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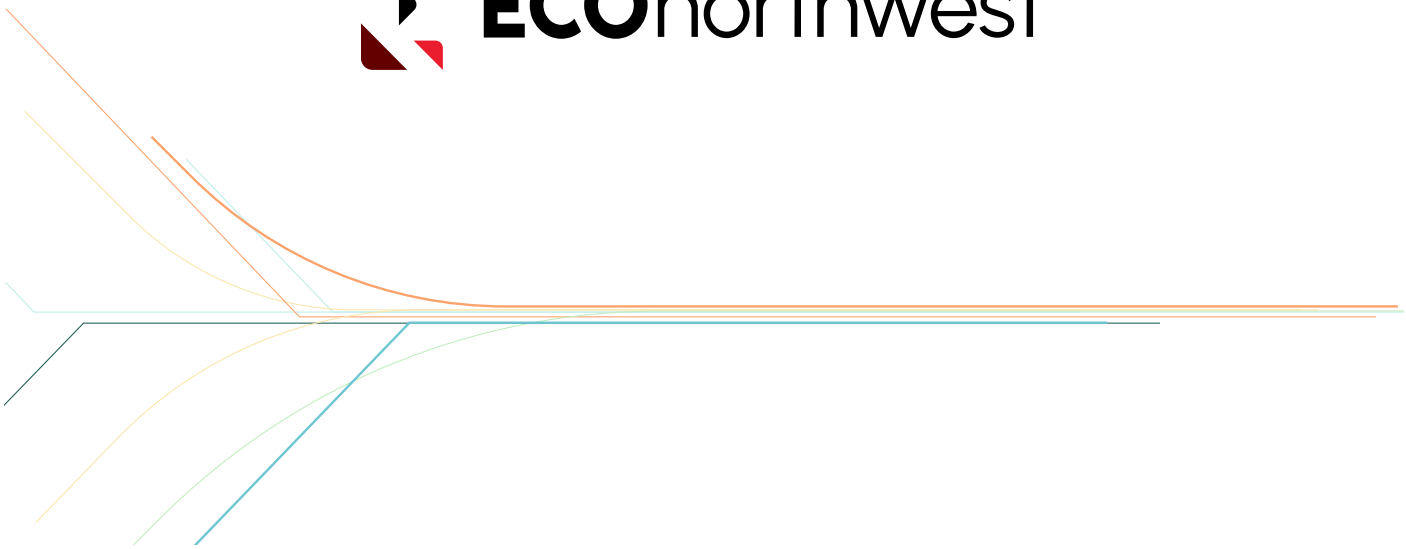

April 2026

Housing Needs Assessment (DRAFT)

Adams County

Prepared for: Adams County

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IMPACT THROUGH INSIGHT

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Housing Needs Assessment

Adams County's Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) was conducted with funding from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) to understand the range of housing needs across Adams County and its unincorporated areas. This study aims to provide Adams County with a data-driven foundation to inform future housing policies, land use strategies, and programs for unincorporated Adams County areas that address affordability and supply gaps in accordance with the Colorado Revised Statutes. The data from the HNA will be used to develop plans, policies, and programs that guide housing strategies and implementation, beginning with an update to the Balanced Housing Plan (BHP) for its unincorporated areas.

Key population, demographic, economic, and housing findings from the HNA are summarized below.

POPULATION GROWTH AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Adams County added nearly 90,000 residents between 2010 and 2023,** reflecting strong population growth (20 percent). Growth was concentrated in incorporated cities, notably Commerce City and Aurora.
- **Unincorporated Adams County grew at a slower pace,** resulting in only a 12 percent increase during the same period. The average annual growth rate (AAGR) of 0.9 percent for unincorporated areas was less than the countywide rate of 1.4 percent AAGR.
- The county is projected to grow by an additional 18 percent **(97,964 residents) by 2036, outpacing the statewide growth rate of 12 percent.**
- **Unincorporated areas have a higher share of children** (28 percent) **and larger households**. For example, 6 percent of households have 7 or more members, compared to just 2 percent countywide.
- **Two-thirds of residents in unincorporated Adams County (66 percent) identify as Hispanic or Latino**, well above the county average of 42 percent, while white non-Hispanic residents represent just 20 percent of unincorporated areas' population.

HOUSING TRENDS

- **Adams County has 191,765 housing units**, with 17 percent (32,990 units) located in unincorporated Adams County.
- **Unincorporated areas have an older and less diverse housing stock**, with 58 percent of homes built before 1970, compared to only 24 percent countywide.
- **Most of the housing stock in Adams County is composed of single-unit detached homes (63 percent).** However, unincorporated Adams County has a larger share of

housing stock that is single-unit detached homes of 67 percent. Manufactured homes comprise 14 percent of housing stock in unincorporated areas, versus 6 percent countywide.

- **Vacancy rates for all housing units are low countywide (3.5 percent),** indicating a tight housing market. While slightly higher in unincorporated areas (3.9 percent) the rate is still below the healthy range of 5-7 percent.
- **For multi-unit buildings, vacancies exceeded 10 percent in 2025**, indicating a softening multi-unit market due to a surge in new construction of multi-unit buildings (9,892 units added since 2022). Rents have slightly declined since peaking in 2023, suggesting supply is beginning to outpace demand.
- **Rental and ownership rates are consistent across the county and unincorporated Adams County** at about 69 percent ownership and 31 percent renter-occupied units.
- **Projected housing production in unincorporated areas is modest and predominantly single-unit homes.** Only one multi-unit project is in the pipeline, though it will offer income-restricted affordable units (117 units out of 905 total in the pipeline from Adams County's permitting department as of 2024).

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- **Home prices in Adams County nearly doubled from 2015 to 2025**, rising 97 percent from $263,000 to $517,000. **Unincorporated Adams County experienced a 101 percent increase**, reaching a median price of $512,000 during that same period.
- In 2025, **to afford the median home price, a household would need an income of $164,000, far above the county's median household income of $98,100.**
- **Average multi-unit building rents (for all unit sizes) reached $1,600 in 2025**, requiring a household income of $64,000 to avoid being cost-burdened (paying more than 30 percent of annual salary on housing costs).

HOUSING PROBLEMS

- **Over half of renters in Adams County (54 percent) are considered "cost-burdened" (or spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs). Unincorporated areas are slightly higher at 61 percent.** A subset of this group (26 percent of all renters) are severely cost-burdened, spending over 50 percent of their income on housing.
- **Overcrowding disproportionately affects renters and low-income households**, with 86 percent of overcrowded renter households earning below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI).
- **Accessible housing is a growing need**, especially as 35 percent of seniors (65+) report a disability. **A total of 77,160 households in Adams County have at least one member with a disability.**

- **Displacement risk is high** in parts of Northglenn, Thornton, and Commerce City due to a combination of housing cost pressures, poor housing conditions, and legacy environmental burdens.
- The **Point-in-Time count found 970 people experiencing homelessness** in Adams County in 2024.

HOUSING NEED

- **Adams County currently faces a shortfall of 1,581 units** in unincorporated Adams County out of 9,912 housing units needed overall in the county.
- **Nearly all current housing need is concentrated among lower-income households.** About 95 percent of existing unmet need is for households earning 80 percent of AMI or less.
- **Adams County will need an additional 8,435 housing units in unincorporated ares (of 37,161 housing units countywide) by 2036** to keep pace with projected population and household growth.
- **The majority of future housing need is for low-income households and rental housing**. About 55 percent of projected housing need countywide is for rental units, while 45 percent is for owner-occupied units. Roughly 62 percent of projected housing need through 2036 is for households earning 80 percent of AMI or less.
- **Current development trends in unincorporated Adams County are not aligned with projected housing needs.** The development pipeline is dominated by market-rate, single-unit homes, with limited multi-unit or affordable housing planned.

Introduction

Study Purpose and Context

Adams County is one of the fastest-growing counties in Colorado. It is home to a diverse population, a strong employment base and access to regional opportunities, and a mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities. Growth in recent years has created opportunity for Adams County residents, but it has also seen rising housing costs, aging housing stock, and increased competition for homes at all price points happen simultaneously. As many residents now face challenges for accessing housing that meets their needs at affordable price points, the Housing Needs Assessment provides a clear understanding of key needs that can be met with intentional strategies and actions.

STATE AND LOCAL CONTEXT

Adams County was awarded the Strong Communities Planning Grant on August 23, 2024, to update its 2017 HNA and BHP. The grant requires jurisdictions to adopt at least one Land Use Best Practice as a result of the grant. Additionally, per Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) § 24-32-3701, certain local jurisdictions are required to complete a state compliant HNA by December 31, 2026, and at least every six years thereafter. This HNA is aimed to follow both the State guidance for the development of Housing Needs Assessments as required by C.R.S. § 24-32-3701 and the grant requirements of the Strong Communities Planning Grant.

The findings of the HNA create a foundation for strategies and action through the BHP, which will establish specific policies and programs to meet housing specific to unincorporated Adams County. These policy recommendations are aimed at meeting the criteria for the Strong Communities Planning Grant by evaluating certain Land Use Best Practices.

The BHP will also be expanded from its previous update to meet the new statutory requirements in C.R.S. § 24-32-3705 for Housing Action Plans (HAPs). This will include a greater focus on strategies to mitigate displacement risk, expanding the view of both standard and long-term affordability strategies, considerations for housing near transit, identification of opportunities for intergovernmental coordination, and a deeper dive into the impacts of zoning and housing development activity.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The following assessment can fully replace the previous report as it reflects current conditions, state guidance, and alignment with the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).

Adams County participated in the development of the RHNA through the DRCOG, for an area covering nine Denver area counties, including Adams, and a portion of southwest Weld

County. Where applicable, this report aligns with findings and outcomes of the RHNA while providing more detail to inform the local understanding of housing need.

1. Community Engagement

Engagement Structure and Approach

Several public outreach and engagement events took place as part of Adams County's HNA process. These engagement events and opportunities included the following:

- Strasburg Hometown Days (August 9, 2025);
- Board of County Commissioners Town Hall (August 25, 2025);
- Festival Latino (September 14, 2025);
- Two Focus Group Sessions (October 21, 2025); and
- An Online Survey (September 24 to November 5)—available through the County's Public Input webpage.

Drawing from the direction and vision for housing in Adams County adopted in the 2022 Advancing Adams Comprehensive Plan update, a series of questions were developed to provide community insight on a variety of housing challenges and opportunities. The goal of this outreach was to gain more detailed feedback on immediate and anticipated future needs; contextualize current housing trends; and better integrate the lived experiences of Adams County residents.

In-person engagement events employed 3x4 foot posters to gather individual responses and featured a county map to identify the approximate area of where respondents live, including residents of eastern Adams County particularly noticeable at the Strasburg Days event. In each engagement event, participants were encouraged to share any other thoughts and opinions they had about Adams County's housing needs. Similar questions were provided through an online survey, which was available for six weeks.

The information that follows includes a summary of input provided during each engagement opportunity. See Appendix A for a complete tabulation of individual responses categorized by event.

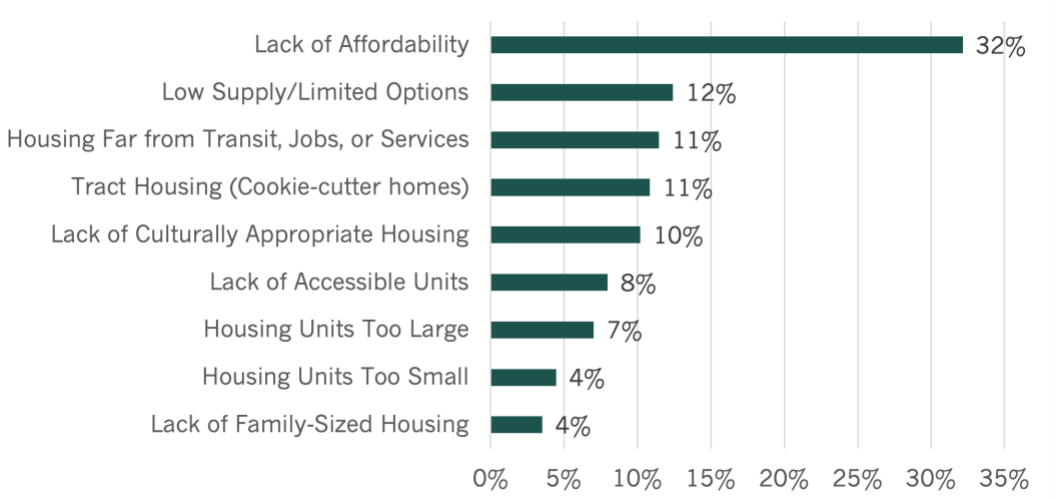
Engagement Findings

Engagement participants are concerned about housing affordability and availability.

Exhibit 1 shows the housing challenges and concerns that emerged across four of the engagement activities, including the Strasburg Hometown Days event, Festival Latino event, County Commissioners Town Hall, and Online Survey. Across these engagement activities, 44 percent of participants in Adams County expressed concern about the lack of housing affordability and supply of housing throughout the county. Some participants noted that

incomes are not keeping pace with the costs of housing. Outside of these four engagement activities, housing advocates also highlighted the impacts of housing cost in focus groups, stressing that older adults on fixed incomes face growing risks of displacement due to rising property taxes and high home maintenance costs.

Exhibit 1. Housing Challenges and Concerns, Adams County Engagement Participants

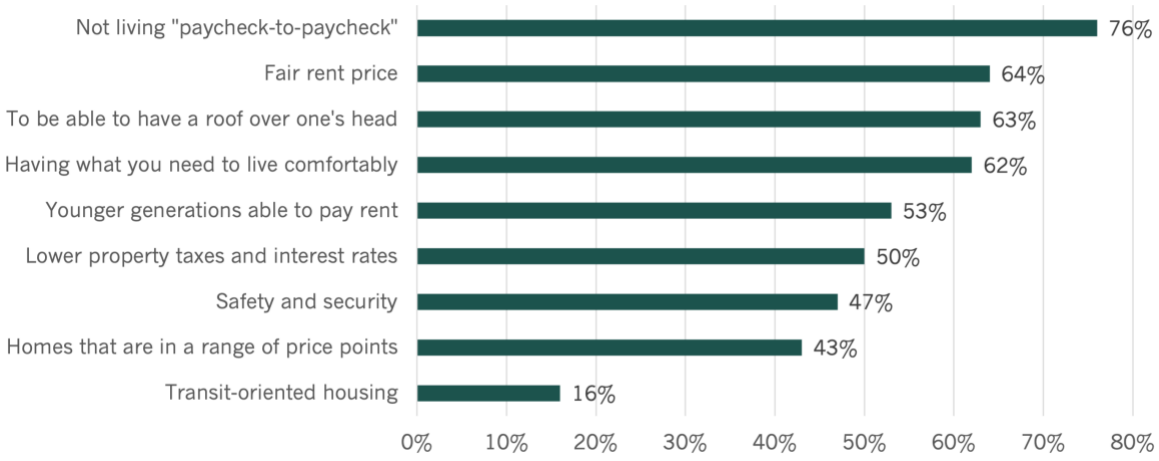


Source: This chart includes documented observations from four engagement processes, including the Strasburg Hometown Days, Festival Latino, Online Survey, and County Commissioners Town Hall.

For many, affordability means not living "paycheck-to-paycheck."

Given the high share of participants voicing concerns about housing cost, the online survey asked participants what affordability means to them. Most survey respondents (75 percent) defined affordability as not living paycheck-to-paycheck, or as having a fair rent price (64 percent). However, participants highlighted other definitions of affordability, including being able to have a roof over one's head, having what is needed to live comfortably, ensuring that younger generations can pay rent in the future, and more, as highlighted in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2. Understandings of Affordability, Adams County Engagement Participants



Source: Online Survey

Participants of engagement town halls and events echoed these diverse definitions of affordability throughout the non-survey engagement activities, but also contributed new understandings of affordability, including:

- Availability of for-sale units like condos and townhomes, which traditionally offer relatively low-cost ownership opportunities compared to single-unit homes.
- Being able to buy other forms of entry-level housing (e.g. small lot single-unit homes).
- Being able to live comfortably.
- Having an income that keeps pace with housing costs.
- Feeling like most expenses are within one's financial means.
- Having lower property taxes and interest rates on mortgages.

When it comes to the lack of housing supply and housing options, participants expressed that there is a limited diversity of housing types. Many were concerned about the amount of tract homes, desiring more culturally appropriate housing, accessible units, smaller units, multigenerational and family-oriented housing, single-resident units, and senior housing with facilities and services for aging in place. Others raised concerns about the equitable distribution of housing across the county, highlighting the need for affordable units outside areas that are already saturated.

While many engagement participants desire more affordable and available housing, another portion of participants (largely those participating in the Festival Latino) expressed concerns about increasing development pressures from new construction activity. Some feel that there are too many apartments and large development projects taking place.

Remaining concerns were related to housing quality, access to public services and utilities, and more:

- Overcrowding, with a lack of space for trades and hobbies.
- Lack of resources for public services such as fire and police.
- Difficulty accessing water and utility services.
- Challenges with HOA communities.
- Lack of knowledge and information for new homeowners and those looking for affordable housing.

Housing advocates and developers are concerned about the cost of providing housing and services, with limited funding available.

Housing advocates and housing developers brought additional perspectives to the table in focus groups. Both groups voiced concerns about the cost of developing housing. One developer that has completed six affordable housing projects in Adams County noted that high interest rates and limited 'soft' funds have further widened project financing gaps, even for projects awarded Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). Participants emphasized

that predevelopment costs including market studies, environmental reviews, and architectural work have become increasingly prohibitive and risky given the uncertainty of zoning approvals. Infrastructure and utilities also emerged as a concern among developers. Approved projects were described as delayed for months or years due to challenges around capacity and scheduling, increasing costs and uncertainty.

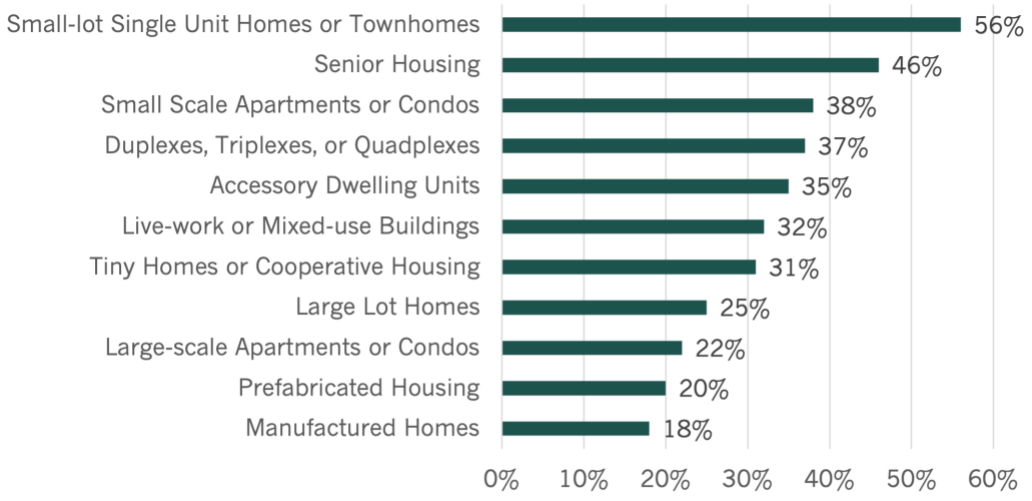
Housing developers also noted that parking requirements and community opposition often derail projects, even when the project meets required codes, reinforcing the need for more consistent application of standards and administrative review processes to limit subjective barriers.

Funding shortfalls emerged as a challenge for housing advocates. These participants shared that Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) discretionary funds have nearly been depleted due to state-level policy shifts, and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars are set to expire in 2026 with no replacement identified. These changes are leading to uncertainty in support for key programs like hotel-based shelters, rapid rehousing, and severe-weather responses.

Participants desire more small-lot single-unit homes, townhomes, and senior housing.

Engagement participants suggested that existing housing types in Adams County include large-lot homes, small-lot single-unit homes, townhomes, mobile homes, and senior housing. When asked in the online survey what types of housing they desire, a large share of survey respondents (56 percent) shared that they want to see an increase in small-lot single unit homes or townhomes. Others (46 percent) expressed that they want to see more senior housing, small scale apartments or condos (38 percent), and duplexes, triplexes, or quadplexes (37%). Remaining desired housing types are highlighted in Exhibit 3. These desired housing types were also voiced in engagement activities that took place aside from the online survey.

Exhibit 3. Desired Housing Types, Adams County Engagement Participants



Source: Online Survey

When offered the opportunity to write in housing desires, survey respondents asked for:

- Better trail connectivity and bike infrastructure within communities
- Opportunities for livestock space
- Workforce housing for farmers
- More multi-generational housing
- Paired homes or attached ADUs
- Affordable options for single parents

Engagement participants offered several housing policy suggestions.

In the online survey and focus groups, participants were given the opportunity to suggest policy changes that may address housing challenges in Adams County.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">SURVEY RESPONDENTS</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">In the survey, respondents highlighted the importance of integrating housing with amenities such as grocery stores, transit options, trails, and mixed-use developments to reduce transportation burdens and improve the quality of life.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="4">HOUSING ADVOCATES</th></tr>
<tr><th>Flexible Zoning</th><th>Predevelopment Support</th><th>Fee Waivers</th><th>Technical Resources</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Housing advocates offered broader policy suggestions, including reducing zoning and permitting barriers, allowing affordable housing “by right,” and eliminating excessive parking requirements, particularly in permanent supportive housing where car ownership may be low. Advocates also encouraged offering predevelopment support and grants for nonprofit housing partners, citing high construction costs, limited ‘soft’ funds, and delays from utility providers such as Xcel. Some advocates support waiving fees for affordable projects, pre-development support grants, and investment in education and technical resources for nonprofit partners. Advocates stressed that preserving existing housing, securing long-term funding, and updating local development policies are essential steps for Adams County to support and meet the growing demand for stable and affordable homes.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="4">HOUSING DEVELOPERS</th></tr>
<tr><th>Flexible Zoning</th><th>Predevelopment Support</th><th>Fee Waivers</th><th>Administrative Incentives</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">State Advocacy</th><th colspan="2">Public Improvements</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Housing developers voiced their support for offering predevelopment grants, fee waivers, and administrative incentives to help projects advance to the fundable stage, especially for small-scale developers. Developers also highlighted a need for more flexible zoning that accommodates smaller-lot housing types or modular construction and does not require a Planned Development Unit (PUD). Additionally, developers encouraged advocacy at the state level or with the Public Utilities Commission to ensure that housing projects receive equitable access to power and water infrastructure. Other procedural challenges that were identified included the County’s policy that requires all public improvements be built prior</td></tr>
</table>

to occupancy, suggesting that it could be phased to stagger development costs and ease up-front financing burdens.

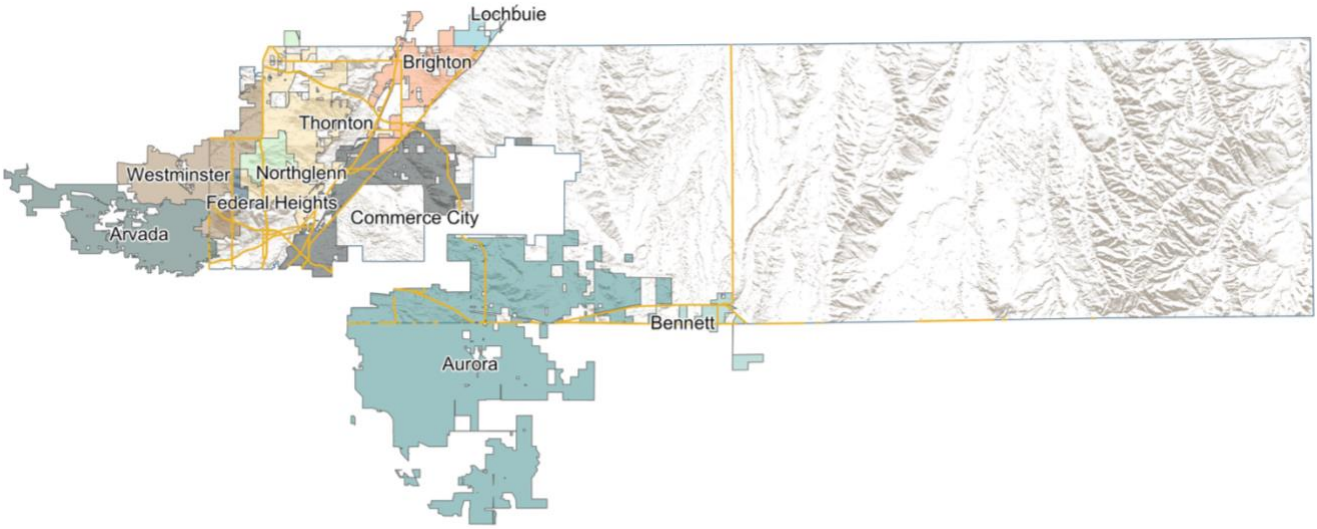
2. Demographic Trends

This section provides a profile of households and residents in Adams County and those living in unincorporated Adams County. The intent is to develop a deeper understanding of demographic characteristics to better understand housing needs in the county.

Throughout this report, data and key findings discussion distinguishes between Adams County as a whole, incorporated cities and towns, and unincorporated areas of the county.

Adams County's population is concentrated in Thornton and Westminster. Combined, these cities make up 40 percent of the county's total population (accounting for only the parts of the cities that are within Adams County). Adams County has ten incorporated cities and towns, which include Thornton, Westminster, Commerce City, Aurora, Brighton, Northglenn, Arvada, Federal Heights, Bennett, and Lochbuie. Six cities extend into more than one county: Westminster, Aurora, Arvada, Bennett, Lochbuie, and a small portion of Northglenn. Adams County also has unincorporated communities not shown on the map below such as Henderson and Strasburg with larger populations.

Exhibit 4. Adams County and Incorporated Areas



Source: ECOnorthwest using American Community Survey

Population Trends

Population growth and household formation are the primary drivers of demand for housing. The rate of population growth and household characteristics heavily influence the demand for specific housing types.

In 2023, Adams County had a total population of 533,580 residents, with 80 percent (434,591) living in incorporated cities and 20 percent (98,989) residing in unincorporated

areas. The county has experienced strong population growth over the past decade, adding nearly 90,000 new residents since 2010, which translates to a 20 percent growth. However, not all parts of the county have grown at the same rate. Most new residents have settled within incorporated city limits, such as in fast-growing cities like Commerce City and Aurora, where major housing growth has taken place. Unincorporated areas of the county experienced much slower population growth than the county overall, increasing 12 percent (about 10,436 new residents) since 2010.

Overall, between 2010 and 2023, Adams County has grown at an average annual growth rate (AAGR) of 1.4 percent, while unincorporated Adams County grew at a much slower pace of 0.9 percent AAGR during the same period. In contrast, incorporated areas have grown at a faster rate than the county overall at about 1.6 percent AAGR, driven mostly by the expansion and urbanization of Adams County incorporated cities.

While the population of unincorporated areas remains large, the urban centers in incorporated cities have captured a greater portion of the county's growth over time, slightly decreasing the overall share of the county's population in unincorporated areas.

Exhibit 5. Population Growth by Community, (2010 and 2023)

PLACE	POPULATION		CHANGE		% OF COUNTY	
	2010	2023	NUMBER	PERCENT	2010	2023
Adams County	**443,711**	**533,580**	**89,869**	**20%**	**100%**	**100%**
Unincorporated Area	**88,553**	**98,989**	**10,436**	**12%**	**20%**	**19%**
Incorporated Area	**355,158**	**434,591**	**79,433**	**22%**	**80%**	**81%**
Thornton	119,753	144,397	24,644	21%	27%	27%
Westminster (part)	63,974	70,431	6,457	10%	14%	13%
Commerce City	46,142	67,463	21,321	46%	10%	13%
Aurora (part)	39,978	52,592	12,614	32%	9%	10%
Brighton	33,102	41,796	8,694	26%	7%	8%
Northglenn (part)	35,883	37,672	1,789	5%	8%	7%
Federal Heights	11,506	14,111	2,605	23%	3%	3%
Bennett (part)	1,961	3,241	1,280	65%	0%	1%
Arvada (part)	2,857	2,774	(83)	-3%	1%	1%
Lochbuie (part)	2	114	112	5600%	0%	0%

Source: Colorado State Demography Office (SDO)

Population Projections

Exhibit 6 shows 10-year (2026-2036) population projections for Adams County and the State of Colorado. Colorado has a estimated population of 6,022,776 in 2026, projected to increase to 6,732,386 by 2036, an increase of 709,610 people or 12 percent.

In 2026, Adams County had an estimated population of 550,575 and will increase to 648,539 people by 2036, an increase of 97,964 people or 18 percent. During the 2026-

2036 period, Colorado will grow at an annual growth rate of 1.1 percent, while Adams County is projected to grow faster than the state at 1.7 percent.

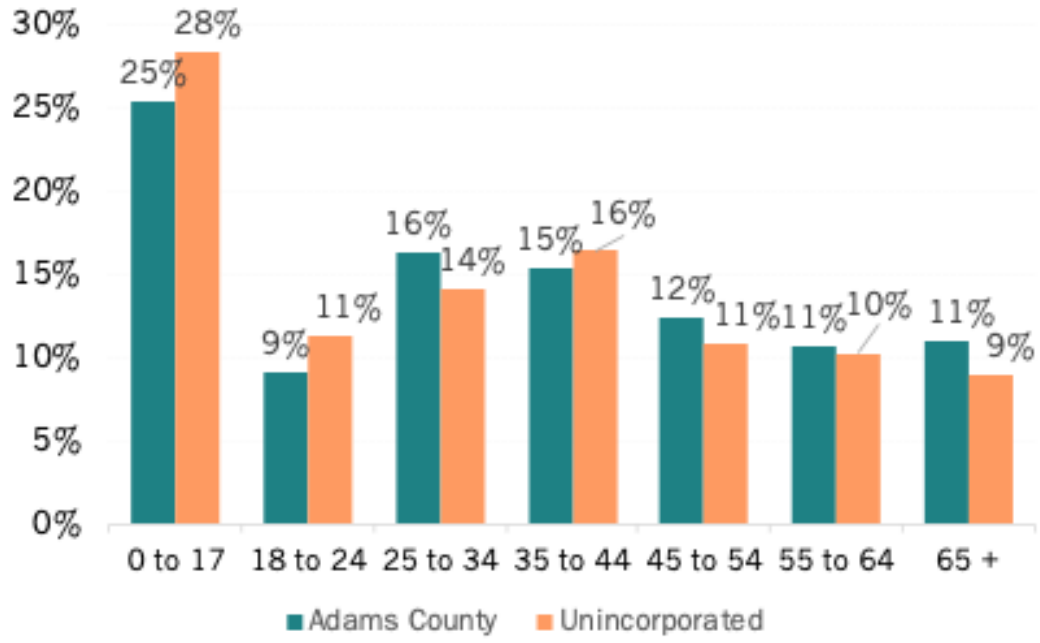
Exhibit 6. Adams County Projected Population Growth, (2026 and 2036)

PLACE	FORECAST		CHANGE		AAGR
	2026	2036	NUMBER	PERCENT	2026-2036
Adams County	550,575	648,539	97,964	18%	1.7%
Colorado	6,022,776	6,732,386	709,610	12%	1.1%

Source: DRCOG Small Area Forecast, Colorado State Demography Office

Adams County's population is generally young and family-oriented, which will shape the county's housing needs. The population of unincorporated areas mirrors that of countywide trends but with some slight differences. In unincorporated Adams County, there tends to be a slightly higher proportion (28 percent) of children ages 17 and under as well as slightly lower shares of older adults and seniors.

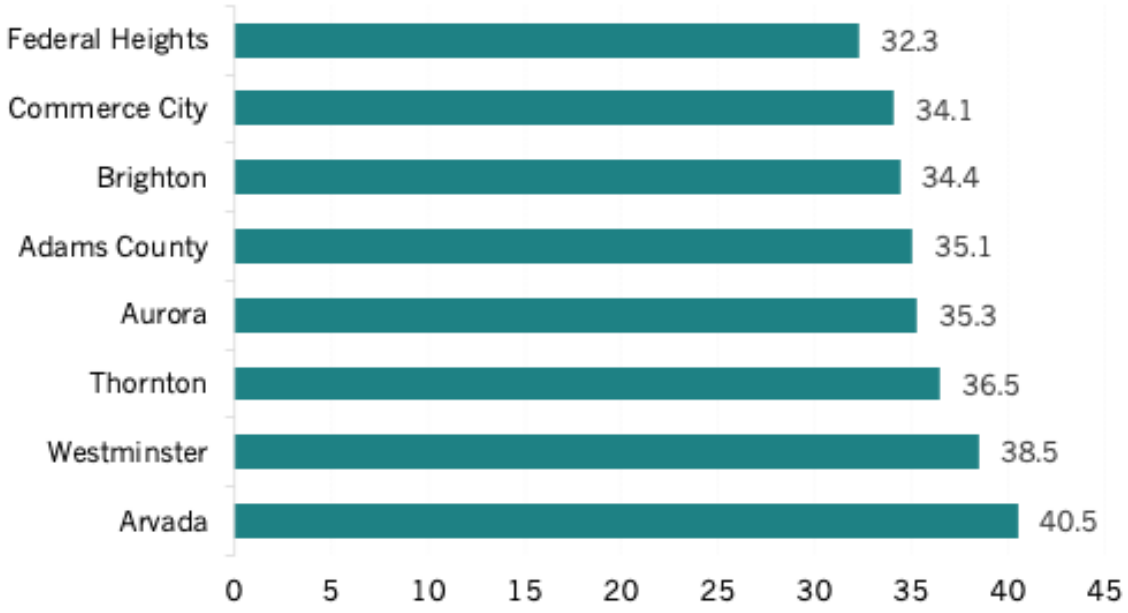
Exhibit 7. Age Distribution, Adams County and Unincorporated Area, (2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Age varies widely among communities within Adams County. As of 2023, Adams County recorded a median age Adams County of 35.1, reflecting a relatively young population when compared to suburban communities in the county such as Westminster (38.5) and Arvada (40.5). Communities such as Federal Heights (32.3), Commerce City (34.1), and Brighton (34.4) have a lower median age the county as a whole, indicating a concentration of younger households in these areas.

Exhibit 8. Median Age by Community (2023)



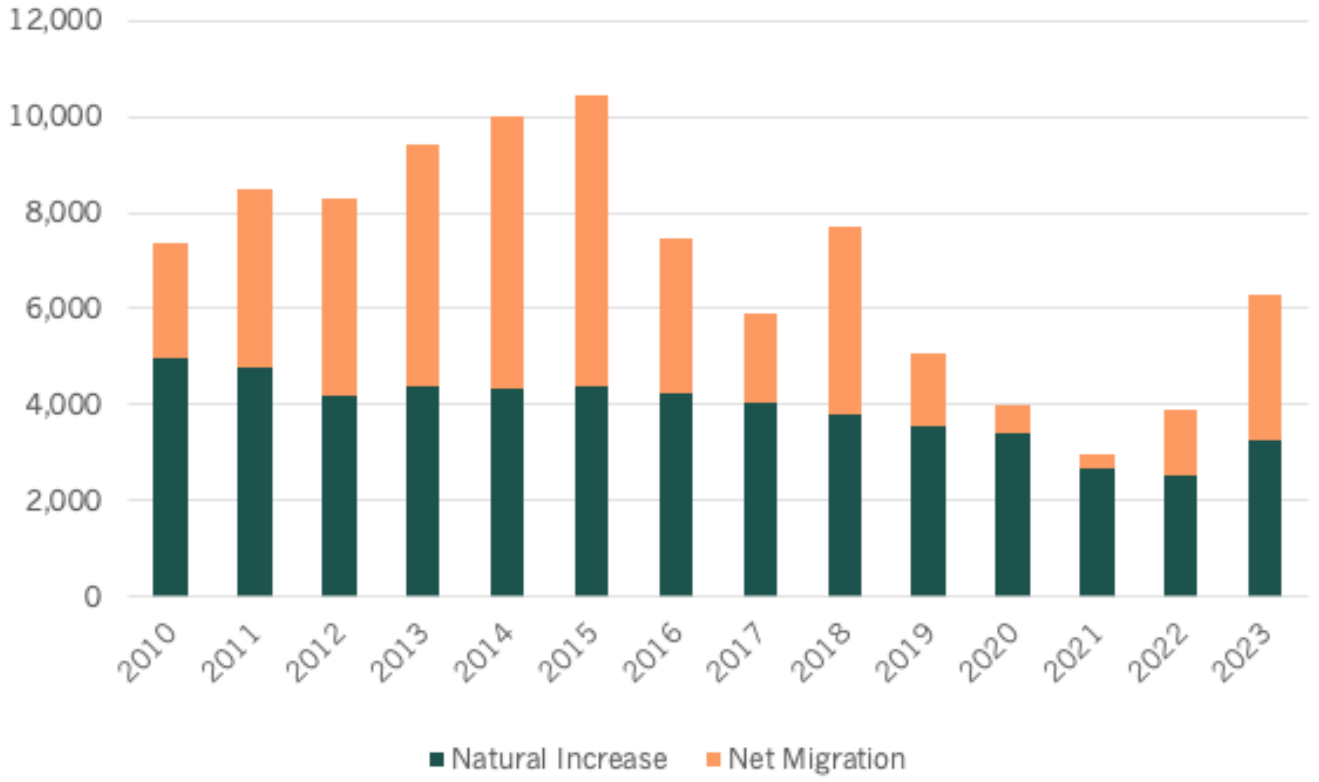
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Migration Trends

Between 2010 and 2016, Adams County experienced strong population growth driven primarily by high levels of net migration. However, since 2016 net migration has declined substantially, with the steepest drops during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), when both domestic mobility and economic activity slowed dramatically. During these years, natural increase became the county's main growth source, though it, too, has shown signs of gradual decline since 2010.

In 2023, net migration showed a modest but meaningful rebound, signaling a potential return of population growth. However, overall growth remains more modest compared to the earlier part of the decade.

Exhibit 9. Net Migration & Natural Increase, Adams County, (2010-2023)



Source: Colorado State Demography Office (SDO)

Household Characteristics

Between 2010 and 2023, the number of households in Adams County increased from 154,505 to 186,840, an addition of 32,335 households, or 21 percent growth. This rate of growth outpaced that of Colorado as a whole, where Adams County's households grew at an average annual growth rate of 1.5 percent compared to 1.3 percent statewide.

Exhibit 10. Household Growth, Adams County and Colorado (2010-2023)

PLACE	HOUSEHOLDS		CHANGE		
	2010	2023	NUMBER	PERCENT	AAGR
Adams County	154,505	186,840	32,335	21%	1.5%
Colorado	1,971,855	2,342,884	371,029	19%	1.3%

Source: Colorado State Demography Office (SDO)

Exhibit 11 shows 10-year (2026-2036) projected household growth for Adams County and the State of Colorado. In 2026, Colorado has an estimated 2,423,315 households, projected to increase to 2,755,533 by 2036 (an increase of 332,218 new households or 14 percent).

In 2026, Adams County has an estimated 195,455 households, projected to grow to 234,404 households by 2036 (an increase of 38,949 new households or 20 percent).

During the 2026-2036 period, Colorado's household total is projected to grow at an annual growth rate of 1.3 percent, while Adams County's household total is projected to grow faster than the state at 1.8 percent.

Exhibit 11. Projected Household Growth, Adams County and Colorado (2025-2050)

PLACE	FORECAST		CHANGE		AAGR
	2026	2036	NUMBER	PERCENT	2026-2036
Adams County	195,455	234,404	38,949	20%	1.8%
Colorado	2,423,315	2,755,533	332,218	14%	1.3%

Source: Colorado State Demography Office (SDO)

Adams County's average household size of 2.82 reflects a demographic skew toward family households, consistent with broader trends seen in many of its incorporated communities. Large household sizes are especially pronounced in Commerce City, Brighton, and Bennett, where the average household size is over 3.0. This high household size points to higher proportions of families with children or multigenerational living arrangements.

Conversely, communities like Westminster and Northglenn show smaller household sizes, indicating demographic differences such as more single-person households, couples without children, or an aging population.

Exhibit 12. Average Household Size by Community

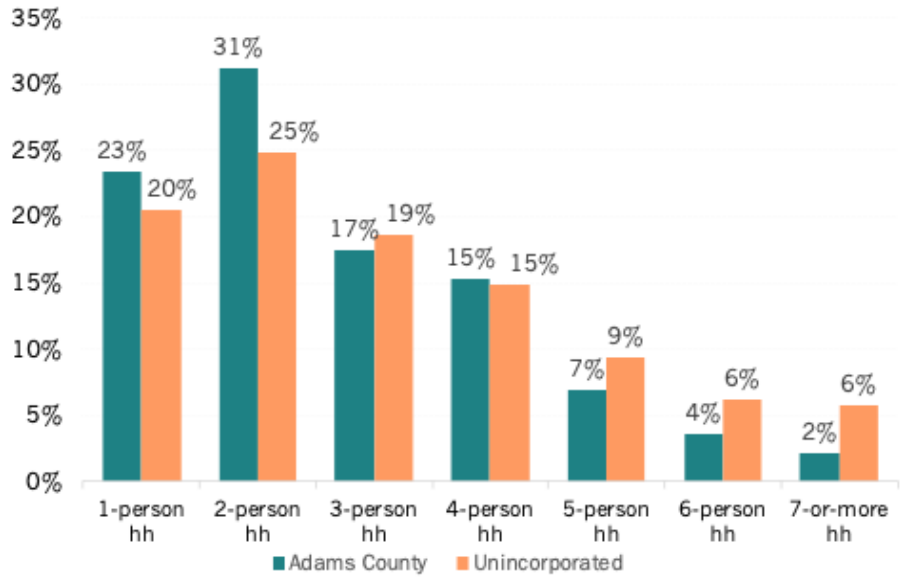
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Household size distribution in Adams County reveals distinct differences between the county overall and its unincorporated areas. While 2-person households are most prevalent across both geographies, unincorporated Adams County shows a substantially higher share of large households. Most notably, 7 or more person households make up 6 percent of households in

unincorporated areas. This is three times the countywide rate, highlighting a concentration of very large, and potentially multigenerational families in unincorporated areas.

Adams County overall shows a higher proportion of smaller households (1- and 2-person), indicating a greater mix of singles, couples, and other smaller families living in more urban or suburban areas of the county.

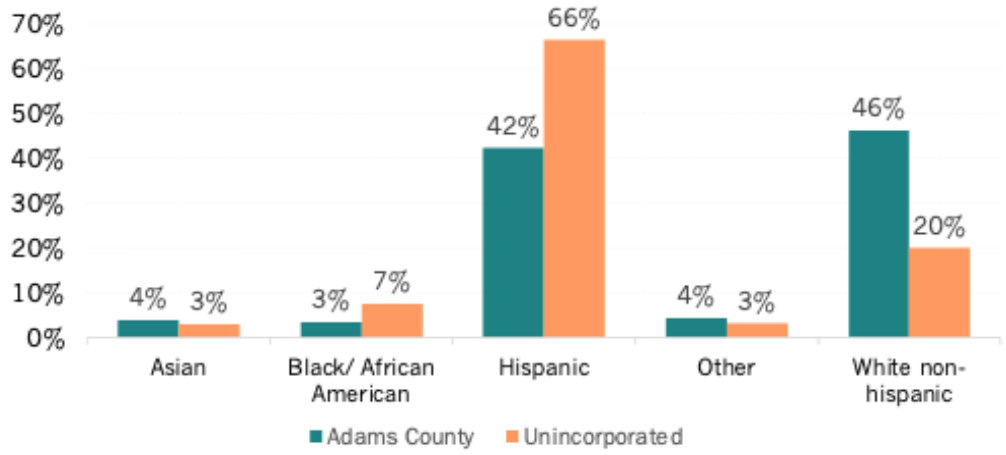
Exhibit 13. Household Size, Adams County and Unincorporated Area (2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Data on race and ethnicity in Adams County reveal pronounced differences in demographics, where 66 percent of residents in unincorporated areas identify as Hispanic, well above the countywide share of 42 percent (Exhibit 14). In contrast, the share of residents who identify as White non-Hispanic in unincorporated areas is less than half that of the county overall (20 percent compared to 46 percent). Other racial groups, including Black/African American, Asian, and multiracial residents, represent small but consistent shares across both geographies.

Exhibit 14. Race and Ethnicity, Adams County and Unincorporated Area (2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

3. Economic Trends

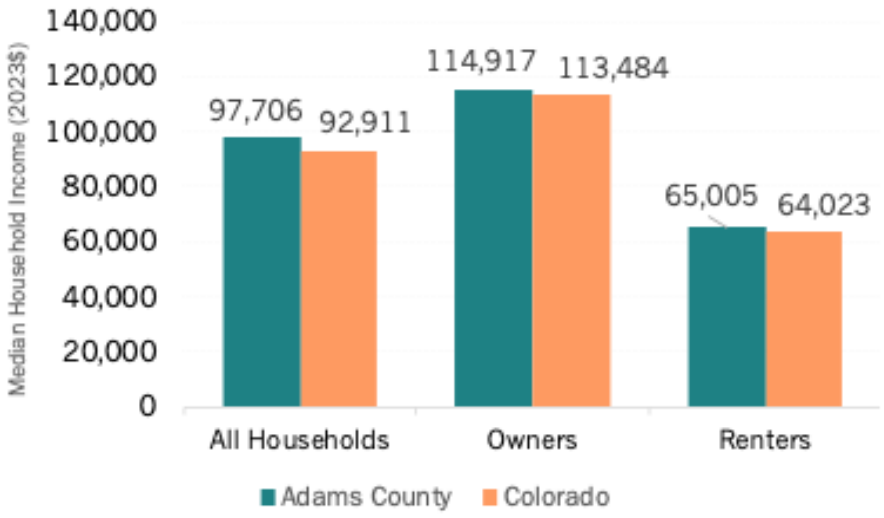
This section discusses key components of Adams County's economy, which affect the demand for and cost of housing. The section summarizes trends in household income, employment, wages, commuting patterns, and other labor market indicators.

Income

The ability of a household to acquire adequate housing is related to household income, whether earned or from other sources. Household income has a major effect on housing choice since it acts as a key variable in estimating what size and type of housing a household can access. Household income can vary greatly across many demographic factors, including race, gender, tenure, and household type. While higher-income households have more discretionary income to spend on housing, low- and moderate-income households often face limited choices in the housing they can afford due to a lack of available lower-cost housing.

In 2023, Adams County's median household income across tenure, both owner and renter, reflects similar statewide average estimates. Adams County households earned a median income of $97,706, slightly exceeding the statewide median of $92,911. The stronger household earnings in Adams County can be attributed to the high earnings made amongst owner households, who earn a median of $114,917 (also slightly above statewide trends). In contrast, renters in Adams County have much lower median incomes of $65,005, creating a substantial gap between owner and renter households of about $50,000.

Exhibit 15. Median Household Income by Tenure, Adams County and Unincorporated Area (2023)

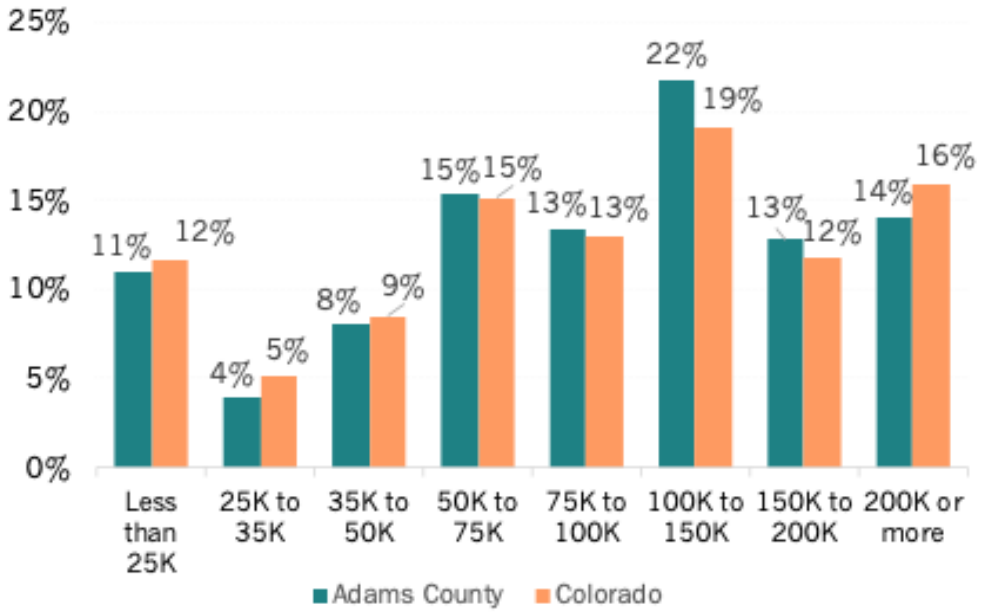


Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Similar to median household incomes, Adams County's household income distribution mirrors statewide distributions, with some slight differences. In 2023, Adams County had a solid middle-income base, with 22 percent of households earning between $100,000 and $150,000, exceeding the statewide share. Additionally, 28 percent of households fall within the $50,000-$100,000 income range, indicating a strong representation of working and middle-class residents.

Compared to the state overall, Adams County has slightly fewer low-income households (those earning less than $35,000) but also has slightly fewer high-income households earning above $200,000.

Exhibit 16. Household Income Distribution, Adams County and Unincorporated Area (2023)



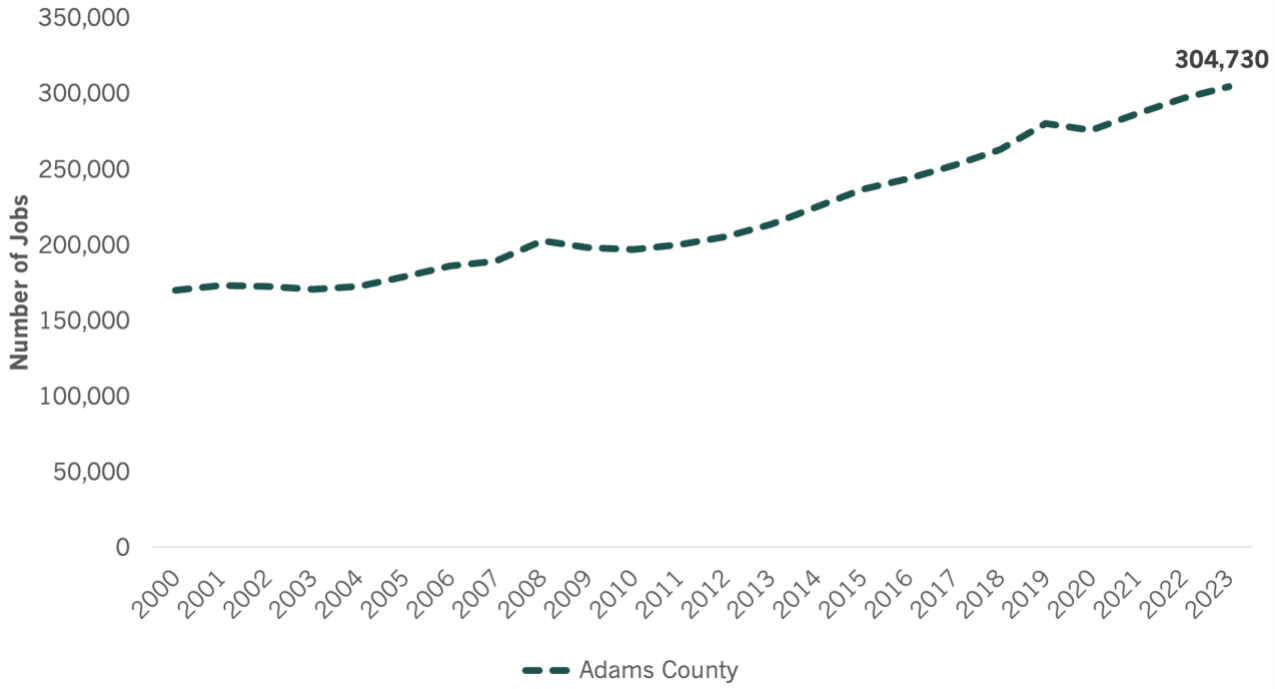
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Employment Trends and Economic Conditions

Employment & Wages

The State Demography Office estimates that Adams County has 304,730 total jobs based on 2023 data (Exhibit 17). Overall, Adams County has experienced long-term sustained employment growth, with the number of jobs increasing by more than 130,000 since 2000. While the county saw relatively slow growth in the early 2000's and a downturn during the Great Recession, job recovery was strong and steady from 2010 through 2019. A brief dip during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was followed by a rapid rebound, suggesting Adams County has strong economic resilience and ongoing expansion.

Exhibit 17. Historical Total Employment (2000-2023)



Source: Colorado State Demography Office (SDO)

Exhibit 18 below shows Adams County's employment by sector. Between 2013 and 2023, Adams County's employment base expanded substantially, adding over 90,000 jobs, which translates to a 43 percent increase. Growth was heavily concentrated in the service-producing sectors, which continue to account for the majority (83 percent) of all jobs in the county. Among these jobs, the wholesale trade, transportation, and utilities sectors led the way with a 73 percent growth followed by the government sector with 47 percent growth.

Goods-producing jobs such as those in the construction, resources, and manufacturing sectors experienced modest growth as well. However, the construction and resources sector saw the strongest growth since 2013 among these jobs (49 percent).

Overall, Adams County's employment base is concentrated among five sectors which include services (26 percent), government (19 percent), construction and resources (12 percent), retail (8 percent), and healthcare (8 percent) sectors. Combined, these sectors account for 73 percent of the county's total employment.

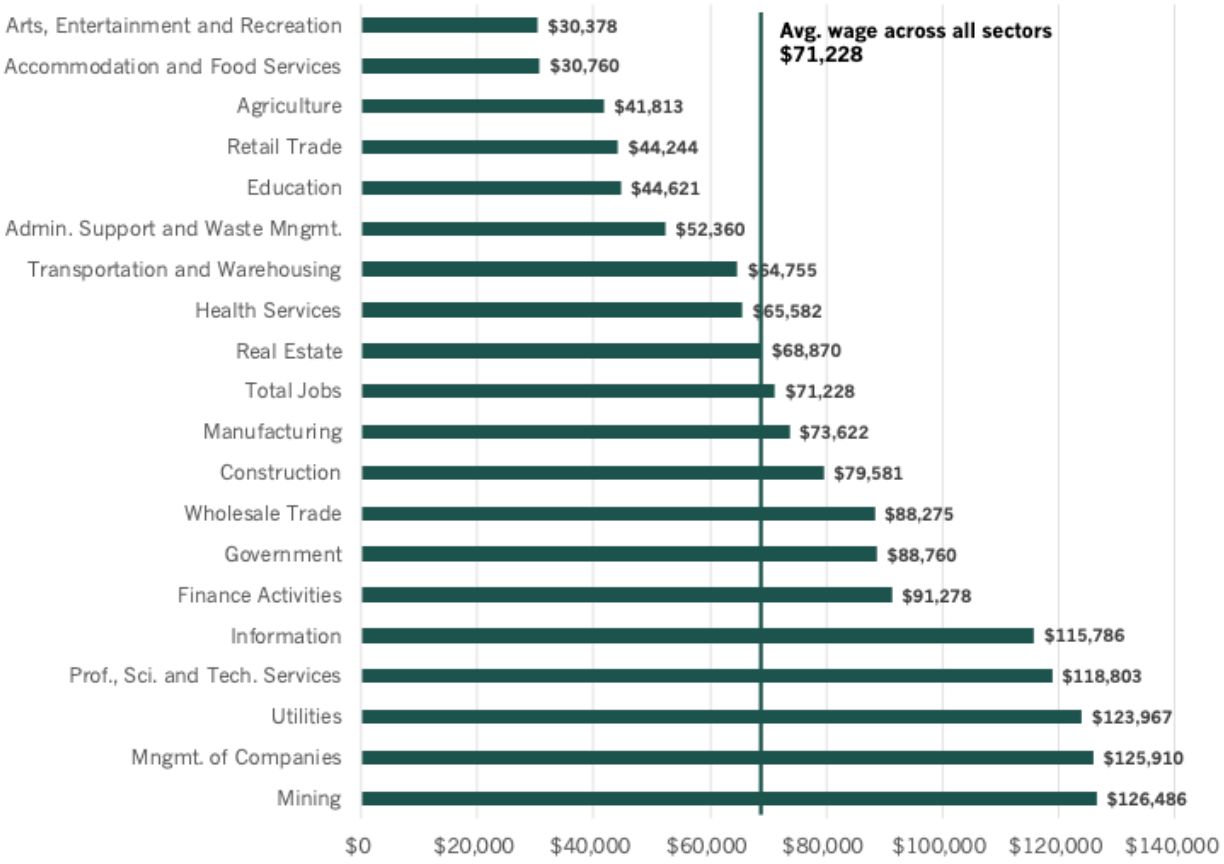
Exhibit 18. Employment by Sector, Adams County (2013 and 2023)

Industry	2013		2023		Percent Change
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	2013-2023
Good Producing	36,541	17%	50,605	17%	38%
Construction and Resources	24,093	11%	35,906	12%	49%
Manufacturing	12,448	6%	14,699	5%	18%
Service Producing	177,177	83%	254,125	83%	43%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	8,853	4%	11,683	4%	32%
Retail	20,669	10%	24,926	8%	21%
Services	55,961	26%	79,067	26%	41%
Wholesale Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	31,615	15%	54,841	18%	73%
Government	39,373	18%	57,899	19%	47%
Education	2,152	1%	2,446	1%	14%
Health Services	18,554	9%	23,263	8%	25%
Total	**213,718**	**100%**	**304,730**	**100%**	**43%**

Source: Colorado State Demography Office (SDO)
Notes: (1). The services sector includes industries in information, professional scientific and technical services, management of companies, administrative support and waste management, arts and entertainment and recreation, accommodations and food services, and other services. (2). SDO includes more employees than the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) to help account for workers not reported through unemployment insurance to QCEW.

Adams County's average wage across all sectors stands at $71,228, but has substantial differences in wages between industries. Out of the five major employment sectors in the county, two provide wages above the all-industry average, which include government and construction and resources. The healthcare industry provides an average wage of about $65,582, slightly below the average wage across the county. The retail industry is one of the sectors with low-paying wages among all industries and represents a large share of jobs in the county.

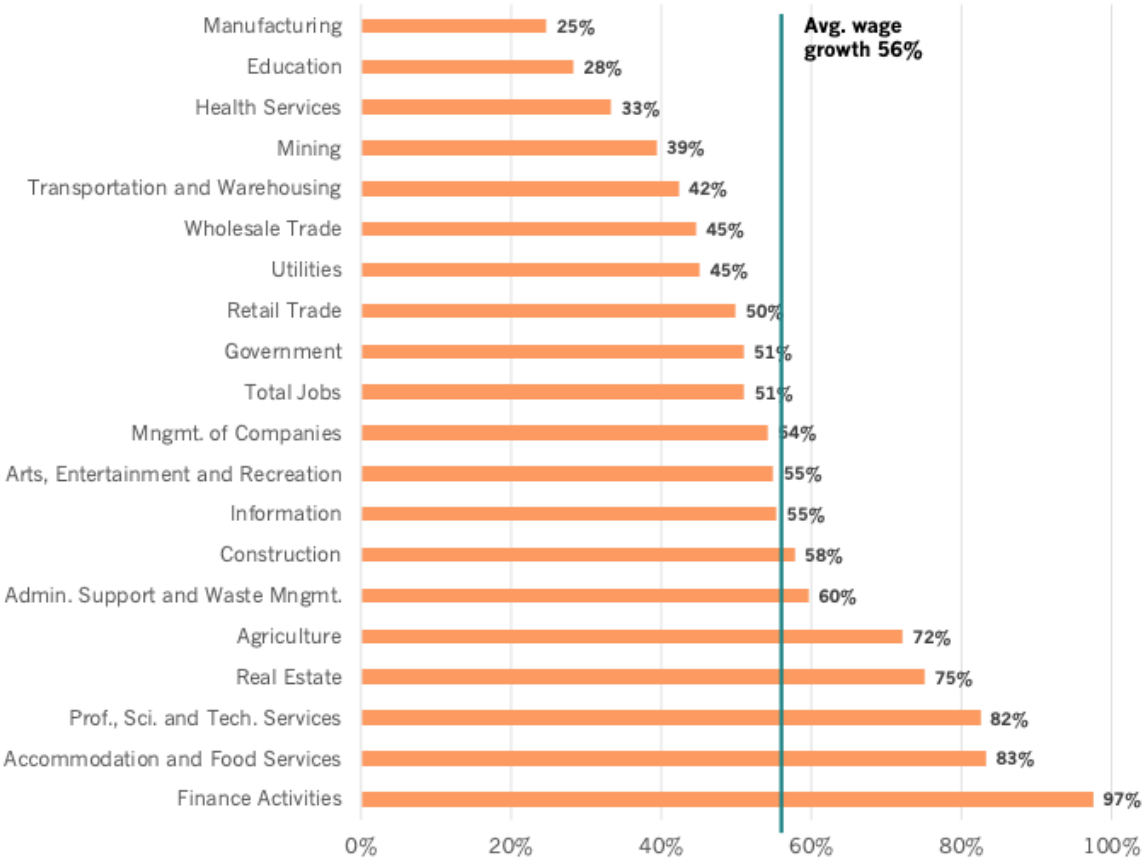
Exhibit 19. Average Wage by Sector in Adams County, (2023)



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Between 2013 and 2023, all sectors in the county experienced growth, averaging 56 percent, with wide variations across individual ones. The most rapid increases occurred in high-wage sectors that make up small shares of the county's overall employment, such as finance activities, professional services, and real estate. The accommodations and food services sector was also among the top sectors with the highest wage growth, however, as of 2023, wages remain well below county averages.

Exhibit 20. Wage Growth by Sector in Adams County (2013-2023)



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

PROJECTED JOB GROWTH

Due to the interrelatedness of economic and workforce conditions, the State Demography Office publishes a job forecast for the seven-county Denver metro area. DRCOG's small-area forecast helps allocate that projection for each decade to counties. Given these constraints, we relied on the 2040 employment projections for Adams County to evaluate employment trends over the next 10 to 15 years. From 2023 to 2040, Adams County is projected to experience substantial employment growth of about 88,183 new jobs, which translates to 26 percent growth or an average annual growth rate of 1.6 percent.

Exhibit 21. Projected Job Growth, Adams County (2023-2040)

GEOGRAPHY	2023	2040	2023-2040 CHANGE		
			COUNT	PERCENT	AAGR
Adams County	335,585	423,768	88,183	26%	1.6%

Source: DRCOG Small Area Forecast

JOBS-HOUSING BALANCE/RATIO

The job-housing ratio is a measure of whether a community has enough housing to support its workforce. A balanced ratio typically falls between 1.0 and 1.5 jobs per housing unit, ensuring that local workers can find housing near their employment. However, given the strong economic connections between Adams County and surrounding employment centers, this figure should not be interpreted too rigidly. The following section summarizes key commuting trends of Adams County residents, which provide a lens into how Adams County is both a regional employment hub and an exporter of workers.

With a 1.6 jobs per housing unit ratio, Adams County has a relatively balanced supply of housing for its workforce. As job opportunities continue to grow, so will the need for more housing. Ensuring a mix of housing types and prices will help meet this demand and support a range of household needs.

Exhibit 22. Jobs-Housing Ratio, Adams County (2023)

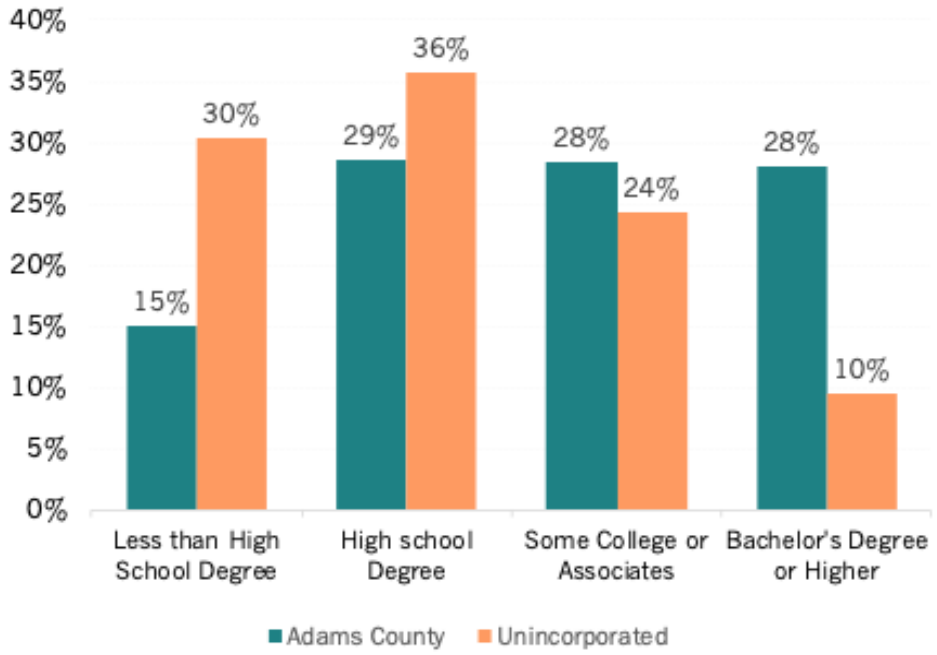
GEOGRAPHY	JOBS	HOUSING UNITS	JOBS TO HOUSING RATIO
Adams County	304,730	191,765	1.6

Source: Colorado State Demography Office (SDO), American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates, ECOnorthwest Calculations

Workforce

Exhibit 23 below shows that Adams County's population overall is highly educated when compared to unincorporated areas, as 28 percent of the county's population (age 15 and over) has a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 10 percent in unincorporated Adams County. By comparison, 30 percent of residents in the unincorporated areas have not completed high school, representing a rate double that of the county as a whole. This concentration of lower educational attainment in unincorporated areas has direct implications in terms of the jobs that these residents are able to obtain and correlates significantly with lower household incomes.

Exhibit 23. Education Attainment, Population Age 15+, Adams County (2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

COMMUTE TRENDS

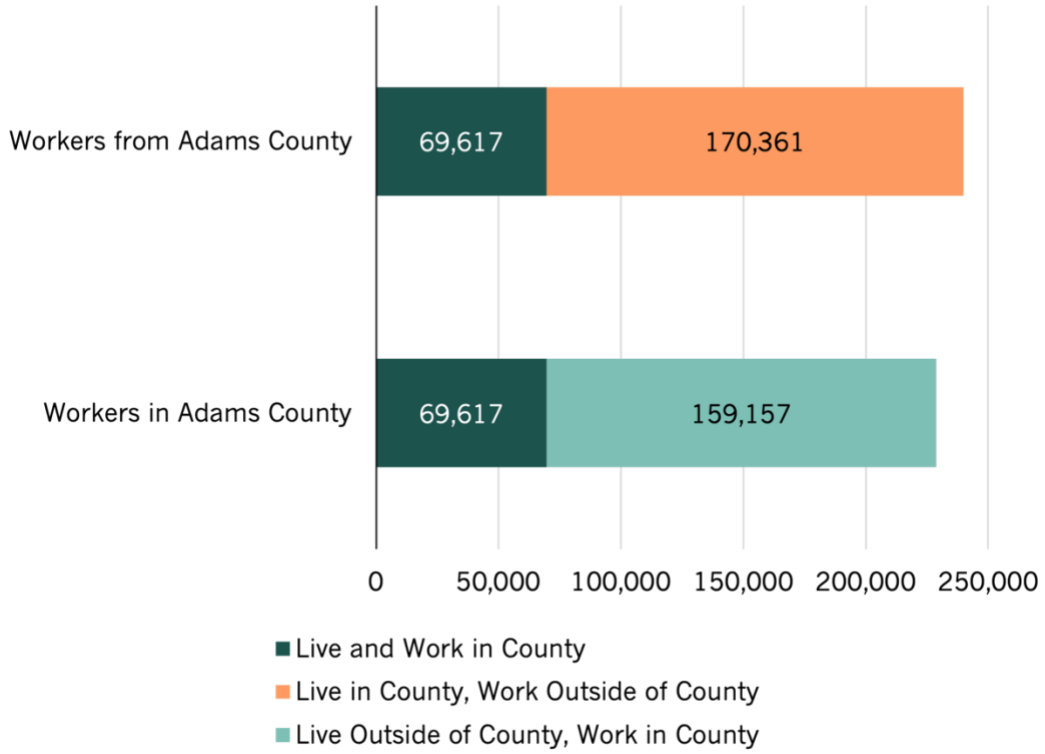
Adams County is both a major exporter and importer of workers, highlighting its role as a regional employment hub. Most of Adams County's residents work outside the county, with about 170,000 residents commuting elsewhere for work. Similarly, a sizeable workforce of about 159,000 people commute into Adams County for work each day. In contrast, a smaller share of about 70,000 residents both live and work in the county.

The top 5 counties where residents of **Adams County** travel for work include the following:

29.0%	**25.6%**	**11.8%**	**10.6%**	**6.9%**
69,617	61,425	28,410	25,339	16,487
Adams County	**Denver County**	**Jefferson County**	**Arapahoe County**	**Boulder County**

Source: US Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

Exhibit 24. Commuting Patterns in Adams County (2022)

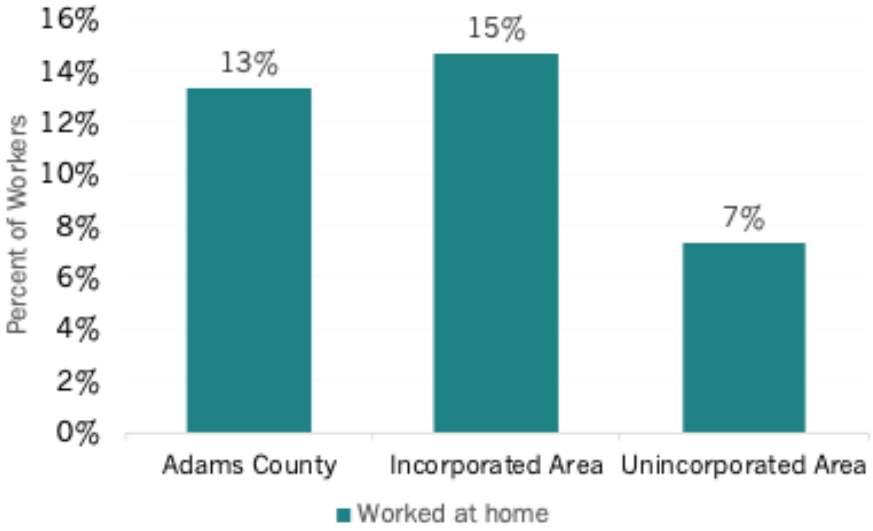


Source: US Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

WORK-FROM-HOME TRENDS

As shown in Exhibit 25, about 13 percent of Adams County workers reported working from home in 2023, a substantial shift in workplace conditions influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and evolving workplace practices. However, there is a clear geographic divide, with working from home as a more common occurrence in incorporated areas (15 percent) than in unincorporated areas (7 percent). Factors behind this strong geographical divide include the types of jobs held by residents in unincorporated areas, which may be more concentrated in manual labor and service or other location-based industries as well as lower educational attainment and limited broadband infrastructure.

Exhibit 25. Work-From-Home Trends, Adams County, Incorporated Area and Unincorporated Area (2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

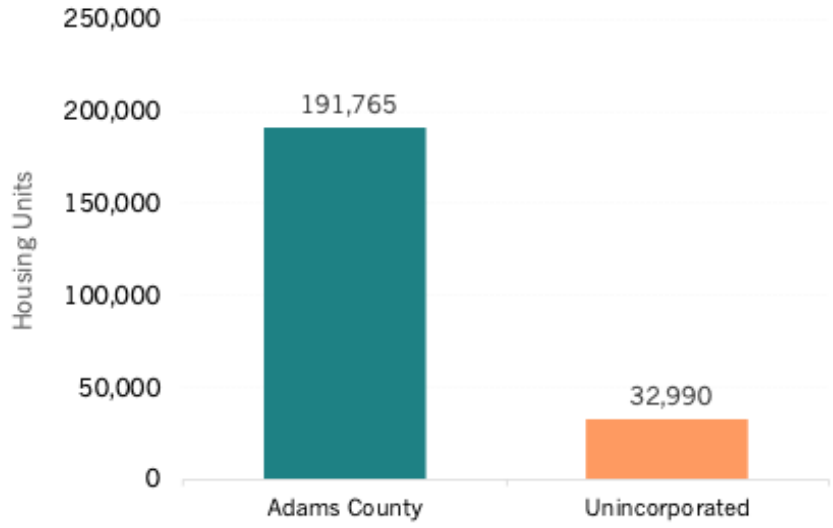
4. Housing Inventory

This section profiles the supply of housing in Adams County. The profile addresses a broad set of variables such as total housing units, units by type, occupancy status, tenure of households, age of housing, and housing production. Throughout the report we use a variety of local, state, and federal sources to summarize trends for Adams County and unincorporated areas' housing inventory.

Housing Profile

According to the American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates, Adams County had 191,765 housing units in 2023, while in unincorporated areas there were 32,990 housing units, representing approximately 17 percent of the total housing units in Adams County (Exhibit 26).

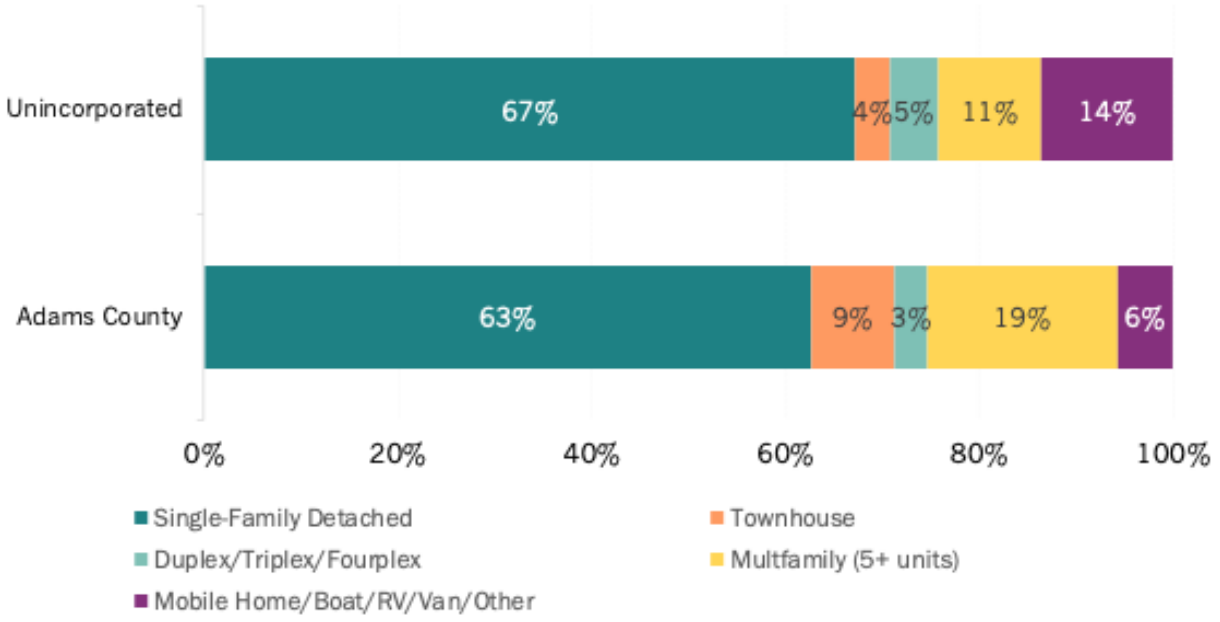
Exhibit 26. Total Housing Units



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Adams County's housing stock (shown by unit type in Exhibit 27) is predominantly composed of single-unit detached homes which make up about 63 percent of all units countywide (and an even larger 67 percent in unincorporated areas). However, housing diversity differs substantially by geography. Countywide, there are more units within larger multi-unit buildings (19 percent) and townhomes (9 percent), while in unincorporated areas there is a larger concentration of mobile and manufactured homes (14 percent) which often serve as lower-cost housing, but may tend to be older and in need of repairs.

Exhibit 27. Housing Units by Units in Structure, Adams County and Unincorporated Area (2023)



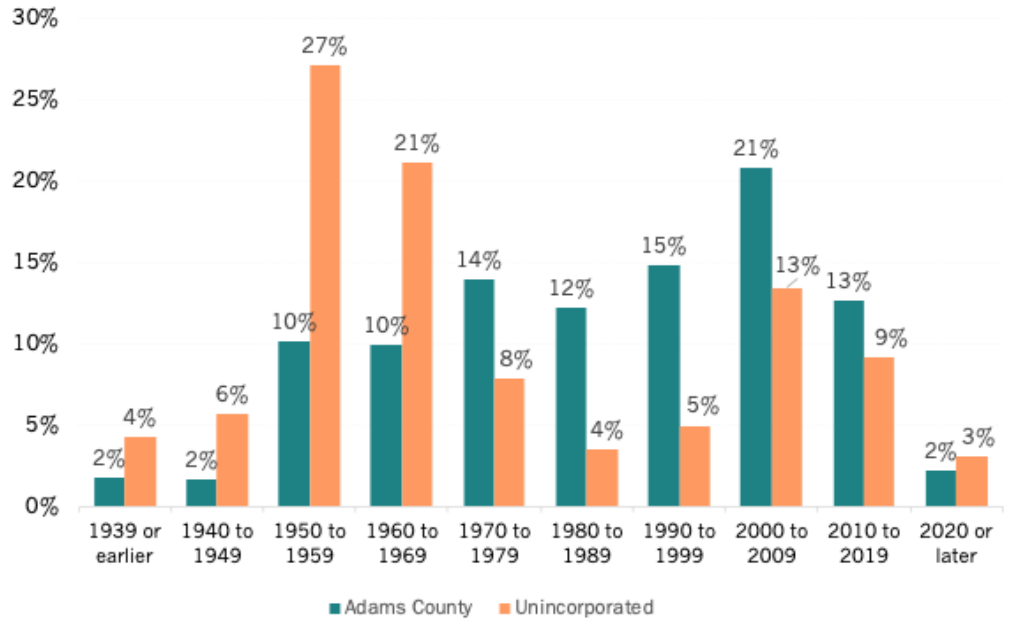
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Housing age can be an important indicator of housing conditions within a community. Like any other tangible asset, housing is subject to gradual physical or technological deterioration over time. If not properly and regularly maintained, housing can deteriorate and discourage reinvestment, depress neighboring property values, and eventually impact the quality of life in a neighborhood. Many federal and state programs also use the age of housing as one factor in determining housing rehabilitation needs. Typically, housing over 30 years of age is more likely to have rehabilitation needs that may include new plumbing, roof repairs, foundation work, and other major repairs.

The housing stock in unincorporated areas is considerably older than that of the county as a whole, with over half of all housing units (58 percent) built prior to the 1970's, compared to just 24 percent countywide. The largest concentration of homes in unincorporated areas was built in the 1950's and 1960's, highlighting the prevalence of an aging housing stock that may face maintenance, energy efficiency, and safety standard upgrades or improvements.

By contrast, Adams County overall has experienced more consistent residential development across the decades, especially from the 1990's through 2009, mostly driven by growing and urbanizing incorporated cities. In unincorporated Adams County, only 12 percent of housing units were built after 2010, pointing to a slow pace of recent housing growth that could become an issue given the county's expanding population and housing demand.

Exhibit 28. Share of Housing Units by Year Built, Adams County and Unincorporated Area (2023)



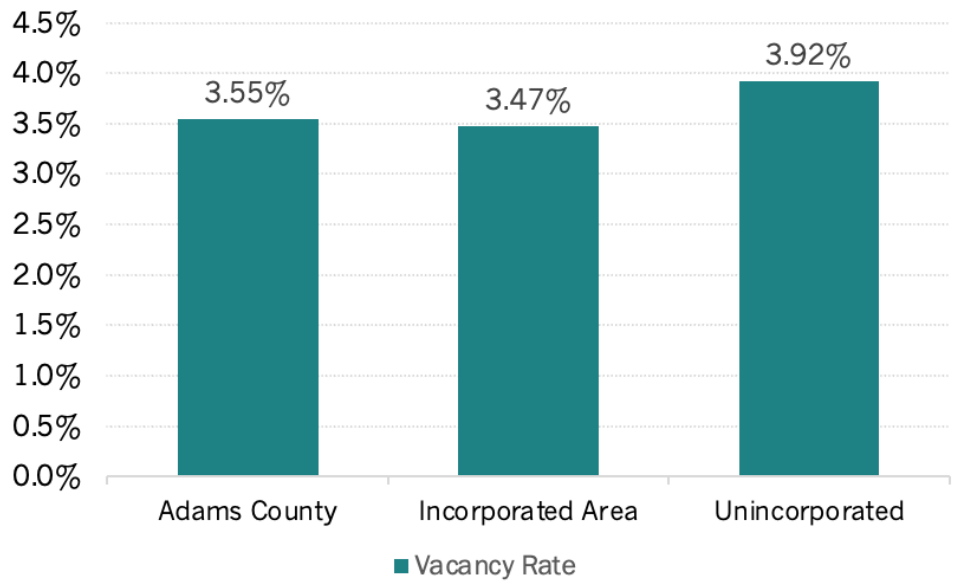
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Vacancy is a measure of the availability of housing units. When there are more vacant units than there are people looking for a place to live, there are more units available. This can reduce demand pressures and lead to lower rents and housing costs, making housing more affordable for people who are looking for a place to live. However, when there are low vacancy rates and high demand for housing, it can lead to higher rents and higher housing prices. This can make housing less affordable for people who are looking for a place to live.

According to the American Community Survey, Adams County's overall housing vacancy rate in 2023 was a low of about 3.5 percent, with slightly higher rates in the county's unincorporated areas at about 3.9 percent. These trends suggest a tight housing market, as a "healthy" vacancy rate typically falls between 5 and 7 percent.

As shown in Exhibit 30, nearly one-third of all vacant housing units are empty because they are rented but not yet occupied. Another 13.7 percent are vacant and for sale, with a higher share (17.9 percent) in unincorporated areas. The relatively low share of units used for seasonal or recreational purposes indicates that both unincorporated areas and the county's housing stock are primarily intended for full-time residents rather than vacation or second homes.

Exhibit 29. Housing Vacancy, Adams County, Incorporated Area and Unincorporated Area (2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Exhibit 30. Vacancy by Reason, Adams County, Incorporated Area and Unincorporated Area (2023)

VACANCY REASON	ADAMS COUNTY	INCORPORATED AREA	UNINCORPORATED AREA
For sale	13.7%	12.8%	17.9%
For migrant workers	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
For rent	31.6%	31.6%	31.4%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	7.2%	7.7%	5.3%
Other vacant	35.3%	35.3%	35.3%
Rented, unoccupied	5.7%	6.1%	3.6%
Sold, unoccupied	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%

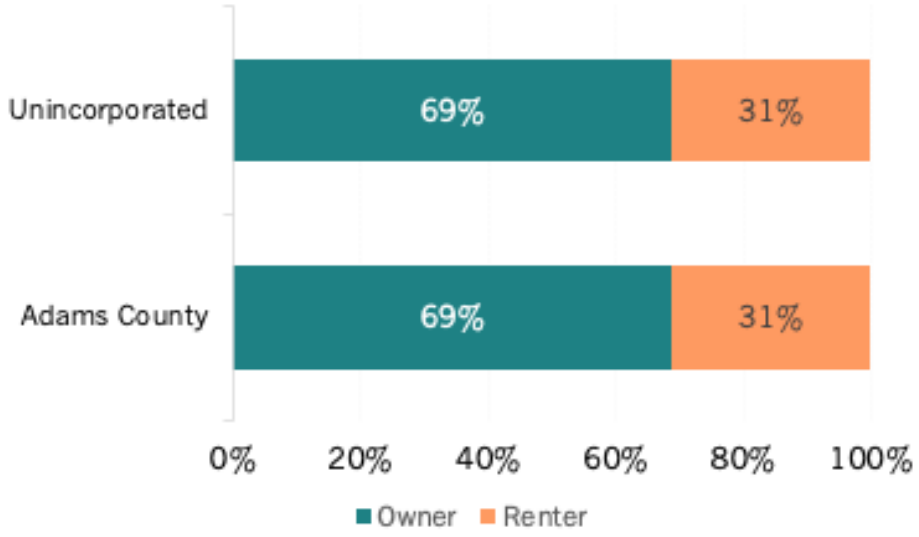
Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Housing Tenure

Household tenure is an important component of housing needs, as it helps to determine whether future housing should be built as ownership units or rental units. In many areas, a notable portion of households choose to rent their homes, emphasizing the significance of having rental housing that is both of good quality and reasonably priced.

As shown in Exhibit 31, the distribution of housing tenure in unincorporated areas mirrors that of Adams County overall. In both geographies, approximately 69 percent of occupied housing units are owner-occupied, while 31 percent are renter-occupied.

Exhibit 31. Housing Tenure, Adams County and Unincorporated Area (2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

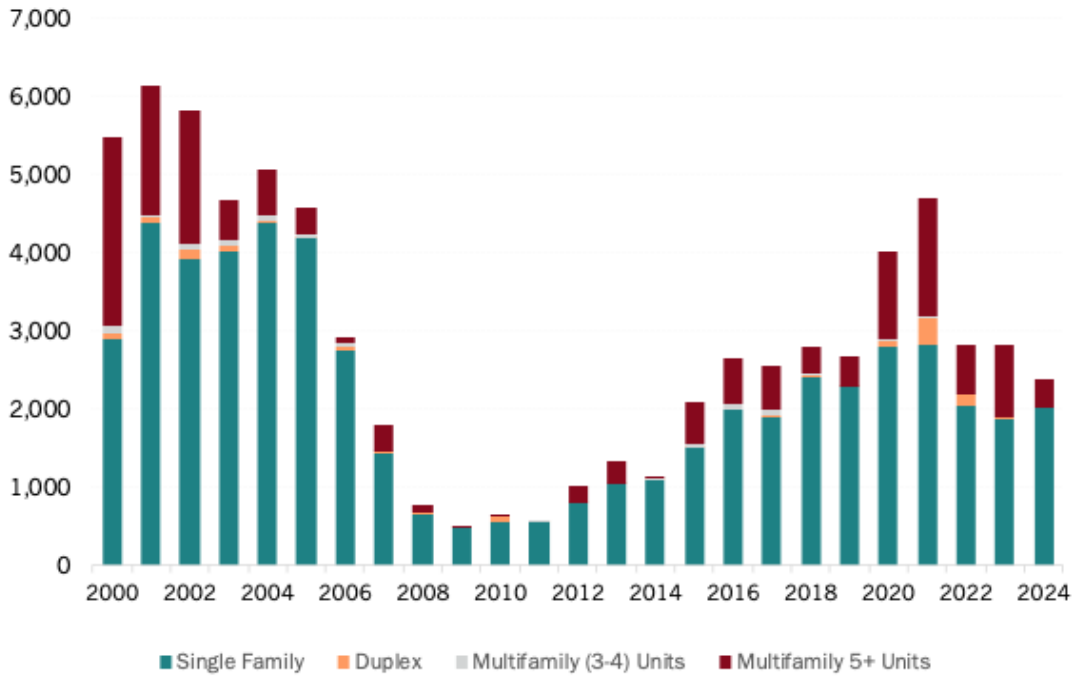
Housing Production

Adams County's residential building permit trends reflect broader economic cycles and shifting housing dynamics. Following a strong development surge in the early 2000's, residential permit activity dropped sharply after the Great Recession housing crash of the mid-2000's and construction remained at lower levels through the early 2010's. Since then, the market has stabilized, averaging roughly 3,000 total housing units per year between 2016 and 2024. Adams County experienced two distinct periods of substantial development in 2020 and 2021, with close to 4,000 and 5,000 residential permits respectively countywide.

Residential development in unincorporated areas has remained heavily concentrated toward single-unit homes, with limited development across other housing types over the past two decades. Similar to trends countywide, the early 2000's were marked by strong construction activity, but development sharply declined during the Great Recession and housing production in unincorporated areas has hovered around 300 to 400 total housing units annually since 2014.

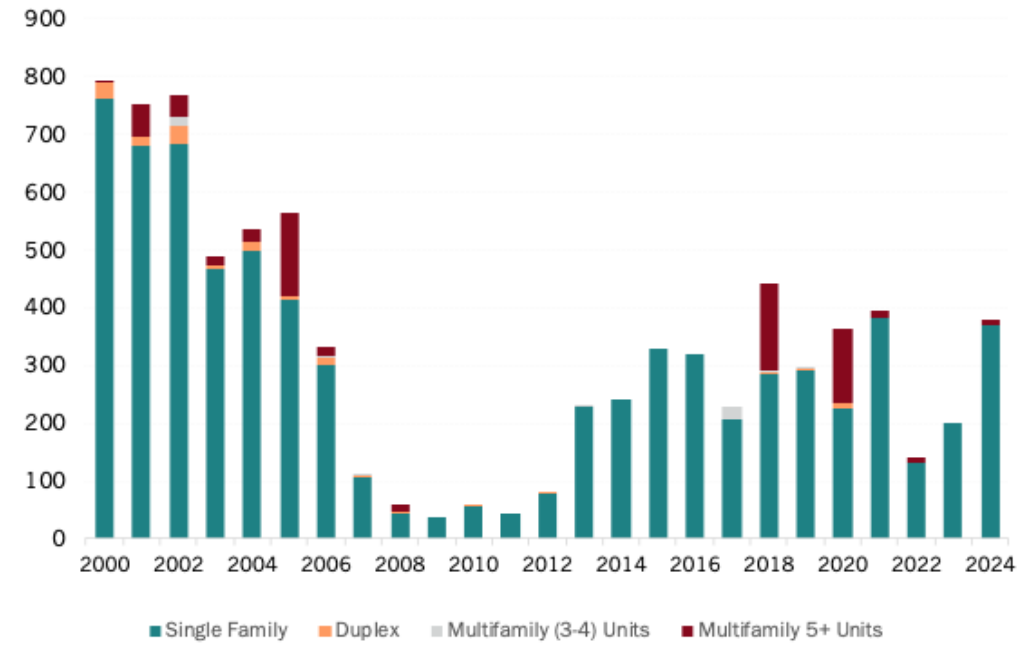
While unincorporated areas have seen very little multi-unit development, 2018 and 2020 reflect the first periods of substantial multi-unit construction (approximately 300 units) since the early 2000's.

Exhibit 32. Residential Building Permits by Housing Type, Adams County (2000-2024)



Source: HUD SOCDS Building Permits Database

Exhibit 33. Residential Building Permits by Housing Type, Unincorporated Area (2000-2024)



Source: HUD SOCDS Building Permits Database

Regulated Affordable Housing in Adams County

An important component of any community's housing inventory is the stock of housing that is affordable to households earning lower incomes. This housing can be regulated or unregulated and is most often rental housing. "Naturally occurring affordable housing" (NOAH) refers to units that are attainable for lower-income households by virtue of their location, age, condition, amenities, or housing type (covered in the next section).

Regulated affordable housing is sometimes referred to as government-assisted housing referencing the public funds utilized to support the development and maintenance of the property. These restrictions vary by the type of funding and the affordability level that the property serves. Such restrictions may have a limited duration for which the property is kept affordable.

As of 2025, Adams County had about 6,684 units of regulated affordable housing across 72 properties, concentrated primarily in Thornton, Westminster, Commerce City, and Brighton. These communities house the vast majority of US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) funded units. Of these units, 5,556 were developed through the LIHTC program, under which affordability restrictions typically expire 30 years after construction.

Adams County has an established partnership with several cities within the county to receive annual Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) allocations from HUD. These funds allow for investment in housing within the cities of Brighton, Northglenn, Federal Heights, Thornton, Westminster, Commerce City, Town of Bennett, and unincorporated Adams County. CDBG and HOME are dedicated to increasing and maintaining the supply of permanent, affordable housing for low- to moderate-income residents.

While many LIHTC properties were built after 2010 and will remain affordable until 2040 or later, several others are approaching the end of their affordability periods in the coming years. Although most of these properties fall outside of county jurisdiction, the County could explore partnerships with local jurisdictions to support preservation efforts, ensuring that these units remain affordable in perpetuity and preventing the loss of critical affordable housing stock. The County and other local governments can leverage new authority through HB24-1175 for right of first refusal or first offer to purchase such properties if the owner is seeking to sell as the affordability restrictions end.

Exhibit 34. Regulated Affordable Housing in Adams County, (2025)

PROGRAM	CITY	PROPERTIES	SUBSIDIZED UNITS
HUD	Thornton	3	257
HUD	Westminster	5	381
HUD	Commerce City	2	69
HUD	Aurora	6	271
LIHTC	Northglenn	5	463

LIHTC	Thornton	12	1,783
LIHTC	Westminster	8	1,079
LIHTC	Commerce City	11	976
LIHTC	Denver	5	484
LIHTC	Brighton	10	771
USDA	Brighton	4	150
USDA	Total	**72**	**6,684**

Source: PolicyMap
Notes(s): Several LIHTC properties also received HUD funding.

Housing Choice Vouchers

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, often referred to as "Section 8 Vouchers," is another key component of affordable housing in a community. Unlike regulated affordable housing, which restricts rents at specific properties, the voucher program provides rental assistance directly to income-eligible households. Participating households pay a portion of their income, typically 30 percent, toward rent, while the voucher covers the remainder, up to a locally defined payment standard based on fair market rents. The subsidy is tied to the household rather than the housing unit, allowing participants to rent from private landlords as long as the unit meets program requirements for affordability and quality. Because vouchers depend on private market participation, their effectiveness can be limited by factors such as the availability of units within the payment standard, landlord willingness to accept vouchers, and broader market pressures that affect rent levels and vacancy rates.

According to the HUD Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Dashboard, 1,470 vouchers are currently in use out of a total of 1,581 available in Adams County. In addition to HCVs, Maiker Housing Partners (the county's housing authority) also oversees 70 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers, 70 Family Unification Program vouchers, and 19 vouchers for non-elderly disabled households. Each of these programs currently maintains a waiting list of residents in need.

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing

NOAH provides units that are affordable to lower-income households without any form of public subsidy. This type of housing is not regulated through a program that requires rents to be set at a certain level. Typically, this type of housing is older, smaller, and/or of lower quality with fewer amenities, older appliances, or older appearances than newer, more recently updated units (which makes them more attainable for households earning below 100% of AMI). Often, these properties have some deferred maintenance or capital needs that have not been addressed. Because there is not enough regulated affordable housing across the country, NOAH is an important part of the housing stock in a community. While NOAH units play a critical role in providing affordable options, they are inherently vulnerable to rent increases, reinvestment pressures, or redevelopment, which can lead to the displacement of lower-income residents. Maintaining and preserving this stock is often an

important housing policy goal, as it represents a significant share of the naturally affordable rental housing available in most communities.

Manufactured Home Parks

Manufactured home parks are a vital source of naturally occurring affordable housing, but they face unique risks that other housing types do not. Residents are particularly vulnerable to sudden rent increases, land sales, and redevelopment pressures, which can result in displacement. Furthermore, inadequate maintenance by park owners or managers can lead to deteriorating infrastructure and possibly unsafe living conditions.

Manufactured housing plays a critical role in providing affordable housing to Adams County residents. According to DOLA's Mobile Home Park Oversight Program, there were about 10,700 occupied lots across 53 manufactured home parks as of August 2025, which represent one of the county's largest sources of NOAH.

Concentrations in Commerce City, Thornton, Federal Heights, Bennett, and Aurora of manufactured homes may pose vulnerability and housing challenges for these communities as this housing ages and can pose displacement risk if these properties are sold. For example, a new owner of these manufactured home parks may raise the rent on each lot, despite households owning the home itself. Additionally, limited vacant spaces in other parks and moving costs may displace the manufactured homeowner.

A list of recent manufactured home park listings (Exhibit 35) indicates that in 2025 there were a total of twelve manufactured home parks up for sale. Listings are mostly concentrated in Commerce City, Thornton, and Bennett as well as the unincorporated community of Henderson.

Exhibit 35. Number of Manufactured Home Parks and Lots in Adams County and Communities (2025)

CITY/AREA	COUNT	RENTAL LOTS OR MOBILE HOMES
Arvada	1	393
Aurora	6	1,603
Bennett	6	71
Brighton	3	498
Commerce City	11	474
Other Unincorporated	7	793
Federal Heights	6	2,465
Henderson/Unincorporated Area	3	413
Strasburg/Unincorporated Area	1	32
Thornton	8	3,625
Westminster	1	369
County Total	**53**	**10,736**

Source: DOLA, Mobile Home Park Oversight Program

Exhibit 36. Manufactured Home Parks for Sale in 2025

MANUFACTURED HOME PARK	CITY/AREA	COUNTY	DATE OF MOST RECENT SALE NOTICE
Bennett Homes	Bennett	Adams	6/9/2025
McDonald Mobile Home Park	Bennett	Adams	8/18/2025
Advance MHP	Commerce City	Adams	5/8/2025
Commerce Heights	Commerce City	Adams	10/6/2025
Lincoln	Commerce City	Adams	7/23/2025
Shady Lane	Commerce City	Adams	10/6/2025
Garden Meadows	Berkley	Adams	10/6/2025
Countryside Village Denver	Federal Heights	Adams	10/9/2025
Cottonwood MHC	Henderson	Adams	2/21/2025
Wikiup	Henderson	Adams	10/9/2025
Pine Lakes Ranch	Thornton	Adams	10/9/2025
Thornton Estates	Thornton	Adams	10/9/2025

Source: DOLA, Mobile Home Park Oversight Program

5. Housing Market Trends

Housing Cost and Affordability

Many demographic and socioeconomic variables influence housing choice. However, research on housing markets consistently finds that the age of the householder, household size, and income are most strongly correlated with housing choice.

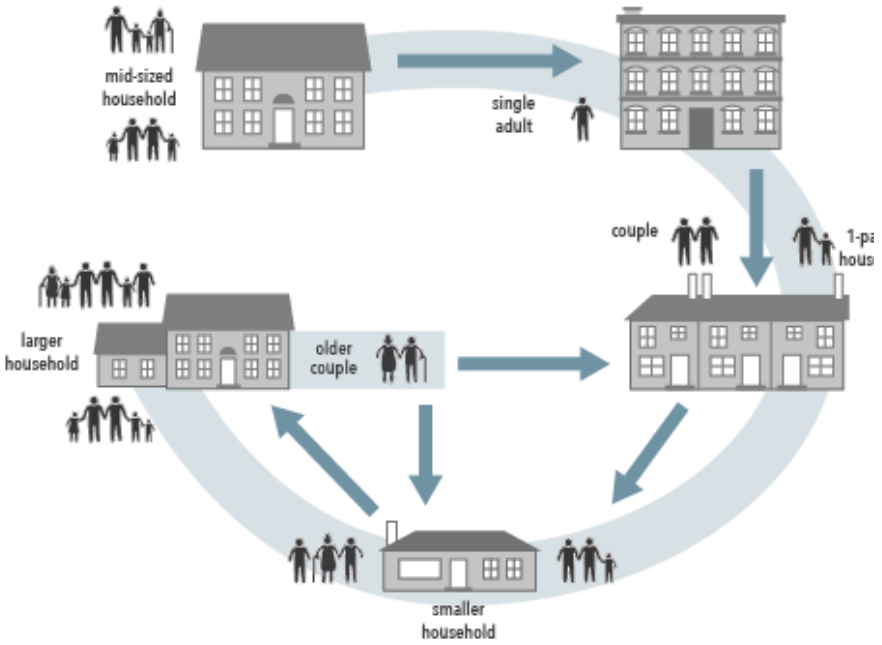
- **Age of householder** reflects life stage and housing preferences. Young adults (18-25) often rent smaller units in urban areas. Middle-aged adults (25-55) may seek family-sized homes. Empty nesters (55-65) and older adults (65+) may seek to downsize or prioritize accessibility.
- **Size of household** is the number of people living in the household. Young adults and older adults are more likely to live in single-person households. Middle-aged adults are more likely to live in multi-person households, often with children.
- **Household income** is probably the most important determinant of housing choice. Income is strongly related to the type of housing a household chooses (e.g., single-dwelling detached housing, duplexes, or buildings with more than five units) and to household tenure (e.g., rent or own).

An individual's housing needs change throughout their life, with changes in income, family composition, and age, as shown in Exhibit 37. The types of housing needed by a 20-year-old college student differ from the needs of a 40-year-old parent with children, or an 80-year-old single adult. As Adams County's population ages, different types of housing will be needed to accommodate older residents.

Housing needs and preferences change in predictable ways over time, such as with changes in marital status and size of family.

Households of different sizes need different types of housing.

Exhibit 37. Effect of Demographic Changes on Housing Need



Source: ECONorthwest, adapted from Clark, William A.V. and Frans M. Dieleman. 1996. Households and Housing. New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research.

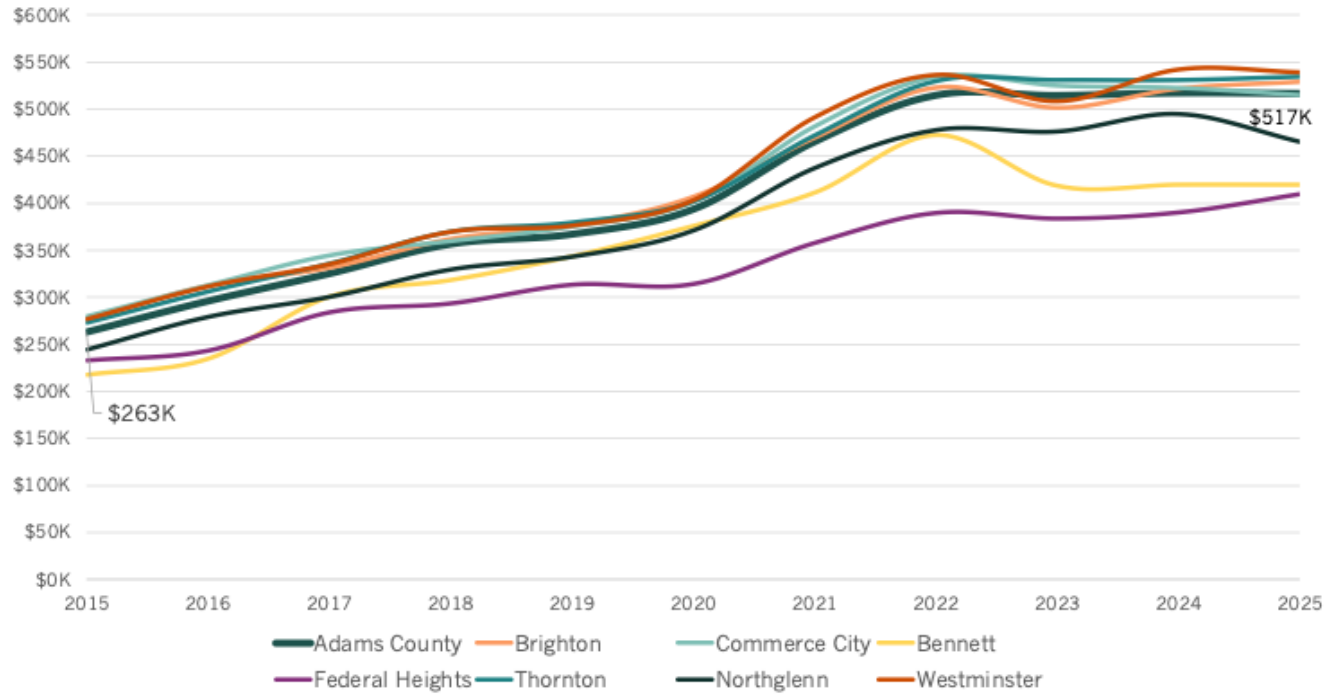
For-Sale Housing Trends

Housing cost has a direct relationship to housing choice for households at all income levels. In general, if housing supply exceeds housing demand, housing prices will decrease. If housing demand exceeds housing supply, housing prices typically increase. The availability of housing is often measured by vacancy rates, which are one factor that can affect housing costs along with other economic conditions such as interest rates.

Between 2015 and 2025, housing prices have substantially increased in Adams County and across the cities within Adams County. Exhibit 38 below shows the median home sale price in Adams County increased from $263,000 in 2015 to $465,000 in Q2 2025, representing a 97 percent increase ($254,250) in home price change.

Other communities, such as Westminster, Thornton, and Brighton have higher priced housing markets with median home prices above countywide medians.

Exhibit 38. Median Home Sale Price, Adams County and Comparison Communities (2015-2025)



Source: Redfin
Note(s): Median home sale prices not inflation-adjusted

While home prices in Adams County nearly doubled between 2015 and 2025, unincorporated areas had the highest home price increase, outpacing countywide trends. In unincorporated Adams County, home prices increased 101 percent from $255,000 in 2015 to $512,000 in 2025.

Among the cities in Adams County, Westminster had the highest median home sale price in 2025, while Federal Heights had one of the most affordable housing markets in the county with a median home price of $410,000.

Exhibit 39. Change in Median Home Sale Price, Adams County, Unincorporated Area, and Comparison Geographies (2015-2025)

Jurisdiction	2015	2025	Change (2015-2025) Number	Change (2015-2025) Percent
Adams County	**262,750**	**517,000**	**254,250**	**97%**
Unincorporated	**255,000**	**512,000**	**257,000**	**101%**
Westminster	276,625	539,000	262,375	95%
Thornton	272,800	535,000	262,200	96%
Brighton	276,750	529,171	252,421	91%
Commerce City	279,375	514,990	235,615	84%
Northglenn	244,500	465,000	220,500	90%
Bennett	218,000	419,950	201,950	93%
Federal Heights	233,110	410,000	176,891	76%

Source: Redfin and Property Radar
Note(s): Median home sale prices not inflation-adjusted

Recently, between August 2024 through July 2025, Adams County's housing market showed a relatively stable residential housing market, with no high fluctuations in home prices and with monthly median home values hovering between $508,000 and $525,000.

Housing inventory is moderately increasing month over month. From late summer 2024 to mid-year 2025, inventory rose about 32 percent. While this rise in inventory did not generally decrease home prices, this was likely due to tight matching between buyers and available homes. However, looking at homes sold year to year, this metric has declined over time, especially in late spring and summer of 2025, suggesting that demand may be softening, likely due to high interest rates and increasing costs for other goods and services.

Exhibit 40. Adams County Housing Market Inventory (Aug 2024-July 2025)

Month	Median Sale Price	Homes Sold	Homes Sold YoY	New Listings	Inventory	Days on Market	Average Sale To List
August 2024	$508K	630	-3.4%	766	1,672	27	99.3%
September	$525K	603	3.6%	767	1,683	38	99.6%
October	$515K	634	19.8%	806	1,779	39	99.3%
November	$515K	582	7.2%	519	1,625	38	98.9%
December	$515K	577	13.6%	364	1,381	46	99.1%
January 2025	$510K	403	9.5%	685	1,485	56	99.0%
February	$513K	481	-13.6%	790	1,653	57	99.4%
March	$520K	675	2.1%	1,003	1,737	41	99.5%
April	$517K	695	-2.8%	1,011	1,904	25	99.5%
May	$517K	722	-3.6%	1,076	2,182	26	99.7%
June	$520K	685	-3.4%	867	2,212	31	99.5%
July 2025	$516K	608	-4.6%	776	2,142	37	99.5%

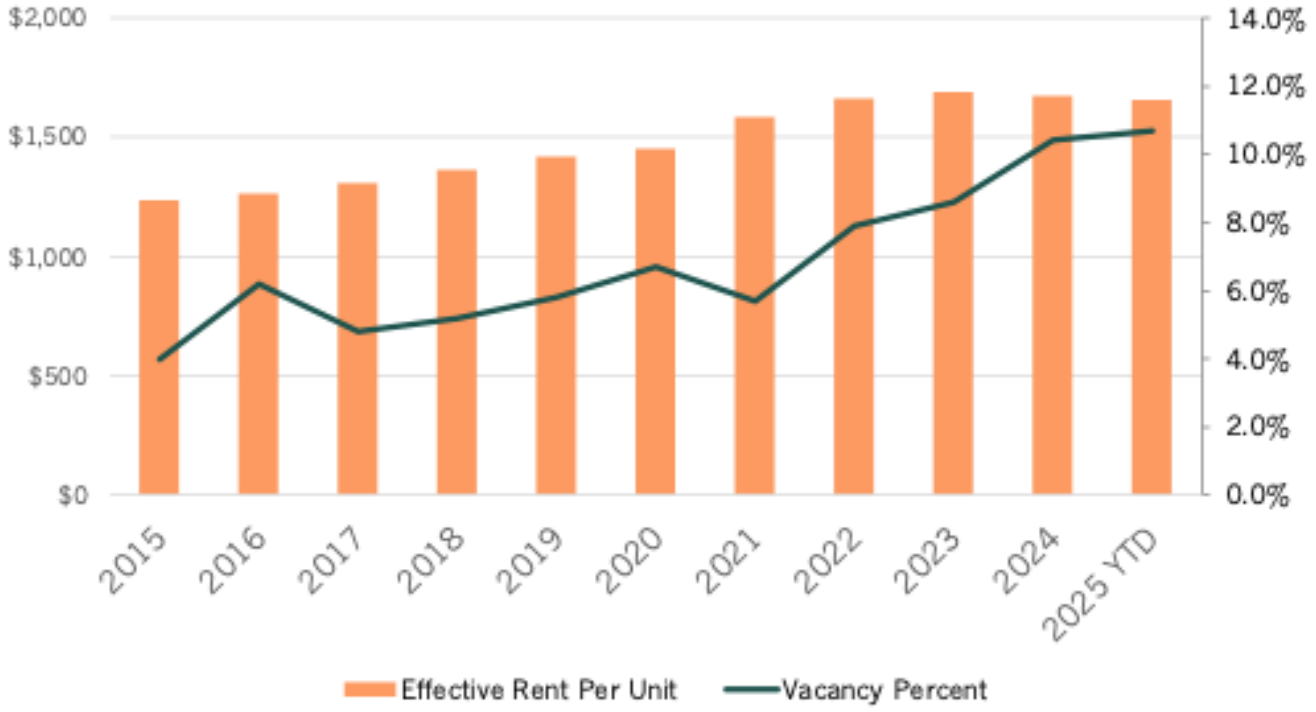
Source: Redfin

Rental Housing Trends

Between 2015 and 2023, the multi-unit market in Adams County experienced steady rent growth, mostly driven by increasing demand and a stable housing supply. Effective multi-unit rents increased from roughly $1,200 in 2015 to about $1,600 in Q1 of 2025, this represents a 34 percent increase ($423) in rent prices in the past decade.

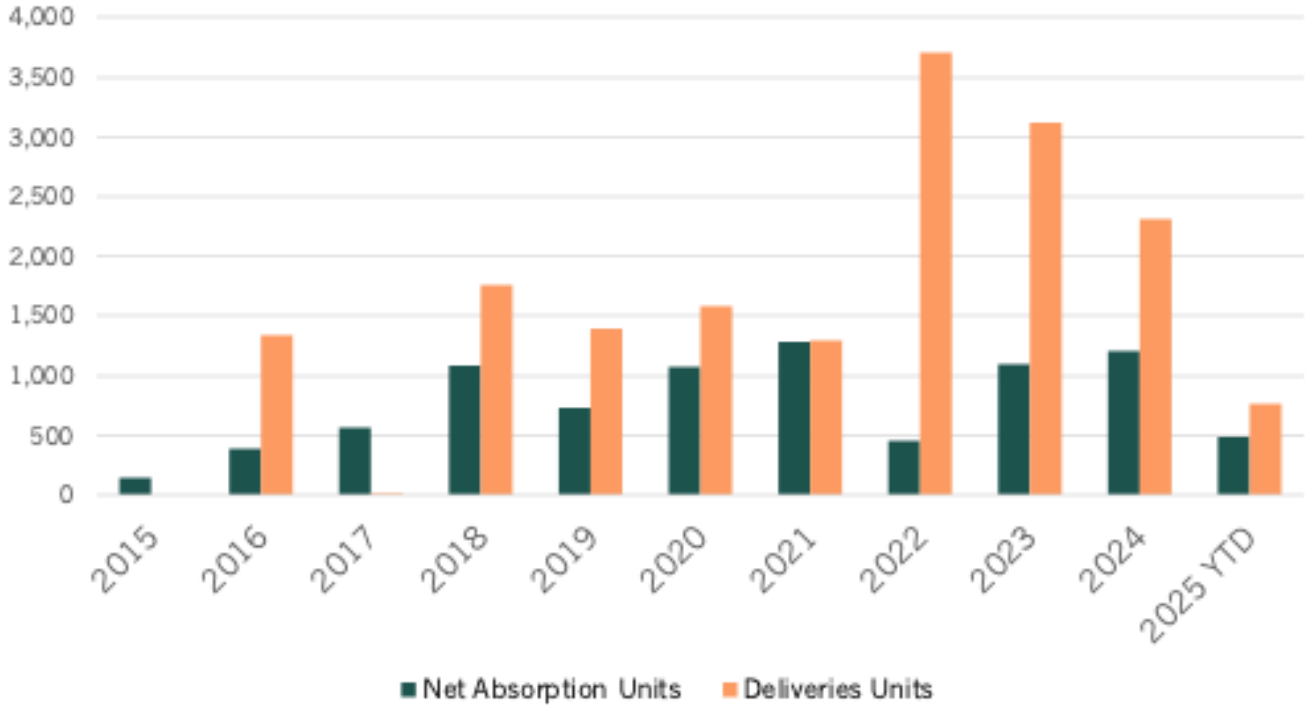
In recent years starting in 2022, vacancy rates for multi-unit rental units began rising sharply, increasing to over 10 percent by Q1 2025. This sharp increase in multi-unit vacancy rates is mostly attributed to a large number of new multi-unit housing stock being delivered to Adams County's market and a longer period for these units to be leased up. Exhibit 42 below shows net absorption and deliveries for multi-unit development in Adams County. Following the higher number of multi-unit buildings from 2020 and 2021, over 3,500 of these units were delivered in 2022, the largest number over a single year in the past decade. This large volume of construction continued, but at a slightly lower pace in 2023 and 2024. Since 2022, 9,892 of these units have been constructed in Adams County, while only 3,232 units were absorbed (leased up). This trend indicates that Adams County's multi-unit housing is currently saturated with new units where supply is greater than demand. As vacancy rates have increased, rents have slightly dipped in 2025 from a peak of $1,690 in 2023. As this trend continues, rents will continue to stabilize and possibly dip down even further as the multi-unit market balances out.

Exhibit 41. Multi-Unit Rents and Vacancy Rate, Adams County (2015-2025)



Source: CoStar

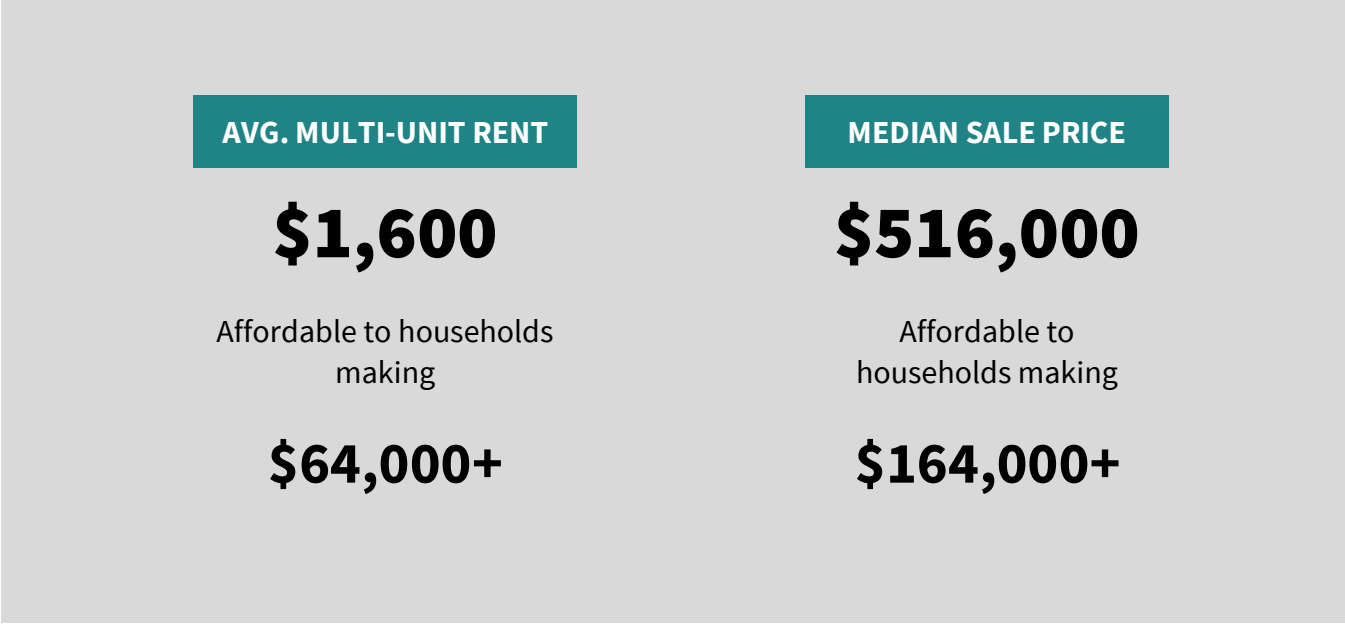
Exhibit 42. Multi-Unit Net Absorption and Deliveries, Adams County (2015-2025)



Source: CoStar

Exhibit 43 below shows the observed rent and median home sale price in Adams County in Q2 2025 as reported by Costar and Redfin. With an observed multi-unit rent of $1,600, a household would have to make a minimum of $64,000 or more to afford the average rent in Adams County without being cost-burdened, meaning they do not spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. In comparison, with a median sale price of $516,000 a household would have to make $161,000 or more to comfortably afford the median home price in Adams County.

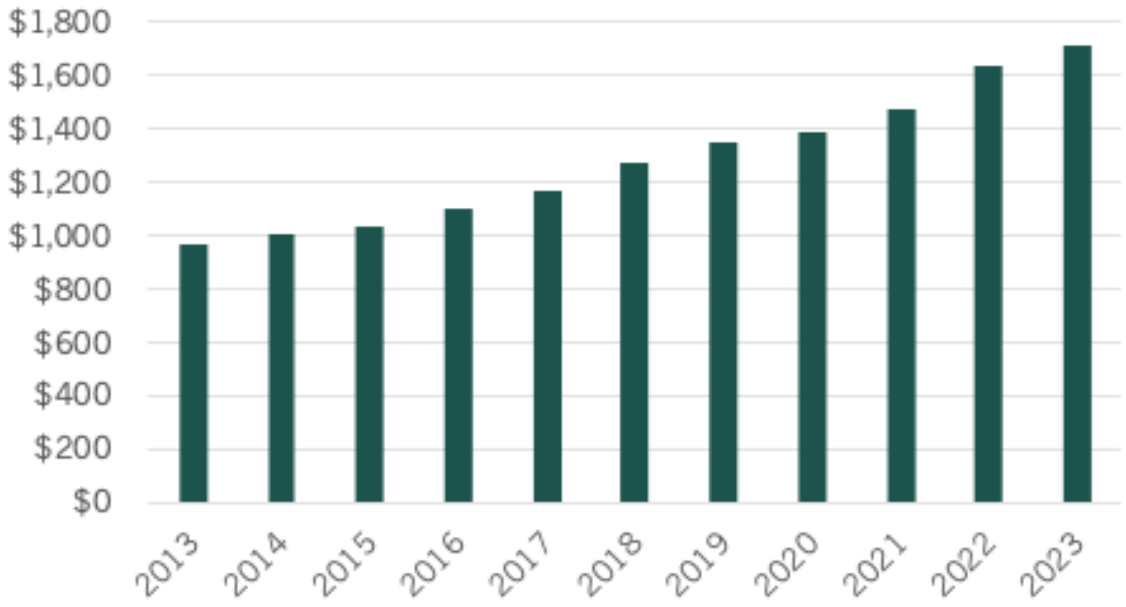
Exhibit 43. Average Multi-Unit Rents and Median Sale Price in Adams County and Related Affordability (Q2 2025)



Source: CoStar, Redfin, and ECOnorthwest affordability calculations
Note(s):
1. Affordability for median sale price assumes 30-year mortgage at seven percent with five percent down payment and 20 percent of the payment covering property taxes, HOA, PMI and insurance. It also assumes an affordable mortgage payment where the monthly mortgage does not exceed 30 percent of a household's income.
2. Affordability for the observed rent assumes that households do not spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

Median rents in Adams County increased steadily from 2013 to 2023, rising from $967 in 2013 to $1,713 in 2023, an increase of 77 percent or $746 over the past decade. Adams County experienced a sharp rent growth after 2018, with greater year-over-year increases observed after COVID-19 from 2020 to 2023. This trend suggests a significant rise in housing costs in the post-2020 period, likely driven by increased demand or broader economic factors.

Exhibit 44. Median Gross Rent, Adams County (2013-2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability is defined by both the income of a household and the costs of a housing unit appropriate for that household.

- For the "Extremely Low Income" category (earning 30 percent or less of the area median income, or AMI), income limits range from approximately $29,430 for a single-person household to $42,000 for a four-person household.
- In the "Very Low Income" category (30 percent to 50 percent of AMI), income limits range from $49,000 for a single-person household to $70,000 for a four-person household.
- For the "Low Income" category (50 percent to 80 percent of AMI), limits range from around $78,500 for a single-person household to $112,000 for a four-person household.
- The "Moderate Income" category (80 percent to 120 percent of AMI) includes income limits ranging from $117,700 for a single-person household to $168,100 for a four-person household.

Exhibit 45. Adams County Income Limits for 2025

	HOUSEHOLD SIZE							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
120% AMI	**117,720**	134,720	151,320	**168,120**	181,680	195,120	208,560	220,000
100% AMI	**98,100**	112,100	126,100	**140,100**	151,400	162,600	173,800	185,000
80% AMI	**78,480**	89,680	100,880	**112,080**	121,120	130,080	139,040	148,000
50% AMI	**49,050**	56,050	63,050	**70,050**	75,700	81,300	86,900	92,500
30% AMI	**29,430**	33,630	37,830	**42,030**	45,420	48,780	52,140	55,500

Source: Colorado Housing and Finance Authority, ECOnorthwest

Exhibit 46 below illustrates housing affordability and the attainable monthly rent and home sale price on household income. The median income for a family of four in Adams County in 2025 is $140,100 (100 percent of AMI); this figure is based on CHFA's HUD-derived calculation for Adams County in 2025.

The estimates in Exhibit 46 are based on what households could afford for a home assuming a 30-year mortgage at 7 percent with 5 percent down payment and 20 percent of the payment covering property taxes, homeowners association fees, property mortgage insurance and general home insurance. It also assumes an affordable mortgage payment where the monthly mortgage does not exceed 30 percent of a household's income.

Monthly affordable rent assumes that households do not spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent. They do not consider other household financial characteristics that can affect the ability to pay for housing, including other household debt such as auto loans and credit cards as well as accumulated assets.

Based on the information above regarding average rent and median home prices in Adams County, a household earning 100 percent of AMI in 2024 could not afford to purchase the median-priced home in Adams County. However, this household can afford the average rent in Adams County.

Adams County's housing market is becoming increasingly unaffordable for middle-income families, particularly for homeownership. Households at 100 percent of AMI ($140,100) cannot afford the median home price of $517,000 requiring an income of $164,000 or more to purchase. While rents are generally more affordable to a wider range of households, newer rental units are typically priced at the higher end of the market, making them less accessible to the average household.

Exhibit 46. Housing Affordability in Adams County for a Family of Four in 2025

If your household earns:				
$42,000 *30% of AMI*	**$70,100** *50% of AMI*	**$112,100** *80% of AMI*	**$140,100** *100% of AMI*	**$168,100** *120% of AMI*
Then they can afford:				
$1,050 **Affordable Monthly Rent** **OR** $132,900 **Affordable Home Sale Price**	$1,750 **Affordable Monthly Rent** **OR** $221,800 **Affordable Home Sale Price**	$2,800 **Affordable Monthly Rent** **OR** $354,700 **Affordable Home Sale Price**	$3,500 **Affordable Monthly Rent** **OR** $443,300 **Affordable Home Sale Price**	$4,200 **Affordable Monthly Rent** **OR** $531,900 **Affordable Home Sale Price**
Related Occupation:				
Retail Salesperson	**Executive Secretaries**	**Personal Financial Advisors**	**Software Developers**	**General and Operations Managers**
$39,120/ $20.33 hr	*$71,020/ $34.15 hr*	*$112,280/ $53.98 hr*	*$142,530/ $68.53 hr*	*$171,000/ $82.21 hr*

Source: HUD, BLS Wage Data by Area and Occupation, ECOnorthwest Calculations
Note(s):
1. Affordable home sale price assumes 30-year mortgage at seven percent with five percent down payment and 20 percent of the payment covering property taxes, Homeowners Association (HOA), Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI), and homeowners insurance. It also assumes an affordable mortgage payment where the monthly mortgage does not exceed 30 percent of a household's income.
2. Affordable monthly rent assumes that households do not spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

6. Housing Problems

Demographic, housing, and economic data indicate that there are housing challenges in Adams County. Low-income renters, in particular, face a lack of affordable, available, and livable housing, leading to housing cost burden, overcrowding, and substandard living conditions. Despite the low rate of overall vacancy (Exhibit 29), multi-unit housing may have higher vacancies (Exhibit 41). New multi-unit structures can have a long lease up period, creating high vacancy rates. Such units may be out of range for many households as developers seek rents needed to pay down construction loans. The rental market is dynamic in terms of turnover. Continued new construction of such units can allow higher-income households to open up opportunities in older units by moving out, putting downward pressure on the rents in older buildings through a process called price filtering.

Moreover, rates of disability in the county suggest a need to consider the number of accessible and "visitable"[1] units available. High rates of homelessness in the Denver metro area outmatch existing income-restricted units and available HCVs. In addition, some areas in the county (see analysis below in Exhibit 52) are facing displacement risk, at times specifically due to housing cost and housing conditions. Provision of affordable and livable housing for all populations will be an important step toward addressing these housing challenges.

A key challenge many low-income households face is competition for naturally-occurring affordable housing from higher-income households. In many instances, higher-income households may choose less expensive housing if it is available and meets household needs, reducing supply of more affordable units.[2] Given entry costs (down payment for owner units, advance rent, and deposits for rental units) and required credit reports, low-income households have clear disadvantages in competing for lower-cost housing.

Housing Cost Burden

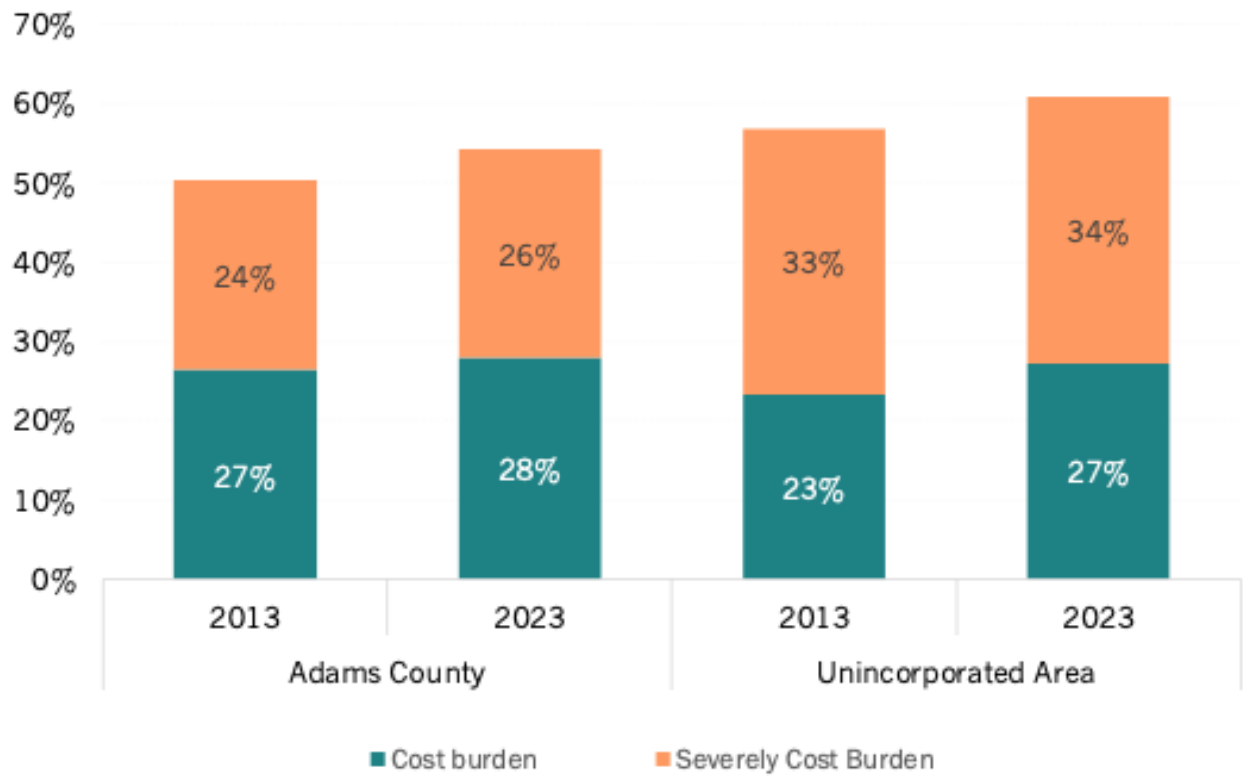
State and federal funding that address affordable housing specify that households spending more than 30 percent of gross annual income on housing are "housing cost-burdened." Housing cost burden can occur when housing costs increase faster than household income. When a household spends more than 30 percent of its income on housing costs (e.g., rent/mortgage, utilities, insurance, property taxes, etc.), households have less disposable income for other necessities, including health care, food, and clothing. In the event of unexpected circumstances such as the loss of employment or serious health problems, lower-income households with a burdensome housing cost are more likely to become unhoused or be forced to 'double up' with other households e.g. move in with friends, family, or roommates). Homeowners with a housing cost burden have the option of selling

[1] "Visitable unit" means a dwelling unit that a person with a disability can enter, move around the primary entrance floor of, and use the bathroom in (Colorado Department of Local Affairs)
[2] DRCOG Regional Housing Needs Assessment, Appendix B. Regional Housing Trends, p. 13-14.

their homes to downsize or become renters. Renters, on the other hand, are more vulnerable and subject to constant changes in the housing market.

In Adams County, the percentage of renters who are cost-burdened has increased from 51 percent in 2013 to 54 percent in 2023, with unincorporated Adams County experiencing a much higher cost burden rate, increasing from 56 percent in 2013 to 61 percent in 2023. The share of severely cost-burdened renters has increased slightly over the years, but remains around 26 and 34 percent in both incorporated and unincorporated areas, respectively.

Exhibit 47. Renter Cost Burden and Severe Cost Burden, Adams County and Unincorporated Area (2013-2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates

Housing Overcrowding

According to the HUD, a household is considered overcrowded when there is a ratio of more than one person per room within a housing unit. In this context, "rooms" refer to spaces such as living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, bedrooms, finished recreation rooms, enclosed porches suitable for year-round use, and lodgers' rooms. This definition serves as a guideline to identify living situations where the available space may not be adequate for the number of occupants, potentially impacting their comfort, safety, and overall quality of life.

In Adams County, renters constitute the majority of overcrowded households, with 4,185 cases compared to 2,299 among homeowners. This issue is particularly prevalent among lower-income households; nearly 86.4 percent of overcrowded renter households and 79.6 percent of overcrowded homeowner households fall below 80 percent of AMI, classifying them as low-income. These findings highlight the disproportionate impact of overcrowding on low-income households, with a higher prevalence among renter households, underscoring the need for targeted strategies to address both space and affordability constraints for these residents.

Exhibit 48. Housing Overcrowding by Tenure, Adams County

	RENTER					OWNER				
	0-30% AMI	30-50% AMI	50-80% AMI	80-100% AMI	Total	0-30% AMI	30-50% AMI	50-80% AMI	80-100% AMI	Total
Single-unit households	775	1,345	1,050	420	3,590	365	315	755	219	1,654
Multiple, unrelated family households	35	140	100	105	380	50	100	210	250	610
Other, non-family households	15	80	75	45	215	25	0	10	0	35
Total need by income	**825**	**1,565**	**1,225**	**570**	**4,185**	**440**	**415**	**975**	**469**	**2,299**

Source: 2017-2021 CHAS

Housing Standards

Beyond housing cost and overcrowding, there are some households living in substandard housing, defined as housing that lacks complete plumbing or kitchen facilities. Most of these households (70 percent) are renters making less than 80 percent of AMI, highlighting the need for more livable multi-unit housing that is affordable to households at 80 percent of AMI or less.

Exhibit 49. Substandard Housing by AMI Level, Adams County

	RENTER					OWNER				
	0-30% AMI	30-50% AMI	50-80% AMI	80-100% AMI	Total	0-30% AMI	30-50% AMI	50-80% AMI	80-100% AMI	Total
Substandard housing – lacking complete plumbing or kitchen facilities	310	55	230	55	650	40	70	65	25	200

Source: 2017-2021 CHAS

Accessible and Visitable Units

Data from the HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) suggest that there are 77,160 households in Adams County with at least one member who has a disability that require accessibility accommodations. Over half of these households have at least one member with an ambulatory limitation (21,540) or hearing/vision impairment (20,820). These data demonstrate the need for accessible and visitable housing units in Adams County that can accommodate hearing, vision, ambulatory, cognitive, and self-care of independent living limitations.

Exhibit 50. Households with at least One Member with a Disability, Adams County (2021)

Household Member has:	Adams County Number of Households
Hearing or vision impairment	20,820
Ambulatory limitation	21,540
Cognitive limitation	17,935
Self-care or independent living limitation	16,865
Total	77,160

Source: CHAS 2017-2021

More recent data from the 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) show individual-level statistics about the rate of disability among Adams County's population. Around 58,839 residents, about 11.3 percent of the population, report having a disability, with prevalence rising significantly with age. Among those aged 65 and older, nearly 35.2 percent experience some form of disability, highlighting the need for housing that accommodates both physical and cognitive limitations to support safe and independent living.

To address the needs of this population, understanding the prevalence of different disability types is essential. Similar to HUD household data, ACS data show that the most commonly reported disability is related to ambulatory difficulty, defined by the ACS as "having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs." Nearly 24,000 residents in the county report this condition and may benefit from accessibility features such as ground-level units and ramps.

The second most common disability is cognitive difficulty, described as "difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions due to a physical, mental, or emotional problem." The needs of individuals with cognitive impairments differ significantly from those with mobility challenges, often requiring in-home support, counseling, and placement in supportive communities tailored to these unique needs. Recognizing these varied needs is crucial for developing inclusive housing strategies that support all residents.

As part of its RHNA, DRCOG applied county-level data on the rate of ambulatory disability by current age cohort to the expected age distribution in the State Demography Office forecast. For Adams County, DRCOG showed a projected increase in population with an ambulatory disability of 33 percent, from over 20,000 to nearly 27,000 over a 10-year period (2022 to

2032) based on this relationship between age and disability. This reflects a growing need for more accessible and visitable units.

Homelessness

As an entitlement community of CDBG and HOME funds, Adams County participates in the Metropolitan Denver Continuum of Care (CoC). This coalition of private and public-sector service providers works to prevent and end homelessness within the seven-county Denver metro area. The Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) coordinates the CoC, focusing on providing low-barrier housing and supportive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The CoC implements a variety of approaches to accomplish this goal, including:

- Prevention and diversion strategies
- Outreach and engagement
- Coordinated assessments
- Crisis sheltering
- Permanent housing solutions.

As part of its work, MDHI conducts the official estimate of homelessness known as the Point-in-Time (PIT) count and also collects Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) partner agency data on the number of individuals who access their housing or related services.

POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT

The PIT count is the count of sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness on a single night in January each year. Because the PIT only measures homelessness on one night of the year and only accounts for sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, it represents an undercount of the actual number of people experiencing homelessness, with some suggestions that it undercounts the unsheltered population by as much as 30-60 percent.[3] Despite these well-known limitations of PIT data, there is no alternative official data source that measures the count of unhoused individuals who are not necessarily accessing housing or related services through HMIS partners. Where possible, this analysis reports actual nominal data and intentionally avoids percentages to avoid extrapolating shares or rates to a wider population.

[3] See for example: Wilder Research, Homelessness in Minnesota - Findings from the 2015 Minnesota Homeless Study (2016). (See http://mnhomeless.org/minnesota-homeless-study/reports-and-fact-sheets/2015/2015-homelessness-in-minnesota-11-16.pdf)
Kim Hopper, Marybeth Shinn, Eugene Laska, Morris Meisner, and Joseph Wanderling, 2008: Estimating Numbers of Unsheltered Homeless People Through Plant-Capture and Postcount Survey Methods. American Journal of Public Health 98, 1438_1442, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2005.083600.

The MDHI PIT recorded a total of **970 people** experiencing homelessness in Adams County on one night in 2024. Of this total, 253 were individuals within families (including at least one adult and one child facing homelessness). Another 683 adults who were not in families reported experiencing chronic homelessness.

The PIT found that 607 people were sheltered, while another 363 slept on the streets or another place not meant for human habitation.

The PIT also measures the number of unaccompanied youth and veterans experiencing homelessness. According to the PIT, there were 49 veterans and 34 unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness on the night of the 2024 PIT count.

The Colorado Homelessness Management Information System defines different experiences of homelessness as such:

- **Sheltered:** persons staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens.
- **Unsheltered:** persons living in tents, cars, and other places not meant for human habitation.
- **Chronic:** persons who have experienced long-term, persistent homelessness, often due to a lack of access to healthcare, affordable housing, and supportive services.

The report also found that four in ten of the people experiencing homelessness were chronically homeless, while one in three were newly homeless.

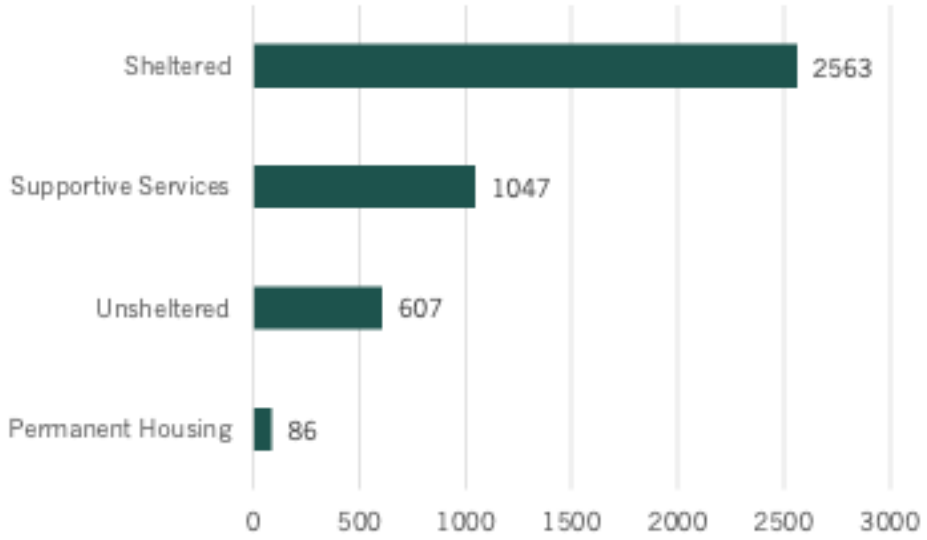
HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM DATA

According to an MDHI report, 3,702 people accessed housing or related services at HMIS partner agencies in Adams County in 2024.[4] Most of these individuals (2,563) were sheltered, while the rest accessed supportive services and permanent housing, or were unsheltered (Exhibit 51). HMIS data also reveal that there is a racial disparity in the unhoused population within Adams County, with people of color representing just over 60 percent of individuals accessing housing and related services.[5]

[4] Metro Denver Homeless Initiative. 2024. State of Homelessness 2024. Pg. 11. See https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fea50c73853910bc4679c13/t/6818ffb5f4be914a5a5f4d31/1746468791948/MDHI+Sub-regions+SOH+2024+Fact+Sheets.pdf#page=11

[5] Metro Denver Homeless Initiative. 2024. Pg. 11.

Exhibit 51. Number of Individuals Accessing HMIS Partner Services by Type, 2024



Source: Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, State of Homelessness, 2024.

Displacement Risk

While it is not possible to fully predict where displacement will happen, the analysis below highlights areas with elevated displacement risk factors at the census tract level. Displacement occurs when residents are no longer able to remain in their neighborhood or community due to rising costs, loss of housing, or changing conditions that make it difficult to stay. **Direct** displacement pressures include redevelopment, eminent domain, lease non-renewals, evictions, and other pressures that have the immediate effect of forcing residents to move. **Economic** displacement pressures include rising rents, loss of income, and other factors that affect housing affordability.

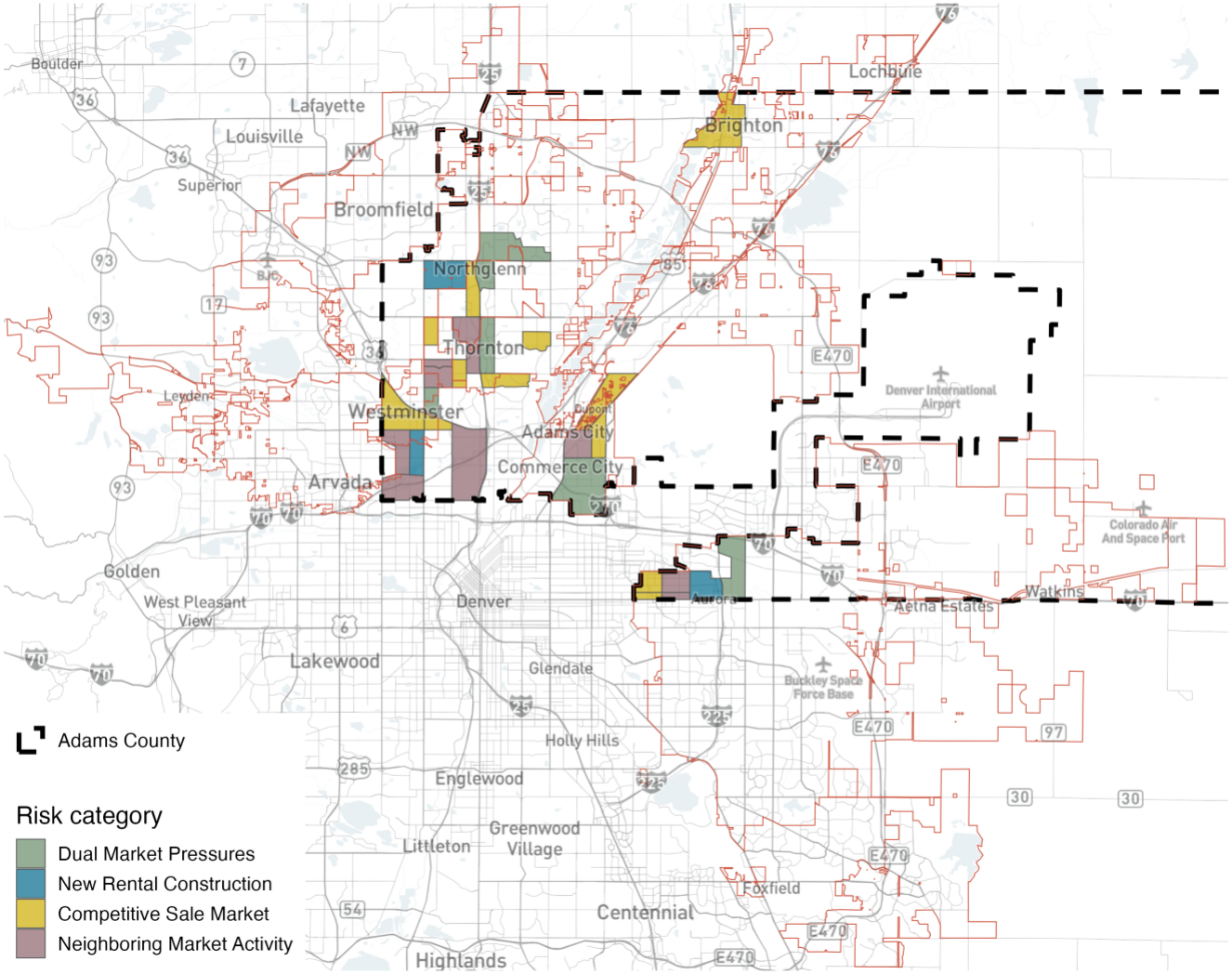
While many household characteristics can contribute to displacement vulnerability, renters with lower incomes face the highest risk of displacement as they have the least ability to absorb an increase in rent, navigate an eviction, or find replacement housing. They are also more likely to be cost-burdened and severely cost-burdened than higher income households, particularly compared to homeowners. Displacement is more likely to occur when housing market conditions change in neighborhoods that have a higher share of these vulnerable households.

ECOnorthwest's methodology for assessing displacement risk attempts to capture the intersection of household-level vulnerability and surrounding market conditions. Specifically, our approach identifies census tracts with a higher share of low-income renters compared to the broader region and places where current market activities compound the risk of displacement for those households using data from the US Census and Federal Housing Finance Agency. This analysis is focused on urban areas of Adams County because limited data and differing housing markets in rural communities can make it difficult to accurately estimate in the same way.

Exhibit 52 shows a map of four conditions that can indicate higher displacement risk based on a combination of demographic and market indicators:

- **New Rental Construction**: The tract is in the top quartile of tracts ranked by the share of households with incomes below 50 percent of AMI **AND** the tract is in the top quartile of tracts ranked by new rental unit production.
- **Competitive Sale Market:** The tract is in the top quartile of tracts ranked by the share of households with incomes below 50 percent of AMI **AND** the tract has a competitive single-unit for-sale market.
- **Dual Market Pressures**: The tract is in the top quartile of tracts ranked by the share of households with incomes below 50 percent of AMI **AND** the tract is in the top quartile of tracts ranked by new rental unit production **AND** the tract has a competitive single-unit for-sale market.
- **Neighboring Market Activity:** The tract is in the top quartile of tracts ranked by the share of households with incomes below 50 percent of AMI **AND** it is adjacent to at least two other tracts where at least one of the two market activity conditions is met (even if those tracts do not have a high share of low-income renters).

Exhibit 52. Displacement Risk in Adams County



Source: ECOnorthwest

7. Housing Resources

Local Housing Authorities and Housing Service Providers

The Adams County HOME Consortium is a collaborative partnership between the Adams County CDBG Urban County jurisdictions and the cities of Commerce City, Thornton, and Westminster, dedicated to increasing and maintaining the supply of permanent, affordable housing for low- to moderate-income residents. The consortium's mission includes expanding the capacity of nonprofit housing providers, strengthening the ability of local governments to provide housing, and leveraging private sector participation.

Within the consortium, several housing authorities work towards these shared goals. Maiker Housing Partners, formerly known as the Adams County Housing Authority, focuses on creating communities by providing quality, affordable housing and supportive services to individuals and families. Similarly, the Brighton Housing Authority is committed to providing affordable housing opportunities and fostering community development within the City of Brighton. The Commerce City Housing Authority also administers HVC and affordable housing units in the City. These organizations operate independently, but collectively contribute to the County's overarching mission of ensuring access to decent, safe, and affordable housing throughout the county.

Adams County partners with housing authorities that provide a variety of affordable housing, emergency shelter, and social services programs, including the following organizations:

- **Maiker Housing Partners:** Maiker Housing Partners promotes community development in Adams County by creating a pipeline of high-quality affordable multi-family apartment housing. Maiker also administers housing choice vouchers, project-based vouchers, veterans vouchers, and other housing services to primarily low-income families and individuals, including the elderly, people with disabilities, and veterans.
- **Brighton Housing Authority:** Brighton Housing Authority develops and provides affordable apartments and duplexes for low-income households in the Brighton community. In addition, Brighten offers services such as housing navigation, tenant based rental assistance, basic needs assistance, food distribution, career and college support, and more.
- **Commerce City Housing Authority**: The Commerce City Housing Authority provides affordable multi-unit housing to low-income residents, in addition down-payment assistance, home rehabilitation loans, housing choice vouchers, and senior housing assistance.
- **Aurora Housing Authority:** The Housing Authority of the City of Aurora provides affordable housing and rental assistance across the region, administering Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and managing over 800 affordable rental units while

supporting roughly 2,000 households through its programs and partnering with government and nonprofit entities to expand access to safe, decent housing for low-income families, seniors, and individuals.

- **Arvada Housing Authority:** The Arvada Housing Authority, a public housing agency overseen by the city, delivers rental assistance through the Housing Choice Voucher Program and other voucher types, supports affordable housing development and preservation, and aims to improve access to diverse, safe, and affordable housing for low-income families, veterans, seniors, and people with disabilities in the community.

Homeless Prevention, Shelter, and Resources

The county coordinates with several other agencies to deliver homelessness prevention, shelter, and housing navigation services. Exhibit 53 highlights the services that each organization offers.

Exhibit 53. Shelter, Housing, and Basic Needs Programming in Adams County

Program	Emergency Shelter	Rapid Re-housing	Street Outreach	Severe Weather	Financial Support	Education / Resources	Food	Case Mgmt
Almost Home	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	
Growing Home					☑	☑	☑	
Cold Weather Care				☑			☑	☑

Service providers and shelter operators in Adams County report to the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI), which operates the region's Coordinated Entry System, as designated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.[6] MDHI ensures that providers and shelter operators submit relevant data through their Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to provide a better picture of who accesses services related to homelessness throughout Colorado. MDHI also administers and monitors grants, conducts the Point-in-Time count, and facilitates regional collaboration between participating cities and counties, including Adams County.

Additional Programs and Resources

Adams County collaborates with many partners that work to improve social and housing conditions throughout the county and region. These partners help the county provide a more holistic array of supports to the community by supplementing the existing housing

[6] Metro Denver Homeless Initiative. https://www.mdhi.org/bfz

and social programs with institutional supports, long-term early childhood and career strategic planning, and policy advocacy.

8. Housing Development Challenges and Opportunities

This chapter synthesizes findings from the Adams County Housing Needs Assessment focus groups from October 2025, supplemented by findings from the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan, the Community Water Baseline Report, Advancing Adams Comprehensive Plan, and other Housing Needs Assessment findings.

Development Costs

HIGH AND RISING COSTS OF DEVELOPMENT

The overall cost to develop housing in Adams County has increased in recent years. This includes the cost of materials, land acquisition, and infrastructure. As one developer noted, the sheer cost of development creates a significant barrier unless there is public money available for affordable housing. Even with tax credits, there are significant financial gaps to fill. Higher interest rates affect construction loans and increase development project carrying costs. While labor shortages under the previous lower interest rate construction environment have eased, helping some construction costs stabilize, tap and utility connection fees continue to increase, affecting development feasibility and housing affordability. Land donation or fee waivers may help address direct development costs in cases where possible.

UPFRONT COSTS AND FINANCIAL RISK

Predevelopment expenses impose upfront costs on a potential housing developer. These may include design, legal fees, or environmental studies. These investments may be needed to secure financing or entitlements to proceed with development. For those pursuing Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, the application fee, combined with required market studies and attorney costs, can deter potential applicants from what may otherwise be competitive projects for the state's limited pool of tax credits. Small-scale predevelopment grants could help address this early cost, especially for community-based, nonprofit developers.

FEASIBILITY AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Anticipated, achievable rents for potential development may not be enough to support the cost of development. Focus group participants noted that some areas in Adams County may not be able to achieve high enough market rents to feasibly support construction, even in some transit-oriented areas that already had zoning in place to support housing development. The lack of gap funding for all types of affordable housing also presents challenges for projects that may have other larger sources of funding committed, but need a smaller gap filled to move forward.

Regulatory Barriers

ZONING AND ENTITLEMENTS

Some developers may avoid land that requires a long entitlement process to get permission to build more housing. Affordable housing funding or Low-Income Housing Tax Credits may be difficult to access without zoning and entitlements already in place. Small changes to development code dimensional requirements could help make existing zoning districts more attractive, helping developers avoid pursuing the longer process to pursue Planned Unit Development zoning just to make modular and smaller-lot entry-level homes feasible. In many areas, zoning designations do not match the types of housing needed, which can also trigger a lengthy and costly rezoning process. Other ideas noted by focus group participants included "right-sizing" parking requirements, especially for projects like permanent supportive housing (PSH), where vehicle ownership, and thus parking demand, may be limited.

PERMITTING AND REVIEW PROCESSES

Permitting processes that require neighborhood engagement can create more difficult, longer, and adversarial processes. Opportunities for expedited interdepartmental review can help address the cost and risk associated with longer timelines. More "by right" housing options in local code can help developers avoid some permitting and review processes while facing less risk in pursuing the remaining processes.

Infrastructure Limitations

ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION

Development in portions of Adams County that are otherwise well-positioned with entitlements and other infrastructure may face challenges securing service commitments from electricity providers. Increased building and vehicle electrification from existing customers, along with demand from new users and uses through infill and other development, can lead to multiyear delays or requests to contribute to on- and off-site improvements to address infrastructure backlogs and substation capacity. Engagement participants noted that the lack of transparency into Xcel's infrastructure and electricity demand planning can make coordination and partnership difficult, even where local governments and others are willing to help with capital investments and local planning coordination. Focus group participants noted potential opportunities to coordinate in addressing this barrier with Xcel and the Public Utilities Commission.

WATER AND SEWER

Central water and sewer service are prerequisites for many of the housing types anticipated to meet Adams County's housing needs. At a minimum, developing such housing requires expensive tap fees to pay for permitting, service line connections, and up-front system

access charges associated with past investments, including treatment facilities, lines, and securing a water supply. Developers may also need to invest in off-site extensions or other infrastructure improvements to bring service to their site. Because these services may be provided by special or metropolitan districts, in addition to municipally controlled systems, the size and structure of tap fees and user charges vary throughout the county. The ability of these systems to expand to meet additional demand may also vary. Opportunities for fee waivers to help reduce costs and meet local housing needs may be difficult when a local government does not maintain the water or sewer system. Investments to provide water and sewer service do not extend throughout the county and may make the provision of higher-intensity housing types impractical where unavailable.

Community Sentiment

LOCAL PUSHBACK

Local opposition can be a challenging barrier to housing proposals. Focus group participants noted examples of considerable neighborhood pushback on affordable housing opportunities. As noted above, more "by right" housing options can help developers deliver more housing. Participants also noted that if community voices participate earlier in planning and zoning decisions before a new housing proposal is up for consideration it can help mitigate costs for extra reviews, redesigns, and approval processes that can add time, cost, and uncertainty.

HOUSING PREFERENCES

As identified through the robust community engagement summarized in Chapter 2, county residents are interested in more housing options. This sentiment aligns with the direction noted in the Advancing Adams Comprehensive Plan to address housing diversity. Some participants expressed issues with greater density and that many recent projects involved large-scale apartment buildings. Views across the engagement opportunities expressed more openness to a variety of options beyond single-unit homes, including townhomes, senior housing, small-scale apartments or condos, ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes.

9. Current and Projected Housing Need

This chapter examines both current and future housing needs over the next 10 years, considering where gaps exist today and where needs are expected to grow. Consistent with the state guidance on housing needs assessments, this chapter presents estimates of current housing needs (catch-up) and future housing needs (keep-up). Housing need estimates describe need by income level and tenure (owner/renter). The estimates address needs across housing types for various household types, ranging from extremely low-income and vulnerable populations through middle- and upper-income households.

The analysis provides a breakdown of:

- **Underproduction/Current Need.** Underproduction occurs when too few housing units are built to meet demand, leading to scarcity, higher prices, and greater cost burden, especially for low-income households. Subsequent low vacancy rates can limit the ability of households to find suitable and accessible housing options.
- **Future Need.** This describes the total housing units needed to accommodate the expected population by 2050 (distributed in 10-year scaled estimates to 2036).

Analysis Framework

DRCOG Regional Housing Need Assessment

Adams County participated in DRCOG's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), which includes housing need estimates for the region and Adams County specific estimates. Under state statute, any local housing needs assessment in an area covered by a regional assessment must acknowledge the local housing need estimate or allocation to their locality.

This local housing needs assessment aligns with the DRCOG methodology to help further coordination and collaboration among area governments that also participated in the RHNA. Adams County exists as part of a regional housing market and economy, relying on the actions of other local governments alongside their own efforts to address overall housing need together.

The DRCOG RHNA estimates regional housing need through 2050, then identifies the need for a 10-year period through 2032, and distributes the identified need down through submarkets to local governments based on current and future jobs, population, and transit access. To create the state required 10-year housing needs estimate this assessment scales the housing need to 2036, beyond DRCOG's initial 2032 estimate, but in line with its 2050 estimate.

Household and Housing Distribution by Income:

- Distribution based on regional income proportions gathered from the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)
- Individual household income and housing cost data also derived from PUMS

Current Need (Catch Up):

- Comparing household headship rates by age from 2000 to the current population age distribution to identify missing households
- Incorporates data on homelessness from MDHI's State of Homelessness Report
- Units needed to achieve a more flexible housing market at a target ratio of 1.072 housing units per household.

Future Need (Keep Up):

- Incorporates the latest available county and regional population and employment forecasts from the State Demography Office (Vintage 2023) as well as the DRCOG's 2025 Small-Area Forecast generated in line with the state forecasts

More technical details on assessing housing needs is available in the 2024 technical methodology. The housing need estimates obtained from DRCOG are now based on more recent small-area forecast and State Demography Office projections as noted above.

Current Need (Catch Up)

According to the DRCOG regional housing need assessment, Exhibit 54 below shows that an estimated 9,912 housing units are needed to accommodate current housing needs in Adams County, with 1,581 of those in unincorporated areas. In both areas, the largest share of need (95 percent) is needed for households with incomes of 80 percent of AMI or less. Fewer units are needed for those with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of AMI.

Exhibit 54. Underproduction/Current Need (2022 base year)

INCOME CATEGORY	ADAMS COUNTY		UNINCORPORATED AREA	
	COUNT	SHARE	COUNT	SHARE
0-50%	7,622	77%	1,216	77%
50-80%	1,796	18%	286	18%
80-100%	319	3%	51	3%
100-120%	174	2%	28	2%
>120%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	**9,912**	**100%**	**1,581**	**100%**

Source: DRCOG RHNA

Projected Housing Need (Keep Up)

As shown in Exhibit 55 below, an estimated 37,161 new housing units will be needed in Adams County by 2036 to accommodate projected population and household growth. Within unincorporated areas, approximately 8,435 new housing units will be required over the same period. The majority of this projected need (62 percent) is for households earning 80 percent of AMI or less, which generally includes low- and very low-income households. About 9 percent of the need is for households earning 80 to 100 percent of AMI, 6 percent for those earning 100 to 120 percent of AMI, and 22 percent for households earning 120 percent of AMI or more.

In the next 10-year period, Adams County would need to see roughly 3,716 new housing units built annually to keep up with the need expected by 2036. In unincorporated Adams County, approximately 844 new housing units are needed annually over the next 10 years to keep up with the need.

This distribution suggests that future housing development efforts should prioritize the creation of units affordable to lower-income households to better meet the county's evolving housing needs and support an inclusive, sustainable community.

Exhibit 55. Projected Housing Need by 2036

INCOME CATEGORY	ADAMS COUNTY		UNINCORPORATED AREA	
	COUNT	SHARE	COUNT	SHARE
0-50%	19,624	53%	4,454	53%
50-80%	3,333	9%	757	9%

80-100%	3,478	9%	789	9%
100-120%	2,368	6%	537	6%
>120%	8,359	22%	1,897	22%
Total	**37,161**	**100%**	**8,435**	**100%**

Source: DRCOG RHNA

Projected Housing Need by AMI and Tenure

Exhibit 56 below shows the breakdown of projected housing need by tenure for both geographies. Of the 37,161 housing units needed in Adams County, 55 percent are needed for rental units, while 45 percent are needed for owner-occupied housing units. Similarly, in unincorporated areas, of the 8,435 units needed, 55 percent are needed for rental units while 45 percent are needed for owner-occupied housing units.

Exhibit 56. Projected Housing Need by AMI and Tenure by 2026, Adams County and Unincorporated Area

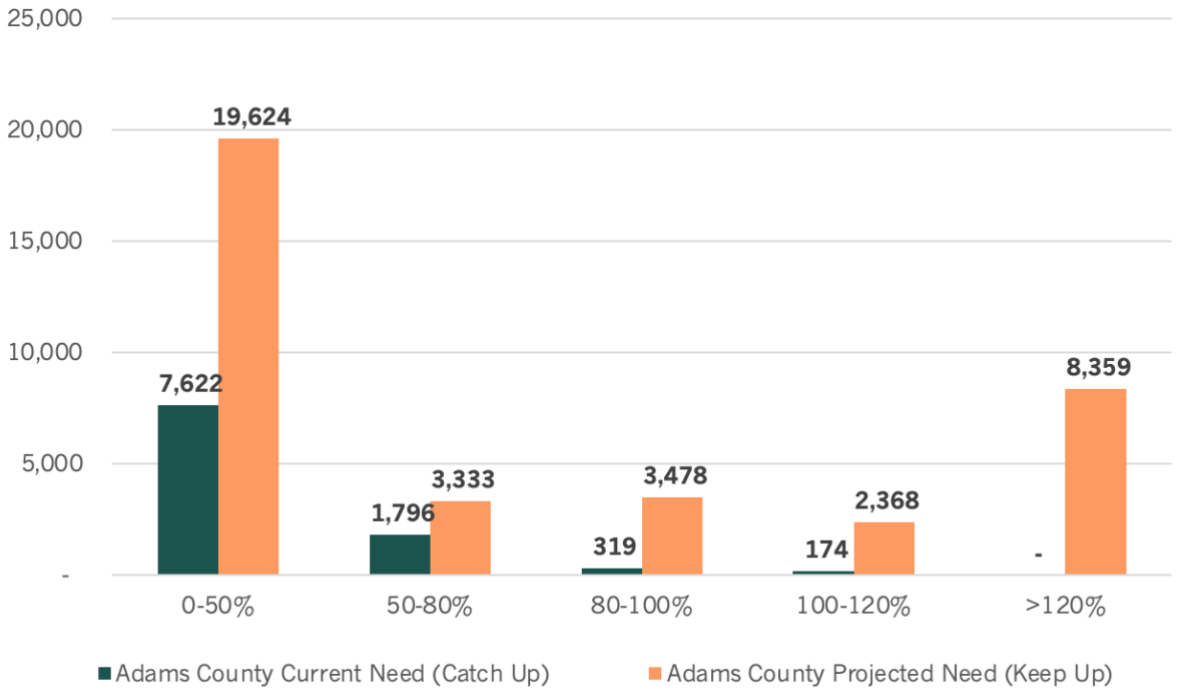
INCOME CATEGORY	ADAMS COUNTY		UNINCORPORATED AREA	
	RENTER	OWNER	RENTER	OWNER
0-50%	14,683	4,941	3,333	1,122
50-80%	1,841	1,492	418	339
80-100%	1,520	1,958	345	444
100-120%	853	1,515	194	344
>120%	1,698	6,660	385	1,512
Total	**20,595**	**16,566**	**4,675**	**3,760**

Source: DRCOG RHNA

Summary of Total Current Need and Projected Need

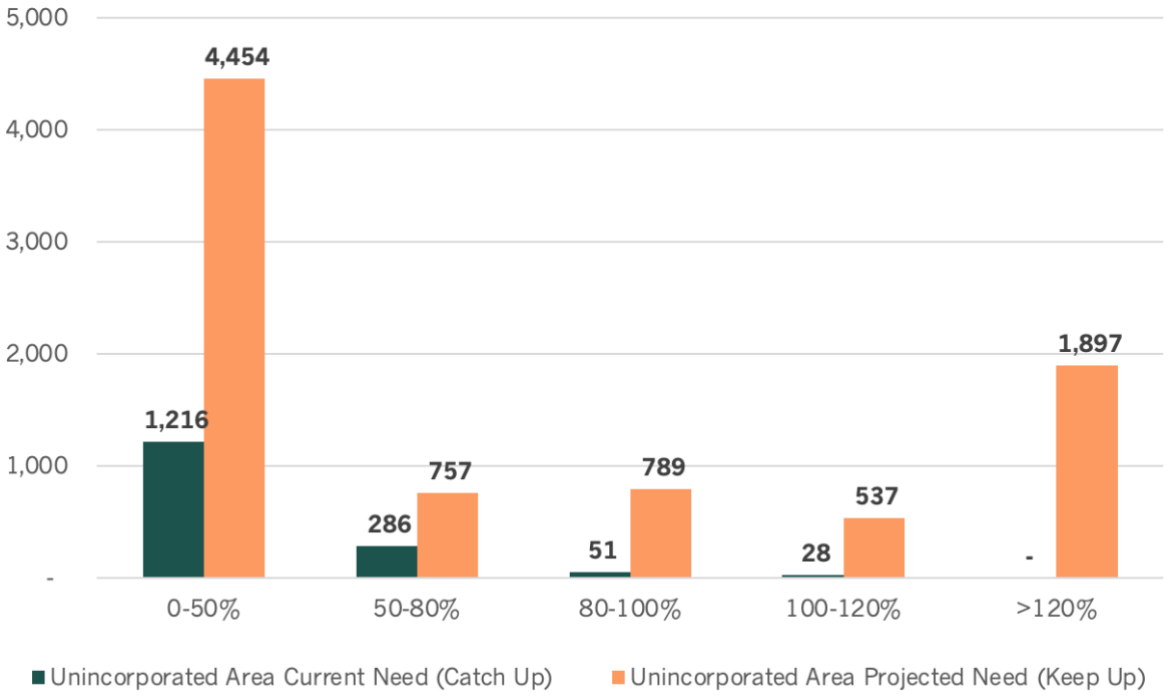
The exhibits below, provide a combine total of the current and projected housing need for Adams County and unincorporated areas by AMI levels.

Exhibit 57. Adams County Combined Current Need and Projected Need



Source: DRCOG RHNA

Exhibit 58. Unincorporated Area Combined Current Need and Projected Need



Source: DRCOG RHNA

Development in the Pipeline

The 2025 development pipeline for approved and preliminary approval status of residential projects in unincorporated areas was predominantly market-rate, single-unit homes. Of the area's 905 units in the pipeline, more than 780 were detached single-unit homes, few multi-unit structures.

Only one project, the Maiker Boyers, will create additional income-restricted multi-unit housing with 117 affordable rental units. This development was made possible through the County's use of pandemic recovery funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to purchase the land, enabling Maiker Housing Partners to begin preliminary development planning to construct this housing at a reduced cost.

These development trends indicate that while unincorporated areas can sustain development at about 900 units per year, the housing product type will need to change in order to build more rental housing units, especially below average AMI.

One can assume that most single-unit ownership units will serve households earning 100 percent or more of AMI. The private market will likely continue meeting the housing needs of these moderate- to higher-income households. However, it is unlikely that the private market will produce ownership or rental units affordable to households earning 80 percent of AMI or less.

Given the substantial housing need within this lower-income range, the County will need to collaborate with nonprofit housing developers and pursue innovative land use strategies to help fill this gap and expand the supply of affordable housing at lower AMI levels.

Exhibit 59. Development in the Pipeline, Unincorporated Area (2025)

Project Name	Total Units	Type	Market Type
Ridgeview Estates	9	Single-unit	Market Rate
Oak Park Drive Estates	3	Single-unit	Market Rate
Hardin Subdivision	34	Single-unit	Market Rate
Wolf Creek Run West, Filing 2A	108	Single-unit	Market Rate
Oak Ridge	70	Single-unit	Market Rate
64th and Lowell	81	Single-unit	Market Rate
Wolf Creek Run West Filing 3	40	Single-unit	Market Rate
Tapia	3	Single-unit	Market Rate
Grove Street Subdivision	8	Single-unit	Market Rate
Wolf Creek Run West, Filing 2B	180	Single-unit	Market Rate
Grassland at Comanche, Filing 5	19	Single-unit	Market Rate
Grasslands at Comanche Filing 6	15	Single-unit	Market Rate
Welby Junction	218	Single-unit	Market Rate
Maiker Boyers	117	Multi-unit	Affordable
Total	**905**	**-**	**-**

Source: Adams County Permitting Department

10. Policy Programs and Recommendations

An HNA identifies housing need and displacement risk. It is not a plan with implementation steps or specific actions. However, it can provide information on how Adams County can respond and shape the Balanced Housing Plan. While not detailed, implementable recommendations, the information below highlights the planning context and potential directions the county can consider.

Policy Context

As a statutory county in the State of Colorado, Adams County has well-defined roles and responsibilities to fulfill with its general fund revenues. Initiatives pursued by area home rule municipalities may not be possible for the County unless supported through outside funding or the development of alternative revenue sources. Outside funding, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) entitlement community block grant formula funds, may offer only a narrow range of eligible activities. In the case of these formula funds, the County's share has remained steady in nominal terms, which, when adjusted for real purchasing power, reflects a decline in funding while housing need has increased. As a result, existing programs and commitments through the County's consolidated plan leave little room for the creation of new programs and initiatives.

For additional context:

- Adams County land use policy only governs unincorporated areas. Incorporated cities and towns govern their territory with their own zoning and subdivision codes.
- Urban-scale services and infrastructure needed for housing development at a greater intensity or scale may be better supplied by incorporated cities and towns. Special utility and metro districts may be able to supply services that the county cannot, though that may require additional partnership and negotiation to secure access to existing capacity or fund improvements to create new capacity.
- Adams County and other partners have sought dedicated funding to help create more housing opportunities. Voters rejected 2024 Ballot Issue 1A for a 0.15% sales tax increase. The County has been researching the potential for a commercial impact fee and other linkage fees that could generate dedicated funding to help address housing needs.

Recommended Considerations

Adams County has made a commitment to act under the state's Strong Communities grant program. The county has discussed and curated a list of potential actions from those

identified in by the state's Strong Communities program for consideration in the completion of its Balanced Housing Plan update. These Strong Communities actions are called out below alongside other recommended considerations.

Financing and Incentives

- **Federal and state funding.** Adams County can support area housing authorities as they compete for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and opportunities through the State Affordable Housing Fund.
- **Expedited permitting.** Jurisdictions that have made a commitment under Proposition 123 (State Affordable Housing Fund) to increase affordable housing must also provide a path for expedited approval of affordable housing. Faster approvals can lower carrying costs and decrease uncertainty for developers. This incentive may require additional staff capacity and coordination.
- **Strong Communities item (Land donation, acquisition, banking, or land trust programs).** Adams County has helped support affordable housing projects through strategic land purchases using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. With the end of that funding stream, the county may still be able to support affordable housing when decommissioning county buildings or repositioning county-held land, such as the former Family Services Building.
- **Strong Communities item—Reduced fees.** Reduced affordable housing development fees (e.g. building permit fees, planning review fees) lowered from existing fee/deposit schedules can reduce upfront costs for affordable housing development.
- **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).** Adams County pursued and achieved state certification as an ADU Supportive Jurisdiction to be eligible for funding under the state's ADU grant program. Grant recipients can use these funds to help in a variety of ways, including offsetting costs related to creating pre-approved ADU plans, providing technical assistance to those creating ADUs, and providing assistance with ADU-associated fees or other required costs.

Preservation and Management

- **Preserving Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing.** Adams County's affordable housing commitment under Proposition 123 was based on a percentage increase in affordable housing, much of which was NOAH. This housing may be at risk of increased rents or prices under real estate market trends. Where these units become unaffordable, it can deepen the area's housing need even as new units are constructed.
- **Maintaining existing homes.** Minor home repair programs through the county's Community Development Block Grant funding or through programs like that through Brothers Redevelopment allow for households of limited means to continue to meet their housing needs.

Land Use and Zoning Incentives, Mandates, and Reforms

- **Strong Communities item—Density bonuses.** Allowing greater densities for projects providing affordable housing can serve as an incentive without direct funding from a local government. Foregone revenue from units held at more affordable prices or rents can be recouped through allowances for more units overall. This incentive may require additional staff capacity to oversee deed restrictions or other compliance mechanisms.
- **Strong Communities item—Minimum lot size requirements.** Development code changes to reduce minimum lot size requirements can encourage development of small lot homes and increase options for lower-cost housing development. (Adams County is currently conducting a Development Standards Overhaul that will address code-related topics)
- **Strong Communities item—Multifamily (multi-unit) housing options.** Development code changes that permit a range of medium-density housing options (e.g. duplexes and triplexes) or other appropriate multi-unit housing options as a use by right in more zoning districts may help builders meet a wider variety of housing needs.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- **Adams County cities and towns.** The county's cities and towns have their own housing needs and commitments. However, their shared success in meeting housing needs benefits the broader Adams County housing market. The county and these municipalities may continue to find opportunities for strategic partnerships.
- **Utility districts.** These districts are in charge of many development and user fees. Where the county can find ways to encourage these districts to offer reduced fees for affordable housing, it may be able to make more projects feasible.
- **School districts.** Adams County's many school districts are major landowners. They may be struggling with workforce housing needs that show up in the county's overall housing needs. Strategic partnerships may help leverage unneeded land to help meet housing needs.
- **Other partnerships.** Other partnerships could include identifying opportunities to work with more nonprofit and mission-driven developers to help meet local housing needs.

Housing Programs

- **Rental assistance and displacement protection programs.** Adams County has a number of existing programs that provide direct assistance to help individual households meet their housing needs. For more details, please refer to Chapter 8. As noted in the policy context above, funding constraints may challenge the ability of these programs to scale to help meet Adams County's housing needs. The county's efforts to secure additional dedicated funding may help scale and supplement housing assistance programs while furthering other housing actions.

- **Downpayment assistance.** Adams County can continue to investigate options to help use different funding sources to support potential homebuyers.