

ADAMS COUNTY COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PROJECT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



ADAMS COUNTY
COLORADO

PREPARED BY:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

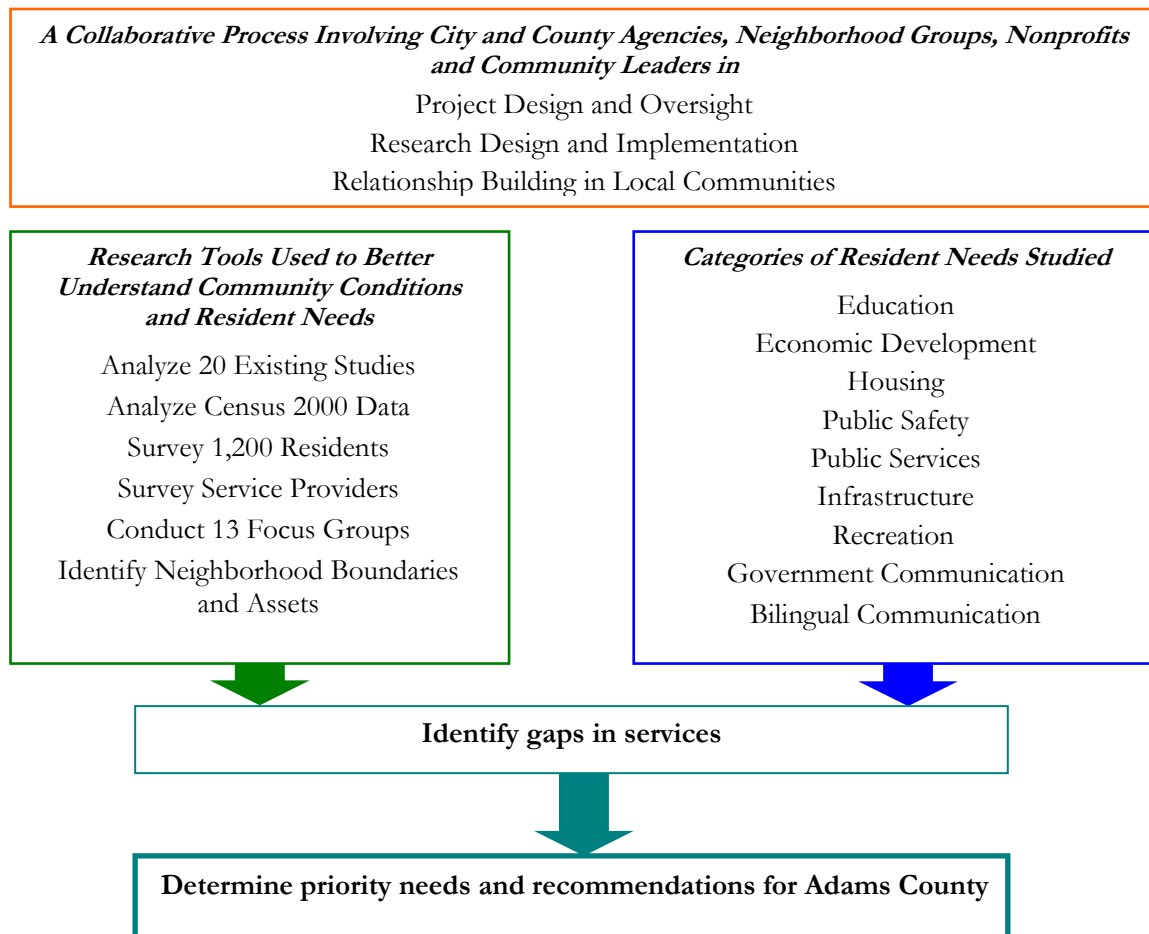
BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE THREE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT.....	2
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADAMS COUNTY.....	6
COUNTY-LEVEL PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT.....	10
EDUCATION.....	12
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	15
HOUSING.....	18
PUBLIC SAFETY.....	22
PUBLIC SERVICES.....	24
INFRASTRUCTURE.....	27
RECREATION.....	29
GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS.....	31
BILINGUAL COMMUNICATIONS.....	33
SELECTED FINDINGS ON MUNICIPALITIES AND UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY.....	35
A SNAPSHOT OF ARVADA.....	38
A SNAPSHOT OF AURORA.....	39
A SNAPSHOT OF BENNETT.....	40
A SNAPSHOT OF BRIGHTON.....	41
A SNAPSHOT OF COMMERCE CITY.....	42
A SNAPSHOT OF FEDERAL HEIGHTS.....	43
A SNAPSHOT OF NORTHGLENN.....	44
A SNAPSHOT OF THORNTON.....	45
A SNAPSHOT OF UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY.....	46
A SNAPSHOT OF WESTMINSTER.....	47
SELECTED FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST.....	48
ADDITIONAL FINDINGS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AND RESIDENT NEEDS.....	55
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	57
COUNTY-WIDE RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES.....	57
COMMUNITY BUILDING IN COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST.....	65
APPENDIX A – SCOPE OF WORK.....	66
APPENDIX B – RESEARCH METHODS AND NEED CATEGORIES.....	69
APPENDIX C –NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOPICS.....	70

ADAMS COUNTY COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In August 2003, Adams County engaged the services of Corona Research, Inc. to conduct a Community Needs Assessment that would identify community needs, community assets, gaps in services, and priorities, especially among low and moderate income residents. The goal of the study was to learn more about community conditions from community members and organizations so that the County could be more responsive to the needs, interests, priorities and capacities of community members in their efforts to create healthier communities. (See Appendix A for the Scope of Work.)

This section of the Community Needs Assessment report presents an overview of community conditions and resident needs in Adams County, provides information on available services and service gaps, and offers recommendations to the County to enhance community conditions and better meet resident needs. The diagram below illustrates the major components of the Needs Assessment project.



THE THREE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Scope of Work included in the Request for Proposals provided specific direction to the research team on the three major components of the Needs Assessment (See Appendix A).

A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

At the start of the Needs Assessment project in August 2003, a **Project Advisory Committee (PAC)** was formed to provide stewardship and expertise for the successful completion of the project. The Committee included Adams County residents, neighborhood associations, community-based organizations, City and County Agencies, the Needs Assessment Task Force, and the Office of Community Development.

PAC members were crucial to the success of the resident survey, as extensive community outreach was involved.



PAC members played a major role in surveying 200 Adams County residents the "old fashioned way" – via door-to-door surveys. In addition to recruiting surveyors in their communities, many hit the pavement and conducted surveys on a sunny Saturday in November 2003. Over 20 Adams County residents, community leaders and city/county staff served as door-to-door surveyors. Corona Research facilitated a training session on November 11, 2003 (See photo).

In addition, PAC members were instrumental in the successful recruiting of focus group participants in low-income neighborhoods and other communities of interest in Adams County. These grassroots efforts resulted in the establishment of many new relationships on behalf of Adams County.

A pizza party proved effective in reaching Adams County residents, community leaders, school staff, agency staff and others to assist with recruiting focus group participants. A few members of the team pose for a picture following the successful event. Over 20 people attended the event, from communities such as Watkins as Federal Heights (See photo).



The Project Advisory Committee established a strong membership. Approximately **30 members attended the monthly PAC meetings**, with an average of 20 to 25 people at each meeting. The April 2004 meeting provided for a transition of PAC leadership from Corona Research to the County. During that meeting, PAC members commented on the unique level of collaboration achieved during the Needs Assessment process and their desire to continue working together

The County also looked to Corona Research to build relationships with individuals and organizations as part of a capacity building initiative to support future improvement activities. During the Needs Assessment process, Corona Research **outreached to over 200 individuals and organizations** from across Adams County, thus positioning the County more strongly for future improvement efforts with active community involvement.

... WITH A NUMBER OF RESEARCH TOOLS

The Request for Proposal outlined several research tools to be used in the study, including a combination of original and secondary research methods, each of which has been documented in separate reports that supplement this report. While the secondary (i.e. existing) research laid the groundwork for understanding community conditions and possible resident needs, the primary (i.e. original) research provided opportunities to **hear directly from county residents** about their needs and priorities. (See Appendix B.)

- The **Resident Survey** of over 1,200 residents provided statistically valid data on county residents as a whole.¹ Of the 1,249 surveys conducted, 200 were conducted door-to-door in low-income neighborhoods using a handheld survey device (see picture) equipped for English and Spanish language surveys. The Project Advisory Committee elected to use a “hybrid” survey approach – a combination of telephone and door-to-door surveys – to ensure that low-income households weren’t under-represented.

A member of the door-to-door survey team is seen using the handheld survey device during the November 11th training session. The devices provided a user-friendly and “high tech” approach to survey data collection (see photo).



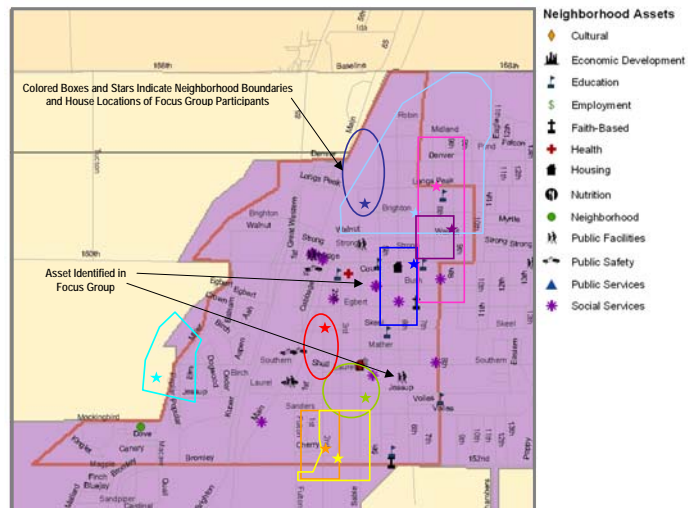
¹A survey of 1,249 people has a 95% Confidence Interval and a Margin of Error of +/- 2.8%.

- 13 **Focus Groups** were conducted in 11 communities of interest, including many low-income and poverty areas, from Brighton to Bennett and many neighborhoods in between. While these groups provided a snapshot of the needs of focus group participants in these areas, the focus group findings are not generalize-able to the whole county.

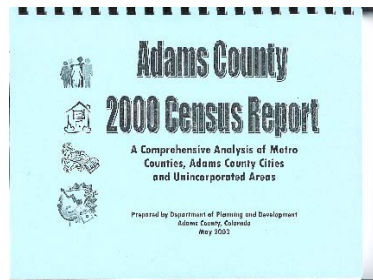


Members of the Aurora Spanish-language focus group pose for a post-group photo. The focus groups were held in community venues, including the Head Start facility at East 14th and Ironton in Aurora. Fortunately, there were enough “big people” chairs to go around (see photo).

- The findings from the **Provider Survey** largely reflect the opinions of social service providers in Adams County, with an emphasis on nonprofit service providers. The findings from the provider survey illustrate the services provided by those particular agencies and are not representative of all Adams County service providers. Nonetheless, the information gathered through the survey provides a baseline of information on current services and service gaps, and also indicates a need to establish the countywide capability to gather and update service data in a comprehensive and consistent manner.
- Another research task was to **Identify Neighborhood Boundaries and Assets**. Over 600 assets were identified in categories such as faith-based organizations and public facilities. These assets comprise a large percentage of community assets in Adams County, and could be supplemented with additional asset data from municipalities and nonprofits on a regular basis (See report entitled “Identify and Map Neighborhoods” and the Archview GIS software file on the accompanying CD). In addition, the neighborhood boundaries mapped in this study were identified during the focus groups and are thus reflective of those particular neighborhoods and residents.



- The **Demographic Profile** of Adams County is based on Census 2000 data and the **Review of Existing Research** included 20 studies that had already been conducted for Adams County or its municipalities with various levels of research rigor.



.... AND A VARIETY OF NEEDS TO STUDY

A challenge inherent in conducting a comprehensive assessment of this nature is that of limiting the scope of the research to fit the available budget while maximizing the amount of information collected. For this study, the client elected to modify the original list of need categories in order to focus on those needs that weren't being studied separately (See Appendix C). The decision to focus on nine particular categories of need was made by the Resident Survey Sub-Committee of the Project Advisory Committee. While some categories were eliminated (Health), others were studied in conjunction with a larger category (Homeless Needs were addressed as part of Social Services) and still others were added (Government Communication and Bilingual Communication).

The nine need categories reflect those areas covered during the primary research in this assessment. Allowance was made for other areas that were analyzed in the secondary research portions of the project, such as the review of existing research, which included some findings related to healthcare and seniors.

It is important to keep in mind that the findings gathered from the different research methods are reflective of the respective populations studied as well as the nature of the research tool utilized. As such, some findings pertain to the entire county and others are specific to the populations studied. Each research method has been fully documented through the supplemental reports created in addition to this report.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADAMS COUNTY

This section provides a framework for interpreting the resident needs and priorities presented in subsequent sections. The framework includes background information on Adams County's residents, and provides a context for understanding their needs as impacted by population growth and economic conditions in Adams County.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ADAMS COUNTY RESIDENTS?

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 illustrated below. The growth rate of 37.3 percent was higher than the state average of 30.6 percent for the same time period. Households in Adams County tend to be larger than those found in general across Colorado (2.8 compared to 2.5 persons per household). This larger family size helps explain why the per capita income in Adams County is approximately \$4,000 less than the state average, while the median household income is essentially the same.

Adams County is younger and more racially and ethnically diverse than Colorado overall, with more children under 18 years of age and more persons of Asian and Hispanic heritage. County residents are also more likely to speak another language than English at home. Adams County's level of educational attainment lags the state's, with fewer high school and college graduates residing in Adams County.

A Comparison of Adams County and Colorado

(Source: Census 2000)

Demographic Characteristic	Adams County	Colorado
Population	363,857	4,301,261
Population, Percent change 1990-2000	37.3%	30.6%
Persons per household	2.8	2.5
Median household income	\$47,323	\$47,203
Per capita income	\$19,944	\$24,049
Persons under 5 years old	8.4%	6.9%
Persons under 18 years old	28.6%	25.6%
Persons 65 years old and older	7.8%	9.7%
White persons	77.3%	82.8%
Black or African American persons	0.3%	3.8%
Asian persons	3.2%	2.2%
Hispanic or Latino persons	28.2%	17.1%
Language other than English spoken at home	21.6%	15.1%
High school graduates	78.8%	86.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	17.4%	32.7%

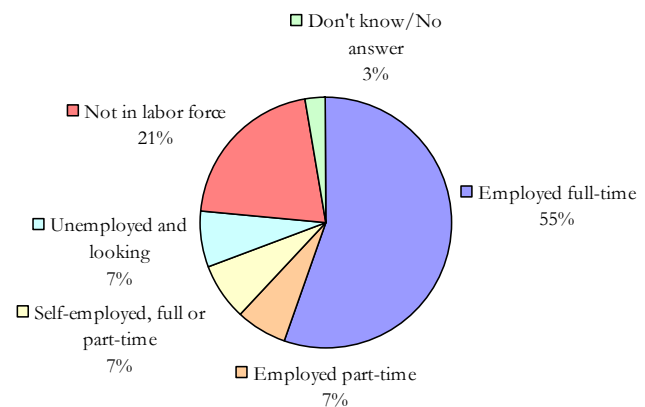
WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT?

The leading industries in Adams County in 2001 were, in order: construction, government, retail trade, and manufacturing.¹ Recent data compiled by the University of Colorado and provided by the Adams County Office of Economic Development notes the county is a major overland shipping hub, with its proximity to major interstates in Colorado. The report also states that the majority of the state's wholesale trade and commerce occur in Adams County.²

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMY?

Early 2004 has found Colorado in the midst of a “jobless recovery” that began after the 2001 recession. This jobless recovery is best evidenced by the unemployment rate. According to the US Department of Labor, the county outpaced 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%.³

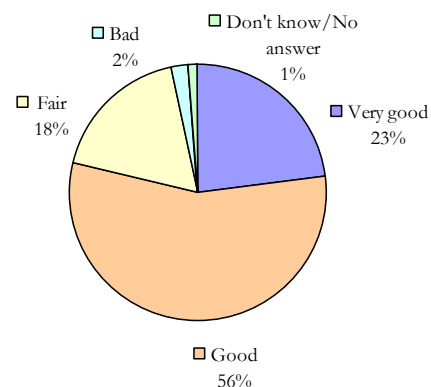
When asked, “*What is your current employment status?*” during the Resident Survey conducted in late 2003, respondents reported an unemployment rate of 7 percent.



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT QUALITY OF LIFE?

The survey of Adams County residents conducted in late 2003 provides a snapshot with statistically valid data on residents' perceived quality of life and need for services. Despite the challenges of the economy and rapid population growth, **79 percent of Adams County residents reported a “good” or “very good” quality of life.**

“*How would you rate your quality of life in Adams County?*” 79 percent of county residents said “good” or very good”.



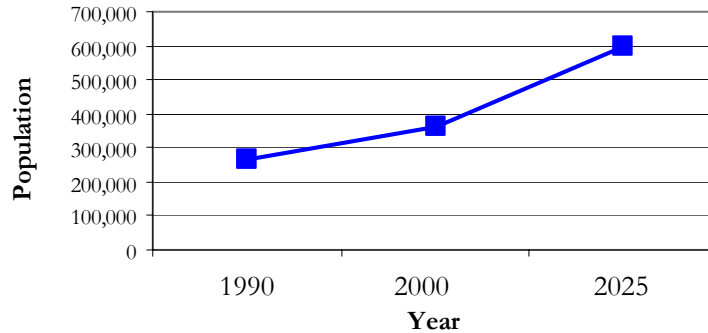
¹ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003.

² Colorado's Economic Opportunities: Yesterday, Today and the Future. University of Colorado, Leeds School of Business, 2004.

³ “Colorado's jobless rate climbs to 5.8 percent,” Rocky Mountain News, January 28, 2004, Page 16B.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH?

What does the future hold for Adams County? The county's high rate of population 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.⁴ 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. This high population growth will place increased demand on the County's services as well as those of its municipalities.



Source: Adams County Comprehensive Plan 2003, Draft

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PROJECTED BUSINESS GROWTH?

The state demographer expects the county to enjoy a “significant share of the Denver Metro area’s future job growth, influenced in no small part by the potential represented by Denver International Airport, the Gateway areas, and the completion of E-470.”⁵ A report recently published by the University of Colorado’s Leeds School of Business expects the construction, trade and service sectors to “continue to grow.”⁶ The report notes the continued importance of the county’s agriculture and transportation sectors as well as the “opportunities to build on [the] strengths of” the computer and electronic manufacturing and other industries. Another area of future growth potential is the new Colorado Biosciences Park Aurora on the old Fitzsimmons site.

According to the Comprehensive Plan, jobs in Adams County are projected to increase 70 percent between 2003 and 2025, from 193,305 to 318,849. This job growth is expected to “remain ahead of forecasts for the entire Metro region and the state as a whole.”

⁴ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Colorado’s Economic Opportunities: Yesterday, Today and the Future. University of Colorado, Leeds School of Business, 2004.

OBSERVATIONS ON GROWTH AND POTENTIAL NEEDS

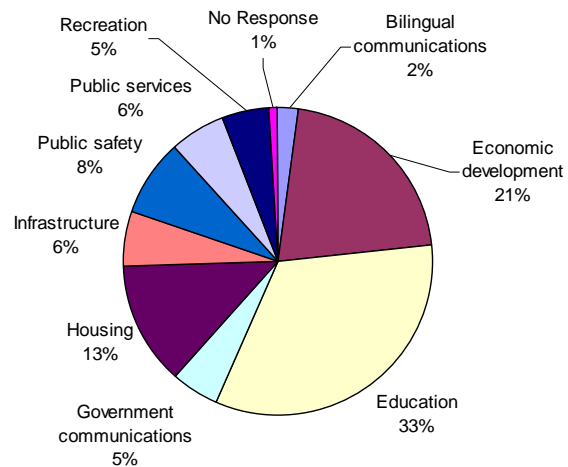
The information in this section provides a context from which to review the needs assessment findings presented next. In essence, Adams County has outpaced the state in terms of the population growth rate and is expected to continue to outpace the state through 2025. Since Adams County is younger than the state in general, with more children under age 18, it can expect that those young people will be graduating from high school and looking for opportunities to earn a living once they reach adulthood. This population growth is expected to be matched by considerable growth in the economic base of Adams County. Some of that economic growth is likely to be in new or growth industries that may require specialized skills or a post-secondary education while offering more opportunities to work and live in Adams County at a higher salary. County residents may need to increase their enrollment and graduation rates from colleges or trade schools in order to compete for these jobs and increase their household and per capita income. This increase in educational attainment would be greatly aided by public school systems that prepare their students for future academic and work success.

In the long term, an increase in household income may result in a shift in priorities, once the basic needs of county residents have been met. For now, the task is to focus on improving services to better meet current needs.

COUNTY-LEVEL PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The 2003 Resident Survey gave residents from across Adams County the opportunity to voice their opinions about needed services and priorities for the future. When asked to select one area for improvement, residents' opinions crystallized around three leading priorities.

“Which ONE of these areas should be the highest priority for improvement?”



Interesting Finding: When presented with a list of the nine categories of need and asked to vote for their Top 3, focus group participants identified the following (in descending order of votes): Economic Development, Public Services, Infrastructure, Public Safety, Education, Housing, Bilingual Communication, Recreation, and Government Communication.

As the following pages illustrate, the research findings and gap analysis support clear priorities for action in Adams County in the areas of Education, Economic Development, Housing and Public Safety. This is not to say that the other five areas are not deserving of the County's attention, as households are impacted by all nine areas. One can think of these findings as supporting the need for broad improvements for Adams County households, whether they be for additional recreation opportunities in the eastern portion of the county, increased public safety in low-income areas or increased job opportunities across the county.

Education is very important to Adams County residents – as evidenced by the 33 percent of residents that ranked it the top priority. The County has a role to play in meeting the needs of county residents in the areas of adult education (specifically in job training), English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, after-school programs and early childhood education. Likewise, the County can support ongoing improvements in the public school systems that serve the same constituents. Improving services in these areas will likely necessitate a strong partnership with local municipalities, school districts and other organizations serving Adams County residents. In addition, several of these issues, such as Economic Development and Housing, would benefit from a regional approach as well.

The next section documents the community need and relative gap in service for each of the nine need categories listed above, in descending order of priority. Findings from the various research methods utilized in this study are presented in support of each priority, and then the gap in services is outlined and overall conclusions offered.

Adams County - a county on the move

WHILE ADAMS COUNTY IS QUITE DIVERSE ...

Urban/Rural

Poor/Affluent

College educated/High school dropouts

New Arrivals/Long-term residents

White/Hispanic/African American/Asian/Multi-racial

...RESIDENTS AGREE OVERALL ON THEIR PRIMARY NEEDS FOR IMPROVED SERVICES.

EDUCATION

#1 Priority for Improvement

Source: 2003 Adams County Resident Survey

Community Need

- Selected as the top priority for improvement by 33% of Adams County households. This category covers early childhood education to adult education, educational opportunities for youth aged 16-20, and after-school programs.

What do residents tell us about education needs via the survey?⁷

- 42,500 Adams County households (33 percent) cited education as their **#1 priority for improvement**. The percentage of survey respondents that selected education as their #1 priority for improvement varied by income, with a range of 21 to 39 percent, with the lower priority given by those in lower-income groups (under \$20,000) and higher income groups (over \$200,000). The lower income groups were much more concerned about housing.
- The level of dissatisfaction with the **public education system** serving a particular municipality or unincorporated area of the county ranged from 12 to 31 percent rating it “bad” or “very bad”.
- 40,000 Adams County households (31 percent) believe that more **after-school programs** are needed.
- 36,000 Adams County households (28 percent) believe there aren’t good **educational opportunities for 16 to 20 year olds** that are no longer in school.
- 66,500 Adams County households (52 percent) believe there are **good adult education opportunities** in their community. This is the only area of education where a majority of county residents held a positive opinion.

The 2000 Census tells us more.....

- **Adams County significantly 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 a college background (ranging from “some college, no degree” to a “professional degree”) at 48.0% compared to 63.7% for the state.⁸
- The percentage of adults with a high school diploma in Adams County ranged by community from 57.8 percent to 85.5 percent, and **those with a college education ranged from 3.7 percent to 28.6 percent**.

⁷ Number of households based on survey of 1,249 residents (95% confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and 128,290 households in Adams County (2000 Census). Rounded to the nearest 500th.

⁸ Community Assessment Report for Adams County Workforce Region, 2003.

The existing research tells us more.....

- 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.**⁹ “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 level of educational attainment is **even lower for Head Start families** in Adams County. According to the 2003 Community Assessment, 63 percent of families had less than a high school degree and 25 percent had a high school degree or GED.¹⁰
- 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 716 (55 percent) were receiving services.**¹¹
- 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 percent of the need was unmet.**¹²

Residents that participated in focus groups tell us more¹³.....

- Education was **ranked in the Top 3 needs** out of nine categories in **6 of the 13** focus groups.
- When asked to comment on why education was ranked in the Top 3 priorities for improvement on the resident survey, focus group participants said that school overcrowding and poor quality were the reasons why education was ranked #1.
- Focus group participants were generally not aware of educational opportunities in their communities other than public schools.

Available Services

- The Provider Survey identified some of the education services provided to Adams County residents.¹⁴ While this data is incomplete it does provide a baseline of information on current services.

⁹ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, 2003.

¹⁰ Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, 2003.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 11 of the 13 focus groups were held in low-income areas in which 5% or more of the population lived at or below the poverty level according to the 2000 Census.

¹⁴ The Provider Survey had a response rate of 41.8%, and so likely is not comprehensive in assessing supply. Due to the nature of this survey, margin of error does not apply. In addition, the number of ‘unduplicated’ customers listed likely includes duplicate customers as well.

- 6,892 youth served by Youth Programs, including after-school
 - 290 youth were served in Youth Job Training Programs
 - 716 children served through Head Start
- Service providers that participated in the Provider Survey identified education as the area with the greatest projected increase in need over the next five years.

Gap Analysis

Are there enough services in Adams County to meet resident needs? The data gathered during this study provides a starting point for understanding the level of unmet need.

COMMUNITY NEEDS/POTENTIAL NEEDS	AVAILABLE RELATED SERVICES ¹⁵
83,728 Adams County youth (5-19 years of age) ¹⁶ 10,994 Adams County related children live in poverty ¹⁷	6,892 youth served by Youth Programs, including after school
53,352 youth aged 15-24 in Adams County ¹⁸	290 youth served in job training programs
1,311 eligible Head Start children	716 children served through Head Start

Conclusions

Resident needs in the area of Education appear to be broadly dispersed. The one area that seems to be working well is that of Adult Education, an area in which the majority of households reported that opportunities are “good” to “very good”. There may be some lessons learned about service provision in this area that could be leveraged to improve other segments of the education continuum (early childhood to adults). Given that Adams County has a relatively large percentage of youth, when compared to Colorado overall, the need for improved public school education and a variety of post-secondary opportunities will likely continue into the future. Most likely, the County will need to form new partnerships, or strengthen existing ones, to help address the broad range of educational issues that made this Priority #1.

¹⁵ Available services are assumed to be those provided by the Provider Survey respondents. This number is likely to under-represent total services, and is offered to provide a relative gap size.

¹⁶ www.census.gov

¹⁷ Adams County, Colorado Poverty Statistics and Maps, 2002.

¹⁸ www.census.gov

Community Need

- Selected as the top priority for improvement by 21% of households. This category included assistance with finding a job (adults and youth), services for starting a business, career counseling, placement, referrals, and low-interest loans or credit for businesses.

What do residents tell us about economic development needs via the survey?¹⁹

- 27,000 Adams County households (21 percent) are concerned enough about economic development to name it as their top priority for improvement. The **concern** about economic development in Adams County **is equally distributed across the county**. When the resident survey data was analyzed by income and location it revealed no real variation in response rate.
- 63 percent of the Adams County residents that work outside the county would **prefer to work in Adams County**. The two main reasons given for not working in Adams County today are: there are more jobs outside the county that fit their skills and that jobs outside the county pay more.
- 9,000 Adams County households (7 percent) include a person that is **unemployed and looking for work**.
- 3,600 Adams County residents (40 percent) of those that are ‘unemployed and working’ reported being **unaware of at least one job assistance program** in the county.
- Only 33,500 Adams County households (26 percent) believe there are “very good” or “good” **opportunities to obtain job training** in their community.
- 18-24 year olds were **most likely to be aware** of opportunities to obtain job skills or training. Only 13 percent reported that they “don’t know” compared to 33 percent of all adults.
- Quality of life is directly related to income. 62 percent of households with incomes below \$10,000 reported a “good” or “very good” quality of life, compared to 93 percent with incomes over \$75,000. Income is directly related to jobs. Residents with full-time jobs were more likely to report a higher income.

The existing research tells us more.....

- According to the 2000 Census **only 39.3 percent of working adult residents worked in the county**.
- On average, **residents that commute outside the county for work earn a higher income** than those that work inside the county, in industries such as real estate and services.²⁰ This

¹⁹ Number of households based on survey of 1,249 residents (95% confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and 128,290 households in Adams County (2000 Census). Rounded to the nearest 500th.

²⁰ Adams County Housing Study, 2002.

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.

- **5,977** (82.5 percent) of Adams County businesses had **19 or fewer employees**, and approximately **5,000 (69 percent) had less than 10** employees.²¹
- Adams County had a **larger share of jobs** in construction; manufacturing; transportation, communication, public utilities; and whole trade in 2000 than did the metro area overall.²²

Residents that participated in focus groups tell us more.....

- Economic Development was ranked in the **Top 3 needs** out of nine categories **in 9 of the 13 focus groups**. Residents emphasized their own need for stable employment with reasonable wages. Some residents believed there are fewer of these jobs now than in the past, due to companies moving out of the area. Other residents mentioned they have had to find jobs outside the city or county due to a lack of local jobs that match their skills. Job training, especially affordable job training, was highly favored and discussed as being somewhat parallel to the need for a good education. That is, education and training leads to one's ability to obtain a better job.

Available Services

- The Provider Survey identified the economic development assistance services provided to Adams County residents²³
 - 5,037 Adams County residents participated in job training
 - 50 Adams County residents received small business support
- Additional data obtained on services in Adams County reveals
 - 90 Adams County entrepreneurs were served by the Westminster Small Business Development Center in 2003. There is also a one-month waiting list for this program.
 - Adams County One Stop Career Centers served 30,608 repeat clients and 18,300 new clients from July 2003 through February 2004.
- Economic development was most likely to be in the Top 3 list of current *and* future needs out of 9 categories of need (Provider Survey).

²¹ US Census Bureau – County Quickfacts 2001 County Business Patterns, and 2000 Census Summary File 3.

²² Adams County Housing Study, 2002.

²³ The Provider Survey had a response rate of 41.8%, and so likely is not comprehensive in assessing supply. Due to the nature of this survey, margin of error does not apply. In addition, the number of 'unduplicated' customers listed likely includes duplicate customers as well.

Gap Analysis

Are there enough services in Adams County to meet resident needs? The data gathered during this study provides a starting point for understanding the level of unmet need.

COMMUNITY NEEDS/POTENTIAL NEEDS	AVAILABLE RELATED SERVICES ²⁴
9,000 households included an unemployed person	30,608 repeat clients and 18,300 new clients served through One Stop Career Centers
	1,541 Adams County residents found a job through One Stop Career Centers
	5,037 residents participated in job training in addition to One Stop
5,977 businesses had 19 or fewer employees in Adams County	50 residents received small business support
	90 entrepreneurs were served through the Westminster SBDC

Conclusions

Resident needs in the area of Economic Development appear to be broadly dispersed, ranging from increased opportunities for job training and placement services (or at least increased awareness of existing services) to increased opportunities to work *and* live in Adams County. The fact that this category was selected by residents of various income levels signifies its importance to those that are unemployed and those that are currently employed. One should recall that this category included job training and employment services as well as more traditional business development. Given that the majority of businesses in Adams County are small (with 82.5 percent employing 19 or fewer people), the County may need to consider increased support for this backbone of the county's economy.

²⁴ Available services are assumed to be those provided by the Provider Survey respondents. This number is likely to under-represent total services, and is offered to provide a relative gap size.

HOUSING

#3 Priority for Improvement

Source: 2003 Adams County Resident Survey

Community Need

- Selected as the top priority for improvement by 16,500 households (13 percent).
- Housing is a disproportionately strong concern among households with incomes under \$30,000. Housing was the top priority for improvement among 20 percent of those with household incomes of \$20,000 to \$29,999, 23 percent of those with household incomes of \$10,000 to \$19,999, and 25 percent of those with incomes under \$10,000.

What do residents tell us about housing needs via the survey?²⁵

- 14,000 Adams County households (11 percent) reported being **at immediate risk of losing their home** during the past 12 months because they couldn't afford their rent or mortgage.
- 27,000 Adams County households (21 percent) said **housing discrimination** is “common” to “very common”. This was especially true for 35 percent of Hispanics said that discrimination is “common/very common”, as did 60 percent of African Americans and 38 percent of multiracial households. While the sample size of African Americans and multiracial respondents is very small, the large proportion of respondents that noted discrimination is of concern.
- 69,000 Adams County households (54 percent) reported a need for more **homeless housing**.
- 70,500 Adams County households (55 percent) said that more **retirement housing** is needed.
- 79,500 Adams County households (62 percent) cited a need for **small starter homes**.

Residents that participated in focus groups tell us more.....

- While the survey sample sizes for Federal Heights and Aurora were quite small (and therefore less statistically reliable), the findings do help to illustrate the challenges faced by low-income households when reviewed in light of the focus group findings.
- Federal Heights – 25 percent of survey respondents rated the housing market as “bad” to “very bad.” The focus group held with Federal Heights residents considered housing to be one of their Top 5 needs, and mentioned the need for “control over rent increases” and mortgage assistance.
- Aurora – 29 percent of survey respondents rated the housing market as “bad” to “very bad.” The English-language focus group revealed a need for affordable housing and energy assistance. The linkage between housing and employment was noted by the Spanish language group, which considered economic development a higher need (i.e. find a job first, then find housing).

²⁵ Number of households based on survey of 1,249 residents (95% confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and 128,290 households in Adams County (2000 Census). Rounded to the nearest 500th.

- **Homelessness** was raised as a concern in several focus groups, ranging from Aurora to Brighton.

The existing research tells us more.....

- 43,061 Adams County households (approximately 33 percent) are **“housing cost burdened”**, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income for rent or a mortgage, and that over half of those residents pay more than 40 percent of their monthly income for housing (2002 Adams County Housing Study).
- The 2004 Adams County Housing Gap Analysis estimates a **shortfall of almost 17,000 rental units** for households earning 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI).²⁶
- 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.
- The finding above was confirmed by a 2004 study, which found there is a **considerable housing gap for homeownership** in Adams County.²⁷ The study calculated that there were only 11 affordable units available for the 980 one-person household that wanted to buy. In addition, there were only 2,115 units available for the 4,611 renters that earned 50 to 80 percent of AMI and wanted to buy a home in Adams County
- **Affordable housing is one of three primary needs for seniors and one of two primary needs for Head Start Families** in Adams County (DRCOG Area Agency on Aging Four Year Strategic Plan for Aging Services 2003-2007; Adams County Head Start Community Assessment, 2003.)
- The **point-in-time survey of the homeless** conducted on January 19, 2004 calculated that 60 percent of the homeless lived outside Denver, **indicated that 17 percent of the homeless were from Adams County**. “Children represent a growing percentage of the homeless,” as housing costs and unemployment “remain the leading causes of homelessness.”²⁸

²⁶ Adams County Housing Gap Analysis, 2004. Each year, the federal government calculates the median income for communities across the country to use as guidelines for federal housing programs. Area median incomes are set according family size.

²⁷ Adams County Housing Gap Analysis, 2004.

²⁸ Fewer homeless, greater need. Denver Post. April 20, 2004.

Available Services

- The Provider Survey identified the amount of services provided to Adams County residents.²⁹
 - 3,347 households received rental assistance in the past year
 - 40,617 households received utility assistance in the past year
 - 1,944 individuals received homeless services, mostly through Access Housing
- Housing was the second most likely need category to be identified as the #1 need today and in the future (Provider Survey).
- Additional data obtained on services in Adams County reveals
 - 1,407 households received Section 8 vouchers or public housing assistance from the Adams County Housing Authority
 - The Adams County Housing Authority had a waiting list of 1,500 for Section 8 vouchers

Gap Analysis

Are there enough services in Adams County to meet resident needs? The data gathered during this study provides a starting point for understanding the level of unmet need.

COMMUNITY NEEDS/POTENTIAL NEEDS	AVAILABLE RELATED SERVICES ³⁰
14,112 households at risk of losing their home	3,347 households (at risk of eviction or foreclosure) received emergency rental assistance
	23-27 single family homes were served by the County's housing rehab loan program
43,061 households were 'housing cost burdened'	40,617 households received utility assistance
1,500 <u>additional</u> households were on the waiting list	1,407 Households received Section 8 vouchers or public housing assistance
980 one-person renter households wanted to buy a home	11 affordable units were available
4,611 two person renter households wanted to buy a home	2,115 affordable units were available

²⁹ The Provider Survey had a response rate of 41.8%, and so likely is not comprehensive in assessing supply. Due to the nature of this survey, margin of error does not apply. In addition, the number of 'unduplicated' customers listed likely includes duplicate customers as well.

³⁰ Available services are assumed to be those provided by the Provider Survey respondents. This number is likely to under-represent total services, and is offered to provide a relative gap size.

Conclusions

One of the most compelling findings related to Housing was the relatively large percentage of households at risk of losing their home last year – 11 percent. This risk was spread across income categories, and didn't decline under 10 percent until the household income rose to \$60,000 (See Resident Survey Report). Given the median household income in Adams County of \$47,323 and the relatively large family size, the burden of paying for decent, safe housing is greater than might appear at first glance. As noted above, housing is a disproportionately strong concern among households with incomes under \$30,000 or 63 percent of the median household income in Adams County. The need for emergency assistance and affordable housing (rental units and for purchase) greatly exceeds the available supply and warrants attention from the County. The need for other types of housing, such as homeless housing and senior housing, warrants attention as well.

Community Need

- 10,500 Adams County households (8 percent) selected public safety as the top priority for improvement.

What do residents tell us about public safety needs via the survey?³¹

- 113,000 Adams County households (88 percent) reported feeling “**safe**” in their neighborhoods.
- **Perceived safety** ranged from a low of 69 percent to a high of 93 percent, depending on one’s community.
- Perceived safety also appears to **increase with income**, with 67 percent of households that earn under \$10,000 reporting that they feel “somewhat safe” or “very safe” to 98 percent of those in the \$100,000-\$199,999 income group.
- Residents that self-reported a “fair” to “very bad” quality of life were **more than twice as likely to rate Public Safety as the county’s top priority for improvement** as were their fellow residents with a “good” or “very good” quality of life.
- Public safety was a **more significant priority** for improvement for Adams County residents **aged 65 and over** than it was for younger residents. However, younger people were less likely to state that they feel safe in their neighborhoods.

The existing research tells us more.....

- 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.**³² “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.

Residents that participated in focus groups tell us more.....

- **7 of 13 focus groups mentioned safety as a Top 3 need** and safety was recognized as an important attribute of a neighborhood or community. Residents’ feelings of safety were a determinant of whether they were likely to feel that they live in a neighborhood. Ideally, residents would like to feel that kids can go out and play in the area without their parents having to worry about them. Residents also desired to feel that crime was not a problem in their neighborhood, or, if it was, that there would be adequate enforcement. Residents mentioned

³¹ Number of households based on survey of 1,249 residents (95% confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and 128,290 households in Adams County (2000 Census). Rounded to the nearest 500th.

³² Adams County Comprehensive Plan, 2003.

their desire for increased safety controls such as reducing speeding traffic, increased street lighting and more police or sheriff presence.

Available Services

Data was not collected on public safety services.

Gap Analysis

Since data was not collected from public safety organizations the gap analysis cannot be calculated.

Conclusions

There appears to be a larger need for increased community policing in low-income areas and those neighborhoods that house seniors. The focus groups provide some insights about specific needs in this area, such as increased street lighting and more police or sheriff presence. While street lighting may be considered a public infrastructure issue at first glance, and is most likely provided by an entity other a public safety office, it appears to have a direct impact on the perception of safety. As such, the Public Safety concerns might best be served by a collaborative approach across city and County departments.

PUBLIC SERVICES

#5 Priority for Improvement

Source: 2003 Adams County Resident Survey

Community Need

- 8,000 Adams County households (6 percent) selected Public Services as the top priority for improvement.³³
- Despite its low ranking of the nine categories of need, 41 percent to 67 percent of Adams County households are of the opinion that more services are needed across the board.

*What do residents tell us about the need for public services via the survey?*³⁴

- It appears that Adams County residents believe an **overall increase in services is needed**, with some categories of higher priority than others.

Number of Adams County Households that Believe More Services are Needed	Service Area
86,000 (67 percent)	Child abuse prevention
85,000 (66 percent)	Youth job training
81,000 (63 percent)	Youth programs
78,000 (61 percent)	Food assistance
76,000 (59 percent)	Job training
74,500 (58 percent)	Victim services
73,000 (57 percent)	Disabled services
73,000 (57 percent)	Homeless services
72,000 (56 percent)	Small business support
69,500 (54 percent)	Senior services
69,500 (54 percent)	Victim assistance
69,500 (54 percent)	Child care beyond the work day
68,000 (53 percent)	Subsidized child care
61,500 (48 percent)	Substance services
52,500 (41 percent)	Mental health services

- 45,000 Adams County households (35 percent) **disagree that there are enough affordable child care programs** in Adams County.

³³ The Needs Assessment did not include the topic of healthcare due to the complex nature of the topic and the understanding that the topic was being studied separately in Adams County.

³⁴ Number of households based on survey of 1,249 residents (95%confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and rounded to the nearest 500th.

- Public services were a more **significant priority** for improvement for Adams County residents’ **aged 60-64** and those households with **incomes** below \$10,000 and between \$60,000 and \$99,999.

Residents that participated in focus groups tell us more.....

- Public services were identified as a **Top 3 need in 8 of the 13 focus groups**. As with the resident survey, there were not one or two specific needs that came to the fore. Rather, residents in different groups mentioned most of the services in this category (i.e. services for seniors, disabled, retarded, victims, children, mentally ill, etc.) about equally. Public transportation and healthcare were also mentioned.

The existing research tells us more.....

- Senior citizens** living in Adams County in 1999 reported that they would “**definitely**” need or “**may**” need help with **day-to-day living** in the next five years, including: interior/exterior repairs, snow shoveling/yard work, transportation, legal services, help with household tasks, help with shopping, and help with care giving.³⁵
- Disabled adults** that have used social services have been challenged to find **accessible housing affordable housing** or **accessible transportation**.³⁶
- According to the 2002 Adams County Housing Study, **most of the households who received support services** in Adams County were single parents with children (32 percent) and couples with children at home (27 percent). Within the past six months, 62 percent of the respondents **had sought assistance with food**. **Medical assistance** was used by 30 percent of those seeking services and **rent payment assistance** was used by close to 25 percent of those responding to the survey. **Spanish-speaking households** reported that they had used **food and medical assistance services** most often.
- The 2003 Head Start Community Assessment found that **ESL classes were a high need** for Spanish-speaking families.

Available Services

- The Provider Survey identified the amount of services provided to Adams County residents in a number of areas, as shown in the Gap Analysis table on the following page.³⁷
- Public Services are considered a priority need today and in the future (Provider Survey).

³⁵ The Status of Older Adults Living in the DRCOG Region, 1999.

³⁶ Adams County Housing Study, 2002.

³⁷ The Provider Survey had a response rate of 41.8%, and so likely is not comprehensive in assessing supply. Due to the nature of this survey, margin of error does not apply. In addition, the number of ‘unduplicated’ customers listed likely includes duplicate customers as well.

Gap Analysis

Are there enough services in Adams County to meet residents' needs? It is quite likely that some service needs were underreported in the Resident Survey. For example, respondents may have been hesitant for legal reasons to report that their household has a need for child abuse services or substance abuse services, and other services such as mental health may be underreported for social reasons or even self-diagnosis reasons.

SERVICE AREA	HOUSEHOLDS STATING NEED FOR SERVICES IN THIS CATEGORY*	NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED CURRENTLY ³⁸
Child abuse prevention	3,000	591
Youth job training	9,000	290
Youth programs	17,000	6,892
Food assistance	10,000	6,096**
Victim services	5,000	2,737
Disabled services	9,000	7,095
Homeless services	3,000	1,944
Small business support	12,000	50
Senior services	11,000	33,806
Victims assistance	6,000	6,315
Child care beyond the work day	11,000	795
Subsidized child care	8,000	2,529
Substance abuse services	5,000	125
Mental health services	10,000	12,104

Note: Job training was addressed in Economic Development.

* As reported on the Resident Survey

** According to OCD records, an additional 5,000 households were served by other food pantries.

Conclusions

Public services are provided by a variety of organizations, both public and nonprofit. As noted above, the data gathered via the Provider Survey provides some data on the availability of services, but is known to be incomplete. In the case of public/social services, it is interesting to compare the perceived need for additional services as reported in the resident survey and the actual number of services delivered. Further analysis will be needed to determine if the underlying issue is one of inadequate services or insufficient marketing of existing services. The County may need to gather additional data from all service providers in Adams County so that a comprehensive understanding of the current mix and availability of services is understood and then used for future planning efforts. Most likely, one entity will need to be charged with the task of gathering and maintaining this information on a regular basis.

³⁸ Available services are assumed to be those provided by the Provider Survey respondents. This number is likely to under-represent total services, and is offered to provide a relative gap size.

INFRASTRUCTURE

#6 Priority for Improvement

Source: 2003 Adams County Resident Survey

Community Need

- 7,500 Adams County households (6 percent) selected Infrastructure as the top priority for improvement.

What do residents tell us about infrastructure needs via the survey?³⁹

Number of Adams County Households that Rate Services “Bad” or “Very Bad”	Service Area
25,500 (20 percent)	Water quality
20,500 (16 percent)	Roadway maintenance
20,500 (16 percent)	Roadway design and layout
18,000 (14 percent)	Traffic signals and signage
18,000 (14 percent)	Code enforcement
13,000 (10 percent)	Drainage and storm runoff
13,000 (10 percent)	Street lighting
10,500 (8 percent)	Sidewalks
10,500 (8 percent)	High speed Internet access
9,000 (7 percent)	Public parking
9,000 (7 percent)	Animal control
6,500 (5 percent)	Telephone service
5,000 (4 percent)	Garbage collection
5,000 (4 percent)	Parks

- Code enforcement received the **lowest positive ranking of the 14 Infrastructure areas**, with only 52 percent of Adams County households rating it “good” or “very good.” (High-speed Internet actually had a lower positive ranking, but only because nearly one-third of respondents had no opinion.)
- Infrastructure was a bigger concern among 45-59 year olds and households earning \$60,000-\$74,999 and \$100,000 to \$199,999.

³⁹ Number of households based on survey of 1,200 residents (95% confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and 128,290 households in Adams County (2000 Census). Rounded to the nearest 500th.

Residents that participated in focus groups tell us more.....

- About Code Enforcement
 - Residents commonly spoke about being aggravated by trash and lack of cleanliness in their neighborhoods. This applied to both private property and public property, and was the result, in part, of poor code enforcement. **Trash and clutter in yards and driveways was discussed as damaging to the appearance of a neighborhood.** Houses in need of major repairs were also viewed as detractors. Similarly, **dirty and cluttered streets** in neighborhoods, as well as **streets in need of repair**, also affected the feeling of living in a neighborhood.
 - Residents widely expressed a **desire for clean and well-maintained public areas.** Trash cleanup/pickup and street cleanup and maintenance were mentioned most often in this category. Sidewalks and sewer system maintenance were also commonly identified in this category.

The existing research tells us more.....

- **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.**⁴⁰ “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.

Available Services

Data was not collected from infrastructure organizations, and in many cases “supply” is not a relevant measure.

Gap Analysis

Since data was not collected on public infrastructure services, a gap analysis cannot be calculated.

Conclusions

While residents were less likely to cite a large need for additional Infrastructure services than they were for a category such as Public Services, there were some areas that warrant specific attention. Water quality, roadways and code enforcement are the leading areas for improvement in this category. Low-income residents are especially concerned about issues of street lighting (covered under Public Safety) and the upkeep of their neighborhoods. Most likely, community-based outreach and improvements in those areas would be well-received and positively impact residents’ pride of place.

⁴⁰ Adams County Comprehensive Plan, 2003.

RECREATION

#7 Priority for Improvement

Source: 2003 Adams County Resident Survey

Community Need

- 6,500 Adams County households (5 percent) selected Recreation as the top priority for improvement.

What do residents tell us about recreation needs via the survey?⁴¹

- 59,000 Adams County households (46 percent) said that more **free/low-cost recreation** is needed.
- 59,000 Adams County households (46 percent) said that more **youth centers** are needed.
- 52,500 Adams County households (41 percent) would like to see additional **cultural/arts opportunities**.
- 45,000 Adams County households (35 percent) would like to see additional **senior centers**.
- 40,000 Adams County households (31 percent) would like to see more **historic preservation**.
- 42,500 Adams County households (33 percent) rated the **opportunities for recreation and cultural activities** as “**very bad**” to “**fair**”.
- Overall, Bennett residents expressed a significantly higher need than did other locales for additional cultural/arts opportunities, free/low-cost recreation, youth centers, senior centers and historic preservation. While the survey sample size was quite small, it does illustrate a strong pattern of need.
- Residents under age 35 rated recreational opportunities lower than did older residents. Only 47 percent of 18 to 24 year-olds rated recreational and cultural opportunities as “good” or “very good” compared to 66 percent of those over the age of 65.

The existing research tells us more.....

- 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.⁴² “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.

⁴¹ Number of households based on survey of 1,200 residents (95%confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and 128,290 households in Adams County (2000 Census). Rounded to the nearest 500th.

⁴² Adams County Comprehensive Plan, 2003.

The residents that participated in focus groups tell us more.....

- Residents believe that more recreation centers and youth centers will provide youth in their neighborhoods with positive activities that would keep them from getting into trouble. Children in their early teens were most commonly identified as being in need of programs. Activities for children that are low-cost were especially favored.

Available Services

Data was not collected from recreation organizations.

Gap Analysis

Since data was not collected on public infrastructure services, a gap analysis cannot be calculated. However, the resident survey and focus groups indicate a need for free or low-cost recreational opportunities, with children and young adults the biggest possible consumers.

Conclusions

Approximately one-third or more of Adams County residents expressed a need for additional recreation opportunities, with the greatest overall need in rural eastern Adams County. While the eastern portion of the County has grown in population it remains relatively small compared to the eastern urban areas. Given that a number of the eastern towns spawn I-70 and the Adams/Arapahoe County boundaries, there may be opportunities to serve rural residents on both sides of the county line through collaborative recreation efforts.

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS #8 Priority for Improvement

Community Need

- 6,500 Adams County households (5 percent) selected this area as the top priority for improvement.

What do residents tell us about governmental communication needs via the survey?⁴³

- Adams County **households were split on the issue of government communications on routine functions**. 56,500 (44 percent) rated it “good” to “very good” and 52,500 (41 percent) rated communication with their local government on routine functions as “fair” to “very bad”.
- Adams County households were also **split on the issue of government communications on policy issues and major decisions**. 42,500 households (33 percent) rated it “good” to “very good” and 64,000 (50 percent) rated communication with their local government on policy issues and major decisions as “fair” to “very bad”.
- In both areas of communications, approximately 33,500 households (26 percent) rated communications as “fair”.
- 73,000 Adams County households (57 percent) believe there are **sufficient opportunities to participate in public decision-making** that affects their neighborhood.
- Government communications (on both routine and policy matters) received **more negative ratings** than positive ratings **from households with “bad/very bad” quality of life**.
- 46,000 Adams County households (36 percent) feel that **local government coordination of services is “bad” or “very bad”**.

Residents that participated in focus groups tell us more.....

- Government Communications received the fewest votes when participants identified their Top 3 priorities for improvement.

Available Services

Data was not collected on government communications services.

⁴³ Number of households based on survey of 1,200 residents (95%confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and 128,290 households in Adams County (2000 Census). Rounded to the nearest 500th.

Gap Analysis

Since data was not collected on government communications, a gap analysis cannot be calculated.

Conclusions

There appear to be opportunities to close the communication gap and increase the number of households that ranked it “good” or “very good”. In addition, the resident survey and focus groups indicate a need for increased coordination of services in several “top priority” areas, including education, economic development, housing, infrastructure and code enforcement.

Community Need

- 2,500 Adams County households (2 percent) selected Bilingual Communications as the top priority for improvement.

What do residents tell us about bilingual communication needs via the survey?⁴⁴

- 50,000 Adams County households (39 percent) believe there is too much emphasis on providing information in multiple languages, compared to 19,000 households (15 percent) who believe there is not enough emphasis.
- **Asian Americans (29 percent), Hispanics (31 percent), and Multi-Racial households (28 percent) said their wasn't enough emphasis on bilingual communication**, while Whites and African Americans desired less emphasis.
- Bilingual communication was a higher priority for 18-24 year olds and those 65 and over, as well as those earning less than \$20,000 per year.
- **Aurora and Commerce City households expressed a stronger concern** about bilingual communication than did households in other communities.

The 2000 Census tells us more.....

- An analysis of the overall population of Adams County reveals that **Aurora and Commerce City had the largest percentages of persons that speak a language other than English at home**, at 39.9 percent and 37.8 percent, respectively.
- **Aurora and Commerce City also had the highest percentages of Hispanic residents**, at 42.2 percent and 53.3 percent respectively.
- A **review of the poverty areas** in Adams County (census tracts in which 15 percent or more of the population are at or below the poverty level) reveals that **the percentage of the population that spoke a language other than English at home was over 33 percent in several areas**, with the highest being Westminster (55.7 percent), followed by Brighton (55.6 percent), Aurora (45.3 percent), and Commerce City (38.4 percent).

The residents that participated in focus groups tell us more.....

- **Spanish-speaking focus group participants** in Aurora and Commerce City were **generally less aware of local assets** than their English-speaking neighborhoods. This may reveal underlying issues with lack of culturally appropriate service delivery or bilingual communications.

⁴⁴ Number of households based on survey of 1,200 residents (95% confidence interval, +/- 2.8%) and 128,290 households in Adams County (2000 Census). Rounded to the nearest 500th.

- **Non-English speakers revealed a reliance on minority-serving organizations.** Spanish-speaking focus group participants were most familiar with resources such as La Clinica de Salud and Hmong residents depend on the Hmong American Association.

Available Services

Data was not collected on bilingual communications.

Gap Analysis

Since data was not collected on bilingual communication services, a gap analysis cannot be calculated. However, the resident survey, focus groups and 2000 Census data indicate a need for increased bilingual communications to serve residents in Adams County for whom English isn't their native language. This need is best illustrated by a focus group finding. Spanish-speaking focus group participants in Aurora and Commerce City were aware of fewer community resources than were their English-speaking counterparts. This lack of awareness of community resources, coupled with the lack of awareness of community leaders (as identified in the focus groups), has likely resulted in residents who are disconnected from their community with access to fewer resources to improve their lives. Given the high level of non-English speakers in poverty areas of Adams County, this is an especially important fact to consider when assisting families in becoming more self-sufficient.

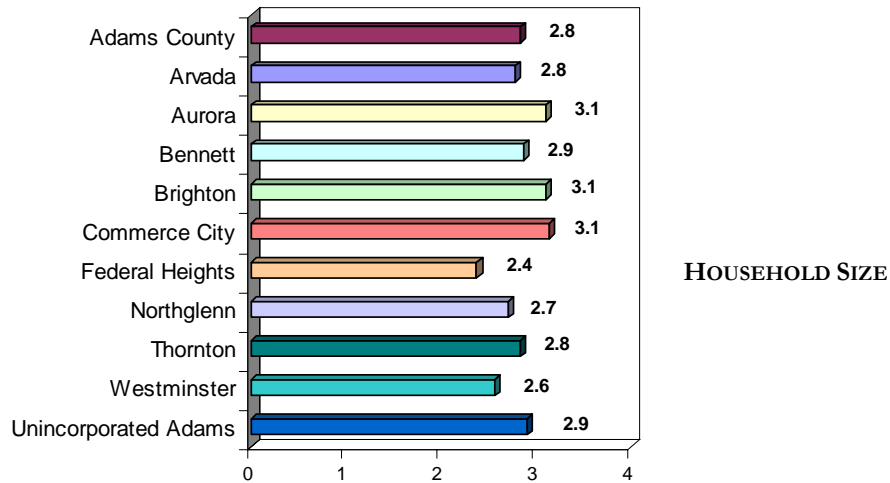
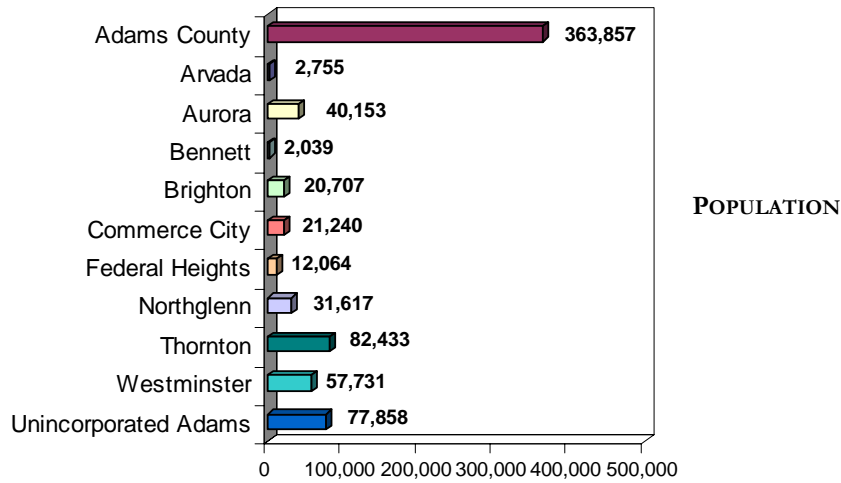
While this need may appear to be relatively small in terms of overall priorities, it likely represents a very strong need for the segment of the population that expressed concern with these services. As noted above, some sections of Adams County – Aurora and Commerce City for example – have large populations of residents that do not speak English at home. Furthermore, several poverty areas are especially impacted by this language barrier, as 33 percent or more of their residents do not speak English at home.

In contrast to some of the early need categories can be addressed by county-wide initiatives, this need may be best addressed by targeted outreach and communication efforts to those communities in need.

SELECTED FINDINGS ON MUNICIPALITIES AND UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY

While the prior section presented county-level findings for the Needs Assessment, this section offers a snapshot on Adams County’s municipalities and unincorporated areas as synthesized from the resident survey and 2000 Census data. A review of the data from the 2000 Census reveals that some cities grew more rapidly than others in term of overall population, with Thornton, Brighton, and Aurora growing 45 percent or more during that time. In contrast, unincorporated Adams County grew less rapidly than the incorporated areas and the percentage of residents in the unincorporated area actually declined between 1990 and 2000, from 23.6 percent to 22.5 percent of the total county population (Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Draft, 2003). The average household size ranges from 2.4 persons per household in Federal Heights to 3.1 persons per household in Aurora, Brighton and Commerce City.

A Comparison of Population Distribution and Household Size in Adams County
(Source: Census 2000)



A further comparison of Adams County and its municipalities across 14 demographic characteristics is offered below.

**A Comparison of Adams County and Its Municipalities
Across 14 Demographic Characteristics**
(Source: Census 2000)

City	Median Household Income	Persons Below Poverty	% Under 5	% Ages 5-18	% 65 and over	White Non Hispanic	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Language other than English Spoken at Home
Arvada	\$60,458	4.1%	4.0%	23.0%	9.1%	67.9%	0.8%	9.4%	20.7%	21.0%
Aurora	\$35,395	19.9%	10.3%	22.6%	6.0%	36.4%	15.5%	2.6%	42.2%	39.9%
Bennett	\$46,600	5.8%	9.5%	27.5%	7.2%	90.6%	0.4%	0.7%	5.8%	4.9%
Brighton	\$46,346	9.5%	8.5%	21.7%	10.0%	58.3%	1.0%	1.1%	38.7%	25.5%
Commerce City	\$33,680	19.4%	8.7%	23.7%	8.9%	42.7%	1.8%	1.0%	53.3%	37.8%
Federal Heights	\$33,750	11.2%	8.2%	17.9%	12.3%	65.3%	1.6%	6.2%	24.7%	19.2%
Northglenn	\$48,243	5.4%	7.4%	20.6%	10.4%	72.6%	1.5%	2.8%	20.1%	15.4%
Thornton	\$54,445	5.2%	8.5%	22.7%	5.7%	72.3%	1.7%	2.3%	21.1%	13.5%
Westminster	\$51,826	6.2%	7.1%	19.4%	8.3%	71.0%	0.9%	5.7%	19.3%	17.5%
Unincorporated	\$44,872	8.8%	7.9%	21.4%	9.1%	60.5%	0.9%	2.7%	33.5%	24.0%
Adams County	\$47,323	8.9%	8.3%	21.6%	7.8%	63.3%	2.8%	3.2%	28.2%	21.6%

City	High School Graduates	Bachelor's degree or higher	Blue Collar Workers	Persons with a Disability
Arvada	90.4%	23.6%	32.2%	15.4%
Aurora	63.3%	8.2%	56.9%	22.5%
Bennett	87.6%	12.3%	49.7%	16.8%
Brighton	74.7%	14.5%	46.6%	22.6%
Commerce City	57.8%	3.7%	60.4%	24.1%
Federal Heights	74.4%	9.2%	49.1%	23.9%
Northglenn	84.6%	19.3%	41.5%	15.9%
Thornton	85.1%	19.9%	39.9%	16.0%
Westminster	85.5%	28.6%	36.2%	15.8%
Unincorporated	75.8%	12.2%	49.4%	21.1%
Adams County	78.8%	17.4%	44.1%	18.6%

The recently released **Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado** indicates that a family of three with one working adult and two children (preschool to teenage) would need to earn between \$32,675 and \$47,300 to pay for housing, food, child care, and other basic expenses. A family of four would need to earn between \$49,444 and \$62,586 depending on family composition.
(Source: www.cclponline.org)

The tables above reveals tremendous diversity within Adams County and its various communities as of the 2000 Census. Four cities were above the county average in terms of household median income (Arvada, Northglenn, Thornton and Westminster), while three were significantly below the median (Aurora, Commerce City and Federal Heights). Likewise, two cities had a relatively low percentage of persons below poverty (Arvada and Bennett) and two exceeded the average by almost 100 percent (Aurora and Commerce City). While some cities had larger proportions of children (Bennett and Commerce City), others were more likely to have senior residents (Northglenn and Federal Heights).

Some cities were more racially and ethnically diverse (Aurora) than others. Adams County residents that speak a language other than English at home were most likely to live in Aurora or Commerce City. Westminster had the largest share of college graduates. This finding is likely correlated to the relatively higher median household income in Westminster.

Next, a snapshot of the unincorporated area of Adams County and each of its municipalities are presented. The data was selected to illustrate variations from the county overall, and as such, presents the more significant differences as a means of showing the uniqueness of each community, as this may aid the County in partnering with local governments to address macro-level countywide needs as well as those of a particular community. The data also provides Adams County municipalities with baseline data on resident needs, although the sample size of some survey sub-populations, such as Arvada, are quite small and are presented primarily for illustrative purposes.

These snapshots are intended to provide Adams County elected officials and staff members – and their city counterparts – with information that can be used to tailor local approaches to meeting the needs identified in the prior section. As noted earlier in this report, opportunities for cross-governmental cooperation and collaboration exist in Adams County.

Note: Readers are encouraged to review two supplemental reports that include more detailed information on these findings (Demographic Profile of Adams County and Resident Survey Report). Readers that are particularly interested in findings related to low-income and poverty in Adams County are encouraged to read the Demographic Profile report.

A SNAPSHOT OF ARVADA

Arvada is the second smallest city in Adams County and is more affluent and better educated than the county overall.

- 990 households in Adams County (smallest)
- \$60,458 median household income (highest)
- 90.4 percent of adults have a high school degree (highest)
- 23.6 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher (2nd highest)
- 23.0 percent of the population are children 5-18 (3rd highest)

The resident survey tells us that Arvada households.....⁴⁵

- Placed a more significant priority on education and government communications than did county residents overall
- Believe the housing market is “good” over “very good” at 56 percent compared to 44 percent for the county overall
- Had the largest percentage of renters at 37 percent compared to 14 percent overall
- Were most likely to believe they have quality child care centers (44 percent rated them “good” or “very good” compared to 32 percent for Adams County overall)
- Had a lower percentage that reported feeling “very safe” (29 percent compared to 47 percent overall)

⁴⁵ The survey sample size varied by community, with Arvada and Bennett being quite small. As such, the statistical strength of each community surveyed varies. The findings are presented here to illustrate variation in perceived needs and demographic characteristics by community. See the Adams County Community Needs Assessment Resident Survey Report for more details.

A SNAPSHOT OF AURORA

Aurora is the fourth largest city in Adams County and is more diverse than the county overall. Aurora also has the largest concentration of poverty in Adams County.

- 40,153 households in Adams County
- 3.1 persons per households (tied for largest)
- \$35,395 median household income (3rd lowest)
- 63.3 percent of adults with a high school degree (2nd lowest)
- 8.4 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher (2nd lowest)
- 22.3 percent of the population are children 5-18 (3rd highest)
- 15.5 percent of the population is African American (highest)
- 39.9 percent of persons speak a language other than English at home (highest)
- 19.9 percent of persons live below poverty (highest)
- 11.4 percent of the population are foreign immigrants (highest)
- 30,252 people lived in the poverty area as identified by the 2000 Census (largest poverty area in Adams County). (Defined as the Census tracts in which 5 percent or more of the population lived at or below the poverty level)

The resident survey tells us that Aurora households.....

- Placed a more significant priority on bilingual communications, housing and public safety than did county residents overall
- Were least likely to report a “good” or “very good” quality of life (52 percent compared to 79 percent overall)
- Believe there are good opportunities to obtain job training or vocational skills in their community, with 33 percent rating it “good/very good” compared to 26 percent overall
- Were least aware of job assistance programs (38 percent compared to 44 percent overall)
- Were less satisfied with communication with local government on routine functions (23 percent rated it “bad/very bad” compared to 15 percent overall) and on policy issues and major decisions (30 percent rated it “bad/very bad” compared to 23 percent overall)
- Were less satisfied with the public education system (51 percent rated it “fair” to “very bad” compared to 43 percent overall)
- Felt there aren’t enough affordable child care programs (45 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” there are enough compared to 35 percent overall)
- Felt there aren’t enough after-school programs (52 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” there are enough compared to 31 percent overall)
- Believed there are enough educational opportunities for youth age 16-20 (37 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” compared to 25 percent overall)
- Believed there aren’t enough educational opportunities for adults (35 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” there are enough compared to 21 percent overall)
- Were less likely to report feeling “very safe” (31 percent compared to 47 percent overall)

A SNAPSHOT OF BENNETT

Bennett is the smallest city studied in Adams County and is located in rural eastern Adams County.

- 712 households in Adams County (smallest)
- \$46,600 median household income
- 87.6 percent of adults have a high school degree (2nd highest)
- 27.5 percent of the population are children 5-18 (highest)
- 90.6 percent of the population is White Non Hispanic (highest)

*The resident survey tells us that Bennett households....*⁴⁶

- Placed a more significant priority on public services and recreation than did county residents overall. Slightly more were concerned about education than in the county overall
- Were most likely to own their own homes at 92 percent
- Were less satisfied with communication with local government on policy issues and major decisions (38 percent rated it “bad/very bad” compared to 23 percent overall)
- Were less satisfied with the public education system (66 percent rated it “fair to very bad” compared to 43 percent overall)
- Felt there aren’t enough after-school programs (68 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” there are enough compared to 31 percent overall)
- Felt there aren’t enough educational opportunities for youth age 16-20 (47 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” there are enough compared to 28 percent overall)
- Believed there aren’t enough educational opportunities for adults (54 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” there are enough compared to 21 percent overall)
- Believed there weren’t enough recreation opportunities in place (55 percent rated them “bad/very bad” compared to 9 percent overall)
- Stated an overwhelming need for additional opportunities in cultural/arts, free/low cost recreation, youth centers, senior centers, and historic preservation (96 to 64 percent said there is “not enough”)

Note: These findings on the need for additional recreation facilities are supported by the 2003 Bennett Town Survey.

⁴⁶ The survey sample size varied by community, with Arvada and Bennett being quite small. As such, the statistical strength of each community surveyed varies. The findings are presented here to illustrate variation in perceived needs and demographic characteristics by community. See the Adams County Community Needs Assessment Resident Survey Report for more details.

A SNAPSHOT OF BRIGHTON

Brighton is the fourth largest city in Adams County and is more diverse than the county overall. Brighton had the largest percentage of children.

- 6,666 households in Adams County
- 3.1 persons per households (tied for largest)
- \$46,346 median household income
- 74.7 percent of adults have a high school degree
- 14.5 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher
- 27.5 percent of population are children 5-18 (highest)
- 25.5 percent of persons speak a language other than English at home (3rd highest)
- 9.5 percent of persons live below poverty
- 2,190 people lived in the poverty area as identified by the 2000 Census. (Defined as the Census tracts in which 5 percent or more of the population lived at or below the poverty level).

The resident survey tells us that Brighton households....

- Placed a more significant priority on infrastructure than did county residents overall
- Were least at risk of losing their home in the last year (6 percent compared to 11 percent overall)
- Were less satisfied than the county, on average, with their opportunities to obtain job training (23 percent of respondents stated they had “bad” or “very bad” compared to 16 percent overall)
- Had the highest awareness of job assistance programs at 51 percent, compared to 44 percent for the county overall (tied with Northglenn)
- Felt there aren't enough affordable child care programs (47 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” there are enough compared to 35 percent overall)
- Felt safer than many of their fellow citizens in other cities, with 94 percent reporting feeling “somewhat safe” or “very safe” compared to 87 percent overall

A SNAPSHOT OF COMMERCE CITY

Commerce City is a relatively small city in Adams County and has the second largest poverty area. Commerce City also has the county's largest percentage of Hispanics in the county.

- 6,771 households in Adams County
- 3.1 persons per households (tied for largest)
- \$33,680 median household income (lowest)
- 57.8 percent of adults have a high school degree (lowest)
- 3.7 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher (lowest)
- 27.5 percent of the population are children 5-18 (highest)
- 53.3 percent of the population is Hispanic (highest)
- 7.4 percent are foreign immigrants (2nd highest)
- 37.8 percent of persons speak a language other than English at home (2nd highest)
- 19.4 percent of persons live below poverty (2nd highest)
- 20,798 people lived in the poverty area as identified by the 2000 Census (2nd largest). (Defined as the Census tracts in which 5 percent or more of the population lived at or below the poverty level)

The resident survey tells us that Commerce City households.....

- Placed a more significant priority on bilingual communications than did county residents overall
- Were less satisfied than the county, on average, with their opportunities to obtain job training (28 percent of respondents stated they had “bad” or “very bad” compared to 16 percent overall)
- Were less satisfied with communication with local government on routine functions (21 percent rated it “bad/very bad” compared to 15 percent overall)
- Were less likely to report feeling “very safe” (32 percent compared to 47 percent overall)
- Were least satisfied with local government coordination of services with 25 percent rating it “good” or “very good” compared to 36 percent overall
- Rated their public education system least positively, with 31 percent rating it “bad” or “very bad” compared to 19 percent for the county on average

A SNAPSHOT OF FEDERAL HEIGHTS

Federal Heights is one of the smaller cities in Adams County and has the largest percentage of residents' aged 65 and older and residents that live in mobile homes.

- 5,079 households in Adams County
- \$33,750 median household income (2nd lowest)
- 2.4 persons per household (smallest)
- 74.4 percent of adults have a high school degree
- 17.9 percent of the population are children 5-18 (lowest)
- 12.3 percent of the population is 65 and older (highest)
- 19.2 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home
- 74.4 percent are high school graduates

The resident survey tells us that Federal Heights households.....

- Placed a more significant priority on housing than did county residents overall
- Were most likely to own a mobile home (30 percent compared to 4 percent overall)
- Were most at risk of losing their home in the last year (15 versus 11percent overall)
- Were most satisfied with local government coordination of services, with 46 percent rating it “good” or “very good” compared to 36 percent overall
- Reported the highest satisfaction with affordable child care programs, with 39 percent rating them “good” or “very good” compared to 26 percent for Adams County overall

A SNAPSHOT OF NORTHGLENN

Northglenn is a moderately sized city in Adams County, is less diverse than the county overall, and has the second highest percentage of senior citizens.

- 11,678 households in Adams County
- \$48,243 median household income (4th highest)
- 2.7 persons per household
- 84.6 percent of adults have a high school degree
- 19.3 percent of adults are college graduates
- 72.6 percent of the population is White Non Hispanic (2nd highest)
- 20.6 percent of the population are children 5-18
- 10.4 percent of the population is 65 and older (2nd highest)

The resident survey tells us that Northglenn households.....

- Placed a more significant priority on government communications than did county residents overall, and were slightly more concerned about recreation, despite being more satisfied than the county overall with:
 - Government communication on routine functions (49 percent rated it “good” over “very good” compared to 44 percent overall);
 - Government communication on policy issues and major decisions (44 percent rated it “good” or “very good” compared to 34 percent overall); and
 - Recreational opportunities in their community (73 percent rating them as “good” or “very good” compared to 55 percent in the county overall, the highest positive rating in the county).
- Have the largest percentage of households that reported a “good” or “very good” quality of life at 90 percent compared to 79 percent overall. (tied with Westminster)
- Were most satisfied with the local housing market, with 57 percent rating it “good” or “very good” compared to 44 percent overall
- Have the highest awareness of job assistance programs at 51 percent, compared to 44 percent for the county overall. (tied with Brighton)
- Were the most satisfied with their public school system, with 48 percent rating it “good” or “very good”

A SNAPSHOT OF THORNTON

Thornton is the largest city in Adams County in terms of population size and has a high level of educational attainment and income.

- 29,018 households in Adams County (largest)
- \$54,445 median household income (2nd highest)
- 2.8 persons per household
- 85.1 percent of adults have a high school degree (3rd highest)
- 19.9 percent are college graduates (3rd highest)
- 72.3 percent of the population is White Non Hispanic (3rd highest)
- 22.7 percent of the population are children 5-18
- 4,513 persons live in the Thornton poverty area (3rd largest)

The resident survey tells us that Thornton households....

- Placed a higher priority on housing than did county residents overall
- Were more likely to own their own home (79 percent compared to 74 percent overall)

A SNAPSHOT OF UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY

Unincorporated Adams County encompasses both urban and rural areas of the county.

- 26,768 households in Adams County
- \$44,872 median household income
- 2.9 persons per household
- 75.8 percent of adults have a high school degree
- 12.2 percent are college graduates
- 60.5 percent of the population is White Non Hispanic
- 21.4 percent of the population are children 5-18
- 12,647 persons live in the Unincorporated poverty area (2nd largest)

The resident survey tells us that Unincorporated Adams County households....

- Placed a higher priority on recreation than did county residents overall. Slightly more were concerned about government communications
- Were less satisfied than the county, on average, with their opportunities to obtain job training (22 percent of respondents stated they had “bad” or “very bad” compared to 16 percent overall)
- Were less satisfied with communication with local government on routine functions (20 percent compared to 15 percent overall)

A SNAPSHOT OF WESTMINSTER

Westminster has the third largest number of households in Adams County and the largest percentage of adults with a college degree.

- 22,517 households in Adams County (3rd largest)
- \$51,826 median household income (2nd highest)
- 2.6 persons per household (2nd smallest)
- 85.5 percent of adults with a high school degree (2nd highest)
- 28.6 percent are college graduates (highest)
- 71.0 percent of the population is White Non Hispanic
- 19.4 percent of population that are children 5-18
- 916 persons live in the Westminster poverty area (smallest)

The resident survey tells us that Westminster households.....

- Placed a higher priority on economic development and infrastructure than did county residents overall
- Tied with Northglenn in having the largest percentage of households that reported a “good” or “very good” quality of life at 90% compared to 79 percent overall
- Believe there are good opportunities to obtain job training or vocational skills in their community, with 34 percent rating it “good” or “very good”, compared to 26 percent overall
- Believe there are good opportunities for adult education, with 68 percent “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” compared to 52 percent for Adams County overall
- Are the most satisfied with government communications on routine functions (49 percent rated it “good” or “very good” compared to 44 percent overall). (tied with Northglenn)

SELECTED FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Needs Assessment included 13 focus groups that were conducted across Adams County. The County elected to conduct the majority of the 13 focus groups in low-income neighborhoods (and poverty areas to be specific) that would likely be in need of additional community development. Of the 13 focus groups, the two groups not conducted in low-income neighborhoods were conducted with the Hmong community in primarily western Adams County and the small towns and unincorporated areas of eastern Adams County. For more detailed findings on the focus groups, please see the Focus Group Report.

Community Need

What do the focus groups tell us about residents' sense of community?

- **Formally Recognized Neighborhoods are Few.** Participants in each focus group were asked to define their neighborhood boundaries. The focus groups revealed that there are few formally recognized neighborhoods in the sections of Adams County studied via the focus groups. These residents generally do not identify themselves with particular neighborhoods and there were few formal neighborhoods with distinct boundaries or associated local organizations identified. As such, residents rarely referred to their neighborhoods by specific names. Whether residents in other parts of Adams County would define their neighborhoods more specifically is unknown at this time.
- **Residents' Perceptions of Neighborhood and Community are Directly Tied to Knowing Other People.** The focus groups also revealed that residents' perception of neighborhood and community are directly tied to knowing other people. When speaking about their local neighborhood and community, residents most often referred to other people or relatives in the area that they know, if any. Those residents who communicate and get to know other residents in their area were the most likely to feel that they live in a neighborhood or community. A feeling of neighbors that help each other and come together in times of need was the greatest predictor of a resident feeling that he/she lives in a neighborhood. Residents who were longer-term residents appeared to be the most likely to speak about knowing others in their neighborhood, but also frequently spoke about their sense of neighborhood as disappearing or long gone due to the changing composition of their neighborhood.
- **A Language Barrier May Hinder a Feeling of Neighborhood or Community.** It is difficult for a resident to get to know his/her neighbors that speak a different language. Both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking residents observed this and indicated that this language barrier hinders an overall feeling of cohesion in the neighborhood. Perhaps it is for this reason that many Spanish-speaking Hispanics indicated a desire to learn English. Some English-speaking residents also believed there is a need for better communication in Spanish, although bilingual communication was generally not identified as a high priority need in English-speaking groups.
- **A Difference in Culture May Also Hinder Residents' Feeling of Neighborhood or Community.** When discussing perceptions that renters and newly arrived residents are likely to detract from a sense of neighborhood or community, longer-term residents, who also tended to be homeowners, occasionally singled out immigrants as more likely to detract from a sense of

pride and permanence in a neighborhood. The language barrier and differences in lifestyle also contributed to a decreased feeling of neighborhood.

What do the focus groups tell us about residents' needs?

- **Many of the Most Commonly Indicated Top-of-Mind Neighborhood Needs are Related to Safety and Cleanliness.** The most commonly indicated top of mind neighborhood needs were related to safety and cleanliness and included: increased police/sheriff presence, deterrence of speeders, more residential street lighting, increased code enforcement, and increased cleanup of trash on public and private property. Another primary top-of-mind need included better schools.
- **Education is Not Always Initially Chosen as a Top Need, But When Discussed Further, Emerges as a Universally Agreed Upon Need.** While education was chosen as a “top-three” need out of nine need categories in six out of 13 groups, it was still widely and deeply discussed as a need that is almost universally agreed upon when participants were asked specifically about the issue.

Quality of public school education for children was the most commonly emphasized area of need. School crowding was also discussed. Parents described a reluctance to send their kids to local schools and in several cases acknowledged that they send their children to private schools. At the same time, residents believed parents are at least partially responsible for their children's education.

Residents believe that a good education was the foundation for future success. Minority groups, including Hispanic and Hmong residents, also noted the need for (and current lack of) quality, and especially, culturally competent, education for their children.

One area of education looked upon favorably in several groups was the County's Head Start program.

- **Public Services are a High Priority Need for Households, Although No Particular Services Emerged as the Most Important.** Public services were the most commonly indicated needs category chosen by residents from among nine needs categories. Within the Public Services category, however, there were not one or two specific needs that came to the fore. Rather, residents in different groups mentioned most of the services in this category (i.e. services for seniors, disabled, retarded, victims, children, mentally ill, etc.) about equally. Public transportation and healthcare were also mentioned.
- **Economic Development Needs Related to Good Jobs and Job Training are a High Priority.** Residents emphasized their own need for stable employment with reasonable wages. Some residents believed there are fewer of these jobs now than in the past, due to companies moving out of the area. Other residents mentioned they have had to find jobs outside the city or county due to a lack of jobs that match their skills. Job training, especially affordable job training, was highly favored and discussed as being somewhat parallel to the need for a good education. That is, education and training leads to one's ability to obtain a better job.

- **Infrastructure-Related Needs are a High Priority (Except Among Minority Residents).** Residents widely expressed a desire for clean and well-maintained public areas. Trash pickup and street cleanup and maintenance were mentioned most often in this category. Sidewalks and sewer system maintenance were also commonly identified in this category. In contrast to others, Spanish-speaking and Hmong residents generally placed a lower emphasis on Infrastructure needs when they compared this need category to others explored in the group discussions.
- **Resources for Children are Priority Needs.** In addition to better education for children in their communities, residents also favored additional activities and programs for children. Residents believe that more recreation centers and youth centers will provide youth in their neighborhoods with positive activities that would keep them from getting into mischief. Children in their early teens were most commonly identified as being in need of programs. Before- and after-school programs were also favored. Activities for children that are low-cost were especially favored.

RANKING OF TOP-OF-MIND NEEDS ACCORDING TO NEED CATEGORY

The findings related to needs can be further described by a series of tables that illustrate needs as identified by residents. During the focus group discussion, participants were asked to share the top-of-mind needs in their neighborhoods. This un-aided question was designed to solicit those needs that were truly top-of-mind for residents. In other words, residents could have listed anything from “slower traffic” to “better sheriff protection” to “public transportation” and various subjects in-between.

While the specific needs identified by the focus groups are summarized in detail in each of the specific focus group reports, the research team analyzed the findings and synthesized them according to the nine categories of need examined in this study. The table on the following page presents a summary of the top-of-mind needs that were shared by focus group participants.

A synthesis of the top-of-mind needs identified by participants indicates that the majority of needs fall into two categories - Public Services and Infrastructure - each of which received a majority of the votes. Public Safety related needs were the next most common top-of-mind needs mentioned in groups. Economic Development needs were not as common among the top-of-mind needs as they were in the Top 3” voting exercise presented later in this report.

RANKING OF TOP-OF-MIND NEEDS BY FOCUS GROUP AND BY NEED CATEGORY

Focus Group Location	Housing	Economic Development	Government Communication	Education	Infrastructure	Public Safety	Public Services	Bilingual Communication	Recreation
Aurora (English)		1			1		3		
Aurora (Spanish)									
Brighton	1			1	2		3		1
Commerce City/ Derby (English)		1		1		1	3		
Commerce City/ Derby (Spanish)									
Eastern Plains						1	2		1
Federal Heights/ Mobile Homes					3	1	1		
Federal Hill (Goal Hill)		2	1		7		1		
Hmong					1	1	2		
Northglenn	2		1		1	1	6		
Perl Mack									
Thornton/Welby		2		2	1	2	2		
Westminster				1	4	1			1
Total Number of Top-of-Mind Responses by Category	3	6	1	5	20	8	23	0	3

Note: This exercise was not conducted in the Spanish language focus groups due to time constraints. In general the Spanish language groups took longer to conduct than the English groups.

RANKING OF “TOP 3” NEEDS ACCORDING TO NEED CATEGORY

Next, focus group participants were asked to rank their “top 3” needs from a list of nine need categories (See Appendix E). This exercise allowed the participants to study the list of categories, and as such, provided them with an aid as they identified their priorities. In each group, participants were asked to vote for their “top three” choices from the nine needs categories.

- A “1” in the table on the following page indicates an area that was chosen by the most participants in a group.
- A “2” indicates the second most participants chose this area.
- A “3” indicates the third place vote getter.

The table below summarizes the priority needs identified by participants in each focus group for the nine categories of need examined throughout this study. In some cases, there was a tie in the number of votes, and in one case (Federal Heights), five need categories received the same number of “1” votes.

RANKING OF “TOP THREE” NEEDS BY FOCUS GROUP

Focus Group Location	Housing	Economic Development	Government Communication	Education	Infrastructure	Public Safety	Public Services	Bilingual Communication	Recreation
Aurora (English)	1				2		3		
Aurora (Spanish)		1		2			3		
Brighton	1	2		3			3		
Commerce City/ Derby (English)					2	2			1
Commerce City/ Derby (Spanish)		3		1				1	
Eastern Plains		1				3			1
Federal Heights/ Mobile Homes	1	1			1	1	1		
Federal Hills (Goat Hill)			3		1	2	3		
Hmong		3		1			2		
Northglenn	3	1			3	3	1		
Perl Mack		1		1		2		2	
Thornton/Welby		2			1	2			
Westminster				2	3		1		
Total Number of “Top Three” Votes by Category	4	9	1	6	7	7	8	2	2

The table tabulates the total number of “top three” votes in each of the nine needs categories for all groups. A review of the table reveals the following key findings.

- Economic Development was the category most often chosen by groups in the “top three” needs categories (nine out of 13 groups).
- Public Services was chosen as a “top three” need the second-most often (eight out of 13 groups).

- Infrastructure and Public Safety were both chosen as “top three” needs in more than one-half of groups (seven out of 13 groups).

It is interesting to compare the results of the top-of-mind exercise and the “top 3” votes exercise. While the same four need categories emerged in both exercises – Economic Development, Infrastructure, Public Safety and Public Services – the total votes shifted fairly significantly. While Public Safety and Public Services were the clear priorities in the top-of-mind ranking, the votes were more evenly divided once participants had a list to refer to, and a little more time to think about the priorities. While Economic Development emerged as the top vote getter in the second exercise, it was closely followed by the other three categories.

What do the focus groups tell us about knowledge of local resources?

- **Many Focus Group Participants Weren’t Familiar with Local Leaders.** Focus group participants were also asked to identify local community leaders by name and many found it challenging to do so. In many cases, residents weren’t familiar enough with their local elected officials to name them. In other cases, residents knew the name of a local leader but not his/her “official” connection to the municipality or County. Lastly, in some cases focus group participants could not name an informal leader in their local community. It did not appear that residents were uninterested in engaging more in their local communities; rather, they appear to not know where to turn in the absence of “known” local leaders.
- **Minority Residents are Most Likely to Depend on Minority Leaders and Minority-Serving Organizations.** Spanish-speaking Hispanics and Hmong residents were most likely to use resources that served their particular community. Thus, Spanish-speaking Hispanics reported using resources such as La Clinica de Salud and Hmong residents depend on the Hmong Community Center. This appears to be related to the ability of these community organizations to deliver culturally appropriate services to their respective populations. There also appears to be a lack of outreach from government or agencies to these groups.
- **Other Than Resources Providing Food and Shelter, Residents are Generally Unable to Identify Many Local Community Resources.** Food banks and churches that provide basic assistance, such as food and shelter, were among the most well known resources in communities. In contrast, non-profit and government organizations were rarely identified. Similarly, residents indicated a lack of awareness of opportunities to volunteer or get engaged in local improvement efforts..

Interest in Community Involvement

One of the most interesting findings from the Community Needs Assessment is the high level of interest expressed by focus group participants in working in partnership with the County on neighborhood improvements. The Needs Assessment provides several valuable tools for use in strengthening local communities and neighborhoods (See separate reports and background information provided to Adams County):

- Contact information for **98 residents that RSVP'd for focus groups and expressed interest** in improving their neighborhoods;
- Contact information for **100 community leaders or organizations** contacted during the Needs Assessment project;
- Contact information for **over 15 additional individuals** that expressed interest in the project and whose names were forwarded to the Office of Community Development.
- Maps created by focus group participants that illustrate their definitions of neighborhood boundaries, overlaid with publicly available resources (or assets) in the immediate neighborhood;
- **GIS maps with over 600 assets**, ranging from libraries to food banks; and
- Focus group findings for each of the 13 groups conducted, including the groups' lists of "top of mind" needs for improvement.

These tools are presented to Adams County with the final report, so that local efforts can be implemented to address the issues raised by the Needs Assessment.

Conclusions

The lack of a sense of neighborhood means that any community-based improvement efforts will need to begin with community building at the local level. In some areas, this community building work will need to be done block by block, as residents feel little if any connection to their neighbors. This community building work will also need to recognize the barriers separating residents of different cultures and languages. Fortunately for Adams County, a core group of residents has indicated their interest in being part of community improvement activities in their local area. These residents, as well as community-based, organizations, faith-based organizations and local leaders can be drawn upon to build stronger local communities that take increased ownership of their area.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AND RESIDENT NEEDS

The research team analyzed the resident survey findings to compare priorities for improvement and quality of life ratings to see what additional findings might emerge. The team found a strong correlation between a “good” quality of life and income, as the percentage of residents that reported a “good” or “very good” quality of life increased with each \$10,000 increment in household income. While only 62 percent of residents in households with incomes under \$10,000 per year rated their quality of life as “good” or “very good”, 90 percent of households with incomes over \$75,000 rated their quality of life as “good” or “very good”. Further analysis of the resident survey data found that income is also directly related to being employed full-time. Over 70 percent of survey respondents in households with incomes of \$60,000 or more reported being employed full-time, compared to only 12 percent of respondents in households earning \$10,000 or less.

How might quality of life impact one’s recommendations for improved services in Adams County? When the nine resident need categories were examined in relation to self-reported quality of life, an interesting pattern emerged. Residents who claimed to have a “good” or “very good” quality of life were compared against residents who claimed that their quality of life was only “fair”, “bad”, or “very bad”. Whereas those with a higher quality of life had three significant priority areas (education, economic development, and housing), those with a lower quality of life added a fourth (public safety). This may indicate that public safety has a disproportionate impact on quality of life for individuals with a “fair” to “very bad” quality of life.

Priority Need	Quality of Life		Priority Need	Quality of Life	
	Very Good or Good			Fair, Bad, or Very Bad	
Education	34%		Education		30%
Economic development	22%		Economic development		18%
Housing	13%		Housing		15%
Public safety	7%		Public safety		15%
Infrastructure	6%		Government communications		5%
Public services	6%		Recreation		5%
Recreation	5%		Public services		5%
Government communications	5%		Bilingual communications		4%
Bilingual communications	2%		Infrastructure		3%

This emergence of a fourth top priority area for those with a “fair” to “very bad” quality of life is significant given the correlation between quality of life and income, as noted above. Since quality of life is directly related to income, one can say that low-income households, in general, would place a higher priority on improvements in public safety than would higher income households in Adams County. This research finding has been corroborated by the focus groups as well, as detailed in the Focus Group Report.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND SATISFACTION WITH BASIC SERVICES

An analysis of quality of life compared to satisfaction with 25 basic services, such as garbage collection and routine government communication, reveals that those with a “good” or “very good” quality of life are more likely to rate services positively. In contrast those with a “fair”, “bad” or “very bad” quality of life were generally less satisfied with basic services, as illustrated below.

Service Ratings for 25 Basic Services

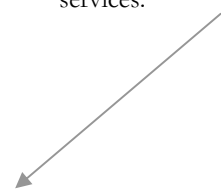
	Rating of Service				Satisfaction Differential
	Very Good/ Good	Fair	Bad/ Very Bad	DK/NA	
Fire Response	85%	4%	1%	11%	84%
Garbage Collection	85%	7%	3%	5%	82%
Emergency Response	83%	4%	1%	12%	82%
Telephone Service	82%	12%	4%	2%	78%
Law Enforcement	81%	12%	3%	4%	77%
Parks	79%	13%	3%	5%	75%
Sidewalks	74%	16%	7%	3%	68%
Animal Control	72%	16%	4%	8%	67%
Street Lighting	73%	19%	6%	1%	67%
Public Parking	65%	21%	4%	10%	61%
Drainage/Storm Runoff	68%	20%	7%	5%	61%
Recreation/Culture	61%	22%	6%	11%	54%
Traffic Signals/Signage	62%	25%	11%	1%	51%
Water Quality	66%	15%	16%	3%	49%
Maintenance of Roadways	61%	25%	13%	1%	48%
Design/Layout of Roadways	59%	28%	11%	2%	48%
Code Enforcement	57%	20%	9%	14%	48%
High Speed Internet Access	48%	13%	7%	31%	41%
Routine Government Communications	51%	26%	10%	14%	41%
Housing Market	49%	27%	9%	14%	40%
Coordination of Gov't Services	40%	22%	7%	30%	33%
Public Education System	44%	23%	13%	20%	31%
Disaster Preparedness	31%	14%	3%	53%	28%
Policy Government Communications	39%	27%	18%	16%	22%
Job Training Opportunities	30%	23%	12%	35%	17%

The Satisfaction Differential in the rightmost column presents the difference in the “very good/good” rating and “bad/very bad” rating for that particular service.

The reader will note that the differential is positive for each of the 25 services. In other words, more residents rated the service positively than negatively in each service area.

	Rating of Service				Satisfaction Differential
	Very Good/ Good	Fair	Bad/ Very Bad	DK/NA	
Emergency Response	83%	9%	3%	5%	79%
Fire Response	79%	10%	4%	7%	75%
Garbage Collection	68%	15%	10%	6%	58%
Parks	65%	22%	10%	3%	55%
Telephone Service	56%	33%	10%	1%	45%
Animal Control	53%	28%	14%	5%	38%
Sidewalks	53%	28%	16%	3%	37%
Law Enforcement	50%	26%	20%	4%	30%
Street Lighting	47%	29%	22%	2%	24%
High Speed Internet Access	37%	17%	14%	33%	23%
Public Parking	41%	34%	19%	7%	22%
Drainage/Storm Runoff	44%	27%	24%	5%	20%
Recreation/Culture	36%	30%	19%	16%	17%
Disaster Preparedness	29%	17%	14%	40%	16%
Traffic Signals/Signage	39%	29%	30%	3%	9%
Maintenance of Roadways	36%	32%	27%	5%	9%
Code Enforcement	33%	26%	31%	11%	2%
Design/Layout of Roadways	33%	33%	32%	3%	1%
Water Quality	33%	29%	34%	4%	-1%
Coordination of Gov't Services	16%	33%	25%	25%	-9%
Housing Market	22%	38%	32%	9%	-10%
Routine Government Communications	21%	29%	33%	17%	-12%
Public Education System	23%	28%	37%	12%	-14%
Job Training Opportunities	15%	30%	32%	23%	-17%
Policy Government Communications	16%	26%	41%	17%	-25%

In contrast, residents with a “fair” to “very bad” quality of life were dissatisfied with 7 of the 25 service areas, as denoted by the negative Satisfaction Differential on the left. More residents rated those services as “bad/very bad” than rated them “good/very good”. These residents were less satisfied with every one of the 25 services.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to Adams County officials and staff to develop and enhance programs that improve local communities and address resident needs. Recommendations to address countywide needs are offered first, followed by specific recommendations to build community in low-income neighborhoods.

COUNTY-WIDE RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES

GOAL – INCREASE CROSS-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

OBJECTIVES

- 1) INCREASE COLLABORATION AND JOINT PROBLEM SOLVING ACROSS COUNTY DEPARTMENTS.

The research team observed a relatively low level of ongoing communication and collaboration across County departments. While this is a generalization, there do appear to be opportunities to increase collaboration and problem solving across departments to address the top priority need areas. For, example, it appears that the Economic Development need could be addressed by joint efforts between the Office of Economic Development, One Stop Career Centers and the Office of Community Development, to name a few key players.

- 2) INCREASE COORDINATION OF SERVICES ACROSS COUNTY AND CITY GOVERNMENTS.

The needs assessment process could not have been accomplished without support from city governments, especially in the implementation of the resident survey and focus groups. Given the tight budgets that all governments are facing, now is an opportune time to move forward with the partnerships established during the needs assessment. An example is the need for increased policing across the county. Some of that need is in the unincorporated portions of Adams County that are in the midst of municipalities (i.e. Derby and Welby). Those areas may benefit most from an enhanced form of cross-governmental cooperation.

GOAL - MEASURE SUCCESS IN MEETING RESIDENT NEEDS

OBJECTIVE

- 1) ESTABLISH OUTCOMES BY WHICH TO MEASURE SUCCESS IN MEETING IDENTIFIED NEEDS

The County would be well served to develop and implement outcomes by which it could measure success in meeting the needs identified by residents in this assessment. Those outcomes should be results-oriented and measurable, and some party (possibly the Project Advisory Committee of the Community Needs Assessment) will need to be accountable to measure those outcomes.

GOAL – INCREASE QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES

OBJECTIVE

1) ENGAGE IN A COUNTYWIDE PARTNERSHIP TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN GENERAL, AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES IN PARTICULAR

As focus group participants noted, education prepares a young person for future academic and work success. Given the level of concern with the public education systems serving Adams County, the County can play a role in supporting ongoing improvement initiatives at the various districts that serve its citizens.

2) INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HEAD START PROGRAMS

There is a clear gap between the number of children served by Head Start and the number eligible. In addition, early childhood education can build the base for continued academic success through grade school and beyond.

3) INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The County can work in partnership with local school districts and community-based organizations to more specifically determine the pockets of need for after-school programs.

4) EDUCATE YOUTH ON THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND A POSITIVE QUALITY OF LIFE.

Education is a proven predictor of lifetime earnings, and earnings are a predictor of a positive quality of life as indicated by this study.

5) ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF 16-24 YEAR OLDS THAT MIGHT NOT HAVE GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL AND WOULD BENEFIT FROM A GED OR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Young adults and older teens will likely require customized programs to assist them in meeting personal/family obligations while obtaining their education. As noted above, given the linkages between employment, income and quality of life, this segment of the population should not be ignored as they are in a prime place in life to realize the benefits of financial self-sufficiency.

GOAL – CREATE A DIVERSE AND ROBUST ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

OBJECTIVE

1) IDENTIFY THE JOB SKILLS AND CAREER INTERESTS OF RESIDENTS

The County can learn more about the skills held by the workers that commute out of Adams County for work. These workers earn more, on average, than their counterparts who work in the County. Understanding their skills sets will help attract employers interested in a local employment base, and represents a resource that can be offered to potential employers

2) ATTRACT WELL-PAYING, FULL-TIME JOBS TO THE COUNTY

Residents have expressed strong interest in working and living in the county. Of course, these efforts should be pursued in partnership with local and regional economic development efforts, such as the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation.

3) INCREASE MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF THE COUNTY’S JOB ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (INCLUDING HELP IN FINDING A JOB AS WELL AS JOB TRAINING)

Awareness of the County’s One Stop services is not as high as is apparently needed, given the responses on the resident survey. In this economic climate, job seekers need as many tools as possible to market themselves.

4) INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF LOW-COST JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS

Some residents appear to be challenged to find low-cost job training programs – the programs that will assist them in finding employment and increasing their standard of living. These programs could be pursued in conjunction with CSU’s Cooperative Extension Office and other local partners.

5) PARTNER WITH OTHER AGENCIES TO INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Small businesses are clearly the majority of Adams County businesses. These businesses are deserving of attention from parties working on economic development in the county. Likewise, the County may explore opportunities to assist in small business start up.

GOAL - INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS

OBJECTIVE

1) PROMOTE AND SUPPORT POLICIES THAT WILL INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

There appears to be a need for increased availability of affordable rental and ownership options. County actions to increase affordable housing might include promoting development of small starter homes and rental units, relaxing fees for affordable homes, and providing other support to affordable housing developers.

2) INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF SELECTED SPECIAL POPULATION HOUSING, INCLUDING RETIREMENT HOUSING AND HOUSING FOR THE HOMELESS

There appears to be a need for an increased supply of housing for seniors and the homeless. Special attention may be needed for homeless families, given the increased trend in this area. Most likely, those families would need other supportive services as well, such as stable education for their children.

3) DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE WORKFORCE HOUSING STRATEGY THAT SUPPORTS THE COUNTY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

An opportunity exists to link the County's economic development and housing goals. The housing needs of all income levels should be considered. Employers expressed concern about the availability of workforce housing in the 2002 Housing Study. The link between housing and economic development was further reinforced by the recent resident survey, which stated the need for increased efforts in both areas.

4) INCREASE FUNDING FOR THE COUNTY'S HOUSING REHABILITATION AND DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The current program appears to serve a tremendous need for the households it can serve, but given its funding allocation, it is clear the need extends beyond the 25 or so households served on an annual basis. It is possible that funds could be leveraged if these rehab projects are undertaken with nonprofit partners that can supply volunteer labor and/or additional funding.

5) INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUNDS TO ASSIST HOUSEHOLDS AT RISK OF LOSING THEIR HOMES. THIS MIGHT INCLUDE "GAP FUNDING" TO ASSIST HOMES AT MIDDLE AND UPPER INCOME RANGES THAT MIGHT BE AFFECTED BY JOB LOSSES OR OTHER ISSUES

The emergency financial assistance available to renters and home owners appears to be well short of serving the 11 percent of Adams County households that risked losing their homes last year.

6) ADDRESS DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING THROUGH ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING LAWS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Discrimination is a significant issue for many Adams County renters and homebuyers. This may be the area that the County can begin to address most quickly, as it requires less investment of funds. The County may be well served to identify best practices in Colorado or from across the United States that can be applied locally.

7) INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Focus group participants cited the need for assistance in paying their utility bills, especially given the relatively large increase in costs this past year. Like emergency rental assistance, this type of emergency assistance can help families through a financial “rough spot”.

GOAL – INCREASE RESIDENTS’ SENSE OF SAFETY

OBJECTIVE

1) HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS WITH RESIDENTS OF LOW-INCOME AREAS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR NEEDS AND CONCERNS. ESTABLISH PLAN OF ACTION TO ADDRESS CONCERNS

As the old adage says, “perception is reality”. Low-income residents stated a higher need for safety and spoke about the need for increased police presence and enhanced street lighting. As mentioned earlier in this report, this objective could be met by a collaboration between public safety officials and those responsible for street lighting.

2) PARTNER WITH MUNICIPALITIES TO BETTER SERVE RESIDENTS IN URBANIZED POCKETS OF UNINCORPORATED ADAMS COUNTY, SUCH AS DERBY AND PERL MACK

Given the likely budget cuts experienced by police and sheriff’s departments, this is an area in which creative problem solving would help leverage existing budgets while meeting a strong community need.

3) INCREASE COMMUNITY POLICING IN LOW-INCOME AREAS

Public safety was identified as a Top 3 need in seven of the 13 focus groups. In addition, public safety was mentioned many times by residents as they identified their “top-of-mind” needs – those needs that first came to mind when asked. Focus group participants also spoke of wanting to know their local law enforcement officers so that relationships could be established. Given the dearth of resources identified in most focus groups, and the importance of public safety in those same communities, an increase in community policing appears to be a natural win/win to meet two community needs.

GOAL – INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

OBJECTIVE

1) ESTABLISH MECHANISMS TO MORE EFFECTIVELY COORDINATE SERVICES PROVIDED BY NON-PROFIT AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN ADAMS COUNTY

Convene a forum of government and nonprofit service providers in Adams County. Further define the gap in services in those areas with a larger perceived gap (on the part of County residents (See table below). Identify creative approaches to fill those gaps.

Number of Adams County Households that Believe More Services are Needed	Service Area
86,000 (67 percent)	Child abuse prevention
85,000 (66 percent)	Youth job training
81,000 (63 percent)	Youth programs
78,000 (61 percent)	Food assistance
76,000 (59 percent)	Job training
74,500 (58 percent)	Victim services
73,000 (57 percent)	Disabled services
73,000 (57 percent)	Homeless services
72,000 (56 percent)	Small business support
69,500 (54 percent)	Senior services
69,500 (54 percent)	Victim assistance
69,500 (54 percent)	Child care beyond the work day
68,000 (53 percent)	Subsidized child care
61,500 (48 percent)	Substance services
52,500 (41 percent)	Mental health services

2) INCREASE SERVICES TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

Target resources to fill the gaps, based on the perceived need priorities as listed above.

2) INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF AVAILABLE SERVICES

Design and implement a marketing campaign to increase awareness of available services. Consider the needs of various target markets, such as non-English speakers and young adults. Local marketing experts may have creative ideas to assist in this effort.

3) INCREASE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE, INCLUDING SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE

Focus on those areas in highest need, such as communities with lower incomes and larger family sizes.

4) INCREASE PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

In addition to after-school programs cited under Education, there is a perceived need for additional youth programs. Emphasis should be placed on free/low-fee programs.

GOAL – IMPROVE COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE

OBJECTIVE

1) INCREASE CODE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IN COORDINATION WITH MUNICIPALITIES

Pride of place is important for all county residents. The County can help build a stronger sense of pride for residents that have expressed concern about accumulated trash and insufficient maintenance. This is especially true for the many low-income areas studied via the focus groups. These efforts could be pursued in conjunction with community building efforts outlined in the next section.

2) FURTHER EXPLORE WATER QUALITY ISSUES

Water quality was of high concern to households as evidenced by the resident survey. The County would likely need to work in partnership with water supply organizations to make improvements in this area. It may also be necessary to educate residents about current water quality and what it would take to improve it.

GOAL - ENHANCE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS

OBJECTIVE

1) IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT RECREATION AND CULTURE OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTS OF EASTERN ADAMS COUNTY

Residents of the eastern portion of the county have expressed a very strong need for recreation options. Adams County may want to consider opportunities to partner with Arapahoe County to meet the needs of residents along I-70.

GOAL – IMPROVE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS WITH COUNTY RESIDENTS

OBJECTIVES

1) REVAMP PUBLIC COMMUNICATION EFFORTS ON POLICY ISSUES, IN GENERAL, AND SPECIFIC NEED AREAS IN PARTICULAR

Engage local marketing and communications experts in assisting the County with identifying more effective communication strategies on both routine matters and policy issues.

2) CONSOLIDATE GIS MAPPING CAPABILITY IN A SINGLE DEPARTMENT

Currently, multiple departments have responsibility of GIS mapping functions. This decentralized approach makes it difficult to maintain up-to-date maps of County assets. These asset maps could be used by County staff and others to build local communities, further ascertain gaps in services and communicate available services more effectively to county residents, through tools such as the website. The Piton Foundation’s asset maps of Denver are an example (www.piton.org).

GOAL – PROVIDE ADDITIONAL BILINGUAL COMMUNICATIONS IN A TARGETED FASHION

OBJECTIVES

1) EXPAND BILINGUAL COMMUNICATION WITH POPULATIONS IN NEED

Target bilingual communications to specific audiences rather than the general public.

COMMUNITY BUILDING IN COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

The top-of-mind needs identified in the 13 focus groups may well be the “low hanging fruit” (i.e. those opportunities most easily tapped) in each neighborhood or community studied. These needs are those that residents identified without any information to aid them. As such, they are likely to be the issues that are most vexing or problematic on a day-to-day basis. A review of the list of top-of-mind needs for each focus group reveals the specificity and individual nature of each list. In other words, each neighborhood’s immediate needs are unique. This presents an opportunity to Adams County to “think globally and act locally” by:

- Hosting meetings with focus group participants and local leaders to address “top of mind” concerns and other needs of local residents. The neighborhood boundary and asset maps, as well as focus group reports, can be used to provide a context for communication. Other service providers, such as local law enforcement officers or nonprofit organization leaders, may be invited to attend;
- Providing leadership development training to residents and local leaders. While some focus groups were challenged to identify local leaders, others have local leaders in their midst. In other cases, new local leaders are waiting to emerge, and need to training and support to make a difference in their community; and
- Establishing ongoing communication channels to foster cross-neighborhood communication.

In addition, the County is encouraged to continue its efforts to involve residents in the Consolidated Plan and other efforts of interest to the Needs Assessment Project Advisory Committee (PAC). Overall, PAC members expressed an interest in staying engaged as a group, noting the uniqueness of the mix of citizens, nonprofit representatives, and staff members from numerous municipalities as well as Adams County offices.

APPENDIX A – SCOPE OF WORK

NEEDS ASSESSMENT CONSULTANT SCOPE OF WORK

1. Goal:

- 1.1. The goal of the Community Needs Assessment is to learn about conditions in Adams County communities from the perspective of community members, community-based organizations, existing surveys etc.,
- 1.2. Use the information gained in 1.1 to begin developing or enhancing programs that are more responsive to the needs, interests, priorities and capacities of community members in their efforts to create healthier communities.

2. Objectives:

- 2.1. Through a collaborative process involving county agencies, non-profits, neighborhood groups and community leaders, plan and implement a county-wide Needs Assessment that will identify community needs, assets, gaps in services, and priorities, especially among low and moderate income residents;
- 2.2. Describe conditions in poverty areas as identified by census data and make links with residents of those areas for future development and community mobilization efforts;
- 2.3. As much as possible, involve communities in all aspects of survey design, implementation and interpretation;
- 2.4. Prioritization of needs and target areas;
- 2.5. Identify and map underutilized community resources and assets;
- 2.6. Through the collaborative process, identify common information needs among agencies and communities;
- 2.7. Utilizing the assets and strengths of the community, participate in an ongoing dialogue to bring awareness, review and guide actions taken to build a healthy community.

3. Expected / Desired Outcomes:

- 3.1. Newly established or strengthened partnerships between communities, agencies (non-profit and county government) for future development efforts;
- 3.2. Identification and involvement of community leaders and other resources to form the basis for future development efforts and neighborhood capacity-building programs;
- 3.3. Identification of specific priorities for inclusion in program plans of participating agencies;
- 3.4. Clearly defined priorities and Development strategies that can and will be used by key decision makers;
- 3.5. Increased accountability to donors, agencies, county government and ultimately citizens;

4. Basic Deliverables:
 - 4.1. Data and information collection (Phase I);
 - 4.2. Neighborhood and community capacity building to implement survey (Phase II);
 - 4.3. Identification of issues, priority needs and opportunities around which neighborhoods and communities may base future mobilization efforts;
5. Methodology:
 - 5.1. This survey will be a collaborative process that makes use of traditional Needs Assessment techniques as well as an asset-based approach. While implemented throughout Adams County, the survey will concentrate on poverty areas identified by U.S. Census information. The NEEDS ASSESSMENT will make use of survey questionnaires, focus group studies, analysis of secondary resources, past surveys etc., and other research approaches that are designed by the collaborating agencies and communities.
 - 5.2. The content of the Needs Assessment survey shall provide sufficient background information to all collaborating entities, while more detailed agency-specific information may need to be collected on an individual agency basis.
6. The survey will require two distinct but interlinked components (6.1 & 6.2) consisting of:
 - 6.1. **Survey research (including inter alia survey design, tabulation, interpretation and reporting)**
 - 6.1.1. Reviewing, analyzing and interpreting existing reports and surveys concerning conditions in Adams County, and summarizing development trends, community needs and priorities. Reports to be reviewed include but are not limited to Tri-County's Community Profiles, DRCOG reports, the Adams County Comprehensive Plan, Town of Bennett surveys, Partnerships for Health Community 2002 survey, Adams County Housing Task Force 2002 Housing Survey, reports by the Adams County Office of Economic Development, and surveys conducted in the cities of Westminster, Thornton and Commerce City.
 - 6.1.2. Establishing a detailed survey methodology that makes use of random sample, stratified or other data collection approaches that result in information that is generalizable to the county as a whole;
 - 6.1.3. Detail the minimum number of citizens to participate in the survey, the pretest, the method of verifying responses, confidentiality safeguards, Data entry and verification, Data analysis and Information Products and reports;
 - 6.1.4. Production of materials in languages commonly used in Adams County;
 - 6.1.5. Coordination with community mobilization efforts;
 - 6.1.6. Drafting of interim and final reports, maps, publications etc.;
 - 6.1.7. Conducting at least three presentations to elected officials, county/city managers and community groups;
 - 6.1.8. Establish ongoing communication and coordination with the Adams County Office of Community Development and members of the Community Needs Assessment Task Force.

6.2. Community training and mobilization, preferably with on-the-ground experience and links with communities in Adams County.

- 6.2.1. Coordinating with entity responsible for Component A and establishing a joint plan of action and consistent methodology;
- 6.2.2. Identifying and establishing contact with existing informal or formal community groups, leaders, key informants etc., in poverty areas as identified by the U.S. Census;
- 6.2.3. Identifying and mapping neighborhood boundaries and assets;
- 6.2.4. Providing upfront training in interviewing, surveying and mobilization to community groups identified,
- 6.2.5. Organizing and conducting (in appropriate languages) focus groups at least 9 priority poverty areas to identify site-specific needs, priorities, assets etc.
- 6.2.6. Record and transcribe all meetings;
- 6.2.7. Create and produce final reports and presentation in coordination with Component A vendor;
- 6.2.8. Establish follow-up plan-of-action with regards to future efforts of participating community groups;
- 6.2.9. Establish ongoing communication and coordination with the Adams County Office of Community Development and members of the Community Needs Assessment Task Force.

Vendors may respond to either or both components (6.1 and/or 6.2) but the ideal candidate will be qualified and capable of implementing both components.

7. Categories of Information Needs

- 7.1 Education
- 7.2 Health
- 7.3 Nutrition
- 7.4 Social Service
- 7.5 Employment & Economic Development
- 7.6 Public Services
- 7.7 Public Facilities
- 7.8 Infrastructure
- 7.9 Homeless Needs
- 7.10 Cultural
- 7.11 Public Safety/Security/Law Enforcement

APPENDIX B - RESEARCH METHODS AND NEED CATEGORIES

The following table outlines the nine categories of need studied in the Community Needs Assessment and the research methods that provide qualitative or quantitative data on each need.

Category of Need	Asset Mapping	Demographic Analysis	Focus Groups	Provider Survey	Resident Survey	Existing Research
Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓
Economic Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓
Public (Social) Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Infrastructure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓
Public Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Government Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓
Bilingual Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓

✓ = Includes data on Community Needs in this Category

= Includes data on Availability of Services in this Category

= Includes data on both Community Needs and Availability of Services in this Category

= Does not include data for Community Needs or Availability of Services for this Category

APPENDIX C – NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOPICS

Nine types of resident needs were studied in this Needs Assessment, as listed in alphabetical order below.

Bilingual communications
Economic development
Education
Government communication
Housing
Infrastructure
Public safety
Public services
Recreation

A challenge inherent in conducting a comprehensive assessment of resident needs is that of limiting the scope of the research to fit the available budget. For this study, the client decided not to examine issues of health care or senior citizens, as those topics were being studied through other research projects at the same time that this Needs Assessment was conducted, or were scheduled to commence shortly thereafter. The County is encouraged to utilize the findings from those studies to augment the findings from this Needs Assessment.