FROM THE CHAPTER

As of the time you receive this issue another national conference, CNU 18, will be over. In spite of the financial difficulties that especially the design and construction professions have been facing, CNU is getting stronger and chapters are more active.

In this issue we are providing the slightly edited and shortened content of two panel discussions we had organized this year. First one is “Urbanism and Cohousing” event where the cohousing living has been discussed in relation to urbanism. The event is hosted by the Wonderland Hill Development Company, a major cohousing developer in the region. The second event was “Historic Downtown Golden: New Urbanism the Old-Fashioned Way,” where the performance of Golden Urban Renewal Authority (GURA) was reviewed along with some of the recent downtown projects.

In these hard times supporting urbanism is particularly important for a sustainable future. How can you support us? (1) Urge your friends and colleagues to become a CNU member. (2) Become a chapter founder or annual sponsor. The details are provided on the back cover of this issue. (3) Become active in the chapter. We can always use more help.

Korkut Onaran
President, CNU-Colorado
Principal, Wolff-Lyon Architects

During the Urbanism and Cohousing Panel, January 7, 2010. The event was hosted by the Wonderland Hill Development Company, that has developed several cohousing communities in the region.

During the Historic Downtown Golden: New Urbanism the Old Fashioned Way panel, April 16, 2010. The event was hosted Golden Urban Renewal Authority.
URBANISM AND COHOUSING PANEL, JANUARY 7, 2010

Cohousing communities have strong synergies with New Urbanism. They practice good urbanism by contributing to the diversity of the greater urban environments with an emphasis on shared facilities, sustainable living practices, walkable neighborhoods, car share programs, and the creation of community. It is because of these overlaps with New Urbanist principles that we have organized a panel discussion focusing on living in cohousing communities.

We have invited residents from four different cohousing communities in Colorado to contribute their first hand experiences to the dialogue about our shared goals. Brian Bowen is a cohousing resident and architect that volunteered to mediate the discussion and help shed light on our topic. The discussion addressed car and public transit use, social and financial sustainability, and the cohousing communities’ relationships with the larger neighborhoods and urban life around them. We also invited Jim Leach of Wonderland Hill Development Company, one of the leading developers of cohousing neighborhoods in the west, to provide an introduction to the concept of cohousing. What is presented here is an edited and slightly shortened version of the presentations and the question and answer session that followed.

Ronnie Pelusio, CNU Colorado Board Member

COHOUSING:
AN INTRODUCTION

JIM LEACH,
President
Wonderland Home
Development Company

I’d like to start with what cohousing is and how it relates to new urbanism. New urbanism and cohousing are very much aligned in their basic principles. Cohousing is a cluster of homes arranged and designed so that people interact with their neighbors and more share certain amenities. Cohousing communities usually have a common house – a central community space where most residents share meals anywhere from one to three nights a week. Cohousing residents manage their own community. It’s very much like any other cluster development with a home owners association, except in this case, it’s a much more active association that meets on a regular daily basis. They have teams and committees.

We started developing cohousing communities about twenty years ago. We designed the first community in Colorado, the Nyland Community. Cohousing was pretty much a grassroots movement then. It started with people wanting to get together and build a neighborhood for themselves and few of their friends. It kept attracting people. It was based on the principles of running a neighborhood community for the benefit of all and a more sustainable lifestyle. These early communities like Nyland often needed professional help, not only design help but organizational help as well. So we focused on the business of organizing, designing and building housing primarily. We really found a way to partner with future residents.

The cohousing movement was brought from Denmark to the United States by architects Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durett. Because they were designers they have been instrumental in connecting the design and building profession with the cohousing movement, which, I think, made projects happen. It’s hard enough to build your own house, but try to build a custom neighborhood and get together with your neighbors and figure it all out. Cohousing is all about community. The design part is easy to grasp and there are a lot of good designers that can design it. But the challenge is really building the community, to plan how residents interact with each other. Katie and Chuck did this planning through the design process. They got people involved in workshops and programmed their design for their community, which is also a stimulating thing that brought people in. We took that idea built on it. The groups now participate in a lot of decisions in their neighborhood. They also invest in it and take financial risks.

The new urbanist movement as Ronnie or Korkut mentioned has been around for about the same amount of time as cohousing, a little bit newer, but has been much more successful in reaching out and being recognized. Early on we saw the potential of overlaps as the new urbanist movement came on, because cohousing deals with the most proactive form of building a community. People were really proactive in wanting to connect with their neighbors and wanting to practice community right in their neighborhood.

The first true new urbanist neighborhood that we put a cohousing community in with the theory that that community would become a valuable asset for the larger neighborhood, was the Hearthstone Cohousing Community in the Highlands Garden Village in Denver. We started working with it ten
years ago. Perry Rose LLC of Denver, row home national developers, saw the potential with cohousing. Sure enough after we put the Hearthstone in, the common house became a community focus not only for heartstone residences but for the entire Highland Garden Village. Perry Rose LLC started to model a lot of things that the new urbanists were trying to do through design. They were trying to create community through walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods where community happens. I can tell you that community needs to happen with the people that are actually living there. The sequel to that is when the Holiday Neighborhood came along in North Boulder as a mixed neighborhood with affordable and market-rate homes. We were given one of the sites to work with as a developer and developed the Wild Sage Cohousing and Silver Sage Cohousing where I live.

If you really look at the issues and problems that our western culture is going through right now in America, you realize that you keep coming back to community. Somehow human beings have to learn how to connect with each other. If you look at how we connect, the most basic level is at the family and we haven’t been doing a very good job of that. The next step is really the neighbors and how much of your daily life you share with them. We have all had some experience with living together with others. For instance, you’ve had this experience if you’ve lived in a dormitory, the military, a rooming house, or even going camping together. You know it’s an enriching experience and also challenging one. Sometimes it is a pain. But, until we can get our culture to recognize that we have to connect, especially at this most basic level of the neighborhood, we can design the most beautiful and efficient environment in the world. However, it won’t work in the long run unless the people who live there make it happen.

Before I conclude I would like to briefly talk also of what we are doing here at Washington School. This building will be a part of Washington Village, a cohousing community. We are about to start the first phase with seven units in the school and six single family homes surrounding the park. We are putting together those initial community members now and are looking for more members. Thank you.
Bryan Bowen
Principal,
Bryen Bowen Architects

I’m an architect here in Boulder and live in the Wild Sage Cohousing Community, which is in the Holiday Neighborhood in Boulder. I was involved in the design process on Wild Sage. I worked with Jim Logan and then worked with Chuck Drevins at Silver Sage Cohousing Community across the street.

Let me introduce our panel here. We all live in Cohousing Communities, including Jim Leach and myself. Zev Paiss is one of the old timers of cohousing and lives in Nomad Cohousing behind Lucky’s Market. Nomad is cohousing with eleven town homes on a small site, built in 1997. A small theater is part of their common house. Harriet Stobel is from Hearthstone, which is, as Jim said, part of the Highland Gardens Village. Hearthstone is a cohousing community with 33 homes on 1.6 acres. Henry Kroll is from Silver Sage, which is a senior cohousing community with 16 homes on 0.7 acres. It was completed three years ago. Aaron Brocket is from Wild Sage, which has 34 homes on 1.4 acres. It was completed in 2004. All of these communities are thriving in their own way. All have resulted in really strong communities and they effect the large context significantly as well. Nomad is built in a great existing neighborhood, it is very close to North Boulder Shopping Center where Lucky’s markey is located. Hearthstone is built into Highland Gardens Village, a neighborhood that was designed with new urbanist principles. Silver Sage and Wild Sage are nestled into the Holiday Neighborhood. They are all in urban contexts.

The first question I’d like to ask is about walkability and how you interact with people in your neighborhood. Could you all talk about what you can walk to outside of your community and how you interact with the neighborhood around you?

Zev Paiss, Resident
Nomad Cohousing Community

Of the four communities represented here, Nomad is the only example that was built into an infill site already surrounded by a complete development. We are directly adjacent to the North Boulder Shopping Center which is one of the reasons why several of us wanted to live there – three restaurants, a market, a video store, a hair salon are right there. When I moved in in 1997, I was recently married,
and now my children are 10 and 11 years old. They can walk to all these facilities by themselves. That’s part of the fantasy I have with being in an almost European-like village where you really have everything you need within walking distance, which is essentially what we have.

We receive EcoPasses as part of our agreement. We have a reduction of parking for a variety of reasons, but one of them was the proximity to North Boulder Shopping Center. We can walk one block, get on the Skip and pretty much go wherever we want to on Broadway. We also happen to be two blocks away from an elementary school.

We have 12 cars for 11 households. So we have a number of homes which only have one car. We have had some car sharing in the past. We don’t actually have it officially right now, but we do car share. Our cohousing is small - only one acre. You can walk out into the middle of the courtyard and see everyone. It’s very easy for us to ask for shared childcare or help with a car. The proximity and the fact that we know each other make it really easy.

I think Hearthstone is considered infill as well. The whole Highland Garden Village is an infill development. Within the Village itself we have a lot of commercial uses: Sunflower Market, a liquor store, a doctor, a dentist, a hairdresser, an eye glasses store. And within the close vicinity, as you walk up Tennison, just about every urban service you would need is available: a few restaurants, a library one mile north of us, and a library one mile west of us. So there are lots of places we can walk to. We also often carpool. Friends will go to a thrift store together. Or one person will pick up stuff for someone else to save on driving. A bus stop a block from us runs downtown. I think we have in our cohousing community a very new urbanist life style.

LIVING IN SILVER SAGE COHUSING COMMUNITY

Henry Kroll
Resident
Silver Sage Cohousing Community

Three years ago I lived on Pine Street in San Francisco and I now live on Yellow Pine Street in Boulder. Walkability was great in San Francisco. I could walk to numerous movie theaters. There were three restaurants on the block. I could go to a coffee shop of my choice. I could walk to where I worked. We lived in a 16-unit apartment building. Christmas would come and we would invite people to our unit for a little get together. I think the only time the neighbors were visible to us was when the fire alarm went off.

What is walkability in terms of community? What
I recently learned from neurocognitive science is that the walking is a key factor for our cognitive reserve. As we engage with people, we keep building up that reserve. Scientists will tell you that simple daily contacts that happens when you walk, such as talking to the shop owner, the postman, etc., keeps our cognitive skills intact throughout our lives. I am living in the senior cohousing or adult-focused community. It is a little different perspective because everyone who lives there has chosen to live there because they understand that isolation (as I just described in San Francisco) is really the enemy of seniors. The more isolated people are, the more disadvantaged they are and thus will have more health issues as a result of isolation.

We interact with our neighbors in cohousing. We can’t avoid it. We don’t have to wait for the fire alarm to go off, we have two dinners a week. We are the building managers. When the fire alarm went off in San Francisco, we call the building manager to fix it. But there is nobody to turn to in cohousing but us. So we are automatically engaged. We have to be ready for that. As Jim said, community building is the toughest part of the cohousing. The architects could design a beautiful facility that would meet all of the environmental updates, etc., but until we learn how to build a community among ourselves, we really haven’t helped ourselves. We haven’t really addressed the lack of social sustainability, which is an important crisis human beings are facing in this society.

LIVING IN WILD SAGE COHOUSING COMMUNITY

Aaron Brocket,
Resident
Wild Sage Cohousing Community

Wild Sage and Silver Sage are located within the Holiday Neighborhood and the Holiday Neighborhood is within this North Boulder district, where new centers have been developed with new retail added to older retail. We have a lot of resources nearby: the pizza shop, the liquor store, restaurants. My son goes to the martial arts place around the corner. We are able to meet a lot of those day-to-day needs by walking within the district. We now have two medical marijuana dispensaries. My wife and I have our own computer programming office across the street. We have a 100-foot commute to the office. So we walk there every day. A lot of our trips are within Wild Sage itself. Our kids (almost 4 and 7 years old) do almost all of their social interaction outside of school within Wild Sage. They see other kids outside. They go to meals in the common house, concerts, and play with kids outside. I will go days at a time without using the car. One way to talk about walkability is to look at how many services are located in close proximity. And when we do that actually we’re talking about the concentration of human capital immediately within our personal environment, where we spend most of our time.
Jim Leach: What’s nice about the Holiday Neighborhood is that it is an interesting place to walk. My office is about a quarter of a mile from the house. I used to live near to my office when I lived in Wonderland Hill, but I walked less frequently to the office even though it was through open space and a beautiful walk. There was no social life on the street. I always see people walking back from the coffee shop - not three times a week, but three times a day. There is a lot of interaction in the new urban neighborhood that cohousing members really feed on. I think that one thing that Bryan mentioned was about cars. I can say that at Silver Sage, we own about 1.5 to 2 cars per household. We don’t drive them very much -- we collect them. We have two car share cars parked outside of Silver Sage now so it is very easy to get by one car.

Bryan also mentioned the density. Hearthstone has 33 units on an acre, Wild Sage, 34 units on an acre. There are 33 units here in Washington Village on 3 acres and it is right in the middle of Boulder. The neighbors complained about density a lot. We originally had proposed 40 units. Density is essential in creating life on the street.

Bryan Bowen: Let’s put this in the context of sustainability. When I think about sustainability lots of different definitions bounce around. The resiliency of your own personal lives; your economic resiliency; your ability to persist through time, where your food comes from – micro layers of sustainability that go beyond just energy efficiency. Let’s focus on how a community interacts with the neighborhood around it. Could you talk about how living in a cohousing community contributes to sustainability in your life and at the same time the sustainability of the larger community?

Zev Paiss: Nomad Cohousing was built into an existing neighborhood. Before, the cohousing people had used the property as a dog path to the market. There are definitely people who still do that because the common green is an inviting place that is accessible to anybody. The common house and the theater is used constantly by groups outside of our community as well. We have a music class that is in there five mornings a week. The Orchard Park Neighborhood next to us doesn’t have a common space. They use ours for their HOA meetings. The city has used it for retreats as well. It really becomes a resource for the larger community. We charge a small amount. It pays for expense of the building.

I think the energy issue is important. Our homes are very energy efficient. They are clustered and very easy to conserve heat. They have the right solar orientation. We don’t have big lawns and we have a lot of planting that is edible. We have drip irrigation so we use very little water. We have try to recycle and compost everything we possibly can. I think we have up to five recycling bins, three trash bins, and a compost system. We are making our one little acre better each year as opposed to slowly degrading it.

Harriett Stobel: In Hearthstone we do a lot of the same things that your community does in terms of sharing. We have people from outside Hearthstone who walk through it all of the time. We also let various groups use the common house. Outside HOAs use it for their meetings since they don’t have a building to meet in. The first year we lived there I was part of a book club with some Highland Garden Village residents. Even though we met in the middle of week and had to go to work the next day, we lingered late to 10 pm or 11 pm chatting because especially those of us who didn’t live in cohousing didn’t have many occasions for that kind of gathering.

Henry Kroll: I think that living in a cohousing community that is located within a larger new urbanist neighborhood is itself environmental education. For instance, in our coffee house, Spruce Confections, all the napkins are recycled. Our community, Silver Sage, has 16 units with 22 adults. One of those 22 will always know something that you don’t such as, xeriscaping, heating,
electrical usage, or waste disposal. We learn by living there. I would never be recycling my compost in apartment houses in San Francisco. It all went down the shoot. The recyclists came in the middle of the night with a pickup truck and sorted out the garbage and gleamed what they could out of that. It’s different here. Let’s say someone likes to have a worm farm. All I have to do is turn over my garbage to her and it’s added to the compost.

Aaron Brocket: Holiday Neighborhood and Wild Sage support each other socially. Wild Sage works as a catalyst and brings people together within the larger neighborhood. We have a city park in the neighborhood but there were no city funds to build it. The city was planning to do something about it within 10 to 15 years. A group of us in the neighborhood advocated getting that built and eventually succeeded and now we have a functioning neighborhood park. A lot of good people were involved in that. It happened because of an already organized community focus group within Wild Sage. It produced a significant social benefit to everybody. Resource sharing is another example. Wild Sage needed a very tall, expensive ladder, and the Holiday Neighborhood’s HOA needed a very tall expensive ladder. We bought one together, so instead of having two we have only one. There are a lot of ways that the neighborhood and Wild Sage support each other.

Jim Leach: This happens in a very organic way. Sharing helps people to be more proactive. In a community you have people passionate about different things, whether it’s a worm farm or car share. It is so hard when you are the only one. But if you are connected with other people your life gets a lot richer. That is the community experience. Our mainstream culture makes us believe that we are going to be happier if we buy more stuff. If you want happiness, you have to actually get up and talk to somebody. Sometimes it is awkward and challenging. But when you connect and share, a tremendous value is generated within the community.

Bryan Bowen: Now, could you tell us a story about your cohousing experience?

To lead, let me briefly talk about my daily routine. As I wake up and come outside, I meet up with the neighbors for coffee. I pick a couple of strawberries and beans at the community garden. Come inside, sit down, and start to think about working. Look to see if Aaron is in his office and we’d go to Spruce Confections. When we spend time at Spruce Confections, we see a half a dozen people we know. I walk across the park and meet the “dog people.” Some are clients, some are friends, and some are both. I do some work; go up to Proto’s for lunch. The day ends and I walk back through the community gardens and eat the rest of the strawberries. I come home, and Nick would ask if I have had a beer yet. We have a small microbrewery here. The kids come home from the carpool. They would go out to play with the other kids. There are usually eight or ten kids outside. Eventually someone would ask what we are doing for dinner. It’s leftover pasta. So and so just got their CSA share, someone just bought a portion of a cow. Someone suggests making fajitas. Now six families are having dinner together. This is something that happens quite regularly.

Zev Paiss: I have lived in Nomad for twelve years. I have a number of stories that I could tell. But I am going to talk about something really difficult. All of these things are about relationships and sometimes it is really hard. One of the first people who moved in was a woman who over time began to be harder to work with. She would disappear for weeks at a time and we really began to wonder what was going on. Eventually, someone knocked on her door and went in. That is something you would never be able to do in an ordinary neighborhood. Turns out she was hiding out in her basement. She was depressed and that was how she dealt with it – she would just hide out. So there was an effort in our community to try to reach out to her. It really got to a point where one of the people in the community was helping her with her checkbook and another was helping her shop. Unfortunately, we got to a point where we realized that we are not designed to provide that level of support to anybody especially since our community is the smallest in the country with eleven households. If there were thirty households and one needed help, it could be workable. But we just ran out of energy, and eventually that person just ended up having to move out.

The difference between a really good neighborhood and a cohousing neighborhood is that in a really good neighborhood you go next door, you knock on the door and ask for a cup of sugar. The person goes and gets the sugar...
and you go home. In a cohousing neighborhood, you go next door, you knock on the door, no one answers, you go in and get the cup of sugar yourself and go home. That doesn’t work for everybody.

Harriett Stobel: However, it is not automatic, or just given, that you can just walk into any of your neighbor’s houses.

I’ll tell you the traveling bed story. About two years ago, one of the women broke her leg, which is very unusual. She was just standing there when it broke. She lives in a two-story house with the bedrooms upstairs. There was no real easy way of having a bedroom on the first floor, but we did create it. We borrowed a bed from someone else. It got a crew of five guys to take apart the bed and bring it to her house and assemble it. She came home from the hospital and there was the bed in her dining room right next to the window. She slept there for two months. At the end of those two months, someone else had broken her ankle. So the five guys took out the bed from first house and put it together in the second house same way. She used it for a couple of months. This to me is a cohousing thing to do.

Henry Kroll: My story is very personal and a difficult story because my wife is only sixty four year old and has a form of dementia. The social workers at the senior services provide house visits and are very concerned about us. We don’t have any children in town. They ask who is going to take care of Jean if I go to Denver for the afternoon. I say she is okay because we live in cohousing. It’s only an acre, and she’s completely comfortable. She can walk around the whole neighborhood. She knows the route. If she needs anything, there are fifteen other homes to knock on the door and everyone is looking in on everyone else. We have a woman who is a 24/7 caregiver for her eighty year old husband who has advanced Parkinson’s. Sadly, she got injured earlier this week. We look in on her and are concerned about who is there to help her, what is happening to help that family. We get such an added value being in this community. If we didn’t have this, I don’t know where we would be. Not this year, but maybe next year we’ll need a lot more services.

Aaron Brocket: My daughter was born four years ago this month. When my wife was far along, we talked about who could take care of our son Jasper. We had three families lined up then four or five other people volunteered. The nurse asked if we had anywhere for our son to go to. She was amazed we had that many. After my daughter was born, we came home the next day and people had lined up to cook meals for us. That first night one of our neighbors who had volunteered to cook for us brought a four-course meal, a bottle of wine, and two lit candles. The beginning of our two-child life was to have a romantic dinner to ourselves with a home cooked meal.

Questions and Answers

Tony Chacon: I work for the City of Westminster as a revitalization coordinator. What draws the interest in cohousing in a particular neighborhood? I am seeing a panel here – three from Boulder, one from Highland Garden Village in Denver. In Westminster, we are actually working with Chuck Perry on a possible redevelopment on an old school site. These are all highly desirable locations. My observation is that cohousing projects tend to go to the high market areas at desirable locations. You have all mentioned walkability – coffee shops down the street, restaurants, etc. I know that with Highland Garden Village (I was actually a planner working on that project when it first started) some of those amenities weren’t necessarily there. So, what draws people to want to be in a community? For example, the south part of Westminster is old, unique and mature but doesn’t have some of the elements that sometimes some of these communities seem to be looking for. They may come later as a result, but I’m just curious as to how that interplays.

Jim Leach: I think the key is trying to attract the people who are going to live there. Cohousers are pretty visionary – they can see if something is going to change or not. They are picky – they are the cultural creatives. Finding the sites is not the challenge anymore. The most progressive place in the country has been the San Francisco Bay area especially the East Bay. All of the projects have gone into marginal places and have made a difference. Cohousing, if you can get it to go in an existing area or within a new urbanist area, is a real asset. At some point, communities will start to see that having a community place is worth subsidizing, which is what cohousing is in a sense. In Boulder our communities are all mixed affordable and market rate. The city has the inclusionary zoning. In other words the market rates subsidize the affordable. Somehow we have to figure out how to stimulate people. There are people who are very proactive and will go in and make it happen. They have to feel like it is in their interest and that they can make a difference.

Harriett Stobel: When I was interested, I didn’t care about what the neighborhood had to offer at all. I just wanted cohousing. Cohousing reminded me of the camp I went to as a teenager. I was so happy.

Georgette Vigil: I think Harriet is right. I am a marketer of cohousing. I am with Wonderland Hill Development Company. There are different segments of the population. Some people want cohousing and maybe Boulder is not their place because they can’t afford Boulder or they need to be nearer to their family. I have found that there is a high level of interest in Denver and in the Denver Metro Area. We haven’t done a lot in Denver other than Hearthstone and Highline in Littleton. Depending on what you are looking for, I think you can find like-minded people to start a project, even if it is not in the most desirable place in Westminster. The character and closeness to downtown are assets there.

Kathleen McCormick: I am a CNU member. I live two blocks from here and I was one of the neighbors who supported the Washington Village project because it is exactly what needs to happen on this site. My question is for the folks in Silver Sage. I am curious as to whether some of the adults hate cohousing if they have never been in a communal setting. I would love for my mother to be in a cohousing, but that is what I want for her because I am used to living in a communal situation.

Henry Kroll: That is one of the difficulties we are working through at Silver Sage. My wife and I explored cohousing before we were committed. However, there have been others.
who have said “this is so beautiful, I love it - How much do I have to pay and where do I sign?” But they did not have the knowledge of cohousing. They hadn’t done the research or experienced it in any way. So, there’s an integration that has to take place. There is no denying that this is a predicament. The pioneers who want to go into urban centers on their own realize they have a mission and a purpose - they are there for a reason. It helps to have people in cohousing who are there for a real reason.

Jim Leach: At Silver Sage, we had two households who lived at Nyland Cohousing at Lafayette that came into Silver Sage. Others didn’t have any cohousing experience. A lot of what you learn working in cohousing is how to build community more efficiently. At times it can be a very awkward process. We have a lot of systems and training that we have developed in time. At each community you learn a little more. I think for seniors and almost anybody, once you get into it, you really like living in a cohousing environment unless you are really turned off by the whole concept.

Zev Paiss: I lived in Nyland for four years. They have 42 households plus the unfinished basements that turned into households. At Nomad we have 11. So scale is a really important factor of it as well as density. Nyland doesn’t work as well as it could because it is too spread out. There are actually sub-neighborhoods there, and depending on where you live you may not see anyone in the other two neighborhoods. When you are planning larger developments or neighborhoods within larger developments, scale and proximity really do matter. By designing the right scale, the right density, and figuring out how common facilities can hook people together, we can really have a strong impact on the way our communities work.

Kerry McDonough: I have learned about cohousing from the City of Boulder’s affordable housing program and I am interested in joining Washington Village. I grew up in cookie-cutter suburbia. Other than living in the dorms, this lifestyle is new to me. You all make it sound really great. I am curious as to what level you need at any given time - engaging fully when it is really important to you or staying away when it is not.

Harriet Stobel: We have had lots of issues that seemed unresolvable but because Jim was our developer and gave us all kinds of workshops during the whole design and construction process – on consensus building, on facilitating communications – it made all the difference in the world. I can’t imagine trying to operate without that skill.

Zev Paiss: I used to give workshops to groups around the country that were thinking about starting cohousing. Now I just live in it. What I tell people is that cohousing really is the longest, most expensive personal growth workshop you will ever take.

David Scott: I am a realtor with Colorado Landmark here in Boulder. Jim, having watched your process here in Washington Village, I have become astounded that you have experienced a high level of neighborhood resistance. My sense is that the resistance has come because people don’t really understand what you are doing.

Jim Leach: I don’t think the resistance is for the cohousing concept. The neighbors here were set on this school -- this property was public property. They didn’t like what the school district and city were doing. We got caught in the middle. We thought we could be the great saviors. I don’t think we would have gotten anywhere at all if we weren’t doing cohousing.

Harriet Stobel: Back when Highlands Garden Village was just an idea of what to do with the land what it used to be Elitch Gardens, the old amusement park, the neighbors were very concerned. When it was suggested to them that there might be cohousing, they weren’t really open to it. I guess they were taken on tours to Nyland and Highline so they could see what cohousing was and they agreed. Throughout that design process, there were meetings with the neighbors, the architects and developers.

Mark Cittone: I am a city planner. My question is about scale and the types of relationships, I looked at renting one of 34 units in a Fort Collins cohousing development. One of my hesitations is that with just 11 units it is such a small number of people. I think maybe I’d be more comfortable with a really good neighborhood versus cohousing. I noticed the projects range from 11 to 40 units. What is the upper limit? What’s the right scale?

Jim Leach: Some defined the range as 25-35 units. I think it depends. The number of units is important for the site plan. But the community itself is an organic, living thing. Different communities have different degrees of health. People come in and out of the community.

Tony Chacone: I am also a city planner. I think there are some lessons learned from cohousing and whether it’s formalized or not. It is like going back to the old days when the grange was the center of activity where everyone would congregate there. It was very organic – you could find people grouped together based on what their interests were.

Jim Leach: To create the kind of community we had in the past you need to have some structure, some organization. One of the reasons I think Silver Sage is working so well is that we have to run that place. If we had someone else doing it for us, we would lose half of our members. There has to be a purpose. For instance in Silver Sage we have decided to have a business meeting once a month, and a social once a month. People need that kind of purpose and connection.

Cheney Ferguson: I think education of the public on these concepts is important. I sort of wish it wasn’t given a name ‘cohousing.’ You wonder why people think of it as a commune, but that’s because commune was given a name. It is just another community, cohousers live in a different way. I think community is a better word to use.

Georgette Vigil: I agree with you. Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durett, who brought the concept from Denmark, wanted to name it something and they just called it cohousing. I have had mentioned this to Katie too. We should have called it something else because of exactly what you’ve just said. There is a disconnect between what the name says.__ and what cohousing really is.

Ronnie Pelusio: Looks like we have no more questions. Thank you all for coming. Thank you for the panel. We hope to see you at the next event.
HISTORIC DOWNTOWN GOLDEN: NEW URBANISM THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY
PANEL DISCUSSION, APRIL 16, 2010

Small cities and towns located on the fringe of bigger cities are now part of the urban growth areas and share the planning issues and challenges of urban development in the metropolitan area scale. When well planned and well executed, the development in the centers of these cities and towns provides a good alternative for suburban living. Denver’s metropolitan area is no exception. A good example for successful development in this type of setting is the development in last ten years in Downtown Golden, Colorado. The following panel tells the story of Downtown Golden along with the challenges of investing in complex projects and the merits of encouraging urbanity and quality of life. Our host Mark Heller, Executive Director of Golden Urban Renewal Authority (GURA), not only provided an attractive space for the event but also picked the projects and arranged the three presenters for the panel. CNU Colorado expresses deepest gratitude to Mark Heller and GURA. The texts provided here are shortened and edited versions of the presentations provided on April 16, 2010

Korkut Onaran, President, CNU Colorado

A QUICK REVIEW OF GOLDEN RENEWAL AUTHORITY (GURA)
AND ITS PROJECTS

Mark Heller,
Executive Director,
Golden Urban Renewal Authority

Let me start with telling you things you already know. Urban renewal authorities catalyze redevelopments by sharing back sales and property tax. We are able to use that revenue stream to fund public-private partnerships, public infrastructures, even marketing and business development as long as we can couch it in terms of the prevention and elimination of blight. Blight is a statutory word and I won’t bore you with the definition. In other words, urban renewal works by leveraging property and sales tax increment revenue through direct reinvestment or by facilitating and partnering in private development.

Here is the GURA Boundary (figure 4). This is where we receive our tax money from and this is where we are required to spend it. GURA was formed in 1989 by the City Council, because then Downtown Golden was suffering from high vacancy rates and deteriorating infrastructure. There were literally broken down vehicles and dogs lying in the street. We tore the complete street out from building face to building face and put in all new utilities, widened the sidewalks, added the brick pavers and decorative lighting, changed it from angled to parallel parking, began a façade program, and added other kinds of street furniture. The most important improvement was adding color to the downtown. It looks much better now than in 1989. In the 1990s and early 2000s we did a number of building and public infrastructure projects totaling over four million dollars, which added hundreds of new workers to the downtown.

Now I would like to go through some of these projects quickly. This is Clear Creek Commons (figure 1). It has a strong presence on the street. Here is Golden Gem, an old cinema building (figure 2). Starbucks was one of the original tenants. There is an important balance in a small downtown area between chain stores and independent stores. That was controversial when it went in, but it has been successful for them as well as for the mix of businesses downtown since. Here are the Clear Creek Square (figure 3) that we will talk about soon. Recently we’ve taken on quite a bit of debt to fund the Gateway Station project which Bob West will tell you about that added 35 luxury condos, 10,000 plus square
feet commercial, new parking for the residents and a new parking garage, and also to help fund a smaller mixed-use commercial building, Jackson Court, that Brad will talk about.

We also do all kinds of smaller things that people don’t notice as much. For instance, we have decorated one of the brand new parking structures with banners based on work by Golden artists or Golden themes. If you haven’t been to downtown Golden for the holiday lights, you really should (figure 5). It’s brilliant. We also developed some pocket parks. We redid the street pole banners with a photo contest featuring local photographers. We have all sorts of minor projects – streetscape, power-washing, parking enforcement, resource efficiency, business development, including websites and e-commerce. Facade improvements are an important part of what we finance as well. Here are the before and after pictures of redoing facades right next to our welcome arch (figures 6 and 7).

Let me introduce the three projects we will overview today. Len McBroom was involved with the Clear Creek Square PUD. It is a redevelopment of an elementary school site. The school was 1930s or 1940s construction. The school was still functioning. The school district decided to close and relocate it a half mile out of the downtown area but the closing was controversial. It was a significant site for historical preservationists, for people who were teaching at that school, and who had kids going to that school. It was also the first major redevelopment in the downtown area – involving buildings that were a different scale than what we had seen before even though they were architecturally tied to it. It was a big shock to folks. I think the combination of losing of the school and the massive new development were two big pills for the community to swallow especially for those who prided themselves on the small historic feel of Golden. However, it was done and I think we are better for it. That set the stage for the downtown area to be able to grow and change. The PUD created another smaller mixed use project, Jackson Court, that Brad will talk about.

The third project is Gateway Station and Bob West will talk about it. The site it occupied was Hesteds. The property manager was happy to sit on it. He knew eventually someone would pay what he wanted. The building was part of 3 or 4 parcels that he owned. There is a dry cleaning business behind the Gateway Station site at the corner of 13th and Washington. The property owner was a wise guy. He knew if he ever sold the big parcel separately from the small parcel that was contaminated, he’d never sell the small parcel. That together with a high purchase price left it undeveloped for twenty years. It wasn’t until Nexcore decided to put ego aside and give the old man his money, which was an epiphany. Let’s not get too wrapped up in why this guy is asking too much for his property; let’s see if we can make money at his purchase price. GURA was not going to condemn it because of prior history he had with the city. So our only choice was to work with Nexcore and give him his exorbitant price. We got it redeveloped after decades and now we have a great new corner.
Good evening. I have a degree in planning and landscape architecture from Rutgers. I switched to the development side in the early 80s. I have had a career in real estate development and real estate in general since. The Clear Creek site is approximately 5 acres. Clear Creek is on the north, 12th Street on the south, 4th Street on the east, and on the west was an alley. Jackson Street was a vacated street that no longer existed. It was in the flood plain of Clear Creek, which was a major constraint on the site. Mark told you about the history of the Mitchell School. We felt the site was an urban infill site, that is, the market opportunity was to contribute to the revitalization of downtown Golden through urban mixed-use redevelopment with historic context and connectivity. The choice that the community had to make was historical adaptive reuse. I am here to share with you that all that was done before McBroom Company showed up. We can’t take any credit for that controversy.

The sponsors of the project are Golden Urban Renewal Authority, the City of Golden, and -- this is unique -- the Golden Civic Foundation. There were also numerous private sector developers, investors and lenders as well as numerous market design-engineering professionals who helped us. We can’t take full credit for the development.

What is the right mix of uses to ensure the vitality? The potential uses were retail, office, hospitality, housing, institutional, and city facilities but outstanding issues were the right size, scale and phasing of the project. We determined a density that necessitated structured parking and downtown had never had it before in this scale. Commitment to quality design construction was important.

The project went through a normal urban renewal process where it went out for bid and a developer was selected. This was the PUD plan that was approved in 1999 (figure 8). The program that earlier developer came up with included office (48,000 sf), retail storefront (24,000 sf), condos (30,000 sf); an FAR of 0.47 to 1; townhomes on the river; and three small 3-story 8,000-foot floor plate buildings with retail on the ground floor and office above. When we were involved the previous developer was in default and could not get the financing work on the office buildings to start the project. Why? The banks wouldn’t finance local credit tenants because they couldn’t get enough preleasing commitments. They had core values that were more urban than suburban.

The deal we made was that the public sector would put in the land, finance a bridge, help the entitlements and public approvals, provide flood plain off-site and on-site improvements, provide tax exempt financing for structured parking, and realize 72 housing permits outside of Golden Pacing Ordinance. That was very important to us. We didn’t want to get into a political fight to acquire housing. We thought that was key to making this whole thing work. We felt this was very risky and pioneering at that time. The structure of TIF is where the developer takes risk and chases the money. If they deliver, they get the reward. If they don’t deliver, there is a lot of risk sharing going on and we
weren’t willing to take that risk. We told the urban renewal authority that we needed to quantify our incentive up front so we would forgo the TIF to have something to leverage at the back end. We made that deal. It was very controversial at the time because it included transfer of land that wasn’t developed yet, which was necessary to get the deal done. The development program doubled the density. It took the office space up to 60,000 sf and combined it with a Class A floor plate. The residential was condo, not for rent, 189,000 SF, with a 0.87 to 1 FAR. It triggered a structured parking and our solution was to bring it out of the ground, not to make it underground under the buildings or elsewhere.

This is the perspective of the new conceptual plan (figure 9). The office building is two 12,000 foot plates, which is a flexible size to attract small tenants or large tenants. We thought that also was critical to pulling this project off. Since we constructed this project, Mark has made me see that there were different things we could have done for the alley. The three residential structures were big – 26 units per building - but we didn’t put them under one roof. We were able to phase it. There were three 26-unit projects instead of 78-unit project, that was critical to getting it financed. We broke ground and the Telecom, our anchor tenant, vacated the lease. We had to do a PUD amendment. The city had completed the off-site improvements for the channel. And after the fact, it was determined that the channel was not wide enough. A big problem! To make the correction, they had to take land area from our site. Our deal was in trouble. The great urban plaza circle turned into a hammerhead so that we could fit our residential into the site.

It took us three years to get this project off the ground. One of the lessons we learned was that when one phase of the project goes into trouble, all phases go into trouble. The office building had been retenanted (Pentax was the savior) and was able to get back to the revitalization. It was 2003 and we were supposed to be done with the project in 2003. As of then we had just stabilized the office building and we were just about to do our deal with the residential. We were half way done. A four-year project was quickly turning into eight.

Now let me talk a little bit about the character. Because we had a Class A tenant with a contemporary forward-looking building. So while we tried to keep within the context of downtown, we also wanted to introduce some things that we felt would appeal to the office tenants that we were trying to attract (figures 12 and 13). We were able to bring a tenant like Pentax and made the deal (which was not in any means easy) because we had free parking in a ready-made downtown (it’s a public policy: Golden doesn’t have paid parking) and we were able to consolidate along the axis of I-70 and all of the properties that were being considered were west end downtown Denver and the airport. The employees of the company said they don’t like the airport, they won’t pay for downtown parking, okay, go to Golden. We won by default.

Retail was another challenging aspect of this project for us. What we learned was that end caps work, inline don’t. You have to work very hard to get the inline to work. What we found was that we had more success with office tenants on the inline. This is the street frontage Figure 17). You can see how we have tried to deal with the change in grades by setting back and yet providing some plaza and potential seating areas in front of the storefront. A big component of the project is that it is connected to the river through the space between the two residential buildings. That was part of the dedicated open space. Three condo buildings were meant to be three mill buildings that were topped off. It went through two architects, so it evolved. Thank you.
I am presenting on two behalfs: I am a partner of Studio DH Architecture for the last 15 years and also, with my partner, the developer of Jackson Court. My partner and I decided to move our architecture firm, which had been in Denver for fifteen years, into Golden. We both live on the west side of town and Golden has really been our hometown. We saw Golden as an opportunity to being part of a community and felt very strongly about moving our company here. We approached Mark and asked if there were any development opportunities in downtown. He mentioned of this undeveloped piece that was part of Clear Creek Square PUD. Len had done all of his work. An RFP came out. We had to put on our developer hats and had to compete for that property against folks who knew much better than us what they were doing. I think the attractiveness of our proposal was that it would be an owner-occupied building. That was something attractive to the city.
garage allowed all of our off-street parking requirements
to be satisfied. That was huge. We didn’t have to build a
parking lot or a structure. GURA also participated in some
of the site development costs that we had. There were some
unusual utility challenges they helped with. With the land
and the parking assistance, our numbers worked.

The site was a hole on 12th Street. An important part
of our proposal to the city was that we would design our
building. For that we studied the historic context of the
City of Golden. We followed the historic patterns to have
openings on the facade, that is, punched windows. There
are no long ribbon windows with storefront on the bottom.
The basic rhythm and bay width of the stores there are 20-25
feet. Also, there is a rich history of masonry and architectural
detailing in the buildings in Golden. The majority of the
buildings have very detailed and ornate cornices (figure
16). The window heads are detailed with beautiful window
headers and column capitals. Corners are also important;
round or clipped corners are common.

We looked at schemes where the alley was between the
parking garage and our building. But given the limitations
of the depth of the site it just left us with too narrow of a
building to make the retail work. That meant for tenants
that needed rear loading and access, we had to tell them to
bring everything in through the front door. It has limited us
to some degree in the tenants that we can attract. As Len
said, the corner is relatively easy to lease, the inline is more
difficult. We decided to go with a two-story building, the
first story being retail. That was part of the agreement with
GURA. Since GURA survives mostly by sales tax, it was
our obligation to put retail tenants on the ground floor. We
did look at multiple story options but eventually we did stick
with the two-story. We did look at the possibility of putting
some residential above but because of the proximity to the
Buffalo Rose – they put out a lot of sound - we decided
against it.

Here is a picture of the building taken shortly after it was
built (figure 17). Our architecture firm takes up a little less
than half of that second floor. We have leased the balance of
that office space to other office tenants. We had a doctor’s
office in there for about a year. They have since left. We
now have a diner in one corner and a spa in the middle.

The streetscape was important for us (figure 19). With
GURA’s efforts we have wide sidewalks many places in
downtown – they average about 20 feet. With the mix of
materials, the trees, lights, awnings, signage - there is some
outdoor seating - we honored the work that GURA had
started in downtown. We also have tenant signs, blade signs
and a sign for the diner. We are only a half block off of
Washington Avenue but you might as well be a half-mile
away. Good signage can change that. Thank you.

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A SHORT STORY OF GATEWAY STATION

Bob West,
Senior Principal,
OZ Architecture, Urban Design,
Interior Design

I am Bob West and I have been with Oz Architecture
as a senior principal for 31 years. You have just heard two
people who are involved in Golden about how GURA has
acted responsible for their projects. This is another project
where urban renewal was very critical. Probably some of
you weren’t around in the late 50s and early 60s; Denver
was a really vibrant city. There were a lot more cowboy hats
walking down 17th Street. But there was a lot of activity
due to offices, retail, and big department stores that people
actually shopped in. Ten years later, in 1970, downtown
Denver was a wasteland. You could shoot an arrow down
17th Street and you wouldn’t hit anybody. DURA (Denver
Urban Renewal Authority) had this idea to tear down all the
historic structures and rebuild large modern architectural
pieces and try to move all the people to the upper levels
away from the sidewalk. In other words, there would be
bridges that cross over all the streets in Denver. They didn’t
think the ground floor life on street was that important.
There were 7 or 8 projects built that way. It really ruined
downtown Denver. Now you know Denver, in 2010. Look
at the difference! What caused that resurgence in Denver? A lot has to do with LoDo. In 1970, LoDo, the historic district of Denver was a malaise, a place where you wouldn’t go at night. Now it is one of the healthiest historic areas in the US. Higher density brought tremendous amount of living opportunities; residential units, lofts that spilled into the rest of Denver and enlivened its commercial health.

One of the keys to urbanism -- which is also the key reason why the Gateway Station is important to Golden -- is that you really need to create a 24/7 type of urban life. I am going to talk about how you create architecture that gets people on the street in a 24/7 type of arrangement for activity and vibrancy. People love to live in historic places. Think about the Front Range – old town Fort Collins, Boulder, and Golden. People love to live and be around historic centers and all of the details of the buildings are why. What we tried to do with this project was to respect those elements, but we had some real challenges.

Here is a bird’s eye view (figure 22). We looked at this project with GURA in an almost 3/4 block arrangement since we were tasked with developing the property itself. We were also tasked in working with GURA in developing the parking garage. We looked at end caps that would relate to the development already happening across 12th. Also we focused on getting people from the Coors Visitor’s Center up on 13th Street by a continuum of retail on the first level and up onto Washington Street. What you see out there now is simply the garage. What will happen are end caps with a brownstone type opportunity to finalize that particular block.

The numbers needed to make sense. We knew that the sales price for these condos would be in the high $200s or low $300s per square foot. It costs exactly the same to build in Golden or Boulder or in Denver. The sales price in Boulder and Denver are high $300s or $1,000 per square foot. To compensate, we had to maximize the density on this site. That’s why you see this type of massing and scale today on this block. Without that there was no way this project could have happened.

These are the plans (figure 20). The ground level is mainly retail. We always like to wrap retail around the entire street face. We feel there is always value in retail potential property when there is a parking garage on the other side of the alley right across from you. One of the challenges of this type of project is that we have 16,000 sf of retail, 7,500 sf of office, 34 condos plus parking. It’s almost like a Rubik’s Cube to put all of those elements together and work right. You always want to put access to underground parking as far

Figure 22: Birds-eye view of the Gateway Station (OZ Architecture).

Figure 24 & 25: The eye-level view of the model and the building after construction as seen from Washington Avenue (OZ Architecture).
back on the project as possible so you don’t have the drive lane interrupting any of the potential retail space. The other interesting thing about this project was that it is set up so that, as the other parcel is developed, we can actually access parking below that project from this garage. We decided to have an interior corridor because it is a deep square block. We had to get access to the office space through an elevator and stairs. We wanted a residential address on Washington Avenue with a separate entry where tenants could pick up mail and use their own elevator to the residential units.

We utilized cut off corners at the main intersection. That is an element you see in historic buildings. Entrances are set back in order to define the entry of storefronts. On the second floor we were facing the parking garage, and we didn’t feel we could sell units looking at the parking garage across the alley, but we did feel we could sell office condos. That’s where the office went. One of the things you can see in this particular footprint is that we had a very deep building. We wanted to draw light back into the units as far as possible, so we used a ‘lanai’ rather than an attached balcony. From the façade you don’t see balconies hung off the building on the street. We were dealing with a building with a large mass, five stories tall. The top floor was pretty controversial among the community. However, this project couldn’t have been developed at a two-story scale. As you know, Golden is a two to three-story scale town. How do you work a project of this size and try to get it fit in in a reasonably comfortable way? We used 25-foot bays as seen in the façade. A lot of things you see in architecture at scale you feel from the street level. We played some tricks such as the second story cornice that breaks up the scale of the building. We looked at changing materials, which were done for breaking up the elements of the building and for cost reasons. You see the punched windows, masonry detailing, a very typical Golden base where there is a column and a recessed entry awning element side band over the top. We set the top floor back to minimize the perception of the fifth story from the sidewalk. One other problem with putting condos on Main Streets is that people like to put their bikes and all of their stuff on their balconies and you see it when you have an open railing. This one has a 3-foot high solid railing that hides the clutter on the balconies. We also feel that having these lanais set back gives a nice scale and shadow break to the building which also helps breaks up the mass. Here you can see how the stepping back of the fifth floor really works in breaking the scale down on a pedestrian level (figures 24 and 25). To be a good neighbor, one of the ideas was also to break down the mass on the corner where it marries the two-story elements. We ended up painting the historic sign back on the wall. We think this building after it ages will blend in as well as possible under the circumstances.

Questions and Answers

Deena Swetlik: My first question is for Bob. Was it all office condos then or just that part facing the alley?

Bob West: No, just on the alley. You don’t go in the same hallways. You can go up the elevator to the office side and not go into the residential area.

Deena Swetlik: Is the urban renewal authority really a BID (Business Improvement District)? There isn’t a BID for downtown, is there?

Mark Heller: We (GURA) are a lot of things and that may change. The downtown district is only the urban renewal project in Golden. We are starting to think about that this summer. We may create a DDA (Downtown Development Authority). I don’t think we have the business to make a BID strong enough to do much. Even if we create a DDA, it will be a while before we get the increment. We may end up creating the DDA sooner than later and may end up transferring GURA’s surplus. The windfall of the city will be enough to pay for everything it is responsible for. A unique thing for Golden is that 10 years ago the citizens passed an amendment limiting the city’s ability to provide incentives over $25,000 without a vote of the people. So GURA or a new DDA would be the only entity that could actually finance a redevelopment. As we have heard in the three projects presented here, the financing would not have happened without GURA.

John Olson: I have a question for Bob. On your Gateway project, it looked like stepping back of the fifth story was handled pretty well. Is it pretty invisible from the street. How far back was that step back?

Bob West: Fifteen feet. The upper level is penthouses so they have nice terraces.

John Olson: My other question is for Mark. Downtown is your only urban renewal district, is that because you have never been approached by other people who want financing elsewhere?

Mark Heller: There are other parts of the city that could benefit from urban renewal. I think there are a few people in the city with a lot of money and a lot of antipathy towards urban renewal. We have been sued many, many times. I think that has had a lasting negative effect on the politicians, past, present and future. Nobody wants to handle another urban renewal project because it was so controversial. I hope that fear will fade because it is such an effective tool. For Golden, it’s our only tool.

Michael Copeland: I have a question about parking. Len, do you recall what the cost of your garage broke down to per space?

Len McBloom: $10,000 a parking space in 2001.

Mark Heller: The one we built for Gateway was $16,000 a space.

Michael Copeland: Bob West, is a future phase the next end cap? Is that parking going to go somewhere else?

Bob West: That parking can go underneath that end cap. In the main project there are 51 parking spaces for 34 units. The reason why this project works is the parking garage – it parks for retail and the office space.

Mark Heller: The parking garage was actually GURA’s contribution. The residential parking for Gateway is under Gateway. Any developer needs to provide actual on-site spaces for their residential units. Council can play
games with commercial parking. For Gateway Station because it was replacing the current building that had been grandfathered, they were not required to provide that commercial parking. Council extended grandfathering for this development. Technically speaking, in terms of code compliance, Gateway did not have to build any new commercial parking. GURA felt that we really needed to have commercial parking. I think their bank and commercial tenants needed to know that there were actual parking spaces nearby. So we built underground. In each end cap, we built knockout panels. It still won’t provide all of the physical commercial spaces that those bookend parcels might need. The cost of building underground parking on small sites frustrates redevelopment of those bookend parcels. GURA was willing to make a deal with Brad – a non-reallocation agreement. We pledged to not allocate any of the public spaces next to Brad’s building to mollify his tenants. Our city attorney really hated that agreement and said that we can’t do it again.

Ronnie Pelusio: Was there surplus parking in the parking garage for Brad’s project?

Brad Haswell: Gateway Station sold its last few units over the last four months. Now there are only resales available. With the economy turning eventually, you are going to see a real surge in Golden. I think supplying parking is key for more development in downtown. Boulder is a perfect example where parking garages were positioned around Pearl Street. For 25 years one end of the mall suffered greatly. The east end always had issues filling up and being active. The west end of the mall as incredibly vibrant and active. That was because there were two parking garages there. When they finally built the the garage that capped the eastend, that entire side of Pearl Street took off. It is absolutely critical to have parking. The fact that you already have it will be a huge positive for developers in the future.

Mark Heller: We took a lot of flack for that. People ask if you’re trying to be such a walkable town, then why are you spending millions of dollars on parking? My answer always was: “do you think the Boulder’s mall is a vibrant place? How do you think they got there?”

Cynthia Patton: With the Gateway project what was your public involvement process? Did the project happen after the ballot measure that capped the incentive?

Mark Heller: No, because urban renewal authorities are not the same as the city and do not have to comply with the city charter. It didn’t happen after the vote.

Len McBloom: We were 30 days away from getting the permit for that built-to-suit at Clear Creek Square and we were sued along with the city and the urban renewal authority. We took them to court and got it dismissed in record time. It allowed the project to go forward. The Telecom crashed two months later; we got the bankruptcy notice six months under construction. If Clear Creek Square had not happened, Gateway would not have happened. You can find a lot of fault with Clear Creek Square in terms of density, how it was executed, but it set the stage for a lot of other projects in Downtown Golden.

Cynthia Patton: For those of you who had a public process, were people more interested in the design component of the project or the retail strategy and the types of retail they would be attracting and adding to the downtown?

Mark Heller: Regarding Gateway, huge on both. We have a twice a month meeting with our downtown merchants, they were among the biggest proponents of Gateway Station. They knew that it would bring more competition, but it would also knew it would benefit the vitality. The community was intensely interested in every facet of Gateway Station. Downtown is the heart and soul of the city. It was a long and difficult process. I think the computer technology that we have now is key to that. We can actually show folks the new building and how much view it would or would not block. The northwest corner that almost collapsed inwards was a result of public input. Because it was a PUD, we could use public input and our financing to get things moving.

Bob West: I thought it was a great process. There was some controversy when we proposed that level of density on Main Street. I thought the suggestions were good. I thought we had a good working relationship with the town. You’re never going to please everyone, but I think we pleased most people.

Len McBloom: I think a lot of mixed-use development opportunities have their point in time. The point in time for Clear Creek Square was early in in terms of acceptance of mixed-use. We had a terrible time getting our lenders to accept mixed-use in downtown Golden. So much so that we had to say to GURA that we will not give you our conventional sales tax generating retail. It was a very contemptuous issue that we had to negotiate through with GURA at that time. We gave them basically a “best efforts” deal - we will give you a period of time, but at some point we need to be free to lease the space to whomever we can lease it to. Another thing about Clear Creek Square that we made a conscious decision about horizontal mixed-use. Thus, the office financed as office. The residential financed as residential. We wanted to have a restaurant. The parking was a real challenge. I know Mark asks me why I created the condos? Because I had to get the tax exempt financing into the proforma. Because I was a private sector user and didn’t qualify for tax exempt financing. Private users can’t benefit from TIF for profit.
FUTURE EVENT:
COLORADO SPRINGS SUSTAINABILITY BIKE TOUR

Date: Saturday, June 26, 2010, 2:00 pm
(In case of inclement weather, postponed to June 27, 2010)

Schedule and meeting places:

10:00 AM: Meet at Mountain Vista Community School cafeteria in Spring Creek for Presentations on Spring Creek, Broadmoor View and Rio Grande Village.
10:30 AM: Tour Spring Creek
11:00 AM: Leave Spring Creek/Broadmoor View for CSU Water Lab with 10-minute presentation by Mark Tremmel.
11:40 AM: Leave CSU Water Lab to ride through Rio Grande Village.
12:00 PM: Arrive Downtown to break for lunch. Appetizers provided by APA Colorado at Nosh.
1:30 PM: Reconvene at Pioneers Museum to continue bike tour to Colorado College. Ride by the community garden at President’s Home or Community Garden at Bemis.
2:10 PM: Continue tour north through Old North End up to the Cohousing Neighborhood and Dog Tooth
2:30 PM: Ride south to Lowell for 20-minute outdoor presentation at small pocket park (intersection of Weber and Las Animas) by Mike DeGrant and Mark Tremmel.
3:00 PM: Leave Lowell for Bristol Brewery.
5:00 PM: Bus to leave Bristol with bicycles back to Spring Creek.

This event is cosponsored by CNU Colorado, USGBC - Southern Colorado Branch, APA Colorado, Colorado Springs Bike Month

AIA Colorado Springs Charrette

The American Institute of Architects Colorado South chapter will host a Pikes Peak Region Smart-Growth Charrette and Sustainability Plan June 3-5, 2010, at Colorado College, McHugh Commons.

All CNU Colorado members are invited to participate at this event for a two-and-a-half day charrette to draft a Smart-Growth Sustainability Plan for the Pikes Peak Region. This discussion will support past levels. You may also prefer to provide an ad similar to what you see on these progress engaging many groups involved in putting sustainability into pages. If you are interested in these options and would like more information please contact: Korkut Onaran: korkut@wlarch.com (303.557.8188) or Sean O’Hara: Sean@evstudio.us (303.322.4964).

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