

## TAKING A LOOK AT ADAMS COUNTY



Pecos Street Between US-36  
and 70th Ave

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

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

# COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

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

## COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

### HOUSING

#### Quantity and projected growth

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

A very basic method of evaluating housing supply and demand is

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

#### Housing mix

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

Table 12: Adams County Projected Housing Needs

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

Source: Colorado State Demographer's Office

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

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

Source: Esri, 2018  
\* 2018 Housing in Structure

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

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

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

#### Housing tenure (rent versus own)

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

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

### DID YOU KNOW?

69%  
SINGLE-FAMILY

#### HOUSING MIX BY UNIT TYPE

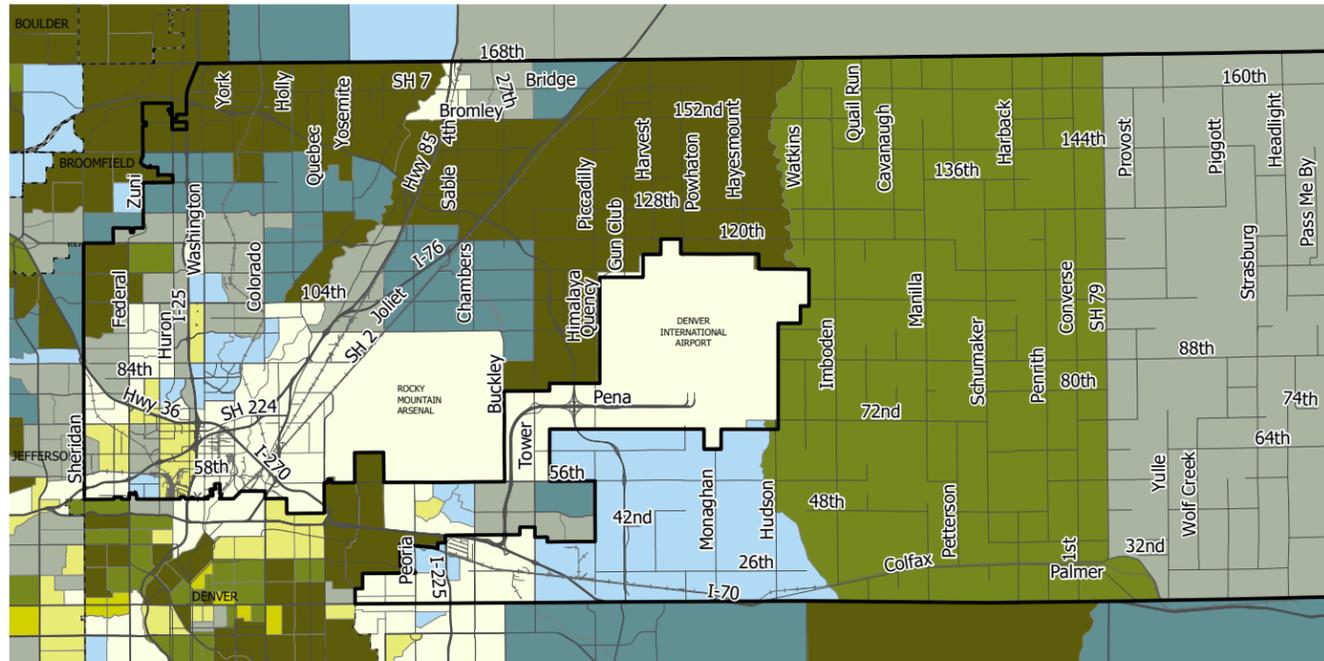
14.2%  
2-19 UNITS

8.7%  
20+ UNITS

6.4%  
MOBILE HOMES



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



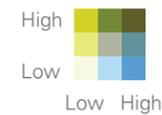
Data Source: Adams County, ESRI - ACS 2020, DRCOG

**LEGEND**

2020 Median Home Value



2020 Median Household Income



Note: data displayed by census tract

NOT TO SCALE

**Housing affordability**

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

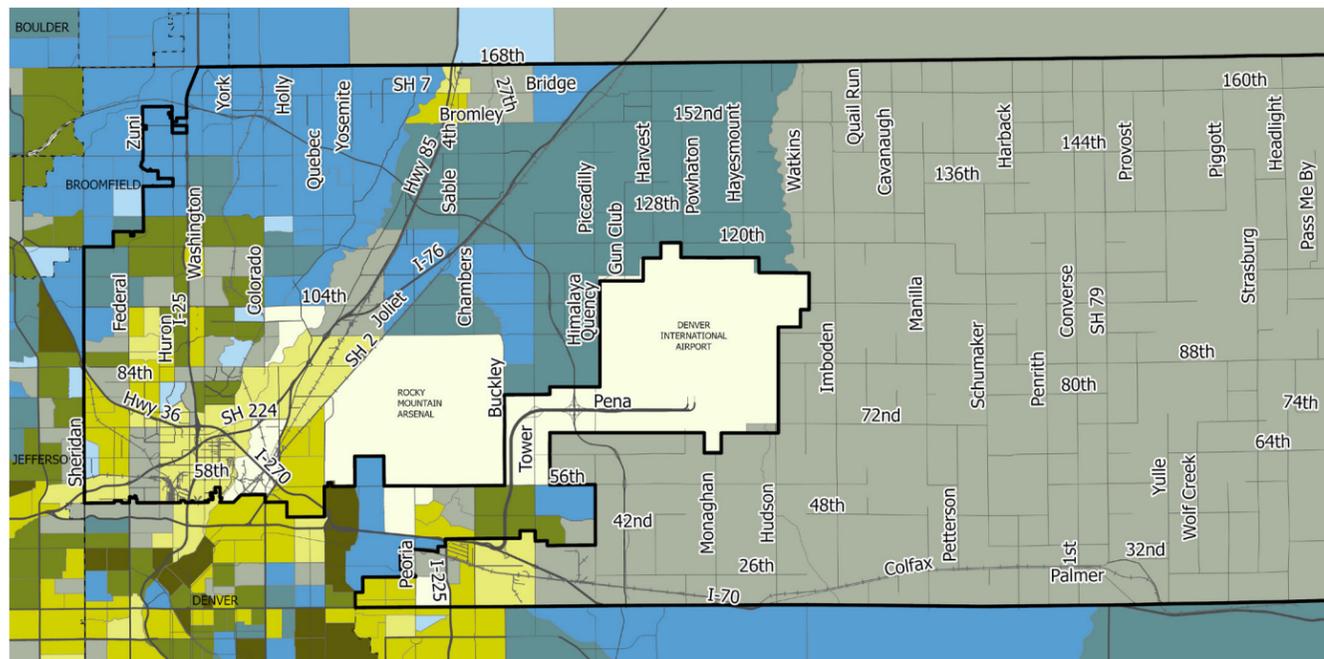
Average rent across all rental housing types is \$1,150 in Adams County which is just slightly higher than the state average of \$1,136.

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

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

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

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



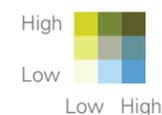
Data Source: Adams County, ESRI - ACS 2020, DRCOG

**LEGEND**

2020 Median Gross Rent



2020 Median Household Income



Note: data displayed by census tract

NOT TO SCALE

County is tracking relatively closely with statewide affordability indices.

### Missing Middle

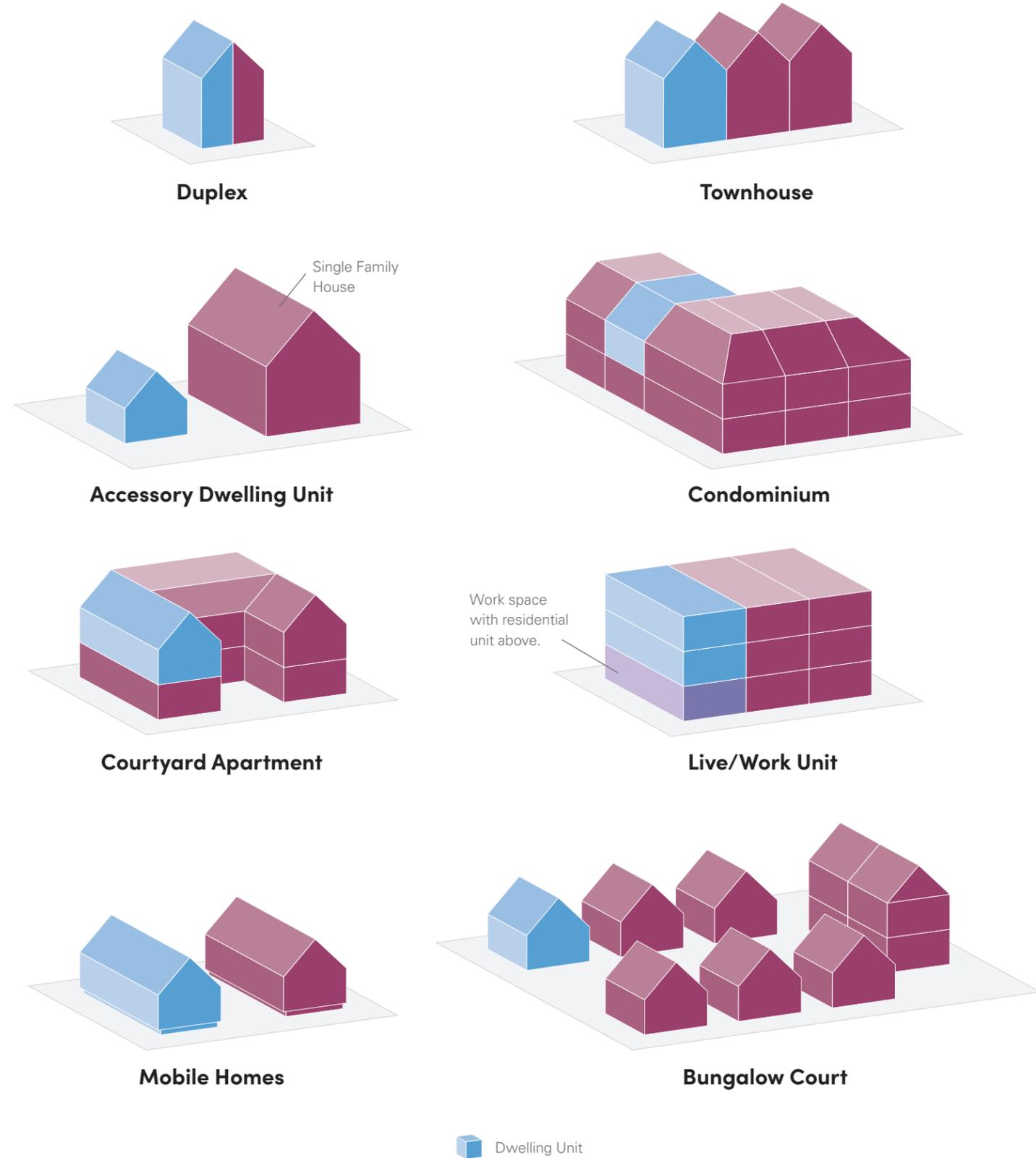
While overall supply and demand is important, housing supply should also meet the diverse needs and preferences of households within the County. Households in Adams County represent a wide range of incomes, ethnicities, sizes, and other dynamics that are best served by varied housing typologies. While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

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

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

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

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



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

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

### Demand for Housing

On a basic level, the 2018 Housing Needs Assessment found that the County does not have enough housing based on population projections and average household size. This trend has only continued. Based on the most recent population projections from the State Demographer’s office, the County will need, on average, an additional 3,371 units annually through 2040 in order to maintain the current average household size.

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

### Housing Costs

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

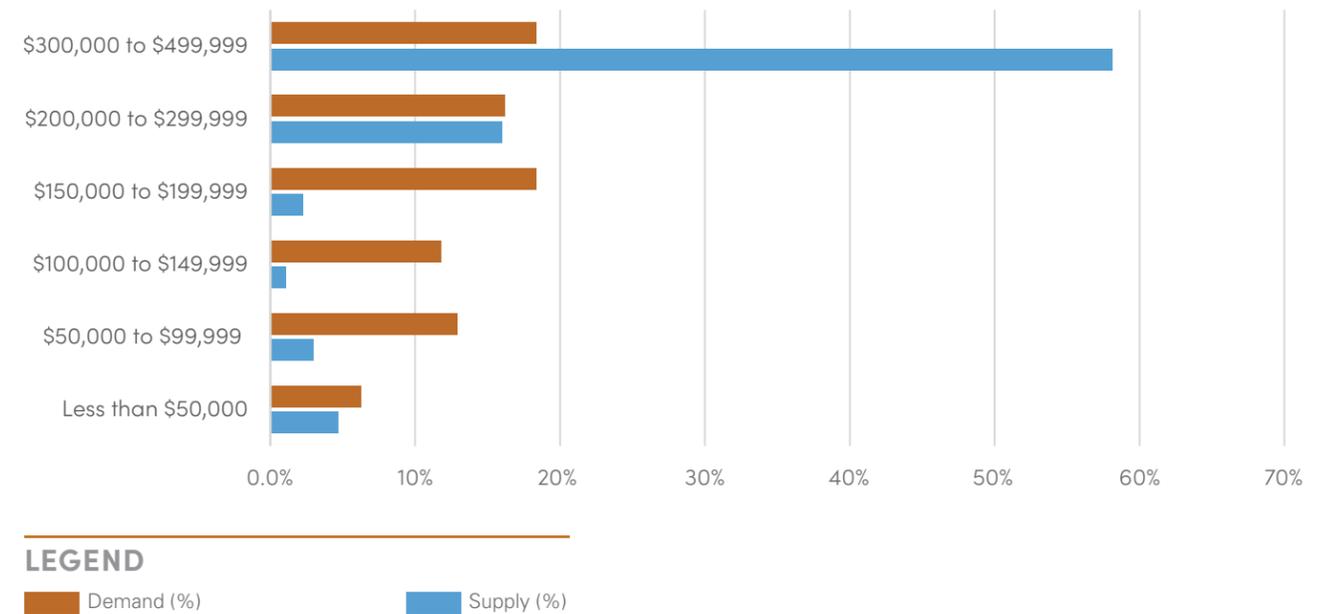
more than 30 percent of their income for housing, increased among all household types.

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

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

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

Figure 23: Housing Supply Vs. Demand (2019)



#### LEGEND

■ Demand (%)      ■ Supply (%)

Source: Colorado State Demographer’s Office

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

### DID YOU KNOW?

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

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

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

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

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

### Affordability Gap

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

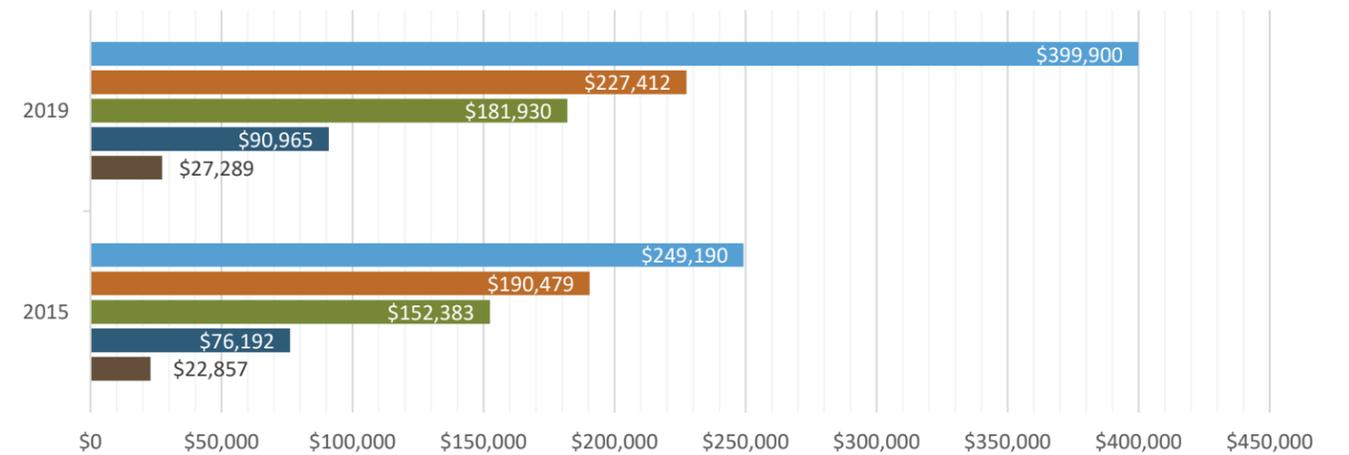
As of 2019, we see that the trend has continued with gaps increasing at all income levels, but most significantly for households at or above the County's median household income level. For households earning 100 percent of median household income, the affordability gap has increased nearly 200 percent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

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

### Preservation of Existing Housing

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

Figure 24: Adams County Affordability Gap (2019)

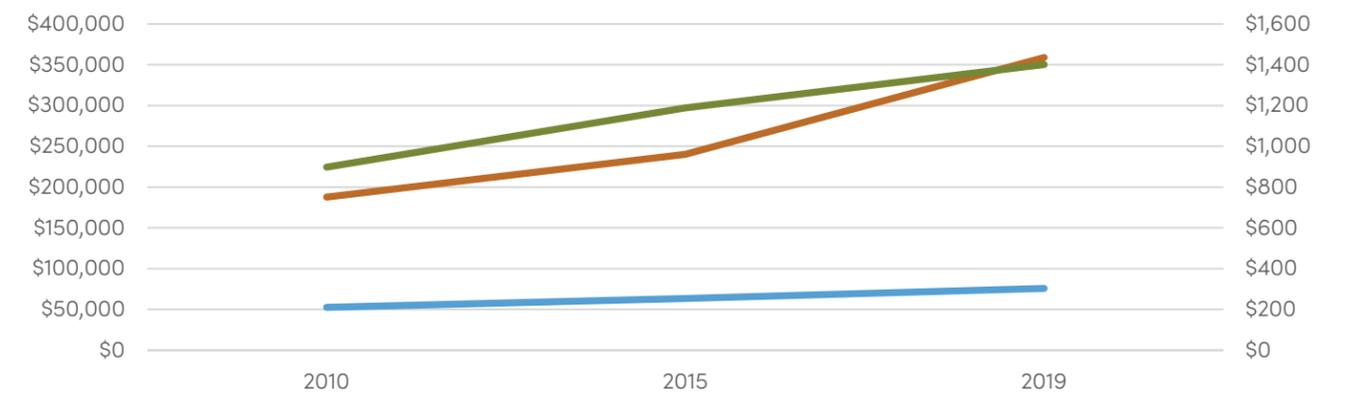


#### LEGEND

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

Source: Colorado State Demographer's Office

Figure 25: Adams County Affordability Gap



#### LEGEND

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

Source: Colorado State Demographer's Office, 2019

## COMMUNITY AND HOUSING:

### STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

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

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ENVIRONMENT

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

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

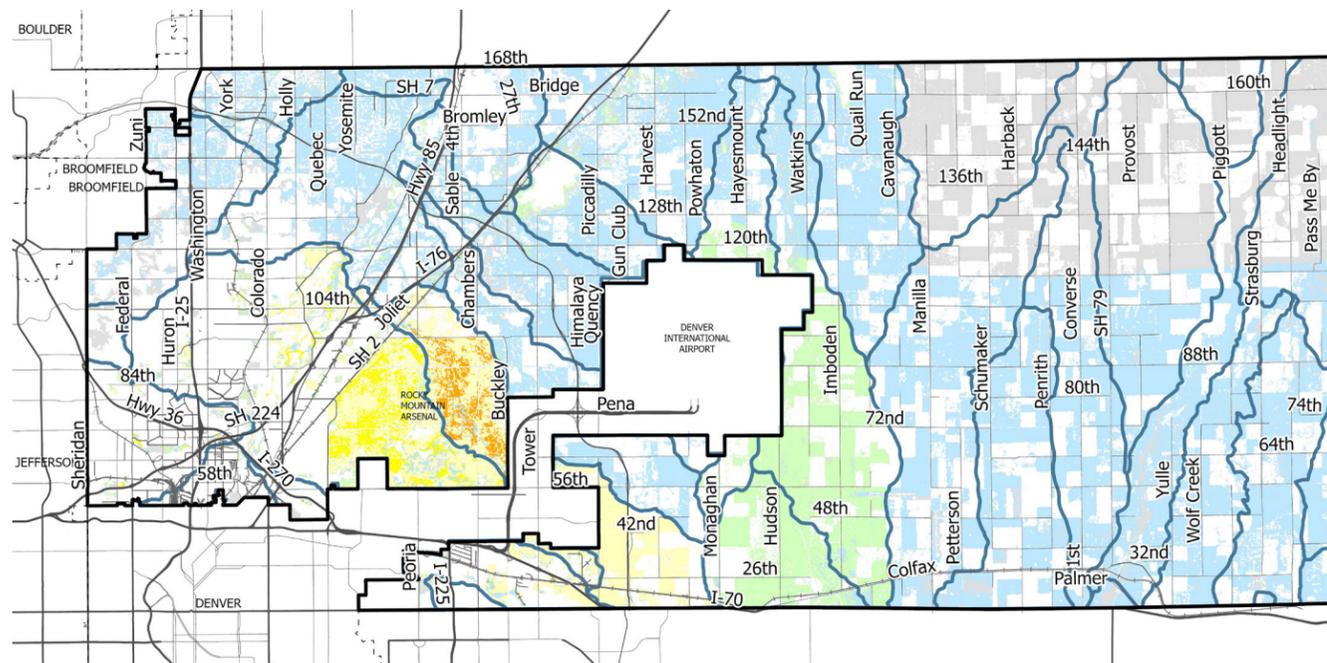
nutrient-rich, and store most of their carbon below ground in the soil and root structures of the prairie grasses.

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

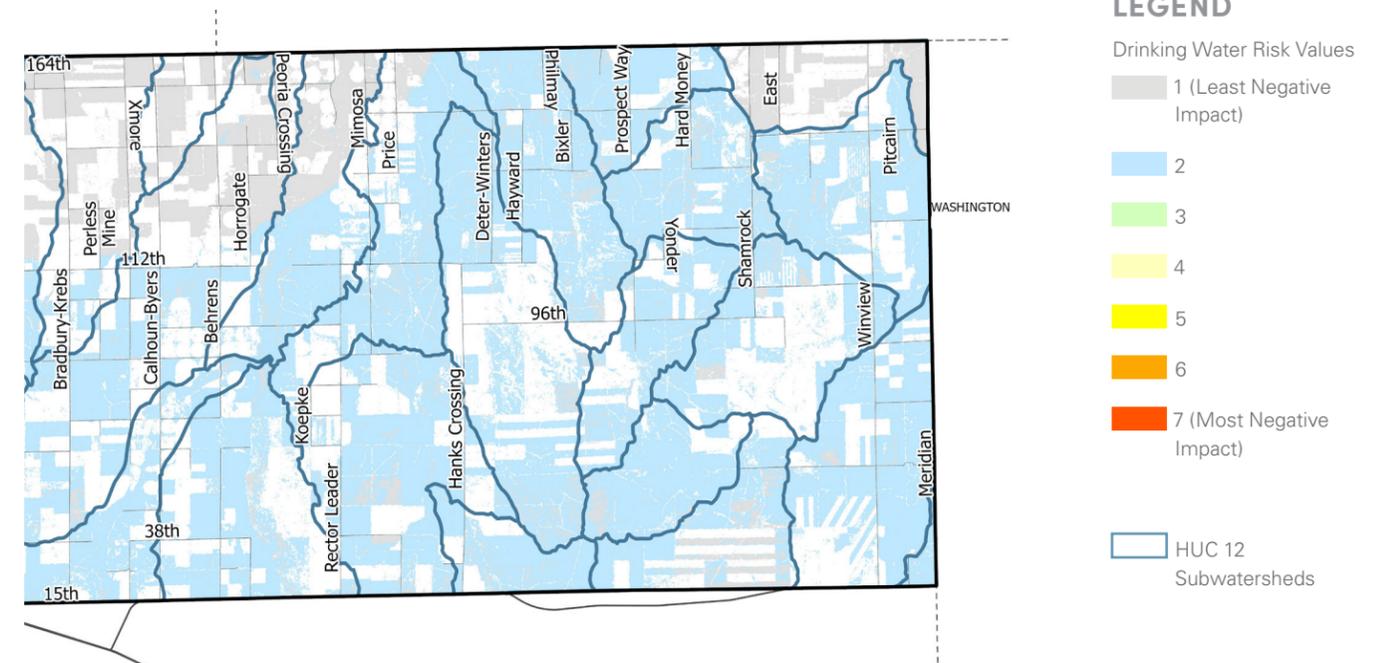
While there has certainly been increased fragmentation of habitat due to development, there is still a strong potential to link habitat into defined corridors that would allow freedom of migration and support native populations of flora and fauna. The relative abundance of un- and underdeveloped prairie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

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

## MAP 10: SUBWATERSHEDS AND DRINKING WATER RISK



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



**LEGEND**

Drinking Water Risk Values

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

HUC 12 Subwatersheds

NOT TO SCALE

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

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

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

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

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

In terms of resource storage and underground reserves, there are limited water resources and moderate mineral and fossil fuel resources. The County lies in the South Platte River basin, and while some water is stored in local reservoirs, much of the County's water comes from reservoirs in other river basins including the Colorado River Basin on the West Slope. Local aquifers include the Fox Hills aquifer, the Arapahoe aquifer, and the Laramie Foundation, though

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

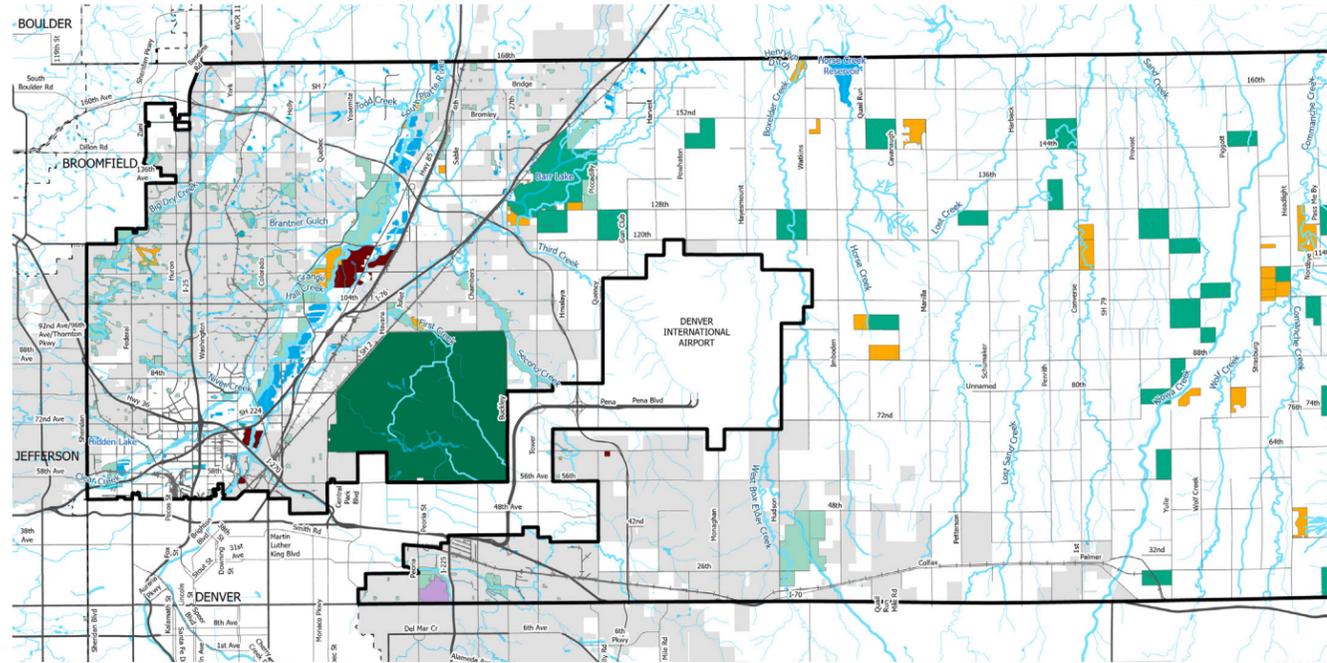
In terms of below ground mineral resources, the County does have shale deposits containing fossil fuels, a number of which have been drilled. However, the lack of infrastructure, particularly pipes to take excess produced natural gas, has limited extraction to date. State regulations limiting the ability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

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

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



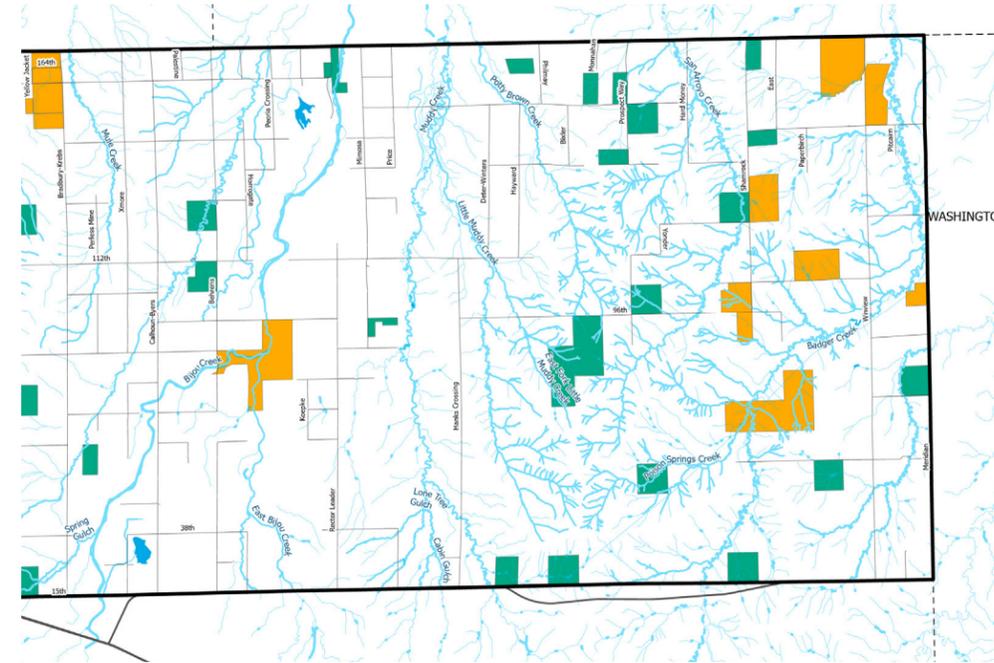
**Figure 26:** Solar Farm in Unincorporated Adams County



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, COMaP / CHNP

### PROTECTED LANDS

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



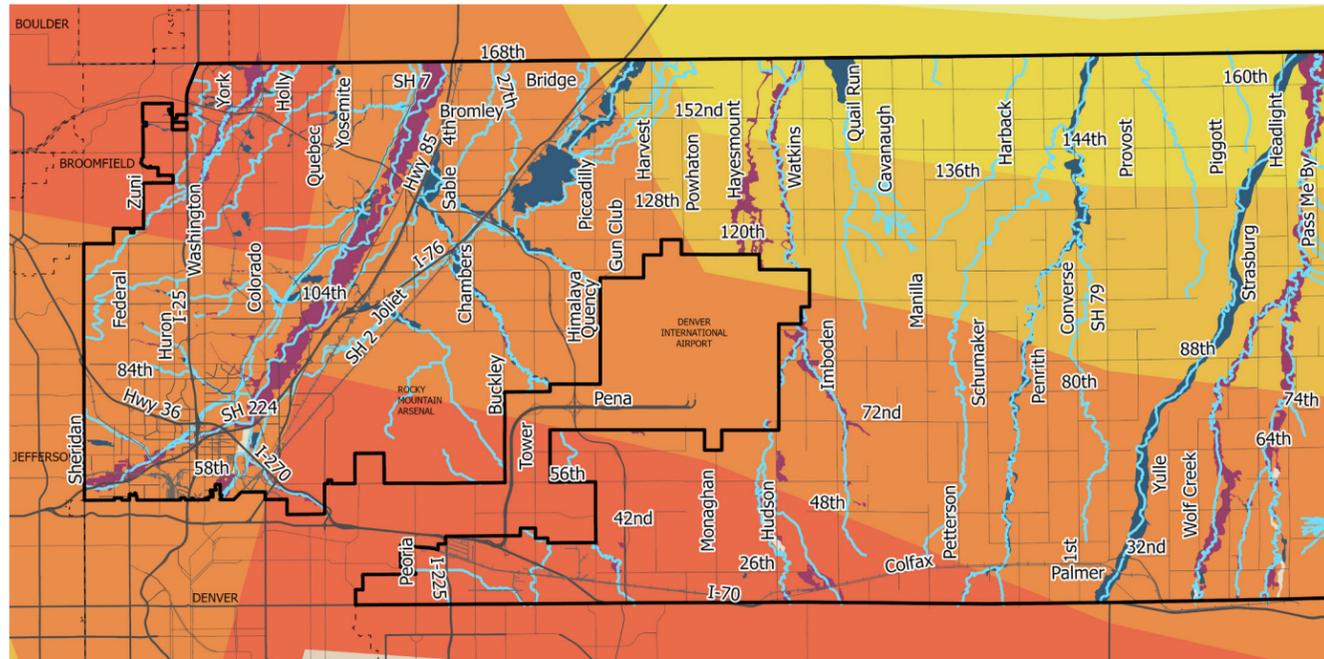
**LEGEND**

COMaP Owner

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

NOT TO SCALE





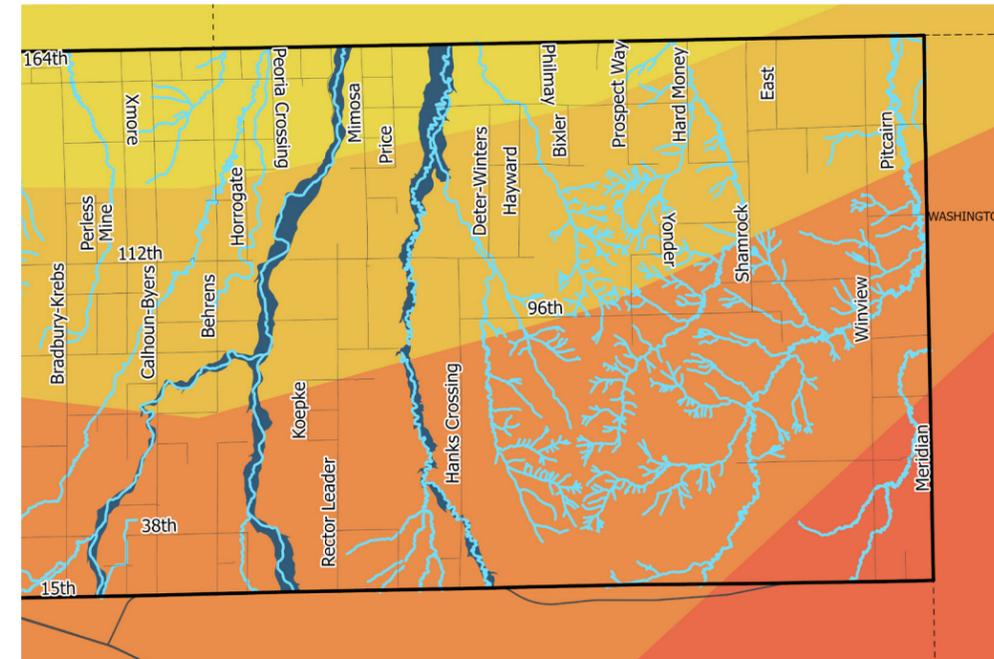
Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Spirit Environmental

**CLIMATE**

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

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

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



**LEGEND**

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

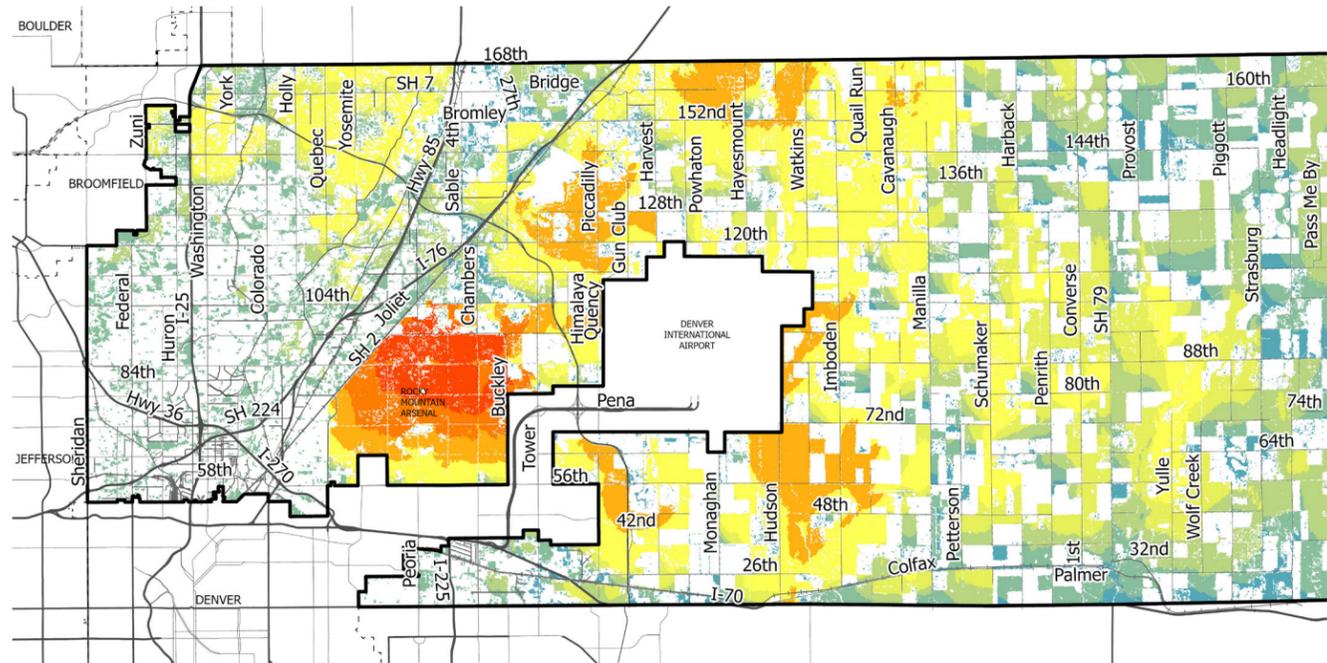
NOT TO SCALE

One of the largest mitigation strategies, carbon neutrality, is outside the direct control of the County, but has significant impacts on residents and business owners. The power supplied to Adams County is getting less carbon-intensive at a relatively rapid pace. Xcel Energy, which served approximately 160,000 premises in 2019 for both electric and gas, has committed to reaching 80 percent carbon-free electricity by 2030, and 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2050, and is on target to reach those goals. United Power, the County's other electricity provider, currently buys their power from Tri-State Generation and Transmission<sup>1</sup>, which provides more carbon-intensive electricity, but they are moving toward

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

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

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



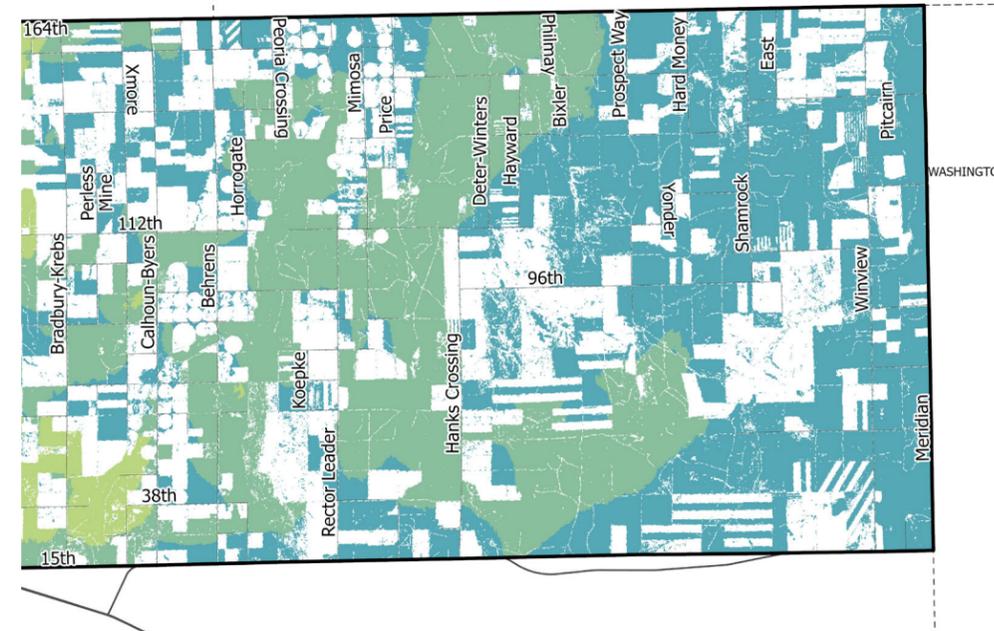
Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Spirit Environmental, CSFS, USDA

### EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS AND FIRES

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

increase with higher temperatures and less summertime precipitation.

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



### LEGEND

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

NOT TO SCALE

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

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

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

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

**Table 15: Natural Environment SWOT Analysis**

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

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 28: Adams County Fire Rescue Community Event



Figure 27: Barr Lake



Figure 29: South Platte River Trail

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIONS

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

### BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIONS

#### CORRIDORS AND TRANSPORTATION

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

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

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

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

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

#### ZONING

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

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

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

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

### OPEN SPACE

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

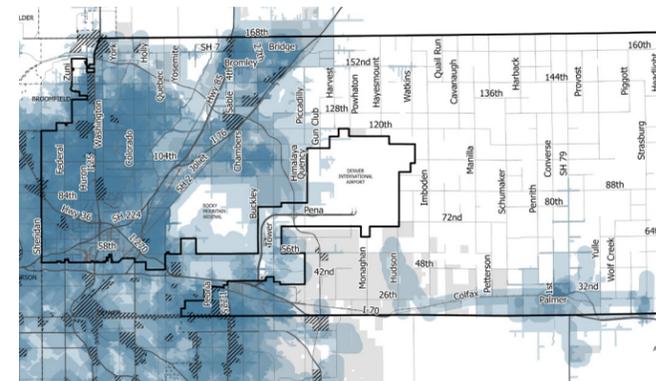
### SERVICE AREA MAPS

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

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

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

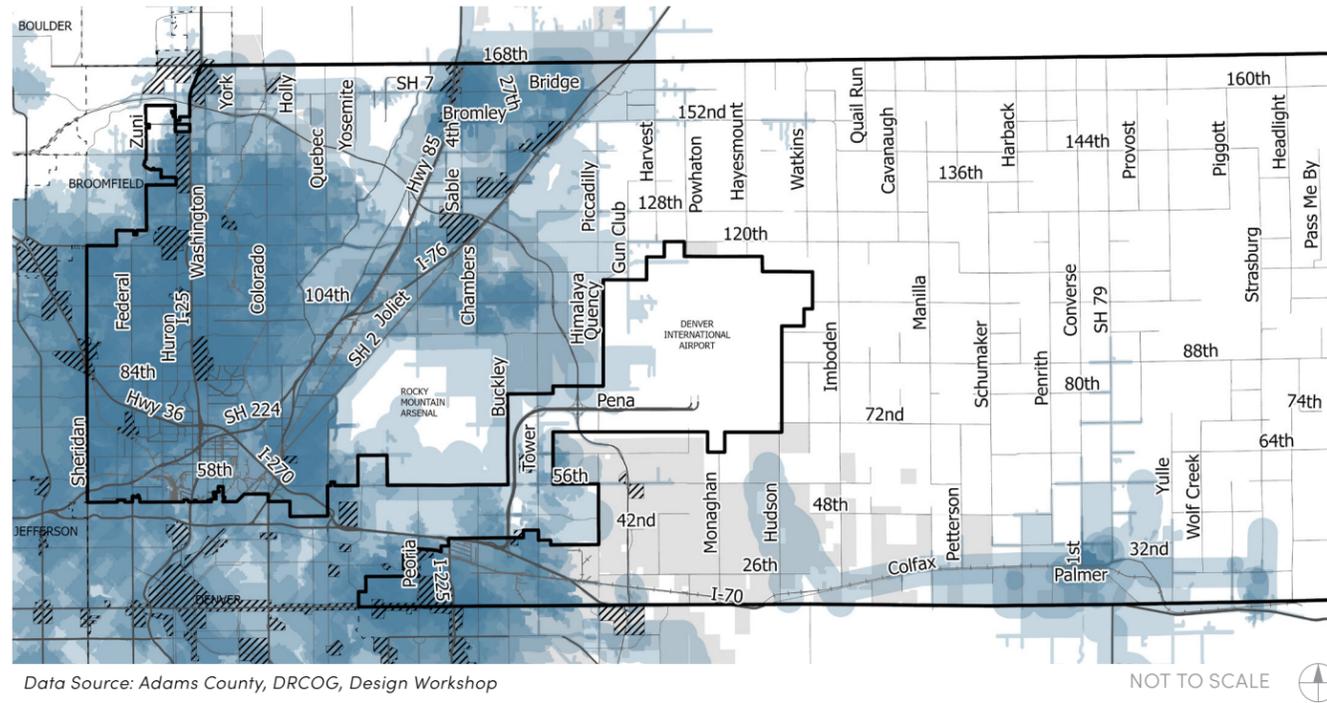
As the County grows and adds residential development, it is important to look at the proximity of services that residents need - childcare, food, libraries, etc. - with a goal of planning for these services to be provided within a 20 minute walk.



20-Minute Community Composite Map

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

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



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

**LEGEND**

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

**Composite 20-Minute Community Analysis Map**

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

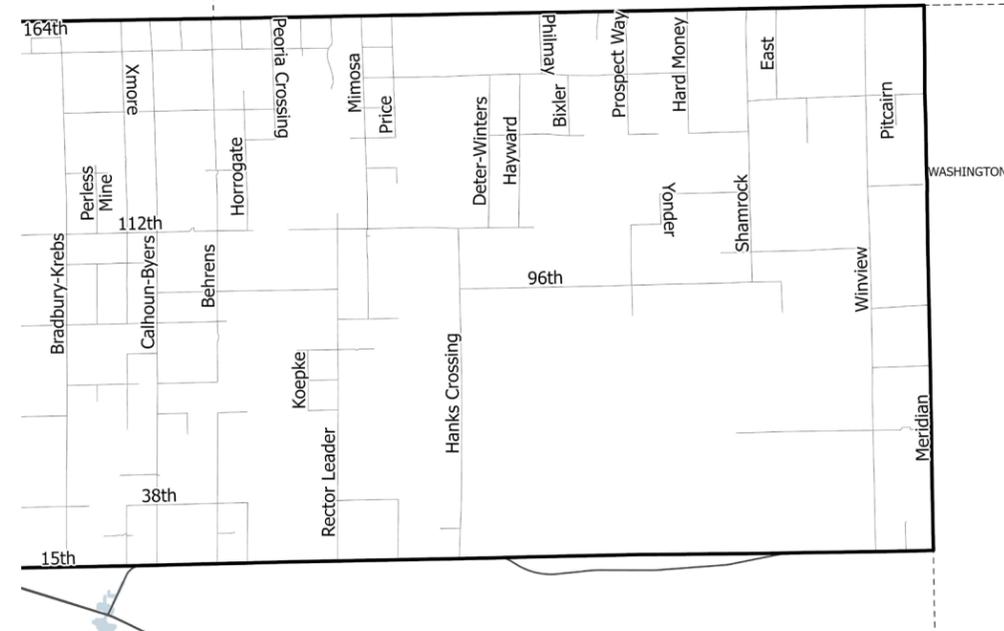
MAP 15 shows a composite of all the service areas in Adams County. The data includes all areas of Adams County including municipal areas, to provide a complete picture of service and access levels throughout the County. However, it is important to note that this document and the

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

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

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

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



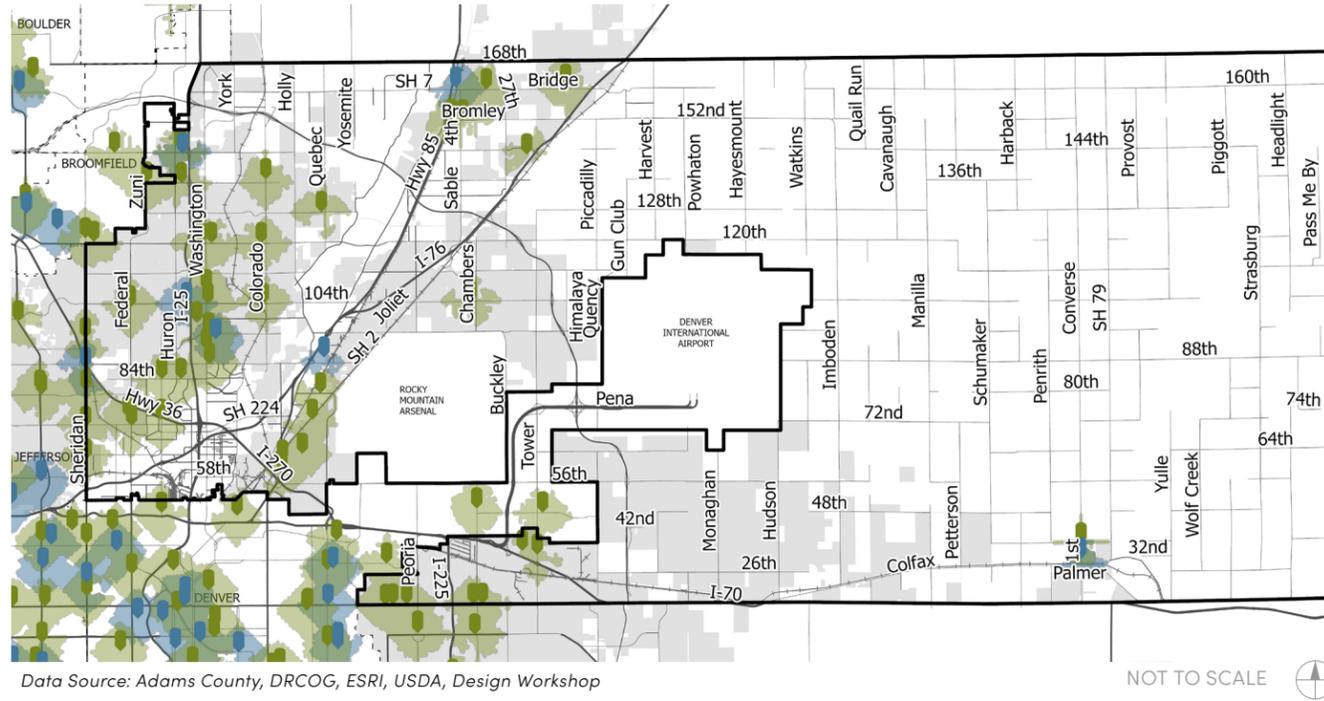
- Trails
- Early education and child care centers
- Kindergarten through grade 12 schools
- Public libraries

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

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

The individual maps can be viewed on the next pages.

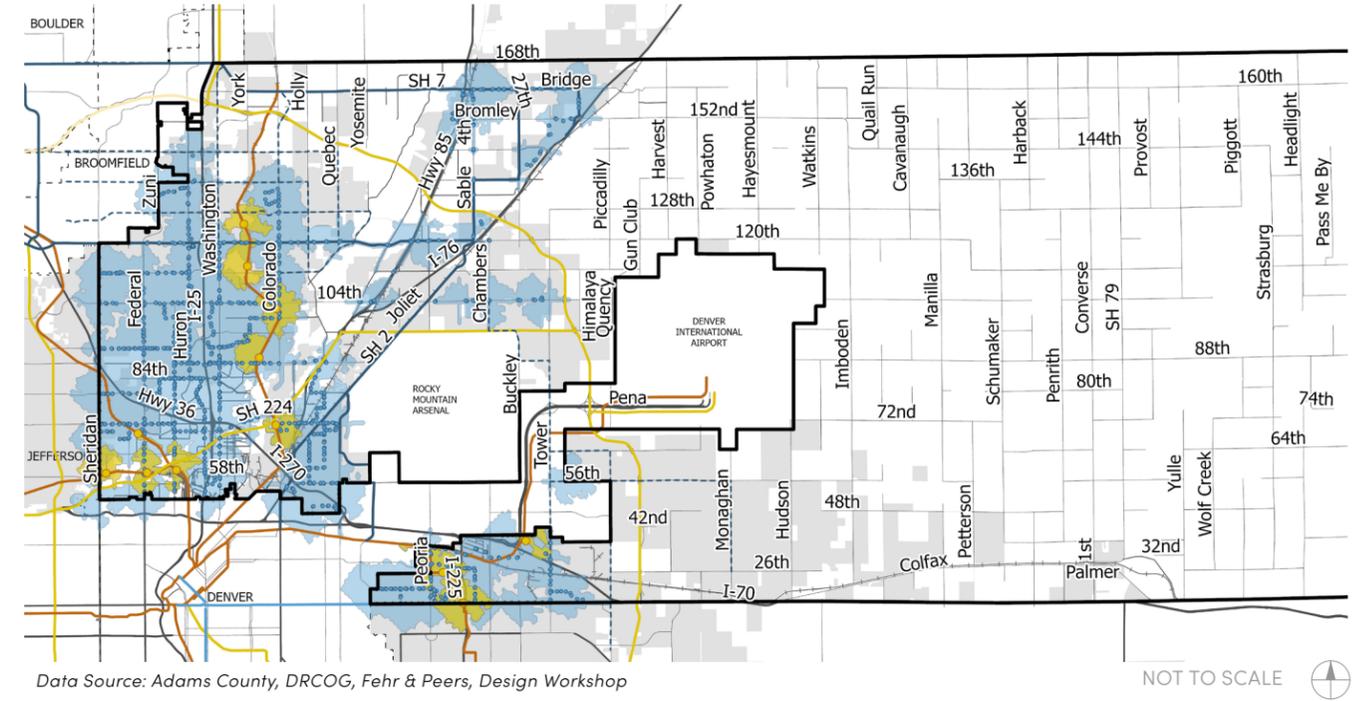
**MAP 16: FULL SERVICE GROCERY AND FARMERS MARKETS (20-MINUTE WALK)**



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

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

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



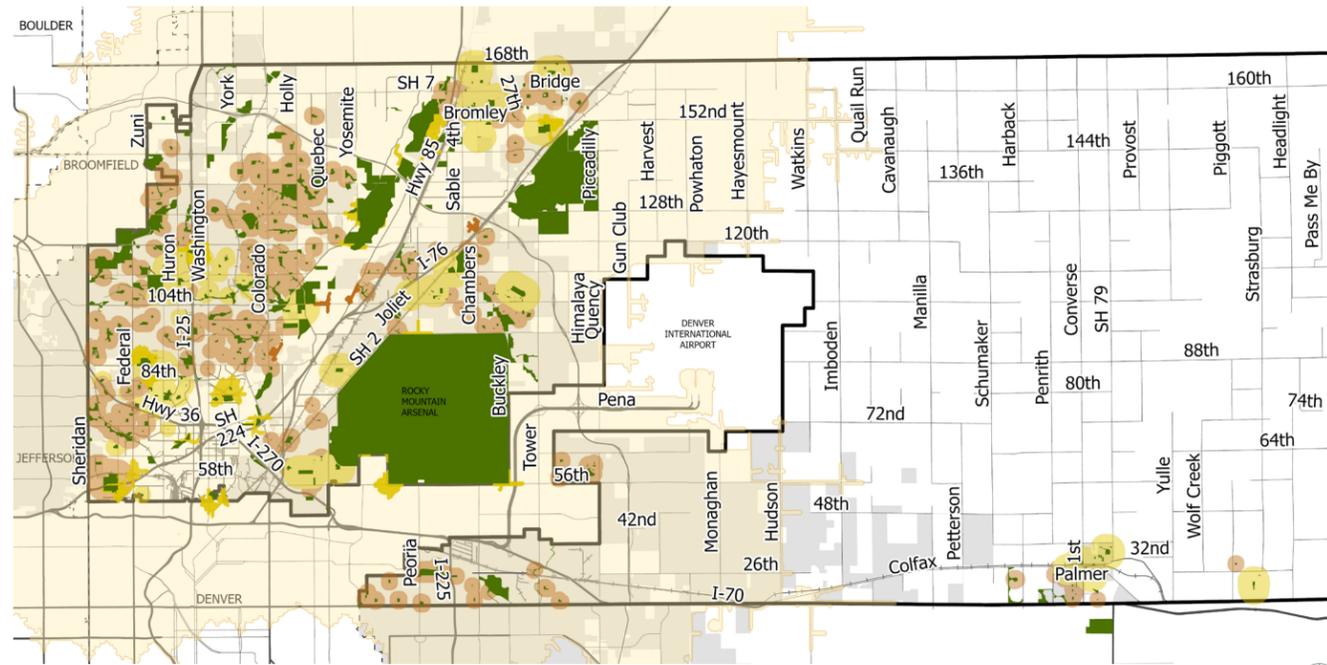
- LEGEND**
- Transit
- Tier 1 BRT/Busway
  - Tier 1 Base Rail
  - Tier 2 Potential BRT/Busway
  - Tier 2 Potential Rail
  - Tier 3 Conceptual
  - RTD Bus Route Planned
  - Bus Stops
  - Rail Stops
  - 1 Mile
  - 1 Mile
  - Adams County Boundary
  - Railroads
  - Roads
  - Municipal Areas

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

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

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

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



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

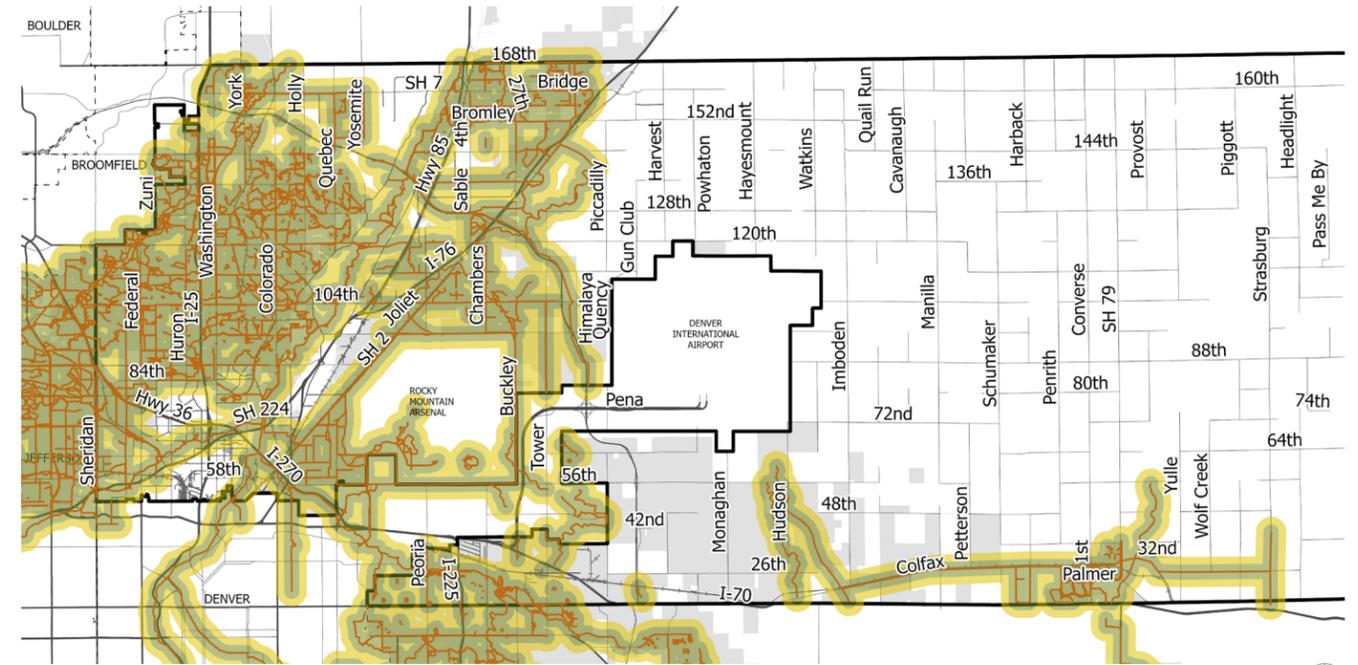
### LEGEND

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

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

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

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



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

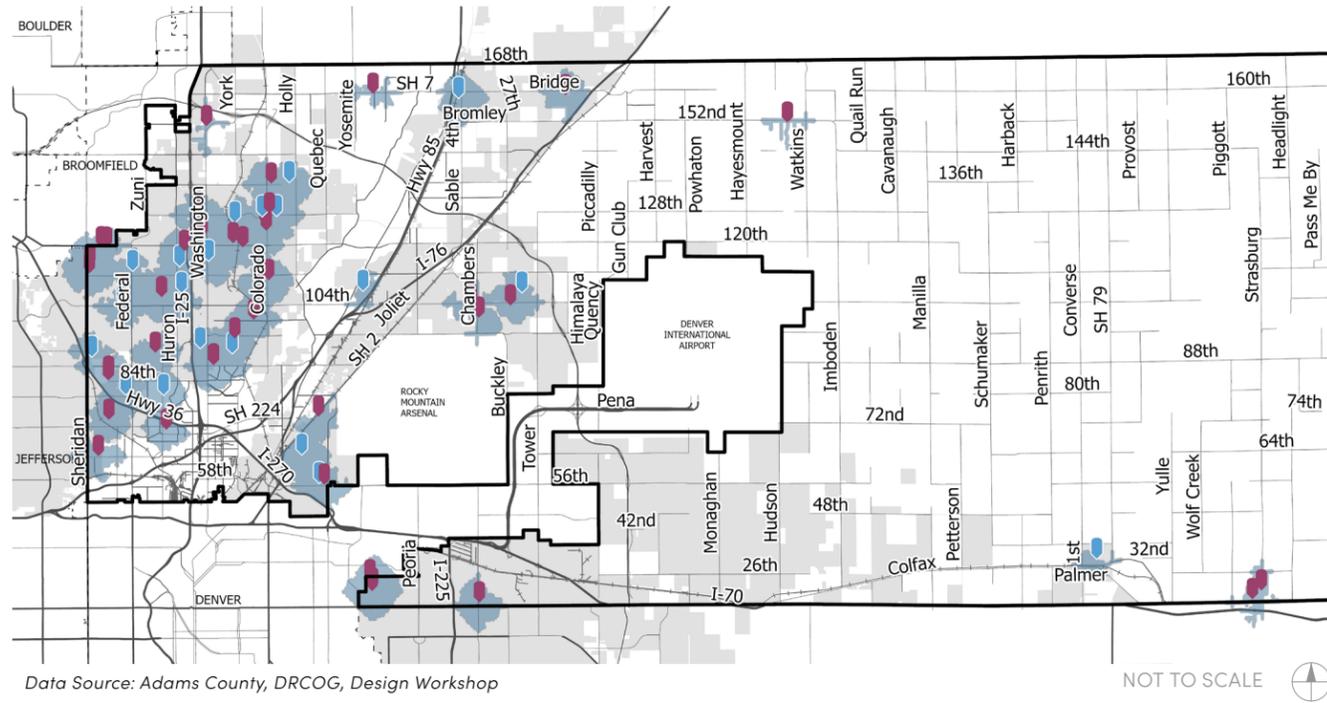
### LEGEND

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

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

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

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



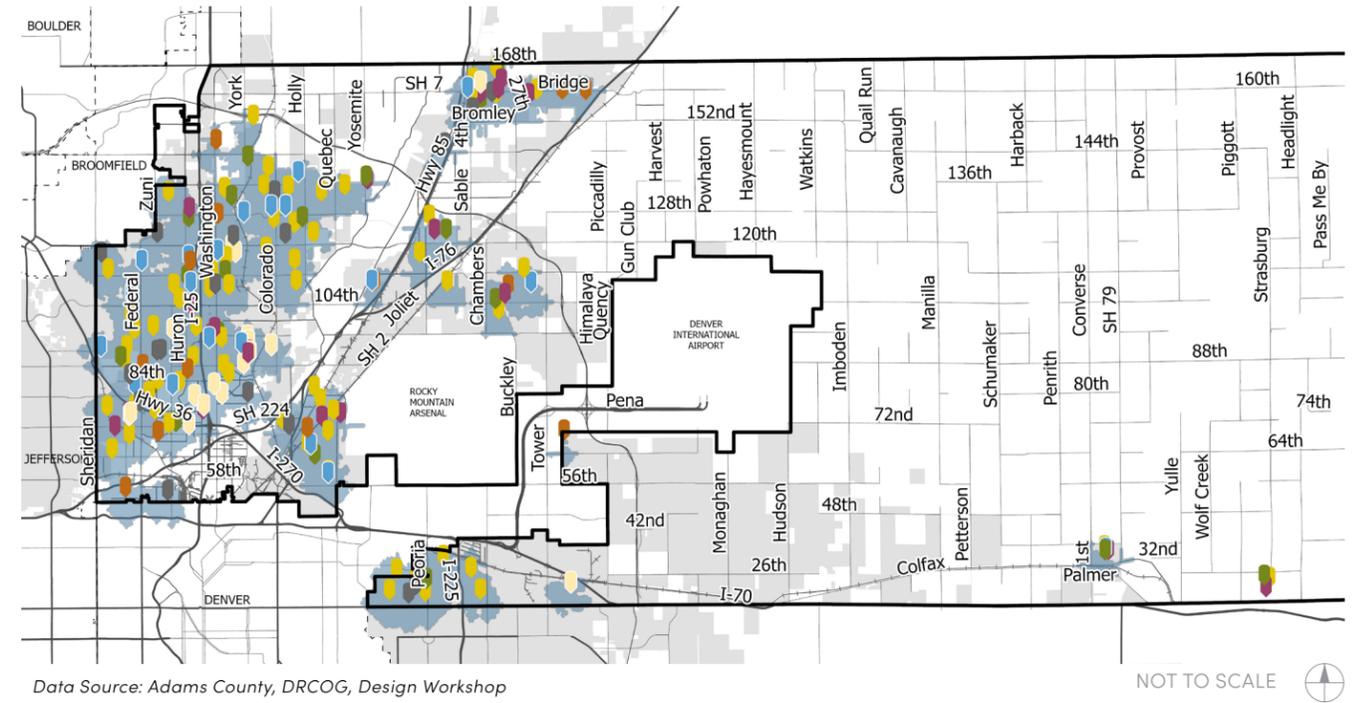
- LEGEND**
- Early Education
  - Child Care Center
  - 1 Mile
  - Adams County Boundary
  - Railroads
  - Roads
  - Municipal Areas

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

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

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

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

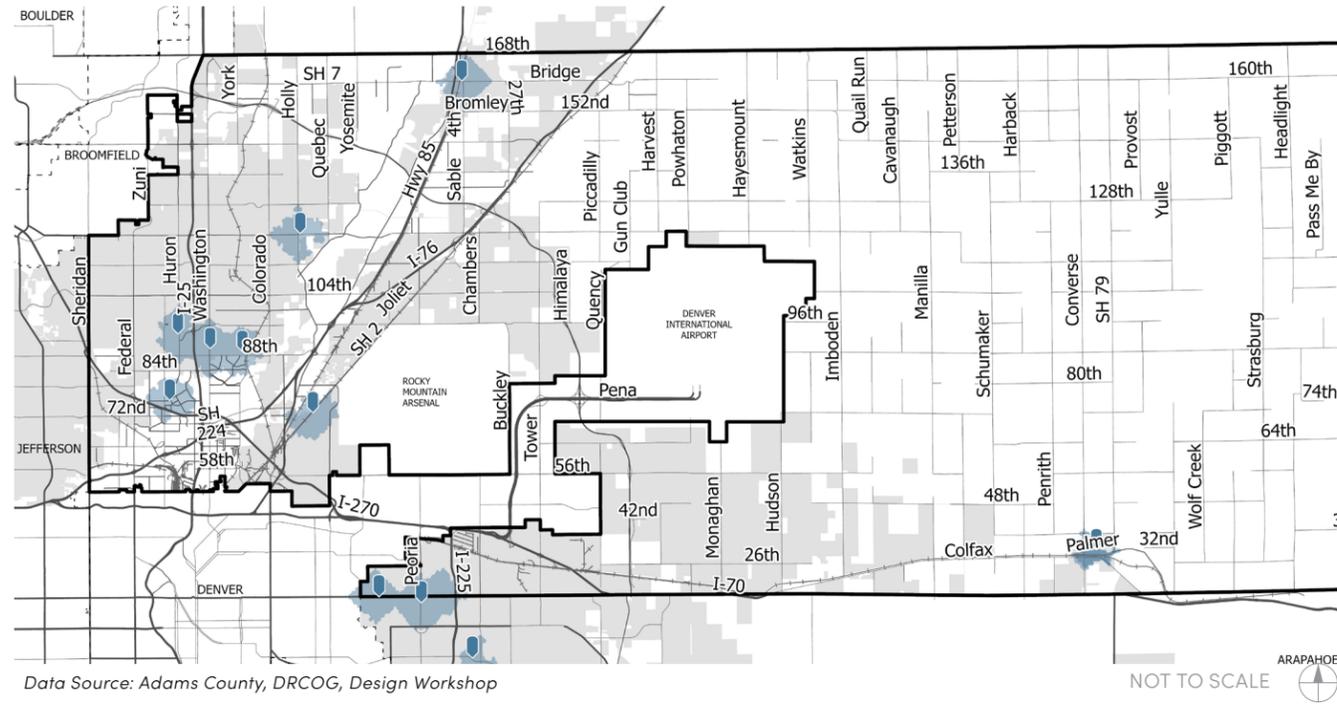


Kindergarten through Grade 12 schools are generally well served in the western and populated portions of the County. Some gaps to note include:

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

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

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



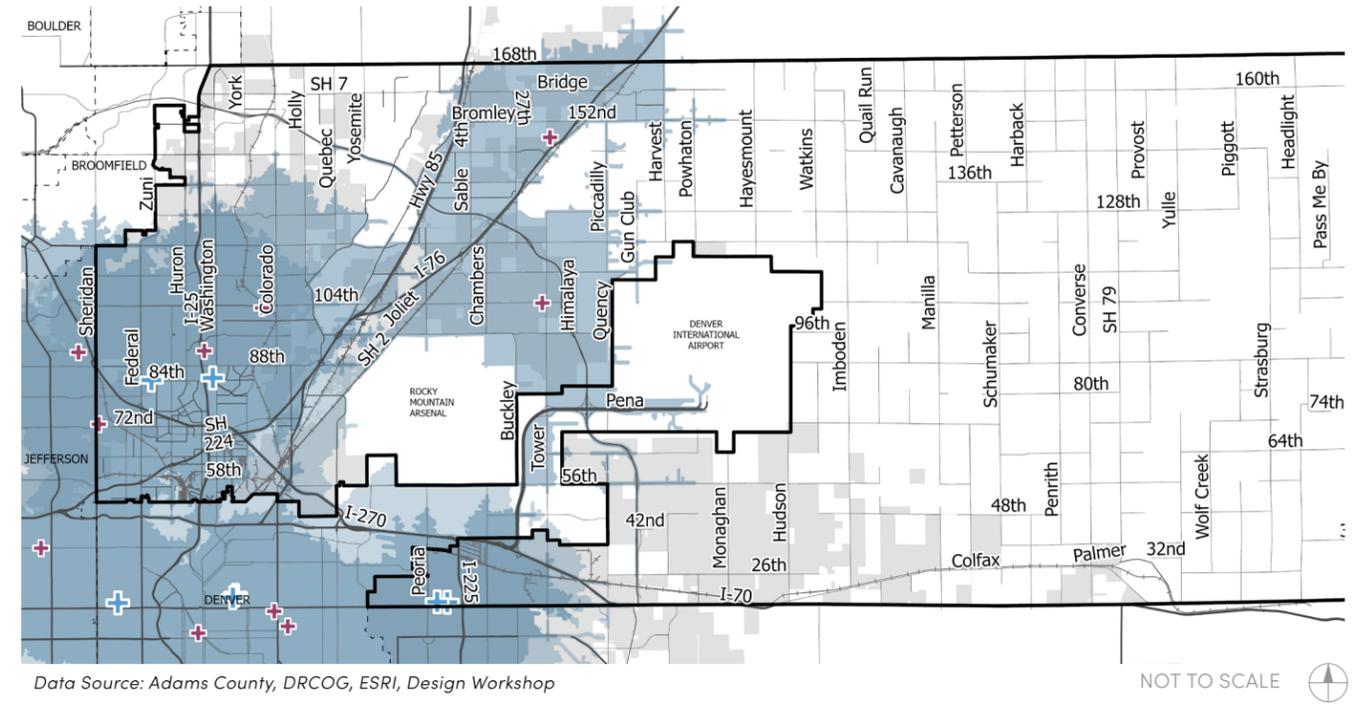
Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

**LEGEND**

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

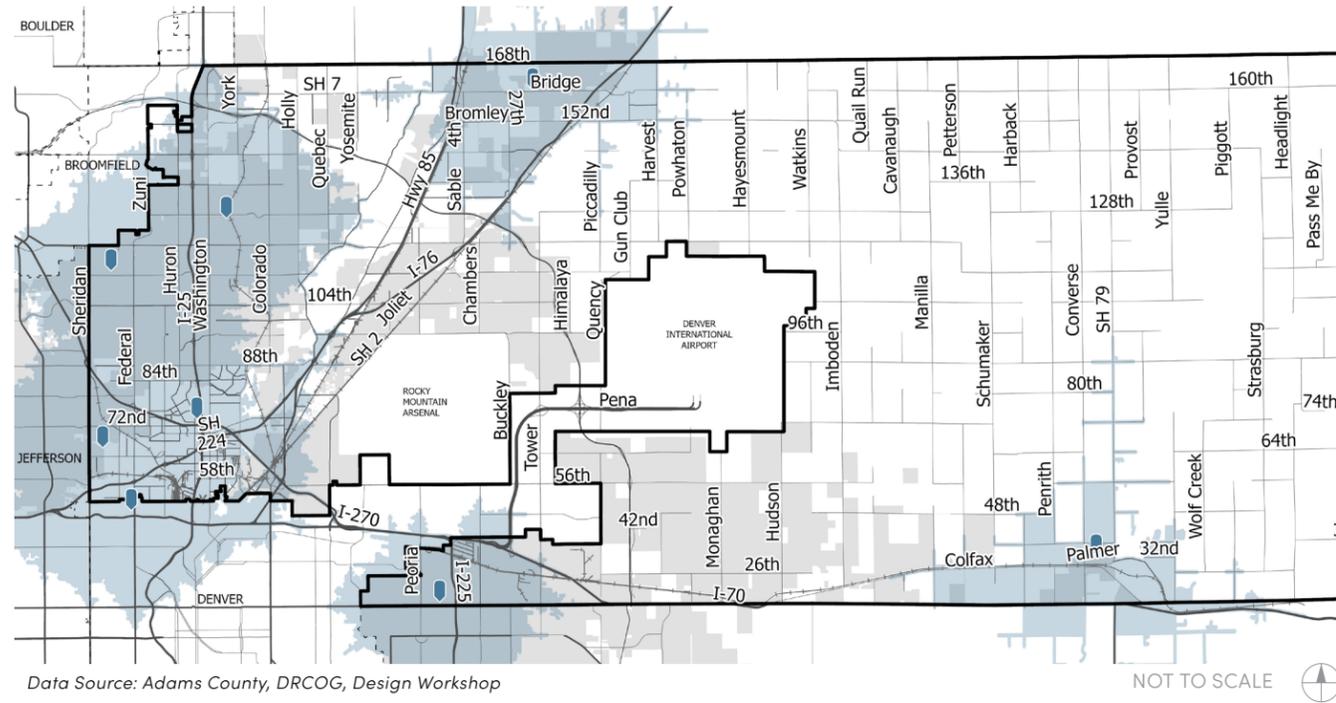
Hospitals and urgent care facilities provide a regional service, and are not expected to be within a 10 minute drive from all residents without an increase in population density. However, because not all Adams

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

**LEGEND**

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

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



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

**LEGEND**

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

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

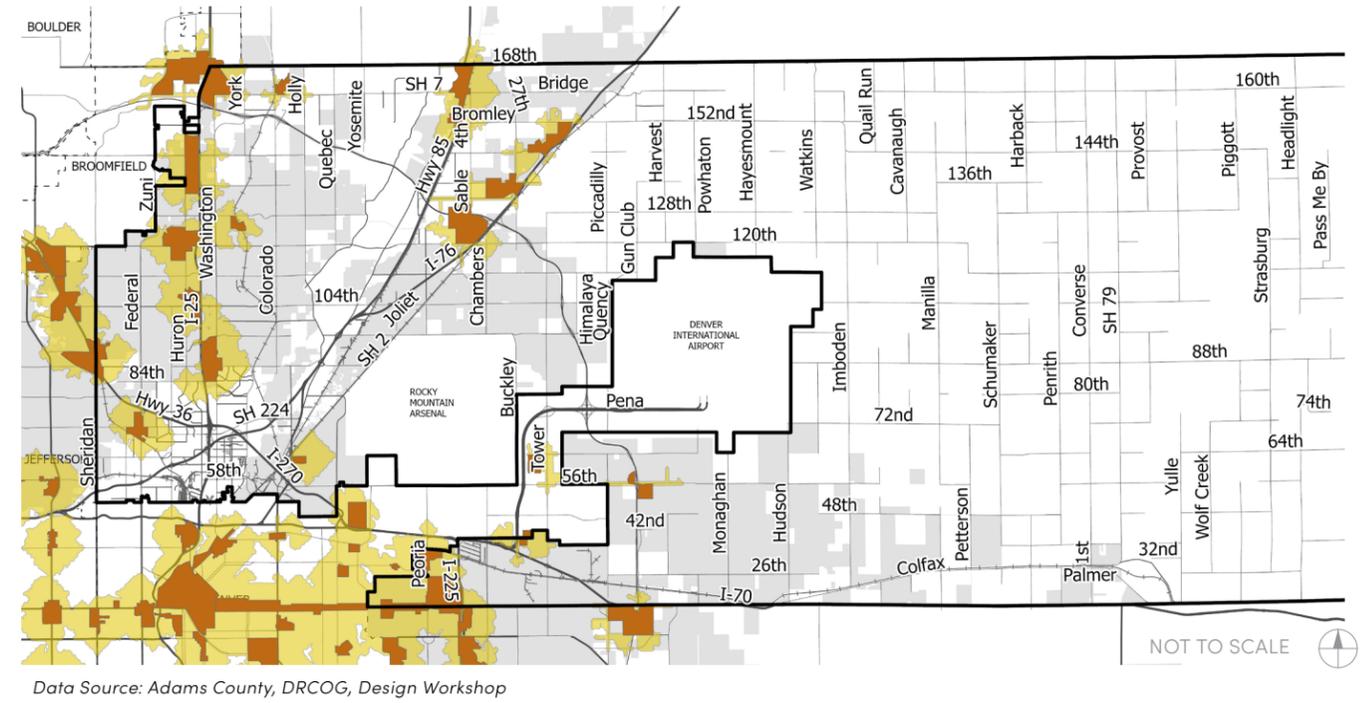
- DeVry University-Colorado
- Front Range Community College
- Pima Medical Institute-Denver
- The University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

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

Higher Education institutions are generally considered to be regional

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

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



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

**LEGEND**

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

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

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

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

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

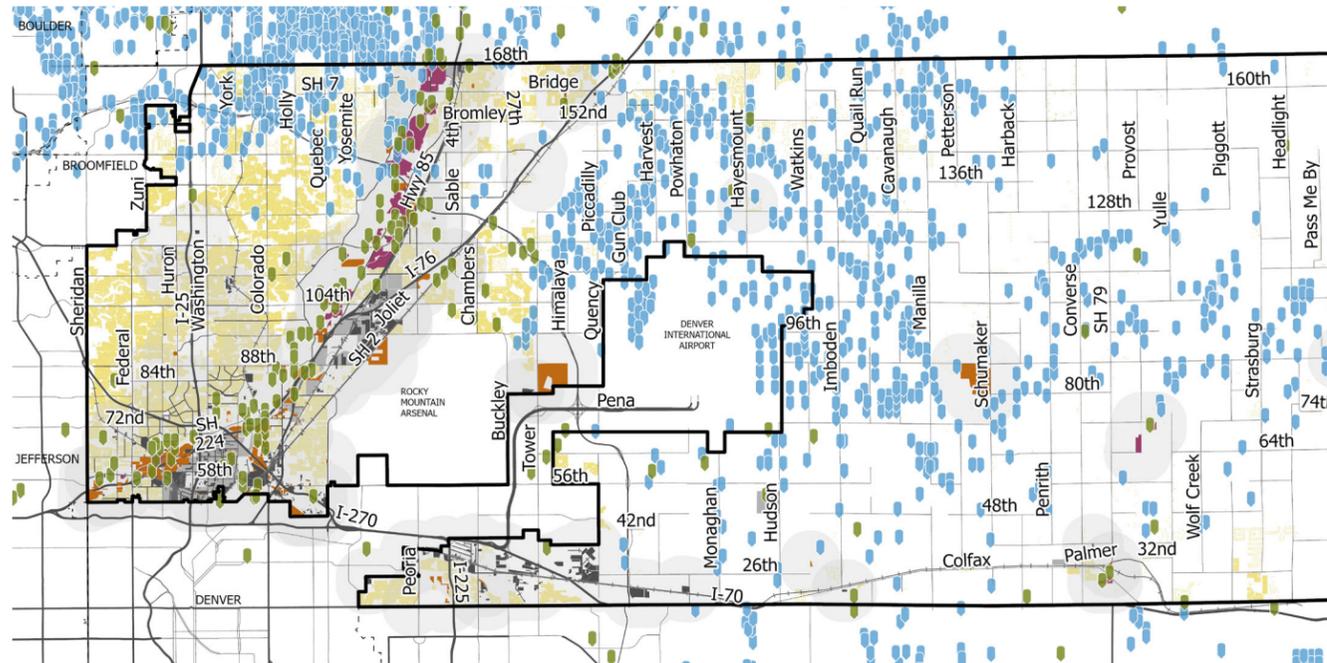
housing. In 2040, the goal is to increase the metric to 25 percent.

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

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



## MAP 27: INCOMPATIBLE LAND USE ADJACENCIES



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

### LEGEND

#### Hazard Sites

- Permitted Mine
- Active Oil and Gas Well
- Landfills
- Adams County Boundary
- Railroads
- Roads

#### Current Land Use

- Industrial
- Producing Mine

#### Future Land Use

- Industrial

#### Buffer

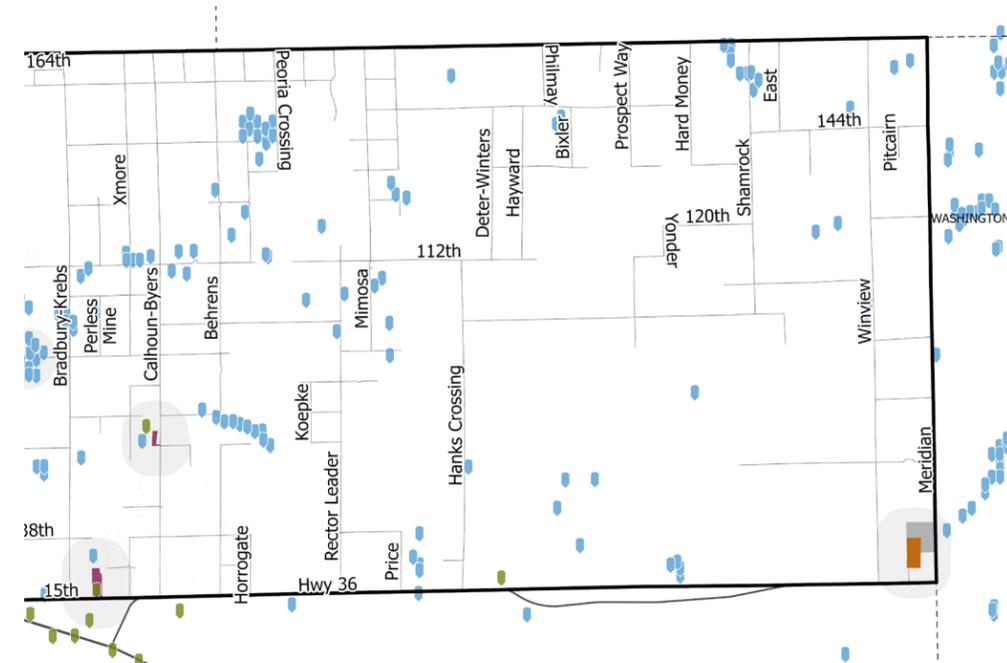
- 1 Mile

- Residential Addresses

### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Some areas of Adams County have adjacency issues with industrial and residential land uses. As noted in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, Adams County has the highest number of hazardous fixed facilities of any Colorado County. These consist of 707 sites required to fill out annual Tier II reports on emergency and hazardous chemical inventory, and 14 sites containing extremely hazardous materials to submit Risk Management Plans (RMPs). These are most prominent along the South Platte especially along the South Platte River corridor and the railroad network.

By overlaying the proximity to these RMP sites along with other identified environmental criteria combined with demographic data, the US EPA has



NOT TO SCALE

generated an Environmental Justice screening tool to help identify areas particularly impacted by combined factors. The western portion of Adams County in particular scores particularly poorly in indices related to proximity to superfund and RMP sites, especially when combined with higher numbers of residents that are people of color, with less than high school education and with some degree of being linguistically isolated. These factors indicate a need to continue to identify and include these impacted residents in restorative efforts to address some of the impacts they have borne.

Adams County can proactively plan to reduce conflicts and address persistent environmental justice issues through an updated future land use map so that industrial areas are clustered together and

criteria is established for industrial uses in close proximity of residential land uses. Additionally, a focus on opportunities for clean industries to locate or expand in Adams County while emphasizing local and inclusive hiring practices is an important aspect of improving environmental justice on a County-wide scale.

Additionally, there are opportunities for improving environmental justice while creating economic development opportunities. By remediating hazardous sites and providing clean energy jobs, these sites can become an asset to the community.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIONS:

### STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

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

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

supported and amplified where possible.

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

**Table 16: Built Environment SWOT Analysis**

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

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

### ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN VALUE LENSES



EQUITY



SUSTAINABILITY



LIVABILITY

#### SWOT ANALYSIS BY TOPIC

##### Threat

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

✓

✓

✓

✓

#### REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEMS

##### Strength

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

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

##### Weakness

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

✓

✓

##### Opportunity

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

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

##### Threat

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

✓

✓

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

##### Strength

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

✓

✓

##### Weakness

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

✓

✓

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

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

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



Figure 31: Aerial of Colorado Air and Space Port

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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

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

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

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

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

### Adams County major employers

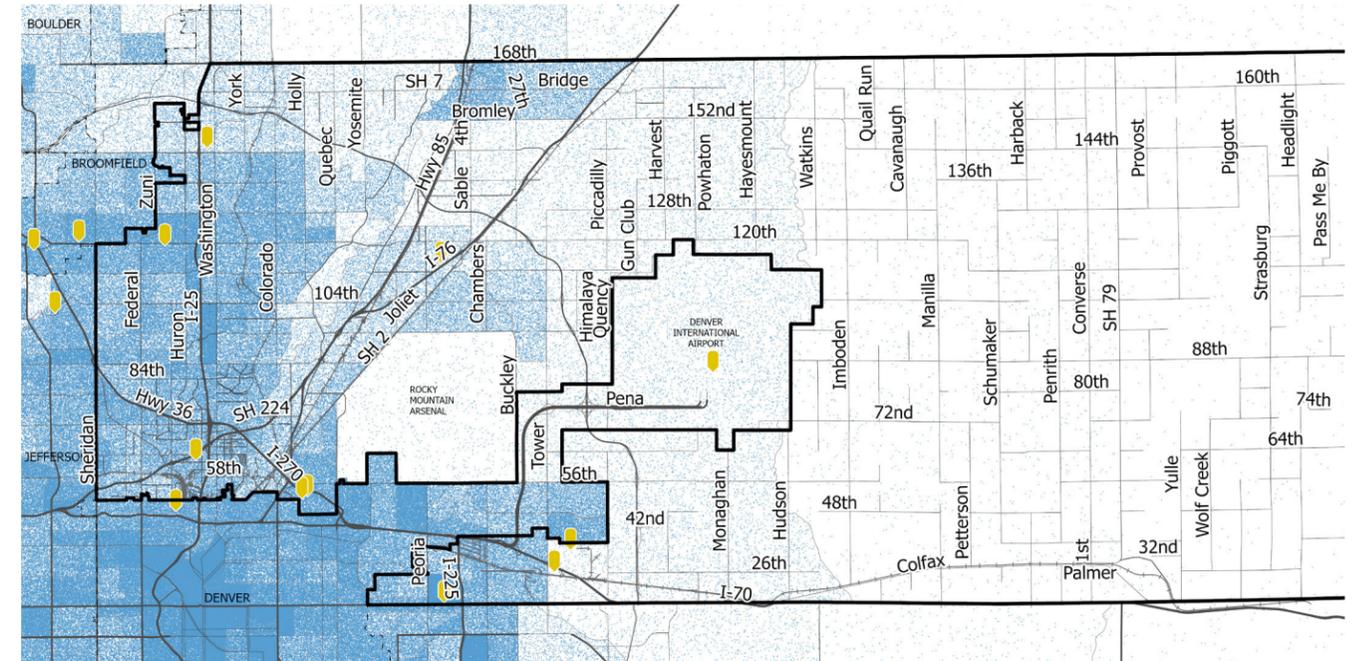
According to data from the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, the largest employers in Adams County for 2020-2021 were:

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

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

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

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



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

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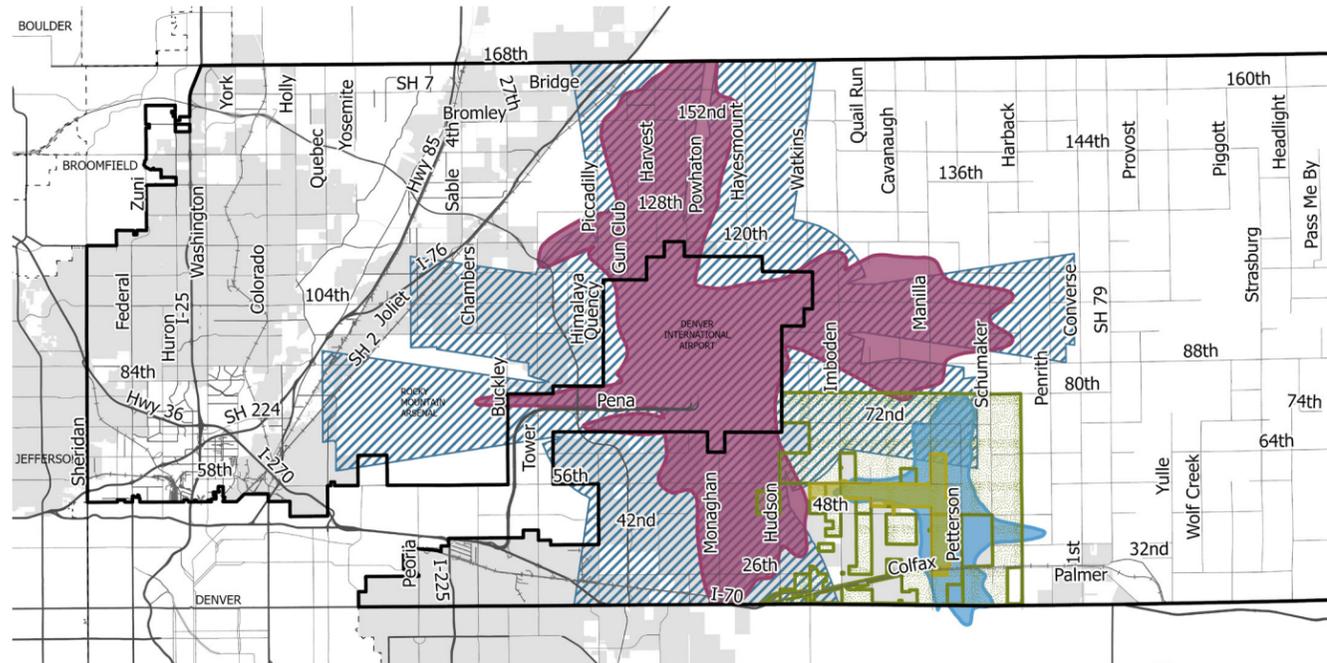
### LEGEND

Census Tracts Jobs

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

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

## MAP 29: AVIATION INFLUENCE AREAS



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

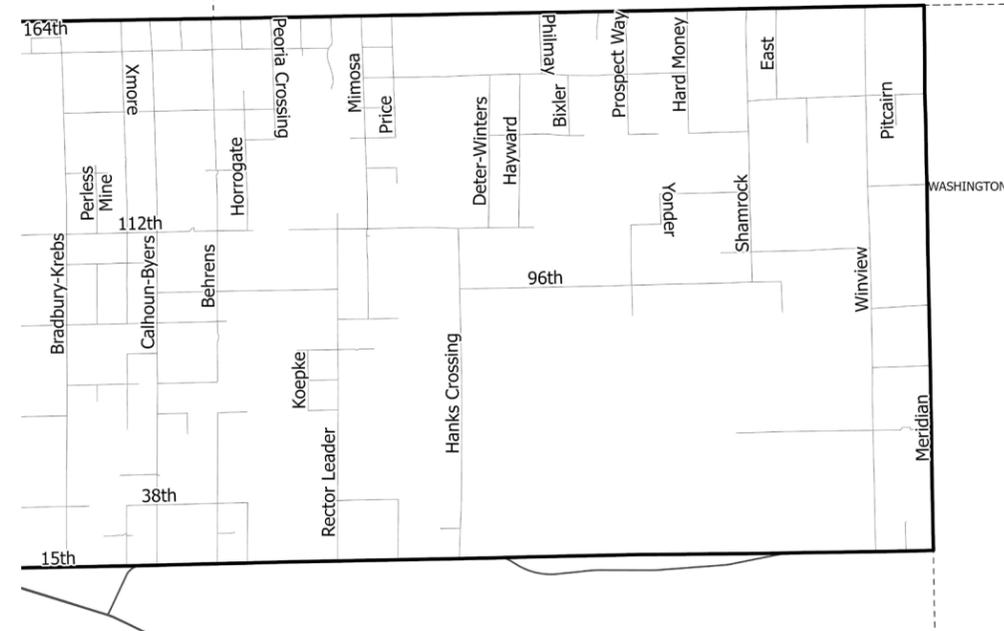
### LEGEND



### AVIATION

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

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



NOT TO SCALE 

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

## WORKFORCE AND LABOR PROFILE

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

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

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

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

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

The work distribution is mostly white collar, which accounts for 54.4 percent of total employment, followed by blue collar and services, which make up 27.4 and 18.2 percent respectively.

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

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

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

## COVID-19 IMPACT

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

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

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

## Economic Development Land Use Analysis

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

Additionally, there may be an opportunity to activate or transition

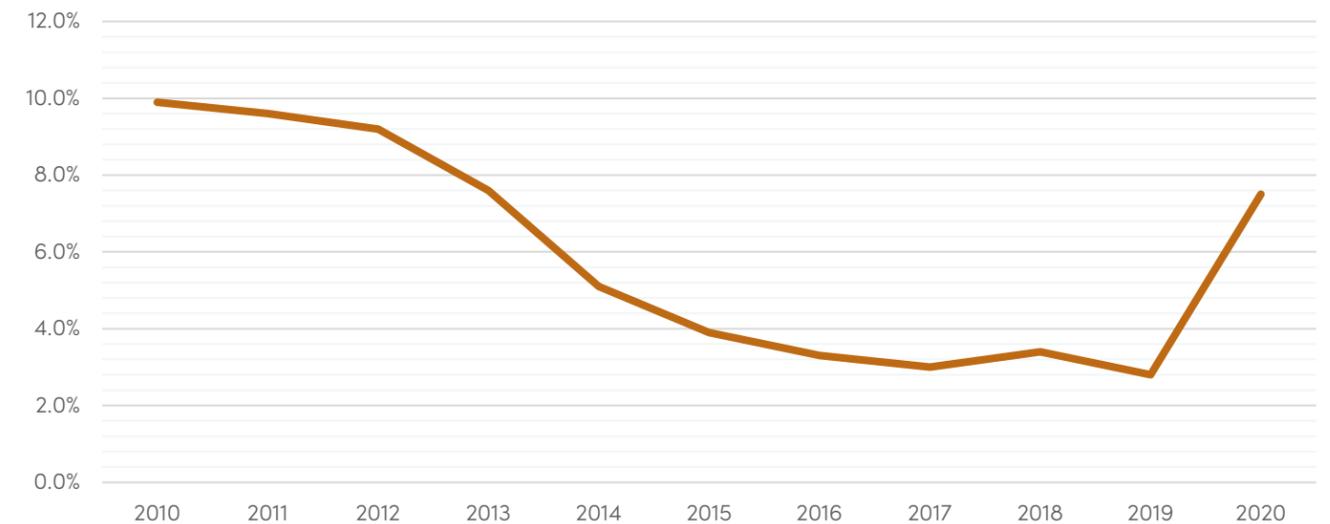
underutilized parcels through incentives or reductions in mitigation requirements in order to provide for appropriate uses such as solar job centers, commercial destination, energy production, clean tech, or warehousing on existing brownfields and hazard sites.

Table 17: Unemployment

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

Source: Esri, 2020

Figure 32: Unemployment in Adams County for the Past Decade



## DID YOU KNOW?

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

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

**54.4%** WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES

**27.4%** BLUE COLLAR EMPLOYEES

**18.2%** SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Data from ESRI Business Analyst 2020 Report

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

### STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

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

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

supported and amplified where possible.

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

**Table 18: Economic Development SWOT Analysis**

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

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

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



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

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE

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

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

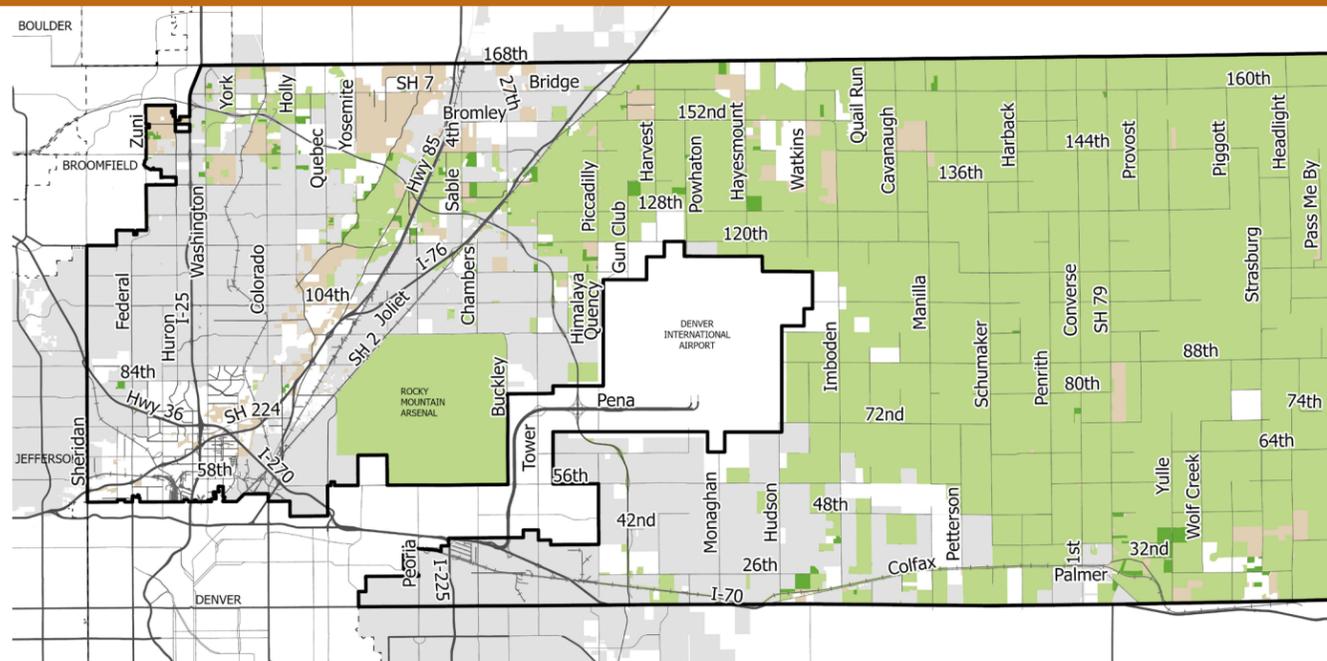
Agriculture, historic assets, scenic views and a vibrant future of artful expression and events will define the future of Adams County.

## AGRICULTURE

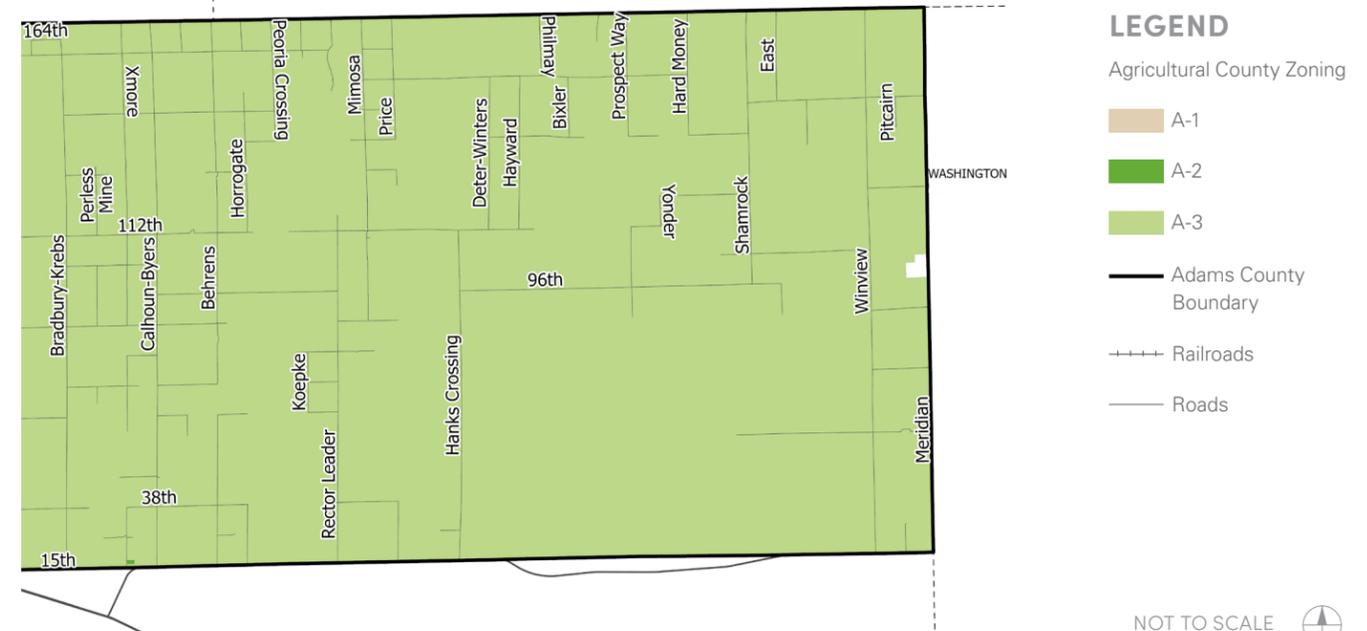
The existing agricultural land uses are a significant cultural heritage component of Adams County. A large percentage of the County, mostly located on the eastern portion of the County, is dedicated to agricultural uses and the popularity of the Adams County Fair at Riverdale Regional

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

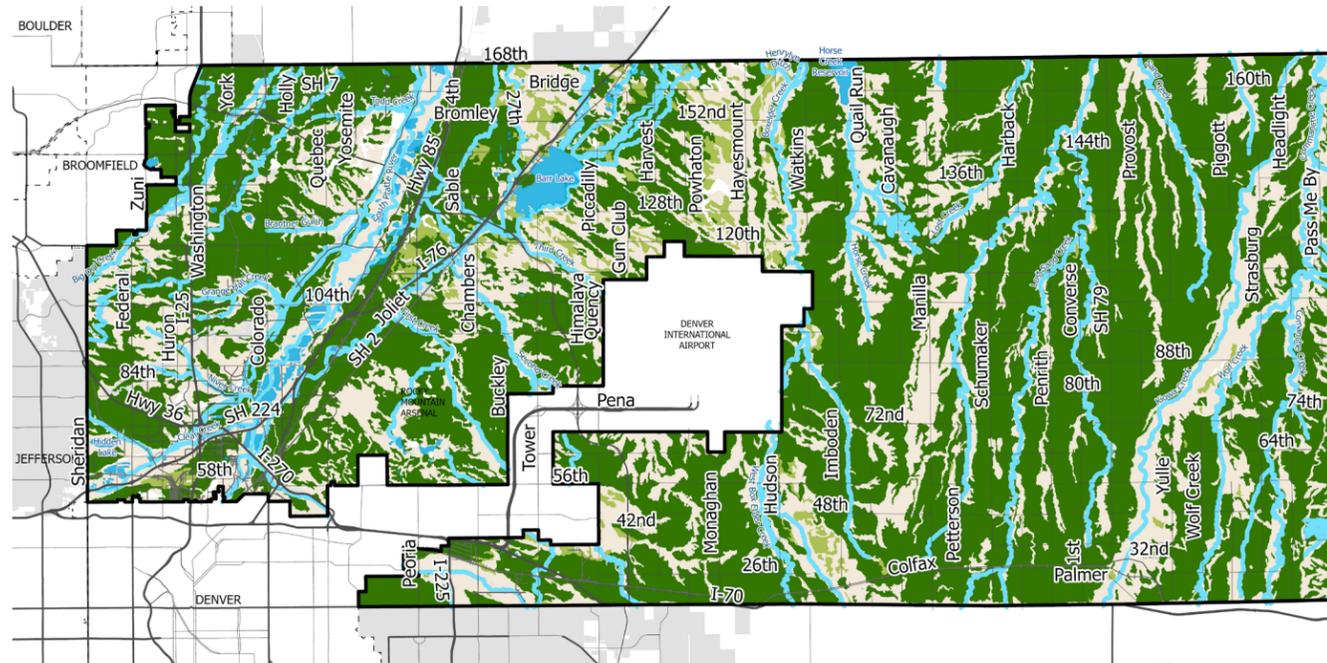
### MAP 30: AGRICULTURAL ZONING



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG



NOT TO SCALE



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, NRCS, USDA

### Economics of Agriculture in Adams County

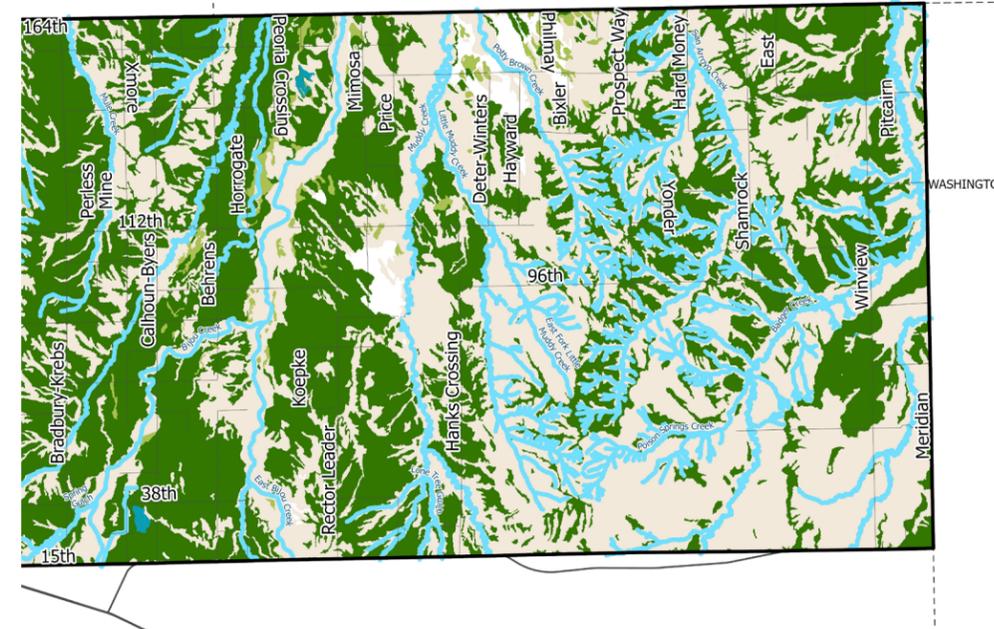
According to the USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture, 93 percent of the county land area (705,289 acres) is classified as “land in farms.” This is defined as the value of sales of agricultural products of more than \$1,000 annually. In Adams County this is a total of 905 farms. While the number of farms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

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

### Agriculture Soils and Prime Farmland

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

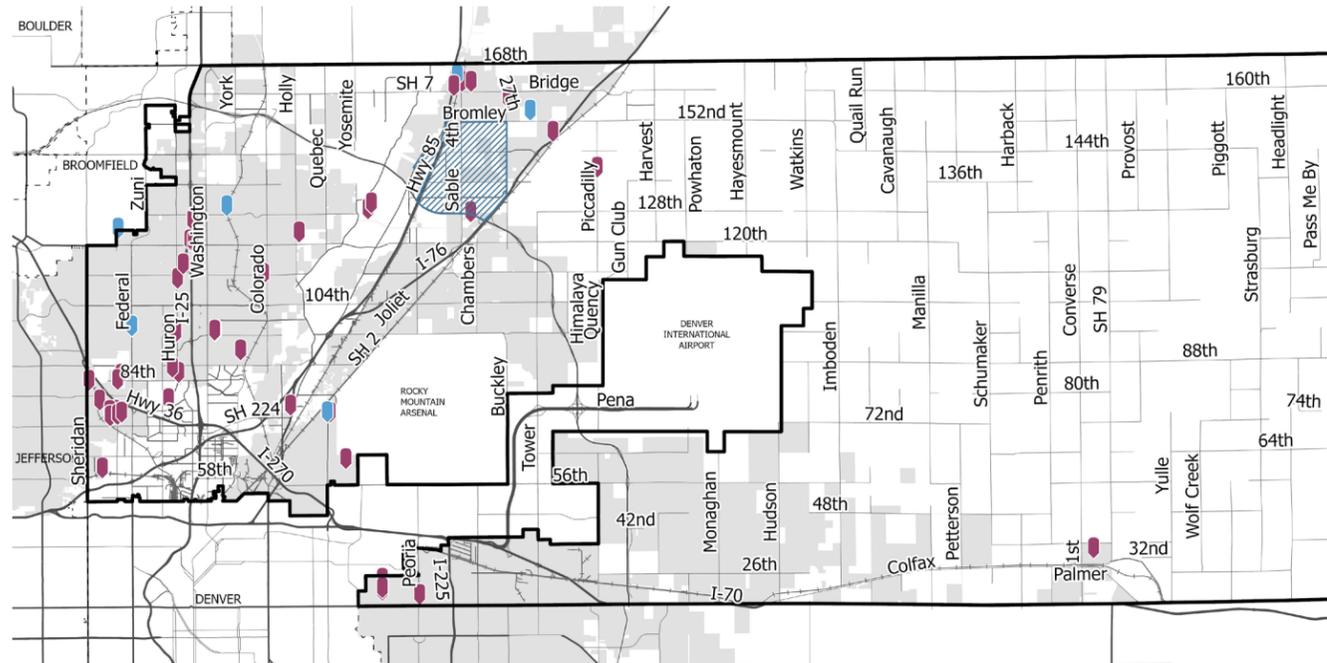
<sup>1</sup> Census of Agriculture, Adams County Profile, 2017



### LEGEND

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

NOT TO SCALE



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

LEGEND

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

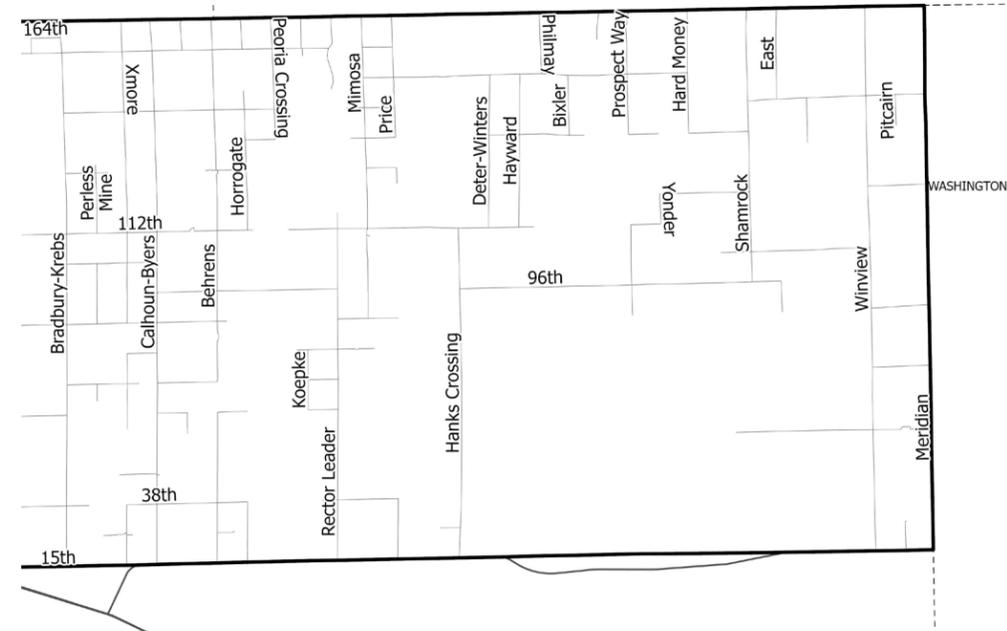
CULTURAL ASSETS

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> HistoryColorado.org



NOT TO SCALE

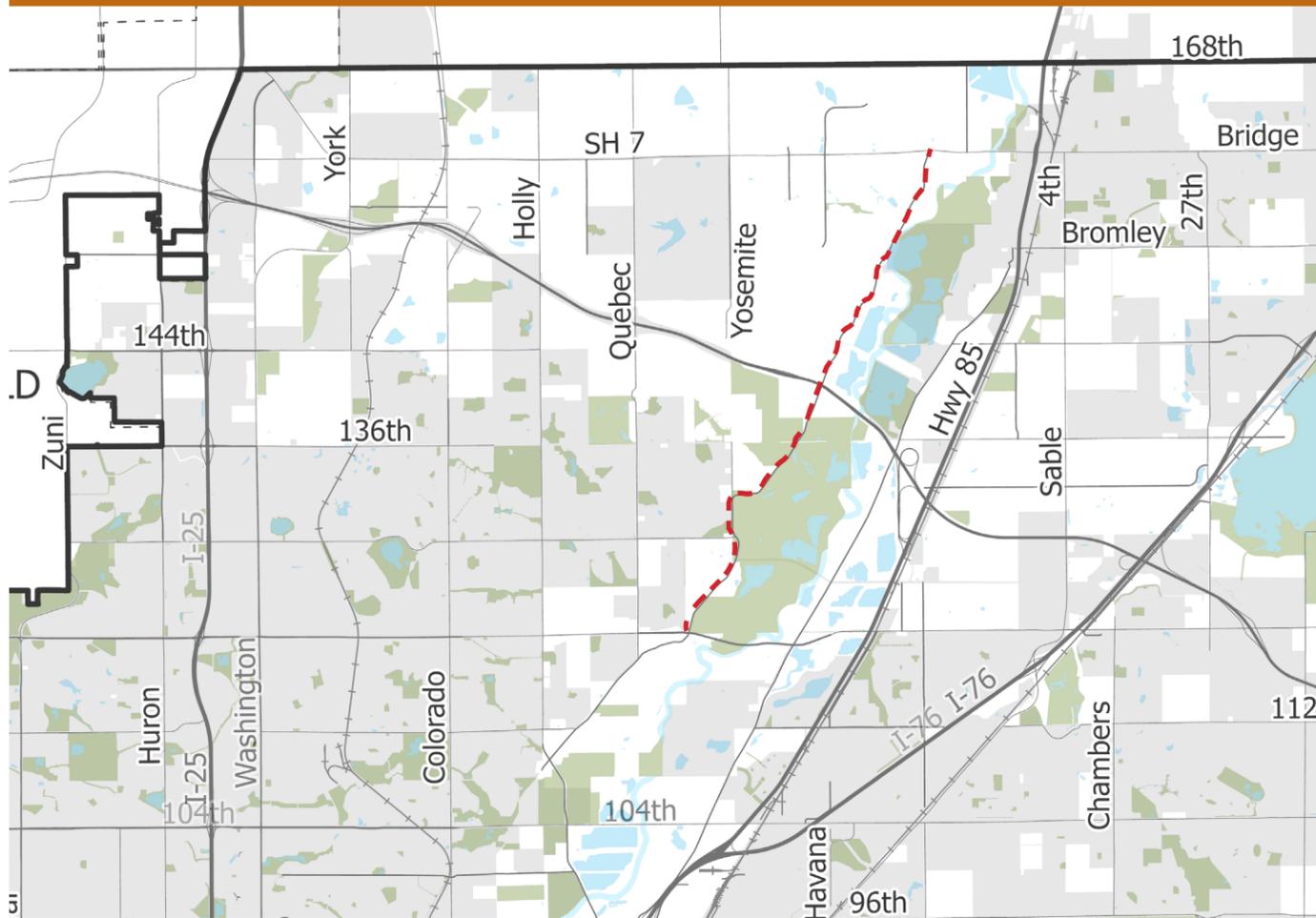
Other historic assets from the History Colorado program are also indicated and they include:

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

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

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

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



Data Source: Adams County, DRCOG, Design Workshop

NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND**

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

**Scenic Byway Key Plan**



**POTENTIAL SCENIC BYWAY**

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

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

- Limiting the scale of development

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

**PUBLIC ART AND EVENTS**

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 36: Event at Clear Creek Valley Park



Figure 34: Sign at 104th and McKay Rd



Figure 35: Bull Riding