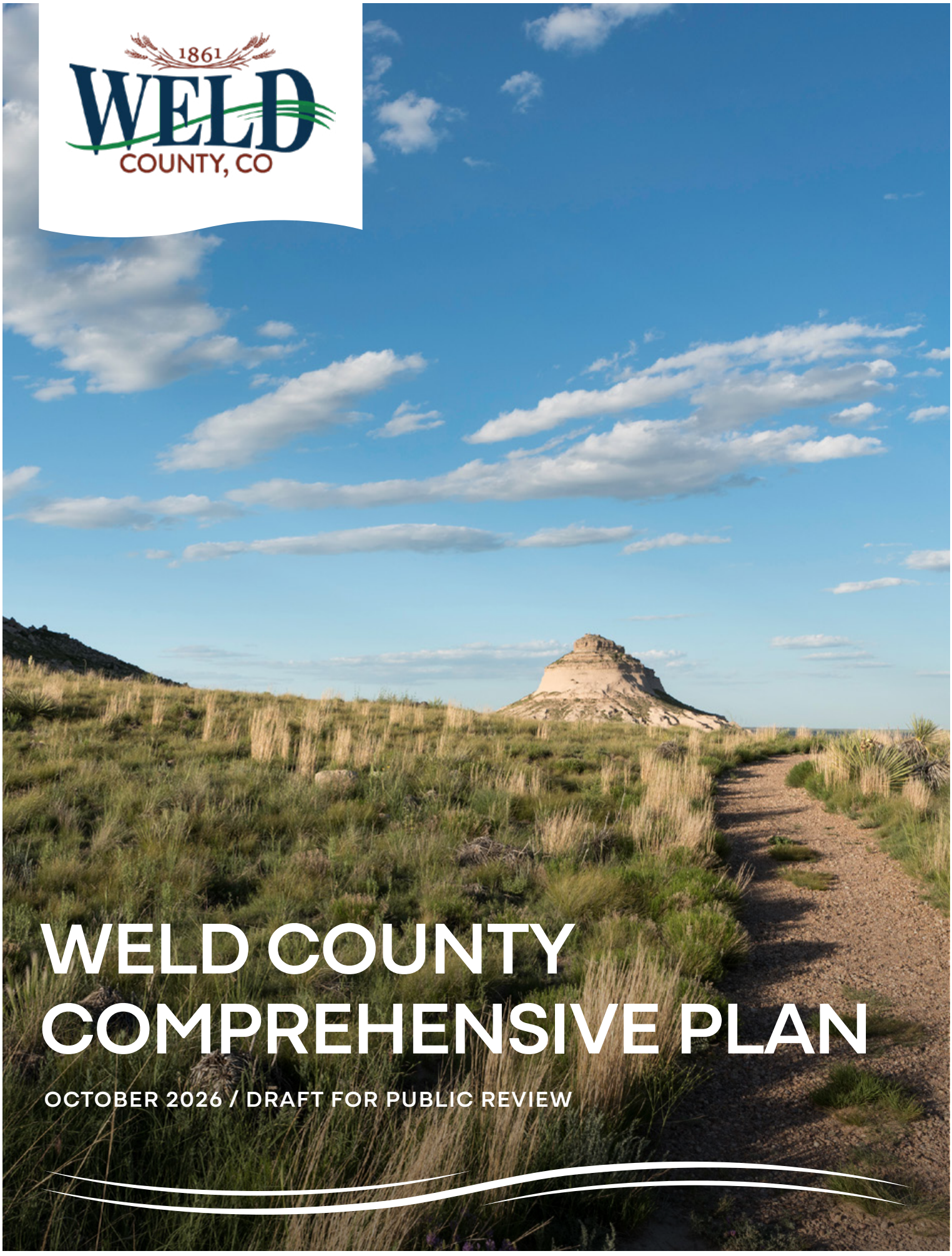


WELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

OCTOBER 2026 / DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Acknowledgments

The Weld County Comprehensive Plan reflects the time, insight, and commitment of the many individuals and organizations who contributed throughout the planning process. County leadership, staff, community members, municipalities, partner agencies, and stakeholders shared their knowledge and perspectives to help shape a Plan grounded in Weld County's diverse communities, landscapes, industries, and agricultural heritage. Weld County extends its sincere appreciation to everyone who participated and helped establish a shared direction for the County's future.

A Special Thank You

To the hundreds of Weld County community members, leaders, and organizations that participated in creating this Plan: Your invaluable feedback has been the foundation of this journey. Your insights and contributions directly shaped the vision and goals. This is more than just a Plan; it is a reflection of your aspirations for Weld County's future.

Thank you for your dedication, support, and involvement.

Board of County Commissioners

Scott James, Chair
Jason Maxey, Pro-Tem
Perry Buck
Lynette Peppler
Kevin Ross

Weld County Planning Commission

Michael Wailes, Chair
Michael Palizzi, Vice Chair
Calven Goza
Virginia Guderjahn
Hunter Hoshiko
Monica Ramirez
Cole Ritchey
Wendy Tucker
Michael Biwer

Community Community Working Group

Kelsey Bruxvoort
Julie Cozad
Stan Everitt
Bill Garcia
Audrey Herbison
Fred Otis
Tim Naylor
Adrienne Sandoval

Weld County Staff

Jim Flesher
David Eisenbraun
Maxwell Nader
Angela Snyder
Aimee Freeland

Design Workshop
Bohannan Huston
ECO northwest



Contents

Acknowledgments.....03

1. Introduction 07

What is a Comprehensive Plan?.....08

Plan Organization.....10

2. Vision and Values Framework 15

Vision.....16

Core Values.....17

Planning Areas.....19

Community Engagement.....20

What We Heard.....22

3. Weld County Today 27

Geographic Context.....28

Historic Context.....30

Existing Conditions.....31

Tourism and Recreation.....37

Key Trends and Drivers.....38

Mapping Stability and Change.....41

4. Future Land Use 49

Future Land Use.....51

Future Land Use Classifications.....54

Scenario Alternatives and Trade-offs.....62

Planning Area 1:Growth Opportunity Area.....66

Planning Area 2: Productive Agricultural Landscapes.....69

Planning Area 3: Rangeland and Rural Landscape....71
Hubs....72
Corridors....73
Overlays....76
Priority Development Areas (PDAs)....78

5. Countywide Goals and Objectives 85

Agriculture and Heritage Element (AH)....86
Land Use and Growth Management Element (LU)....88
Economic Development Element (E)....92
Transportation Infrastructure Element (TI)....94
Water Element (W)....97

6. Planning Area Specific Goals and Objectives 101

Planning Area 1: Growth Opportunity Area....102
Planning Area 2: Productive Agricultural Landscapes....105
Planning Area 3: Rangeland and Rural Landscapes....109

7. A Plan for Action 113

Plan Maintenance....114

8. Glossary of Terms 121

1



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Weld County is experiencing both growth pressures along Colorado's Front Range and economic shifts while remaining one of the most productive agricultural regions in the nation. Growth along the Interstate 25 corridor and nearby expanding municipalities has put pressure on housing supply, roadways, infrastructure, and services. At the same time, agriculture, energy production, manufacturing, and emerging industries have continued to shape Weld County's economy, identity, and rural landscapes.

The Comprehensive Plan is an opportunity to proactively identify strategies for how Weld County will update economic opportunities and the preservation of working lands, rural character, and natural resources over the next 10 to 20 years. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to help Weld County navigate these issues by providing a policy framework for evaluating future growth and investment decisions. These interconnected policies related to land use, infrastructure, transportation, and economic development identify a coordinated approach to ensure the County remains resilient, productive, and fiscally responsible for future generations.

A Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for future decision-making based on technical analysis, public engagement, adopted policy, and existing conditions data. Because economic conditions, population trends, infrastructure needs, and environmental factors can change, the Plan is designed to evolve with the County and should be revisited periodically.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is a long-range document that guides future growth, land use, infrastructure investment, and community development. It establishes a County's vision and priorities and identifies the policies and the objectives that shape decisions about new development, natural resources, utilities, transportation, and public services.

In Colorado, state law authorizes counties to adopt Plans that guide future land use and development. These Plans provide the foundation for zoning, capital improvement programming, intergovernmental coordination, and development review. Comprehensive Plans help communities make informed, coordinated decisions over time. In Weld County, the Comprehensive Plan ("Plan") serves as the primary long-range policy document for the County's unincorporated areas.

A Comprehensive Plan is:

- A guide for the County's future growth, preservation, and development.
- A long-range tool for policy decision-making, public investment, financing, and action.
- A reflection of the community's vision and goals.
- Required by State Statute.

A Comprehensive Plan is not:

- Zoning.
- A set of land use code standards.
- A detailed budget document.
- Specific regulations, requirements or ordinances.



Riparian landscapes shape Weld County's natural character

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Using the Plan

This Plan is intended to serve as a long-range guiding document for Weld County through policy recommendations and planning considerations. The Weld County Comprehensive Plan aims to:

- Provide consistency and predictability while allowing flexibility to respond to changing conditions, recognizing that technologies, regulations, funding availability, and community priorities may change over time.
- Guide future development proposals, zoning updates, investments, intergovernmental coordination, and long-range policy setting.
- Provide a framework for County staff, elected officials, residents, municipalities, property owners, developers, and partner agencies to evaluate decisions and competing priorities.
- Strengthen coordination across County departments and community partners for policy implementation.

This Plan is a Guide to:

- Reflect community vision and values
- Prioritize infrastructure and growth areas
- Balance development with agriculture
- Protect property rights while planning for sustainable growth



State Compliance and DOLA Planning Requirements

The Weld County Comprehensive Plan must align with State of Colorado regulations and statutes which provide guidance on plan elements and content. More specifically, it must be compliant with new mandates under SB24-174 which require strategic growth and water supply elements in Comprehensive Plans.

DOLA, the Department of Local Affairs, reviews elements for minimum statutory compliance in order to ensure local governments meet the state's standards.

Under SB24-174, Colorado Comprehensive Plans must include a Strategic Growth Element and a Water Supply Element. The Strategic Growth Element identifies policies and tools to guide future development, reduce sprawl, and evaluate opportunities for housing on vacant or underutilized land. The Water Supply Element addresses the water supplies and infrastructure needed to support future growth, as well as establishes policies for water conservation in coordination with local water providers. Together, these elements help ensure that future development is supported by adequate infrastructure and informed by long-term land use and resource planning.

Plan Organization

Plan Structure

The Weld County Comprehensive Plan establishes the County's long-range planning framework and policy direction. Chapters build on each other to provide context, technical analysis, community priorities, and implementation guidance.

The Plan begins with an introductory chapter that describes the planning process, and provides an overview of the Plan.

Chapter 2 introduces the Vision and Values Framework, which summarizes major core values identified through public engagement, stakeholder coordination, and community discussions.

Chapter 3 summarizes existing conditions across Weld County. These sections examine demographic trends, economic conditions, housing patterns, transportation systems, land use, agricultural resources, environmental systems, infrastructure needs, and growth trends affecting the County today.

Chapter 4 establishes the County's long-term land use framework for unincorporated areas and other land use patterns to guide development decisions over time, and includes a Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

Chapters 5 and 6 outline specific Goals and Objectives for the Plan related to countywide goals (Chapter 5) and goals specific to the three Planning Areas (Chapter 6).

Chapter 7 defines ongoing Plan maintenance and implementation strategies.



Vision: A vision statement serves as an aspirational future statement.

Core Values: A core value is a community ideal to guide decision-making.

Planning Areas: Designated areas that recognize the diverse needs of Weld County's landscapes.

Plan Elements: Each element is aligned with a set of Goals and Objectives. These are efforts or desired results that provide direction for achieving the community's vision.

Goals: Aspirational statements to guide decisions towards desired outcomes.

Objectives: Objectives are the 'how-to achieve your Goals', and may include projects, programs, policies, or partnerships.

Fig 1. Comprehensive Plan Structure



Fig 2. Plan Elements

Plan Elements

The following Plan Elements will guide the structure of the Weld Comprehensive Plan, with each element serving as a chapter.

The Goals and Objectives (Chapter 5-6) in the Plan are intended to guide conversations about where growth should occur, which infrastructure investments should be prioritized, how natural and agricultural resources should be protected, and how future development can remain compatible with the County's character and long-term economic Goals.

These are listed alphabetically, not by priority level.

2. Agriculture and Heritage

The Agriculture Element focuses on preserving working lands, protecting agricultural viability, supporting water systems essential to farming and ranching, and maintaining the rural landscapes that define much of Weld County.

2. Economic Development

The Economic Development Element examines objectives for workforce growth, industrial development, and economic diversification, acknowledging the growing role of manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy, and emerging industries throughout the County.

2. Land Use and Growth Management

The Land Use and Growth Management Element focuses on the relationship between future growth and development patterns by managing growth in coordination with municipalities, directing development toward appropriate areas, and preserving agricultural lands, rural character, and natural resources.

4. Transportation and Infrastructure

The Transportation and Infrastructure Element addresses roadway systems, freight movement, and infrastructure capacity to maintain safe and efficient transportation systems.

5. Water

The Water Element examines long-term water availability, water quality and conservation, and the relationship between water resources, agriculture, and future growth, which are some of the most important long-term planning considerations for Weld County.

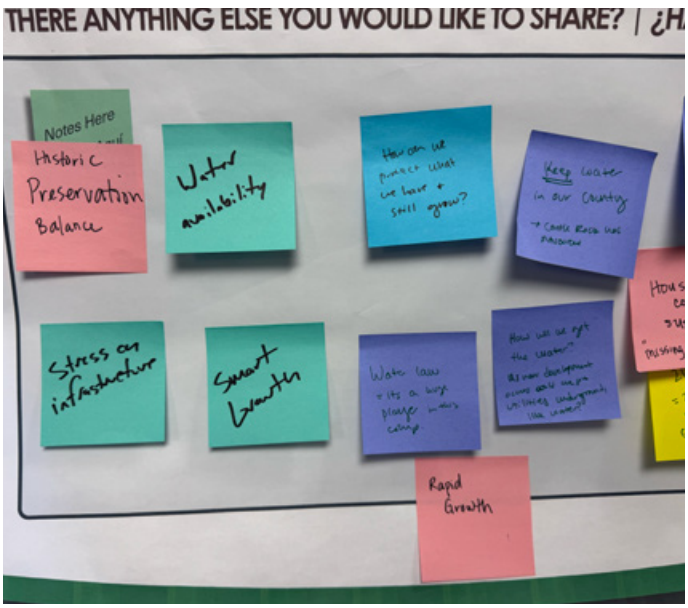
Process Overview

The Weld County Comprehensive Plan update planning process relies on both technical analyses and community engagement to ensure the Plan reflects broader regional trends and local priorities that will affect Weld County over time.

The planning process began with a review of prior planning efforts, adopted County policies, infrastructure plans, demographic trends, land use regulations, and existing development patterns. Existing Conditions Reports (Appendix A) provided technical analyses of population growth, housing, economic activity, transportation systems, natural resources, agricultural land, water systems, and infrastructure capacity throughout Weld County, establishing the baseline information to guide future planning discussions.



Fig 3. Process Overview Diagram



Gathering community ideas and feedback



Discussing the County's future with key stakeholders

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

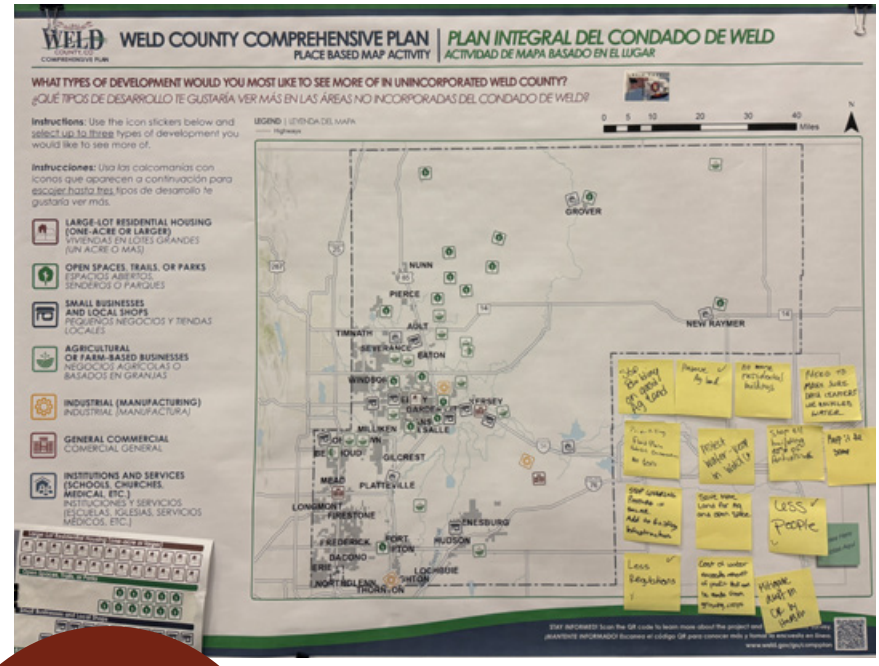
Community Engagement

Public and stakeholder engagement occurred throughout the planning process. It included focus groups, workshops, and pop-up events, as well as coordination with municipalities, agencies, agricultural representatives, businesses, landowners, and residents. Public engagement provided insight into how residents view growth, rural character, economic development, and the role of agriculture across different parts of the County, informing the establishment of a Vision and Values Framework for the Plan. Stakeholder discussions helped to inform recurring concerns, long-term opportunities, and community priorities.

Growth scenarios were used to assess how growth patterns and development trends could affect transportation systems, agricultural operations, infrastructure demands, water resources, and community character over time. These efforts informed the development of Place Types and the Future Land Use Map (FLUM).



Engaging stakeholders in planning discussions



Identifying priorities and opportunities across Weld County

650+
Community Engagement Participants

2



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

CHAPTER 2

VISION AND VALUES FRAMEWORK

Weld County's identity is closely tied to its agricultural heritage, working lands, rural landscapes, business-friendly environment, and its role as an economic center in northern Colorado. Community feedback throughout the planning process consistently emphasized the importance of maintaining agricultural viability, preserving rural character, supporting economic opportunity, protecting infrastructure investments, and maintaining a high quality-of-life for both current and future residents. At the same time, the community recognized that Weld County continues to change. Population growth, housing demand, economic diversification, technological change, and evolving development patterns are reshaping parts of the County, particularly near major transportation corridors and municipal boundaries.

The Vision and Values Framework is intended to acknowledge both realities. The Framework does not replace the values that have historically shaped Weld County but expands them, helping to adapt to future conditions while preserving the characteristics central to Weld County's identity.

This chapter outlines feedback from the Community and how it informed a future vision for Weld County, as well as the core values that support that vision. This provides the strategic framework for connecting community priorities to Plan recommendations and direction for the future.

Vision

A vision statement answers the question "Where are we going? What future are we working toward?", reflecting a shared aspiration for the County's future. The vision serves as the north star for the Comprehensive Plan, setting the stage for Goals, policies, and investments to ensure that decisions made today align with the future the community wants to create.

The Comprehensive Plan builds on the Strategic Plan's vision and mission by applying them to the County's diverse geographies, ensuring healthy, safe, and livable communities, balancing growth and development, and planning for resilient infrastructure, facilities, and resources.

The Weld County 5-Year Strategic Plan, developed in 2022, provides the following mission and vision for how local government should operate:

https://www.weld.gov/Government/Departments/Commissioners/Strategic-Plan:

Mission Statement

To provide responsive, innovative, and cost-effective services.

Vision Statement

Be a model County government that delivers excellent services and enables citizens and communities to pursue prosperity and quality of life in ways that are accessible, inclusive, and forward-thinking, while honoring our Western heritage and respecting individual liberties.

Core Values

Core values answer the question "Who are we? What matters to us most?" They are informed by outreach and discussion with staff, leadership, and community members to guide future decision-making in Weld County.



Rooted in Agriculture

We honor and protect our way of life.

Agriculture is the economic, cultural, and historical backbone of Weld County. We value working lands, water stewardship, and the freedom to farm and ranch. We also encourage agricultural innovation that may include new technologies and evolving techniques. Protecting our agricultural heritage means safeguarding the land, traditions, and livelihoods that define who we are.



Growing Together

We manage growth with intention and regional partnership.

Weld County recognizes that sustainable growth requires coordination, foresight, and collaboration. We value strong partnerships with municipalities and regional stakeholders to promote predictability, reduce conflict, guide development to areas where infrastructure exists and ensure growth strengthens our communities.



Respect Rural Lifestyle and Natural Resources

We value peace, independence, and room to thrive.

We value peace, independence, and room to thrive. Wide horizons, rural landscapes, and a strong sense of personal freedom and responsibility define Weld County. We cherish the serenity of low-density living and the ability for residents to live, work, and raise families in safe, self-reliant communities. We support responsible energy and mineral development.



Responsible Prosperity

We steward our resources wisely for long-term success.

We believe growth should support economic opportunity without jeopardizing fiscal stability. Responsible decision-making, strategic investment, and a diversified economy ensure that Weld County remains prosperous and financially resilient for generations to come.


Planning Area 1
Planning Area 2
Planning Area 3
Pawnee National Grasslands
0
5
10
20
30
40 miles
N



Planning Areas

Weld County is geographically diverse. To better reflect the County's varied landscapes and communities, three distinct Planning Areas enable a tailored approach that accounts for the unique character, opportunities, and constraints of different parts of the County.

The Planning Areas define geographic areas within the County where additional considerations and visioning is applied.

Legend

- Planning Area 1: Growth Opportunity Area
- Planning Area 2: Productive Agricultural Interface
- Planning Area 3: Rangeland and Rural Landscapes
- Incorporated Cities and Towns
- Water Bodies
- Pawnee National Grasslands
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Tertiary Roads

Fig 4. Planning Areas Map

Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/ NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

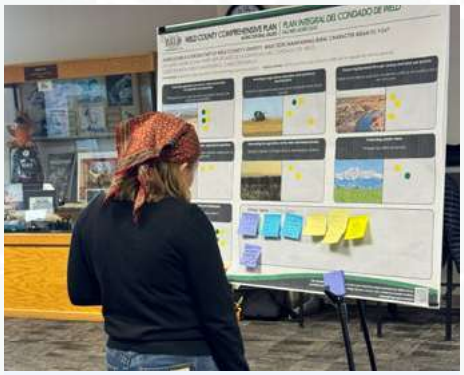
Community Engagement

Community engagement helped shape the direction of the Weld County Comprehensive Plan from the beginning. The first engagement window recorded more than 650 interactions through pop-up events, the Countywide survey, and project outreach. These conversations provided valuable insight into what residents value most, the challenges they see ahead, and the priorities they want the Plan to address. A full summary of responses and feedback is included in Appendix B.

The first window of public engagement asked people what they value about Weld County, what concerns them about its future, and what they want the County to prioritize as it grows. The County and project team gathered input through a bilingual community survey and five pop-up events in January 2026. The findings below reflect the people who chose to participate and help identify the questions this Plan needs to address.

More Ways People Connected







650+
Interactions across Window 1

280
Community Survey Responses

6
Events

8
Newsletters

18
Social Media Posts

170,000
Countywide Mailers Sent to Property Owners



Presenting on Weld County's Existing Conditions to stakeholder groups

Plan Leadership Groups

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Community Work Group (CWG) meetings were held in the winter of 2025 to gather input on key opportunities, challenges, and planning priorities for the Comprehensive Plan. Participants included County partners, technical advisors, and community stakeholders. Across both meetings, participants described Weld County as a place defined by rural character, agricultural heritage, independence, limited government, economic opportunity, and a strong sense of home.

TAC and CWG members supported directing urban growth toward towns and cities, while asking for clearer coordination around annexation, three-mile plans, and infrastructure. Their discussions also raised a practical question for this Plan: where should the County take an active role, and where should it leave room for landowners and agricultural operations to make their own decisions?

Focus Group Discussions

Between October and November 2025, six stakeholder focus groups were conducted to gather input from technical experts, service providers, industry representatives, agricultural producers, and partner agencies. Across all groups, participants emphasized the need for stronger coordination between the County, municipalities, utility providers, state agencies, and other partners to better align growth with infrastructure, water resources, transportation investments, and community services.

Agricultural participants raised concerns about keeping farmland in production and maintaining access to water. Transportation and utility partners focused on the cost and timing of infrastructure as communities grow. Across groups, participants called for earlier coordination so development decisions reflect what roads, water, and other facilities can support.

What We Heard

The community survey was open from January 5 through March 2, 2026, and received 280 responses. The project team also held five pop-up events in Johnstown, Greeley, and Eaton, including outreach at the Colorado Farm Show. Materials were available in English and Spanish. Many questions allowed people to select up to three responses, so percentages show the share of people answering each question who selected an option; they do not add to 100 percent.

What Residents Value

When asked what they love about Weld County, **60 percent** selected its agricultural roots and rural lifestyle. Open space and natural beauty followed at **44 percent**, while **37 percent** valued a small-town feel with access to city amenities. Together, these responses describe a place where working lands and nearby communities both matter to residents' quality of life.



60%

of respondents value agricultural roots and rural lifestyle



44%

of respondents value open space and natural beauty



37%

of respondents value small-town feelwith access to city amenities



Gathering resident feedback on Weld County's priorities.



Sharing information and collecting input on the County's Future Land Use Map

What Concerns Residents

Residents' most frequently selected concerns were limited water availability (**44 percent**), loss of farmland and the agricultural economy (**43 percent**), and traffic and transportation (**41 percent**). Nearly one-third also selected population growth (**32 percent**), loss of rural character (**31 percent**), and the rising cost of living (**30 percent**). These concerns show how growth, resource availability, and everyday costs are connected in residents' minds.

44%
of respondents have concerns about limited water availability

43%
of respondents have concerns about loss of farmland and agricultural economy

41%
of respondents have concerns about traffic and transportation

What Weld County Should Prioritize

Asked what Weld County government should focus on as the County grows, participants most often selected protecting natural areas and water quality (**64 percent**) and supporting agriculture and ranching (**53 percent**). Improving County roads and transportation choices followed at **41 percent**, while **37 percent** selected encouraging good jobs and supporting local businesses. More than one-quarter (**27 percent**) selected collaborating to direct growth toward municipalities and designated growth areas.

64%
of residents want the County to protect natural areas and water quality

53%
of residents want the County to support agriculture and ranching

What We Heard

73%

of respondents define rural character as protecting agricultural land from urban sprawl

What Rural Character Means

For many participants, rural character is tied to the ability to keep farming and ranching. **Seventy-three percent** selected protecting agricultural land from sprawl and incompatible development. Others selected preserving farmland through zoning and land use policies (**43 percent**), limiting regulations that may burden agricultural operations (**28 percent**), and advocating for agriculture at the state and federal levels (**26 percent**). The responses point to a desire to protect working land while keeping agriculture viable.

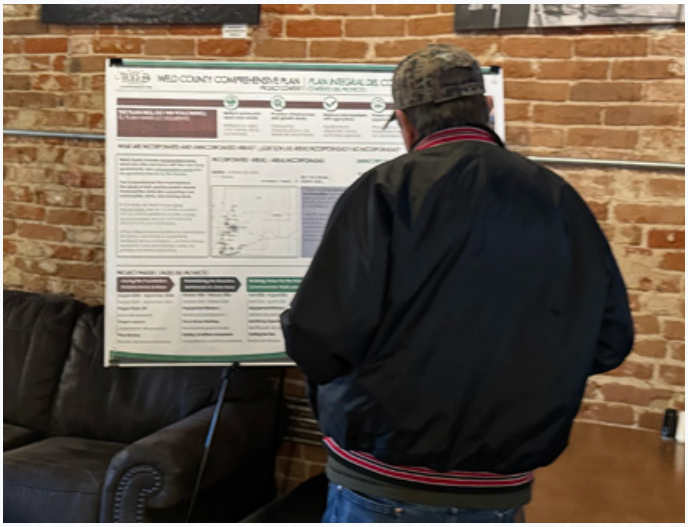
62%

of residents want more open space, trails, and parks

Development in Unincorporated Weld County

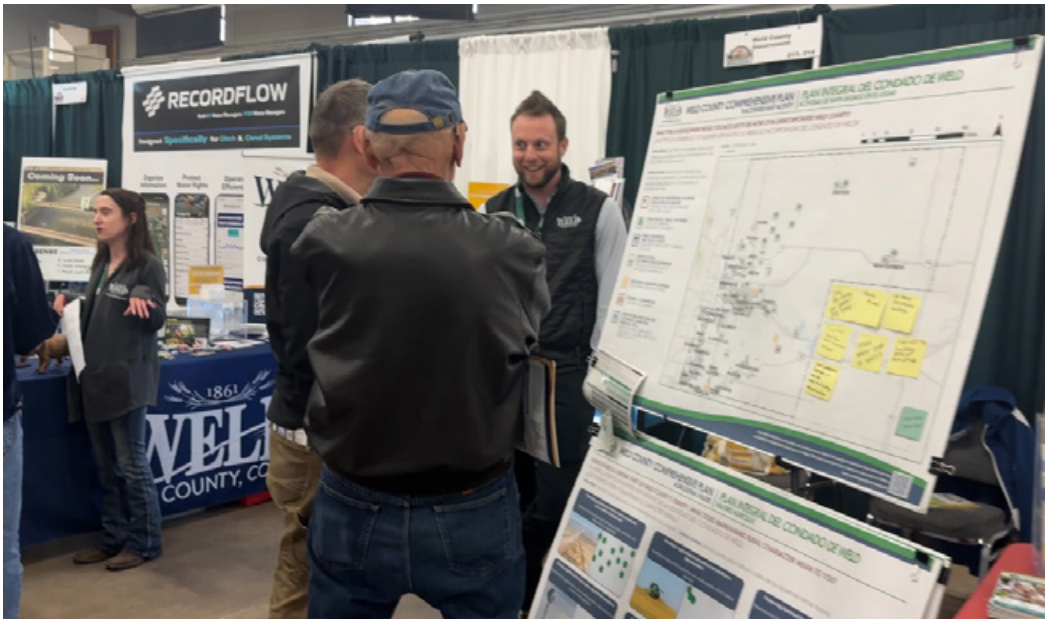
When asked what they would like to see more of in unincorporated Weld County, participants most often chose open spaces, trails, or parks (**62 percent**), agricultural or farm-based businesses (**58 percent**), and small businesses or local shops (**46 percent**). Far fewer selected general commercial development (**15 percent**) or industrial development (**12 percent**). These responses suggest interest in uses that build on the rural landscape and local economy, though they do not determine where any particular use should be located.





Left: Discussing important geographical trends with participants during first engagement.

Top: A resident reviews planning materials at a community event



Attendees discuss the Comprehensive Plan at the Weld County Farm Show

Different Places, Different Priorities

45% vs 88%

participant support for making agriculture and ranching a priority (incorporated versus unincorporated areas)

Participants from unincorporated areas placed especially strong emphasis on agriculture. In the survey cross-tabulations, support for making agriculture and ranching a County priority **ranged from 54 to 88 percent** across unincorporated areas, compared with **45 percent** among incorporated respondents. Rural respondents also raised concerns about farmland loss, water, and road conditions. Incorporated respondents placed relatively more emphasis on housing costs and access to amenities. The Plan needs to respond to both sets of experiences while recognizing the County's different roles inside and outside municipal boundaries.

Transportation

32%

of participants prioritize safer intersections and rural roads

For transportation in unincorporated Weld County, participants put immediate road needs first. **Thirty-two percent** ranked safer intersections and rural County roads as their highest priority, and **62 percent** placed that choice in their top two. Better maintenance of existing County roads was also a strong priority. Comments described roads shared by residents, agricultural equipment, and freight vehicles, making safety and upkeep especially important as travel increases.

Water and Farmland

34%

of residents prioritize farmland preservation

Farmland conservation received the largest share of first-place rankings among environmental priorities (**34 percent**). Water quality and conservation had the broadest high-priority support, with **62 percent** placing it in their top two. Open comments added concern about agricultural water rights and the potential for water to move out of farming as municipal demand grows. The Plan can address these concerns through land-use coordination while being clear about the limits of County authority over water rights.

Source: Weld County Comprehensive Plan Window 1 Community Engagement Summary, April 2, 2026.

3



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

CHAPTER 3

WELD COUNTY TODAY

Weld County continues to grow rapidly while maintaining a strong rural and agricultural identity. Conditions vary significantly across the County, particularly between urbanized communities and rural areas. Like many communities across Colorado, Weld County faces growing housing affordability challenges. Rising housing costs, housing shortages, and cost-burdened residents remain concerns in many parts of the County. At the same time, Weld County maintains a strong economy supported by agriculture, oil and gas, manufacturing, transportation, and construction.

As Weld County continues to grow, the Comprehensive Plan is an opportunity to balance development pressures, housing needs, infrastructure demands, and preservation of the County's rural and agricultural character.

The Comprehensive Plan reviews current conditions today to inform the opportunities for tomorrow. The following is a snapshot of key factors influencing Weld County. A full summary of Existing Conditions is provided in Appendix A.

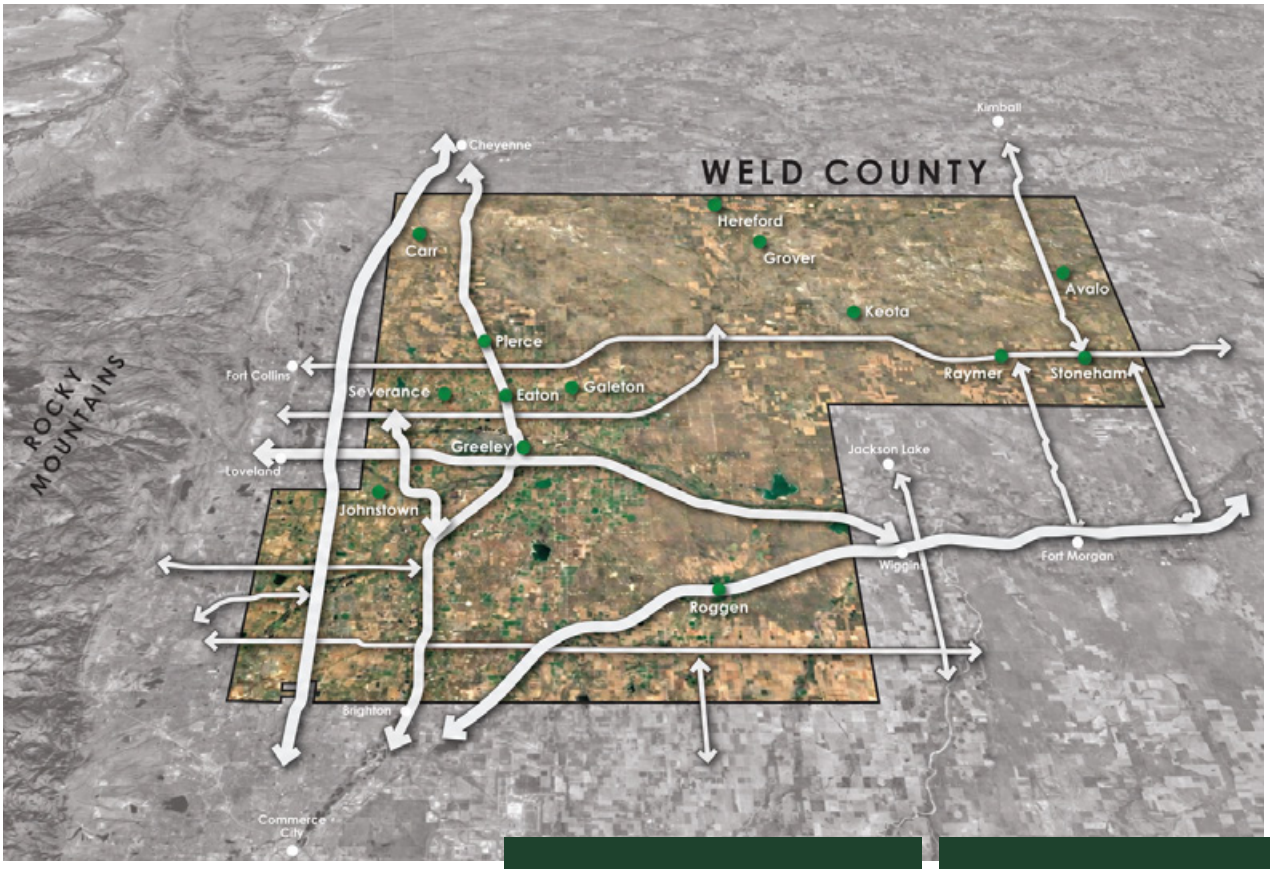


Fig 5. Regional Context Map

Weld County is expected to grow by

170,000+

residents by 2050

Incorporated areas are growing

over 3x

faster than unincorporated areas

Geographic Context

Weld County occupies a key geographic and economic position within northern Colorado and the broader Front Range region. The County spans from rapidly urbanizing communities north of Denver to rural agricultural areas on the eastern plains of Colorado, serving as a key link among Colorado's urban corridor, agricultural economy, freight networks, and energy-producing regions. Major transportation corridors, including Interstate 25, Interstate 76, and U.S. Highway 85, provide regional connections to surrounding communities and neighboring states. Rail infrastructure, freight corridors, energy systems, and agricultural supply networks further reinforce the County's role as a major economic and logistical center in the region.

Weld County is also among Colorado's most agriculturally productive counties and features a diverse landscape that includes irrigated farmland, grasslands, energy production areas, growing municipalities, historic communities, industrial centers, and environmentally sensitive natural systems. Agriculture, oil and gas production, manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy, and small businesses all contribute significantly to the County's economy.

Weld County continues to experience substantial population growth and development pressure, particularly in the southern and western portions near the Front Range urban corridor. Communities near Interstate 25 and other major transportation routes face rising demand for housing, commercial development, industrial activity, and infrastructure expansion. These pressures create both opportunities and challenges for the County as it works to balance growth with the preservation of agricultural lands, rural character, natural systems, and infrastructure capacity.

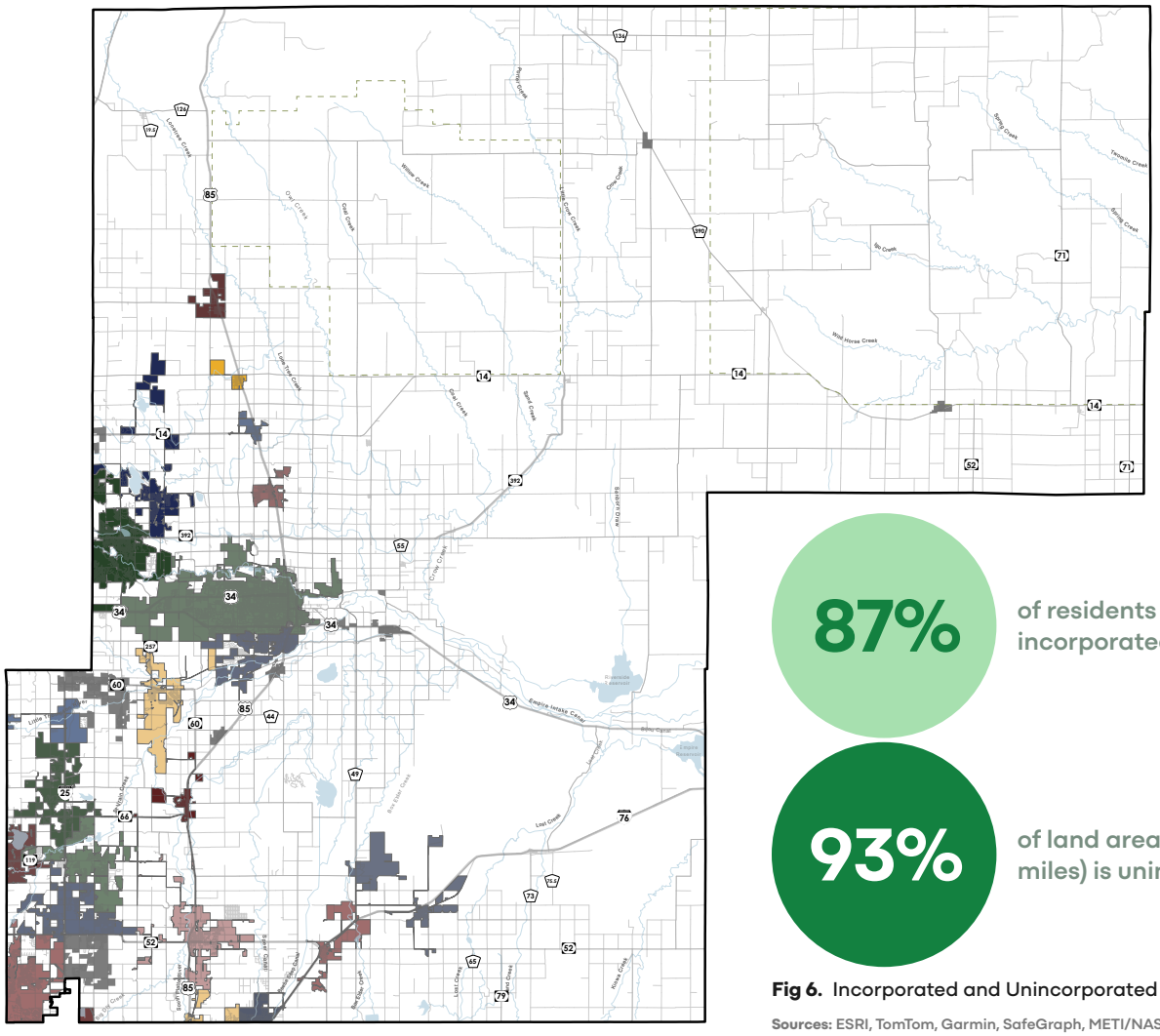
Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas

As of 2024, 322,006 people are estimated to live in Weld County. Approximately 87 percent of the County's population lives within municipalities, while 13 percent live in unincorporated areas. This represents an increase of roughly 94,000 people over the past decade, making Weld County one of the fastest-growing counties in Colorado.

As Colorado's third-largest County by land area, Weld County remains largely rural, even though there are 32 municipalities with at least a portion of their boundaries within Weld County. Approximately 93 percent of Weld County's land area remains unincorporated, reflecting the County's rural and agricultural character. An estimated 47,874 residents live in unincorporated areas. Growth patterns remain concentrated in communities along the Front Range, while much of the County remains rural. Population growth in unincorporated Weld County has been substantially slower than growth within cities and towns.

47,874 people live in unincorporated areas

322,006 people live in municipalities



87% of residents live in incorporated municipalities

93% of land areas (3,747 square miles) is unincorporated

Fig 6. Incorporated and Unincorporated Map

Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

Historic Context

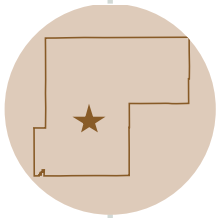
Weld County's history is closely tied to agriculture and the region's abundant resources. Long before European settlement, Indigenous peoples, including the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute, lived throughout the region and relied on its rivers, grasslands, and wildlife. Weld County was established in 1861, and the Homestead Act of 1862 encouraged further Euro-American settlement by providing opportunities to acquire land for farming. As irrigation expanded in the late 1800s, agriculture became increasingly established across the County. Rail service connected local producers to growing markets and helped establish a network of rural communities, many of which remain today. Agriculture quickly became the backbone of the local economy, influencing where towns developed and how the landscape evolved. Many of these towns thrived due to trade and transportation corridors that connected Weld County to the broader Front Range and the western United States.

Throughout the twentieth century, advances in irrigation, energy production, manufacturing, and transportation diversified Weld County's local economy and contributed to steady population growth. The County's location between the Denver metropolitan area and northern Colorado communities positioned it as both a productive agricultural region and an important center for commerce and industry. In recent decades, Weld County has experienced significant growth driven by regional economic expansion, energy development, and increasing demand for housing and employment. Today, the County's history remains visible in its agriculture, rural communities, historic town centers, and ongoing commitment to balancing growth with the preservation of its agricultural heritage and rural character.



Before 1800

Indigenous peoples inhabit the region



1861

Weld County established



Late 1800s

Homesteading expands settlement



Late 1800s

Railroads connect communities



Early 1900s

Irrigation expands agriculture



Mid 1900s

Energy and industry diversify the economy



Recent decades

Regional growth accelerates



Today

Communities balance growth and agricultural preservation

Fig 7. Weld County History Timeline

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Existing Conditions

Weld County's Existing Conditions reveal the relationships between its growing communities, working landscapes, natural resources, and infrastructure networks. These conditions vary across the County, influencing where future development may be supported and where competing land uses require greater consideration. Understanding these geographic patterns helps identify opportunities for growth, areas where resources may need protection, and locations where coordination with municipalities will be essential. Together, these findings establish the foundation for scenario planning, allowing the County to explore different growth patterns and their implications for the Future Land Use Map.

369,880
Population of Weld County

8th
Most populous County in Colorado

47,874
Residents live in unincorporated Weld County

35
Median age in Weld County

Versus 38.5 median age statewide

129,679
Households

2.8
People per household

$93,287
Median household income (versus $92,470 in Colorado)

¼ of Weld County Households earn less than $50,000/yr

150,769
Total jobs in Weld County in 2024

27% ↑
Increase in jobs from 2014–2024

⅔
of employed residents work outside the County

$12B
Assessed value from oil and gas over the past ten years

4,000
Farms in Weld County

$2.4B
Agriculture market value in 2022

Sources: 2024 State Demographer and American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year 2019–2023

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

With nearly

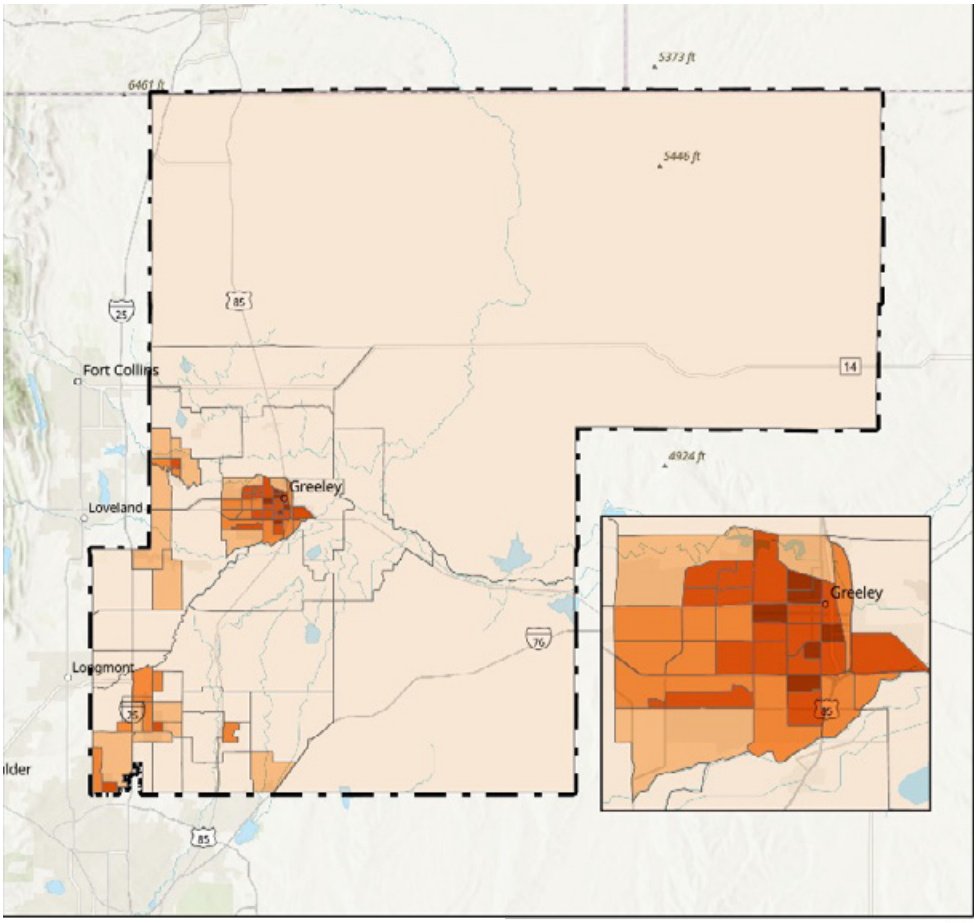
370,000

residents, Weld County is the 8th most populous County in Colorado.

Census Tract, Weld County

The map highlights the contrast between Weld County's concentrated Front Range communities and its sparsely populated rural areas, helping inform where future growth can be supported while preserving the County's rural character.

Source: ACS 5-Year, 2019–2023



Population and Growth

Weld County continues to experience population growth, particularly in Greeley and communities along the Front Range. Greeley is home to roughly one-third of Weld County's residents, with about 117,000 people. Between 2015 and 2024, approximately 75 percent of population growth resulted from net migration.

State forecasts estimate the population will reach approximately 540,000 residents by 2050, equating to an annual growth rate of 1.2 percent between 2024 and 2050.

Weld County's growth is concentrated around Greeley and southwestern communities connected to the Front Range. Much of the northern and eastern parts of the County remain sparsely populated. This pattern creates different infrastructure needs across the County, with more concentrated demand near municipalities and extensive service networks supporting rural areas.

Weld County has a younger population than nearby counties, with a median age of 35 years. Greeley has an even younger median age of 33 years. Unincorporated portions of the County generally contain older populations, including larger shares of residents over age 55.

The average household size in Weld County is 2.8 people. More than half of all households consist of one or two people, while larger households are more common in unincorporated areas. Most Weld County households (approximately 75 percent) live in owner-occupied single-family homes, a higher share than in unincorporated areas.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Housing Needs

Weld County's median household income has increased significantly over the past decade and is now similar to the statewide median. As of 2023, the median household income was approximately $93,000, nearly 60 percent higher than in 2014. Approximately 9 percent of Weld County residents live below the poverty line, matching the statewide average.

Housing prices in Weld County have increased substantially over the last decade. The 2025 Weld County Housing Needs Assessment identified a substantial shortage of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households. The study estimated a current housing gap of approximately 27,600 units countywide. It also projected a need for an additional 34,000 housing units throughout the County by 2034 to accommodate future growth. The analysis identified a mismatch between available housing types and household needs, particularly for smaller and lower-cost units. All of these findings apply to the County as a whole and most new development will continue to occur within municipal boundaries.

Economy and Development Patterns

Weld County's labor force has grown rapidly over the past decade, increasing by approximately 40 percent to roughly 180,000 workers. There were approximately 150,000 jobs throughout Weld County in 2024. Public administration, construction, manufacturing, retail trade, and health care are among the County's largest employment sectors. Transportation and warehousing, education, and professional services have experienced strong recent growth, reflecting increasing economic diversification.

Weld County's economy is expected to continue growing through 2050. State forecasts project approximately 47,000 additional jobs over the coming decades, representing roughly 31 percent increase in employment growth. Professional services and mining-related industries are expected to continue growing, while agricultural employment is projected to decline slightly over time.



Rural road stretches through Weld County's agricultural landscape

Where Development Is Expanding

Population and employment growth are influencing development patterns, particularly near existing municipalities and major transportation corridors. Between 2014 and 2024, developed land expanded into previously open and agricultural areas. Some working lands are also transitioning to other uses as declining agricultural productivity makes continued farming less viable. These changes create opportunities to accommodate growth on less productive lands while preserving the County's most valuable agricultural areas. These locations are important for coordinating future growth with municipal services and surrounding land uses. Specific areas of development are discussed more in the following chapter.

Weld County has

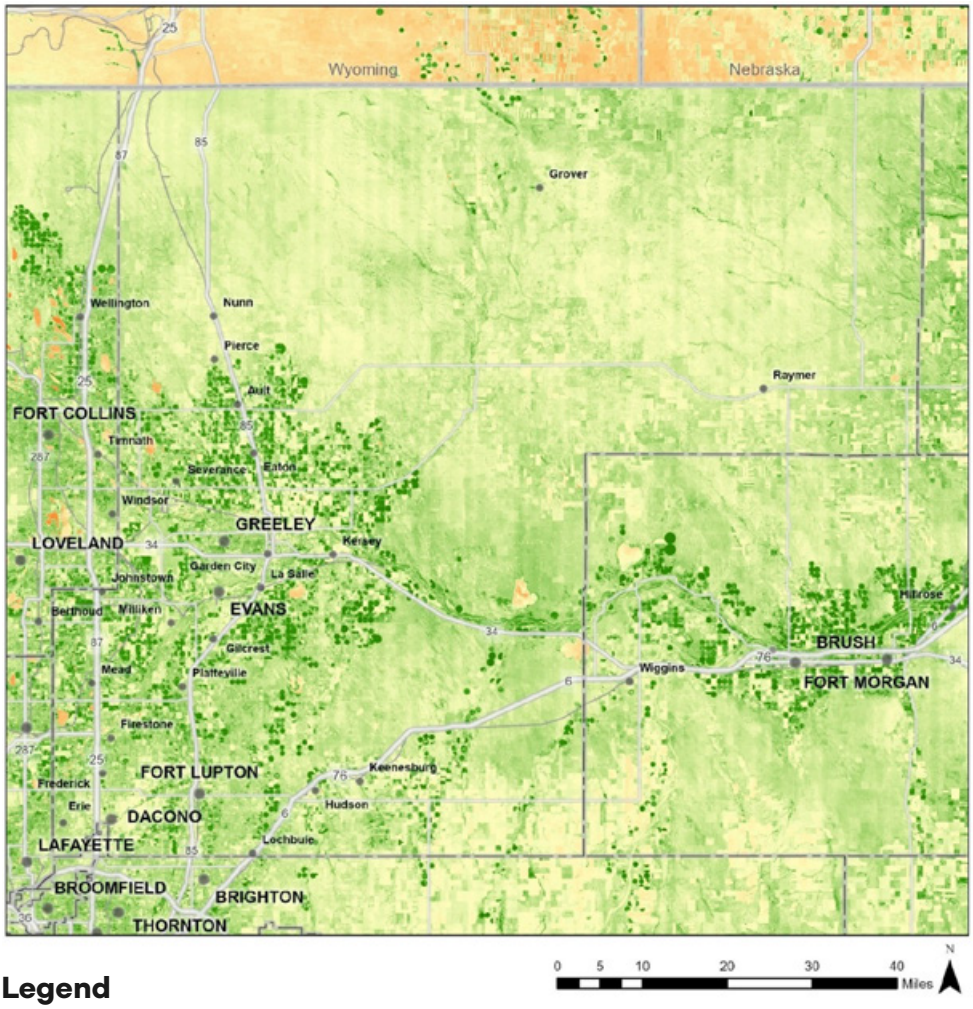
1.9 million

acres of grassland and pasture.

Fig 9. USDA Land Cover, 2024

The distribution of land cover across Weld County helps distinguish productive agricultural areas from lands with changing uses, informing opportunities for future development while prioritizing the preservation of viable farmland.

Source: USDA, Esri, USGS



Legend

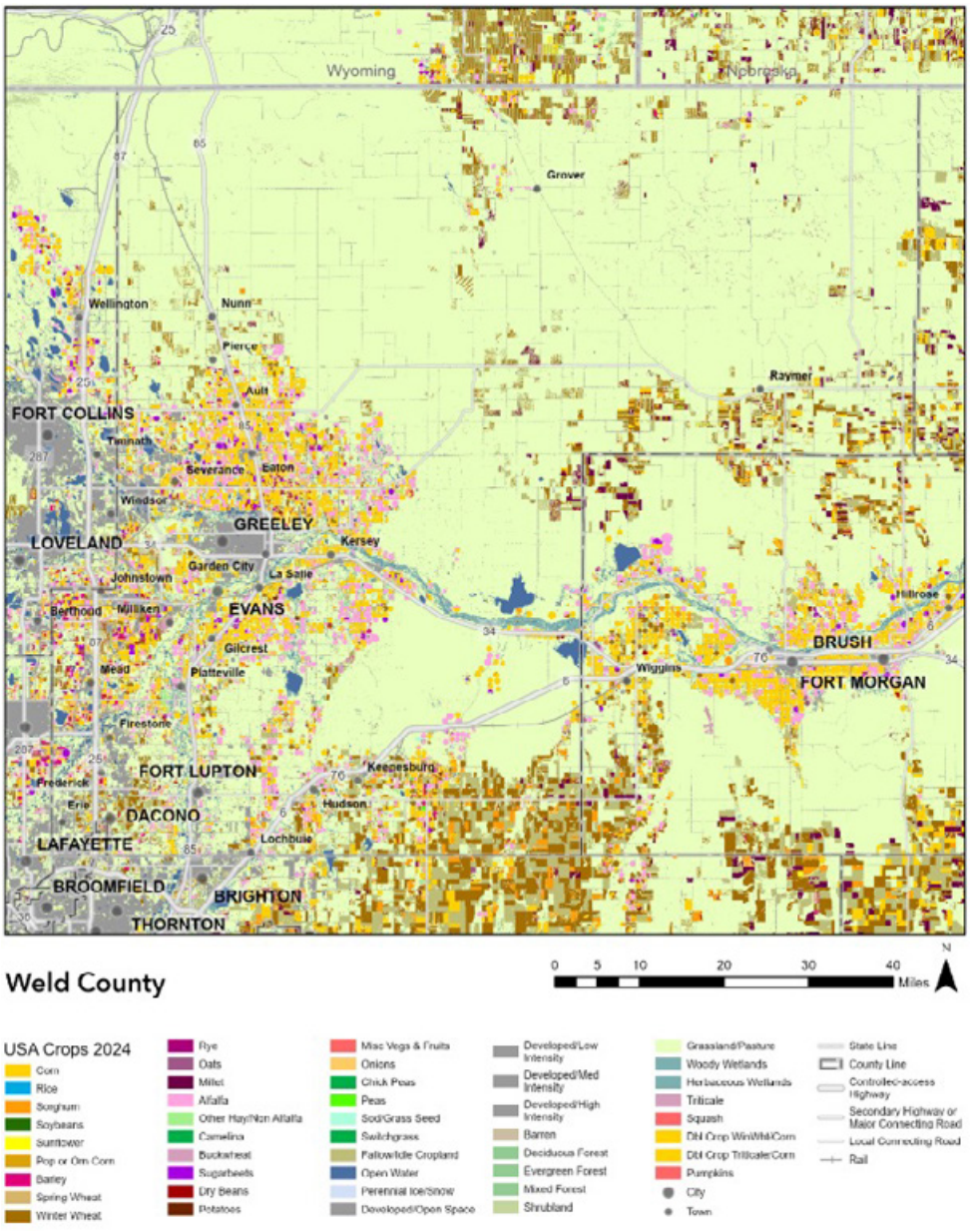
USDA LAND COVER

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Agricultural Lands

Agriculture remains a major component of Weld County's economy and accounts for approximately 26 percent of Colorado's agricultural market, totaling approximately $2.4 billion in market value in 2022. The County contains nearly 4,000 farms and accounts for approximately 26 percent of Colorado's agricultural sales.

Agriculture takes different forms across Weld County. Irrigated fields follow the South Platte River and areas served by water infrastructure, while dryland crops, pasture, and rangeland shape the surrounding landscape. Together, these lands support agricultural production and related businesses. Mapping current crops and farmland capability helps identify areas where development could affect productive agricultural lands.



Fallow and idle cropland expanded by 10–15% between 2014 and 2023 as more cropland is periodically rotated out of production.

Fig 10. USDA Cropland Cover, 2024

The map illustrates the variety and distribution of crops grown across Weld County, highlighting the concentration of irrigated cropland along the South Platte River and the County's most productive lands for specific agricultural types.

Source: USDA, Esri, USGS

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



Mature trees along the Cache la Poudre River provide shade and wildlife habitat

Energy Production

Oil and gas is one of the County's largest sources of revenue, contributing an estimated $12 billion in assessed valuation over the past ten years. Weld County is Colorado's leading oil-producing County. With more than 45,000 oil and gas wells, including approximately 10,600 active producing wells as of 2025, the County produces more than 600 million barrels of oil annually. Oil and gas production extends across large portions of Weld County, while wind and solar energy development are becoming additional land uses. The location of these facilities introduces considerations for surrounding homes, agricultural operations, transportation access, and natural resources.

Water Resources and Natural Hazards

Water resources are closely connected to Weld County's agricultural lands and natural systems. Rivers and waterways support agricultural production and wildlife habitat, while floodplains create development constraints in some areas. The South Platte River and its tributaries are particularly important when considering water availability, flood risk, and land-use suitability.

Natural Habitats

Weld County's natural systems include grasslands, rangelands, and river corridors that provide habitat across lands that also support agricultural and energy production. Identifying high-priority habitats helps illustrate where future development may affect connected natural systems.

Transportation and Service Capacity

Weld County's transportation and utility networks support existing communities and connect economic activity across the region. Their location and capacity are important considerations for where future development can occur. Traffic volumes are highest along Interstate 25, U.S. Highway 85, and U.S. Highway 34, where regional commuting overlaps with freight and agricultural transportation. Water and sanitation service areas provide additional context for where development may be supported by existing infrastructure and where new investments could be required.

Weld County has strong commuting connections with surrounding counties. More than two-thirds of working residents commute outside the County for employment, including many who travel to the Denver metropolitan area. At the same time, many workers commute to Weld County from surrounding communities.Transportation and utility needs differ considerably across Weld County. More populated areas generally require greater service capacity, while rural areas depend on infrastructure that extends across larger distances. These differences influence the cost and feasibility of supporting additional development.

Tourism and Recreation

Weld County recreation and tourism options for residents and visitors connect to the County's economic base with its agricultural and natural assets. Farms and ranches offer a range of agritourism opportunities that can diversify producer income while generating visitor spending that supports local businesses. Examples include farm-based experiences offering pumpkin patches, corn mazes, hayrides, and opportunities to experience local farm production. Public and private entities also maintain natural areas that support hunting, fishing, camping, and other outdoor activities. Key recreational highlights include the Colorado Parks and Wildlife State Wildlife Areas and the U.S. Forest Service's Pawnee National Grassland. A variety of trails offer hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, such as the Poudre River Trail, Great Western Trail, and Weld Legacy Trail. The recreation and tourism economy supports local employment, quality of life, and visitor spending across accommodations,

The Cache la Poudre River offers natural habitat and opportunities for outdoor recreation



Key Trends and Drivers

The patterns emerging from Weld County's Existing Conditions point to a larger question: how can the County accommodate continued growth while sustaining the resources and industries that define it? The following Trends and Drivers bring these considerations into focus, highlighting the pressures, opportunities, and changing conditions that will shape future land use decisions. They serve as a bridge between understanding Weld County today and exploring the different directions its future growth could take through scenario planning.



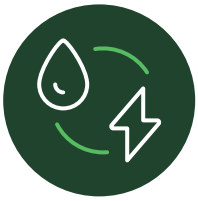
Growth is concentrating in the southern part of the County and in the Greeley–Windsor area.

Development continues to concentrate along transportation corridors and near municipalities. Approximately **87% of Weld County residents** live in incorporated municipalities, and the **County's population has reached 322,006**, with a concentration in southwestern Weld County. This will have implications for resource and service accessibility, as well as infrastructure availability.



Agricultural land is under increasing pressure.

Weld County has about **2.6 million acres of land** and is Colorado's leading agricultural producer. Development encroaching onto rural lands and water access will contribute to the gradual conversion of agricultural land into other uses, particularly near growing municipalities.



Energy production remains central to the economy.

Weld County produces approximately **89% of Colorado's oil** and **37% of its natural gas**. The oil and gas sector continues to play an important role alongside the growing manufacturing, industrial, and other energy sectors.



Transportation systems are increasingly important.

Weld County's transportation system contains **3,000 miles of roadway** and serves commuters, freight movement, and agricultural operations on the same network, stressing physical infrastructure and capacity. Road connectivity and safety are important for future mobility and economic efficiency.



Urban and rural areas have different infrastructure and service needs.

Service capacity, infrastructure costs, development patterns, and community values differ significantly between urban and rural areas.



Natural hazards will increasingly influence planning decisions.

Wildfire, flooding, and drought pose risks that must be monitored and addressed in land use planning.



Infrastructure capacity is a major constraint on growth.

With the population projected to grow by **more than 170,000 additional residents**, these systems will be increasingly stressed. Water systems, transportation networks, utilities, and housing capacity influence where growth can occur and at what pace.



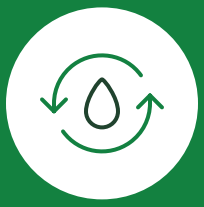
Weld County functions as both a job center and a commuter County.

The County supports significant employment but also has many residents commuting to nearby cities: Weld County supports approximately **150,769 jobs**, while **44,121 residents** commute outside the County for work, mostly toward Denver and Boulder Counties, with commute times of 30 minutes or more.



Natural resource protection will shape growth preferences.

As Colorado's top agricultural producer, preserving agricultural land, natural areas, and environmental systems should determine where growth may occur and where preservation is more important.



Water availability will shape future development.

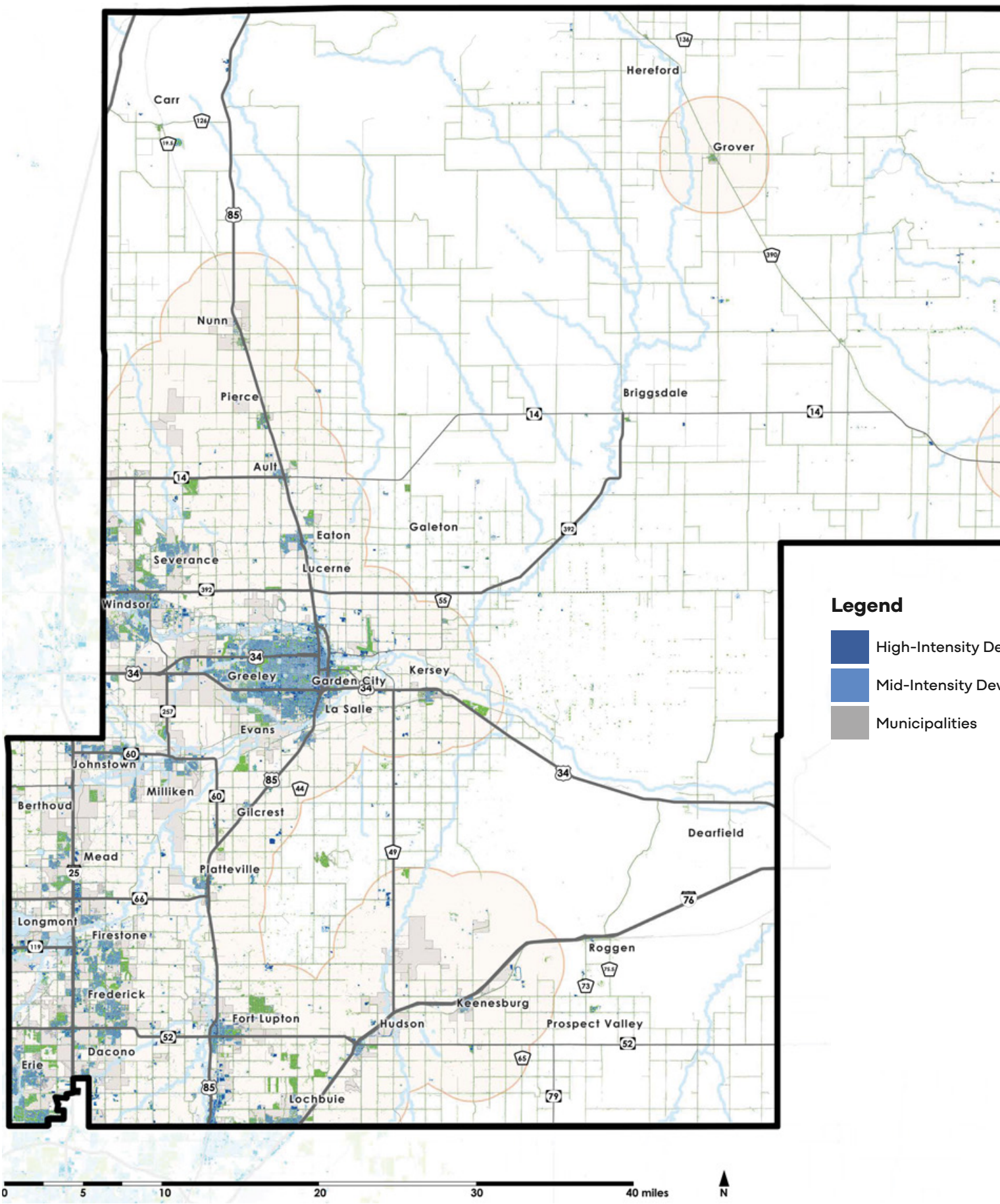
Water rights, access, and infrastructure will influence both agricultural sustainability and development capacity. Weld County relies on more than 15 major reservoirs and extensive water delivery systems.



Weld County's population is becoming more diverse in age and household structure.

Weld County has a **median age of 35 years** and an **average household size of 2.8 persons**. An increasing number of working-age adults and older residents, along with changing household sizes, will influence housing needs, workforce availability, and service demands.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



evelopment

velopment

Mapping Stability and Change

Mapping and diagrams illustrate existing development patterns, infrastructure networks, agricultural areas, and environmental features across Weld County. Examining the spatial relationships of changing land cover, prime agricultural lands, and energy and environmental factors indicates how different parts of the County may evolve.

Some areas are likely to experience continued growth and development, particularly near municipalities, transportation corridors, and existing infrastructure. Other areas may remain stable due to agricultural productivity, infrastructure limitations, environmental constraints, or community preferences for preservation. Identifying these areas helps guide where growth can be accommodated efficiently and where preservation may be appropriate.

All maps include shared base layers of roads, highways, waterways, Weld County's boundary, incorporated municipalities, and a 3-mile buffer of municipal limits. Using a weighted overlay in GIS, higher weights (dark blue) are assigned to areas of high-intensity development, highlighting scattered patterns of targeted development. Medium weights (blue) are mid-intensity development. The lowest weights (light blue) show low-intensity development, with more sprawling growth patterns. Developed open space (green) was not weighted; rather, it is displayed to showcase land use designations amid development patterns. Together, these layers highlight development and growth patterns as they are today, with high-intensity development being dispersed unequally across the map rather than typically surrounding urban areas.

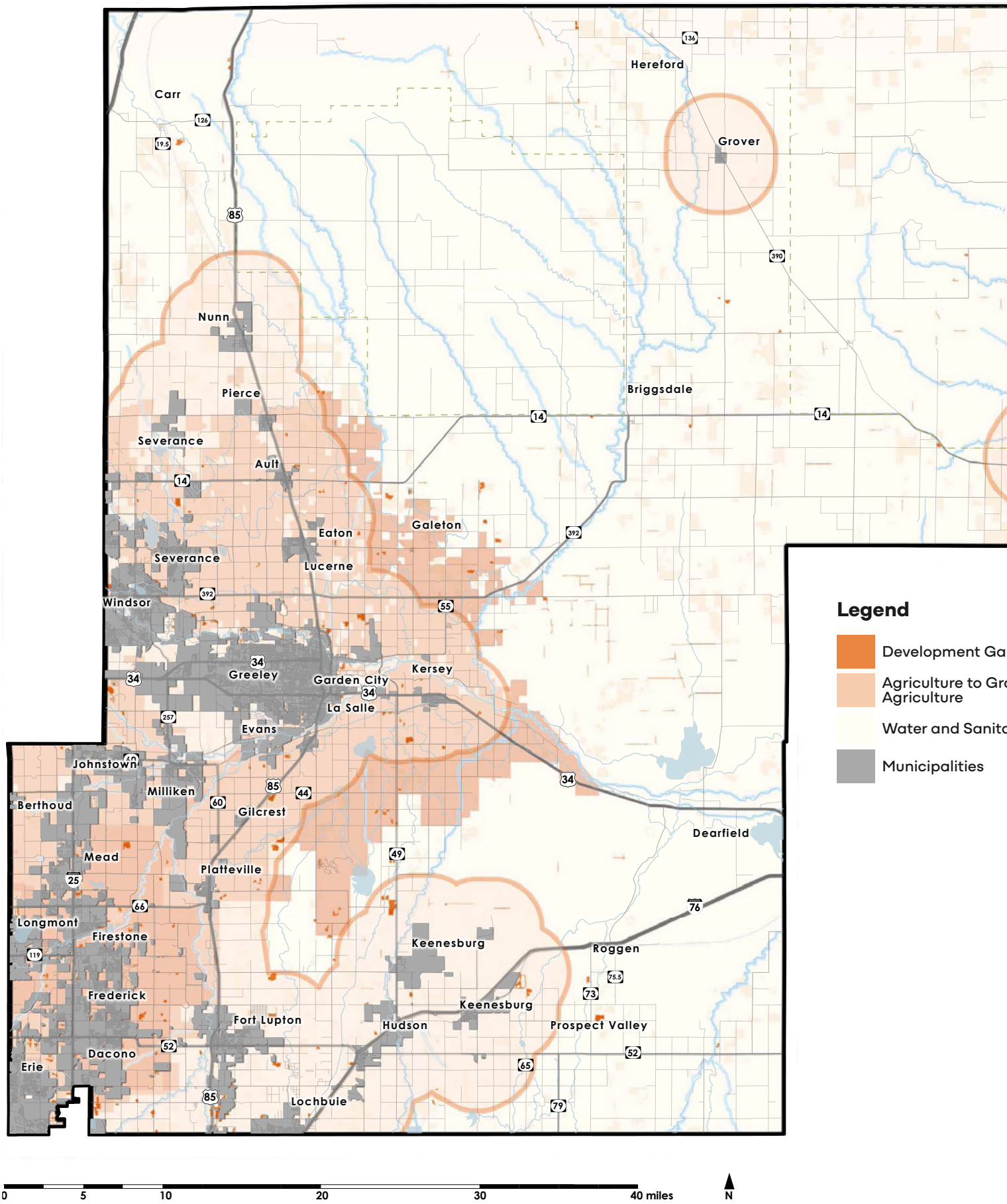
Baseline Condition

The GIS analysis confirms that growth is already concentrated in central western and southwestern Weld County, particularly around Greeley, Evans, Windsor, Johnstown, Milliken, Frederick, and Fort Lupton, with continued expansion along the Interstate 25, U.S. Highway 85, U.S. Highway 34, and Interstate 76 corridors. Outside these areas, development remains largely dispersed and low-density, while agriculture continues to dominate the County's landscape. Continued conversion of agricultural land at municipal edges increases pressure on infrastructure and reliance on incremental utility extensions to accommodate growth. Without changes to current policies or growth patterns, development is expected to continue outward from municipalities, placing additional demand on roads, water systems, and public services while gradually reducing the amount of productive agricultural land.

Sources: BHI, ESRI, USDA, Weld County GIS

Existing conditions mapping forms the baseline using GIS analysis of current land use, development intensity, municipal boundaries, transportation corridors, waterways, and protected open space. Development intensity was weighted to distinguish high-, medium-, and low-intensity development, creating a reference condition against which the three alternative scenarios were evaluated.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

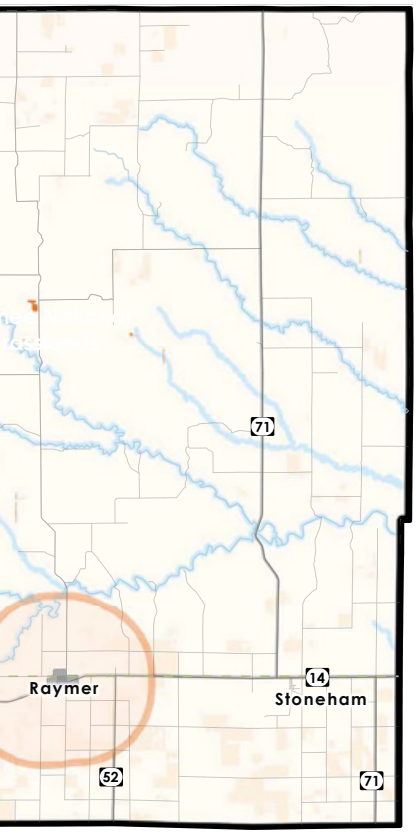


Fig 11. Growth at the Edge Basemap

Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

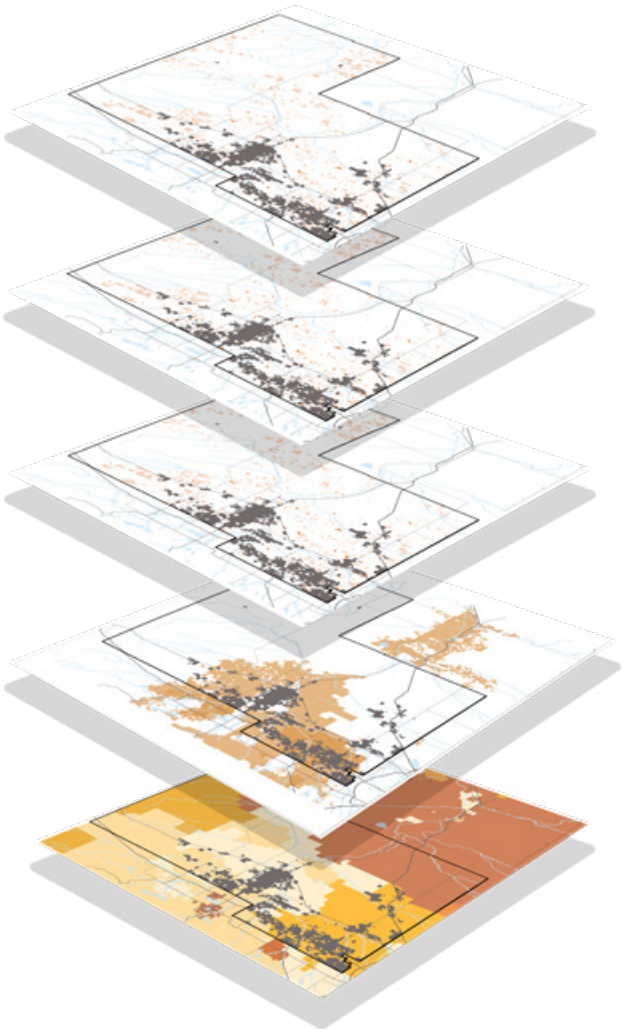
Land Use and Development Analysis

The analysis identifies the strongest opportunities for future development within and adjacent to existing municipalities where infrastructure can be expanded more efficiently. Growth is concentrated along Interstate 25, U.S. Highway 85, U.S. Highway 34, State Highway 52, and Interstate 76, creating connected employment corridors while reinforcing community centers in Greeley, Windsor, Frederick, Fort Lupton, and other municipalities. Compared to the baseline, this scenario substantially reduces scattered rural development by directing new housing toward municipal edges and preserving larger, unfragmented agricultural areas. The analysis also demonstrates that coordinated annexation, utility expansion, and transportation investments would be essential to support this growth pattern, particularly where municipal service capacity is currently limited.

ined

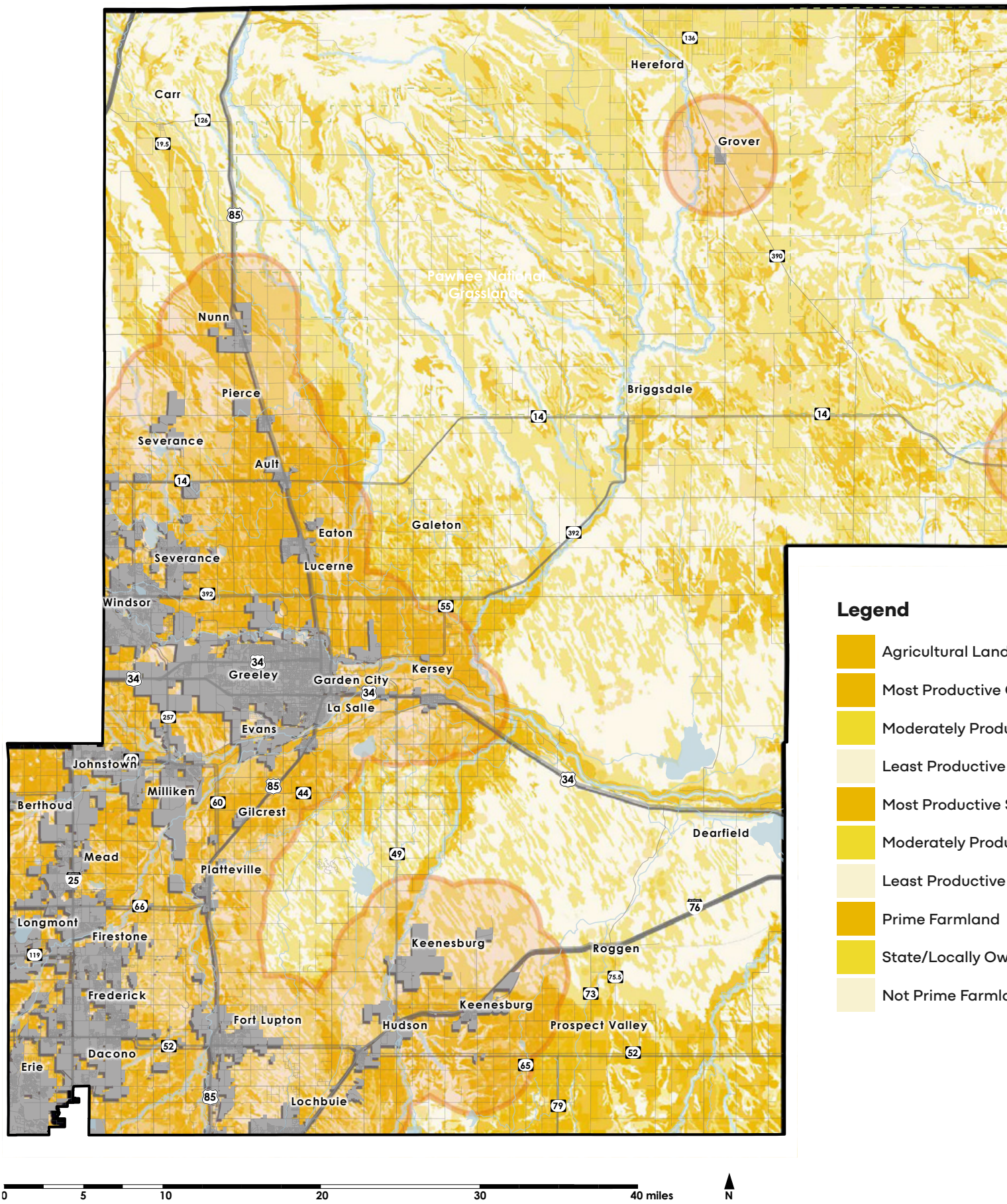
assland / Grassland to

ation District Areas



GIS overlays of recent development activity, municipal growth boundaries, water and sanitation districts, utility service areas, and transportation infrastructure to identify locations where future growth could be accommodated efficiently. Areas with existing or planned infrastructure received greater weight, while agricultural lands and areas with limited services received lower suitability scores.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

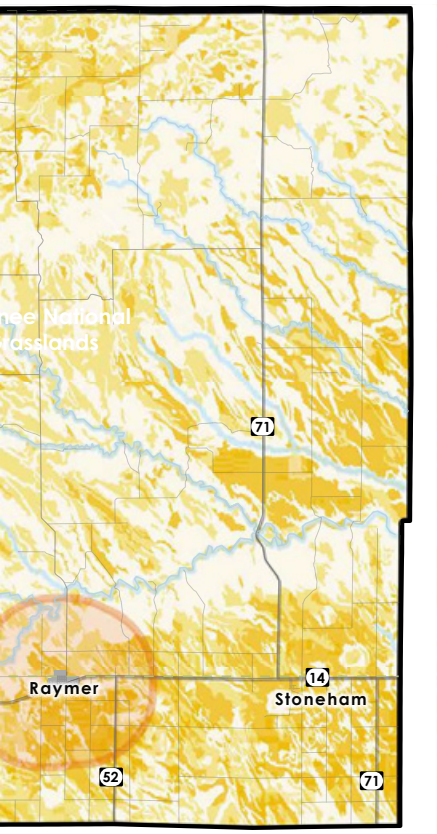


Fig 12. Agricultural Preservation Basemap

Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

Agricultural Land Analysis

The analysis identifies extensive, contiguous areas of prime farmland across central, northern, and eastern Weld County that warrant long-term protection. Conservation priority areas closely align with the County's highest-quality soils, productive cropland, and irrigated agricultural lands, while higher development potential remains focused around existing municipalities and transportation corridors. Transition zones are concentrated near municipal edges where agricultural land faces the greatest development pressure, highlighting areas where conservation tools, development rights programs, or coordinated planning may be most effective. Directing growth toward existing communities can significantly reduce farmland fragmentation while preserving the large agricultural landscapes that support Weld County's economy and identity.

l Lost to Development

Crops by Yield

uctive Crops by Yield

Crops by Yield

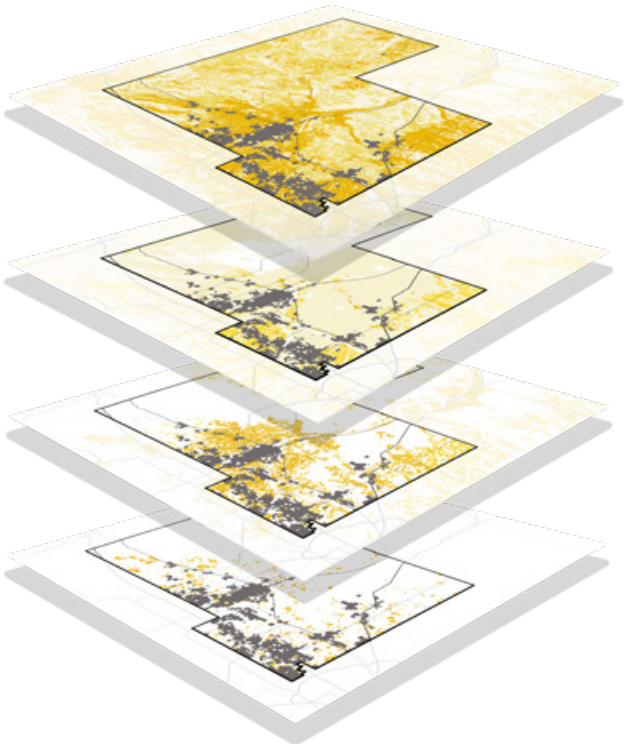
Soils

uctive Soils

Soils

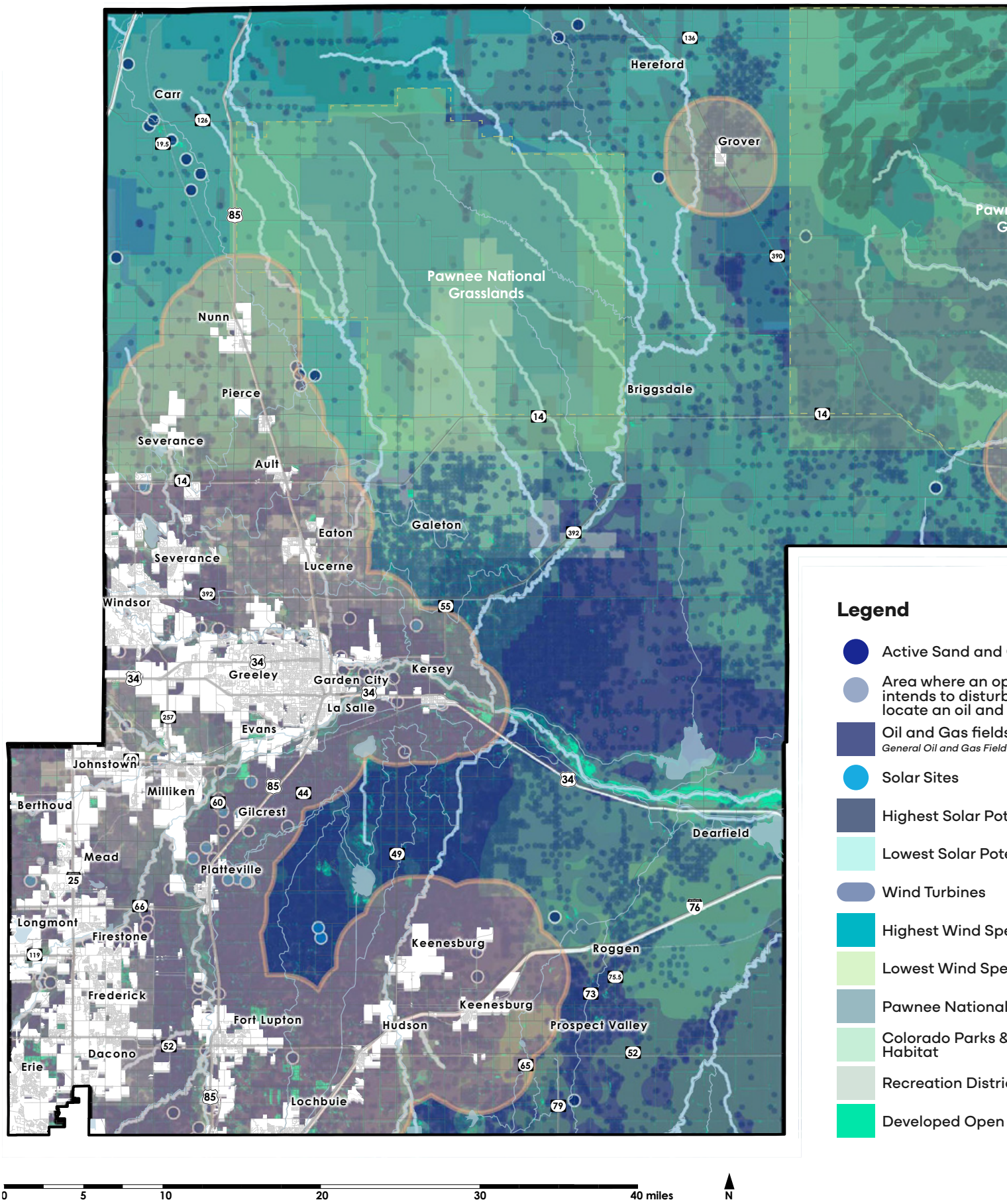
wned Farmland

and



Agricultural resources combine GIS data on prime farmland, soil productivity, crop productivity, irrigated agriculture, historical farmland conversion, and conservation opportunities. These datasets were weighted to identify areas where agricultural production provides the highest long-term value and where development would have the greatest impact on working lands.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

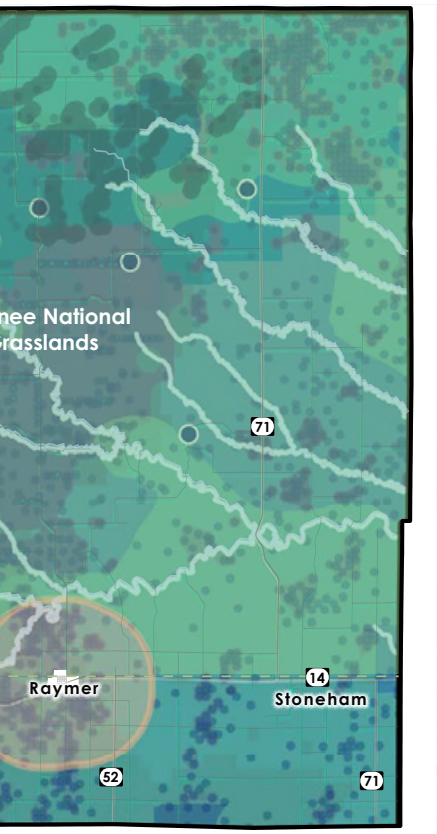


Fig 13. Economic Diversification Basemap

Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

Economic Analysis

The analysis identifies U.S. Highway 85, Interstate 25, County Road 49, U.S. Highway 34, and Interstate 76 as the County's primary economic corridors, with employment nodes clustered around Greeley, Evans, Fort Lupton, Hudson, and key highway intersections. Industrial and logistics uses are concentrated near existing freight routes and utility infrastructure, while areas with strong wind and solar resources provide opportunities for future energy investment. The mapping also highlights locations where industrial growth can be paired with workforce housing, employment centers, and transportation improvements to reduce commuting distances and support local job creation. Consideration should be given to siting industrial uses to avoid conflicts with agricultural lands, environmental resources, and nearby residential development while coordinating future infrastructure investments.

Integrated GIS layers related to transportation infrastructure, freight movement, oil and gas production, active sand-and-gravel operations, substations, wind and solar resources, recreation assets, environmental constraints, and existing industrial development. These datasets identified areas with the greatest potential to support employment growth while maximizing access to infrastructure and minimizing conflicts with sensitive resources.

Gravel Permit Sites

perator has disturbed (or
) the land surface in order to
gas facility

s

s, Horizontal Fields, and Wattenberg Field

tential

ential

eed

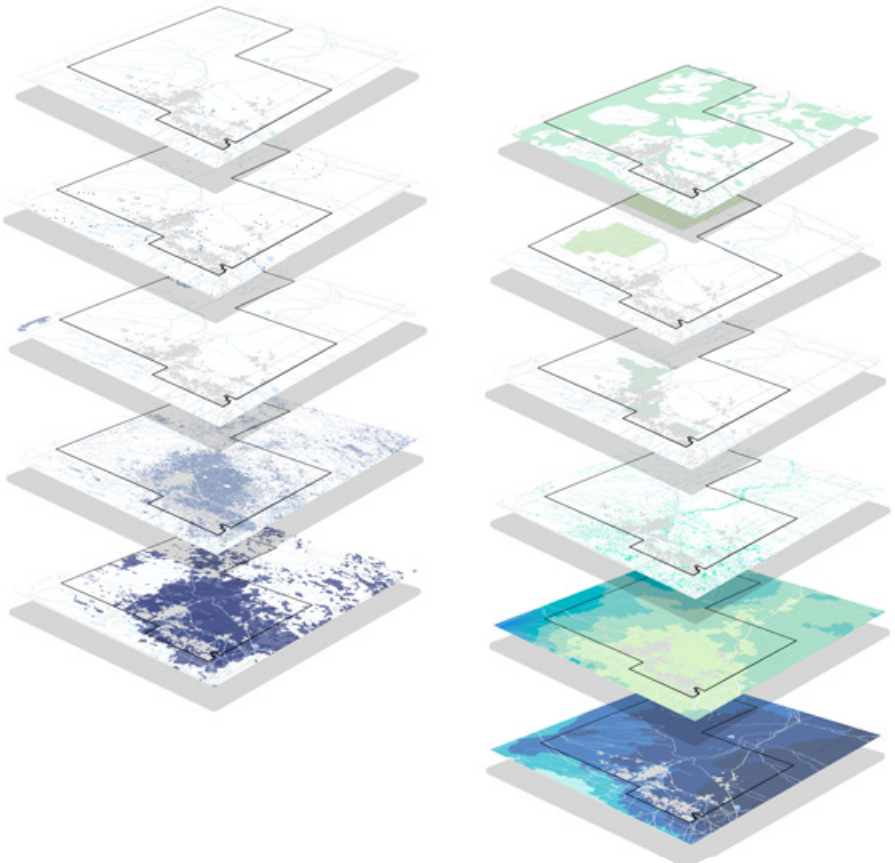
eed

l Grasslands

& Wildlife Priority Terrestrial

cts

Space



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

4



CHAPTER 4

FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is a critical component of Comprehensive Planning, guiding long-term development and land use decisions. This is not zoning, but it can help to support future decisions related to policy implementation and zoning code updates. A FLUM ensures that development is consistent with the community's long-term vision and Goals for desired future development patterns; aligns future decision-making with infrastructure needs and environmental considerations; balances job growth and business creation with housing; and supports prioritizing resource allocation.

Future Land Use Classifications define the Place Types on the FLUM, establishing design standards and development intensity to guide the future character. These classifications support the Goals and Objectives in this Plan and may inform future land use decisions and improvements to the Weld County Code.



Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) associated Place Types serve as the primary framework for guiding long-term growth and land use decision-making in Weld County. Rather than prescribing exact zoning or parcel-specific entitlements, the map establishes a countywide vision for how different areas are intended to function and evolve. Weld County's FLUM is organized around three Planning Areas that define the contrasting nature of its current urban-to-rural transitions. The Planning Areas structure policies and County investments by geography, directing growth to where infrastructure exists, acknowledging the value of maintaining highly productive agricultural lands that define working lands and rural heritage, and supporting economic centers that strengthen long-term prosperity.

Place Types, together with corridors, hubs, and overlay districts, provide a consistent vocabulary for describing desired development patterns and community character across the County. The FLUM is intended to guide policy decisions, intergovernmental coordination, annexation discussions, rezoning requests, and future updates to the County's land use regulations, while maintaining flexibility to respond to changing conditions over time.

Land Use Code Alignment

Weld County's existing Land Use Code provides the regulatory tools necessary to achieve the policies established in this updated Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use Code is codified in Chapters 22: Comprehensive Plan, 23: Zoning, and 24: Subdivision Regulations of the 'Weld County Charter and Code'. Together, these chapters form the foundation for managing land use, development, and growth throughout the County.

Chapter 22

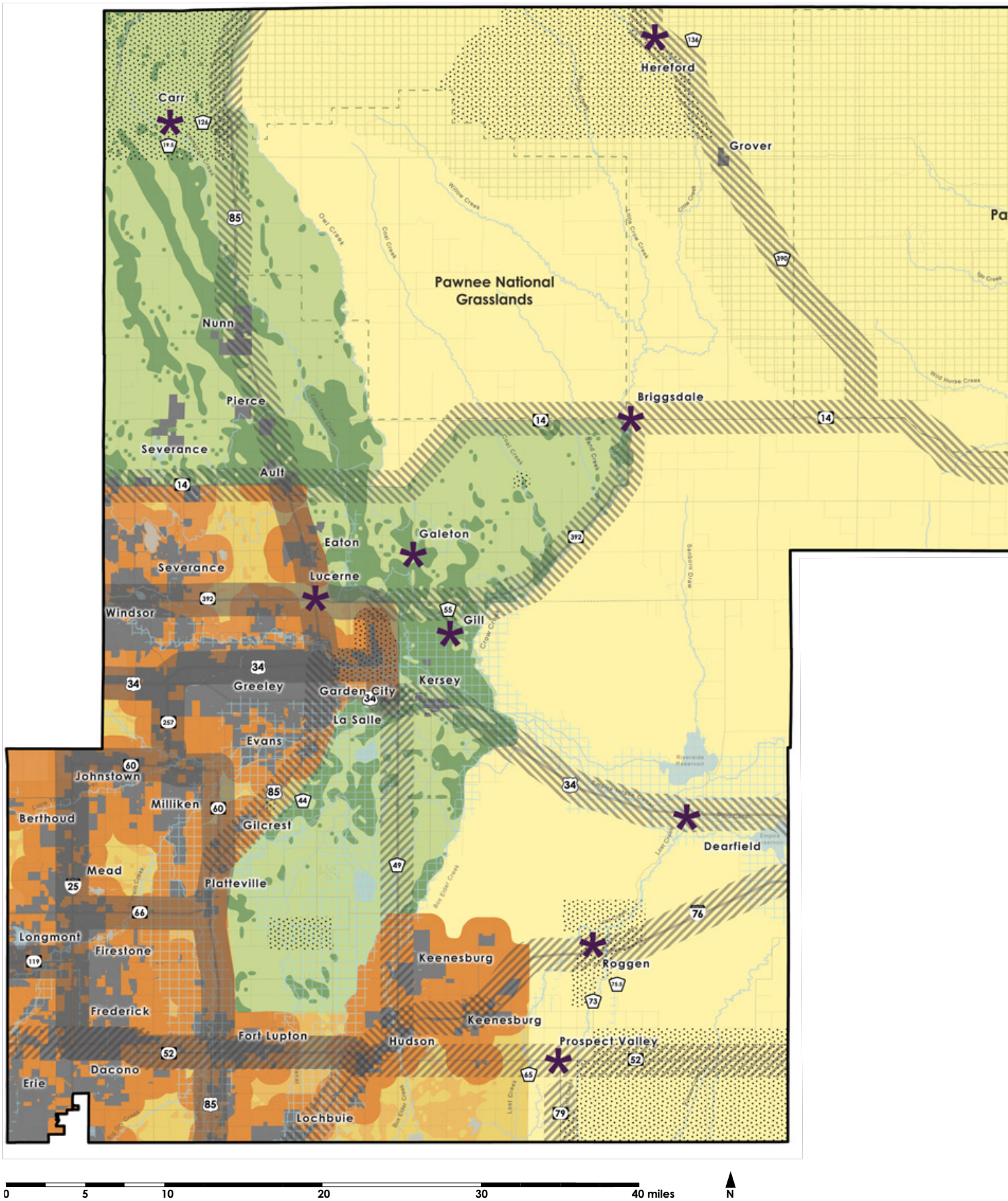
The Comprehensive Plan establishes the overarching Goals, policies, and strategies that guide future development, infrastructure, and environmental stewardship across Weld County. It provides policy direction for zoning, subdivision, and capital investment decisions.

Chapter 23

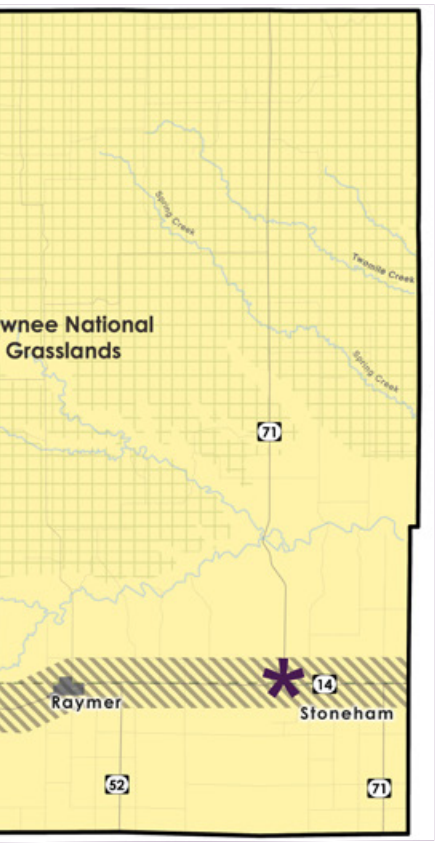
The Zoning chapter implements the Comprehensive Plan through specific zoning districts that define allowed land uses, densities, setbacks, and development standards. It also outlines procedures for rezonings, Use by Special Review (USR) applications, and amendments to the zoning map.

Chapter 24

Subdivision Regulations govern the division of land, including rural land divisions, minor subdivisions, and Family Farm Divisions, ensuring that new lots are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, zoning requirements, and available infrastructure.



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



Legend

PLACE TYPES

Planning Area 1: Growth Opportunity Area

- Municipal Coordination Area
- Rural Infill Residential Area
- Urban Agriculture Area

Planning Area 2: Productive Agricultural Interface

- Agricultural Transition Area
- Priority Agricultural Area

Planning Area 3: Rangeland and Rural Landscapes

- Rural Rangeland and Managed Lands

HUBS

- Rural Crossroads

CORRIDORS

- Commercial
- Agribusiness
- Energy and Technology

OVERLAYS

- Water Systems
- Prairie Ecological
- Priority Development Area

- Incorporated Cities and Towns
- Water Bodies
- Pawnee National Grasslands
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Tertiary Roads

Fig 14. Future Land Use Map Composite

Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

Weld County's Future Land Use Map prioritizes directing growth to areas with existing infrastructure, acknowledges the value of maintaining highly productive agricultural lands that define working lands and rural heritage, and supports economic centers that strengthen long-term prosperity. This approach reinforces an annexation-first philosophy, creates a clear distinction between growth and conservation areas, and provides flexibility for economic development. Place Types are intended to guide future mapping, zoning updates, infrastructure investment, and intergovernmental coordination.

Future Land Use Classifications

The following land use classifications outline the character and design criteria for the land uses shown on the FLUM. These are broken into three primary Planning Areas, each with a set of Place Types, and supported by Community Hubs, Corridors, and Overlay Districts in key locations as outlined below.

MAP 1

Planning Areas

Planning Areas recognize the diverse needs of Weld County's landscapes and provide a countywide approach to growth. These include:

Planning Area 1

Growth Opportunity Area: Suburban growth and municipal coordination.

Planning Area 2

Productive Agricultural Interface: Active farms and ranches, feedlots, greenhouse operations, and other agriculture, agriculture-related manufacturing, and rural towns.

Planning Area 3

Rangeland and Rural Landscapes: Grasslands, ranchlands and other agriculture, productive industries, energy development, and rural towns.

MAP 2

Place Types

Place Types define the desired development pattern within each Planning Area. These include:

Municipal Coordination Area

Municipal Coordination Areas are areas adjacent to municipalities that are planned collaboratively to accommodate future growth and infrastructure investment. These areas serve as a transition to rural Weld County, and these development types are anticipated to occur within municipal annexations.

Rural Infill Residential

The Rural Infill Residential Place Type includes existing rural communities and established residential areas where limited infill can strengthen communities without extending significant new infrastructure or fragmenting agricultural lands.

Urban Agriculture

The Urban Agriculture Place Type contains areas where agriculture and urban development coexist through smaller-scale farming practices, local food production, agribusinesses, and educational agriculture integrated with growing communities.

Agricultural Transition Area

Agricultural Transition Areas exist where agriculture remains important while future land use may gradually evolve to compatible uses such as low-density rural development with conservation emphasis.

Priority Agricultural Area

Priority Agricultural Areas are productive agricultural landscapes where long-term agricultural viability is the primary objective. These lands support the County's economy, heritage, and food production.

Rural Rangeland and Managed Lands

These areas contribute to Weld County's western heritage, scenic character, and rural economy. Large open landscapes are characterized by agriculture, ranching, grazing, and other economically productive rural and large landscape uses such as extractive industries. Includes grasslands and other natural resources and managed lands.

MAP 3

Hubs, Corridors, and Overlays

Rural Crossroads

Rural Crossroads are concentrated areas of services, activity, and community identity. These include:

Historic Townsites: Sites that function as towns such as Galeton and Carr or could potentially function like towns, such as Dearfield.

Intersections: Areas with established mixture of uses that function as community centers, such as Prospect Valley.

Corridors

Corridors align future uses with mobility and infrastructure.
These include:

- Commercial Mixed-Use Corridor
- Agribusiness Corridor
- Energy and Technology Corridor
- Ecological Corridor

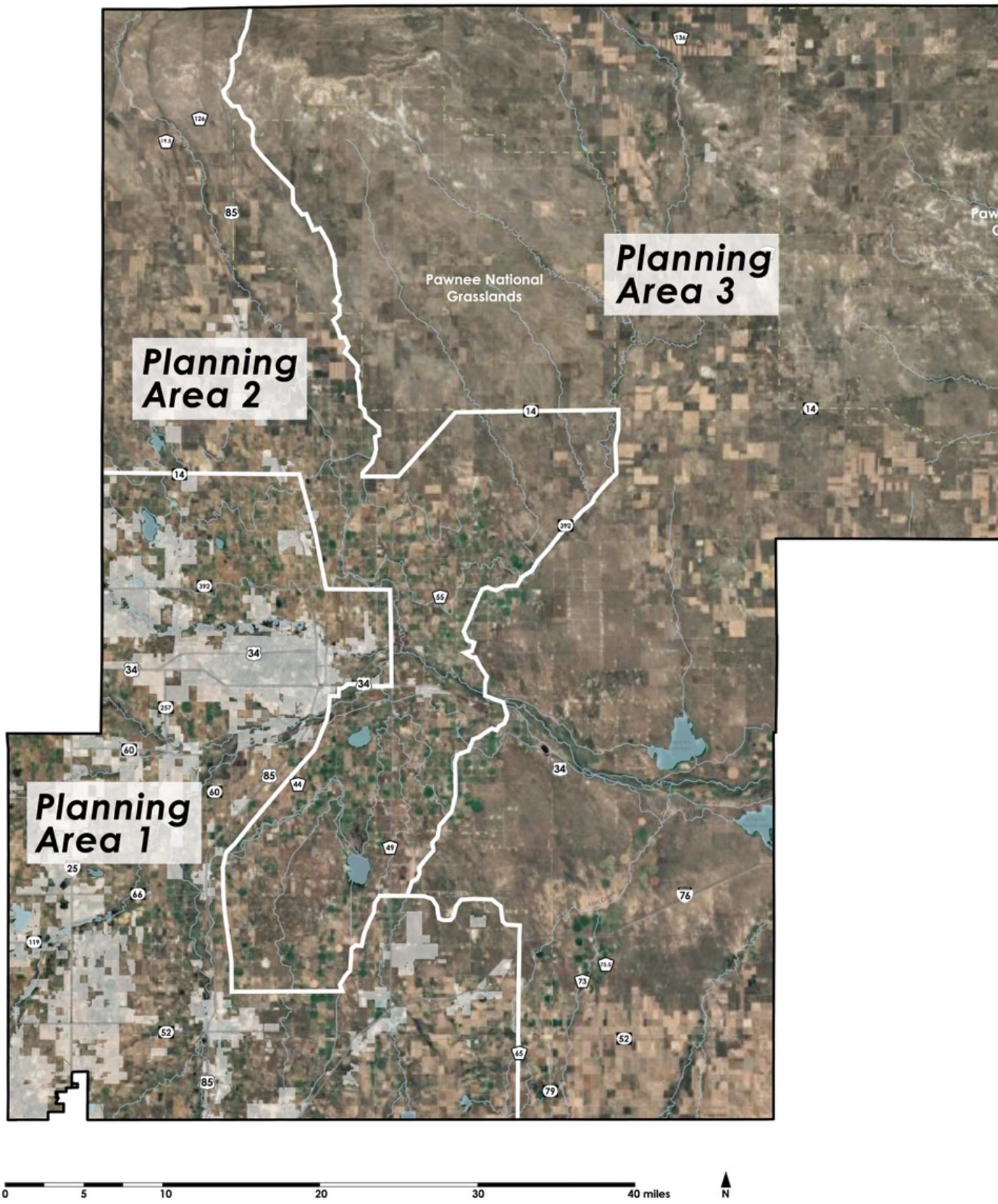
Priority Development Areas

Highlight specific resources and systems for future use.



Horses graze across Weld County's open grasslands.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW


Planning Area 1
Planning Area 2
Planning Area 3
Pawnee National Grasslands
0
5
10
20
30
40 miles
N

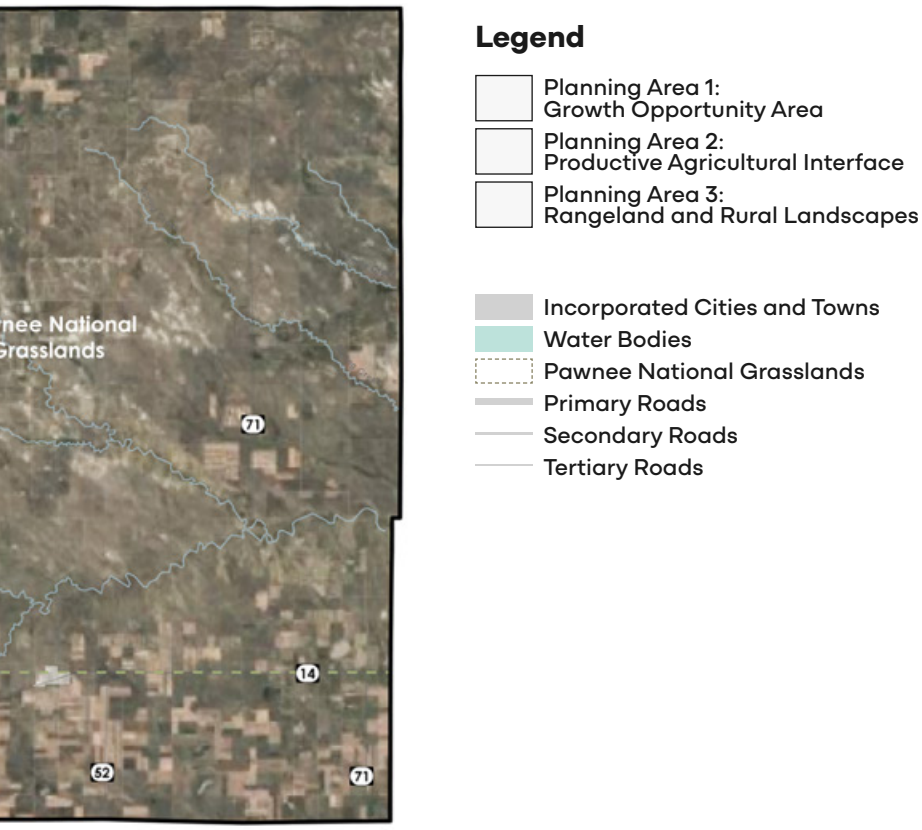
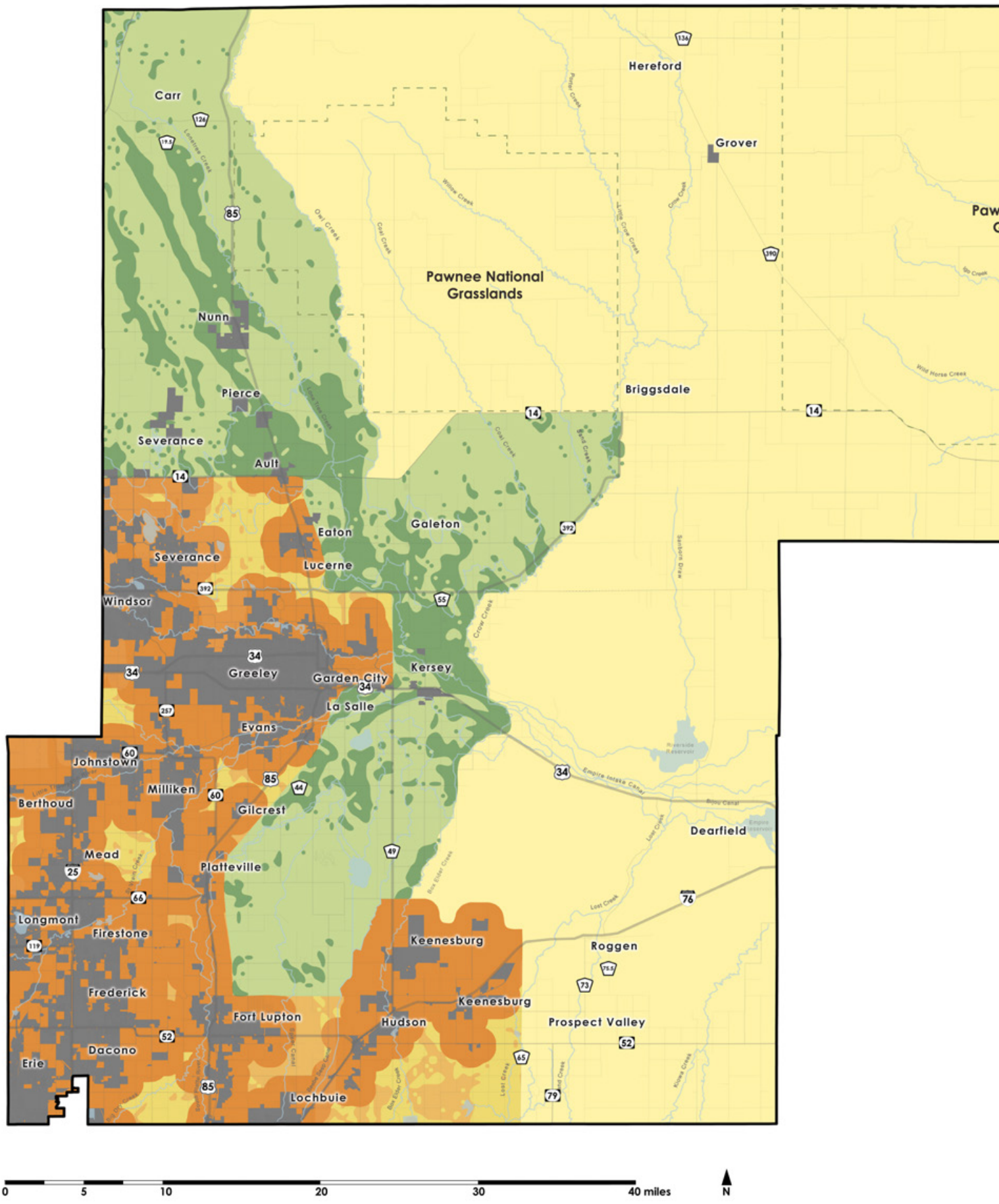


Fig 15. Planning Areas

Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

1. Planning Areas Map

The Planning Areas Map establishes a Countywide approach for managing growth, conservation, and economic development by organizing Weld County into three distinct areas: Growth Opportunity Areas, Agricultural Buffer areas, and Rangeland and Productive Landscapes. These areas reflect the County's commitment to directing growth toward locations with existing or planned infrastructure, preserving agricultural lands, and rural character, and supporting long-term economic resilience. This framework reinforces an annexation-first approach and provides clarity for future land use decisions and resource allocation.



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

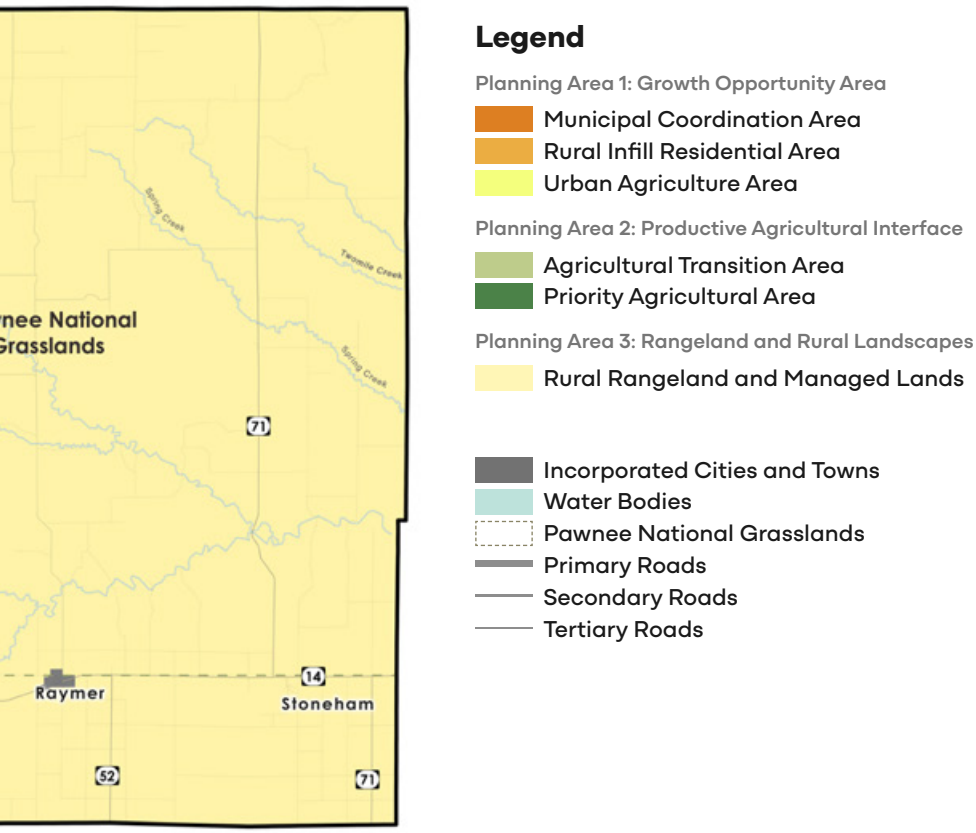


Fig 16. Place Types

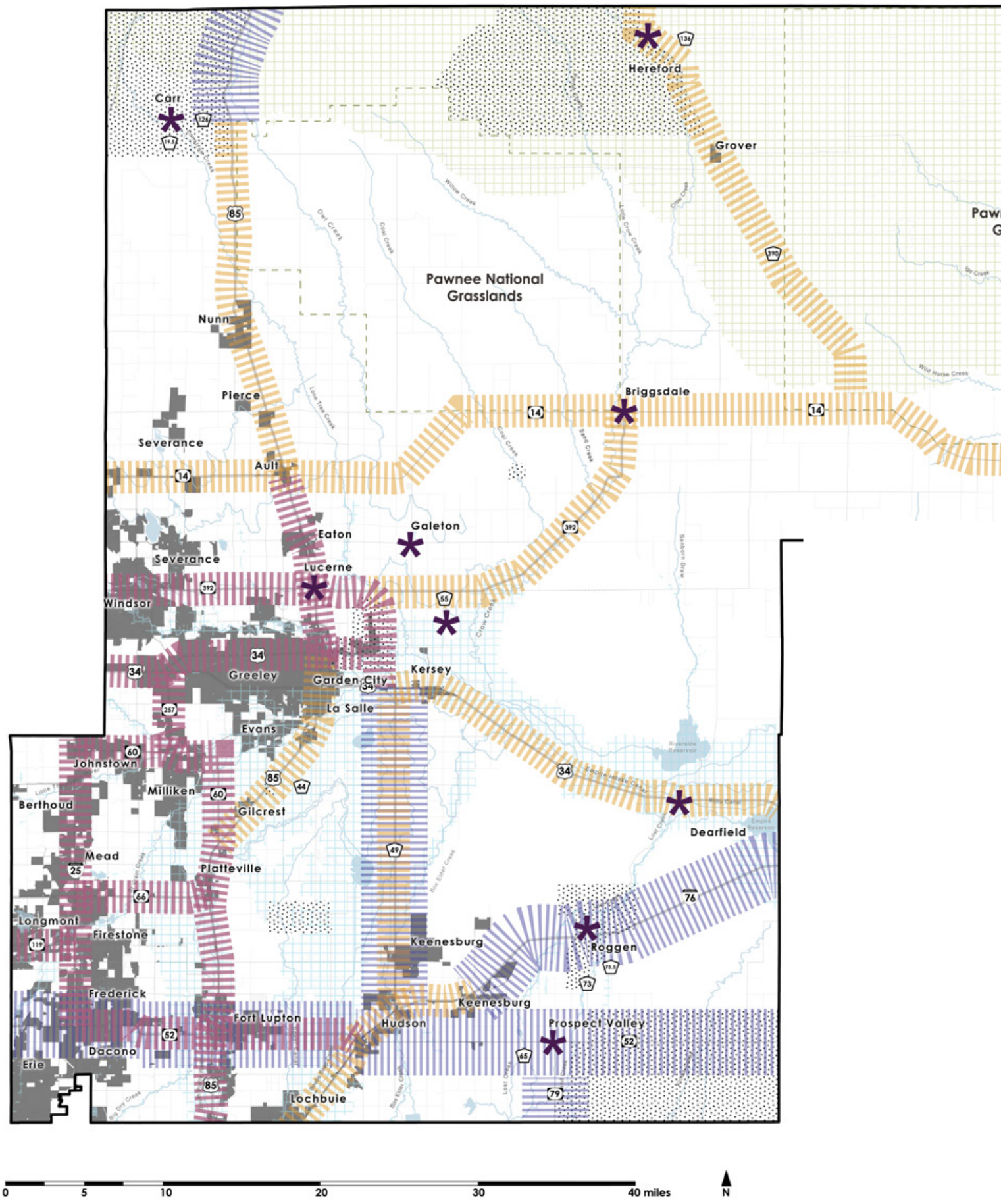
Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

2. Place Types Map

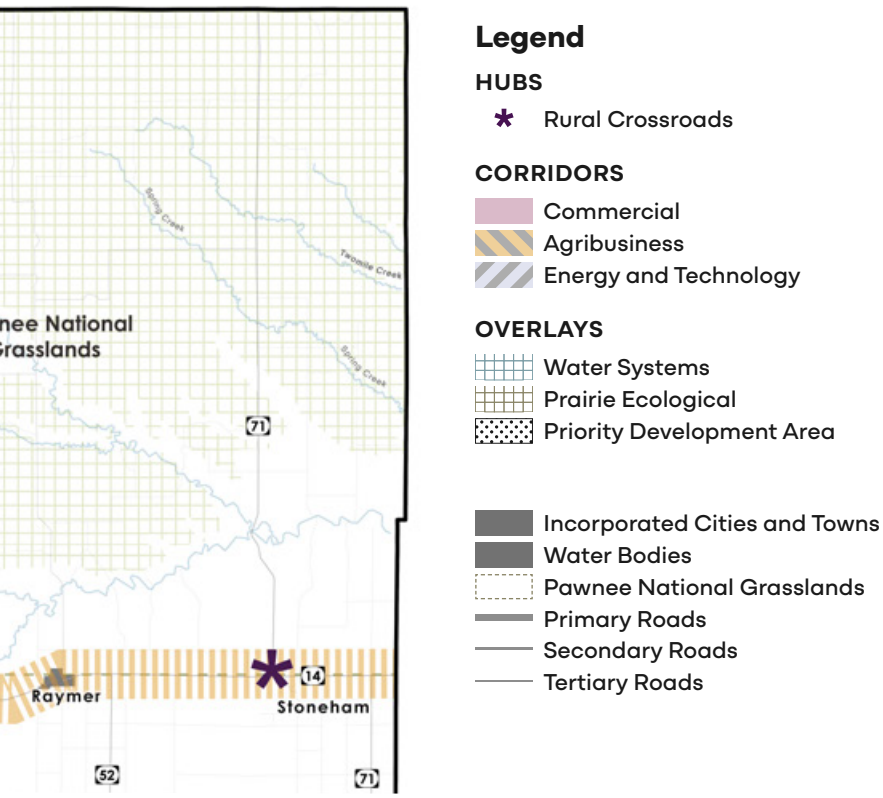
The Place Types Map illustrates the desired development patterns within Weld County's three Planning Areas, translating the Future Land Use Map into a more detailed framework for character and intensity. Each Place Type defines how land is expected to function and evolve, ranging from compact employment and residential areas near municipalities to rural infill, agricultural preservation zones, and rangeland landscapes. Together, these Place Types guide future zoning, infrastructure investment, and intergovernmental coordination while maintaining flexibility to respond to changing conditions.

Place Types are described in detail on pages 66–71.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



Legend

HUBS

- Rural Crossroads

CORRIDORS

- Commercial
- Agribusiness
- Energy and Technology

OVERLAYS

- Water Systems
- Prairie Ecological
- Priority Development Area

- Incorporated Cities and Towns
- Water Bodies
- Pawnee National Grasslands
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Tertiary Roads

Fig 17. Hubs, Corridors, and Overlays

Sources: ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, USDA,USFWS

3. Hubs, Corridors, and Overlays Map

The Hubs, Corridors, and Overlays Map identifies key activity centers and connected networks that support mobility, economic development, and community identity across Weld County. Community hubs, which are rural crossroads at established historic townsites, serve as focal points for services, housing, and local activity, while corridors align land uses with major transportation, infrastructure, and environmental systems. Together, these elements coordinate growth patterns, improve connectivity, and ensure that development is supported by efficient infrastructure and compatible land uses.

Hubs, corridors, and overlays are described in detail on pages 72–83.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Scenario Alternatives and Trade-offs

Community Engagement Exploring Tradeoffs

Discussions with the BOCC, Technical Advisory Committee, and Community Working Group explored how the three scenarios might inform different policy and land use approaches in the Future Land Use Map. Workshop discussions reinforced that a single growth framework cannot guide Weld County's future; rather, a more layered and flexible planning strategy is needed to reflect the County's diverse landscapes, economies, and development pressures. Participants emphasized the need for a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) that incorporates multiple planning tools, including corridors, overlay districts, transition areas, and flexible growth zones, to better respond to changing conditions while still providing clarity and predictability.

This feedback informed a three-tiered planning framework for the County, represented in the three Planning Areas herein, which focuses on geographies experiencing the highest levels of suburban and municipal growth pressure along key transportation corridors, long-term agricultural preservation and rural buffer areas that protect productive farmland while managing development transitions, and resource-based industries, employment, and energy production. The following section presents a Future Land Use Map, Place Types, corridors, community hubs, and overlays that reflect this direction.

Weld County functions as both a growing urbanizing region and a large rural landscape. Southwestern portions of the County experience significant development pressure due to proximity to the Denver metropolitan area and regional transportation corridors. Other areas remain predominantly rural and agricultural. This duality identifies different needs and priorities, creating both opportunities and tensions that must be addressed thoughtfully. Weld County's planning priorities are intended to provide balance etween foundational ideas within the Plan:

- Support economic growth and employment opportunities;
- Preserve agricultural land and rural character;
- Ensure fiscal stability;
- Support the region to provide housing options for current and future residents;
- Maintain infrastructure capacity and service levels;
- Ensure the longevity and conservation of natural resources and environmental systems.

These priorities are interconnected, and decisions in one area often influence outcomes in others. Scenario Planning alternatives in Weld County address both growth and preservation, economic development and fiscal sustainability, and urban and rural priorities.







All Photos: Focus group participants discuss the three scenarios for the Future Land Use Map

Three Scenario Alternatives

Three scenarios explore different growth priorities and outcomes, representing a plausible future placing varying levels of emphasis on key planning levers. Scenarios remain neutral and recognize that multiple futures may be viable, depending on community values and policy choices, to evaluate trade-offs.

SCENARIO A

Growth at the Edge

Population growth and demographic change drive this scenario, with the strongest demand among working-age households (especially ages 25 to 44). Housing production increases significantly near municipalities, with pressure for more diverse housing types and attainable workforce options. Public facilities and services expand more quickly, including schools, safety services, libraries, and community infrastructure. Fiscal tools, including impact fees and growth-related funding mechanisms, are becoming increasingly important to address infrastructure costs and service expansion.

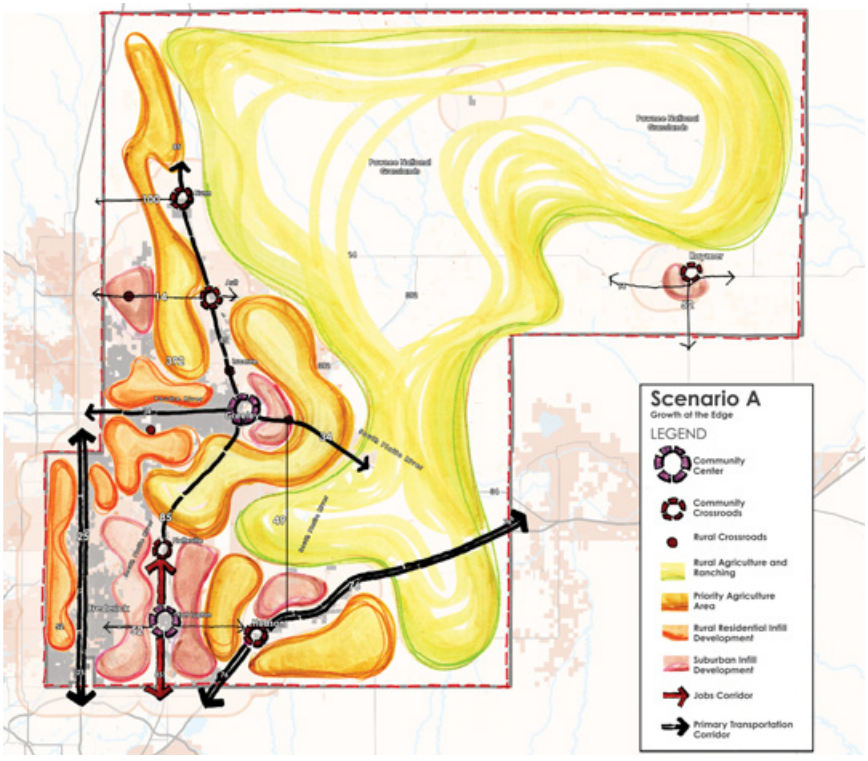


Fig 18. Scenario A: Growth on the Edge

SCENARIO B

Agricultural Preservation

Long-term agricultural viability and rural character are prioritized, and growth is managed to reduce conversion of productive farmland. New housing is incremental and steered toward community centers rather than dispersed patterns. Conservation tools are used more actively, including easements, land trusts, and transferable development rights (TDRs), to shift development potential away from the highest-value agricultural areas.

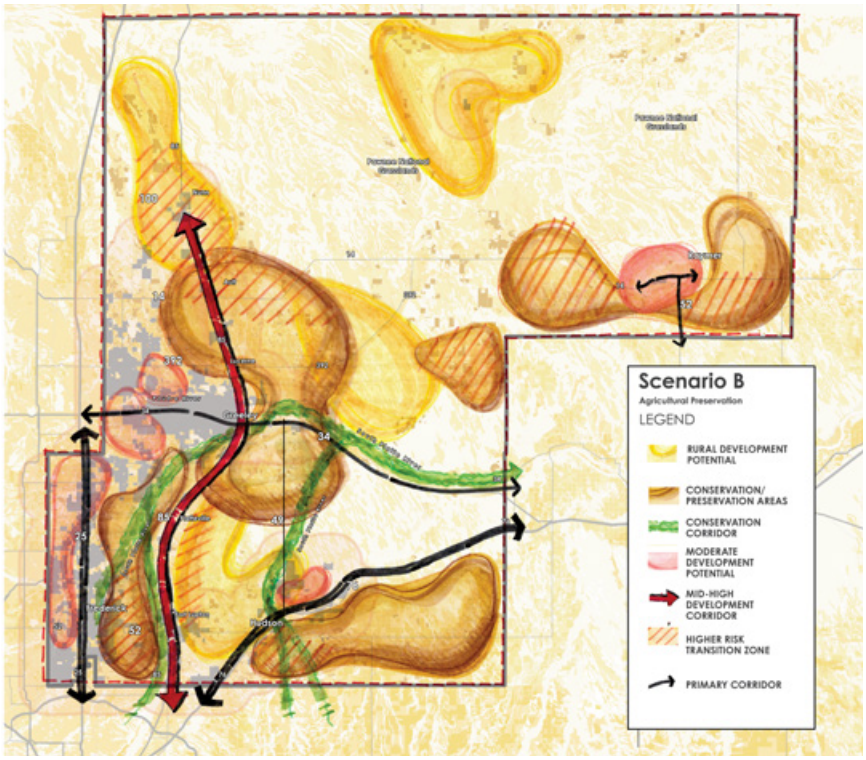


Fig 19. Scenario B: Agricultural Preservation

SCENARIO C

Economic Diversification

Economic expansion drives land use decisions, with an emphasis on job growth, competitiveness, and shovel-ready sites. Industrial and employment uses expand in targeted areas, including manufacturing, logistics, agricultural processing, and emerging sectors such as data centers and advanced industry. Infrastructure investment accelerates to support water, energy, roads, and utilities needed for economic activity. Workforce development and local job creation are emphasized, including workforce housing near employment areas to support younger workers and reduce long commutes.

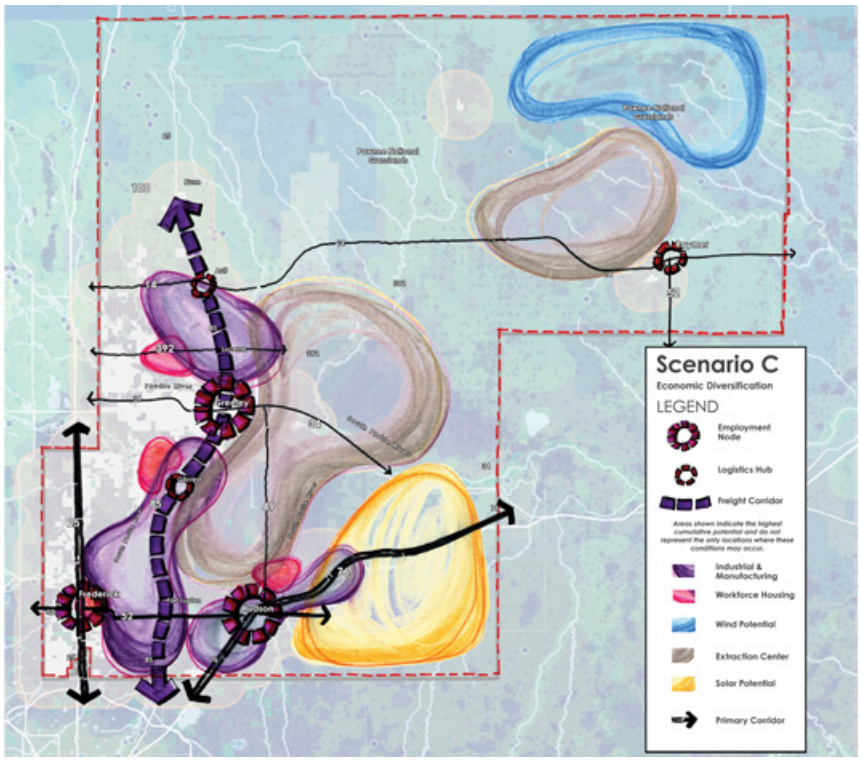


Fig 20. Scenario C: Economic Diversification

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Planning Area 1: Growth Opportunity Area

This Planning Area will accommodate the majority of future population growth in coordinated areas adjacent to municipalities and along major transportation corridors where urban services, utilities, and infrastructure can be efficiently expanded. These Place Types support annexation-first growth patterns, compact development, and coordinated municipal expansion. These development patterns are anticipated to occur within municipal annexations.

Municipal Coordination Area

Areas adjacent to municipalities that are planned collaboratively to accommodate future growth and infrastructure investment. These areas serve as a transition to rural Weld County, and these development types are anticipated to occur within municipal annexations.

Primary Uses

Residential neighborhoods, mixed-use development, employment centers, civic uses, parks, schools.

Supporting Uses

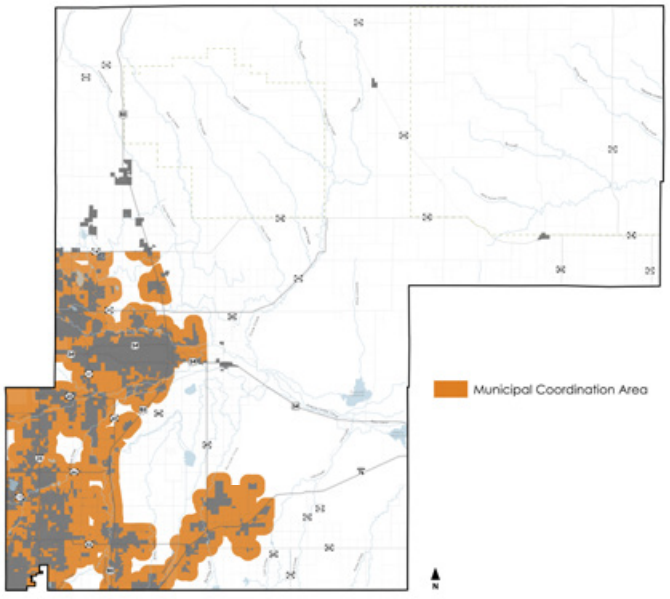
- Commercial, community services, public facilities, higher-density housing.
- Refer to the future land use maps of the nearest municipalities.

Development Intent

- Align development with Coordinated Planning Agreements (CPAs) and municipal 3-mile plans.
- Encourage annexation of enclaves and infill development.
- Prioritize development where infrastructure exists.
- Support compatible transitions to agricultural lands.

Location

Municipal Urban Growth Areas (UGAs).





Residential neighborhoods near municipalities where future growth is anticipated

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Planning Area 1: Growth Opportunity Area

Rural Infill Residential

Existing rural communities and established residential areas where limited infill can strengthen communities without extending significant new infrastructure or fragmenting agricultural lands.

Primary Uses

Rural residential infill; large-lot single-family residential development, ADUs.

Supporting Uses

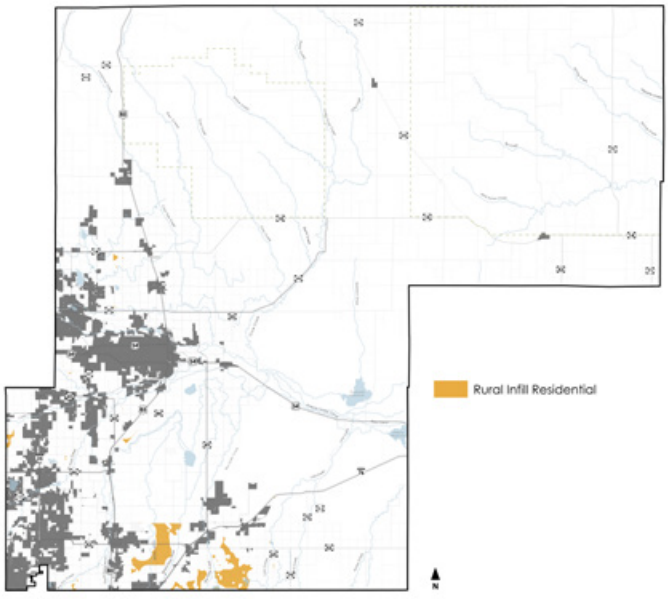
Community facilities, local retail and services, agricultural support businesses, neighborhood parks and community facilities, small-scale local businesses where appropriate.

Development Intent

- Consider requiring public water and public sewer service where available.
- Pursue Coordinated Planning Agreements with every municipality and update outdated agreements.
- Discourage "leap-frog" development.
- Utilize existing roads and utilities as available.

Location

Areas within Planning Area 1 that are outside the Municipal Coordination Area and are not priority farmland.





Large-lot homes within existing rural communities, surrounded by agricultural land

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Planning Area 1: Growth Opportunity Area

Urban Agricultural Area

Areas where agriculture and urban development coexist through smaller-scale farming practices, local food production, agribusinesses, and educational agriculture integrated with growing communities.

Primary Uses

Community farms, specialty agriculture, greenhouses, orchards, local food production, low-density residential.

Supporting Uses

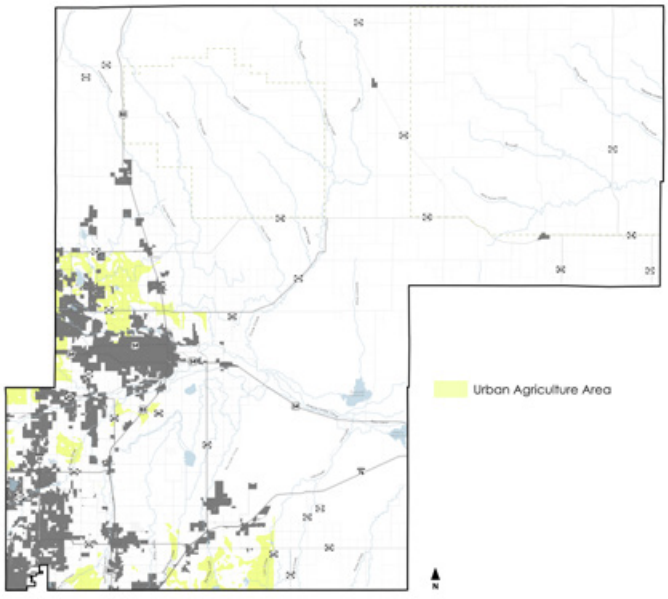
Farmers markets/farm stands, agricultural education, community gardens, limited retail-commercial.

Development Intent

- Support agricultural entrepreneurship and smaller operations.
- Preserve productive soils.
- Encourage compatibility with adjacent existing uses.

Location

Edges and fringe areas surrounding Greeley, Windsor, Severance, Firestone, and areas with productive soils.





Local businesses and gathering spaces support agriculture within growing communities

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Planning Area 2: Productive Agricultural Interface

This Planning Area aims to maintain agricultural zoning and direct dense development away from Weld County's prime agricultural lands and rural heritage resources, maintaining rural identity, environmental systems, and strategic separation between urban growth areas and rural open landscapes.

Agricultural Transition Area

Agriculture remains important while future land use may gradually evolve to compatible uses such as low-density rural development with conservation emphasis.

Primary Uses

Agriculture, large-lot rural residential, agriculture-related businesses, ag-related processing and manufacturing.

Supporting Uses

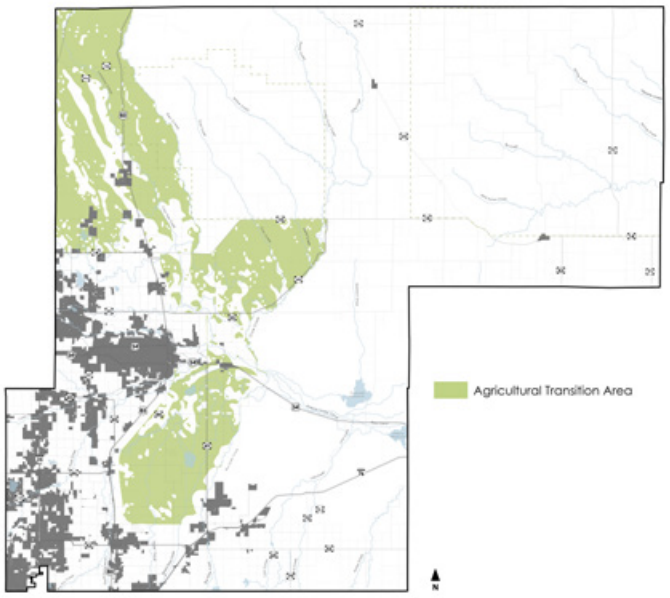
Rural residential, limited commercial such as local food production, agribusinesses, educational agriculture, and agritourism.

Development Intent

- Direct development toward clusters to reduce fragmentation and pressure on prime farmlands.
- Support agricultural zoning and preservation practices.

Location

Northwest and central Weld County where soils are not prime, and along highways.







Top: Working farmland alongside existing rural development

Bottom: Rural homes and agricultural lands coexist as land uses evolve

Planning Area 2: Productive Agricultural Interface

Priority Agricultural Area

Productive agricultural landscapes where long-term agricultural viability is the primary objective. These lands support the County's economy, heritage, and food production.

Primary Uses

Farming (crops), ranching and livestock conservation lands.

Supporting Uses

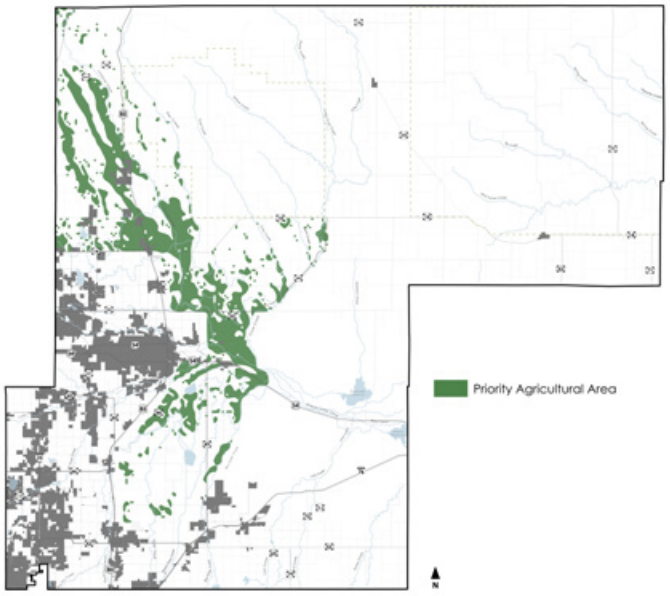
Agricultural processing and manufacturing, renewable/alternative energy.

Development Intent

- Limit subdivisions.
- Preserve large contiguous agricultural parcels.
- Encourage land preservation practices.
- Protect water rights and irrigation infrastructure.

Location

Prime irrigated agricultural lands in northwest and central Weld County surrounding Greeley and along river corridors.







Top: Crop harvesting on productive agricultural lands

Bottom: Cultivated fields supporting long-term agricultural production

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Planning Area 3: Rangeland and Rural Landscape

This Planning Area aims to maintain the significant portions of Weld County that are expected to remain largely unchanged over the next decade or more, with limited development pressure anticipated. These place types preserve open landscapes and maintain agricultural zoning and a low-intensity rural character.

Rural Rangeland and Managed Lands

These areas contribute to Weld County's western heritage, scenic character, and rural economy. Large open landscapes are characterized by agriculture, ranching, grazing, and other economically productive rural and large landscape uses such as extractive industries. Includes grasslands and other natural resources and managed lands.

Primary Uses

Agriculture, ranching and grazing, energy development and extractive industries, public and conservation lands.

Supporting Uses

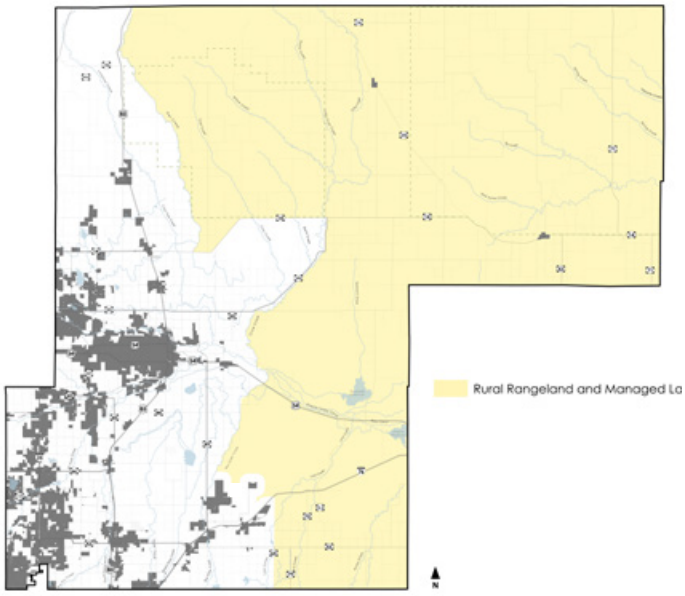
Very low density residential and supportive housing for agriculture/ranching.

Development Intent

- Preserve large uninterrupted landscapes.
- Minimize residential and sprawling development patterns.
- Maintain low development intensity for scenic views, rural character, and large landscapes that are not fragmented by development.
- Require reclamation of disturbed sites to improve and maintain grasslands.
- Protect dark skies, scenic character.

Location

Primarily eastern Weld County and including Pawnee National Grassland region.







Top: Open rangelands supporting grazing and wind energy production

Bottom: Pawnee Buttes and the scenic landscapes of eastern Weld County

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Hubs

Hubs are the centers of activity, services, employment, and community identity throughout Weld County. These support housing, services, and employment in certain historic townsites, and along major roadways.

* Rural Crossroads

Small-scale service centers providing community services at key rural intersections that function as local gathering places and service and civic nodes.

Primary Uses

Local retail, agriculture-based businesses.

Supporting Uses

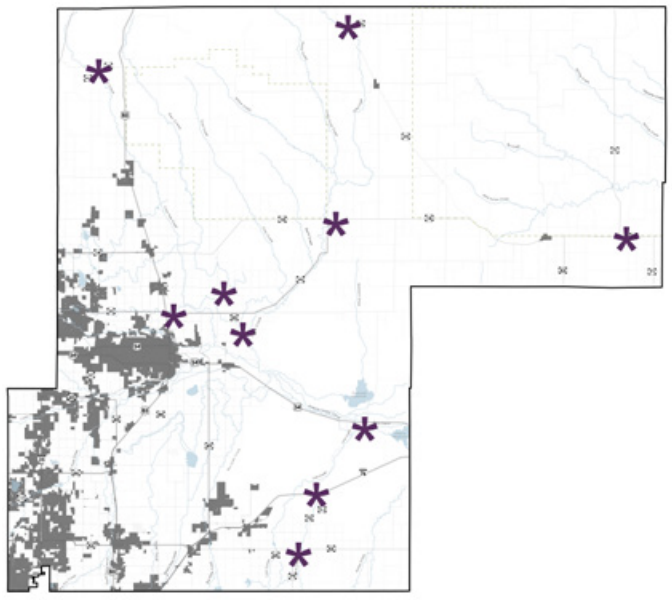
Churches, day care centers, and community facilities.

Development Intent

- Maintain compatibility with surrounding agriculture.
- Encourage local business and community investment.

Location

Carr, Roggen, Galeton, Briggsdale, Hereford, Lucerne, Gill, Stoneham, Dearfield, Prospect Valley.







Top: Historic main streets support local business

Bottom: Community facilities provide essential services to rural residents

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Corridors

Corridors are the primary movement and infrastructure networks that connect communities, industries, agricultural areas, and regional destinations across Weld County. They include major transportation routes, freight systems, utility corridors, agricultural mobility routes, and environmental systems.

Commercial Mixed-use Corridor

Mixed employment and mixed-use nodes and regional access where services like public water and sewer are available. Annexation, where feasible, may be required.

Primary Uses

Office, flex industrial, retail-commercial, hospitality.

Supporting Uses

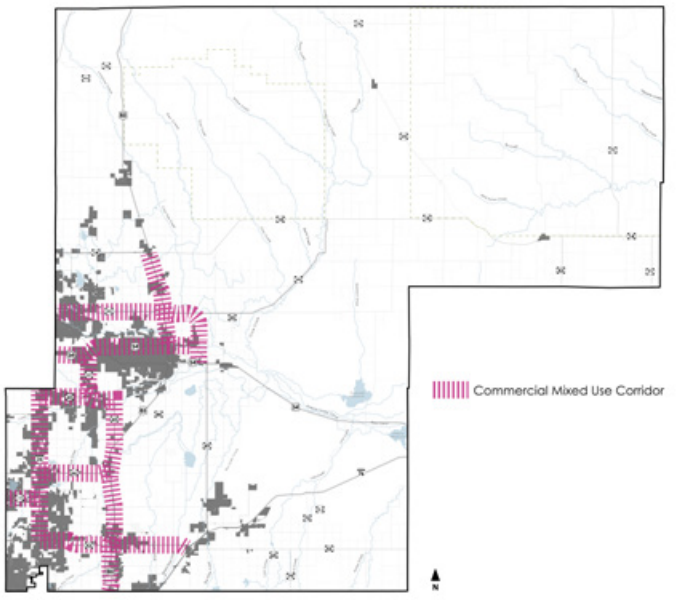
Logistics centers, business parks, light industrial uses.

Development Intent

- Mixed commercial with highway access.
- Coordinate transportation and infrastructure to promote business viability.
- Minimize land use conflicts with adjacent neighbors.

Location

Portions of certain highways including I-25, U.S. 34, U.S. 85, and others.







Top: Major highways connect residential areas with commercial development

Bottom: Retail and services cluster along major transportation corridors

Corridors

Agribusiness Corridor

Rural transportation corridors serving working lands.

Primary Uses

Working lands corridor, farm-to-market transportation infrastructure.

Supporting Uses

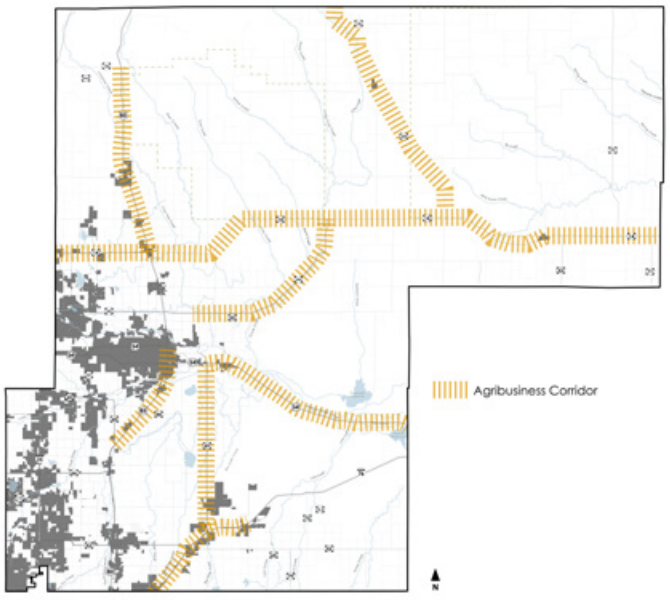
Rural-serving industry and agriculture-related manufacturing.

Development Intent

- Limit residential frontage and incompatible uses.
- Preserve efficiency and farm access.
- Coordinate roadway improvements and consider objectives to support agricultural operations.

Location

Portions of certain highways including U.S. 34, U.S. 85, S.H. 14, S.H. 392, and others.





Agricultural fields and grain storage facilities support farm-to-market operations

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Corridors

Energy and Technology Corridor

Logistics and industrial concentration along transportation routes.

Primary Uses

Warehousing, logistics, freight facilities, industrial processing, advanced manufacturing.

Supporting Uses

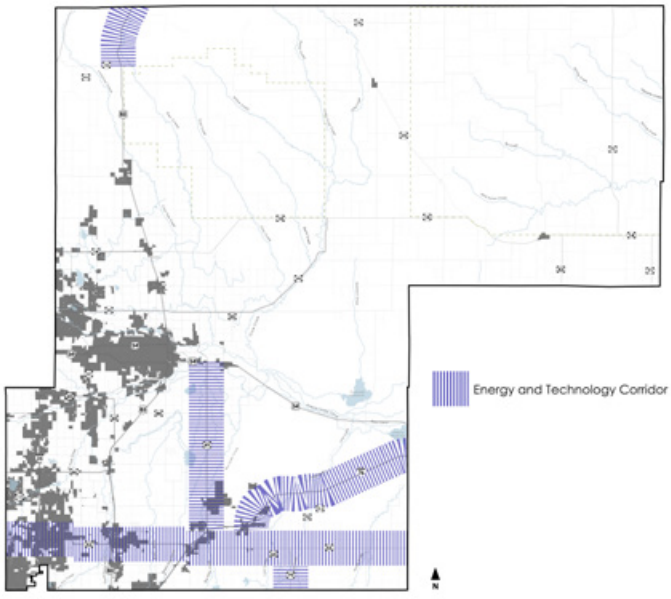
Technology and innovation centers.

Development Intent

- Support economic diversity and employment growth for long-term fiscal resilience.
- Evaluate water and energy demands.
- Encourage sustainable infrastructure objectives to minimize conflicts and congestion.
- Minimize conflicts and congestion.

Location

U.S. 85, U.S. 34, I-76, I-25, industrial segments.





Freight transportation supports industrial and logistics activity along major highways

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Overlays

Overlay boundaries identify resources that warrant closer consideration during planning and development review. They do not replace the underlying future land use designation or determine whether every parcel is developable. Protected land boundaries, applicable regulations, and site-specific conditions shall guide individual project decisions.

Water Systems

The Water Systems Overlay identifies the South Platte and Cache la Poudre river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, ponds, reservoirs, and areas important to groundwater recharge. These connected systems support agriculture, wildlife habitat, water storage, and the movement of water across the County. The overlay guides development to account for those functions and for site-specific flood and water quality conditions.

Primary Uses

Water conveyance and storage, floodplain management, groundwater recharge, and riparian and aquatic habitat.

Supporting Uses

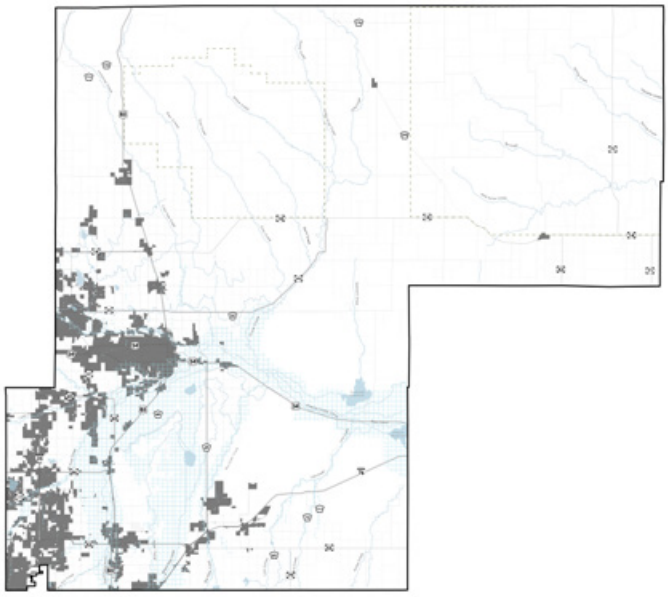
Agriculture and ranching, water-related infrastructure, low-intensity recreation.

Development Intent

- Consider flood hazards, drainage, groundwater recharge, and water quality early in site planning.
- Locate and design features to maintain the function of waterways, wetlands, and irrigation systems.
- Support compatible uses and restoration where they improve water and habitat conditions.

Location

Primarily along the South Platte and Cache la Poudre river corridors and associated floodplains, wetlands, water bodies, and mapped recharge areas in southern Weld County.





River corridors connect waterways, floodplains, and surrounding landscapes

Prairie Ecological

The Prairie Ecological Overlay recognizes the Pawnee National Grassland and the broader northern prairie landscape. The Grassland is an important public resource for shortgrass prairie habitat, grazing, wildlife, and recreation. The surrounding area also contains working lands, aquifer recharge areas, and privately held land with opportunities for agriculture, energy, and other compatible projects. The overlay calls for attention to these resources when projects are considered; it does not treat all land within its boundary as protected land.

Primary Uses

Management of protected public lands, prairie habitat, working agriculture and ranching, and groundwater recharge.

Supporting Uses

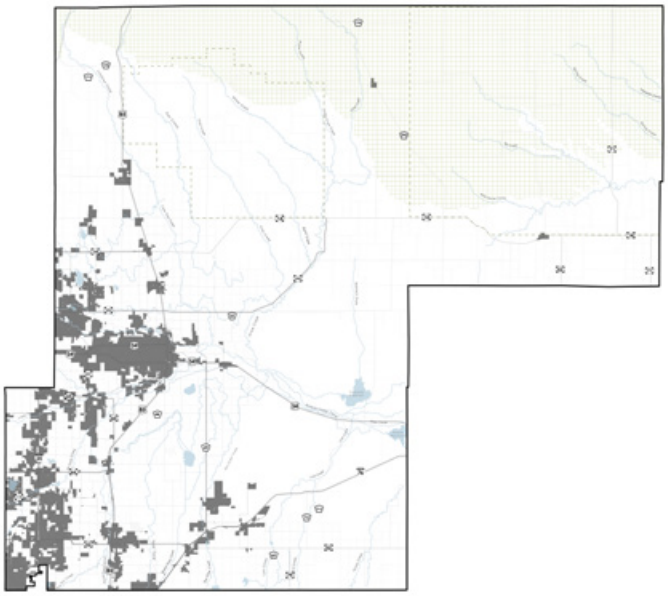
Recreation, agricultural support activities, energy projects, and other development on eligible land where site design addresses habitat, water, access, and surrounding land uses.

Development Intent

- Respect the boundaries and management requirements of the Pawnee National Grassland and other protected lands.
- Allow projects on land outside those protected areas to be considered under the applicable land use designation and review process.
- Use site-specific information to address prairie habitat, wildlife movement, aquifer recharge, drainage, and effects on nearby agricultural operations.
- Encourage project layouts that retain working land where feasible and restore disturbed areas after construction or use.

Location

Northern Weld County, including the Pawnee National Grassland, surrounding prairie and working lands, and mapped aquifer recharge areas.





Open prairie landscapes support grazing and wildlife habitat

Priority Development Areas (PDAs)

Priority Development Areas are strategic overlays applied across the Future Land Use Framework to address countywide priorities that extend beyond individual place types or tiers. These overlays – Priority Development Areas (PDAs) – help guide development, infrastructure investment, environmental stewardship, and economic opportunity by identifying areas with unique opportunities, constraints, or policy considerations.

Priority Development Areas

Areas where infrastructure investment and coordinated growth are encouraged.

Primary Uses

Primary uses will vary depending on the areas. See the descriptions on the following pages.

Supporting Uses

Supporting uses will vary depending on the areas. See the descriptions on the following pages.

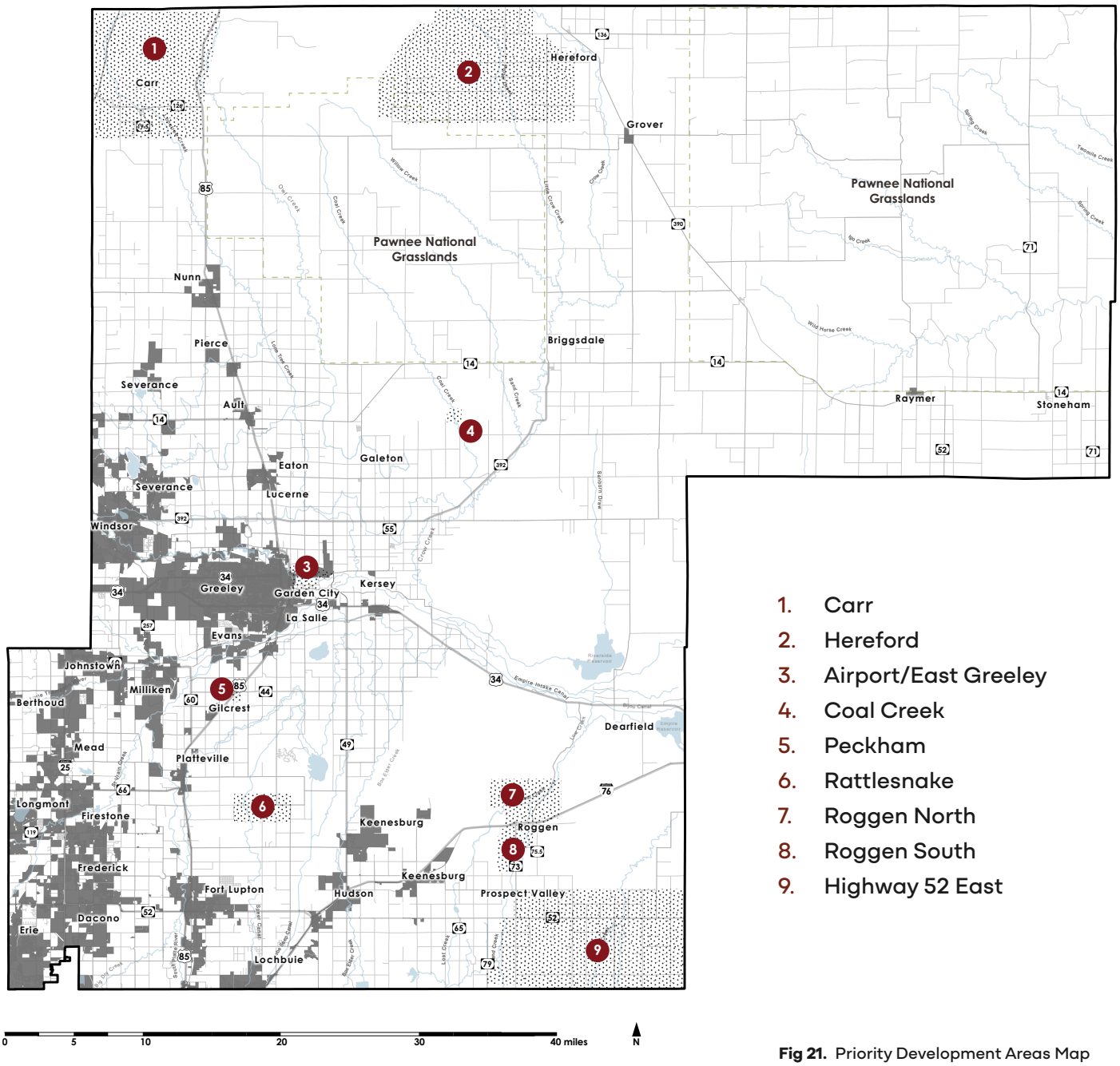
Development Intent

- Focus growth on infrastructure access and services, and prioritize annexation and intergovernmental coordination.
- Support the local economy and contribute to fiscal stability.





Top: Mixed-use development creates spaces for dining and community activity
Bottom: Walkable commercial streets concentrate businesses and services



1. Carr
2. Hereford
3. Airport/East Greeley
4. Coal Creek
5. Peckham
6. Rattlesnake
7. Roggen North
8. Roggen South
9. Highway 52 East

Fig 21. Priority Development Areas Map

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Priority Development Area Descriptions

Priority Development Areas identify portions of unincorporated Weld County where certain types of development may be appropriate based on existing land uses, infrastructure, access, and other local conditions. These areas provide general policy direction but do not establish fixed boundaries or guarantee project approval. The boundaries shown on the [Future Land Use Map/Priority Development Areas Map] are conceptual.

All proposals shall be reviewed under applicable County regulations. Development should respond to site conditions, available services, surrounding uses, and the area's rural or agricultural character. Projects shall demonstrate adequate transportation access, water supply, wastewater treatment, emergency services, and other infrastructure appropriate to their scale and intensity.

Carr (1) and Hereford (2):

Carr and Hereford offer opportunities for energy, technology, and related economic development along Weld County's northern border. Existing large-scale solar development, major electrical transmission infrastructure, and proximity to energy and technology uses in Wyoming provide advantages for industries that require significant electrical capacity or specialized infrastructure.

Development should make efficient use of existing or planned infrastructure while limiting conflicts with agricultural and ranching operations. The Chalk Bluffs, open rangelands, drainages, wildlife habitat, and long-distance views are defining features of the area. New uses should be carefully located and designed to minimize impacts on these resources and maintain the area's rural character.

Airport / East Greeley (3):

The area surrounding the Greeley-Weld County Airport is emerging as an important employment center. Existing residential, commercial, and industrial uses, along with continued investment in the airport and surrounding infrastructure, create opportunities for aviation-related development and higher-technology industries.

The County supports commercial, industrial, technology-oriented, and similar employment-generating uses that are compatible with airport operations and surrounding development. Because incorporated and unincorporated properties are interspersed throughout the area, coordination with the City of Greeley will remain important. Annexation is encouraged where feasible. When annexation is not practical, the County may support development that reflects the area's evolving character and appropriately addresses airport, transportation, infrastructure, and compatibility considerations.





Top: Ranching lands alongside opportunities for energy development
Bottom: Existing transportation infrastructure supports future employment growth





Top: Open rangelands characterize the area's rural setting.
Bottom: Water features and natural vegetation within the rural landscape

Coal Creek (4):

Coal Creek is located between State Highways 392 and 14, approximately midway between the historic townsites of Galeton and Briggsdale. The area has limited residential development and already includes specialized uses such as a rocket-testing facility and oil and gas production. These existing activities provide a foundation for additional technology, energy, and employment uses.

New development should build on existing infrastructure and take advantage of the area's separation from more populated locations. Projects should remain compatible with surrounding agricultural lands and maintain appropriate separation from rural residences. The scale and intensity of development should reflect available infrastructure and the area's rural setting.

Peckham (5):

Peckham is located at the grade-separated interchange of U.S. Highway 85 and County Road 44, between LaSalle and Gilcrest. Industrial uses are concentrated southeast of U.S. 85 within and around the Weld County Industrial Park, while residential uses are primarily located northwest of the highway. This established pattern and direct highway access support the continuation of compatible industrial and employment uses.

Annexation into a nearby municipality is preferred where feasible. Within unincorporated Weld County, the County supports the continued use, redevelopment, and expansion of existing industrial properties. Adjacent land may also be appropriate for industrial development when it builds on existing infrastructure and reinforces the established land use pattern. Projects should provide appropriate transitions and minimize impacts on nearby residential properties.

Energy infrastructure coexists with local wildlife



Rattlesnake (6):

Rattlesnake, also known as Tire Mountain, is an established industrial and energy area bounded by County Roads 39, 41, 26, and 28. Existing operations, energy infrastructure, and the area's history of industrial activity distinguish it from the surrounding rural landscape.

Future development should build on this established character. Industrial, energy, resource-related, and similar uses may be appropriate when they are compatible with existing operations and make efficient use of available infrastructure. Concentrating these uses within Rattlesnake can also help reduce scattered industrial development elsewhere in rural Weld County. Projects should remain sensitive to nearby agricultural operations, rural residences, and other site-specific conditions.

Roggen North (7):

Roggen North is intended to support the continued development of the existing golf course resort as a cohesive destination. Appropriate uses may include lodging, residential development, dining, recreation, event facilities, and other visitor-serving activities. These uses may be considered even when development of a similar scale would typically be directed toward a municipality.

The County may consider a specialized zone district, rezoning, or another land use tool that allows the area to develop in a coordinated manner. Projects should complement the surrounding landscape and recreational character while allowing the resort to evolve over time. Development should be reviewed comprehensively so that individual projects contribute to a unified destination and are supported by sustainable infrastructure, including site-specific or innovative service solutions where appropriate.

Roggen South (8):

Roggen South provides an opportunity for industrial, technology, energy, and other employment-generating development in eastern Weld County. Existing energy uses and significant electrical infrastructure create advantages for industries that require reliable power or specialized facilities. Because of the area's distance from incorporated municipalities, annexation may not be practical.

Development should be concentrated where it can efficiently use energy and transportation infrastructure while minimizing conflicts with agricultural operations and rural residences. Projects should avoid converting prime farmland when reasonable alternatives are available. Site design should balance access to infrastructure with the continued viability of surrounding agricultural lands.

Highway 52 East (9):

Highway 52 East is located east and south of the Prospect Valley junction of State Highways 52 and 79. Although the area remains predominantly undeveloped, existing utility-scale energy development provides an infrastructure base for additional energy, technology, and related employment uses.

New development should make efficient use of existing or planned infrastructure and remain compatible with surrounding agricultural operations. The area's rolling terrain and open landscape are important parts of its rural character. Projects should be thoughtfully located to minimize unnecessary impacts on viewsheds, agricultural land, and natural resources while providing infrastructure and services appropriate to the proposed use.



Grain storage facilities reflect the area's agricultural character

5



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

CHAPTER 5

COUNTYWIDE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are overarching statements that advance the Plan's vision while Objectives are the steps taken to make progress toward those Goals. Goals and Objectives support each of the five Plan Elements (Page 13). Each Plan Element includes an aspirational statement that serves as a vision for that particular aspect of the Comprehensive Plan.

The following sections are organized around countywide Plan Elements, each with Goals and Objectives around the five Plan Elements (Agriculture and Heritage Element (AH), Land Use and Growth Management Element (LU), Economic Development Element (E), Transportation Infrastructure Element (TI) and Water Element (W)).

Agriculture and Heritage Element (AH)

Protect and strengthen Weld County's agricultural foundation as both an economic engine and a defining cultural asset, while conserving working landscapes and natural resources.



Working agricultural lands preserve Weld County's farming heritage

Weld County's agricultural and ranch lands are central to its identity and heritage, but they face increasing pressure from growth and competing demands. Agriculture is both a key economic driver and a defining cultural asset. Preserving large, productive farming and ranching areas on the County's most valuable soils while reducing operational conflicts is a central focus of this Plan Element.

This chapter presents countywide objectives to protect working landscapes, strengthen agricultural stability and economic viability, steward water and natural resources, and sustain the heritage, traditions, and rural lifestyles that define Weld County. It also introduces long-term preservation tools to help ensure this rural heritage remains resilient as the County evolves.

Community engagement throughout the process reaffirmed the County's strong connection to its rural and working lands. It also highlighted growing concern that the needs of western, more urbanized areas differ from those of rural communities in central and eastern Weld County.

Agriculture and Heritage Countywide Goals and Objectives

Goal AH.C.1.

Reduce conflicts between agriculture and encroaching development.

- **a.** Encourage development patterns that maintain large, contiguous agricultural lands and minimize fragmentation where growth occurs.
- **b.** Limit incompatible non-agricultural uses in priority farmland areas.
- **c.** Support voluntary conservation of productive agricultural lands.
- **d.** Develop new land division strategies to create more options for landowners to preserve agricultural lands.
- **e.** Prioritize conservation of key parcels at the urban edge where feasible to conserve working lands.

Goal AH.C.2.

Support agritourism and historic and emerging agricultural operations to educate on the legacy of Weld County's rural lifestyles and strengthen the long-term economic viability of working farms and ranches.

- **a.** Review land use regulations to provide clear pathways for farmstands, seasonal events, educational activities, farm stays, and farm-to-table operations.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Land Use and Growth Management Element (LU)

Support strong, healthy communities by coordinating housing, services, and infrastructure to meet the needs of current and future residents.



Open rural landscapes highlight the importance of balancing growth with land preservation

Weld County's communities face growing demands driven by continued population growth and shifting demographics. Much of this growth is concentrated in southwestern Weld County and near municipalities where infrastructure, services, and transportation networks already exist. As development pressure increases, balancing edge growth with the protection of agricultural lands has been one of the County's most important long-term planning priorities for decades.

This Plan Element establishes objectives to support coordinated housing growth within and adjacent to municipalities while advancing the County's broader agricultural preservation Goals. It emphasizes coordination with municipal partners to align housing, employment, and infrastructure for current and future residents. The objectives also recognize the importance of managing growth to reduce fragmentation of working lands and minimize conflicts between urban and rural uses.

Community engagement throughout the planning process supported directing housing growth toward municipalities. Feedback also emphasized the importance of preserving productive farmland, maintaining open space and rural character, and making infrastructure investments in a coordinated and fiscally responsible way.

Strategic Growth

Under Colorado Senate Bill 24-174, County master plans must include a Strategic Growth Element that describes existing and potential policies, analyzes potential housing opportunity sites, and coordinates with the water supply element.

This Strategic Growth Section provides a framework for directing future development toward municipalities and locations where development can be supported while preserving the agricultural lands, natural resources, and rural character that define the County. The Goals and Objectives build upon other aspects of this Plan, including the Future Land Use Map, Existing Conditions Assessment, and the Goals and Objectives listed in the Water Element (Chapter 5) and Transportation and Infrastructure Element (Chapter 5).

Existing Strategic Growth Policies

The previous Weld County Comprehensive Plan established policy guidelines for land use across all unincorporated areas of the County. It was codified as regulatory law under Chapter 22 of the Weld County Code. It fulfills Colorado statutory requirements for master plans and mineral extraction planning, making it both a land use and resource-management framework. The 2020 Plan is built on four guiding principles: respecting agricultural heritage, respecting private property rights, promoting economic growth and stability, and protecting health, safety, and welfare. It organizes ten overarching Goals with 37 Objectives across land use, economic development, environment, and natural resources. This vision reinforced Weld County's identity as one of Colorado's most productive agricultural regions, where right-to-farm protections, low-density development standards, and explicit water rights policies have been instrumental in preserving working lands and rural character.

The 2020 Plan also set forth a urban development framework, discouraging urban-scale residential growth in unincorporated areas while encouraging annexation and coordination with municipalities. Through Coordinated Planning Agreements and consistent intergovernmental collaboration, the County sought to direct growth to appropriate urban centers while maintaining compatibility between rural, suburban, and industrial land uses. Economic objectives focused on expanding shovel-ready industrial and commercial opportunities, enhancing transportation connectivity, and supporting small business development reinforce Weld County's role as a regional economic hub grounded in agriculture, energy, and manufacturing.

Potential Strategic Growth Policies

Strategic Growth policies that support the Strategic Growth Element (SGE) connect to the (FLUM) to draw on process inputs and are identified in the Goals and Objectives table below. These growth policies establish a coordinated approach for accommodating future growth while preserving agricultural lands. Rather than identifying where growth may occur alone, the Plan emphasizes directing new development toward municipalities, existing communities, and areas with planned services, encouraging compatible rural development and protecting working lands from fragmentation. The Planning Areas defined in the FLUM draw lines to preserve high-value agricultural lands and strengthen partnerships with local jurisdictions, ensuring that future development aligns with the visions of different parts of the County.

Private Property Rights

A Colorado Comprehensive Plan is a policy document rather than a regulatory document. Landowners retain the right to use, develop, and transfer their property in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

In Colorado, a Comprehensive Plan provides policy guidance for future land use but does not, by itself, alter private property rights or change existing zoning. Respect for private property rights is a fundamental principle of this Comprehensive Plan. It is intended to provide policy guidance for future growth and development and does not alter property ownership, establish zoning, or change the legal rights of individual landowners. Decisions regarding land use and development will continue to be made through established regulatory processes and in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

Analyses and Assessments

The growth objectives presented in this chapter are informed by the findings of the Existing Conditions Report (Appendix A), the Scenario Planning Process (Page 48-49), and the FLUM (Chapter 4).

Together, these planning efforts identified opportunities and constraints for future growth, evaluated alternative development patterns and their trade-offs, and established a long-term framework to guide growth.

Land Use and Growth Countywide Goals and Objectives

Goal LU.C.1.

Continuously work to improve land use regulations to align them with the Goals and Objectives of this Comprehensive Plan, focusing on consistency and efficiency, as well as effectiveness in implementation.

- **a.** Simplify the resubdivision process for historic townsite lots to create usable, buildable lots.
- **b.** Periodically evaluate and improve the County's code compliance program to ensure it is consistent, transparent, and effective in achieving timely resolution of violations.
- **c.** Consider identifying additional activities of statewide interest that enable the County to leverage its 1041 powers over strategic growth decisions.
- **d.** Encourage preservation, restoration, and reuse of historic structures and landmarks.

Goal LU.C.2.

Conduct subarea studies of Priority Development Areas and other areas that may be prioritized for new development or infrastructure investment and refine as needed.

- **a.** Prioritize subarea studies based on development pressure, infrastructure needs, and opportunities for coordinated investment.
- **b.** Coordinate subarea studies with affected municipalities, service providers, special districts, property owners, agricultural operators, and community members.
- **c.** Evaluate transportation, water, wastewater, drainage, utilities, emergency services, and other infrastructure needed to support anticipated growth.
- **d.** Use subarea study findings to refine the Future Land Use Map, Priority Development Area boundaries, and capital improvement priorities.

Goal LU.C.3.

Reduce conflicts between different land uses and intensities.

a. Consider access easements and privately maintained roads used for access to have recorded maintenance agreements to ensure adequate access is maintained.

b. Encourage new development mitigates impacts to existing land uses and incorporates adequate transitions or buffers between land uses of incompatible types or intensities.

Key Considerations for Future Code Update

In 2027, the County's Planning Department staff will work with the Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commissioners to review and update the County's zoning and subdivision regulations. Some potential goals of this project include the following:

1. The criteria for approval of land use applications like changes of zone, site plan reviews, and uses by special review haven't changed much in several decades, and it may be worth trying to establish more objective criteria.

2. Nationwide, many communities have moved their zoning codes away from focusing on the use conducted in a building or lot and instead focus more on the design of buildings and mitigation of impacts. This is something worth considering as the County continues to grow. If it is decided to keep the existing format largely intact, the uses allowed in the various zones should be reviewed to make sure they are consistent with the intent of the zones in which they are allowed.

3. The defined terms should be reviewed and some of them updated. For example, the definitions for "noncommercial junkyard" and "outdoor storage" could be updated and a definition of "rubbish" added to clarify what is allowed and what is not.

4. The County's zoning code enforcement provisions are also in need of updates, especially in light of the recent passage of House Bill 2026-1239, which updated state law regarding code enforcement by counties.

5. The land division options in Chapter 24 should be reviewed and updated to align with this Comprehensive Plan.

Economic Development Element (E)

Strengthen a resilient, diversified economy that supports high-quality jobs, leverages Weld County's competitive advantages, and adapts to changing market conditions, recognizing energy as a foundational economic driver and planning for long-term diversification, compatibility, and resource stewardship.



Agricultural operations support Weld County's rural employment

Weld County's economy is grounded in agriculture and energy production, while also expanding into sectors such as industry, manufacturing, and logistics. The County is both a major employment center and a commuter hub, with transportation corridors that move people, goods, energy, and agricultural products. Its business-friendly approach continues to attract investment and economic opportunity.

This chapter outlines objectives to strengthen long-term economic resilience by supporting key industries, encouraging diversification, and aligning infrastructure with job growth. It recognizes the ongoing importance of energy production, industrial development, and manufacturing while addressing infrastructure capacity, land use compatibility, and fiscal sustainability. Strategic investment, workforce development, and employment corridors will help keep Weld County competitive as market conditions and industries evolve.

Community engagement throughout the planning process showed support for maintaining Weld County's business-friendly climate and economic independence. People in communities along the urban edge emphasized employment growth, housing, and infrastructure expansion. In contrast, people in rural communities highlighted the need to protect agricultural operations, manage industrial impacts, and preserve rural character and open space.

Economic Development Countywide Goals and Objectives

Goal E.C.1.

Support objectives of regional transportation mobility and safety when aligned with County objectives.

- **a.** Maintain clear development and permitting processes.
- **b.** Evaluate County regulations and procedures to remove barriers.
- **c.** Coordinate infrastructure investments to encourage private investment, focusing on transportation, utilities, broadband, and water capacity.
- **d.** Strengthen workforce development partnerships that align education and training programs with the needs of existing and emerging industries.
- **e.** Explore public-private partnerships and coordinated infrastructure investments.

Potential Revitalization Tool

Article 31 of Title 30 of the Colorado Revised Statutes contains the County Revitalization Law, which outlines the powers of a County revitalization authority, the components of a County Revitalization Plan, and the opportunity factors involved with revitalization areas.

The Board of County Commissioners can adopt a resolution identifying the need for this authority, describing the land that would be within one or more revitalization areas, and follow the other processes outlined in C.R.S. § 30-31-104 to establish an authority. The County revitalization authority can issue revenue bonds and use tax increment financing to fund geographically targeted County revitalization projects that advance opportunity factors, including investment in critical infrastructure, development of economic opportunities, remediation of contaminated soils or water, or redevelopment of former landfills or topographically challenged areas. For the full list of opportunity factors, see C.R.S. § 30-31-103(14).

Creation of a County revitalization authority equips unincorporated areas with funding and financing tools previously reserved for urban renewal and downtown development authorities in state statute. It is an option to help a County achieve strategic growth by enabling productive use of vacant or underutilized properties, or repositioning land facing other practical barriers to development.

Transportation Infrastructure Element (TI)

Invest in transportation and infrastructure systems that strengthen economic competitiveness, support agricultural and rural communities, protect public investments, and align future growth with long-term capacity.



Utility infrastructure supports transportation and future growth

Weld County's transportation and infrastructure systems are vital to economic activity, agricultural operations, and long-term growth. This chapter outlines objectives to maintain and modernize Weld County's transportation and infrastructure systems while aligning future growth with available capacity and long-term fiscal responsibility. It focuses on preserving and improving existing roads, enhancing transportation safety and freight mobility, and supporting economic growth through strategic infrastructure investment.

Community engagement throughout the planning process emphasized maintaining and preserving the function of existing transportation and infrastructure systems before expanding new facilities. Feedback also highlighted the essential role these systems play in supporting Weld County's economy, including agricultural hauling, freight movement, industrial growth, and energy production.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Transportation and Infrastructure Countywide Goals and Objectives

Goal TI.C.1.

Support the recommendations of the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) in land use decisions.

- **a.** Incorporate applicable TMP recommendations into land use, development review, and infrastructure planning decisions.
- **b.** Support objectives of regional transportation partnerships with shared priorities regarding mobility, safety, and economics.
- **c.** Coordinate with municipalities, CDOT, and regional partners on improvements that enhance regional mobility.

Goal TI.C.2.

Coordinate transportation and land-use planning to support efficient growth patterns.

- **a.** Preserve right-of-way and transportation corridors needed to accommodate future growth.
- **b.** Encourage development patterns that maximize the efficiency of existing transportation infrastructure.
- **c.** Coordinate land use and transportation planning to reduce long-term infrastructure costs.

Goal TI.C.3.

Continue to support economic competitiveness through strategic mobility and freight investments.

- **a.** Improve connectivity between employment centers, industrial areas, and regional transportation corridors.
- **b.** Support freight mobility along key economic corridors.
- **c.** Identify and preserve corridors critical to future economic development opportunities.

Transportation Master Plan (TMP) Summary

Weld County's 2050 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) is currently being updated to help guide transportation investments, mobility objectives, and infrastructure decisions through 2050. It evaluates countywide transportation across all modes, including roadways, freight, transit, bicycle and pedestrian travel, to support safe, efficient, and connected communities while accommodating future growth and economic activity. The TMP provides a long-term framework to keep the County's transportation system safe, resilient, reliable, and accessible.

The Comprehensive Plan and the 2050 Transportation Master Plan work together to align future land use and infrastructure investment to address mobility needs and long-term development decisions for Weld County.

Transportation and Infrastructure Countywide Goals and Objectives

Goal TI.C.4.

Support improvements to the Greeley-Weld Airport in alignment with regional economic goals.

- **a.** Maintain adequate land and access for logistics-related and other businesses benefiting from airport access.
- **b.** Prioritize improvements to airport access and on employment corridors connecting to the airport.
- **c.** Consider updating the Airport Overlay District to limit residential building within that area to reduce conflicts between increasing air traffic and residential development.

Goal TI.C.5.

Ensure infrastructure systems support planned growth and economic development.

- **a.** Prioritize growth in areas where existing infrastructure can be extended efficiently.

Goal TI.C.6.

Manage transportation investments to reduce conflicts between agricultural operations and expanding development.

- **a.** Consider irrigation ditches and associated agricultural infrastructure in transportation improvements and development review, and coordinate with ditch companies to minimize conflicts and maintain system functionality.
- **b.** Evaluate potential impacts to agricultural operations when planning major transportation and infrastructure investments within agricultural areas.
- **c.** Coordinate infrastructure planning with agricultural preservation objectives.

Water Element (W)



Align development with infrastructure capacity to ensure efficient service delivery and long-term fiscal responsibility.

Waterways support agricultural water needs and wildlife habitats

Water is one of Weld County's most important long-term resources. Reliable water supplies support farms and ranches, municipalities, industries, rural communities, and wildlife habitat. Water is transported from the Western Slope to cities and farms in Weld County, highlighting the complexity and importance of water in this arid region. As population growth and development pressures continue along the Front Range, water availability and delivery systems will play an increasingly important role in shaping where and how growth occurs.

Community engagement throughout the planning process consistently emphasized the importance of protecting Weld County's water resources and keeping them under local control. Feedback showed strong support for preserving agricultural water rights, planning responsibly for future demand, and linking growth decisions to long-term water availability and stewardship.

However, counties are limited by state law and other realities on what actions are available to them. Water law in Colorado is notoriously complex, with water rights being severable from land, and water court being time-consuming and expensive.

Weld County is not a water provider. There are several water districts that provide water in Weld County, plus various municipalities that also provide water, some of which provide water outside their annexed boundaries in limited cases. Water providers outside of Weld County have also acquired water rights associated with land located within the County.

Water Element Goals and Objectives aim to protect, manage, and sustain Weld County's water resources. It focuses on supporting agricultural water use, planning for drought resilience, and promoting long-term conservation. It also recognizes water as a critical natural resource and economic asset that is essential to preserving the County's agricultural heritage and way of life.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Water Countywide Goals and Objectives

Goal W.C.1.

Support the long-term viability of agricultural water resources and irrigated agriculture.

- **a.** Recognize agricultural water supplies, ditch systems, and irrigation infrastructure as critical economic assets.
- **b.** Encourage voluntary approaches that maintain agricultural viability while accommodating changing land ownership and operational needs.
- **c.** Support regional discussions regarding alternative water transfer methods, water-sharing agreements, and other approaches that reduce pressure for permanent dry-up of agricultural lands.
- **d.** Advocate for state policies and legislation that provide agricultural producers greater flexibility to retain agricultural water and reduce pressures for permanent dry-up.
- **e.** Preserve infrastructure corridors and utility access for working/productive landscapes.

Goal W.C.2.

Discourage development in areas that lack water utility services.

- **a.** Share growth projections and land use information that support long-term infrastructure planning with municipalities, special districts, and water providers.
- **b.** Consider existing and planned water and wastewater service areas when evaluating future growth and development patterns.
- **c.** Coordinate future development patterns with existing and planned domestic water and wastewater service areas and available service capacity.
- **d.** Support the North Front Range Water Quality Planning Association's regional planning efforts to limit redundant, inefficient, or fragmented water and sewer services.
- **e.** Direct higher-intensity development toward municipalities and water districts with existing or planned service capacity.

Goal W.C.3.

Align future growth with reliable water service, infrastructure capacity, and long-term sustainability.

- **a.** Coordinate future land use decisions with municipal water and wastewater service plans, capital improvement programs, and growth projections.
- **b.** Strengthen coordination between Weld County, municipalities, and water providers during Comprehensive Planning, subdivision review, and major land use decisions.
- **c.** Use Coordinated Planning Agreements (CPAs), where applicable, to coordinate future growth and land use decisions with water and wastewater service considerations.
- **d.** Incorporate water availability and service considerations into future updates to the Future Land Use Map.
- **e.** Support regional water infrastructure, storage, treatment, and conveyance projects that improve long-term system reliability within Weld County.

Goal W.C.4.

Promote efficient landscape water use and conservation within growth areas.

- **a.** Encourage water-wise landscaping, efficient irrigation systems, and drought-tolerant planting practices.
- **b.** Review applicable County development standards for opportunities to support water efficiency and compatibility with water provider conservation practices, such as landscaping, irrigation, and outdoor water-use requirements.
- **c.** Encourage redevelopment and infill patterns that maximize the efficiency of existing water infrastructure.
- **d.** Monitor water usage at County-owned facilities and explore turf replacement and other water-saving measures.
- **e.** Consider the long-term implications of water demand and availability when evaluating growth and land use decisions.

Goal W.C.5.

Encourage future growth that respects agricultural production.

- **a.** Direct residential development to areas with existing or planned municipal services.
- **b.** Discourage premature extension of urban water infrastructure into priority agricultural areas.
- **c.** Coordinate growth management decisions with long-term agricultural preservation objectives.
- **d.** Promote development patterns that reduce fragmentation of irrigated farmland and agricultural infrastructure.

Goal W.C.6.

Support responsible rural development that aligns with water availability and protects long-term resource sustainability.

- **a.** Encourage development patterns that reflect the capabilities and limitations of wells and on-site wastewater treatment systems (OWTS), including consideration of development intensity, site conditions, water-quality impacts, and the availability of centralized water and wastewater service.
- **b.** Promote conservation subdivision and clustering approaches that preserve open lands and reduce the amount of irrigated landscaping associated with rural residential development.
- **c.** Encourage water-wise landscaping and efficient outdoor water use practices in rural residential development.
- **d.** Coordinate planning decisions with groundwater, well permitting, and environmental health considerations where appropriate.
- **e.** Provide information and educational resources regarding well limitations, water availability, and long-term water stewardship.

Goal W.C.7.

Protect water quality and improve resilience of rural water systems and natural resource landscapes.

- **a.** Protect floodplains, wetlands, riparian areas, and natural drainage systems, which contribute to watershed health and groundwater recharge.
- **b.** Support drought preparedness and long-range water resilience planning.
- **c.** Encourage provider-led infrastructure investments that improve reliability for rural residents, agricultural operations, and energy-related uses.
- **d.** Support provider-led efforts to enhance system redundancy, storage, and drought resilience.
- **e.** Encourage master drainage Plans and regional detention facilities.

DOLA Water Element Compliance

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Water Supply Element is a mandated component of local Comprehensive Plans, required for counties and municipalities under Senate Bill 24-174. Jurisdictions must adopt this element and ensure land use decisions align with water availability and conservation, so they understand availability and constraints. The required components outline (1) consulting water providers, (2) including conservation policies, and (3) assessing future needs.

6



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

CHAPTER 6

PLANNING AREA SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following chapter provides additional detail around the three Planning Areas (Growth Opportunity Areas, Productive Agricultural Interface, and Rangelands and Rural Landscapes) reflecting the different conditions, priorities, and development patterns found across Weld County and have additional Goals and Objectives specific to the needs of each of these district regions.

Planning Area 1: Growth Opportunity Area

Weld County's urban interface grows with intention, directing most development to municipalities. Strategic investment in transportation corridors strengthens economic vitality while reducing long-term public costs. By coordinating closely with municipalities and aligning land use with infrastructure capacity, the County accommodates growth without compromising the agricultural foundation and rural landscapes that define its identity.

This Planning Area will accommodate the majority of future population growth in coordinated areas adjacent to municipalities and along major transportation corridors where urban services, utilities, and infrastructure can be efficiently expanded. These Place Types in Chapter 4 for Planning Area 1 support annexation-first growth patterns, compact development, and coordinated municipal expansion.

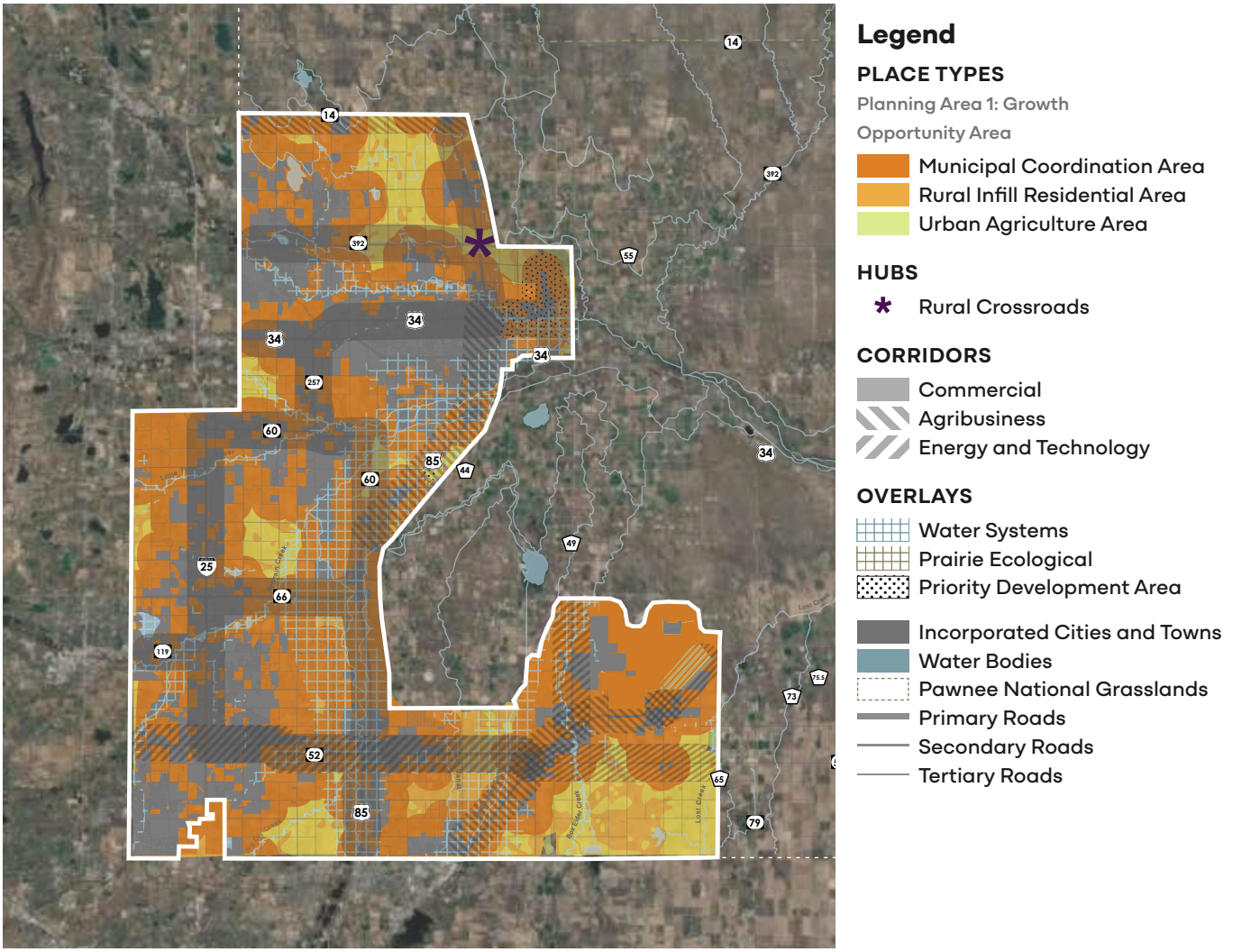


Fig 22. Priority Development Areas Map

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

PA1 Agriculture and Heritage Goals and Objectives

Goal AH.PA1.1

Direct growth to designated development areas.

- **a.** Review and update the Agricultural zone in Chapter 23 of the Weld County Code.
- **b.** Consider rezoning Agricultural-zoned residential subdivisions, historic townsites, and other areas with small lots.
- **c.** Within Coordinated Planning Agreements with municipalities, encourage an urban-rural interface that transitions to less dense development on urban edges.

Goal LU.PA1.1.

Direct development toward municipalities.

- **a.** Continue to refine existing CPAs to direct growth toward the mutual benefit of the County and municipalities, in accordance with this Plan and municipal Comprehensive Plans.
- **b.** Coordinate future growth with available infrastructure, emergency services, schools, and public facilities to maintain efficient service delivery.
- **c.** Encourage municipal annexation of areas that are surrounded by annexed land and in well-served areas.

PA1 Land Use and Growth Management Goals and Objectives

Goal LU.PA1.2.

Coordinate with municipalities on issues relating to land use and development.

- **a.** Coordinate with municipalities through Coordinated Planning Agreements (CPAs) to identify areas beyond long-range plans for urban-scale growth, infrastructure, and services.
- **b.** Collaborate with municipalities to annotate and characterize key areas within Coordinated Planning Agreements for a variety of potential shared strategic growth objectives, such as urban-agricultural buffers that maintain agricultural land between municipalities.

Goal LU.PA1.3.

Encourage the infill, revitalization, and reuse of vacant lots.

- **a.** Support annexation, infill, and redevelopment in designated Priority Development Areas and corridors, Rural Crossroads, urban growth areas, and near existing employment centers.
- **b.** Explore revitalization options for townsites and enclaves to encourage annexation.
- **c.** Review and consider updating the Agricultural zoning, currently divided by those areas within subdivisions, those within historic townsites, and those outside subdivisions and townsites.

PA1 Economic Development Goals and Objectives

Goal E.PA1.1

Encourage economic expansion and diversification in priority areas near municipal edges to support a thriving economy with employment opportunities across various sectors.

- **a.** Encourage employment growth in areas with access to existing infrastructure, housing, transportation, and other services. Prioritize annexation.
- **b.** Review and update the Commercial zoning districts. Consider changing C-4 (Highway Commercial) to mixed-use.
- **c.** Support agritourism and other potential markets providing more economic prosperity, business incubators, and job opportunities, considering accessible locations within or near municipalities and Priority Development Areas.
- **d.** Prioritize investments in key transportation and drainage infrastructure projects vital to economic development and diversification.

PA1 Transportation and Infrastructure Goals and Objectives

Goal TI.PA1.1.

Encourage multimodal connections, including trails, bicycle facilities, and other appropriate transportation options, that connect growth areas with municipalities, employment centers, and community destinations.

Planning Area 2: Productive Agricultural Landscapes

Weld County's rural and agricultural lands remain the enduring heart of its economy and identity. These areas may see different pressures or future transitions, however, the values of rural areas and productive landscapes are preserved through thoughtful growth management that directs urban development to towns and farm-friendly development to appropriate locations, and promotes stewardship of the health of our water and natural resources.

This Planning Area aims to maintain agricultural zoning, directing development away from Weld County's prime agricultural lands and rural heritage resources, while preserving rural identity, environmental systems, and a strategic separation between urban growth areas and rural open landscape.

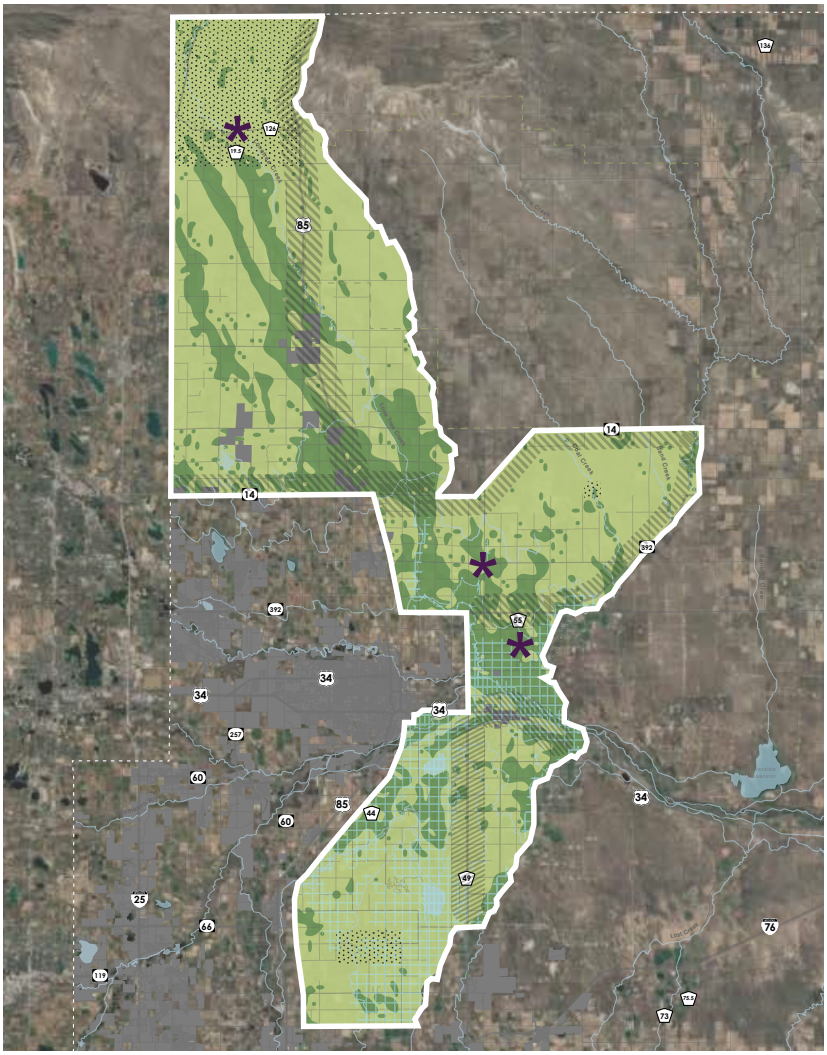


Fig 23. Priority Development Areas Map

PA2 Agriculture and Heritage Goals and Objectives

Goal AH.PA2.1

Discourage fragmentation of prime agricultural lands.

- **a.** Support Priority Agriculture Areas as identified on the FLUM.
- **b.** Direct non-agricultural-related development to municipalities, Priority Development Areas, and corridors as indicated in the Future Land Use Map, discouraging zoning changes, land divisions, and land use changes in productive agricultural areas.
- **c.** Work with organizations such as land trusts that play a role in agricultural conservation and connect with landowners for economic incentives and voluntary conservation easement/agricultural preservation programs.
- **d.** Evaluate market-based and voluntary preservation tools, clustered development, Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD), conservation easements, and other opportunities that can help maintain productive agricultural lands.

Goal AH.PA2.2.

Support the long-term viability of agriculture through innovation and economic diversification.

- **a.** Evaluate opportunities for uses that support farmer/rancher economic diversification on their properties (for example, energy development) without negatively impacting or diminishing agricultural productivity and healthy soil and water retention.
- **b.** Support agriculture-related industries, including processing and local food systems.

PA2 Land Use and Growth Management Goals and Objectives

Goal LU.PA2.1

Support development approaches that maintain large agricultural areas and reduce conflicts with farming operations.

- **a.** Require changes in land uses to consider existing agricultural operations, transportation access, water availability, and long-term infrastructure needs.
- **b.** Explore tools such as residential cluster development, TDR, or conservation subdivision that can help provide more housing options while limiting land fragmentation.
- **c.** Support development compatible with and supportive of working lands at strategic locations along key corridors.
- **d.** Explore code changes to reduce conflicts between working lands and new development.

Goal LU.PA2.2.

Support development options in transition areas that help maintain the viability of productive agricultural lands.

- **a.** Support the expansion of ag-based industries.
- **b.** Support special or accessory uses and structures that help owners and operators of working lands diversify their sources of income, such as energy development on a less productive portion of their land.

PA2 Economic Development Goals and Objectives

Goal E.PA2.1

Support the growth of agricultural industries, manufacturing, logistics, and food and agricultural processing.

a. Maintain employment land to support job targets, including industrial and commercial land uses near heavy rail corridors, existing compatible development, and utilities, including electricity, gas, water, and sewer.

b. Locate industrial uses where minimal environmental and social impact would occur, considering adequate buffers for critical areas.

c. Promote the use of enterprise zone state income tax credits to support investment in businesses.

Right to Farm Statement

Weld County is one of the most productive agricultural counties in the United States, typically ranking in the top ten counties in the country in total market value of agricultural products sold. The rural areas of Weld County may be open and spacious, but they are intensively used for agriculture. Persons moving into a rural area must recognize and accept there are drawbacks, including conflicts with long-standing agricultural practices and a lower level of services than in town. Along with the drawbacks come the incentives which attract urban dwellers to relocate to rural areas: open views, spaciousness, wildlife, lack of city noise and congestion, and the rural atmosphere and way of life. Without neighboring farms, those features which attract urban dwellers to rural Weld County would quickly be gone forever.

Agricultural users of the land should not be expected to change their long-established agricultural practices to accommodate the intrusions of urban users into a rural area. Well-run agricultural activities will generate off-site impacts, including noise from tractors and equipment; slow-moving farm vehicles on rural roads; dust from animal pens, field work, harvest, and gravel roads; odor from animal confinement, silage, and manure; smoke from ditch burning; flies and mosquitoes; hunting and trapping activities; shooting sports, legal hazing of nuisance wildlife; and the use of pesticides and fertilizers in the fields, including the use of aerial spraying. It is common practice for agricultural producers to utilize an accumulation of agricultural machinery and supplies to assist in their agricultural operations. A concentration of miscellaneous agricultural materials often produces a visual disparity between rural and urban areas of the County. Section 35-3.5-102, C.R.S., provides that an agricultural operation shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance if the agricultural operation alleged to be a nuisance employs methods or practices that are commonly or reasonably associated with agricultural production.

Water has been, and continues to be, the lifeline for the agricultural community. It is unrealistic to assume that ditches and reservoirs may simply be moved "out of the way" of residential development. When moving to the County, property owners and residents must realize they cannot take water from irrigation ditches, lakes, or other structures, unless they have an adjudicated right to the water.

Weld County covers a land area of approximately 4,000 square miles in size (twice the size of the State of Delaware) with more than 3,700 miles of state and County roads outside of municipalities. The sheer magnitude of the area to be served stretches available resources. Law enforcement is based on responses to complaints more than on patrols of the County, and the distances which must be traveled may delay all emergency responses, including law enforcement, ambulance, and fire. Fire protection is usually provided by volunteers who must leave their jobs and families to respond to emergencies. County gravel roads, no matter how often they are bladed, will not provide the same kind of surface expected from a paved road. Snow removal priorities mean that roads from subdivisions to arterials may not be cleared for several days after a major snowstorm. Services in rural areas, in many cases, will not be equivalent to municipal services. Rural dwellers must, by necessity, be more self-sufficient than urban dwellers.

People are exposed to different hazards in the County than in an urban or suburban setting. Farm equipment and oil field equipment, ponds and irrigation ditches, electrical power for pumps and center pivot operations, high-speed traffic, sand burs, puncture vines, territorial farm dogs and livestock, and open burning present real threats. Controlling children's activities is important, not only for their safety, but also for the protection of the farmer's livelihood.

Planning Area 3: Rangeland and Rural Landscapes

Weld County's rangelands and open landscapes remain defined by expansive grasslands, working ranches, scenic views, and a strong sense of independence and rural character. These areas continue to support ranching, habitat systems, and energy production while remaining largely unchanged over time. Growth is limited and carefully managed to protect scenic views, natural systems, and the quiet rural qualities that define these landscapes.

These Place Types maintain agricultural zoning and preserve open landscapes and low-intensity rural character.

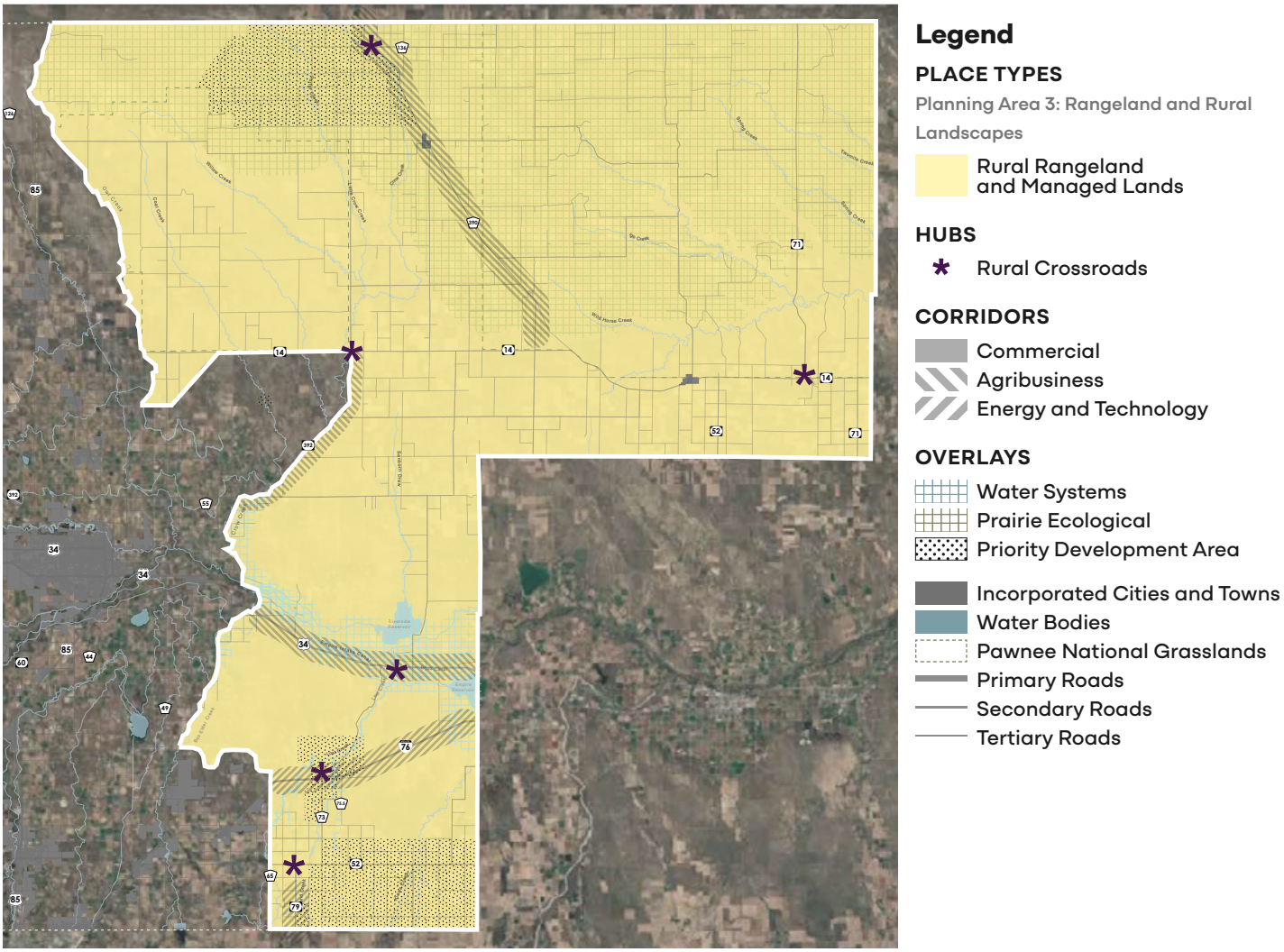


Fig 24. Priority Development Areas Map

PA3 Agriculture and Heritage Goals and Objectives

Goal AH.PA3.1

Encourage stewardship of rivers, streams, wetlands, and other critical natural features that contribute to agricultural viability and community well-being.

- **a.** Consider establishing protections for high-value agricultural soils, contiguous landscapes, wildlife habitat, and high-priority scenic areas, such as the Pawnee Buttes, arroyos, and bluffs, by developing programs in coordination with organizations such as soil conservation districts, extension offices, USDA, Cattleman's Association, ditch companies, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.
- **b.** Promote reclamation and reuse of former mineral extraction sites in ways that support agriculture, economic development, recreation, or other community needs. Review and update zoning regulations on open mining.

Goal AH.PA3.2.

Promote ecological innovation and hazard planning to be resilient to changing conditions.

- **a.** Coordinate with local, regional, and state partners on planning for flooding, drought, fire, and severe storm events. Support the countywide hazard mitigation Plan.
- **b.** Encourage land use and infrastructure decisions that reduce risk to people, property, agricultural operations, public investments, and sensitive habitat areas.

PA3 Land Use and Growth Management Goals and Objectives

Goal LU.PA3.1

Maintain and conserve existing rural landscapes.

- **a.** Recognize agriculture and energy production as primary land uses within rural areas of Weld County.
- **b.** Support land use decisions that maintain the long-term viability of working lands and reduce conflicts between neighboring uses.
- **c.** Support voluntary conservation of farms and ranchland.
- **d.** Ensure large-scale development proposals account for up-front and long-term infrastructure and service delivery impacts.
- **e.** Consider expanding 1041 processes or existing special use processes to ensure development decisions consider the ecological and productive value of existing landscapes.
- **f.** Consider methods for promoting development setback from geologic hazards, bluffs, wildlife habitats, and other ecologically sensitive areas.
- **g.** Consider establishing noise and lighting standards that are more restrictive in rural areas.

PA3 Economic Development Goals and Objectives

Goal E.PA3.1

Encourage the development of power transmission, distribution, and other systems vital to economic development and diversification throughout the County.

- **a.** Support energy development, emerging technologies, and energy-related manufacturing where compatible with agricultural operations and surrounding land uses.
- **b.** Prepare for fluctuations in energy markets by supporting a diverse local economy and appropriately located energy production, storage, and support facilities with access to existing transmission, distribution, pipeline, and transportation infrastructure.
- **c.** Update standards for the siting, design, operation, and mitigation of alternative-energy facilities.
- **d.** Support energy projects that strengthen community resilience, improve reliability, and reduce long-term energy costs.
- **e.** Consider appropriate separation between active oil and gas operations and new residential development to reduce land-use conflicts and protect continued energy production.

7



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

CHAPTER 7

A PLAN FOR ACTION

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide County decisions over the next several years. To remain useful, it will need to be reviewed as conditions change and implementation moves forward. Planning and Development Services should coordinate this work with other County departments. Coordination with municipalities and service providers will also be important when decisions extend beyond County authority.

The implementation matrix should serve as the main tool for tracking progress. It identifies the expected timeframe for each action, as well as who should lead the work and how progress will be measured. The matrix can be refined as responsibilities and funding become clearer; however, administrative updates should not change the Plan's adopted policy direction.

Plan Maintenance

Recommended Review Schedule

Ongoing: Track development activity and major infrastructure decisions. Monitor annexations and other changes that may affect the Plan.

Annually: Review the implementation matrix as part of the County's budget and work-planning process. Identify which actions should move forward during the next year.

Every Five Years: Review the Plan's key assumptions, maps, and evaluate implementation progress.

Approximately Every Ten Years: Complete a broader update with current data and renewed community input. Revisit the future land use framework and the Plan's overall direction.

Earlier or additional reviews may be needed when conditions change more quickly than expected. This could include a significant shift in growth patterns or infrastructure capacity. New state requirements may also require the County to revisit part of the Plan.

Annual Implementation Review

Each year, the County should prepare a brief implementation update to show what has been completed and where additional work is needed. The annual review does not need to reconsider every Plan policy. Rather, it should focus on implementation and near-term decisions. The update should identify:

- Actions completed during the previous year.
- Actions currently underway.
- Actions that have been delayed.
- Priorities for the next budget year.
- Changes in department or partner responsibilities.
- New funding opportunities.
- Issues that may require further study.

Five-Year Plan Review

The five-year review provides a more detailed check on whether the Plan is still working as intended. It should look beyond individual projects and consider the County's overall direction. These findings should then be presented to the planning Commission and BOCC, and clearly identify whether the Plan remains effective or requires targeted changes. The review should consider:

- Whether growth is occurring in the locations anticipated by the Plan.
- Whether the Planning Areas still reflect current conditions.
- Whether Hubs and Corridors remain appropriate.
- Whether Overlay Areas need to be adjusted.
- Whether infrastructure decisions support the future land use framework.
- Whether agricultural land patterns are changing.
- Whether implementation actions are producing useful results.

Updating the Comprehensive Plan

Not every change requires a full Comprehensive Plan update; the process should match the significance of the proposed change. The Comprehensive Plan is an advisory policy document, meaning that it does not change zoning or approve development by itself. Any binding requirements must be adopted separately through the process required by the Weld County Code and Colorado law.

Routine Maintenance

Routine maintenance keeps the Plan accurate without changing its policy direction. Planning and Development Services should determine whether a proposed change is routine maintenance or requires a formal amendment. Routine maintenance should only be used when the change does not alter the meaning of an adopted policy. This may include:

- Correcting typographical errors.
- Updating agency or department names.
- Replacing outdated links.
- Updating data, such as demographic estimates.
- Recording completed implementation actions.
- Adding references to newly adopted Plans.
- Correcting minor mapping errors.

Targeted Plan Amendment

A targeted amendment addresses a specific part of the Plan without reopening the entire document. An amendment may be appropriate when:

- A Subarea Plan establishes more detailed direction.
- A coordinated planning agreement with a municipality is adopted.
- New information changes a major planning assumption.
- A mapped area no longer reflects current conditions.
- A related County Plan establishes new policy direction.
- A proposed project raises a broader issue that the Plan does not adequately address.

When a Plan Amendment May Be Needed

Before beginning an amendment, the County should determine whether the issue belongs in the Comprehensive Plan. Do not use a Plan amendment solely to support one development proposal that conflicts with adopted policy. When a proposed project raises a broader question, the County should consider the issue beyond the boundaries of the individual property.

The County should consider the following questions when determining if an amendment is necessary:

- Does the proposed change respond to a broader planning need?
- Is it consistent with the Plan's overall direction?
- Would it affect nearby properties or jurisdictions?
- Could the project affect existing agricultural operations?
- Can existing or planned infrastructure support the change?
- Could it create a long-term cost for the County?
- Does it require coordination with another jurisdiction or service provider?
- Would a subarea study provide better information?

Major Plan Update

A major update should review the Comprehensive Plan as a whole and examine current conditions to reconsider the County's long-term direction. A targeted amendment should explain what is changing and why, and identify how the change relates to the rest of the Plan. The review process should include coordination with affected departments and agencies. Community input should reflect the scale of the proposed change. A major update should also identify which existing policies remain effective. The County does not need to rewrite parts of the Plan that are still working.

The update should include:

- Current demographic and development information.
- Updated infrastructure and service information.
- Review of the future land use framework.
- Evaluation of implementation progress.
- Coordination with municipalities.
- Input from property owners, residents, and business owners.
- Review by the Planning Commission.
- Adoption by the BOCC through the ordinance process.

Implementation

An Implementation Matrix turns the Comprehensive Plan's Goals and Objectives into a practical guide for carrying the work forward. It identifies the relative level of investment and anticipated timing for each action. The matrix does not replace the Goals or change their meaning. Instead, it connects the Plan's long-term direction to the day-to-day work of budgeting, updating regulations, and planning future investments.



Working agricultural lands remain central to Weld County's long-term planning

Plan Checklists

The Comprehensive Plan prioritizes supporting decisions such as the annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP), development review, code amendments, and municipal agreements. The following checklist combines priority near-term and medium-term actions. The following is organized into near- and medium-term priorities for Policies, Programs and Processes, Projects, and Partnerships.



Center-pivot irrigation supports agricultural production and water management

Policies

Near-Term Priorities

- ☐ Update Chapters 23 and 24 through a comprehensive code update. Focus on agricultural zoning and land-division standards to distinguish urban-interface properties, reduce fragmentation, support working lands, historic townsites, and agricultural transition areas. (AH.C.1; AH1.PA1.1; LU.PA1.2.c; LU.PA2.1). Update commercial and industrial zoning to support employment growth in appropriate, infrastructure-ready locations while minimizing conflicts with agriculture, neighborhoods, and sensitive resources. (E.C.1; E.PA1.1; E.PA2.1; E.PA3.1)
- ☐ Clarify standards for agritourism and agricultural-support uses, including farmstands, events, farm stays, and accessory uses. (AH.C.2; AH.PA2.2; LU.PA2.2; E.PA1.1.d)
- ☐ Update development-review requirements to address agricultural operations, freight routes, water availability, infrastructure capacity, service costs, hazards, habitat, and long-term compatibility. (TI.C.6; W.C.2; W.C.4–7; LU.PA2.1; LU.PA3.1)
- ☐ Evaluate programs for voluntary agricultural preservation tools, including conservation easements, Transferable Development Rights, Voluntary Agricultural Districts, conservation subdivisions, clustering, and urban-agricultural buffers. (AH.C.1; W.C.4–5; LU.PA1.3.d; AH.PA2.1; LU.PA2.1; LU.PA3.1.c)

Medium-Term Priorities

- ☐ Establish water-efficiency standards for landscaping, irrigation, rural development, conservation subdivisions, and County-owned facilities. (W.C.3; W.C.6)
- ☐ Update natural-resource and hazard standards, including protections for floodplains, wetlands, riparian areas, drainage systems, bluffs, habitat corridors, scenic areas, and dark skies. (W.C.7; AH.PA3.1–2; LU.PA3.1.f)
- ☐ Review the Airport Overlay District to protect airport operations, reduce residential conflicts, and support compatible logistics and employment uses. (TI.C.4)
- ☐ Evaluate expanded 1041 or special-use review authority for development with significant effects on strategic growth, infrastructure, agricultural lands, or sensitive landscapes. (LU.C.1.c; LU.PA3.1.e)

Programs and Processes

Near-Term Priorities

- ☐ Create an annual implementation and monitoring program that assigns responsible departments, establishes timelines and performance measures, aligns actions with the County budget, and reports progress to the Planning Commission and BOCC.
- ☐ Periodically evaluate code compliance and permitting for consistency, transparency, timeliness, effectiveness, and unnecessary regulatory barriers. (LU.C.1; E.C.1.a–b)

Medium-Term Priorities

- ☐ Establish an agricultural land and water monitoring program to track conversion, fragmentation, conservation, irrigation infrastructure, and loss of agricultural water. (AH.C.1; W.C.4–5; AH.PA2.1)
- ☐ Create a business retention, expansion, and workforce program focused on employment, target industries, entrepreneurship, agricultural businesses, food processing, energy, manufacturing, logistics, and advanced industries. (E.C.1; AH.C.2; AH.PA2.2; E.PA1.1; E.PA2.1; E.PA3.1)
- ☐ Develop agricultural education, succession, and technical-assistance programs connecting producers with schools, universities, 4-H, business resources, and conservation assistance. (AH.C.2.c–e; AH.PA2.1.c; AH.PA2.2)
- ☐ Evaluate reinvestment in underutilized sites, former extraction areas, Rural Crossroads, and historic townsites. (LU.C.1.b; LU.PA1.2.b; LU.PA2.2.d; LU.PA3.2.a)

Projects

Near-Term Priorities

- ☐ Identify priority subarea studies to coordinate planning and capital investment. (LU.C.2.a–d; TI.C.2; TI.C.5; W.C.1–2)
- ☐ Prioritize transportation and freight corridor improvements identified in the TMP and on the FLUM, including needed rights-of-way, airport access, and agricultural routes. (TI.C.1–4; TI.C.6; E.PA1.1.e; E.PA2.1.a)
- ☐ Inventory vacant, underutilized, and former extraction sites and plans for priority sites. (LU.C.1.b; LU.PA1.2)
- ☐ Consider reinvestment at Rural Crossroads, and in historic townsites. (LU.PA2.2.d; AH.PA3.1.c; LU.PA3.2)

Medium-Term Priorities

- ☐ Support regional water infrastructure projects that improve storage, treatment, conveyance, redundancy, and drought resilience. (W.C.2.f; W.C.7.c–d)
- ☐ Implement strategic transportation and drainage that support planned growth, municipal expansion, airport access, and priority employment areas. (E.C.1.c,e; TI.C.1–5; E.PA1.1.a,e; E.PA2.1.a)
- ☐ Protect priority agricultural, natural, and scenic landscapes through mapping, voluntary conservation, targeted acquisition or easements, and coordinated stewardship projects. (AH.C.1; W.C.4–5; AH.PA2.1; AH.PA3.1; LU.PA3.1)

Partnerships

Near-Term Priorities

- ☐ Finalize and/or update Coordinated Planning Agreements with municipalities to address growth areas, annexation, urban-rural transitions, infrastructure, water and wastewater service, compatible interim uses, and agricultural buffers. (LU.PA1.1; LU.PA1.3; W.C.2.d; AH1.PA1.1)



Horseback riding reflects Weld County's ranching heritage

Medium-Term Priorities

- ☐ Coordinate with municipalities, CDOT, the airport, and regional transportation organizations on corridor infrastructure, freight mobility, multimodal connections, airport access, and capital investments. (TI.C.1–4)
- ☐ Coordinate with water providers, special districts, NFRWQPA, and municipalities on service capacity, growth projections, conservation, drought resilience, and regional infrastructure. (W.C.1–3; W.C.7)
- ☐ Partner with agricultural organizations, land trusts, conservation districts, Extension, USDA, ditch companies, and producers on land conservation, agricultural water stewardship, succession planning, and economic diversification. (AH.C.1–2; W.C.4; AH.PA2.1–2; AH.PA3.1–2)
- ☐ Coordinate with chambers, economic-development organizations, educational institutions, and industry partners on workforce training, business assistance, target industries, infrastructure needs, and public-private investment. (E.C.1; E.PA1.1; E.PA2.1; E.PA3.1)
- ☐ Partner with state and regional agencies on hazard mitigation, habitat protection, water policy, energy infrastructure, and natural-resource resilience. (W.C.4; W.C.7; AH.PA3.1–2; LU.PA3.1; E.PA3.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following glossary provides definitions for specialized technical terms, acronyms, and industry-specific concepts used throughout this document.

Refer to this section as needed to clarify unfamiliar vocabulary and enhance overall understanding of the material.

Planning and Coordination

Subarea Plan or Subarea Study: A focused planning document that examines a defined part of the County in greater detail than the Comprehensive Plan. A Subarea Plan is typically adopted to guide future land use and infrastructure decisions. A subarea study generally provides analysis and recommendations that may inform future Plans, agreements, or regulations.

Annexation: The legal process through which unincorporated land becomes part of a city or town. After annexation, the municipality generally assumes land use authority and responsibility for municipal services, subject to state law and any annexation agreement.

Three-Mile Plan: A Plan that a municipality must have and update at least annually before completing an annexation within the area extending up to three miles from its boundary. The Plan describes anticipated land uses and the general location of roads, utilities, public facilities, open space, and other services that may be needed as the municipality grows. A Three-Mile Plan identifies areas where annexation may be considered but does not itself annex land or change County zoning.

Coordinated Planning Agreement (CPA): A planning-focused agreement between Weld County and one or more municipalities that establishes how the parties will coordinate growth and development within an agreed area. A CPA may address growth boundaries, development referrals, land use expectations, annexation, infrastructure, and service responsibilities. A CPA is a specific type of intergovernmental agreement used in Weld County.

Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA): A formal agreement between two or more public agencies to coordinate or jointly provide a public function, service, facility, or planning activity. The agreement establishes each party's powers, responsibilities, financial obligations, and decision-making role.

Geographic Information System (GIS): A computer-based system used to create, manage, analyze, and display information connected to geographic locations. GIS allows planners to compare mapped information such as parcels, roads, land uses, utilities, agricultural resources, and development patterns.

Land Use Development

Subdivision: The legal division of land into two or more parcels or ownership interests, or the use of land for multiple dwelling units, unless an exemption applies. A subdivision is generally shown on a recorded plat and reviewed for matters such as access, water, wastewater, drainage, roads, and utilities. Colorado law and the Weld County Code establish specific exemptions and procedures, including provisions related to parcels of 35 acres or more.

Development Review: The County's process for evaluating a proposed land use, subdivision, or development against adopted codes, standards, Plans, and applicable agreements. Review may be administrative or may require public hearings and can address site design, access, infrastructure, compatibility, and potential effects on surrounding properties.

Urban–Rural Interface: An area where municipal or other urban-level development meets, approaches, or may affect rural and agricultural lands. These areas often require added coordination to address land use compatibility, infrastructure and service extensions, annexation, traffic, and the continuation of agricultural operations.

Infill Development: New development on a vacant or underused site within an area that is already largely developed and served by existing roads, utilities, and other public facilities.

Redevelopment: New construction or substantial improvement on a previously developed site. Redevelopment may involve replacing, expanding, or reconfiguring existing buildings and site improvements to accommodate a new or updated use.

Adaptive Reuse: The renovation and reuse of an existing building for a purpose different from, or expanded beyond, its original use while retaining much of the existing structure.

Underutilized Site: A vacant or developed site where a meaningful share of the land, building space, or existing infrastructure is unused or could support additional activity consistent with adopted plans, and regulations.

Compatible Land Use: A land use that can function near other uses without creating unreasonable conflicts. Compatibility may depend on context, scale, intensity, traffic, noise, lighting, odor, dust, hours of operation, infrastructure needs, and effects on established uses. Uses do not need to be identical to be compatible.

Transitional Land Use: A land use, development pattern, or site-design feature located between areas with different types or intensities of use to reduce conflicts and create a gradual change in scale or activity. A transitional land use is not necessarily temporary.

Accessory Use: A use or structure that is secondary, customary, and incidental to the principal use of the same property.

Special Use: A use that may be appropriate within a zone district but requires case-by-case review because of its location, scale, operating characteristics, or potential effects. Approval may include conditions needed to meet adopted standards and maintain compatibility. In Weld County regulations, this is generally addressed through the Use by Special Review process.

Agriculture

Conservation Subdivision: A subdivision designed around the long-term protection of a meaningful and connected portion of a site, particularly working agricultural land, open space, waterways, habitat, or scenic features. Homes, roads, and other improvements are located on the remaining portion of the property.

Cluster Development: A development pattern that groups lots or buildings on a smaller portion of a site, often using smaller lots or flexible setbacks, so that the remaining land can continue in agriculture, open space, or another low-intensity use. Overall development potential is generally based on the full site rather than the size of the individual lots. When used as the specific Colorado statutory process, the requirements of C.R.S. § 30-28-403 apply.

Development-Supported Agriculture (DSA): An approach that uses a portion of the value, infrastructure, or organization created by development to support continued agricultural use on another portion of the site. It may combine clustered development with protected farmland, farm infrastructure, long-term access for an agricultural operator, or ongoing financial support for agricultural production.

Development Rights: The legally recognized ability to develop or use land to the extent allowed by applicable zoning, subdivision requirements, other laws, and required approvals. Development rights do not guarantee approval and, where authorized by a local program, may be limited, purchased, or transferred separately from ownership of the land.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): A market-based tool through which a property owner may transfer permitted development capacity from land intended to remain in agriculture or open space, called the sending area, to land planned for additional development, called the receiving area. The sending property is restricted against the transferred development, while the receiving property may gain additional development capacity under the local program.

Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD): A voluntary local program through which eligible landowners enroll working agricultural land for a defined period and receive recognition or other locally established benefits for keeping the land available for agriculture. Enrollment does not change zoning or permanently restrict future use unless the landowner enters into a separate recorded agreement.

Conservation Easement: A voluntary legal agreement through which a landowner places stated limits on development or certain uses to protect the land's agricultural, natural, scenic, open-space, or historic values. The land remains privately owned and may be sold or transferred, subject to the easement. The easement is held and enforced by a qualified organization or public entity and is generally permanent unless the recorded agreement provides otherwise.

Agricultural Buffer: Land, distance, or physical features that separate an agricultural operation from nearby non-agricultural uses. A buffer is intended to reduce conflicts associated with normal agricultural activity and lessen the effects of new development on farming. It may include setbacks, roads, drainage areas, open land, landscaping, or compatible low-intensity uses and is typically provided by the new non-agricultural development.

Right-to-Farm: See page 108.

Private Property Rights: The rights of a property owner to possess, use, manage, enjoy, lease, sell, or transfer land and to exclude others, subject to applicable laws and the valid rights of others, including easements, leases, and recorded agreements. Land use decisions shall respect these rights and follow required legal procedures.

Colorado House Bill 1041/1041 Regulations: Colorado's Areas and Activities of State Interest Act, adopted through House Bill 1041 in 1974, authorizes counties and municipalities to identify and regulate certain development activities or geographic areas whose effects may extend beyond the immediate site. "1041 regulations" are the locally adopted standards and review procedures used to determine whether a designated project may proceed and what conditions must be met. Only activities or areas designated under applicable local regulations are subject to 1041 review.

Agritourism: An activity, event, or service connected with a farm, ranch, or other agricultural operation that allows visitors to experience, learn about, or purchase products associated with agriculture. Examples may include farm tours, harvest activities, educational programs, farm stands, recreation, lodging, or events. For land use

planning purposes, agritourism should remain directly connected to the agricultural operation rather than function primarily as an unrelated commercial use.

Agricultural Land Fragmentation: The division of a larger agricultural area into smaller or disconnected parcels, or the interruption of agricultural land by nonagricultural development, roads, or other uses. Fragmentation can make farming and ranching less efficient by complicating irrigation, equipment movement, livestock management, access, and coordination among neighboring operations. It refers primarily to the physical and operational pattern of the land, not simply a change in ownership.

Agricultural Processing: The handling or transformation of a raw farm or ranch product into a form suitable for storage, distribution, sale, or further manufacturing. Activities may include cleaning, sorting, grading, cooling, milling, packaging, or processing crops, dairy products, or livestock. The scale and effects of the activity help determine whether it is an accessory agricultural use or a separate commercial or industrial use.

Prime Farmland/Productive Agricultural Land: Prime farmland is a federal soil classification for land with the soil quality, growing conditions, and available moisture needed to produce sustained high crop yields when properly managed. Productive agricultural land is a broader planning term that may include land capable of supporting viable crop or livestock production based on soils, water availability, parcel size and configuration, agricultural improvements, and its relationship to surrounding operations. Land can be locally important or productive even when it does not meet the federal prime-farmland classification.

Working Lands: Land actively managed for farming, ranching, forestry, or another resource-based use that supports livelihoods and contributes to the local economy. Working lands remain in productive use and may also provide open land, wildlife habitat, water-management functions, and rural character.

Alternative Transfer Method: A voluntary arrangement that temporarily, intermittently, or partially changes the use of an agricultural water supply while allowing the owner to retain long-term ownership of the water right. ATMs are intended to meet municipal, industrial, or other water needs without permanently transferring the right away from agriculture or permanently removing the associated land from production. Any arrangement remains subject to Colorado water law and protections for other water-right holders.

Aquifer Recharge: The process by which water enters and replenishes an underground aquifer. Recharge may occur naturally when precipitation, streamflow, or irrigation water soaks into the ground, or it may be managed through facilities such as infiltration basins, recharge ponds, canals, or injection wells.

Ditch System: A connected network of ditches, canals, laterals, headgates, measuring devices, and related structures used to divert, convey, measure, and distribute water. A system may serve multiple properties and may be operated by a ditch company, association, public entity, or individual water-right holder. The physical ditch system is separate from the legal water rights conveyed through it.

Water Provider: A public, cooperative, or private entity that supplies water to customers or members and operates all or part of the facilities used to divert, treat, store, or deliver that water. Water providers may include municipalities, special districts, water authorities, cooperatives, ditch or reservoir companies, and private utilities.

Water Rights: A legally recognized right to use a specified portion of Colorado's public water supply for a beneficial purpose, subject to its priority date, source, amount, point of diversion, place and type of use, and other decree or permit conditions. A water right is a property interest but does not constitute ownership of the water itself. Changes or transfers must comply with Colorado water law and may not injure other water rights.

Water-Wise Landscaping: Functional and attractive landscaping designed to use supplemental water efficiently. It matches plants and turf to the site and intended use, favors plants suited to local conditions and with lower water needs, improves soil, uses efficient irrigation, applies mulch, and limits turf to locations where it serves a practical purpose. Water-wise landscaping does not require eliminating all turf or living plants.

Land Stewardship

Reclamation: The process of stabilizing and restoring land disturbed by mining, energy development, construction, or another activity so it is safe, stable, and suitable for an approved future use. Reclamation may include removing facilities, regrading land, replacing topsoil, controlling drainage and erosion, reestablishing vegetation, restoring agricultural productivity where appropriate, and monitoring the site. It does not necessarily mean returning the land to its exact original condition.

Riparian Area: Land next to a river, stream,

lake, pond, or other waterbody where soils and vegetation are influenced by surface water or shallow groundwater. Riparian areas can stabilize banks, filter runoff, store floodwater, and provide wildlife habitat. A riparian area is not necessarily a legally defined wetland.

Hazard Mitigation: Sustained action taken before or between emergencies to reduce or eliminate long-term risks to people, property, infrastructure, and essential services from natural or human-caused hazards. Measures may include land use planning, building standards, drainage improvements, property protection, infrastructure upgrades, and public information. Hazard mitigation differs from the immediate response provided during an emergency.

Resilience: The ability of residents, businesses, infrastructure, natural systems, and local government to prepare for disruptions, continue essential functions, recover, and adjust to changing conditions. Resilience planning helps reduce long-term risk and supports faster recovery from events such as drought, flooding, wildfire, severe weather, economic shifts, public-health emergencies, or infrastructure failure.

Access Management: The coordinated planning and design of driveways, intersections, medians, turn lanes, and other access points along a roadway. Access management seeks to maintain safe and efficient travel while providing reasonable access to adjoining properties.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP): A multi-year schedule of major public investments, such as roads, bridges, and drainage systems. A CIP typically identifies each project's anticipated cost, timing, priority, and funding source. Inclusion in a CIP does not necessarily guarantee construction will be funded.

Infrastructure Capacity: The amount of demand that a road, utility, facility, or public service can accommodate while continuing to meet established operating and safety standards. Available capacity is the portion that remains after existing and committed demands are considered.

Multimodal Transportation: A transportation system that supports more than one form of travel and provides connections among them. Modes may include passenger vehicles, freight, walking, bicycling, transit, rail, and aviation. Multimodal planning does not require every mode to be accommodated on every roadway.

Transportation Master Plan (TMP): A long-range Plan that identifies transportation needs, establishes policies, and guides future projects and investments. A TMP considers existing conditions, anticipated growth, roadway functions, safety, freight movement, and other forms of travel while coordinating transportation decisions with land use planning.

Economic Development

Economic Diversification (DOLA): Economic diversification is the process of strengthening the County's existing economic assets, expanding the commercial base, and creating a multi-industry cluster framework, ensuring that the County can withstand economic cycles and market volatility.

Resilience: The County's ability to proactively prepare for and reduce risk and withstand, adapt to, and recover from economic disruptions and disasters.

Broadband: High-speed internet service capable of transmitting substantial amounts of data for communication, business, education, public services, and other uses. Broadband may be delivered through fiber, cable, fixed wireless, mobile, or satellite technology. Specific speed standards may change as federal and state programs are updated.

Distributed Energy: Energy generation, storage, or management resources located near the place where energy is used or connected to the local distribution system. Distributed energy may include on-site generation, batteries, combined heat and power systems, microgrids, or equipment that manages energy demand.

Energy Storage: A system or facility that captures energy for use at a later time. Storage technologies may include batteries, thermal systems, pumped water, compressed air, or other mechanical and electrical systems. Storage can support reliable service by balancing differences between when energy is produced and when it is needed.

Renewable Energy Facility: Land, structures, equipment, and related infrastructure used to produce usable energy from sources that are naturally replenished, such as sunlight, wind, geothermal resources, moving water, or biomass. A facility may include collection or generation equipment, access roads, substations, storage, and connections to the electrical grid. The development code may establish different requirements based on the facility's type, size, and primary purpose.

Workforce Development: Coordinated efforts to help people gain the skills and experience needed for employment while helping employers find qualified workers. Workforce development may involve education, technical training,

apprenticeships, career guidance, recruitment, and partnerships among employers and training providers.

Business Incubator: A facility or program that helps new or early-stage businesses become established. Support may include affordable workspace, shared equipment, technical assistance, mentoring, networking, and help accessing financing or markets.

Enterprise Zone: An area designated by the State of Colorado based on specified economic conditions where qualified businesses and projects may be eligible for state tax incentives. The program is intended to encourage business investment and job creation in designated communities. An enterprise zone is different from a federally designated Opportunity Zone.

Fiscal Impact: The estimated effect of a proposed project, policy, or land use change on public revenues and costs. A fiscal impact analysis considers both one-time expenses, such as new infrastructure, and ongoing costs, such as operations, maintenance, and public services. Fiscal impact is different from the project's broader effect on the local economy.

Fiscal Sustainability: The ability of the County to maintain public facilities and services over the long-term using reasonably anticipated revenues. Fiscal sustainability considers future operating costs, maintenance needs, replacement costs, debt, and other financial obligations when making growth and investment decisions.

Public–Private Partnership: A formal arrangement in which a public agency and a private organization share responsibilities, resources, costs, or risks to deliver a public facility, service, or program. The specific roles and public oversight requirements are established through a contract or other agreement.

Agencies, Boards, Advisory Groups

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC): Weld County's elected governing body. The BOCC adopts the County budget and policies, oversees County operations, approves contracts, and makes decisions on matters assigned to it by the Weld County Home Rule Charter and applicable law, including certain land use applications and implementation actions.

Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA): A state agency that supports Colorado communities and local governments through technical assistance, grants, demographic information, housing programs, property-tax administration, and local-government services.

Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT): The state agency responsible for planning, constructing, operating, and maintaining Colorado's state transportation system, including interstates, U.S. highways, and state highways. CDOT also coordinates multimodal transportation planning and works with local governments on corridor improvements, access, safety, and funding.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW): A division of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources responsible for managing the state's wildlife resources, state parks, and outdoor recreation programs. CPW also provides data and technical guidance related to wildlife habitat, movement areas, and potential development impacts.

Community Working Group (CWG): An advisory group convened to provide local knowledge and community perspectives during a planning process. Members may represent different geographic areas, industries, property owners, residents, and community interests. A CWG reviews information and provides feedback but does not replace the authority of appointed or elected decision-makers.

North Front Range Water Quality Planning Association (NFRWQPA): The regional water-quality planning agency designated under Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act for Larimer and Weld counties. The association coordinates wastewater and water-quality planning, reviews certain utility plans and facility proposals, and provides a forum for cooperation among member governments and service providers.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC): An advisory group composed of agency representatives, service providers, technical professionals, and other subject-matter specialists. In this case, the TAC for Weld County was entirely composed of County staff. A TAC reviews data, methods, assumptions, and draft recommendations to help ensure that a Plan is accurate and practical. It provides technical guidance but does not serve as the final decision-making body.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): The federal department responsible for programs and policies related to agriculture, food, forestry, rural development, and natural-resource conservation. USDA agencies provide agricultural data, technical assistance, research, loans, grants, conservation programs, and other services relevant to farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW