

# Downtown Golden Character Plan

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# Chapter 1 Welcome to Downtown Golden

## I. PROJECT PURPOSE AND GOALS

The 2006/2007 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 more fine grain 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 gulch 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 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 over twenty million barrels of beer per year.

*Source: Golden Old and New. Cathleen Norman. © 1996.*

Progressive in their thinking, the founders of Golden strived to stay on the cutting edge of technology and economic sustainability. Their pioneering spirit during the post war era acknowledged Golden's growth and development through their aim to attract a diverse group of industries for the city. The founders encouraged industry that would ultimately parallel the creative class and considered how Golden's citizens would live, work and play within the public realm.

### 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

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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.](#)

### III. CURRENT LAND USE MAP

The Current Land Use Map 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:

- **8<sup>th</sup> 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.
  - This area is near the intersection of US 6, SH 93, and SH 58. As such, heavy traffic (and high noise levels) moves near the area. The potential roadway alignment for W-470 will pass by this area increasing the noise and traffic levels.
  
- **Clear Creek Corridor**
  - This area is dominated almost entirely by municipal, CSM, and recreation uses
  
- **8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District**
  - This area is mostly residential of varying densities. Light commercial uses, restaurants, and primary education uses are also present.

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- **12<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District**
  - This area is mostly single family detached residential. Some higher density residential uses exist.
  - Calvary church is in this area and plans to expand their campus.
  - Light commercial uses, office, and light retail uses.
  
- **Central Business District**
  - Most of the high density commercial, retail, and restaurant and bar uses in Golden are present in this area.
  - High density residential is concentrated along the Washington Ave and Clear Creek Corridors.
  - The main Post Office is in this area.
  - Recreation and park uses exist along the Clear Creek Corridor.
  
- **SH 58 Gateway**
  - This area is dominated by the Coors Tech operation. Deleted: k
  - Gas and convenience store uses are also present. Deleted: t
  
- **Goose Town**
  - This area is a unique mix of industrial, office, and residential.
  - 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.
  
- **South Washington**
  - Mostly light commercial, office, and an art center. Some restaurant uses. Deleted: and
  - Some residential of mixed densities.
  
- **South Jackson Gateway**
  - This area has some strip-style commercial development with office, restaurant, retail, and auto maintenance. Urban style grocery anchor.
  - Some commercial recreation (bowling alley).
  - Mixed density residential.
  
- **East Street Historic District**
  - Mostly single family residential – some higher density.
  - Some light office, restaurant, and commercial

#### IV. EXISTING ZONING MAP

## Chapter 2 Downtown Golden Vision, Goals, and Policies

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 policies and strategies, this chapter presents the overall goals and vision of Downtown. 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.

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### I. THE VISION

Golden is a unique and distinctive place which takes advantage of its natural and cultural resources. The city preserves its 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 our 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.

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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.

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

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## II. DOWNTOWN CHARACTER PLAN 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.

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

*Character:* [is there more on promoting the urban core and cultural/social events?](#)

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 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.

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*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.

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Promoting destination, stopover, or day-visit tourism, while providing activities and programs for both tourism and non-tourism businesses.

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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.

## **Chapter 3**

This chapter will be an endorsement of the above (existing) goals and policies. Also in this section, additional goals of the Downtown Plan can be cited here.

## **Chapter 4**

Economic Vitality: How are we more strategic in creating business opportunities? Cite examples and strategies here. What resources don't we have (entertainment?). Also include the long range goals of Parks (interconnection).

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