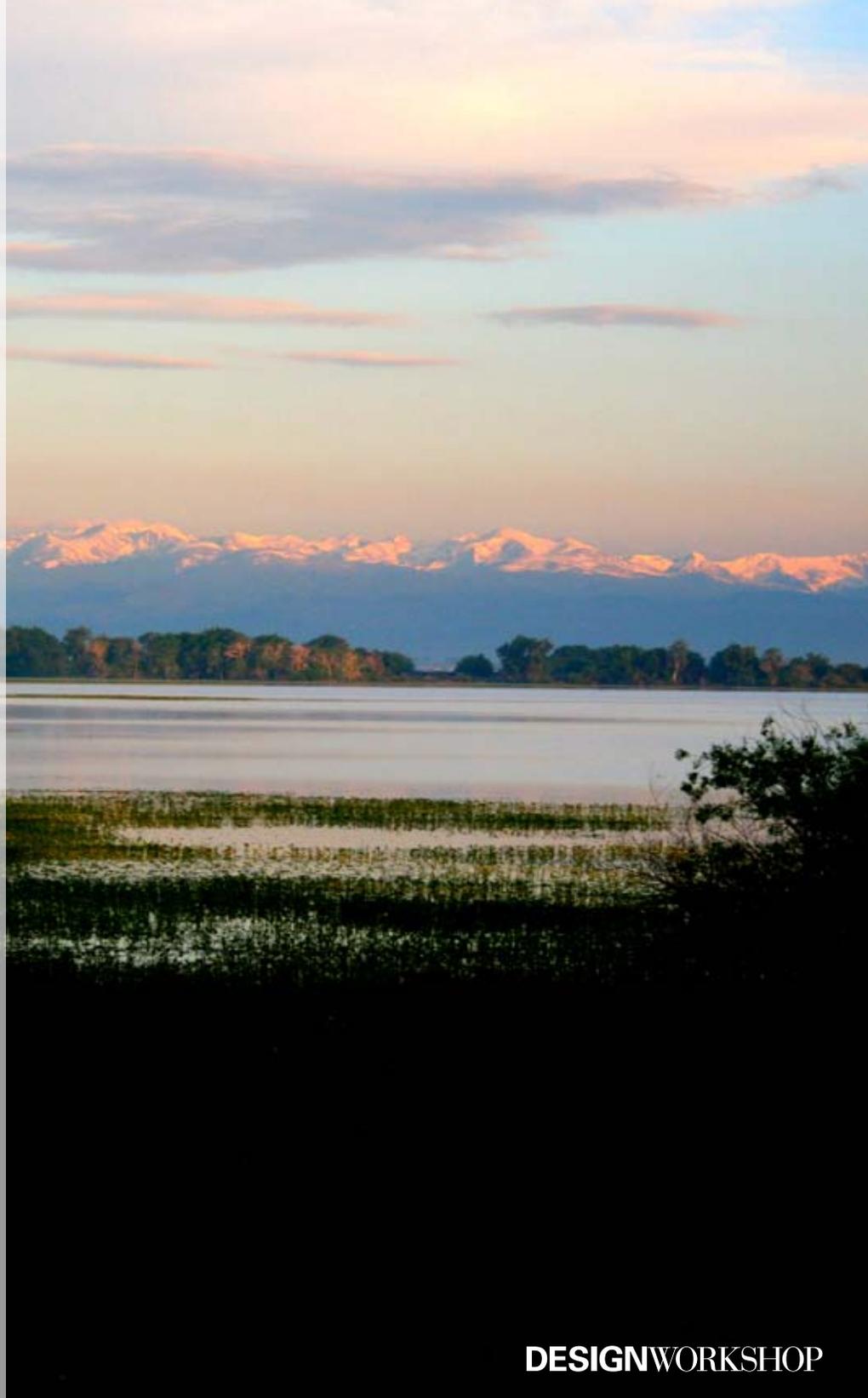




# ADAMS COUNTY COLORADO OPEN SPACE, PARKS & TRAILS MASTER PLAN

ADAMS COUNTY  
NOVEMBER 16, 2012





# CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
A Redefined Role of Adams County Open Space, Parks, and Trails .....	2
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Introduction .....	6
Adams County Context .....	6
Plan Purpose .....	7
Plan Vision .....	8
Guiding Principles and Goals .....	9
Plan Update Process .....	13
<b>EXISTING CONDITIONS</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Role of County Open Space and Parks Management .....	16
Funding .....	16
Relevant Studies .....	18
Summary of Existing Parks, Open Space and Trails .....	19
Open Space and Parks Provision .....	22
Growth and Development .....	24
Parks Per Population .....	26
Land Characteristics and Land Cover .....	26
Agricultural Resources .....	29
Mineral Extraction .....	32
Wildlife .....	33
<b>EVALUATION OF LANDS FOR FUTURE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE</b> .....	<b>35</b>
Evaluation of Lands .....	36
<b>MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS</b> .....	<b>45</b>
Master Plan Elements .....	46
Proposed Park and Open Space Focus Areas .....	47
Proposed Trails .....	66
Recreational Opportunities .....	77
Outdoor And Nature Education .....	85
<b>ACTION PLAN</b> .....	<b>87</b>
Introduction and Action Plan Purpose .....	88
Action Plan Summary Table .....	89
Master Plan Performance Measures .....	94
Policy Implications .....	96
Potential Funding Sources .....	101
<b>MASTER PLAN UPDATE RESIDENT INPUT FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>107</b>
Resident Survey .....	108
Community Meeting Feedback .....	109

## LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: Existing Parks and Open Space- Adams County and Local Jurisdictions. . . . .	6
Map 2: Residence Proximity to Parks and Open Space Providing Public Access . . . . .	22
Map 3: Soil Productivity . . . . .	30
Map 4: Wildlife Habitat Value Composite Map . . . . .	37
Map 5: Land Characteristics and Land Cover . . . . .	38
Map 6: Agricultural Value. . . . .	39
Map 7: Property Size and Location Composite Map. . . . .	40
Map 8: Composite Map of All Open Space and Parks Factors . . . . .	42
Map 9: Park and Open Space Master Plan . . . . .	46
Map 10: Flood Control Overlay Policy Areas. . . . .	49
Map 11: Big Dry Creek Greenway . . . . .	50
Map 12: Second Creek Greenway . . . . .	52
Map 13: Kiowa Creek and Comanche Creek Greenways. . . . .	53
Map 14: Box Elder Creek Greenway. . . . .	55
Map 15: Local Food Production District. . . . .	57
Map 16: South Platte River Corridor . . . . .	61
Map 17: Confluence of Clear Creek and South Platte River. . . . .	62
Map 18: Agricultural Reserves. . . . .	63
Map 19: Clear Creek and Hyland Hills Infill Opportunity Area. . . . .	64
Map 20: Barr Lake State Park Buffer Area . . . . .	65
Map 21: Trail Priorities Master Plan. . . . .	66
Map 22: Big Dry Creek Trail, I-25/Tanglewood Creek Trail, and US 36 Trail . . . . .	69
Map 23: Proposed Trails - Tennyson Street Trail, Lowell/Jim Baker Trail, and Clay St. Trail . . . . .	70
Map 24: Proposed Trails - E. 104 <sup>th</sup> Ave, Riverdale Road, South Platte River Trail, Brantner Gulch . . . . .	72
Map 25: Proposed Trails - O'Brian Canal, First Creek Trail, Second Creek, Denver Hudson Canal . . . . .	74
Map 26: Proposed Trails - Local Foods Tour, 136 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Barr Lake Connections, and I-76 Trail . . . . .	75
Map 27: Proposed Recreation Master Plan. . . . .	78
Map 28: Proposed On-street Bike Routes. . . . .	81

**Data Source:** Adams County GIS

**Disclaimer:** Although every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided on the included maps, Adams County cannot be responsible for consequences resulting from omissions or errors in the information and graphic representations made herein. Users should consult with the Adams County Planning Department to ascertain whether any modifications have been made since the publication of this material.

**Projection:** All Maps are displayed in NAD 1983 State Plan Colorado Central FIPS 0502 Feet.

**Additional Map Sources:**

- US Department of Agriculture
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Denver Regional Council of Governments
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- National Land Cover Database Satellite Imagery
- Colorado Vegetation Classification BLM/CDOW/USFS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Adams County would like to thank all of the residents who participated in the public meetings and workshops necessary for the success of this plan.

### *Technical Advisory Committee*

#### **Adams County Parks and Community Resources Department**

Rick Anderson, Director

Shannon McDowell, Open Space Program Manager

Marc Pedrucci, Natural Resource Manager

Roger Harvey, Natural Resource Specialist

Regina Elsner, Open Space Grant Coordinator

#### **Planning Department**

Abel Montoya, Director

Kristin Sullivan, AICP, Planning Manager

Stacey Nerger, Long Range Planner

Brandi Rank, GISP, GIS Analyst

#### **Public Works Department**

Russ Nelson, Engineering Manager

#### **Finance Department**

Adrienne Dorsey, Sustainability Coordinator

#### **Colorado Parks and Wildlife**

Joe Padia, District Wildlife Manager

Michelle Seubert, Barr Lake State Park Manager

#### **Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory**

Kacie Miller, Education Director

#### **Urban Drainage and Flood Control**

Steve Materkowski, Senior Construction Manager

#### **Citizen/Agriculture**

Adam Kniss, Agriculture

### *County Commissioners*

W.R. "Skip" Fischer, District 1

Alice J. Nichol, District 2

Erik Hansen, District 3

### *Consultant Team*

Richard Shaw

Anna Gagne

Jessie Young

Sara Endsley

#### **Design Workshop**

120 East Main Street

Aspen, CO 81611

970.925.8354

### *Photos Courtesy of:*

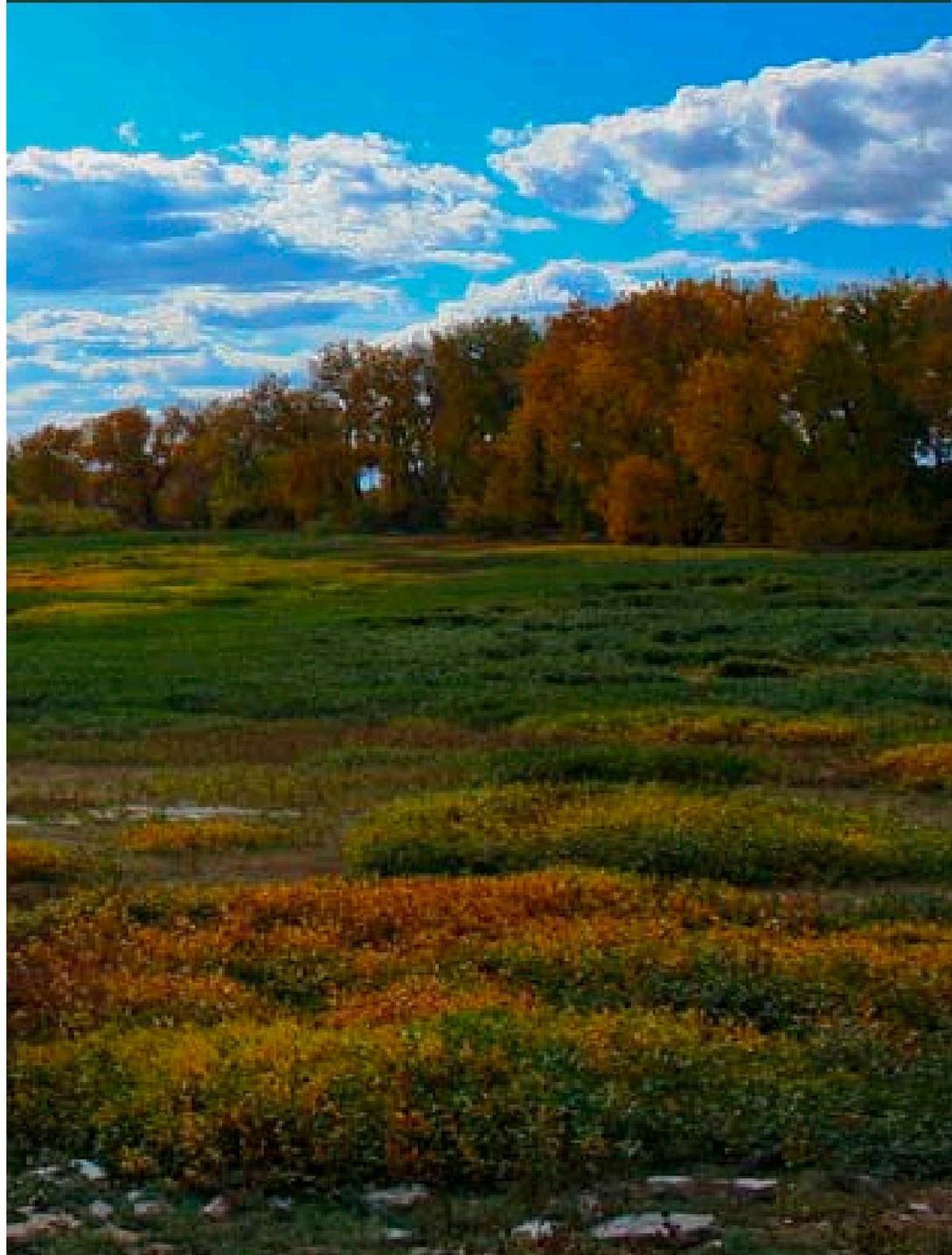
Jim Hollis, Christina Bell, &  
Colorado Division of Wildlife







# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# A REDEFINED ROLE OF ADAMS COUNTY OPEN SPACE, PARKS, AND TRAILS

The success of this plan will make important contributions to the quality of life of Adams County residents and ensure that important natural resources are protected. Barr Lake, The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, regional parks, greenways and trail systems, and local parks have attracted people and businesses to locate in Adams County. The Master Plan update proposes a vision and strategies to enhance the County landscape and valued attributes that have drawn people to the communities in Adams County, ensuring the legacy of the contributions of parks and open space is enjoyed by future generations.

Residents have expressed their desire for the continued enhancement and expansion of the open space, parks, and trails system by voting for and incrementally increasing a dedicated sales tax that will remain in place at least until 2026. Open space strategies chart a road map to preserve natural resources, address issues of food production and preservation of local agriculture, and include opportunities for residents to experience the outdoors in natural settings. This plan strikes a balance between the multitude of urban and rural community values and adapts the open space and parks program to the needs of today and the future.

This document serves as an update to the 1998 Master Plan. The plan is the foundation and guide for the County to support park, trail and open space projects that have clear public value, protect public interest and provide public access to desirable, needed, and well-designed facilities.

## *Establishing a Vision:*

The vision for the 2012 Master Plan promotes an open space system that conserves agricultural lands throughout the County; preserves and enhances important wildlife habitats and corridors; and protects and improves important natural and scenic resources such as wetlands, floodplains, and unique land forms. The plan identifies corridors for trail development and open space conservation that link to the open space systems of adjacent counties and communities while retaining the natural, cultural, and agricultural qualities of the County. The plan is unlike past open space plans in its use of resources to protect and promote viable agricultural uses within urbanizing environments.

## *The Process:*

**Engagement:** A public engagement strategy was designed to involve and represent all communities and interest groups within Adams County. The project's engagement included a County-wide Survey to understand the current perceptions, priorities, values and goals for the County's open space, parks, and trails. Two sessions of public meetings in addition to stakeholder meetings were held to further develop the public's vision, values and priorities and to gain feedback on the draft plan. Additionally, the consultant team met with a Technical Review Committee and Stakeholder Committee throughout the process to gain insight and guidance on the direction of the plan.

**Inventory and Analysis:** A multitude of resources and existing plans were consulted pertaining to the existing parks, open space, and trails in the County covering demographics, proximity to neighborhoods, development / growth trends, stormwater resources, wildlife corridors and habitats, special districts, protected lands and land ownership. Following the inventory, Geographic Information System software was used to evaluate a variety of environmental, land characteristic, population concentration, and land policy data to identify the most suitable and desirable locations for future parks, open space, and trails.

**Plan Development:** The draft plan was distributed to review agencies, Adams County staff, municipal park planners, Technical Review and Stakeholder Committee members, public meeting participants, and made available on the County website for comment.

### ***Master Plan Elements:***

#### **Parks and Open Space**

The primary components of the proposed open space, parks, and trails development and enhancements in Adams County are focused on 11 main areas:

1. **South Platte River Corridor** - Prioritize land located between the Regional Park and Ken Mitchell Open Space for conservation.
2. **Second Creek Greenway** - Create opportunities for recreation in a scenic setting and complete connections to regional trails.
3. **Big Dry Creek Greenway** - Fill in the gaps to complete the greenway as an important recreational, flood control, and wildlife habitat area.
4. **Kiowa Creek and Comanche Creek Greenways** - Designate the land surrounding the creek as open space and allow for public trails to be developed over time to serve as a regional attraction.
5. **Box Elder Creek Greenway** - Acquire as open space and restore the ecological qualities of the creek's floodplain.
6. **Confluence of Clear Creek and South Platte River Agricultural Lands** - Ensure agricultural uses remain viable at this juncture to promote the agricultural heritage of the community and protect their scenic value.
7. **Local Food Production District** - Develop a sub-area plan to capture the locational benefits and richness of the existing agricultural lands south of Brighton to create a unique place for food production and agritourism within the metro area.
8. **Barr Lake Buffer** - Acquire additional lands surrounding Barr Lake State Park to protect important resources and restore critical habitats.
9. **Agricultural Land Conservation** - Focus conservation easement investments on the productive lands to the east of Barr Lake where development is likely to take place over time.

#### **Principles of the 2012 plan:**

1. **Partnerships and Regional Coordination**
2. **Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Provision**
3. **Natural Resource and Wildlife Habitat Protection**
4. **Connecting People to the Land**
5. **Water Resources Protection and Enhancement**
6. **Trail Connectivity**
7. **Agricultural Conservation**
8. **Outdoor and Nature Education**
9. **Disturbed Land Restoration**

**10. Conservation Flood Control Overlay Policy Areas** - Implement strict controls on development within the County Flood Control Overlay Zones to protect water quality and wildlife movement, control erosion and manage flood water.

**11. Infill Local Park Opportunities** - Partner with Hyland Hills Park and Recreation District and Westminster to develop creative solutions in these urban environments, such as the conversion of vacant properties to gardens or parks, and the incorporation of public park space and recreation uses on school, library, and other public spaces.

### **Trails**

Potential trails are identified throughout the County to complete connections based on the needs and priorities of residents over the next 10 years. The plan anticipates pedestrian, equestrian, and bicycle users and denotes the trails of high priority. Regional bicycle loops are a concept included in the trails plan.

### **Recreation**

The focus on recreation for the County is to provide recreational opportunities that are desirable and compatible with the open spaces and natural settings. Passive Recreation activities, like wildlife watching, walking, and biking can offer constructive, restorative, and enjoyable opportunities for the community. Developing opportunities for bird watching, wildlife viewing, as well as fishing are recreation priorities of this plan.

### ***Action and Implementation Plan***

The plan encourages partnerships between communities, neighborhoods, the private sector and Adams County for open space conservation, stewardship, and education. A variety of land protection strategies benefiting both landowners and residents of the County are described in the Action Plan.

# INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction
2. Adams County Context
3. Plan Purpose
4. Plan Vision
5. Guiding Principals and Goals
6. Plan Update Process

# 1



## INTRODUCTION

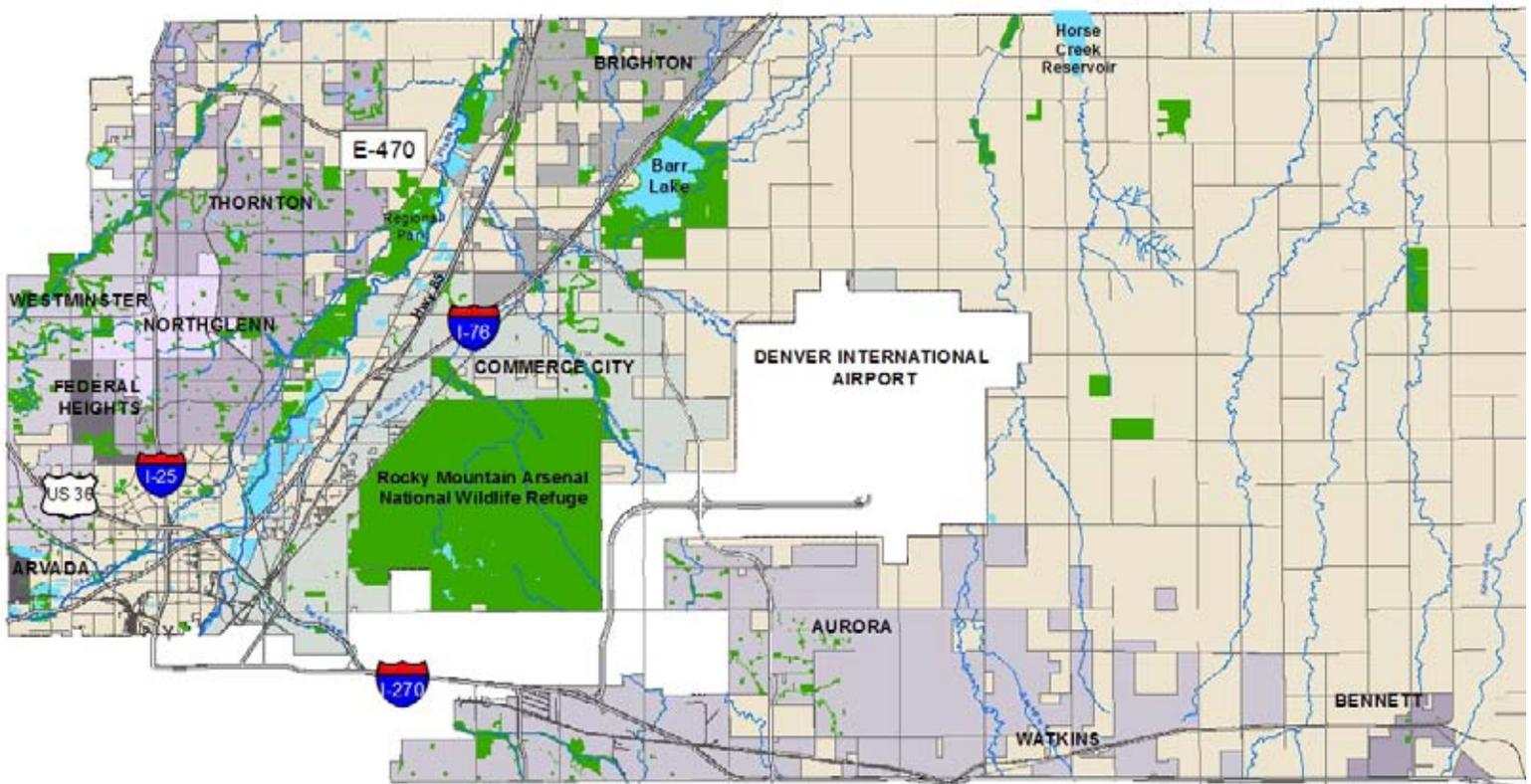
This Master Plan update marks a new era in providing parks, open space, natural resource stewardship, and recreation opportunities to Adams County residents and visitors. The County has developed a mature system of wildlife sanctuary, conserved lands, trail networks, and regional recreation sites. The determined efforts of private and public partners have transformed gravel pits, drainage corridors, reservoirs, and an arsenal into treasured natural and recreational amenities of enduring value.

Considerable success can be accredited to foresight in anticipating growth pressures that threaten to diminish the amount and quality of agricultural lands and ecological resources. The establishment of a comprehensive vision has resulted in serving the needs of an ever increasing population. **Residents have expressed their desire for the continued enhancement and expansion of the open space, parks and trails system by voting for and incrementally increasing a dedicated sales tax.**

## ADAMS COUNTY CONTEXT

Adams County is adjacent to Denver along the Front Range of Colorado. The County ranges in character from the more densely populated development in the western area to the far less populated, agrarian area to the eastern area. The Denver International Airport (DIA) extends into Adams County's agricultural lands just east of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

Map 1: Existing Parks and Open Space- Adams County and Local Jurisdictions



## PLAN PURPOSE

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

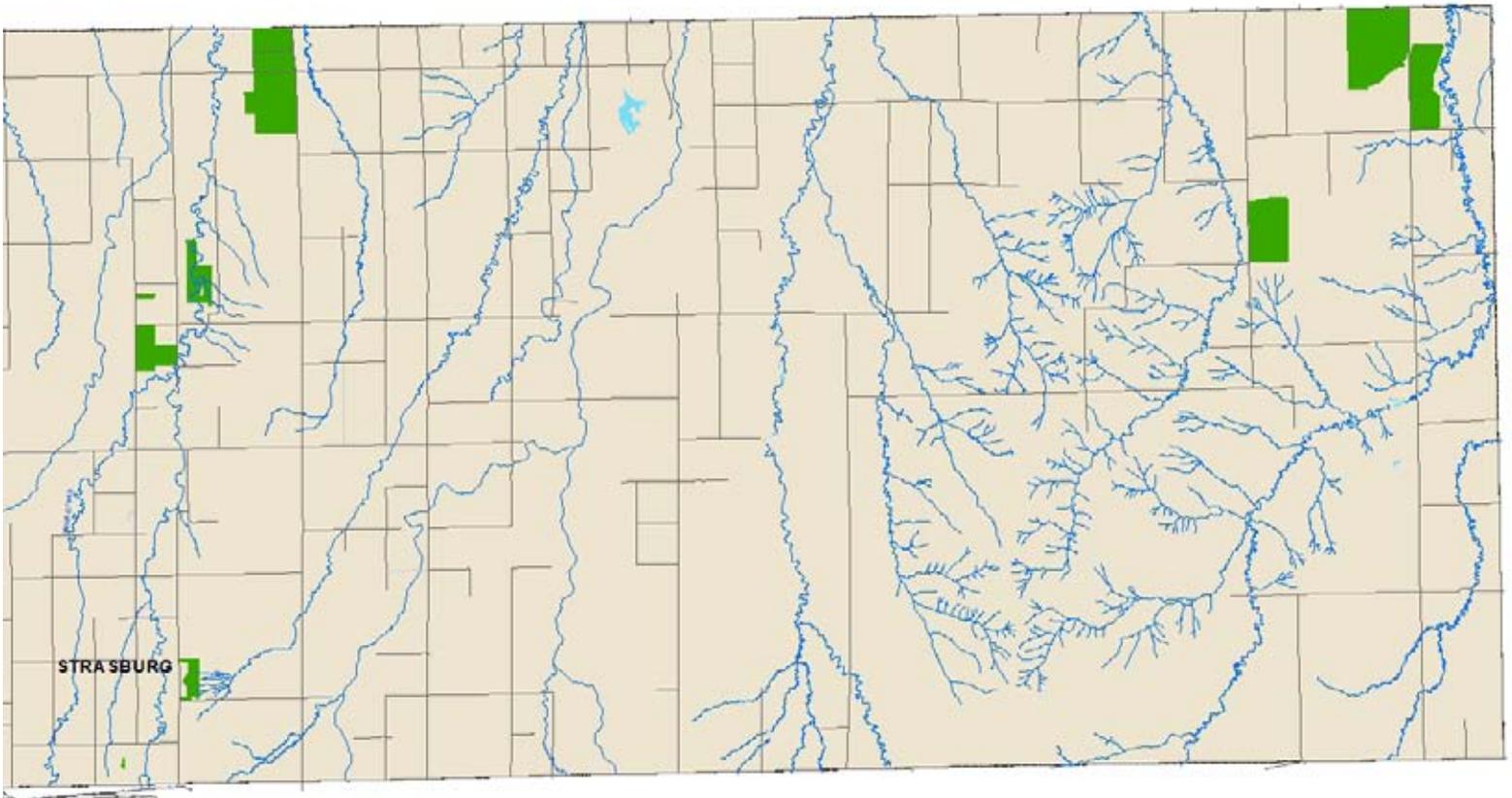
- Preserve and maintain areas with ecological, cultural, agricultural, and historical significance;
- Balance resource stewardship with quality customer service and visitor experience; and
- Promote inter-jurisdictional cooperation to create a seamless system of trails, parks, open space, and facilities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

This document serves as an update to the 1998 Master Plan and was carefully coordinated with updates to the Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Plan, and Hazard Mitigation Plan, which happened simultaneously. **The plan establishes the foundation for the County's**

**decision making related to open space.** The role of the County is to support park, trails and open space projects that have clear public value, protect public interest and provide public access to desired, needed and well-designed facilities. **Land acquisition for parks and open space** with the potential to develop, operate and/or maintain facilities on park or open space land is the primary means of support. Land acquisition by the County can only be pursued with willing landowners.

The County Open Space Sales Tax, extended through December 2026, provides a means for the County to support the Master Plan. The tax proceeds are used solely to:

*Preserve land that protects water quality;  
Protect wildlife areas, wetlands, rivers, and streams;  
Preserve farmland;  
Protect open space in order to limit sprawl; and  
for creating, improving and maintaining parks, trails, and recreation facilities.*

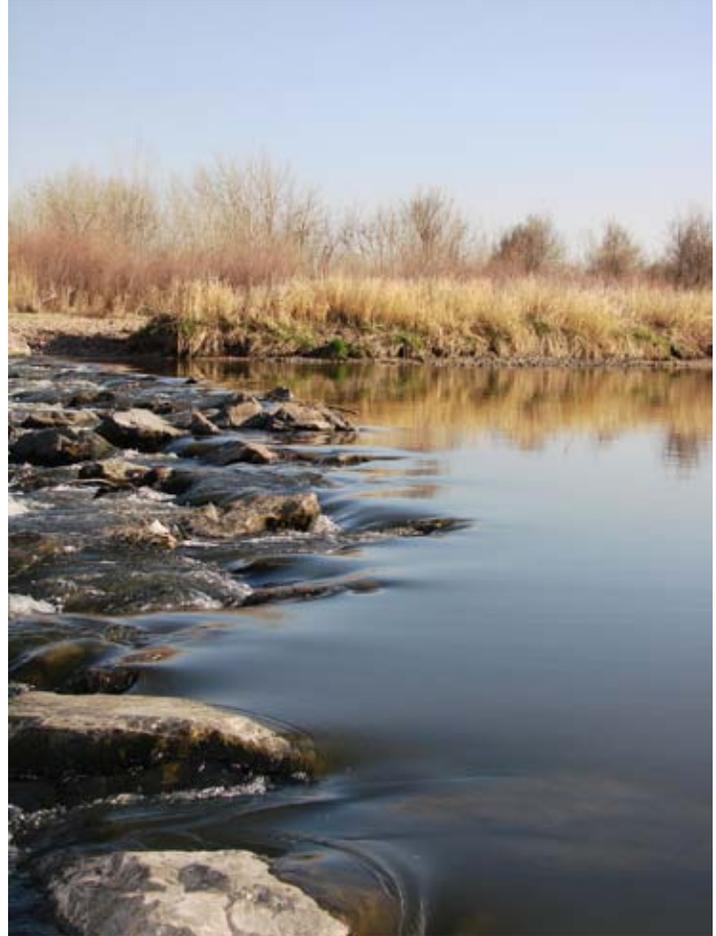


## PLAN VISION

**The vision for the Open Space, Parks, and Trails Plan is to create an integrated system that conserves agricultural lands throughout the County; preserves and enhances important wildlife habitats and corridors; and protects and improves important natural and scenic resources such as wetlands, floodplains and unique land forms.** Parks and trails planning anticipates the needs of residents for public places for recreation, social activities, and enjoyment of outdoor settings. Adams County is anticipated to increase in population, and thus, requires planning to meet the needs of additional residents.

**This plan is distinct from past plans in that it seeks to strengthen existing amenities and address future challenges of balancing people, nature, agriculture and growth demands.** The plan calls for reinforcing the role of Barr Lake, Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge, the South Platte Corridor, greenway systems, and regional parks to provide a sanctuary for both wildlife and humans. It also creates a vision for a reserve of permanently conserved productive farmland that is most in jeopardy of being developed. The plan is unlike past agricultural preservation plans in the conceptualization of adapting agricultural use to create a viable economic future in urbanized areas and putting open space resources towards preservation of agricultural land. For example, the Local Food Production District is a concept within the plan that captures the location benefits and richness of the existing agricultural lands to create a unique place within the metro area. The development of a hub for specialized food, tourism building, and community enhancement are all hallmarks of the updated plan.

**When asked generally about the amount of open space in Adams County, 92% of survey participants strongly or somewhat agreed that additional open space land should be preserved, while only 8% disagreed.**



*River and stream corridor improvements have been the focus of many past parks, open space, and trails projects.*

The Open Space, Parks and Trails Plan encourages partnerships between communities, neighborhoods, the private sector and Adams County for open space conservation, stewardship, provision of recreation, and outdoor/nature education. The plan also encourages greenways and trails that link to the adjacent counties. To help ensure implementation of the Plan, a series of creative land protection strategies benefiting both landowners and residents of the County are provided.

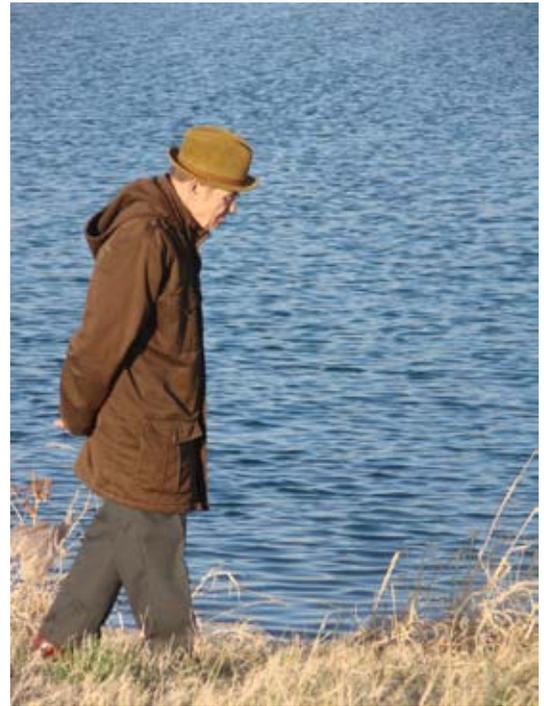
## GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

The guiding principles and goals of this plan are intended to provide background on the importance and purpose of the plan's elements, strategies and action steps. The principles identified in this plan support the over-arching understanding that **the health of the natural environment, the strength of the community, and economic security are essential to Adams County's future.**

### Principle 1:

#### Partnerships and Regional Coordination

- Encourage partnerships between departments within Adams County including Planning, Public Works, Sustainability, Community Development, and Neighborhood Services, as well as between neighboring counties, communities, neighborhoods, the private sector, other agencies, and land trusts for parks, open space conservation, stewardship and environmental education.
- Pursue joint conservation efforts between Weld, Broomfield, and Jefferson Counties to save resource dollars and provide more efficient conservation of agricultural lands that cross County boundaries.
- Identify a series of creative land protection strategies that benefit both land owners, the County and the community at large.



*Walking, biking, equestrian use, and jogging are popular activities within Adams County where the trails receive year-round use.*

### Principle 2:

#### Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Provision

- Utilize the park and open space system to provide a range of recreational experiences from larger regional parks to community level parks as well as serving a variety of age groups and user-types year-round.
- When possible provide pedestrian, equestrian, and bikes routes separate from traffic to promote a quality experience for trail users.
- Ensure the development of safe open space and recreation elements when in proximity and direct interaction with vehicular routes.
- Provide sensitive and unobtrusive trail development and a mix of well balanced recreational activities within the open space system while preserving and enhancing the natural characteristics of the County.

### **Principle 3:**

## **Natural Resource and Wildlife Habitat Protection**

- Protect and enhance important ecological and scenic resources such as riparian areas, wetlands, floodplains, prairie grasslands and unique land forms.
- Protect and enhance important and existing wildlife habitats and corridors, provide for species movement through the County.
- Provide for adequate land around riparian habitats to ensure a sustainable species richness and to prevent the diminution of critical wildlife habitat.
- Create habitat linkages to regional open spaces for species of importance, such as the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, Barr Lake State Park, and river corridors.



### **Principle 4:**

## **Connecting People to the Land**

- Provide open space, parks and trails of scenic and natural value. Provide public access to these places close to where people live, work, attend school, and near community centers so they are convenient for people to experience every day.
- Preserve lands that provide local food production and opportunities for people to learn about agricultural practices
- Interpret the natural, cultural and historic resources located within parks and open space sites.



### **Principle 5:**

## **Water Resources Protection and Enhancement**

- Improve water quantity and quality to assure a continuing quality of life in Adams County by implementing stormwater management best practices to minimize runoff and encourage infiltration, protecting and enhancing wetland habitats and riparian zones.
- Buffer development impacts from water resources including rivers, lakes, and streams and their adjacent riparian habitats.
- Protect, in as natural a state as possible, floodplains and flood hazard areas for flood event conveyance and storage. Enhance these corridors with vegetation to reduce erosion and siltation.
- Restore and enhance disturbed lands in and around river, creek and drainage corridors.
- Utilize water aesthetically and sustainably. Create opportunities for people to learn about this important resource.

*Barr Lake offers opportunities for visitors to engage and learn about the environment. Top Photo: The observation deck extends out over the water where this family can observe the balds eagle nest without disturbing them (Photo: [www.denverpost.com](http://www.denverpost.com)); Bottom Photo: Girl Scouts earn their Bird Badges at a Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory event at the Banding Station at Barr Lake (Photo: [www.rmbo.org](http://www.rmbo.org))*



*A variety of types of trails have been built within the County.*

## **Principle 6: Trail Connectivity**

- Provide trails to serve both as places to recreate and for non-motorized transportation like walking, biking, and equestrian use.
- Provide a linked open space system that connects to the open space and trails systems throughout the County and to adjacent counties and communities.
- Provide trail and open space linkages, where essential, along and across major vehicular circulation rights-of-way. When possible provide for grade separated trail crossings of major roadways.
- Provide opportunities and facilities for a variety of trail experiences such as hiking, walking, cycling, and equestrian use and to accommodate all ability levels and interests from beginner to expert users.

## **Principle 7: Agricultural Conservation**

- Preserve and protect the viability and character of high quality agricultural lands in the County.
- Maintain the integrity of sensitive agricultural lands by keeping recreational or other potentially disturbing uses separate where necessary.
- Consider agricultural lands and their viability to serve as natural area protection.
- Consolidate land conservation to avoid fragmentation of agricultural practices and conflict of urban and rural activities.



*Adams County contains agricultural lands large enough to be appropriate for bison farming.*

## Principle 8: Outdoor and Nature Education

- Fund and provide for environmental education and interpretation to help residents, students and open space users learn to appreciate the wealth of natural, cultural and scenic resources.
- Educate users of parks and trails in order to minimize environmental impacts.
- Support educational efforts that engage citizens in their role as stewards of our natural and cultural resources.



*Rocky Mountain Wildlife Refuge has recently invested in expanding the education opportunities available.*

## Principle 9: Disturbed Land Restoration

- Restore lands disturbed by gravel mining and extraction as community resources that support native habitats, wildlife, water storage, and recreation opportunities with a focus on lands in and around river, creek and drainage corridors.
- Encourage existing and future mining operations to reclaim lands during and after mining in an effort to create habitat, restore vegetation, contribute to flood storage and provide recreational and educational opportunities.



*Extractive industries along Clear Creek in Adams County*

## PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Adams County received a Great Outdoors Colorado grant to prepare the update to the 1998 Adams County Open Space Plan. Design Workshop was hired to work together with Adams County Parks and Community Resources Department, a Technical Review Committee, a Stakeholder Group, and County residents. **The plan has been updated to reflect the values and desires of residents and has the support needed for long-term implementation.**

The cornerstone of the plan update process was engaging the residents by listening to, understanding, and coming to a consensus about the opportunities that exist for open space in Adams County. The public was given a number of opportunities to provide input and to influence the direction of the plan in the form of a resident survey and public meetings, instant feedback polling and interactive mapping exercises. A website provided updates about the project for easy access of information.

### Public Input

In addition to two rounds of public meetings at which interested citizens were able to provide their feedback and input, the project team met routinely with the Technical Review Committee which included Adams County Parks, Planning and Public Works staff, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Urban Drainage and Flood Control, and representatives from the agricultural community. A Stakeholder Committee was formed to inform the project and represent different viewpoints. The Stakeholder Group was made up of subject matter experts and citizens representing interest groups including, Adams County Open Space Board Members, cities within Adams County incorporated areas, Parks and Recreation Districts, Denver Water, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partners, The Trust for Public Land, Adjacent County Parks and Open Space Planners, and other agencies including special districts.



### Plan Generation Overview

The plan update process consisted of six tasks to move the project from a vision to a plan with actionable strategies to be carried out over the next 10 years. The Open Space, Parks and Trails Master Plan will serve as a planning and funding tool with the purpose of guiding future open space acquisitions, enhancements, restorations, conservation, preservation and connectivity opportunities.

#### 1. Project Start-up

This task included start-up meetings with Adams County Staff and the Technical Review Committee to understand existing open space and trails programs and achievements. The first opportunity for the public to influence the direction of the plan was in the County-wide Survey distributed to 1,600 homes in the western and eastern parts of the County in March 2012. Responses were collected from 328 completed surveys, and insight was gained into current perceptions and participation, priorities, values, and goals for the open space, parks, trails and recreation activities within the County.

## 2. Inventory of Open Space, Parks and Trails

Collecting data and updating maps to gain an understanding of the current provision of open space, parks and trails was completed to inform the overall plan. A sampling of complex sets of information taken into account included: demographics, proximity to neighborhoods, development/growth trends, stormwater resources, wildlife corridors and habitat, special districts, protected lands and land ownership.

## 3. Land Analysis and Trends Evaluation

Geographic Information System (GIS) software was used to evaluate a variety of environmental, land characteristic, population concentration, land policy data sources to identify the most suitable locations for future parks, open space and trails. The data analysis was informed by citizen values as well as program objectives.

## 4. Vision, Values and Priorities Assessment

Six public meetings were held at different locations throughout the County and at the Open Space Forum. A total of 140 people participated in instant feedback polling and indicated on maps the lands they would like to see protected and locations that are desirable for more recreation activities in the future. Similarly, the stakeholder group met to provide input for the plan development.

## 5. Draft Master Plan and Action Plan

The team worked to compile, understand, and prioritize the results of the land analysis and the feedback from the public meetings to draft a plan that is responsive to the wishes of the community and reflective of the environmental and land conservation needs. A series of public meetings and stakeholder meetings were held to gain feedback on the plan prior to finalizing the plan. The draft document was posted on the website for interested community members to review and comment.

## 6. Development of the Final Master Plan

The feedback from the public input and stakeholder meetings in Task 5 was incorporated into a revised and final master plan and action plan.

**Adams County Open Space, Parks and Trails Resident Survey**

1. How familiar, if at all, are you with the Open Space Sales Tax for Adams County?  
 Very familiar     Somewhat familiar     A little bit familiar     Not at all familiar

2. How familiar, if at all, are you with how the Open Space Sales Tax has been used in Adams County?  
 Very familiar     Somewhat familiar     A little bit familiar     Not at all familiar

3. In general, how good or poor a job is the Adams County Open Space Sales Tax program doing? Would you say...  
 Excellent     Very good     Good     Fair     Poor     Don't know

4. In general, how good or poor a job is the Adams County Parks and Community Resources Department doing? Would you say...  
 Excellent     Very good     Good     Fair     Poor     Don't know

5. Open space within Adams County can serve a variety of purposes, some of which are listed below. Please rate how important, if at all, each purpose is to you and your household.

	Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Don't Know
Providing visual "green spaces" within the county.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Preserving the agricultural heritage of Adams County.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Preserving open spaces for wildlife.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Helping to control development growth and "suburban sprawl".....	1	2	3	4	DK
Providing natural places for outdoor recreation like walking and hiking.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Protecting land in floodplains and along rivers and streams that will help maintain high water quality.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Preserving ponds, wetlands and lakes.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Providing places to exercise pets.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Providing places to fish.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Providing connections to the regional trails in the county.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Providing buffers or boundaries between developed communities.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Preserving working farms and ranches.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Providing trails for recreational activities like biking, running or walking.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Providing trails that allow residents to get to shopping areas or work destinations by walking or biking.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Preserving the natural landscape along scenic byways within the county (e.g. Riverdale Road).....	1	2	3	4	DK
Preserving areas in the county with beautiful or unique natural features.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Preserving scenic views.....	1	2	3	4	DK
Purchasing for open space reclaimed land previously used for industrial or commercial uses ("brownfields").....	1	2	3	4	DK

Community-wide Survey



Community Meeting in Brighton - Map Activity April 2012



Community Meeting in Thornton - Open House April 2012



Open Space Forum - April 2012

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Role of County Open Space and Parks Management
2. Funding
3. Relevant Studies
4. Summary of Existing Open Space, Parks and Trails
5. Open Space and Parks Provision
6. Growth and Development
7. Parks Per Population
8. Land Characteristics and Land Cover
9. Agricultural Resources
10. Mineral Extraction
11. Wildlife

# 2



## ROLE OF COUNTY OPEN SPACE AND PARKS MANAGEMENT

Adams County Parks and Community Resources Department (ACPCRD) is responsible for open space planning, management, and maintenance. ACPCRD is a regional leader in creating and operating an interconnected and growing system of parks, trails, open space, and facilities that:

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



*Autumn in Adams County*

## FUNDING

Adams County voters demonstrated their dedication to parks and open space by approving the 1/5 of one percent Open Space Sales Tax in 1999. This sales tax was authorized through 2006. In 2004, the sales tax was increased to ¼ of one percent, or 25 cents on a \$100 purchase, and the sales tax was reauthorized by voters to remain through 2026. Proceeds from the sales tax benefit parks, recreation and open space projects County-wide. Through 2011, over \$95 million has been generated to fund parks and open space projects in cities and unincorporated areas of Adams County.

Funds are distributed three ways:

- 68% is awarded through a competitive grant program
- 30% is distributed back to the jurisdiction where the tax was generated
- 2% is allocated to administration costs

The program includes a provision for a citizen Open Space Advisory Board, appointed by Adams County Board of Commissioners, to review and recommend projects for funding. A seven-member board (four members from unincorporated areas, three from cities and towns), representing all geographical areas of the County, reviews all grant applications and recommends funding allocations to the Board of County Commissioners. The competitive grant program has disbursed funds for parks and open space projects as is listed in **Table 1**.

There are three grant application types:

1. passive project
2. active project
3. mini grant

Over the life of the program, no more than 28% of these funds can be spent on active projects and no less than 40% can be spent on passive projects (per Adams County Resolution 99-1).

- Passive Project applications are for lands with significant natural resource, scenic and wildlife habitat values; lands that are buffers maintaining community identity; lands that are to be used for trails and/or wildlife migration routes; lands that will be preserved for agricultural or ranch purposes; lands for outdoor recreation purposes limited to passive recreational use; and lands with other important values such as scenic and historic sites that contribute to municipalities' natural and cultural heritage.
- Active Project applications are for lands for programmed park purposes and other recreational uses such as sports fields, golf courses and recreation centers.
- Mini Grant applications (amount does not exceed \$5,000) are for uses defined in either of the above sections but are geared towards smaller community projects, neighborhoods and joint projects with youth and non-profit organizations.

In Colorado, grants are also available through the lottery-funded Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) program for entities to acquire, expand and improve local parks; outdoor recreation and environmental education facilities; conserve open space; and construct, maintain, plan and design trails. GOCO has allocated nearly \$18 million to projects within Adams County since 1998 as shown in Table 2.

OPEN SPACE SALES TAX GRANT PROGRAM 2000-2011	
Applicant	Amount Allocated/ Disbursed
Adams County	\$17,896,656
Aurora	\$1,829,766
Arvada	\$49,065
Bennett	\$426,087
Bennett Park and Recreation District	\$2,365,317
Brighton	\$3,793,590
Broomfield	\$64,010
Commerce City	\$3,542,689
Federal Heights	\$241,192
Northglenn	\$3,768,308
Strasburg Park and Recreation District	\$293,079
Thornton	\$11,744,960
Westminster	\$10,214,196
Hyland Hills Park and Rec. District	\$2,830,309
Barr Lake State Park	\$622,406
Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory	\$293,869
Other	\$4,314,465
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$64,289,964</b>

**Table 1: Open Space Sales Tax Grant Program 2000-2011**

GOCO FUNDING 1998-2011 BY SPONSOR	
Project Sponsor	Total Grant Amount
City of Aurora	\$995,328
Town of Bennett	\$92,900
City of Brighton	\$1,217,331
City of Commerce City	\$3,025,000
City of Federal Heights	\$110,373
City of Northglenn	\$339,510
City of Thornton	\$834,711
City of Westminster	\$800,000
City and County of Denver (Commerce City Sand Creek Project)	\$809,000
Colorado Division of Wildlife	\$451,651
Colorado State Parks	\$164,500
Hyland Hills Park and Rec District	\$26,725
Strasburg Metro Parks and Rec District	\$221,230
The Trust for Public Land	\$94,744
Adams County	\$8,714,855
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$17,897,858</b>

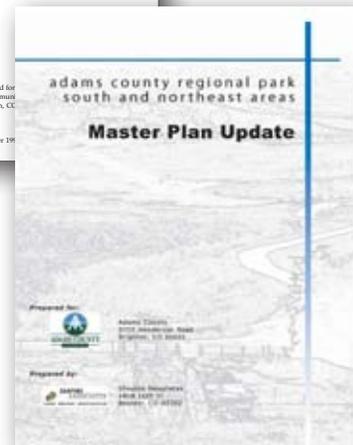
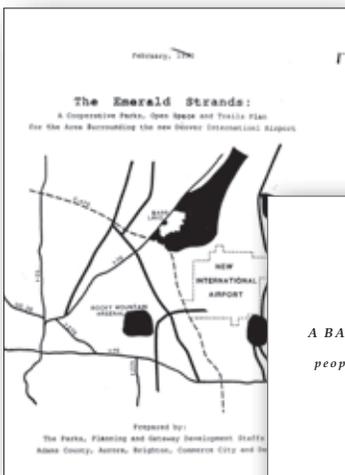
**Table 2: GOCO Funding 1998-2011 by Sponsor**

## RELEVANT STUDIES

The first Master Plan for Adams County Parks and Community Resources Department, *Adams County Open Space Plan: A Balanced Environment for the Future* was completed in December 1998. This plan discussed the issues, identified goals, and provided an inventory of existing resources specific to agricultural resources, environmental resources, and regional trails. Relevant past plans and studies that have been conducted throughout the County are listed below:

- 2011 I-70 Corridor Economic Assessment
- 2010 Westminster Wildlife and Natural Resource Management Plan for Open Space Properties
- 2010 Northglenn Open Space Management Plan: A Framework for the Future

- 2009 Adams County Trails Guide (map)
- 2009 Thornton Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- 2008 52-85 Trail Master Plan: A Regional Segment of the Colorado Front Range Trail
- 2008 Adams County Regional Park South and Northeast Areas Master Plan Update
- 2008 Berkeley Neighborhood Plan
- 2008 Rotella Park Renovations Master Plan
- 2005 Mineral Extraction Plan
- 2005 Second Creek Greenway Master Plan
- 2005 Riverdale Road Corridor Plan
- 2004 South Platte Fishing Lakes and Open Space Action Plan
- 2004 Adams County Comprehensive Plan
- 2003 City of Thornton Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- 2003 The Southwest Adams County Framework Plan
- 2002 Strasburg Plan
- 2002 88th Avenue Open Space Plan
- 2001 Arvada Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan
- 2000 Commerce City – Prairieways Open Space Action Plan
- 1998 Adams County Open Space Plan
- 1997 South Platte River Heritage Corridor Plan
- 1996 A Conservation Vision for Barr Lake State Park
- 1996 Adams County Transportation Plan
- 1990 The Emerald Strands – Cooperative Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan for the Area Surrounding the new Denver International Airport



# SUMMARY OF EXISTING PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

Adams County’s open spaces, parks and trails play an important role in contributing to and connecting the larger, regional system of urban and rural communities across the front range of Colorado. Adams County’s open spaces and trails provide important linkages to the Denver metropolitan area’s major federal, state, and regional open spaces, including Barr Lake State Park, Cherry Creek State Park, Chatfield State Park, and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge. The primary trail and open space systems that will link Adams County to the region are along the South Platte River and the Highline Canal which run north/south and Clear Creek and Sand Creek which run east/west.

There is a total of approximately 41,570 acres of parks and open space within Adams County owned and managed by a variety of entities. Adams County Parks and Community Resources owns approximately 3,000 acres of open space of which 2,080 acres are publicly accessible. The largest open space parcel Adams County owns is the 1,150 acre Regional Park and Fairgrounds. **Table 3** provides a summary of the County owned properties that allow public access.

The County also holds conservation easements, which are lands privately owned with voluntary preservation agreements. The County prefers to protect natural areas or farmland using conservation easements unless public access and recreation are important. Colorado Open Lands, a land trust, and the City of Westminster, hold conservation easements on some County-owned lands. Typically, easements held by these entities were required by a funding partner such as GOCO or Adams County Open Space Sales Tax. Organizations such as The Conservation Fund and the Trust for

**Table 3: County Owned Parks and Open Space with Public Access**

COUNTY MAINTAINED PARKS AND OPEN SPACE WITH PUBLIC ACCESS	
Park Name	Use/Type
88 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Open Space	Passive Recreation / Natural Area
City View Park	Active Recreation Neighborhood Park
Lowell Street Trailhead	Trailhead Neighborhood Park
Rotella Park	Active Recreation Community Park
Regional Park (Fairgrounds)	Active Recreation Regional Park
Steele Street Trailhead	Active Recreation Trailhead
Siegrist Lake	Passive Recreation Natural Area
Engineer Lake	Passive Recreation Natural Area
Sandhofer Lake	Passive Recreation Natural Area
Little Dry Creek Lake	Drainage Detention Natural Area
Twin Lakes Park	Passive Recreation Community Park
Baker Reservoir	Passive Recreation Community Park
Elaine T. Valente Open Space	Passive Recreation Natural Area
E-470 Property	Nature Preserve Natural Area
Government Center Natural Park	Passive Recreation Community Park
Clear Creek Open Space	Floodplain Preservation Natural Area
Jim Baker Reservoir	Passive Recreation Natural Area

Public Land have been strong partners with Adams County in conservation easements and land acquisition. Conservation easements within Adams County comprise 8,866 acres of the County’s land. These conservation easements include 5,268 acres voluntarily preserved using the County Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. The intent of the TDR program has been to:

1. Preserve important open space, important wildlife, important farmland, or floodplain areas in the County.
2. Develop real property in the agricultural area, which is an alternative to the creation and proliferation of 35-acre parcels.
3. Provide opportunities for landowners to develop their property in a manner that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The western third of Adams County has a diversity of recreation, open space and trail opportunities managed by the County, incorporated cities, recreation districts or other entities. County facilities are generally oriented toward passive recreation, while the incorporated cities have both passive and active recreation facilities. **Table 4** provides a summary of the primary management entities within the County and the total amount of acreage that they manage.

Besides the many facilities each city offers, one can visit cultural and natural resource sites at Adams County Regional Park and Fairgrounds, the South Platte River and Clear Creek open space systems, Barr Lake State Park, and Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

The Arsenal supports an abundance of wildlife species that are associated with the native grasslands of the high plains. The programs, tours, and visitor center attract approximately 30,000 people a year. The Arsenal property includes approximately 16,000 acres, of which over 12,000 acres is reserved for wildlife and does not allow public access.

Barr Lake State Park and its surrounding open space form an area greater than 2,000 acres that is home to many of the most significant wildlife species in Colorado. Ornithologists and enthusiasts of passive and active recreation can find a number of activities to enjoy at Barr Lake. Public access to this wildlife resource is unique in Adams County and provides habitat and ecological resources worthy of preservation efforts from joint entities surrounding the site.

Adams County contains a diversity of open space and park types to serve resident needs for recreation, enjoyment of nature and the outdoors, and aesthetic purposes, as well as protection of natural areas and farmland preservation. **Table 5** provides a summary of the acres of open space and parks by type.

**Table 4: Parks and Open Space Acreage by Primary Manager**

ACREAGE OF PARKS BY MANAGER		
Type of Manager	Primary Managing Entity	Acres
County/ Municipality*	Adams County	2,365
	City of Thornton	2,348
	City of Westminster	1,538
	City of Commerce City	1,730
	City of Brighton	1,148
	City of Aurora	846
	Hyland Hills	722
	City of Northglenn	404
	City of Federal Heights	17
	City of Arvada	12
	Town of Strasburg	10
	Town of Bennett	18
Other Public Entities	School Districts (all)	49
	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	16,011
	Colorado Division of Wildlife	58
Other (>500 acres)	Private Land Trust	2,514
	Private Land Trust	649
	Private Land Trust	1,678

\*Only the acres within Adams County are calculated. Where a city extends into a county other than Adams, only parks and open space within Adams County was included. Other managers with less than 500 acres of are excluded from this list.

ACREAGE OF OPEN SPACE AND PARKS BY PARK TYPE	
Open Space and Park Type	Acres
Community	1,633
Public Garden	6
Greenway	1,395
Mini-Park	29
Multi-Use Park	540
Natural Areas	23,377
Neighborhood	1,652
Regional Park	1,150
Special Use	1,784
Sports Complex	389
Farmland	4,346
TDR Conservation Easements	5,268
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41,569</b>

**Table 5: Acreage of Open Space and Parks by Park Type**

The focus of land preservation since the 1998 County Open Space Master Plan has been on agricultural and wildlife areas along the South Platte River, and around Barr Lake State Park as well as along other major waterways such as Big Dry Creek, Second Creek, and Sand Creek. Significant floodplain protection progress has been made in Westminster and Thornton along Big Dry Creek in the past 10 years while Commerce City has also been working to protect the Second Creek corridor. The Elaine T. Valente Open Space contributes to the County’s significant ownership and conservation of floodplains which will remain in their natural state. In addition, several cities have developed water storage areas for recreational use including Ken Mitchell Lakes in Brighton, Eastlake Reservoir #3 in Thornton, McKay Lake, Jim Baker Reservoir, and the Little Dry Creek floodplain in Westminster.

An expanding system of paved and unpaved trails for bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians weaves through the western portions of the County, linking many destination points. There are approximately 403 miles of trails within the County boundaries. **Table 6** identifies the miles of existing trails (multi-use, pedestrian, asphalt, gravel, and natural trails) located within each municipality and the unincorporated areas of the County. Adams County manages 25 miles of trails including 17 miles of trail along the South Platte River, and about 7.5 miles along Clear Creek. Many connections exist from the cities to the South Platte River Trail (SPRT). The SPRT runs from 104th Avenue to Denver.

EXISTING TRAIL MILES WITHIN ADAMS COUNTY	
Jurisdiction	Trail (miles)
Arvada	3
Aurora	33
Bennett	3
Brighton	26
Commerce City	36
Federal Heights	3
Northglenn	37
Thornton	97
Westminster	72
RMANWR	13
Unincorporated Adams County	80
<b>TOTAL Trail Miles</b>	<b>403</b>

**Table 6:** Existing Trail Miles within Adams County municipalities and unincorporated area



Trails within Adams County Regional Park

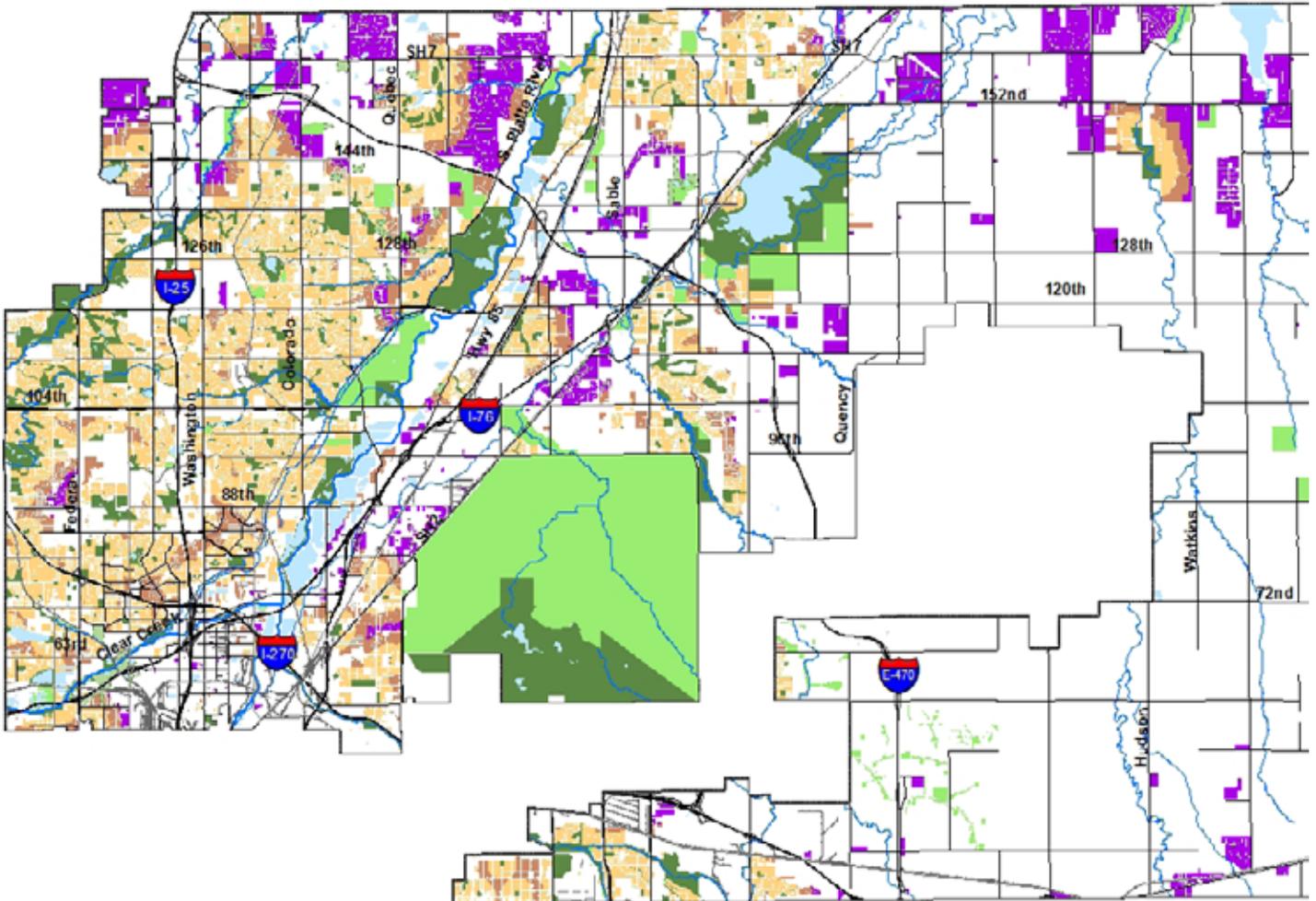


Barr Lake State Park, Photo Courtesy of Christina Bell

## OPEN SPACE AND PARKS PROVISION

Seventy eight (78) percent of all residential parcels are within a quarter mile (five minute walking distance) of an open space or park that allows public access. There are approximately 106,300 residential parcels within walking distance of a park or open space with public access (see Map 2). Eighty three (92) percent of all residential parcels are located within one-half mile (10 minute walking distance) or less of a park or open space with public access. The residential areas that do not have parks and open space within walking distance are mostly located in the northern portion of the County and in areas that are not within city boundaries.

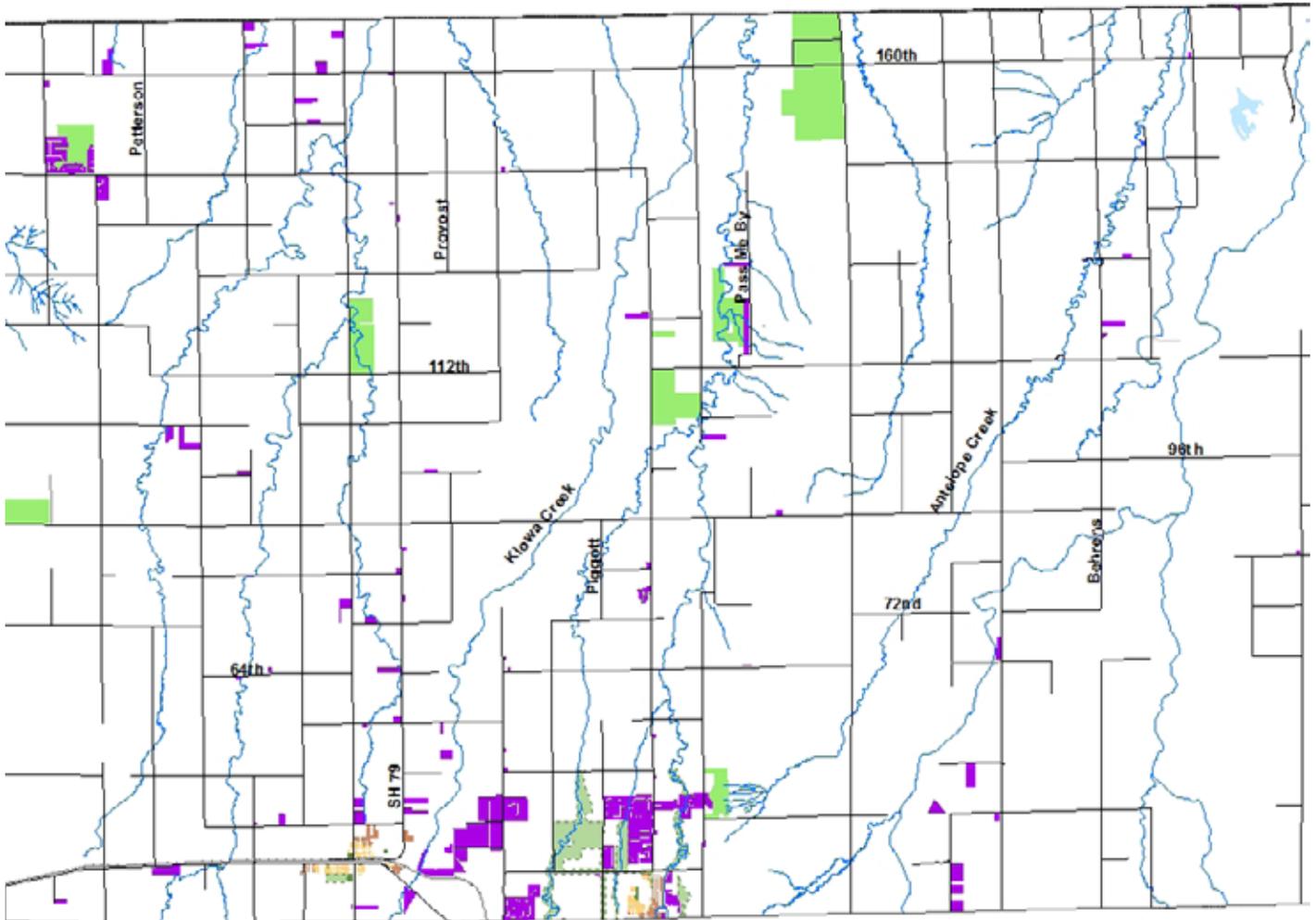
**Map 2:** Residence Proximity to Parks and Open Space Providing Public Access



School proximity to parks and open space is also an indicator of accessibility. There are 182 schools in Adams County; 141 (77%) of them are located within a quarter-mile (5-minute walk) of open space and parks that allow public access.

- Residential Parcels within a Quarter Mile of Public Parks and Open Space
- Residential Parcels within a Half Mile of Public Parks and Open Space
- Residential Parcels Without Public Parks and Open Space within Walking Distance
- Existing Parks and Open Space with Public Access
- Existing Open Space with No Public Access
- Planned Future Municipal, County, or Private Parks and Open Space

Public Access is defined as parks and open space that are developed and that development includes physical access (trail, sidewalk, or has features inviting access: i.e. playground). Parcels larger than 32 acres were not evaluated in this analysis.



## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The anticipated population growth of Adams County is a major consideration in the planning of future parks and open space. Future development patterns will also have implications for locating parks, open space, and trails. The graph in **Figure 1** demonstrates the changes that have occurred in the population numbers for each community from 2000-2010. The total population within Adams County grew from 363,857 to 441,603 within the ten-year period, an increase of 21.4%.

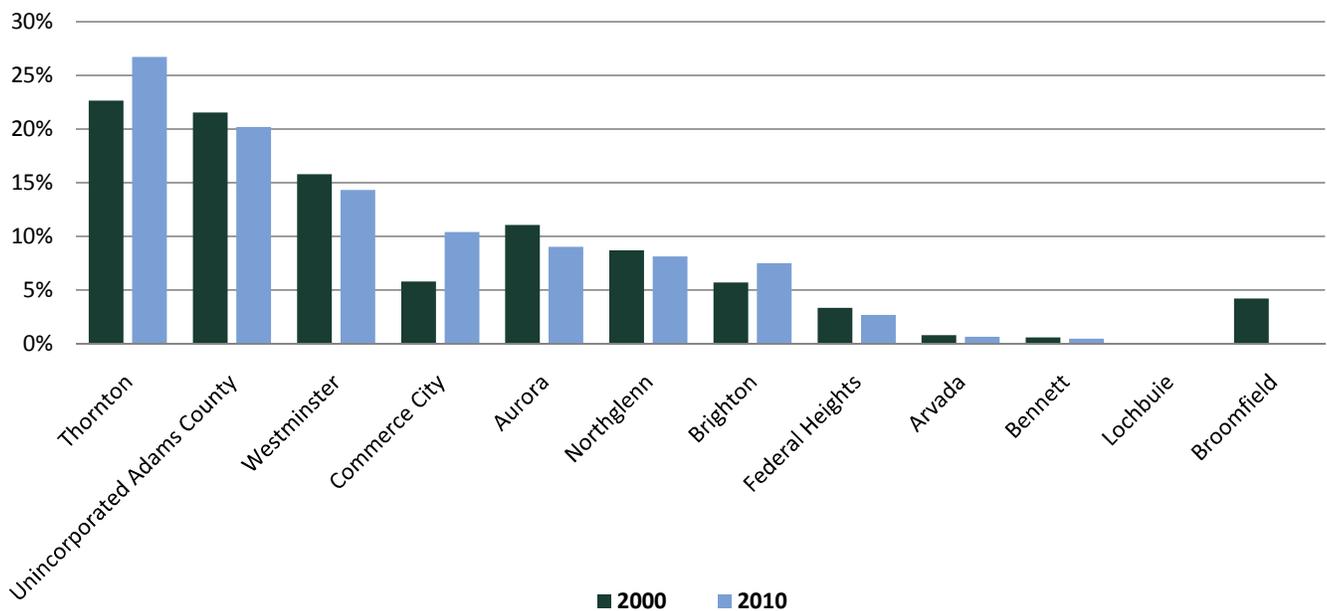
- From 2000 to 2010 unincorporated Adams County’s population grew from approximately 78,000 to 89,000 (+13.8%).
- Adams County has the 4th highest total population in the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) region.
- Adams County has the 2nd highest growth rate in the DRCOG region.



*Subdivisions that include large lots for horse ownership are becoming more common in rural areas.*

**Figure 1: Adams County Population 2000-2010**

### Adams County Population 2000-2010



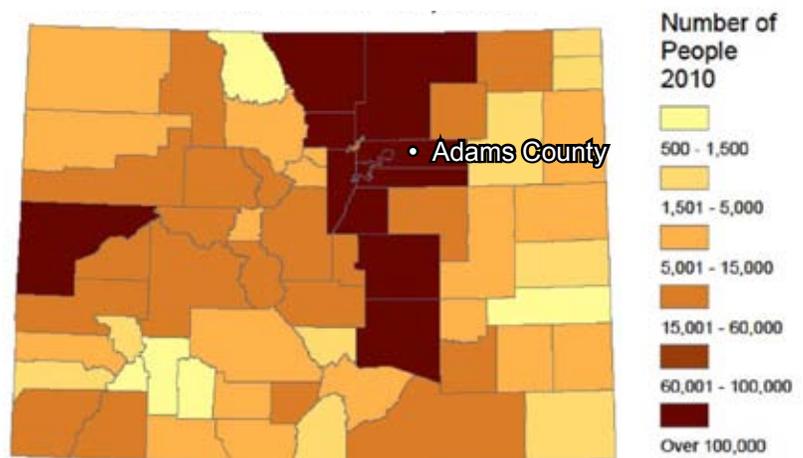
Source: US Census - Note: The City and County of Broomfield was created in November 2001. The population at this time was 15,861. The 2000 Census counts the population for Broomfield (within Adams County) as 15,239.

- Adams County population forecast (CO State Demographer) is projected to be 544,258 by 2020;
- According to the State Demographer, Adams County is projected to double in population by 2040 to 742,459.

New job and population growth is continuing to shift from more central portions of the Metro area into the outlying suburbs, where land is available and associated costs are relatively less. In Adams County, that means in particular the northwest areas along the I-25 corridor north of 120th Avenue, and in the north central parts of the County along the new E-470 Tollway around Brighton and Commerce City. Generally, future growth will continue within the eastern portion of the County as growth extends north and east from the Denver Metro Area. Brighton, Commerce City and Thornton have urban growth boundaries that extend significantly beyond their current city boundaries, as these cities continue to grow and fill much of the agricultural lands in this portion of the County.

The city boundaries (109,502 acres) in addition to the additional subdivided lands outside the city boundaries (43,026 acres) consumes 20% of the County land. Communities are growing together and the once prevalent rural buffer lands which once separated cities are quickly disappearing. The 2004 Comprehensive Plan and 1998 Open Space Plan both include strategies to maintain an open space buffer (natural or agricultural lands) or separator between cities, utilizing creative land protection strategies that can benefit the landowners, communities, and Adams County. The plan encourages Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) between the County and cities to ensure the success and preservation of the community separator concept. However, most of the urbanizing western portion of Adams County has already been designated as city growth areas for eventual annexation.

Figure 2: Colorado Population Totals (2010)



Adams County is among the 11 most populated counties in Colorado  
Source: Colorado State Demography Office, 2010

Table 7: Acreage of Open Space and Parks by Park Type

PARK LEVEL OF SERVICE PER POPULATION			
TIMELINE	EXISTING PUBLIC ACCESS ACREAGE*	POPULATION	PROJECTED ACRE PARK/CAPITA***
Adams County Population - Census 2010	16,850	441,603	0.038
Adams County Population - Forecast 2020**		544,258	0.031
Adams County Population - Forecast 2040**		742,459	0.023

\*Existing Park Acreage is based on public access within the GIS UMA as of 10/25/2012 for the entire County.

\*\*Population forecasts from the Colorado State Demographer's office completed in 2011

\*\*\*The National Recreation and Park Association suggests that a park system, at a minimum, be composed of a total of 6.25 to 10.50 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population. (10.5 acres/1,000 = .011 per capita)

Table 8: Colorado Regional Analysis Public Land Acres and Public Acres Per Capita

PUBLIC LAND ACRES (OPEN TO RECREATION USE) AND PUBLIC ACRES PER CAPITA (BY REGION)			
SCORP REGION	TOTAL ACRES	PUBLIC LAND ACRES (OPEN TO PUBLIC USE)	PUBLIC ACRES PER CAPITA
Front Range	7,502,653	1,934,363	0.60
Northeast	11,294,510	75,978	0.70

\*SCORP Section 5: Introduction to the SCORP Regional Profiles

## PARKS PER POPULATION

The National Recreation and Parks Association suggests that a park system, at a minimum, be composed of at least 6.25 acres per 1,000 people (or .007 acres per capita). Adams County currently exceeds this minimum providing 0.038 acres per capita (38.2 acres per 1,000 people) of lands available for public access and recreation.

While Adams County exceeds the National Recreation and Park Association standard for acreage of parks and open space per capita (Table 7), the County has a much lower ratio when compared to the Front Range or Northeast Regions of Colorado (Table 8). The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) completed for Colorado calculated the acres of open space and parks per capita to be 0.6 for the Front Range Region overall (which includes all of Adams County). The Northeast Region of Colorado is characterized much like the rural, agricultural lands in Adams County, yet the acres per capita still exceeds that of Adams County.

## LAND CHARACTERISTICS AND LAND COVER

### Hydrology

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

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



*Confluence of Clear Creek and the South Platte River*

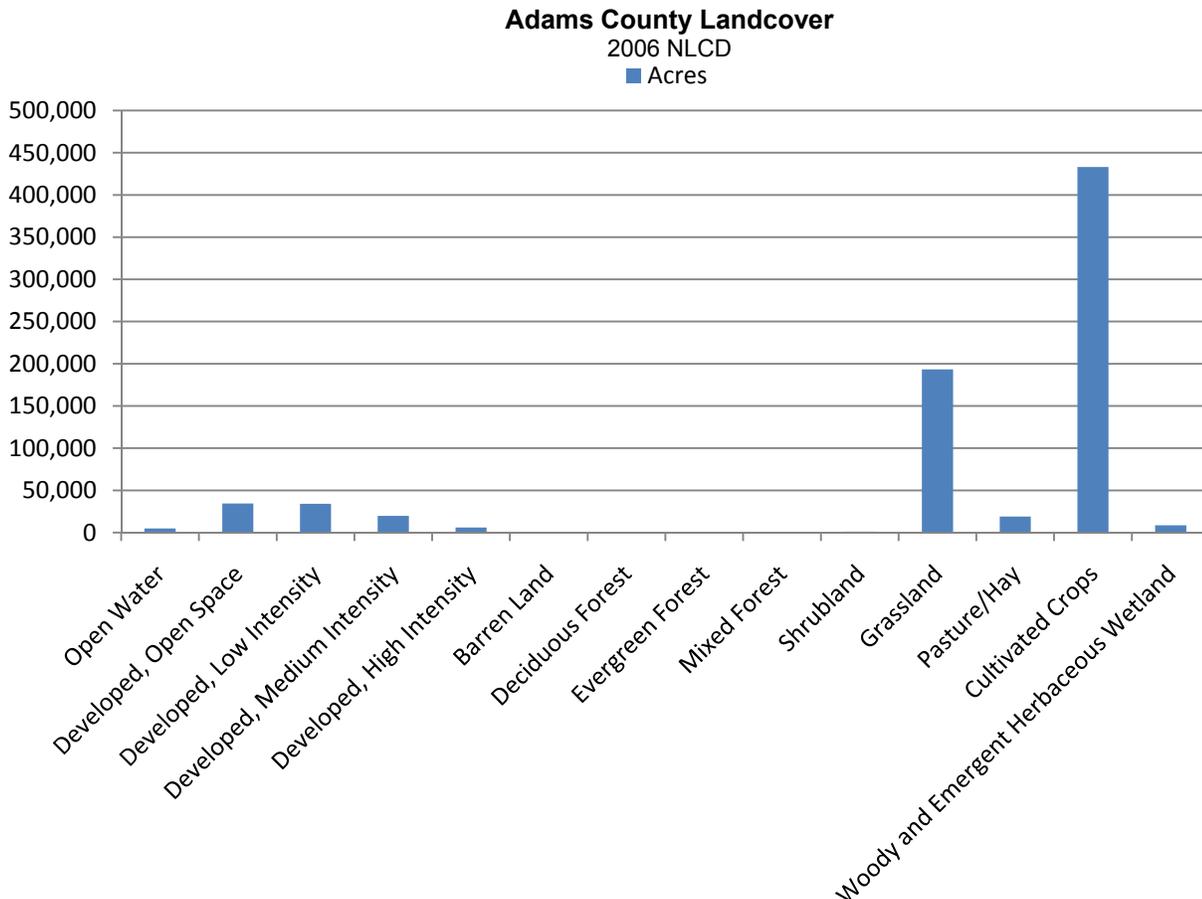
The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Creeks and Irondale Gulch, which intersect with the O’Brian/ Burlington Canal, are also considered to be highly sensitive to increased runoff. Large portions of these drainages have been cut off from the South Platte River by the two canals and drain directly into the canals. The O’Brian/Burlington is already over impacted during flood times. Increases in storm water runoff may produce flooding effects that cannot be handled. Brantner Gulch, flowing from Thornton, to Adams County Regional Park is suffering from similar pressures from development and is also being carefully studied by Urban Drainage and Flood Control for increased storm water conveyance capabilities.

LANDCOVER CATEGORY ACRES WITH ADAMS COUNTY	
Landcover (NLCD 2006)*	Acres
Open Water	4,893
Developed, Open Space	34,539
Developed, Low Intensity	34,200
Developed, Medium Intensity	19,808
Developed, High Intensity	6,114
Barren Land	944
Deciduous Forest	800
Evergreen Forest	112
Mixed Forest	12
Shrubland	1,219
Grassland	193,437
Pasture/Hay	19,135
Cultivated Crops	433,110
Woody and Emergent Herbaceous Wetland	8,774

**Table 9:** Landcover Category Acres with Adams County

\*National Land Cover Database 2006 Classification System

**Figure 3:** Adams County Landcover



## Vegetation

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

Trees are not plentiful in the County and naturally exist only along portions of the drainages and water bodies. The drainages and edges of the water bodies are important vegetation corridors due to their often rich diversity of plant material. They are also an integral part of the prairie grassland environment.



*Vegetation along the Kiowa Creek drainage*



*Grazing lands for cattle cover a large percentage of the land within the County.*

## AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Adams County has long been an agriculturally based community. The soils in Adams County are among the best in Colorado for agriculture. The U.S. Geological Survey land cover indicates that Adams County has almost 500,000 acres of farmland, while the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service sites 701,575 acres of “land in farms” in the County defined as any place from which \$1,000 or more in agricultural products were produced and sold.

These numbers indicate that Adams County is a leader in Front Range agriculture production. Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas and wheat are grown in large quantities and represent the bulk of the crops produced in the County. Dryland-farmed wheat, concentrated on lands east of Brighton and north of Strasburg, is the County’s dominant yield crop. Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod also comprise a significant portion of sales from Adams County farms.

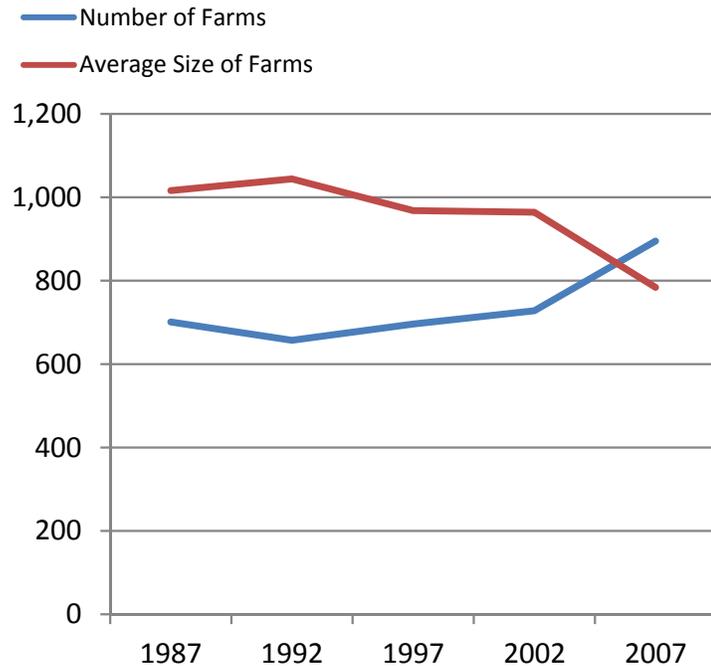
The agricultural vegetative cover is dominated by dryland crops/fields and rangeland throughout the western three quarters of the County, with irrigated crops/fields throughout. Row crops, irrigated pasture and dry-farm crops are located in the eastern one fourth of the County. Soils classified as Prime Farmland of State-Wide Importance cover 16% of the County (120,626 acres) while an additional 37% (277,106 acres) are classified as Prime Farmland if Irrigated.

The number of farms increased from 728 in 2002 to 895 in 2007. Though the number of farms increased, the size of farms decreased- from an average 964 acre farm to an average 784 acre farm in 2007- as there was only an overall increase in County-wide farm acreage of about 100 acres. The market value of products sold increased from \$98,670,000 in 2002 to \$153,438,000 in 2007.

**Table 10:** Agriculture Vegetation Type Acres within Adams County

AGRICULTURE VEGETATION TYPE ACRES WITHIN ADAMS COUNTY (USGS LAND COVER)	
Agricultural Vegetation Type	Acres
Row crops, irrigated pasture and dryfarm crops	18,260
Dryland crops and fields	380,881
Irrigated crops and fields	99,960
Rangeland	264,002
Non-agriculture	121,145

**Figure 4:** Number of farms and farm size in Adams County

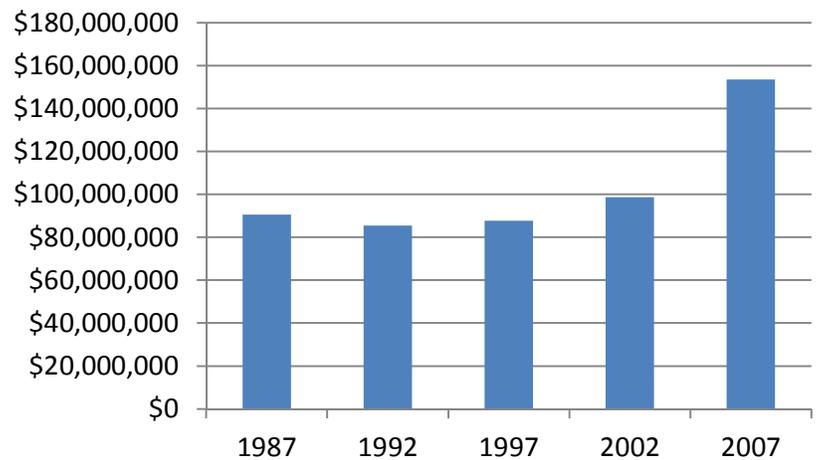


Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Truck farming also is a significant business in Adams County. As land prices in Adams County rise, many farmers are making a transition to more profitable crop production, such as vegetable farming. Cattle ranches, which are often combined with raising other foods, exist throughout the County, but are concentrated in the east. Cattle is the largest livestock component in Adams County. Dairy farming, which was historically very important in the County, still exists but has exhibited up and down cycles throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

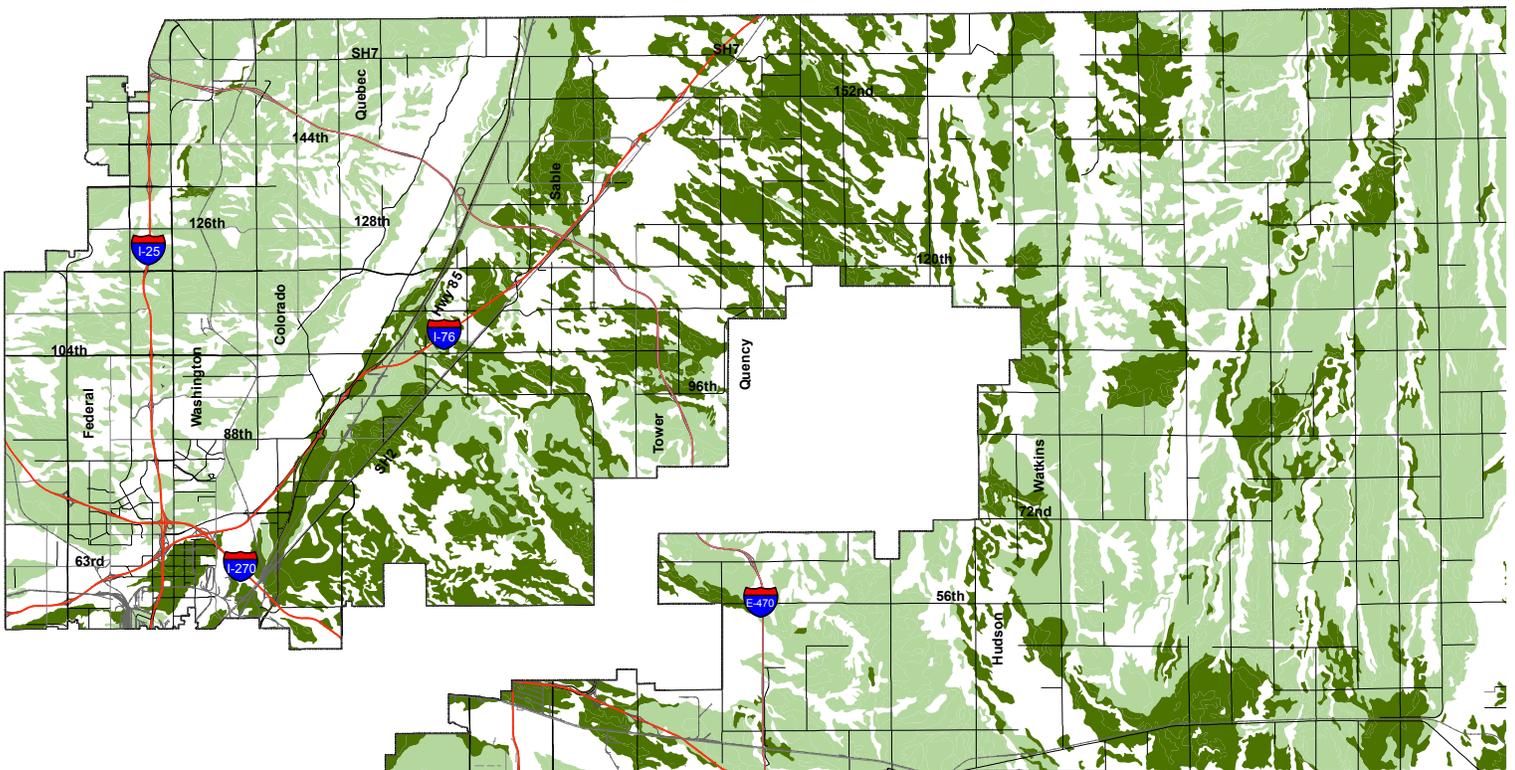
Some of the most productive agricultural land in the County borders urban population centers. As municipalities continue to grow, their expansion encroaches on agricultural operations. In addition, tension between agricultural and non-agricultural uses is occurring because of restrictions on normal farming practices when residential and commercial uses encroach on agricultural areas. Agriculture in the western part of Adams County has and will continue to experience the most dramatic shifts and changes.

Figure 5: Market value of agricultural products sold in Adams County



Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Map 3: Soil Productivity. Source: USDA/ NRCS



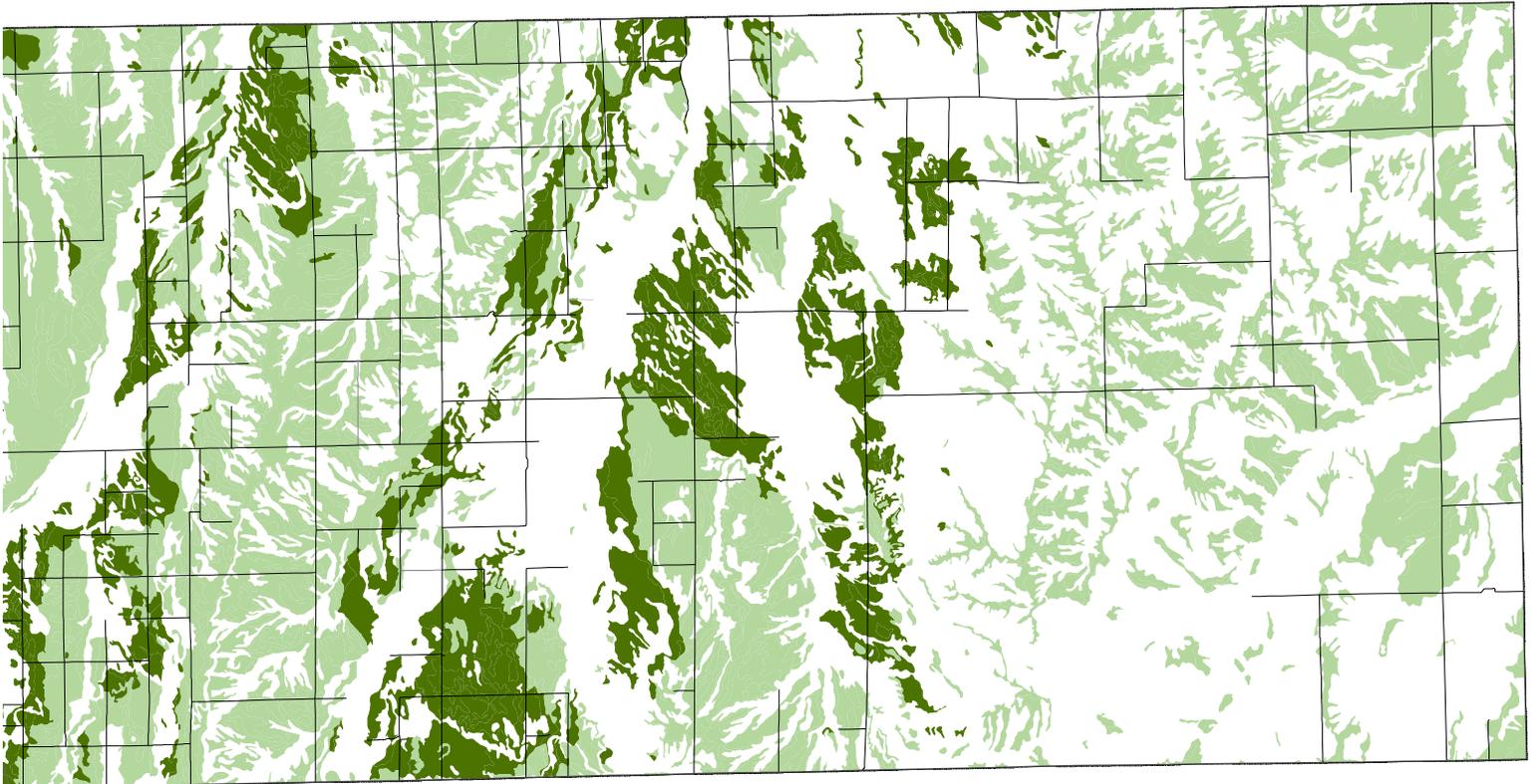


*Box Elder Creek Ranch is surrounded by agricultural lands near Horse Creek Reservoir. Photo: Google Earth*

#### **USDA DESIGNATIONS**

**Prime Farmland** is land that has the best combination of physical, chemical and biological characteristics for producing food, feed, and fiber, and oilseed crops. Prime Farmland areas have the soil quality, moisture supply, and growing season to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when those lands are treated and managed, including water management, according to acceptable farming methods.

**Farmland of Statewide Importance** is of statewide importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, and oilseed crops. Generally, farmlands of statewide importance include those that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.



## MINERAL EXTRACTION

The extraction of mineral resources is important to the local economy, providing employment to County citizens and tax income to the government. Adams County has led the Metro Area in recognizing the need for nearby aggregate sources and protecting them from premature development. In 1969, the County established a Mineral Conservation Zone District in which sand and gravel extraction was allowed. The Mineral Conservation Overlay Zone was established in 1979 in order to protect known deposits of resources including sand, gravel and coal. This zone establishes reasonable and uniform limitations, safeguards, and controls for the conservation and wise utilization of natural resources and for rehabilitation of excavated land.

Sand and gravel particles are created by the actions of water, heat, cold and wind on exposed rock. These particles wash downhill, ending up in streams and rivers where they are swept along until deposited in slow-moving sections of the watercourse. Streams rarely stay in the same location indefinitely. They meander within a floodplain, sometimes depositing material and sometimes cutting through earlier deposits. Along the way, the sand and gravel is sorted by size. Coarser gravel particles settle out first, while finer sand is carried further downstream. This sorting process created the very desirable sand and gravel deposits found along Clear Creek and the South Platte River.

In Adams County, Clear Creek has been almost completely mined, as have large parts of the South Platte Valley. In the future it is probable more gravel will be brought in from remote pits, such as Boulder Creek and St. Vrain Creek, and from rock quarries in the mountains. It is also possible urbanization to the east will make exploration of the deposits along Box Elder, Kiowa and Comanche Creeks financially attractive. Implementation of the Mineral Extraction Master Plan includes the conservation of natural areas through the use of setbacks of mining operations from rivers and streams and the use of a set-aside policy to offset habitat loss.

Adams County contains significant sand and gravel resources that continue to be extracted. The majority of aggregate extraction takes place adjacent to the banks of the South Platte River, with smaller mining

operations found along the County's minor drainages. Clear Creek has also been heavily mined, with many ponds and riparian lands remaining. The primary mining companies, Western Mobile, Cooley Sand and Gravel, and Albert Frei and Sons, have profited from mining aggregate along the South Platte River and will, in all likelihood, continue to mine here until the aggregate is expended.

Both the Comprehensive Plan and 1998 Open Space Plan require existing and future mining operations to reclaim lands during and after mining in an effort to create wildlife habitat, restore vegetation, contribute to flood storage, and provide appropriate residential, commercial, recreational, or educational development opportunities. These plans encourage reclamation of extracted sites to be multipurpose in use (water storage, passive recreation, and wildlife habitat).

Mining companies must adhere to mandatory State of Colorado mining reclamation regulations. Reclamation of a gravel mine involves returning lands disturbed by mining operations to a stable condition. Replacing topsoil, reinstating vegetation, rehabilitating floodplain and restoring ground water are some of the reclamation activities a mining company is required to perform. Adams County has an excellent opportunity, particularly in areas which have not been permitted for mining, to work with the mining operations to ensure that lands can be reclaimed in a manner that enhances wetlands and riparian zones, while providing recreation and educational resources that benefit the natural ecosystem and enhance the overall quality of life for Adams County residents. Many of the newer gravel mines will be developed for water storage. The South Platte River Heritage Plan identifies opportunities for development of multi-use water storage incorporating passive recreation uses and wildlife habitat where appropriate.

The Cooley and Western Mobile Lakes are located near 145th Avenue alignment and Riverdale Road and are in the process of being transferred to Adams County after mining is complete. Thornton and Brighton both have former gravel pits that are open to recreational access for trails and fishing.

## WILDLIFE

Adams County is home to a tremendous diversity and concentration of wildlife, especially birds. Over 362 species have been seen in Adams County according to the Colorado Bird Record Committee of the Colorado Field Ornithologists. There are over 100 federally recognized bald eagle nests in Colorado and at least six nests are located in Adams County. The County has several sites on the “central flyway” of migratory waterfowl in the western United States. These sites are critical stopover locations for a wide variety of birds traveling south along the Front Range. In addition, there are large populations of mammals such as mule deer, white-tailed deer, coyotes, antelope, badgers, pronghorn, swift fox, cottontail rabbits, white-tailed jackrabbits, and black-tailed prairie dogs.

The highest habitat values for significant wildlife populations are largely located in the eastern half of the County within the agricultural lands and along the main rivers including the South Platte River and Clear Creek. High values are also concentrated around Barr Lake and Horse Creek Reservoir as well as many of the smaller streams and creeks (Muddy Creek, Bijou Creek, Kiowa Creek, Comanche Creek, Wolf Creek, San Arroyo Creek, Potty Brown Creek and Badger Creek). The western half of the County is becoming largely urbanized, however the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge has high habitat value. Development patterns have changed the water sources available over the years. Riparian areas are the primary migration routes. Migration patterns for large animals are not strong in this County as the climate is mild enough to allow for year-round habitation.

In the past decade, the County has worked to protect a large area of farmland along the South Platte River that allows for wildlife movement along the river corridor. This protected area includes the Bald Eagle Conservation Easement. Most of these properties are under conservation easement, which ensures that these properties will be suitable for wildlife movement in perpetuity. Further north on the Platte, the Bloom property also protects habitat of a variety of species such as deer, turkeys, raptors, and more. Barr Lake State Park and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) work closely to create programs and events that educate the public on environmental and habitat

**Table 11: Wildlife Habitat of Importance Present within Adams County**

WILDLIFE HABITAT OF IMPORTANCE PRESENT WITHIN ADAMS COUNTY	
Wildlife Habitat*	Habitat Importance Ranking
Bald Eagle Nest Sites	High
Mule Deer Migration Corridors	High
Pronghorn Concentration Area	High
Pronghorn Winter Range	High
White Tail Deer Overall Range	High
Turkey Overall Range	High
Turkey Production Area	High
Mule Deer Resident Population Area	High
Bald Eagle Roost Sites	High
Great Blue Heron Nesting Area	High
Mule Deer Summer Range	Medium
Mule Deer Winter Range	Medium
Mule Deer Severe Winter Range	Medium
Pronghorn Overall Range	Medium
Swift Fox Overall Range	Medium
Bald Eagle Winter Concentration	Low
Bald Eagle Winter Range	Low
Mule Deer Concentration Area	Low
Mule Deer Limited Use Area	Low
Prairie Meadow Jumping Mouse Overall Range	Low
Pronghorn Resident Population Area	Low
Pronghorn Perennial Water	Low
Turkey Winter Range	Low
Turkey Winter Concentration Area	Low
White Tail Deer Winter Range	Low
White Tail Deer Concentration Area	Low

*\*Habitat Mapping provided by the Colorado Division of Wildlife Natural Diversity Information Source. Wildlife habitat deemed most important and ranked by Colorado Parks and Wildlife district manager.*

issues. Because RMBO is located at Barr Lake State Park, they have formed a strong partnership. The City of Aurora also provides environmental education for Adams County residents at the Morrison Nature Center located at Star K Ranch.

Due to the quantity, quality and uniqueness of the wildlife in the County, two wildlife sanctuaries have been preserved, Barr Lake State Park and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Since the 1880's, when the lake was created as an irrigation reservoir, Barr Lake has been a refuge for wildlife. The park is well known for its vast prairie landscape, spacious views to the Front Range, tremendous diversity of wildlife, high quality of fishing and the many passive recreation opportunities. The lake has more than 346 species of birds, including the most successful bald eagle nesting pair in the region. It is also a critical resting place for thousands of birds traveling south. In addition, Barr Lake and the South Platte River have the highest concentrations of deer in the County.

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge supports an abundance of species and communities that traditionally inhabited the expansive plains grasslands. This 27-square mile protected area provides natural habitats that have been long in decline due to agricultural and urban development. The area is one of America's largest wildlife refuges and provides food, shelter and freedom to more than 330 species of animals such as bison, bald eagles, ferruginous hawks, a wide variety of migratory birds, deer, coyotes, prairie dogs and burrowing owls. After cleanup, the Refuge will be the largest contiguous block of undeveloped land within the Denver metropolitan area.

Prairie dogs are a prey base for raptors such as the ferruginous hawk which is a species of special concern in the state. They are the primary prey for bald eagles and vital to the continued roosting and nesting of bald eagles in the County. The state threatened burrowing owl nests in prairie dog burrows and is commonly seen in active prairie dog towns in the eastern half of the County. Prairie dogs are also a food source for coyotes, badgers, red-tailed hawks, Swainson's hawks, and swift fox. Prairie dog towns provide habitat for mountain plover and a variety of reptiles and amphibians.

Area wildlife is also important for hunting, especially waterfowl. The Mile High Duck Club, which owns significant wetlands north of Barr Lake, provides an excellent example of how private entities can maintain wildlife habitats in the County. Even though the County's wildlife appears to have ample habitat, there are many concerns for the future regarding growth, mining, conflicting recreational uses, loss of agricultural lands and the loss of existing wildlife habitats and corridors.

**“Colorado residents value wildlife viewing; almost all Coloradans report that one of the reasons they take trips to the outdoors is for the chance to see wildlife. Almost all residents also report they enjoy watching wildlife when they take a trip outdoors, enjoy seeing wildlife around their homes, and report that the wildlife they see is an important part of their community. Coloradans think it is important that residents have a chance to learn about the wildlife in the state.” (Vaske)**



*From Left to Right: Mule Deer, Burrowing Owl, and American Avocet (Source: Colorado Division of Wildlife)*

# EVALUATION OF LANDS FOR FUTURE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

# 3

1. Wildlife Habitat
2. Land Characteristics and Land Cover
3. Agriculture
4. Scenic Quality
5. Property Location and Size
6. Land Policy, Development Suitability and Infrastructure
7. Composite Map
8. Agricultural Resources
9. Mineral Extraction



# EVALUATION OF LANDS

## Methodology

Geographic Information System (GIS) data from various sources was utilized to create a database of all elements listed in Figure 6. Each data element was assigned a rank and over-layed on a map for analysis.

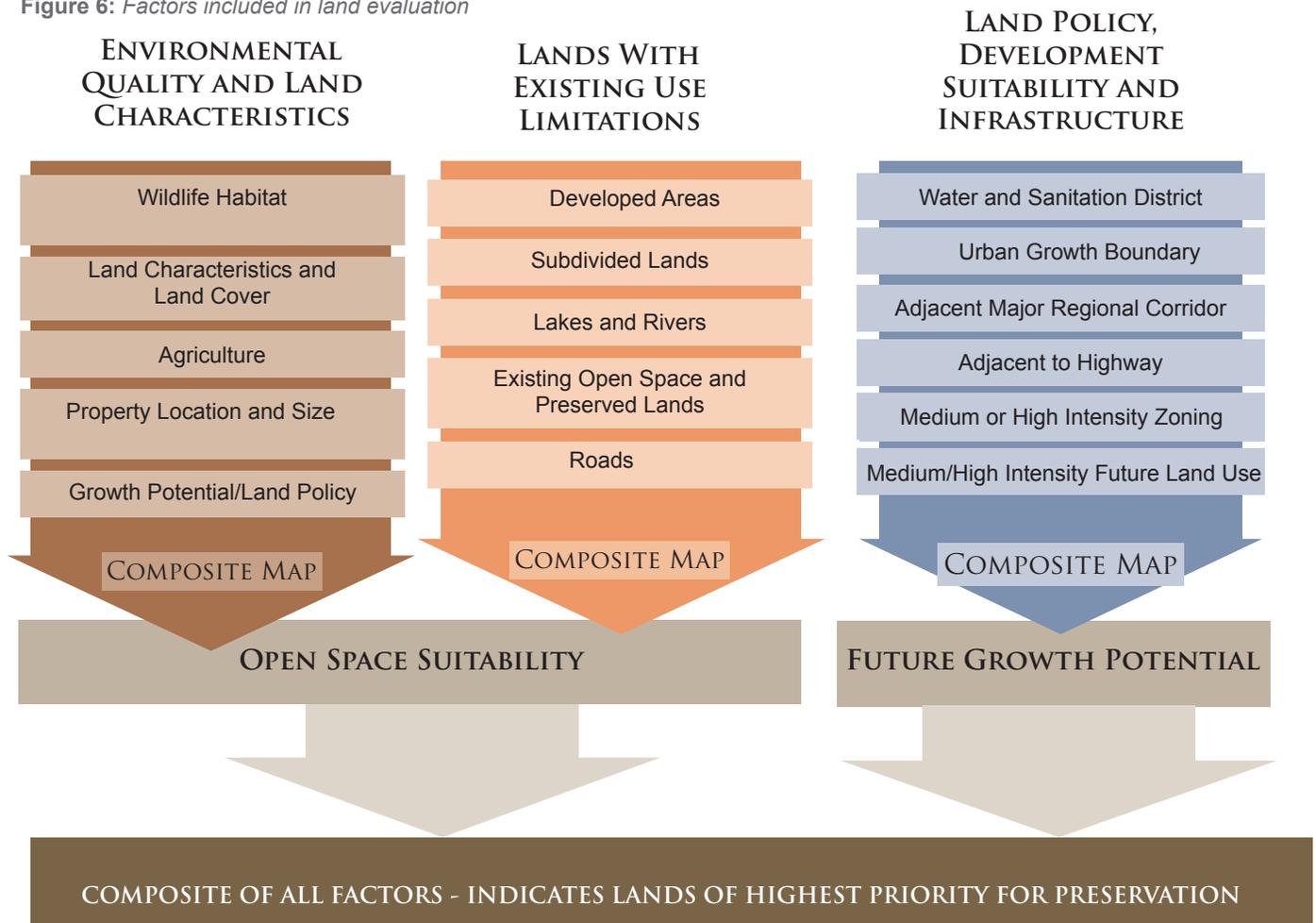
The land evaluation and ranking was informed by the guiding principles and goals set forth by both expert input- in the form of the Technical Review Committee and stakeholder input- as well as public input from the County-wide Survey and meetings regarding lands they would like to prioritize and the role they believe open space should play.

## The Result

Each of these groups of data produced a composite map illustrating lands with the highest values for preservation and suitability as open space.

This methodology provides a framework for prioritization and decision making for future open space acquisitions, determining locations for future trails, evaluating access or protection levels for open space properties and identifying gaps in the parks and open space system.

Figure 6: Factors included in land evaluation



## Composite Maps

### Wildlife Habitat

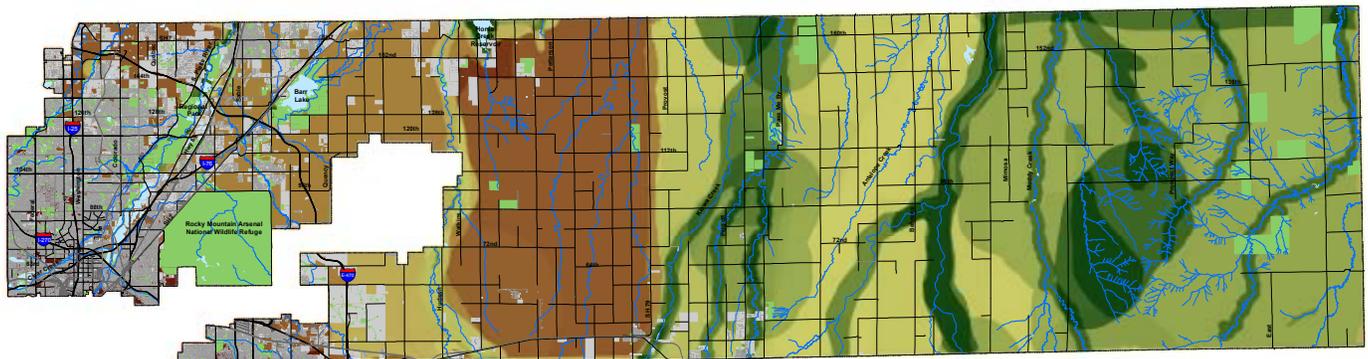
The Wildlife Habitat data included those species most critical as defined by Colorado Division of Wildlife (see the existing conditions chapter for more information about wildlife species ranking). The highest ranking was assigned to the habitats of the bald eagle, pronghorn and great blue heron. The composite map shows the highest values for preservation being those areas along rivers and streams. The eastern half of the County has the largest area of high habitat value for preservation due to the less developed character of the land, streams, and aquifers.

### WILDLIFE HABITAT

	Ranking
Bald Eagle Nest	10
Pronghorn	10
Great Blue Heron	10
Turkey	10
Mule Deer	10
White Tail Deer	10
Swift Fox	5
Prairie Meadow Jumping Mouse	1

COMPOSITE MAP

Map 4: Wildlife Habitat Value Composite Map



WILDLIFE HABITAT VALUE

	High
	Low

Note: All Composite Maps are shown at a small size for simplified document viewing. Large format maps for high visibility and legibility are available upon request.

**Land Characteristics and Land Cover**

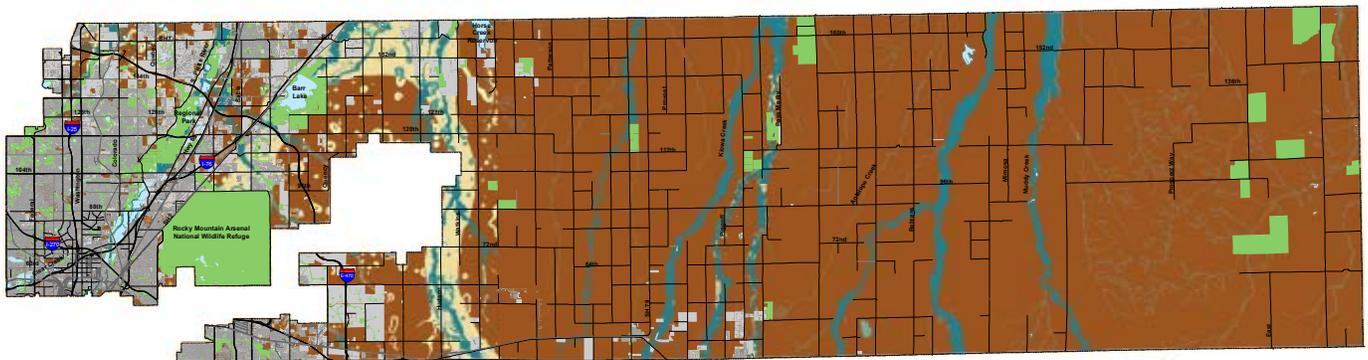
Land Characteristics and Land Cover map shows forested areas, rivers, streams, ditches and lakes, wetlands and flood areas, Flood Hazard Areas, steep slopes over 30 percent grade, Plains Preservation Areas and River Preservation Areas as identified by the Denver Regional Council of Governments as highly valued landscapes, therefore indicating these areas as the highest value for future preservation.

**LAND CHARACTERISTICS AND LAND COVER**

	Ranking
Forest	10
Rivers	10
Streams	10
Lakes	10
Wetlands	10
Flood Plain	6
Steep Slopes	5
Plains Preservation Area	5
River Preservation Areas	5
Ditches	4

**COMPOSITE MAP**

**Map 5: Land Characteristics and Land Cover**



## Agriculture

Agriculture criteria included lands defined as prime farmland by USDA as the highest rank, followed by areas currently used for crop production, rangeland, as well as areas currently irrigated and those currently designated as agricultural zoning and future land use policy areas of high density development. The ranking also valued large agricultural parcels over smaller segmented parcels. These areas are largely concentrated on the central and eastern half of the County.

### AGRICULTURAL LANDS

	Ranking
Prime Farmland of Statewide Importance	10
Prime Farmland if Irrigated	8
Irrigated Crops and Fields	8
Row Crops, Pasture, Dryforms	6
Future Land Use Agricultural Designation	6
Dryland Crops and Fields	4
Rangeland	4
Large Lot Agriculture Parcels	3
Agriculture Zoning	2

**COMPOSITE MAP**

Map 6: Agricultural Value

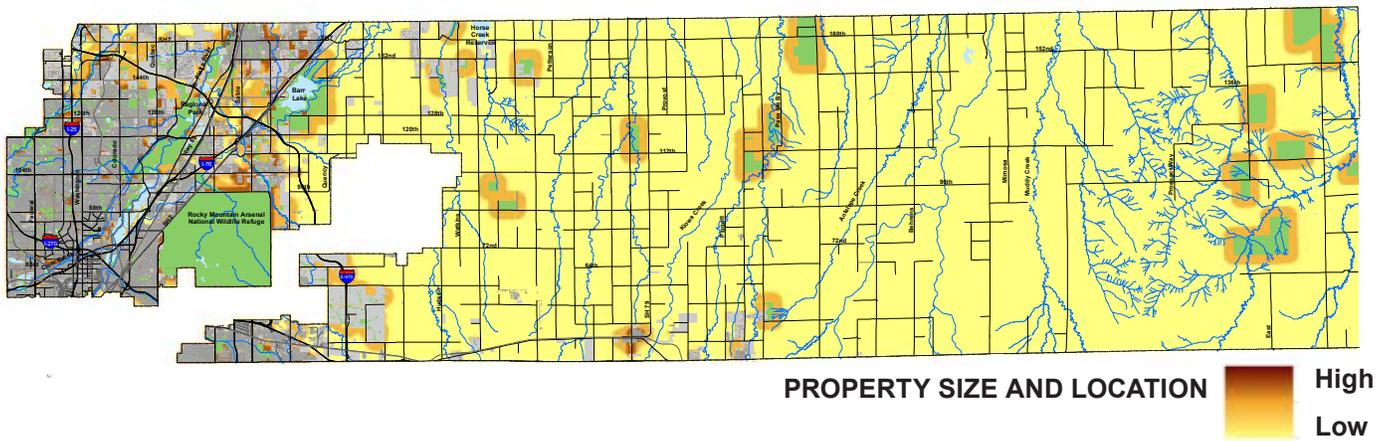


### Property Location and Size

Property Location and Size composite map prioritizes lands adjacent to existing parks, open space, and trails. These lands that could connect or expand upon existing systems of open space and trails. Areas with residences and schools that do not have access to open space within a five-minute walk are also criteria for identifying potential lands of value. From the analysis of residential proximity, a number of lands in the western part of the County, which is mostly urbanized or where development is imminent, are shown as priority lands for parks and open space provision.

PROPERTY LOCATION AND SIZE	Rank
Properties Adjacent to Parks and Open Space	10
Properties Adjacent to Trails	8
Residential properties - no open space/parks within a 5 min walk	8
School properties - no open space/parks within a 5 min walk	8
Residential parcels - no open space/parks within 1/2 mile	6
<b>COMPOSITE MAP</b>	

Map 7: Property Size and Location Composite Map

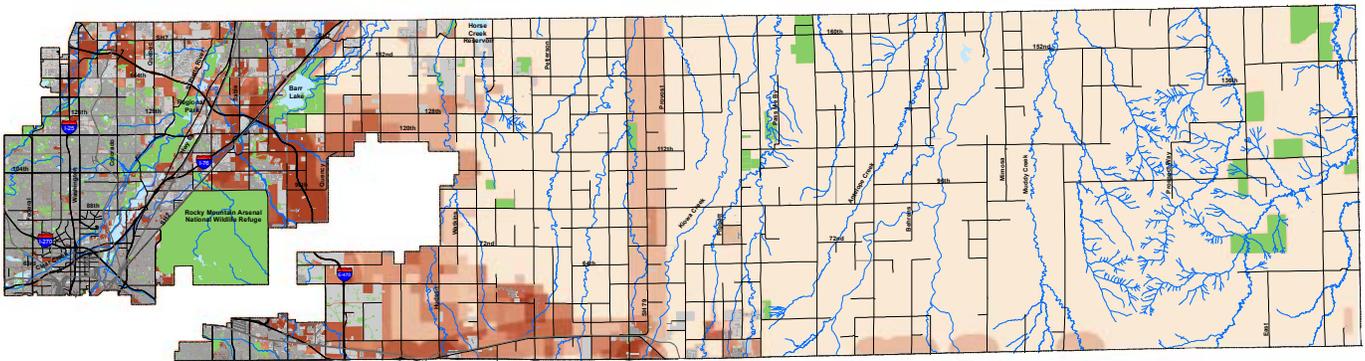


## Land Policy / Future Growth Potential

The Land Policy / Future Growth Potential composite established any constraints or opportunities due to utilities or infrastructure needs. Growth potential was established by extracting areas adjacent to major regional road corridors and highways as well as medium or high intensity future land use and zoning.

### LAND POLICY

	Rank
Water and Sanitation District	10
Urban Growth Boundary	10
Adjacent Major Regional Corridor	10
Adjacent to Highway	8
Medium or High Intensity Zoning	8
Medium or High Intensity Future Land Use	6
<b>COMPOSITE MAP</b>	



**LAND POLICY / FUTURE GROWTH**

High
Low

### Composite Map

The composite of all maps overlays all the criteria described above. The result provides a clear framework for prioritization of lands for future open space or parks. Land along rivers, streams and lakes are a clear target for preservation, as well as areas within the already developed communities that face imminent development pressure and are in close proximity to a high concentration of residences.

WILDLIFE HABITAT		LAND CHARACTERISTICS AND LAND COVER	
	Rank		Rank
Bald Eagle	10	Forest	10
Pronghorn	10	Rivers	10
Great Blue Heron	10	Streams	10
Turkey	10	Lakes	10
Mule Deer	10	Wetlands	10
White Tail Deer	10	Flood Plain	6
Swift Fox	5	Steep Slopes	6
Prairie Meadow Jumping Mouse	1	Plains Preservation Area	5
		River Preservation Areas	5
		Ditches	4

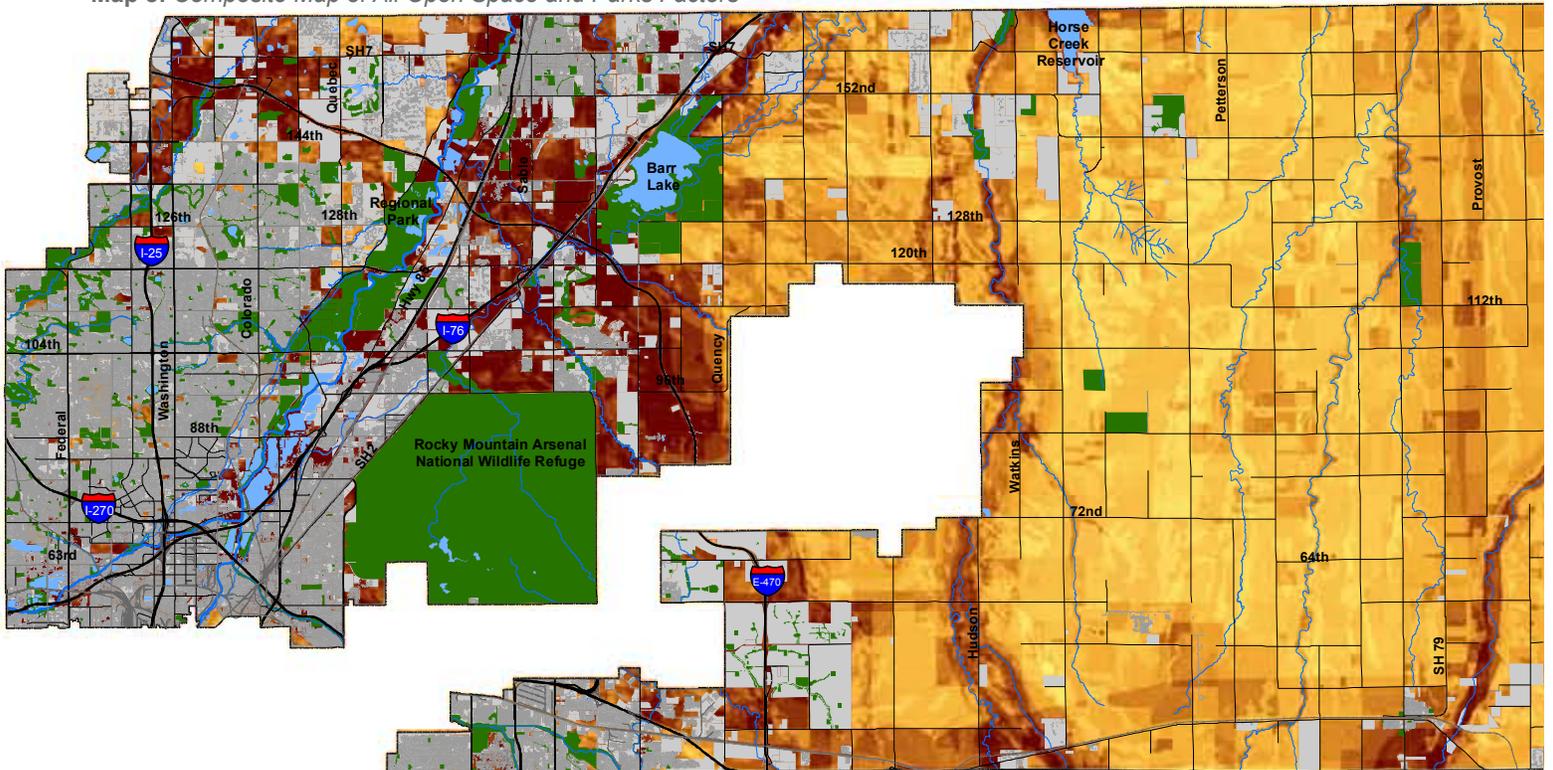


COMPOSITE MAP



COMPOSITE MAP

Map 8: Composite Map of All Open Space and Parks Factors



### AGRICULTURAL LANDS

	Rank
Prime Farmland of Statewide Importance	10
Prime Farmland if Irrigated	8
Irrigated Crops and Fields	8
Row Crops, Pasture, Dryforms	6
Future Land Use Agricultural Designation	6
Dryland Crops and Fields	4
Rangeland	2
Large Lot Agriculture Parcels	3
Agriculture Zoning	4
<b>COMPOSITE MAP</b>	

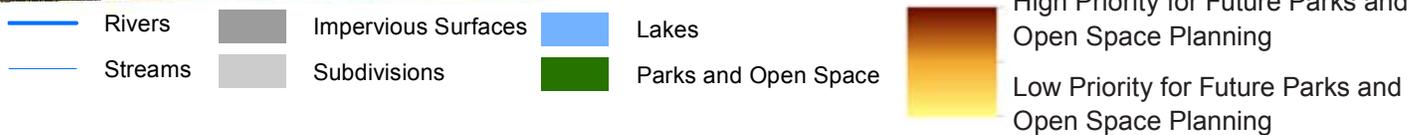
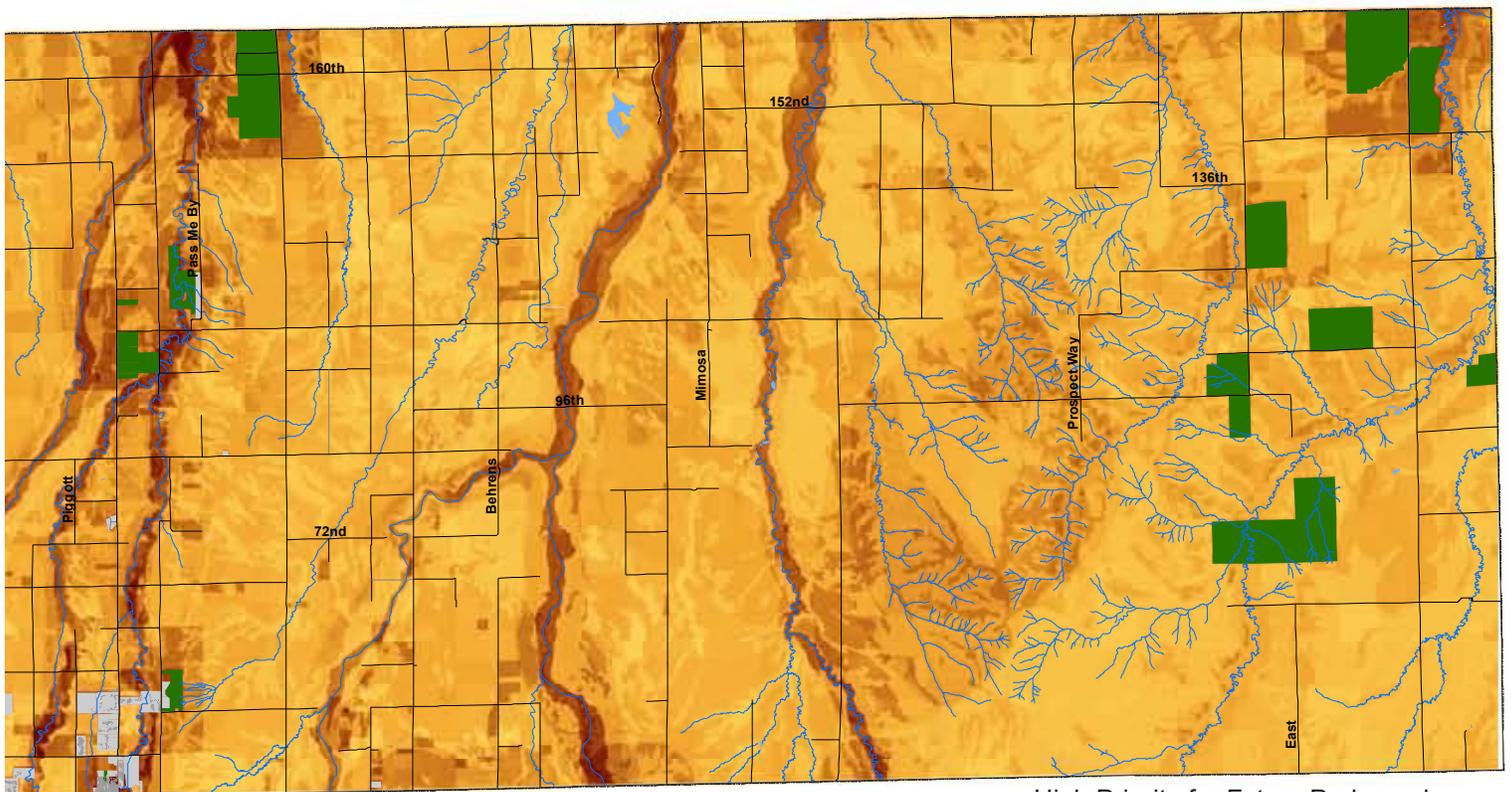
### PROPERTY LOCATION/SIZE

	Rank
Properties Adjacent to Parks and Open Space	10
Properties Adjacent to Trails	8
Residential properties - no open space/parks within a 5 min walk	8
School properties - no open space/parks within a 5 min walk	8
Residential parcels - no open space/parks within 1/2 mile	6
<b>COMPOSITE MAP</b>	

### LAND POLICY

	Rank
Water and Sanitation District	10
Urban Growth Boundary	10
Adjacent Major Regional Corridor	10
Adjacent to Highway	8
Medium or High Intensity Zoning	8
Medium or High Intensity Future Land Use	6
<b>COMPOSITE MAP</b>	

## COMPOSITE OF ALL FACTORS INDICATES LANDS OF HIGHEST PRIORITY FOR PRESERVATION





# MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

1. Proposed Open Space and Parks Focus Areas
2. Proposed Trails
3. Recreational Opportunities
4. Outdoor and Nature Education

# 4



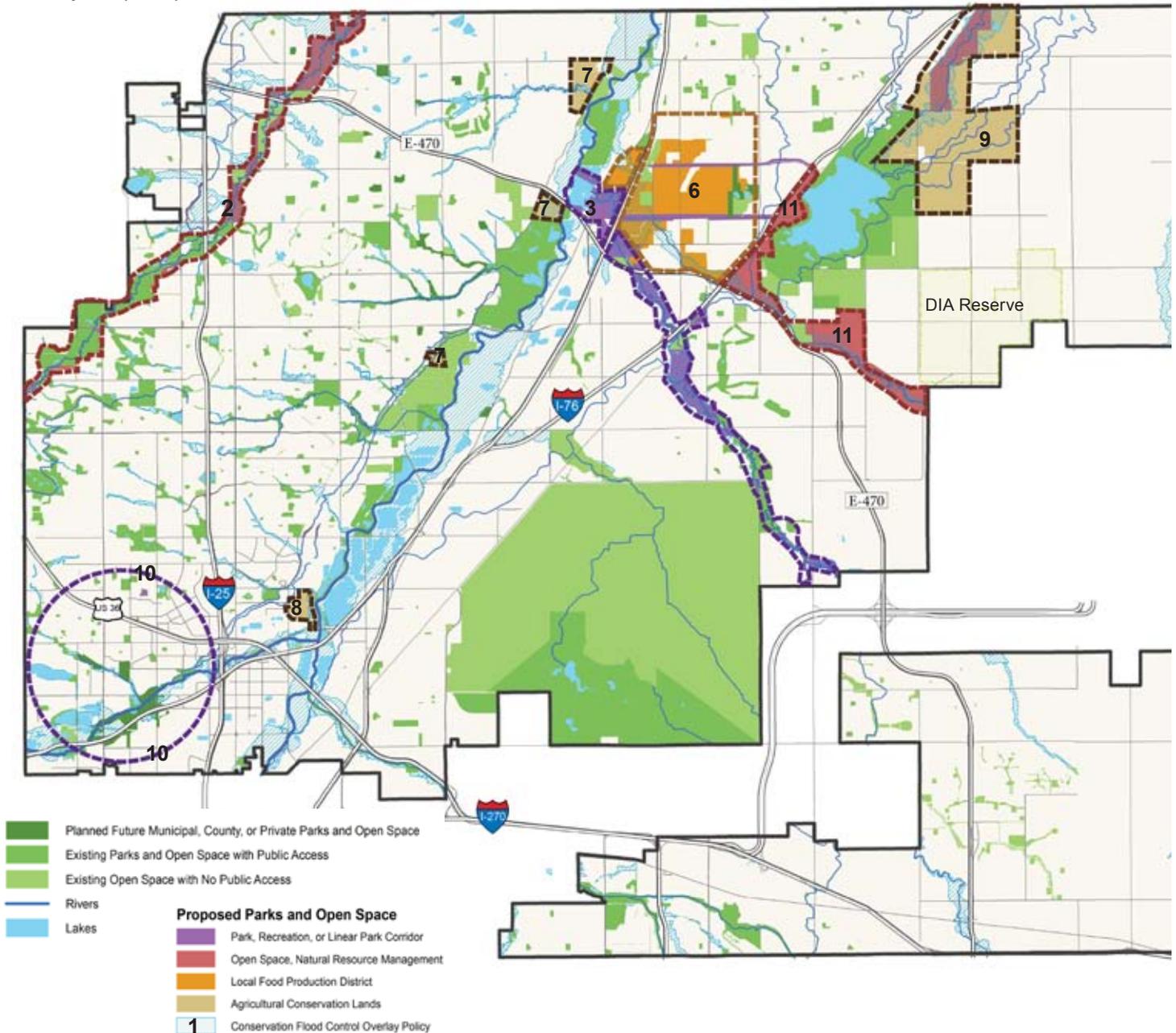
# MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

This chapter describes the primary components of the proposed parks, open space, and trails development and enhancements within Adams County. The cities and towns have their own parks, open space and trails plans that are taken into account in the County Master Plan to indicate regional connections and opportunities.

## Proposed Open Space and Parks

-  Parks, Recreation, or Linear Park Corridor
-  Open Space, Natural Resources Management
-  Local Food Production District
-  Agricultural Conservation Lands

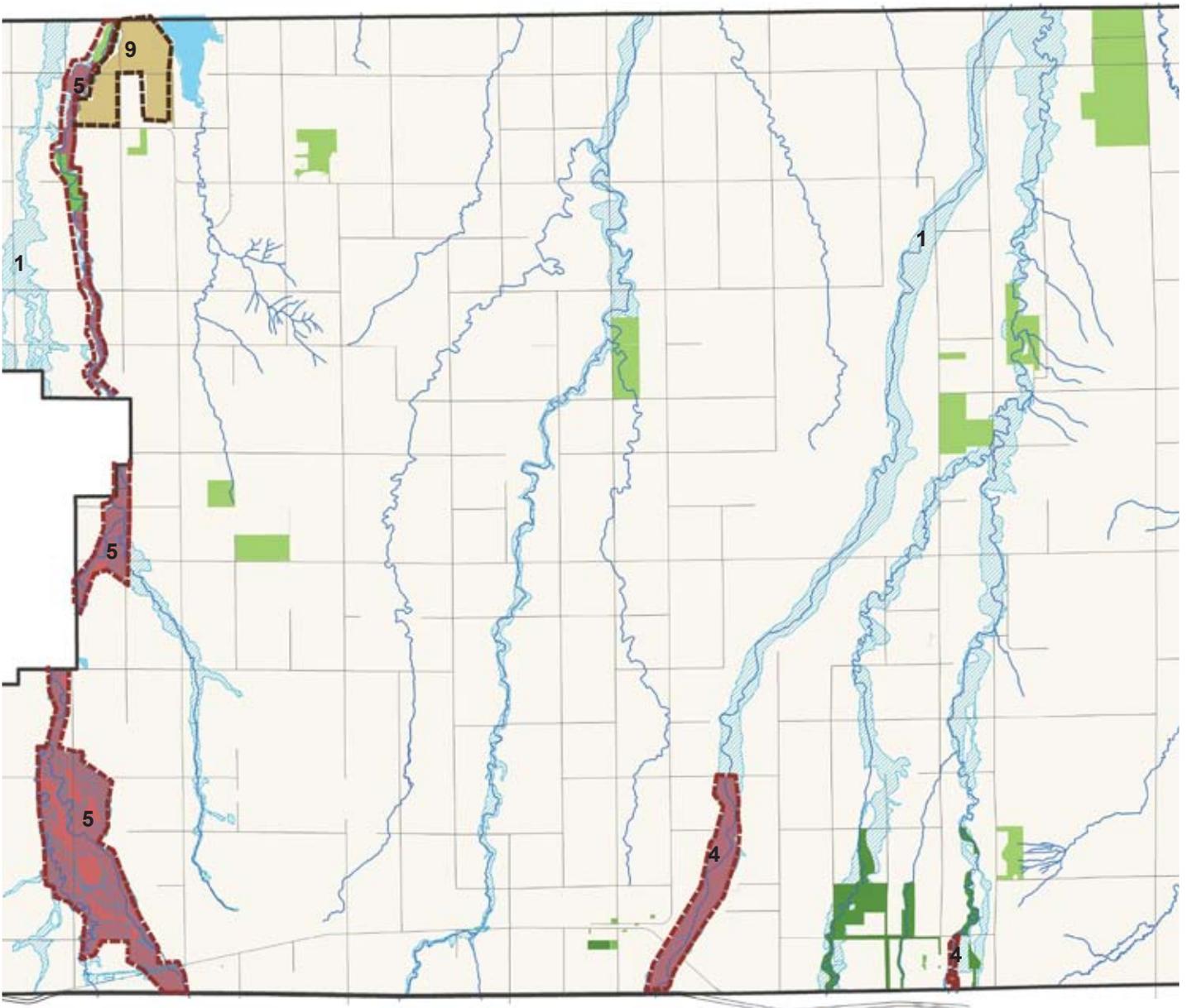
Map 9: Open Space and Parks Master Plan



## PROPOSED OPEN SPACE AND PARKS FOCUS AREAS

The Master Plan vision for open space is focused in the following 12 areas in the County:

1. Conservation Flood Control Overlay Policy Areas
2. Big Dry Creek Greenway
3. Second Creek Greenway
4. Kiowa Creek and Comanche Creek Greenways
5. Box Elder Creek Greenway
6. Local Food Production District
7. South Platte River Corridor
8. Agricultural Lands at the Confluence of Clear Creek and South Platte River
9. Agricultural Land Conservation
10. Infill Local Park Opportunities
11. Barr Lake Buffer



## River Corridors and Greenways for Restoration and Recreation

River and drainage corridors are the most important natural features within the County and their permanent protection and enhancement as open space is vital. Ninety-three percent of the County-Wide Survey respondents deemed protecting land in floodplains and along rivers and streams that will help maintain high water quality an essential or very important purpose of open space. Flood control has become a major concern due to the amount of growth and development in the County. The influx of development has increased the amount of stormwater runoff and stream channelization has altered natural drainage patterns and created greater challenges in handling flash floods. Throughout most of the County, development may be permitted as long as structures are raised above the flood water line with fill. In addition to water quality and quantity implications, building up to the stream edge interferes with bird habitat and wildlife that utilize riparian areas as travel corridors.

In addition to flood mitigation, erosion control, and water quality improvement, some riparian areas are appropriate for public recreation. When human activity can be balanced and not interfere with the natural systems and flood mitigation, these greenways can serve as excellent opportunities for people to enjoy nature and recreation. Public feedback on the Master Plan showed that people most desire trails to be located along river corridors.



*Much of the natural areas along the South Platte River are conserved as open space.*

## 1. Conservation Flood Control Overlay Policy Areas

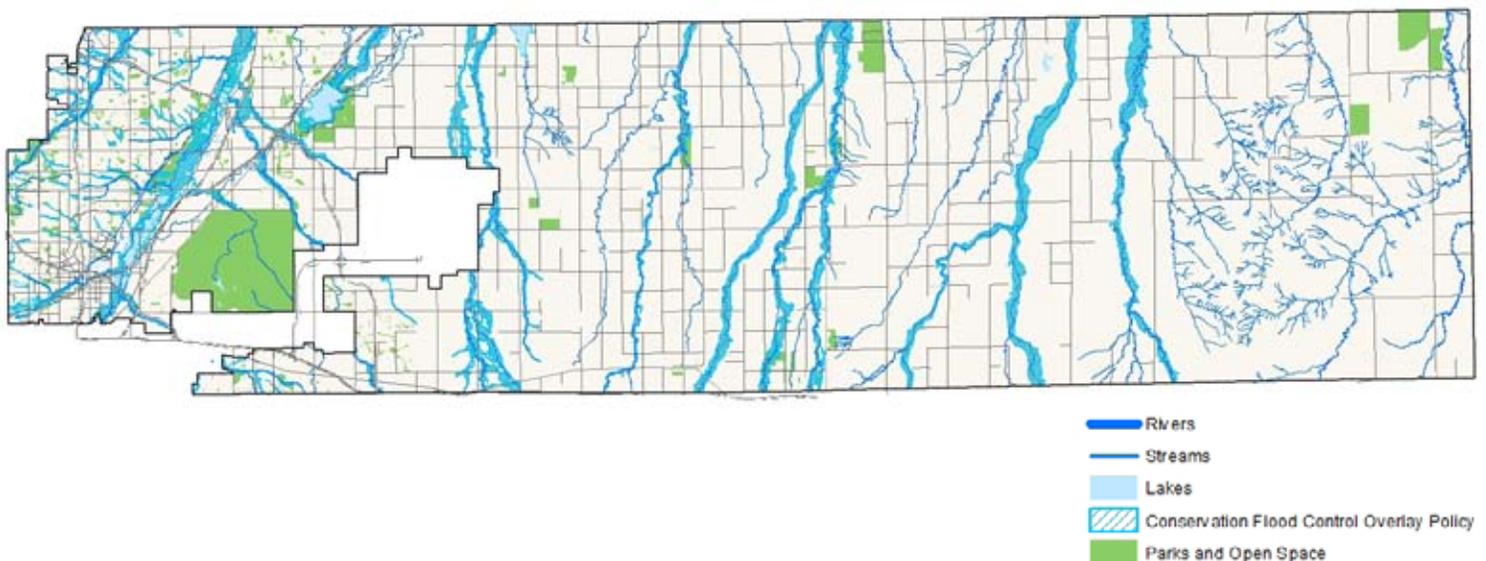
River and stream protection and enhancement throughout the County is important for a variety of reasons. Incremental development within the floodplain and riparian areas is leading to impaired stormwater management and fragmentation of wildlife and bird habitat. The conservation of entire corridors with the Flood Control Overlay Zone is critical for water quality, wildlife movement, and erosion control in addition to flood water management. An important element of the Master Plan is the recommendation for more strict controls for the County Flood Control Overlay Zones. This recommendation is intended to direct development away from riparian and flood areas, not to inhibit flood management.

Not all floodplain areas are appropriate for public access and trails because of safety concerns, private property interests, wildlife conflicts, or ecosystem sensitivity. In those situations acquisition of open space for public access is not necessary or desired. Acquiring lands as open space is not always necessary to protect the important functions of rivers and streams. Other measures can be utilized such as tightening the County's policy for flood control and providing incentives to land owners to enhance riparian areas. Greater restriction on development within the Flood Control Overlay Zones would in effect preserve riparian and floodplain areas in the same way as open space acquisition.



*Kiowa Creek drainage contains tall cottonwood trees that contrast with the surrounding grazed lands.*

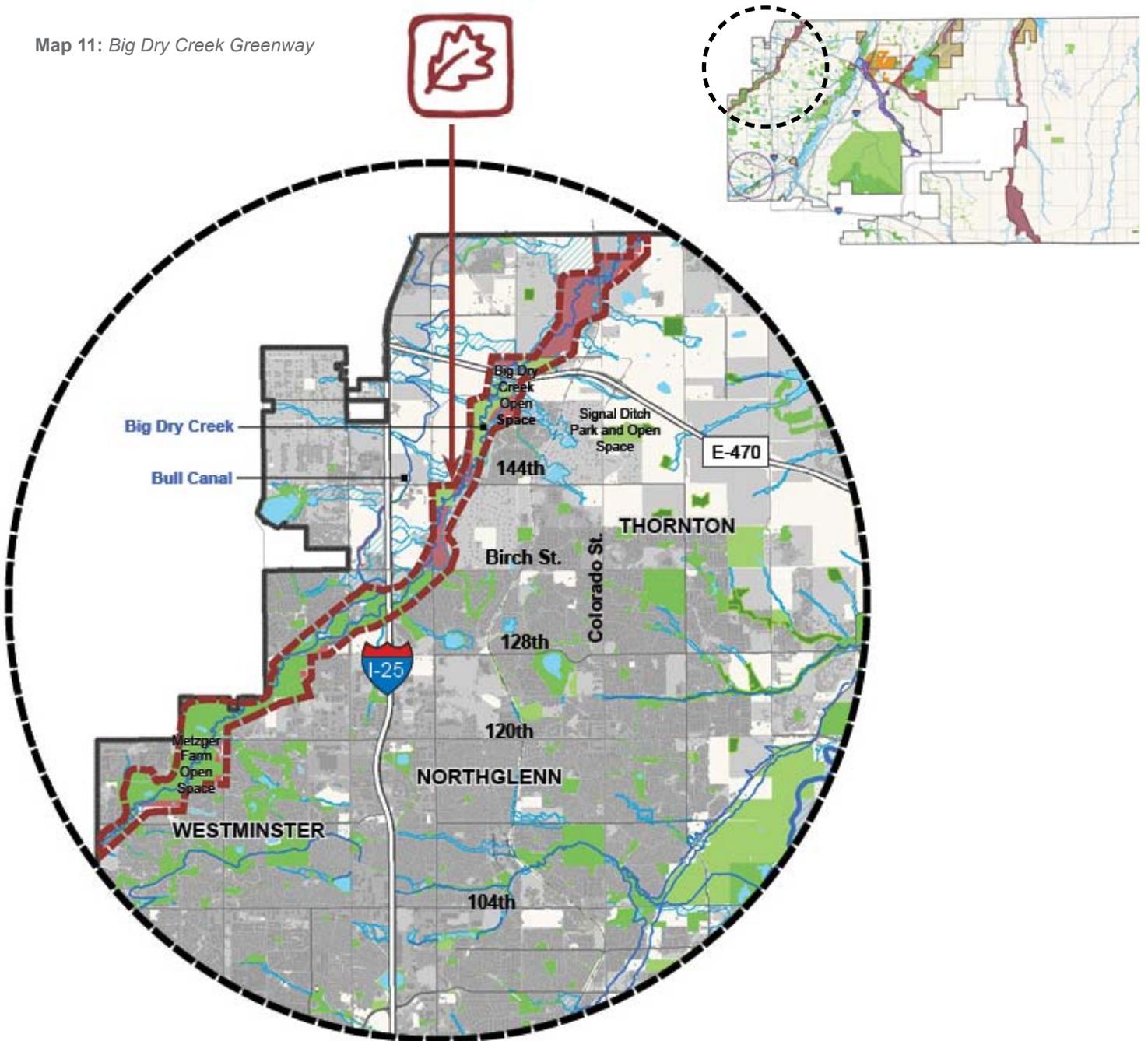
**Map 10:** Flood Control Overlay Policy Areas



## 2. Big Dry Creek Greenway

Big Dry Creek is a major drainage through the City of Thornton and its floodplain has been designated as an open space network throughout the community. The trails connect to Westminster where trails, open space and parks have already been developed. Many ecologically valuable habitat types, including wetlands, riparian forests, and mesic grasslands, occur within the Big Dry Creek drainage. The vegetation communities attract a diverse wildlife population including numerous birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The creek corridor also provides nesting or migration habitat for raptors, waterfowl, wading birds such as the great blue heron, and migratory shorebirds. Completing the gaps in parks and open space acquisition is a high priority for Thornton and the County.

Map 11: Big Dry Creek Greenway



*Existing trails along Big Dry Creek provide bike, equestrian, and pedestrian routes and recreation opportunities to surrounding neighborhood. This is a significant corridor to construct paths, filling in connectivity gaps.*



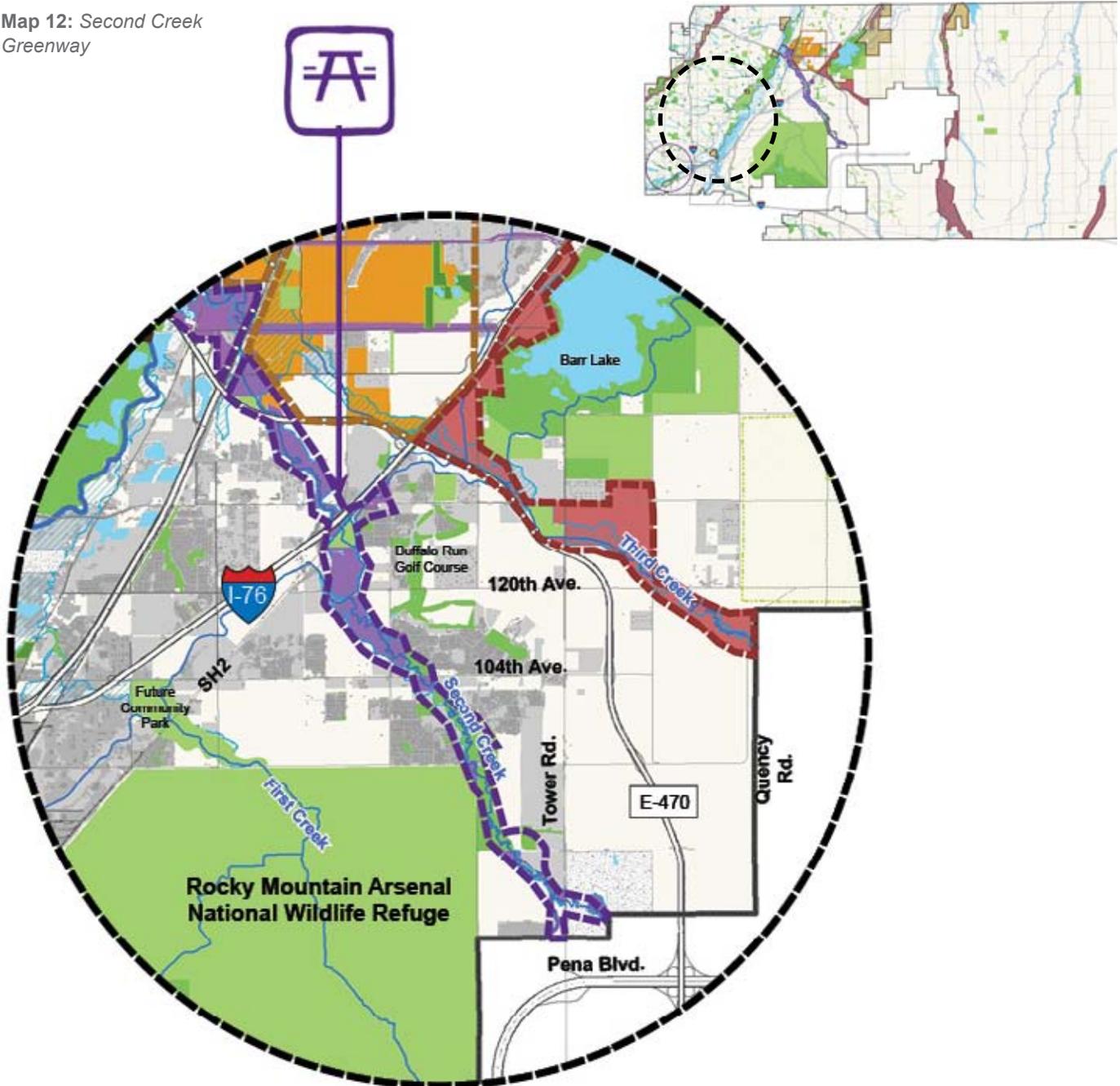
*Many scenic open spaces have been preserved along the Big Dry Creek floodplain.*



### 3. Second Creek Greenway

As a major natural amenity and conduit of stormwater, the concept for this greenway is to treat the corridor as a community amenity, creating opportunities for recreation in a scenic setting and connecting regional trail systems. A plan for Second Creek Greenway was developed in 2005 and progress has been made towards preserving the floodplain, acquiring trail easements and constructing portions of the multi-use trail. The greenway takes the form of a linear park, with facilities to serve the people recreating. Vegetation will be established for both flood management and natural scenery. Eventually the trail will span 17 miles through Brighton, Adams County, Commerce City, Aurora, and Denver- connecting to the South Platte River Greenway Trail (which is a designated segment of the Colorado Front Range Trail) and the High Line Canal Trail. It is a high priority of the many jurisdictions involved to complete the development of the greenway.

Map 12: Second Creek Greenway

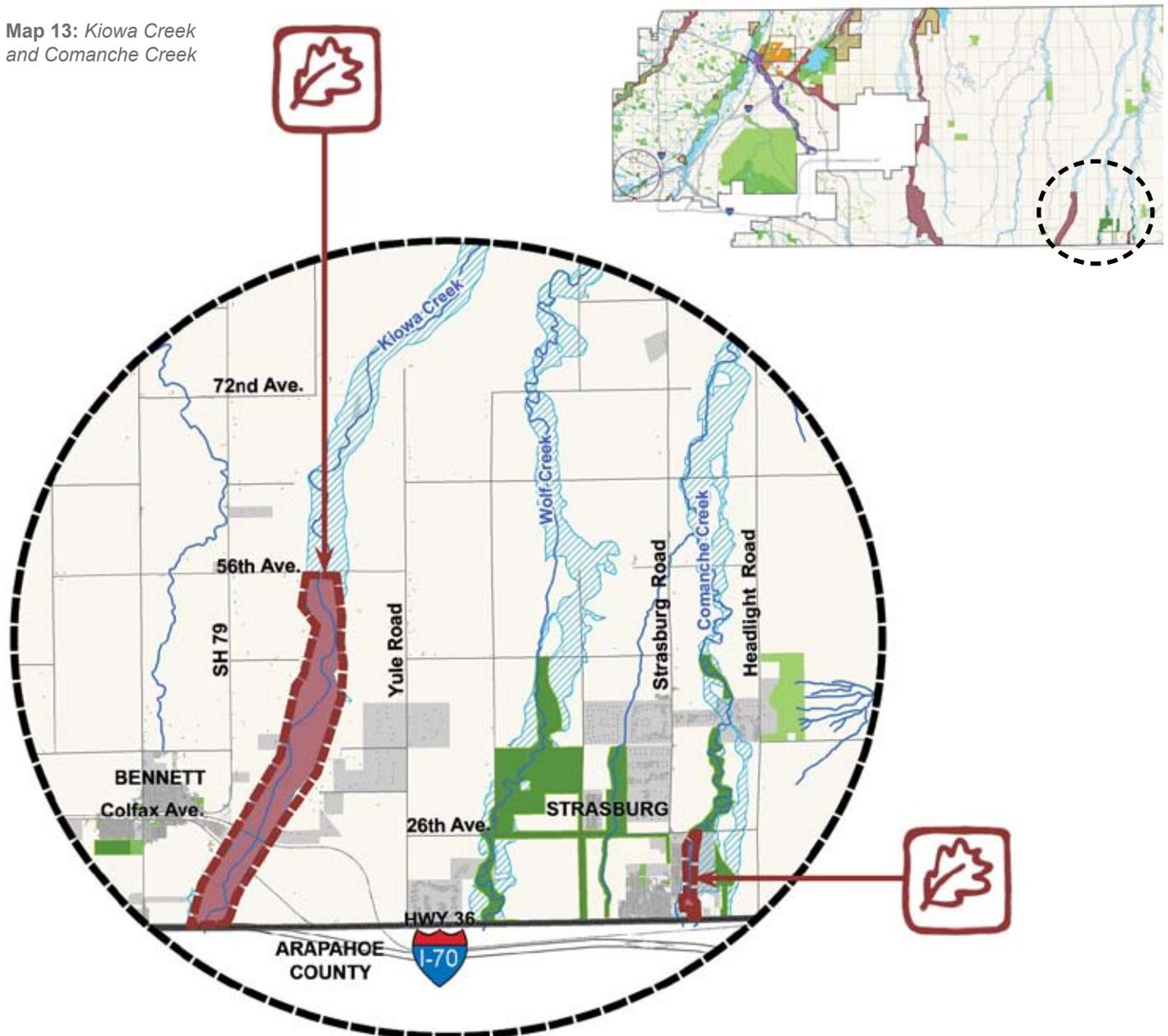


#### 4. Kiowa Creek and Comanche Creek Greenway

Kiowa Creek is located between Bennett and Strasburg. This cottonwood lined stream is one of the highest quality stream corridors in the rural area of the County. Kiowa Creek attracts wildlife such as mule deer and pronghorn antelope as well as a large variety of birds including red-tailed hawk. This plan recommends designation of the land surrounding the creek as open space and to allow for the creation of publicly accessible trails. The trail could connect to Arapahoe County's open space system currently underway with the newly acquired Kiowa Creek Open Space Park. The opportunities for hiking, bird watching, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, and enjoying a stream setting makes this an important location with the opportunity to serve as a regional open space resource.

The Strasburg Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2002 and identifies potential future parks and open space land uses (Map 13 shows these lands in a dark green color). Portions of the Comanche Creek floodplain are included in the previous plan. Public comments received for the County Master Plan update requested that additional lands within the Comanche Creek floodplain south of 26th Avenue be added to the Open Space Master Plan. These lands are not only important for stormwater management, but are also in close proximity to residents and the school. Further evaluation may reveal opportunities for trail connections and park facilities.

Map 13: Kiowa Creek and Comanche Creek



## 5. Box Elder Creek Greenway

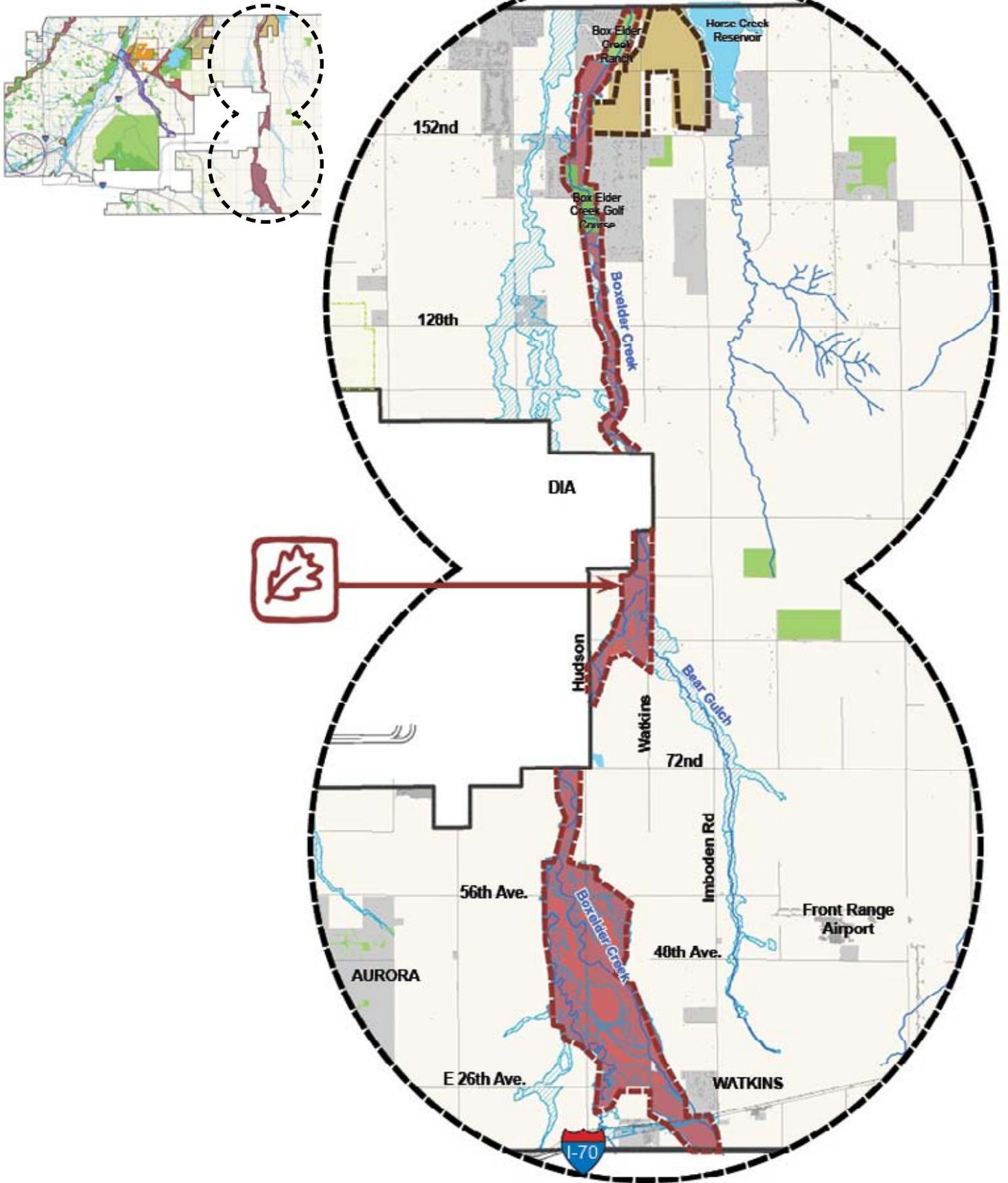
Adams County has a long standing policy aimed at protecting Box Elder Creek and the corridor's floodplain which flows north along the eastern edge of Denver International Airport (DIA) from the community of Watkins in southern Adams County. The County has worked hard to preserve the rural land uses and prime agricultural areas surrounding the creek through policy and zoning mechanisms. The area has been under development pressures for the past decade; however, a large floodplain area has somewhat limited the encroaching development. North of the airport, the creek is recommended to be conserved as part of agricultural conservation easements. Acquiring lands south of 128th Avenue as open space will permanently protect this stream corridor, allowing for the creation of public trails. Preserving this land as open space will act as a buffer between the urban and more rural areas, creating separation of development between DIA, Aurora and Watkins. Arapahoe County has also made conservation of Box Elder drainage a high priority.

*Aurora Campus for Renewable Energy is planned along Box Elder Creek, south of DIA and north of I-70. The plan designates approximately 460 acres along Box Elder Creek for park and open space area. The plan includes concepts for restoration of the riparian corridor that would serve as a wildlife corridor and regional trail corridor.*



*Box Elder Creek meanders through agricultural lands.*

Map 14: Box Elder Creek Greenway



## Preserve Remaining High Quality Agricultural Land in Urbanizing Areas

Agriculture has historically been the economic staple of the County and provides the rural atmosphere that residents greatly appreciate. The County-wide survey results show that over 92% of residents agree that working farms and ranches should be preserved in Adams County. Respondents felt that allocating open space funds to preserve working farms and ranches was just as important as purchasing land for trails, recreation, or wildlife protection.

In the western portion of the County, productive agricultural lands have been developed into neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas. The agricultural lands that remain are subject to market forces and cultural shifts that are challenging the continuation of farming operations. The development of these lands will mean the permanent loss of fertile agricultural soils of state-wide importance. Once the high quality soils are converted to urban use a major finite resource is lost. The loss of farms also means a decrease in economic diversity, a reduction in local food security, and a decline in stormwater infiltration, as well as changes to the rural character and scenic views and other open space values.

With some adaptation and the creation of a hospitable environment it is possible for farming to be viable in an urban setting and provide benefits to the community.

Avoiding further fragmentation of the farmland and sustaining farm-supporting businesses (such as feed and equipment dealers, veterinarians and other agricultural services) is essential for sustaining farming operations. Agriculture is most viable when a number of operations are adjacent to one another with limited interruption by development. Fragmentation of farms also leads to “impermanence syndrome.” This is a condition in which farmers are never certain whether or not their neighbors will be rezoned for development that will render farming difficult if not impossible. This condition convinces farmers that land conversion is inevitable and that farming and rural life in general are doomed in their area. This conviction causes landowners to defer stewardship and forego agricultural investments.

The intent of the County’s agricultural preservation efforts is to help farmers and ranchers challenged by development pressures to remain in business through offering voluntary and incentive-based methods. The more agricultural land which can remain in viable production throughout Adams County, the more sustainable the local agricultural economy will remain. Since landowners have different needs, a range of options are available through the open space program. Conservation easements, transfer of development rights programs, and assistance from land trusts are some of the mechanisms for assisting interested property owners in conserving their lands for agricultural purposes.



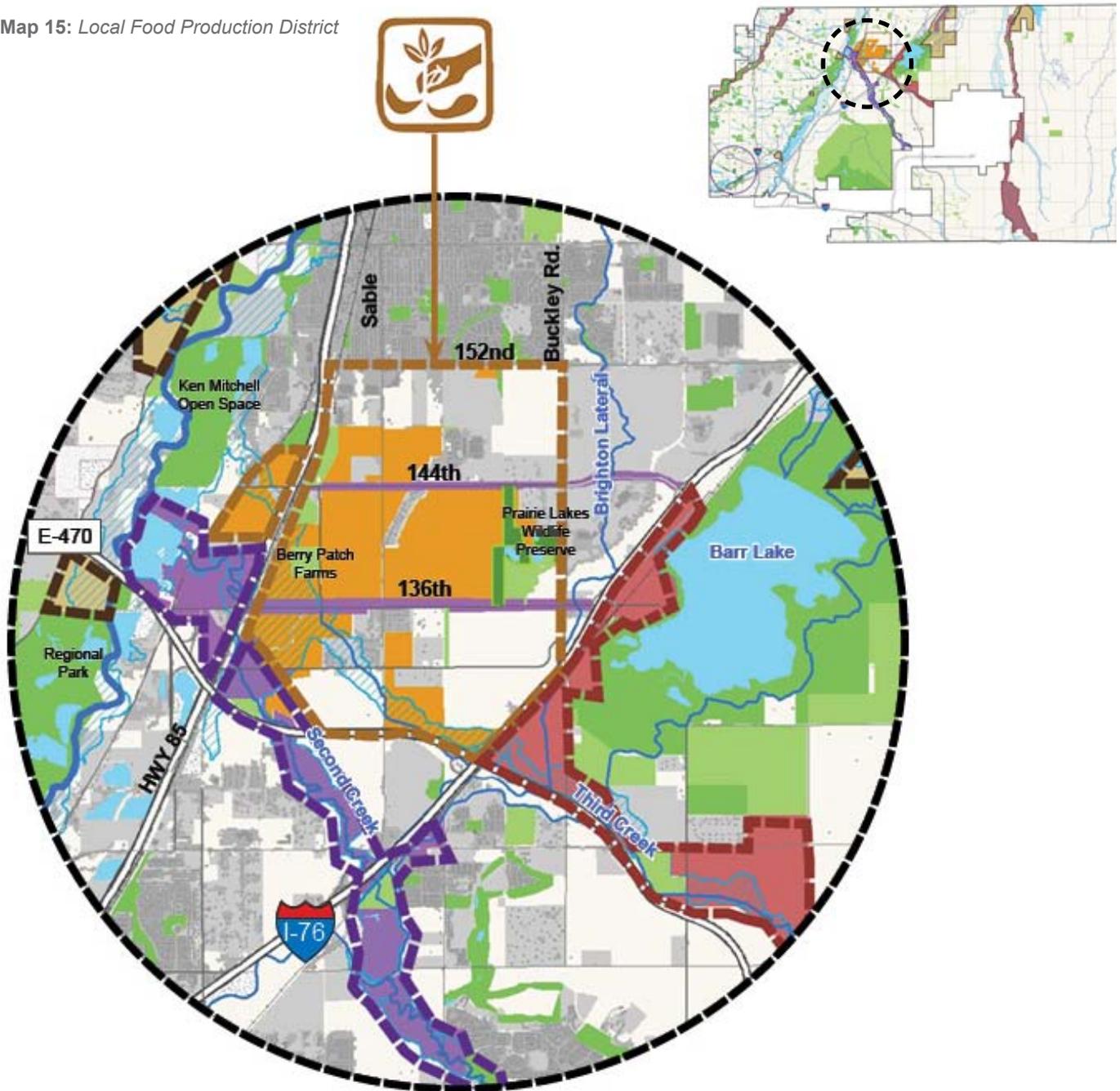
*Petrocco Farms represents some of the prime farmland in Brighton where ensuring the continued viability of agriculture is a critical element of the local economy.*

## 6. Local Food Production District

The single best place within the Denver Metro region for cultivating, processing and distributing food that is integrated into an urban surrounding is within the County, south of Brighton. The rich agricultural lands, local specialty foods, and easy access from major highways and regional trails make this location ideal for creating a destination for residents and visitors to experience the bountiful products of the land and scenic qualities of the area.

The vision for this District is to create an opportunity for small farms and cottage businesses to thrive, provide economic benefits and improve the quality of life within the region. Forethought and commitment to developing this area as a distinct district will ensure a legacy of access to fresh, locally grown foods for residents, as well as attract visitors.

Map 15: Local Food Production District



Agritourism in the District could include tours of working farms, education opportunities, community farms, tastings and purchasing of artisan foods and fresh produce, festivals and fairs, restaurants, bed and breakfast lodging, and outdoor recreation. **These activities would help diversify the economic base of the County, potentially provide sound economic returns, and help people living in urban and suburban areas connect with the land and understand the important role that food production plays in our lives.**

The most well known U.S. examples of Local Food Production Districts are in Sonoma and Napa Valley, California. Colorado agritourism tours throughout a similar type of district are available in Delta County, Palisade, San Luis Valley, and Uncompahgre Valley. Agritourism is a growing industry in Colorado with an estimated 13.2 million visitors engaged in agritourism in 2006, spending approximately \$1.26 billion.



*Tim and Claudia Ferrell, owners of Berry Patch Farms in Brighton are an example of small farmers in Adams County who have protected their land from future commercial development through conservation easements. The farm is a local attraction for people who come to pick their own berries as well as a destination for agricultural adventures and cooking demonstrations. Photo: Douglas Merriam (www.cookinglight.com)*



*Palizzi Farm located in Adams County sells their produce including yellow squash, potatoes, onions and string beans at the Cherry Creek farmers market in Denver, demonstrating the range of products produced in the County.*



*Angora Goats at Wynham Farms in Brighton where Mohair other yarn is produced for knitting, crocheting, weaving, spinning, and toy crafts.*

One Adams County farm is already well known within the area for agritourism. Berry Patch Farms is a certified organic pick-your-own and farm market of less than 40 acres. It offers tours, workshops for children, seminars for adults, cooking classes, as well as school field trip opportunities. Establishing a district with a unified intention, incentives, and policies for the nearly 3,000 acres of agricultural land will expand the opportunities available to farms in the area. The district area is bounded by E-470, Highway 85, 152nd Avenue, I-76, and Buckley Road.

The District has the geographic advantage of being close to the population center of Brighton and the Regional Park. The small town and historic main street appeal of downtown Brighton along with their locally owned restaurants is the type of place that will draw visitors for an authentic experience. Complementary to the Local Food Production District, the Regional Park Master Plan recommends agricultural education and the development of a farmers market in the future.

The preservation of the lands within this district requires the treatment similar to parks and open space planning and management. A park-like setting along 144th and 136th Avenues is designed to create linear connections from Barr Lake to the South Platte River Corridor. Maintaining 100-foot wide landscaped road frontages with separate bike lanes and pedestrian lanes will transform this area into an attractive and inviting environment for guests, creating an identity for the District. The irreplaceable farm lands will require a variety of mechanisms to be permanently protected and increase economically viability.

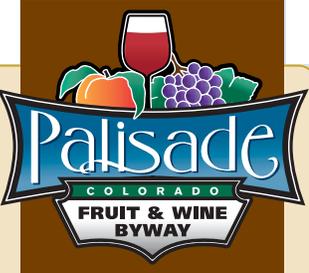
Many farmers in this area view their lands as a retirement fund and anticipate selling their properties to developers. Conversion of the land to residential neighborhoods and commercial developments is anticipated within Brighton's Future Land Use Plan. Utilities in the western portion of the district have been sized for high density development. Recently, the City of Brighton formed an Agricultural Land Preservation Sub-Committee and hosted community meetings to explore options for preserving agricultural land in the area. This is the time for alternatives to be explored in creating an economically viable future for Brighton and the County lands. Options such as zoning lands along these major utility corridors to allow for greenhouses and other commercial uses that complement the local food production such as restaurants and bed and breakfast lodging could address some of the concerns with changing the future land use policies in the area.



Shops in Paonia, Colorado promote fresh, local foods.

**Pick a route!**

Choice scenic driving and bike rides of Palisade and East Orchard Mesa



- **East Cruiser Loop:** 5 mile easy tour along the Colorado River that starts and ends in downtown Palisade.
- **West Cruiser Loop:** 7 mile loop that takes riders through Riverbend Park and goes by the most wineries of any tour.
- **East Orchard Mesa Loop:** 25 miles with several hills along the way. A favorite scenic drive or road bike ride that passes by many orchards, vineyards and wineries. Best vistas of the valley.

---

 Hiking Trail	 Mountain Bike Trail	 Fruit & Wine Byway Mileage Marker
 Boat Launch	 Disc Golf Course	
 Horse Trail	 Preferred Bike Route	 Optional Route



Palisade, on Colorado's western slope, has developed a niche in agritourism through annual events like the Palisade Peach Festival and a self-guided scenic driving or bike routes through local farms and vineyards where visitors can join in local agriculture tours and adventures aimed at a diverse range of ages and interests.

In addition to traditional agricultural preservation mechanisms such as conservation easements and transfer of development rights programs, there may be instances in which the open space program should play a stronger role to ensure valuable agricultural lands are not developed. The use of open space funds will be necessary to make this district concept possible. Much like open space purchases for protection of scenic views, recreational opportunities, natural areas, and wildlife habitat, this district serves a strong public purpose. There may be situations in which the only way to prevent development of a property is by public acquisition of these properties with a lease-back program to farmers.

This plan recommends developing a sub-area plan to develop strategies for this important area. The sub-area plan will need to investigate the appropriateness of lands within the Local Food Production District boundary for agricultural activities. Items such as soils, water resources, drainage, existing entitlements, proximity to existing utilities, and property owner interest are critical components to determining the future land uses for this area.

Stakeholders such as local property owners, CSU agricultural extension office, surrounding communities, land trusts, and state agencies should be involved to develop conservation, enhancement, and marketing tactics. Forming a district and creating a detailed plan would build an expectation for the land use of the area and form a sense of solidarity among farmers. The creation of a branded district will create opportunities for marketing local foods to the metro region, much like Palisade, Colorado where they are well known for their peaches and other agricultural products.



*Austin features their best food-producing spots on the Bicycle Sport Shop's Urban Farm Bicycle Tour, a family friendly bicycle tour which includes optional stops at more than 20 urban farms, and school and community gardens. The 2012 ride will be the tour's fourth year educating and entertaining foodies and families.*

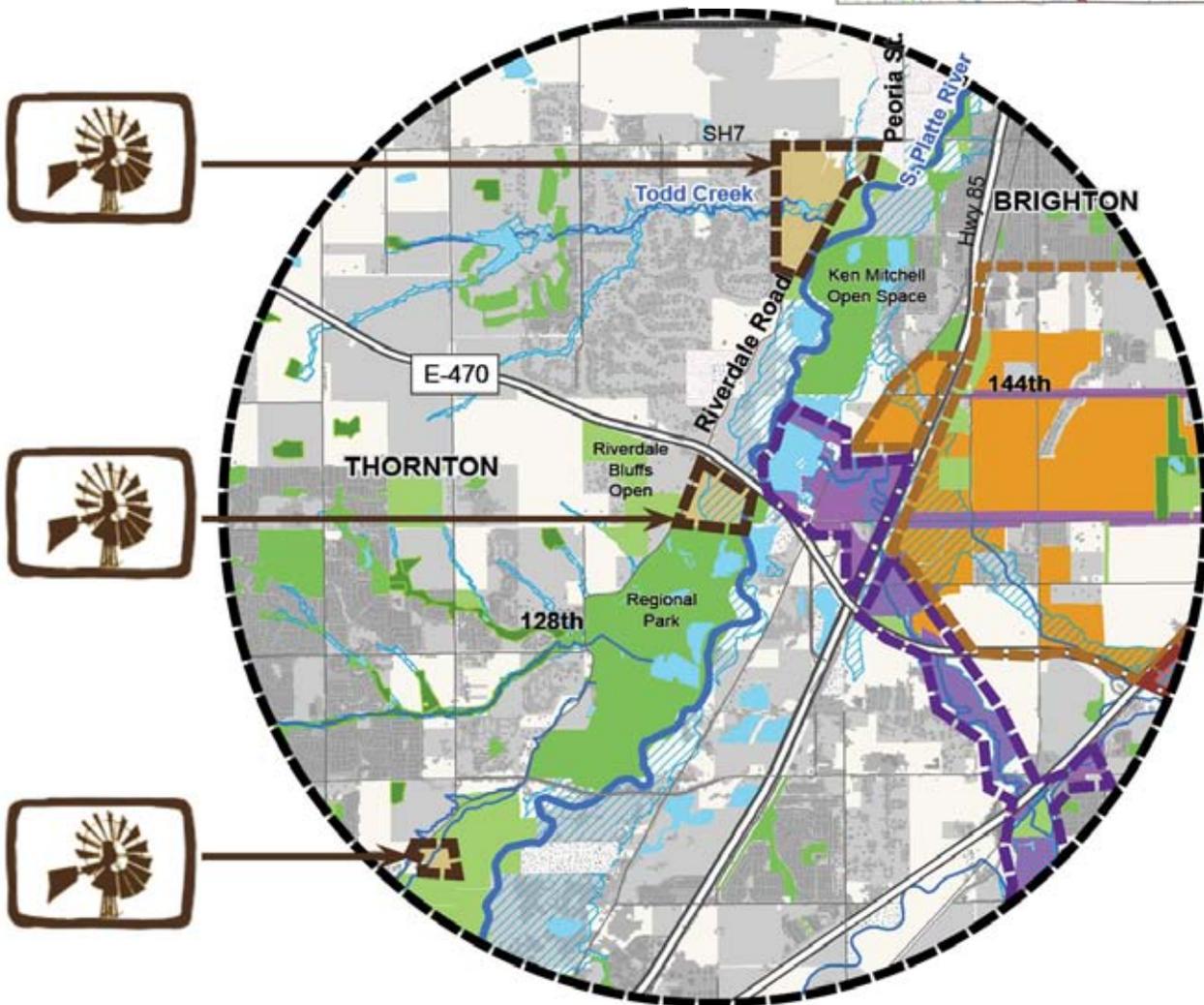
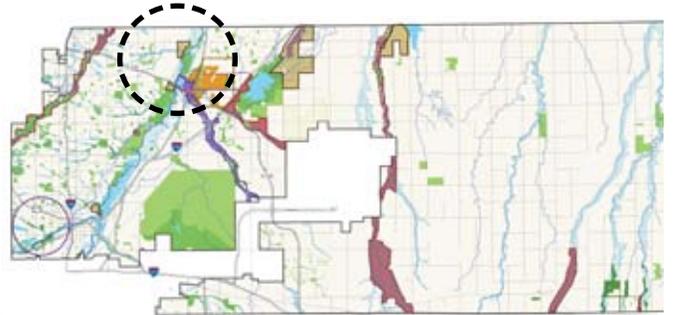


*Boulder County Parks and Open Space has partnered with the Colorado State University Extension to conduct farm tours of Boulder County Parks and Open Space's Agricultural Lands, the program's goal is to show residents the spectrum of agricultural production systems, issues, challenges and opportunities. The tours highlight different farms each time, representing field and forage crops, vegetable crops and livestock. Photo: Boulder County*

## 7. South Platte River Corridor

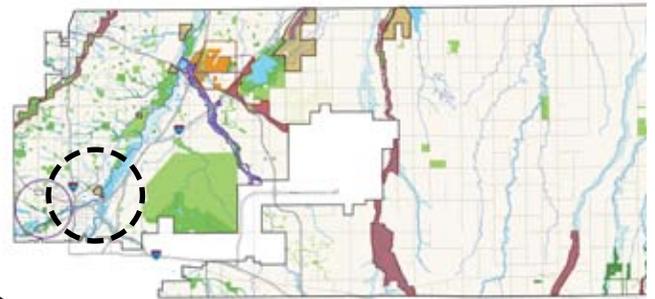
The recommendations in the South Platte River Heritage Corridor Plan have been mostly completed, preserving and enhancing the natural, cultural, and recreational qualities of a 17-mile stretch of the river corridor. Highly productive and scenic agricultural lands have been preserved within this corridor, leaving a lasting legacy. Along this river there are only a few gaps left to fill to complete the work of conserving lands identified in the Corridor Plan. Properties identified in the South Platte River Heritage Corridor Plan should continue to be pursued for preservation. In addition, this Master Plan recommends prioritizing land located between the Regional Park and Ken Mitchell Open Space for conservation. These properties are significant because they contain the confluence of Second Creek and the South Platte River.

Map 16: South Platte River Corridor



### ***8. Agricultural Lands at the Confluence of Clear Creek and South Platte River***

The land around Welby is some of the last of the productive agricultural lands remaining within Adams County Clear Creek corridor. Ensuring the viability of agricultural uses in this area is a critical element of this plan. The properties of Welby Gardens, a Nursery, Cosimi Farms and others in the area has remained in family ownership spanning generations. While the neighborhood includes a mix of uses, the surrounding residents value the agricultural lands that are still present. The boundary of this area is State Highway 224/E 74th Avenue to the south, York Street to the west, 78th Avenue to the north and the South Platte River to the east. The scenic value of these lands can be enjoyed from both the South Platte River Trail and the Clear Creek Trail and provide a visual break from the industrial and gravel mining uses along other portions of these corridors.



**Map 17:** *Confluence of Clear Creek and South Platte River*

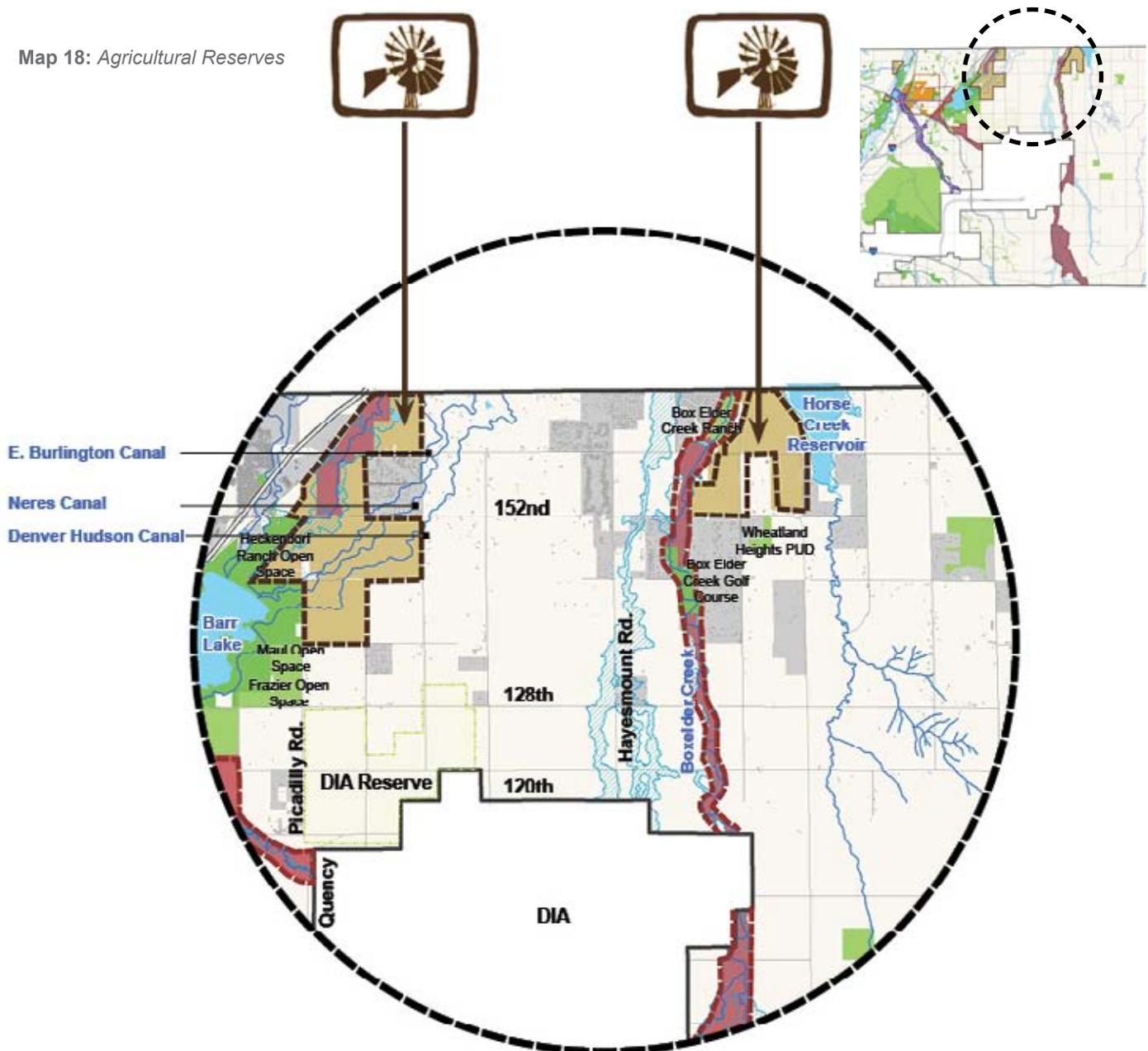


## 9. Agricultural Land Conservation

The agricultural lands to the east of Barr Lake are important scenic and ecological buffers to Barr Lake. They are also highly productive agricultural lands and many are quite large in size. While some of this area is within the Denver International Airport noise contours that restrict residential home building, the restrictions do not prohibit commercial or industrial structures from being built. The Agricultural Reserve is the most likely location that long range development will spread to the east, reducing the amount of active farmland within the County. Conservation easement investments should be focused in this area rather than locations further to the east that are less likely to be converted from agricultural use within the next ten years.

Roughly 3,000 acres of this land is designated as Denver International Airport Reserve, where potential conflicts from the airport are the highest due to the location of runways. Most of these lands are owned by DIA and are currently set aside for open space, agricultural activities, and oil and gas wells. However, the designation is not permanent and it is possible that it could be converted to other uses in the future. The Agricultural Reserve is compatible with the future plans of the airport to become a hub for food processing, storage, and distribution.

Map 18: Agricultural Reserves



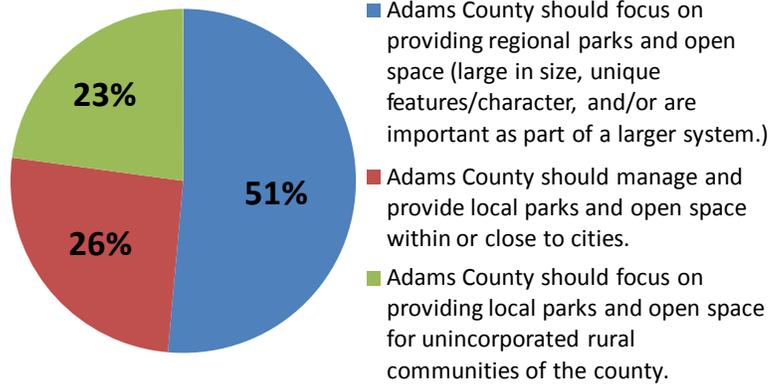
## Local and Regional Parks

Public comments collected for the creation of this plan provided direction for the role that the County should play in the provision of parks. Most meeting participants felt that Adams County should focus on providing regional parks and open space- which are generally large in size, with unique features or character, and/or are important as part of the larger system. Only one-fourth of the meeting participants felt Adams County should manage and provide local parks and open space within or close to cities. Typically Adams County seeks to create collaborations with municipalities, special districts, or other park managers for neighborhood or city-serving parks.

### 10. Infill Local Parks Opportunities

Much of the western unincorporated area of Adams County is developed and few large open space or parks opportunities exist. Within these areas County residents seek improvements to existing parks and trail systems. Creative solutions may be sought in these urban environments, such as the conversion of vacant properties to gardens or parks, and the incorporation of public park space and recreation uses on school, library, and other public spaces. Hyland Hills Park and Recreation District and Westminster manage other parks in the area and the County could partner with them to evaluate the potential for parks and trails enhancements.

Results from the public meeting's keypad polling showing where participants felt the County should focus their efforts



Map 19: Clear Creek and Hyland Hills Infill Opportunity Area



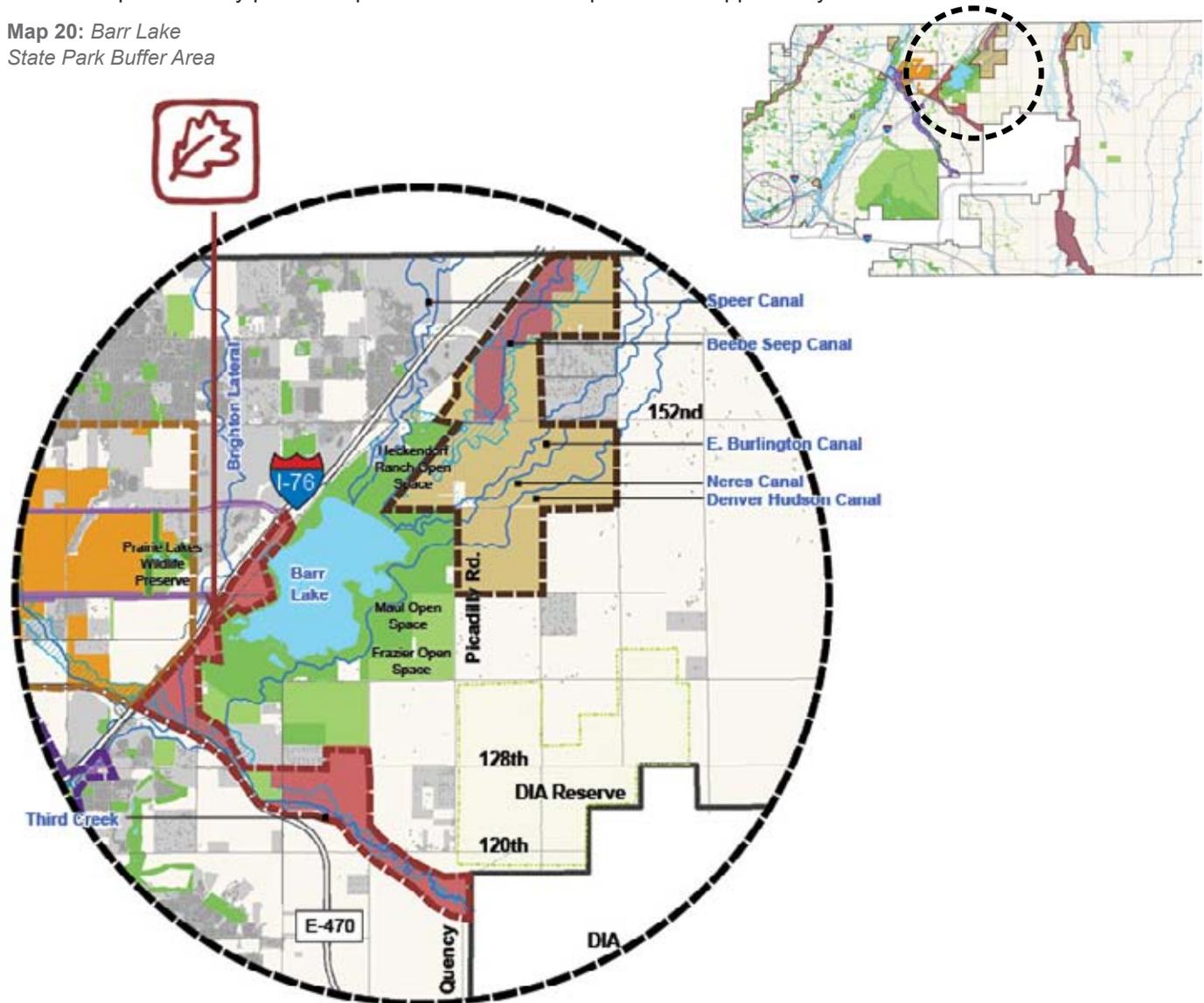
Clear Creek Trail: Many residents who attended public meetings feel that the Clear Creek trail and surrounding area needs to be cleaned up and maintained.



## 11. Barr Lake Buffer

Barr Lake State Park is highly valued by residents and visitors for many recreation activities, nature education opportunities, and the scenic environment it provides. Abundant wildlife is dependent on the State Park lands and surrounding properties for habitat. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) works with the State Park to create programs and events that educate the public on environmental and habitat issues. More than 350 species of birds have been spotted in the park and it is well known for its eagles, blue herons, white pelicans, cormorants, egrets, and hawks. Diverse fish populations are found within the lake, making this a popular spot for anglers. Mule deer and white-tailed deer are also attracted to Barr Lake. Lands have been preserved surrounding the park to ensure the habitat and ecological resources such as streams, wetlands, and large cottonwood trees continue to enhance the quality of Barr Lake State Park. As development and major infrastructure projects have begun to spread to the area surrounding Barr Lake, there has been increased concern for how these changes will impact the scenic and natural environment. The Flood Control Overlay Zone surrounding the canals to the north of Barr Lake State Park are important areas for future open space preservation. Open Space protection is also a proposed element of this plan for buffering Barr Lake from Interstate 76 and E-470. Third Creek and its floodplain are included in the proposed open space buffer area as well. Lands to conserve for the State Park were first identified in the 1996 Conservation Vision Plan document followed by a Management Plan in 1999. This Master Plan proposes the lands identified within the previous plans and other surrounding significant lands should be a priority for acquisition as open space in order to permanently protect important resources and provide the opportunity to restore habitat.

Map 20: Barr Lake  
State Park Buffer Area



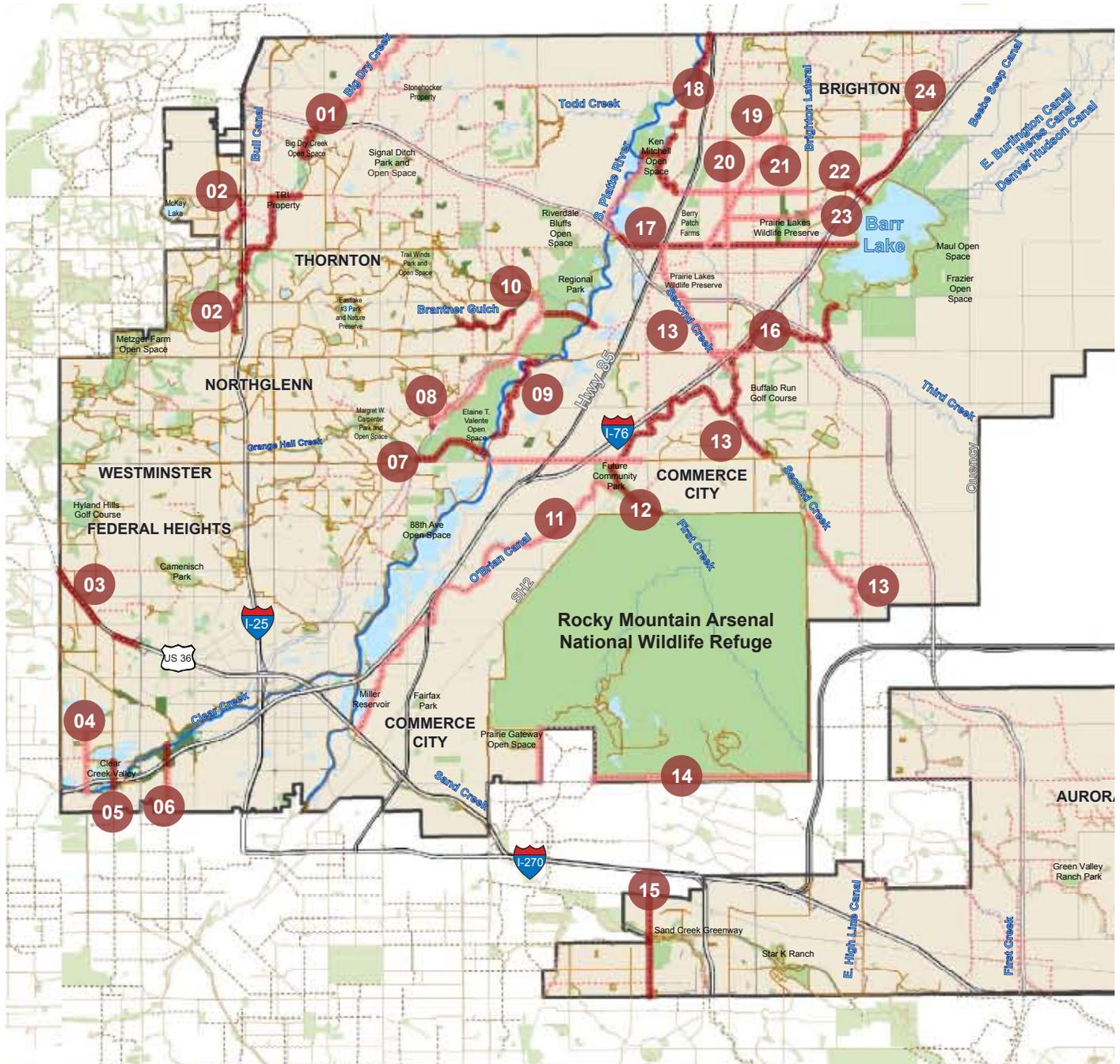
# PROPOSED TRAILS

## High and Mid-term Priority Trails

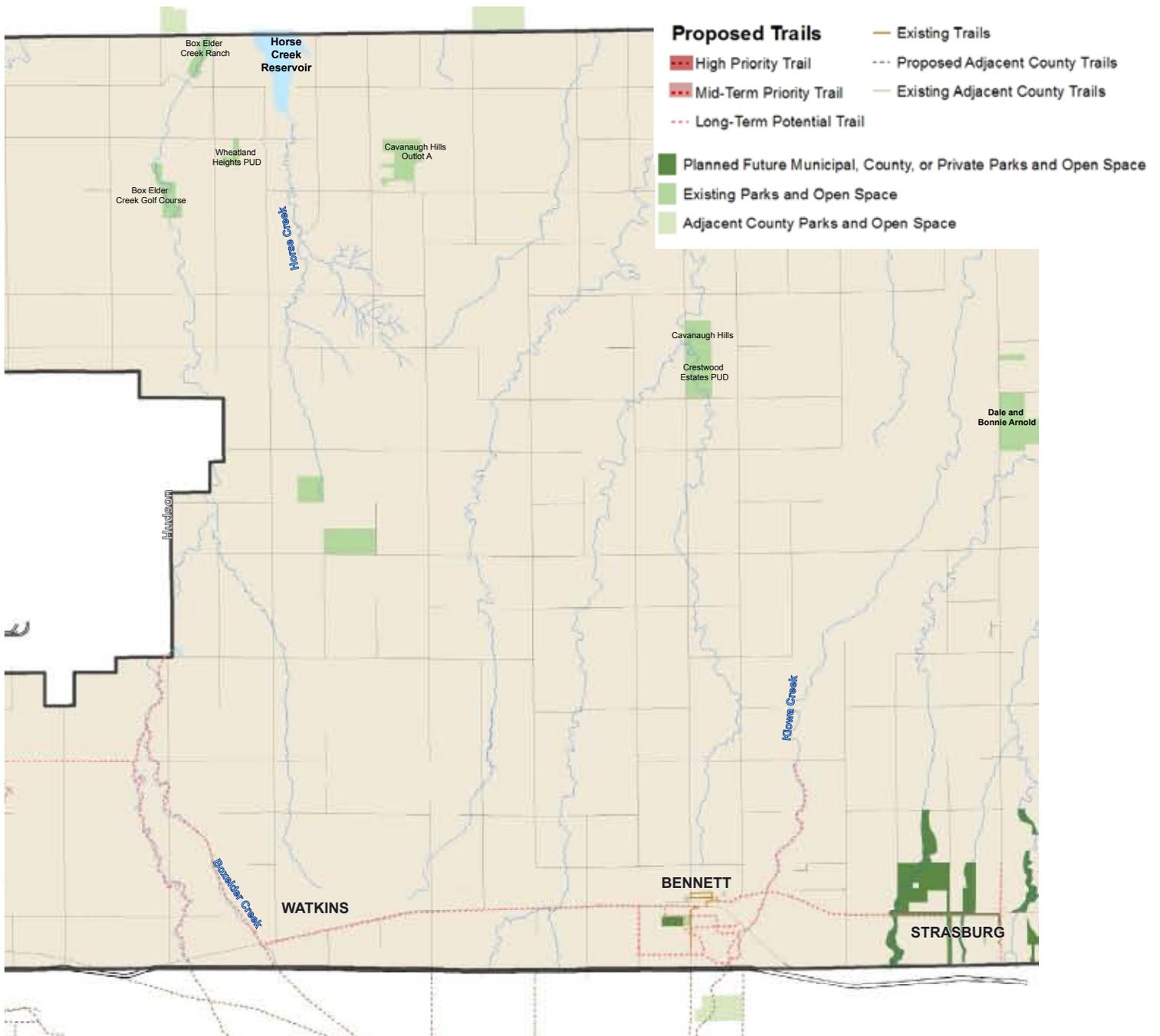
Potential future trails are identified extensively throughout the County to anticipate desired connections. In order to plan for the next 10 years, it is important to evaluate priorities for trail creation based on resident desires, city and town plans, construction feasibility, and funding sources.

This section describes the trails that are High and Mid-Term Priorities. Long-Term Potential Trails suggest locations that would fill existing trail gaps, create important connections, or anticipate future development.

Map 21: Trail Priorities Master Plan



- 01 Big Dry Creek Trail
- 02 I-25/Tanglewood Creek Trail
- 03 US 36 Trail
- 04 Tennyson Trail
- 05 Lowell/Jim Baker Trail
- 06 Clay Street Trail
- 07 104th Avenue Trail
- 08 Riverdale Road Trail
- 09 South Platte River Greenway Trail
- 10 Brantner Gulch Trail
- 11 O'Brien Canal Trail
- 12 First Creek Trail
- 13 Second Creek Greenway Trail
- 14 RMANWR Perimeter Trail
- 15 Peoria Street Trail
- 16 Denver Hudson Canal Trail
- 17 136th Avenue Trail
- 18 South Platte River Greenway Trail
- 19 Bromley Trail
- 20 Sable Trail
- 21 Fulton Ditch Trail
- 22 144th Avenue Trail
- 23 Bridge Street Trail
- 24 I-76 Trail



Many of the Long-Term Potential Trails pose challenges to implement such as costly road underpasses, or multiple jurisdiction cooperation to create connectivity. It is not anticipated that these trails will be a high priority to construct within the next 5-years, however, development plans and infrastructure projects must refer to the Trails Master Plan and include these trails.

High Priority Trails are those that are currently under construction or are expected to be completed within the next three years. Mid-Term Priority Trails are those that have a selected alignment, and have sought or secured funding sources.

### ***Big Dry Creek Trail***

Expanding Big Dry Creek Open Space trails to the north crossing under E-470 will create an enjoyable nature walk, bike ride, or horseback ride along the Big Dry Creek. There are few existing trails within this northwest portion of the County and population growth is anticipated to increase. Another missing trail link is a 1.8 mile section from Big Dry Creek Open Space to nearly nine miles of existing portions of the Big Dry Creek Trail that continues to the south west.



*Canine visitors enjoy the Big Dry Creek trail which connects a number of parks and open spaces ending at City Park in Westminster.*

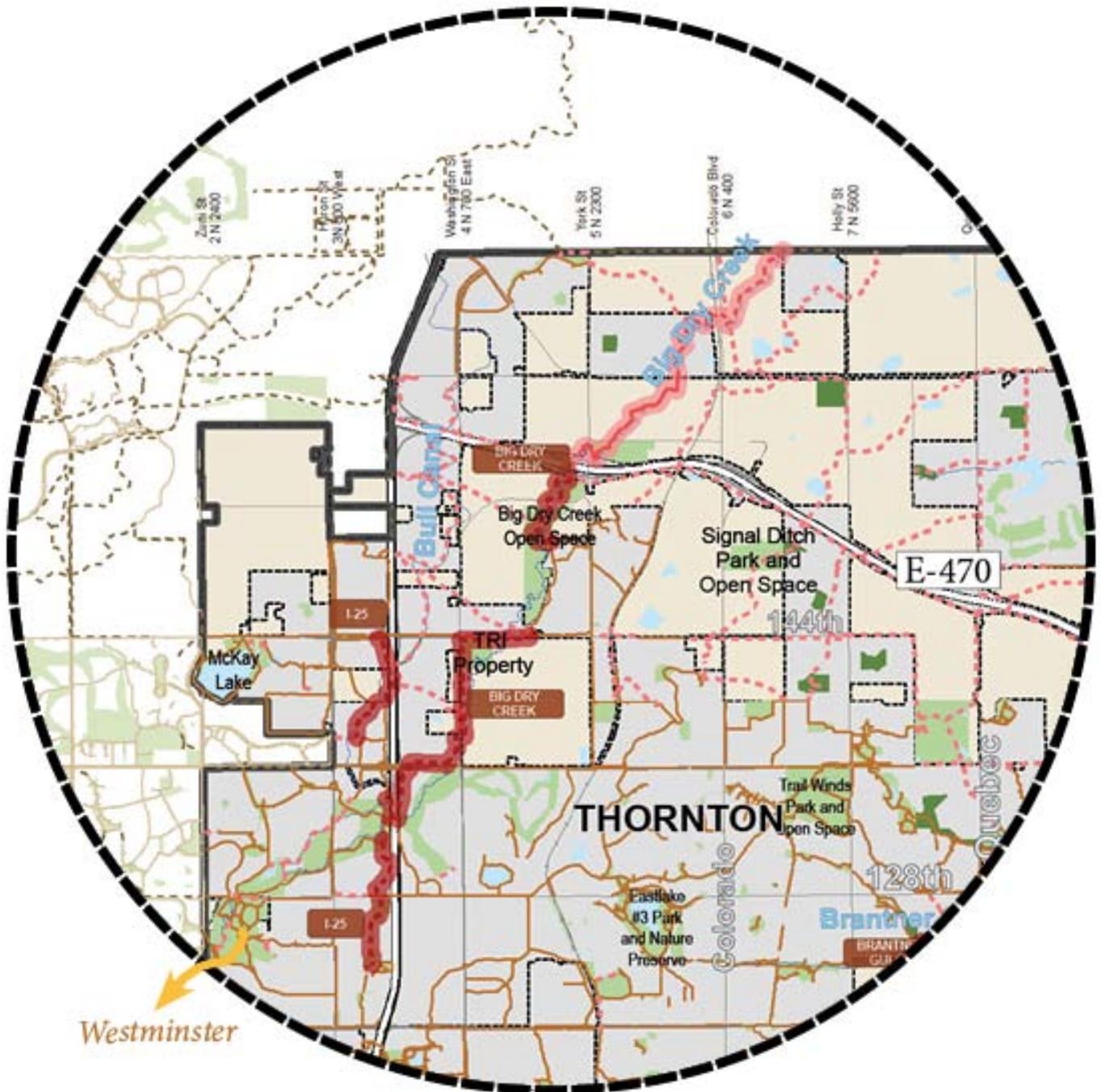
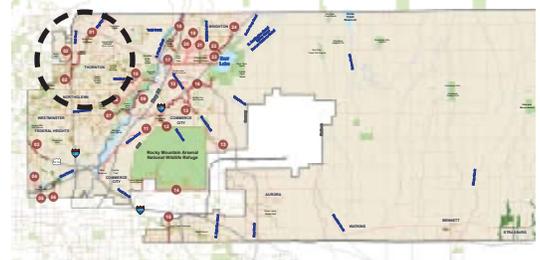
### ***I-25 / Tanglewood Creek Trail***

Portions of this trail have been built and the proposed high priority trails are planned for construction in the near future. The I-25 trail will eventually extend 3 miles from Huron Street at 150th Avenue east to I-25 and south to the Big Dry Creek Trail, connecting to 120th Avenue. This trail will provide access to many existing and planned businesses within the I-25 corridor. Pedestrian trail underpasses for the I-25 Trail have already been constructed under Huron Street at 150th Avenue, 144th Avenue just west of I-25 and 136th Avenue just west of I-25.

### ***US 36 Trail***

A trail following the alignment of US 36 Express Lanes Project will be constructed along much of the corridor. This trail will create an important connection for commuter bicyclists. Portions are currently under construction and the sections within Adams County are anticipated for completion by 2015. Phase I of the Express Lanes/Bus Rapid Transit project extends from 88th Avenue and Bradburn Boulevard to Westminster to 88th Street in Louisville/Superior. Phase II will extend further to the northwest, terminating at Foothills Parkway in Boulder.

**Map 22:** Big Dry Creek Trail, I-25/Tanglewood Creek Trail, and US 36 Trail



**Tennyson Street Trail**

This trail is also intended to provide connection to a future RTD commuter rail transit line station.

**Lowell / Jim Baker Trail**

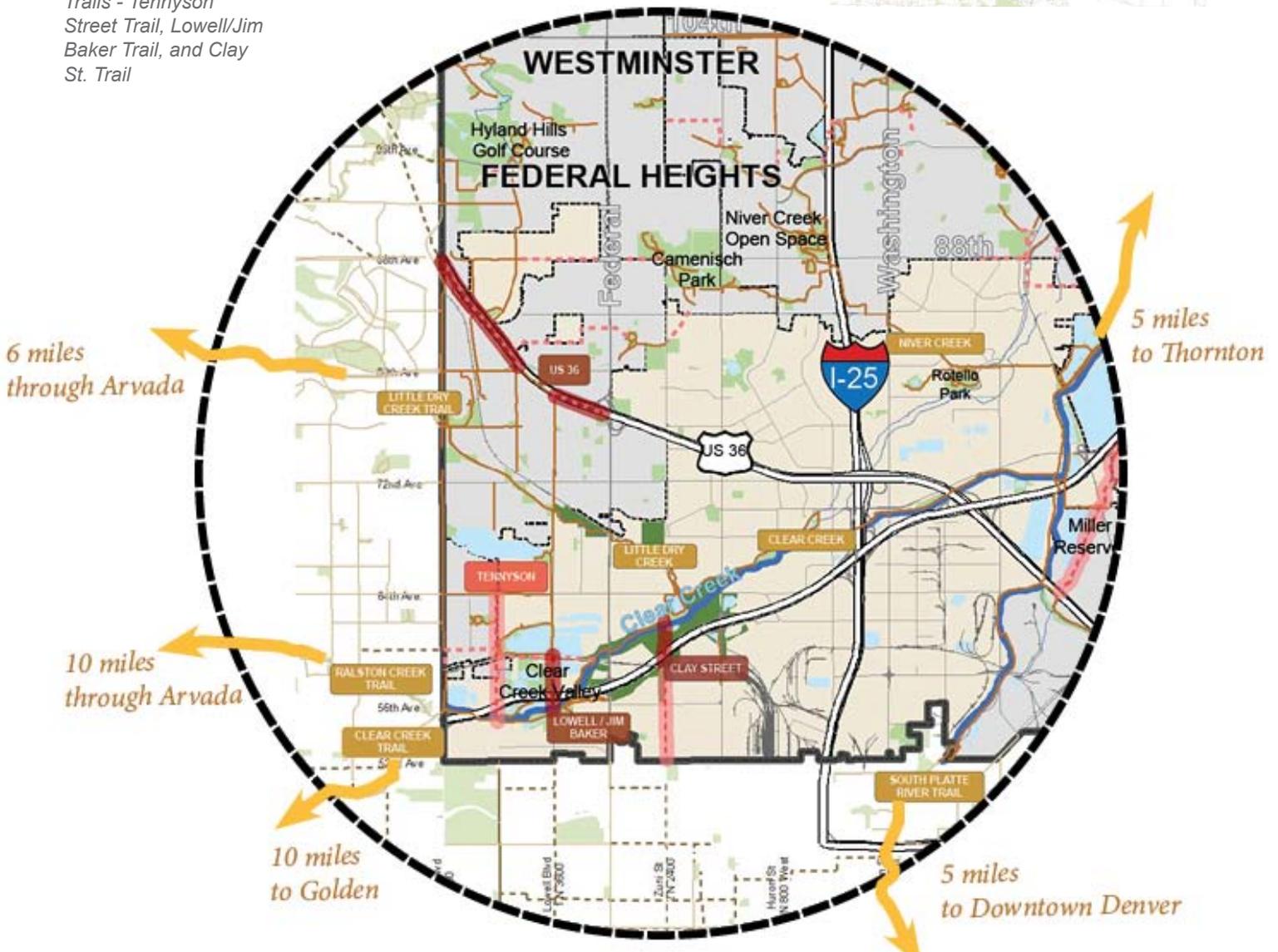
This trail is planned along Lowell boulevard to connect neighborhoods to a future light rail station. The trail is an important grade-separated crossing from Interstate 76 and Union Pacific Railroad tracks. The trail connects the Clear Creek Trail to Jim Baker Reservoir and is also a link between the Clear Creek Trail and the Little Dry Creek Trail.

**Clay Street Trail**

Design is underway to create a trail to connect the intersection of Zuni Street and 59th Avenue to the Clear Creek Trail. It includes a pedestrian tunnel under the Union Pacific Railroad and a grade-separated crossing at the RTD electric commuter rail transit Gold Line.



Map 23: Proposed Trails - Tennyson Street Trail, Lowell/Jim Baker Trail, and Clay St. Trail



### ***E. 104th Avenue***

A multi-use path along E. 104 Avenue will serve as an important east-west corridor allowing for safe crossing of Highway 85 and I-76. It will create connections to trail systems in Commerce City, Thornton and Northglenn as well as to the South Platte River Trail.

### ***Riverdale Road Trail***

Thornton and Adams County in partnership have proposed this multi-use trail to run the length of the Regional Park and other adjacent open spaces. It will run along Riverdale Road for over three miles, connecting trail systems from the intersection of 128th Avenue and Riverdale Road to the intersection of 112th Avenue and Riverdale Road. The trail connects important recreational destinations such as Holly Park and Adams County Regional Park and Fairgrounds. Through the Grange Hall Creek Regional Trail, the Riverdale Road Trail will indirectly connect to the Margaret W. Carpenter Recreation Center.

### ***South Platte River Greenway Trail***

The South Platte River Trail is one of the longest continuous trails within the County. It originates in Elaine T. Valente Open Space and extends approximately eight miles to the southern edge of the County, continuing 5 miles to Downtown Denver and connecting to other major trail systems. There are a few gaps within Adams County in the South Platte River Trail. One gap is a 1.5 mile section between Elaine T. Valente Open Space to the County Regional Park and Fairgrounds. This corridor passes through multiple conservation easement properties. The second gap is a 1.7 mile section between the County Regional Park to the Ken Mitchell Open Space. This path passes under E-470 and connects to other proposed trails within Brighton. Colorado Front Range Trail will complete the less than one mile gap within Adams County to the trail proposed in Weld County.

### ***Brantner Gulch Trail***

An approximately 3 mile trail alignment proposed along the western edge of the County Regional Park will connect Thornton and Northglenn neighborhood trails to Adams County Regional Park and Fairgrounds as well as the South Platte River Trail.

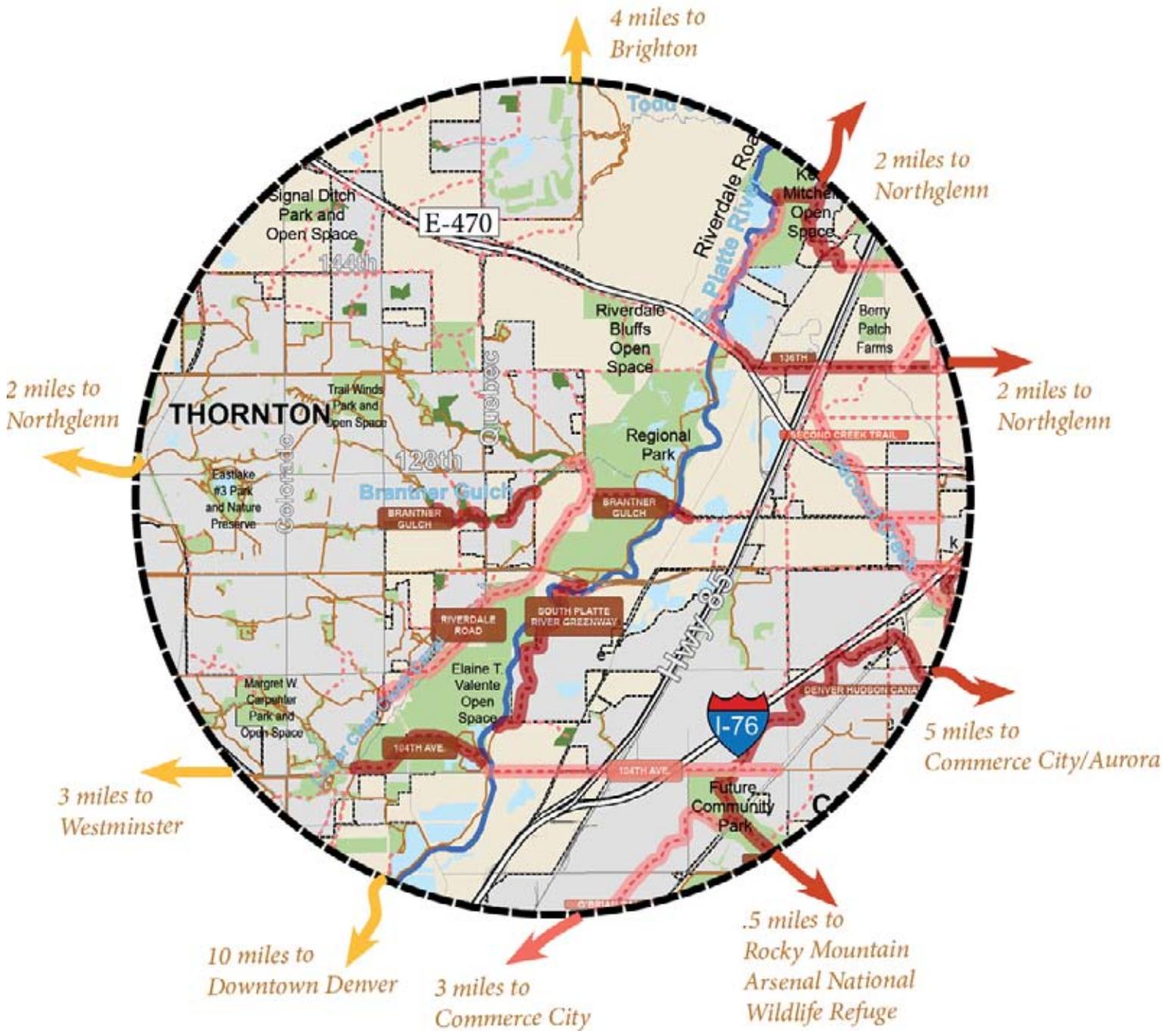


*South Platte River*



*Riverdale Road is popular with cyclists for its curvy alignment and scenic views. However, narrow shoulders or lack of shoulders currently cause safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists.*

**Map 24: Proposed Trails - E. 104<sup>th</sup> Ave, Riverdale Road Trail, South Platte River Trail, Brantner Gulch Trail**



### ***O'Brian Canal Trail***

This nearly 8 mile trail extends from the future community park in Commerce City nearly 8 miles to a junction with the existing Sand Creek Trail and South Platte River Trail, connecting to the Clear Creek trail. It follows the western boundary of Commerce City and roughly follows the I-76 alignment.

### ***First Creek Trail***

A future community park is planned in Commerce City between 104th Avenue and Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (RMANWR). A trail through this park will connect to the existing Rocky Mountain Arsenal perimeter trail.

### ***Second Creek Trail***

The Second Creek Greenway Master Plan was created in 2005 to guide the development of a multi-use trail and greenway along the length of Second Creek – linking the Platte River Greenway to the Highline Canal Trail. Portions of this 17.3 mile link are anticipated to be completed in the near future.

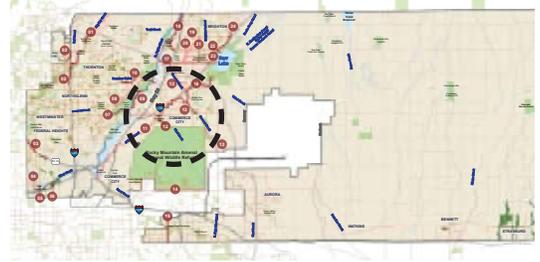
### ***Denver Hudson Canal***

This trail is another important north-south route to connect Rocky Mountain Arsenal to Barr Lake. It originates at E. 104th Avenue at the Commerce City future community park and continues roughly 6.6 miles to the trail loop around Barr Lake.



*Second Creek Trail (Source: Second Creek Greenway Autumn 2005 Master Plan)*

**Map 25: Proposed Trails - O'Brian Canal Trail, First Creek Trail, Second Creek Trail, Denver Hudson Canal**



**Local Foods Tour**

The City of Brighton is currently envisioning opportunities to preserve agricultural lands and create new economic opportunities to promote local food production along its southern boundary. Future bicycle and pedestrian routes will create opportunities for people to tour from farm-to-farm within the district as a tourism activity. Sable and Fulton Ditch are identified as the first priorities for multi-use paths.

**136Th Avenue**

Adding a multi-use path along East 136th Avenue will connect the Regional Park, and southern portions of Brighton to Barr Lake. Grade-separated crossings at Interstate 76 and Highway 85 will be necessary to ensure safe travel. East 136th Avenue is within the Local Food

Production District and will be an important east/west connection for pedestrians and cyclists.

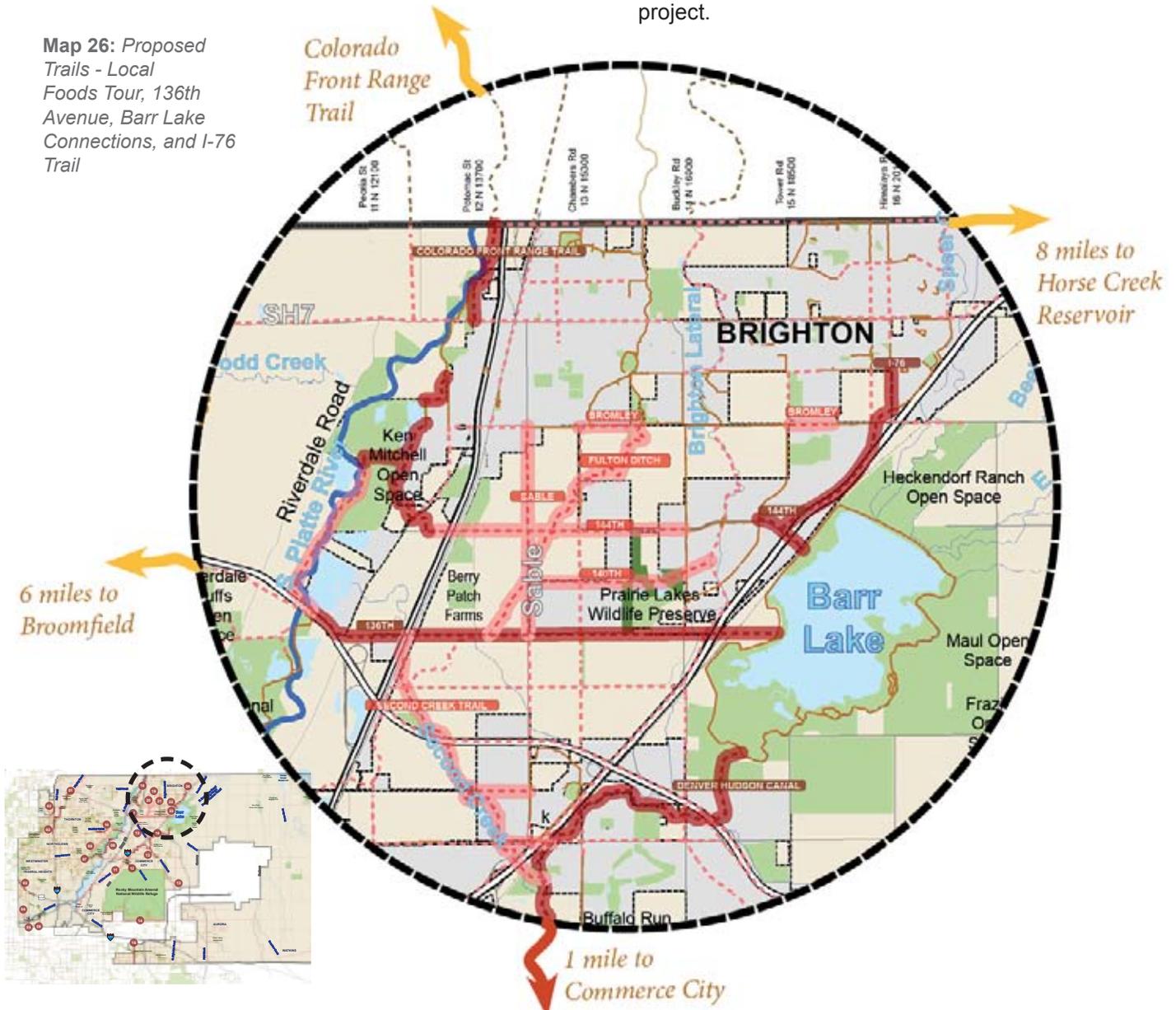
**Barr Lake Connections**

Barr Lake is currently only safely accessible by car from the western portion of the County due to I-76 separating it. Pathways and underpasses at E. 144th Avenue and E. 136th Avenue will resolve this issue and create east-west routes from the County Regional Park and Ken Mitchell Open Space.

**I-76 Trail**

Portions along I-76 will be constructed by developers as the lands in Prairie Center are developed. North of 152nd Avenue, the western most north-south parallel trail will be constructed as part of a gas pipeline project.

Map 26: Proposed Trails - Local Foods Tour, 136th Avenue, Barr Lake Connections, and I-76 Trail



## Rocky Mountain Greenway

The initial planning stages for the Rocky Mountain Greenway is currently under underway. The vision is to create uninterrupted trails and transportation linkages connecting the Denver metro area's trail systems, the three Denver-area units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Two Ponds, and Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuges), Rocky Mountain National Park, and the community trails systems. The Rocky Mountain Greenway Steering Committee will identify priority projects. The section through Adams County would connect the Arsenal to Sand Creek (through Montbello in Denver), then travel on the Sand Creek Trail, the South Platte River Trail, the Clear Creek Trail, and the Little Dry Creek Trail.



*"The Rocky Mountain Greenway Project aims to connect gaps between existing Denver area parks covering 40,000 acres and greenway trails running more than 140 miles." (Source: The Denver Post & U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)*

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

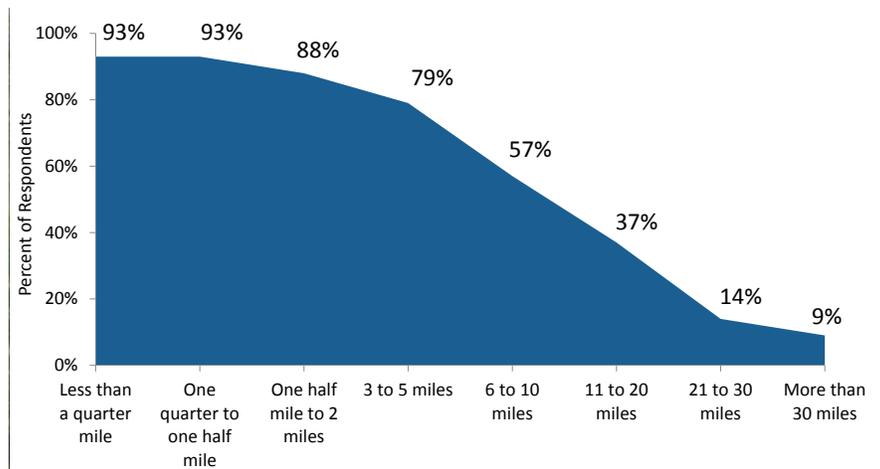
### Community Values and Desires

The Resident Survey and feedback from public meetings provided insight into recreational opportunities the public values and where they would like to see improvements or additional amenities. Some of the conclusions from the public were as follows:

- There is room for improvement in meeting the recreational needs of residents. Recreation opportunities were at the top of the participant's list of items in which the County needs to focus their efforts.
- The types of park and recreation facilities perceived as most lacking within Adams County were places for group gatherings, natural areas to explore and view birds and wildlife, multi-use trails and open lawn/play spaces. Trails were the most desired amenity for the County to provide.
- The activities that need new or improved facilities include: walking, outdoor/nature education, biking, wildlife/bird watching, hiking, campgrounds, and amphitheater/community event space.
- Walking was the most popular activity residents currently participate in.
- People's willingness to travel to natural areas or outdoor recreation places decreases as distance increases.

**88% of County-wide Survey respondents rated natural places for walking and hiking as either "essential" or "very important."**

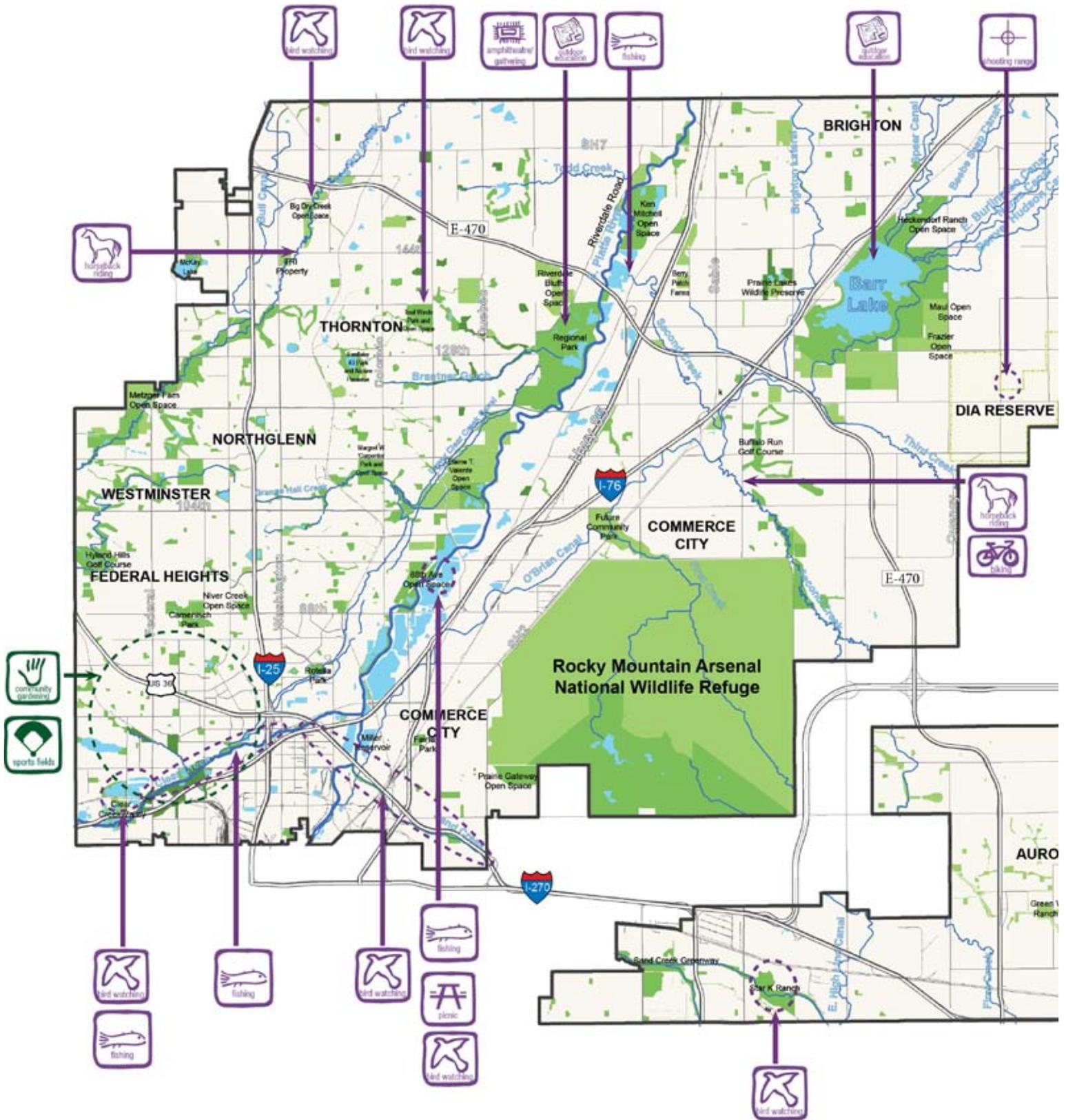
### Distance Willing to Travel to Access Natural Areas and Outdoor Recreation

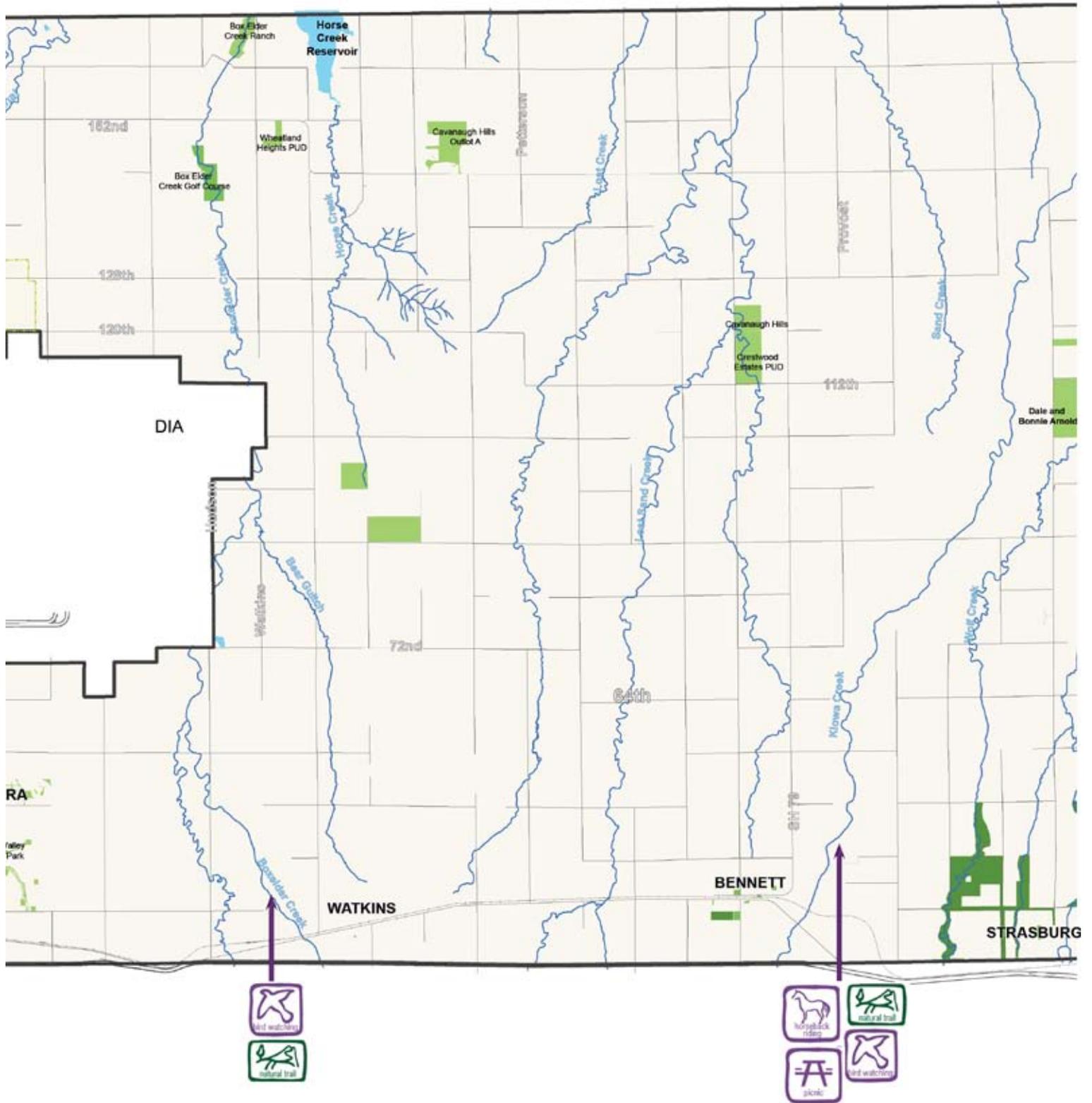


**93% percent of respondents were willing to travel up to a quarter mile to access a natural area or outdoor recreation activity. 57% were willing to travel 6 to 10 miles, while only 37% of respondents were willing to travel up to 11 miles.**

There are many recreational opportunities that are desirable in the County's natural settings and are compatible with open space conservation and natural area protection. Providing outlets for recreation can supplement the opportunities available in each municipality to enhance the experience of Adams County residents and visitors. **Passive recreation activities, like wildlife watching, walking, horseback riding, and biking, can offer constructive, restorative, and enjoyable opportunities for the community. These activities help to foster an understanding and respect for open spaces as well as the community and economic benefits of conservation.** These activities are compatible with many open space, parks and trail properties and often have minimal impact on the natural, cultural, environmental, or agricultural value of the land. A balance must be found between protecting ecosystems and natural environments and human disturbance of people seeking to enjoy nature.

Map 27: Proposed Recreation Master Plan



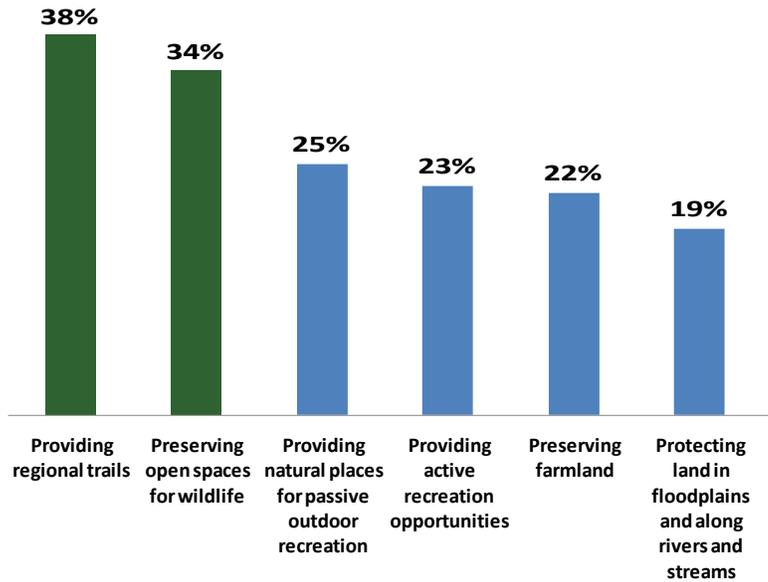


### Trail Based Recreation

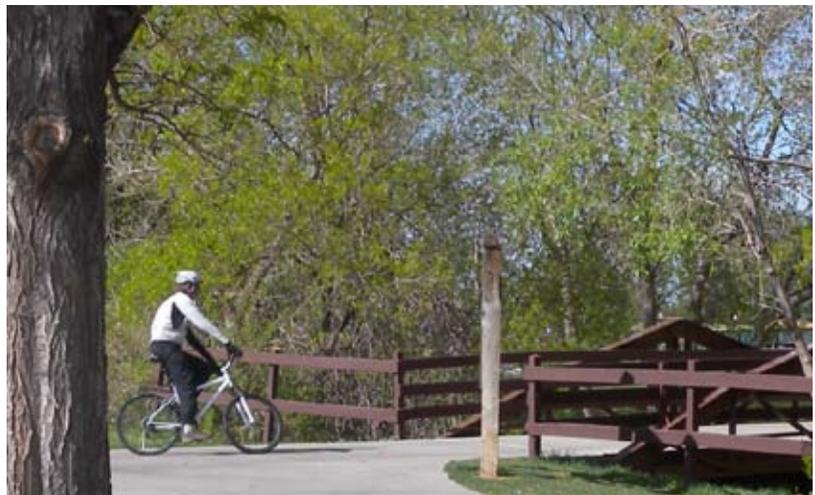
Activities such as walking, hiking, biking, and horseback riding are all trail based recreation activities that have been a focus of the County’s open space planning. Providing a diversity of trails and trail linkages to destinations is key to promoting walking and biking as both a recreation activity and a transportation option. The recommendations for trail priorities for walking and biking trails are found in the preceding section. While horseback riding is allowed on all County trails, many are urban paved trails that are not designed with the intent of equestrian use. The places where horseback riding is most compatible with adjacent uses and desirable for riders include the Big Dry Creek Trail and Second Creek Trail as well as the proposed trails around Kiowa Creek. Separate pathways for equestrians may be desirable in locations with a high number of users and paved surfaces.

Equestrian trail use requires the provision of an alternative soft surface or crusher fine trail between 2 feet and 6 feet in width which can also be used by runners and walkers. These multi-purpose trails should attempt to be a minimum width of 10’ when possible or in heavily traveled sections and should allow parking for trailers at equestrian access points. The Second Creek Greenway Master Plan includes the provision of a trail head which would include equestrian access at the Tucson Open Space parcel (owned by the City of Brighton) east of the Fulton Ditch.

Figure 7: Public feedback on the most important item the County need to focus future efforts. (Keypad Polling responses, April 2012)



Bikers enjoy a leisurely ride in Barr Lake State Park



Connecting parks and trails through on-street and off-street bike routes is an important element of this 2012 plan.

## Cycling - On Street Bike Routes

Many east-west oriented roads are currently used by cyclists for recreation and some long-distance cycling races are held on urban and rural roads. However, narrow road width, heavy traffic patterns and high speeds make this activity uncomfortable for many riders who wish to explore the area. This situation could be greatly improved with some improvements being made along designated routes to accommodate biking. While some of the municipalities currently have on-street bike routes, the County does not have designated or signed roads for cyclists. This plan introduces the idea of creating long distance, regional on-street bicycle routes for recreation purposes where organized bike rides and races, which are growing in popularity, can take advantage of improved routes that are currently not available. The County's on-street routes will link to existing and proposed multi-use trails, existing and proposed open spaces and parks, and stretch into the eastern parts of the County.

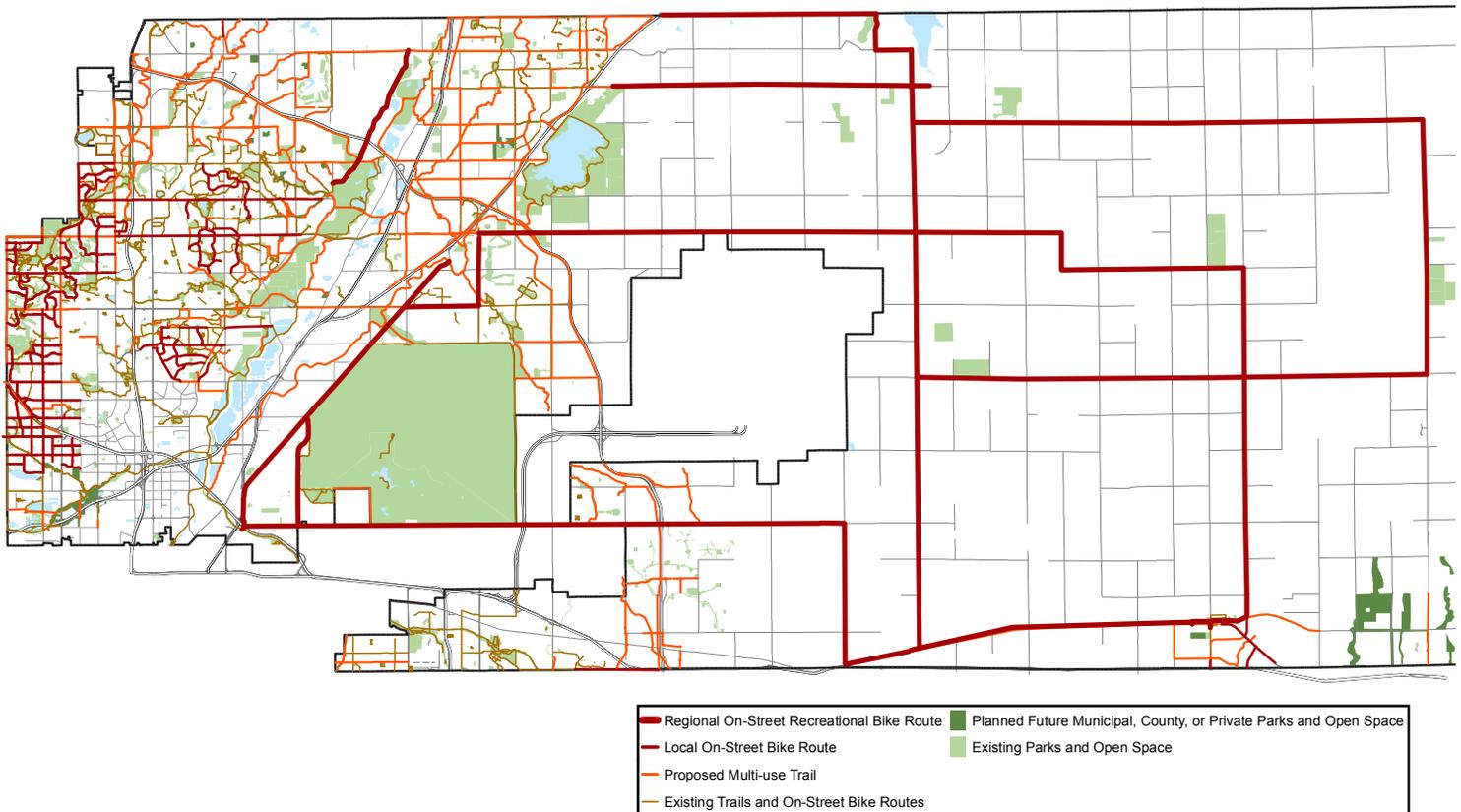
The proposed bike route designations will require design elements for on-street bike use varying according to traffic speed and volume along different segments of road. The roads designated for on-street biking should at a minimum include a 4-foot wide paved shoulder and signage. The following are the proposed regional on-street bike routes:

### Riverdale Road Bikeway

The scenic qualities and interest of Riverdale Road currently attracts many cyclists and is often under heavy use. While a multi-use trail is proposed parallel to Riverdale Road linking Ken Mitchell Open Space and the Regional Park, it is thought that this roadway will continue to be used by more experienced cyclists that feel comfortable biking on the roadway. The on-street route will require safety improvements of widening shoulders in certain segments as well as signage to alert cars to share the road with cyclists. The route will connect to Thornton's proposed multi-use Riverdale Trail and connect to other multi-use city routes.

*Total Mileage: 4.4 miles one way.*

Map 28: Proposed On-street Bike Routes



### **Regional Bike Loop**

The proposed Regional Bike Loop has the potential to become an asset for cyclists in Adams County and the Front Range as a destination bike route through scenic agricultural lands and rural small towns. The Regional Bike Loop is proposed to follow 120th Avenue from Commerce City west to Peterson Road; south on Peterson to 112th Avenue; turns south on State Highway 79 all the way into Bennett; east along Highway 36/Colfax; north along Hudson Road to 56th Avenue. At 56th Avenue, the route connects with both on-street and multi-use trails around the southern border of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and returns along State Highway 2 through Commerce City (see Map 28). Improvements to the road to accommodate on-street cycling may include widened shoulders, signage, and paving along Converse Road.

*Total Mileage - outer loop: 72.8 miles*

### **152nd Bike Route**

The 152nd Bike Route will follow 152nd Avenue which goes east-west from Barr Lake State Park to Imboden Road. South of 152nd cyclists may continue on a short or long loop of the proposed Regional Bike Loop. Improvements for the road to accommodate on-street cycling may include widening shoulders and adding signage.

*Total Mileage: 8.7 miles one way with options to connect into the Regional Bike Loop via Imboden Road.*

### **Imboden Road North-South Route**

This route will provide connections between the 152nd Avenue Bike Route and the Regional Bike Loop. South of 120th Avenue, Imboden provides a shorter version of the Regional Bike Loop. Improvements to the road to accommodate on-street cycling may include widening shoulders and adding signage.

*Total Mileage: 16.4 miles one way. Inner Loop Distance: 55.6 miles.*

### ***Bird Watching and Wildlife Viewing***

Educating and enhancing opportunities to learn about and enjoy the unique birds and wildlife in the eastern plains is an important recreation and conservation activity for Adams County. Although bird watching and wildlife viewing are considered non-consumptive and passive activities, they do have impacts on wildlife which are important to mitigate.

A study by Colorado State University and the Colorado Division of Wildlife sought to understand wildlife viewing in Colorado and produced a number of relevant findings that are important to Adams County as they seek to encourage bird and wildlife viewing. While wildlife viewing is very important to Coloradans, the research indicates that participation is not as high as people's interest, which makes it important to understand constraints to viewing. Not knowing the best times or the best places to look and not knowing enough about viewing opportunities are often cited as reasons preventing people from viewing wildlife. Most people combine bird and wildlife viewing with other activities such as picnicking, camping, and day hiking, making it important to provide for these opportunities together rather than looking at wildlife viewing as a separate and independent activity. It is important to accommodate the different types of viewers from the generalist who participates on occasion or in association with other activities to the smaller percentage of wildlife and bird watchers who have an active interest in viewing. (Wildlife Viewing in Colorado: A Review and Synthesis of Existing Data)

Developing facilities for bird and wildlife viewing can help to protect natural ecosystems and species, while also enabling people to successfully view and experience wildlife and in turn increase their enjoyment and appreciation for conservation and protection.



*Bald Eagles have three nesting sites located within Adams County that require protection from visitors.*

Undeveloped lands with dirt hiking trails, with or without wildlife interpretation signs are desirable. Scenic overlooks, informal nature centers or interpretive centers, boardwalks, and observation areas/blinds are also attractive options to increasing opportunities for wildlife viewing. It is important to protect nesting sites, riparian edges, native vegetation, sensitive areas and wetlands in ways which provide viewing yet discourage access.

Providing information about viewing opportunities and educating people about the species they may find is important to capturing new participants in this activity. Most Coloradans reported that brochures/pamphlets, wildlife watching field guides, checklists and maps, and newsletters were desirable. The information which was most important to residents of the Denver Metro area was as simple as providing the best times and locations as well as the types of wildlife found in the area. Some additional ways Adams County residents suggested increasing participation in bird and wildlife viewing included County-wide events and birding tours. Adams County should look for opportunities to partner with organizations like the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to develop programs and manage open space and parks to protect the diversity of existing species. The Colorado Birding Trail is a new program developed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and their partners as a major nature tourism initiative to “promote non-consumptive outdoor recreation, conservation of resources by private landowners, and a diversified income for rural economies.” Adams County should consider working

with the organization to develop a birding trail within Adams County, linking public and private outdoor recreation sites into a network where visitors can observe birds and wildlife.<sup>1</sup>

The places in which Adams County may consider developing bird watching facilities within existing County open space and trails that currently support a variety of bird species, raptors, and other wildlife where enhancements for birding and viewing wildlife can be focused include: 88th Avenue Open Space (Blue Heron areas), Lowell Ponds wetlands, Gahagen Open Space, 136th and Holly Park and Open Space, 88th Avenue Open Space, Star K Ranch, and along Sand Creek. Proposed open space and trails that would be preferred locations for this type of recreation include: Kiowa Creek Trail and Box Elder Creek Trail. The Regional Park Master Plan supports this type of activity with enhancements to the northern nature preserve and birding and wildlife viewing areas along the South Platte River within the park. The three proposed trails will be natural surfaces where visitors will have the opportunity for a more natural wildlife viewing experience.

### ***Fishing***

Better fishing access and amenities to support fishermen should be identified and clearly marked with signage and improved access, both through trail access for non-motorized transport and parking spaces in appropriate areas. Participants in the public meetings identified areas along the South Platte River (88th Avenue Open Space and between the Ken Mitchell Open Space and the Regional Park) and Clear Creek



*A sampling of the species found in Adams County that catch the interest of residents exploring the County's protected lands and attract visitors interested in getting a glimpse of species unique to the front range prairies.*

in addition to creating more fishing spots within the Regional Park and Horse Creek Reservoir (owned by the Henrylyn Irrigation District) as places where they would like to see improvements for fishing take place. Some of the locations in Adams County that provide fishing opportunities already include: Elaine T. Valente Open Space Lakes, Grandview Ponds, Lowell Ponds, McKay Lake, West Sprat-Platte Fishing Facility, Gravel Lakes Fishing Facility, Adams County Fairgrounds Lakes (Fishing is Fun Lake), and Barr Lake. These areas may have opportunities for additional improvements geared toward improving the experience for fishermen or improving existing facilities. Fishing is currently prohibited at the Clear Creek Holding Ponds except for youths in the Colorado Parks and Wildlife angler education activities.

Some recommended improvements to support fishing as a recreational activity in the County include a range of improvements, from relatively low impact natural trail enhancements and enhanced shoreline access, to more intensive improvements like bathrooms and fishing piers. Facilities that can be enjoyed by the community as well as improve the experience of fishermen and children include: handicapped-accessible fishing piers and ADA access, parking, picnic areas, rest rooms and drinking fountains, and trail connections linking to other area attractions. Enhancing the ease of access to the shore, bank, or pier; providing open areas for casting; and improving the fish habitat and stocking local ponds are important improvements to support fishing. Providing trail access where residents can access and enjoy the waterways from the existing multi-use trails on foot is also important.

### ***Other Recreational Activities***

**Public Shooting Range** - Community members were interested in seeing plans finalized for Adams County Public Shooting and Sportsman Education Park developed near the intersection of 120th and Gun Club Road. If this location proves to be unfeasible, due to concerns from Denver International Airport, another site for this facility should be considered. This facility will offer firearm and archery enthusiasts the opportunity to engage in a wide range of skill development activities as well as provide education on firearm safety. The provision of such a facility will provide a community space for those who may currently practice these activities in places that are unsafe and dangerous to others.



*Fishing can provide entertainment for the whole family and an opportunity for people of all ages to enjoy being in a natural setting*



*Picnic shelter at Elaine T. Valente Park*

**Places for Group Gatherings** - Creating additional places for group gatherings should be considered in the 88th Avenue Open Space and along the Kiowa Creek trail. These facilities offer a venue for public events and community activities. They can be varied in scale and range from large amphitheatres, smaller outdoor classroom spaces, to picnic sites and shelters for small groups or families.

**Community Gardening** - Finding additional locations for community gardening (similar to the garden in Brighton) in the western part of the County was identified in the community polling exercise as an activity in need of new or improved facilities. These gardens create productive social spaces that can bring the community together and produce local fresh food. Vacant parcels in the south western part of the County, such as the site of the former Clear Lake Middle School, could be potential places for this type of facility.

**Sports Field/Open Lawns** - Over half of the participants at the community meetings felt there were too few sports fields or open lawns available in the County. While sports fields and open lawns are mostly provided by the municipalities and Special Districts, there may be opportunities for the County to provide additional fields or public lawns within the Regional Park and Fairgrounds or the former Clear Lake Middle School property. The vacant lands in the urban area south of 88th Avenue and North of Clear Creek offers opportunities for the County to work with municipalities to create additional parks and open space opportunities.

## OUTDOOR AND NATURE EDUCATION

The Barr Lake State Park and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge provide excellent community wide resources for environmental education programs in Adams County. Adams County should continue to work with the Colorado State Parks and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support activities within these facilities and look for ways to expand programming to reach more residents within the County. Barr Lake with its abundant habitat and wildlife, Nature Center and Environmental Learning Center, should be a focus for further nature interpretation and education opportunities.

Adams County Regional Park is a popular destination that could benefit from informal interpretive educational elements and the development of a small nature center that focuses on the cultural and agricultural heritage of the County. This center can showcase the high plains prairie environment, agricultural richness, and unique ecology of Adams County while providing educational opportunities for students and local residents. These can include elements for education, nature enjoyment and classroom opportunities while showcasing best management practices for environmental restoration and conservation. There is an opportunity at the Regional Park to work with Colorado State University's extension campus in providing environmental education.

Interpretation of agriculture in Adams County is an endeavor that will make it so residents understand and appreciate farmer and rancher needs. More education and interpretation opportunities should be developed through partnerships between the County, area farmers and ranchers, and support centers such as the City of Brighton. The interpretive mediums can take many different forms such as online resources, kiosk and wayside exhibits, booklets, pamphlets and videos related to particular topics.



*Adams County residents harvest their hard work at Brighton's Community Garden.*



*Interpretive signage is part of the many offerings available at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal for visitors to learn about nature.*

<sup>1</sup> Vaske, J. J., Wittmann, K., Williams, T. V., Hardesty, K., and Sikorowski, L. (2001). *Wildlife Viewing in Colorado: A Review and Synthesis of Existing Data*. Project Rep. for the Colo. Div. of Wildlife. Human Dimensions in Nat Res. Unit rep. No. 33, Colorado State Univ., Fort Collins. 41 pp.





# ACTION PLAN

1. Introduction and Action Plan Purpose
2. Action Plan Summary Table
3. Master Plan Performance Measures
4. Policy Implications
5. Potential Funding Sources

# 5



## INTRODUCTION AND ACTION PLAN PURPOSE

The Action Plan provides recommendations for implementing the long-term vision and goals expressed in the Open Space, Parks, and Trails Master Plan. The Action Plan is intended to be a technical working document, with regular updates as tasks are completed and possible opportunities are evaluated. The Action Plan provides direction to Adams County Parks and Community Resources Department; and also has implications for coordination with other County departments, such as Planning and Development, Public Works, as well as other organizations and agencies. As Adams County moves forward with a purposeful and progressive open space program, it will be necessary for County government to assume a leadership position with respect to stewardship of open space resources and work in collaboration with municipalities, recreation districts, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to implement this program. Adams County will not accomplish all of the recommendations of this Plan acting alone; success will be realized through efforts already underway with public sector partners, land conservation organizations, and landowners.

### 1. Key Elements of Implementation

- Adams County Parks and Community Resources Department will implement the Master Plan vision through partnerships with local, county, state, and federal agencies, land trusts, and private property owners.
- Plan implementation relies on participation of private property owners.
- The plan seeks to provide incentives rather than restrictions to achieve the plan vision.
- Ongoing coordination with other agencies and regional entities will be required.



*The Bromley Hishinuma Farm in Brighton is on the National Register of Historic Places due to its significance in the history of Japanese Americans who farmed the land since 1947 who raised sugar beets, cabbage, alfalfa, and corn. Photo: [www.waymarking.com](http://www.waymarking.com)*

## ACTION PLAN SUMMARY TABLE

Abbreviations:

- CDOT = Colorado Department of Transportation
- DIA = Denver International Airport
- DOPW = Department of Parks and Wildlife
- NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Services
- RMBO = Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

1: PARTNERSHIPS AND REGIONAL COORDINATION		
Action Item Task	Participants	Timeframe
Maintain an updated regional GIS map database of existing and proposed parks, open space and trails. Share with partner agencies.	Adams County GIS to lead by collecting updated mapping from municipalities and surrounding Counties, combine datasets and distribute updates to partner agencies.	Annually
Strengthen and build relationships with parks, open space and trails managers from the cities and recreation districts through regularly scheduled meetings and forums.	Adams County to organize and lead quarterly Park and Open Space Directors meetings to address mutual objectives, issues and priorities.	Bi-Annually
Coordinate planning of trails and recreation bike routes with local and regional transportation plans.	Adams County to participate in the creation of transportation plans	Ongoing
Work with the school districts to plan for better connections between school children and parks and open spaces and create nature educational opportunities.	Adams County, school districts, municipalities, recreation districts, RMBO	Ongoing
Participate with the Hyland Hills Recreation District in planning for public outdoor recreational activities within the southwest portion of the County.	Adams County and Hyland Hills	2013-2015
Coordinate with Denver International Airport in management of surrounding open spaces and natural resources. Focus on Box Elder Creek as a location for riparian enhancement.	Adams County and DIA	2013-2015

## 2: OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES PROVISION

Action Item Task	Participants	Timeframe
Create safe routes for on-street cyclists by coordinating road designation, widening and signage with the Public Works Department.	Adams County, CDOT	2012
Promote on-street regional bicycle routes to cyclist organizations, interest groups and race organizers.	Adams County	2016 (or when routes are complete)
Clarify the County's position and enforce regulations for gold panning as a recreational activity within Adams County parks.	Adams County	2013
Complete high priority off-street trail connections identified in the Trails Master Plan.	Adams County, municipalities, and partner organizations	2013-2015
Inventory parks' amenities such as rest rooms, parking, benches, and picnic tables at existing Adams County recreation areas in order to start the process of determining facility needs.	Adams County	2014-2015
Provide trails suitable for equestrian use along routes identified in the Master Plan, as well as staging and parking areas for horse trailers.	Adams County	2013-2016
Seek opportunities to incorporate places for group gatherings, sports fields, and community gardens into existing parks.	Adams County, Cities, and Park and Recreation Districts	2012-2015
Improve water access and amenities for activities such as fishing and swimming within existing and new parks.	Adams County, "Fishing is Fun" Program of the Division of Parks and Wildlife	2012-2015
Work with ditch companies and Urban Drainage and Flood Control District to create and plan for multi-use paths where appropriate.	Adams County, ditch companies, UDFCD, land managers	Ongoing
Create development requirements for dedication of floodplain areas to become trail easements.	Adams County	2013
Incorporate the ideas of the Regional Bicycle Loop into the County Transportation Plan.	Adams County	2012

### 3: OUTDOOR AND NATURE EDUCATION

Action Item Task	Participants	Timeframe
Partner with the Division of Parks and Wildlife and the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory to provide wildlife interpretation and viewing opportunities within County and municipal park lands.	Adams County, DOPW, RMBO	Ongoing
Support outdoor nature/education programs through the County grant program.	Adams County	Ongoing

### 4: WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

Action Item Task	Participants	Timeframe
Discuss modification of County floodplain regulations to restrict development. Recommendations for the treatment of the Flood Control Overlay Zone District are provided in the Policy Recommendations section of the Action Plan.	Adams County	2013
Discuss modification of County regulations to protect creeks that currently lack formal floodplain mapping (creeks in the eastern portion of the County). Require landowners or developers to estimate the area inundated by the 100-year floodplain area and incorporate the floodplain plus a resource protection buffer as a development setback as part of the land use process.	Adams County	2012-2014
Provide technical and financial assistance to farmers and rural area property owners to help safeguard water quality, riparian, and in-stream habitat in and around floodplains.	Adams County, CSU Extension, NRCS	Ongoing

## 5: AGRICULTURAL LAND CONSERVATION AND ENTERPRISE SUPPORT

Action Item Task	Participants	Timeframe
Create a sub-area plan for the Local Food Production District. Evaluate infrastructure investments and economic possibilities. Develop a branding and marketing plan. Define a pro-active role for the Open Space program.	Adams County, Brighton, CSU Extension Services, land trusts	2013
Create zoning categories appropriate for the Local Food District with specified listing of uses and accessory uses available. Revise County codes to encourage cottage industries and other urban agricultural land uses.	Adams County, City of Brighton	2013
Revise the existing Transfer of Development Rights sending and receiving areas and provisions. Adjust the ratios and create more flexible policies for smaller sized parcels. (See the Policy Implications recommendations section of the Action Plan for more information)	Adams County	2012-2013
Work with agencies and local groups to create a co-op farming program, local area farmers' markets, and a farm link and mentoring program.	Adams County, Regional Fairgrounds, CSU Extension Services	2012-2015
Connect the CSU Extension Services to area farms. Help find farmers to manage or purchase farms that existing landowners wish to sell so that agricultural lands would be more likely to remain in operation.	Adams County, CSU Extension Services	2012-2015
Develop regulations for Conservation Based Development for rural cluster development that encourages the conservation of agricultural lands and activities. Include the ideas of these rural land uses within the Comprehensive Plan.	Adams County	2013-2015
Create Intergovernmental TDR agreements with Brighton, Aurora, Commerce City, and Bennett to identify receiving areas to benefit from the program.	County and municipalities	2012-2015
Evaluate the opportunity for the County to create a lease-back program for partnership with farmers in the Local Food Production District.	Adams County, land trusts	2012-2015
Create incentives for property owners to participate in agricultural land conservation, such as rural density transfers, taxation incentives, agricultural enterprise districts, and differential agricultural land assessment rates.	Adams County, Assessor	2013
Evaluate opportunities to incentivize retention of agricultural parcels greater than 35 acres, such as instituting an alternative rural land use development process. (See the Policy Implications recommendations section for more information)	Adams County	2013
Implement the Regional Park Master Plan that includes opportunities for farmers and agricultural education.	Adams County	2013-2015
Evaluate the option for adoption of a mitigation fee or real estate transfer tax to be assessed for the conversion of lands to non-farm uses by development projects. Development applications on lands identified to contain soils of state-wide agricultural value or have produced agricultural goods within the past 5-years would incur a fee per acre to be distributed to a fund for conservation easements.	Adams County	2013
Create a Right to Farm ordinance to protect from complaints about customary agricultural practices in designated urban areas.	Adams County	2013
Evaluate County ordinances and code to identify challenges to agritourism type businesses and activities.	Adams County	2013

### 5: AGRICULTURAL LAND CONSERVATION AND ENTERPRISE SUPPORT

Action Item Task	Participants	Timeframe
Seek addendum to the Northern Colorado Regional Food System Assessment prepared by Colorado State University and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to gain a better understanding of how Adams County fits within the regional food context and identify recommendations for enhancing Adams County food systems.	Adams County and Colorado State University	2013

### 6: OPEN SPACE SALES TAX PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Action Item Task	Participants	Timeframe
Encourage partnerships through the Open Space grant application program in the form of support letters, financial contributions, and/or in-kind contributions.	Open Space, parks and trails grant applicants	Ongoing
Provide staff support to applicants in preparing open space, parks and trails grant applications.	Adams County to provide grant writing workshop for all applicants before each grant cycle	Prior to each grant cycle (2 times per year)
Build awareness about the Open Space Sales Tax through an informational campaign.	Adams County	Ongoing
Determine funding sources for administration and monitoring of conservation easements, such as an endowment or fee system.	Adams County to coordinate with local jurisdictions and land trusts.	2013-2015
Expand upon the sources of outside grants for Adams County Projects and seek funding for new special projects. (See the Funding Sources section of the Action Plan for more information.)	Adams County	Ongoing
Complete an audit of the Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan to track progress of performance measures and completion of goals.	Adams County	Annually
Initiate a study on the “Economic Benefits” of Adams County Open Space Program report to provide information to residents prior to the Open Space Tax sunset in 2026.	Adams County to lead and provide to other Counties for comparison and benchmarking of programs.	2020
Identify maintenance and management issues for parks and open space properties managed by the County.	Adams County	2013-2014
Develop detailed open space management plans for County-owned public open space properties that contain important wildlife habitat to guide long-term maintenance and enhancement activities.	Adams County, DOPW, NRCS	Ongoing

## MASTER PLAN PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The performance measures detailed below help to keep the master plan on track by setting a vision, baselines, targets, and methods for measuring different topic areas related to the goals of the plan.

METRICS				
Topic Area	Vision Indicator	Baseline Condition	Measurement Method	Target for the Future
Parks and Open Space Distribution	Provide ample public accessible parks and open space per resident. Ensure that open space and park areas are located proportionate to the population density.	78 percent of all residential parcels in the County are within one-fourth mile (five minute walking distance) of an open space or park that allows public access.	GIS mapping calculation	85 percent of all residential parcels in teh County are within one-fourth mile of an open space or park that allows for public access.
Parks and Open Space per Population	Ensure provision of parks and open space per population is maintained or increased as the County's population grows.	Adams County = 28,633 acres or parks and open space per 441,603 population (2010 census) = .06 acre/resident.	GIS mapping calculation	TBD
Public Awareness	Increase in resident knowledge of the open space sales tax.	63% of residents surveyed are not at all familiar with the tax.	Resident survey	Increase awareness by 10%
Quality of the Open Space, Parks and Trails System	Improve the public perception of the parks, open space and trails systems.	72% of residents surveyed rated the quality "excellent" or "good".	Resident survey	Increase rating to 80%
Provision of Trails	Increase in the linear miles of trails.	404 linear trail miles within the County (80 within unincorporated Adams County)	GIS mapping calculation	The Trails Master Plan targets 81 linear miles of high or mid-term priority trails to be added.
Recreation Participation	Increase participation in recreation activities.	See the Open Space Resident Survey for all categories of recreation participation	Resident survey	Increase all categories of family participation in outdoor recreation activities by 5%

**METRICS**

Topic Area	Vision Indicator	Baseline Condition	Measurement Method	Target for the Future
Health Indicators	Improve the health indicators linked to physical activity.	County Health Rankings and Roadmaps website: Adams County Obesity Rate = 25%, Physical Inactivity = 21%	County health assessments	Reduce to Colorado Benchmark 20% obesity rate and 17% inactivity
Habitat Protection	Conserve lands with high quality habitat.	Acres of land with high quality habitat currently in permanent protection	GIS analysis	The Open Space Master Plan targets ___ number of acres
High Quality Agricultural Soil Protection	Conserve lands with high quality agricultural soils.	Acres of land with high quality soil currently in permanent protection	GIS analysis	The Open Space Master Plan targets ___ number of acres
Farmland Protection	Increase the acres of lands held in conservation easements.	8,866 acres of conservation easements	GIS database property calculation	The Open Space Master Plan targets ___ number of acres
Water Quality and Quantity	Increase the acres of protected land with surface waters including flood zones, wetlands, riparian corridors and protection buffers.	Acres of protected lands with surface water resources	GIS analysis	The Open Space Master Plan targets ___ number of acres
Floodplain Protection	Reduce the rate of construction occurring within the floodplain.	Number of permits issued per year to fill or build within a floodplain area	Permit tracking	Reduce by 10% per year
Funding and Grants	Increase the amount and diversity of outside funding and grants acquired to fund Adams County projects.	Dollar amount of grants and number of different sources awarding the grants.	Yearly financial tracking	Increase the dollar amount of grants received by 10%. Obtain grants from two new sources a year.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTY REGULATIONS AND THE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Revision or creation of County regulations will be needed to implement the Open Space, Parks, and Trails Master Plan. This section describes the necessary changes identified within the planning process. Evaluation, trial, and coordination with multiple County departments will be required to realize the intent of these recommendations for changes in policies.

### **Agricultural Land Conservation**

#### *Transfer of Development Rights*

Adams County Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program was created in 2001 to enable the exchange of development rights. This Open Space, Parks, and Trails Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan updates necessitate modifying the areas designated as sending and receiving locations. In addition, the TDR program requirements should be modified to increase property owner interest in the program, improve the program flexibility to meet the open space objectives, and address administration difficulties.

When the TDR program was first developed it focused on preserving lands in the following areas: Barr Lake buffer zones; flood plain areas throughout Adams County, primarily in western half; and the airport influence zones of Denver International Airport and the Front Range Airport. At the beginning, TDRs were allowed for farmland to the far eastern edge of county, but then the area was refined to include only the areas west of Strasburg (Yellow Jacket Road was the dividing line, with only the areas west of road included). The area has also been modified to include floodplain and important habitat areas around the South Platte River.

The TDR program sending areas should now be revised to the priority areas for conservation identified in the Open Space, Parks, and Trails Master Plan. These lands represent the highest resource values that are most likely to experience growth pressures in the near future. The areas best suited to capture future growth should be identified as receiving areas within the Comprehensive Plan update. It is anticipated that major roadway corridors such as I-70, areas surrounding already urbanized areas, and the areas surrounding rural communities will be the locations to maximize development density. Intergovernmental Agreements for TDRs may also be a way to direct development to the most suitable locations and preserve rural character.

The ratios to award additional units should be reevaluated to create greater incentive for developers to become interested in the program. Flexibility for the program to allow for parcels less than 35 acres to receive partial credit should be made possible to allow for lands used for smaller food production related activities to take part in the program. A land banking system may also increase the ease for developers to utilize the program.

The TDR program would benefit from an awareness campaign and involvement of Land Trusts to make both developers and property owners within the sending areas aware of their options and incentives available. Finally, administration and monitoring of the properties involved in the TDR program will require determination of permanent funding sources.

## *Conservation Development*

The Comprehensive Plan should describe the forms of conservation development that would create more compact development patterns and conservation of resources in the rural areas of the County. Development in this manner is incentivized by granting the ability to develop greater density of housing units along with the conservation of significant land. Typically conservation development is thought of as preserving natural areas such as streams, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and natural scenic areas. This plan introduces a new idea of an agricultural hamlet. The agricultural hamlets would locate housing on clusters of lots two acres or less in size. Agricultural activities would then be protected in perpetuity on the remaining 30 or more acres. The intent of such a development style would be for only 10 percent of the property to include development and roadways and the remaining 90 percent to be used for food production and open space. The preserved lands could be leased to farmers, non-profit organizations, or managed as part of the home-owners association. The opportunity for small scale organic farming, farming co-ops, and rural lifestyles is made possible by this land use configuration.

The Comprehensive Plan should also introduce the idea of mixing some forms of agriculture with residential communities in the more urbanized areas and rural edge. This could incorporate professional food production as a key element in the community design, social network, and financial viability of the development. A few examples known as agriburbia are successful in the front range already, such as the Platte River Village in Milliken. This development includes 944 homes surrounding 108 acres of backyard farms and 152 acres of community farms. The farm feeds local residents and supply restaurants while paying for community upkeep.

The Comprehensive Plan should incorporate these ideas for conservation development into land use planning. The steps that would follow include revisions to the County municipal code and zoning.



*Protecting high quality agricultural lands like this farm in expansive eastern portion of the County is a priority.*



*Customary agricultural practices such as hoop houses should be protected through the Right to Farm Ordinance.*



*By creating an Agricultural Enterprise District, Adams County will help local food remain an asset for the community.*

### ***Flag Lot Development***

Adams County Development Standards and Regulations allow for flag lots to be created when all other subdivision alternatives are impractical. To prevent agricultural use from becoming unviable due to lot configuration, it is recommended that the flag lot dimension standards be reviewed and modified.

## **Local Food Production District Policy Implications**

### ***Land Use and Zoning***

Create zoning categories appropriate for the Local Food Production District with specified listing of uses and accessory uses available. Revise County codes to encourage cottage industries and other urban agricultural land uses. A list of allowed land uses must be created that encourage urban agricultural practices. Zoning for the Local Food Production District will need to be developed to address the wide variety of agricultural, tourism, education, retail, hospitality, entertainment, and recreation opportunities.

### ***Right to Farm Ordinance***

The 1998 Open Space Plan identified the need for a Right-to Farm ordinance, however, it has not been implemented. It has become all the more important for the County to adopt to support farming near urban areas. The Right to Farm ordinance is intended to reduce the occurrence of conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses and to protect the public health. One purpose of the ordinance is to reduce the loss of agricultural resources by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be deemed a nuisance.

### ***Agricultural Enterprise District Creation***

The option should be explored to create an Agricultural Enterprise District (AED) for the lands identified in the Master Plan for conservation. Modeled after Urban Enterprise Zones, AEDs provide incentives for voluntary participation. AEDs are voluntarily formed where farmers and ranchers agree to keep their land in agriculture for a defined period of time, usually five to ten years, in return for benefits provided by the County. Benefits to participating farmers and ranchers could include property tax relief, marketing support, job training, reduced sales taxes, exemption from certain environmental regulations, protection from nuisance complaints, and limitations on the County's ability to

extend roads, utilities and special districts into the defined AEDs. Proponents of AEDs elsewhere suggest that the costs of such a program are offset by reduced residential development, which typically generates less property-tax revenue than needed to provide public services.

## **Subdivision/PUD Regulations**

### ***Open Space Dedication***

The County PUD and subdivision requirements should be modified to remove the allowance of roadways included in the calculation of open space dedication. The Open Space dedication should only include lands use for parks, natural resource protection, and public recreation. Of the open space dedications, it is recommended that a minimum of 10 percent allow for public access to trails, parks, or natural areas.

## **Flood Area and River Corridor Protection**

The conservation of entire corridors with the Flood Control Overlay Zone is imperative for water quality, wildlife movement, and erosion control in addition to flood water management. An important element of the Master Plan is the recommendation of more strict controls for the County Flood Control Overlay Zones.

The flood areas would be further conserved by tightening the County's policy of allowing exceptions for building within the floodplain and providing incentives to land owners to enhance riparian areas. Greater restriction on development within the Flood Control Overlay Zones would in-effect preserve riparian and floodplain areas in the same way as open space acquisition. It is recommended that the County obtain formal floodplain mapping for all creeks and streams.



*Third Creek*

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Adams County Open Space Tax is just one of the funding sources available for parks, open space, trails, nature education, outdoor recreation, and conservation projects. Current funding sources Adams County and municipalities utilized include partnerships, fees, grant awards and private donations. The Open Space, Parks, and Trails Master Plan identifies new projects that could seek funding from a variety of types of sources.

### Grants

Grants require submission of an application, typically by a specific deadline, for a project sponsor to compete for funding. Potential grant funding sources are listed below and are categorized according to their applicability to different topics addressed in the Master Plan document. This list is not intended to be inclusive of all opportunities, but rather to document the variety of possibilities initially identified from the planning process. See the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Grants Summary List provided by the Colorado Parks and Recreation Association for a listing of more opportunities.

### *Parks, Recreation and Open Space*

Conservation Trust Funds are distributed by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to cities, towns, counties, and special districts. These funds are available for parks, recreation, and open space purposes. Funding can be used for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of new conservation sites or for capital improvements or maintenance for recreational purposes on any public site. They can be used for open spaces including but not limited to flood plains, green belts, agricultural lands or scenic areas, or for any scientific, historic, scenic, recreation, aesthetic or similar purpose.

The Gates Family Foundation Parks, Conservation & Recreation grant program provides for land conservation and easement purchases, greenways and trail systems, outdoor/indoor recreation facilities, urban public spaces, and community gardens in Colorado. The foundation also provides conservation easement support.

LiveWell Colorado Community Investments initiative seeks to create healthy communities where residents have access to affordable, healthy foods and where active lifestyles are encouraged and supported.

Colorado Division of Wildlife Fishing is Fun Program provides a match grant opportunities to local and county governments, park and recreation departments, water districts, angling organizations and others for projects to improve angling opportunities in Colorado. Among the types of projects supported through Fishing Is Fun are stream and river habitat improvements, access improvements, perpetual easements for public access, pond and lake habitat improvements, fish retention structures, development of new fishing ponds, and amenity improvements such as shade shelters, benches and restrooms.

Great Outdoors Colorado has a long history of funding projects in Adams County, local municipalities, recreation districts, and towns for open space, parks and recreation projects or planning efforts.

The Colorado Tourism Office/ CTO administers the Statewide Marketing Matching Grant Program (which assists organizations with promotion of the state as a whole) and the Regional Matching Grant Program (which assists organizations with the promotion of



*Biker enjoying the Clear Creek Trail*

specific regions in Colorado). Within the context of marketing projects, the funds may be spent on promotion, product packaging, networking and communication and education. The regional parks and Local Food Production District may be eligible to apply for funding.

The USDA Community Facilities Grant Program assists in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population. This grant may be appropriate for communities within the more rural portions of the County to apply.

The Anschutz Family Foundation provides grants to non-profits and organizations in Colorado. The grants aim to improve the lives of individuals, promote self-sufficiency, and assist with community development by supporting outdoor or environmental education or programs that will promote self-sufficiency.

The El Pomar Foundation supports Colorado projects related to health, human services, education, arts and humanities, and civic and community initiatives. Generally, El Pomar does not fund seasonal activities, travel or media projects, but their funding has supported other aspects of cultural heritage tourism, including regional planning and development.

### ***Trails and Bicycle Ways***

The Colorado State Recreational Trails Grant Program funds projects for large recreational trail grants, small recreational trail grants, trail planning, and trail support grants. The Colorado State Parks Board and Great Outdoor Colorado Board are responsible for selecting projects for funding. Grant applications fall into the categories of Large Construction or Maintenance, Small Construction or Maintenance, and Planning or Support.

The Federal Inter-modal Transportation and Efficiency Act/ TEA-21 funds are distributed through the state. Funds are available for transportation related projects, including bicycle and pedestrian trails.

The Colorado Safe Routes to School Program distributes federal funds through the Department of Transportation to school districts and local governments and require no local matching funds. This is also an opportunity to gain funding for the creation of safe routes for children to travel to outdoor places.

The Bikes Belong Coalition is a non-profit organization providing grants for trail construction, bike lanes, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives.

## ***Farmland Conservation***

The NRCS Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program/FRPP provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural use. Working through existing programs, the USDA joins with state, tribal, or local governments to acquire conservation easements or other interests from landowners.

The NRCS Conservation Innovation Grants/CIG is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.

The Gates Family Foundation is exploring grant opportunities for urban-rural food linkages and alternative economic futures strategies for agriculture and agricultural tourism in Colorado.

The USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program/BFRDP provides grants to develop and offer education, training, outreach and mentoring programs to enhance the sustainability of the next generation of farmers. The recipient must be a collaborative, State, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of public or private entities, which may include: state cooperative extension service; community-based and nongovernmental organization; college or university; or any other appropriate partner.

The USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program provides funding to meet the food needs of low-income people, increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs, and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues; and/or meet specific state, local, or neighborhood food and agriculture needs for infrastructure improvement and development; planning for long-term solutions; or the creation of innovative marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers.

The USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program provides funding with the intent of increasing domestic consumption of agricultural commodities by expanding direct producer-



*Restoration is planned for a historic barn located within protected open space.*



*Wetlands bordering the Clear Creek multi-use trail provide important habitat for wildlife.*

to-consumer market opportunities. Examples of direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities include new farmers markets, roadside stands, community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, agritourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer infrastructures.

### ***Water Resource Protection***

The NRCS Small Watershed Program/SWP works through local government sponsors and helps participants solve natural resource and related economic problems on a watershed basis. Through river basin and watershed planning, NRCS helps citizens identify resource problems and encourage solutions for flood prevention, erosion control, and protection of water quality and quantity.

The NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program/WRP is a voluntary program designed to restore and protect wetlands on private property. Under WRP, landowners may sell a conservation easement or enter into a cost-share agreement with USDA to restore and protect wetlands.

### ***Wildlife Habitat and Natural Resources Enhancement***

The NRCS Grassland Reserve Program/GRP is designed to help landowners and operators voluntarily restore and protect grassland, including rangeland, pasture land, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The GRP assists participants to voluntarily keep grasslands from conversion to cropland or other uses.

The NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program/WHIP is a voluntary program for individuals to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private lands. It provides both technical and financial assistance to help establish and improve wildlife habitat.

The USDA Conservation Reserve Program/CRP is a voluntary program in which participants enter into contractual agreements with the USDA to take highly erodible land and environmentally sensitive cropland out of production by applying protective vegetative cover suited for wildlife. CRP is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency/FSA, with technical and other assistance from the NRCS.

The NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance/CTA provides voluntary conservation technical assistance to land-users, communities, units of state and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems.

The Gates Family Foundation's Natural Resource initiative partners strategically with groups to support land conservation, water resource protection and management, increased land trust capacity, citizen stewardship and ecosystem services demonstration opportunities.

The Laura Jane Musser Fund promotes public use of open space that improves a community's quality of life and public health, while also ensuring the protection of healthy, viable and sustainable ecosystems by protecting or restoring habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species.

The Audubon Society TogetherGreen Innovation Grants program supports creative and ambitious projects that engage diverse communities and find innovative solutions to environmental challenges. The projects supported conserve or restore habitat and protect species, improve water quality or quantity, and engage new and diverse audiences in conservation action.

Energy and Mineral Impact Grants administered by the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) assist communities affected by the growth and decline of extractive industries. The applicability of these funds to cultural heritage tourism lies mostly in their ability to fund improvements to public facilities and local government planning efforts where cultural heritage tourism-related goals can be furthered through economic development initiatives.

## **Partnership Funding**

Partnerships are joint development funding sources or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and the County, or a private business and the County. Two partners jointly develop potential revenue-producing park and recreation facilities and share risk, operational costs, responsibilities and asset management based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.

## **Dedication/Development Fees**

These fees are assessed for the development of residential and/or commercial properties with the proceeds to be used for parks and recreation purposes, such as open space acquisition, community park site development, neighborhood parks development, regional parks development, etc.

## **Inter-local Agreements**

Contractual relationships entered into between two or more local units of government and/or between a local unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint usage/development of sports fields, regional parks or other facilities.

## **Taxing Districts**

The Local Food Production District described in this plan may be appropriate for the creation of a Special District with a dedicated taxing mechanism. Revenues would be used to conserve open lands for agricultural uses, purchase lands for parks or open space, public infrastructure investments, and for trail planning and development. The support and feasibility of this funding mechanism would be explored as part of sub-area planning efforts.

## **Land Trusts**

Land Trusts such as the Conservation Fund, the Trust for Public Lands, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, and more contribute both technical help for acquisitions and funds in obtaining conservation easements.

## **Friends Associations**

These groups are formed to raise money typically for a single focus purpose that could include a park facility or program that will better the community as a whole and their special interest.

## **Foundation/Gifts**

These dollars are raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations established with private donations in promotion of specific causes, activities or issues. They offer a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gifts catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, sales of items, etc.

## **Bonds**

Bonded indebtedness issued with the approval of the electorate for capital improvements and general public improvements. The types of bonds available include Revenue, General Obligation, or Special Assessment.

## **Sponsors**

A sponsorship program for park and trail amenities allows smaller donations to be received from both individuals and businesses. Cash donations could be placed into a trust fund to be accessed for certain construction or acquisition projects associated with the open space system. Some recognition of the donors is appropriate and can be accomplished through the placement of a plaque, the naming of a trail segment, and/or special recognition at an opening ceremony. Types of gifts other than cash could include donations of services, equipment, labor, or reduced costs for supplies.

## **Irrevocable Remainder Trusts and Life Estates**

These trusts are set up with individuals who wish to leave their wealth or property to the County to use for a specific open space or parks project.

## **Reservations**

This revenue source comes from the right to reserve specific public property for a set amount of time. The reservation rates are usually set and apply to group picnic shelters, meeting rooms for weddings, reunions and outings or other type of facilities for a special activity.

## **Special Fundraisers**

Many park and recreation agencies have special fundraisers on an annual basis to help cover specific programs and capital projects.

## **Volunteerism**

This is an indirect revenue source in that persons donate time to assist the department in providing a product or service on an hourly basis, such as trail clean ups, tree planting, etc. This reduces the County's cost in providing the service plus it builds advocacy into the system.



**MASTER PLAN UPDATE  
RESIDENT INPUT FINDINGS**

**6**



## RESIDENT SURVEY

A statistically valid Resident Survey was distributed to a randomly selected group of 1,600 households throughout incorporated and unincorporated Adams County. Half of the surveys were distributed to the western portion and half were distributed to the eastern portion of the County. A postcard pre-notification was sent January 9th, 2012 followed by the first wave of surveys on January 16th, 2012. The response rate was 21 percent or 328 completed surveys. The survey gathered a range information including:

- Participation and Use
- Behaviors
- Priorities and Values
- Vision and Mission
- Contribution
- Measuring Performance
- Policy Preferences
- Funding Preferences

The survey results were weighted to reflect the County's demographics. We oversampled the eastern portion of the County so we could understand their preferences apart from those who lived in the west. This, however, only lets us slice the data a little bit finer. It doesn't skew the overall results toward the unincorporated or eastern perspective.

A complete discussion of the survey results can be found in *Adams County Open Space, Parks and Trails Resident Survey Report of Results* from March 2012.

*The Technical Review Committee provided insight into local issues and existing plans.*



## COMMUNITY MEETING FEEDBACK

Two rounds of public meetings were held to educate the public about the plan update process and gather feedback from the community.

### ***Community Meetings Round 1:***

The first round of meetings took place in April 2012, at three different locations throughout the County. The meetings were repeated twice at each location, at noon and evening sessions, to ensure that as many people as possible were able to attend. In addition, the same meeting format was also presented at the Open Space Forum.

- April 16 - Huron Street Anythink Library, Thornton
- April 17 - Adams County Regional Park & Fairgrounds, Brighton
- April 18 - Bennett Community Center, Bennett
- April 30 - Open Space Forum, Adams County Regional Park & Fairgrounds, Brighton

The first round of community meetings included a brief presentation followed by a keypad polling session where residents participated in an instant feedback survey with the answers to the survey questions instantly available for participants to view during the presentation. The keypad session was followed by a map activity in which participants were able to add their concerns and ideas related to open space, parks, and recreation to maps from which comments were collected and incorporated into the plan.

### ***Community Meetings Round 2:***

The second round of public meetings was held to present the draft plan. Attendees had the opportunity to add their feedback to maps and collaborate in generating any additional ideas. The comments generated during each meeting were incorporated into the final plan. A total of four different presentations were held at the following locations in July, 2012:

- July 11 at 7 p.m. - Huron Street Anythink Library, Thornton
- July 12 at Noon and 6 p.m.- Carl Park Community Center, Denver, CO
- July 13 at Noon - Adams County Regional Park & Fairgrounds, Brighton

### ***Keypad Polling Overview:***

The keypad polling sessions during the first round of public meetings were focused on assessing the community's vision, values & priorities for open space, parks, and recreation. The questions built upon the responses generated from the mail in surveys. A total of 140 responses were collected, 69 responses from the attendees of the community meetings and 71 responses from the Open Space Forum. The responses represent both the east and west portion of the County, though attendee's were predominantly from the eastern, more densely populated portion of the County, representing 57 percent. Thirteen percent of responses were from the western portion of the County and almost 30 percent were from people living outside of Adams County.

The key highlights from the public meetings included:

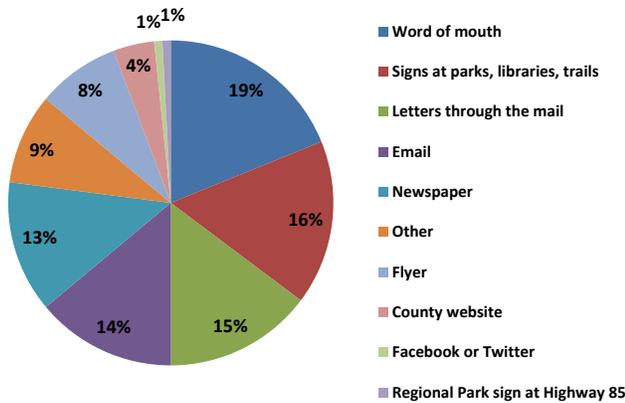
- The highest value was placed on the preservation of agriculture, water resources, natural areas, and wildlife habitat, along with provision of trails, regional recreation opportunities, and providing outdoor/nature education.
- Participants want more trails within river corridors, trails connecting communities, and scenic/recreational bike routes.
- A majority of participants would like to see Adams County focus on providing regional parks and open spaces rather than on providing local parks and open space within cities or incorporated rural communities.

## Keypad Results:

### 1.) How did you find out about his meeting? (select all that apply)

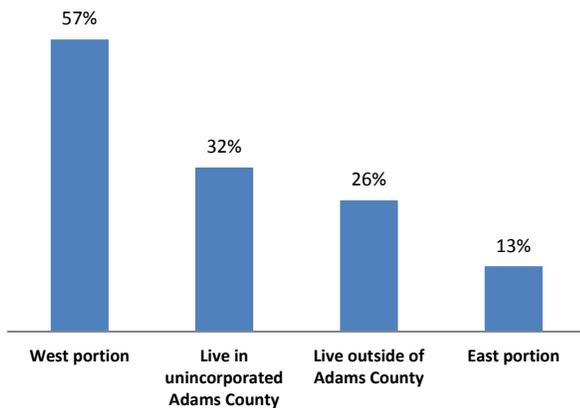
	Number	% of Responses
Word of mouth	23	19%
Signs at parks, libraries, trails	20	16%
Letters through the mail	18	15%
Email	17	14%
Newspaper	16	13%
Other	11	9%
Flyer	10	8%
County website	5	4%
Facebook or Twitter	1	1%
Regional Park sign at Highway 85	1	1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Question not included at the Forum presentation



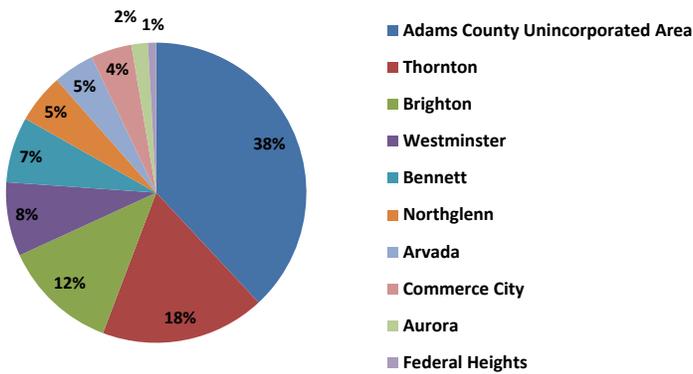
### 2.) In which part of Adams County do you live? (select up to two)

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
West portion	80	45%	57%
Live in unincorporated Adams County	45	25%	32%
Live outside of Adams County	36	20%	26%
East portion	18	10%	13%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100%</b>	



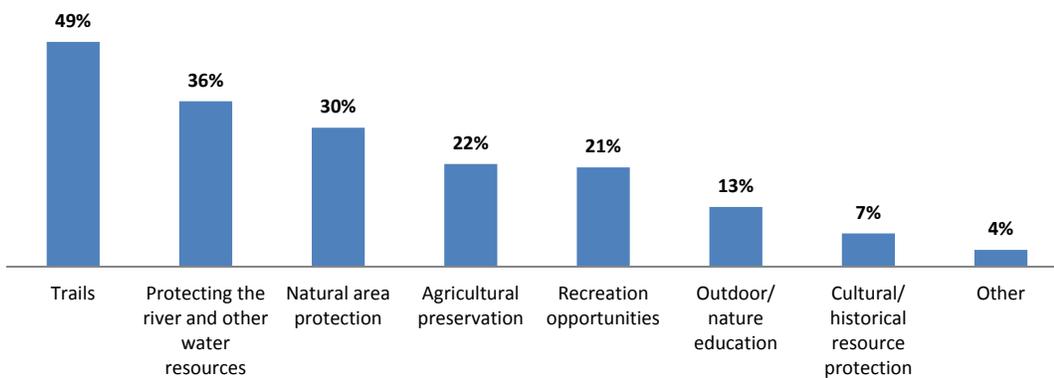
**3.) If you live within an Adams County city, which one is it?(select one)**

	Number	% of Responses
Adams County Unincorporated Area	43	38%
Thornton	20	18%
Brighton	14	12%
Westminster	9	8%
Bennett	8	7%
Northglenn	6	5%
Arvada	5	4%
Commerce City	5	4%
Aurora	2	2%
Federal Heights	1	1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100%</b>



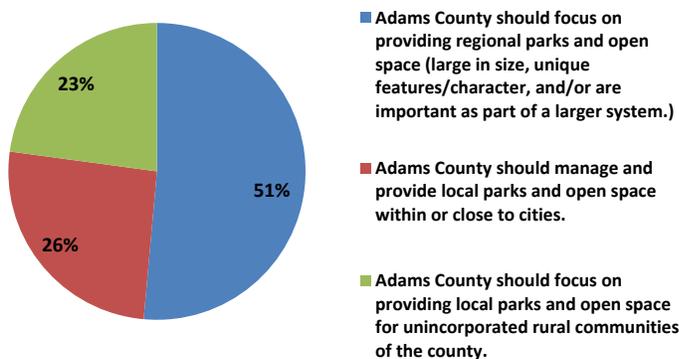
**4.) Which of these parks, open space, and trails efforts has been most successful in serving the needs of the residents? (select up to two)**

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
Trails	68	27%	49%
Protecting the river and other water resources	50	20%	36%
Natural area protection	42	17%	30%
Agricultural preservation	31	12%	22%
Recreation opportunities	30	12%	21%
Outdoor/ nature education	18	7%	13%
Cultural/ historical resource protection	10	4%	7%
Other	5	2%	4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>100%</b>	



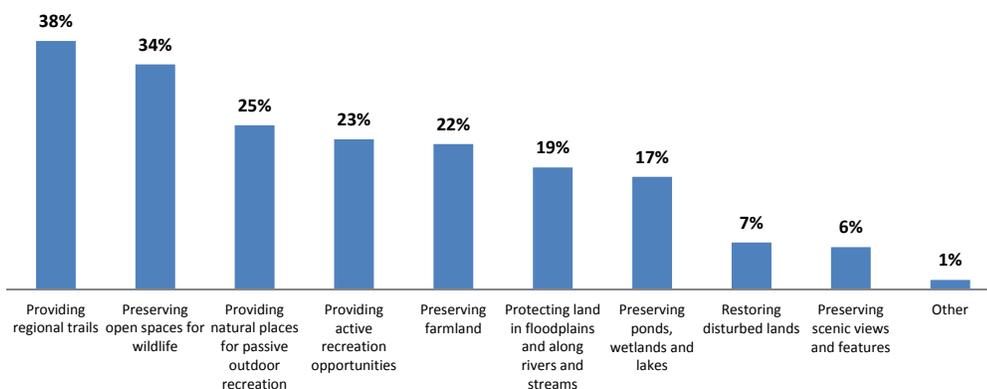
**5.) Which of these statements best fits your vision for the role of Adams County? (select one)**

	Number	% of Responses
Adams County should focus on providing regional parks and open space (large in size, unique features/character, and/or are important as part of a larger system.)	72	51%
Adams County should manage and provide local parks and open space within or close to cities.	36	26%
Adams County should focus on providing local parks and open space for unincorporated rural communities of the county.	32	23%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>



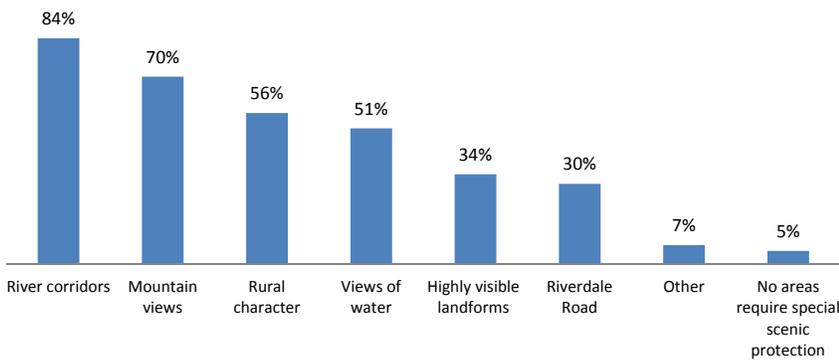
**6.) On which of these does the County need to focus future efforts? (select up to two)**

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
Providing regional trails	53	20%	38%
Preserving open spaces for wildlife	48	18%	34%
Providing natural places for passive outdoor recreation	35	13%	25%
Providing active recreation opportunities	32	12%	23%
Preserving farmland	31	11%	22%
Protecting land in floodplains and along rivers and streams	26	10%	19%
Preserving ponds, wetlands and lakes	24	9%	17%
Restoring disturbed lands	10	4%	7%
Preserving scenic views and features	9	3%	6%
Other	2	1%	1%



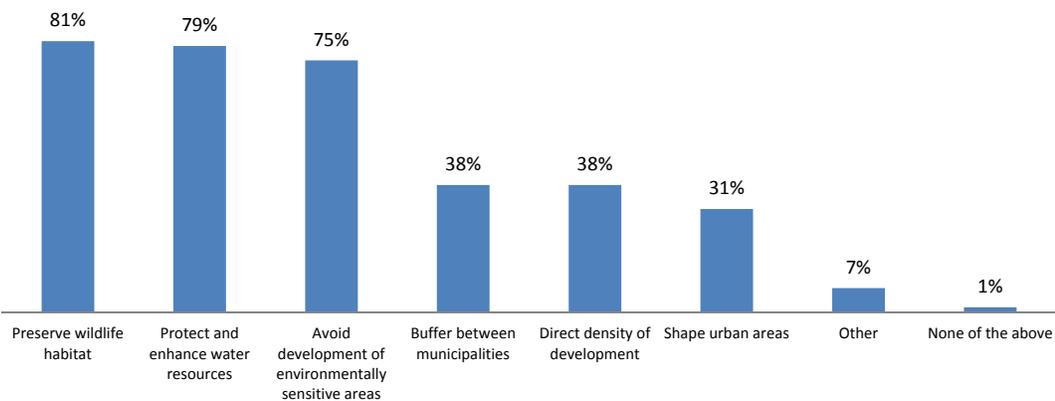
**7.) What do you think are the most important scenic qualities of the County to be protected? (select all that apply)**

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
River corridors	118	25%	84%
Mountain views	98	21%	70%
Rural character	79	17%	56%
Views of water	71	15%	51%
Highly visible landforms	47	10%	34%
Riverdale Road	42	9%	30%
Other	10	2%	7%
No areas require special scenic protection	7	1%	5%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>100%</b>	



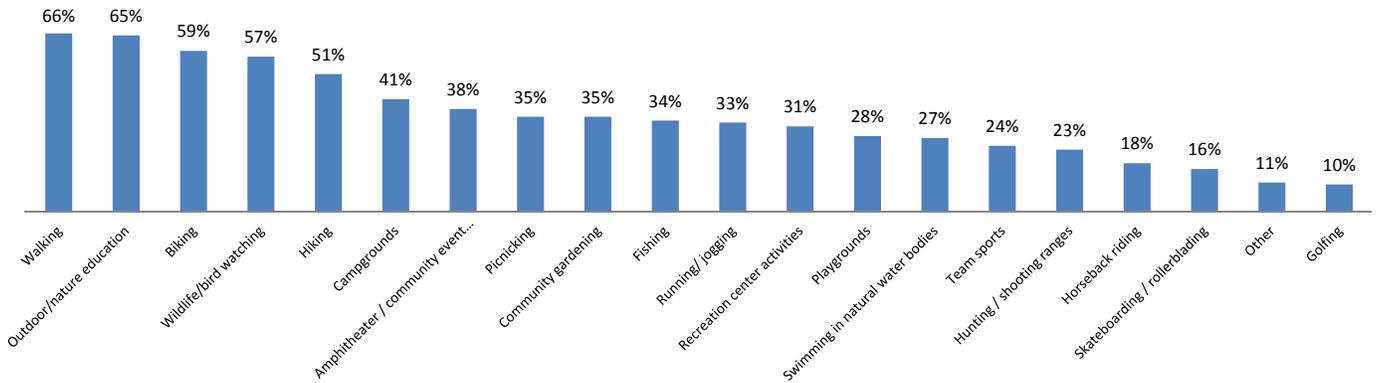
**8.) Should open space be acquired to direct growth for any of these purposes? (select all that apply):**

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
Preserve wildlife habitat	113	23%	81%
Protect and enhance water resources	111	23%	79%
Avoid development of environmentally sensitive areas	105	21%	75%
Buffer between municipalities	53	11%	38%
Direct density of development	53	11%	38%
Shape urban areas	43	9%	31%
Other	10	2%	7%
None of the above	2	0%	1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>100%</b>	



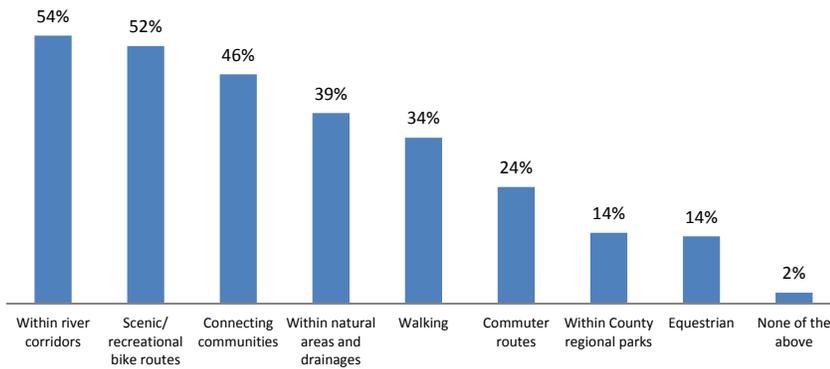
**9.) Which activities most need new or improved facilities? (select all that apply)**

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
Walking	92	16%	66%
Outdoor/nature education	91	22%	65%
Biking	83	15%	59%
Wildlife/bird watching	80	14%	57%
Hiking	71	13%	51%
Campgrounds	58	14%	41%
Amphitheater / community event space	53	13%	38%
Picnicking	49	9%	35%
Community gardening	49	12%	35%
Fishing	47	8%	34%
Running/ jogging	46	8%	33%
Recreation center activities	44	8%	31%
Playgrounds	39	7%	28%
Swimming in natural water bodies	38	9%	27%
Team sports	34	8%	24%
Hunting / shooting ranges	32	8%	23%
Horseback riding	25	6%	18%
Skateboarding / rollerblading	22	5%	16%
Other	15	4%	11%
Golfing	14	2%	10%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>100%</b>	



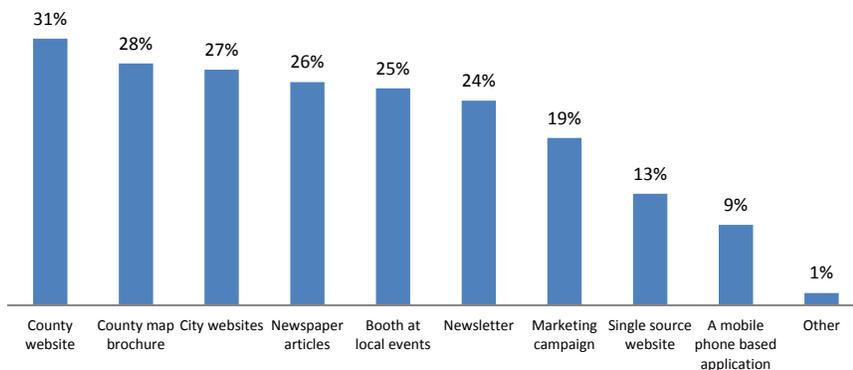
**10.) Where/which type of trails would you most want to see added within the County unincorporated area? (select up to three)**

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
Within river corridors	76	19%	54%
Scenic/ recreational bike routes	73	19%	52%
Connecting communities	65	17%	46%
Within natural areas and drainages	54	14%	39%
Walking	47	12%	34%
Commuter routes	33	8%	24%
Within County regional parks	20	5%	14%
Equestrian	19	5%	14%
None of the above	3	1%	2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>	



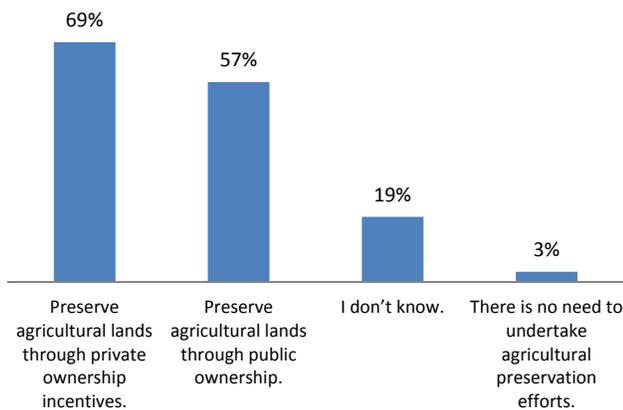
**11.) How should Adams County raise awareness about Open Space, Parks, and Trails? (select all that apply)**

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
County website	43	15%	31%
County map brochure	39	14%	28%
City websites	38	13%	27%
Newspaper articles	36	13%	26%
Booth at local events	35	12%	25%
Newsletter	33	12%	24%
Marketing campaign	27	10%	19%
Single source website	18	6%	13%
A mobile phone based application	13	5%	9%
Other	2	1%	1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>100%</b>	



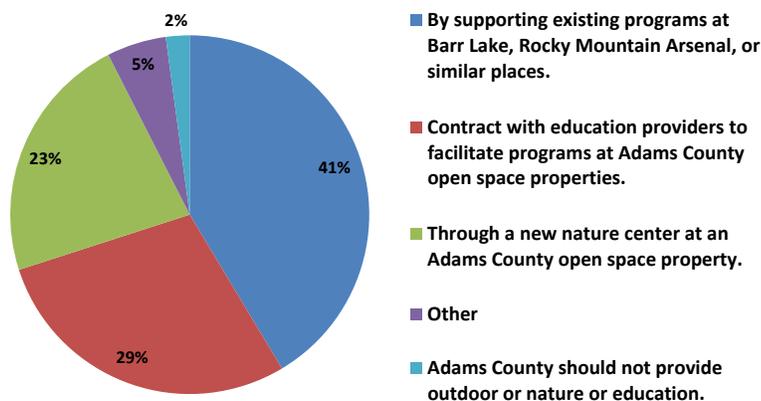
**12.) Which of these options for agriculture preservation do you support? (select all that apply)**

	Number	% of Responses	% of People
Preserve agricultural lands through private ownership incentives.	96	47%	69%
Preserve agricultural lands through public ownership.	80	39%	57%
I don't know.	26	13%	19%
There is no need to undertake agricultural preservation efforts.	4	2%	3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100%</b>	



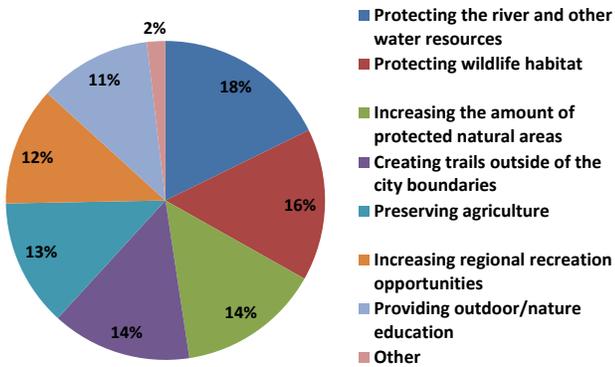
**13.) How should Adams County provide outdoor or nature education? (select all that apply):**

	% of Responses
By supporting existing programs at Barr Lake, Rocky Mountain Arsenal, or similar places.	41%
Contract with education providers to facilitate programs at Adams County open space properties.	28%
Through a new nature center at an Adams County open space property.	22%
Other	5%
Adams County should not provide outdoor or nature or education.	2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>



**14) Where should Adams County focus efforts in the future? (select in rank order):**

	Number	% of Responses
Protecting the river and other water resources	1077	18%
Protecting wildlife habitat	937	15%
Increasing the amount of protected natural areas	876	14%
Creating trails outside of the city boundaries	861	14%
Preserving agriculture	784	13%
Increasing regional recreation opportunities	731	12%
Providing outdoor/nature education	691	11%
Other	114	2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6071</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Map Activity Results:**

The first round of public meetings included a map activity in which meeting participants were divided into smaller groups and given a map of the existing parks and open space amenities within the county and asked to offer their feedback on a range of topics. Including:

- Scenic views or natural features to protect within the County.
- Additional opportunities for outdoor recreation activities within the County.
- Where to add trails.
- The types of parks and open space that is needed in the County ranging from agricultural conservation to regional parks or sports fields.

The comments and ideas generated on each map were consolidated and popular ideas that were appropriate for the County were incorporated and reflected in the final plan.

The highlights from the map activity include:

- The scenic views surrounding Barr Lake State Park were the most desirable to protect.
- Participants wanted more protected natural area open space, recreation opportunities near water, and conservation of agriculture within select communities.
- Trail priorities included completing regional trail links, adding trails along streams, and creating a regional bike loop.



Community Meeting #1, Brighton - Map Activity April 2012



Selection of stickers meeting participants could place on the maps.

