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**Chris Adams & Susan Baldacci
Kathryn Adams & Emily Adams.**
411 East Street, Golden, Colorado 80403, USA.
Tel: +1 303 216 2858 or +1 303 832 3394
Email: chris.adams@MilesMedia.com OR adamsbaldacci@comcast.net

Mayor Charles J Baroch
City of Golden
911 Tenth Street
Golden, CO 80401
cbaroch@ci.golden.co.us

Mark Heller,
Executive Director
Golden Urban Renewal Authority
info@gura.com.

*cc Councilors **Diane Chesbro & Karen Oxman, Vince Auriemma, City Engineer and Steve Glueck, Planning & Development Director, City of Golden.***

Developing a (Really) Pedestrian Friendly Town

Golden is a wonderful place to live. Our American – New Zealand family has lived in widely different parts of the world and we would choose no other place in the US to call home. This is the second extended period in which we have lived and owned property in Golden. The City Council, planners and staff are to be commended on Golden's wonderful small town, lifestyle friendly design and facilities. Thank you for all your great work.

However, there is one major area in which Golden is not as progressive or friendly to its residents – the facilities, signage and policing of pedestrian's rights. Sadly, many American cities are blighted with an auto centric, pedestrian unfriendly urban design – and though Golden is better than many US communities it could be even more pedestrian friendly.

We believe Golden needs an aggressive, integrated, well funded and properly policed **pedestrian plan**. We believe that communities all over American are slowly waking up to the importance of pedestrian friendly facilities (common in much of the rest of the world) which encourages exercise, safety, lessens pollution and promotes energy

conservation (eg: walking rather than driving) – and Golden can be at the forefront of this trend.

The first issue is the absolute dominance of the car on the pedestrian crossings of Golden. With the exception of traffic lights with pedestrian signals – cars appear to have an automatic right of way on Golden ‘crossings’ – even on what appear to be ‘pedestrian crossings’ with pedestrian signs (eg: the crossing on Ford Street at the Clear Creek Bridge). Drivers usually do not look for pedestrians and almost never stop for them. Police seem to ignore this pervasive ignorance of the State Law requiring that cars to yield to pedestrians.

Below we list a 6 point plan to upgrade Golden as a pedestrian friendly town. We commend these ideas to you and ask that you review these suggestions, discuss with us any questions or issues, seek other input – but most importantly take action !. Some of these steps are simple, could be quickly adopted and make a real difference.

1. Upgrade Pedestrian Crossings at Key Locations. We believe key locations should have ‘full’ pedestrian crossings – with a pedestrian activated flashing lights, other clear signage (eg: wording such as ‘State Laws Requires you Yield to Pedestrians’), upgraded road markings and signage approaching such crossings plus finally policing of driver behavior. The cities of Bolder and Breckenridge have both added such better signed and managed crossings*. We advocate priority locations as a first stage – notably on roads along the Tucker Gulch bike path and near Golden Schools. We then suggest further options for stage II (not an exhaustive list – others will likely have further suggestions).

Proposed Enhanced Pedestrian Crossings in Stage I:

1. Ford Street – between end of Tucker Gulch bike path and Norman D. Memorial Park
2. 7th Street - just off Ford and just under to Hwy 58
3. 10th Street – the bike/pedestrian crossing on Tucker Gulch.
4. Ford Street (by Clear Creek bridge)
5. Washington Street (by Clear Creek bridge)
6. 8th Street – at bike path crossing.
7. Examine Pedestrian Crossings near all Golden Schools (eg: on Washington Street near 2nd Street and also a possible crossing at 5th Street).

Additional Suggestions (could be added in Stage II):

1. Washington Street (opposite Visitor Information Centre)
2. Jackson Street at 16th (access from town center to Super Markets etc)
3. 19th Street – crossing near Elm Street for access to bike path running south along 6th Ave.

** In many overseas countries – center pedestrian ‘safety’ or ‘refuge’ islands are also added into pedestrian crossings as an additional safety precaution (this slows traffic and also allows pedestrians to pause on the island in the centre of the road). This should be investigated as an option on some of the proposed upgraded crossings.*

2. Remove other ‘Pedestrian Crossings’.

Once clearly marked, legitimate Pedestrians Crossing (where pedestrians can expect right of way) are in place we suggest removing (painting over) all the other ‘crossings’. They seem to serve not purpose – other than perhaps confusing some residents or visitors who may expect right of way.

3. Add Side Walks where they do not exist and Widen Side Walks.

A number of streets (or one side of some streets) in Golden have not sidewalks or have some areas of no side walks (eg: along Ford Street near 1st Street). We believe these areas should receive urgent attention with a plan to invest in sidewalks wherever possible.

Many more streets have narrow (half width) sidewalks which make safe walking (eg: children walking to school) problematic – particularly in places where plants overgrow the sidewalk, cars are parked or snow is present. We often find ourselves having to walk in the road in such situations or when passing others. We suggest that the Council adopt a long term policy of replacing all existing narrower sidewalks (including during maintenance work etc) with wider sidewalks. This may require a 10 or 20 year plan – with the additional cost to be spread over a number of years and incorporated wherever possible into regular maintenance.

4. Work with Schools on ‘Walk to School’ Programs

As you may be aware some Golden schools have a ‘Walk to School’ program – usually a single day promotion to encourage leaving the car or bus behind. This is one small effort to improve the very small numbers of children who currently walk to school in our town. To be successful these programs will need to be supported by upgrades in sidewalks and pedestrians crossings noted above. As noted, priority should be given to looking at Pedestrian Crossings near all Golden Schools (see 1). Additional flashing lights, tighter speed limits and other signage should also be examined near schools (we currently cross Washington at 5th Street on some days walking to school and with the volume and speed of traffic it is often not a safe experience). We also suggest the Council and Police actively consult with schools on these programs and identify ongoing areas in which to encourage walking to school through-out the year.

5. Pedestrian Friendly Businesses.

A number of businesses in downtown Golden have buildings, car parks or other facilities which are purely auto focused and at add odds with a pedestrian friendly community. These include businesses without easy pedestrian access. One notable example are the Banks – which only offer drive up ATMs in Golden – requiring walkers to stand in a line of cars in order to access their money. The Golden Pedestrian Strategy should include working with such businesses on the design and facilities they provide for pedestrians.

6. Add Safety Signs for Bikers.

Finally, cars don't present the only danger to pedestrians. As more bikers and pedestrians are using the same bike and foot paths there is an increasing safety issue – notably on parts where biker may speed up or children are common. We suggest that signs (eg: 'Share the Path' and 'Walkers – Watch for Bikes and Stay to the Right') are located at key places (eg: the top of the steeper section of the Tucker Gulch bike path by Coors Tech) to ensure that bikes give right of way, keep their speed under control and pedestrians stay to the right. Biker education could also be included in the existing Bike Strategy for the city.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these ideas and for all your hard work in our community.

We look forward to your feedback on these proposals and working with you in making Golden a more pedestrian friendly place and an even more wonderful town in which to live.

Kind Regards

Chris Adams. Susan Baldacci.

411 East Street, Golden, CO 80403.

Tel: 303 216 2858 (H), 303 484 1655 (W), Mobile: 303 842 3394.

Email: adamsbaldacci@comcast.net