

Executive Summary 2009
Strasburg SubArea Plan Update
Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan

Purpose, Need, and Process for the Sub Area Plan Update:

The Arapahoe County Planning Division, in conjunction with Adams County Planning & Development, conducted a Community Needs Assessment survey in early 2009 for the rural, unincorporated community of Strasburg, which is dissected with two-thirds of the community within Adams County and one-third with Arapahoe County, to help the Counties determine whether the issues and concerns reflected in the 2002 SubArea Plans had changed and whether updates to the two Counties' respective SubArea Plans were needed. The Strasburg SubArea Plan was adopted by Arapahoe County May 14, 2002, and is an element of the Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan.

Arapahoe County hired the professional survey firm of RRC Associates to develop the survey form, to distribute it to all addresses within the Strasburg School District boundary, and to analyze the results and prepare a final report of findings. The results of the survey were presented during a community meeting on March 31, 2009, at Strasburg High School, with an opportunity for additional citizen input. The survey results were also discussed with business leaders at a meeting of the Regional Economic Advancement Partnership, a committee of the I-70 Corridor Chamber of Commerce. While some changes have occurred since adoption of the SubArea Plan in 2002, the survey report indicates that the citizens of Strasburg believe the issues and work resulting in the adoption of the original SubArea Plan are still relevant today.

This survey was conducted with the assistance of a Small Communities Technical Assistance Grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and awarded through the Denver Regional Council of Governments, with matching funds provided by Arapahoe County and in-kind match provided by Adams County through staff services.

During this general time frame, additional efforts were underway to improve the ability of Strasburg to develop in an economically feasible way within the existing downtown development structure along a stretch of Colfax Avenue and several blocks to the south. Zoning boundaries had been established many years ago in a broad-brush manner not consistent with many of the actual land uses. Buildings and uses often overlapped zoning boundaries and sometimes lot lines, and few of the businesses within these blocks could meet the standards of the County's Land Development Code.

The Strasburg Downtown Overlay Zone was approved by the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners in 2008. This action created legal, conforming status for residential and business uses within the boundary of the overlay zone and established development standards that would allow existing uses and buildings to be improved and expanded in a manner consistent with the existing use patterns and land development. Building and site development standards were addressed for building setbacks from the

public rights-of-way and other property lines, landscaping requirements and parking ratios and locations, including the use of off-street parking. The Strasburg SubArea Plan Map, as part of the current update, incorporates the Strasburg Downtown Overlay Zone.

Other Changes are occurring that could modify the attitude and outlook for the future of the community of Strasburg. The first is the Regional Economic Advancement Partnership (REAP) requested a study along the I-70 Corridor to identify opportunities and constraints for economic development throughout the corridor. Residential uses have also continued to develop within the Strasburg area, and the Comanche Crossing Business Park was approved south of I-70 within Arapahoe County; this project is in the early stages of marketing and development. Public parks and recreation improvements have continued, including a park within the Arapahoe County boundaries and funded in part by the Arapahoe County Open Space program.

Farther east, near Byers, several commercial ventures have started which will impact Strasburg. These include the High Plains Raceway to provide a venue for events of an association of amateur motor racing enthusiasts, likely to attract visitors from the Denver metro area travelling through Strasburg.

REAP requested both Arapahoe County and Adams County resources to conduct an I-70 Corridor economic development study. The study area encompasses incorporated and unincorporated areas along I-70, from Air Park Road (near the easternmost boundary of the City of Aurora) on the West to the Arapahoe County/Elbert County line on the southeast end of the corridor, with a width of four miles on either side of I-70 and a distance of 40 linear miles. Since the start of the I-70 corridor study, REAP has conducted numerous meetings to introduce the intent of the study and start a networking program that will benefit all communities within the corridor.

The study area includes the incorporated towns of Bennett and Deer Trail and the unincorporated communities of Watkins, Strasburg and Byers. Principal participants, to date, include the school districts, businesses and support associations, landowners and local governments. In late 2009, a request for proposals was issued to obtain assistance in conducting an assessment of the current and future economic potential for the corridor and to review the infrastructure systems necessary to support additional growth of employment and service related businesses. An update to the 2002 SubArea Plan is important to provide up-to-date information for this study, and responses by the business community have, to date, been favorable.

Conditions Influencing Future Updates and Plan Implementation:

The community of Strasburg has an Urban Growth Boundary/Area allocation within the Metro Vision regional plan, approved by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). The UGB/A allocation eliminates regional barriers for growth at “urban” densities within Strasburg (densities more consistent with a town center within the broader rural landscape). Local issues such as water and sewer capacity and condition of the older infrastructure are becoming growth management issues for future local and regional discussions.

Availability of suitable homes, strong schools and community amenities will continue to be priorities not only for current residents, but also for attracting new businesses that provide employment opportunities and local services to area residents. As Strasburg improves overall, greater pressure will be placed on the weakest areas in need of improvement; continuing work will help to identify any gaps and needs for meeting those gaps.

The Arapahoe County Open Space Division is in process of developing the County's first comprehensive Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan. This work effort will serve as a guide and create a continued funding mechanism to acquire open space lands and to support development of parks through a share-back program with the cities of Arapahoe County. The Open Space program has, to date, provided for the acquisition of both fee title and conservation easement holdings in rural, eastern Arapahoe County. These and future acquisitions could help to maintain the rural, agricultural heritage of the east county and influence the relationship of Strasburg to other nearby communities and outlying areas by helping the community to remain distinct and identifiable as an important rural community.

The Arapahoe County Transportation Master Plan is also undergoing a comprehensive update focusing primarily on the unincorporated parts of the county. As most of the unincorporated areas are within the rural, eastern county, the influences of any identified changes could significantly impact the outcome of the I-70 Corridor Economic Development Study and have implications for future updates to the Strasburg SubArea Plan.

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau will conduct the ten-year population census; the previous U.S. Census occurred in the year 2000. It is unknown at this time whether the Census results will have implications for changes to the Strasburg SubArea Plan. As an interim measure, a Demographic Summary of the I-70 Corridor, prepared by Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with the I-70 Corridor Regional Economic Advancement Partnership in 2009, can provide beneficial data as a new appendix and reference document to the Strasburg SubArea Plan.

Arapahoe County Planning staff will be monitoring the community of Strasburg and realizes that changes will create a need to revise or modify this subarea plan in the future. Given the number and importance of the various Arapahoe County and joint Corridor studies underway, as well as the 2010 Census, Arapahoe County and the community of Strasburg recognize that an additional update to the Strasburg SubArea Plan may be appropriate within a two-to-five year timeframe.