

Community Heart & Soul®

— Guided by what matters most —

GOLDEN, COLORADO

Golden experienced spurts of growth throughout its history, presenting challenges of walkability, community engagement, and affordable housing. Golden city officials wanted to engage the community in discussing the future. The city held block parties, chili socials, festivals, and community summits. More than 2,000 residents participated, a high water mark for Golden.

POPULATION:
19,000

CHALLENGE:
Balancing growth with preserving town's historic and unique character

FOCUS: Civic engagement, comprehensive planning, downtown planning, neighborhoods, transportation

KEY TOOL:
Resident engagement

Golden “by the numbers”:

- 30% - the amount Golden’s population grew from 1990 to 2000
- 12% percent of the population participated in Golden’s Heart & Soul project
- 350+ stories collected from Golden residents as part of the project

Local conditions:

Golden’s population grew more than 30 percent between 1990 and 2000, presenting challenges of walkability, community engagement and affordable housing. In the 1990s, residents became concerned about the pace and consequences of growth and worked to impose strict regulations on development and expansion. Voters adopted ordinances limiting construction of new residences to one percent per year and curtailed the physical expansion of the city limits.

With further growth projected, Golden wanted to proactively involve the entire community in discussing potential challenges.

Volunteer and Community Response:

The city’s Community Heart & Soul project, Golden Vision 2030, came up with creative ways to draw residents to discuss the future of their city. The city held block parties, chili socials, festivals, and community summits. Over 2,000 residents took part in the project—12 % of the population—a high water mark for the city.

Three guiding themes emerged:

- Accessible and walkable;
- Active outdoors/environment;
- Safe, clean, quiet neighborhoods.

Heart & Soul Outcomes:

These became the starting point and guide for comprehensive plan updates, neighborhood plans, land use decisions, code changes, and community investment decisions.

For example, anyone with a project up for city review must state how it makes a positive impact or contribution to the three guiding themes. Developers must fill out a form that includes these specific themes and explain how what they are doing contributes to these themes.

"It's really given staff, the planning commission, and city council a lot more confidence that they understand the desires and interests of the community, which is a helpful compass during the decision-making process," said Rick Muriby, planning manager. "In my own observations, these decision-makers have been able to refer to the Golden Values during particularly difficult or divisive land use hearings, sometimes compelling the applicant to do more to meet these goals in order to gain approval and sometimes to stand up to strong opposition from neighboring residents or owners."

"The fabric of a community is built by its volunteers. By placing volunteers front and center, the Heart & Soul process has helped to weave the fabric of our community." - Mike Bestor, former city manager, Golden

