

An Evaluation of Well-being in Golden, CO

December 2015

Executive Summary

The City of Golden, Colorado is loved by many – its geographical location, its beauty, and its welcoming community are assets that have drawn people to live, work, and play in this small town for years. Residents described in their own words that living in Golden has had a positive impact on their **well-being – the physical, mental, emotional and social health of an individual or community.**

PURPOSE

The evaluation goal was to better understand the well-being of Golden residents in order to guide the City of Golden and its community partners as they strategically engage in program and planning development and resourcing. Four focus groups and 16 interviews were conducted with Golden area residents to **identify what aspects of Golden had positive and negative contributions to their well-being.**

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Sense of Community: Having a sense of community was the strongest aspect of Golden that positively affects residents' well-being. Events, places, programs or experiences where residents had meaningful interactions with neighbors, felt supported by and supportive of their community members, or when they simply enjoyed the opportunity to interact.

Opportunities to volunteer: Helping neighbors is an experience that residents' felt good about.

Community or school-based programs: Inclusive, supportive programs contributed positively to well-being.

"My son is a part of the Golden Backpack Program...It's important to him because it makes him feel included."
- School focus group participant

Access to Open Space: Parks, open space, walking and biking paths, offered places for recreation as well as rest and relaxation.

"People are embracing having fun and taking care of [themselves]"
- School Focus Group Participant

Growth vs. Community: Perceived growth was found to negatively affect well-being because it threatened the sense of community and small-town feel that residents felt were positive aspects.

"[There is a] struggle between marketing and opening up Golden more to tourism and the Denver area and preserving the sense of community"
- Faith-based focus group participant

Support those in need: Finding resources and access to food were needs identified by respondents.

"People would like to help find resources, but you can't find them or don't know where to go."
- School focus group participant

Safety: Road construction and speeding traffic in roundabouts contributed negatively to well-being, especially in school zones. On the other hand regulation of marijuana and tobacco helped residents and their families feel safe, positively impacting their well-being.

"If there were to be a dispensary, I would not be as comfortable to let my children have such free range."
- School focus group participant

RECOMMENDATIONS Based on Participants' Suggestions

Ensure safe routes to school

- ✓ Maintain safe school routes to Golden students of all ages, apply the Golden Vision 2030 core community value of an accessible and walkable community to road construction and changes conducted within school zones.

Expand public transportation options

- ✓ Evaluate public transportation options from all Golden neighborhoods in keeping with an accessible and walkable community. Consider transportation access based on a given neighborhood's needs, such as locations of senior living or retirement homes.

Support for those in need

- ✓ Provide support through skill-building services and programs such as providing healthy meals on a budget or job-seeking.

Community & Behavioral Health

colorado school of public health

We hope that this report will serve as a meaningful resource in developing future programs, policies, and community development projects, as well as serve to reinforce the importance of incorporating community-driven values into initiatives in order to ensure resident well-being.

– The CSPH Evaluation Team



City of
Golden

RECOMMENDATIONS From the Evaluation Team

Support community capacity building

- ✓ When designing, funding, and implementing programs and events, from city to neighborhood level, assess what aspects will support opportunities for residents to build relationships, support each other, give back to their community and positively contribute to their well-being.

Maintain access to open, green space

- ✓ Keep in mind the multiplicity of health benefits beyond physical exercise and recreation that trails, bike routes, parks and open space have to offer. These places offer your residents a place to rest, relax, to balance out the stresses of modern life, and to connect with their friends and neighbors.

Promote smart growth

- ✓ Optimize the Golden Vision 2030 values to test current and new plans to better understand the potential quality of life and health benefits and threats that such plans pose. Consider using the *Smart Growth Scorecard: A Community Self-Assessment Tool* to provide a consistent process and to assess the impact of land use decisions.

Increase affordable housing

- ✓ Consider using the *Smart Growth Scorecard: A Community Self-Assessment Tool* to assess the diversity of housing stock in the Golden area, and in particular new areas of development, new downtown development and in school neighborhoods.

Making information on resources accessible

- ✓ Inquire with the target audience – people you would like to use the program or service – where they go for information to identify sources they are already using, especially if it is a typically hard to reach population.

Pleasant View residents and Golden services

- ✓ Utilize opportunities to communicate the scope of Golden municipal services for residents, equivalent contacts in neighboring cities, and programs that service the broader region or county to let residents within and nearby know what services are available to them.