



# GOLDEN URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

## Memorandum

**To:** Mayor Smith and City Councilors  
**From:** Annette Lyttle, Chair  
**Date:** July 9, 2009  
**RE:** GURA update and 5 year review

Pursuant to the Intergovernmental Agreement between GURA and the City, GURA meets with Council at least once each year to review GURA's upcoming annual budget and work plan prior to final adoption by GURA. GURA also periodically updates Council about current year programming, which is the reason for this meeting.

While the global recession has certainly impacted Golden, the negative effects seem to have been tempered within the GURA district. For example, the sales tax decline for downtown Golden is -0.4% compared to -10.1% for the city as a whole. Also, no downtown business has closed since Foss General Store. In fact, new businesses have been opening or expanding with comforting regularity. We have recently welcomed Vital Outdoors, Bella Notte, Clear Creek Books, The Clothes Mine, The Golden Diner, The Golden Skillet, Golden Sweets, Jimmy John's, Grappa Mediterranean Bistro, Sherpa House, and the expanded Peak Cycles to name a few. A new pet supply store is slated to open next month.

The Herculean efforts of our downtown merchants, Chamber of Commerce and cultural organizations, and the excellent marketing overseen by the Economic Development Commission, have created the offerings and awareness to steadily bring folks downtown. GURA's ongoing investment in downtown's buildings, infrastructure, businesses, cultural groups, and public spaces has also been a major factor in downtown's impressive performance before and during this recession. GURA's programming over the last five years is listed at the end of this memo to provide a quick review of some of the work that has contributed to downtown's resilience.

Lastly, GURA and EDComm have recently begun discussions regarding the future of economic and real estate development in Golden. We would like to provide a brief update on our preliminary thoughts and request direction on continuing this effort.

## **2009 GURA Activities**

The following is a summary of some of GURA's projects from the past six months.

### **Gateway Arch**

While this project has seen its problems, we are hopeful that they will soon be resolved and the arch can function as it was intended – to draw Coors tourists towards downtown. The traffic light arm will be lowered and shortened so that most of it will no longer block the view of the arch (from the point of view of a person standing at the Coors lot corner looking west). The street work and masonry is completed to our satisfaction after many weeks of disputes with the contractor. It is worth mentioning that the idea for the arch came during a public input session about designs for improving the streetscape along 13<sup>th</sup> Street: an arch was not even on the drawing board at that point. But a citizen who attended suggested an arch, and that idea captivated the room. It is a fitting public monument to Golden's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

### **Public Art**

GURA produced two new large banners recently. The first was a collaboration with Foothills Art Center using the winning submission from a contest of Jefferson County artists in celebration of Golden's 150<sup>th</sup>. This banner now hangs on the Golden Hotel. The second banner promoting the Golden Fine Arts Festival and featuring this year's winning artist was installed on the south wall of the parking garage. This banner can be used to promote the festival each year. There are now six large banners downtown creating a new and interesting visual experience for our visitors and merchants. All of the banners feature Golden or were created by local artists.

### **New Street Pole Banners**

In anticipation of Golden's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, GURA inaugurated a Street Pole Banner Contest to replace the aged and mismatched banners that had lined Washington Avenue for the last 15 years or so. This project is unique for its use of local art instead of stock imagery, which is the norm for street pole banners (although we did use a few stock photos for the patriotic series). Goldenites whose photos were picked enjoy seeing their work rendered large, the rest of our citizens enjoy knowing that their neighbors took the photos, and both groups enjoy being directly involved in the beautification of downtown Golden. GURA also solicited Pentax to donate its top-of-the-line digital camera and some point-and-shoots for the top three winners.

Another element to this program was the installation of the new banners on the light poles north of Clear Creek. Those light poles were purchased by GURA a few years ago, but there were not enough of the old banners to include the new poles.

So far, GURA has produced a spring/summer set and a patriotic set. The patriotic set was on display over the two weeks around 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and will also be displayed around Veterans Day and Memorial Day. The spring/summer set will be displayed until late August, when we will produce the third and final set, which will stay up through the winter. Feedback on this project has been enthusiastic and positive. The attached award application also summarizes this program.

### **Facade Renovations**

Also in anticipation of the 150<sup>th</sup>, GURA budgeted \$100,000 for 2008-2009 towards upgrading the facades throughout downtown. Five storefronts were re-done with this support, and staff is currently working with two additional building owners. This project required considerably more staff time than originally budgeted, but the results were worth the investment and the property

owners/tenants have been universally pleased. GURA has funded a total of ten façade renovations over the last few years. The attached award application summarizes the facades improved under the current program.

### **Shop Local Campaign**

This is a new initiative not foreseen by the 2009 Work Plan, but one that has become an important element of GURA's efforts these last few months. Working together with EDComm, Sharon Wheatley, Barb Warden, and others, the "We are Golden – Buy Local First" campaign will utilize social networking (Facebook, YouTube, etc) to promote local shopping. The messaging will be upbeat, informal, and neighborly, with a heavy emphasis on the citizens themselves producing most of the content instead of an outside agency or city staff. The concept is that if the production of content is easy, fun, and low pressure, then citizens and local merchants will enjoy being a part of the campaign and will participate by creating their own ads, videos, and blogs. Once the campaign is launched, please visit [www.golden.com](http://www.golden.com) to watch the campaign unfold. The attached summary of the campaign provides more details.

### **Back to Work Program**

Another addition to the 2009 work plan is GURA's participation in a "back to work" stimulus program administered through Jefferson County's Community Services Advisory Board. GURA was selected along with Red Rocks Community College and Jefferson County Workforce to share a \$495,000 federal grant intended to encourage employers to permanently hire at least 33 people. The program will focus on veterans, seniors over 55, youth between 17-24, and the general population of unemployed in the County, all of whom must not be currently earning income above 200% of the poverty level for our area. Each employee may receive no more than \$15,000 in the twelve month grant term. GURA will use its 1/3 of the grant funds (\$165,000) to place 11 Jefferson County seniors with GURA district employers. GURA will begin its outreach to merchants immediately. While this program is certainly beyond GURA's normal kind of work, the opportunity to help employ eleven people and help grow downtown businesses in these difficult times fits in with our mission and was too important to pass up.

### **Golden Cinema**

For several months, GURA staff has been working with staff from the American Mountaineering Center (AMC) to explore the concept of using the Foss Auditorium as a community cinema during Wednesday through Sunday nights. There are many unknowns to this project, which is still in an exploratory stage. GURA community surveys over the years consistently rank a cinema highly as an amenity our citizens want. As prior GURA efforts to attract the Landmark Cinemas to the former Hesteds site made clear, a conventional cinema is not economically feasible. However, a low-key, community-oriented cinema that does not show first-run movies such as might be located in the AMC might work very well. GURA has been researching the business case and would provide funding to purchase equipment. That research, which is based on studies by the Motion Picture Association of America, is promising though not yet complete.

In addition to the business case, two other legs of the stool need to be sturdy. One of them is the use of the space. The AMC is working to confirm that the Foss Auditorium could be used for this idea. Issues include tax implications and other impacts to the missions of three organizations in the building.

The third leg is the creation of a new, enthusiastic, and creative volunteer group to run the cinema on a long term basis. This is perhaps the most difficult and complex part of the concept. Those interested are invited to contact Mark Heller at the GURA office.

### **Web Site Program**

GURA started this program two years ago and funding for this third year is already fully subscribed with ten downtown merchants slated to get new or improved websites. GURA will have funded twenty-one new websites by year's end. Our tracking indicates steadily increasing traffic for the sites created last year.

### **Energy Efficiency Program**

This program is also a continuing effort. There are two or three implementation still available this year. The grant application link is at [www.gura.com](http://www.gura.com). GURA will have funded twelve implementations by year's end.

### **Parking Garage Lighting Retrofit and Photovoltaics**

GURA has been exploring a lighting retrofit for both parking garages that would precede a photovoltaic installation. The GURA Board is scheduled to discuss these ideas further at its July 13 meeting, and will likely proceed with an RFP. Stimulus funding will be pursued.

### **Lots 2 and 4**

The redevelopment of the lots to either side of the new garage is still on hold due to the recession.

### **Parking Demand Study**

One of the lessons learned during last year's redevelopment RFP process for Lots 2 and 4 was that the cost of satisfying the parking requirements when combined with other costs of redevelopment downtown, presented an insurmountable economic hurdle. In response, GURA and the Planning Department have been conducting a detailed parking demand study which will form the basis of a thorough evaluation of the parking code. The study is not yet complete.

### **URA Legislation**

Mark Heller participated in several rounds of comments and calls to legislators opposing changes to the Colorado Urban Renewal Act that would have had serious adverse consequences for the current downtown district and any new urban renewal project. All such bills were defeated in the recent legislative session, but there will be a strong push next session to craft a comprehensive amendment that will satisfy opponents and proponents of urban renewal. GURA will continue to monitor this issue and participate as necessary.

### **Public Speaking**

Mark Heller was asked to speak at three occasions during the last six months: he led a tour of downtown Golden for the national conference of the Congress for New Urbanism; he spoke together with Mayor Smith at a DRCOG/ULI seminar on best municipal practices for sustainability; and he presented GURA's programs at the recent Economic Development Council of Colorado's annual week-long course on economic development.

## Five Year Review

GURA has been involved in many new and significant projects over the last five years. It has also been successful in distributing grant funds to downtown's business and cultural organizations. The attached charts illustrate the dollar value of these contributions and the following list is a recap of many of these activities in no particular order:

- Gateway Station: This project won the 2008 Governor's Award for Downtown Excellence for New Construction
- Gateway Station Parking Garage: 262 free covered spaces and about 60 surfaces spaces
- Jackson Court
- PCE Remediation of the Hesteds site, partially funding through a \$200,000 grant from the EPA
- \$8.75 million fixed-rate, tax-exempt refinancing and redevelopment loan using a novel method of future property tax increment revenue as the sole source of repayment
- Golden-based large art banners
- Golden-based new street pole banners
- Cultural organization grants: major grant funding was provided to the Miners Alley Playhouse, the Foothills Art Center, Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum, and the American Mountaineering Museum
- Downtown services: GURA fully funds or partially funds a variety of downtown services including sweeping, plowing, plants and flowers, maintenance, power washing, holiday lights, parking enforcement, parking garage maintenance, restrooms, etc
- Street lights: GURA purchased the new antique style streetlights installed on Washington Avenue north of Clear Creek
- All America Competitions: GURA provided partial funding to our 2005 team
- Received the Golden Chamber of Commerce's 2005 Chamber Civic Award
- Loveland Garden: GURA organized and partially funded this park, now maintained by the Table Mountain Garden Club
- Façade Renovations: GURA partially or completely funded façade renovations for the following buildings/businesses: Golden Quilt Store/Chisholm Architects, Windy Saddle, Silver Horse, Golden Himalaya, Baby Doe's, Pickets, Creekside Jewelers/Avenue Vision/Del's, Image Designers, Spirits in the Wind, and D'Deli. Additional facades are in the works.
- General Improvement Grants: GURA has provided funding for various projects at the following properties: Buffalo Rose, Century 21, Vital Outdoors, San Francisco Row Condos, Millstone Condos. Additional grants are in the works for five applicants.
- Web Sites: GURA created web sites for Avenue Gifts, Foss Building Wine and Spirits, Silver Horse, Creekside Jewelry, Baby Doe's, D'Deli, Pickets, Golden Sweets, Windy Saddle, and Juna. Additional web sites are in the works for the following: Sirona Physical Therapy, Table Mountain Vision, Café 13, The Clothes Mine, Foothills Art Center, Mountain Lifestyles Chiropractic, Vital Outdoors, Golden Diner, Vintner's Cellar, and Bella Notte.
- Energy Efficiency: GURA funded energy audits and implementations for the following sites: Baby Doe's, Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum's new space, Pickets, Clear Creek Books, Creekside Jewelers, Dove Inn, Banks Insurance, Woody's, and Chelsea's of London. Three

more implementations are in the works for Foothills Art Center, The Golden Visitors Center, and Clear Creek Dental.

- Gateway Arch: GURA fully-funded this project
- Welcome to Golden Arch: GURA contributed \$10,000 towards last year's renovation
- Bike Racks: GURA installed these popular bike racks
- RMQM/Office move: By moving to a new office, GURA vacated space needed by the Quilt Museum at the time. The Quilt Museum is expanding and moving again to a space that has been renovated with assistance from GURA
- Downtown Character Committee: this multi-year, collaborative effort resulted in a neighborhood plan and new design guidelines and standards for downtown
- Sustainability Initiative: This project won the 2008 DRCOG Gold Award for Public Outreach.
- Reinvestment Fund: GURA has contributed over \$180,000 towards the work of EDComm
- Annual Report, newsletter, email list, and other outreach efforts: To improve communication and transparency, GURA began publishing annual reports in 2004 and newsletters beginning in 2007. GURA has also developed an extensive email contacts list of businesses in the district
- Original Shopping District: GURA was the early supporter of Golden's participation in this joint marketing effort, which promotes downtown Golden and similar districts as an alternative to malls
- Holiday Lights LED Upgrade: GURA converted the downtown holiday lights to LED, which allowed a vast increase in the number of lights that could be powered from the very limited electrical system currently in place
- Affordable Housing Study: GURA drafted this study, which was a key resource for the Housing Affordability Task Force
- Downtown Directory Signs, Interactive Maps, Google Earth 3D Mapping: GURA has been continuously striving to improve the visitor experience downtown by helping visitors find the business they are looking for. The interactive maps and Google Earth 3D mapping are the 21<sup>st</sup> Century version of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Directory Signs.
- TIF Agreements: Grappa, Safeway: GURA committed to provide funding to attract Grappa and to assist Safeway in a store remodel and asbestos abatement project.
- "Golden Point" outreach: GURA met with every commercial property owner in this area to explain the implications, risks, and rewards of urban renewal
- Memorial Bricks: GURA raises a negligible amount of funds from this service, which is much more valuable as a way for Goldenites to remember or honor friends and family.