

ADAMS COUNTY COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING RESEARCH REPORT



ADAMS COUNTY
COLORADO

PREPARED BY:



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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In August 2003, Adams County engaged the services of Corona Research, Inc. to conduct a Community Needs Assessment. The purpose of the Community Needs Assessment was to gather information from Adams County residents about their needs and priorities in order to target resources more responsively to meet the needs of citizens. The Needs Assessment consisted of several components that would provide current information on community conditions, gaps in services, and priority needs.

As a first step towards completing a community needs assessment for Adams County, Corona Research analyzed a number of studies, assessments, surveys and plans that had been developed for Adams County from 1996 through 2003. Existing research on the county and its residents focused on diverse issues, such as health, housing, aging, and food distribution and was not limited in geographic scope to Adams County alone, though the focus was largely on Adams County and its municipalities. This report includes an analysis of 20 studies provided as of September 30, 2003 by the Adams County Office of Community Development and other organizations involved in this project. (See list at the end of this report.).

METHODOLOGY

Per the client's request, the research team reviewed each report and determined the value of the report from a research perspective, most notably the documentation and reliability of the research methods used. Report reliability was rated on a scale of high to low, with the addition of an "unknown" category as described below.

- High Reliability Rating – Was given to reports that were thoroughly cited and included detailed descriptions of the research methods used, as well as copies of the research instruments, such as surveys and focus group guides. The four essential elements of strong research design could be validated (see Appendix). The interpretation of findings was clearly explained. In essence, the reports were thorough enough to allow the research to be replicated.
- Medium Reliability Rating – Included citations of most data sources in the body of the report, as well as brief descriptions of the research methods used. Some, but not all, of the research instruments were included. The research validity included two to three of the elements of strong research design.
- Low Reliability Rating – While some data sources might have been referenced in the report, others weren't cited. The research methods weren't identified or were very briefly described.

Survey instruments, focus group guides and interview guides were not included with the report. Thus, the research methodology, instrument design, implementation and interpretation could not be verified

In general, reports that scored a “low” rating on two or more criteria, and reports that received one or more “unknown” ratings were not included in this analysis, as the findings could not be verified overall. Exceptions were made when specific data sources could be easily confirmed. More detail about the reliability rating is included in the Appendix. In addition, a brief description of each report and its research methodology is included in the Appendix.

A variety of issues, trends and priorities were found in the individual reports and “between” reports (i.e. when reports were compared to one another). These findings have been organized in several key categories, some of which are the same categories used to identify needs in the resident survey, provider survey and focus groups conducted as part of this Adams County Community Needs Assessment 2003-2004 (See Appendix).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A thorough analysis and synthesis of the 20 reports provided for this study revealed several issues, trends and priorities that, when combined, serve as indicators of community needs. Those community needs are presented below, with highlights from the research to illustrate their significance for Adams County. More detailed research findings that illustrate these needs can be found in the next section of the report.

- **Growth.** Adams County is expected to add 300,000 additional residents by 2025. According to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, this growth is likely to result in increased pressures on county services. If most of that pressure is in the western portion of the county, the High Five Plains Community may continue to feel under-served, as noted in the High Five Plains Community Assessment in 1998. Increased property development would be good news for the county, as it relies on property taxes to fund most health, safety and capital improvements (Adams County Comprehensive Plan 2003).
- **Economic Development.** According to the 2000 Census only 39.3% of adult residents also worked in the county. Most Adams County residents work outside the county, which means that the county is a net exporter of jobs. On average, these commuters are employed in higher paying industries than the predominant industries in the county (2002 Adams County Housing Study). This finding echoed a concern about the county’s “inadequate economic/employment base” as identified in the 1996 Restructuring Plan. This need is also included in Adams County’s 2003 Comprehensive Plan, which lists “attract high-quality commercial growth and economic development” as one of its key goals.
- **Housing.** Affordable housing continues to be a challenge for many of the county’s residents (1996 Restructuring Plan and 2002 Adams County Housing Study). It is estimated that 33% of county residents are rent burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income for rent or a mortgage, and that over half of those residents pay more than 40% of their monthly income for housing (2002 Adams County Housing Study). Affordable housing is one of three primary needs for seniors in Adams County and one of two primary

needs for Head Start Families.¹ Some renter households surveyed in the 2002 Housing Study indicated that they had not purchased a home because “a home they could afford in a location they wanted” was not available. The Study found that the purchase of a single-family or attached home was outside the reach of most households earning the median income in the county.

Housing has become an economic development issue in Adams County as well. The 2003 Comprehensive Plan includes the task of assessing housing needs, “especially attainable housing for employees of companies located within the county” This need for employee housing was echoed in the 2002 Housing Study’s employer survey, in which 37% of employers felt that housing was a serious to critical problem for the county.

- **Educational Attainment.** As noted in several reports analyzed for this study, a high percentage of Adams County residents are without a high school education or post-secondary education.² In fact, Adams County had “by far the lowest overall percentage of college graduates in the metro area”.³ Residents with lower formal educational attainment are more likely to be left out of the economic recovery, as unemployed individuals with higher levels of formal education will be at a competitive advantage in many industries. The 2003 Comprehensive Plan includes as one of its policies of “further enhancing and solidifying the base for the Adams County labor force” the strategy to “support educational resources and opportunities”. For example, the High Five Plains Community Assessment identified adult and higher education as community needs that would most likely require creative public-private partnerships to address.
- **Supportive Services.** The 2002 Adams County Housing Study provided insights into the needs for basic supportive services in Adams County. Low-income households utilized food, medical and rental assistance most frequently, and most of these families were single parents or couples with children. Spanish-speaking households reported that they had used food and medical assistance services most often. Disabled residents reported a need for affordable housing. Seniors reported a need for basic services such as home repair and maintenance, transportation and help with day-to-day living (DRCOG Four Year Strategic Plan for Aging Services 2003-2007). The 2003 Head Start Community Assessment found that ESL classes were a high need for Spanish-speaking families.

Other support service needs include housing assistance (rental and homeownership), employment training, as well as services for youth and seniors (2000-2004 Consolidated Plan). The research team also identified needs for job and vocational training, and other services to support low- to moderate-income working families, such as childcare and health insurance.

- **Homelessness.** According to the 2000-2004 Consolidated Plan, the lack of affordable housing and poverty are the principal causes of family homelessness. Unfortunately,

¹ DRCOG Area Agency on Aging Four Year Strategic Plan for Aging Services 2003-2007; Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, 2003.

² Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003. Adams County 2000 Census Report, 2003.

³ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003.

homelessness has continued to increase, with more families with children amongst the homeless population in 2003 than in previous years in metro Denver. ⁴ This trend is likely to hold until job growth re-emerges.

- **Child Care.** Quality, affordable childcare can be a challenge for many households, especially low- to moderate-income working families. Head Start’s 2003 Community Assessment included an analysis of the publicly funded pre-school capacity for low-income households. It determined there were 2,529 total publicly funded preschool slots in 2003 compared to an estimated need of 6,467 (based on eligibility requirements), which meant that 61% of the need went unmet.
- **Health Care.** Healthcare continues to be inaccessible and unaffordable for many (1996 Restructuring Plan). Access to healthcare was identified as a future need by several reports⁵ In addition, access to culturally appropriate healthcare for specific populations, such as Hispanics, was called for in the 1999 Thornton survey.
- **Public Facilities and Infrastructure.** “Public facilities and improvements” and “infrastructure improvements” were rated a high need in the assessment conducted as part of the 2000-2004 Consolidated Plan. Case in point, the 2003 Bennett Town Survey identified the water supply as an important concern as the Town Board considers new land development. Bennett residents also voiced their need for additional or improved recreational opportunities. Infrastructure improvements are of high priority as described in the county’s 2003 Comprehensive Plan, and include such areas as road projects, highway interchanges, telecommunications, and open space.

It is interesting to note that several of the key issues, trends and priorities described above reflect issues and concerns identified for the Adams County Service Delivery System in the 1996 Local Restructuring Plan. The community assessment conducted during the formulation of that plan identified the following issues and concerns:

- A high percentage of county residents have less than a high school education;
- Adams County has an inadequate economic and employment base;
- Affordable housing is a problem for three in ten Adams County households;
and
- Health care for uninsured populations is inadequate, unavailable and expensive.

It is likely that the county’s efforts in those areas were hampered by the economic recession and jobless recovery that occurred in the early 2000s, as the county was faced with increased population growth. Possible future priorities that emerge from this study include meeting the needs of a diverse population while managing significant growth over the next twenty years. While Adams County cannot directly solve some of the needs identified above, such as access to affordable health care, it

⁴ Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area Point-in-Time Survey, 2003.

⁵ Community Assessment Report for Adams County Workforce Region, 2003; DRCOG Area Agency on Aging Four Year Strategic Plan for Aging Services 2003-2007; Thornton Community Health Issues, 1999.

can be part of a metro area or Front Range approach to addressing the problem. Other regional problems that have a presence in Adams County include providing a mix of housing options that meet resident needs while accomplishing economic development goals, addressing homelessness, increasing the economic engine by attracting new businesses or growing existing businesses, providing services that increase the economic self-sufficiency of low-income households, and addressing needs for affordable and accessible childcare. Other issues more unique to Adams county include increasing the level of educational attainment in the county and meeting the needs of the rural, eastern portion of the county.

MACRO-LEVEL FORCES IMPACTING ADAMS COUNTY

An analysis of research studies conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s helps one to formulate a picture of the community that was studied during that time period. When one looks at a community such as Adams County during the late 1990s through the early 2000s one must consider the impact of three macro-level forces in Colorado during that time: significant population growth, an economic boom and bust cycle, and the rising cost of healthcare (and corresponding increase in the number of uninsured).

The level of population growth along Colorado's Front Range, and in Metro Denver more specifically, impacted service delivery as communities tried to keep up with expanding demand. During that same time period, cities and counties were faced with an economic downturn and the reduced employment levels, reduced tax revenues and increased foreclosures and other signs of economic distress that signify such a downturn and jobless recovery. The third force at play during this same time was double-digit increases in healthcare costs.

The converging forces of population growth, the economy, and rising healthcare costs likely exacerbated any lingering challenges that Adams County was facing in the 1990s, such as lack of affordable housing and access to healthcare. We explore these issues in more detail below, beginning with key findings regarding the county's population growth and economic picture.

POPULATION GROWTH

OVERALL GROWTH

Adams County, like other counties in metropolitan Denver, grew considerably between the 1990 and 2000 Census, with an increase of 98,819 to 363,857 total residents in 2000, as outlined in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. The growth rate of 37.3% was higher than the state average of 30.6% for that same period. As one would suspect, some cities grew more rapidly than others in terms of overall population, with Thornton, Brighton, and Aurora growing 45% or more during that time.

GROWTH IN UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY

Unincorporated Adams County grew less rapidly than the incorporated areas in the 1990s and the percentage of residents in the unincorporated area actually declined between 1990 and 2000,

from 23.6% to 22.5% of the total county population.⁶ This decline may be due in part to annexation of land by incorporated areas, rather than a true decline in population.

It should be noted that the majority of unincorporated land is in the eastern portion of the county, an area that has felt “overshadowed” by the metropolitan portion of the county as it has been “difficult to get attention from county offices,” according to the Community Assessment conducted for the High Five Plains Community (HFPC) in 1998.⁷ This feeling of being “overshadowed” may be due, in part, to the slower growth rate in unincorporated Adams County compared to the high growth rate of the incorporated areas (at 2.25% and 2.93% respectively).⁸

The High Five Plains Community runs along I-70 east of metro Denver, and includes Bennett, Byers, Deer Trail, Strasburg, Watkins, and surrounding agricultural lands, homes and small acre developments. Only Bennett and Deer Trail are incorporated. The High Five Plains Community Needs Assessment conducted in 1998 recommended that the area take the initiative to plan for growth. This recommendation appears to be relevant today. The assessment also suggested that growth occurs while ensuring that the communities remain affordable, with a sense of community spirit and cooperation across town boundaries.

GROWTH IN THE HISPANIC POPULATION

According to the Adams County 2000 Census Report, the county “had about the same proportion of Hispanic residents to persons in 2000 as it did in 1990” which was 28.2%. While growth in the Hispanic population may have been proportional to prior years, Adams County had a much greater proportion of Hispanics than most of Colorado (Source: Community Health Profile: Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties).

GROWTH IN THE SENIOR POPULATION

Adams County had 29,551 seniors aged 60 years and up in 1990 and 38,961 seniors in 2000, an increase of 31.8%.⁹ This increase outpaced the average increase for the eight-county DRCOG region of 23%. Growth of minority seniors between 1990 and 2000 was 19.8% in Adams County, making it the county with the second largest population of minority seniors, with Denver having the most. The senior population in Adams County is projected to grow less rapidly between 2000 and 2007, approximately 26.8%, to 49,404 seniors by the year 2007. Adams County is expected to be outpaced by six of the counties in the region (Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Douglas, Gilpin, Jefferson).

⁶ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003.

⁷ High Five Plains Higher Education & Community Assessment Project. Procedure and Results, 1998.

⁸ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003.

⁹ DRCOG Area Agency on Aging. Four Year Plan for Aging Services 2003-2007.

GROWTH IN THE HOMELESS POPULATION

The fourth annual point-in-time survey of the homeless, conducted on January 27, 2003, counted 9,725 persons as homeless in metropolitan Denver, an increase over the 9,670 counted in 2001.¹⁰ This equates to an increase in the estimate of the “annual prevalence” of homeless in metro Denver to 31,217 from 25,210. Of those 9,725 individuals, 3,214 were single adults, 3,452 were adult- or youth-headed families, and 3,452 were children in families. Almost one-third of the homeless surveyed that day were children in families, making children one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population.

POPULATION GROWTH IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE

The county’s high rate of growth is projected to continue through 2025 and Adams County is expected to gain the greatest number of new residents in absolute numbers compared to other Denver metro area counties.¹¹ According to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan for Adams County, both the State Demographer and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) predict that the county’s population will reach over 600,000 persons, assuming a continuation of current land use development patterns and policies.

According to the Comprehensive Plan, this growth is expected to occur in outlying suburbs where land is available and relatively less expensive. More specifically, the Plan predicts that the county will likely grow in the “northwest areas along the I-25 corridor north of 120th, and in the north central parts of the county along the new E-470 Tollway around Brighton and Commerce City”.

***Interesting Finding:** Adams County’s senior population and that of unincorporated Adams County are not expected to grow at the same rate as the county overall. The county’s overall population growth is expected to outpace other metro Denver counties through 2025.¹²*

2001 RECESSION AND JOBLESS RECOVERY

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, “a peak in business activity occurred in the U.S. economy in March 2001. A peak marks the end of an expansion and the beginning of a recession. The determination of a peak date in March is thus a determination that the expansion that began in March 1991 ended in March 2001 and a recession began. The expansion lasted exactly 10 years, the longest in the NBER's chronology”.¹³ The economic recession that began in March 2001 lasted through November 2001, and has been followed by what has been commonly referred to as a “jobless recovery” across much of the United States, including Colorado. This jobless recovery is evidenced by the unemployment rate.

¹⁰ Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area. Point-in-Time Surveys, 2001 and 2003.

¹¹ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ www.nber.org

The workforce in Adams County experienced a higher rate of unemployment (6%) in 2002 than the state (5.2%) (Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment). This difference in employment continued in 2003. According to the US Department of Labor, Adams County continued to outpace the state's unemployment rate as of December 2003, with 7.1% unemployment in the county compared to the state's unemployment rate of 5.8%.¹⁴

Interesting Finding: *The survey of 1,200 Adams County residents conducted in November through December of 2003 as part of this Needs Assessment also reported an unemployment rate of 7.1% for Adams County.*¹⁵

CONTINUOUSLY ESCALATING HEALTHCARE COSTS

Access to affordable healthcare has declined for many Colorado residents, as employers have had to shift increasing costs to employees or drop insurance coverage all together. In addition, the recession and jobless recovery have left many Colorado residents without health insurance coverage all together. We can gain a better understanding of what is happening in Adams County if we look at available state-level data on insurance coverage. Slightly over 15% of Colorado residents were without health insurance coverage for an entire year (based on a three-year average from 2000-2002) according to the US Census.¹⁶ A 2003 study published by The Commonwealth Fund, a New York non-profit agency, stated that “nearly two-thirds of low-income, working-age Hispanics were uninsured for all or part of the year in 2000, compared with less than half of low-income, working-age blacks and whites. Half of all Hispanics under age 65 were uninsured at some point during that year, compared with 35 percent of blacks and 22 percent of whites.”¹⁷

Interesting Finding: *In 2002, most uninsured Coloradans (80%) were working families, in which at least one person in the family worked either full-time or part-time. Since Medicare provides health insurance for most people age 65 and older, the uninsured are almost entirely under 65.*¹⁸ *Hispanics were less likely to be insured (67.6%) than were non-Hispanic Whites (89.3%), Blacks (79.3%) or Asians (81.6%) that reported a single race.*¹⁹

¹⁴ “Colorado’s jobless rate climbs to 5.8 percent,” Rocky Mountain News, January 28, 2004, Page 16B.

¹⁵ Corona Research survey of 1,200 residents of Adams County, November-December 2003. See separate report on the resident survey.

¹⁶ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p60-223.pdf>

¹⁷ Insurance, Access, and Quality of Care Among Hispanic Populations: 2003 Chartpack. Michelle M. Doty for the National Alliance of Hispanic Health Meeting. October 15-17, 2003. www.commonwealthfund.org.

¹⁸ www.familiesusa.org, http://www.familiesusa.org/site/DocServer/Colorado_uninsured.pdf?docID=2366.

¹⁹ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p60-223.pdf>.

A SNAPSHOT OF ADAMS COUNTY

Research findings from the 20 studies analyzed for this report present a snapshot of Adams County as revealed in this section of the report.

INCOME DISTRIBUTION

The Adams County 2000 Census Report highlights several interesting findings related to income distribution within the county. While the median household income in the county was \$47,323, the small portion of Arvada located in Adams County remained the wealthiest city in the county at \$60,458. Commerce City and Federal Heights were neck and neck with the lowest median incomes in the county, at \$33,680 and \$33,750 respectively. Correspondingly, general poverty levels were highest in Aurora (19.9%) and Commerce City (19.4%), and lowest in Arvada (4.1%).

Overall, the unincorporated portions of the county had income levels lower than the county average across the board at \$44,872 and \$47,323, respectively. Yet, overall poverty rates were significantly lower than the county average in those unincorporated areas.²⁰

In 2000, Adams County had a larger proportion of Hispanic residents at 28.2% than did Arapahoe County (11.8%) or Douglas County (5.1%), or the State of Colorado (17.1%).²¹ Per capita income for Hispanics was highest in Arvada (\$19,693) and lowest in Aurora (\$9,022). Per capita income for Whites exceeded the county figure, while the Hispanic income level was far below it. Whites earned 70% more per capita than Hispanics.²²

***Interesting Finding:** Income and poverty levels vary considerably across Adams County, with some geographic areas and populations in higher income brackets than others.*

POVERTY

Poverty areas could be found in many Adams County municipalities, including Aurora, Brighton, Northglenn, Thornton, Federal Heights, Westminster and Unincorporated Adams County.²³ Overall, Adams County had almost 6,000 families who were poor as of the 2000 Census.²⁴ In terms of individuals, over 32,000 individuals were poor. Additionally, there were 10,994 related children under 18 years of age living in poverty in Adams County. Three community examples are presented below based on Census Tract data (Adams County Poverty Statistics and Maps).

²⁰ Adams County 2000 Census Report, 2003.

²¹ Community Health Profile: Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties, 2002.

²² Adams County 2000 Census Report, 2003.

²³ Adams County, Colorado Poverty Statistics and Maps, 2002.

²⁴ Ibid.

Aurora had the highest concentration of persons living in poverty, with 27.5% and 33.8% living below poverty in the western most Census tracts (Number 78 and 79). Aurora also had the highest concentration of families in poverty, at 25.0% and 30.1%, in the same Census tracts. Many of the related children living in poverty reside in Aurora, where the percent of the population in poverty ranges from 12.1% to 38.9% in the Adams County portion of the city.

Commerce City had the second highest family poverty concentration levels in Adams County, with 15.3% of families living in poverty. Commerce City also had the highest percentages of female-headed households living in poverty at 25.6% compared to the county overall (18.0%). Not surprisingly, Commerce City and the unincorporated areas adjacent to the city also had larger numbers of related children living in poverty, ranging from 13.5% to 24.1% in the Census Tracts.

Federal Heights had the second highest percentage of female-headed households living in poverty at 24.9%, compared to a family poverty level of 9.2%.

A comparison to the 1990 Census data included in the Local Restructuring Plan reveals little change in many of these “pockets of poverty” during the 1990s.²⁵ Aurora, the southern portion of Commerce City, and sections of unincorporated Adams County, Brighton, and Northglenn included Census Tracts or Block groups with high concentrations of poverty in the 2000 Census as well.²⁶

Interesting Finding: *Poverty is concentrated in some incorporated and unincorporated areas of Adams County, most notably Aurora and Commerce City, and may require additional services to break the cycle of poverty in those local areas.*

EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

Based on the 2002 Adams County Housing Study’s employer survey, it is estimated that 92% of jobs in Adams County are full-time and 8% are part-time.²⁷ Businesses in Westminster and Northglenn reported the highest percentage of part-time jobs, at about 16% and 13%, respectively. All of the adults are employed in 56% of households; one-half of the adults are employed in 17% of households, and 20% of households have no employed adults. The largest percentage of employed persons receives most of their income from industries such as “professional services” (31%), followed by “retirement income” (12%) and “other” (10%).

The 2000 Census 2000 found that 39.3% of Adams County residents work in the county and 60.1% work elsewhere.²⁸ The employer survey portion of the 2002 Adams County Housing Study also revealed that the county is a net exporter of workers, which means that the county has a larger proportion of residents (15.2%) than it does jobs (10.8%), as measured by those with unemployment insurance coverage (2000 Census). On average, residents that commute outside the county for work

²⁵ Local Restructuring Plan for the Planning Area of Adams County, 1996.

²⁶ Adams County, Colorado Poverty Statistics and Maps, 2002.

²⁷ Adams County Housing Study, 2002.

²⁸ Adams County Census Report, 2003.

earn a higher income than those that work inside the county, in industries such as real estate and services.²⁹

The 2002 Adams County Housing Study's household survey found that approximately 20% of employed survey respondents live and work in the same community in Adams County. Commerce City and Brighton employ the highest percentage of working residents within their communities, at a respective 31% and 27%. On the other hand, 92.5% of employed residents of Federal Heights reported that they commute to other areas for work. Of those Adams County residents that work within Adams County, most are employed in Thornton or Northglenn.

Interesting Finding: *Adams County is a net exporter of jobs, with over 50% of local residents leaving their county for employment. On average, commuters earn a higher annual income than do those people that work in Adams County (2002 Adams County Housing Study and 2003 City of Westminster Housing Needs Assessment).*

We can obtain a sense of the obstacles to employment faced by low-income households when we review findings of the Learning Circle (i.e. focus group) held in conjunction with the Adams County Workforce Region Community Assessment in 2003. The report identified several barriers to employment, including lack of higher education, skills, work experience, transportation, available jobs and affordable insurance.³⁰ The group also identified several barriers to job retention including lack of childcare, lack of support for single moms, and insufficient access to transportation.

Interesting Finding: *Barriers to employment include insufficient education, skills, and work experience, as well as a lack of available jobs.*

INDUSTRIES IN ADAMS COUNTY

According to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, the leading industries in Adams County in 2001 were, in order: construction, government, retail trade, and manufacturing.³¹ The Comprehensive Plan also referenced data from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, which found that Adams County had a larger share of jobs in the following industries in 2000 than did the metro area overall: construction; manufacturing; transportation, communication, public utilities; and whole trade.³²

²⁹ Adams County Housing Study, 2002.

³⁰ Community Assessment Report for Adams County Workforce Region, 2003. The reader should note that this research method was rated "low" as only one focus group was held. It is included in this section, as the findings have been validated by other studies

³¹ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003.

³² Adams County Housing Study, 2002.

Interesting Finding: *The county's employment base varies from the metro Denver area in general, with higher concentrations in industries such as construction, manufacturing and public utilities.*

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

While Adams County is similar to the State of Colorado in terms of gender and age distribution of the population, the county is quite different from the state with regards to educational attainment. Adams County trails the state in educational attainment with a higher percentage of adult residents with no high school diploma (21.2% compared to 13.1%) and fewer with some college or a professional degree at 48.0% compared to 63.7% for the state (Source: US Census Bureau 2000).³³

The level of educational attainment is even lower for Head Start families in Adams County. According to the 2003 Community Assessment, 63% of families had less than a high school degree and 25% had a high school degree or GED.³⁴ These findings indicate a need for vocational and job training for adults with low education levels, as education has been proven to be a good predictor of economic self-sufficiency and employability. These findings were confirmed by participants in a Learning Circle held in conjunction with the Community Assessment completed in February 2003. According to the report, employment and training needs include affordable childcare, accessible healthcare affordable housing, ESL classes, and jobs that pay a livable wage.³⁵

While the western portion of Adams County is largely populated and incorporated, the eastern portion of the county is more lightly populated and is largely unincorporated. These factors impact the higher education needs and realities of Eastern Adams County. Growth, in-migration, and the growing number of small acre developments were seen as both changes and challenges for the High Five Plains Community as reported in 1998.³⁶ Many of those changes have continued into the early 2000s. The study noted the challenges faced by two-parent and single-parent households in which adults with multiple roles commute to work, leaving little time to civic and educational activities. In addition, families, communities, schools, and colleges in the local area have limited resources. Specific higher education and adult education needs identified in the HFPC focus groups included job, occupational and vocational education; business; human development; health; agriculture; civic and community needs; and basic "life and learning" education.

Interesting Finding: *Increasing the educational attainment of Adams County's adult population will likely require new collaborative efforts and supportive services, such as childcare.*

³³ Community Assessment Report for Adams County Workforce Region, 2003.

³⁴ Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, 2003.

³⁵ Town of Bennett, Colorado 2003 Citizen Survey, 2003.

³⁶ High Five Plains Higher Education & Community Assessment Project, 1998.

CHILDCARE

According to the Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, there were 1,311 Head Start eligible children living in the county in 2003 and only 55% of those children were receiving services. Other childcare providers in Adams County include the 10 school districts, which provide early childhood education through the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), Title 1, special education and tuition-based programs. An analysis of the publicly funded pre-school capacity determined there were 2,529 total slots in 2003 compared to a estimated need of 6,467, which meant that 61% of the need was unmet.

Interesting Finding: Adams County is only able to meet the preschool needs of 39% of three- and four-year old children considered to be at-risk and eligible for low-cost, high quality childcare.

HEALTH STATUS

According to the Tri-County Health Department's Community Health Profile in 2002, Adams County ranked higher than Arapahoe County, Douglas County and the state in 1998-1999 on five of six risk factors for morbidity and mortality as monitored by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System in Colorado. Those risk factors were blood pressure, blood cholesterol, healthcare coverage, overweight and current smokers.

Another indicator of health is a mother's age and the status of the child at birth. While Douglas County led Adams County in overall fertility rates, Adams had a greater fertility rate for teens than the other two counties or the state.³⁷ Of the three counties and the state, the proportion of pregnant women that received prenatal care in the first trimester of their pregnancy was lowest in Adams County, at 76.5% compared to 79.6% and higher. In contrast, Adams County had a lower incidence of preterm births at 8.5% compared to the Arapahoe County, Douglas County or the state. All three counties also had higher percentages of low weight births than the Healthy People 2010 target set by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

When considering issues of risk factors and healthcare access, one must consider the health disparities faced by low-income people and people of color. As noted in the Tri-County Health Profile, *"While there is much focus on the biological and behavioral aspects of health, there are other underlying factors that have a great deal of influence on health. Inequalities in income and education underlie many health disparities in the United States. In general, populations that suffer the worst health status are also those that have the highest poverty rates and the least education. Many health disparities also exist among various racial and ethnic groups"*.³⁸

INSIGHTS FROM THE THORNTON COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES STUDY, 1999

A survey of Thornton residents conducted in 1999 found that affordability was a priority health issue.³⁹ This affordability issue is reflected in the finding that low-income families used preventive care less than middle-income families and used emergency rooms more. The need for more

³⁷ Community Health Profile. Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties, 2002.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Thornton Community Health Issues: Working Toward a Healthy Community, 1999.

accessible health care was also a common finding among survey respondents. Residents reported difficulties in accessing health care, such as not knowing where to go, not having transportation, and not being able to afford health services.

The poor and undeserved also reported feeling less welcome in traditional healthcare settings. For example, cultural differences, including differences in beliefs and norms, can cause barriers to health care access. In the 1999 survey of Thornton residents, Hispanics reported having more difficulty knowing where to go for health care, getting appointments, and affording care than non-Hispanics.⁴⁰ When asked to report on unmet needs, Clinica Campesina estimated that it was only meeting seven percent of the uninsured needs in west Adams County.

Thornton residents aged 64 and older experience more dental problems and depression than other groups surveyed in 1999. The elderly in Thornton are more likely to be low-income, as 40% of those surveyed reported earning less than \$15,000 annually.

Interesting Finding: Adams County residents were at greater risk of blood pressure, blood cholesterol, healthcare coverage, overweight and current smokers and than residents of neighboring Arapahoe and Douglas Counties.

Low-income people and people of color are more likely to experience health disparities and feel less welcome in a traditional health setting.

HOUSING

About 71% of households in the Adams County Housing Study's household survey study area were owner-occupied as of 2002 and 61% were single-family units. Approximately 13,000 of those units were mobile homes, which continue to play a significant role in providing affordable housing in the county. While single-family homes have comprised over half of the homes in the county, there has been an upward trend in the construction of duplexes, town homes and similar structures, with an increase of 45% from 1990 to 2000⁴¹

INSIGHTS FROM THE WESTMINSTER HOUSING STUDY, 2003

The City of Westminster conducted its own housing study and found that the city had become less homogeneous between the 1990 and 2000 Census.⁴² The study reported a decline in the number of households with children and an increase in couples without children and single adults. The population aged 65 and over grew 85% during the 1990s, and the city become more ethnically diverse, although it continues to be primarily White.

The city's housing stock was considered to have "good variety" in terms of pricing and unit types. Seventy percent of homes were owner-occupied in Westminster in 2003. Affordability of Westminster housing was reflected by the fact that only 19% of households in Westminster paid

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Adams County Housing Study, 2002.

⁴² City of Westminster Housing Needs Assessment, 2003.

more than 35% of their income for housing compared to 31% of Denver residents. Westminster's neighborhoods varied with regards to housing stock. The mobile homes in Westminster were located in the north and south central areas. Older housing stock, reduced levels of ownership, lower incomes and an increased presence of minority populations characterized the southern and south central areas. Those areas also have the highest proportion of seniors.

The jobs-to-population ratio in Westminster was 0.40 compared to a Denver Metro ratio of 0.60. As a result, Westminster has been a net exporter of workers.

Interesting Finding: Westminster is more affordable than other areas of Adams County, as evidenced by the smaller percentage of households paying more than 35% of their income for rent or mortgage.

Westminster may have increased demand for "empty nester" and senior housing as a result of the demographic shift in the 1990s. Homes formerly owned by senior citizens may provide a new source of affordable housing in the older neighborhoods.⁴³

NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As reported in the 2002 Adams County Housing Study, renters dominated households with income levels under \$50,000. In comparison, over 63% of owner households earned over \$50,000 per year, whereas only about 29% of renter households reported the same income level. Furthermore, the median household income for owners was almost twice that of renters at \$32,000 and \$60,000 respectively. The study also revealed that the purchase of a single-family or attached home was outside the reach of most households earning the median income in the county.

Housing is considered affordable when a household pays no more than 30% of its gross monthly income on rent or a mortgage. Households paying more than this amount are considered "housing cost" burdened and are at risk of homelessness due to high housing costs. It is estimated that 33% of households in Adams County – or 43,061 - paid 30% or more of their monthly income for housing according to the 2002 Adams County Housing Study. More than half of those households paid 40% or more of their income for housing. This need can also be illustrated by comparing the supply of affordable rental units with the potential market for those units. The 2002 Adams County Housing Study calculated a rental housing shortage of over 8,176 affordable rental units, based on monthly rental costs and household earnings. Among employers responding to the employer survey component of the Housing Study, 34% felt that housing was one of the more serious problems facing the county, with 3% indicating it was the most critical problem.⁴⁴

Affordable housing is one of the two most significant needs for Head Start families according to interviews conducted with Family and Community Specialists and community agency staff, during the Head Start Community Assessment in 2003.⁴⁵

⁴³ City of Westminster Housing Needs Assessment, 2003.

⁴⁴ Adams County Housing Study, 2002.

⁴⁵ Adams County Head Start Community Assessment., 2003.

Affordable housing is also one of the three primary needs for seniors in Adams County according to the DRCOG Area Agency on Aging Four Year Strategic Plan for Aging Services 2003-2007. A planning session with the Adams County Senior Council revealed that “many members felt that affordable housing would be a growing concern for many seniors over the coming years, as the demand for affordable housing will not keep pace with its availability”.⁴⁶ The 2002 Adams County Housing Study found that, while homeownership is prevalent amongst 65 year olds (82%), it decreases sharply with age where one finds that 45% of 85 year olds and older are renters. As this population grows with the aging of Baby Boomers, one understands the concern voiced in the DRCOG study.

Interesting Finding: *The need for affordable housing for households ranging from families with young children to seniors, is relatively high today and will likely continue according to the 2002 Adams County Housing Study, 2003 Head Start Community Assessment, and the DRCOG Area Agency on Aging Four Year Strategic Plan 2003-2007.*

THE HOMELESS

The 2003 point-in-time study of the homeless in metro Denver found that 71% of the 9,725 persons surveyed had a need for emergency shelter and services and that 29% participated in homeless transitional housing programs or treatment programs.⁴⁷ This represents an increase in the need for emergency shelter and services over the 2001 survey (62.7%). While the study covers the entire metro Denver area, one can assume that Adams County has not escaped this increase in homelessness, given the income, education and employment patterns in the county. The majority of Adams County’s homeless population reported the following places of residence on January 27, 2003: family or friends (40.1%), transitional housing (22.2%) emergency shelter (10.1%) and hotel/motel (9.7%).⁴⁸

Interesting Finding: *The metro area’s homeless population continued to grow in the early 2000s, most likely due to the recession and jobless recovery. Many of the new homeless are families with children.*

PUBLIC SERVICES

Several of the studies included findings related to use of public services (i.e. food banks and health care) by specific populations, such as low-income families and senior citizens. Summary findings for those populations are included below.

⁴⁶ DRCOG Area Agency on Aging Four Year Plan for Aging Services 2003-2007.

⁴⁷ Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area, 2003.

⁴⁸ MDHI: Point-in-Time Homeless Count. Results by Question, 2003.

LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

According to the 2002 Adams County Housing Study, most of the households receiving support services in Adams County were single parents with children (32%) and couples with children at home (27%). Among households using services, the overall median income was \$12,000 and the mean was \$14,988, or approximately 30% of the Area Median Income as defined by HUD. Over 45% of those using services earned under \$10,000 annually. Close to 75% of all households that used services earned less than \$25,000 annually. Among households using services, 41% reported they were employed full-time or part-time. Approximately 14% devote all of their monthly income for housing.

Survey respondents were asked to note the reasons that they had difficulty paying for housing over the last two years. The two biggest reasons were loss of a job or other source of income and simply insufficient income. Other important reasons included unanticipated expenses and an inability to locate housing that was affordable. Within the past six months, 62% of the respondents sought assistance with food. Medical assistance was used by 30% of those seeking services and rent payment assistance was used by close to 25% of those responding to the survey. About one-fourth of households using services had moved at least once in the past year. Not surprisingly, households that were relatively new to the area were most likely to have needed emergency shelter. About 76% of households using services that had been in the area for two years or less used this service. Among households using services, the cost of housing is the most important factor they consider when finding a place to live. This is closely followed by size of the unit and being close to schools.

According to the 2003 Community Assessment for Adams County Head Start, there were 1,311 Head Start eligible children in the county, and only 55% of those children were receiving services. The Program Administrator informed the research team that families must meet the federal poverty guidelines to be eligible for Head Start. For a family of four the income threshold for 2004 is \$18,600. The Program Information Report provides a census of Head Start families and is filed with the federal government every year.⁴⁹

The 2002-2003 Program Information Report also indicated the following needs for Head Start children: follow-up dental services (69%) and health insurance (28%). Additionally, 28% of children were referred for mental health services.

Interesting Finding: Families living in poverty needed assistance with day-to-day expenses such as child care, food and medical assistance.

INSIGHTS FROM THE ADAMS COUNTY FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM, 2002

A review of data from the Adams County Food Distribution Program from October 2001 to September 2002, revealed that the largest percentage of households using the service were in Commerce City, followed by Aurora and Thornton.⁵⁰ It isn't surprising to see Commerce City and Aurora on the list, as those cities have significant need based on the Census 2000 poverty figures

⁴⁹ Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, 2003.

⁵⁰ Adams County Food Distribution Program, 2002.

discussed previously in this report. In other ways, food distribution customers mirror the findings for low-income households. First, the largest percentage of customers has a high school degree or lower, which isn't surprising given the link between education and income. Second, single parent females and two-parent households are the dominant users, and females greatly outnumbered males in terms of the registered user by household, representing both female-headed households and two-parent households. Finally, many of the registered households reported employment when asked their income source, thus speaking to the challenges faced by working poor families.

HISPANICS

The household size of Spanish speakers using services was quite large when compared to other households that used support services, as reported by the 2002 Adams County Housing Study. Over 65% of the households indicated they had five or more people in their household, with a five-person household found to be the median household size. This is almost double the county average of 2.8 persons per household according to the 2000 Census. Spanish speaking households earned considerably less than all other households that received services. The average income of these households was \$8,397 and the median was half that found among the other households at \$6,000. This is significant given that Spanish-speaking households reported significantly larger households.

It appears that Spanish-speaking households may be at a higher risk for homelessness and displacement when the amount of income they devote for housing is taken into consideration. Over half reported that they pay 100% or more of their monthly income for housing. About 37% of Spanish speakers indicated that they had been behind in their rent or mortgage at least once during the past two years. Using services associated with food, such as the food bank or food stamps, were clearly the most important to these households. About 25% used medical assistance. Only about 25% of Spanish speakers indicated they received any types of housing assistance. Of those, about 43% indicated that they received help from family and friends. Slightly over half of Spanish speakers that used services indicated that they were employed.

The 2003 Head Start Community Assessment for the county reported that 68% of enrolled children were Hispanic and 37% were monolingual Spanish speaking. Interviews with Family and Community Specialists and community agency staff indicated that English as a Second Language classes were a significant need for Head Start Families.⁵¹

Interesting Finding: *Hispanic families tend to be larger than the county average and earn a lower income.. These families often need a variety of social services including Head Start, food assistance (food bank or food stamps), and ESL classes. Interestingly, these families are less likely to have received any type of housing assistance. (Source: 2002 Adams County Housing Study, 2003 Head Start Community Assessment).*

SENIORS

The 2002 Adams County Housing Study reported that the mean income of seniors using services was \$16,301 and the median was close to \$13,000. This suggests that very low-income seniors use

⁵¹ Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, 2003.

supportive services. Around 22% of seniors that used services indicated that finding affordable rental housing had been a problem. Among senior households that used services, the three primary reasons that paying for housing had been difficult in the past was loss of income/job, insufficient income and unanticipated medical expenses. Seniors were more likely to note loss of rent subsidy than were all households responding to the survey. Over half of senior households using services paid 31% or more of their income for housing. Among seniors using support services, 74% indicated that they used food assistance. About one-fourth of seniors used medical assistance and 16% used rent payment assistance. Approximately 12% of seniors who owned their homes reported that they were in fair or poor condition and needed work. Among renters, close to 19% reported that their unit needed minor repairs.

Senior citizens living in Adams County in 1999 reported that they would “definitely” need or “may” need help with the following aspects of day-to-day living in the next five years: interior/exterior repairs (48%), snow shoveling/yard work (39%), transportation (33%), legal services (29%), help with household tasks (24%), help with shopping (23%), and help with care giving (22%).⁵² Seniors in Adams County also reported current problems with poor health (55%), depression (35%), financial problems (30%), and difficulty with everyday activities (29%).⁵³

Interesting Finding: *Seniors need assistance with home repairs, ranging from minor to more major, according to the 1999 DRCOG study and the 2002 Adams County Housing Study.*

THE DISABLED

Approximately 17% of households in Adams County had at least one person with a disability as reported by the 2002 Adams County Housing Study. Most households reported only one person (13%) and less than one percent of households have three or more disabled persons. The majority of households only had one person with a disability. About 18% of four person households have three persons with a disability, which suggests a group home. Approximately 26% of households with a disabled person earn \$25,000 or less. Slightly more than 30% earn \$25,000 to \$34,999. Given that the highest number reported a mobility impairment, it is likely that homes that are accessible or programs that improve access and mobility would be useful. Around 45% of disabled persons did not have any problem finding a place to live. The biggest problem was cost (38%) and the least encountered problem was inability to find an accessible unit. About 35% of households with a disabled person that used services reported being behind in their housing payment one or more times the past two years. Close to half indicated that insufficient income was a reason.

Section 8 assistance is the most used of the housing assistance provided according to those surveyed. Among households with a disabled person that used services, the most important factor to consider when finding a place to live was cost. The size of a unit was also important, as was finding a place close to public transit.

⁵² The Status of Older Adults Living in the DRCOG Region, 1999.

⁵³ Ibid.

Interesting Finding: Disabled adults that have used social services have been challenged to find accessible housing, affordable housing or accessible transportation.

THE HOMELESS

The point-in-time surveys conducted by The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative seek to estimate the total number of homeless in metro Denver and the causes of homelessness. While there has been continuity in the four most common reasons for homeless in 2001 and 2003, the specific reasons and their order had changed as illustrated below.⁵⁴

Reasons For Becoming Homeless	2003 Survey	2003 Survey	2001 Survey
	Total Respondents	Adams County	Total Respondents
Unemployment	1	2	2
Unable to pay rent/mortgage	2	1	1
Alcohol and substance abuse	3		4
Domestic violence	4	4	3
Family member/personal illness	5	5	8
Unable to pay utilities	6		NA
Mental illness	7		5
Other (not specified)	NA	3	NA

It is interesting to note that Adams County’s homeless population identified three of the four main causes for homelessness as the metro area overall. Unfortunately, the “other” category included no explanation.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The surge in population growth in Adams County since 1990, as well as surrounding areas, has resulted in increasing pressures on community facilities and infrastructure, including parks, public safety, roads, schools.⁵⁵ “In many instances, demand is outstripping the county’s ability to pay for expansion of existing services and facilities, on top of maintaining what is in place today,” notes the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. The Plan also recognized that Adams County does not assess a general sales tax currently. Rather, a property tax is used to fund most general health and safety functions and capital improvements.

INSIGHTS FROM THE BENNETT TOWN SURVEY, 2003

Since 1998, the Town of Bennett has conducted an annual survey of all its residents. This longitudinal study offers a snapshot of the needs and concerns of a small, rural community.

⁵⁴ Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area Point-in-Time Surveys, 2001 and 2003.

⁵⁵ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, 2003.

The majority (over 75%) of Bennett residents that participated in the 2003 survey indicated they were satisfied with street maintenance, snow removal, electric service, street lighting and the water supply and quality, and those rankings had remained relatively consistent since 1998.⁵⁶ When asked to identify “the most important concerns for the Planning Commission and for the Town Board as they consider new land development proposals, survey respondents in Bennett identified the following:

- Water supply (55%) – 23% increase over 2002 response
- Police services (52%)- doubled 2002 average response of 25%
- Quality of new land development (26%) – slight increase over 2002

Bennett residents were also asked to select the statement that “most closely reflects your feeling about community growth”. Sixty percent said that “Bennett should plan for a moderate rate of growth” and 28% said “Bennett should actively encourage more growth”. Residents also indicated that Bennett’s greatest strength is being a “small town” with 60% of respondents selecting that attribute. That attribute has been ranked highest every year since 1998.⁵⁷

Bennett residents continued to voice their need for additional or improved recreational facilities when surveyed in 2003. Respondents were able to select up to three needs. The list of the “top five” needs in 2003 has remained unchanged since 1998 and includes: recreation center (57%), indoor swimming (46%), trails/bike paths (37%), movie theater (36%) and parks (23%).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ 2003 Town of Bennett, Colorado 2003 Citizen Survey, 2003.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

APPENDIX A – STUDIES ANALYZED FOR THIS REPORT

1. Adams County, Colorado – Poverty: Statistics and Maps, November 2000
Prepared by: Adams County Office of Community Development
2. Adams County Comprehensive Plan, 2003
Prepared by: Adams County
3. Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, 2002
Prepared by: Adams County, Colorado Head Start
4. Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, 2003
Prepared by: Adams County Head Start
5. Adams County Housing Study, 2002
Prepared by: McCormick and Associates, Inc.
6. Adams County Office of Community Development: Food Distribution Program, 2002
Prepared by: Adams County Office of Community Development
7. Adams County 2000 Census Report, 2003
Prepared by: Adams County Department of Planning and Development
8. City of Westminster Housing Needs Assessment 2003
Prepared by: McCormick and Associates, Inc. – A member of The Housing Collaborative, LLC
9. Community Assessment Report for the Adams County Workforce Region, 2003
Prepared by: The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children
10. Community Health Profile: Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties, 2002
Prepared by: Tri-County Health Department
11. Consolidated Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2000-2004, 2000
Prepared by: Adams County Office of Community Outreach
12. DRCOG Area Agency on Aging: Four Year Plan for Aging Services, 2003
Prepared by: Colorado Department of Human Services – Aging Services Unit
13. High Five Plains Higher Education and Community Assessment Project, 1998
Prepared by: Center for Rural Assistance, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
14. Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area: The Changing Face of Homelessness, 2001
Prepared by: The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative and The Colorado Department of Human Services Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs

15. Homelessness on the Denver Metropolitan Area: Point-in-Time Survey, 2003
Prepared by: The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative
16. Local Restructuring Plan for the Planning Area of Adams County, 1996
Prepared by Carol A. Gosselink, Ph.D., Consultant
17. The Status of Older Adults Living in the DRCOG Region: A Needs Assessment and Asset Model for Older Adults in the Seven County Region, 1999
Prepared by: National Research Center, Inc.
18. Thornton Community Health Issues: Working Toward a Healthy Community, 1999
Prepared by: Thornton Partnerships for Community Health Task Force
19. Town of Bennett, Colorado – 2003 Citizen Survey, 2003
Prepared by: Adams County Office of Community Development
20. 2000 Census Data: Westminster and Neighboring Communities, 2000
Prepared by: RRC Associates, Inc.

APPENDIX B – RELIABILITY RATING SYSTEM

The following criteria were used to rate the reliability of each report. The Corona team distinguished between secondary research, such as use of Census 2000 data or other sources, and primary research, such as surveys, focus groups or interviews.

RELIABILITY RATING	SECONDARY DATA SOURCES CITED IN BODY OF REPORT	PRIMARY OR SECONDARY RESEARCH METHODS DESCRIBED	PRIMARY RESEARCH TOOL(S) INCLUDED	VALIDITY OF RESEARCH METHOD(S)*-- - PRIMARY OR SECONDARY
High	Consistently cited	Detailed description	All research instruments included	Includes all four elements of strong research*
Medium	Most sources cited	Brief description	Some research instruments included	Includes two or three elements out of four
Low	Sources listed but not cited	Named but no description	No research instruments included	Includes one element out of four
Unknown	Sources aren't listed or cited	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Legend

* The four elements consist of: sampling methodology, instrument design, implementation and interpretation of findings

Not Applicable (N/A) – Criteria does not apply

Reports that scored a “low” rating on two or more criteria, and reports that received one or more “unknown” ratings are not included in this analysis as the findings could not be verified. These reports are considered less valuable from a research perspective as the methodology doesn’t meet standards of excellence or could not be validated.

APPENDIX C - RELIABILITY RATING OF EACH REPORT

ADAMS COUNTY, COLORADO: POVERTY – STATISTICS AND MAPS

Author: Adams County Office of Community Development

Year: 2002

Brief Description: This report consisted exclusively of maps and tables about poverty in Adams County based on the 2000 Census. The maps appear to have been pulled directly from the Census website. No written descriptions or analysis were included.

Reliability Rating – High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	
Primary research tool(s) included	Not Applicable	
Validity of research methods	Not Applicable	

ADAMS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (DRAFT)

Author: Adams County

Year: 2003

Brief Description: This Comprehensive Plan provides goals, policies, and a future land use plan for guiding the physical development of the county. The Plan will be used to assist the Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners, and staff as decisions are made regarding land use applications, capital improvement planning, and regional coordination efforts.

Reliability Rating – High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	Data sources cited.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Not Applicable	
Primary research tool(s) included	Not Applicable	
Validity of research methods	Not Applicable	This is a planning document that references key data sources to illustrate key points and priorities.

ADAMS COUNTY HEAD START COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT, 2002

Author: Adams County Head Start

Year: 2002

Brief Description: This draft report documents a Community Assessment conducted in June 2003. Graduate Students from the University of Colorado at Denver assisted with the assessment. According to the report, the research approach consisted of Census data, staff and community agency interviews, data from the 2002 and 2003 Program Information Reports, parent surveys and needs assessments, interviews with Policy Council parents and information from other community assessment reports. In addition, a list of resources used by Head Start families is included.

Reliability Rating - Low

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Low	Some data sources were referenced in the report, but not cited directly. Others were not referenced or cited.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Low	Research methods were not listed or were very briefly described. There is some information about the process design in Section 8 on Page 20.
Primary research tool(s) included	Low	The parent survey instrument was not included.
Validity of research methods	Unknown	The research methodology, instrument design, implementation and interpretation cannot be verified for the parent survey or the Program Information Report (assumed to be a data collection instrument).

ADAMS COUNTY HEAD START COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT, 2003

Author: Adams County Head Start

Year: 2003 Draft Report

Brief Description: This draft report documents a Community Assessment conducted in June 2003. Graduate Students from the University of Colorado at Denver assisted with the assessment. According to the report, the research approach consisted of Census data, staff and community agency interviews, data from the 2002 and 2003 Program Information Reports, parent surveys and needs assessments, interviews with Policy Council parents and information from other community assessment reports. In addition, a list of resources used by Head Start families is included.

Reliability Rating - Low

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Low-Medium	Data sources were referenced but not fully cited.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Low	Research methods listed, but not described.
Primary research tool(s) included	Low	Survey instrument(s) and interview guide(s) were not included.
Validity of research methods	Unknown	The research methodology, instrument design, implementation and interpretation cannot be verified. For example, no information is given on the 470 families that participated in the survey or how representative they were of the total population surveyed.*

*Note: A follow up call with the Program Administrator revealed that the Program Information Report is submitted to the federal government annually and includes information on every family with a child enrolled in the program..

Enrollment guidelines are based on the federally determined poverty rate. The maximum income for a family of four is \$18,600 for the current year. The child must be three to five years old.

ADAMS COUNTY HOUSING STUDY

Author: McCormick and Associates, Inc.

Year: 2002

Brief Description: This document includes an Executive Summary, Adams County Housing Study: Demographics, Housing Cost and Employment, and Adams County Housing Study: Economically Distressed Households, Seniors and Hispanics. Primary research was conducted to generate information beyond that available from existing public sources. Three surveys were distributed as described below.

- Household Survey. The Household Survey was mailed to 5,000 homes in incorporated and unincorporated Adams County.
- Special Needs Survey. This survey was a point in time survey that was conducted of people seeking services on June 11th from various service agencies in Adams County.
- Employer Survey. This survey was mailed to 400 businesses in incorporated and unincorporated Adams County, 343 of which were delivered to the respective business.

This study covers Adams County and primarily the communities of Brighton, Commerce City, Federal Heights, Northglenn, Thornton, and Westminster.

Reliability Rating – Medium-High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	Listed and consistently cited. Extensive use of Census data to illustrate changes from 1990 to 2000.
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	All methods described.
Primary research tool(s) included	Low	No.
Validity of research methods	Medium	Includes information on sampling methodology, survey weightings and statistical validity. No information included on survey design.

ADAMS COUNTY OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Author: Adams County Office of Community Development

Year: 2002

Brief Description: This report is exclusively a tabular presentation of data concerning the food distribution program from October 2001 to August 2002 and Census 2000 data concerning the population of interest. There are no written descriptions accompanying the tables.

Reliability Rating – Low

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Medium	It is assumed that “Census Year: 2000” means the data is from that census.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Low	No written description of any research methods is used.
Primary research tool(s) included	Low	No explanation is given of the research methods used to gather the data on registered households.
Validity of research methods	Unknown	No description is included.

Note: It is assumed that the data on registered households is collected on a monthly basis for each household served and tabulated annually.

ADAMS COUNTY 2000 CENSUS REPORT

Author: Adams County Department of Planning and Development

Year: 2003

Brief Description: This report consists of numerous charts tables and maps that illustrate findings of the 2000 Census for Adams County. Data in this report are arranged in the following order: County data – city data – CDP (Census Designated Places) data. CDPs are developed neighborhoods in unincorporated areas of the County. Cities included are: Arvada, Aurora, Bennett, Brighton, Commerce City, Federal Heights, Northglenn, Thornton, and Westminster. CDPs include: Berkeley CDP, Derby CDP, North Washington CDP, Sherrelwood CDP, Strasburg CDP, Todd Creek CDP, Twin Lakes CDP, and Welby CDP.

Reliability Rating – High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	
Primary research tool(s) included	Not Applicable	
Validity of research methods	Not Applicable	

CITY OF WESTMINSTER HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Author: McCormick and Associates, Inc. (A member of The Housing Collaborative, LLC)

Year: 2003

Brief Description: Primary research for this assessment included a household survey, special needs survey, employer survey and local interviews to determine housing, employment and commute patterns of residents throughout Adams county. In addition, existing research, such as Census data was analyzed. Seven Westminster neighborhoods were reviewed in this study.

Reliability Rating – Medium-High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	Listed and consistently cited. Extensive use of Census data to illustrate changes from 1990 to 2000.
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	All methods described.
Primary research tool(s) included	Low	No.
Validity of research methods	Medium	Includes information on sampling methodology, survey weightings and statistical validity. No information included on survey design.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE ADAMS COUNTY WORKFORCE REGION

Author: The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children

Sponsor: The Workforce, Faith and Community Works Initiative

Year: 2003

Brief Description: This report was written as part of a statewide initiative to connect community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) with Colorado Workforce Centers. The research approach consisted of one Learning Circle (i.e. focus group) with six participants and a review of existing demographic data, primarily from the 2000 Census. The findings from the two research methods were not synthesized and no summary findings were reported.

Reliability Rating - Medium

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	Consistent citations.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Medium	Brief description included.
Primary research tool(s) included	Medium	Referenced only.
Validity of research methods	Low	Only one Learning Circle was conducted.

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROFILE: ADAMS, ARAPAHOE AND DOUGLAS COUNTIES

Author: Tri-County Health Department

Year: 2002

Brief Description: This study was the first health for the Tri-County Health Department that covers Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. The study presents demographic information, as well as information from birth and death certificates and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Healthy People 2010 indicators are included as appropriate.

Reliability Rating – Medium-High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	All data sources are cited.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Medium	A brief description is included in the cover letter.
Primary research tool(s) included	Not Applicable	
Validity of research methods	Not Applicable	

CONSOLIDATED PLAN FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS 2000-2004

Author: Adams County Office of Community Outreach

Year: 2000

Brief Description: This study identified the housing, homeless and community development needs to improve the quality of life and opportunities available to low-income residents of Adams County. County staff analyzed existing data, visited residents in shelters and public housing, and with homeowners. Service providers were also contacted.

Reliability Rating - Medium

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	Sources are clearly referenced.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Medium	Brief description provided.
Primary research tool(s) included	Low	Instruments such as surveys and meetings agenda are not included.
Validity of research methods	Unknown	Sampling methodology, instrument design, implementation and interpretation cannot be verified.

DRCOG AREA AGENCY ON AGING: FOUR YEAR PLAN FOR AGING SERVICES

Author: Denver Regional Council of Governments with JVA Consulting

Year: 2003

Brief Description: This document is a four-year plan on aging for Region 3A and a comprehensive needs assessment of the region's older population required by Title III and Title VII of the Federal Government. Region 3A comprises eight counties that also include the Denver Metropolitan area. The eight counties are: Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin and Jefferson. The region is home to half of the state's older citizens. The needs assessment process included focus groups, key informant sessions, in-depth literature review and best practices review.

Reliability Rating – Medium-High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	Complete list of references included and data cited directly.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Medium	Focus groups, key informant input sessions and planning council sessions were well documented. No background information was included on the literature review or best practices research.
Primary research tool(s) included	Medium	Discussion guide for focus groups not included.
Validity of research methods	Medium-High	Documentation of research methods and findings could include more detail on instrument design.

HIGH FIVE PLAINS – HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Author: Center for Rural Assistance – Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

Year: 1998

Brief Description: This report entitled “Procedures and Results” is not the full report of this study. It does identify adult learning needs which if addressed might benefit the High Five Plains area of Adams County and Arapahoe County. It also suggests some ways in which local towns and citizens, schools, community colleges and universities, local business and civic groups might work together to meet learning needs. The HFP community includes the small towns of Bennett, Byers, Deer Trail, Strasburg and Watkins, together with surrounding agricultural lands, homes and small acre developments. Adult leaders of diverse backgrounds, known locally to have concern for the community’s future and general interest in education (which involves educators, business people, health care professionals, farmers/ranchers), were selected and each participated in one of five separate focus group discussions. A sixth discussion was held with high school youth.

Reliability Rating - High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	Descriptions of the sources are included. Census data was from 1990.
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	Thoroughly describes the “community-centered assessment approach”. Approach included a review of demographic data and other recent studies on the area, local visits, telephone calls and input from local residents.
Primary research tool(s) included	High	Includes the focus group questions in the body of the report.
Validity of research methods	High	Thorough explanation of all research elements was included.

HOMELESSNESS IN THE DENVER METROPOLITAN AREA: POINT-IN-TIME SURVEY 2001

Author: The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative and The Colorado Department of Human Services Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs

Year: 2001

Brief Description: This Executive Summary documented the third in a series of annual point-in-time studies. One hundred and twenty homeless providers from a six county region (Boulder, Longmont, Denver, Jefferson, Arapahoe/Douglas, Adams) participated in the census count of persons who were homeless on October 23, 2001. The survey was administered to all homeless persons who came through the homeless service providers during the week of October 23rd, with the understanding that people completing the survey were homeless on October 23rd. The survey population included 1,800 families representing 5,820 persons and 3,051 single individuals.

Reliability Rating – High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Not Applicable	
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	Detailed description included.
Primary research tool(s) included	Not Applicable	Not included in this Executive Summary.
Validity of research methods	High	Includes a detailed description of the sampling method, instrument design process, implementation of the survey and the steps to analyze the findings.

HOMELESSNESS ON THE DENVER METROPOLITAN AREA: POINT-IN-TIME SURVEY 2003

Author: The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative

Year: 2003

Brief Description: This Summary documented the fourth in a series of annual point-in-time studies. This study provides a one-time snapshot of people experiencing homelessness in the seven county metropolitan area on a single day and evening in January 27, 2003. Data was gathered through surveys with 1,985 families representing 6,511 people and 3,214 single individuals. This report also included several helpful tables and charts.

This Rating includes the separately documented “MDHI: Point-In-Time Homeless Count” with results by question obtained by the research team.

Reliability Rating – Low

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Not Applicable	
Primary or secondary research methods described	Low	No description included.
Primary research tool(s) included	Not Applicable	Not included in this Summary.
Validity of research methods	Unknown	“Results by question” identified that the Adams County sample size was 504.

Note: It is assumed that this study used the same methods as the 2001 study, as the author and report format are the same. In addition, survey findings were available by question for Adams County. As such, some key findings from this report were included.

LOCAL RESTRUCTURING PLAN FOR THE PLANNING AREA OF ADAMS COUNTY

Author: Carol A. Gosselink, Ph.D., Consultant

Year: 1996

Brief Description: This report responded to HB 94-1005 to provide a plan for the administration and delivery of human services in Adams County. The study assessed the human services delivery system through several key research tasks: agency surveys, compilation of socio-demographic data, plotting of at-risk populations on census tract maps, locating services on Census tract maps, survey of consumers of health and human services, and assessment of the delivery system.

Reliability Rating - High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	High	Census 1990 and other sources referenced.
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	Each method was described in detail.
Primary research tool(s) included	High	Service provider survey included.
Validity of research methods	High	Provider survey instrument, sampling methodology, implementation and data analysis included.

THE STATUS OF OLDER ADULTS LIVING IN THE DRCOG REGION:
A Needs Assessment and Asset Model for Older Adults in the Seven County Region

Author: National Research Center

Year: 1999

Brief Description: The purpose of the study was to identify the needs of older adults such as transportation, housing, volunteerism, care giving responsibilities and probable service. The study also looked at quality of life, issues affecting older adults and services. The study presents survey findings from a randomly selected sample of 1,700 households of older adults in the DRCOG (Denver Regional Council of Governments) area in 1999. The DRCOG region included a seven county area comprised of: Douglas, Gilpin, Arapahoe, Jefferson, Denver, Clear Creek and Adams.

Reliability Rating - High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Not Applicable	
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	Research methods were described in detail.
Primary research tool(s) included	High	The survey instrument was included.
Validity of research methods	High	The research methodology, instrument design, implementation and interpretation can be verified. The number of surveys delivered, delivery method and response rates are described. For example, the survey sampling scheme is included in the Appendix.

Note: Some survey findings are tabulated at the county level, and others represent the seven-county DRCOG region. 309 of the 1,700 respondents were residents of Adams County.

THORNTON COMMUNITY HEALTH ISSUES
Working Toward a Healthy Community

Author: Thornton Partnerships for Community Health Task Force

Year: 1999

Brief Description: This survey was conducted in response to the Thornton City Council's recognition that a more accurate profile of community health needs was required to better coordinate government, community and neighborhood activities. This study consisted of a survey that was administered to 2,500 randomly selected households via mail as well as door-to-door surveys to 200 households in designated low-income areas.

Reliability Rating – High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Not Applicable	
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	Thorough description of the survey methodology.
Primary research tool(s) included	High	Survey instrument included.
Validity of research methods	High	The sampling methodology, instrument design, implementation and interpretation of the findings were well documented. It is unclear if the door-to-door survey was conducted randomly as the mail survey had been.

TOWN OF BENNETT, COLORADO – 2003 CITIZEN SURVEY

Author: Administration Department

Sponsor: Bennett Board of Trustees

Year: 2003

Brief Description: This survey was conducted in January 2003 to gather information about the community and hear from citizens about their thoughts on issues of public interest. This was the seventh annual survey delivered to every household in the corporate limits of Bennett. A total of 874 surveys were delivered, 727 by first class mail, and 147 hand-delivered door-to-door. Two surveys were delivered to each household, with instructions to the recipient to give the second survey to another adult member of the household. The response rate in 2003 was fairly consistent with the 2002 response statistics. In 2003 the response rate was 175 households, or 16%, versus 17.2% in 2002. Of respondents, 37% responded with two surveys versus 34% in 2002.

Reliability Rating - High

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Not Applicable	
Primary or secondary research methods described	High	Research methods were described in detail.
Primary research tool(s) included	High	The survey instrument was included.
Validity of research methods	High	The research methodology, instrument design, implementation and interpretation can be verified. The number of surveys delivered, delivery method and response rates are described. Changes in the survey design from the prior year are noted. The sample size (N) is included for each question from 1998-2003.

2000 CENSUS DATA: WESTMINSTER AND NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

Author: RRC Associates, Inc.

Year: 2000

Brief Description: This report is a graphical representation of what is assumed to be Census 2000 data for Westminster and its neighboring communities, including Aurora, Arvada, Thornton, Northglenn, Broomfield, Lafayette, Brighton, Federal Heights, Niwot, Louisville, Longmont, Erie and Commerce City. As such, some of the municipalities included are outside Adams County. No descriptions or supplementary analysis of the data was provided.

Reliability Rating – Low

CRITERIA	RATING	EXPLANATION
Secondary data sources cited in body of report	Low	No references were included.
Primary or secondary research methods described	Low	The report consists only of charts and graphs. No information is provided on the research methods used.
Primary research tool(s) included	Not Applicable	
Validity of research methods	Not Applicable	

APPENDIX D – CATEGORIES OF NEED

- Housing** Emergency Assistance, Referrals, Counseling, Weatherization/Energy Assistance, Rent or Mortgage Assistance, etc.
- Economic Development** Job Finding Assistance for Adults or Youth, Services for Starting a Business, Career Counseling, Placement, Referrals, Low-interest Loans or Credit
- Government Communication** About Routine Government Functions Like Taxes and Voting, About Policy Issues and Major Decisions that Will Have a New Impact on City, etc.
- Education** Counseling, Adult Education, Early Childhood Ed., Head Start, Child Development, Literacy, After-School Programs, etc.
- Infrastructure** Roads, Water, Sewer, Trash, Sidewalks, Public Parking, etc.
- Public Safety** Police, Fire, Emergency Response, etc.
- Public Services** Public Transportation, Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse Services, Food Assistance for the Needy, Victim Assistance, Senior Services, Child Care Financial Assistance, Day Care, Disabled Services, Homeless Services, Youth Services, etc.
- Bilingual Communication** Communication from Government in a Second Language, Translation Assistance to Businesses or Individuals
- Recreation** Parks, Recreation Facilities for Youth, Seniors, and Families, etc.