

## GOLDEN

# ADUs BOOST HOUSING

By Robin Becker, City of Golden city planner

**T**he City of Golden is a historic town located in the mountains west of Denver. We are a welcoming community with a population of 20,399, which includes a mix of students, retirees, young families, childfree couples, and singles. Approximately 40% of the population rents their homes. Golden is an economic center, tourist destination, and college town. We have robust demand for housing and a significant housing affordability issue. Golden must continue to innovate to provide diverse housing options to meet the needs of our community.

In 2010, Golden adopted an ordinance to allow homeowners to build Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). ADUs are smaller, independent residential dwelling units located on the same lot as a stand-alone, single-family home. The City of Golden allows internal (e.g., basement) and external (e.g., detached cottage) ADUs on a single-family zoned lot.

Golden has added 80 ADUs to the housing stock over the past 12 years, meaning new dwellings were added without a new subdivision or the development of new land.

### BENEFITS

One main benefit of ADUs is that the cost to build or retrofit a home to add an ADU is often less expensive than the cost to build a more traditional rental unit. The added income that can result from renting out an ADU can provide a lower cost of living to both the homeowner and renter/occupant. Data shows that ADUs rent for below or at market rent. This is important to note as ADUs are often used not just for traditional renters, but for family members to age in place, for those that need long-term care, or for young adults.

ADUs can also provide a more affordable option distributed in the community including in existing single-family neighborhoods. There are regulations regarding size and design, and a requirement that the property owner live on site, but ADUs allow the community to extend this less expensive rental option to areas that would not allow apartment buildings or other traditional multi-family residential unit types.

### CHALLENGES

While ADUs are allowed throughout the community, there are notable

clusters located in Golden's downtown neighborhoods and historic districts. These locations are desirable areas to live in as they are close to major employers, the Colorado School of Mines campus, and walkable downtown amenities. When cottage style ADUs clustered on specific blocks and alleys, some residents complained that this concentration of small alley units has changed the character of their block.

A second challenge the city faces with ADUs is access and safety, and this includes adequate lighting, appropriate front door location and access, safety for pedestrians and drivers, and other alley ADU concerns. In response, the Planning Division reviews all ADU permits to check adequate lighting, access, entrances, and exits are safe and well-designed.

Since the adoption of the ADU ordinance in 2010, Golden has learned the importance of ongoing education for homeowners and renters, and we continue to review current policy and regulations as needed. As more communities adapt to meet changing housing demands, the permitting of ADUs as housing stock is a valuable tool to address housing availability and market rate affordability.

**THE ADDED INCOME THAT CAN RESULT FROM RENTING OUT AN ADU CAN PROVIDE A LOWER COST OF LIVING TO BOTH THE HOMEOWNER AND RENTER/OCCUPANT.**

