

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

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Executive Summary:



Vail Economy: End of season numbers have yet to be officially posted. However, there is a sense in the business community that it was one of the best. Some are speculating that not only were the total [snow fall](#) records topped, but the long standing glass ceiling of 1.6 million skier days may have been exceeded as well. Town of Vail [sales tax](#) receipts marginally lagged behind the most recent high set in the 2008 winter season. [Read on...](#)

The Broader View: American consumer confidence has been making gains in recent weeks because of improved corporate earnings and employment numbers according to the Bloomberg [consumer comfort index](#). The gains are fragile and could be negatively affected by climbing gas prices and declining home sales. Speculation persists over how much longer the Federal government's economic stimulus effort can continue keeping interest rates at historic lows, while saturating the economy with newly minted cash ([Quantitative Easing 2](#)), which risks hiking inflation rates. [Read on...](#)

Eagle County Foreclosures Leveling Off, Unemployment Easing: Higher foreclosure rates cause a greater drag on home values. There were fewer [foreclosures](#) in Eagle County compared to this time last year, a positive indicator for real estate values. However, dollar figures are up due to some large properties that have gone into foreclosure. [Read on...](#)



Pace of Vail Building Permits Down: Town of Vail first quarter [building permits](#) have dropped below 2010 levels. There are no large construction projects except those funded by the Town of Vail. In the private sector, remodels and residential additions predominate. [Read on...](#)

Decline in Real Estate Values = Lower Property Taxes: Realtors have been consistently reporting that property sales have been discounted from the 2007 market high between 20% - 40%. Property values for the purpose of taxation are reappraised every two years based upon comparable market sales within the first 18 months of the biennium. The new appraisals are expected to be out May 1st with the average projected to be 25%-30% less than the previous biennium valuation. [Read on...](#)

Where Will Vail's Growth Come From? Have Vail's traditional growth problems: parking and affordable housing, become issues of the past? These issues have become so ingrained in the community's political psyche that they will not be easily set aside. There are those who are of the opinion that their continued public debate, championed by local popular politicians, could be obscuring more important community issues. [Read on...](#)



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Vail Skier - Showy spring plumage reflects the buoyant success of the winter ski season

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

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Judging from the flood and diversity of foreign languages encountered on the streets, the weakened dollar appears to have drawn in record numbers of international visitors. According to hoteliers, the Mexican market predominates with a strong presence from Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Australia and the United Kingdom. Domestically, adverse weather dampened enthusiasm from some east coast markets.

There are business people saying, unlike last ski season, consumers are spending more freely across a much broader spectrum of goods and services. The season's success may well have vaulted the Vail brand back to the top position in North America, perhaps even globally. Vail, it is being said, has regained its unique "adventuresome spirit" of greatness.

For those laboring in the vineyards there is a push to sustain upward momentum through the summer and beyond. If tourism market growth can be sustained, there is a higher probability residential property values will float upward as well.

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longer the Federal government's economic stimulus effort can continue keeping interest rates at historic lows, while saturating the economy with newly minted cash ([Quantitative Easing 2](#)), which risks hiking inflation rates.

Warnings by Standard & Poor's, a financial credit rating agency indicates that U.S. government debt must be reined in or suffer severe economic consequences. The [risk of default](#) on the national debt is not likely, according to other analysts. Either way, this leaves Americans with few options other than to economize on their lifestyle expectations. The [political mood](#) of the nation remains gloomy.

Britain, which took drastic steps to curb government spending, may be a harbinger of what lies ahead for American households. The [U.K. economy](#) is experiencing a downturn in retail sales as disposable household income is declining faster than at any time in the past 60 years. Inflation caused by higher fuel and food costs accompanied by weak personal incomes, rising taxes and a fluttering real estate market has caused consumer confidence to decline. These factors have caused the first year-over year decline in disposal income in 30 years.

Nationally, [housing prices](#) continue a downward trend with a -5.7% year over year decline in February, with Colorado down -12%. The rate of [new home construction](#) and sales of existing homes are expected to remain tepid. The exception is the purchase of bank foreclosures and distress sales. [New home purchases](#) increased in March, which is a positive sign.



Eagle County Foreclosures Leveling Off, Unemployment Easing: Higher foreclosure rates cause a greater drag on home values. There were fewer [foreclosures](#) in Eagle County compared to this time last year, a positive indicator for real estate values. However, dollar figures are up due to some large properties that have gone into foreclosure. There are those reckoning the leveling off is because the worst of the job loss related foreclosures occurred last year. Eagle County [unemployment](#) has improved slightly compared with the same time last year. With no major development projects forecasted to start construction, new employment opportunities will be in the lower wage services sector.



Pace of Vail Building Permits Down: Town of Vail first quarter [building permits](#) have dropped below 2010 levels. There are no large construction projects except those funded by the Town of Vail. In the private sector, remodels and residential additions predominate. There are those in long established Vail businesses who have seen the potential that the Vail Renaissance is generating. Some now have greater confidence in taking the personal risk of reinvesting in upgrading and remodeling their family run businesses, hoping that they will reap dividends for years to come.

Local 1st Quarter Real Estate Sales Slower: According to Vail Valley real estate sales figures a local analyst is reporting that the Vail Valley real estate market is trending a bit slower than last year. [Land Title](#) statistics show that with all real estate transactions through February, dollar volume is down by 18%; also the number of units sold is down by 14% from 2010.

A more current first quarter analysis by [Vail Prudential Realty](#) of residential properties shows the number of units sold on a par with 2010 (178 to 174) but dollar volume is down 22% from 2010. The average sales price is approximately \$1,057,000. By comparison, the first quarter in 2010 had an average sales price of \$1,364,000, 2009 averaged \$1,570,000 and 2008 was \$1,772,000. Correctly priced properties are selling.

The Town of Vail [is reporting](#) real estate transfer tax (RETT) collected through March for major redevelopment projects to be flat. Collections not related to redevelopment are down -14% from this time last year.

Decline in Real Estate Values = Lower Property Taxes: Realtors have been consistently reporting that property sales have been discounted from the 2007 market high between 20% - 40%. Property values for the purpose of taxation are reappraised every two years based upon comparable market sales within the first 18 months of the biennium. The new appraisals are expected to be out May 1st with the average projected to be 25%-30% less than the previous biennium valuation.

All property owners have the right to appeal (protest) their property value directly with the Assessor's Office between May 1 and June 1. Appeals can be made in person, by mail or fax.

[Eagle County Assessor: Appeals](#)

Lower Property Tax Revenues Not Without Potential Consequences:

Outmigration of the construction workforce, accompanied by a decline in state funding and property tax revenues has caused the Eagle County School District to [cut 40 jobs](#), 30 of which are teaching positions. Voter attitudes are causing school officials to look at a tax increase election as a last resort.

A Cautionary TIF Tale:

The Town of Vail is becoming more reliant upon Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund capital projects in the Lionshead redevelopment urban renewal district. TIF generate revenues come from the increase in property tax valuation resulting from new construction. The Town is building \$15 million in transportation and related improvements financed by bonds repaid by TIF generated property taxes. In a cautionary [TIF report from California](#), there are several TIF funded renewal authorities that aggressively financed redevelopment projects during the boom that are now facing financial crisis because of a precipitous recession-related decline in property taxes. The Homeowners Association was successful last fall in urging the Town to reduce the amount of its Lionshead TIF related expenditures; the Association continues its advocacy of restraint.

Retail Sales Gain Ground: Vail's monthly sales tax receipts for the [winter season](#) through February are [outpacing](#) other Colorado mountain resorts with an 8.98% average increase as compared to Aspen's 5.32%. Anecdotal reports are that Vail's luxury goods business did much better than Aspen's over the winter season. The [Town is reporting](#) all categories of businesses in all locations throughout Vail have increased over the prior year during the winter season. [Sales tax](#) estimates for March are up 16.8% from last year. For the current ski season November through March they are up 12.3%. March revenues from the Lift Ticket Tax are up 11.5% from March 2010 and up 11.7% for the ski season.

Lodging Revenues Increased: Sales tax revenues from lodging increased 9.5% in February. [MTRIP reports](#) through February average occupancy year over year was down -0.6% while average daily room rate increased by 3.3% to \$425.00.

Public Parking Revenues Down: Daily sales at the end of March from the Town's two parking structures are down 5.65% with non-pass transactions up 1.2% from the prior season. Sales from discounted season parking passes are down 5.8%. The designated free skier parking zone on the North Frontage Road at the West Vail commercial center was largely filled every day thru the entire ski season. The Town, wanting to be sensitive to economic conditions, expanded the "local's only" value card to all Eagle County residents, which mushroomed sales. The number of days that the South Frontage Road was used for overflow parking in Vail Village and Lionshead was one of the lowest on record. ([TOV Revenue Trends](#))

TOV & VRI Spar Over Long-Term Public Parking Needs: Some members of the Vail Town Council are not satisfied with Vail Resort's strategy to respond to the long-term public parking needs of the community. According to Town parking studies there will be a shortfall of 1,000 parking spaces in coming years.

These numbers are in addition to the publically available parking spaces to be provided in the proposed Ever Vail portal in West Lionshead. The Town Council has inferred, if Vail Resorts does not become a partner in solving the long-term need, then they will discuss in August rescinding their permission to allow 15 days of overflow parking on the Frontage Roads.

There are those questioning whether Vail Resorts is vulnerable to a shutdown of Frontage Road parking as the demand for overflow parking has dropped significantly this ski season. They say it is the Town of Vail that has been furthering the practice of Frontage Road parking by allowing "Free" parking in West Vail and offering parking pass discounts on the North Frontage Road at Middle Creek. There are those that see the drop in the demand for the Town owned public parking as an indication that its projections are no longer accurate. This may be caused by the availability of new private sector public parking that has transferred demand away from the Town's parking structures.

The Town Council has rejected within the past year a proposal to build a 1,000 vehicle parking structure under the athletic fields on Ford Park. They have also rejected making road widening improvements that would expand parking opportunities along the Frontage Roads. Other than expanding existing parking structures in Vail Village and Lionshead or adding more parking at the Ever Vail portal there are few options to expand Town of Vail owned public parking within the Town limits. A VRI representative suggests that if Ever Vail is not approved as it is generally configured currently, the company may move its investment capital to its Tahoe resorts.

Where Will Vail's Growth Come From? Have Vail's traditional growth problems: parking and affordable housing, become issues of the past? These issues have become so ingrained in the community's political psyche that they will not be easily set aside. There are those who are of the opinion that their continued public debate, championed by local popular politicians, could be obscuring more important community issues. As some see it, before new economic realities

can take hold in Vail, the Town government must find itself in an untenable position by spending down its financial reserves in a vain attempt to keep popular local issues as the central theme of its agenda.

What is now playing out in the [economic decline](#) of Vermont's ski communities could also be replicated in Eagle County, but on a much larger scale. There is a rebalancing process underway in the local economy. There is a political appetite for more development, but a disbelief that it will occur any time soon because of national economic conditions. The collapse of the construction industry as a year round employer has reset the local economic priority to filling high end destination guest beds, now the main stay of the local economy.

The three decades long drum beat for a "year round" economy is being replaced with a quest to return to core strengths by maximizing revenues during prime summer and winter tourism seasons.

The "shoulder" season remains the providence of a slow revival in the "group" business market that can be attributed to several new midsize conference facilities built in new hotel properties. Faded from the scene, after twenty years of throwing millions of dollars at designing elaborate public/private development schemes, is the "year round economy" concept of a publically subsidized 1,100 plus seat convention/conference center.

There is an emerging reality that is being borne out by gains in Vail Resorts revenues as the shape and profitability of its post-recession marketing strategies play out. However, the longevity of marketing driven gains can be ephemeral. Vail is fortunate, it has its 50th Anniversary Celebration and the 2015 World Alpine Championships to keep it focused on developing new markets and catering to its traditional base. In the view of some lifetime Vail loyalists, much will be dependent upon increasing new investment to improve on-mountain safety and facilities on a par with improvements being made throughout the Town and by other international competitors. A bigger share of reinvestment dollars is necessary to keep the Vail flagship leading the way forward.

Today, sound marketing and investment strategies are delivering profitability in the winter season, but without further consolidation of both the summer and winter branding, can performance keep pace with the crest of the consumer directed wave? The existing fragmented organization of the community's government-controlled marketing program leads to a branding message that can be uncontrollable, garbled, and where weaknesses can quickly trump strengths. In the view of some business leaders, the community needs to embrace increased control from the private sector to lead to the unification of a year round brand building strategy targeted at growing business by expanding into multicultural international markets. A local domestic government is ill-equipped to take on and sustain such a task.



Winter 2010-2011 Flights from Mexico.
Miami is the gateway for Vail's South American guests.

International Markets Grow: Vail Resorts is making strides in expanding international markets. They are influencing the Town of Vail to follow suit. Anecdotal indications are that the winter season will see a strong upswing from Latin America particularly from Mexico and Brazil. The Town's summer marketing program is also putting greater emphasis on the Latin market, particularly Mexico.

Vail business promotion delegations are making more frequent visits to Mexico. Locally, programs are being created to cater to the needs of an expected influx of Latin American families who are seeking summer camp programs for the children. Previously, the Latin American summer camp business went to Canada, but changes in visa restrictions, have made the United States the new preference.

Vail Resorts has initiated a Spanish language website, Destinovail.com, to promote both winter and summer Vail vacation opportunities. Financial analysts believe that several countries throughout the [Latin American market](#) have strong growth potential over the long-term. The ease with which Vail can expand its Latin American market is assisted by the cultural familiarity gained from the growth of the [American Hispanic population](#). Growth of Vail's other multicultural international markets have expansion potential, but are more problematic and challenging because of distance, language, and cultural sensibilities. Each is becoming a more critical factor in strengthening Vail's high end destination guest and residential real estate markets.

Funding for Eagle County Airport Up in the Air: The Eagle County Commissioners dropped their [subsidy of flights](#) into Eagle County. This, as the importance of the airport has become one of the key factors in building and diversifying the economy of the surrounding region. The business community is scrambling to replace the lost revenue. In spite of the funding difficulties and a modest reduction in winter service, airlines this winter season filled more seats at higher fares into EGE. Planners are predicting because of a successful winter season, airlines will become more aggressive in expanding service for the next winter into the Eagle airport. Their strategy is to improve linkage between Eagle and major international hubs throughout the United States. Research is progressing on a feasibility study to open an international terminal that could have significant value in expanding business from Latin America and Canada. It is expected that the developers of the international terminal are seeking financial partnership with local governments and the private sector. County officials are currently updating their master plan for the airport.

TOV \$9.4M Conference Center Election Reset From August to November: Voices dissatisfied with the vetting process for several projects proposed to be the beneficiaries of the sequestered Conference Center Fund caused the Town Council to back away from the tentative August special election date. The Council wants give the public more time in June to weigh in on the recommended projects, as well as see if there are any others that may have merit. Importantly, the November date coincides with the election of four open Town Council seats. The date change ensures that whatever is brought to the voters will become hotly debated by Council candidates and will be the central issue of the election.

The Council was informed belatedly by their legal advisors that there was no time restriction (in months or years) on when they had to bring the matter to the voters. Already, several years have passed since the funds were sequestered by action of the voters and the Town Council. Some on the Council believe as a matter of principle, based on a 2006 former Council's political promise, that the issue should be put to the voters now. Others disagree because of vastly different economic conditions. They do not believe that any of the proposed projects add to the economic well being of the community, which was the original purpose for the fund. They advocate until the right project is found, don't hold a vote. Importantly, if any of the proposed projects under consideration are put on the ballot and summarily rejected by the electorate, the funds must be returned to the taxpayers via a reduction in the rates of sales and lodging taxes.

ENVIRONMENT

Snow Fall, Gore Creek Flood Potential and Water Pollution:

Winter [snow fall](#) is one of the highest on record. Low temperatures are slowing the spring runoff. The possibility of [flooding](#) is increased when spring moisture continues followed by several days of sustained high temperatures.

The Town and Eagle River Water & Sanitation District are jointly working to identify the location of undesirable background levels of certain urban related chemicals that began appearing in East Vail last year.

Front Range/Western Slope Water Development Deal: Vail and Eagle County will retain the benefits they gained in the rejection of the Homestake II water development project in the Holy Cross Wilderness in a new agreement between Denver and Western Slope water developers. The proposed major reservoir, near Wolcott Junction, if it is ever built, can now be a joint Denver/Western Slope project, rather than, as originally proposed, a Denver only project. The city of Aurora still retains its ability to remove water from the Eagle River and Homestake Creek in the vicinity of Camp Hale. An extensive review of the complex deal can be found in the current edition of [Mountain Town News](#).





Gear & Equipment at the ready - new West Vail Fire Station

Pine Beetle Forest and Wildfire Management Projects - Vail Mountain and TOV: The United States Forest Service is proposing to implement hazard tree, salvage and regeneration treatments on about 984 acres of lodgepole pine on National Forest lands within the special use permit boundary of the Vail Ski Resort. The purpose of this project is to reduce risks to the public and infrastructure from falling trees and to create conditions that would increase lodgepole pine regeneration following the mountain pine beetle epidemic by removing dead, dying and susceptible trees through salvage. ([See USFS website for details.](#))

The Town of Vail is downsizing its summer wildlands fire crew. It has several [tree removal operations](#) scheduled from East Vail to Cascade Village. Both efforts are to further reduce the threat of danger from catastrophic wildfire.

The Town of Vail and Colorado Department of Transportation continue to improve their fiber cable network to expand their public web cam television monitoring and electronic message signs on Interstate 70 to aid in evacuation due to a wildfire event. With the exception of successful outcomes of several storm closures events, critics say there has yet to be a circumstance where the Town's wildfire evacuation plan has been put into actual practice. These critics believe that a community wide drill should be conducted, particularly for those neighborhoods most vulnerable to wildfire and because fire fighting assets have been redeployed as a result of the opening of the community's largest fire station in West Vail.

Green Building Codes Under Study: The Town of Vail continues its effort to expand its environmental sustainability efforts. It is studying methods to require green building technology through its building codes. These code changes could have significant impact on larger projects. There are those who believe that long-term projects, such as Ever Vail, which are not expected to begin construction any time soon, should be held to the highest zero carbon emissions standards, rather than the more commonly accepted Leeds standards. They say that, if Vail's branding is to be strengthened with younger generations, it needs to be more closely aligned with the emerging values of green technology consumers. Vail builders worry that onerous green regulations will drive up construction costs, which will push real estate investors out of the Vail market. Also, developers are concerned with the Town's move to adopt legislation to "standardize" the "exactions" (special requirements which can be financial and/or technological) it can impose on new development projects.

Embracing the Tide of Technological Innovation in Hard Times: The evolution of green and cutting edge building technology is rapidly advancing as evidenced from [futuristic examples](#) of advanced materials, computer communications and [energy conservation technologies](#) designed for residential and commercial applications. Similar proposals are being suggested for automobile technology, like converting the rental car fleet at the Eagle airport to all electric vehicles. The limited range of all electric vehicles is compatible with the short travel distances between the airport and surrounding resort destinations. However, Vail's parking structures, public or private, are not as yet set up with ubiquitous recharging ports. The Town of Vail is beginning to consider energy conversion projects on a limited basis, like 15-year pay back conversion to LED lighting in its parking structures.

Stunning Architecture Addresses Connectivity Issue: HNTB – Michael Van Valkenburgh & Associates have been selected as the winners of the ARC Wildlife Bridge competition. The winner and eight finalists of the competition were welcomed to Vail at a reception at the Sebastian Hotel. The reception, which was hosted by the Canadian Consulate in Denver, allowed Vailites to view the stunning architecture that has been proposed to alleviate traffic/wildlife collisions. The winning design may be used to build a prototype on Vail Pass. ([See a selection of the final proposals.](#))

The 36 six competing firms were charged with providing solutions that would be more cost-effective than the structures currently being used in Alberta, Canada, which cost on average \$10-\$15 million each to span four lanes. A wide range of concepts based on different materials were represented among the finalists, including one which used beetle kill wood as the primary material.



Winning concept for Interstate 70 West Vail Pass Wildlife Crossing

HNTB – Michael Van Valkenburgh & Associates chose a more traditional material: pre-cast concrete in modular components. This cuts down on transportation costs as concrete is widely available and also enables a variety of configurations for different sites. Their design takes into account existing conditions as well as several proposals that have been made for improving traffic on I-70, including the possibility of a light rail.

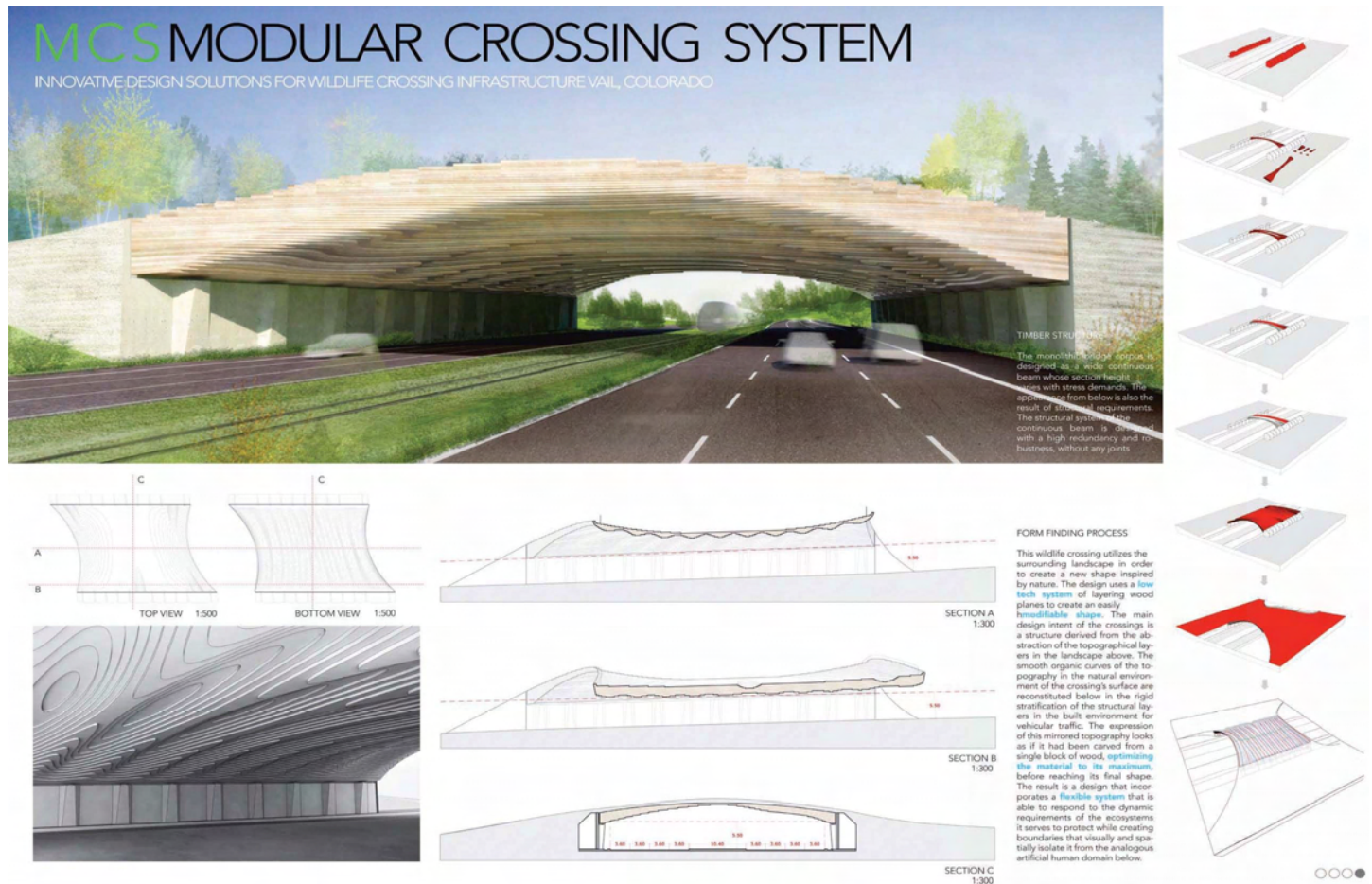
The Vail Pass site was chosen from 26 possible locations due to the design challenges it represents in regards to isolation and extreme weather conditions and extensive studies that have been carried out by the Center for Native Ecosystems and the Colorado Department of Transportation.

The Vail Pass site is an area of extreme interest as a possible location for a wildlife bridge due to its potential to reconnect one of the most important wildlife corridors in the Southern Rockies. A habitat connection at Vail Pass would allow the unimpeded migration of ranging animals from the Hunter-Frying Pan Wilderness through the Holy Cross and into the Eagle's Nest Wilderness.

The effective use of readily available materials and a lower weight-bearing specification would allow the HNTB-Michael Van Valkenburgh & Associates design to accomplish the task of providing safe passage for wildlife at half the cost of the current model being used in Alberta.

The need to restore habitat connectivity and the 725,000 - 1.5 million cases of vehicle/wildlife collisions annually, the \$5-\$7 million price tag of the winning design is attracting a great deal of attention from transportation planners throughout western North America. - *Jonathan Staufer, Vail*

Wildlife Crossing Concepts Could Be Used in Vail: While the wildlife bridge concepts were conceived to be built on West Vail Pass, they can also be put to good use in Vail itself. There are several locations where these kinds of crossings could be used to unify neighborhoods that are separated by the Interstate. The above illustration is very similar to the "cut and cover" concept already incorporated into the Town's transportation master plan to bury I-70. Any one of the proposals open many possibilities. The most important is that the cost of building the Simba Run underpass is estimated to be between \$15 million to \$20 million. It is designed to carry heavy vehicle traffic. The wildlife bridges are not designed for vehicular traffic and are half the price. This put these types of landscaped open space bridges well with the capability of the Town of Vail to fund. At those prices, multiple crossings are possible if built over several decades.



What do you think about these issues?

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Your input is appreciated!

POINT OF VIEW

Bury I-70 through Vail: *Otto Wiest – Mr. Wiest is a life long skier and founding member of the Vail Ski School. He is a Vail residential property owner, world traveler, photographer and resident of Lindenberg, Bavaria in Germany.*



Recently, I stood on top of Lindsey's, the former International run, and looked down to Vail. It was not very impressive to see the huge highway dominating the valley.

By looking up and down the valley, I got the idea how wonderful all of this might be if the ugly highway were not there. It would be a quiet and beautiful marvel of the Gore Range beside the creek, surrounded by trees and nature.

Yes, I was standing up there on Vail Mountain and dreaming. If you could see what has been done in other parts of the world, I wonder if such dreams might also become true in Vail. I have seen the big highway from the north disappearing just under the earth when it starts to enter Paris.

OK, Vail is not Paris. Let's take it a little smaller.

There is Locarno, in Switzerland, located at the Lago Maggiore-Tessin. They have put the ugly highway into the mountain and surrounded the whole town.

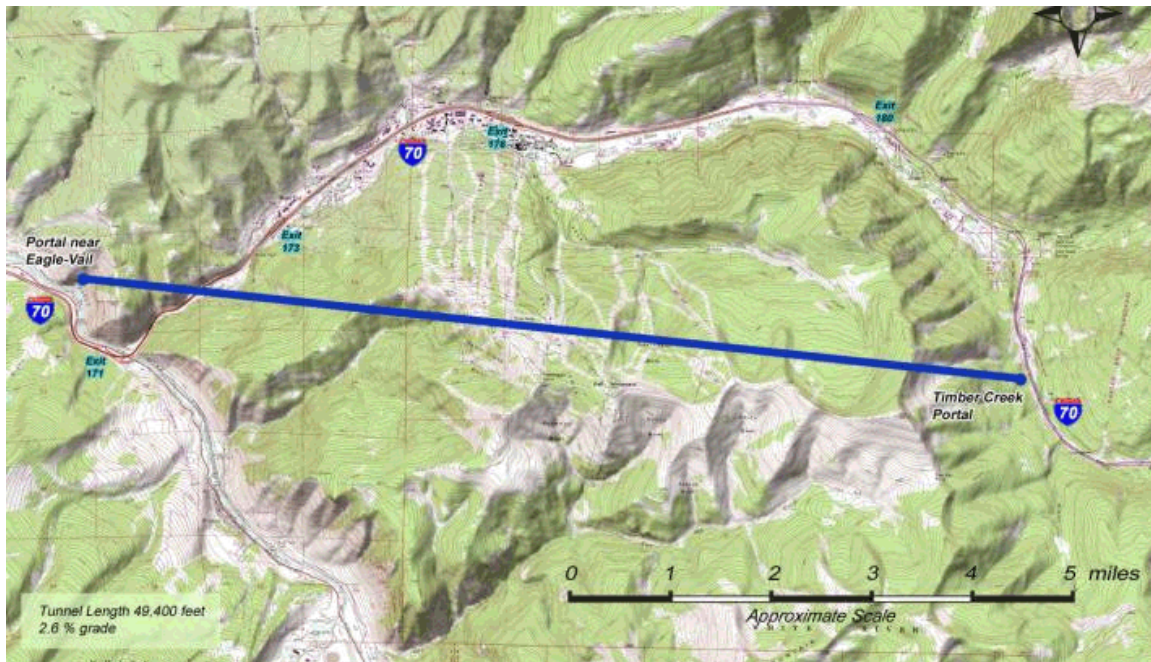
In Reggio Calabria, southern Italy, they have put the big railway under the town and on top is a park, roads and so on.

Just travel through our modern world. There are endless examples of how to eliminate the disturbing traffic.

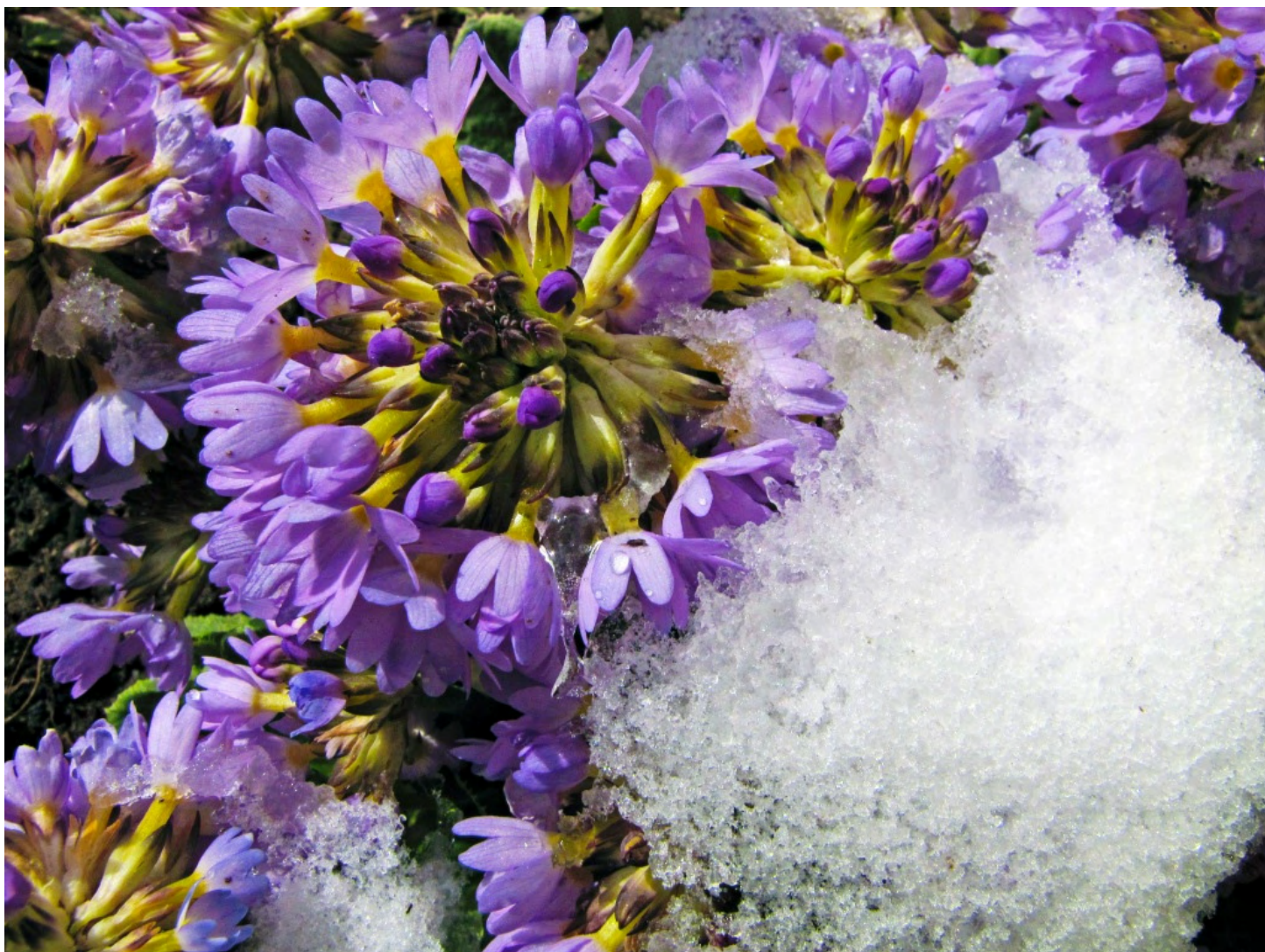
Warren Miller writes: "Skiers, who come to enjoy the end result of a lot of pioneers who carved out this valley into a long thin group of cities that cling to the lifeline that is Interstate 70, which brings the skiers and snowboarders here from all over the world and carries the money down to the big city of Denver."

What a precise description of the present situation! Well, I know there are enough people in Vail who put such comments away as fast as possible or don't like to read it because it is uncomfortable to face the truth. Can't we do any better? Can Vail now lean back and enjoy what it has done to date?

The Vail "renaissance" will not be finished as long as Vail is called the resort along I-70. Someday, this has to happen. Please, let's not forget that.



Proposed Vail Mountain Tunnel Would Totally Rid Vail of Interstate 70



Spring emerges from under the snow in a Bishop Park garden.

SPECIAL EVENTS CALENDAR

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