

INTRODUCTION

VISION STATEMENT

The Douglas County Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP or Plan) reflects, acknowledges and balances the common values, rights, and needs of all County residents and landowners, and honors and protects its unique, diverse communities and resources. This intent is most effectively realized through citizen understanding of, and participation in, land use review processes and public forums.

In the State of Colorado, it is the duty of the county planning commission to draft and adopt a comprehensive plan for the unincorporated territory of the county, pursuant to C.R.S. §30-28-106(1).

The CMP clearly states the desired community vision for the future and establishes the guiding policies needed to achieve sustainable growth over a 20- to 30-year period. The CMP has been developed as the foundation for the County's future growth and development, and as such, is intended to provide decision makers with guidance on how to maintain and improve identified community values.

The CMP uses community values as the basis for goals, objectives, and policies to shape and guide future growth. An extensive process was followed to identify community values during the 2008 update. The community identified values in 10 categories that are still valid in 2019:

- Access and Transportation
- The Natural Environment
- The Planning Process
- Property Rights and Property Values
- Quiet, Peacefulness, and Privacy
- Recreation
- The Rural/Unique Area
- The Safe Environment
- The Sense of Community
- Water Supply

This Plan builds on the above-listed community values in developing goals, objectives, and policies to guide land use

SECTION 1

decisions and shape development. A future Land Use Map (see Map 1.1) is included to demonstrate how this Plan's policies guide the desired location, use, and intensity of land development. Each of these components of the CMP is described below:

- Goals provide general statements reflecting County desires regarding land use, decision-making processes.
- Objectives establish a more specific framework for the larger goal.
- Policies provide the guidelines for direction or action.
- The CMP Land Use Map illustrates future land uses and important geographic features based on this Plan's goals, objectives, and policies.

Plan components address growth-related topics such as land use, transportation, community resources, parks and open space, water supply, environmental quality, and wildlife.

This Plan is divided into land use, environmental, and service sections that detail the community's desired goals, objectives, and policies by topic and geographic area. Section background and Plan amendment processes are provided to assist with using and maintaining the relevance of the document.

The CMP is the instrument that establishes long-range land use policies in a coordinated and unified manner. Decision makers can use this Plan for guidance on resource allocation, zoning of land, the subdivision of land, capital improvement plans, budgeting, and County work programs.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The 2040 CMP update public outreach process began in January 2018. The outreach process was designed to reach as many Douglas County citizens as possible. A variety of media, technologies, and public meetings were used to gather input on the themes and topics most important to the County's citizens. Input is used to review and inform the goals,

objectives and policies as they relate to the County's vision. Below is a list of methods used during the update process to collect comments:

- **INTERNET**

A web page was created where people could track project status, public meetings, materials, and the latest drafts of plans and maps under discussion. The web page included a link to submit comments or questions about the Plan and the update process.

- **PLANNING COMMISSION KICK-OFF MEETING**

The Planning Commission formally kicked-off the CMP update process during a public hearing and listened to initial Master Plan comments from the public.

- **OPEN HOUSE - CASTLE ROCK**

The open house was the start of the update process and was intended to familiarize the public with the current CMP policies and provide information on the update process.

- **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS - CASTLE ROCK, FRANKTOWN, HIGHLANDS RANCH, LARKSPUR, LOUVIERS, PARKER, ROXBOROUGH AND SEDALIA**

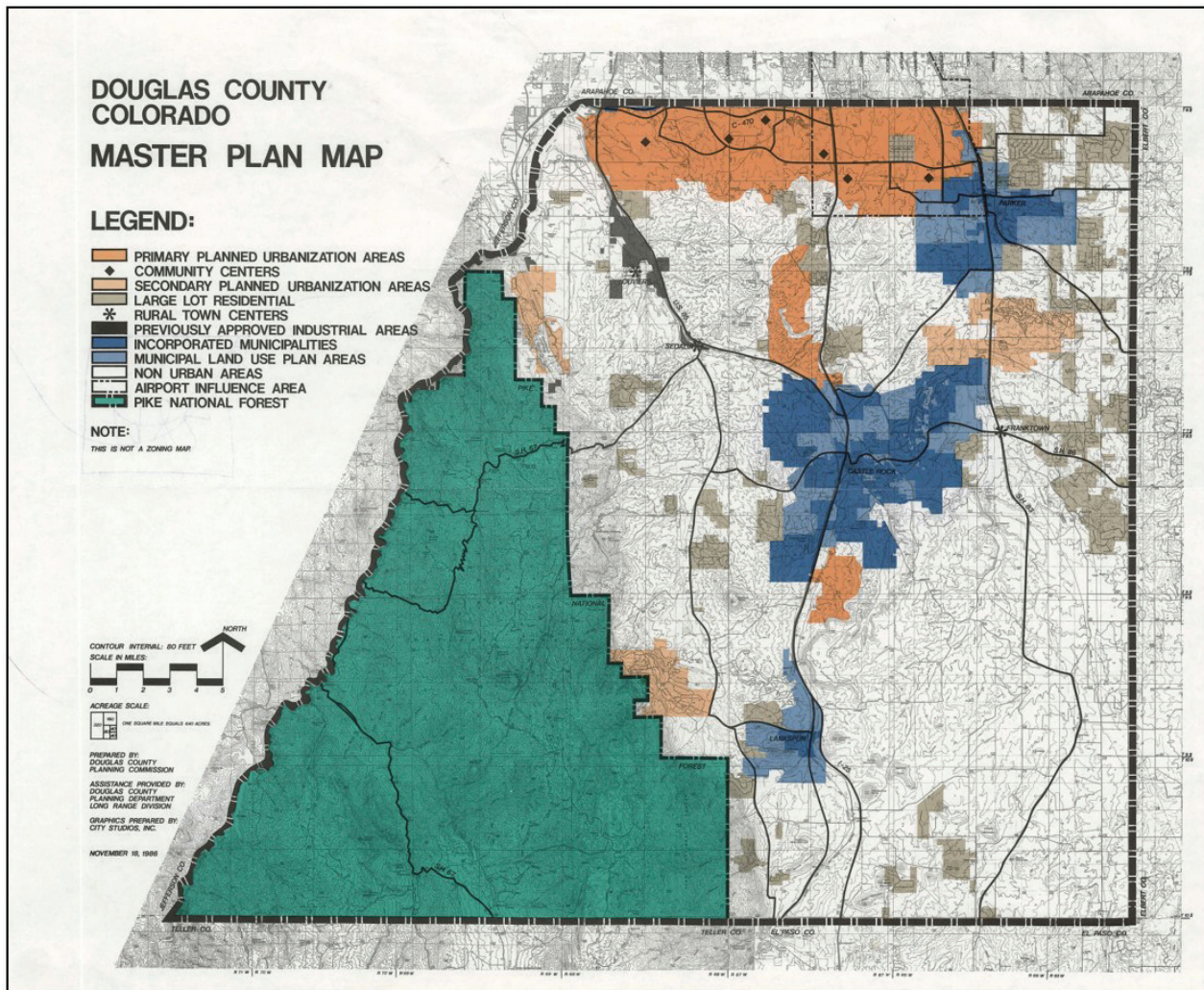
For each community, the conversations were focused on the subareas and specific Master Plan topics in Douglas County. Staff listened, discussed, and gathered public input about the issues and values specific to these areas. Staff used note cards and flip charts to capture public comments. Comment cards were provided to attendees if they wished to write comments instead of speaking.

- **WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

Comment cards were available at all meetings for use by citizens not comfortable speaking in a public setting. Staff also received public comment letters that were included in the project file record. Staff distributed the CMP update to agencies, homeowners' associations, and business groups via email and mail requesting comments.



Figure 1.1 - 2010 Master Plan Map



THE FIRST MASTER PLAN

A County CMP was completed in 1974, however a CMP and Land Use Map wasn't adopted until 1986. The 2010 Master Plan Map (1986) (Figure 1.1) directed urban development to the northern four miles of the County between Highways 83 and 85, and recognized existing communities in "secondary planned urbanization areas," such as Castle Pines, The Pinery, Roxborough, and Perry Park. The secondary planned urbanization areas became what are now known as "Separated Urban Areas." The 1986 Plan left the remainder of the county for nonurban densities and uses.

Subsequent CMPs refined the goals, objectives, and policies for urban and

nonurban areas of the county to ensure the community vision continued to be reflected. The 2040 CMP Land Use Map, while more detailed, has a land use pattern that is similar to the one adopted in 1986.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND REGULATIONS

The CMP is supported by other planning documents that serve to shape development. These include related guiding documents which are considered "sub-elements" of the CMP. Sub-elements provide topic-specific goals, objectives, and policies, and in some cases, are referenced in the CMP document. Sub-element plans include the:

- Transportation Master Plan

- Mineral Extraction Plan
- Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan
- Recreation and Tourism Plan

Figure 1.2 shows the relationship between the CMP and its sub-elements and implementation documents.

The CMP has historically reflected planning goals and values consistent with Metro Vision 2040. The Metro Vision 2040 Plan is a regional land use and transportation plan established by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). Metro Vision 2040 addresses topics such as future transportation investments, growth trends, regional open space needs and opportunities, and air and water quality standards over a 20-year horizon. The County is a signatory to the Mile High Compact, a voluntary agreement between members of DRCOG to manage growth throughout the region by implementing Metro Vision 2040.

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

Douglas County, Colorado encompasses over 843 square miles and lies close to the center of the state along the I-25 corridor between the major metropolitan areas of

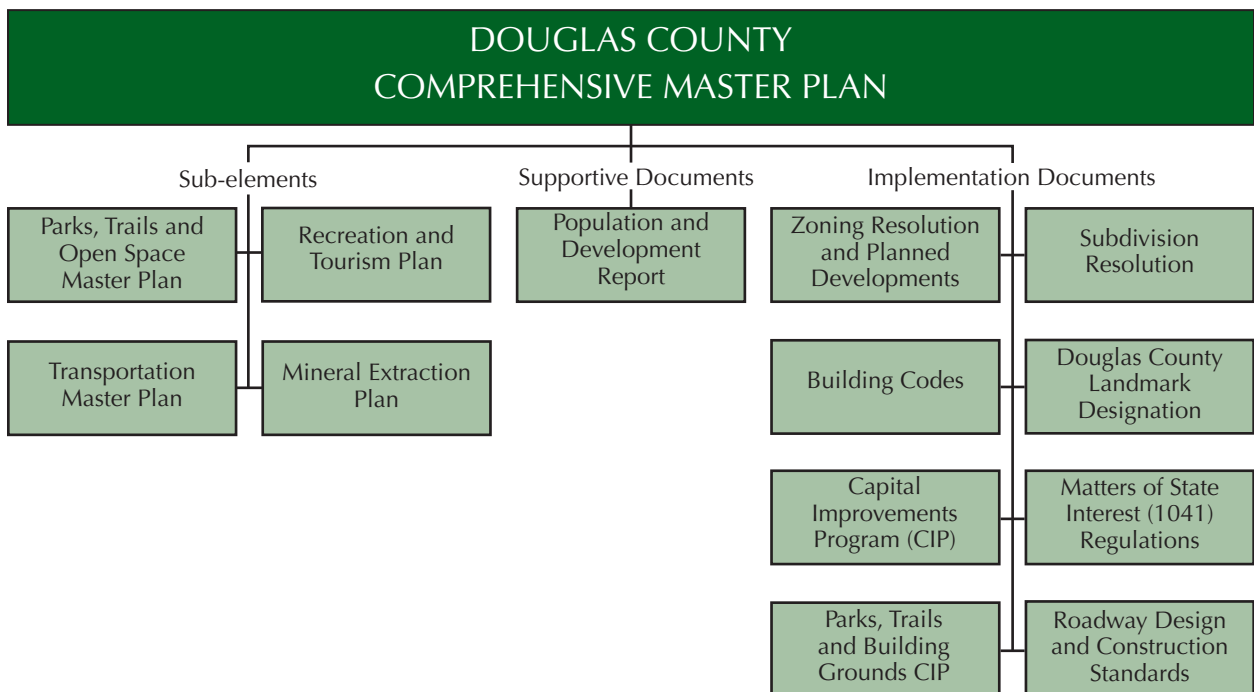
Denver and Colorado Springs.

Topographic relief ranges from 9,748 feet at Devils Head in the Pike National Forest to 5,360 feet where the South Platte River crosses the north boundary of the county. Some geologic resources of the county are landmarks, such as Devils Head, Dawson Butte, Castle Rock, Roxborough State Park, and Castlewood Canyon State Park. These landmarks, and the rolling, ridge-and-valley landscape surmounted by its mountain backdrop are aesthetically important assets of the County and its people.

Douglas County's vegetation is as varied as its topography. Pine, spruce, and fir trees cover the mountains of the Pike National Forest. The foothills are home to Gamble Oak, Mountain Mahogany, and Choke Cherry. The numerous riparian ways running throughout the county play host to Cottonwood trees, willows, and lush grasses. The mid-grass prairies prevalent in the county are populated with blue gramma, switch grass, and winter wheat grasses.

Douglas County is home to a diversity of wildlife including deer, elk, coyote, mountain lion, fox, hawk, black bear, the Preble's meadow jumping mouse (a threatened species)

Figure 1.2 - CMP-Related Plans and Documents



and is the nesting ground of the Sharp-tailed grouse.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Since the 1990's, Douglas County has been one of the fastest growing counties in the U.S. The County's population continues to grow, but not at the same volume or rate as in the past. The County gained nearly 110,000 residents between 2000 and 2010, which was a 62 percent increase.

Between 2010 and 2020, the anticipated population growth rate will be much lower, closer to 25 percent, as approximately 70,000 new people call Douglas County home. This pattern of slower growth is likely to continue for the next two decades, reaching a projected population of 484,000 in the year 2040. (See Figure 1.3)

Douglas County has changed from a rural county with a small population to a mixed urban and nonurban county with a larger population. Even with fast population growth in the 1990's, the Master Plan guided

development to appropriate areas of the county.

As Douglas County continues to grow, the type and location of housing, the number and type of jobs, and population trends for the next several years will diverge from historic development patterns.

To protect the rural patterns of development, the County adopted policies that guide growth to designated urban areas and municipalities in the northern portion of the county. Over 90 percent of the County's population lives in the designated urban areas which make up less than 20 percent of the County's land. (See Figure 1.4)

The County is home to seven incorporated municipalities. Five wholly within the county are Castle Pines, Castle Rock, Larkspur, Lone Tree, and Parker. The two municipalities based outside of Douglas County are Aurora and Littleton. Combined, these municipalities make up an increasing share of the County's total population, but account for only 9 percent of the land area.

Figure 1.3

Douglas County Population Projections, 2000-2040

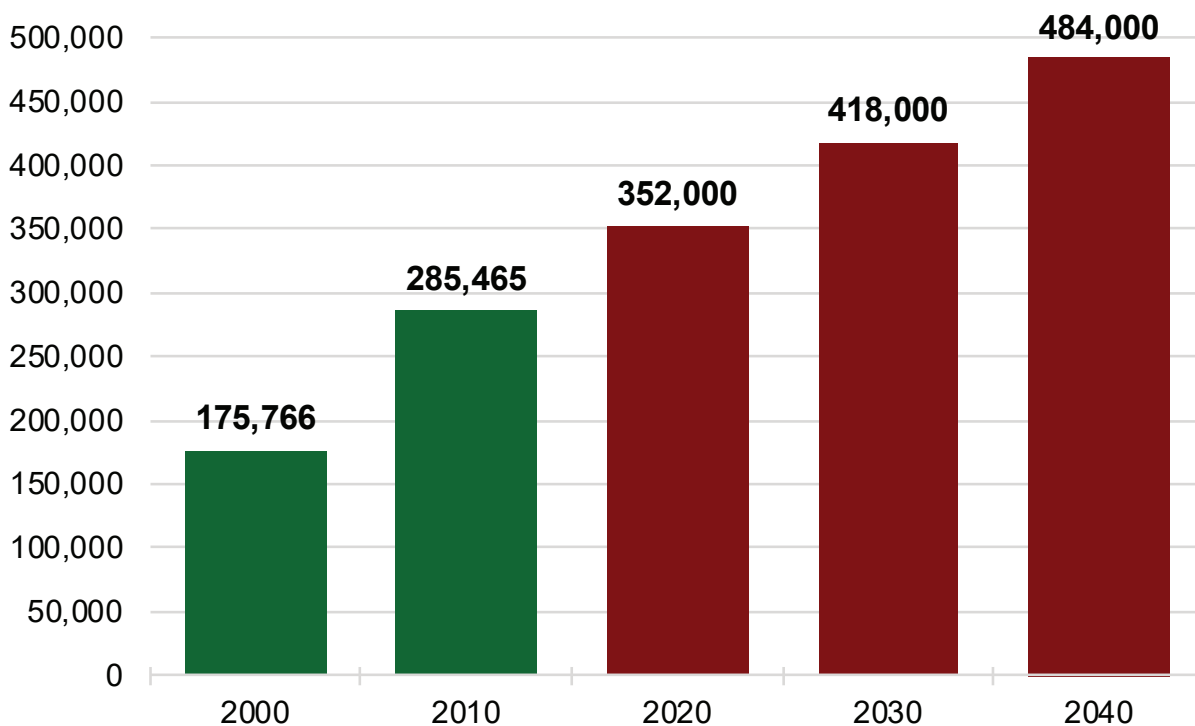
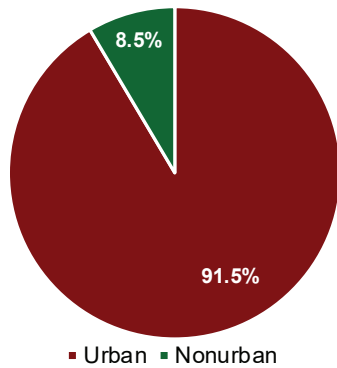


Figure 1.4

Douglas County Urban and Nonurban Population Shares, 2019



In 2007, the municipalities accounted for 38 percent of the total population; as of 2019, they account for 43 percent. (See Figure 1.5) Plan policies encourage the incorporated communities to increase their share of the urban population over time.

The County housing growth rate has slowed considerably since the 1990's. The recession in 2009 slowed the housing market, but building activity has increased almost every year since then. The highest annual County housing growth rate occurred in 1996 while the lowest occurred in 2011. (See Figure 1.6)

The type of housing built has also changed over the years. In 1990, there were few apartment units in Douglas County and by 2000, that total had tripled. In 2019, all multi-family housing, including condominiums, townhouses, duplexes, and apartments, were 24 percent of the total housing stock.

The number of wage and salary jobs (not including sole proprietors) located in Douglas County has been increasing steadily over the past two decades, except during the recession in 2009. The total number of jobs in 2017 was over 121,000. By 2040, total employment in the County could reach 220,000 jobs. (See Figure 1.7)

Figure 1.5

Incorporated and Unincorporated Douglas County Population Shares, 2007 and 2019



County industries experiencing the largest increases in jobs from 2008 to 2017 were health care and social assistance, professional and technical services, and administrative and waste services. Although retail trade continued to be the County's largest employer, other industries are growing faster, decreasing the percentage of retail jobs in the county. The second and third largest industries are professional and technical services, and health care and social assistance.

In the past, Douglas County had low percentages of people over the age of 65. As the population ages, the percentage of older adults will increase to 25 percent of the County population by the year 2040. The County may have to adjust policies in order to meet the needs of older adults. (See Figure 1.8)

URBAN AND NONURBAN

The CMP is a guiding document for the unincorporated parts of Douglas County. The unincorporated area is 91 percent of the total land area of Douglas County. Land use control in Douglas County is under the jurisdiction of seven municipalities in addition to the County.

The CMP categorizes different parts of unincorporated Douglas County as urban, nonurban, and rural communities on the land use map. Each has different goals, objectives,

Figure 1.6

Douglas County Annual Housing Growth Rate, 1990-2018

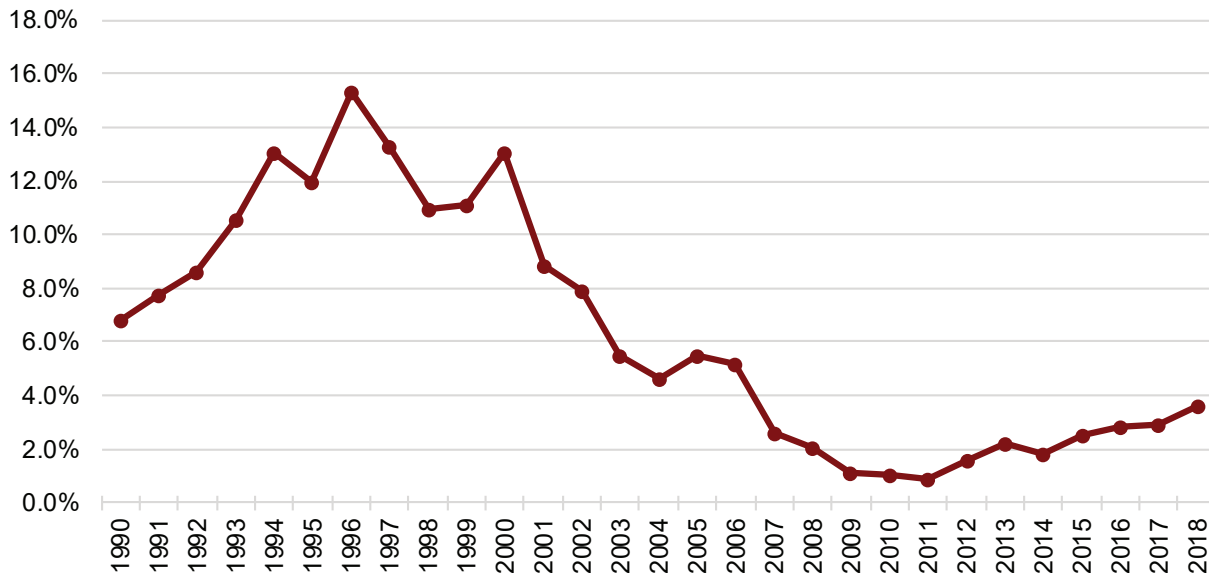
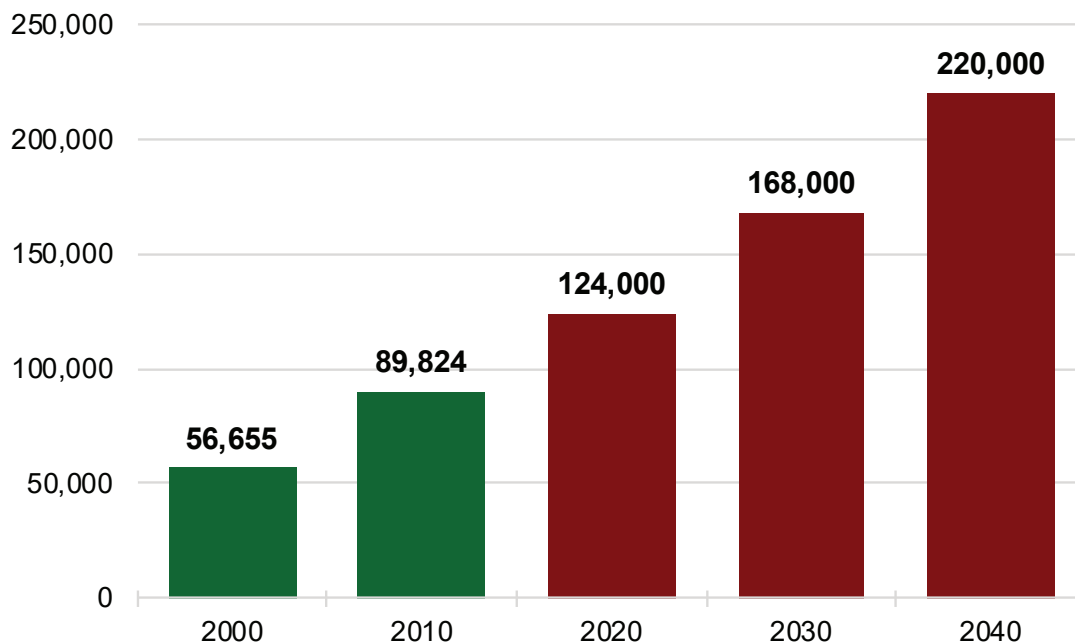


Figure 1.7

Douglas County Employment Projections 2000-2040

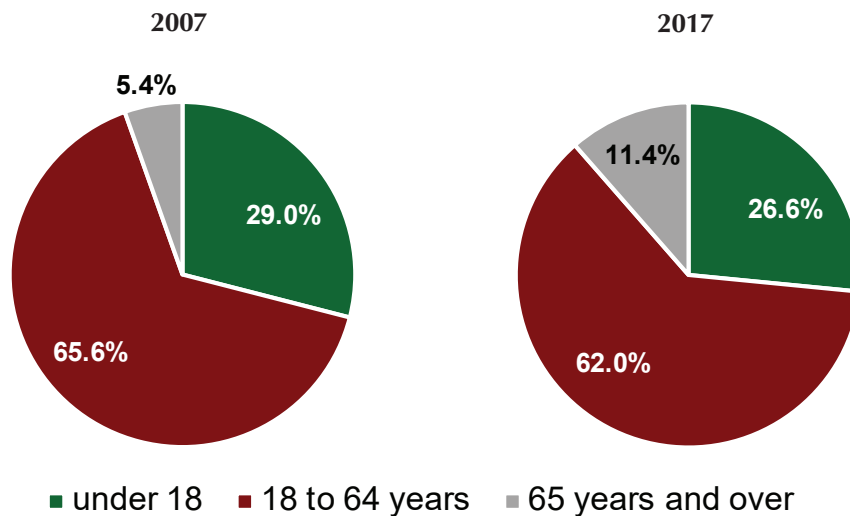


and policies. Urban development is typically characterized by residential uses at a gross density higher than one dwelling unit per 2.5 acres, and all commercial, business, and industrial uses.

The CMP Land Use Map shows four categories of urban area in unincorporated Douglas County: Primary Urban Area, Chatfield Urban Area, Separated Urban Areas, and unincorporated Municipal Planning

Figure 1.8

Douglas County Population by Age Group, 2007 and 2017



Areas. The fifth type of urban area on the CMP Land Use Map is the incorporated cities and towns. Land within incorporated cities and towns is designated as urban, even if the land currently has rural uses.

These urban areas are 150 square miles in size, or 18 percent of the total land area in Douglas County. The incorporated cities and towns are 79 square miles in size, or 9 percent of the total land area. As of January 2019, 91 percent of the population in Douglas County lives in the urban-designated areas of the county. The population living in the municipalities is 43 percent.

The CMP has been successful in guiding development to the urban areas to preserve the nonurban areas. The Land Use Map along with the goals, objectives, and policies encourage urban-level development in urban areas and appropriate rural development in the nonurban area. The amount of urban land area has not increased much since the 1986 Land Use Map. Ninety percent of the growth in Douglas County over the past few decades has occurred on land area designated as urban in the 1986 Master Plan. The County population is growing by infilling previously designated urban and incorporated areas rather than adding new urban land.

BALANCED FUTURE

As Douglas County continues to grow, the vision for the future has turned toward preserving the quality of life residents enjoy. County officials and residents understand the need for a balance between environmental quality and adequate services in the face of new growth. To address the need for balance, the CMP incorporates the concept of sustainability as part of the community vision.

The characteristics of the future population within the county are projected to change in comparison to what has been experienced in the past. Adjustments to plan policies and budget priorities will need to be considered to meet the needs of a different population.

Based on trends and growth projections, the County plans for the future by focusing on growth-related topics, such as:

- Providing areas for urban development to preserve the open spaces and nonurban areas
- Encouraging communities for older adult populations
- Supporting development of renewable water resources while emphasizing conservation efforts

- Encouraging transportation systems that do not rely heavily on the automobile
- Considering and evaluating services for residents of all ages
- Promoting housing diversity
- Increasing open space preservation activities
- Identifying and protecting important viewsheds
- Identifying areas for commercial activities

The goals and expectations of the CMP must be used to guide how development will look and where it will go. The CMP is the primary tool for establishing a vision and shaping development. By focusing on the stated growth topics, the public, staff, and officials can better prepare the County to meet future challenges while protecting the resources and natural amenities of the County.

IMPLEMENTATION: HOW THE CMP IS USED

The most important step in achieving the County vision is through implementation of the CMP. Applied primarily through zoning and subdivision, it guides unincorporated development, directing growth to urban areas and limiting nonurban development. Approval criteria for most land use applications require compliance with this Plan.

The competing values of the Plan must be balanced through the public review process to achieve the larger vision of the community. The public has a key role in the implementation of the CMP by providing feedback to Douglas County through development review processes on how well the community's vision is being implemented through the CMP. Decision makers use the CMP to ensure proposals and programs meet public desires and expectations.

The County strives to improve participation by utilizing the latest technologies in distributing information to, and soliciting feedback from, the public about development review and County activities.

INTERPRETATION: HOW THE SECTIONS RELATE TO EACH OTHER

As a guiding document, the CMP uses language different than that found in regulatory documents such as the zoning resolution and the subdivision resolution. Words like “encourage,” “support,” “promote,” and “ensure” provide flexibility in prioritizing the competing values in the CMP and remind us that the document is not a checklist.

The CMP is meant to be used as a whole. The goals, objectives, and policies are reviewed and discussed within the context of a specific land use request. For example, the Nonurban Land Use section primarily deals with land use in the nonurban area, heavily emphasizing rural character, scenic views, open space, and design issues. Yet topics such as community resources, transportation, water supply, wildlife habitat preservation, and open space opportunities are addressed in other sections of the Plan, including the urban land use section, and should be reviewed concurrently with nonurban land use policies.

Topics may be discussed in multiple sections. Policies regarding wildlife can be found in the urban section, nonurban section, rural communities section, and the wildlife section. In cases of conflicting policies, there may be a reference that the specific section policies take precedence.

CONCLUSION

The Douglas County CMP guides and shapes new growth to ensure development is well-served and that resources and amenities are preserved. The CMP evolves over time and through its regular updates responds to a changing economy, anticipated growth, and changing needs and values of County residents.

The CMP represents a shared vision of the citizens of Douglas County as expressed by the Planning Commission. It seeks to find an appropriate balance in land use that will provide opportunities for preservation of open space and wildlife habitat, while meeting the

needs of daily life, including jobs, housing, recreation, and services appropriate for both urban and nonurban lifestyles. The CMP incorporates general policies about how and where growth and development should occur, while offering a broad, yet realistic land use plan for the County now and into the future.

