridors, Rocky Mountain Arsenal, and Barr Lake State Park. Riparian areas along the South Platte River and Clear Creek corridors are generally split evenly between native and non-native dominated vegetation communities; however, non-native



Figure 30: Cheatgrass



Figure 31: Canada thistle



Figure 32: Hoary cress



Figure 33: Field bindweed



Figure 34: Kochia



Figure 35: Cattail



Figure 36: Smooth brome



Figure 37: Siberian elm

vegetation communities typically perform worse ecologically compared to native communities. Riparian forested communities highlight both stream corridors making up approximately 15 percent of the corridor. Overall, the majority of the riparian areas along both corridors are performing at a fair function due to low species diversity, presence of noxious and invasive weeds, poor root depth along riverbanks, and steep bank angles. Upland vegetation communities are mostly dominated by non-native species and disturbed areas (176 acres) with less than 25 percent total cover which represent the greatest restoration opportunity for the county. Native dominated upland vegetation communities (95 acres) are present in less common and generally outperform non-native communities ecologically. On average, non-native upland communities contain much higher densities of noxious and invasive weeds and lower species diversity compared to native upland communities.

The most prevalent noxious and invasive species observed were cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), hoary cress (*Lepidium draba*), field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), kochia (*Bassia scoparia*), cattail (*Typha* sp.), smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), and Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*). "Table 21: Landscape Typology Function Across Assessed Open Space Properties" on page 80, provides a summary of the

ecological function of the open space and park properties assessed.

## Landscape Typology Assessment

Adams County's open spaces and parks along the South Platte River and Clear Creek corridors provide numerous ecological, hydrological, and recreational benefits to residents and wildlife of Colorado, and maintaining or improving their ecological function is imperative to preserving these resources. Six of these open space properties were assessed using Landscape Typology, a system used to construct a geospatial dataset of vegetation community polygons and determine their level of function based on ecological and social parameters. Each vegetation community is assigned a primary habitat type (i.e. Riparian Forested, Riparian Herbaceous, Upland Herbaceous, etc.) and a habitat subtype (i.e. Native, Non-Native, etc.). Parameters assessed include plant species diversity, wildlife habitat quality, user defined trails, noxious and invasive weed populations, and a suite of stream characteristics. Landscape Typology can also be used to evaluate and prioritize property acquisitions that will be converted into open space or parks.

Six open spaces and parks were assessed using the Landscape Typology system including Lowell Ponds, Clear Creek Bottomlands, the South Platte River and Clear Creek confluence, Hazeltine Mine, Riverdale



Regional Park, and Willow Bay. These properties serve as representative examples of the overall riparian corridor. There may be properties that were not evaluated that provide higher or lower function, but these six properties provide insight into average conditions and potential opportunities for improvement.

A total of 828 acres between the six Adams County properties were mapped and assessed using Landscape Typology; however, impervious surfaces and surface

water were not scored. Overall, the open spaces and parks assessed are mostly functioning at fair and good levels with very small portions falling into the poor and excellent categories. The most detrimental parameters to vegetation communities within these properties were poor species diversity, poor wildlife habitat, presence of bare ground, and noxious and invasive weed populations.

Sufficient riparian buffers exist along the South Platte River and Clear Creek within Adams County, but portions of both corridors are constricted by adjacent development and infrastructure limiting buffer widths, wildlife habitat, and floodplain connectivity.

Surface water makes up a considerable portion of both corridors

**Table 20: Landscape Typology Function Across Assessed Properties**

FUNCTION	SIZE (ACRES)	% OF SCORED ACRES
Poor	58	12%
Fair	278	57%
Good	126	26%
Excellent	23	5%
Total	485	100%

Data Source: Great Ecologies

**Table 21: Landscape Typology Function Across Assessed Open Space Properties**

HABITAT TYPE	SUBTYPE	SIZE (ACRES)	% OF ASSESSMENT AREA	AVERAGE SCORE	FUNCTION
Bluegrass Forested	NA	0.28	0%	88	Excellent
Bluegrass Lawn	NA	21.69	3%	88	Excellent
Disturbed	NA	36.97	4%	49	Poor
Herbaceous Wetland	Non-Native	7.36	1%	68	Fair
Riparian Forested	Cottonwood	25.48	3%	68	Fair
	Mixed Woodland	41.85	5%	69	Fair
	Non-Native	30.46	4%	60	Fair
	Willow	28.46	3%	73	Good
Riparian Herbaceous	Native	8.65	1%	75	Good
	Non-Native	13.41	2%	68	Fair
Surface Water	Armored	82.50	10%	-	-
	Unarmored	260.51	31%	-	-
Upland Forested	NA	36.45	4%	64	Fair
Upland Herbaceous	Native	95.41	12%	72	Good
	Non-Native	138.94	17%	58	Fair
Total/Average	828.42	100%	69	Fair	

Data Source: Great Ecologies

covering approximately 41 percent of the corridors. Surface water includes rivers, streams, ponds, and storage reservoirs created by former gravel mine operations. Table 21: Landscape Typology Function Across Assessed Open Space Properties, provides a summary of the habitat types and subtypes mapped within Adams County open space and park properties and their average Landscape Typology function.

### Hydrology

The largest and most ecologically diverse drainage in Adams County is the South Platte River. All other creeks eventually feed into the South Platte, including the Clear, Sand, Box Elder, Kiowa, Lost and Comanche Creeks. Barr Lake and Horse Creek Reservoir are the largest standing bodies of water in the County; many smaller ones have been created for irrigation or from mining. The 100-year floodplains of all the drainages and water bodies are critical elements of the open space system. They handle runoff and floodwaters, contain wetlands and riparian zones, provide numerous recreation opportunities to park users, and serve as important corridors and habitats for wildlife and vital pollinators which, in turn, are vital for sustainable agriculture in perpetuity.

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge contains significant amounts of native wildlife (bison, deer, coyote, waterfowl, etc.) and has preserved lakes, streams, and wetland

systems. Barr Lake and the Beebe Draw wetlands, located northwest of DIA, are sensitive components of the county hydrologic and wildlife systems, and are vitally important water resources. They contain some of the most significant wildlife habitats in the state and preserve extensive amounts of wetlands and riparian areas. The Mile High Flood District, the agency responsible for the efficiency and successful water conveyance of all drainages and water systems in western Adams County, considers these lands to be extremely sensitive to development due to potential runoff.

The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Creeks and Irondale Gulch, which intersect with the O'Brian/Burlington Canal, are also considered to be highly sensitive to increased runoff. Large portions of these drainages have been cut off from the South Platte River by the two canals and drain directly into the canals. The O'Brian/Burlington is already heavily impacted during flood times; increases in storm water runoff may produce flooding effects that cannot be handled.

Brantner Gulch, flowing from Thornton, to Adams County Regional Park is suffering from similar pressures from development and is also being carefully studied by the Mile High Flood District for increased stormwater conveyance capabilities.

The vast number of gravel ponds along the South Platte River and Clear Creek corridors, though not

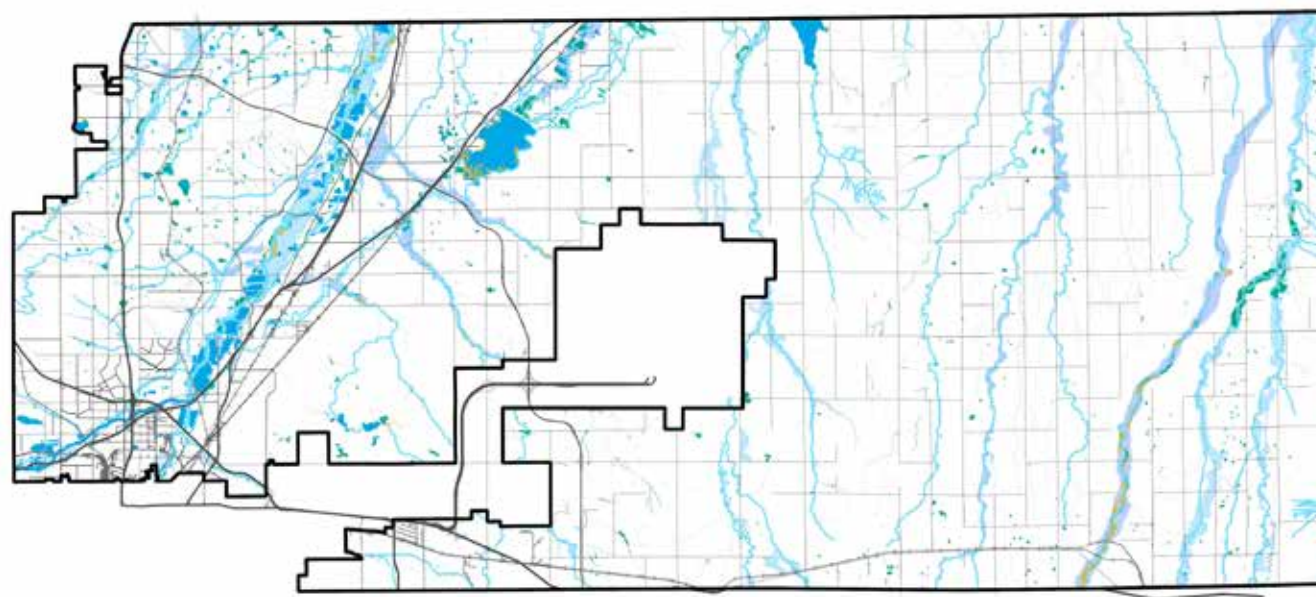
aesthetically appealing, provide habitat for migrating waterfowl and opportunities for future open space properties and potential wetland mitigation banking.

The implications of altered precipitation levels due to climate change along with hotter and drier weather will cause significant supply issues that will have repercussions in Adams County.

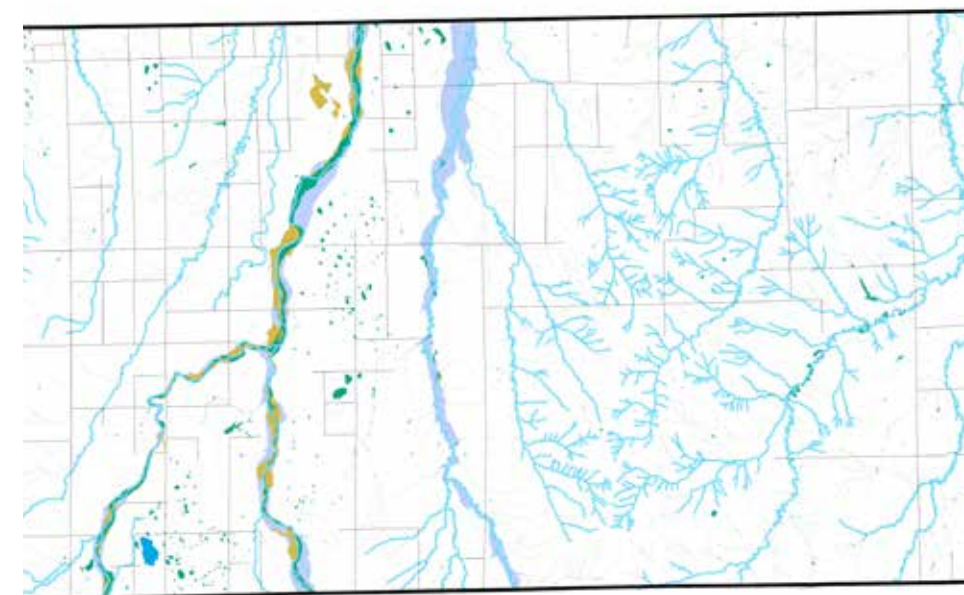
Precipitation is more likely to fall in larger events, and they are less likely to fall in the summertime. Municipal and industrial users do not currently experience a water gap (difference between demand and supply) for the South Platte but projected increasing population and potentially hotter

and drier future climate conditions will create the need for additional water supply despite efforts to conserve water. In addition, demand for groundwater is approximately 19 percent of the overall demand statewide. In Adams County, this will primarily affect irrigation wells as other South Platte users also rely on these increasingly limited supplies.

## MAP 24: HYDROLOGY



Source: Adams County GIS, FWS National Wetlands Inventory, USGS NHD



### LEGEND

- Rivers, Ditches, Creeks and Streams
- Lakes
- Wetlands
- Riparian
- Flood Zones
  - A
  - AE
  - AO

NOT TO SCALE



### Wildlife Habitat Value

Adams County is home to a large variety of wildlife species including, but not limited to, various species of ground dwelling birds, passerine birds, various birds of prey, small mammals, large mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians. Some of the species found within Adams County are more tolerant to human development and encroachment while other species are not. Adams County also contains several significant features that are immensely beneficial to wildlife and should be protected. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) reviewed the methodology of this analysis and

provided insight specific to Adams County to weigh in on species of importance, critical habitats, wildlife diversity and impacts on species of special concern, or those being listed as state or federally endangered. Each species used for this analysis was ranked on a scale of 0 to 10; 0 meaning the it was not included in this analysis overlay, 5 meaning it was of low priority, 7-8 medium priority, and 10 having the highest priority.

CPW indicated highest importance for species be placed on Bald Eagle, Mule Deer, Pronghorn, Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse and Swift Fox. They also placed great importance on

native aquatic species, sportfish species and riparian concentration areas in order to help Adams County protect riparian areas, which are a vital benefit to wildlife by providing access to food, water and shelter. Contiguous habitat also ranks as a high contributing factor since habitat loss and destruction is one of the largest impacts that affects wildlife. The availability of winter range can be extremely important to the survivability of a wildlife species, particularly in harsh winters. Therefore, CPW recommended high importance on winter range for Mule Deer. Other at-risk species identified include the Burrowing Owl, Spiny

Softshell Turtle, Iowa Darter, Orange-spotted Sunfish, and all birds of prey. These species highlight the importance of waterways throughout the County as areas of habitat.

Based on these values and inputs listed in Table 14, a composite map, Map 21, has been created to indicate the areas of highest wildlife habitat value. The highest values for wildlife are largely located in the eastern half of the county within the agricultural lands and along the main rivers including the South Platte River and Clear Creek in the western half of the county. High values are also concentrated around Barr Lake and

### MAP 25: WILDLIFE HABITAT VALUE



Source: Design Workshop, Colorado Parks and Wildlife



### LEGEND

Weighted Composite Scale



NOT TO SCALE

Horse Creek Reservoir as well as many of the smaller streams and creeks (Muddy Creek, Bijou Creek, Kiowa Creek, Comanche Creek, Wolf Creek, San Arroyo Creek, Potty Brown Creek and Badger Creek). The western half of the County is becoming largely urbanized, however the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge has high habitat value.

Due to the quantity, quality and uniqueness of the wildlife in the County, two wildlife sanctuaries have been preserved, Barr Lake State Park and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Since the 1880's, when the lake was created as an irrigation reservoir, Barr Lake has been a refuge for wildlife. The park is well known for its vast prairie landscape, spacious views to the Front Range, tremendous diversity of wildlife, high quality of fishing and the many passive recreation opportunities. The lake provides habitat to more than 350 species of birds, including the most successful bald eagle nesting pair in the region, and a rookery of over 200 nests on the southwest side of the lake. It is also a critical resting place for many species of birds during both migration seasons. In addition, Barr Lake and the South Platte River have the highest concentrations of deer in the County. Other species found at the State Park include coyote, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and dramatic bird species like white pelicans, great blue herons, cormorants, egrets, ospreys and hawks. Barr Lake State Park and

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) cohabitate the site and work closely to provide public programs and events that educate visitors on all aspects of the park's natural history.

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge supports an abundance of species and communities that traditionally inhabited the expansive plains grasslands. This 27-square mile, 15,000 acre protected area provides natural habitats that have been long in decline due to agricultural and urban development, including prairie, wetland and woodland land typologies. The area is one of America's largest wildlife refuges and provides food, shelter and freedom to more than 330 species of animals such as bison, bald eagles, ferruginous hawks, a wide variety of migratory birds, deer, coyotes, prairie dogs and burrowing owls. With 10 miles of hiking trails, fishing, wildlife viewing opportunities, and nature programming, the site is an immense resource to the county.

The County has worked to protect a large area of farmland along the South Platte River that allows for wildlife movement along the river corridor. This protected area includes the Bald Eagle Conservation Easement. Most of these properties are under conservation easement, which ensures that these properties will be suitable for wildlife movement in perpetuity.

**Table 22: Wildlife Rankings Used**

INPUTS	RANKING	INFLUENCE ON MAP
Concentration Areas		20%
Mule Deer (Year-round)	5	
Pronghorn (Year-round)	10	
Bald Eagle (winter)	5	
Native Aquatic Species	10	
Sportfish Species	10	
Riparian (500-ft Setback)	10	
Nest/Site Production Areas		15%
Bald Eagle Nest Sites	10	
Bald Eagle Roost Sites	10	
Great Blue Heron Nesting Area	8	
Wild Turkey Production Area	8	
Osprey Nest Sites	7	
Migration Corridors		15%
Mule Deer Severe Winter Range	10	
Mule Deer Winter Range	10	15%
Bald Eagle	5	
Mule Deer	10	
Pronghorn	10	
Wild Turkey	8	
Forage Areas		10%
Bald Eagle (Summer)	5	
Bald Eagle (Winter)	8	
Great Blue Heron	5	
Osprey Foraging Areas	7	

INPUTS	RANKING	INFLUENCE ON MAP
Overall Range		5%
Mule Deer (Summer Range)	5	
Pronghorn Overall Range	5	
Swift Fox Overall Range	10	
Mule Deer Limited Use Area	5	
Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse	10	
Overall		
Wild Turkey Overall Range	5	
Burrowing Owl	8	
Golden Eagle	10	
Black Tailed Prairie Dog	8	
Spiny Softshell Turtle	8	
Furruginous Hawk	7	
Iowa Darter	7	
Orange Spotted Sunfish	7	
Prairie Falcon	7	
Resident Population Areas		5%
Mule Deer Resident Population Area	5	
Pronghorn Resident Population Area	5	
Pronghorn Perennial Water	10	

0 - is not being included  
5 Low Priority  
7-8 Medium Priority  
10 Highest Priority

Source: Design Workshop, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

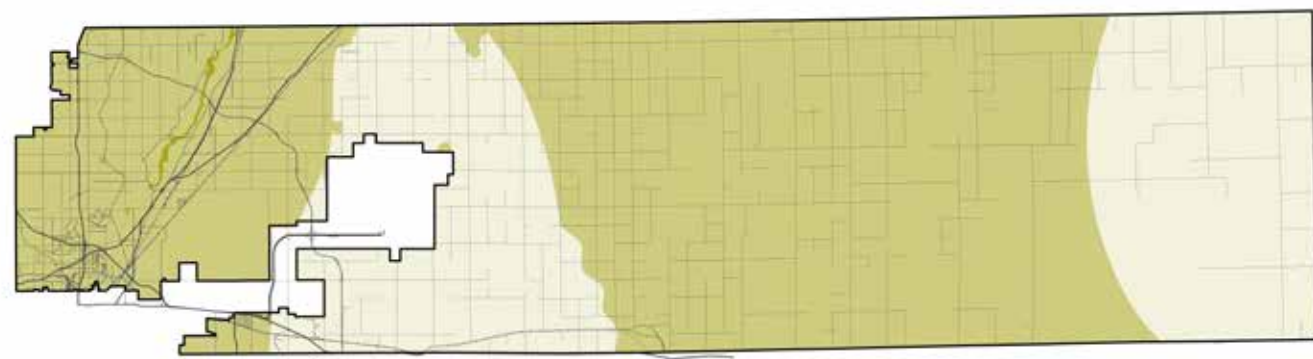


### Bird Habitat


374 bird species have been observed in Adams County according to the increasingly popular crowd sourced eBird website. Hotspots for commonly observed birds include Barr Lake, Rocky Mountain Arsenal, the South Platte River, and the Clear Creek River.

While gravel/mining ponds are mostly closed to the public, waterfowl make great use of them which may influence future open space property acquisition and preservation.

### MAP 26: BIRD HABITAT



Source: Design Workshop, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

NOT TO SCALE 

**LEGEND**

Weighted Scale




-  High Value
-  Medium Value
-  Low Value

Table 23: Wildlife Rankings Used

BIRDS	PRIORITY
American Bittern	5
Band-tailed Pigeon	3
Brewer Sparrow	5
Brown-capped Rosy Finch	3
Burrowing Owl	8
Cassin Sparrow	3
Ferruginous Hawk	7
Golden Eagle	10
Grasshopper Sparrow	3
Lark Bunting	3
Lazuli Bunting	3
Lewis Woodpecker	3
Long-billed Curlew	3
Mountain Plover	3
Northern Harrier	3
Prairie Falcon	7
Rufous Hummingbird	3
Swainson Hawk	7
Veery	3
Virginia Warbler	3

BIRDS	PRIORITY
Bald Eagle	5
White Pelican	6
Wild Turkey	6
White Pelican Breeding Range	5
Wild Turkey Breeding Range	5

Source: IMBCR Program, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (Liza Rossi) and the Dept. of Defence (Buckley Air Force Base), and Pavlacky, D.C. Jr, P.M. Lukacs, J.A. Blakesley, R.C. Skorkowsky, D.S. Klute, B.A. Hahn, V.J. Dreitz, T.L. George, and D.J. Hanni. 2017. A statistically rigorous sampling design to integrate avian monitoring and management within Bird Conservation Regions. PLoS ONE 12(10): e0185924.



Image Credit: Jim Hollis  
**Figure 38:** Owl Captured in Adams County



Image Credit: Jim Hollis  
**Figure 39:** Geese at Barr Lake



Image Credit: Jim Hollis  
**Figure 40:** Bird at Barr Lake

**Figure 41:** Diagram of Recreation Values Composite Components and their Weighted Values



## RECREATION VALUES

Adams County also plays a role along with municipal and Special Districts in creating, improving, and maintaining parks, trails and recreation facilities. This assessment combines a view of the gaps in park and trails service and locations of populations that that most need additional parks. Demographics such as age and vulnerability characteristics contribute to this assessment. The locations that show the highest value or need for additional recreation resources are indicated in Map 27 as southwest Adams County, and along the E470, I76, and Highway 85 corridors in the northwest part of the county.



**Figure 42:** Riverdale Regional Park

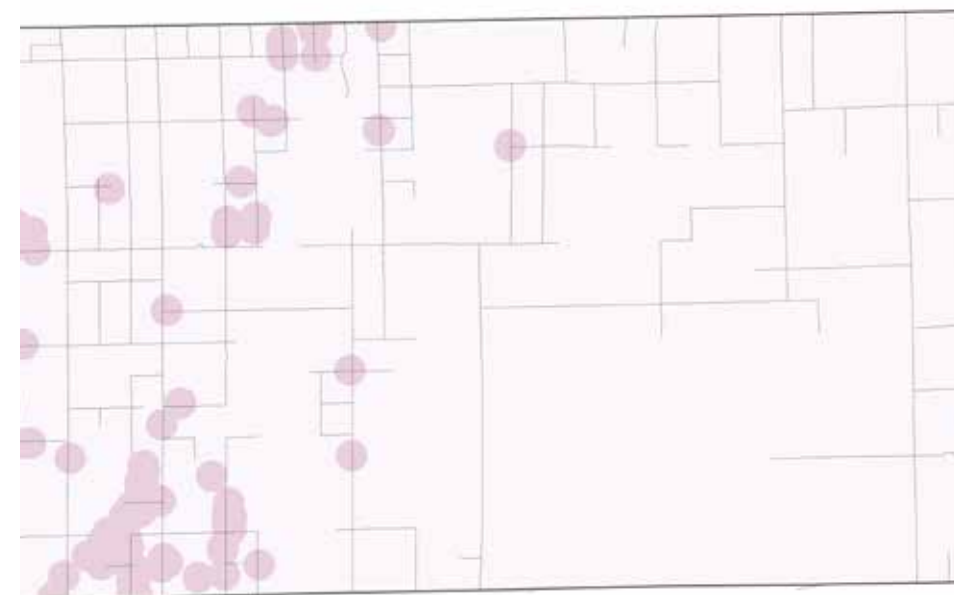


**Figure 43:** People walking at Rotella

## MAP 27: RECREATION VALUES COMPOSITE MAP



Data Source: Adams County and Design Workshop



### LEGEND

Weighted Composite Scale

- High Value (7)
- Low Value (0)

NOT TO SCALE



**Figure 44:**  
Diagram of Scenic Resources Composite Components and their Weighted Values



## SCENIC RESOURCES

Adams County is, in part, defined by its scenic and cultural landscapes. The national park service defines a cultural landscape as "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources..., associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values."

The county has identified cultural scenic views that are important to be considered as a priority for land protection. Significant views identified include those from Riverdale Regional Park, Riverdale Bluffs Open Space/ Road, Barr Lake, and Confluence as well as the agricultural views in Historic Splendid Valley and Old Brighton Road and the cultural corridor on Brighton Rd. from 120th to 124th.



**Figure 47:** Platte River

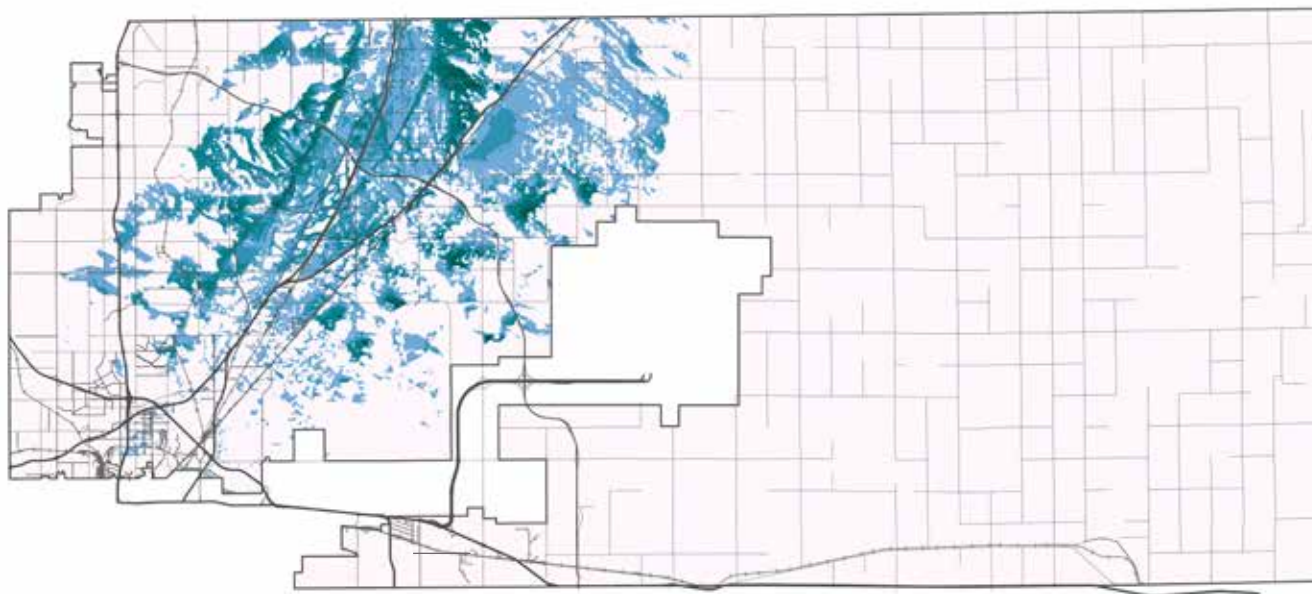


**Figure 45:** Bridge at Barr Lake

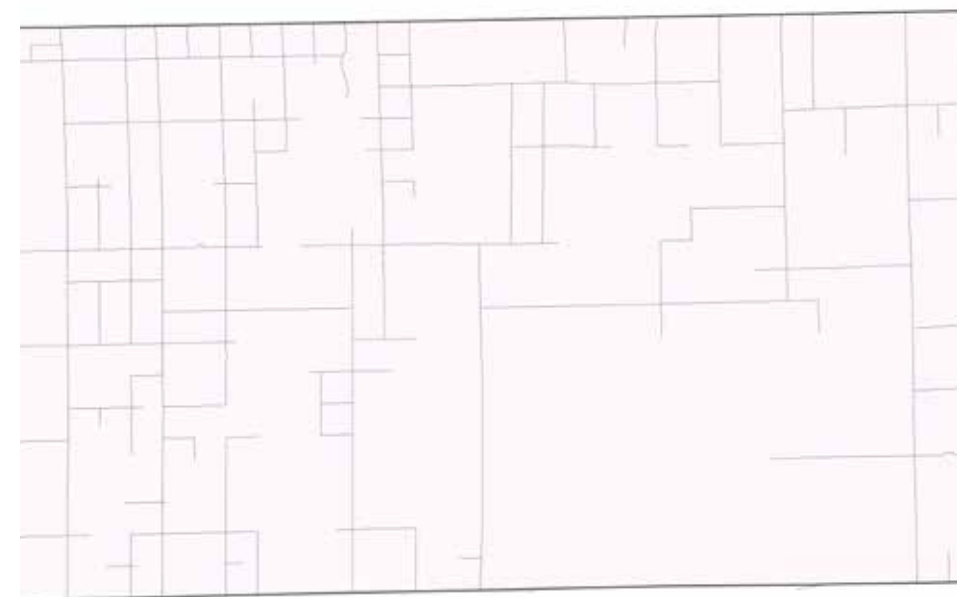


**Figure 46:** Barr Lake

## MAP 28: SCENIC RESOURCES COMPOSITE MAP



Data Source: Adams County and Design Workshop



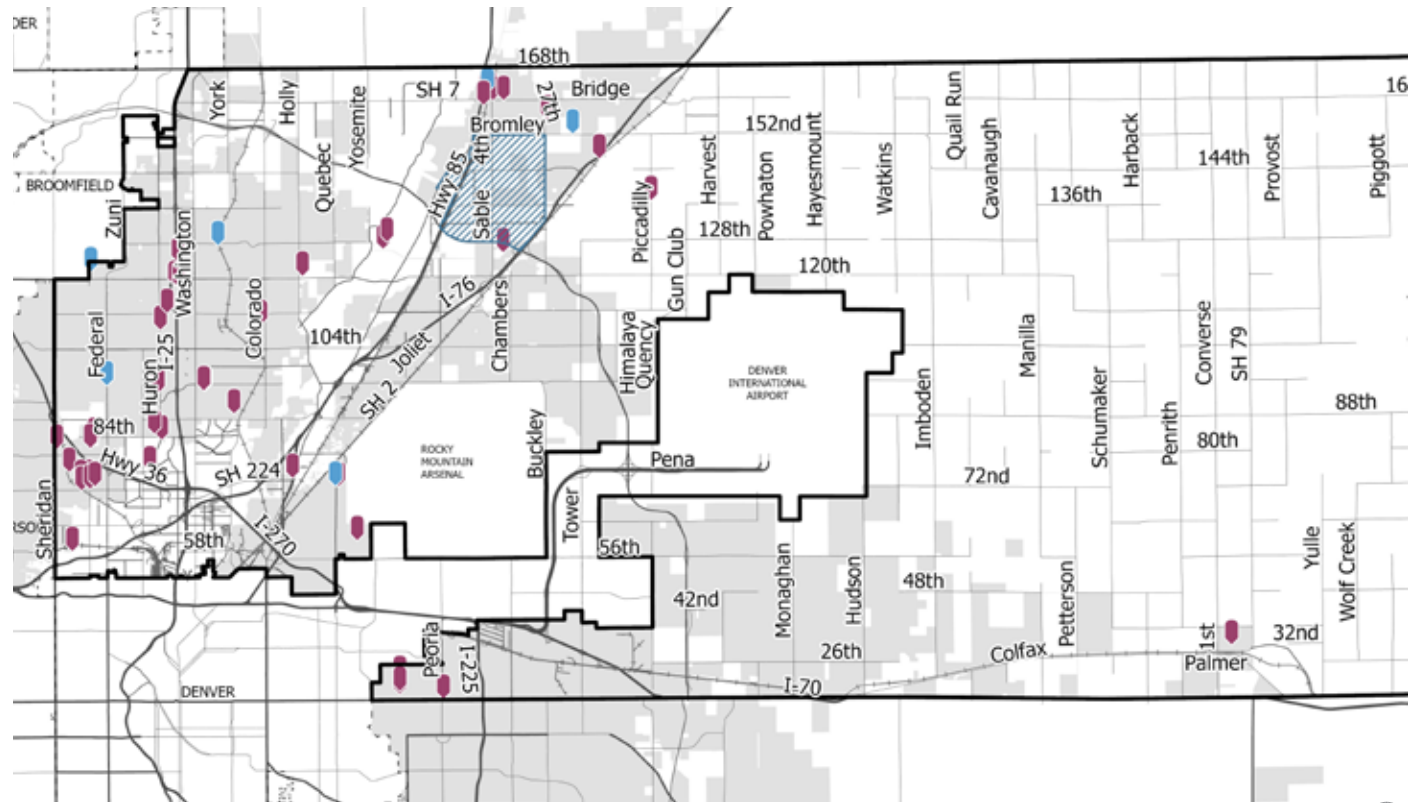
### LEGEND

Weighted Composite Scale



NOT TO SCALE 

MAP 29: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PLACES



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

NOT TO SCALE

LEGEND

- Historic Places
- Cultural Places
- Historic Splendid Valley
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads

Historic and Cultural Places

Areas surrounding historic and cultural properties, including the Historic Splendid Valley area are also valued in this assessment. The Historic Splendid Valley Plan was developed in partnership between the City of Brighton and Adams County in 2016 to preserve agricultural land and heritage, encourage local food production, and promote agritourism in southern Brighton. The district is an identified agricultural asset and cluster of heritage resources.

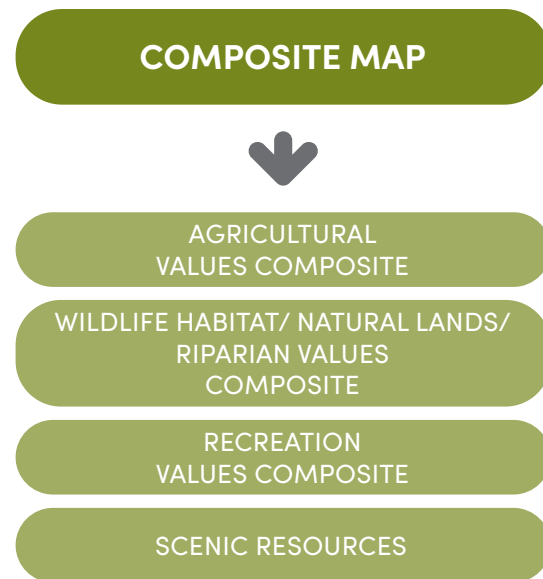
Table 24: List of Historic and Cultural Place

CULTURAL		HISTORIC
A Child's Song	Granville Fuller House	Bromley Farm / Koizuma-Hishinuma Farm
Aar River Gallery	Harris Park School	Colorado Sanitary Canning Factory
Adams County Courthouse	M.J. Lavina Robidoux House	Eastlake Farmers Co-Operative Elevator Company
Adams County Cultural Council (ACCC)	Main Street Creatives (MSC)	Engelbrecht Farm
Adams County Historical Society and Museum	Maitri Multi Media	Gottlieb & Rose Egli House
Adams County Regional Park	North Metro Arts Alliance	Metzger Farm
Adams County Visual Arts Commission (ACVAC)	Northglenn Arts & Humanities Foundation	Savery Savory Mushroom Farm Water Tower
Anythink Brighton Library	Northglenn Youth Theatre	
Anythink Huron Street	Paletteers Art Club	
Anythink Library	Performance Arts Complex at Pinnacle Charter School	
Anythink Perl Mack	Platte Valley Players	
Anythink Wright Farms	Riverside Cemetery	
Anythink York Street	Rodeo Market Community Arts Center	
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies	South Westminster Arts Group	
Bowles House	St. Stephen's Lutheran Church	
Brighton High School	The Armory	
Brighton Music Choir and Orchestra, Inc.	The Art Academy	
Bruderlin House	The heART of Brighton	
Carpenter Park Fields	Thede Farmhouse	
Colorado Educational Theatre	Thornton Arts & Culture Center	
Concept Colorado	Thornton Arts, Sciences, and Humanities Council (TASHCO)	
Creative U	Thornton Community Band	
Denver Tramway Streetcar #.04	Thornton Community Chorus, Inc.	
Dick's Sporting Goods Park	Union High School	
DL Parsons Theatre	Westminster Historical Society	
E.B. Rains Jr. Memorial Park	Westminster University (Bellevue College)	
Eye for Art Program	William J. Gregory House	
First Presbyterian Church (Brighton)	Wilson House (Centennial House)	
Fitzsimons General Hospital		

Data Source: Adams County, History CO, Design Workshop



**Figure 48:**  
Diagram  
of Overall  
Composite Map



## COMPOSITE MAP

The highest ranked areas for parks, open space and trail resources appear in the composite map of all of the identified values (MAP 30). When the Agricultural Values; Wildlife Habitat/Natural Lands/Riparian Values; Recreation Values; and Scenic Resources are overlaid upon one another, the areas of highest priority emerge. These overlapping open space priorities illustrate areas that would meet multiple park and open space objectives, and they serve as a general area for Phase 2 focus as recommendations are explored.

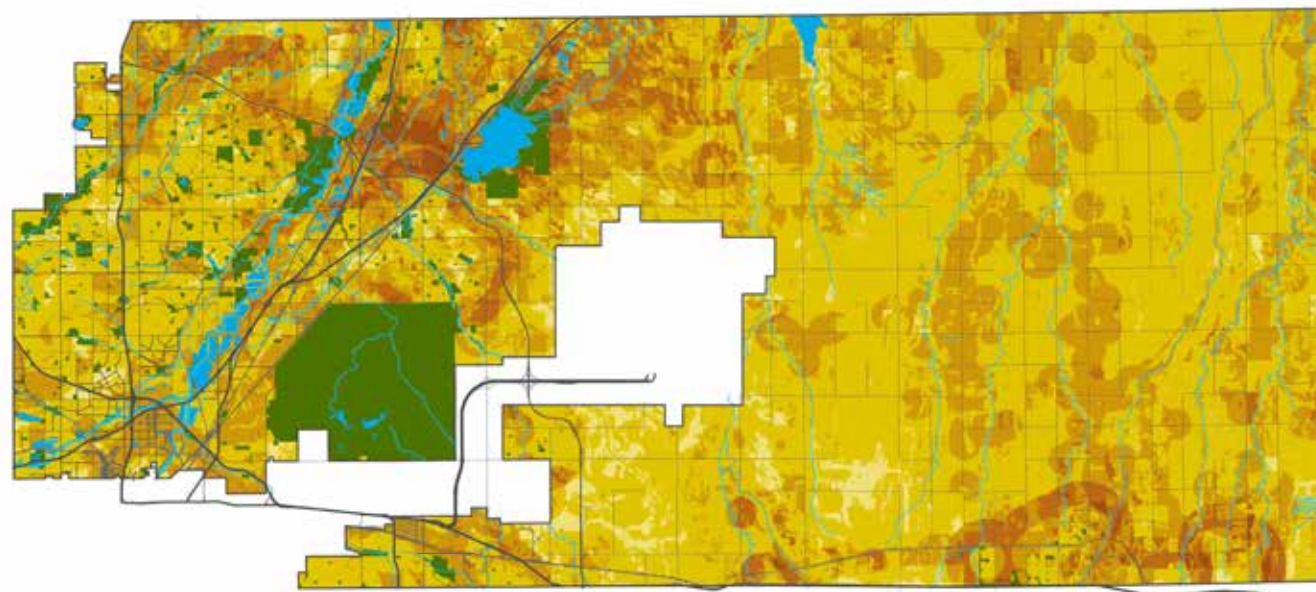
**Figure 49:**  
Diagram of  
Prioritization  
Components



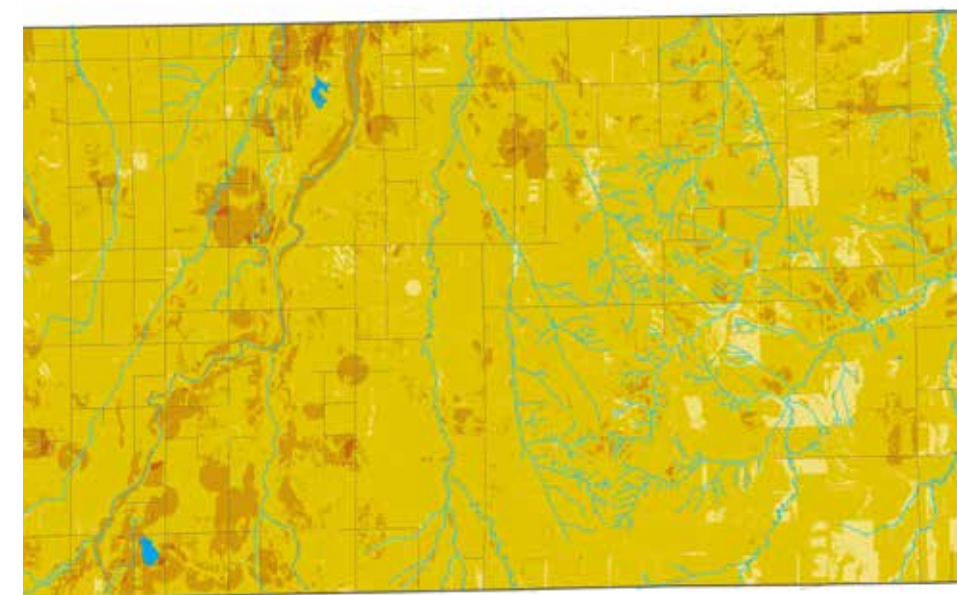
## PRIORITIZATION

In Phase 2 of the plan, additional factors that influence prioritizing future conservation or acquisitions will be introduced. These factors include growth pressures where open space may be under greatest threat of being converted to other land uses if conservation actions are not taken. Different types of development such as energy development, on scenic views or wildlife corridors. Community values from public input and regional conservation goals will also influence the identification of priority areas that will be the focus and recommendations of this plan.

## MAP 30: COMPOSITE MAP









Data Source: Adams County and Design Workshop



## LEGEND

Weighted Composite Scale

-  High Value (6)
-  Low Value (0)
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Adams County Boundary
-  Railroads
-  Streams and Lakes

NOT TO SCALE 



## FIVE STRATEGIC CORRIDORS



This section takes a look into the five different strategic corridors that Adams County has identified. These are:

- Federal Boulevard
- Pecos Street
- Washington Street
- 104th Avenue
- 120th Avenue



## FIVE STRATEGIC CORRIDORS OVERVIEW

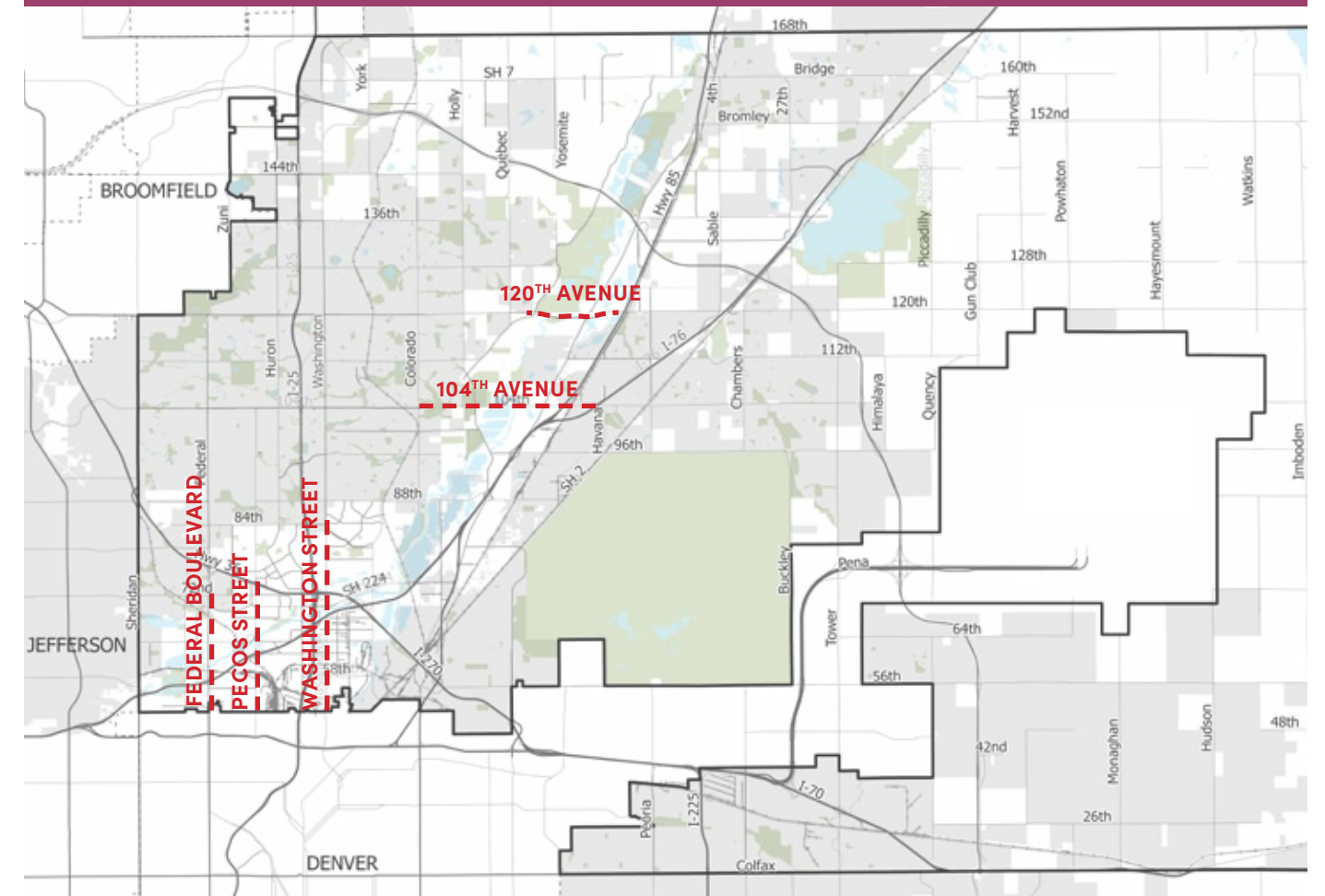
As part of the Advancing Adams planning process, the County identified five strategic corridors for taking an in depth look at planning issues. The five corridors (identified on MAP 31) are Federal Boulevard, Pecos Street, Washington Street, 104th Avenue and 120th Avenue. These corridors have the following attributes:

- They are principal arterial roadways;
- Have unincorporated lands adjacent to each corridor
- They are subject to a study or upcoming improvements within the municipality;
- Fall within an Opportunity Zone area;

- They are identified for improvements in the Adams County 5-year Capital Improvement Plan;
- They have redevelopment potential – significant current development activity, large areas of undeveloped land or land assemblage; and
- They are in proximity to multi-modal transit opportunities.

**THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES AND A VISION FOR FUTURE LAND USE AND MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS FOR THESE CORRIDORS. THIS PLAN DOCUMENT FOCUSES ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARKS, OPEN SPACE, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND RECREATION TRAILS WITHIN THE FIVE CORRIDORS.**

## MAP 31: FIVE STRATEGIC CORRIDORS KEY PLAN



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data, DRCOG

NOT TO SCALE

### LEGEND

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

Table 25: 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

Data Source: Design Workshop and Adams County GIS



## MAP 32: FEDERAL BOULEVARD



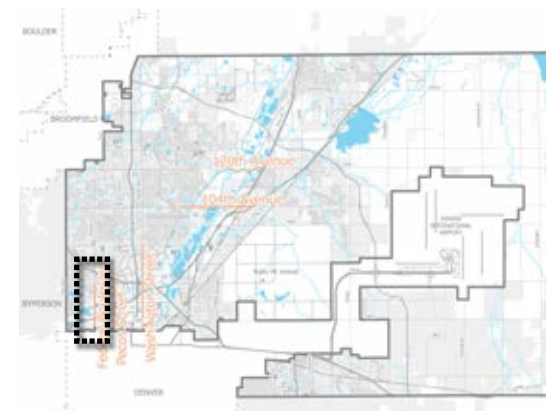
### LEGEND

- Opportunity Areas
- Parks and Open Space
- Lakes and Streams
- Clear Creek
- Trails
- Natural Resource Conservation Overlay
- Corridor Boundary
- R RTD Station

### Analysis Opportunities

- 1 Multi-use trail with potential connections to the RTD Station and to Clear Creek Trail
- 2 At-grade trail access for CCT on east side of Federal
- 3 Pedestrian/bike bridge across creek
- 4 Connect Clay Street Community Trail to RTD Station
- 5 Floodplain restoration
- 6 Creek Creek Trail vegetative buffer
- 7 Trail connections to Little Dry Creek Trail and vegetative buffer
- 8 Potential bike boulevard/existing multi-use trail

### Corridor Key Plan



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data

1 : 36,000

## FEDERAL BOULEVARD

Federal Boulevard is seen as a central business hub for Adams County, promoting a diversity of businesses and the likelihood of future development and expansion in this corridor. Currently, the study area does not feature adequate parks or open space to serve the existing nearby population. Future residential density is anticipated to increase in this area, promoted by the transit-oriented development opportunities that exist surrounding the RTD station. In addition, future business expansion is also anticipated, thereby making it

worthwhile to consider the commuting population and needs of employers and employees to have access to open space and trails.

### Opportunities

The RTD station is surrounded by underutilized and underdeveloped parcels. This creates great opportunities to provide park and recreation amenities within the neighborhood. The potential to make comfortable connections to the Clear Creek Trail also exists. Potential future trail connections could include one from the RTD Station to the Clay Street Community Trail in addition to an



Figure 50: Clear Creek Federal Commuter Rail Station and Gateway Park



at-grade crossing to Clear Creek. A comprehensive vision of connecting green and civic amenities such as parks, trails and cultural elements would benefit the location greatly.

The Federal Boulevard corridor also suffers from water and drainage issues like the water quality, an undersized stormwater system and flooding that occurs regularly at the railroad. There is a role within this plan framework to work to address the environmental hazards, looking critically at the river corridors and the health and habitat serving those riparian areas. This plan will review opportunities and ways to increase the capacity of the ecological system that Clear Creek fills by expanding the riparian buffer and reconnecting

the floodplain throughout. Clear Creek and the trail act as the primary recreation facility for the district, so fostering a healthy ecosystem and providing opportunities to connect to the trail are important. There is also an opportunity for new connections to Little Dry Creek Trail.



**Figure 51:** Autocentric Commercial Activity North of West 64th Avenue on Federal Boulevard

### MAP 33: PECOS STREET



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data

1 : 36,000

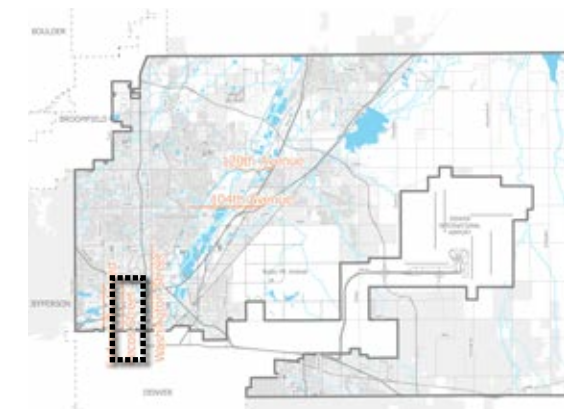
#### LEGEND

- Opportunity Areas
- Parks and Open Space
- Lakes and Streams
- Clear Creek
- Trails
- Natural Resource Conservation Overlay
- Corridor Boundary
- R RTD Station

#### Analysis Opportunities

- 1 CIP Project between 52nd and Cargill Dr. that introduces 10' multiuse trail on one side of the streets
- 2 Potential pedestrian and bike improvements to Pecos bridge between Cargill Dr. and 62nd. The south end of this bridge is where a connection to 56th street could happen
- 3 BNSF-Clear Creek project location
- 4 Potential acquisition of CDOT parcel to south of LDC Lake/N of I-76/W of RR tracks
- 5 Improved trail under Pecos St. and better at-grade trail access at Pecos St.
- 6 Trail re-route along Clear Creek from Pecos to Rail Road tracks
- 7 Potential bike lanes on Pecos Street to create multimodal connection to Midtown
- 8 Clear Creek and xeriscaped green buffer
- 9 School and Baseball Field (or additional active sports parks)
- 10 Potential for east-west connection between Pecos and Federal at 72nd. Potential bike lane opportunity from Midtown

#### Corridor Key Plan





## PECOS STREET

The Pecos Street corridor contains a significant number of industrial uses to the south, and abrupt transitions to residential and mixed-use areas from industry. The pedestrian environment within the corridor is quite unpleasant. The short distance from the Midtown neighborhood to the RTD station contains sidewalks, but is subjected to heavy truck traffic, no demarcated crosswalks, and limited trees or other adjacent appealing land uses that help create scale for pedestrian comfort.

### Opportunities

The Pecos Street study area has an opportunity to introduce additional parks and open spaces to serve the local residents. Some park space is located within the Midtown Neighborhood, however, that facility primarily services Midtown residents.

Access to the Clear Creek Trail from Pecos Street is provided through concrete trails, however that could be improved.

There is potential for bike lanes to be added to Pecos Street to create a multimodal connection to Midtown Neighborhood, other housing to

the north, and the Pecos Street RTD station.

Pedestrian and bike improvements to Pecos bridge/potential connection to Federal via 72nd (multiuse trail).

This area has opportunities to create landscape buffers through open space in order to ease the transition between industry and residential land uses, as well as support better livability and public health.

Flooding and drainage are an issue in this study area due to undersized infrastructure and failing irrigation laterals, as well as being within the Clear Creek floodplain, all of which impact the water quality. There

is an opportunity to address the environmental flooding hazards by looking critically at the riparian health and habitat of Clear Creek. Green infrastructure can also be an opportunity to improve water quality; incorporating BMPs during design of retrofitted infrastructure has great impacts.



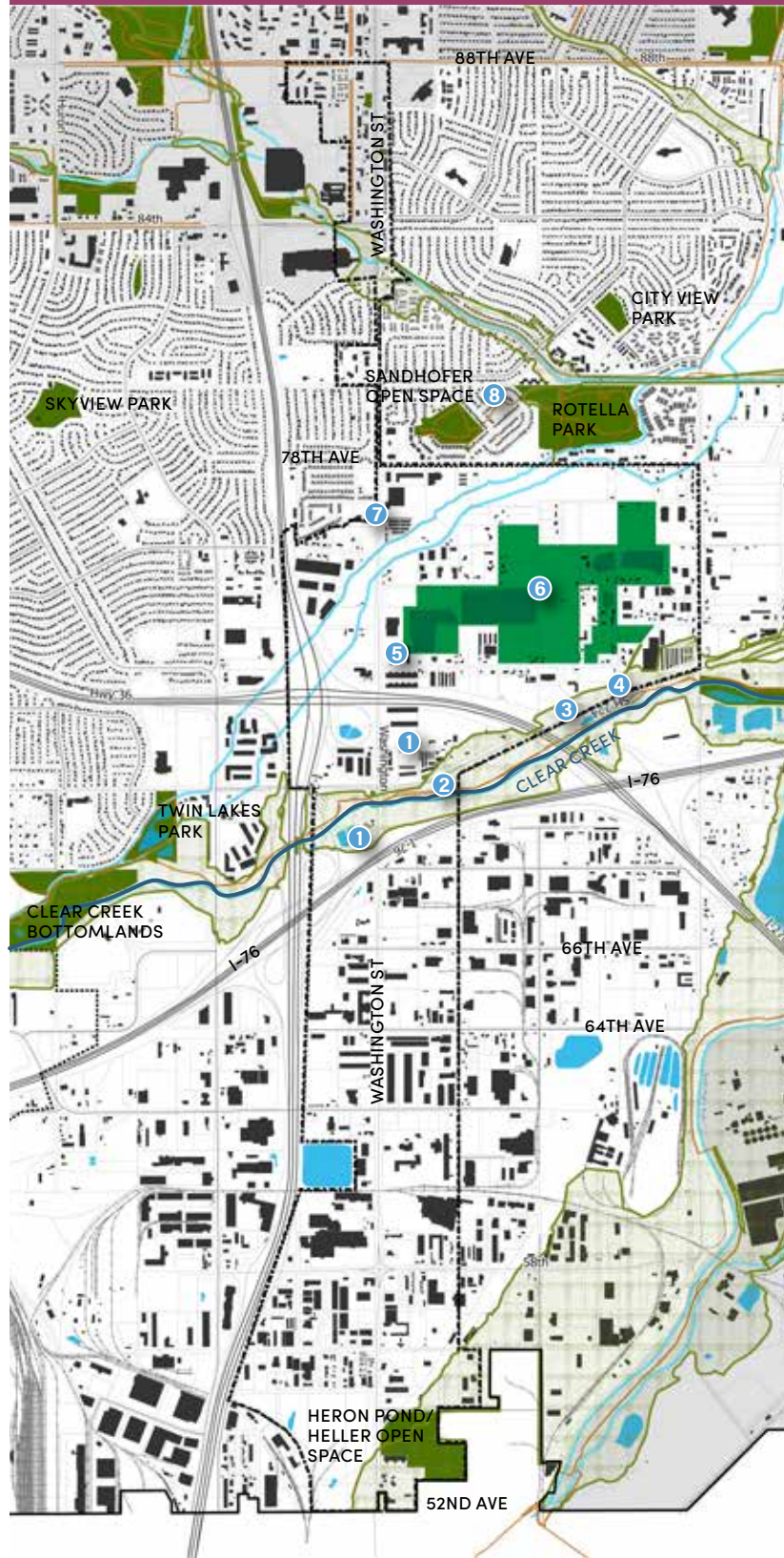
Figure 52: Area near RTD Station at Pecos



Figure 53: Industrial Activity Behind Residential Areas on West 67<sup>th</sup> Avenue Looking South

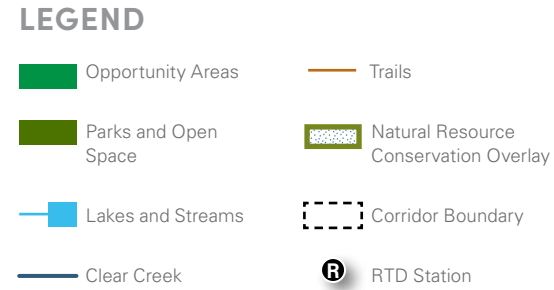


## MAP 34: WASHINGTON STREET

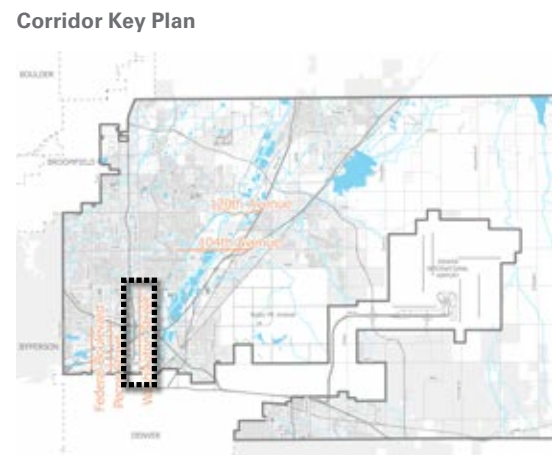


Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data

1:36,000



- ### Analysis Opportunities
- 1 Agritourism/ innovation zone/ solar farm
  - 2 Connection to the south with multiuse trail to the National Western Center
  - 3 Creek and xeriscaped green buffer
  - 4 Trail Connections (especially at-grade crossings for Clear Creek at Washington St.)
  - 5 Potential for community center
  - 6 Welby neighborhood
  - 7 Enhanced sidewalks and wider planting areas are considered through road diet between 73rd and 78th
  - 8 Establish connection between Rotella Park and Washington St



## WASHINGTON STREET

The Washington Street corridor contains a mix of eclectic uses – autocratic commercial, small-scale agriculture and industry. The area does not offer many residential units, however, bicyclists and pedestrians are confronted with wide roads, high traffic volumes, high speeds and unpleasant noise. Areas lack street trees and vegetated buffers between pedestrians and traffic, and the study area is further confronted with connectivity challenges imposed by highways, the river and the railroad acting as barriers.

### Opportunities

The Washington Street Corridor bisects the Clear Creek Trail but since the corridor does not offer many residential units, it may not be justified to add a traditional park or open space. However, there are opportunities for public gathering space in Welby and within the industrial areas south of I-76.

In terms of trails, there is an opportunity to connect to Clear Creek by creating at-grade trail connections from Washington Street.

Connections to and expansion of nearby adjacent successful districts, such as the River North Art District two miles south of the study area, and the National Western Center, also to the south. The proximity and heritage of the National Western Center

would justify improved connections from Welby including a dedicated equestrian trail.

This area lacks adequate food access to serve the population, creating the need for a grocery store or year-round farmer's market. A park or plaza could serve as a location to support increasing food security, by providing a space for a farmer's market or support a grocery store with an area for outdoor picnicking.

There is an opportunity to improve drainage to Clear Creek through surface-treatment stormwater BMPs such as bioswales with a weir system. In the event easements are created to support green infrastructure, additional off-road trails can also be introduced. There is also an opportunity to better announce and celebrate the river at key intersections with increased green space.

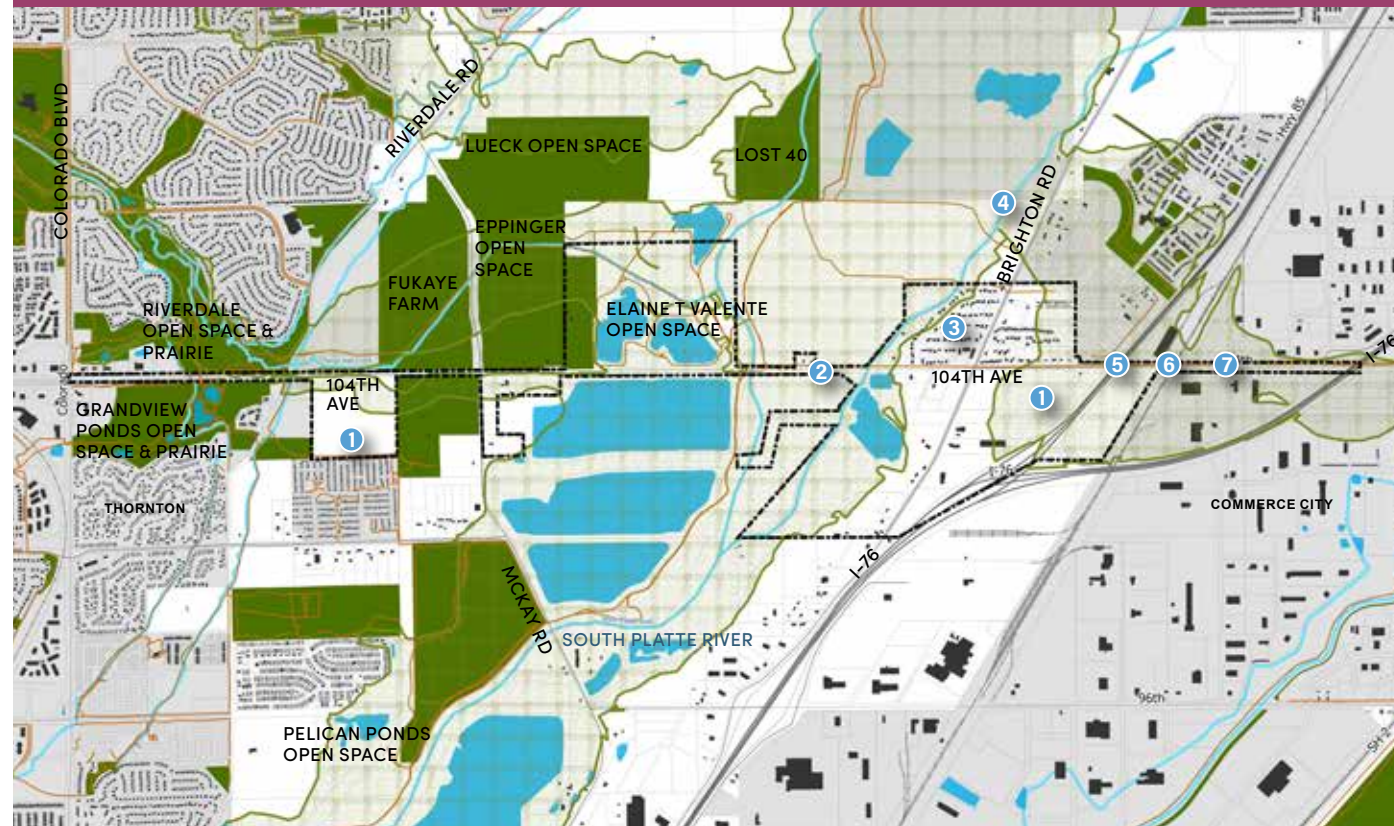
There's also an opportunity for a connection to Rotella Park.



Figure 54: Crossing at Clear Creek Trail



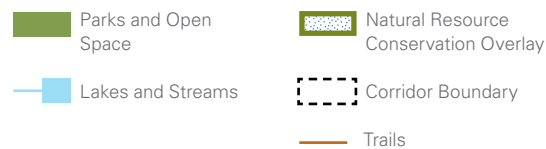
## MAP 35: EAST 104TH AVENUE



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data

1:36,000

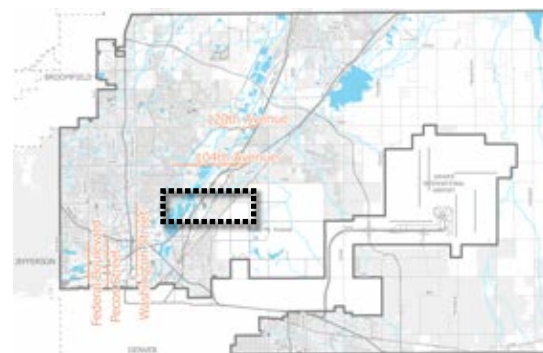
### LEGEND



### Analysis Opportunities

- 1 Agricultural Land
- 2 Connection to the South Platte Trail
- 3 New trail connection is being implemented near Brighton Road and 104th that will connect to the Front Range Trail and South Platte Trail
- 4 Future nature park with playground and trail connection to South Platte Trail
- 5 Future grade separated crossing at intersection of 104th and US-85
- 6 Potential bike lanes along 104th, from US-85 to the west
- 7 Connections to the east side of US-85 to connect residential neighborhoods with the existing trail system and parks

### Corridor Key Plan



## EAST 104TH AVENUE

The East 104th Avenue corridor stretches between Colorado Boulevard to the west and I-76 to the east, intersecting with Thornton and Commerce City. This area is mainly agricultural with some low-density residential and industrial uses. Challenges from Highway 85 and the railroad create some safety and mobility challenges for bicyclists and pedestrians, particularly as they attempt to access the Elaine T. Valente Open Space and South Platte Trail. Some work is underway to connect from the Belle Creek Neighborhood, however more connectivity is needed along the East 104th Avenue roadway.

### Opportunities

Currently, there are multiple trail projects underway in this area. First, there is a new trail connection between the Front Range Trail near Brighton Road and East 104th Avenue. Secondly, there is a trail connection being considered between the Belle Creek Neighborhood and the South Platte Trail.

The South Platte River corridor can support additional recreational opportunities, such as play or natural history interpretation.

Connections to the existing parks and trails system for the neighborhoods east of 85 is also an opportunity for this corridor.



Figure 55: Intersection of Brighton Road and 104th Avenue



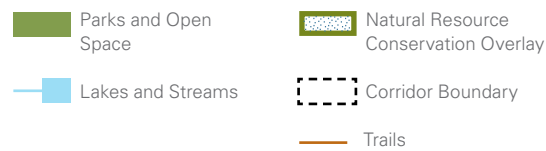
## MAP 36: EAST 120TH AVENUE



Data Source: Design Workshop, Adams County GIS, Municipal GIS Data

1:22,000

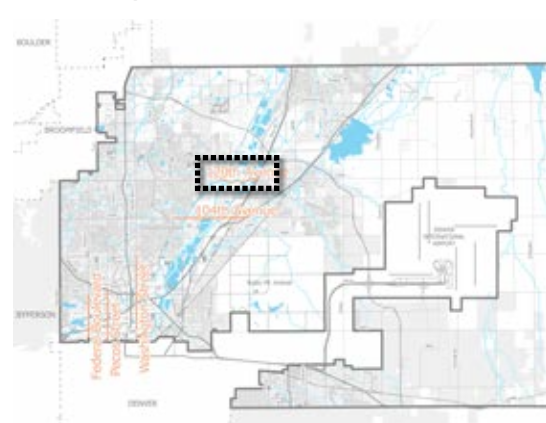
### LEGEND



### Analysis Opportunities

- 1 Connection to the South Platte Trail
- 2 Regional Open Space and Trail Loop
- 3 Riverdale Regional Park
- 4 Agricultural land
- 5 Connect to future scenic trail loop
- 6 Trail extension to connect the neighborhoods to the east to the South Platte River and Riverdale Regional Park
- 7 River Run Park

### Corridor Key Plan



## EAST 120TH AVENUE

The East 120th Avenue corridor stretches between Riverdale Road and Peoria Street, intersecting with Thornton, Commerce City and Brighton. The area is mostly residential with some agricultural uses. Connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists is limited, particularly in accessing Riverdale Regional Park and associated regional trail connections.

### Opportunities

A significant idea for a regional multiuse trail is to create a loop to connect 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 Riverdale Regional Park, the Denver International Airport, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, National Western Center, South Platte Trail, Clear Creek Trail and the Colorado Front Range Trail.



Figure 57: Access to Colorado Front Range Trail at Crossing of South Platte River



# LOOKING FORWARD



This section takes a look into two different topics. Analyzing each and identifying the opportunities they present. The topics are:

- Recreation
- Contemporary Issues and Opportunities for Parks, Open Space and Trails



## RECREATION

Outdoor recreation is arguably what makes Colorado the remarkable place that it is today. The pristine and diverse landscapes of the state contribute to a high quality of life and are main reasons for visitation and livability. One of the fastest-growing states in the nation, Colorado's population currently stands at over 5.5 million and is expected to grow to 8.5 million by 2050. More residents and higher visitation rates translate to more stress on parks, natural areas, sensitive landscapes and wildlife habitats, more wear-and-tear and higher maintenance costs, and more crowding and competition for access to trails and recreation facilities. It is critical to think ahead and plan for the future now to address these challenges and keep these spaces in the pristine and diverse condition that makes Colorado a one-of-a-kind state and Adams County a place with high quality of life.

### SUMMARY FROM OUTDOOR RECREATION TRENDS REPORT

Today, Adams County's parks, open spaces, and trails offer a broad variety of outdoor recreation activities that are growing in diversity. Some of the recreational offerings include picnic areas, playgrounds, trails, basketball, volleyball, horseshoes, disc golf, golf courses, and fishing. The County's 2018 Riverdale Regional Park Master Plan also seeks to implement a set of features that would create

opportunities for water-based recreation. Adams County aspires and plans to offer more bike courses, specialized playgrounds, dog parks, agricultural programs, and outdoor event spaces. While the County acts as a provider for the infrastructure to support recreational pursuits, it does not program those spaces.

The County partners with different groups to help provide diverse recreation programs. Partnerships include state agencies like Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), academic interests such as the Colorado State University (CSU) Extension office and local school districts, municipalities, and regional agencies and civic attractions such as the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the Denver Botanic Gardens, The Colorado Railroad Museum, the Adams County Historical Society, and The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, to name a few. Public private partnerships are also considered to facilitate programming and concessions.

Adams County is developing a naturalist program to better facilitate some of these partnerships, with the goal of maintaining the interests of county residents through the introduction of programming and facilities that support a broader approach to outdoor education opportunities with these various organizations.

## NATIONAL ACTIVITY TRENDS

Supplementing input from Adams County residents, a study of national recreation trends is helpful for understanding changing needs and informing decisions about the activities that may need additional accommodation in the future. Information released through the Sports and Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) 2020 (based on data collected in 2019) Topline Report on Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities reveals that the most popular sport and recreational activities include walking for fitness, treadmill, free weights, running/jogging, and hiking.<sup>1</sup>

The report also highlights the lowest point of inactivity recorded in the past six years in America. Nevertheless, the difference in the level of inactivity between different income groups is still a matter of concern with households making less than \$25K showing an increasing inactivity rate over the past five years.

### National Trends in General Fitness

According to the SFIA report, fitness sports' participation rates have been the highest for five consecutive years with the participation rate increasing yearly throughout that time frame. In 2019, 67.3% of people indicated that they had participated in some form of fitness activity; the second activity

category (outdoor sports) came in with a 50.7%.<sup>2</sup>

The most popular fitness activity by far is fitness walking, which had over 111 million participants in 2019.<sup>3</sup> Over five years, the activities that grew most rapidly were rowing machine (up 5.5%), kettle bells (up 4.7%), aquatic exercise (up 4.3%) and cross-training style workouts (up 3.8%) and yoga (up 3.8%).<sup>4</sup>

### National Trends in Individual and Team Sports

The most heavily participated sports for 2019 were bowling (45.4 million), golf (33.5 million) and basketball (24.2 million).

Other notable activities that were popular in 2019 included Baseball, Soccer, Tennis, and Table Tennis. The activities that have seen strong growth in the past five years were Cardio Tennis (up 9.3%), trail running (up 7.9%), and pickleball (up 7.1%). Ultimate Frisbee was the sport with the largest decline in participation rates by 12.9% over the past five years.

### National Trends in Outdoor Recreation

The second most popular of the activity groups was Outdoor Sports with more than 50.7% of people reporting that they have participated in such activities in 2019. Much like the general fitness activities, outdoor

1 Sport & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) Sports, Fitness, And Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report 2020, pages 22-34

2 Ibid, page 8  
3 Ibid, page 23  
4 Ibid, page 22-24



recreation activities encourage an active lifestyle, can be performed individually or with a group and are not limited by time restraints. In 2019, the most popular activities in the outdoor recreation category include hiking (49.6 million), road bicycling (39.3 million), freshwater fishing (39.1 million) and camping (28.1 million).<sup>5</sup>

### National Non-Participant Interest

The SFIA report also includes a chapter that shows which sports interest non-participants. The first part of this sections shows that for most age segments, fishing, camping, biking, and hiking were aspirational activities. Swimming for fitness was also a popular activity for groups older than 25 years. When activities were viewed by income, fishing, camping, bicycling, and swimming were all in the top four for all income groups. Fishing and camping were more popular amongst lower income groups whilst bicycling and swimming were more popular amongst the higher income groups.

## COLORADO AND LOCAL ACTIVITY TRENDS

### Colorado Recreation Trends

The 2019 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) report findings indicate that at least 92% of Coloradans participated at least once every few weeks in some form of outdoor recreation over the year prior to the

<sup>5</sup> Sport & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) Sports, Fitness, And Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report 2020, page 22-24

survey, and some four or more times per week. The top three barriers to outdoor recreation were limited time, traffic congestion and crowding. The North Central region, which includes Adams County and six other counties, also has high participation in outdoor recreation, with 46% of adults taking part in these types of activities.<sup>6</sup> A majority of Coloradans (64%) are not traveling far to spend time outdoors, but rather are using parks, open spaces, and trails in their local communities between one and four times per week.<sup>7</sup>

One of the demographic shifts occurring in Adams County and throughout the state is the increase in the Hispanic population, which is an important factor when planning for parks.

### Colorado's Most Popular Outdoor Activities

SCORP states that the top ten outdoor activities in Colorado for 2019 were walking, hiking/backpacking, picnicking/tent camping, fishing, playground activities, jogging/running outdoors, skiing (alpine/telemark)/snowboarding, wildlife viewing, RV camping/cabins, and team or individual sports.<sup>8</sup> While the percentage of people that participated in recreation activities is similar to the rate reported five years prior, some recreation activities are showing stronger increases than

<sup>6</sup> National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Top Trends in Parks and Recreation 2019, page 115

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, page 64

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, page 22

others. For example, the number of days Coloradans recreated on trails grew by 44% from 2012-2017. Spending profiles also showed the greatest increase in trail sports, snow sports, RV camping, and running. Significant increases in trail use are being seen throughout Colorado and Adams County due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as users look for physical and mental reprieve in outdoor settings that lend to safe social distancing.

What the number one activity makes clear is that people of all ages and backgrounds like to get outside in nature and partake in activities that are low-impact and do not necessarily cost money. Colorado public recreation initiatives focus on building more walking and hiking trails and creating more opportunities for people to go into nature together.

SCORP also categorizes all outdoor activities into five groups and ranks the popularity of these groups by

region of the state. In the North Central region, the most popular activities are trail/road-based, such as walking, hiking, biking, and off-roading, followed by other outdoor activities, like RV and tent camping and target shooting. The third most popular activity group in terms of participation is wildlife-related, such as hunting, fishing and bird watching. In 2017, outdoor recreationists in the North Central region spent 39.3 days road biking, 20.6 days bird watching, 16.3 days hiking/backpacking, 15.2 days wildlife viewing, and 13.5 days skiing/snowboarding.<sup>9</sup> According to eBird, an online platform for birdwatchers, there are more than 4,245 eBirders who have visited Adams County and documented more than 374 species in 85 hotspot areas around the County.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Table 14, page 138

<sup>10</sup> eBird, Adams County profile page (accessed 20.13.2020)

**Table 26: Activities and Participation in North Central Colorado Region**

POPULARITY	ACTIVITY GROUP	ACTIVITIES IN GROUP	PARTICIPATION (THOUSANDS)
1	Trail/Road	Walking, Jogging/Running (outdoors), Hiking/Backpacking, Horseback riding, Road biking, Mountain biking, Off-highway vehicle (OHV) or 4-wheeling/motorcycling	1,706
2	Other Outdoor	Developed/RV camping, Tent camping, Picnicking, Target or skeet shooting, Rock climbing, Team or individual sports (outdoors), Playground activities	1,238
3	Wildlife-related	Hunting, Fishing, Ice fishing, Bird Watching, Wildlife viewing (excluding bird watching)	759
4	Water-based	Swimming (outdoors), Power boating, Water/Jet skiing, Sailing, Canoeing/Kayaking, Whitewater rafting, Stand up paddle-boarding	676
5	Winter	Skiing (alpine/tele)/snowboarding, Sledding/tubing, Snowmobiling, Snowshoeing or cross-country skiing	481

Source: 2019 Colorado SCORP



Adams County is one of the top ten counties in the state for hunting (#6), generating \$32,169 in economic output, and supporting 344 jobs.<sup>11</sup> Annually, approximately 4,481 people participate in big game hunting, 3,561 in small game hunting, and 7,089 in hunting waterfowl.<sup>12</sup>

### Local Sport and Market Potential

Walking for exercise is the number one activity in Adams County according to ESRI Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report and Recreation Expenditures Report by County 2019.<sup>13</sup> Though not as popular within the county compared to the nation, more than 82,000 individuals participate in walking for exercise, or nearly 16 percent of the population. The other activities that many adults participate in are swimming, jogging/running, camping, and hiking. Nevertheless, not all these activities have participation rates higher than the national average. Categorizing these activities by general sports, fitness, and outdoor activities shows how general sports in Adams County are more popular than the national average and thus hold a greater potential for residents to actively participate in them. Other significant activities worth highlighting for having a higher participation rate than the national average are volleyball, Zumba, football, soccer, baseball, and

11 Colorado's 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), Table 8, page 122  
12 Ibid, Table 17, page 141  
13 ESRI Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report & Recreation Expenditures Report (created 05.14.2020)

mountain biking. The staff of Adams County also noted an increase of interest over the past five years in pickleball, futsal, and soccer.

### ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RECREATION

The outdoor recreation industry is a major economic engine for Colorado. In 2017, it generated over \$62 billion in economic output, over \$35 billion in GDP (10 percent of the total state GDP), and \$9.4 billion in tax revenue (local, state, and federal). The North Central region contributed a significant portion of that – its economic output was \$13.8 billion, it added \$7.5 billion to the GDP, and it generated \$2 billion in tax revenue.<sup>14</sup> According to the Outdoor Industry Association, national consumer spending on outdoor recreation increased by 37% between 2011 and 2016.

Outdoor recreation is a significant job creator in Colorado, providing more jobs than construction and manufacturing combined.<sup>15</sup> An estimated 511,000 jobs, or 18.7 percent of all jobs in the state, are outdoor recreation-related; 119,958 of those jobs are in the North Central region.<sup>16</sup>

Coloradans spent over \$36.8 billion on trips and equipment for outdoor recreation in 2017, and \$9.6 billion of that was spent in the North Central region.<sup>17</sup> The majority of spending

14 Ibid, page 111  
15 Ibid, page 119  
16 Ibid, page 119  
17 Ibid, page 116

on equipment in this region was for walking (\$1.3 billion), followed by hiking/backpacking (\$900 million) and playground activities (\$546 million).<sup>18</sup> This differs markedly from how recreation dollars were spent statewide, where residents and nonresidents alike spent the most dollars on skiing and snowboarding, spending \$9.3 billion in 2017. Statewide, residents alone spent \$4.9 billion on skiing and snowboarding, \$2.9 billion on hiking/backpacking, \$2.1 billion on tent camping, \$1.8 billion on RV camping/cabins, and \$1 billion on wildlife viewing.<sup>19</sup>

SCORP also includes a study conducted by Southwick Associates for Colorado Parks and Wildlife that estimates the economic contributions of outdoor recreational activity in Colorado during 2017. The North Central region that Adams County and six other counties are a part of is the 2nd largest beneficiary of the regions in every economic category listed.<sup>20</sup> The economic output associated with outdoor recreation in this region is estimated at \$13.85 billion dollars, contributing \$7.5 billion dollars to the Gross Domestic Product of seven counties.<sup>21</sup> The economic activity generated from outdoor recreation supports 120,000 jobs in the region and 511,000 in the state. This translates to 18.7% of the entire labor force in

18 Table 13Ibid, page 137  
19 Ibid, Table 16, page 140  
20 Ibid, page 111  
21 Ibid, page 111

Colorado who are receiving \$21.4 billion dollars in salaries and wages.<sup>22</sup>

### DEMOGRAPHICS AND RECREATIONAL TRENDS

Adams County is socially and culturally diverse and, as the research into demographics reveals, economically diverse, as well. Additionally, the County is fast-growing – the State Demographer forecasts that the County will grow by 21.4% over the next ten years, which is faster than the national average. The age group expected to grow the most in that time is 65 years and older.<sup>23</sup> The County also has a larger portion of children (less than 14 years of age) than the State average, representing 23% of the population and can be attributed to a larger number of young families. Currently, population growth seems to be concentrated in specific areas of the County – on the western edge bordering Denver County and other urban centers. What can be gleaned from all this anticipated growth and demographic variety is that Adams County will have to devise targeted strategies to meet the needs of all its open space user groups who enjoy getting outside and using the parks and trails close to home.

The Physical Activity Council's 2020 annual study for sports, fitness, and recreation participation shows that fitness, outdoor, and individual sports have the highest participation rates

22 Ibid, page 111  
23 ESRI Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report & Recreation Expenditures Report (created 05.14.2020)



among Americans for the past six years at rates reaching 67.3%, 50.7%, and 45% respectively. Nevertheless, when broken down by generation, a significant difference is noticed in how popular team sports are among Gen Z (people less than 20-years-old) and Millennials (people between 20 to 40 years of age) where it reaches a participation rate of almost 56.3% and 27.2% respectively. There is a significant difference between these numbers and the 12% and 4.3% of Gen X (people between 40 and 55 years of age) and Boomers (people ages 56 to 75). When asked about which activities they most interested yet do not participate in, younger individuals (ages six to 24) predominantly chose fishing and camping. People 45 and older expressed more interest in bicycling and swimming for fitness as well. This information is very critical in understanding and translating Adams County's large young and elderly populations' outdoor and recreation needs. The report also shows how inactivity is reversely proportional to income with individuals making under \$25,000 showing an inactivity rate as high as 45.6%. Fishing and camping where the two activities people of lower income expressed most interest in compared to bicycling and swimming for fitness on the other side of the spectrum. This should influence the County's decisions towards facilitating access to recreational opportunities to lower income communities and allocating different offerings in a more reasonable manner.

### Youth and Recreation Trends

According to a National Study: Project Play. State of Play 2020 Trends in Youth Play Report, the most popular sports among youth that agencies indicated were among their Top Five where, Basketball (85% included it within their top 5), Baseball/Softball (81%), Soccer (73%), Football (58%), and Volleyball (34%).<sup>24</sup> In 2018, 15.7% of children between 6 and 12 participated in Bicycling on a regular basis. Other activities with high participation rates on a regular basis were Basketball (14.1%), Baseball (13.6%), and Soccer 7.4%.<sup>25</sup> Soccer participation continues to decline nationally, while the other most popular sports for kids ages 6 to 12 either grew participation in 2018 (baseball) or only slightly decreased (basketball). While noting the decline in soccer on a national level, Adams County continues to experience interest and growth in the sport, especially amongst its Hispanic population.

However, in recent years, there has been a sharp decline in the number of children playing team sports. Only 38% of kids ages 6 to 12 played team or individual sports on a regular basis in 2018, down from 45% in 2008, according to data from the Sports and Fitness Industry Association.<sup>26</sup> According to the National Survey of Children's Health, only 24% of youth ages 6 to 17 engage in at least 60

<sup>24</sup> National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). 2020 Youth Sports at Park and Recreation Agencies  
<sup>25</sup> Ibid  
<sup>26</sup> Ibid

minutes of physical activity per day, down from 30% a decade earlier. Boys (28%) are more likely than girls (20%) to meet this daily physical activity recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

According to data presented by the Aspen Institute, lacrosse is growing in popularity among children. Between the 14 team sports that were evaluated by the Sports and Fitness Industry Association in 2018, lacrosse had the highest percentage of newcomers and return participants (54.9%) among kids ages 6 to 12. Lacrosse is taking steps to promote multisport sampling. Even as the sport had lost 36% of its players from 2017, it remained with a net gain of 18.9% which was higher than any other sport, surpassing track and field (16.4%) and wrestling (10.8%).<sup>27</sup>

### Equal Access to Recreation

Equity is at the heart of access to youth sports. National Studies demonstrate that gender, household formation and income correlate with the likelihood (and level) of children's engagement with organized sports, what sports they may play and how long they engage in those activities. In fact, 42% of lower-income families cited cost as the reason their children do not play sports.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, across the nation there are significant disparities in who has access to youth sports opportunities,

<sup>27</sup> The Aspen Institute - Project Play. State of Play 2020 Trends in Youth Play Report  
<sup>28</sup> Ibid

both in terms of proximity to sports fields and courts and the ability to afford registration fees. Kids from lower-income homes face increasing participation barriers. In 2018, 21.6% of children ages six to twelve in households with incomes under \$25,000 played sports on a regular basis, compared to 42.7% of kids from homes earning \$100,000 or more. Kids from the lowest-income homes are more than three times as likely to be physically inactive. There is even greater concern over how this difference between households of the lowest and highest income has grown by 140% between 2012 and 2018 showing an even greater challenge to equal access to recreational opportunities.<sup>29</sup>

### RECREATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Outdoor recreation is a continually growing sector in Colorado that touches many other business sectors. It is very much a part of the state's identity and culture, and the foundation for its economic stability and growth. Given how vital outdoor recreation is to Colorado's identity and continued economic prosperity, SCORP identifies the state's top four priorities for outdoor recreation to ensure that it continues to grow successfully.<sup>30</sup> Those priorities are: sustainable access and opportunity, stewardship, conservation and funding.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid  
<sup>30</sup> Ibid, pages 5-7



SCORP also details the top three conditions that are negatively impacting parks and open spaces across the state, hindering participation in outdoor recreation. These are: limited time, traffic congestion and overcrowding. Other factors that may be considered include the stability of housing and the ability for individuals and families to earn a living wage. SCORP suggests addressing these hindrances through strategic management, long-term planning, and maintenance of existing infrastructure and trail networks.<sup>31</sup> The following section highlights how some of these statewide challenges and opportunities apply to Adams County, and also highlights some particular to this place.

### Demographic Opportunities

While there are challenges for outdoor recreation, there are also trends that point to opportunities. SCORP identifies some of these. In the last few years, there has been a rapid increase in the 65 years and older population in Colorado and throughout the United States. Even in Adams County, the 65+ age group accounts for 11.3% and is expected to grow the fastest of any age segment, accounting for 12.4% of the population by 2025. This large increase will impact how parks and recreation facilities are programmed in the future. People over the age of 65 tend to gravitate toward opportunities for socialization and serving their larger communities.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, page 4

Focusing on providing recreational and outdoor opportunities for these residents, especially to help them stay healthy and active, has the potential to infuse parks and open spaces with dedicated participants who can help teach the next generations how to be good stewards of our public spaces. Localities throughout Colorado have seen the sport of Pickleball begin to fill a need for active recreation within the senior populations. Pickleball is an easy to learn activity that encourages player socialization, physical health, and improved hand-eye coordination.

In addition, Adams County is home to a growing number of young families, with children under the age of 14 years representing 23 percent of the population (above the State average of 18.1%), and millennial adults between the ages of 25 and 44 accounting for the largest segment of the county population at 31.3 percent.

The fact that in the last 12 months, more than 70,000 adults in Adams County were expected to spend a certain amount of money on sports and recreation equipment provides an opportunity to continue to educate residents and visitors on the importance of these spaces, encouraging volunteer and conservation efforts, and providing opportunities for people to spend even more time outdoors. Utilizing public/private partnerships to support and enhance outdoor recreation is another opportunity to provide a safety net when and if one type of

**Table 27: Residents' Expenditure on Sports/Recreation Equipment in the last 12 months since they took the survey**

SPENDING RANGE	EXPECTED # OF ADULTS	PERCENT	MPI
\$1-99	21,718	5.8%	99
\$100-\$249	21,441	5.7%	102
\$250+	27,253	7.3%	99

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report and Recreation Expenditures Report

funding for parks and open spaces might not be available.

The economic findings of spending in the future 2024-2028 SCORP may show a dramatically different reality and projection of spending based on the unanticipated outcomes of COVID-19, with more people spending time recreating close to home, but also taking up new recreational pursuits or upgrading existing ones. For example, bicycle sales and repairs to older bicycles soared in 2020, which is not represented in the data reported.

### The Impact of COVID-19

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic will have a lasting impact on people and how they have come to rely heavily on close-to-home access to nature and outdoor recreation, and there will be an on-going evolution of understanding the impact and impression of the virus on the public as it relates to public spaces. Parks and trails act as critical infrastructure to the public, serving physical, mental, and emotional needs, and as such, opportunities for the County exist for public services. Opportunities to respond to the lingering affects of the pandemic include:

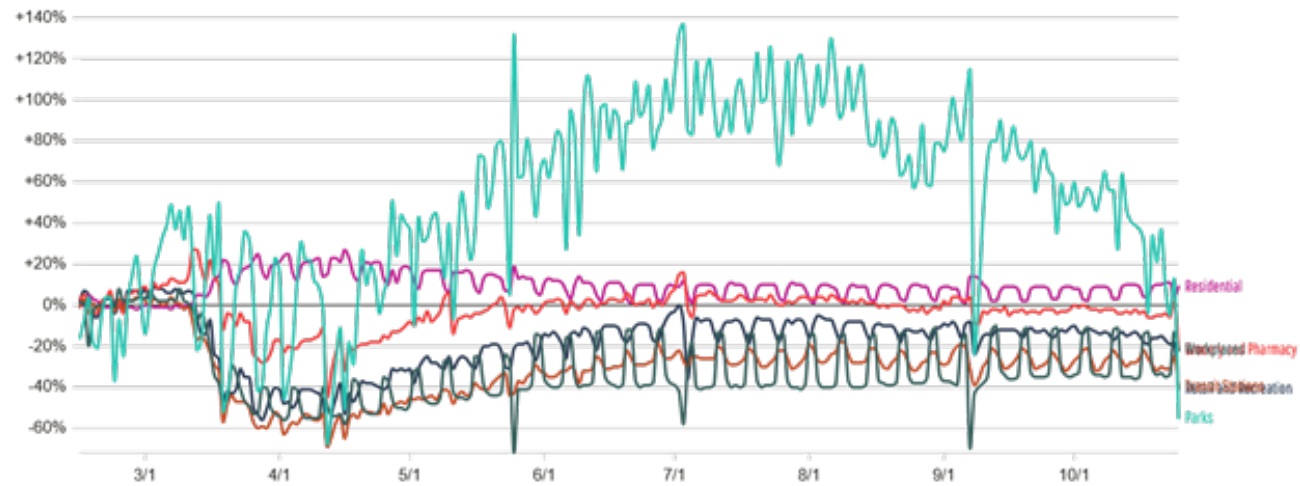
- flexible, adaptive and expansive outdoor spaces for classes and programming that cannot safely be provided indoors;
- trails to fill gaps in public transportation;
- addressing overcrowding by expanding resources in high demand areas and raising awareness of and spreading the love to less popular locations;
- distanced activities and addressing social isolation for vulnerable populations; and
- youth being disconnected from sports and athletics, fear in managing physical interactions in youth sports, and underserved populations facing the inability to 'pay-to-play'.

Figure 58 shows movement trends throughout Colorado from March 1 to October 1, 2020. It shows that parks have experienced the most significant change in movement trends than categories such as retail, recreation, groceries and pharmacies, transit stations, workplaces, and residential.

The Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) survey of membership in June of 2020 showed that 72% of respondents expect individual sports and 66% anticipate outdoor sports to be the two top product categories to return to health post-COVID-19. Only 37% of respondents anticipate that the



**Figure 58:** COVID-19 Community Mobility Report for the State of Colorado (March – October 2020)



Source: Google LLC "Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports"

return of youth sports will return in 2021 or later.<sup>32</sup> The NRPA Youth Sports at Park and Recreation Agencies report also stated that 90% of park and recreation professionals report that the pandemic had a significant detrimental impact on their agencies' youth sports programming during the summer and fall of 2020.<sup>33</sup>

## RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

### Trends in Priorities

Adams County will also be taking cues from SCORP and identify its own priorities for outdoor recreation, potentially aligning with the state's goals. A SCORP survey requested outdoor recreation agencies/ organizations to rank priorities for

<sup>32</sup> Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA). COVID-19 Industry Impact Report June 2020 Results  
<sup>33</sup> National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). 2020 Youth Sports at Park and Recreation Agencies.

the future. More than half (56%) of respondents listed expanding community trail systems as an important priority and 49% identified connecting regional trail systems. Developing neighborhood, community or special use parks or facilities was of importance to a slightly lesser percentage (43%).

The variety of densities in the County may warrant different standards of park and open space access. In the urbanized western areas of the County, residents would ideally be within a walkable distance, 1/4 mile or (5-minute walk) from a neighborhood park or a 1/2 mile (10-minute walk) from a community or regional park. In the rural agricultural areas of the central and eastern County, land-use patterns do not support comparable standards for access to parks. In the central area along the I-70 corridor, a standard of living within one mile of

a park may be a more realistic goal for rural communities. Park service areas should be linked to densities, as different neighborhoods call for different standards for access to parks and open space.

In order to meet recreation demands, key partnerships with municipal agencies and special district providers, such as Hyland Hills, may be able to support increased access to recreation facilities and offer programming.



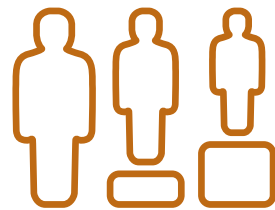
## CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

The existing conditions evaluated within this report point to a range of opportunities for more exploration in the second phase of the master plan process along with identification of strategies and actions. The summary of issues and influences that follows is organized according to the Core Value Lenses of Equity, Sustainability, and Livability.

### EQUITY

Equity: Equity is just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Equitable park offerings means "ensuring everyone receives the appropriate investment for where they are", understanding that "some communities need more investment

#### EQUITY



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

Figure 59: Equity Value Lens

because they have historically been underserved" (NRPA 2020 equity definition). The opportunity exists throughout this master plan to establish equitable spaces for outdoor recreation, community gathering, connectivity, and experiences in nature. One way to address this is to critically consider the service gaps indicated in this study, recognizing that groups that have been traditionally underserved include racial and ethnic minorities, low-income populations, teenage girls and young women, and seniors. The master plan presents an opportunity to plan for locating future parks to be within a reasonable walking distance of residents.

Another opportunity to address equity is considering how parks are to be inclusive and welcoming to all. This brings up a key issue of unsheltered people experiencing homelessness for Adams County to consider best management methods for open spaces, parks and trails.

### HOMELESSNESS

Understanding what homelessness is and who experiences it is key to understanding the issue and the role of parks and recreation providers. Someone experiencing homelessness is someone without stable housing and can be an individual or a family. Homelessness is related to other societal issues like income inequality, the lack of affordable housing, and barriers to accessing mental health care. Homelessness is incredibly complex and there are many paths

into homelessness, including personal, structural, and societal constraints.

Homelessness is an issue that can only be mitigated when involving a range of stakeholders, which oftentimes includes park and recreation agencies. Adams County has several organizations, initiatives, and resources in place that assist homeless individuals and those who are at risk of becoming homeless. Under the Department of Community Safety and Wellbeing, the County has five programs in place to reduce poverty and homelessness, these are the Adams County Day Works, Homelessness Outreach, Mobile Shower and Mobile Laundry Services, Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, and Severe Weather Activation Plan (SWAP).

The Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan along with supporting management plans, regulations, site plans and policies can address questions such as:

- What can be done to increase visitation to park, open space and trail assets by everyone to build civic trust?
- How can the departments support inclusion and create opportunities for social connections among diverse groups?
- How can parks departments link unsheltered populations to services and avoid the type of enforcement mitigation of displacement and loss of possessions that has proven to complicate and exacerbate poverty and health conditions?
- How to reduce discomfort some people feel from viewing the circumstances of unhoused individuals that may cause

them to be dissatisfied with a space or not visit it? What physical characteristics would reduce association with high-risk environments?

- What actions can be taken to discourage and respond to behavior that is anti-social unsafe, or a criminal act? How maintenance standards can be upheld?

### Homelessness in Parks

Adams County, like many localities, has rules and regulations surrounding camping or trespassing in parks and open spaces, assembly, obstructing passage, storing personal property in public spaces, and solicitation. The County's Parks, Open Space and Trail Rules and Regulations includes different sections that effect homeless individuals seeking to find shelter in these spaces. These include limiting hours of operation, limiting parking and overnight camping, and rules for resource protection that make it unlawful to tamper with natural and man-made objects. There are also rules prohibiting open fires, possessing glass containers, consuming alcoholic beverages, and littering and dumping.

Within Adams County and the region, coordinated and thoughtful enforcement approaches are needed as a management tool. Various law enforcement groups, impact teams, and agencies all may play a role of enforcement, and ensuring they all are following the same protocols or set of policies is critical in addressing homelessness as a regional issue. Enforcement policies and methods

must consider how criminalization of homelessness exacerbates the situation because it does not help the condition of those experiencing homelessness or get them better access to services.

The Adams County Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Arts Department recently enacted a ranger program to provide visitor safety and resource protection, education and interpretation amongst the county's park, open space and trail resources.

### Understanding Encampments

Encampment is a term used to describe the cluster of informal dwellings of homeless individuals. Encampments can be found in different locations and can take up many forms. They can be tent cities, homeless settlements, or homeless camps; and they can be located under freeways, in parks, open spaces, sidewalks, and even trails. These spaces can become a real and perceived hurdle not only for the people dwelling in them but for the context and community around them.

In Denver, two homeless sites (at the National Western Complex and the Denver Coliseum) have been created as other homeless areas have been swept from within the city. Denver has a history of sweeping homeless campsites and this has caused many homeless people to seek dwelling in nearby and connected areas. Adams County has been challenged by the widespread relocation of

homeless individuals from the Denver metropolitan area to locations such as the Clear Creek and South Platte River corridors. These locations offer well-connected trail infrastructure for the homeless population, but they have initiated conflicts with concerned neighbors and residents about safety. In addition, floodplains are generally not safe locations for displaced individuals to inhabit. The hazards of floods are dangerous to life and property within these zones, and disease, contamination and unsanitary conditions are also proliferated during flood events.

As park agencies plan for management of open spaces, they need to pre-emptively design for the potential of a homeless population moving in and establishing camping sites. No agency wants to see their new project or restoration work immediately damaged, particularly before ecological establishment.

### The Costs of Not Taking Action

It is critical that parks and recreation providers take a problem-solving approach to homelessness and work as part of a collaborative response to this issue. Parks and recreation providers need to focus on community education, training, design of their assets and working with service providers.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability: By committing to improved internal operations and property maintenance methods (i.e. efficient irrigation, water-wise landscapes) as well as conservation and enhancement of natural resources, sustainability will be part of Adams County's identity.

### SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Adams County has the opportunity to lead in environmentally sustainable practices through its operations and maintenance approaches to parks, open spaces and trail resources. The County is currently undertaking a sustainability audit and plan creation for their internal operations. Areas to address environmental sustainability for parks, open space, and trails include water conservation, green infrastructure and energy conservation.

Water conservation can occur in daily facility operations. Irrigation technology such as centralized control systems that monitor weather conditions and evapotranspiration rates applied broadly can reduce the use of water throughout the county's park assets. Reducing the use of potable water in irrigation use also supports this goal. Utilizing and understanding native plant communities and landscape typologies can help build resilient landscapes that are native appropriate for the Colorado climate. Green infrastructure provides a network of resilient landscape strategies utilizing vegetation, soils, stormwater management, and other elements to protect water quality and build healthy environments.

Energy conservation can be expressed through renewable energy sources, upgrades to energy efficient fixtures, LED lighting retrofits, and automation controls, to name a few. The Parks, Open Space and Cultural Arts department can consider utilizing electric vehicles amongst their maintenance fleet. Building practices can be evaluated for efficiencies, including water serving and energy conserving fixtures and equipment. Facilities can consider means for waste reduction.

Other critical areas of this plan inherently address sustainability. Increasing connectivity through trails assists the county in meeting sustainability goals by providing alternatives to single occupancy

### 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.

Figure 60: Sustainability Value Lens



vehicles. Focusing on the protection and conservation of critical ecologically important lands, as well as agricultural lands, contribute to protecting the county's delicate ecosystems, local food sources, and help in building resilient landscapes in the face of natural disasters or events. Open Spaces are also a place to encourage green renewable energy production when impacts to wildlife, scenic views, and other ecological functions is avoided.

The Sustainable Adams County 2030 Plan outlines the county's adopted philosophies towards sustainability, placing equal value and importance on environmental protection, social responsibility, and fiscal management.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Understanding the extent and potential magnitude of climate change impacts provides the County with future-thinking opportunities to plan for and make reasonable decisions in both adapting to and mitigating these climate impacts. Adapting to these impacts will involve specific planning for unavoidable impacts and the flexibility to anticipate responses to a range of potential outcomes. The mitigation role involves focusing on reducing impacts on future climate change that are within the control of the County.

### Colorado Climate Impacts

Climate change in Colorado is likely to be characterized primarily by increased heat, which has multiple

environmental consequences, both directly and indirectly. Earlier spring runoff, increased drought, more extreme weather events, and increased heat waves are all projected for Colorado as a state and will all come into play in Adams County. Indirect impacts of climate change are likely to exacerbate the negative impacts of other trends such as overconsumption of resources, wildfire fuel loading due to forest management decisions, and air quality degradation from industry and transportation.

In addition to drought, climate change in Adams County will exacerbate the impacts of discrete extreme weather events such as wildfires and flooding. 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. With the increase in extreme precipitation events anticipated over time, there is a correlated increased risk of flooding.

### Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies to Tackle Climate Change

To plan for Climate Change in Adams County most effectively, a dual focused approach is needed. Anticipating the coming climate changes will allow the County to prioritize applicable adaptation strategies to ensure community

members are able to continue to enjoy a high quality of life as environmental challenges are magnified. At the same time, by recognizing the impacts of high versus low emissions scenarios, Adams County can take steps to reduce the future impacts by focusing on greenhouse gas emissions reduction mitigation strategies and other practical measures to minimize negative impacts proactively. Cooperative growth also puts a clear emphasis on similar values of environmental stewardship, regional cooperation, increased green spaces and increased conservation of resources that will help the county trend towards a more sustainable future. The County can address climate change through land use strategies and through the built environment in manages.

## WATER RESOURCES PROTECTION

Water resource protection is important in Adams County for providing critical wildlife habitats, maintaining a balanced stormwater runoff system at a regional scale, buffering development impacts, and protecting floodplains for flood control. Waterways provide opportunities for public use and experiences. The South Platte River and Clear Creek Corridors represent two significant waterways in the county. They provide diverse ecological systems and critical wildlife habitat, scenic amenities, recreational and mobility assets, and opportunities for economic development and restoration. This plan will outline

ways to protect water resources, limit excessive water use, and implement low-water landscaping opportunities. This theme ties back to the Comprehensive Plan and the Sustainable Adams County 2030 Plan. The Comprehensive Plan outlines the possibility of a county-wide Water Plan that would address how water is used and planned for on a regional scale.

## LIVABILITY

Livability: Parks, open space and trails are major contributors to the quality of life in Adams County, and livability is enhanced through provision of these places within close proximity and easy access to where people live, work, and go to school. This plan will help to further enhance livability through the thoughtful integration of artful placemaking strategies, cultural events/programs and parks design best practices that celebrate the culture of Adams County and further contribute to livability.

### 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 61:** Livability Value Lens

## ARTS, CULTURE, EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Adams County is dedicated to the growth and evolution of the arts in its communities with a vision to be an inclusive community where everyone can enjoy a rich diversity of arts and cultural experiences. The opportunity exists to integrate arts and culture into all aspects of parks, open space and trail planning. In doing so, citizens feel connected and included in public spaces, a sense of place is defined, amenities are visually attractive, and experiences that are offered are diverse and build community - all contributing to the overall quality of life.

Community-based arts and events foster a sense of respect and caring for public spaces. Diversity can be celebrated through performance, food, visual arts, and cultural events. The annual County Fair is one example of an event that brings together the regional community and celebrates the unique qualities and the rich heritage of the county. The County can support more outdoor recreation programming, cultural events, and naturalist programming, and look for ways to disperse this type of activity throughout the county geography.

## DIVERSE RECREATION NEEDS

Special opportunities and challenges exist within the county for outdoor recreation. The county is culturally and linguistically diverse, and residents are enthusiastic about outdoor recreation in many forms. The senior population

desires outdoor experiences that go beyond walking, while youth are looking for specialized play experiences including connecting with nature and inclusive and accessible environments. Self-directed recreation is increasing in popularity. Nature based activities such as birdwatching, fishing, and nature exploration are seeing an increase in participation. Trails and regional connections are critical to the population for both recreation and transportation. Some of the unique opportunities that exist in the County include expanding agritourism, particularly in the Historic Splendid Valley, and offering a quintessential "Colorado Experience," close to home by connecting people to lakes, rivers and nature. A goal identified in this plan is to ensure residents have close access to places for recreation, to help in the connection of the population to health, fitness, and nature experiences.

## FOOD ACCESS AND AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT

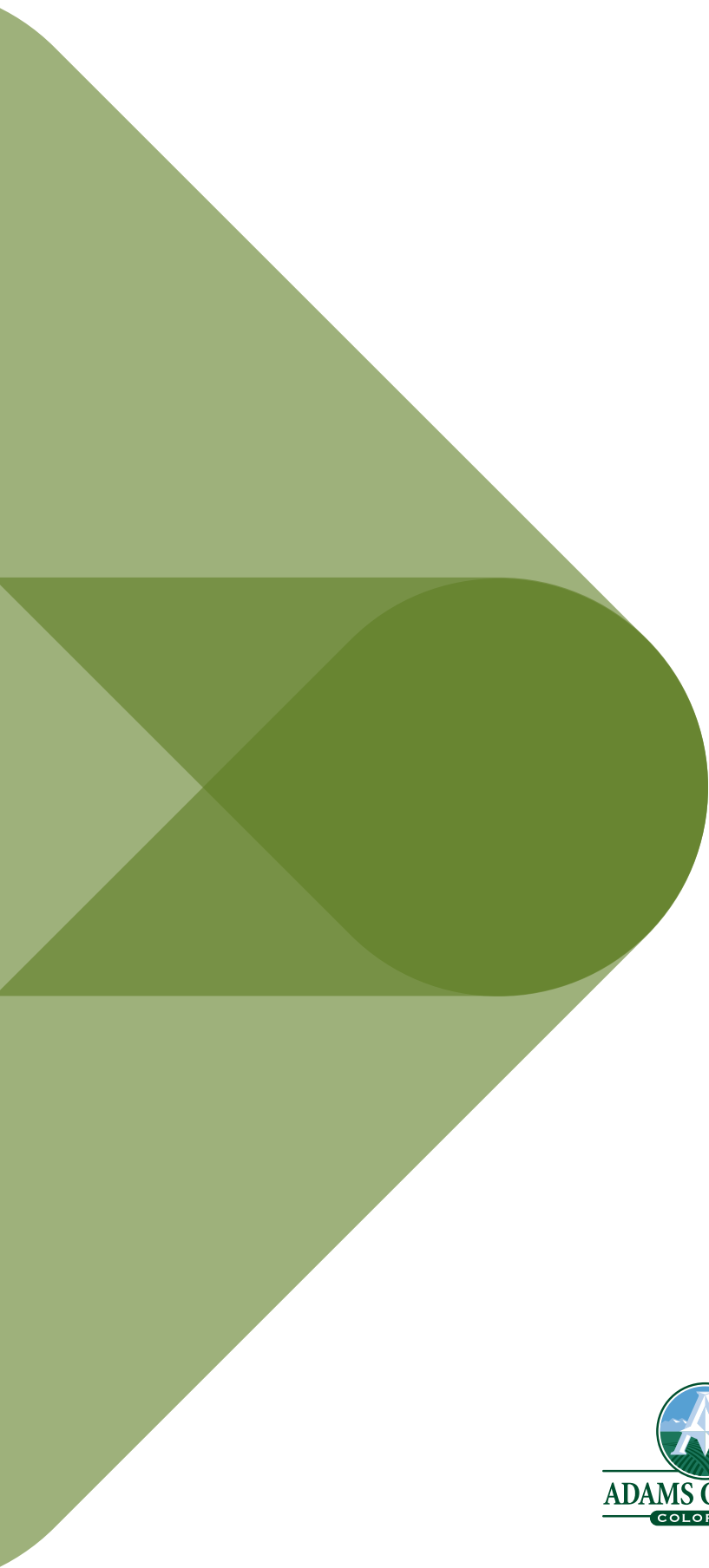
Agriculture has historically been an economic staple for the County and provides the rural atmosphere character that residents associate with. Utilizing open space funds to preserve working farms, ranches and agrarian lands is critical in both preserving this rural character and traditions of the county, but it is also important in filling gaps in food access that may exist for some populations. The Historic Splendid Valley planning work has set up a framework for highlighting some of the county's

agricultural resources. The County endeavors to promote and support the local food economy through strengthening the public's awareness of the local food system, educating youth, and celebrating the county's rich heritage and resources.

## REGIONALISM

Collaboration across the regional landscape that Adams County sits within is important to furthering objectives within this master plan. Working with local agencies, adjacent counties, and regional entities creates a cooperative setting for which to support big visions, programming and budgetary efficiencies, environmental stewardship, and connect trail corridors. Existing efforts include the South Platte River Coalition, Clear Creek Coalition, E-470 Trail connection planning, and considerations for connecting Riverdale Regional Park to the National Western with a multi-purpose trail that supports equestrian use.





ADVANCING **ADAMS**  
PLANNING FOR A SHARED FUTURE

