

Executive Summary 2009  
**Byers SubArea Plan Update**  
Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan

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

The Arapahoe County Planning Division conducted a Community Needs Assessment survey in late 2007 for the unincorporated, rural community of Byers to help determine updates that may be needed or desired by the community for the Byers SubArea Plan, an element of the Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan. The Byers SubArea Plan was adopted June 24, 2003.

The County hired the professional firm of RRC Associates to conduct a survey to help determine whether the issues and concerns addressed by the approved subarea plan of 2003 had changed. The survey was mailed to all addresses within the Byers School District boundary, with options for either a mail or internet response; results of the survey were presented during a community meeting in January 2008. In January 2009, the Planning staff met with members of the Byers Business Development Council to discuss steps to move forward with an update to the Byers plan while a Community Needs Assessment was getting underway in the neighboring community of Strasburg.

On February 26, 2009, County Planning Division staff conducted an “Open House” in the Byers community to discuss the various issues of the existing Byers SubArea Plan and the survey results and to gather additional public input targeted toward several key issues identified within the 2007 Community Needs Assessment. However, it appears from the survey results and this community meeting, approximately one year later, that the citizens of Byers believe the issues and work resulting in adoption of the original subarea plan are still relevant today, as they were in 2003.

In the last four and a half years, some changes have occurred that could modify the attitude and outlook for the future of the Community of Byers. The first is that the Regional Economic Advancement Partnership (REAP) – a working group of the I-70 Corridor Chamber of Commerce – initiated a study along the I-70 corridor within both Arapahoe and Adams Counties to identify opportunities and constraints for economic development throughout the corridor. Secondly, High Plains Raceway was developed outside of Byers. Events held at High Plains Raceway are expected to bring additional visitors through this community, increasing the need for service and retail commercial business and generating the demand for, and revenues to support, new improvements.

REAP requested both Arapahoe County and Adams County resources to conduct the I-70 Corridor Economic Development Study. The study area encompasses both the 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 2003 SubArea Plan is important to provide up-to-date information for this study.

Secondly, outside of the corridor but within Arapahoe County, a new raceway has been constructed, called the High Plains Raceway, to provide a venue for events of an association of amateur motor racing enthusiasts. The new Lead Valley Gun Range was developed next to the Raceway. Conversations have started about the possible need for a new hotel for Byers to accommodate participants and visitors to the surrounding events in the area. Tourism may be coming to Byers, and this has created a new enthusiasm for growth that falls within the Byers sub-area boundary.

In addition, also outside of Byers, the former “Dog Track” located to the east along I-70 has a new owner with interest in creating a new dirt race track venue for motor-related events. The facility had undergone clean-up and is operating limited, periodic events under a Temporary Use Permit issued by Arapahoe County in 2009, but with large plans for the future that may require additional County approvals as permanent plans become a reality. These new uses have created a fresh drive for the community that was not previously there.

### **Conditions Influencing Future Updates and Plan Implementation:**

The Community of Byers 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 Byers – 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 Byers improves overall, greater pressure will be placed on the weakest areas in need of improvement; continuing work will help to identify any gaps and the needs for meeting those gaps.

In 2008, one change occurred within the SubArea Plan boundary. The Bijou Telephone Coop property was rezoned by Arapahoe County from its former residential zone to a

business zone reflecting its current and anticipated uses and bringing the zoning into greater conformity with the Byers SubArea Plan Map.

Several efforts not directly related to the Byers SubArea Plan update process, but strongly influential to the future of Byers, include several efforts underway in Arapahoe County. The I-70 Corridor Economic Development Study, a joint effort of REAP, Arapahoe County and Adams County, may have implications for future updates to the subarea plan; this process is expected to run through late 2010.

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 Byers 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 Byers 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 Byers 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 Byers SubArea Plan.

Arapahoe County Planning staff will be monitoring the community of Byers and realizes that changes will create a need to revise or modify this sub-area 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 Byers recognizes that an additional update to the SubArea Plan may be appropriate within a two-to-five year timeframe.