



For More Information
Contact: Kitty Clemens
Economic Development Director
719-685-9741
CELL (719)-321-8561
kitty@clemens.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MANITOU SPRINGS AHEAD WITH WALKABLE AUDIT OF MANITOU AVENUE

January 6, 2004 (Manitou Springs, Colorado) – The Manitou Springs Economic Development Council (EDC) and the City of Manitou Springs will host Dan Burden, Director of Walkable Communities on January 20, 2004. Mr. Burden’s visit will be the first of many opportunities for area residents to begin the process of visualizing how downtown will function after public improvements are made on Manitou Avenue.

Improving the pedestrian environment and public spaces in downtown Manitou Springs is the cornerstone of the EDC strategic plan which adheres to the concept of walkability as the key to a healthy urban environment. This principle was identified in the master plan for Manitou Avenue in 1978 and reaffirmed by several other studies over a 20 year period, including the Avenue Plan adopted by the City of Manitou Springs in 1998.

The economic benefits of a walkable community are widely documented. According to recent research conducted by the Center for Community Economic Development, homebuyers are willing to pay more for homes in a community when public spaces are designed for walkability. Visitor numbers also increase when towns design on a more human scale with pedestrian-

friendly amenities such as wide sidewalks, inviting areas to rest from shopping and sidewalk cafes. In downtown Lodi, California a pedestrian oriented project similar in size and cost to the downtown Manitou Springs revitalization resulted in a drop of retail vacancy rates from 18% to 6% and a 30% increase in retail sales. Sales rise as residents and visitors increase their length of stay and frequency of visits. Residents are willing to pay more for housing as a direct relationship to quality of life. Community pride increases as a “sense of place” reenergizes public interaction in open space gathering places.

Designing walkable communities also has other tangible benefits. Walking improves the overall health of community residents. Reducing vehicular emissions benefits plants, watersheds, and the health of wildlife alike. As more people take to the streets, private sector investments in the surrounding buildings enhance visual appeal of the entire area and increase commercial property values.

Mr. Burden will conduct workshops on January 20th at City Hall, 606 Manitou Avenue. The first workshop will be held at 1:00. Interested parties are encouraged to brown bag their lunch. The workshop will be repeated at 6:30 to allow those not able to attend a daytime session to participate. There is no cost for the workshop. Seating will be on a first come basis.

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