



DISTRICT PLAN

Adams County, Colorado and the City of Brighton, Colorado

PLAN SUMMARY | APRIL 2016

Adams County and the City of Brighton partnered to draft the District Plan to study the feasibility of preserving farmland in southern Brighton that remains valuable for food production, while allowing for a range of development opportunities that consider the most efficient and sustainable use of the land.

This plan helps decision-makers guide investment in the area for compatible residential, commercial, and industrial development, as well as farmland conservation, and local food and agritourism promotion.

DISTRICT VISION

The District has been in a state of transition since E-470 opened in 2003, making the area more accessible and developable, threatening its farming heritage, the local food economy, and the buffer that farmland provides between Brighton and the Denver region.

Although some development is desirable, thoughtful and proactive coordination are necessary to ensure the South Platte River's prime farmland will remain a southern gateway to Brighton, balancing a mix of neighborhoods with small and medium-sized farms. Rural uses, such as farming, food processing, and clustered housing on 1-2 acre lots, will be focused in the County. Urban uses, such as multifamily, mixed use, and neighborhood commercial developments, will be encouraged in the City.

The Fulton Ditch trail network will tie destinations together – farm stands, farm-to-table restaurants, pick-your-own farms, a historic farm and special events venue, bed and breakfasts, working lands, and food storage and processing facilities – from the South Platte River to Barr Lake. Properly developed and preserved, the District will retain its status as a hub of local foods, enhance the local food economy, become a tourist destination for food connoisseurs, promoting the distinctive image of a freestanding community that grows a significant portion of the region's produce.



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Office of Long Range
Strategic Planning
www.adcogov.org
720-523-6863



City of Brighton
Community
Development
www.brightonco.gov
303-655-2000

To view the entire plan, please visit

www.adcogov.org/districtplan

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

City and County staff and their consultants held five neighborhood meetings in five months to present area strengths and weaknesses, a market study about the local food economy, water rights information, and case studies. These meetings allowed concerned citizens to voice their preferences for farmland conservation and various development options.

Throughout the process, study sessions with City and County Planning Commissioners, Brighton City Council Members, and the Board of County Commissioners offered additional insight into community values. This plan considers the aspirations of everyone who participated and attempts to balance the livelihoods of all who are affected, by encouraging a thoughtful transition of the area.



OUTREACH

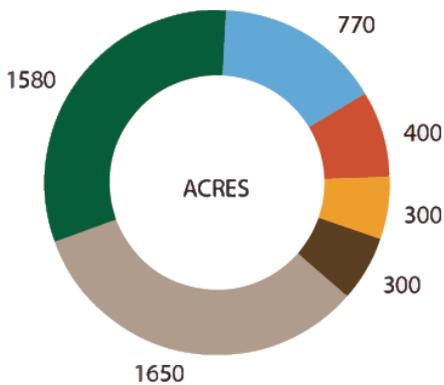
- Sent 1600 postcards to properties in and near the area on two separate occasions
- Newspaper ads
- Press releases
- Posters placed in the community
- Posting on DistrictPlan.org and Brighton's websites, YouTube and city channels
- Insert into Brighton's Utility bills
- Special Spanish Speaking outreach including dual translation posters and postcards, community outreach by Hispanidad, dual translation at neighborhood and public hearing meetings, Spanish radio ads

LAND DEVELOPMENT MARKET

A market assessment prepared for the Be Brighton Comprehensive Plan Update estimated future demand for residential and non-residential uses. The pie chart below represents the existing commitments and constraints within the 5,000-acre study area. Nearly two-fifths of the study area is already annexed and entitled by the City of Brighton (1,950 acres). Most of the market demand for residential and commercial uses will be accommodated in these already annexed and entitled areas, which will build out over the next 30 years.

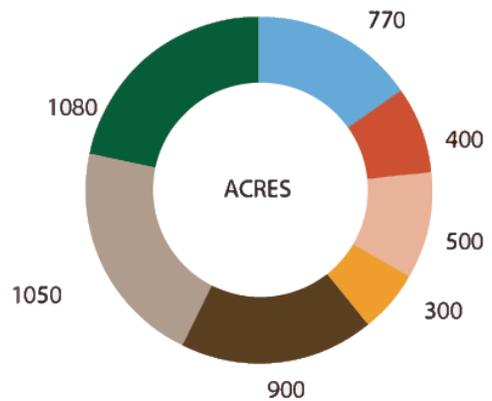
The County and City open space programs have funding capacity to add 250 acres or more each decade to the 400 acres already conserved. By 2035, nearly 20% of the study area could be designated open space / farmland. This leaves much of the unconstrained, unprotected land for future development, which may not experience direct development pressures for several decades; however County and City preservation efforts will create a market for these lands.

EXISTING COMMITMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS



- Floodplain
- Open Space
- Rural Development
- Currently Annexed + Entitled, Built
- Currently Annexed + Entitled, Unbuilt
- Remaining Unconstrained, Unincorporated Area

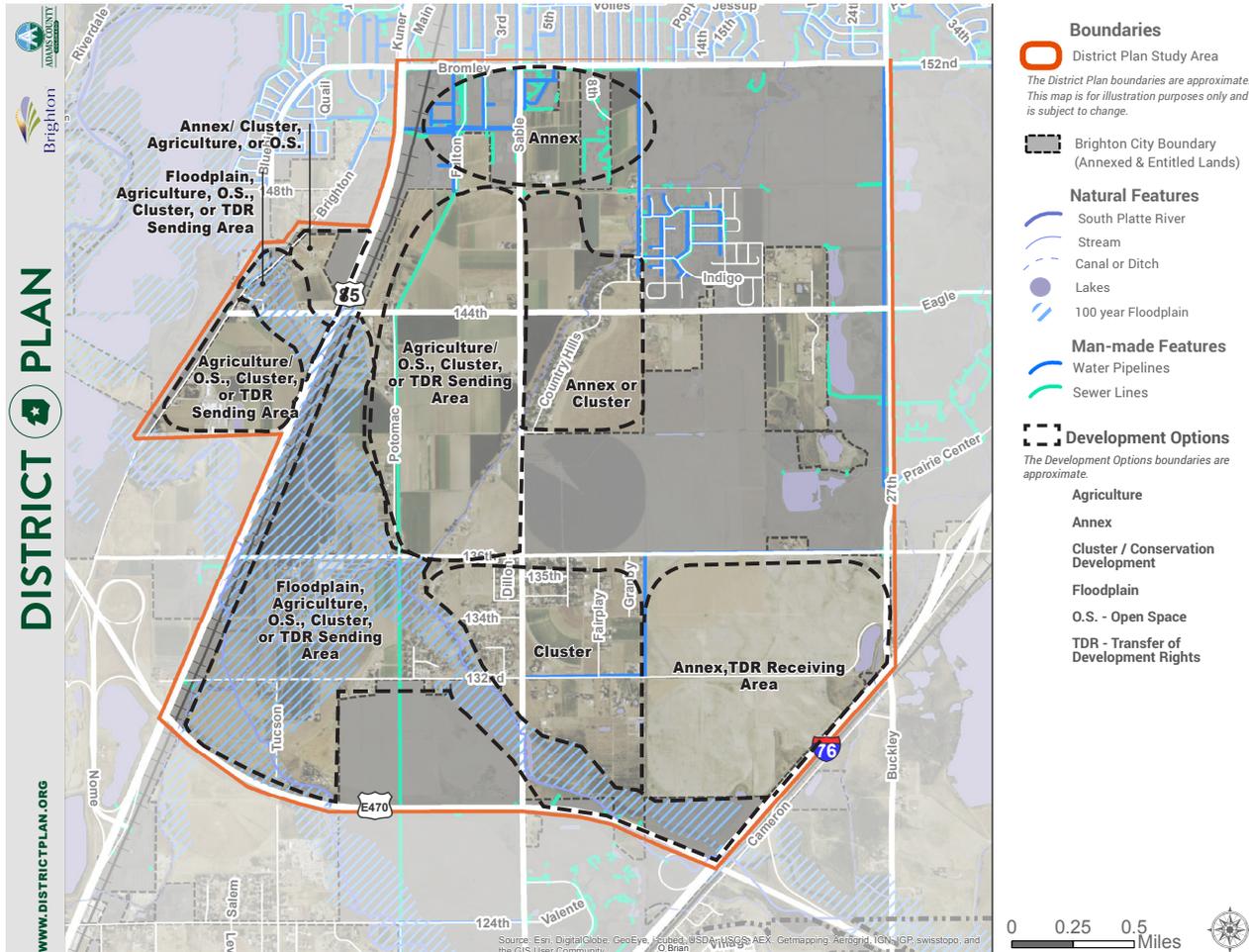
FUTURE DEMAND (2035)



- Floodplain
- Open Space in 2015
- Open Space in 2035
- Rural Development
- Currently Annexed + Entitled, Built (2015-2035)
- Currently Annexed + Entitled, Unbuilt
- Remaining Unconstrained, Unincorporated Area

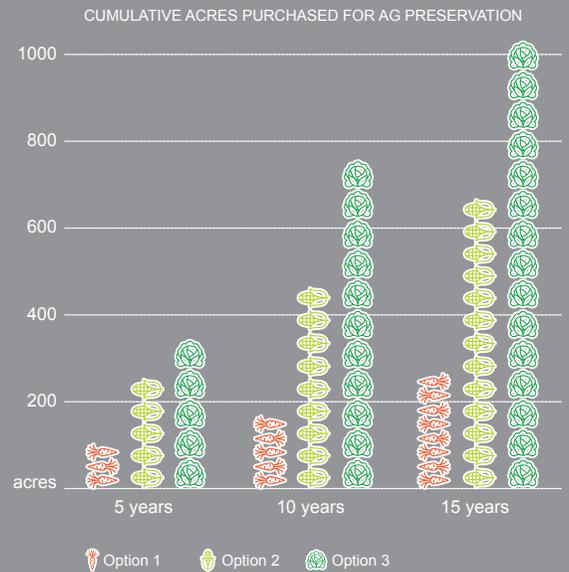
EXPANDING LANDOWNER OPTIONS

The Landowner Options Map outlines the conservation and development options most likely to be appropriate for each unincorporated area due to infrastructure availability, proximity to the City of Brighton boundary, and existing environmental constraints such as the 100-year floodplain. These are in addition to rural residential and agricultural uses presently available through current County zoning, with the intent of broadening flexibility for landowners to make the highest and best use of their land within the bounds of the public health, safety, and welfare. Complimenting each of these five options is an invigorated local food system designed to increase the profitability of farm properties and enhance our quality of life. Each of these options and potential uses is further described in Chapter 3, which includes a Future Land Use Map and use table.



AGRICULTURAL LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

This graphic provides an estimate of how many acres including water shares could be purchased applying fee-simple acquisition within the City and County funding possibilities. Land protection efforts in the District will be guided by the vision and practical realities outlined in the District Plan. In the interim, its success will be dependent on the willingness of landowners who wish to keep some or all of their land in agriculture or by selling or donating land rights to protect their property.



KEY SUPPORT SYSTEMS: LAND MANAGEMENT & GROWING A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

The broader scope of Adams County and Brighton’s proposed land preservation efforts could need supportive infrastructure and examination of new management approaches. For the short term, the Agricultural Land Preservation Sub-Committee, as re-imagined, would help support many plan action items, as it is well-positioned to make policy recommendations for next steps. Over time the committee would advise County and City officials as they devise a long-term organizational structure. Initially the sub-committee could be formalized and recognized by both Adams County and Brighton, members of the committee would be appointed by both the County Commission and the City Council, and funded by both entities.

The preservation of farmland would also benefit from a connection to consumers who will purchase products from local farmers and local food businesses, which could help promote agritourism.

A full-time equivalent position dedicated to developing the programs and marketing plan necessary to support building a more robust local food system may strengthen the recommended outcomes of this plan. Funding for marketing and programming efforts may be derived from existing department budgets and various grants. Larger marketing initiatives may be funded through existing lodging tax funds. This position may be funded for a two-year evaluation period, with the goal the position will be self-sustained with grant funding thereafter, and would work with the revamped Agricultural Land Preservation Sub-Committee.



PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS/ NEXT STEPS:

Both Adams County and Brighton are committed to the implementation of the District Plan. In order to cultivate a local food system, preserve prime agricultural lands in the District Area, and increase the likelihood of agritourism development, the following are recommended, but not limited to, appropriate next steps in the process:

1. Adams County and Brighton should commit to annually and jointly applying for a minimum of \$1M of competitive Adams County Open Space Grant Funds, and applying 250K each of their Open Space share-back funding for preserving agricultural lands within the District. Grant funds are derived from a combination of existing Open Space sales tax, matching GOCO grant funds, and other funding sources which may be available.¹
2. Adams County and Brighton will develop an evaluation matrix² for agricultural land preservation opportunities to include:
 - Prioritize lands that inherently help maintain agricultural operations and wildlife habitat.
 - Define goals around water resources to sustain agricultural production and address future municipal need.
 - Focus on designated prime agricultural lands that are contiguous to optimize farming efficiencies.
 - Where possible, focus on existing view sheds.
 - Assess existing and future transportation constraints.
3. Explore the creation a revolving fund to ensure a portion of property tax funds from the District area are allocated for reinvestment and future land acquisition of strategically located land that would enhance agricultural preservation and help to define the character of development as outlined in this plan. Seek out other funding opportunities and financing to implement and sustain the District Plan’s recommendations.
4. Adams County and Brighton should jointly enhance the Ag-Land Preservation sub-committee and appoint key members.
5. As part of the plan, a new, full-time equivalent employee dedicated to local food system programming and marketing efforts would be beneficial. This position could be funded equally by Adams County and Brighton for a minimum of two years, with evaluation thereafter, with the goal of the position to be self-sustaining via grant funds thereafter.
6. Contemplate the release of a request for proposals to meet the objectives of the District Plan by the development community.
7. Amend Adams County and City of Brighton regulations and standards to help implement the Local District Plan in regards to transfer of development rights (TDR), and other zoning and design related amendments.
8. Adams County and the City of Brighton will explore other opportunities to work together to implement the District Plan’s strategies, actions and recommendations.
9. Pursue opportunities in which historic preservation grants and tax credits might help to rehabilitate historic farm properties.

¹ Actual grant funding request may vary year over year depending upon available lands for fee-simple acquisition in terms of available acreages. Grant applications will be evaluated annually by the Open Space Board and the Board of County Commissioners, and others. All land purchases are subject to annual appropriation procedures.

² See discussion of additional, potential land conservation criteria in Chapter 3 of the Plan.