

Preserving an Agricultural Heritage: The Joint Adams County/City of Brighton District Plan

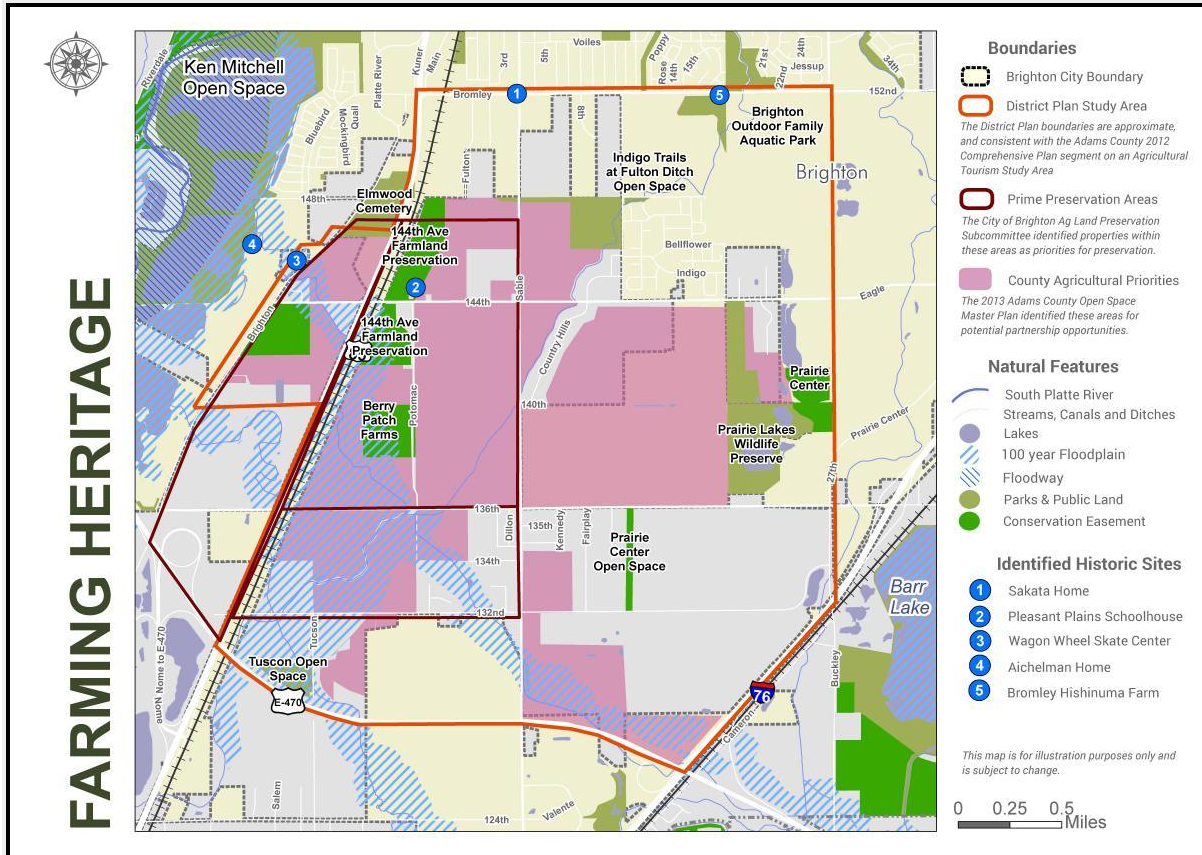
MERIT AWARD

Preserving an Agricultural Heritage:

The Joint Adams County/City of Brighton District Plan

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The south Brighton area in unincorporated Adams County in particular includes historic farmsteads, large vegetable and nursery growing operations, year-round farm stands, and the community-supported agriculture operation Berry Patch Farm. In the next 10 years, the City of Brighton is anticipated to add at least 12,000 residents and 6,000 jobs, many of which are attracted to the area's bucolic, farmland countryside. "With a street named Cabbage Avenue, Brighton has been and is an agriculture town," says Tim Ferrell, owner of Berry Patch Farm.

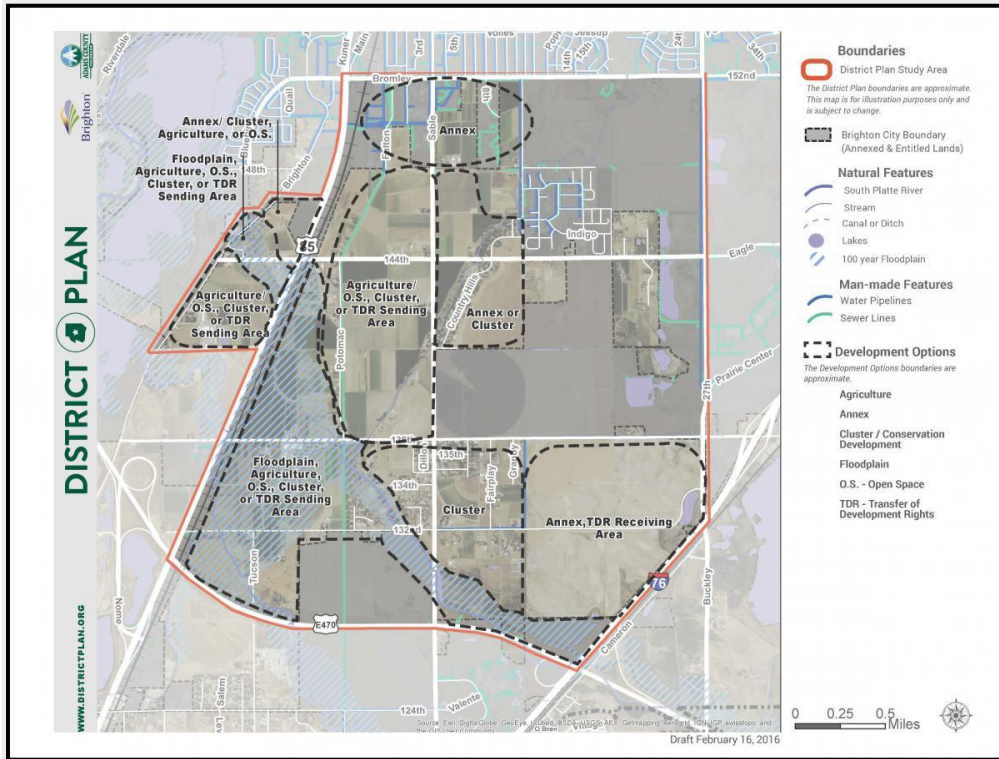


Despite this history, the region's farming heritage is at risk. Many farmers want to sell their land because there is no family to pass it down to; they need retirement funds; and/or because encroaching development makes farming increasingly difficult. As in most of the Front Range, farmland infrastructure, once widespread and contiguous, is breaking up.

Since 2005, Adams County and Brighton have been working toward sensible edge development, farm preservation and the development of agritourism. In 2015, Adams County and the City of Brighton entered into an innovative partnership to fund the Adams County District Plan to establish a joint vision and strategies for incentivizing sustainable development, enhancing the vitality of the local food economy and attracting visitors to an area encompassing approximately 5,000 acres.

The consulting team, led by Logan Simpson, and including Two Forks Collective, Crossroads Resource Center, HRS Water Consultants, Inc., and Urban Interactive Studio, conducted an extensive bilingual outreach effort to identify the highest and best use of the remaining undeveloped acreage. In addition to ongoing "kitchen table talks" with large landowners, the team met with a stakeholder Working Group and led public meetings to discuss area strengths and weaknesses, a market study about the local food economy, water rights, and case studies. Experts such as The Conservation Fund, the Local Food Campus, and the Colorado Tourism Office shared their experience regarding conservation valuation and acquisition, placemaking, food business development, and agritourism. The ongoing

dialogue was memorialized in a series of five videos that are available at <https://www.adcogov.org/districtplan>.



These public/private partnerships were integral to pooling expertise, identifying stakeholder needs and desires, sharing knowledge, and developing a careful balance between farmland preservation and development opportunities. Two important outcomes were expanding landowner options and creating a new future land use category, Local District Mixed Use, that encourages food cultivation and processing alongside farmers markets, bed and breakfasts, farm-to-table restaurants, breweries, and other residential and commercial development compatible with agriculture. The County and City continue working together to implement the plan's recommendations, including improving the County's transfer of development rights program that will allow development rights to be transferred from County to City land; a joint City/County Agricultural Preservation Committee; coordinating the purchase and stewardship of

agricultural lands; and jointly funding a new employee to manage local food system programming.

