

ELBERT COUNTY OVERVIEW

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A Comprehensive Plan is a document that provides the vision for what a community wants to become and the steps that need to be taken to reach that vision. The plan provides guidance and direction to property owners, residents, elected and appointed officials, County staff, and local leaders who are responsible for implementing desired changes for the future of the community.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOU.

The early stages of the vision were shaped by public input gathered at the Elbert County Fair, Simla Days, and a community survey where you shared your perspectives on growth, preservation, and priorities for the future. This feedback was further refined through multiple working sessions with the steering committee.

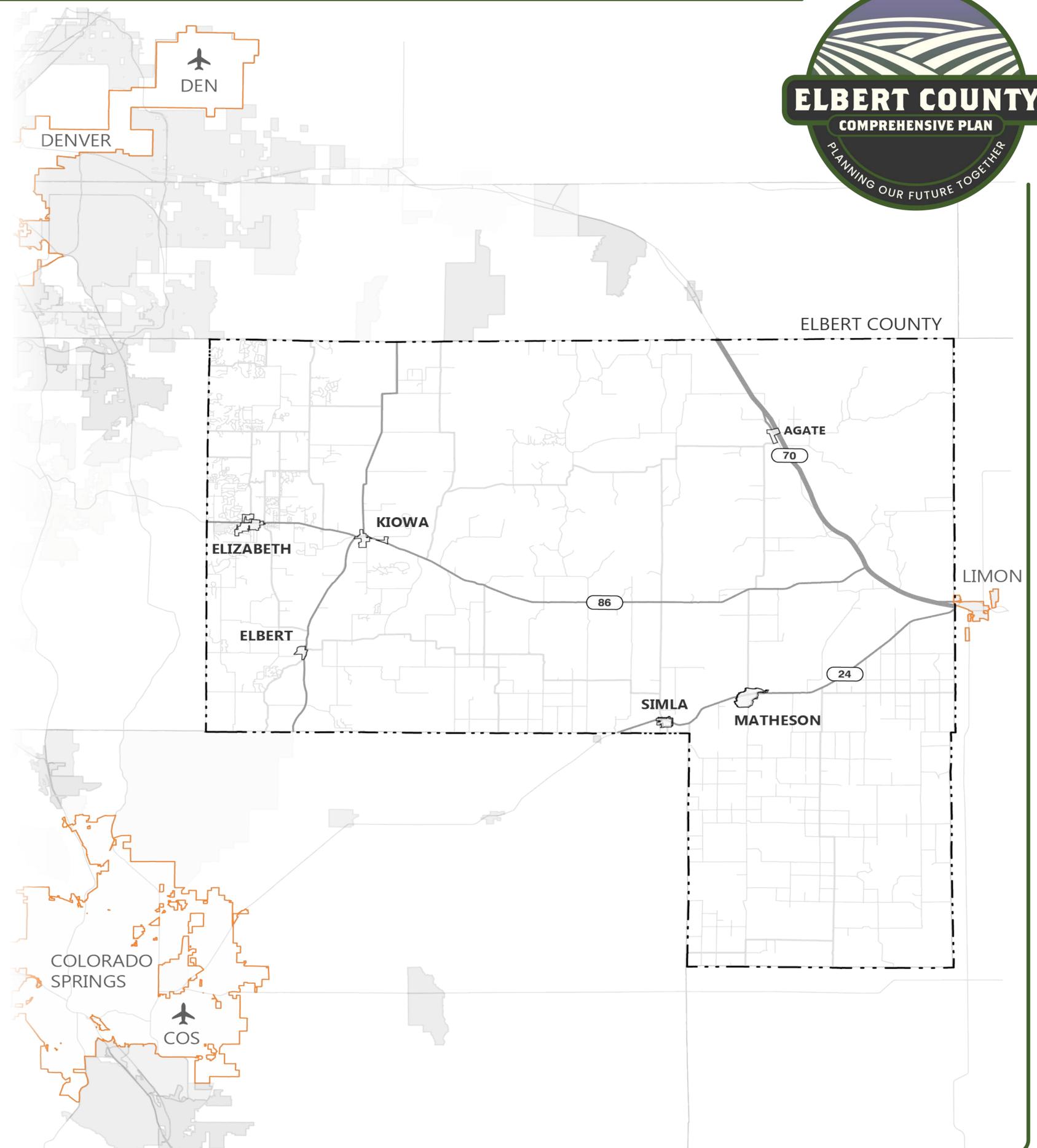
ELBERT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION STATEMENT.

Rooted in Tradition, Growing with Intention.

Elbert County is dedicated to the careful stewardship of its resources to ensure the county's rural character endures for future generations. Guided by these values, we commit to preserving our natural resources, agricultural heritage, and family-centered way of life. As we look to the future, thoughtful and responsible planned growth will be essential in strengthening our local economy, small-town character, and infrastructure – ensuring Elbert County remains a desirable, safe, and resilient home for future generations.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CORE PRINCIPLES.

- 1 Elbert County will preserve its rural character.
- 2 Elbert County will protect all its natural resources.
- 3 Elbert County will promote a sustainable economy.
- 4 Elbert County will foster a safe and high quality of life.



LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

C.R.S. 30-28-106(1) AND C.R.S. 31-23-206(1)

Municipalities, counties, and regional planning commissions are authorized to prepare comprehensive plans as a long-range guiding document for a community to achieve its vision and goals. If a planning commission is established, then it is the duty of the commission per C.R.S. 30-28-106(1) and C.R.S. 31-23-206(1) to make and adopt a comprehensive plan, subject to the approval of the local governing body (e.g., board of county commissioners, city council, etc.).

The principal purpose for a comprehensive plan is to be a guide for the achievement of community goals and aspirations. A plan will also:

- State and promote broad community values in the plan goals, objectives, policies and programs.
- Establish a planning process for orderly growth and development, and economic health.
- Balance competing interests and demands.
- Provide for coordination and coherence in the pattern of development.
- Provide for a balance between the natural and built environment.
- Reflect regional conditions and consider regional impacts.
- Address both current and long-term needs.

Source: CO Department of Local Affairs

SB 24-174 - HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Colorado's SB 24-174 requires every local government, unless specifically exempt, to complete and publish a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) by December 31, 2026, and update it every six years afterward (§24-32-3703). The purpose of the HNA is to support coordinated housing planning across the state by providing consistent, accurate housing data while keeping costs low for local jurisdictions (§24-32-3705).

Importantly, the law does not require communities to build a particular number of homes or specific types of affordable housing. Instead, the HNA serves as an informational tool that helps jurisdictions create housing action plans tailored to their unique needs, constraints, and opportunities (§24-32-3705).

Completed HNAs must be submitted to the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) for review under the timelines and procedures outlined in §§24-32-3703 and 24-32-3704.

- The East Central Council of Local Governments (ECCOG) completed a draft HNA in September 2025, which has been accepted by DOLA.

SB 24-174 - HOUSING ACTION PLAN

A Housing Action Plan (HAP) must respond directly to the community's approved HNA and show how the local government plans to address the housing needs identified. It guides future local legislation, supports regional coordination, and helps inform the public about the community's housing strategies (C.R.S. §24-32-3701(1)(a)).

- The HNA and HAP are not included in this Comprehensive Plan process; however, the Plan must incorporate the findings from the HNA in relation to housing needs and growth.

RURAL LOT SIZES IN SURROUNDING COUNTIES

LINCOLN COUNTY

Rural Design Development Overlay: Allows for development of lot sizes below 35 acres. Allows for residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

Source: Section 2-230 – Lincoln County Zoning Resolution

EL PASO COUNTY

Rural Placetype: 1 dwelling unit/5-acres.

Source: 2021 Your El Paso Master Plan

DOUGLAS COUNTY

Rural: 1 dwelling unit/2-10-acres.

Zoning Code: 2+ acre lots within Rural Site Plans, Comprehensive Plan allows for 10-acre lots for transitional areas.

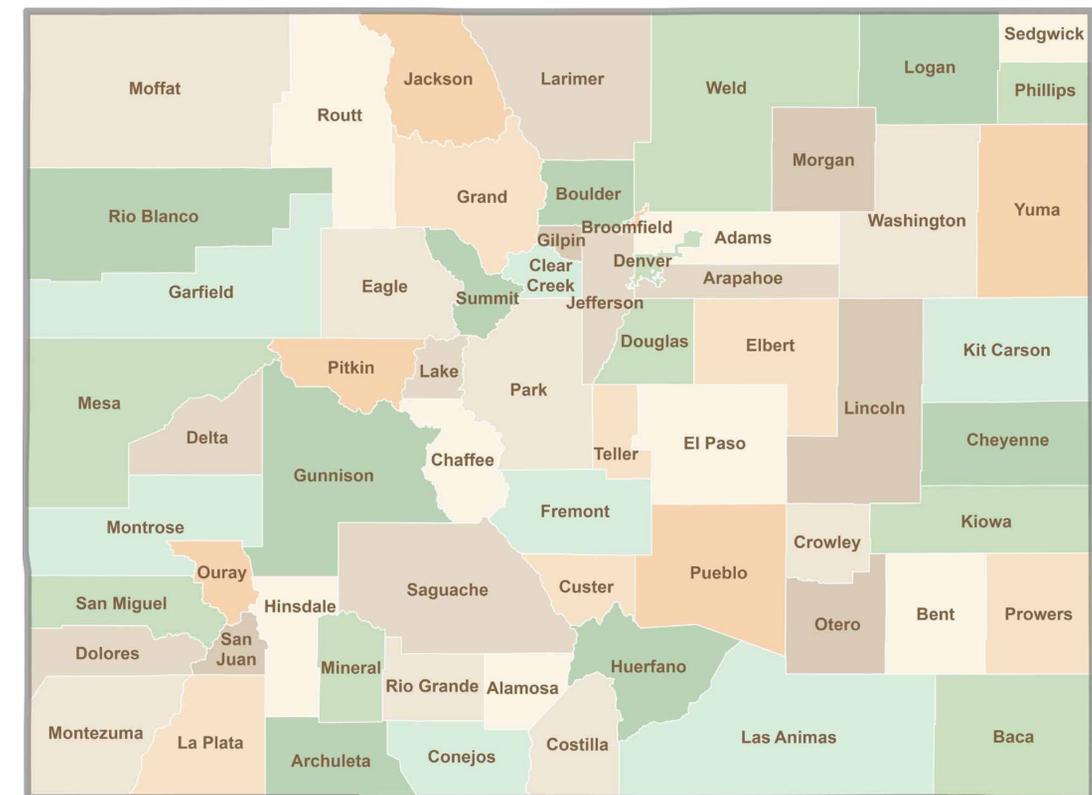
Source: 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan and Section 305A Rural Site Plan – Site Design Criteria (Douglas County Zoning Resolution)

ARAPAHOE COUNTY

The Comprehensive Plan identifies rural areas in Tier 2 as 19-acre lots (page 24) however, they do not have a “rural” land use designation.

Single-Family Detached / Light Intensity: 2.5+ Acre Lots (lowest density land use provided in Comprehensive Plan).

Source: 2018 Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan



ELBERT COUNTY DRAFT RURAL LAND USE CATEGORIES

- RURAL COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL**
2 - 10 acres
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL**
10 - 35 acres
- RURAL PRESERVATION**
35+ acres

LAND USE BEST PRACTICES

TRANSITIONAL LAND USES

Transitional land uses, such as low-density residential or rural development, bridge the gap between agricultural land and higher-intensity commercial areas. These transitional land uses provide the following benefits:

- **Reduce land-use conflicts** and maintain community character by avoiding abrupt changes between very different types of development.
- **Improve compatibility** and quality of life by creating buffer zones that soften impacts from higher-intensity uses.
- **Support efficient infrastructure planning** by concentrating improvements (roads, utilities, services) near higher-intensity uses.
- **Avoid isolated “islands” of development**, which require long stretches of costly infrastructure to serve a small area.
- **Prevent unnecessary strain on public systems**, since such isolated development often cannot generate enough economic return to cover infrastructure costs and service include emergency responses, water, and roadways.

COMPATIBILITY ALONG COUNTY BOUNDARIES

- **Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions** to ensure development near the county’s boundaries align with adjacent municipalities.
- **Promote complementary land uses** along shared boundaries to avoid stark contrasts between neighborhoods.
- **Support regional connectivity** through coordinated planning of roads, utilities, and other shared infrastructure.
- **Create seamless transitions between communities**, reducing potential land-use conflicts and improving overall cohesion.
- **Apply this approach locally**, for example, development along Elbert County’s western edge should be similar in character to nearby neighborhoods like The Pinery and Windy Hills to avoid nuisances and ensure a smooth transition.

CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

- **Designating specific corridors for industrial and commercial uses** helps concentrate employment centers and tax-generating businesses in strategic locations.
- **Reduces impacts on residential areas** by keeping higher-intensity uses in planned, appropriate places.
- **Supports economic development** by creating hubs that attract businesses and investment.
- **Provides long-term benefits** such as improved roadways, utilities, and other public services supported by corridor-driven economic activity.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Community Survey

The Community Survey was open from July 22 – September 5, 2025, and it collected a total of 925 responses, of which 868 were from Elbert County residents, representing 94% of total survey participants.



Steering Committee Meetings

The steering committee played a vital role throughout the comprehensive plan process, bringing together a broad range of interests and community representation to ensure all Elbert County voices were heard. The group helped workshop and refine the vision statement and core principles, reviewed and provided feedback on draft land use maps, and shared important values, perspectives, and local knowledge from their communities. They also served as project champions, helping spread information and encourage participation, ensuring the plan remained grounded in community priorities.

Elbert County Fair

The planning team attended the County Fair to promote the comprehensive plan survey and gather early community input. Fairgoers shared their ideas for the future of the county, helping shape the foundation of the vision statement and overall direction of the plan.



Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission

The Board of County Commissioners and the Planning Commission have been engaged throughout the process, offering guidance and insight from both elected and appointed perspectives. Their involvement helped ensure the comprehensive plan reflects broader county priorities and aligns with long-term policy direction.

Simla Days

The planning team attended Simla Days to connect with residents on the eastern side of the county. Community members shared their early ideas and hopes for the future, providing valuable insight to help shape the county's vision statement and long-term direction.



Open House #1

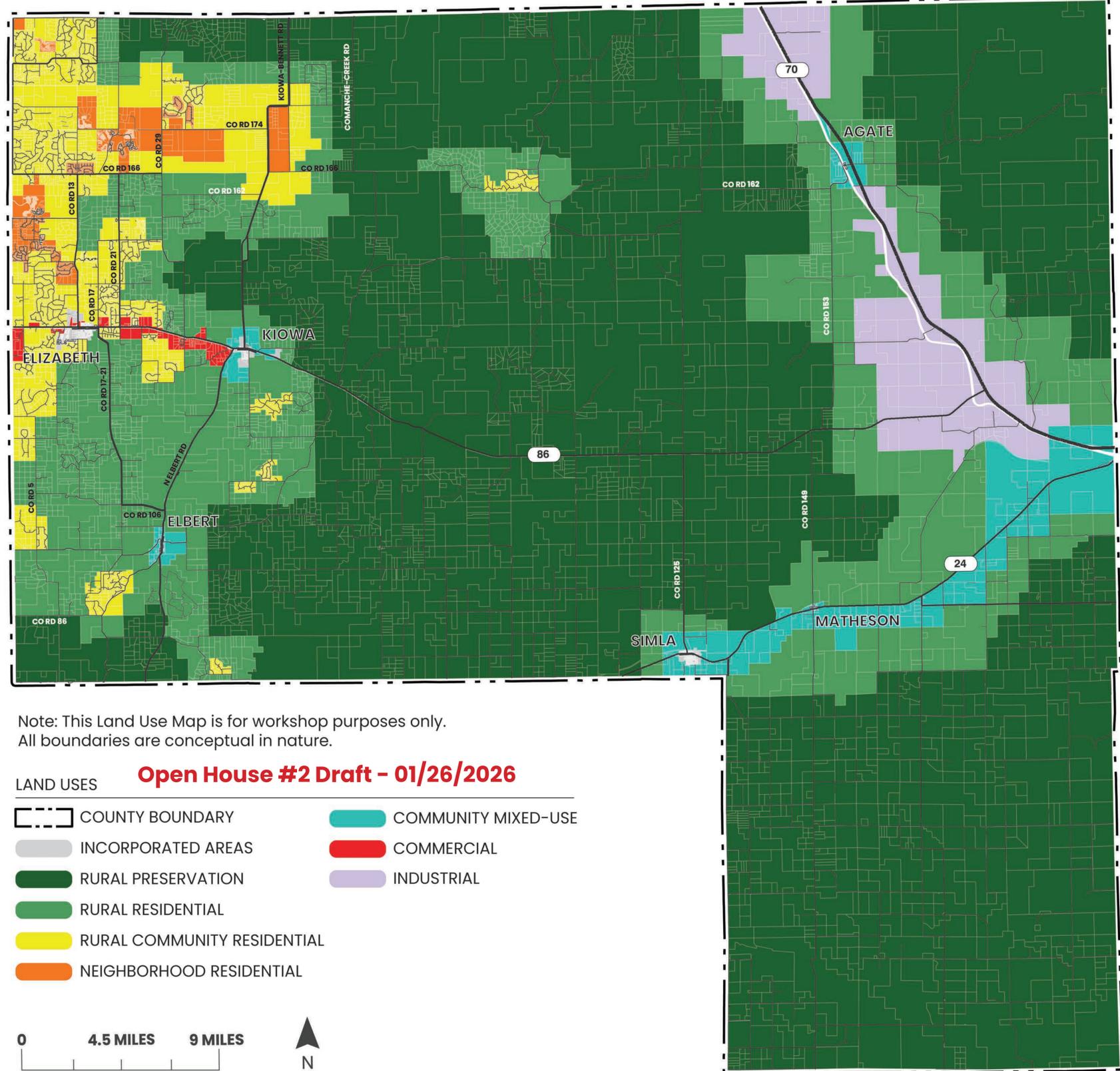
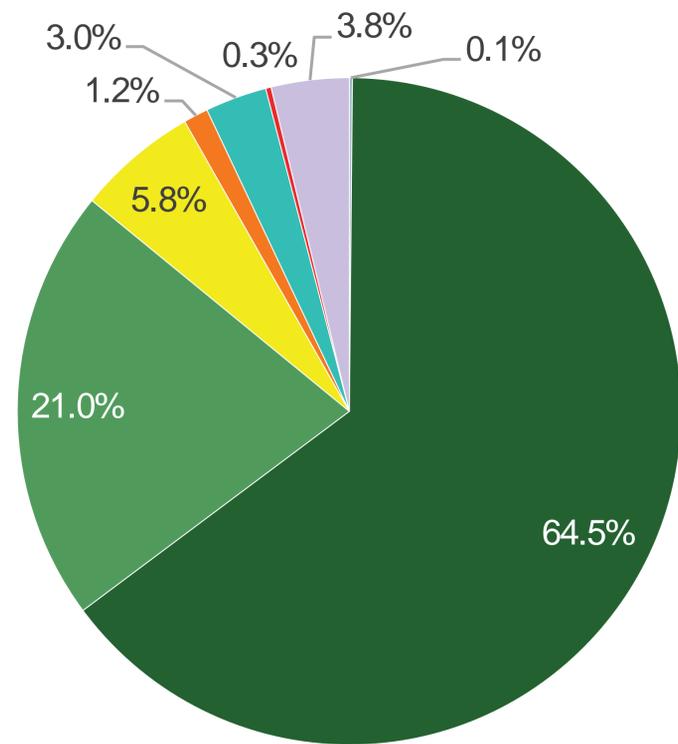
At the first open house, the community confirmed the draft vision statement and core principles and reviewed updated demographic trends and survey results. Participants also began sharing ideas and priorities for the Future Land Use Map, helping guide the next steps of the comprehensive plan.



DRAFT FUTURE LAND USE MAP

ELBERT COUNTY SIZE FACTS

- 1,851 square miles
- 51 miles east - west
- 49 miles north - south
- Approx. 27 miles of I-70
- Approx. 36 miles between Kiowa & I-70



WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT LAND USE CATEGORIES?

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FUTURE LAND USE?

Land Use represents the intended pattern of development and how the community envisions land use over time (e.g., residential, commercial). It is a policy guide, not a regulatory tool, to inform the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

- INCORPORATED AREAS**
 Includes the towns of Elizabeth, Kiowa, and Simla which each operate independently from the county.
- INDUSTRIAL**
 Supports manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution activities that drive economic growth and provide employment opportunities. These areas are intended for uses that require significant land, access to freight routes, and robust infrastructure. Typically located on parcels of several acres to several hundred acres.
- COMMERCIAL**
 Provides areas for retail, office, and service businesses that meet community needs and generate economic activity. Typically located on smaller parcels for retail and offices, and larger parcels for hospitals or major facilities.
- COMMUNITY MIXED-USE**
 Supports existing communities by providing areas that accommodate a blend of residential, commercial, and limited, light industrial uses. Typically located on smaller lots for residential and larger parcels for commercial or light industrial.
- NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL**
 Accommodates smaller-lot residential development with access to local amenities and open vistas. Generally located on parcel that are typically less than 2 acres.
- RURAL COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL**
 Supports rural neighborhoods with slightly higher density than rural residential while maintaining open space, natural features, and the overall rural character on parcels that are typically 2 to 10 acres.
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL**
 Allows for agricultural supportive housing and low-density residential while preserving the rural character, scenic views, and open space that define the county's identity on parcels that are typically 10 acres or greater.
- RURAL PRESERVATION**
 Maintains the county's agricultural heritage, protects natural resources, and preserves open space while allowing very low-density residential development on parcels that are typically 35 acres or larger.

KEY THEMES FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE

- **Retain rural character throughout the county.**
- **Transitions between land uses.** Land uses should incrementally increase in intensity to avoid conflicting uses and to maintain the county's rural nature.
- **Economic development opportunities in Eastern Elbert County.** Focused opportunities surrounding Simla, Matheson, and Agate to address the community's commercial and residential needs.
- **Industrial development opportunities along the I-70 corridor.** Industrial uses along this corridor will create economic development benefits for the county from employment opportunities to tax income.

WHAT'S NEXT?

