



SUSTAINABLE ADAMS COUNTY

PLAN SUCCESSES & UPDATE

Adams County developed the first countywide sustainability plan in 2015. This plan, [Sustainable Adams County 2030](#), established Adams County's commitment to its vision of being the most innovative and inclusive county in America for all families and businesses. It set the stage for the County to tackle issues ranging from energy efficiency and renewable energy, to waste reduction, to addressing food deserts across the county, and ensuring that county operations were leading the way for the community. The 2030 plan called for a re-evaluation in 2020 to determine any need for revision to ensure long-term sustainability and success of Adams County.

SUSTAINABILITY SUCCESSES

The County has had many successes across a range of sustainability topics, such as significant energy efficiency improvements in County facilities, implementing green infrastructure in new public works projects, achieving a SolSmart Gold designation for streamlining the solar permitting and installation process, and providing community enrichment grants for neighborhood projects.

Additional successes, though certainly not all, within each of the four cornerstones are outlined below.

Responsible & Innovative Regional Leadership

Provide responsible and innovative leadership that considers sustainability as the County continues to grow.

- Through A-Proud, the County provides employees with resources related to diversity, equity & inclusion, cultural competence, and health and wellness resources.
- The County's Green Team was established to promote sustainable practices amongst employees and within County operations, delivered through webinars and education about broader sustainability topics
- Community Enrichment Grants support neighborhood beautification and social cohesion efforts.
- Quality of Life surveys have indicated an increase in community engagement and government responsiveness since 2012.



Waste Management & Reduction

Improve Adams County's environmental impact by reducing waste sent to landfills.

- County hosts recycling events throughout the year to collect electronics, household hazardous waste, and other hard-to-recycle materials in conjunction with member communities
- County provides multiple recycling drop-off locations
- Increased use of recyclable materials in County building materials and supplies
- Waste diversion efforts at Adams County Fair increased the amount of waste diverted from the landfill
- Donations of used office supplies and furniture to area non-profit organizations and schools (Supply Donation Program)
- Green Team installed a compost machine in the Government Center Public Works break room to pilot composting on site
- Significantly reduced the number of paper and in-person transactions, transitioning to online systems.



Conservation of Energy & Natural Resources

Reduce Adams County's environmental impact by conserving energy, fuel, water, and land; transitioning to renewable energy supplies; and promoting sustainable transportation options.

Energy

- County facilities have reduced energy consumption by 49% per square foot since 2012, achieving the initial 2030 Plan goal.
- Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CPACE) financing is available in Adams County, allowing commercial properties to pay for energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades via their property tax assessments
- Development standards include passive solar requirements for mixed-use and non-residential blocks; encouragement of sustainable development, including integration of renewable energy, use of energy efficient materials, LEED, green roofs; and solar design standards

Water & Land

- The County has integrated water conservation technologies and practices to reduce potable water use in buildings and parks by 17%.
- First county in Colorado to require ENVISION framework use for infrastructure projects.
- County provides education about water quality through stormwater illicit discharge education, household hazardous waste events, Creek Day cleanup events, and rain barrel workshops.



Transportation

- The County fleet includes 1 electric vehicle and 13 hybrid vehicles.
- The County installed 6 electric vehicle charging stations, including 4 publicly available stations
- Telecommuting and flexible work schedules have reduced vehicle miles traveled, and therefore greenhouse gas emissions, for County employees
- Community development block grants fund multi-modal transportation projects in unincorporated county and member communities.
- 13 miles of the RTD N-Line was completed in 2020, providing service from north Adams County to Union Station.

Respect for Adams County's Heritage

Acknowledge, respect, and preserve Adams County's agricultural heritage and open spaces as the county continues to grow.

- Increase in the number of farmers markets and farm stands available throughout the county for community members since 2012.
- Historic Splendid Valley plan lays foundation to incentivize agrarian activities with agritourism focus for Brighton and unincorporated Adams County



GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS SUMMARY

As part of the 2030 Plan update, a new greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory was completed to understand the scope, scale, and impact of the emissions in Adams County. This inventory was completed for all of Adams County, including both unincorporated and incorporated areas. This addition to the 2030 Sustainability Plan is important to support the State of Colorado's greenhouse gas reduction goals, set in [House Bill 19-1261](#), which aim to reduce emissions by at least 50% by 2030 and 90% by 2050 over 2005 levels.

In 2019, Adams County emitted 7,181,627 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent (MTCO₂e). Figure 1 shows a breakdown by sector. The largest sectors are energy and transportation. In Adams County, energy industry and industrial processes and product use (IPPU) emissions are come from petroleum refining processes and combustion of non-natural gas fuels (e.g. fuel oil). This sector accounts for 12% of community-wide emissions.

The greenhouse gas inventory was developed to comply with the [Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories](#) (GPC Protocol) BASIC reporting level within the boundary of Adams County. The GPC Protocol sets a clear, standard framework for reporting community GHG emissions that allow for consistent reporting year-to-year and comparisons across communities. The GPC Protocol captures production and consumption activities taking place within the community.

SUSTAINABILITY OPPORTUNITIES

As technology, policies, and awareness have changed related to sustainability, climate change, equity, and environmental justice, the County has a number of opportunities to advance their sustainability goals and be an innovative and inclusive community for all. Some of these opportunities include:

- Addressing air quality impacts, both indoor and outdoor, on environmental justice communities
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Transitioning to alternative fuels for transportation
- Transitioning to renewable electricity and reducing natural gas consumption
- Promote community resilience and well-being

Adams County Community-wide Emissions, 2019
Total Emissions (MTCO₂e): 7,181,627

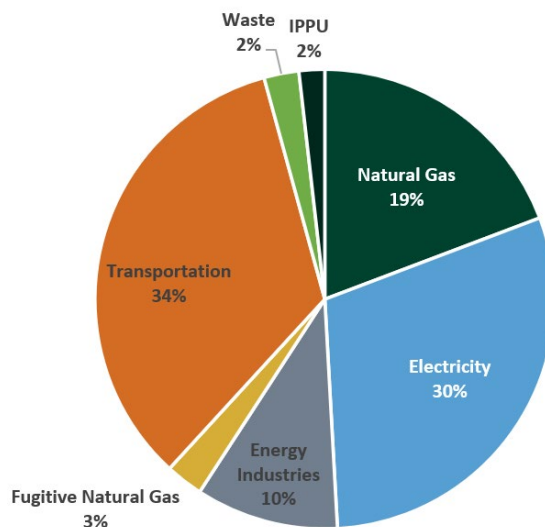


Figure 1:
2019 Adams County GHG Emissions by Sector



NEXT STEPS

In late 2020, plan review and updates began with the Adams County staff-led Sustainability Committee and Green Team (responsible for internal education and initiatives) representatives. Goals and strategies are currently being re-evaluated to determine what updates are needed to continue making progress toward a sustainable community. One major advancement is the updated 2030 Plan will align with the Advancing Adams plan updates, including the Comprehensive Plan; Transportation Master Plan; and Parks, Open Space, and Trails Plan. The plan also includes a new greenhouse gas inventory that can be periodically updated and used to track impacts over time. The plan update will be completed by the end of 2021.

There are many co-benefits between sustainability and GHG emissions reduction, particularly for environmental justice communities most impacted by emissions and climate change. For example, expanding alternative transportation options (such as electric vehicles) and promoting alternative fuels reduces emissions, improves air quality from decreased ozone pollution, and can improve human health outcomes.

This update focuses on making the sustainability plan measurable and have clear implementation actions to ensure progress can be made toward the County's sustainability goals. It will include goals, strategies, specific actions, and measurable targets on environmental and social topics, while also considering economic sustainability. The Plan update acknowledges the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and will incorporate themes of equity, environmental justice, and resilience throughout the plan components.

As of April 2021, the County is finalizing updated goals and beginning to explore strategies to achieve those goals. This summer, there will be opportunities for the community to provide input on the Sustainable Adams County 2030 Plan update in conjunction with the Advancing Adams plans.

