

Morgan County, CO

Comprehensive Plan

October 2025



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Introduction



About Morgan County

Morgan County is a primarily rural county located on the high plains of northeastern Colorado. The County measures 36 miles long and 36 miles wide, encompassing 1,296 square miles. This area is diverse, and its expansive open spaces and especially fertile lands along the South Platte River make it a hub for agricultural activities with numerous farms and ranches that drive the local economy.

The County benefits from good transportation connectivity. Interstate 76 runs through it, linking Morgan County to Denver and neighboring states. Several major highways, including US Highways 34 and 6, further promote accessibility and make the county a reliable corridor for commerce and travel. Additionally, Morgan County is served by both passenger and freight rail lines, enabling the movement of various types of shipments, including dairy and agricultural products.

Morgan County was formed in 1889, and it continues to cherish the values and opportunities that have made it thrive, such as a local culture and economy that are deeply rooted in agricultural production and rural living. At the same time, the County is seeking thoughtful ways to continue to progress and grow in ways that protect its heritage while offering a vibrant environment for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

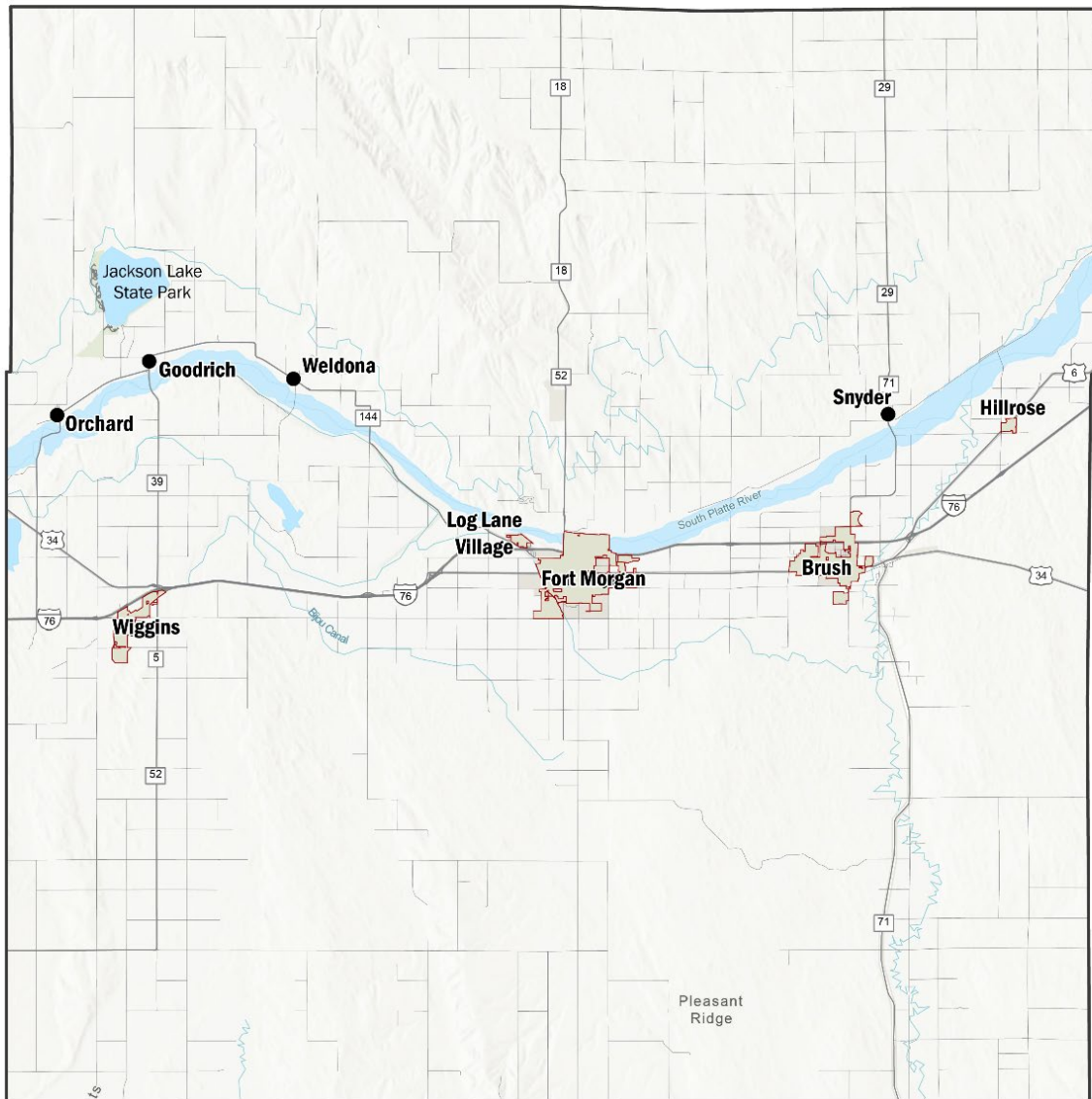
The County's most recent Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2008. Significant changes in the economy and community have taken place since then. In recent years, the growth of remote work has driven more people to relocate from the Denver Metro Area to Morgan County to enjoy the open space and other advantages of rural living. Therefore, a new comprehensive plan was warranted to guide the County on a path more reflective of current conditions and demographic trends. This new Comprehensive Plan investigates the current community assessment, projects future trends and demands, and gathers community input to define the vision and goals of Morgan County today. The planning process in this plan considers and recognizes the Comprehensive Plans for other local jurisdictions within the County.



The Communities of Morgan County

Morgan County has nine communities, five of which are incorporated. The largest communities are Fort Morgan and Brush, where the majority of the population is located. The Town of Wiggins has seen the fastest rate of population growth over the past decade.

Exhibit 1: Cities and Towns in Morgan County



The five incorporated cities and towns in Morgan County are primarily located along the corridors of Interstate 76 and US Highway 34, where much of the non-agricultural activities are concentrated. The four unincorporated communities are all located just north of the South Platte River, along a no-longer-existing rail line that used to travel along the river.

Other unincorporated communities and major subdivisions are spread throughout the county, such as Blue Sky, Jackson, Morgan Heights, Hoyt, and others.

Exhibit 2: The Communities of Morgan County – Population & Size

COMMUNITY	POPULATION	SIZE (SQ. MILES)	INCORPORATED?
BRUSH	5,299	2.8	Yes
FORT MORGAN	11,521	5.3	Yes
GOODRICH		0.05	No
HILLROSE	266	0.2	Yes
LOG LANE VILLAGE	948	0.2	Yes
ORCHARD	87	0.16	No
SNYDER	27	0.4	No
WELDONA	105	0.16	No
WIGGINS	1,202	1.3	Yes

Source: Census 2023 ACS 5-Year Population Estimates.

Purpose of the Plan

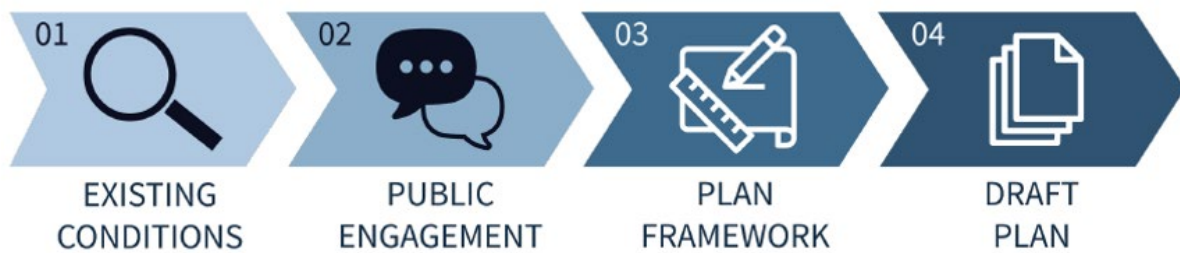
The Morgan County Comprehensive Plan serves as the county’s overarching policy guide and advisory document, outlining a shared vision for its future. It establishes a framework for forming policy and making decisions that reflect the community’s long-term goals and values.

Updating the Comprehensive Plan provides a renewed vision for Morgan County’s future. The plan builds upon issues and opportunities identified through public engagement to establish policies and strategies to achieve the community’s vision. The Morgan County Comprehensive Plan meets the requirements of Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) while presenting the opportunity for the community to consciously plan in a way that supports its vision and values.

This Comprehensive Plan is designed to uphold the rights of private property owners while addressing challenges related to expected future growth and development in Morgan County. It helps make informed decisions about managing resources, guiding development, and ensuring sustainable growth. This plan may be amended at any time to align with changes in the County.



Plan Process



1. **Existing Conditions:** A data-driven community profile for Morgan County was created to provide a snapshot of the County’s demographics, economic conditions, and general characteristics.
2. **Public Engagement:** The community’s involvement and guidance are essential to creating the Comprehensive Plan. The information captured through community participation informs the vision and goals that direct the Comprehensive Plan. A Public Engagement Plan (PEP) was created at the start of the planning process. The PEP was intended to guide public outreach efforts throughout the process to ensure early and continuous involvement in decision-making. The PEP involved the following engagement activities to include as many members of the community as possible:
 - Community Survey
 - Stakeholder Interviews
 - Community Listening Posts
 - Visioning Workshop
 - In-person Pop-ups/Booths
3. **Plan Framework:** Guided by the mandates of Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.), an understanding of current conditions, and active community participation, the plan framework delineates the key aspects the Comprehensive Plan will encompass.
4. **Draft Plan:** Taking each part of the planning process and what has been learned into consideration, a plan is fully drafted and provided to community members and stakeholders for feedback. That final feedback is incorporated into the final version of the Comprehensive Plan.

Statutory Authority

Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.) 30-28-106 mandates that county planning commissions create and adopt a Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the county's unincorporated territory. The plan must outline the vision, goals, and policies related to land use, transportation, infrastructure, and other aspects of development. In alignment with this directive, the Morgan County Comprehensive Plan is updated.

Community Vision and Values



County Values

Morgan County has a diverse community that is rapidly evolving. Many factors shape the changes taking place across the region, and the County recognizes the opportunities arising from the demographic and economic shifts taking place over the past few years.

Some of Morgan County's most cherished features are its rural way of life and its robust agricultural economy. County residents and workers take great pride in the local productive farming and ranching industries and are keen on preserving this part of the culture for future generations.

Below are the fundamental values that define who the Morgan County community is, what it stands for, and what it aspires to be in the future. These values shape the County's vision and guide its Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies.

Agriculture

Farming and ranching are the cornerstones of Morgan County's heritage, economy, and rural lifestyle. They efficiently utilize the land, providing nutritious food, economic stability, and a deep connection to the County's open spaces. Morgan County farmers and ranchers play a vital role in preserving the county's natural resources and ensuring a resilient and productive future for generations to come.

Small-Town Feel

Residents of Morgan County cherish the sense of community where people know and support each other. Morgan County's rural lifestyle offers a slower pace of life and a strong sense of belonging, as well as a general preference for local businesses, events, and traditions. These values often provide a sense of safety and security.

Attainable Housing

The County prioritizes attainable and affordable housing, ensuring that residents of all income levels have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing options. Morgan County will work collaboratively with local municipalities to allow a wider variety of housing options in areas with access to jobs and services to ensure a high quality of life.

Diverse Economy

Morgan County will foster an economic environment that both supports existing industries, such as agriculture, and also embraces innovation and diversification in the local job market. A strong and resilient economy provides a wide array of good-paying jobs that attract and retain young talent. Some of the opportunities for economic development in the county are supporting existing industries, training for emerging industries, taking advantage of future prospects for renewable energy, and developing a reliable infrastructure and efficient government processes to foster business growth and workforce development.

Environmental Resilience

Morgan County is committed to preserving and protecting its farmland and natural resources, promoting responsible environmental stewardship, and ensuring the long-term well-being of the community and economy for future generations. The County recognizes the importance of enhancing its resilience, adaptation, and mitigation against extreme weather events.

Healthy Water Resources

Water quality and availability are crucial to the agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial uses within Morgan County. Water management practices can significantly influence the health of waterways, including rivers, creeks, reservoirs, and irrigation ditches. Developing effective water goals and policies can ensure the long-term availability and sustainability of water resources for current and future generations.

Vision Statement

The vision for Morgan County is...



“A vibrant community rooted in its rural culture and agricultural heritage while supporting smart growth, embracing diverse populations, and fostering thriving businesses.”

Morgan County Context & Trends



Introduction

Made up of primarily rural areas with agricultural uses, Morgan County has five incorporated municipalities, including Fort Morgan, Brush, Wiggins, Hillrose, and Log Lane Village, as well as a number of unincorporated communities, including Goodrich, Weldona, and Orchard. Fort Morgan, the largest municipality within the county, is located approximately 80 miles northeast of metro-Denver and 50 miles east of Greeley.

This chapter provides contextual and current data about Morgan County's community and economy. These findings are backed by the analysis in Appendix A, which explores several performance indicators and metrics, including population, age and race, education, and employment in Morgan County as compared to the State of Colorado. The findings are translated into future needs and trends for Morgan County to consider as it facilitates the comprehensive planning process.

Finally, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) Analysis showcases Morgan County's economic, social, and recreational assets, and further identifies opportunities and challenges for the County to consider through the strategic planning process.

Key Demographic & Economic Findings

Population Findings

- Although Morgan County has not grown rapidly since 2010, the County's aggregate population increased by 5% since 2016, reaching 29,559 persons in 2023. The Town of Wiggins has grown more rapidly than other cities in the county, accounting for 50% of the total growth in the County between 2010 and 2023.
- Areas near Wiggins and in the southwestern region of the County experienced the most substantial population increases from 2013 to 2023, with growth rates ranging from 101% to 148%, particularly along major transportation corridors like State Highway 52 and outside of the municipal boundaries of major cities.



Demographic Findings

- Morgan County's population is aging, but it is not aging as rapidly as the State of Colorado. The median age in both Morgan County (36.1) and Colorado (36) was nearly identical in 2010, while Morgan County's median age increased by 1% between 2010 and 2023, compared to a 5% increase in Colorado's median age over this period, which rose to 38 in 2023.
- Both Morgan County and Colorado have experienced a growth in diversity since 2010, especially in the Hispanic-identifying racial sub-demographic. Morgan County was more racially diverse than the state of Colorado in 2010. Between 2010 and 2022, non-white populations in Morgan County increased by 7%, a slightly higher rate of growth than the observed 5% increase in Colorado over the period.
- The proportion of Hispanic residents has grown to make up 37% of Morgan County's population, representing a total growth of 4% compared to Colorado's 2% from 2010 to 2023. Of Morgan County's Hispanic population, 29% identify as Mexican.
- Compared to the state, Morgan County generally shows lower educational attainment for residents. 18% of Morgan County residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, while the same proportion (18%) have not achieved a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Educational attainment has improved in Morgan County since 2010, with a 3% increase in the residents who hold a bachelor's degree or higher, although this growth is slower compared to 8% growth across Colorado.

Employment and Industry Findings

- Manufacturing is Morgan County's largest economic sector by employment, and it has grown in recent years. In 2023, the Manufacturing industry in Morgan County employed 3,156 people, with workers in the industry earning a median wage of \$49,200.
- Agriculture is the predominant land use in Morgan County, and both the Agricultural sector and industries that support it represent a significant component of Morgan County's economy. In 2023, the Agricultural sector in Morgan County accounted for more than 7% of all employment in the County, with employment increasing by 1.0% annually between 2010 and 2023.
- The Mining (which includes oil and gas extraction) and Health Care industries have experienced a decrease in countywide employment since 2010, shrinking by 3.0% and 1.2%, respectively.
- Unemployment has decreased in Morgan County, falling from 7.4% in 2010 to around 4% or below since 2014. As of 2023 the unemployment rate remains low in the County, while the labor force participation rate across Colorado has dropped from 70.2% in 2010 to 68.4% in 2023.

Workforce Findings

- Wages in Morgan County generally tend to be somewhat lower than those of the State, with the two exceptions being the Production industry and Transportation and Material Moving. Those working in Production, an employment industry that includes more than 100 occupations, such as Machinists, Food Batchmakers, Dental Laboratory Technicians, and Gas Plant Operators, among others, earn an average annual wage of more than \$49,000 in Morgan County, while those working in Transportation and Material Moving make an annual average wage of approximately \$42,100. Overall, Morgan County's Median Household income was \$70,471 in 2022, which represents an increase of 39% since 2010.
- In Morgan County, 24% of all households make less than 50% the Area Median Income (AMI). Renters are more concentrated in the lower AMI brackets than are homeowners.
- Around one-third (32%) of residents in Morgan County work in Fort Morgan, while all other most common commute destinations lie outside of the County. The lone exception is the Town of Brush, which accounts for 7% of commute destinations for residents within the County.
- Fort Morgan and Brush are both residential hubs for the County, with 29% and 11% of Morgan County's workforce living in those cities, respectively. However, more than 40% of the County's workforce commutes in from other counties in Colorado.

Housing Findings

- Median home prices in Morgan County have appreciated at an accelerated rate relative to Colorado, increasing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.11% between 2010-2022. In 2022, the median housing price was \$277,400, reflecting a total increase of \$141,200 since 2010.
- Renters in Morgan County pay a median of \$1,038 in monthly housing costs while homeowners pay a median \$1,792. There are only 1,998 housing units in Morgan County which cost less than \$1,000 monthly, of which 80% are rental properties.
- In 2022, Morgan County's jobs-to-housing unit ratio is generally balanced at 1.1. There has been little variation of this ratio for major cities in the County since 2010, aside from Wiggins, whose ratio decreased from 1.2 to 0.7, as housing development increased significantly over this period to accommodate strong population growth.



Future Needs & Trends

- **Population Growth:** Morgan County is experiencing uneven but steady population growth, particularly near key transportation corridors, creating new demands on land use, infrastructure, and community services.
- **Housing Needs:** Rising housing costs and limited affordable options are making it more difficult for residents—especially renters and low-income households—to find stable, accessible housing within the County.
- **Employment Projections:** Job growth in manufacturing, services, and logistics is reshaping the local economy, raising questions about workforce readiness and long-term economic diversification.
- **Agriculture and Food Processing Industries:** Agriculture remains central to Morgan County's economy and identity, but development pressures and resource constraints present challenges to its long-term viability.
- **Trends in the Energy Industry:** As traditional energy sectors decline and solar energy gains momentum, Morgan County faces a pivotal moment to shape its role in Colorado's energy transition.
- **Other Trends:** Additional factors such as waste disposal, water access, infrastructure capacity, and fiscal health will also influence Morgan County's future planning efforts.

SWOT Analysis

This Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a strategic planning tool that assesses Morgan County's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. This list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is based on data analysis presented in this document, a review of earlier plans and policies, and public engagement input and feedback collected from the community.

Strengths

Strengths highlight internal advantages and positive attributes that contribute to Morgan County's success.

- Location along Interstate 76
- Tight knit community and generational roots
- A culturally diverse community
- Strong and impactful agricultural production industries, including dairy (according to the USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture, Morgan County is in the top three counties in the state for value of crops and livestock produced)
- A diversified economic base
- Proximity to Denver and Denver International Airport (one of the five busiest airports in the United States, and a major international travel hub)
- Incoming investment in utilities (such as Xcel Energy's Colorado's Power Pathway, which includes construction of new transmission lines and a new substation in Morgan County)
- Recreational assets and opportunities, including the South Platte River, Jackson Lake State Park, Prairie Trails Wildlife Area, Historic Rainbow Bridge, Carroll Hotel, parks, and the Fort Morgan and Brush Museums
- County Express and Amtrak Station in Fort Morgan
- Increasing population and labor force participation

Weaknesses

Weaknesses identify internal challenges or limitations that hinder performance or progress.

- Limited opportunity for residential infill
- Limited public transportation options and connectivity
- Cultural resistance to growth or innovation
- Accessibility issues throughout public infrastructure
- Lack of industry diversification
- Wear and tear affecting the condition of highways/interstates in Morgan County
- Limited services, resources, and amenities for residents (such as childcare, recreation spaces for kids, salons, stores, etc.)
- Rising costs of housing and living (accompanied by an increase in homelessness), and limited availability of entry-level housing
- Low educational attainment relative to the state
- Distance from other Colorado tourism assets
- Limited municipal and county budgets

Opportunities

Opportunities explore external factors or trends that could be leveraged for growth or improvement.

- Available land for economic development and growth
- Investment in existing businesses and industries for expansion
- Increasingly diverse population, particularly Hispanic-identifying residents
- Community-scaled agricultural activities
- Attracting the right development
- Incoming skilled workers through immigration
- Solar power production and renewable energy
- Utility support industries
- Considering Bustang

Threats

Threats examine external challenges or risks that could negatively impact Morgan County's goals.

- Limited water resources in northeast Colorado; water in high demand (two of three largest reservoirs in Morgan County are tied to agriculture)
- Shortage of teachers and healthcare workers in Morgan County
- Rising costs of county operations
- Changing federal and state regulations
- Encroaching development on farmland and agricultural operations
- Colorado residents being priced out of Denver metro looking for more affordable housing options (primarily in Wiggins) relocating to County and driving up housing costs while limiting housing inventory
- As push towards renewable energy intensifies, existing oil and gas operations in Morgan County may be at risk
- History of flooding in Fort Morgan and Brush
- External investors buying real estate inside the county, which may impact housing and commercial space availability or affordability.

Comprehensive Plan Elements



Goals and Policies Overview

Morgan County’s comprehensive plan is an aspirational document that defines the County’s vision and sets a framework of goals and policies to move the county closer to achieving that vision. Comprehensive plans are themselves not regulatory documents, but they inform and guide other county tools and programs to implement and enact the goals and policies outlined in them.

Policy Documents such as this comprehensive plan set the direction for:

- Regulatory Documents such as zoning or development regulations, to implement the steps to achieve a future goal; and
- County-led programs, updates, and planning to implement the policies and action items to achieve the goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

As a policy document, this plan does not hold legal sway over county activities nor automatically extend into land-use regulation. Instead, it provides a first comprehensive, coordinated step towards a wide variety of community goals. Additional steps may be essential, including the development of implementation plans, studies, inventories, or updates to create consistency between the comprehensive plan and evolving regulatory documents.

For purposes of this plan, the terms “Goal” and “Policy” are defined as:

- **Goal**—Broad statements indicating a general aim or purpose to be achieved. A goal is a direction setter, an ideal future end, condition, or state related to the public health, safety, or general welfare toward which planning and implementation measures are directed. It indicates a clear commitment by the local governing body. A goal is an extension of a plan’s future vision, as well as an assessment of future conditions.
- **Policy**—Policies are steps that can be implemented through a department’s work plan and budgeted for. They are undertaken to realize plan goals. Policies may include the development of more detailed and localized plans and work to implement strategies, formal agreements, or regulations.

Within each topic area, or element, of the plan is a set of goals and policies to carry out the future vision for Morgan County.

Morgan County remains a rural, agriculture-based community rooted in agricultural production, food systems, and a small-town character. The goals and policies in this plan honor that identity while preparing for the opportunities and challenges of the future.

Plan Elements

This plan encompasses a wide array of key planning topics relevant to Morgan County:

Agriculture

Many in the County community regard agriculture, including farming and ranching, as one of Morgan County's most precious assets. This element concentrates on protecting Morgan County's agriculture sector, promoting efficient agriculture practices, and protecting agricultural resources from the impacts of sprawling development and extreme weather events.

Housing and Strategic Growth

Morgan County aims to achieve a healthy and varied stock of housing that meets the community's needs. Housing options that meet the needs of Morgan County residents will retain current residents and align with anticipated population growth, and a mix of land uses will ensure access to needs and services within reasonable distances. This element provides the framework for aligning future land development with Morgan County's vision.

Water Protection and Conservation

As a vital and precious resource, planning for water in the county is a prudent piece of the Comprehensive Plan. Water quality and availability are essential not only for the major agricultural sector but also for all developments in Morgan County. This element focuses on protection and conservation, meeting future demand, and ensuring high-quality water in the county.

Economic Development

This element focuses on fostering a robust and diverse economy in Morgan County. The county aims to protect agriculture as an important economic asset while supporting the growth of other businesses and industries. A diversified economy can make Morgan County an attractive place that develops and retains skilled workers of all ages.

Open Space, Recreation, and Tourism

This element focuses on preserving open space, enhancing recreational outlets, and ensuring the county is a fun place for residents and visitors alike.

Transportation and Infrastructure

A healthy transportation network and reliable infrastructure are integral to a county's safety and success. This element focuses on promoting a robust transportation system by addressing current concerns and anticipating future needs. It promotes proactive coordination to ensure seamless delivery of utility needs across the County. As Morgan County continues to grow in population, the demand for public safety and emergency services will also increase, and this element addresses those needs.



Agriculture Element

Goals and Policies

AG-1 Goal

Develop and implement zoning regulations that preserve agricultural use and promote economic benefits for agricultural landowners.

1. **Maintain the agriculturally related uses by right** in the Agricultural Zoning District, and allow for greater flexibility for agriculturally related ventures.
2. Maintain the viability of agricultural operations and support them by continuing to **allow supplemental uses** with appropriate permitting and regulations.
3. **Maintain the quarter-mile buffer requirement** for agricultural uses with Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).
4. Regularly **review and revise existing codes and regulations** to ensure they support and promote agricultural uses.
5. Promote and encourage the **enforcement of code requirements and regulations** across all unincorporated Morgan County to protect agricultural uses.

AG-2 Goal

Preserve existing agricultural lands that grow food for the community, and support the efficient expansion of productive agricultural uses, farms, ranches, and facilities.

1. **Protect prime agricultural areas** from the impacts of developments and commercial recreation by upholding farmers' and ranchers' rights to utilize their land for agricultural uses.
2. Encourage the deployment of **innovative and efficient agricultural practices**.
3. Partner with agencies and organizations that provide **programs and initiatives for effective management and utilization of agricultural lands**.

AG-3 Goal

Strategically plan for the transition of land uses between development and agricultural lands within the municipal urban growth areas (UGAs) and target growth areas.

1. Support the **smooth interaction with neighboring property owners** when development is adjacent to productive agricultural lands.
 - Promote **Morgan County's Right to Farm Policy**.
 - Encourage **outreach programs for new residents** to educate them regarding agricultural activities.
 - Address potential damage to **agricultural irrigation ditches** caused by development.
 - Encourage an **open dialogue** between farmers and users of adjacent properties.
2. Support programs that **encourage responsible development practices** that minimize the impacts of development on agricultural operations and promote growth within the target growth areas.

AG-4 Goal

Increase agriculture's preparedness for, response to, and recovery from extreme weather events.

1. Improve **data collection, inter-agency coordination, and resource planning** and preparedness for extreme weather events.
2. Support a **timely and robust agricultural recovery** from extreme weather events by streamlining communication and coordinating resources.
3. Provide agricultural producers and farm workers with **education and technical assistance to mitigate the negative impacts of extreme weather** and leverage opportunities to increase operational resilience.
4. Improve and expand **awareness and response to emerging pests, weeds, and diseases**.





Housing and Strategic Growth Element

Goals and Policies

H-1 Goal

Foster safe, livable, and vibrant communities that honor the rural culture of Morgan County.

1. Coordinate with the **local municipalities to absorb** most of the projected population growth.
2. Encourage **compact, moderate-density, mixed-use development close to existing jobs and services**, specifically within municipal Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) and target growth areas to protect open space and agriculture in unincorporated Morgan County.
3. **Enable the development of amenities**, such as restaurants, medical offices, daycare, groomers, and other daily needs, close to existing and target growth areas.
4. Actively work to **improve safety and security in neighborhoods** through periodically revising existing development guidelines and supporting the delivery of community services.
5. Maintain **low-density development** in rural unincorporated Morgan County, especially outlying development outside of the UGAs and target growth areas.

H-2 Goal

Enhance housing availability and affordability to keep up with growing demand and promote attainable housing options for all economic segments of the population.

1. Conduct a **Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)** to identify the amount and types of housing needed in the community and develop an appropriate **Housing Action Plan (HAP)**.
2. Promote the **development of affordable housing** and the integration of affordable units within new residential and mixed-use developments.
3. Enhance housing affordability by **allowing alternative building options** such as modular, manufactured, or prefabricated homes.
4. Support a range of **housing types for retirees and seniors**, including condominiums, assisted living, co-living, and independent living communities near daily needs and services.
5. Promote the **development of permanent supportive housing (PSH) and emergency housing** facilities near daily needs and services.

H-3 Goal

Develop a growth path that promotes efficient and responsible development while protecting Morgan County's open space and agricultural heritage.

1. Protect existing agriculture operations by **directing growth to target areas** without restricting private property rights.
2. **Discourage rural residential developments** in areas of prime agricultural production.
3. Promote smart growth that **concentrates moderate residential densities in areas near services** and with access to employment, education, and amenities.
4. Work closely with the municipalities to **develop compatible zoning regulations** within the UGAs and target growth areas.
5. **Encourage municipalities to annex land** for commercial, residential, and industrial development.
6. Revise **subdivision criteria and standards** that provide landowners with clear guidance for preserving open space while maintaining flexibility.





Water Protection and Conservation Element

Goals and Policies

W-1 Goal

Cultivate relationships and partnerships with water districts, agencies, and organizations that promote and support water conservation efforts.

1. Foster **partnerships with water districts, local utilities, government agencies, community organizations, and residents** to collaboratively address water infrastructure challenges, leverage funding opportunities, and ensure the equitable distribution of water resources.
2. Establish **regular meetings and communication channels** between Morgan County officials and key state and local agencies responsible for water resource management to ensure alignment in goals and strategies.
3. Support and collaborate with **Morgan County Quality Water District to deploy best practices** for preserving water quality and quantity, and **advocate for a comprehensive assessment of existing water infrastructure** to better understand the needs of Morgan County residents.
4. Support local water providers and relevant entities in pursuing **Colorado Water Conservation Board** grant programs aimed at supporting water conservation initiatives.

W-2 Goal

Enhance efficient water management in Morgan County's agriculture sector and strive for fair access to water resources for agricultural uses.

1. Support regional efforts **that improve water storage, distribution, and management** to benefit agricultural water needs.
2. Provide support for continued **maintenance and installation of irrigation infrastructure**, including canals, ditches, pumps, and irrigation networks, to deliver water to agricultural lands and enhance crop production.
3. Actively support and collaborate with relevant **agencies and stakeholders involved in the management of irrigation ditches** and networks.

W-3 Goal

Support and promote best practices for water management and conservation that serve all land uses within the County.

1. **Support local initiatives that promote conservation practices** and overall water use efficiency to reduce water loss and improve overall water use efficiency.
2. Explore the development of **1041 Regulations** for water development projects to accelerate the adoption of best practices and promote efficient resource utilization.
3. Encourage the development of **central or community-based water and wastewater systems** and treatment facilities.
4. Promote **water use efficiency for new and redeveloped residential and commercial** properties in unincorporated Morgan County.
 - Encourage developers to seek funding to install **water-conserving appliances and fixtures**.
 - Encourage new developments to **bring their own water** supplies (through water shares or entitlements).
 - Encourage commercial and industrial uses to **connect to municipal systems** where feasible.
 - Consider including **water conservation requirements** in building and development codes.





Economic Development Element

Goals and Policies

E-1 Goal

Promote a diversified economy that is attractive to young professionals and fosters talent retention.

1. Agriculture is still the key driver of the community; **Promote growth in jobs and industries related to agriculture.**
2. Work with the **municipalities to align strategic economic goals.**
3. **Strategically locate business, commercial, and industrial zoning** in areas that optimize economic development opportunities and support efficient growth.
4. Increase and **diversify retail, dining, and entertainment** options within target growth areas in unincorporated Morgan County.

E-2 Goal

Create a collaborative environment that fosters the growth of the local economy and local workforce.

1. Foster job and employment option growth in the County by revising to create a **business-friendly** environment.
2. Work with current local business owners to **enhance the business community's presence and understand their needs.**
3. Coordinate with **Morgan Community College and other community organizations** to provide continuing education for the community.
4. Partner with **organizations that offer professional training to ensure a skilled local workforce** that meets the evolving demands of Morgan County's growing industries.

E-3 Goal

Support responsible energy development in Morgan County through balanced zoning and permitting strategies that promote renewable energy opportunities while preserving agricultural land.

1. Promote the growth of **renewable energy** businesses while protecting Morgan County’s rural character and agricultural production.
 - Explore strategies to guide energy development **away from prime agricultural farmland**, while maintaining private property rights and supporting informed land use decisions.
 - Encourage **solar-grazing partnerships** between solar facility owners and ranchers.
 - Encourage the inclusion of **landscape buffers at the edges of energy developments** located within one mile of major county roads or freeways.





Transportation and Infrastructure Element

Goals and Policies

TI-1 Goal

Provide a safe, reliable, and efficient road network connecting people and businesses across Morgan County.

1. Conduct **regular inventory updates of county roads** and evaluate traffic volumes and the suitability of the transportation infrastructure to accommodate projected growth.
2. Work closely with the **agricultural community to understand their use of and impacts on County roads** and how to reduce conflicts with other road users and property owners along those roads.
3. Identify **short-term and long-term improvements** for existing and planned county roads.
4. Explore and **pursue available grant programs offered by CDOT** and other agencies for county transportation projects.
5. Explore **measures to enhance roadway safety** and reduce traffic accidents.
6. Explore the **development of an alert system** to notify the local community of hazardous roadway conditions or closures.
7. Explore options and consider requiring **developers to contribute to the cost of upgrading and maintaining county road infrastructure** serving their development, with a focus on fair cost-sharing between new developments and other properties benefiting from these improvements.

TI-2 Goal

Recognize Interstate 76 and US Highway 34 as significant assets for the County and promote their interchanges as gateways into the community.

1. Improve **highway and gateway signage** along major roads and interchanges that welcome commuters to Morgan County and reflect the local identity.
2. Explore introducing **landscaping and public art improvements** at highway interchanges to signify the arrival in Morgan County.

3. Encourage **high-quality mixed-use development** in the vicinity of certain highway interchanges that overlap with target growth areas.
4. Continue to **foster a close collaborative relationship with CDOT** to best serve the local community and commuters.

TI-3 Goal

Encourage high-quality public transit and freight service across the County.

1. Explore options with **municipalities to provide coordinated public transit services** beyond municipal boundaries.
2. Encourage transit service providers to **upgrade their buses to meet ADA requirements and extend their hours of operation** to meet demand.
3. Coordinate with the Federal Railroad Administration to **explore expanding the rail service** for passenger and freight movement in Morgan County.



TI-4 Goal

Facilitate and support the maintenance and delivery of utility services across Morgan County while strategically planning for new and expanded services to meet the evolving needs of residents and businesses.

1. Foster **strong partnerships with utility providers and local municipalities** to identify common needs, explore joint initiatives, and optimize resource allocation.
2. Streamline **utility regulations and permitting procedures**, and continue coordinating and **providing right-of-way access** to ensure efficient delivery of services.
3. Coordinate with utility providers to perform upgrades to **aging powerlines and utility infrastructure** that enhance weather resilience and flood-proofing.

TI-5 Goal

Provide well-coordinated emergency management plans and services.

1. **Improve protocols and communication systems** to the public during emergencies.
 - Develop designated sources of information and communication channels.
 - Utilize multi-lingual announcements to ensure legibility for all populations within the county.
2. Coordinate and communicate **emergency management plans closely with local agencies**, schools, hospitals, and other community groups to enhance preparedness and response.
3. Investigate ways to maintain **continuity of services during emergency events**, especially for areas with vulnerable populations.
4. Consider evaluating zoning strategies to discourage development **within floodplain areas** and other areas of environmental sensitivity, prioritizing open space and agriculture as preferred land uses.
5. Explore partnerships to **develop a localized assessment of flood-prone areas** to better guide future development and provide emergency services.



Open Space, Recreation, and Tourism Element

Goals and Policies

OS-1 Goal

Encourage responsible stewardship of Morgan County's natural resources and assets, ensuring their protection, long-term viability, and benefits for current and future generations.

1. Support **partnerships with organizations** that work to preserve open space, wetlands, scenic areas, and other sensitive lands.
2. Coordinate with the City of Fort Morgan on their trail plan and **consider expanding the trail network** into unincorporated Morgan County.
3. Coordinate with the State and **Jackson Lake** Reservoir Company to promote Jackson Lake as an important recreational asset for the County.
4. Prioritize **accessibility improvements in public parks** to enhance the inclusivity of recreation and tourism assets, ensuring that individuals of all ages and abilities can enjoy the County's natural and cultural attractions.
5. Engage in public **outreach and education initiatives to raise awareness** about the importance of preserving and maintaining the County's natural assets for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.
6. Promote the use of **floodway areas for open space** and drainage facilities.
 - Encourage and cooperate in flood mitigation projects.
 - Maintain the floodplain areas along the **South Platte River as open space for recreation** and wildlife preservation.

OS-2 Goal

Expand recreational amenities and opportunities targeted for locals and visitors alike.

1. Encourage **mixed-use developments** that include neighborhood-serving retail and amenities.
2. Encourage the development of **food and beverage outlets in target growth areas** within the County.
3. Explore partnerships to develop a **County Community and Recreation Center** at a strategic location that is easily accessible from across the County.
4. Encourage local farmers to **facilitate rotating locations of farmers' and makers' markets** and other County events while providing appropriate regulations.
5. Encourage **community events and festivals** that celebrate and showcase Morgan County's rural and agricultural culture and diverse populations.
6. Coordinate with local municipalities on the **promotion and marketing of County events and amenities**.



Future Land Use

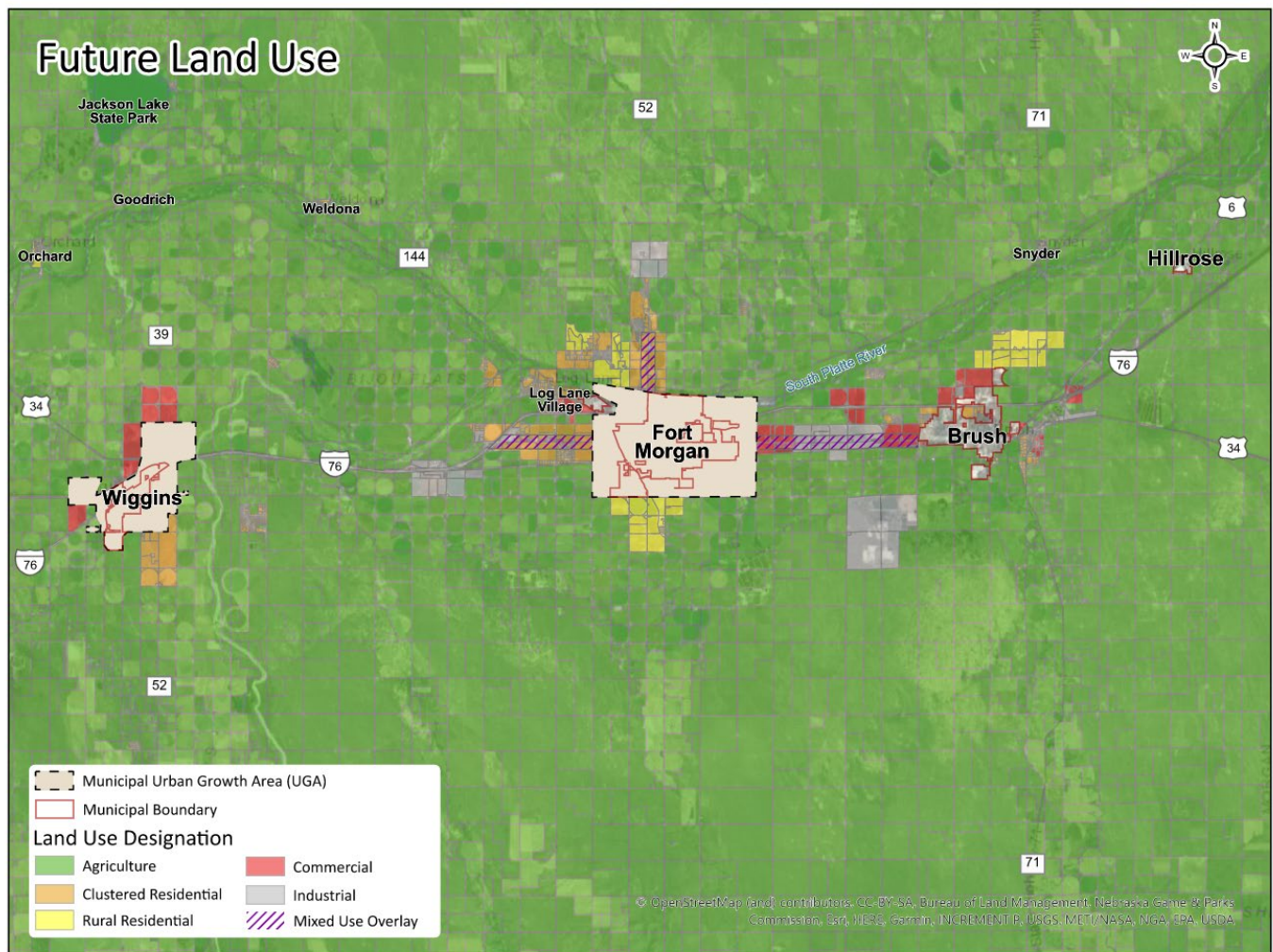


Future Land Use Designations

Land Use Designations are categories that indicate the future vision for a particular area within Morgan County. These should not be confused with zoning districts, which can be found in the Zoning Regulations. While similar in nature, zoning districts regulate how the land can be used currently. Land use designations are suggestive and aspirational, and they reflect the vision of how the land can be used in the future and where the county should encourage different types of growth. Changing the land use from existing uses may require utility/infrastructure extensions, zone changes, or other substantial procedures.

Defining land use is imperative for directing the development of Morgan County. Below are the proposed future land use designations in Morgan County, and Exhibit 3 is a cropped version of the Future Land Use map showing where each of these land uses is suggested. A county-wide Future Land Use map can be found in Appendix C.

Exhibit 3: Future Land Use Map (cropped)



Agricultural Designation

The primary intent of this designation is to provide for the conduct of agricultural activities related to ranching and farming production, including activities that support, maintain, and promote agriculture as an essential economic asset in the county. Land uses in this designation are encouraged to provide for the maintenance of agricultural production and preservation of the associated lifestyles.

Rural Residential Designation

Areas designated for low-density residential dwellings in conjunction with agricultural or other rural activities. This designation often involves larger lot sizes and is typically located away from urban centers and main travel corridors. The primary uses of this designation are single-family homes and small-scale farming activities.

Clustered Residential Designation

Areas designated for Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and other clustered developments that may incorporate preserved open space. Lot sizes and housing types may vary, and may include single-family units, duplexes, cottage housing, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). This designation allows for moderate and medium densities and is often located close to urban and activity centers, or along major travel corridors.

Commercial Designation

The intent of the commercial designation is to provide land use types for general sales, businesses, contractors, service, processing, transportation, and warehouses. It is designed to accommodate a variety of compatible businesses. Businesses that produce goods and products on site can offer those items for retail sale as an accessory use in this district.

Industrial Designation

The industrial land use designation is intended to accommodate manufacturing, processing, fabrication, assembly, and storage of materials and products, most commercial or similar compatible uses, industrial enterprises, as well as allowing service facilities for industries and their employees. This designation may also accommodate warehousing, distribution, and wholesaling services with increased heavy truck traffic in locations and upon sites that can accommodate increased truck traffic.

Mixed-Use Overlay

The intent of the mixed-use overlay is to allow for a level of flexibility in focused areas of specific underlying land use designations. The mixed-use areas encourage combining multiple uses within close physical proximity. The mixed-use overlay at the Clustered Residential land use designation would offer a variety of residential densities alongside small businesses and neighborhood-serving retail. This would provide services and amenities close to residential uses, promoting economic activity, public safety, and a sense of local community.

The mixed-use overlay applied to Commercial and Industrial land uses would combine various non-residential functions in close proximity along active corridors. Uses can include a mix of retail, office, agricultural, recreational, or industrial spaces. This would help create a thriving business or industrial park for the County. The mix of diverse and complementary uses would attract more customers or users to the area.

Special Uses

Special uses, such as solar farms and RV parks, are growing in Morgan County, but they don't directly fit within the existing and proposed land use designations. To preserve the rural and farmland community look and feel, special uses are encouraged outside designated Prime Farmland, flood hazard zones, and the municipal urban growth areas (UGAs).



Appendices



Appendix A: Community Assessment

Methods

The data presented in this Community Assessment draws from numerous statewide and regional data sources, as well as federal data repositories, including:

- Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)
- Colorado State Demography Office (SDO)
- U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys (ACS)
- Morgan County Open Data Portal
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
- Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)
- Colorado Labor Market Information Gateway
- Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
- Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

Organization of this Chapter

This Appendix is organized as follows:

- The **Community Demographics** section analyzes key data points, such as population growth, age, race, and educational attainment, contextualizes the existing conditions within the County, and localities within, and to identify demographic trends.
- The **Economic Characteristics** section contextualizes Morgan County's economy by analyzing employment, wage, housing, and commute data.
- The **Future Needs and Trends** translates findings into upcoming impacts and further considerations Morgan County should take into account in the strategic planning processes.

Community Demographics

This section provides an overview of Morgan County's historical demographics, exploring trends over time, as well as gives the current conditions of various metrics concerning Morgan County's community.

Population

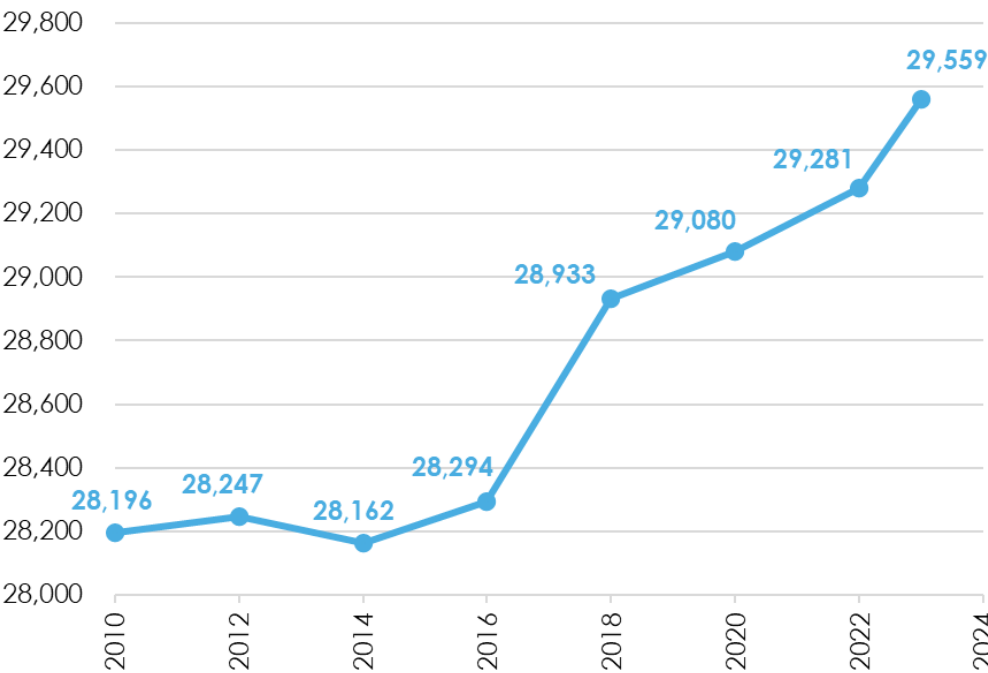
Morgan County's population has shown overall growth between 2010 and 2023, increasing by nearly 1,400 residents over the period (Exhibit 4). The growth pattern, however, has not been linear. After a slight decline between 2012 and 2014, where the population dropped to 28,162, the County

experienced an increase from 2016 through the remainder of the period. By 2018, the population reached 28,933, marking a period of accelerated growth that continued through 2023.

For Morgan County, this represents a total compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of .4% from 2010 to 2023, compared to Colorado’s 15.7% growth over the same period. Exhibit 4 also shows the breakdown of this growth across its incorporated cities and unincorporated areas. Unincorporated Morgan County accounts for one third of the County’s total population, with its largest city being Fort Morgan. The most substantial growth occurred in Wiggins, one of the smallest incorporated cities in the County, whose growth accounted for 50% of the total growth in the County, growing from 894 residents in 2010 to 1,592 in 2023.

Exhibit 4: Total Population, Incorporated Cities and Unincorporated Morgan County, 2010 - 2023

	2010	2023	CAGR
Fort Morgan	11,326	11,735	0.3%
Unincorporated Morgan County	9,370	9,679	0.2%
Brush	5,468	5,332	-0.2%
Wiggins	894	1,592	4.5%
Log Lane Village	874	910	0.3%
Hillrose	264	311	1.3%
Morgan County	28,196	29,559	0.4%

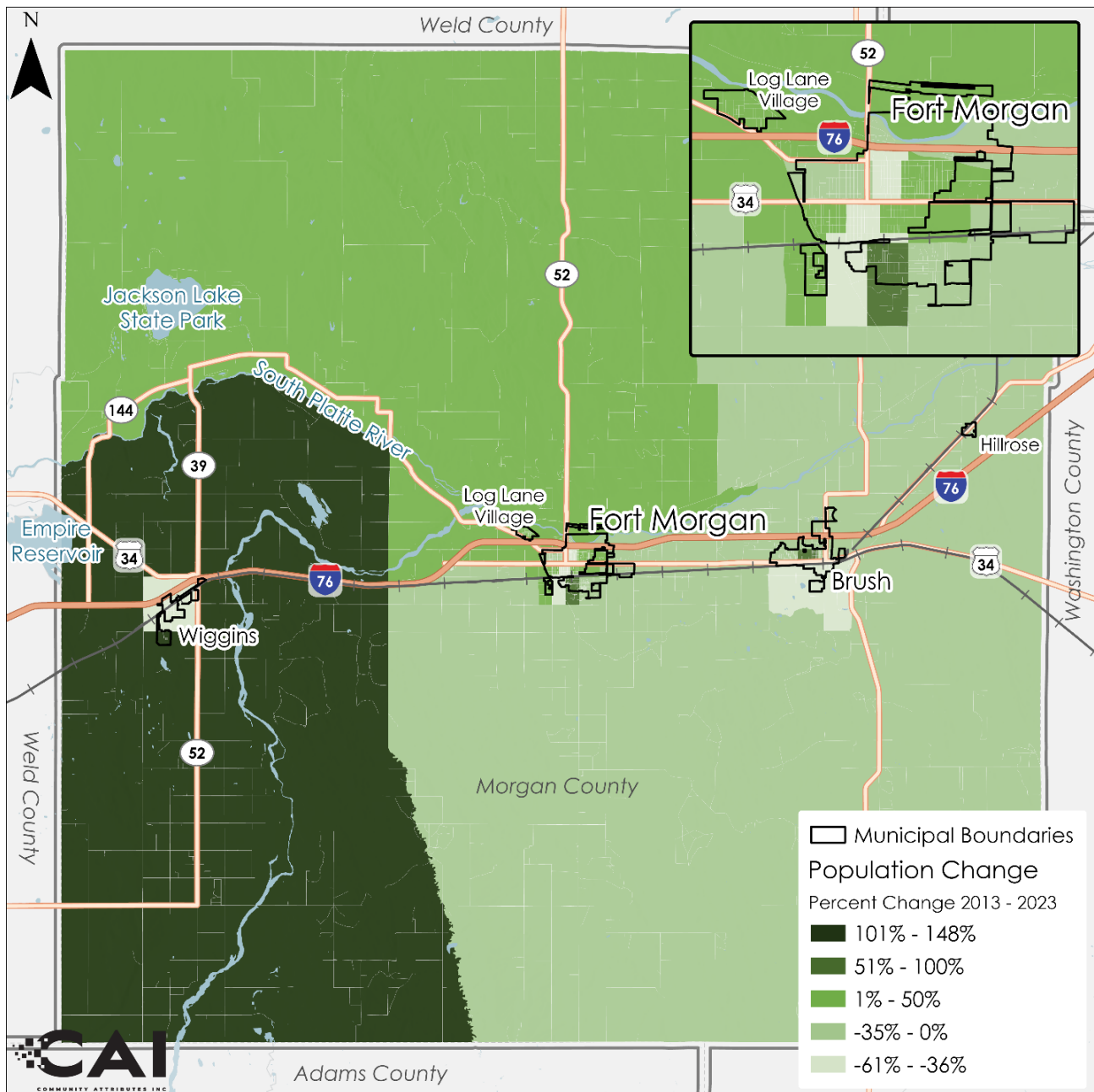


Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), 2024; CAI, 2025.

The population change map of Morgan County from 2013 to 2023 illustrates significant variation in growth across the region (Exhibit 5). Areas near Wiggins and in the Southwest experienced the most substantial population increases, with growth rates ranging from 101% to 148%, particularly along major transportation corridors like I-52 and outside of the municipal boundaries of major cities. Moderate growth (51% to 100%) is observed in the northwest, emphasizing the expansion of suburban and semi-urban populations. Some regions around Fort Morgan, Brush, and Log Lane Village also show smaller increases (1% to 50%), indicating steady but slower growth. In contrast, eastern and rural portions of the County have experienced either minimal change or population decline.



Exhibit 5: Change in Population by Block Group, Morgan County, 2013-2023

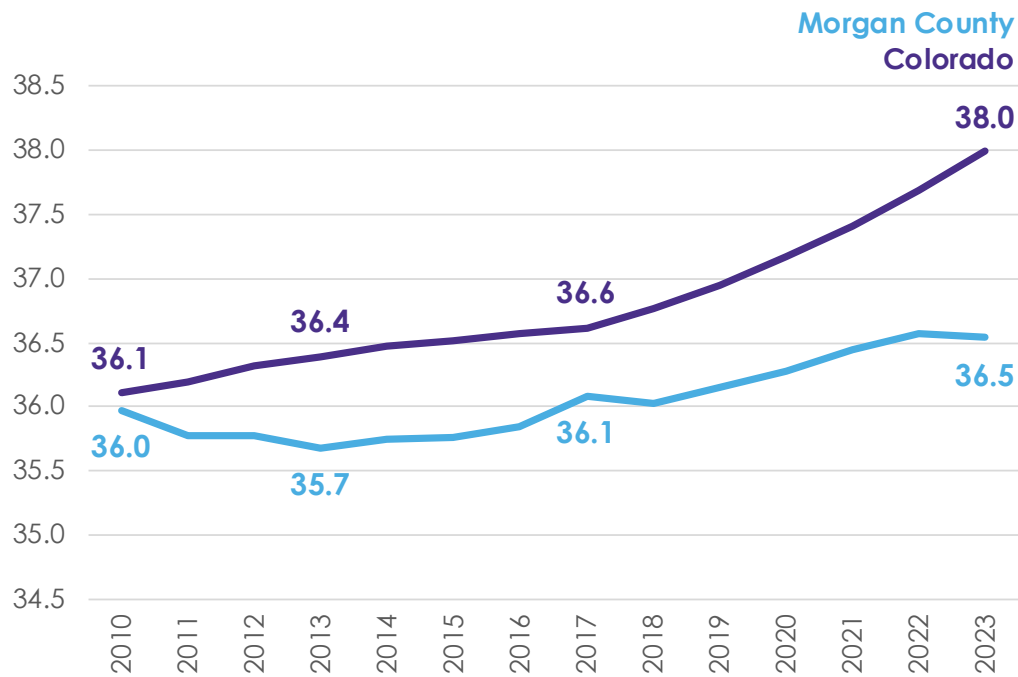


Source: American Community Survey, 2013 and 2023; CAI, 2024.

Age and Race

Compared to Colorado, Morgan County has not seen much change in its median age between 2010 and 2023 (Exhibit 6). Morgan County and the State both showed a similar median age (36) in 2010. Since then, Colorado’s median age increased steadily, reaching 38 in 2023. During this time, Morgan County’s median age only fluctuated slightly, gradually increasing to a median age of 36.5 years in 2023.

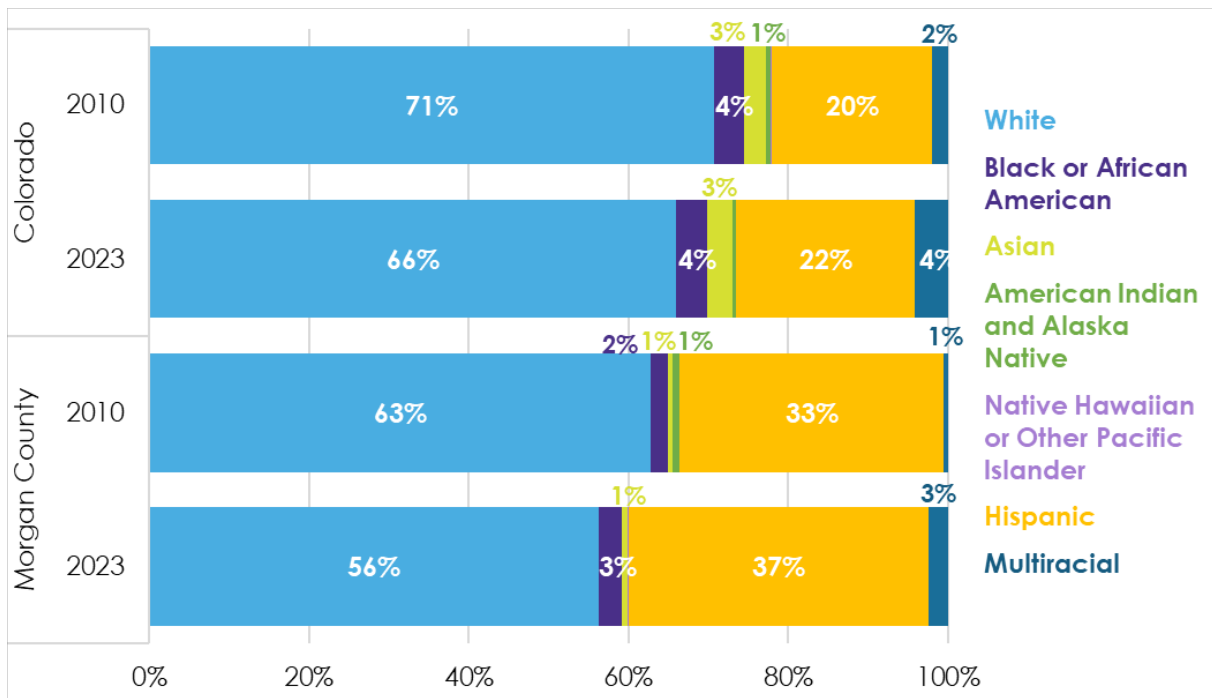
Exhibit 6: Median Age, 2010 to 2023, Morgan County and State of Colorado



Source: Population Totals, Age and Race/Hispanic Origin, Colorado State Demography Office (SDO), Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), 2024, CAI, 2025.

Exhibit 7 compares changes in racial demographics in Colorado and Morgan County between 2010 and 2022. Morgan County was more racially diverse than the State of Colorado in 2010, and by 2022, non-white populations had increased by 7% in the County compared to 5% in Colorado. Both Morgan County and Colorado have experienced a growth in diversity since 2010, especially in the Hispanic-identifying racial sub-demographic, which experienced the fastest rate of growth of any demographic over the period. There has been little to no growth in other racial demographics including Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Black or African American populations, with less than a 1% change in both Colorado and Morgan County.

Exhibit 7: Population by Race, Morgan County and State of Colorado, 2010 and 2023

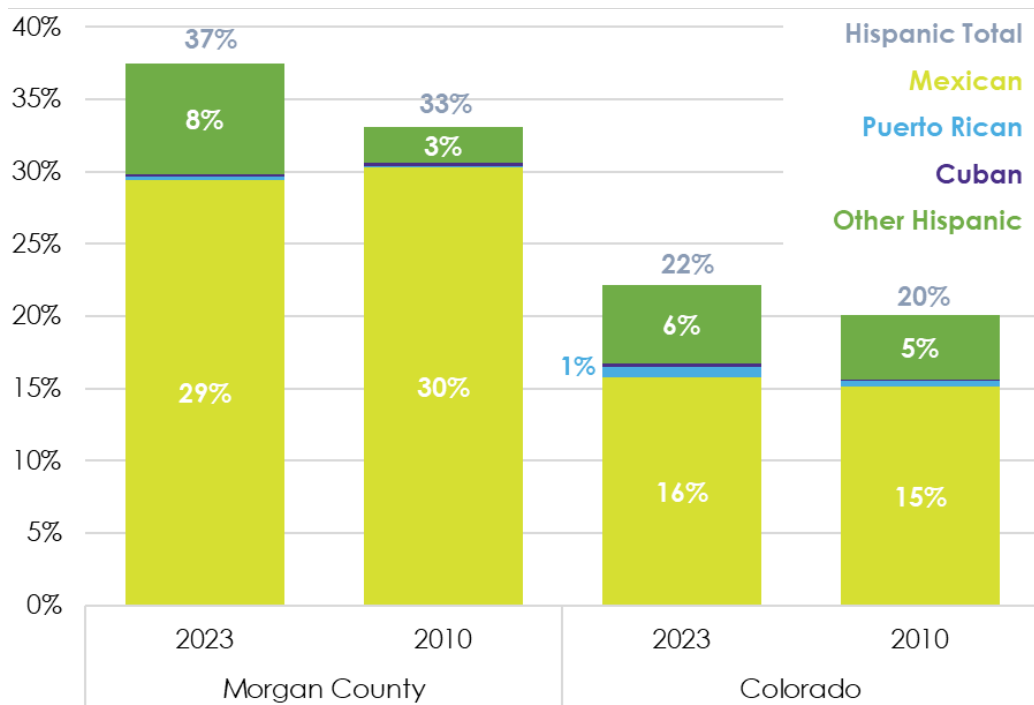


Sources: American Community Survey 2010-2014 and 2019-2023 Five-Year Estimates; CAI, 2025.

*Changes were made to 2020 U.S. census survey which provides a more comprehensive understanding of the detailed identities reported by the U.S. population. Due to changes in questionnaire design, data processing, and coding methods, differences may be observed when comparing this data to other Census Bureau surveys or non-Census Bureau data sources. Any unexpected discrepancies are likely attributable to various factors, particularly the design of the race and ethnicity questions and the enhancements made to how responses are coded

Since 2010, the concentration of residents who identify as Hispanic has been higher in Morgan County relative to Colorado. The proportion of Hispanic residents has also grown to make up 37% of Morgan County’s population, representing a total growth of 4% compared to Colorado’s 2% from 2010 to 2023. This is a total increase of 1,686 people identifying as Hispanic in Morgan County since 2010. In both Morgan County and Colorado, the largest proportion of Hispanic residents identified as Mexican. This is true for both 2010 and 2023, though the proportion of those who identify as “other Hispanic” increased in both Morgan County and Colorado over the time period, growing by 5% and 1% respectively (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8: Population of Hispanic Origin, Morgan County and State of Colorado, 2010 and 2023



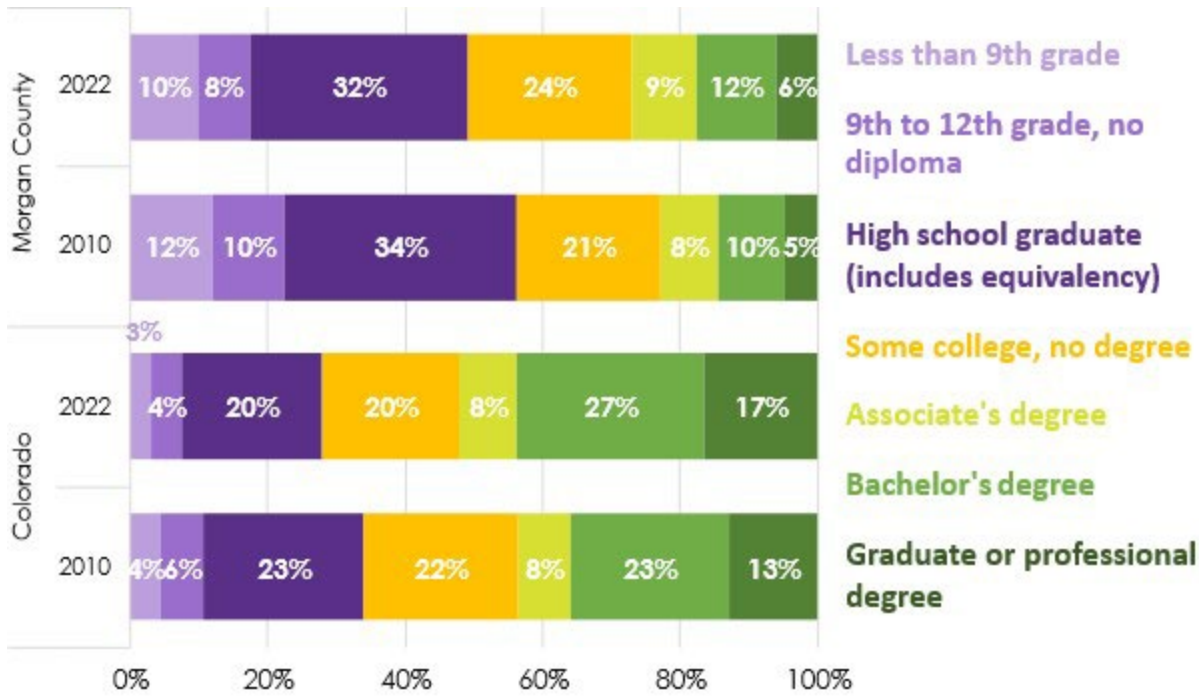
Sources: American Community Survey 2010-2014 and 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates; CAI, 2025.



Educational Attainment

Overall, Colorado shows a higher proportion of more highly educated residents than Morgan County (Exhibit 9). Between 2010 and 2022 there was a gradual increase in the percentage of more highly educated persons in both Colorado and Morgan County. Over this period, Colorado saw an 8% increase in the proportion of persons with a bachelor’s degree or higher. Morgan County’s resident base also became more educated over this period, though to a lesser extent. The proportion of Morgan County residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher increased by 3% from 2010 to 2022, and the proportion of residents with some college or an associate’s degree increased by 4%. By 2022, half of Morgan County’s residents tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau had taken at least some college coursework or achieved a higher level of educational attainment.

Exhibit 9: Educational Attainment (100% total at highest level achieved), Morgan County and State of Colorado, 2010 and 2022



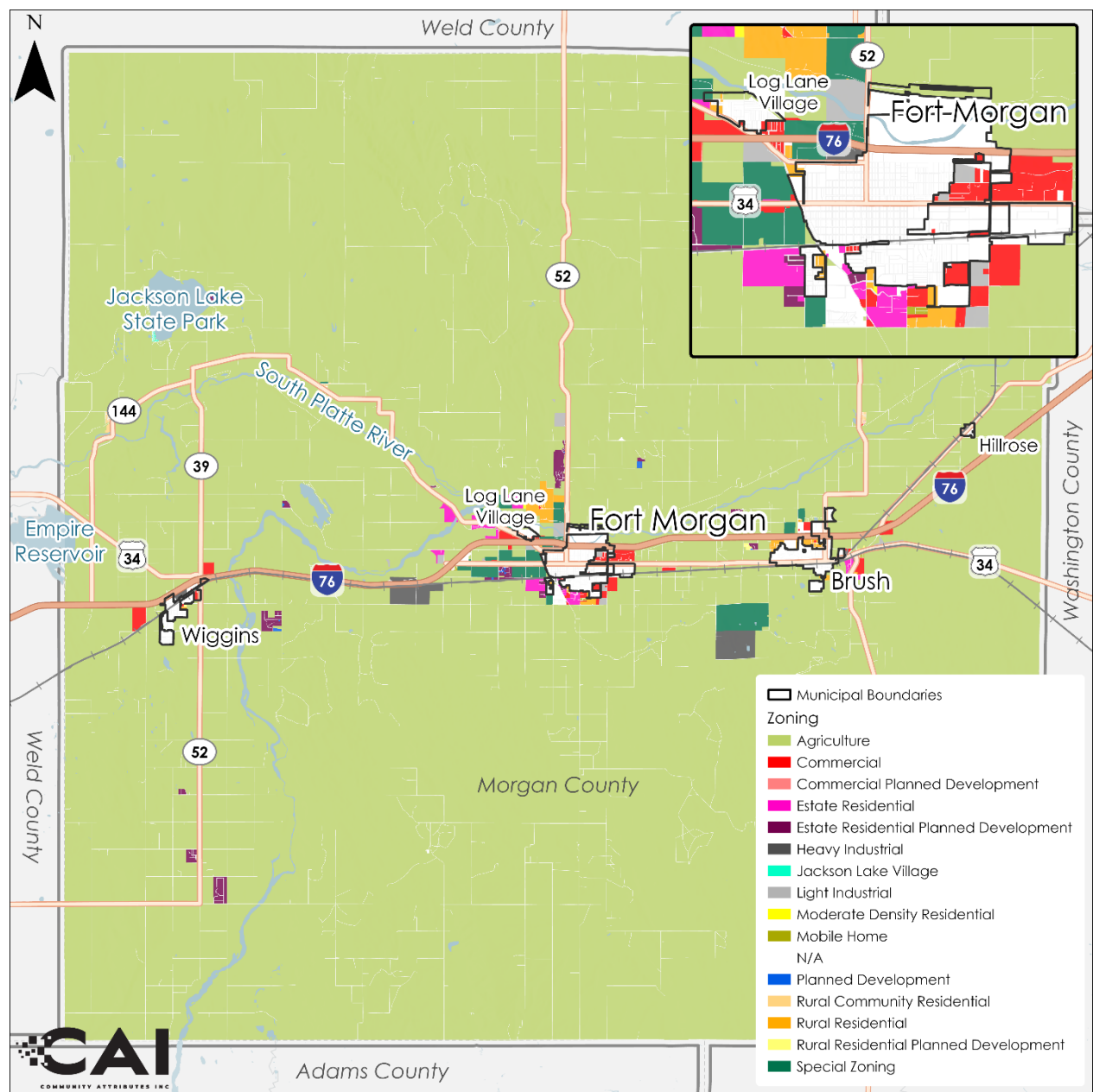
Source(s): American Community Survey 2010-2014 and 2018-2022 5-Year Estimates; CAI, 2025.

Existing Land Uses

Morgan County zoning is primarily agricultural, with the primary urban concentration around Fort Morgan, located centrally in the County (Exhibit 10). The city features a diverse mix of zoning, including commercial, residential, industrial, and planned development areas, concentrated along major roadways like I-76 and US-34.

Brush, Log Lane Village, and Wiggins serve as secondary population centers with smaller-scale urban zoning, while the remaining areas are predominantly dedicated to agriculture. High-density residential zones are clustered in Fort Morgan and Brush, while moderate and rural residential zones dominate the outskirts, supporting suburban and semi-rural lifestyles.

Exhibit 10: Map of Current Land Uses by Parcel, Morgan County, 2024



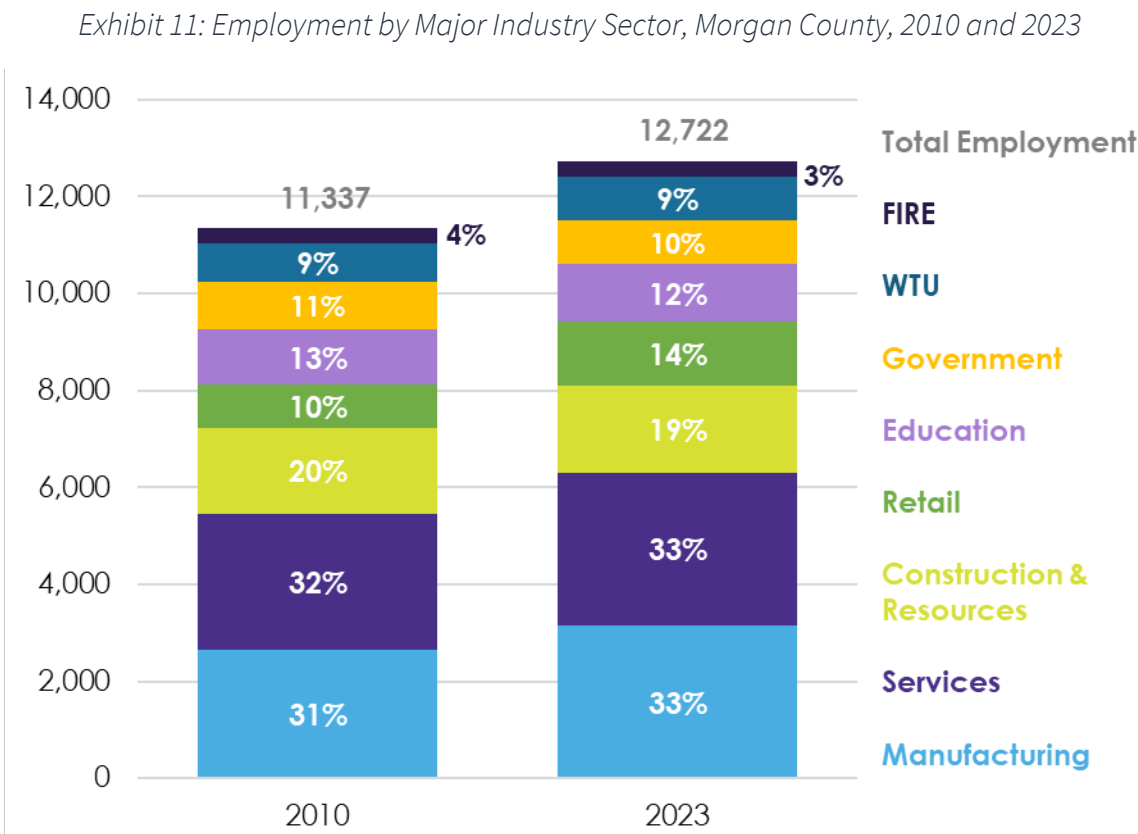
Source: Morgan County Open Data Portal, 2024; CAI, 2025.
 Note: Land use parcel data run by the county covers unincorporated areas and not incorporated cities. Cities within Morgan County did not provide publicly available zoning data reflecting the N/A designations within municipal boundaries.

Economic Characteristics

This section contextualizes Morgan County’s economy by exploring data surrounding industry and employment in Morgan County. It also looks at workforce issues, including data surrounding workforce housing, wages, and commutes.

Morgan County Industries

Exhibit 11 highlights the shifts in the distribution of jobs across sectors in Morgan County over time. Total employment increased by 1,385 between 2010 and 2023, with the top three industry sectors remaining Manufacturing, Services, and Construction & Resources, which includes Agriculture. The proportion of jobs in Morgan County in the Retail sector increased by 4% over the time period while most other sectors saw minimal changes over time.



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Colorado Labor Market Information Gateway, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2024; CAI, 2025.
Note: FIRE = Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate Services, WTU = Warehousing, Transportation and Utilities

Exhibit 12 explores a more detailed breakdown of the change in two-digit NAICS industries in Morgan County in 2010 and 2023. The largest two-digit NAICS employment sector in Morgan County is manufacturing with 3,156 workers, which is nearly 2.5 times greater than the next largest employment sector, retail trade. The most prominent economic sectors by employment in Morgan County include manufacturing, retail trade, educational services, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services. Combined, these five sectors comprise nearly 60% of all employment in Morgan County. Between 2010 and 2023, seven employment sectors grew at a CAGR greater than 1.0%, including administrative and waste services (with a CAGR of 3.5%), transportation and warehousing (2.9%), retail trade (2.8%), professional and technical services (2.7%), other services, excluding public administration (2.5%), accommodation and food services (1.7%), and manufacturing (1.3%).

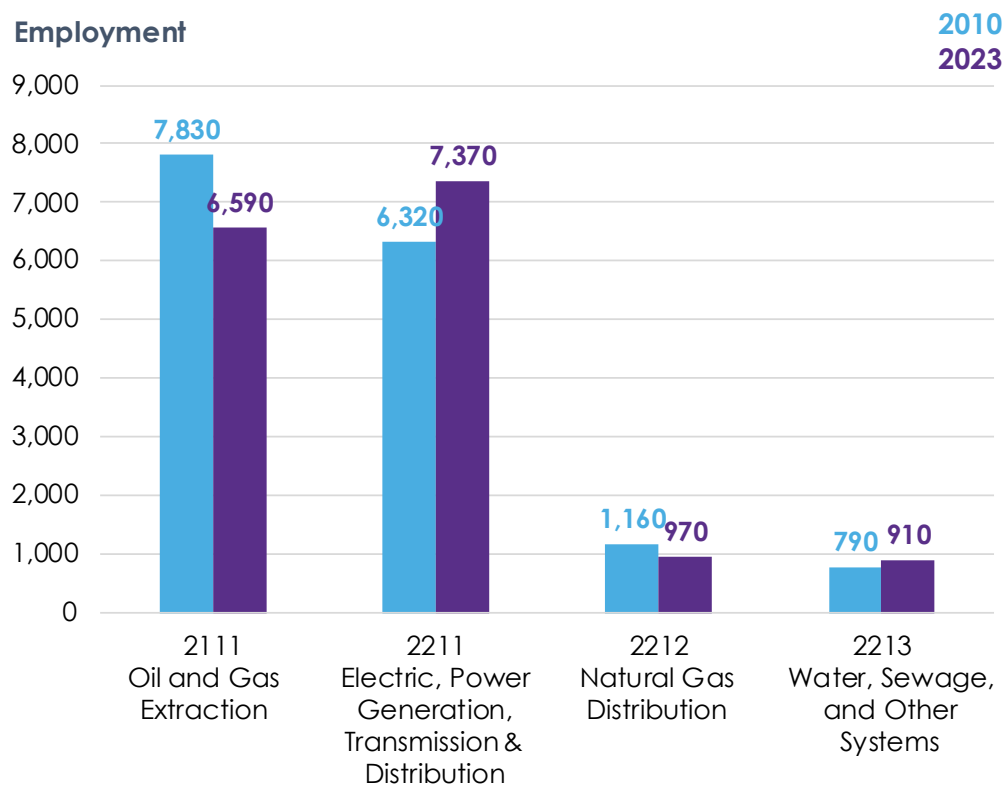
Exhibit 12: Employment by 2-Digit NAICS Industry Sector, Morgan County, 2010 and 2023

Industry	NAICS Code	Employment 2010	Employment 2023	CAGR (2010-2023)	Net Change
Manufacturing	31-33	2,657	3,156	1.3%	499
Retail Trade	44-45	903	1,301	2.8%	398
Educational Services	61	1,142	1,192	0.3%	50
Health Care and Social Assistance	62	1,148	982	-1.2%	-166
Accommodation and Food Services	72	746	934	1.7%	188
Public Administration	92	973	915	-0.5%	-58
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	11	790	896	1.0%	106
Construction	23	654	701	0.5%	47
Administrative and Waste Services	56	359	559	3.5%	200
Transportation and Warehousing	48-49	237	344	2.9%	107
Wholesale Trade	42	335	340	0.1%	5
Information	51	265	277	0.3%	12
Finance and Insurance	52	244	243	0.0%	-1
Mining	21	302	203	-3.0%	-99
Utilities	22	219	199	-0.7%	-20
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	81	128	176	2.5%	48
Professional and Technical Services	54	112	158	2.7%	46
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	53	72	76	0.4%	4
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	71	51	53	0.3%	2
Management of Companies and Enterprises	55	-	14	0.0%	14
Unclassified	99	-	3	0.0%	3
Total		11,337	12,722	0.9%	1,385

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Colorado Labor Market Information Gateway, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2024; CAI, 2025.

Four distinct economic industries that represent a large portion of energy production and utilities maintenance were examined in Exhibit 13 and Exhibit 14, which compares the change in employment in both Colorado and Morgan County between 2010 and 2023 for the four industries. Two of these industries, including Oil and Gas Extraction, and Electric, Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution, have historically been economic catalysts in Morgan County. Between 2010 and 2023, Colorado saw a decline in employment within the Oil and Gas Extraction (NAICS 2111) and Natural Gas Distribution (NAICS 2212) industries. Conversely, employment grew in the Electric Power Generation, Transmission, and Distribution (NAICS 2211) and Water, Sewage, and Other Systems (NAICS 2213) industries, reflecting a shift in workforce trends across the energy and utility sectors away from Oil, gas and natural gas distributions.

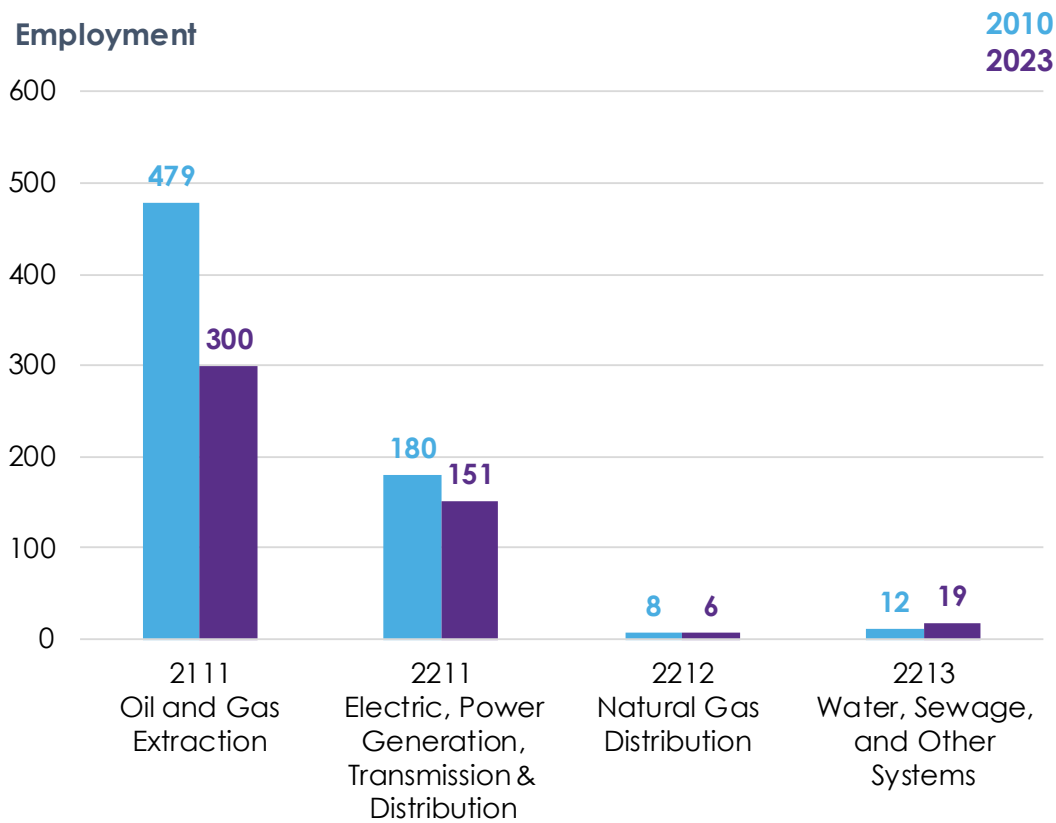
Exhibit 13: Employment by Selected 4-Digit NAICS Code, State of Colorado, 2010 and 2023



Sources: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Bureau of Labor Statistics; CAI, 2025.

Looking at the same industries in Morgan County, employment declined in three of the four selected 4-digit NAICS industries between 2010 and 2023, with the largest decrease occurring in the Oil and Gas Extraction industry, which saw a reduction of over 37% in employment. Employment in the Electric Power Generation, Transmission, and Distribution industry also decreased in Morgan County, whereas employment in this industry increased in Colorado between 2010 and 2023 (Exhibit 14). In contrast, employment in Water, Sewage, and Other Systems experienced a modest increase of seven employees, representing nearly 49% of growth during the same period.

Exhibit 14: Employment by Selected 4-Digit NAICS Code Industry, Morgan County, 2010 and 2023



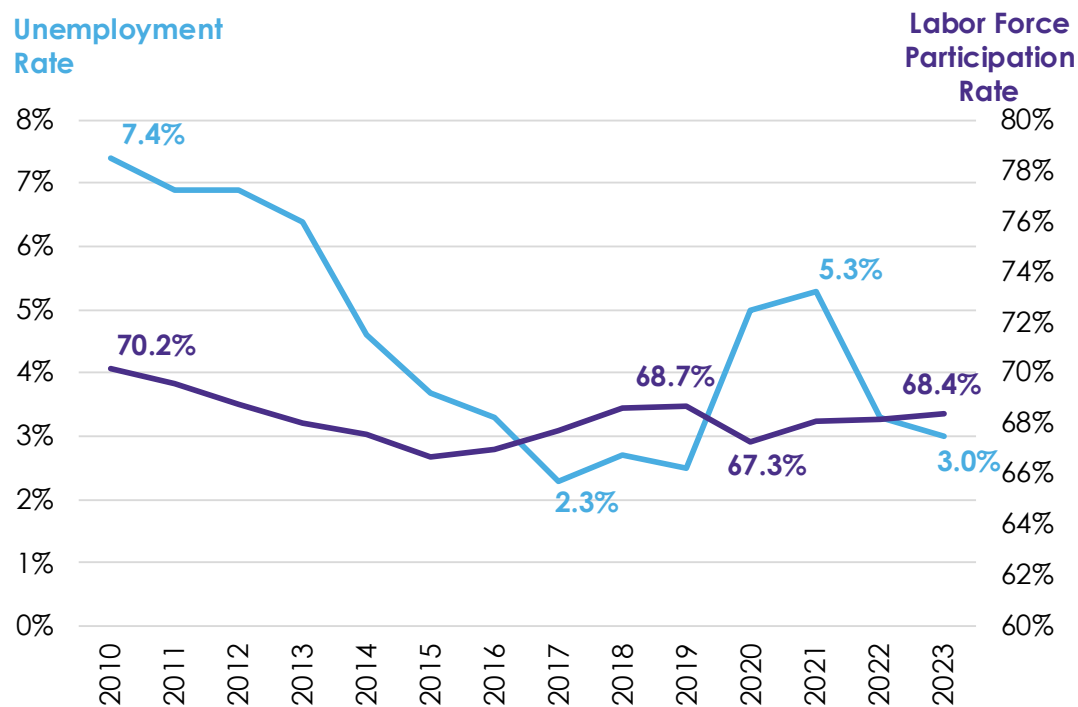
Sources: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Bureau of Labor Statistics; CAI, 2025.



Employment and Wages

The unemployment rate in Morgan County has remained near or below 4% since 2015, dropping from 7.4% in 2010. Additionally, unemployment in the area was effectively unchanged amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Exhibit 15). Labor force participation data for Morgan County was unavailable, per BLS, but during this period, the civilian labor force participation in Colorado has generally declined.

Exhibit 15: Labor Force Participation Rate and Unemployment Rate, Morgan County, 2010 to 2023

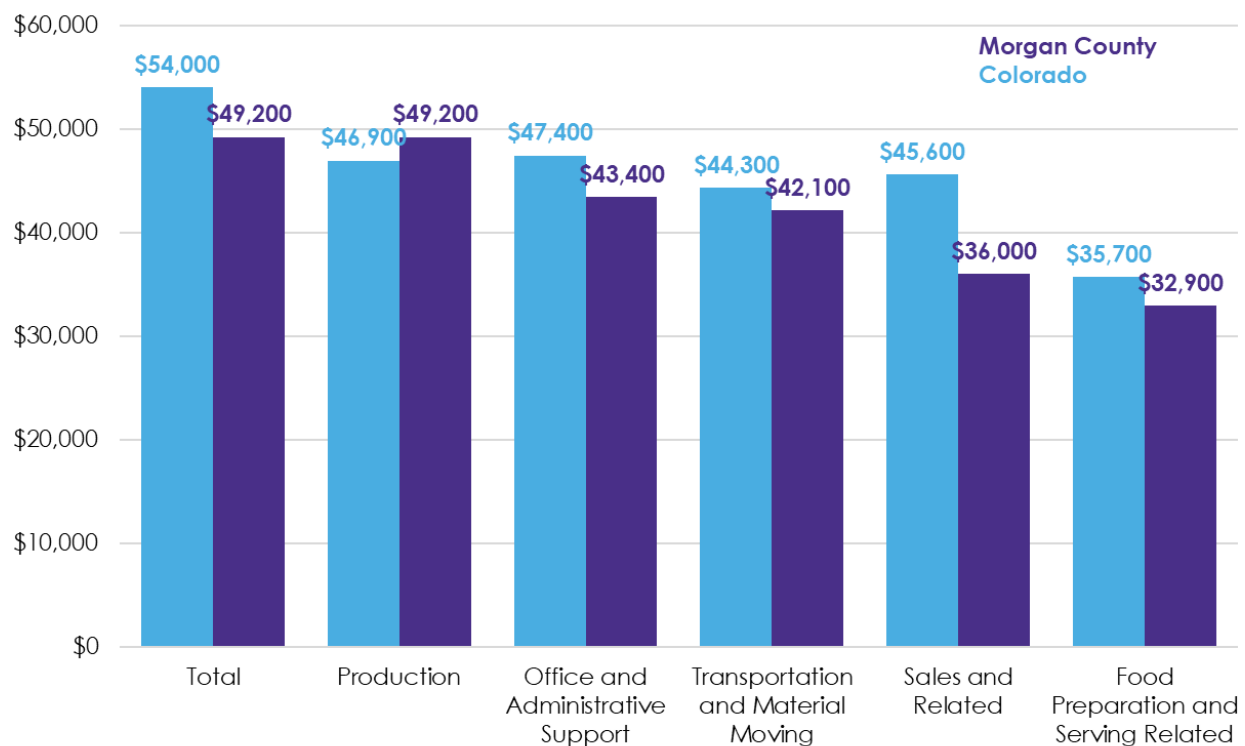


Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) Colorado Labor Market Information Gateway, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2024; CAI, 2025.

Exhibit 16 compares the median wages of Morgan County’s workers to statewide wages for Morgan County’s five largest industries by employment. The five most prominent industries, including Production, Office and Administrative Support, Transportation and Material Moving, Sales and Related, and Food Preparation and Serving Related, represent many unique professions and together, make up the majority of jobs in Morgan County (57%). Overall, median wages in Morgan County’s five largest industries by employment are lower than those across Colorado, with the Production industry being the lone exception. The median wage in the Production industry in Morgan County represented the highest median wage of these five industries, and is equivalent to the median wage in the County in 2023.



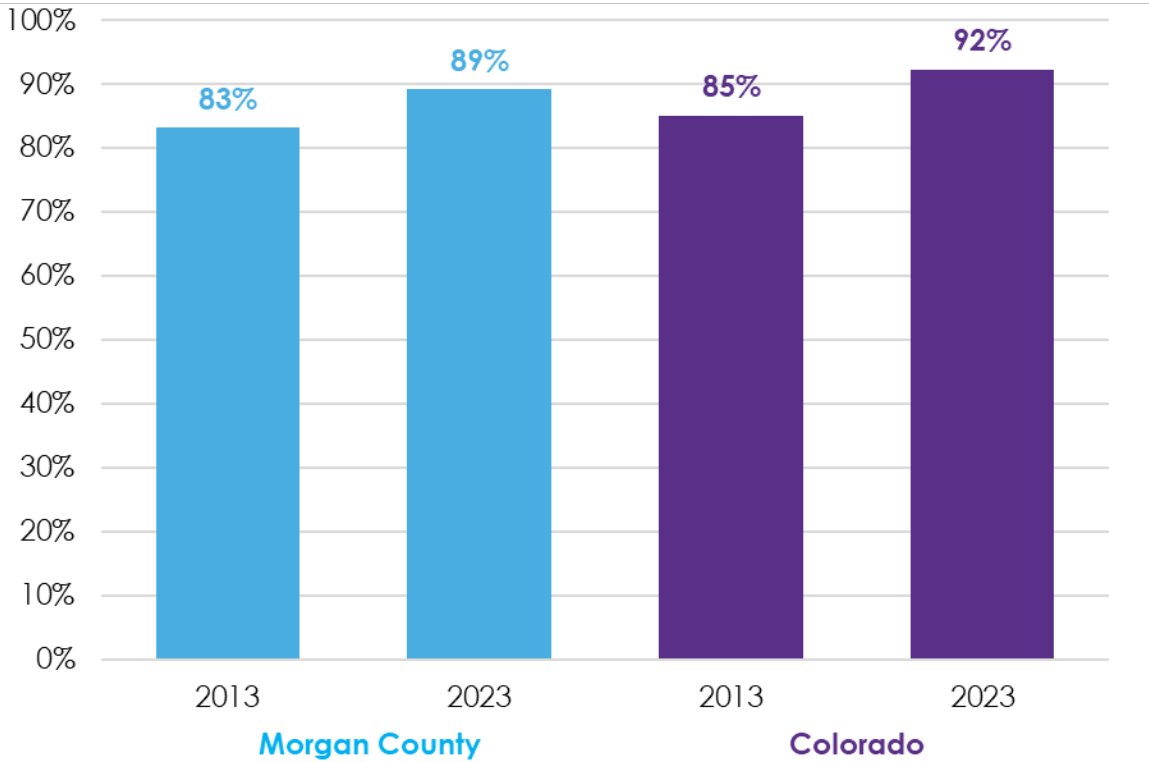
Exhibit 16: Median Wages, Morgan County and State of Colorado, 2023



Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) Colorado Labor Market Information Gateway, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2024; CAI, 2025.

Between 2013 and 2023, the proportion of residents with health insurance coverage increased in both Morgan County and the State of Colorado (Exhibit 17). In Morgan County, the number of uninsured residents declined from 4,665 to 3,094. Similarly, Colorado saw a decrease of nearly 310,000 uninsured residents, even as the State's population grew by approximately 690,000. As of 2023, 89% of Morgan County's residents and 92% of the State's residents have health insurance.

Exhibit 17: Total Civilian Population with Insurance Coverage, Morgan County and State of Colorado, 2013 and 2023



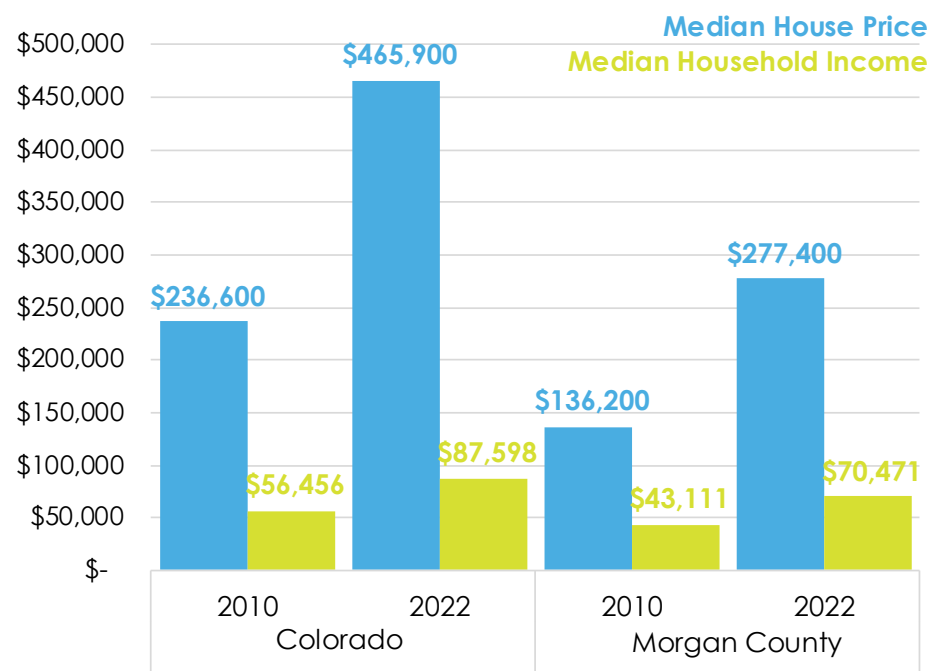
Sources: American Community Survey 2013-2017 and 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates; CAI, 2025.



Housing Trends

Exhibit 18 explores the change in median home prices and median household incomes in Colorado and Morgan County between 2010 and 2022. In Colorado, the median price of a home nearly doubled since 2010, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.81%, showing an increase from \$236,600 in 2010 to \$465,900 in 2022. However, the median household income grew at a much slower rate (3.73%), increasing from \$56,456 to \$87,598 over the same period. A similar trend is observed in Morgan County, where the median house price increased at a rate of 6.11% from \$136,200 in 2010 to \$277,400 in 2022, and the median household income grew at 4.18% from \$43,111 to \$70,471. These figures reflect a disparity between the rate of increase in housing costs and household income. This trend, while more significant in the State of Colorado than in Morgan County, suggests an increasing challenge for affordability in both regions, with housing costs outpacing income growth.

Exhibit 18: Median Household Income and Median Home Price, Morgan County, 2010 and 2022

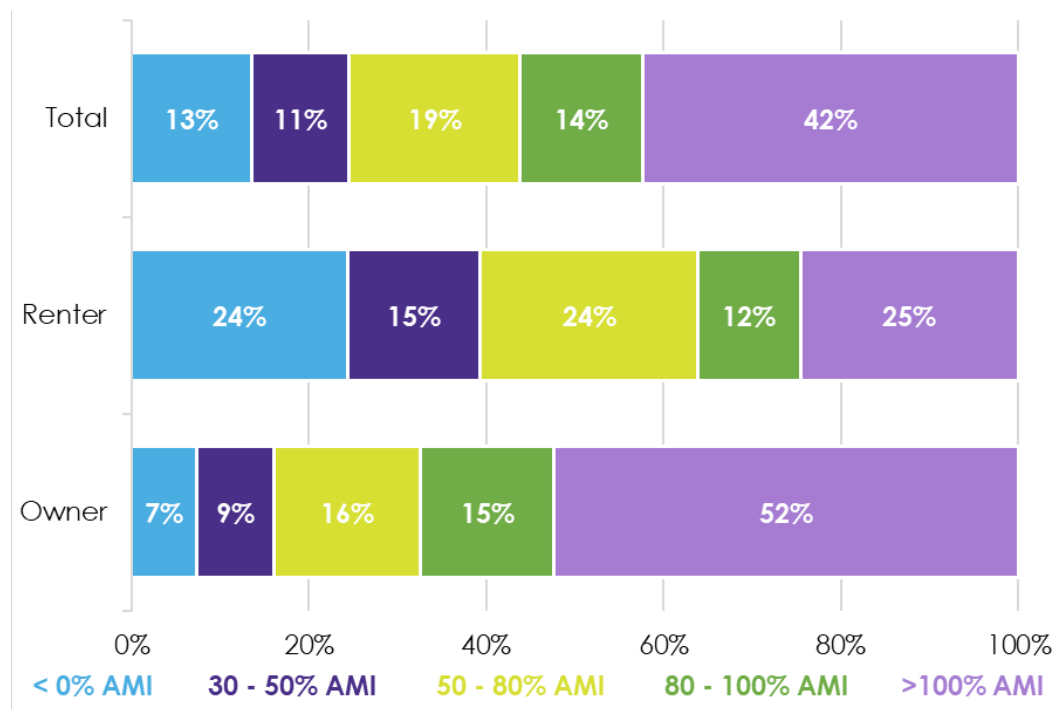


Source: American Community Survey 2010-2014 and 2018-2022; 5-Year Estimates; CAI, 2025.

Exhibit 19 illustrates the distribution of households in Morgan County by Area Median Income (AMI) brackets, separated into total households, renters, and owners. Among all occupied households (about 10,600 households in total), 42% have incomes above 100% of AMI, while 13% fall below 30% AMI.

Renters (making up 36% of the total occupied households in Morgan County) are more concentrated in the lower AMI brackets, with 24% (or 930 households) earning below 30% AMI and 15% (or 575 households) making between 30-50% AMI. Conversely, 52% of owners (or 3,545 households) have incomes above 100% AMI, while 7% (or 500 households) fall below 30% AMI.

Exhibit 19: Households by Area Median Income (AMI), Morgan County, 2021

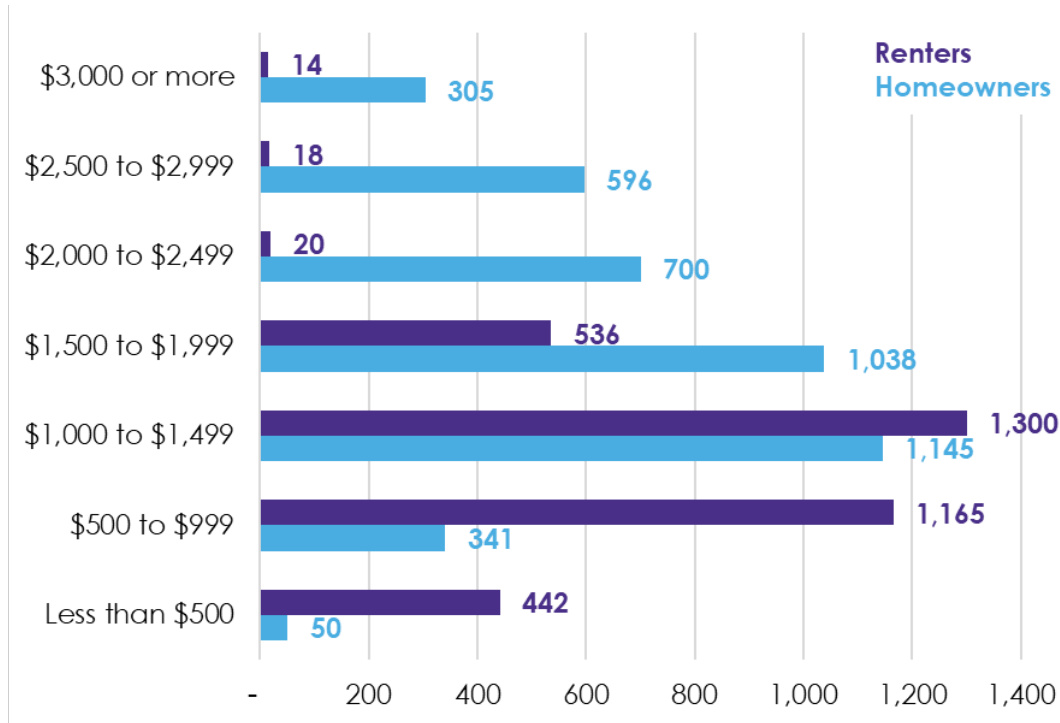


Sources: US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) 2017-2021; CAI, 2024.

Exhibit 20 illustrates estimated monthly housing costs by household and by tenure (renters and homeowners) in Morgan County in 2022. Overall, Renters pay a median \$1,038 on housing costs monthly while homeowners pay a median \$1,792.

Renters are most concentrated in the \$1,000 to \$1,499 category, with 1,300 households, followed by 1,165 households in the \$500 to \$999 range. Homeowners are similarly concentrated in the \$1,000 to \$1,499 range, with 1,145 households, but also have a significant number (1,038) in the \$1,500 to \$1,999 range. At the higher end of costs, 305 homeowners have monthly costs of \$3,000 or more, compared to only 14 renters. At the lower end, 442 homeowners pay less than \$500 monthly, compared to 50 renters.

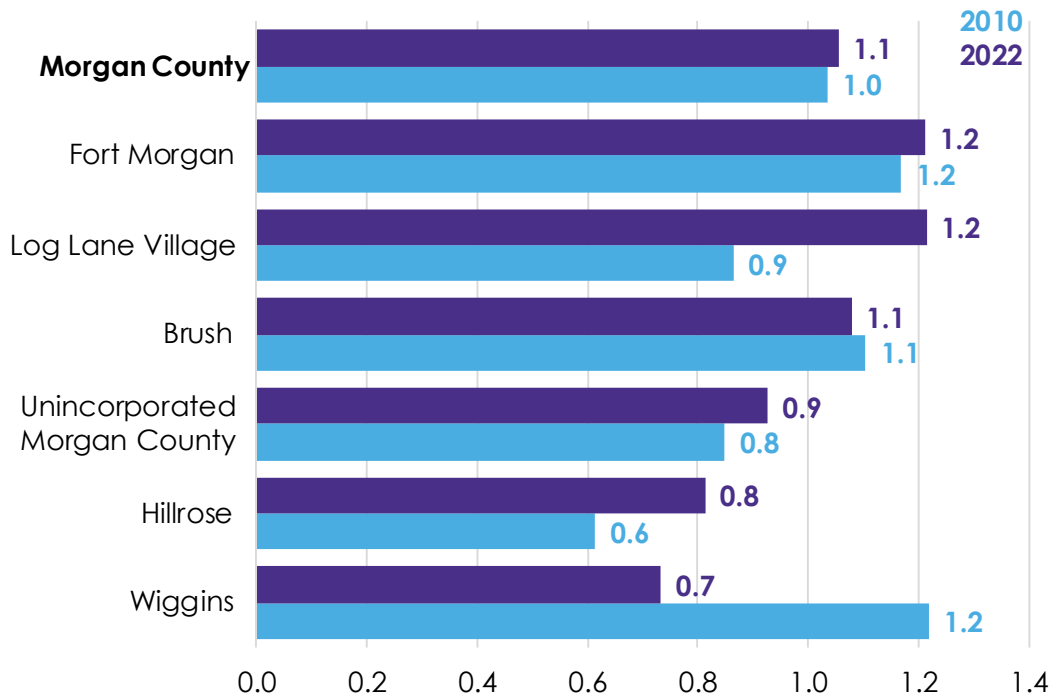
Exhibit 20: Monthly Housing Costs by Household and Tenure, Morgan County, 2022



Sources: American Community Survey, 2022; CAI, 2024.

The ratio of jobs-to-housing units is a metric that assesses the balance between employment opportunities and housing availability. Generally, Morgan County maintains a roughly balanced ratio of 1.1 jobs for every housing unit in 2022. Fort Morgan and Log Lane Village had the highest jobs-to-housing unit ratios in Morgan County in 2022, with 1.2 jobs for every housing unit. Between 2010 and 2022, the proportion of jobs to housing units increased in five of the seven jurisdictions in Morgan County (Exhibit 21). Wiggins, which experienced strong population growth between 2010 and 2022, experienced a decrease in its jobs-to-housing unit ratio, as more housing units were developed to accommodate the increase in population.

Exhibit 21: Jobs to Housing Units Ratio, Morgan County and Incorporated Cities, 2010 and 2022



Sources: American Community Survey 2017-2022 5-Year ACS Estimates; Municipal Housing and Housing Timeseries, 2010 to Current Year, 2024, Colorado State Demographer; Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Colorado Labor Market Information Gateway, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2024; CAI, 2025.

Commute and Labor-Sheds

Around one-third (32%) of residents in Morgan County work in the County's largest city, Fort Morgan. Other than Brush city, which is the third most common commute destination (with 7%), all other major commute destinations are outside the County. Denver is the second highest location, with 7% of Morgan County residents commuting there for work, while cities like Greeley, Aurora, and Colorado Springs account for smaller proportions. Smaller towns collectively account for 39% of the overall jobs in the County, suggesting a wide commute-shed for Morgan County residents and a broad distribution of jobs across the State (Exhibit 22).

Exhibit 23 indicates that Fort Morgan and Brush are residential hubs for the County, with 29% of Morgan County's workforce returning home to Fort Morgan after work and 11% returning to Brush. However, more than 40% of Morgan County's workers commute in from other counties.

Exhibit 22: Morgan County Residents' Place of Work, 2022

Place of Employment	Count	Share
Fort Morgan city, CO	5,017	32%
Denver city, CO	1,081	7%
Brush city, CO	1,012	7%
Greeley city, CO	779	5%
Aurora city, CO	338	2%
Colorado Springs city, CO	299	2%
Wiggins town, CO	289	2%
Sterling city, CO	237	2%
Commerce City city, CO	200	1%
Fort Collins city, CO	188	1%
All Other Locations	6,013	39%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2022; CAI, 2025.

Exhibit 23: Morgan County Workers Place of Residence, 2022

Place of Residence	Count	Share
Fort Morgan city, CO	2,813	29%
Brush city, CO	1,088	11%
Greeley city, CO	462	5%
Sterling city, CO	234	2%
Wiggins town, CO	220	2%
Log Lane Village town, CO	219	2%
Denver city, CO	169	2%
Aurora city, CO	122	1%
Evans city, CO	98	1%
Fort Collins city, CO	95	1%
All Other Locations	4,237	43%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2022; CAI, 2025.



Future Needs and Trends

This Future Needs and Trends analysis serves to inform Morgan County’s Comprehensive Plan update by identifying the conditions, dynamics, and emerging issues that may shape the County’s development over the next several decades. Drawing from both quantitative data and community engagement, this analysis highlights the trends that are already impacting the County, as well as those likely to do so in the future.

The trends explored in this section reflect economic indicators and community characteristics, including population growth, housing availability and affordability, employment patterns, land use, infrastructure capacity, and dynamics within major industries such as agriculture and energy. These trends are closely linked to the themes identified in the Community Assessment, SWOT analysis, and community outreach.

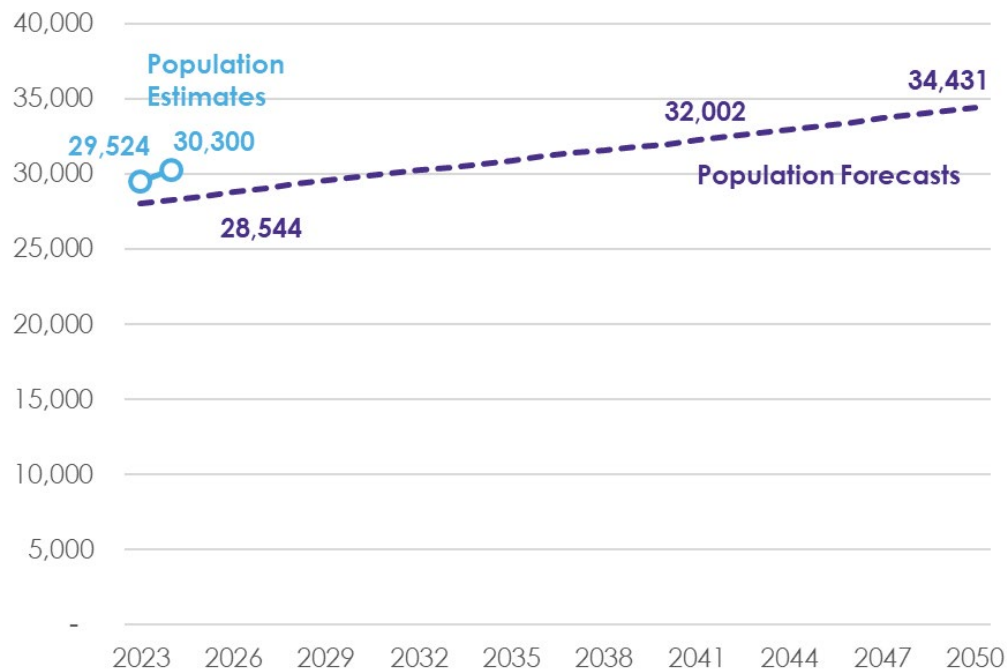
Finally, this section also considers how the identified future needs and trends play into Morgan County’s comprehensive planning process. The demographic and economic shifts will influence demands on infrastructure, services, and land resources and the information here is intended to help the County prepare for future challenges, prioritize investments, and make informed decisions during the strategic planning process.

Population Growth

Morgan County’s population is growing, particularly in areas closest to the Denver Metro area. Since 2016, the County has grown by 5%, with rapid development around Wiggins—where some census tracts saw population increases of more than 100% between 2013 and 2023. This population growth, driven by proximity to Denver and affordability relative to metro areas, is concentrated near transportation corridors such as I-76 and Highway 52 and can spill outside of municipal boundaries.

Population projections show Morgan County reaching almost 34,500 residents by 2050 (Exhibit 24). These projections represent an annual growth rate of 0.5%. Population estimates for 2023 and 2024 already exceed the projected values for those years.

Exhibit 24: Population Estimates and Forecasts, Morgan County, 2023-2025



Sources: ACS, 2023; DOLA, 2025; CAI, 2025.

Trends towards a growing population present both opportunities and challenges for Morgan County. On one hand, it signals economic vitality and potential for expanded tax bases, bringing opportunities for new residents, businesses, and investments. On the other hand, growth can put pressure on transportation infrastructure, public services, and agricultural lands. It also creates challenges for community engagement and land use planning, as rapid change can trigger public frustration. Managing population growth will require attention to how and where development occurs, and how residents are engaged in the process.

Considerations for Comprehensive Planning:

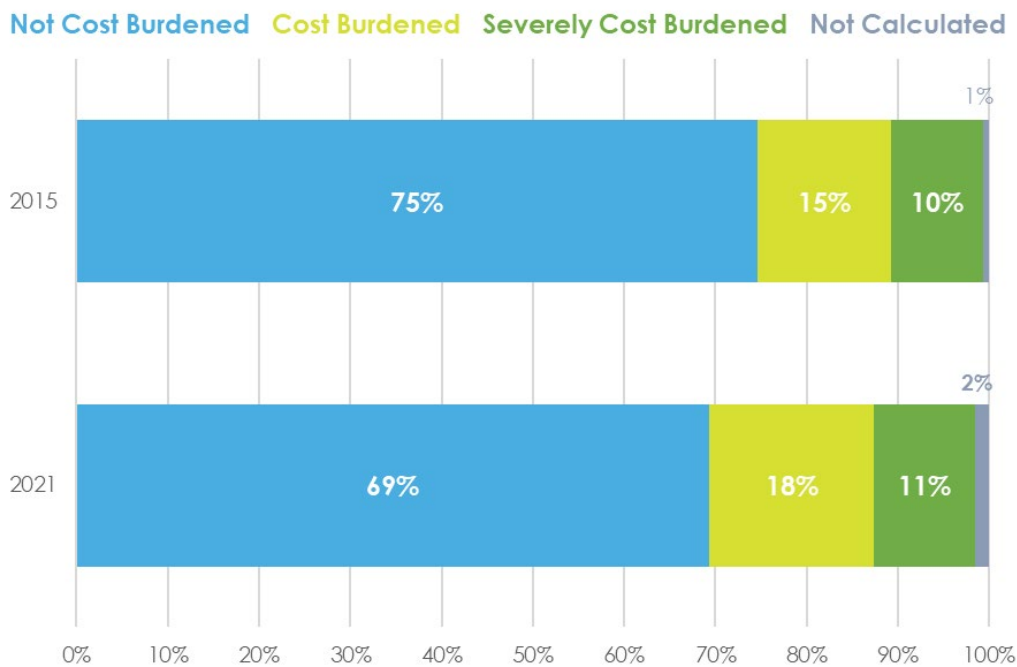
- Considering that population growth is a trend on the horizon, how can Morgan County direct and benefit from it?
- How can the County support jurisdictions experiencing the greatest growth pressures?
- What role can the County play in coordinating infrastructure planning across jurisdictions?
- How can the County foster inclusive and constructive public engagement around land use changes?
- What approaches might help balance growth and agricultural preservation?
- How can the County stay ahead of change, rather than responding only after it arrives?

Housing Needs

Median home prices in Morgan County have appreciated at an accelerated rate relative to Colorado, increasing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.11% between 2010-2022. Morgan County’s median home prices have also grown more quickly than household incomes, with home values increasing at a 6.11% annual rate between 2010 and 2022, while income growth saw a 4.18% annual increase.

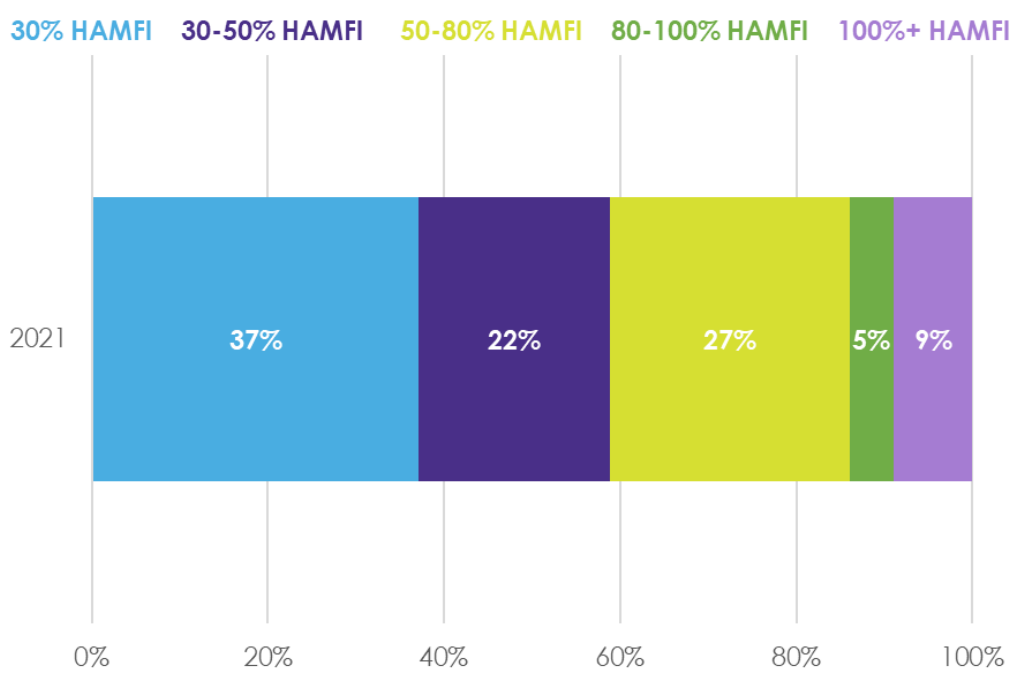
The proportion of households in Morgan County that are housing cost burdened, or paying more than 30% of household income on housing, has increased by a total of 4% from 2015 to 2021 (Exhibit 25). Households at all different income levels experienced cost burden in Morgan County in 2021, with 9% of households experiencing cost burden making more than 100% HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) (Exhibit 26). As of 2021, nearly one-quarter of all households in Morgan County earned less than 50% of Area Median Income (AMI). Meanwhile, new development has not kept pace with growing demand for housing. As population growth continues, existing housing challenges may become more pronounced—particularly if housing supply does not keep pace with demand.

Exhibit 25: Housing Cost Burden, Morgan County, 2015 & 2021



Source: HUD CHAS, 2017-2021; CAI, 2025.

Exhibit 26: Income Level of Cost Burdened Households, Morgan County, 2021



Source: HUD CHAS, 2017-2021; CAI, 2025.

Access to affordable housing affects residents' quality of life, the County's ability to attract and retain a workforce, and long-term economic resilience. Rising costs threaten to limit who can live in Morgan County—even those who work there. The lack of affordable housing options risks displacing residents and exacerbating issues such as homelessness.

Considerations for Comprehensive Planning:

- Housing availability and cost concerns are likely to be exacerbated by population growth trends.
- What types of housing are most needed to support residents at different income levels?
- How can workforce housing be encouraged near employment centers?
- What barriers exist to developing housing on infill parcels or within existing towns?
- In what ways can land use policy support a broader range of housing choices?
- How might the County monitor and respond to changes in housing affordability over time?

Employment Projections

Morgan County added approximately 1,385 jobs between 2010 and 2023. Manufacturing remains the top employment sector, while growth is also occurring in retail trade, administrative and waste services, and transportation/warehousing. However, local wages tend to lag behind state averages, and current educational attainment levels may not align with future workforce needs.

Employment growth provides new economic opportunities, but the County's ability to fully benefit from that growth may depend on workforce readiness and alignment with industry demands. Education, infrastructure, and land use policy can all influence the local job market and economic outcomes.

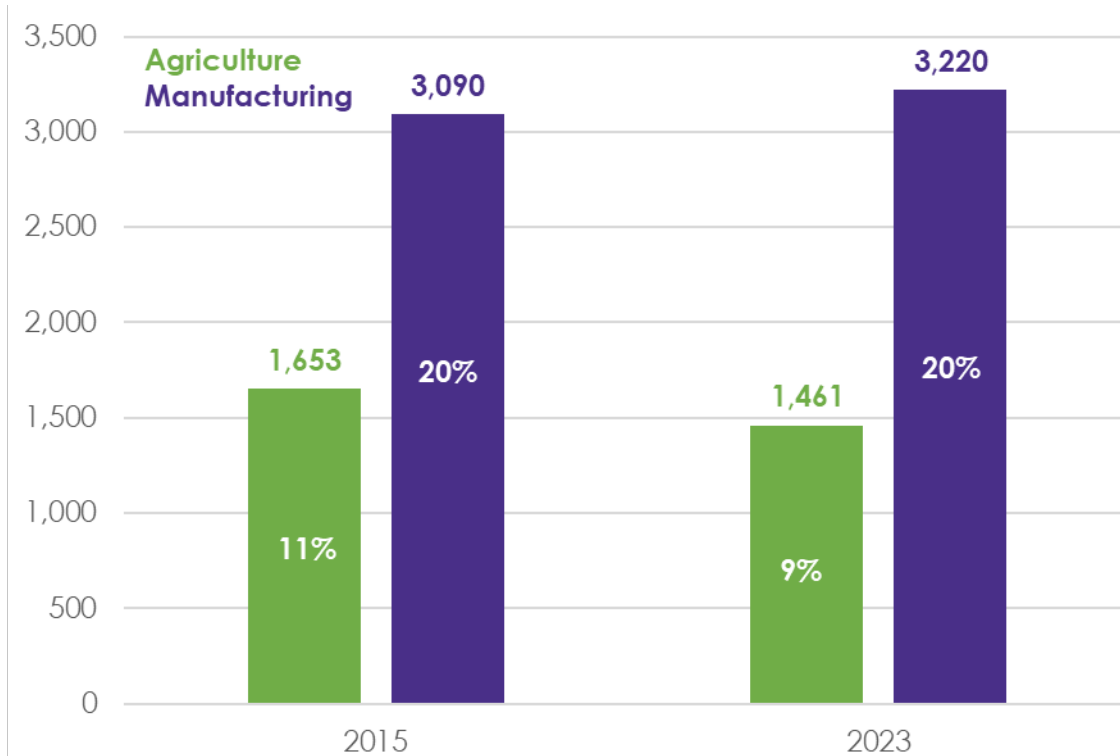
Considerations for Comprehensive Planning:

- What industries does Morgan County wish to target for support and investment in the coming years?
- How can educational and training pathways support emerging job sectors?
- Where is land available and appropriate for commercial and industrial development?
- What can be done to improve wage levels and job quality in key sectors?
- How can economic growth be harnessed to bring benefit to the broader community?

Agriculture and Food Processing Industries

In Morgan County, agriculture is not just heritage—it's an economic engine. As of 2023, Agriculture continues to play a foundational role in Morgan County's economy, land use, and cultural identity. It remains a top employment sector (making up 9% of all employment in Morgan County), a dominant land use in the County, and an anchor to the County's food processing industries (Exhibit 27). The great majority of Manufacturing jobs in the exhibit below are made up of jobs in the Food and Beverage Product Manufacturing sector (2,975 of the total 3,220 manufacturing jobs in 2023). However, the decrease from 11% of jobs in agriculture in 2015 to 9% in 2023 shows a higher amount of growth in non-agriculture industries and a slight decrease in agriculture employment. Agricultural land faces increasing development pressure, and water access remains a long-term concern.

Exhibit 27: Employment in Selected Industries, Morgan County, 2015 & 2023



Source: DOLA, 2025; CAI, 2025.

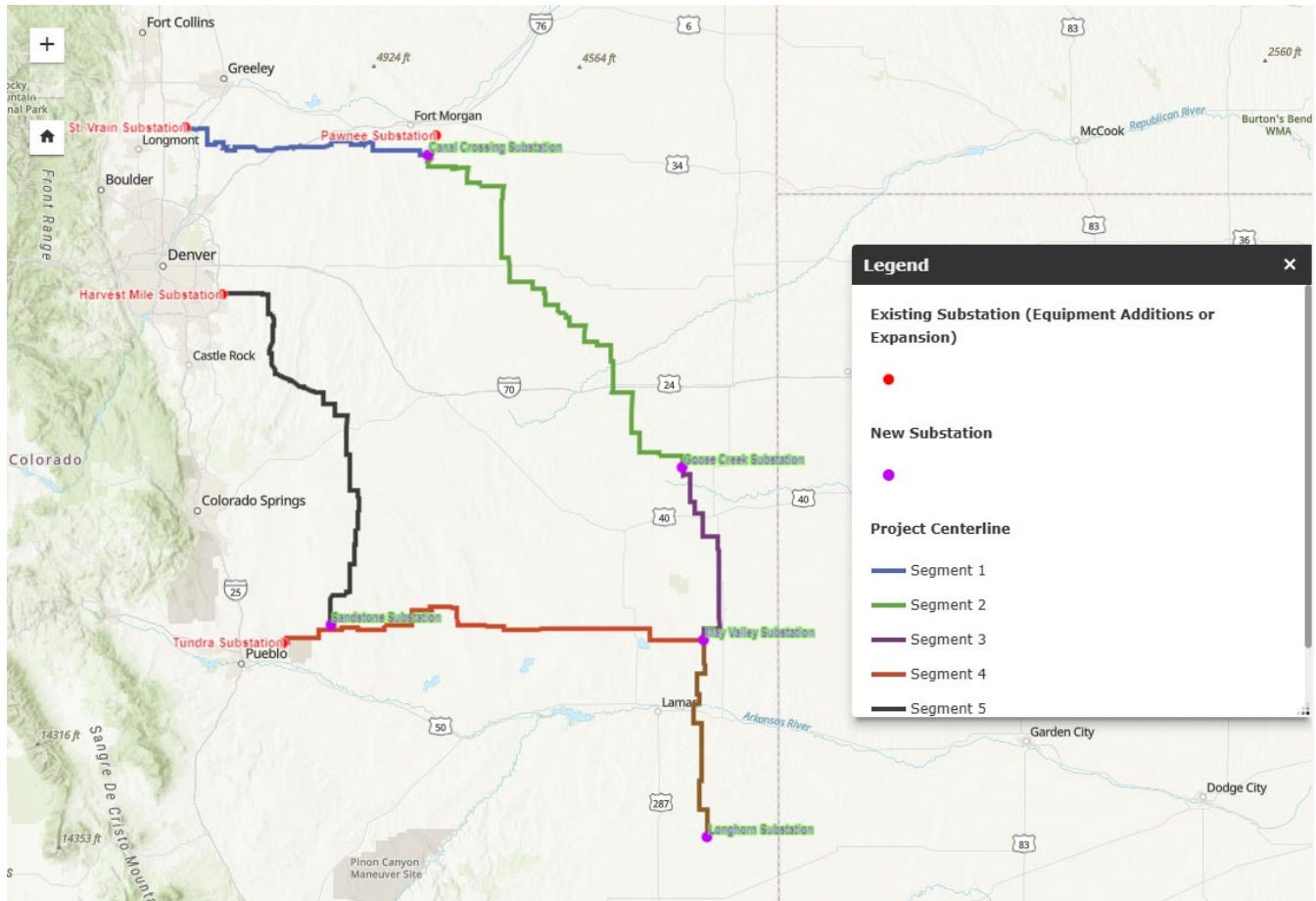
As the County grows, thoughtful planning will be needed to ensure that agricultural uses remain viable and visible. The county will need to navigate growing tensions between land preservation and housing needs, and between new development and water resource management.

Considerations for Comprehensive Planning:

- How can agricultural land be preserved while accommodating new development?
- What land use policies best support both traditional and innovative agriculture uses?
- What role can value-added agriculture and ag-adjacent industries play in future economic development?
- How might water access and infrastructure shape the future of agriculture in the region?

Trends in the Energy Industry

Exhibit 28: Xcel Energy Colorado Power Pathway Map



Source: Xcel Energy, *Energy Colorado Power Pathway* project site, accessed online at: <https://www.coloradospowerpathway.com/>

Energy is a dynamic and evolving sector, and Morgan County is positioned to play a role in Colorado's broader energy transition. In Morgan County, employment in traditional oil and gas sectors has declined, while interest in renewable energy—particularly solar—is growing. Xcel Energy's Power Pathway project is bringing new infrastructure to the area, enabling more renewable energy projects.

This shift reflects broader statewide and national energy trends. Morgan County is well-positioned to benefit, but the pace and scale of development must be managed thoughtfully. Renewable energy investments can bring economic benefits and diversification, but also raise land use, environmental, and workforce considerations.

Considerations for Comprehensive Planning:

- Considering regional trends to transition from traditional energy sources towards more renewable energies, what does Morgan County want its role to be?
- How might Morgan County position itself to harness and benefit from incoming solar investments?
- How can the County prepare the workforce for changing industry needs?

Other Emerging Trends

In addition to the major trends discussed, several other emerging or ongoing dynamics may influence long-term planning efforts in Morgan County, such as:

Waste Disposal

A regional trend toward outsourcing waste disposal and landfill management is emerging across northeastern Colorado. Morgan County may wish to consider its long-term role in solid waste planning, particularly as growth increases local demand and infrastructure ages.

Water Access

Through the comprehensive planning process, Morgan County will consider water access, particularly as it relates to land use and infrastructure planning. The concern of limited water supply is persistent across the region, and as Morgan County's population grows and demand rises, it is a particularly poignant concern for agricultural users and new developments.

Municipal Fiscal Concerns

Some municipalities within Morgan County face budgetary constraints, limiting their ability to invest in infrastructure, staffing, or services. As growth continues, balancing new demands with available revenues may become a critical issue for local governments.

Lack of Public Infrastructure to Support Development

In some parts of the County, infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewer systems may not be in place to support population growth or development, which comes along with it.

Climate Resilience

In its comprehensive planning, Morgan County will examine exposure to climate-related risks, including flooding, drought, and high winds. These risks may require more proactive planning around emergency preparedness, stormwater systems, and long-term resilience.

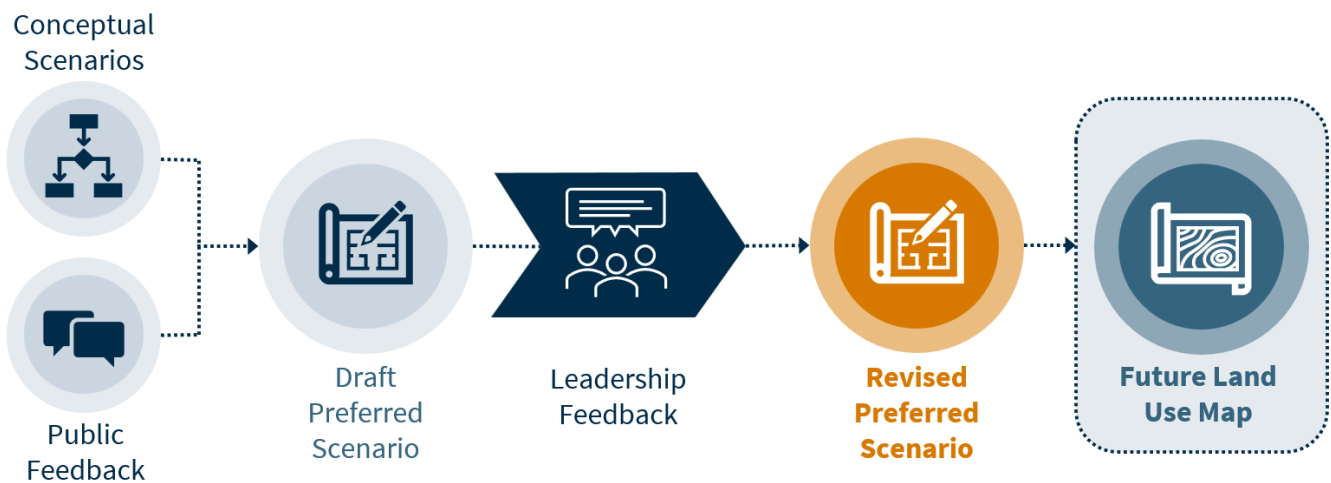
Appendix B: Future Growth Scenarios

Growth Scenarios

It’s crucial to recognize that growth is inevitable, and addressing how to manage it effectively is vital for shaping the future of Morgan County. To guide this development, three distinct growth scenarios were explored: **Dispersed Nodes**, **Growth Centers**, and **Growth Corridors**. Each of these scenarios offers a different strategy for managing growth, considering factors such as existing development patterns, infrastructure availability, and the county’s long-term goals. While each scenario provides benefits and poses challenges, they are all shaped by various constraints that need to be addressed.

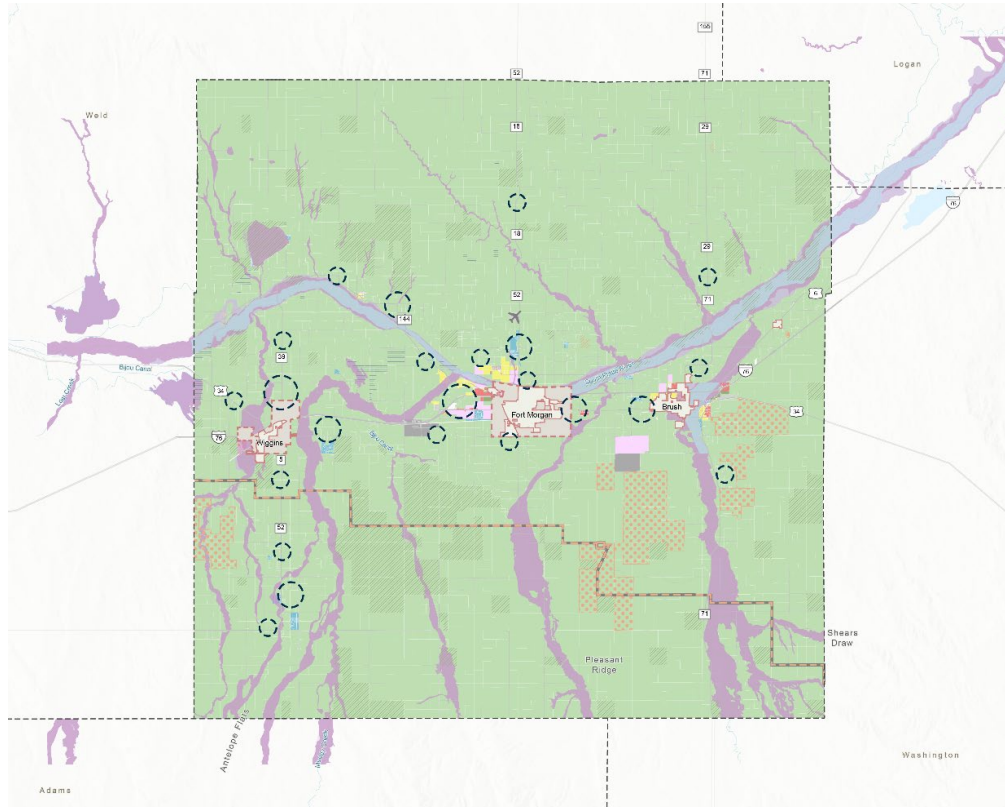
In addition to these strategies, it is essential to account for key constraints within the county that may impact where and how development can occur. Publicly owned lands (federal, state, and county) are dispersed throughout Morgan County, and floodplains along the South Platte River present natural limitations. These areas must be carefully considered when determining future land use designations, as they could limit or restrict proposed growth. Furthermore, certain areas may present compatibility challenges. For example, proximity to large-scale dairies or active agricultural operations could make residential development difficult due to odor, operational impacts, and resistance to the conversion of prime agricultural lands to other uses. Effectively addressing these challenges will be crucial in ensuring that growth occurs in a smart and harmonious manner.

Exhibit 29: Growth Scenario Development Process



Growth Scenario 1: Dispersed Nodes

Exhibit 30: Growth Scenario 1: Dispersed Nodes

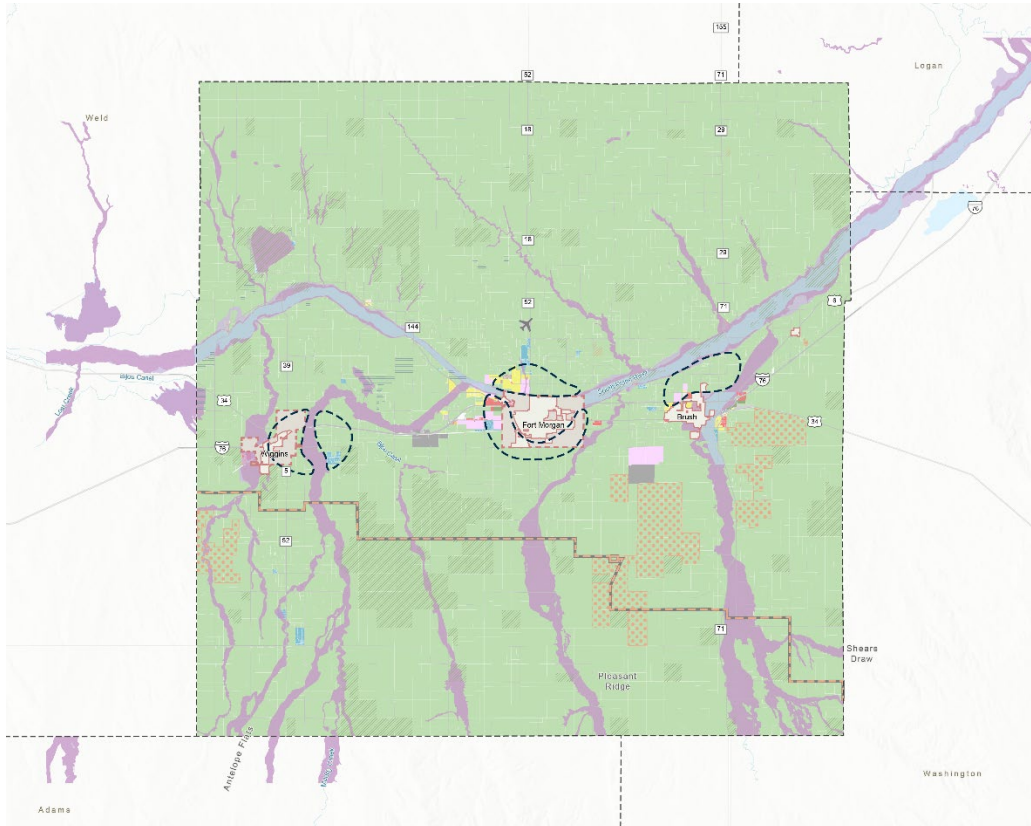


This scenario represents a “business as usual” approach, continuing the County’s existing development patterns. Growth would occur in a dispersed manner across the county, primarily in the form of low-density, single-family homes and subdivisions in both established hotspots and rural areas, with some likely infill of areas along the boundaries of already-developed regions. Employment centers would remain concentrated in their current locations, while strip commercial development would expand along major transportation corridors.

This approach offers the highest level of flexibility for landowners and developers, allowing market forces to determine the location and nature of future development. Many of the areas identified as potential growth nodes would remain zoned for agriculture, with development decisions made on a case-by-case basis. However, this flexibility also increases the potential for land use conflicts and inefficiencies in infrastructure. Development would likely cluster near existing amenities—such as schools, cities, and utilities; but without a guiding mechanism, growth may not occur in the most suitable or strategically planned areas. Furthermore, this semi-arbitrary growth pattern would likely cause numerous points of friction between sprawling rural residential subdivisions and adjacent productive agricultural uses.

Growth Scenario 2: Growth Centers

Exhibit 31: Growth Scenario 2: Growth Centers



This scenario focuses future growth around the incorporated communities of Wiggins, Fort Morgan, and Brush, promoting compact, radial development patterns centered around existing population and employment hubs. It encourages a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses tailored to each community, drawing from the growth patterns projected in the municipal Urban Growth Area (UGA) future land use maps. Growth is envisioned to radiate outward from community centers with transitional uses at the edges, while attempting to avoid natural constraints such as floodplains and prime agricultural lands.

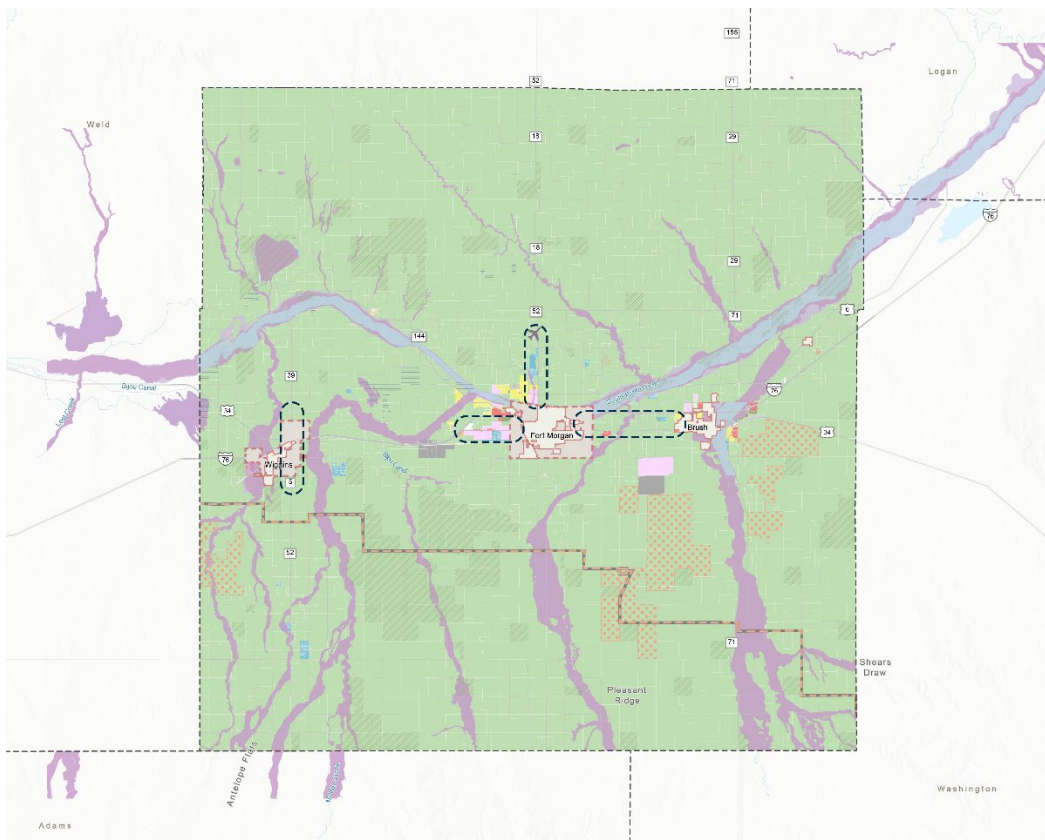
In **Wiggins**, growth is proposed eastward, with westward expansion constrained by publicly owned lands. In unincorporated Morgan County to the east of Wiggins, two crescent-shaped growth areas are designated, separated by a buffer to avoid flood-prone zones that would likely remain as open space or agriculture. These crescent areas support continued development close to the existing UGA as well as recent residential subdivisions further east.

In **Fort Morgan**, development expands radially, with residential and mixed-use areas focused around the city core. To the north of the river in unincorporated Morgan County, growth follows a wedge along Highway 52, incorporating existing residential zones to the west of the highway and opening new opportunities for growth to the east. South of the river, radial growth around the edges of the city extends development boundaries in a pattern following the city's projected growth, encompassing existing mixed-use and residential areas and allowing for continued outward expansion.

By **Brush**, growth in unincorporated Morgan County is directed primarily to the north, closely following the city's northwest edge along I-76 and extending northeast along Highway 71. While some of the proposed growth areas include existing residential and mixed-use zones northwest of the city, most of the land would be transitioned from current agricultural use to residential or commercial.

Growth Scenario 3: Growth Corridors

Exhibit 32: Growth Scenario 3: Growth Corridors



This scenario emphasizes linear development along key transportation corridors, guiding future growth to follow major roadways and highway connections between communities. It aims to concentrate development where infrastructure already exists or can be most efficiently extended, creating active, accessible corridors that support a mix of uses.

Growth is primarily directed along the corridors connecting Wiggins, Fort Morgan, and Brush. These areas are envisioned as dynamic zones featuring a blend of residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development tailored to the character and capacity of each corridor segment.

This approach supports ongoing residential growth while introducing opportunities for retail, employment clusters, and higher-density housing near major transportation routes.

By **Wiggins**, growth is concentrated along Highway 52 to the south and Highway 39 to the north, with a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses following these routes. The proposed boundary overlaps with the city's existing Urban Growth Area (UGA) and encourages north-south expansion, reinforcing Wiggins' role as a growth center while minimizing sprawl into surrounding agricultural land.

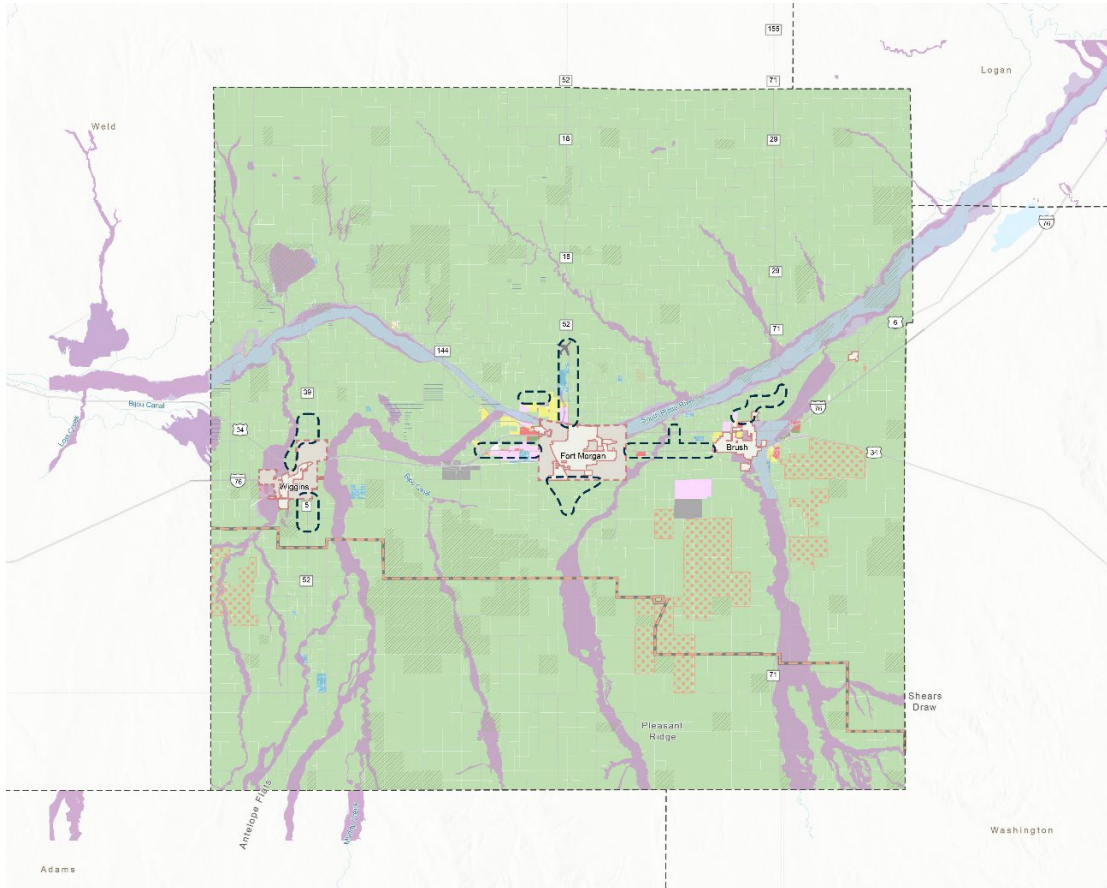
The growth area around **Fort Morgan** features two key corridors: one extending west of the city, along U.S. Highway 34, supporting existing residential and commercial zoning, and another stretching north along Highway 52, opening new opportunities for industrial and commercial development. These corridors strengthen Fort Morgan's position as a regional center for employment and services.

Between **Fort Morgan and Brush**, development extends west along U.S. Highway 34, forming a commercial and industrial corridor that links the two cities. This scenario supports and builds upon existing commercial activity south of I-76, using targeted zoning to encourage redevelopment and strategic infill while preserving agricultural lands beyond this corridor.

Overall, this scenario discourages dispersed residential and commercial growth outside the designated corridors, helping to preserve rural character and limit infrastructure expansion in lower-priority areas.

Preferred Growth Scenario: Hybrid Corridors & Centers

Exhibit 33: Preferred Growth Scenario



Following the presentation of three preliminary growth scenarios to the Morgan County Comprehensive Plan Committee on May 7, 2025, a fourth option – The Preferred Growth Scenario – was developed in response to committee feedback. This scenario blends the strengths of Scenario 2: Growth Centers and Scenario 3: Growth Corridors, reflecting a shared vision for strategically focused, corridor-based development with compact growth near established hubs.

Growth in **Wiggins** is directed along key transportation corridors: Highway 52 to the south, Highway 39 to the north, Highway 34 to the west, and the northern edge of I-76. A mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses is encouraged along these routes. Expansion to the east is constrained by existing dairy operations, which make downwind areas unsuitable for residential development. While the surrounding land includes numerous circular agricultural plots, many wells have dried up or are nearing depletion, making portions of this land ideal for potential re-zoning. Continued local input will be essential to refine the precise growth boundaries to minimize impacts on prime agricultural lands.

Fort Morgan's expansion is concentrated along the U.S. 34 corridor, extending the mixed-use development already established on the city's west side and as well as promoting growth toward Brush. Northward growth follows Highway 52, with careful consideration of the airport and related building height restrictions. Southward expansion remains part of the plan, though at a smaller scale than envisioned in Scenario 2. The committee recommended specifying corridor widths—such as a 500-foot commercial band—to ensure consistency and support infrastructure planning.

Growth in **Brush** reflects a hybrid of Scenarios 2 and 3. The city supports a shared commercial and industrial corridor along U.S. 34 connecting to Fort Morgan. Additional growth is encouraging northward along Highway 71, where a designated growth corridor closely follows the highway. These areas are intended to accommodate residential and commercial development while supporting the high traffic volumes associated with regional oil and gas activity.

Overall, this scenario prioritizes compact, efficient development that leverages existing transportation and utility infrastructure while preserving agricultural land and rural character outside designated growth areas.



Appendix C: Future Land Use Map

Exhibit 34: Future Land Use





Appendix D: Public Engagement Summary

Public outreach was a key component in the development of the Morgan County Comprehensive Plan. A Community Engagement Plan (CEP) was prepared to guide public outreach efforts throughout the process and ensure early and continuous involvement in decision-making. This appendix summarizes the engagement efforts taken as part of the comprehensive plan's development.

The objectives for the CEP are to:

- **Inform residents** of the comprehensive plan update, the process, and outcomes. Utilize outreach methods to inform residents and property owners of the variety of participation opportunities.
- **Exchange information** by conducting collaborative events that engage in conversation and the exchange of ideas and information so that participants can have ownership in the outcome of planning processes, leading to buy-in, a sense of pride, and higher-quality planning documents.
- **Be inclusive** of a range of perspectives, engaging citizens in unique ways to reach a broader audience and understand their goals, needs, and desires.
- **Provide access** to engagement opportunities, events, and participation for all citizens, including within the different municipalities in Morgan County.
- **Be transparent** and openly reflect a variety of viewpoints within the community and the County's process for the development and implementation of the comprehensive plan.

Communication Channels

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan update process, the County maintained several channels for notifying the public and other stakeholders of relevant meetings and events. Regular opportunities for updates and notifications include a project web page, social media posts, email notifications, flyers and handouts, and monthly Project Core Team meetings.

Engagement Activities

Various engagement activities and opportunities were planned and conducted as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process, describing the activity and anticipated timeframe.

Community Listening Posts

Timeframe: February 2025

Community Listening Posts are in-person, pop-up engagement opportunities at highly visited locations. This allows the planning team to go and hear from people where they are rather than requiring them to come to a specific engagement event. Listening Posts were utilized to offer a variety of opportunities to hear from the community at the Super Foods market in Wiggins, Safeway and the Gene Doty Senior Center in Fort Morgan, and the Fresh Foods market in Brush.

Each Listening Post featured an informational board about the comprehensive planning background and process and an activity Visioning Board on which community members could add their thoughts and desires for Morgan County's future vision.

Visioning Workshop

Timeframe: February 2025

This in-person engagement visioning workshop was held at the Morgan County Administration Building in Fort Morgan. The event was held in an open-house style, where community members could come at any time within the three-hour event window. The hall was set up with engagement boards to inspire and capture ideas, and to hear from the local community. The boards included information about the comprehensive plan and existing zoning in the county, data on community assessment, trends, and projections, as well as activity boards for future visioning and a SWOT analysis. Markers and sticky notes were used to identify core values, desired, strengths, and weaknesses. Stickers were used to identify locations on maps that are best suited for growth.

Stakeholder Interviews

Timeframe: March - April 2025

The consultant team interviewed various stakeholders in a focused setting of one to three interviewees at a time, asking specific questions about Morgan County's future and vision related to their fields of expertise. The consultant worked with County staff to develop a list of appropriate stakeholders, which included representatives from the County, the municipalities of Fort Morgan, Wiggins, and Brush, the Colorado Department of Transportation, the County Sheriff, municipal fire departments, waste management, emergency management, utilities, economic development, agriculture, dairy, and feedlots.

Community Town Hall Events

Timeframe: April 2025

After gathering input and feedback from the community events and monthly Core Team meetings, two Town Hall engagement events were held in Wiggins and Brush. During those events, a summary of the findings, preliminary goals and policies, and conceptual development growth scenarios were presented. At the end of each presentation, Q&A sessions allowed community members to highlight their priorities, note their preferences, and voice their concerns, while having county staff and consultants readily available to answer their questions.

Community Survey

Timeframe: February – May 2025

A community survey was available online for two months to gather input from the community. This survey was promoted during the in-person events and online to reach a wide audience, especially those who may not be able to participate in in-person workshops and events. A summary of the survey results is available later in this appendix.



Plan Rollout and Adoption

Plan Rollout Engagement

Timeframe: July 2025

The consultant team held in-person pop-ups to introduce the draft Comprehensive Plan to the community. Informational booths were set up at the Farmers Market in Fort Morgan and at the Morgan County Fair in Brush. Large display boards highlighted the core values and vision statement used in this plan and showed the proposed Future Land Use map, and a printed copy of the full draft plan was available for review. The booth featured a make-your-own button station, which proved popular with both children and adults. While participants created their buttons, planning team members shared key information about the plan's goals and proposals. Printed flyers with a scannable QR code linking to all materials were distributed to visitors.

Adoption

Timeframe: October - November 2025

The consultant team will assist with adoption proceedings, including virtual attendance and presentations at the Planning Commission and Board Meetings. The Comprehensive Plan will be presented, and final changes will be incorporated into the final plan document.



Community Survey Results Summary

This section presents a summary of key themes gathered from the community survey and public engagement conducted as part of the Morgan County Comprehensive Plan Update. With a total of 99 responses, this survey provides important insights into the perspectives and priorities of residents regarding critical topics such as land use, housing, economic development, infrastructure, and community. The themes extracted from these responses serve as a foundational guide in informing the development of goals and policies within the Comprehensive Plan, helping to shape a future that reflects the values and aspirations of Morgan County's community members.

The summary provided herein was developed with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

Question 1: What do you like best about Morgan County today?

The following key themes were found after analyzing 99 responses about what residents appreciate most about Morgan County:

- **Small Town Feel and Sense of Community**

A dominant theme among responses was appreciation for the “small town” atmosphere. Many respondents highlighted the friendly, familiar environment where people know and support each other. Words like “friendly,” “quiet,” “helpful,” and “hometown feel” came up frequently, with residents noting the comfort and connection that come from living in a close-knit community.

- **Rural Character and Slower Pace of Life**

Many residents shared their appreciation for the county's rural setting, wide-open spaces, and slower pace. The contrast to the hustle and bustle of urban life was repeatedly mentioned, with Morgan County described as a peaceful and simpler place to live. This rural character was seen as both a cultural identity and a source of everyday quality of life.

- **Affordability and Livability**

Several responses mentioned the reasonable cost of living, affordable housing, and low taxes as attractive features. People noted that Morgan County is a good place to raise a family and that its affordability contributes to a good quality of life without the pressures of urban costs.

- **Safety and Family-Friendly Environment**

Safety was another commonly mentioned strength. Respondents indicated that Morgan County is a quiet, safe place to raise children, with low traffic and a family-oriented atmosphere.

- **Diversity and Inclusion**

A number of respondents mentioned the county's diversity as a positive attribute. This includes both cultural diversity and the range of people drawn to the area. Residents appreciated a welcoming atmosphere and the sense of inclusion within the community.

- **Agriculture and Open Space**

The county's agricultural heritage and open landscapes were frequently cited as essential parts of its character. Respondents expressed pride in the area's agricultural base and appreciated the space and opportunity for rural lifestyles, including farming and homesteading.

- **Access to Services and Amenities**

While maintaining its rural character, Morgan County was also praised for offering essential services, such as schools, recreation, libraries, and moderate traffic. Proximity to the Front Range and mountains, while still feeling removed from urban congestion, was seen as an added benefit.

Question 2: If you could, what would you change or improve within Morgan County?

Survey participants shared a wide range of ideas for improving Morgan County. These ideas fall into several clear themes, reflecting both practical needs and aspirational goals for the county's future.

- **Expanded Commercial Options and Amenities**

Residents frequently mentioned a desire for more retail and dining choices, including big-box stores, national restaurant chains, and locally-owned sit-down restaurants. The current limited selection was seen as a missed opportunity to meet local needs and attract visitors. More recreational amenities, such as an indoor pool, bike paths, and family-friendly activities, were also requested to enhance quality of life.

- **Economic Diversification and Job Growth**

Many responses emphasized the need to broaden the local economy beyond its agricultural base. Residents expressed support for attracting new industries, encouraging sustainable growth, and relieving tax burdens on farmers. There is a strong interest in creating a more balanced economy with job opportunities across a range of sectors.

- **Infrastructure and Public Services**

Concerns about road conditions, school quality, and outdated infrastructure were common. Respondents want to see more investment in school facilities, teacher recruitment, and road maintenance. Basic public infrastructure is viewed as a necessary foundation for future growth and community well-being.

- **Affordable and Thoughtful Housing Development**

Housing affordability and smart growth planning were recurring themes. Some residents support new housing options, especially for families and lower-income individuals, while others cautioned against overdevelopment without supporting infrastructure. Vacant housing reuse and careful planning were suggested to avoid strain on local services.

- **Mental Health, Homelessness, and Social Support**

A strong call emerged for improved access to mental health care, services for people experiencing homelessness, and affordable child care. Community members want solutions that promote stability, dignity, and self-sufficiency, such as workforce programs and wraparound support systems.

- **Public Safety and Cleanliness**

Concerns about drug activity, theft, and homelessness prompted calls for better enforcement and safety planning. Some respondents described personal experiences with crime and voiced frustration about perceived inaction. Others advocated for a balance between enforcement and compassionate support.

- **Preservation of Rural Character and Identity**

Despite openness to change, many respondents were adamant about maintaining Morgan County's small-town, agricultural feel. There is concern about rapid growth altering the community's identity, with several people stating a preference for slower, intentional development that respects the county's roots.

- **Environmental Stewardship and Innovative Agriculture**

A few respondents emphasized the need for environmental awareness and agricultural innovation. Suggestions included legalizing cisterns, promoting diverse and sustainable farming practices, expanding farmers markets, and supporting conservation efforts. These ideas reflect a forward-thinking approach to land and resource management.

- **Communication, Transparency, and Planning**

Lastly, a desire for greater government transparency, better community communication, and accessible disaster planning emerged. Residents want to be informed and involved in planning efforts, especially around emergency preparedness and long-term growth decisions.

Question 3: Over the past 5 years (or since you have lived here, if less than 5 years), has Morgan County improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same as a place to live, taking all things into consideration? What factors most influence your response?

The following key themes were found after analyzing 99 responses reflecting on how Morgan County has changed as a place to live:

- **Mixed Views with a Tilt Toward Decline**

While some residents see signs of improvement, the majority of responses suggest that Morgan County has either stayed the same or gotten worse. Those who feel it has declined often cite rising crime, homelessness, and a loss of the small-town feel. Some describe a visible deterioration in community pride, cleanliness, and safety, with specific references to panhandling, drug use, and under-maintained properties.

- **Youth and Retention Challenges**

A common concern was the outmigration of young people and lack of engagement or opportunity for the younger generation. Respondents noted few appealing amenities or jobs to keep young adults rooted in the community. Bars and entertainment venues are described as dull or stagnant, with little innovation to attract or retain younger residents.

- **Housing Growth without Matching Services**

Many noted an increase in housing developments but expressed concern that this growth hasn't been matched by job creation, infrastructure upgrades, or essential services. Several mentioned a lack of zoning enforcement, inadequate healthcare access, and an imbalance between new housing and available community resources.

- **Economic and Recreational Positives**

Some respondents highlighted progress in specific areas, such as the addition of the field house, new restaurants, and small businesses. A few praised Wiggins for its residential development and noted recent investments in schools, community venues, and diverse businesses that signal forward momentum.

- **Concerns over Community Identity and Leadership**

A number of responses expressed frustration with community leadership, citing poor planning, resistance to change, or a failure to invest in needed infrastructure like indoor recreational facilities. There's a growing sentiment that the county risks becoming a "stepping stone" for residents seeking a better quality of life elsewhere.

- **Cultural Change and Social Division**

Several residents described cultural shifts—such as increasing diversity, changing norms, and political polarization—as significant influences on community sentiment. While some celebrated greater inclusivity, others felt uneasy about what they described as "front range influences" or a perceived erosion of traditional values.

Question 4: Where and how do you think Morgan County should change in the next 20 years?

The following key themes were identified from a broad range of responses reflecting community hopes, concerns, and priorities for the future of Morgan County:

- **Planned and Controlled Growth**

Residents emphasized the need for controlled, well-planned development that avoids congestion and urban sprawl. Many called for long-range planning to guide the placement of housing, schools, and businesses, with better attention to traffic flow and infrastructure capacity.

- **Affordable, Diverse Housing**

There was strong concern about the lack of affordable housing, especially for working families and young people. Respondents supported more rental units and modest single-family homes, with less emphasis on large apartment complexes. Housing growth should be tied to services and infrastructure.

- **Expanded Economic and Job Opportunities**

Many called for more business variety, particularly retail, restaurants, and light manufacturing, to strengthen the tax base and reduce out-migration. Suggestions included attracting industries linked to agriculture and renewables, and creating local jobs that pay a living wage.

- **Improved Infrastructure**

Road conditions, traffic congestion, and infrastructure planning were frequent concerns. Respondents urged improvements to streets, intersections, and traffic management, especially near schools and new developments.

- **More Community Amenities**

Residents want more shared spaces and recreational facilities, including parks, pools, trails, and youth programs. There was strong interest in creating regional hubs that serve both Fort Morgan and Brush, and in expanding access to education, healthcare, and everyday services.

- **Support for Youth and Aging Populations**

Several responses highlighted the need to invest in youth, including support for homeless youth, improved schools, and accessible extracurriculars. Others emphasized aging-friendly planning, with wellness spaces like indoor pools and strategies to support quality of life for seniors.

- **Protect Agriculture and Rural Character**

Respondents expressed a desire to preserve agricultural land and rural traditions, cautioning against unchecked growth. Many urged the county to stay pro-agriculture, adopt smarter land use, and explore ag-tech innovation to sustain farming into the future.

Question 5: Do you support the development of solar power generation facilities in Morgan County?

Community feedback revealed a wide range of opinions about solar development, with key themes centered around support for renewables, concerns about land use, and the importance of local benefits.

- **Conditional Support for Renewable Energy**

Many respondents supported solar energy in principle, noting its environmental benefits, alignment with energy independence goals, and compatibility with existing transmission corridors. However, support was often contingent on carefully siting away from homes and

not on productive farmland. Some respondents encouraged integrating solar with agriculture through agrivoltaics to maximize land use and maintain rural character.

- **Local Control and Economic Benefit**

A common theme was that solar facilities should directly benefit Morgan County residents. Several people supported solar if it lowered utility costs or created local jobs but opposed large-scale projects perceived to serve outside interests or utility companies. Respondents emphasized the need for local ownership, oversight, and a fair return for communities hosting solar infrastructure.

- **Concerns About Scale, Land Use, and Impacts**

Opposition centered on the perceived overreach of large-scale commercial projects, potential loss of agricultural land, and long-term environmental consequences. Some respondents cited impacts on wildlife, migration patterns, storm behavior, and property values. Others questioned the reliability of solar energy and expressed skepticism about subsidies and hidden costs.

- **Strongly Divergent Views**

While some respondents were enthusiastic about solar's future in the county, others expressed deep resistance, particularly to massive utility-scale developments, describing them as a threat to rural identity and quality of life. This polarized perspective suggests a need for additional community dialogue and transparent decision-making.

Question 6: Do you support the development of PFAS (forever chemicals) disposal facilities in Morgan County?

Community responses showed widespread concern and significant opposition to PFAS disposal facilities, with key themes focusing on environmental risks, local responsibility, and the need for careful consideration.

- **Strong Opposition Due to Environmental and Health Concerns**

Many respondents opposed locating PFAS disposal facilities in Morgan County, fearing contamination of groundwater, agricultural lands, and overall environmental harm. There was a clear sentiment against the county becoming a dumping ground for hazardous chemicals, especially those originating from urban or industrial areas outside the region.

- **Conditional or Cautious Support with Strict Safeguards**

A smaller group expressed conditional support if facilities could safely neutralize PFAS without risking local water supplies or ecosystems. Site selection and careful management were emphasized as critical to minimizing negative impacts. Some respondents indicated a need for more information before forming an opinion.

- **Local Accountability and Fairness**

Concerns were raised about the fairness of placing responsibility for PFAS disposal on Morgan County, especially given the chemicals' association with metropolitan areas. Several

participants stressed that PFAS solutions should be addressed where the chemicals are generated.

- **Polarized Views and Information Gaps**

While opposition was dominant, a few respondents expressed support or neutrality, highlighting uncertainty or lack of knowledge about these facilities. This underscores a potential need for increased public education and transparent discussions around PFAS disposal options.

Question 7: Do you have any additional comments concerning Economic Development in the County?

Community feedback highlighted the importance of balanced growth, infrastructure needs, economic diversification, and preserving local quality of life.

- **Balanced and Sustainable Growth**

Many respondents urged for slow, thoughtful growth that supports current residents first. Concerns were raised about overexpansion without adequate housing, schools, healthcare, and public services. Several called for fixing existing issues before pursuing new development.

- **Economic Diversification and Support for Local Business**

There was strong support for diversifying beyond agriculture and attracting a wider variety of businesses, including manufacturing and green industries. Suggestions included reducing regulations, improving outreach, and creating affordable conditions for business startups.

- **Infrastructure and Community Services**

Several participants emphasized the need to improve infrastructure, such as housing affordability, medical facilities, and educational resources, to support both current and future residents. Some highlighted the importance of investing in workforce education and job training.

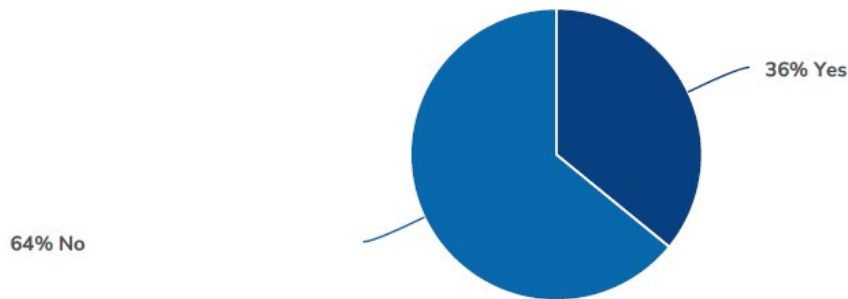
- **Preserving Quality of Life and Environment**

Some respondents stressed that economic development should not come at the expense of community health or local environment, advocating for careful planning and embracing green technologies.

- **Community Engagement and Communication**

A few comments noted positive progress by the Morgan County Economic Development Corporation and called for better public awareness of their work. Others suggested including homeschool families and supporting local small businesses.

Question 8: Are you satisfied with the condition of County Roads?

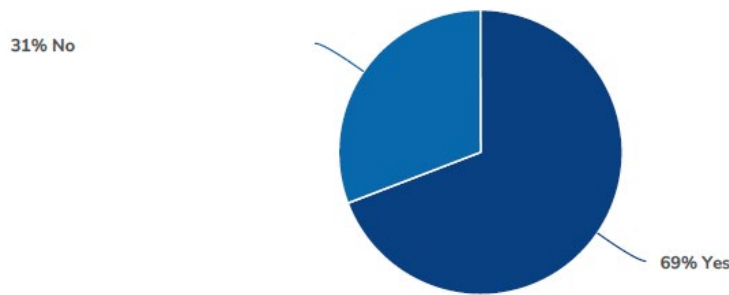


Question 9: Why / Why not?

Community feedback showed a mix of opinions but highlighted significant concerns about maintenance, surface quality, and resource limitations.

- **Maintenance Frequency and Road Conditions**
Many residents expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of roads, describing them as rough, full of potholes, washboarded, and poorly drained. Dirt roads, in particular, were noted for creating difficult driving conditions, especially during winter or after rain. Chip seal was criticized as a temporary, cost-saving solution that degrades quickly and requires frequent repairs every 5–7 years. There is a clear desire for more consistent grading and maintenance schedules to improve overall road conditions.
- **Infrastructure and Safety Concerns**
Several respondents highlighted safety issues such as the absence of painted lines on roads, narrow or non-existent shoulders, and erosion near ravines and canals. Overweight truck traffic was also seen as a damaging factor, with calls for better enforcement by law enforcement agencies to protect the roads from further degradation.
- **Budget, Staffing, and Resource Limitations**
Many comments referenced budget constraints and a shortage of qualified road operators, leading to less frequent or insufficient road maintenance. Some also noted inefficiencies in current practices, such as piling debris too close to mailboxes or leaving unrecovered gravel windrows on roads that worsen driving conditions. There is a sense that better planning and resource allocation could improve maintenance outcomes.
- **Mixed Perceptions and Positive Feedback**
While most feedback was critical, some community members felt the county was doing a reasonable job given its limited resources and extensive road network. Improved grader training and maintenance on key thoroughfares were mentioned positively. A small portion of respondents felt roads were acceptable or good overall, attributing some roughness to typical state road conditions.

Question 10: Are you satisfied with how major roadways handle traffic?



Question 11: Why / Why not?

Responses show a mix of perspectives, with a significant portion of residents expressing concern about road conditions, safety, and traffic management on major roadways. Others acknowledge the complexity of balancing agricultural and commercial traffic in a rural environment.

- **Concerns About Road Conditions and Maintenance**

Several respondents criticized the poor condition of key highways such as CO 52, I-76, and others, highlighting that some roadways are well past their useful lifespan. Many feel state agencies like CDOT have failed to invest adequately in reconstruction or long-term maintenance, offering only temporary fixes instead. The road surfaces on major routes are described as rough and deteriorating, impacting safety and travel comfort.

- **Traffic Safety Issues and Enforcement**

Safety concerns are frequent, especially related to speeding and reckless driving on major roads. There are calls for better enforcement of traffic laws and improved safety measures to protect both local residents and commuters.

- **Balancing Agricultural and Commercial Traffic**

Many comments recognize that traffic flow is complicated by the presence of farming equipment, semis, and other slow-moving vehicles sharing the road with passenger cars. Some respondents appreciate turn signals and stop signs, noting that traffic generally flows well despite these challenges.

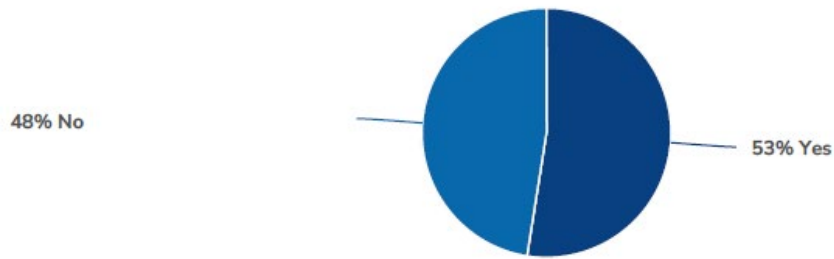
- **Mixed or Neutral Feedback**

Some respondents felt that traffic management was adequate given the rural nature of the county and the volume of traffic. A few indicated they rarely use major county roads and thus had limited experience or no significant concerns to report.

- **Requests for Infrastructure Improvements**

Several participants advocated for major upgrades, including widening roads (e.g., making Hwy 34 four lanes) to improve safety and reduce accidents. They stressed the need for state-level investment and prioritized improvements, noting that current funding and attention tend to favor more populated front-range areas.

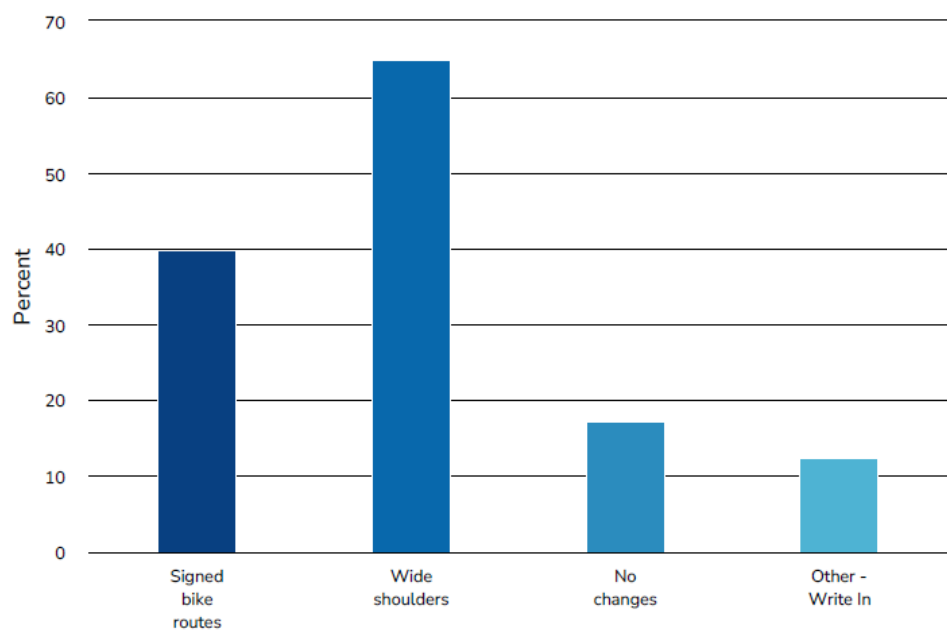
Question 12: Do you use backroads to avoid traffic flows on highways?



Question 13: Which roads?

- CR Q (*most frequent*)
- CR R
- CR W (*52 to 144*)
- CR Y (*paved*)
- CR S (*near Brush*)
- Hwy 34 (*preferred over I-76*)
- Hwy 52
- I-76 (*rough conditions noted*)
- 7th Street (*preferred over Platte*)
- Secondary highways & side streets
- General “back roads” / alternate routes

Question 14: In order to accommodate cyclists and/or pedestrians on major County Roads, would you prefer signed bike routes, wider shoulders, or no change to the current road design? Select all that apply.

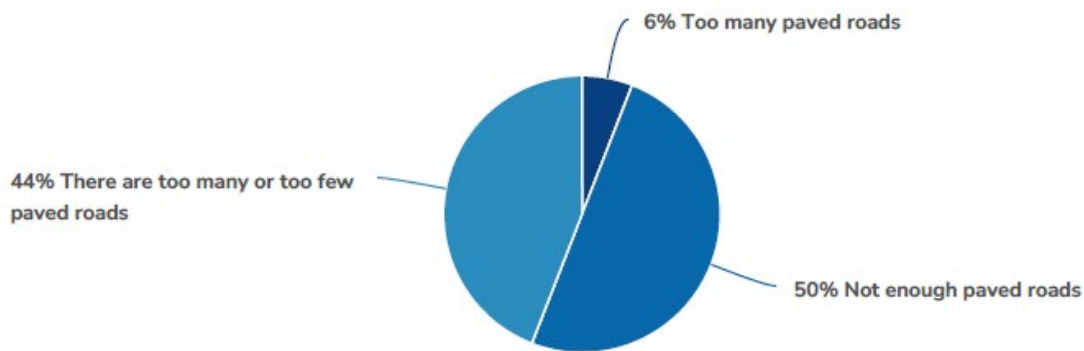


Themes of “Other-Write In” Comments:

Some respondents shared additional thoughts regarding road safety and infrastructure, highlighting these key themes:

- Concerns about speeding and its impact on overall safety
- Debate over the presence and needs of cyclists on county roads
- Preference for prioritizing safe driving over expanding bike infrastructure
- Interest in developing walking trails and exercise stations

Question 15: In unincorporated Morgan County, does the County have too many paved roads, not enough, or just about right? Select one that applies.

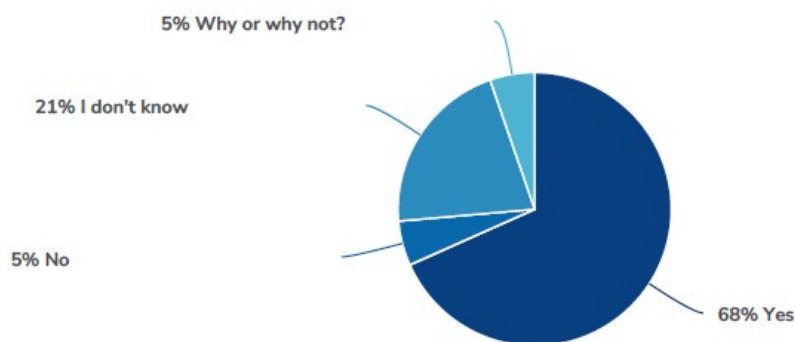


Question 16: Do you have any additional comments concerning Utilities, Services, and Transportation?

Responses reflect a mix of contentment, concerns, and suggestions for improvement across utilities, services, and transportation in the county.

- **Public Transportation Needs**
Multiple respondents expressed the desire for improved public transportation options, including taxi and bus services, especially to assist those without vehicles or limited mobility.
- **Utility Service Expansion**
There is a call for expanding natural gas availability throughout the county, particularly in rural areas, to enhance energy access.
- **Road Conditions and Maintenance**
Several comments highlight deteriorating road conditions, noting paved roads are falling apart and specific roads (such as Road 8 south of Q) need paving. There is a request for more comprehensive paving to reduce vehicle damage.
- **Cost and Funding Concerns**
Some respondents raised issues with high costs, such as water tap fees, requesting discounts for farmers. Others pointed out that many taxpayers fund county roads without regularly using them, questioning funding fairness.
- **Public Health and Sanitation**
One comment suggests the local health department could improve management of homeless sanitation issues.
- **Funding Allocation Requests**
A suggestion was made for state funds, currently focused on I-70 mountain projects, to be allocated also to support infrastructure improvements in the eastern plains.
- **Neutral or No Additional Comments**
Several respondents indicated no additional comments or expressed satisfaction with current conditions.

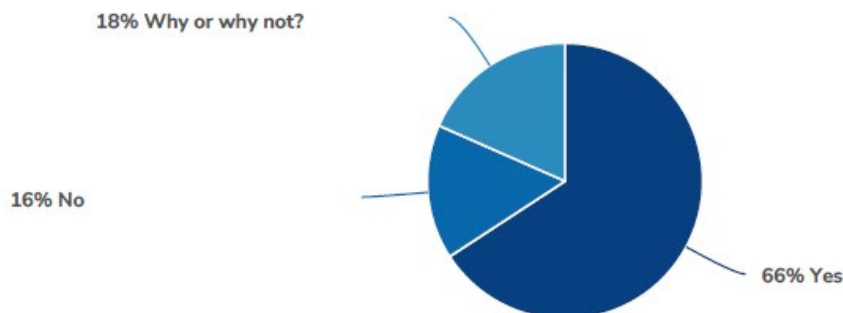
Question 17: Would you support a program that incentivizes willing landowners to keep land in agricultural production?



Why / Why not?

Two respondents explained their reasoning for whether they would support an incentivizing program for agricultural production. Their responses stated that it depends on the details of the program, and that landowner should have rights when zoned correctly.

Question 18: Do you feel safe in Morgan County? Why or why not?

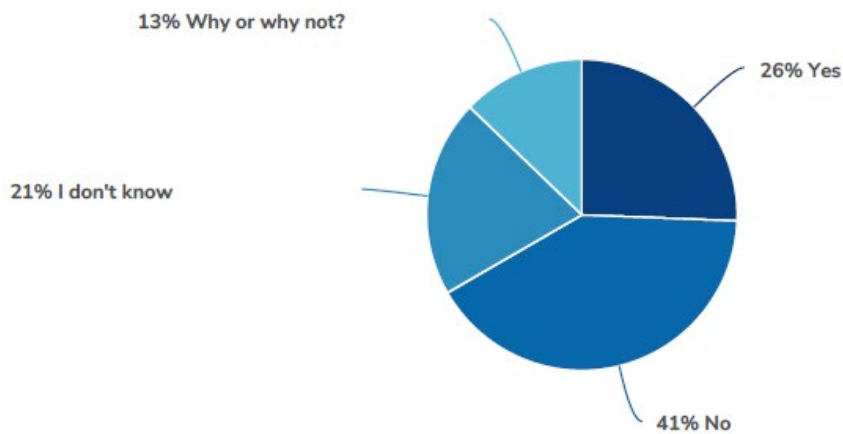


Why / Why not?

Some respondents shared comments explaining why or why not they feel safe in Morgan County. Their responses reflect the following key themes:

- **Cautious Confidence:** Several individuals reported feeling mostly safe but noted they remain alert, especially for the safety of family or business.
- **Concerns About Crime:** Some cited increased crime, illegal drugs, and homelessness as contributing to a growing sense of unease.
- **Situational Safety:** One respondent noted that safety depends on the time of day, suggesting that concerns vary based on circumstances.

Question 19: Should there be an increase in non-agricultural land uses (examples: residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) along Highway 34 corridor east and west of Fort Morgan? If so, please clarify.



Why / Why not?

Some respondents shared comments explaining their perspectives on whether non-agricultural land uses should increase along the Highway 34 corridor near Fort Morgan. Their responses reflected the following themes:

- **Support for Balanced Growth:** Several respondents supported some increase in development, citing the value of economic diversity and the belief that agriculture and new land uses can coexist if properly managed.
- **Conditional Support:** One respondent noted that any increase should depend on the area's infrastructure capacity to handle new development.
- **Concerns About Traffic:** One individual opposed additional non-agricultural development due to concerns that it would add too much traffic along the corridor.

Question 20: Do you have any comments concerning where and how new growth should occur in Morgan County?

Respondents offered a wide range of opinions on preferred locations and strategies for future growth. While many emphasized the importance of accommodating growth, there was a strong theme of balancing development with the preservation of agriculture and infrastructure capacity:

- **Growth Near Infrastructure and Existing Corridors**

Many respondents supported focusing new development along major transportation routes such as I-76 and Highway 34, as well as within or near existing city limits, where infrastructure and services are already established. These areas were seen as logical places to accommodate both residential and commercial growth.

- **Support for Thoughtful, Planned Development**

Several emphasized the need for careful planning to avoid sprawl or unnecessary loss of agricultural land. Suggestions included focusing on infill development, encouraging medium-density housing, and limiting expansion into productive farmland. A few advocated for redevelopment of older properties rather than building new subdivisions on open land.

- **Preservation of Agricultural Land**

Some respondents strongly voiced that agriculture should remain the priority, recommending that development avoid conflicts with farming operations. The idea of balancing growth with ag sustainability—especially through water storage and infrastructure investment—was noted as a long-term strategy.

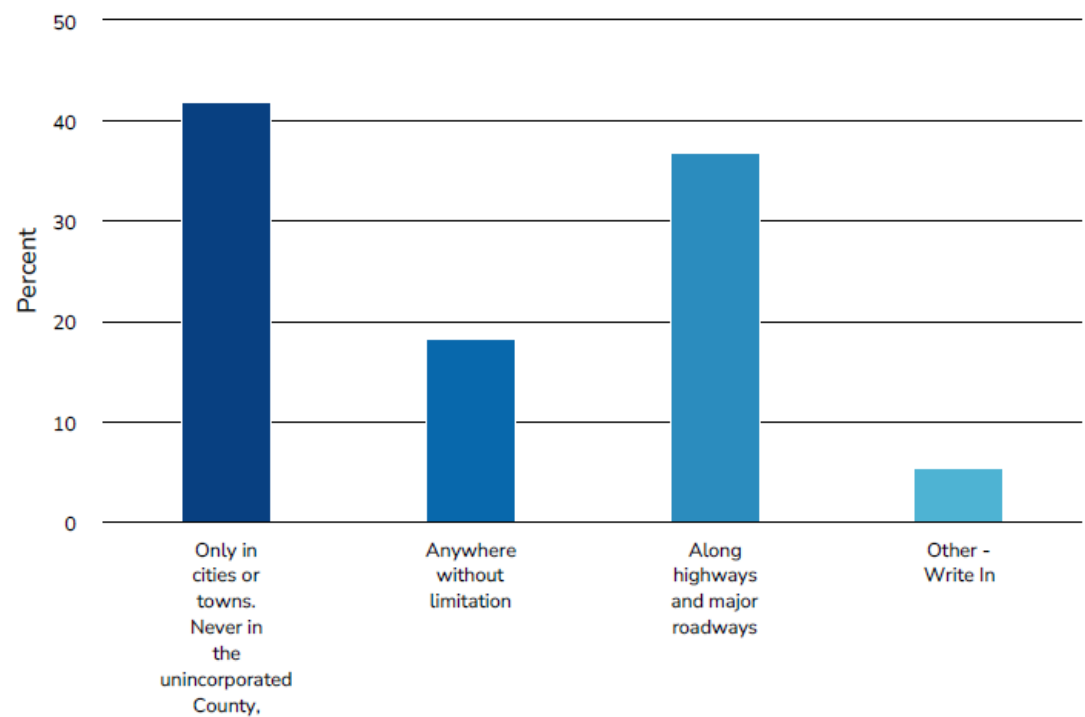
- **Concerns About Housing and Affordability**

Respondents expressed interest in increasing housing options, particularly more affordable and smaller homes, but also noted that housing growth should be tied to job availability and economic support. One comment criticized higher-end housing developments as misaligned with local needs.

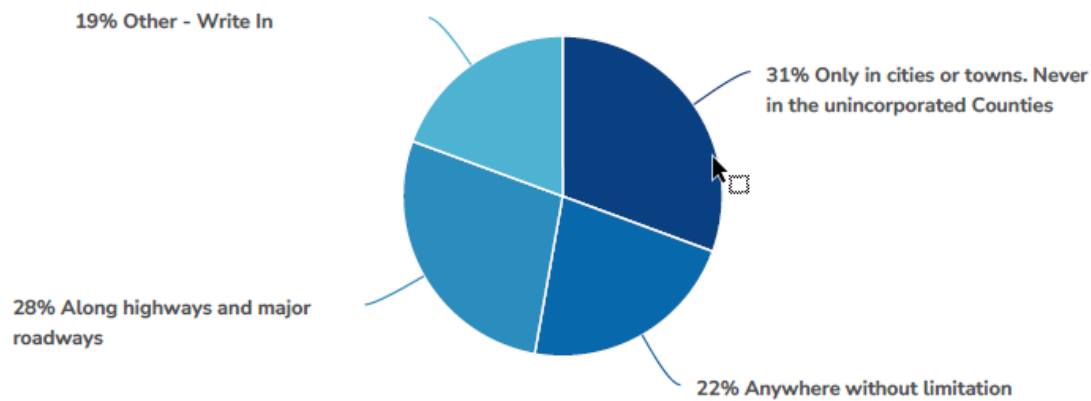
- **Desire to Maintain Small-Town Character**

A few respondents called for limiting growth to preserve the county's rural and small-town identity, voicing concerns that overexpansion could lead to increased crime and outside dependency.

Question 21: Commercial Uses (Examples – Auto Sales or Service, Hotels, Office, Shops, other Retail) are most appropriately located where?



Question 22: Industrial uses (Examples – manufacturing, fabrication, salvage yard) are most appropriately located where?



Themes of “Other-Write In” Comments:

Some respondents provided write-in responses as to where they think industrial uses should be located, with their comments highlighting these key themes:

- **Compatibility with Surroundings** – Several emphasized that industrial development should avoid negatively impacting property values, residential areas, or soft commercial zones.
- **Use of Designated Industrial Areas** – Some suggested locating such uses in existing industrial parks or near established industrial zones, such as Fort Morgan’s industrial area.
- **Preservation of Agricultural Land** – One respondent cautioned against converting agricultural land for industrial purposes.
- **Situational Considerations** – One noted that appropriate location depends on the specific nature of the business, indicating the need for case-by-case evaluation.

Question 23: Are you satisfied with the quality of housing and housing options in Morgan County? Why or why not?

Respondents shared a variety of perspectives on the state of housing in Morgan County, with most comments reflecting concerns about affordability and housing availability. While some noted recent improvements or satisfaction with current options, many emphasized ongoing challenges that affect both renters and homebuyers.

- **Concerns About Affordability and Access**

A dominant theme among respondents was the high cost of housing relative to local wages. Many expressed frustration with the difficulty of affording a mortgage, qualifying for housing assistance, or finding reasonably priced rental options. Several pointed out that even low-income housing is often too expensive for those who need it most.

- **Lack of Housing Availability**

Numerous comments described a shortage of housing, particularly for low-income households and new employees. Some emphasized that more housing is needed both within cities and in the broader county, with several calling for support to increase the supply of affordable and workforce housing.

- **Mixed Perceptions of Housing Quality**

While a few respondents felt the quality of housing was adequate—especially in rural areas or older neighborhoods—others noted poor conditions, neglected maintenance, or aging housing stock in need of improvement. Some called for investment in renovating existing homes rather than continuing to build new subdivisions.

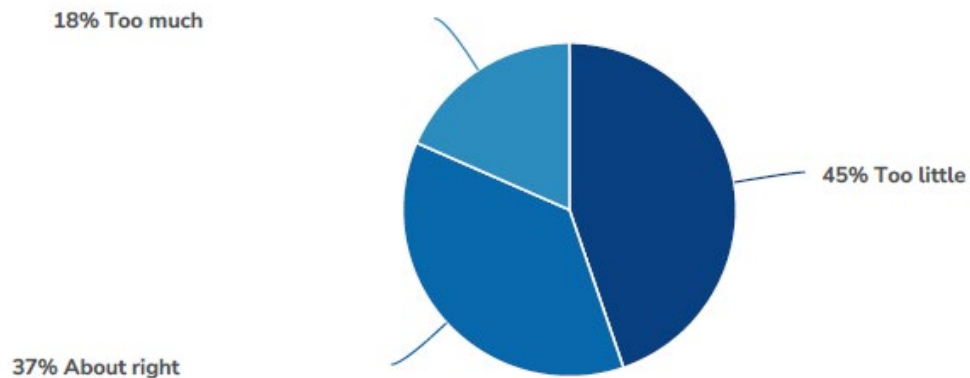
- **Interest in Infill and Redevelopment Opportunities**

A small number of comments encouraged creative solutions to the housing shortage, such as adaptive reuse of older buildings or infill development within existing urban areas. These respondents noted the potential to revitalize downtowns and reduce the pressure on agricultural land.

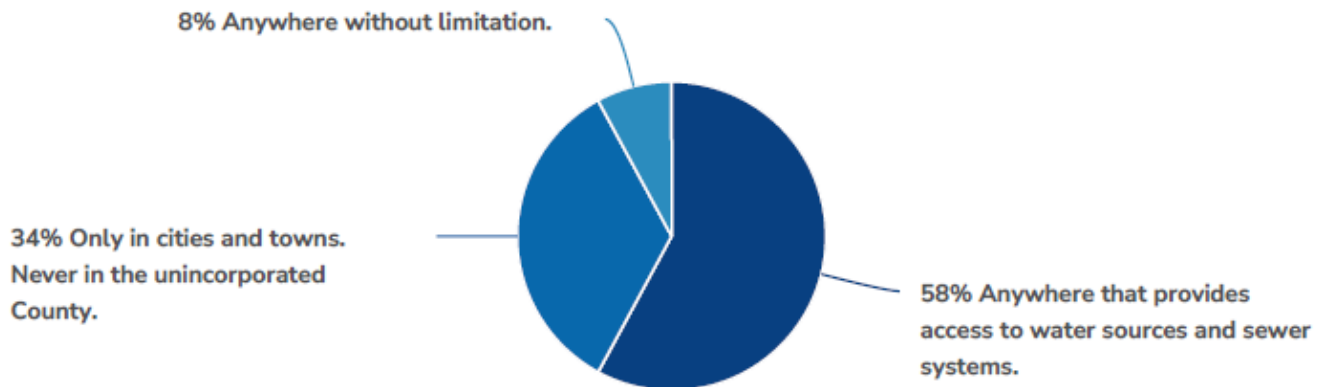
- **Diverse Experiences and Opinions**

While some respondents said they were satisfied with housing in their area, others voiced concern about overdevelopment, crowding, or the impact of tax burdens and subsidies. These responses reflect the varied experiences across the county, from urban neighborhoods to rural homesteads.

Question 24: Over the past few years, do you think the rate of growth for housing in Morgan County has been too little, about right, or too much?



Question 25: Where are duplexes, townhomes, and multi-family dwellings are most appropriately located?



Question 26: Do you have any additional comments concerning Land Use, Housing, Commercial, and Industrial Development?

Respondents shared a range of views on development priorities and concerns across land use, housing, commercial, and industrial sectors. The comments reflect both support for thoughtful growth and caution about maintaining the county's rural and agricultural character.

- **Support for Balanced Growth and Housing Density**

Several respondents expressed support for increased housing density within city limits, applauding recent efforts in Fort Morgan to accommodate growth through infill development. These individuals noted that density can help address housing shortages and support economic growth when thoughtfully planned within municipal boundaries.

- **Preservation of Agricultural Land and Rural Character**

A strong theme emerged around the importance of protecting agricultural lands and preserving the county's rural identity. Some cautioned against expanding subdivisions or industrial development into areas zoned for agriculture, arguing that such moves undermine the region's farming economy and traditional land uses.

- **Concerns About Infrastructure and Planning**

Infrastructure, especially water, sewer, and road capacity, was cited as a key consideration in future development. Respondents urged the county to require thoughtful planning around sewer systems and to avoid placing dense developments in areas that are already congested or lack necessary services.

- **Desire for Responsible Development Practices**

Comments emphasized the need for property maintenance, accessibility, and enforcement of cleanliness standards, particularly for multi-family housing. Others warned against overregulation or overly restrictive planning, noting that new residents are moving to Morgan County to escape the problems of urban areas.

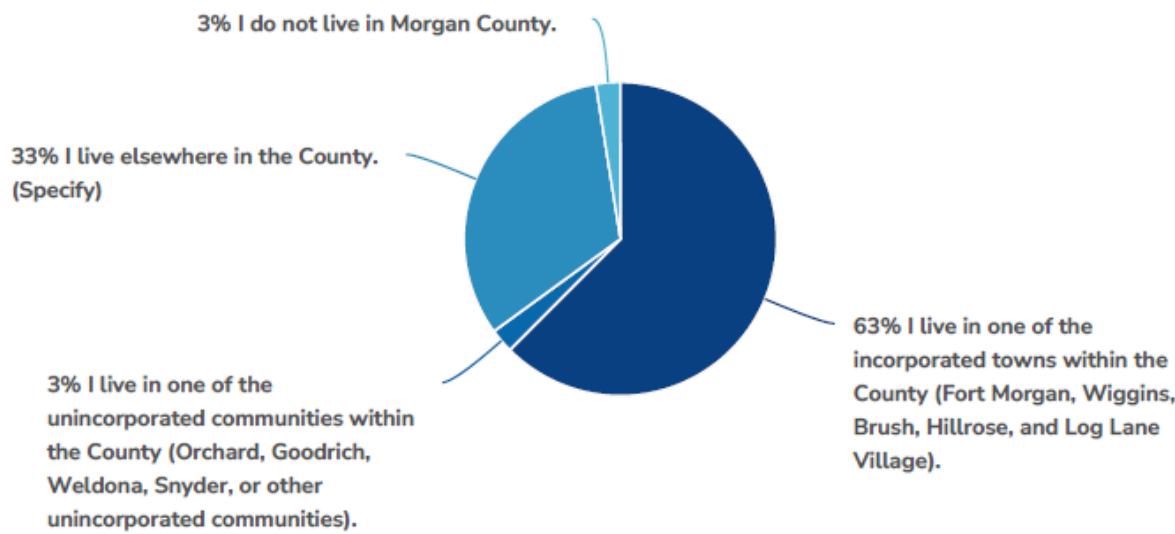
- **Opposition to Certain Types of Development**

Some respondents voiced strong opposition to specific forms of development, including solar and wind energy projects, large apartment complexes, and continued subdivision growth. These views were often tied to concerns about preserving agricultural land and resisting changes perceived as incompatible with rural life.

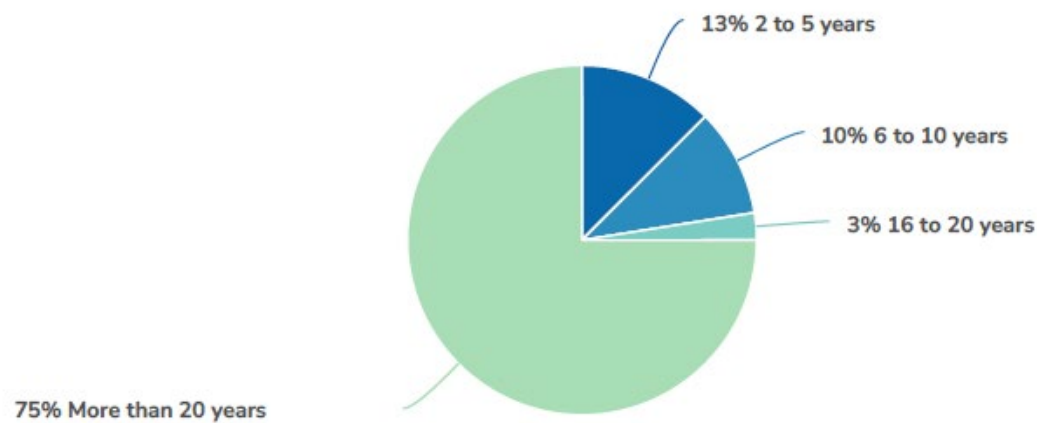
- **Commercial Needs and Amenities**

A few comments noted a lack of adequate retail options, particularly grocery and hardware stores, indicating a need for better commercial amenities to serve the growing population.

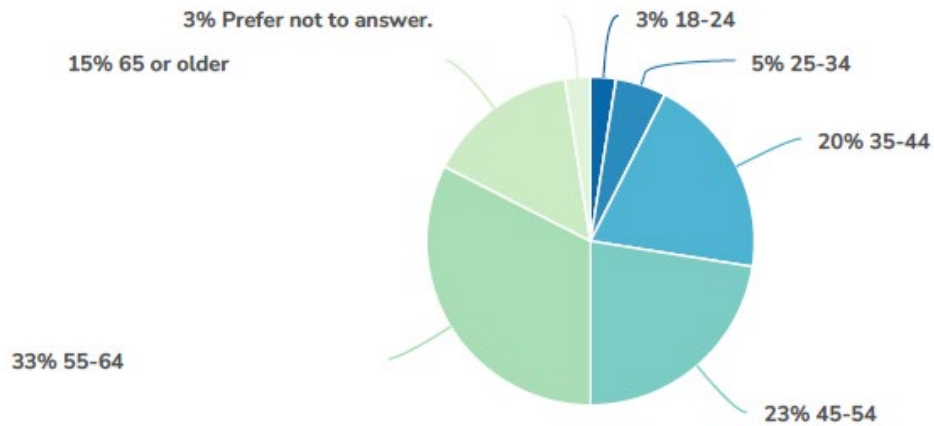
Question 27: Where in Morgan County do you live?



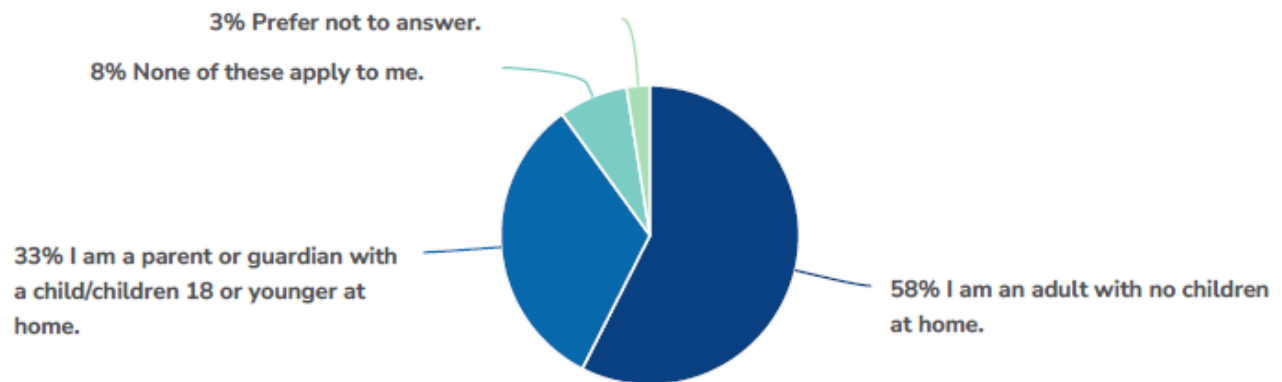
Question 28: How long have you lived in Morgan County?



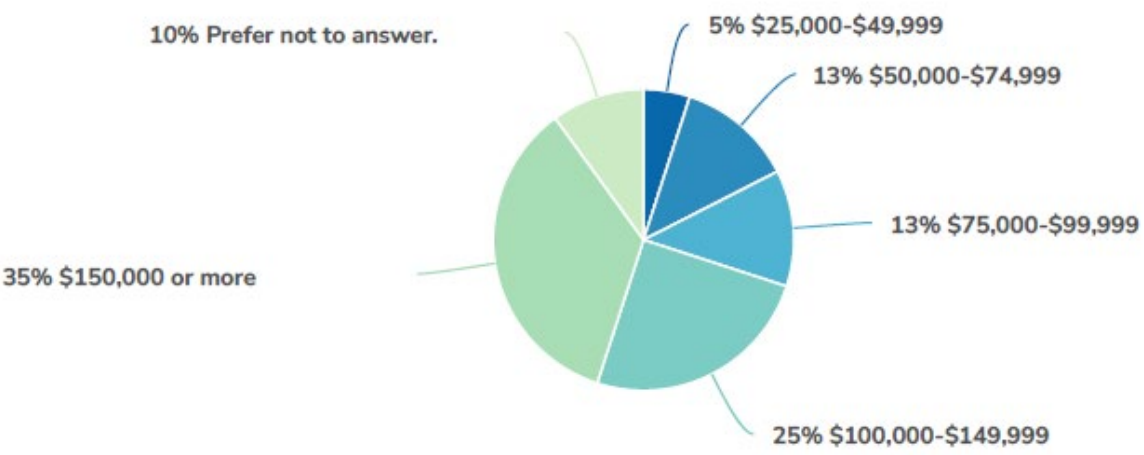
Question 29: What is your age range?



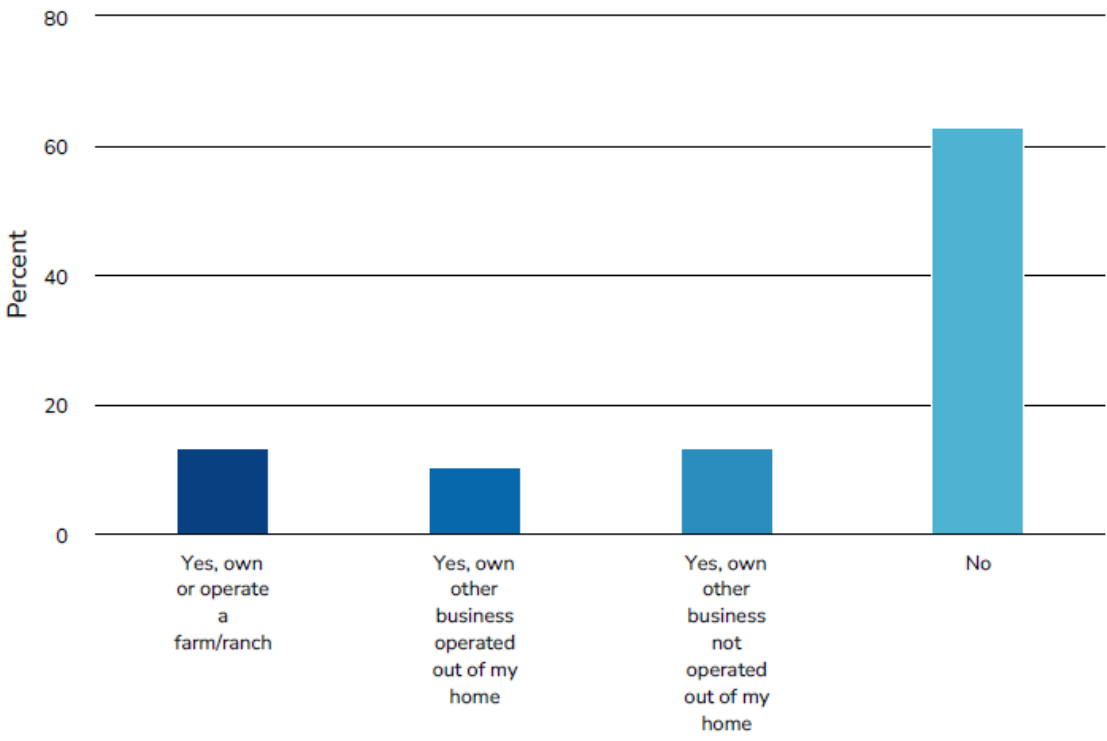
Question 30: Which of the following best describes your life stage?



Question 31: What is your annual household income?



Question 32: Do you or another member of your household own or operate a farm/ranch or other business in Morgan County?



Question 33: We appreciate your interest and participation in the Morgan County Comprehensive Plan Update. The answers you have provided will help inform and guide us as we move forward! While we hope you were able to share all your ideas, we don't want to miss anything. Below is a space to share any additional information or comments we may have missed in the earlier sections of this outreach.

The public was provided with the opportunity to provide final comments in the survey. The themes of the final comments included the following:

- **Support for Responsible Growth and Development**
Some respondents expressed enthusiasm for future economic and commercial growth, particularly in Fort Morgan. There was encouragement to welcome more commercial chain businesses, with the belief that local businesses can still thrive alongside new development.
- **Desire to Preserve Rural Identity**
Others strongly emphasized the need to protect the rural character of Morgan County and resist changes that may “citify” the area. These comments reflect a broader concern about overdevelopment or urbanization that could threaten traditional ways of life.
- **Fairness in Regulation and Governance**
Concerns were raised about the inconsistent application of county regulations, particularly zoning and building codes. One respondent noted that enforcement based solely on written complaints leads to unfair outcomes and recommended that regulations be either universally enforced or eliminated.
- **Opposition to Solar Development and Infrastructure Needs**
Several respondents voiced strong opposition to utility-scale solar projects, calling for restrictions to limit them to private property rather than agricultural or open lands. Additionally, deteriorating road conditions and safety hazards were flagged as urgent issues needing attention.
- **Continued Stakeholder Engagement**
There was an overall tone of engagement and investment in the future of the county, with at least one respondent acknowledging the importance of the planning process and expressing hope that community voices will be heard and acted upon

Overall, residents demonstrated a strong connection to Morgan County's rural character and quality of life, while emphasizing the need for balanced growth, consistent regulation, infrastructure improvements, and respectful consideration of community concerns moving forward.