



GOLDEN URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

Memorandum

To: Downtown Planning Committee
From: Mark Heller
Date: 02/05/06
RE: Downtown and GURA planning

Background

To summarize and supplement the memo from Steve Glueck dated December 27, 2005 and my memo from January 16, 2006, we are in the early stages of strategic planning to revise the Golden Urban Renewal Plan (the "Plan") as the driving force behind re-assessing a variety of issues pertaining to the current and future vitality of Downtown Golden. Concurrent with the revision of the Plan, many now feel it is time to re-assess the overall vision for downtown, including where "downtown" should be in terms of boundaries, what should be "there" in terms of amenities and businesses, and how it should look. As a result of the first committee meeting (which was attended by staff and board members from GURA, HPB, and Planning), work has begun on an expanded downtown design guideline that will key off of downtown's existing design features. These guidelines will be incorporated into the Plan to provide a cohesive design for the downtown into the future. Subsequent discussions among these groups also resulted in the conclusion that the Clear Creek Corridor and other park amenities should be a major component in any revision of the Plan since the vitality of downtown is dependent on excellent public spaces. Thus, the Parks & Rec Board and staff are now included in the Plan revision and downtown visioning process. A longer term goal is to use this same approach to evaluate other parts of the City that might be improved through urban renewal.

What is the GURA Plan and how is it revised?

The Plan was adopted by the City Council in December, 1989 following several years of community input. It is the document that summarizes the goals and priorities of various committees to address the declining conditions of the downtown area in the late eighties. The Plan follows procedures set out by the Colorado Urban Renewal Act and establishes GURA's physical boundaries and independent funding mechanism. The Act has detailed instructions on how to study and create an urban renewal area such as the one that GURA

oversees. These instructions required study of a variety of factors leading to the conclusion that the general area is “blighted.” So unlike other Council-appointed boards and commissions, the GURA district and GURA itself are constrained by State law as to what it can and cannot do, and even where the boundaries are. Just as analyzing the original conditions, obtaining public input, and drafting the original Plan had to be done according to State law, so too must any revision of the original Plan. A revision of the plan will require significant public input and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. This is a lengthy process and could easily take more than year. A fifteen page summary of the Urban Renewal Law and its processes (written by the City’s attorney Jim Windholz and published by the Colorado Municipal League) will be provided at the February 8, 2006 meeting for your review.

Four other documents will also be provided at that meeting. The first is a portion of the 1989 GURA Plan setting out in matrix form the short, mid, and long term goals and projects. You will note that much has changed, especially the technology used to publish the Plan. The second document is GURA’s 2006 Work Plan. The third is a Vision Statement approved by the Downtown Merchants Association two years ago. The fourth is EDComm’s 2006 work plan. Together these documents give a picture of what has been accomplished, what remains to be done, and how the various agencies plan to accomplish their goals.

Tasks of the Committee

Unlike the late-eighties, the downtown area is no longer in dire need of emergency life support. While the task is not yet done, the general environmental and economic health of the downtown area is good. However, more than 16 years later, it is high time to evaluate whether the original goals of the Plan are still worthwhile, whether the remaining tasks are still desired, and what new goals and projects should be added. Beyond the Plan, this committee will consider the broader questions of:

1. How to ensure Downtown Golden stays relevant and vital to the citizens of Golden and the region?
2. What mix of businesses are appropriate for Downtown?
3. How do the new priorities fit with the City’s Comprehensive Plan?

In addition to the broad strategic questions, this committee will address how Downtown Golden should focus on at least the following specific new issues. These issues (and others might be suggested through the process) represent new developments and/or challenges since the Plan was adopted. If the Plan revision and the strategic discussion are to be comprehensive, the committee should consider at least these issues:

- a. Desired mix of land uses
- b. GURA boundary adjustments and additions
- c. Improved Design
- d. Resource efficiency
- e. Collaboration with NREL and CSM
- f. Affordable housing
- g. Digital economy
- h. “Creative Class”
- i. Gold and West Lines

Members of this committee, representing Boards with specific missions and perspectives, can provide valuable assistance to GURA as it revises the Plan and to the Planning Commission as it revises the downtown design guidelines. Similarly, the work of the committee may result in changes to other planning documents in addition to or instead of changes to the Plan or the design guidelines. For example, the committee might recommend that the City's land use regulations and related Comp Plan sections might change as a result of the committee discussion on land use issues, or the committee could recommend that the Parks Master Plan should change following discussion on how to better integrate the Downtown area with the Clear Creek Corridor. It is also hoped that this committee would become the nucleus of a larger committee appointed by either GURA or Council that would provide input into the Plan and Design Guideline revisions.

The Colorado Community Revitalization Association ("CCRA") provides matching grants upon application to fund a slate of consultants to assist communities with fewer than 20,000 people with just this type of effort. GURA will apply to this program, and if the grant is awarded, this committee would play a significant role in providing information and feedback to these experts.

Work Plan

The meeting on February 8, 2006 will be devoted to refining both the goals of this memo and the work plan suggested below.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
1. Review current Plan and draft Guidelines	March 15
2. Discuss findings and new ideas (2 meetings)	April
3. Submit mission-specific comments to the various Boards	May
4. Meet with CCRA team	June
5. Review CCRA findings	July
6. Outreach (2 meetings)	August
7. Draft Plan revision and revisions to other Planning documents as appropriate	September
8. Outreach (2 meetings)	October
9. GURA/PC/HPB/Parks approvals	November
10. Council approval	December