



Downtown Character Plan

October 23, 2008



City of
Golden

911 10TH ST. GOLDEN, CO 80401



City of Golden

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Resolution No. 1918	5
Executive Summary	7
Introduction	7
Highlights	7
City-Owned Land	8
Guiding Principles	9
Specific Capital Or Operational Recommendations	9
Downtown Golden	11
Project Purpose And Goals	11
Historic Overview Of Downtown Golden	11
Downtown Golden Today	12
Downtown Golden Character Area Map	13
Existing Zoning Map	15
Existing Vision, Goals, Policies And Strategies	17
The Vision	17
Summary Of Downtown Goals And Policies	17
Summary Of Previously Endorsed Strategies	18
Top Issues And Research	19
Desired Mix Of Land Uses In Character Zones	19
Downtown Design Standards And Guidelines	21
Essential/ Affordable Housing	22
Energy And Resource-Efficiency Guidelines	24
Integrated Public Spaces And Corridors	25
Potential GURA Boundary Adjustments	25
Collaboration With CSM And NREL	25
Fastracks And Other Transit Opportunities	25
Adapting To The Digital Economy	28
Increasing Cultural And Entertainment Opportunities	28
Future Recommendations	29
GURA Boundaries Adjustment	29
Land Use And Regulatory Recommendations	29
Parks And Recreation Master Plan	29
Economic Vitality	30
Ongoing Public Involvement	30

Figures:

Figure 1. Downtown Character Area Map	13
Figure 2. Downtown Character Area Zoning Map	15
Figure 3. Opportunities and Preservation Map	20
Figure 4. Awning Survey Results	21
Figure 5. Ownership Costs vs. Household Income for Golden Residents, 1999	22
Figure 6. Median Household Income, 2006	23
Figure 7. Successful Affordable Housing Developments	24
Figure 8. Public Opportunites — Existing Conditions	26
Figure 9. Public Opportuties — Potential Improvements	27

Appendices:

- A. Downtown Design Guidelines
- B. Table Of GURA Plan And Golden Comprehensive Plan Strategies
- C. Summary Of Open House Input
- D. Online And Other Surveys
- E. Verbatim Citizen Comments
- F. CCRA Report

RESOLUTION NO. 1918

**A RESOLUTION OF THE GOLDEN CITY COUNCIL
APPROVING THE DOWNTOWN CHARACTER PLAN AND
INCORPORATING THE PLAN IN REFERENCE AS PART OF
THE GOLDEN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 1432, adopted on October 23, 2003, the City of Golden adopted the City of Golden Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Character Plan has been prepared to supplement portions of the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Golden Planning Commission has completed a study of the proposed plan and held several public comment opportunities relative to the plan; and

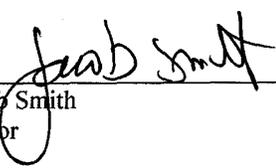
WHEREAS, the Golden City Council conducted a public hearing on the plan and its adoption on October 23, 2008.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GOLDEN, COLORADO:

Section 1. The Downtown Character Plan, as prepared by the committee made up of representatives from Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Board, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and GURA, is hereby approved in reference as part of the City of Golden Comprehensive Plan.

Section 2. In approving said Downtown Character Plan, City Council recognizes that said plan is a working and living document that must grow and remain flexible to meet the needs of the City of Golden. Therefore, said plan is approved with the understanding that Planning Commission and City Council will continue to review, analyze and amend the same as the needs of the community dictate and as based on good and proper planning considerations.

Adopted this 23rd day of October, 2008.



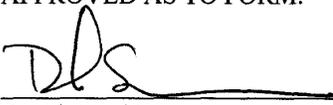
Jacob Smith
Mayor





Susan M. Brooks, MMC
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



David S. Williamson
City Attorney

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 2006 and with the support of City Council, representatives from four City Boards began working to develop a new set of planning documents for downtown Golden and the Clear Creek Corridor. The group named itself the “Downtown Character Committee.”

Each of these four Boards and Commission members brought a distinct mission and perspective, yet they all shared concern for the downtown area. By working cooperatively, these various perspectives were combined to create a comprehensive approach to the issues facing downtown Golden.

The Committee researched a variety of topics, including:

- A review and comparison of the goals and strategies of the many existing planning documents and studies
- Potential areas of expansion of the GURA district
- Potential improvement of the public domain along Clear Creek
- A review of the important historical and architectural elements of Downtown as the basis for improved design guidelines
- An analysis of the need for affordable housing programs in the GURA district and throughout the City
- Strategies to improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy for City operations as well as by Golden’s residents and businesses
- Strategies to improve the business mix of Downtown and keep it competitive and relevant into the future
- Strategies to improve and organize collaboration with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and the Colorado School of Mines (CSM)

This Committee employed numerous strategies to solicit public opinion on the above topics, including:

- Convened 12 focus groups to gain input from the following:
 - ◇ GURA/City Staff
 - ◇ Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
 - ◇ Golden Urban Renewal Authority
 - ◇ Students from Colorado School of Mines and Golden High School
 - ◇ Tourism and Golden Cultural Alliance
 - ◇ Historic Preservation Board
 - ◇ City Management Team
 - ◇ Planning Commission and City Council
 - ◇ Downtown property owners
 - ◇ Downtown merchants
 - ◇ Chamber of Commerce
 - ◇ Major Downtown Employers
 - ◇ Golden Architects
- Organized two open houses that attracted more than 75 participants
- Reviewed nearly 800 citizens’ comments
- Commissioned an independent review and report by planning, business and architect consultants through the Colorado Community Revitalization Association
- Commissioned a 3D digital visualization movie of downtown awning options
- Published several online and hard copy surveys to gauge public opinion on streetscape, business mix, awning design, pedestrian amenities, etc.

II. HIGHLIGHTS

The Downtown Golden Character Plan was prepared as a supplement to the Golden Comprehensive Plan.

A few highlights include:

1. Downtown Design Standards and Guidelines: This draft code, included as Appendix A, would mark a significant improvement in the City’s ability to guide the aesthetics of the downtown

area. Time and time again, citizens giving input to this process stressed the importance of maintaining downtown Golden's small town, historic character.

2. Walkability/Streetscape Improvements: For similar reasons, citizens consistently expressed their desire for a variety of improvements to the pedestrian and bicycle environments throughout the downtown area, and for better connections to the rest of the city. This report offers a number of suggestions on these topics, and many of them are already in progress or being planned by one or more of the Boards participating in this process.
3. Land Use: Citizens made frequent mention of a number of significant land use concerns. Among them were:
 - How to better integrate the public land and facilities along Clear Creek with the creek itself?
 - How to ensure that housing in and around downtown remains affordable to the socio-economic cross-section of residents currently living in the area?
 - How to create a dynamic economic future while maintaining the small town character of the area?

III. CITY-OWNED LAND

The City of Golden is the largest single land owner in the downtown area. The manner in which the City utilizes its land will have a tremendous impact on the future character and viability of the downtown area and the community as a whole. The plan recommends that:

Using input from the guiding principles of this Downtown Character Plan, as well as from the concurrent Parks and Recreation Master Plan, City Council should authorize a broad based comprehensive planning effort for all of the City owned land between 8th Street and 11th Street, from Tucker Gulch west to US 6. This study should look at all of the policy, use, and fiscal implications of a variety of land use alternatives. It is important that City Council take the lead in this effort. This opportunity to map the future of this public land for the next several generations is a critical effort the City must undertake to maintain and enhance downtown character.

While the study effort should consider all of the City-owned land in this area, the most often mentioned parcels where a vision and policy direction are needed include the following:

- Primary parcels for policy discussion include:
 - The area on the south side of Clear Creek between Illinois and Maple Streets. Community input for this parcel included recommendations for a picnic area, cultural or historic park use, trail head, and parking for trail head and kayak course use.
 - The City lot west of the library (if the library does not take ownership for an expansion). Community input for this parcel included ideas for relocated municipal uses, continued farmers market and parking, or other recreational uses.
 - Lions Park ball fields and tennis courts. In conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the committee has raised the question about whether it might make sense to relocate these community recreation facilities out of the downtown core, and to use this large area for other uses. This discussion was new to many participants, and the range of possible uses for this parcel is great.
 - Clear Creek Campground. Over the years, there have been many informal discussions about the possible expansion or enhancement of the campground. With this parcel as well, there are many opportunities ranging from a complete change of use, to enhancements of the existing campground facilities.
 - Lower level of old shops site. The fate of this parcel is a new topic for the community, and will be very relevant upon the completion of the new fire station at city hall. It could be retained for future municipal use, as it ties in with the water treatment plant, and it could potentially facilitate additional recreation, parking, or circulation purposes.
 - Upper (northwest) level of old shops site. This approximately 3.5 acre parcel above the water plant intake ponds also has many possible uses. The Committee believes this location presents an excellent opportunity for workforce housing. Other possibilities include parks and recreation and market-based housing and mixed-use development.

- Possible Changes to 10th Street near Lions Park and Community Center; access to Community Center parking from 9th. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has been identifying options to modify 10th Street near Lions Park in response to very heavy pedestrian activity near and crossing the street, fueled largely by the success of the kayak park and other Clear Creek uses. This concept is complicated by the amount of municipal uses west of this stretch of road; campground, community center, water plant, municipal offices, Canyon Gate apartments, and so must be part of the larger discussion of city land in the corridor.
- Possible new street from Community Center up to 8th Street through old shops site. Both the 8th and 9th Street neighborhood plan, and the input to the committee indicates that traffic to the public uses and city facilities creates impacts on the neighborhood north of Clear Creek. The committee recommends that the possibility of a street connection from the end of 10th Street up to 8th Street through the shops site be investigated.
- New buildings should either reflect period architecture representative of the commercial core, or blend in with the historic character of the existing buildings.
- Emphasize essential (workforce) housing in the core neighborhoods and downtown.
- Promote increased housing density (of all types) in the downtown commercial core.
- Recognize that flexibility and/or incentives may be necessary for certain projects to achieve community goals.
- Emphasize recreational gathering places of an appropriate scale for downtown.
- Be a leader in sustainability and environmental initiatives.
- Beautify side streets leading to the Clear Creek Corridor to encourage people to walk to and through the area.
- Increase the emphasis on public art, but consider more organized approach, and not focusing only on bronzes.
- Require property owners and businesses to better maintain buildings, facades, and sidewalks.
- Include view preservation regulations for Table Mountains and Mt. Zion from key locations on Ford, Jackson, Washington, and Arapahoe in the downtown design guidelines.

IV. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In reviewing the substantial public input received by the committee over the period of mid 2006 through mid 2007, there is a great deal of consensus within the community about the desired character, and feel of the downtown area. The following are presented as the guiding principles for specific policy plans of the four boards and the City, as well as general city implementation. There are also a number of specific recommendations listed throughout the report as well as in the various appendices.

- Maintain the current, small town, and historic character of Golden.
- Balance growth and redevelopment pressures and the need to maintain community character.
- Increase the emphasis on making downtown pedestrian friendly and creating pleasant safe, walkable experiences for residents visiting or living downtown, and those using services.
- Preserve as many of the existing core area buildings of historic significance as possible, in part using incentives.

V. SPECIFIC CAPITAL OR OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Using the input received from the public, the committee also assembled a number of recommendations for City actions or regulatory changes. These recommendations include the following:

Pedestrian Improvements

- Install pedestrian improvements at intersections and traffic calming
- Install pedestrian improvements crossing Ford at 14th
- Improve the pedestrian route from 14th to 19th (could be Jackson or Washington)
- Install pedestrian and streetscape improvements – 13th, Washington to Ford
- Install pedestrian and streetscape improvements

for museum/ history park corridor - Arapahoe Street, 13th to 11th Streets

- Install pedestrian and streetscape improvements – Jackson, 14th to 24th
- Install pedestrian and streetscape improvements – Washington, SH 58 to Iowa
- Install pedestrian and streetscape improvements – Washington, 14th to 19th
- Install pedestrian and streetscape improvements – 12th, Washington to Ford
- Construct a second connection to SH 58 pedestrian bridge from the 8th Street neighborhood
- Improve the safety of the pedestrian crossing of US 6 at 19th Street

Bicycle Improvements

- Add bike-racks in appropriate locations
- Add bike lockers at 10th and Washington

Trail Improvements

- Install the south bank Clear Creek trail extension - Maple to US 6 and along US 6 to 19th St.
- Extend the unpaved trails up the Canyon from the US 6 bridge
- Create a loop trail on both sides of Clear Creek both west of Illinois Street and between Washington Avenue and Ford Street
- Improve parking and pedestrian areas for creek and park users at kayak area
- Increased signage, waste bags and enforcement for pets along the Clear Creek trail
- Install mileage markers along trails to encourage walking

Streetscape/façade Improvements

- Promote a redesign of the covered walkways on Washington Avenue, eliminating the posts, and balancing the benefits of variety and consistency
- Continued and increased clean-up of downtown streets, sidewalks, and Miners and Prospectors Alleys
- Install pedestrian and landscape oriented alley improvements, cooperatively approached with owners businesses, and users
- Build more and wider sidewalks and take advantage of streetscaping opportunities in

general and specifically north of SH 58

- Participate in the new Washington Avenue Bridge over SH 58
- Discuss an ordinance requiring a minimum amount of maintenance on buildings and properties in the downtown area

Signage Improvements

- Update and redo city billboard on 6th Avenue
- Install landscape and signage enhancements at gateways
- Update and redo downtown directional signs

Public and Recreational Amenities

- Encourage more outdoor seating
- Implement a stricter smoking ordinance downtown
- Enforce reasonable use of sidewalk for private use... not too much merchandise, signs, clutter
- Continue regular kayak course dredging and rebuilding as needed
- Finalize location for bandshell or similar entertainment venue

The committee hopes that City Council will incorporate the above suggestions and principles in future City decisions for the community and specifically for the downtown area.

Chapter 1

DOWNTOWN GOLDEN

I. PROJECT PURPOSE AND GOALS

The Downtown Golden Character Plan provides the framework for an update and refinement of a number of prior planning documents including the 1989 Golden Urban Renewal Plan and 2003 Golden Comprehensive Plan Update. The Character Plan provides the Golden community the opportunity to assure that the policies and planning documents that guide public decisions are consistent with the community vision. The Character Plan is intended to:

- provide community input for an update of the Golden Urban Renewal Plan.
- provide land use and redevelopment recommendations for preservation and redevelopment opportunities in the downtown area.
- provide recommendations for public investment in the downtown area, public realm, parks and open space areas, and streetscape
- provide recommendations for update and refinement of design standards and guidelines for construction and alterations in the downtown area.
- provide the policy and design connections between the downtown area and the surrounding neighborhoods.

For purposes of this study, the downtown character zone is defined as extending from State Highway 58 on the north, to the commercial area near Golden High School on the south, and extending from the generally defined edges of the adjacent residential neighborhoods and CSM on the east and west. While these abutting neighborhoods and CSM have a strong influence on the downtown area, and are influenced by them, they are best addressed in separate planning efforts on a smaller and scale.

II. HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF DOWNTOWN GOLDEN

Golden was founded during the gold rush of 1859, but gold seekers were not its first inhabitants. The area had been frequented by the

Ute, Arapaho, and Cheyenne tribes, as well as early trappers Louis Vasquez and Rufus Sage. Most sources agree that the town was named for settler Tom Golden, one of the early miners who panned gold in the valley of Clear Creek.

A toll bridge, two stores, and the county's first commercial garden were among the settlers' first endeavors. Golden's location at the mouth of Clear Creek Canyon furthered the town's aspirations as a supply center and aided its role as a transportation hub for freight wagons and, later, the railroad. Although Golden was the site of the Territorial Capital from 1862 to 1867, it permanently lost the state capital to Denver when Colorado achieved statehood. Instead, the town grew slowly but steadily as a supply center for the mining districts in the mountains to the west. Although Golden lost the capital to Denver, it remained the Jefferson County seat and built a splendid brick courthouse that shared the hill with the Colorado School of Mines campus. Golden also grew as an industrial town. Clear Creek provided water for milling, smelting, manufacturing, and generating electricity. Local coal mines yielded resources for early industry and employed many local residents. Early Golden industries also included a cigar factory, candy factory, paper mill, glass plant, three lime kilns, and several stone quarries.

Town building was aided by the clay deposits that supplied material for local brickmaking. Wood was used less frequently in construction because it had to be brought down from Clear Creek Canyon. However, cannonball-sized stones from the creek were used in foundations, retaining walls, and porches of many local buildings, as well as in the Armory Building at Thirteenth and Arapahoe Streets.

Golden became the site of the Colorado School of Mines in the 1870s. After a church-financed schoolhouse on the eastern edge of Golden blew down in a windstorm, a brick classroom was constructed on the present-day campus. City fathers W. A. H. Loveland, Charles C. Welch, and Edward L. Berthoud helped establish the college, either by serving on the board of trustees or by contributing funds or land to the fledgling school. Today the world-class institution offers degree programs that include engineering, geology, and environmental sciences.

The Coors brewery is another early enterprise that has had a lasting influence in Golden. Founded by German immigrant Adolph Coors, the brewing company has grown from a small stone building near the foot of Castle Rock to an industrial complex that expands eastward along the Clear Creek Valley. Brewery tours have become a major attraction for visitors coming to Golden. In the early 1900s, Coors branched out into ceramics manufacturing, a sideline that later helped sustain the company during Prohibition. Today, Coors is the largest single-site brewery in the world, producing many million barrels of beer per year.

Progressive in their thinking, the founders of Golden strived to stay on the cutting edge of technology and economic sustainability. Their pioneering spirit extended past the post-Civil War period and into the early 20th Century era and acknowledged Golden's growth and development as an important commercial city attracting a diverse group of industries and retail commerce. Today, we continue in their spirit and consider how Golden citizens can now live, work, and play within the community and public realm in the 21st Century.

III. DOWNTOWN GOLDEN TODAY

Like many towns across America, land use and development patterns in the downtown area began to change after World War II. The expansion of the highway system and the introduction of suburban style subdivisions and shopping alternatives increased pressures on downtown areas. By the 1970's, downtown Golden's role as the economic, social, cultural, and governmental center of the City had begun to erode rapidly. Increasingly, the community's retail and service needs were met by outlying developments, and downtown vacancy increased. By the 1980's, Golden residents and property owners agreed on an urgent need to intervene to reverse the economic downward trend in property condition and general economic vitality.

The results of this commitment included the establishment of the Golden Urban Renewal Authority (GURA) in 1989, substantial public investment in downtown infrastructure throughout the 1990's, and a number of major redevelopment projects to increase downtown jobs, residents, and business opportunities, most encouraged or aided by GURA, the City, and the Golden Civic Foundation (a local non-profit organization).

In 2006 and 2007, the downtown area of Golden continues to change and evolve. Public investment in parking and other public infrastructure continues, with a focus on the Clear Creek Corridor, public art, and active recreation uses. New construction is bringing additional residents and commercial space. Lodging, restaurant, and retail uses associated with active recreation appear to be thriving, while general retail and specialty arts and gift shops appear to struggle against the competition and changes in retailing practices. While downtown Golden appears vibrant and active, there is a great need to define the desired course for the core of the community for the next few decades. Those participating in planning Golden's future can take comfort in the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of Loveland, Berthoud, and West – all of whom embraced the challenge of guiding Golden's early evolution from little more than a tent city by a river to the Territorial Capitol.

IV. DOWNTOWN GOLDEN CHARACTER AREA MAP

The Downtown Golden Character Area Map (Figure 1) depicts the study area and certain adjacent neighborhoods, including conditions as of 2006. The map is divided into a number of character zones as follows:

8th Street West

- This area is primarily characterized by municipal uses, restaurants, outdoor storage, and high-density residential. A pedestrian trail also moves through the area, and connects to the neighborhood north of State Highway 58.
- This area is near the intersection of US 6, SH 93, and SH 58. As such, heavy traffic moves near the area and relatively high noise levels exist. A proposal for a high speed beltway connection known as the Northwest Corridor would further impact this area if realized, increasing the noise and traffic levels.

Clear Creek Corridor

- This area is dominated almost entirely by municipal, CSM, and recreation uses. Pedestrian and recreational activities are at the highest levels of any location in the City. The short term future

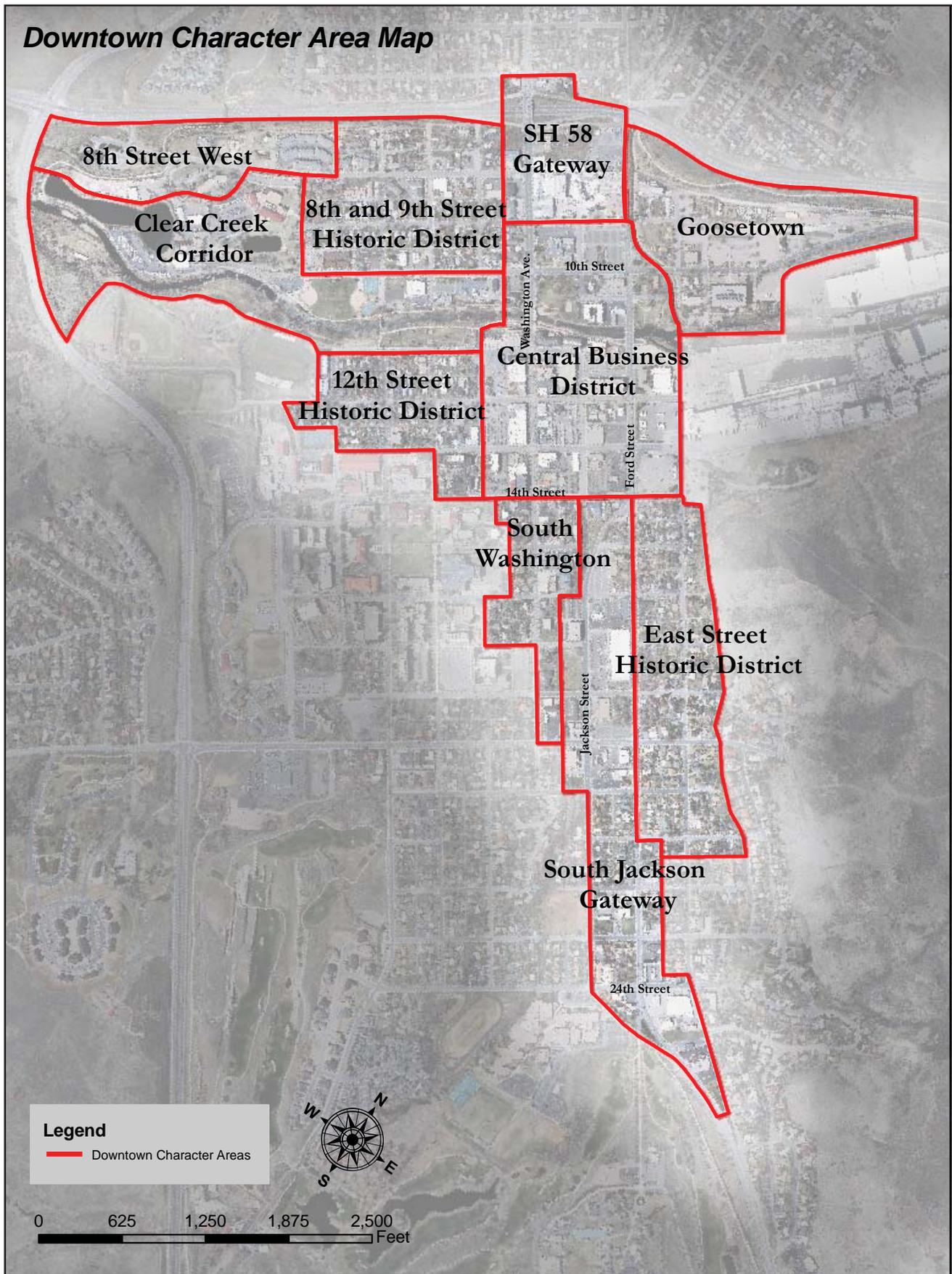


Figure 1. Downtown Character Area Map

of this area is a special focus of this effort, and the concurrent Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

8th and 9th Street Historic District

- This area is mostly residential of varying densities. Light commercial uses, restaurants, and primary education uses are also present.

12th Street Historic District

- This area is mostly single family detached residential. Some higher density residential uses exist.
- Calvary Episcopal Church is in this area and is expanding its campus.
- Light commercial uses, office, and light retail uses are also scattered along the eastern edge of the area.

Central Business District

- Most of the high density commercial, retail, and restaurant and bar uses in Golden are present in this area.
- Most of the historic commercial buildings giving character to the perception of the city are located in this area.

High density residential is concentrated along the Washington Ave and Clear Creek Corridors.

- The historic main Post Office and other community icons appear in this area, including the old North High School (now the American Mountaineering Center).
- Recreation and park uses exist along the Clear Creek Corridor within the CBD.

SH 58 Gateway

- This area is dominated by the Coors Tek operation.
- Convenience retail and a few residential uses are also present.

Goosetown

- This area is a unique mix of industrial, office, and residential structures and uses.
- A railroad spur also runs through the area to the north.
- There is a potential that the light rail Gold line could enter into this area from the northeast in the

distant future (25 plus years), and it is important that this opportunity be preserved and protected.

South Washington

- Mostly light commercial, office and an art center. Some restaurant uses.
- Some residential of mixed densities.

South Jackson Gateway

- This area has some strip-style commercial development with office, restaurant, retail, and auto maintenance. An urban style grocery anchor dominates the area between 16th and 18th streets.
- Some commercial recreation (bowling alley) and a significant redevelopment opportunity exist near 24th Street.
- Mixed density residential is located throughout the area.

East Street Historic District

- Mostly single family residential – some higher density.
- Some light office, restaurant, and commercial along Ford Street.
- A portion of this neighborhood was rezoned in 2007 from multi-family uses to a zone district characterized by single family dwellings, more in keeping with the current land uses.

IV. EXISTING ZONING MAP

The Existing Zoning Map (Figure 2) shows the zoning classifications for the study area. The zoning patterns in the study area are primarily derived from the original zoning effort in 1949 and 1950, as modified by a large community rezoning in 1960. The map shows a large commercial core, surrounded by neighborhoods (often zoned R-3) and a mixture of zoning classifications along the Ford and Jackson Street corridor out to the Golden High School area.

Downtown Character Area Zoning Map

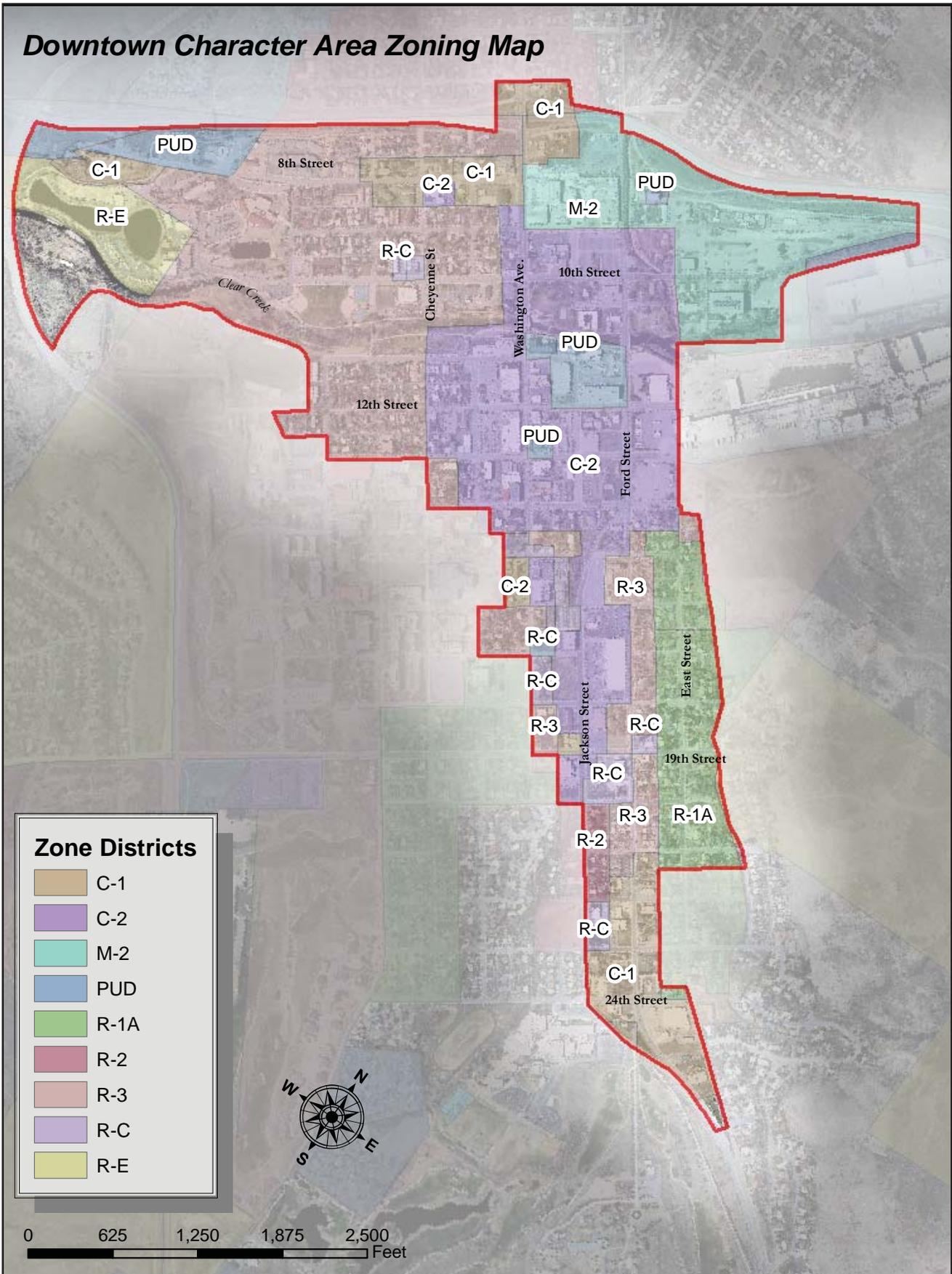


Figure 2. Downtown Character Area Zoning Map

EXISTING VISION, GOALS, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

In 2006 and 2007, Downtown Golden is an area of change as well as great opportunity to become one of the premier urban spaces in the region, while preserving its character and unique feel. The pedestrian scale and walkability of the area have attracted much redevelopment activity. While the later chapters in this plan address specific details, this chapter presents the overall goals and vision of Downtown and a summary of prior strategies. The Vision Statement below is based on the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. The Goals are specific to Downtown, and are based upon a combination of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, 1994 Downtown Sub-Area Plan, and 1989 Golden Urban Renewal Plan. In preparing this summary plan, the Committee believes that the community vision for downtown Golden articulated in these prior documents is still valid as the general goal.

I. THE VISION

Golden is a unique and distinctive place which takes advantage of its natural and cultural resources. The city preserves historic buildings, independent small-town character, and friendly atmosphere.

Golden is a pleasant place to live, work, and visit. The city is a community that blends old and new in a manner that respects and maintains a timeless character based on its rich past and a bold vision for the future.

The city has a full spectrum of land uses, distinguishable neighborhoods, housing, job opportunities, and art, culture, and recreation options, making it possible for people of various backgrounds and incomes to live, work, shop, get services, be educated, and recreate here. The city's economy is strong and flexible, and is positioned to remain that way into the future, even one increasingly dependent on technology and the global economy.

Land uses are arranged to be convenient and accessible for residents. Travel in the city and to the surrounding region is comfortable and convenient for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and auto drivers. The city has an intimate pedestrian atmosphere and a walkable environment.

Most additional development in the city takes the form of infill and redevelopment. Change takes place in a compatible and positive manner, so that the city's attractive qualities are maintained. Neighborhood connectivity is maintained.

The city has an infrastructure that provides quality and cost-effective public services, leads the way with a commitment to continual reinvestment in the city, and creates a public realm that inspires and generates pride.

Preservation and improvement of the natural environment, including Clear Creek and the surrounding mountains, is vitally important to Golden's character. Environmental impacts associated with transportation, growth, and development are minimized and mitigated to protect existing and future residents and workers of Golden. View Corridors from Golden to the foothills, Mesas, and Clear Creek are preserved.

Informal social interaction and formal associations are both important aspects of life in Golden. Residents feel they are part of Golden as a whole.

II. SUMMARY OF DOWNTOWN GOALS AND POLICIES

The overall direction for goals for this part of the community can be found in the Comprehensive Plan, 1994 Downtown Sub-Area Plan, and the 1989 GURA Plan. This section contains an inventory of the goals and policies from these three documents, which have been combined and presented according to the policy categories contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

The primary policy goal for Downtown Golden is that the community should maintain the distinctiveness of Downtown Golden by:

Character:

- Preserving its friendly small-town and Main Street character.
- Preserving and improving its natural, historical, scenic and cultural resources.
- Improving the mix of residential and commercial

land uses to strengthen the downtown character.

- Ensuring that change takes place in a compatible and positive manner both within downtown and in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Ensuring site development reflects and respects historic building heights, mass, bulk, size, setbacks, materials and orientation.
- Making downtown an inviting place where activities, such as special events, would occur to attract visitors and gather townspeople.

Land Use:

- Encouraging zoning designations and development that reinforces the area's historic character and high quality.
- Diversifying into a wide variety of compatible and economically viable land uses, services and activities to include specialty retail, lodging, multi-family housing, hotel and convention, artistic, research & development, services, commercial, entertainment, special events, and civic activity.
- Ensuring that development, redevelopment and remodeling provide an intimate pedestrian atmosphere, pedestrian amenities, a walkable environment, pedestrian improvements that link to neighborhoods, natural features, landscaping and seasonal color.
- Encouraging growth primarily through infill and redevelopment within the existing fabric and character of downtown and which is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.
- Encouraging revitalization and redevelopment of highly visible and underutilized areas to realize image, livability and economic benefits, especially on strategic parcels along Washington Ave.

Physical Surroundings of Downtown

- Protecting and preserving hillside slopes and retaining strategic public ownership as open space.
- Ensuring that the Clear Creek Corridor and trail system has access to the downtown businesses and special amenities that complement the downtown.
- Emphasizing the presence of Clear Creek in the downtown and the development of the Clear Creek as a setting for festival parks, environmental preservation, trails, and community parks.

Housing

- Encouraging a variety of housing types, prices, densities, sizes, and architectural variety.

Transportation and Parking

- Encouraging a variety of modes of travel to access downtown by identifying key vehicular, pedestrian and bikeway gateways and entryways to downtown and providing information regarding locations from shopping, business and public uses.
- Promoting pedestrian, vehicular and transit linkages to connect the downtown business areas with the Colorado School of Mines, Coors, and the Clear Creek Corridor.
- Enhancing access into downtown from the north and south.
- Providing accessible, visible, high quality and attractive urban parking facilities designed with people as well as vehicles in mind.
- Developing parking strategies to reduce demand for surface parking through construction of parking structures, provision of shuttles, and provision of pedestrian and bike linkages.

Economic Vitality

- Maintaining existing businesses while growing a variety of thriving and diverse businesses and new business opportunities.
- Promoting destination, stopover, or day-visit tourism, while providing activities and programs for both tourism and non-tourism businesses.
- Encouraging businesses that are not dependent on on-site parking to locate downtown.
- Encouraging local merchants to employ more responsive retail strategies that may include window display, promotion, and longer business hours.
- Encouraging connections with Coors Tour Visitor Center and Colorado School of Mines that will support the growth of downtown.

III. SUMMARY OF PREVIOUSLY ENDORSED STRATEGIES

The 1989 GURA Plan and 2003 Comprehensive Plan each contain specific recommendations for strategies to help achieve overall goals and the vision for the downtown area. In reviewing such strategies, it must be noted that many of the strategies are ongoing and some have been accomplished or are no longer relevant due to changed circumstances. These strategies are presented in Appendix B.

Chapter 3

TOP ISSUES AND RESEARCH

In preparing for this discussion of the downtown area, it was determined that a number of policy or subject areas should be evaluated to provide additional background information for the community discussion. Initially the below issues were identified where specific research was to be completed during the project. This chapter contains a summary of the status and results of these research efforts, by topic as of summer 2007.

A. DESIRED MIX OF LAND USES IN CHARACTER ZONES

An updated mix of land uses for 10 individual character zones will be an outcome of the community input and discussion process included in this project. In general, the existing goals, policies and strategies recommend:

- Increased housing of various multifamily styles and various price ranges in the mixed use commercial areas.
- Increased unique retail uses and convenience uses for downtown residents and visitors.
- Increased office employment uses.
- Public uses and community cultural and recreation uses.

Opportunities and Preservation

Through the public input and open house process, the committee developed a map of specific individual buildings where preservation of existing structures is recommended, as well as a few locations where redevelopment of the site has been proposed in the past, either by the land owner or the community. The Opportunities and Preservation map (Figure 3) is intended to be a reference for the City and GURA in the future when discussing these specific locations.

Businesses

Through the various surveys, open houses, etc, the Committee received hundreds of ideas for restaurants and retail businesses that citizens felt would be good in Golden. The most common suggestions included breakfast, fast casual and family dining options, and more Asian cuisine

restaurants such as Thai, Japanese, or Indian. There was also a large group of Open House attendees who indicated they would like a bookstore in Downtown Golden. There were also many suggestions for specific retail businesses that people would like to see in Downtown Golden, including practical clothing stores, children's stores, office supplies, a wine shop, and shoe stores.

One survey question asked, "Would you shop in Downtown Golden if most stores were open on Sundays?" Eighty percent of respondents said yes. Additionally, seventy percent said they would shop in Downtown Golden on weekend nights if most stores were open.

While there is strong support for enabling the success of local, independent businesses, others suggested the need for striking a balance between independent stores and chains. Some offered that national chains could be acceptable as long as they are held to design standards and zoning requirements. There is an emphasis on making sure the businesses fit with Golden's character. The theme of balance extended to the goods sold within the businesses. For example, one person commented, "Balance anchor stores with independent businesses. If possible, favor the independent businesses. Balance expensive boutiques with cheap shops. Variety is best."

Streetscape

Most people surveyed like the planters on Washington Ave. and they listed a variety of features that they like about them, including the flowers, trash receptacles, and seating. A majority of respondents (93%) expressed an interest in seeing the streetscape (sandstone planters, benches, trees, and streetlights) on Washington Ave. extended to other parts of Golden. The two most common areas suggested for this extension were south on Washington Ave. to 19th Street and east on 13th Street towards the Coors plant.

There are mixed feelings in the community about the covered walkways in Downtown Golden. While many people think they may need to be changed or redesigned, few people want them to be removed altogether. A group of survey respondents would like them to remain, but with the vertical

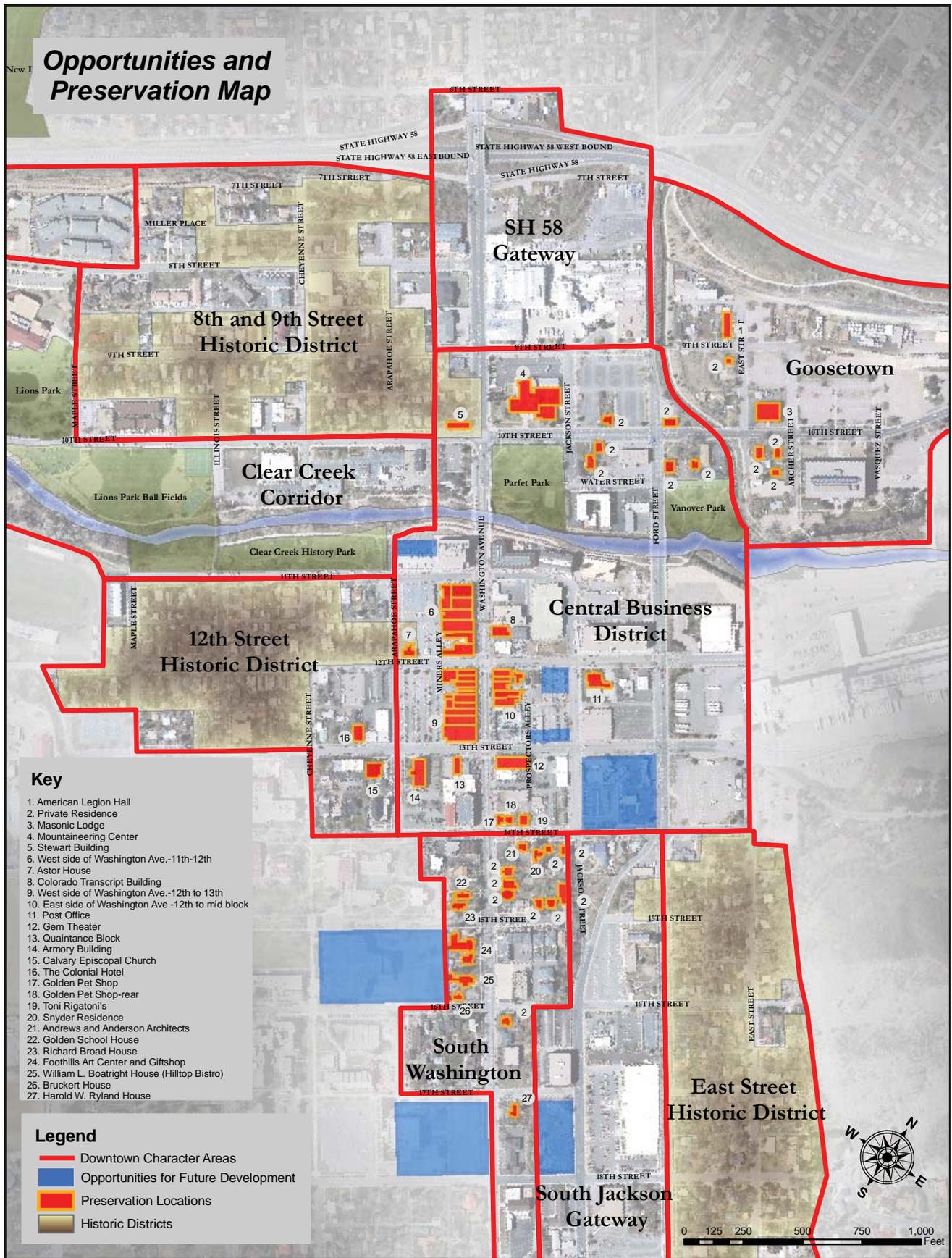


Figure 3. Opportunities and Preservation Map

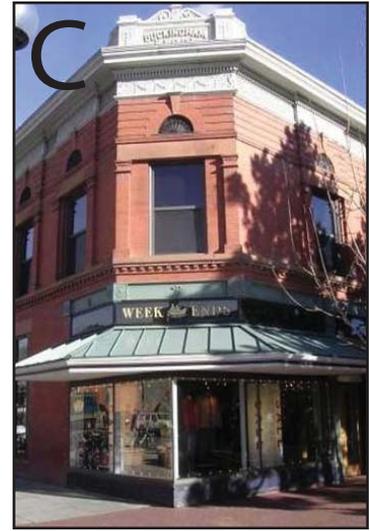
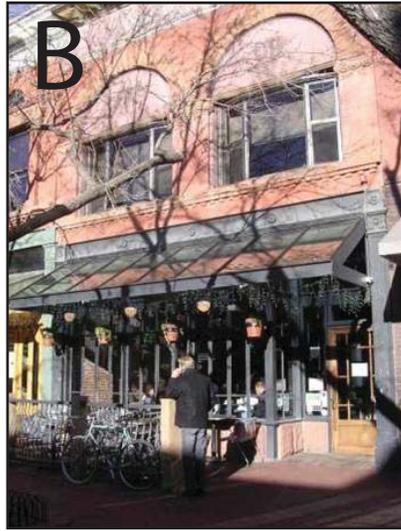


Figure 4. Awning Survey Results.
 A - 56% positive responses
 B - 62.5% positive responses
 C - 68% positive responses

columns removed. Another group would either like covered walkways to be totally removed or redesigned. There is not a strong consensus about the preferred solution. In February and March 2007, the Downtown Character Committee conducted an online survey of awning styles. Survey respondents were asked which of the following best described the awning in a photo: 1) A great fit for Golden; 2) Perhaps appropriate for Golden; 3) Neutral or unsure; 4) Not a great fit for Golden; or 5) Inappropriate for Golden.

Above are the three photos that received the highest percentage of positive responses on the online awning survey. Positive responses were either “A Great Fit for Golden” or “Perhaps Appropriate for Golden.”

An outside analysis of recommended land use mix is contained in Appendix E, the Colorado Community Revitalization Association report from the December, 2006 Downtown Character Committee series of focus groups. The recommendations from this group reinforce the current goals and policies, especially as it pertains to developing the Clear Creek Corridor into a more cohesive set of public spaces. The CCRA team also recommends improving the downtown design guidelines, attracting another small hotel (50-100 beds), and recruiting “fast casual” franchise restaurants. Another recommendation from the CCRA team is that the community considers relocating City Hall to the current shops area, using the sale of the current City Hall property to finance the new buildings. The vacated site could be redeveloped to both improve public use of the Creek and create new commercial opportunities

consistent with the neighborhood/creekside setting. Such a change would have to be weighed against the many benefits of keeping the City’s administration in the heart of the City.

B. DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Early in the committee discussions, there was a recognized need to update the City’s site development standards for the core of the Downtown area, to better reflect the guiding principles being developed for this project. The proposed design standards and guidelines attempt to preserve the recommended Main street character of downtown through the maintenance and restoration of its architectural integrity. The project goals include the following:

- a. Retain distinct architectural features that give the downtown its distinguishing character. This goal is accomplished by recognizing and respecting the architectural features of downtown’s most distinguished historic structures.
- b. New construction and additions to existing buildings should recognize the predominant size and bulk of existing buildings through design considerations.
- c. Use new elements such as landscaping materials, fencing, streetscape elements that are compatible with the character of the neighborhood in size, scale, material and color.
- d. Retain landscape features such as parks, street lights, benches, walkways, alleys, and building setbacks that have traditionally linked buildings to their environment.

The draft Downtown Design Standards and Guidelines have been prepared as an iterative project with input from individual downtown owners and designers, as projects have been discussed. In addition, a focus group of interested architects reviewed an earlier draft document and made several suggestions reflected in the current draft. The next steps in this project would be continued stakeholder discussion, and a public hearing process by Planning Commission and City Council.

C. ESSENTIAL/ AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Citizens and the committee members feel that housing in and around the downtown is an issue and will become more of an issue in the future. As listed above the two major recommendations are:

- Emphasize essential (workforce) housing in the core neighborhoods and downtown.
- Promote increased housing density (of all types) in the downtown commercial core.

The comments from citizens that related to housing fell into three themes: affordability, density, and a desire for letting “organic” growth happen. While “organic” was not defined, we assume it to mean growth without direct government subsidy or direction. In terms of affordability, one person commented, “I’m concerned about the affordability to live in Downtown Golden.” However, there is some disagreement about this issue. Another person commented, “I feel that low income housing can’t support the retail businesses with the high rents in Downtown Golden.” Some comments on affordability mentioned the terms workforce housing and essential housing. There is also some disagreement on the preferred density in Downtown. A few people conveyed distaste for the high density of new housing in Downtown Golden. However, others expressed an interest in promoting connections between retail and neighborhoods in order to support businesses. One person commented, “Increasing density downtown will help ensure vibrancy of businesses and more residential is critical.”

The issue of providing and encouraging opportunities for essential housing for workforce households is a very complex issue in the community as a whole, and even more complicated in the downtown area, where land values are among the highest, and housing styles are limited by market

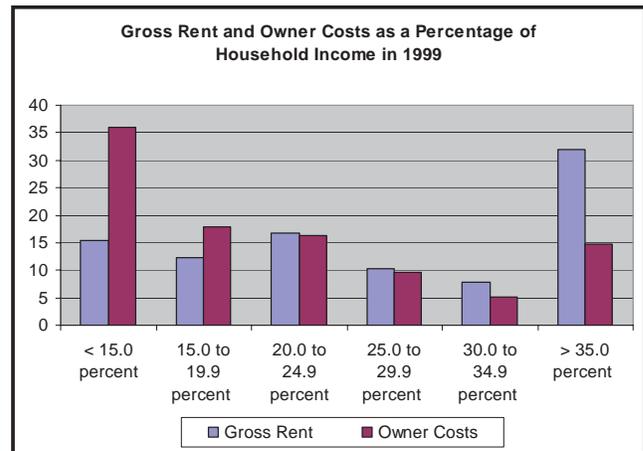


Figure 5. Ownership Costs vs. Household Income for Golden Residents – 1999
Source: U.S. Census

forces to attached and multi-family buildings. However, housing affordability may impact a community’s economic and social health if it prevents families from a range of incomes from living here.

Housing Costs

The concept of the housing cost burden relates to the percentage of an individual’s income that is allocated for housing costs. If more than 30% of one’s income is spent on housing, a person is considered burdened by housing costs. This definition and many others related to housing can be found on the National Low Income Housing Coalition web site, which has a glossary of terms.¹ The following chart (Figure 5) displays the percentage Golden residents spent on housing costs per month at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census. Nearly 40% of renters and 20% of owners in Golden spent more than 30% of their monthly household income on housing costs. Although this data has not been updated since 2000, the ratio comparison should be valid.

Income

The median household income in Golden was estimated to be \$56,936 in 2006. This estimate is based on Census 2000 data and more updated data sources, such as the American Community Survey.² Golden’s median household income is lower than the median for Jefferson County, which was estimated

¹ http://www.nlihc.org/detail/article.cfm?article_id=2823&id=46

² Demographics Now, <http://www.demographicsnow.com/AllocateOnline.srct?ShowPage=static/methodology.htm>

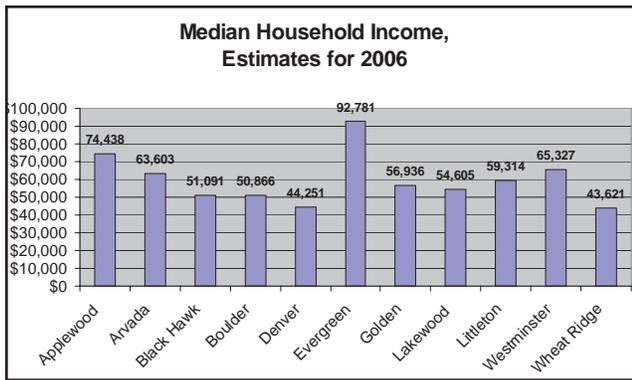


Figure 6. Median Household Income - 2006
 Source: U.S. Census; 2006 estimates obtained from Demographics Now <http://www.demographicsnow.com>

to be \$66,422 in 2006. The chart below (Figure 6) compares median household incomes for several cities within the Denver metropolitan region.

Existing Programs

Below are some examples of existing programs that are available to Golden residents:

- Canyon Gate is a senior housing property, consisting of 52 one-bedroom units. It is located at 1411 Eighth Street in Golden. Residents must be at least 62 years old and their income must be 50% of Area Median Income or less. Residents pay 30% of their income for rent.
- The Jefferson County Housing Authority also administers the Housing Choice Voucher program, which provides rental vouchers that can be used for any rental unit on the market. Currently, there are approximately 100 of these vouchers in use in Golden.³
- Homeownership assistance programs through the Colorado Housing Assistance Corporation (CHAC) and the Colorado Housing Finance Agency (CHAFA). These agencies provide education and down payment assistance to Colorado residents.
- Housing rehab assistance through Jefferson County. Homeowners or landlords apply for low-interest loans that would fund improvements to bring the homes up to city code, or otherwise upgrade the home. Improvements can include plumbing, electrical, weatherizing, facade improvements, or structural problems.

³ Alan Feinstein, Director of the Jefferson County Housing Authority, 10/24/06 telephone interview.

Potential Programs

Below are some concepts for essential or affordable housing that have been implemented in other communities and which could be implemented in Golden:

- Self help housing. The families who will occupy the homes must assist with approximately 65% of construction under qualified supervision. Savings created through the reduction of labor costs and low-interest loans allow families to own homes that they would be unable to own otherwise. The Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) has developed a fact sheet that provides detailed information on this program at http://www.ruralhome.org/servicesLoans_SelfHelpHousing.php. Additionally, HAC conducted an in-depth study of this program, which is available at <http://www.ruralhome.org/manager/uploads/creatingthevillage.pdf>.
- Land trust programs. These programs make homes available at lower prices by separating ownership of the home from the land upon which it is built. The land trust retains ownership of the land, which reduces the price of the home, often by approximately \$30,000 to \$50,000, or higher if the market justifies it. For more information on community land trusts and to see examples, see the Institute for Community Economics web site (<http://www.iceclt.org/clt/>).
- Tax credit housing. Administered by the Internal Revenue Service, and the Colorado Housing Finance Agency, this program allocates the federal tax credits to developers based on a competitive application process. The capital from the sale of tax credits is used to reduce the debt on a development. The debt reduction keeps rents affordable in tax credit units for 30 years.
- Good-looking housing. Affordable housing used to be inferior to market rate housing. This is no longer the case. New affordable housing can offer very competitive amenities and blend seamlessly with market rate neighbors. Examples of such can be found below and at Affordable Housing Design Advisor (www.designadvisor.org).

Examples of Successful Developments

This section provides examples of high-quality, successful affordable housing developments throughout the U.S. More examples can be found on the Affordable Housing Design Advisor web



West Hopkins Townhouses in Aspen, Colorado is an infill project of for-sale units built on donated land.



Lowry Redevelopment Authority is currently developing an additional 72 single-family homes that will be available to households that earn 80% or less of Area Median Income, to be complete in 2008.



In Issaquah, Washington, first-time homeowners were able to purchase the Lake Park Townhomes, which were completed in 1987.

Figure 7. Successful Affordable Housing Developments.

site.⁴ These examples cover a variety of financing methods, including tax credits, donation of public land, and low-cost construction techniques.

While there are certainly challenges to finding affordable housing in Golden, there are several opportunities available if the community chooses to make this a priority. The ideas and issues mentioned here will be explored in depth in an affordable housing report to be written by GURA by year's end.

⁴ Affordable Housing Design Advisor, <http://www.designadvisor.org>

D. ENERGY AND RESOURCE-EFFICIENCY GUIDELINES

Although the focus of the Open Houses on February 25th and 26th did not include sustainability there were still enough attendees interested in these issues to make it one of the frequent suggestion categories. Comments related to using renewable energy for City operations, mass transit, and as a business recruitment strategy. Others suggested energy efficiency, reduction of CO2 emissions, and improved recycling options.

Both GURA and City Council have indicated a commitment to establishing programs for municipal and community efforts to improve energy and

resource efficiency. These programs are being addressed in the City Council sponsored Golden Sustainability Initiative officially begun in early 2007. Such programs would use a combination of public education/outreach, financial incentives, and regulation to improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy.

In July, GURA launched a small business energy efficiency pilot program to encourage the business and property owner community to make energy efficient improvements. For each business, GURA will fully subsidize an audit and will pay up 50% of the cost of the improvements, up to \$2,000. If this project is successful, it may be made a permanent project of GURA and it may be expanded throughout the City as an Economic Development Commission project.

E. INTEGRATED PUBLIC SPACES AND CORRIDORS

The ideas presented by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to more fully integrate the public and private spaces bordering Clear Creek were illustrated in the maps (Figures 8 and 9) prepared for the Committee.

The public input on this topic seems to show a consensus that Clear Creek should be preserved as a greenway and not developed. Many Open House attendees expressed how much they enjoy the trails and having the green space so close to Downtown Golden. They view it as a unique community asset and wish to ensure its preservation. There is also a common desire to extend and connect the trails that run along the creek and improve access and connections to the trails. Some respondents suggested additional recreational amenities along the creek.

F.POTENTIALGURABOUNDARYADJUSTMENTS

The Committee discussed potential GURA boundary adjustments and potential additional district areas, and it believes there is a continuing and active role for GURA. The Committee believes that a detailed financial analysis and additional public input are necessary prior to undertaking the appropriate studies necessary to bring the advantages and benefits of urban renewal to properties adjacent to the current GURA District.

G. COLLABORATION WITH CSM AND NREL

Coordination and collaboration among the City, CSM, and NREL is a critical part of the City's economic development efforts and regional public policy discussions. In the context of this study, no further analysis was undertaken regarding how this effort would best support downtown character goals. This should be an ongoing effort of high priority.

H. FASTRACKS AND OTHER TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

One of the major themes that came out of the Open Houses related to alternative transportation and improving bike lanes and pedestrian paths. Suggestions included providing more connections, extensions, and access points. Attendees would like to see the trails adjacent to Clear Creek extended. There is also a desire for improved transportation facilities, such as a local circulator like the former GUS BUS and for a new service that would connect Golden to the coming light rail terminus.

There were also many comments on widening sidewalks, maintaining trails, and improving pedestrian crosswalks at key intersections. Several people mentioned that the outdoor seating and smoking areas obstruct the pedestrian path and negatively impact downtown users.

As the public input and committee debate of the downtown character plan discussions continued, the Regional Transportation District's (RTD's) metropolitan transit plan known as FasTracks proceeded through various levels of design, value engineering, and cost containment efforts. The (to be determined) transit connections from the community to the end of line light rail station at US 6 and Johnson Road are the biggest issues affecting transit's role in the downtown area. In 2008, the City will start a Transportation Demand Management study for the central part of the community that will also evaluate effective alternatives to provide good circulator service in the community along with necessary connections to the light rail system. The City must also be mindful of the long-term potential for extension of the Gold Line and/or West Corridor Line to downtown Golden and potential routes for interconnecting this with a new passenger rail system supplementing I-70.

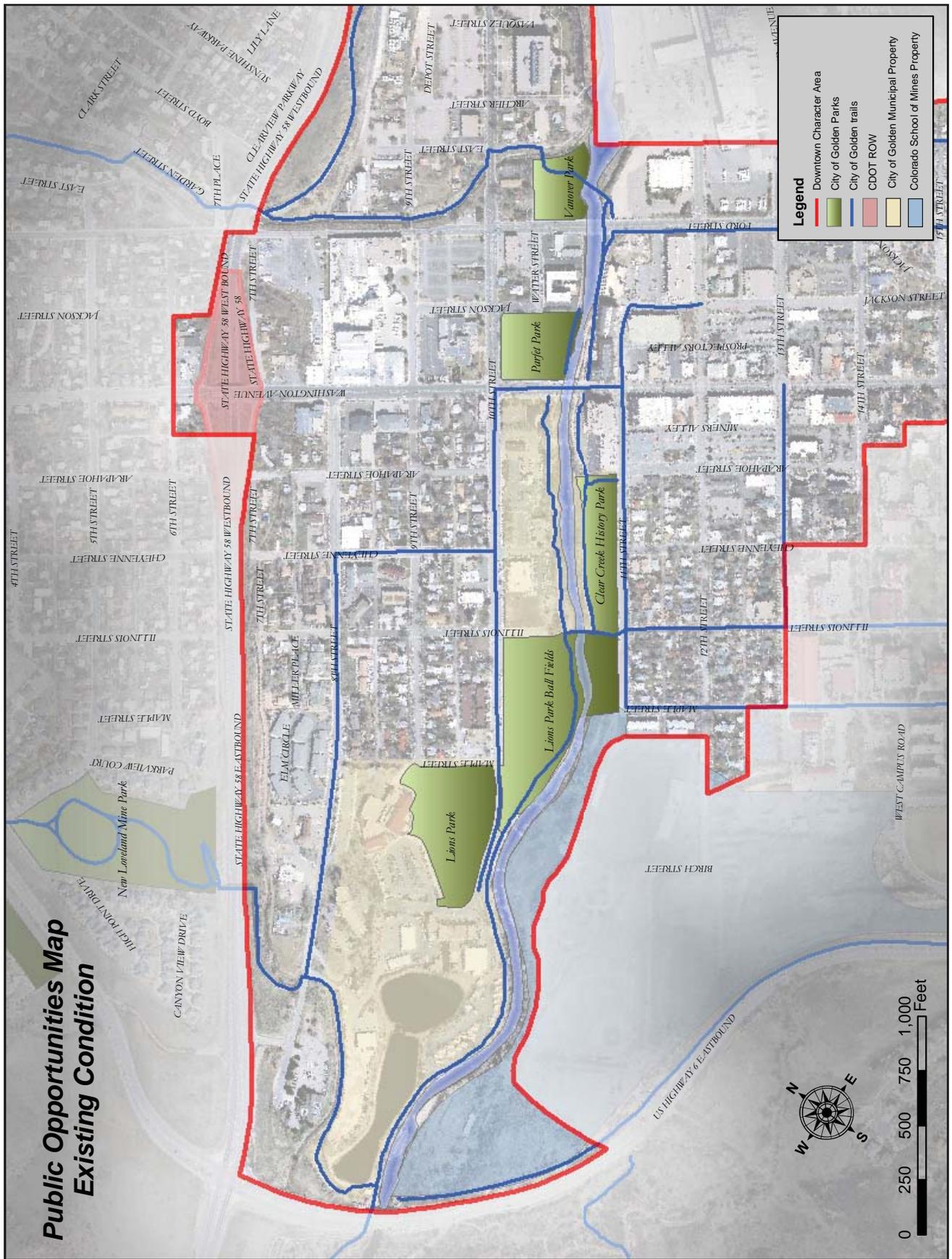


Figure 8. Public Opportunities – Existing Conditions

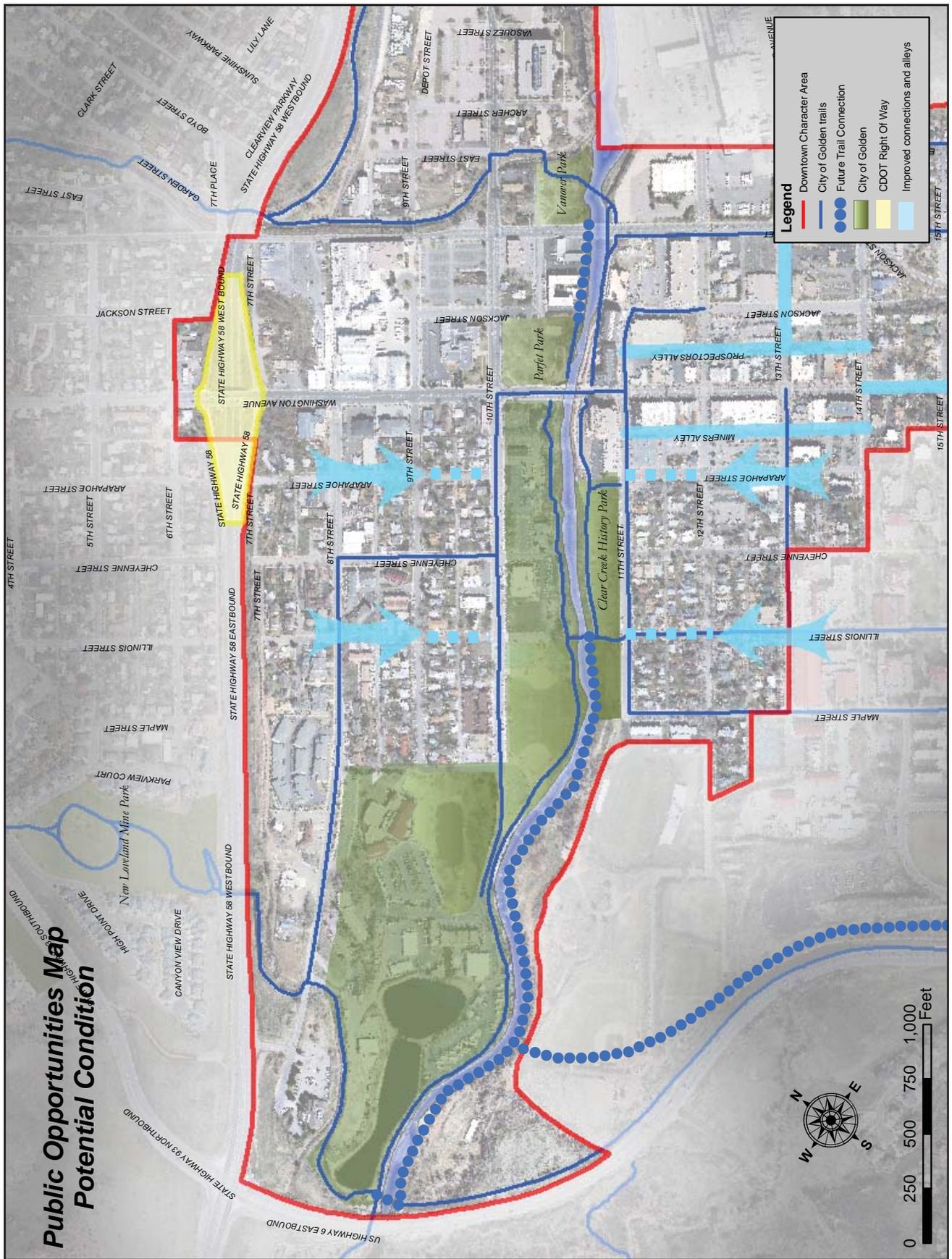


Figure 9. Public Opportunities – Potential Improvements

I. ADAPTING TO THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Three projects are either underway or are in conceptual stages. First, Golden is working with nine other Front Range communities to establish a regional wireless network that would stretch from Golden and south Lakewood all the way to Boulder and Thornton west of Denver. If this effort succeeds, GURA will install a series of wireless informational kiosks that would allow users to access certain websites related to Golden happenings and businesses. Users could make dinner or show reservations, check community events, get directions or store recommendations, etc. Lastly, GURA and EDComm have hired a web designer to assist businesses in designing and operating online versions of the businesses. This on-going project yielded six web sites for individual downtown retailers that previously had no web presence.

J. INCREASING CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee found that there is a desire by many citizens to build upon the cultural assets already in Golden. One of the more popular suggestion categories was for additional facilities such as a band shell, a small movie theater, music venues or jazz clubs, and a stage for poetry readings or open mike events. There is also a strong desire to continue and expand the community events that are held in Downtown Golden, such as a monthly art walk, the art festival, more live music and outdoor concerts, and a longer season for the movies in the park series.

There were suggestions to improve the signs that mark downtown Golden's boundaries in order to draw in more visitors. Recommendations to support tourism including the continuation of free parking and making sure there is sufficient parking. Also, there were suggestions to market, promote, and continue the events that make Golden unique.

One option is to renovate the Green Center, possibly by adding it to the GURA district. However, the financing strategies for such renovation have remained elusive, and CSM's interest and commitment to such a project are unknown. The City recently authorized the Buffalo Rose to double its concert capacity. GURA is working with the Golden Cultural Alliance to

assess the economic impact of arts and culture. The decision about the location for a bandshell or similar venue will increase the community's capacity to increase cultural opportunities and focus its efforts.

A fundamental component of Golden's cultural attractions is its historic architecture. Most people who commented on the architecture in Golden value the historic buildings. These people emphasized the importance of preserving this part of Downtown Golden's character and pointed out that Golden's history is what makes it unique from other towns. Additionally, there is also a desire to thoughtfully blend new buildings in with the historic buildings.

Chapter 4

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The public input process to date has generated a substantial amount of project specific suggestions along with some larger policy principles. Based upon the input that was received, and committee discussion, the following additional policy discussions are recommended for endorsement by the community and City Council.

I. GURA BOUNDARIES ADJUSTMENT

An update to the 1989 GURA Plan and/or the creation of new urban renewal district(s) would be a likely follow-up to this effort. While there was little direct discussion about this Plan, the committee recommends that any such update incorporate the following recommendations:

- Any plans to adjust the current GURA boundaries or to create additional urban renewal districts require additional discussion with the community. There is some evidence of community support for considering an additional district in the commercial area around Jackson, Ford and 24th streets. Evidence of community support is ambiguous, minimal or lacking for ideas relating to previously excluded areas in the commercial core and parts of Goosetown.
- In discussions about redevelopment in the downtown core, GURA should continue to respect and support the height and bulk limitations proposed for the downtown design guidelines, which require no more than two story buildings along Arapahoe, two or three story buildings along Washington Avenue, while allowing taller structures east of Prospectors Alley.
- In deliberations about redevelopment proposals, GURA should strongly consider the guiding principles in this report for architecture and land use, as well as the downtown design guidelines as criteria to evaluate redevelopment proposals.

II. LAND USE AND REGULATORY RECOMMENDATIONS

While the character committee effort included discussions about desired land uses and types of businesses, there are no regulatory changes specifically necessary to allow these uses. Rather the primary regulatory aspect of the character committee efforts is a proposed amendment to Chapter 18.40 of the Municipal Code to incorporate refined design standards and guidelines for the downtown area. The draft design standards and guidelines are contained in Appendix A, and are based upon the following:

- The primary goal of these refined design standards and guidelines for the downtown area is to retain distinct features that give the downtown its distinguishing character.
- The standards and guidelines accomplish this goal by utilizing architectural examples in the downtown area to demonstrate preferred solutions to be incorporated into new projects.
- In addition, the standards and guidelines include a graduated building height system for the downtown core that limits the height of new buildings in various zones without special review.

While certain desired land uses are not precluded by current codes, achieving these land uses and mixes may require further City action. For example, to achieve the downtown area housing recommended in the guiding principles and further discussed in Chapter 3, Planning Commission and City Council should evaluate further changes to City code to encourage or mandate such use.

III. PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

The committee recommends that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan utilize the guiding principles and major capital amenity recommendations, and that it support a unified vision of the corridor for the comprehensive strategic utilization of City-owned land.

IV. ECONOMIC VITALITY

GURA and the City (both staff and the Economic Development Commission) should pursue projects and programs to be more strategic in creating business opportunities. Strategies for this issue may include:

1. Updating detailed customer and workforce demographics (to add to the more complete resident demographics easily available)
2. Inventory available commercial spaces
3. Analyze gaps in the business mix, e.g, what do we need that we don't have and what might we need that we don't have (considering all the imminent high income downtown residents and other demographic changes in store). This strategy may involve the development of a community-driven long term retail strategy.
4. Solicit businesses that might fit the available spaces and the business mix goals
5. Improve internet access and businesses' web presence

V. ONGOING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The structure of the four existing boards and commissions that participated in the Downtown Character Plan affords an excellent vehicle for on-going public participation. Each of the boards is responsible for part of the implementation of this plan, and this cooperative role will facilitate strong on-going communication and coordination among the groups. The citizens of Golden will have the opportunity to approach any of these boards, or associated staff liaisons to comment on the plan recommendations or inquire about implementation.