



The 2017 design plan for West Lionshead, then known as EverVail. The 2017 plan is to be modified which may or not retain appropriate amounts of public parking, workforce housing, open space and transportation facilities.

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What's Next: Economic Development – Part One

The nature of Vail and Eagle County recreational economies are highly susceptible to adverse fluctuations of transient worker and visitor populations. Historically, equivocating economic conditions have resulted in suppressing tourism, construction and real estate.

Locally, in the past, devaluations become neighborhood and property specific. The core areas of Vail and Beaver Creek have seen between 17-30% and some of the outlying areas have experience devaluations of 60-70%. This in turn caused significant decreases in tax revenues, resulting in government budget cuts. Out-migration occurs as workers and businesses seek safer havens.

Antidotes sought are protections for full and part-time working residents. Downturns in tourism, as was demonstrated during the pandemic, can be partially offset by an influx of skilled “work-from-home” part-time residents. Government incentives, punitive or otherwise, to match housing and parking inventories with seasonal demand are reconsidered.

The times call for balancing flexibility with rigidity in the setting of housing and related tourism policies. There are those strenuously questioning if Vail should be building subsidized housing for workers employed elsewhere in Eagle County. A self-serving alliance surrounds much of the TOV's subsidized work-force housing development in Vail. They have a vested interest in continuing to provide housing to workers who are employed elsewhere in Eagle County. Request of authorities for a public accounting of whose workers are living where goes unheeded.

By any measure, rebalancing outdated assumption and policies is a daunting task fraught with complexity and pitfalls. At risk, are stress tested standards abandoned in favor of untested short-term development opportunities. A hiatus in development may buy time, giving the community the opportunity to recover, reassess past decisions and prepare for the next surge in development.

Against this background, in Vail, matters are complicated by the exchange of the bighorn sheep wildlife habitat in East Vail for an untested scenario to develop an additional portal to Vail Mountain in West Lionshead. What is not widely known or understood are the cumulative implications of developments already approved or in the process of being considered by the Town of Vail. It is not uncommon to receive opinions that Eagle County has become noted for its lax attitude towards incentivizing and approving development.

If the general speculation about foreseeable economic trends materialize, based upon prior experience, there could be a potential dampening in the pace of development and consumer discretionary spending. Local governments, traditionally, have been quick to make adjustments in non-essential spending.



Should the TOV subsidize developing worker housing for those not working in the Gore Valley?

The community ought to be asking if the Town of Vail should be building subsidized housing for workers who are not working within the Gore Valley or employed fulltime elsewhere in Eagle County. Requests for a public accounting of worker housing needs and where those currently living in subsidized or Town-provided housing work have been ignored. Without accountability, it is impossible to make informed decisions about further Town subsidized construction of workforce or 'affordable' housing.

Lost in the budgetary shuffle are expenditures designed to anticipate future growth, putting local governments further behind in their responsiveness to tourism related consequences. The habitual cure is to reduce development costs by repealing standards as an incentive to increase the pace or profitability of development, or another option is to extend the time a project maintains its approval.

When a recovery occurs, greater reliance upon mass tourism and transportation are set in motion, potentially further diminishing the recreational experience and the community’s quality of life. Notable exceptions excluded, these are excessive transactional behaviors which bring resorts into disfavor and transformational communities into decline.



Will Sandstone and Gore Creek green belts remain as depicted in the 2017 plan for Ever Vail shown above?

The TOV’s leadership is setting future milestones in its commitment to carrying on the tradition of working on forward looking transportation and planning concepts for the future of the Interstate system in Vail. There are advancements being made in the direction of expanding mass transportation and alternative forms of transportation technology within the Town’s jurisdiction. Vail has always position itself to take advantage of Federal and State assistance by having shovel-ready projects at hand.

The impacts upon human and wildlife inhabitants qualifies as matters subject to environment impact analysis by governing authorities. Incrementally, over time through community action, authorities should take positive actions leading toward perfecting the quality of the Vail experience.

A reader confides, “I’m writing to say that I hope the VHA continues to serve its very important role as a watchdog and advocate. VHA’s efforts have been invaluable at keeping folks “honest” and letting local government and officials know that someone is watching. The bigger Vail gets, the more the VHA is needed.“

VHA, is funded by voluntary dues pledged annually from condominium associations and individual property owners. Members are primarily the part-time resident property owners from Vail’s founding generations. As Vail grows, traditional assumptions of political activism have also become more complicated and costly.

VHA is a member and reader-supported non-profit. Memberships and contributions fuel the VHA reports, *Letters to Vail* and help VHA respond to important issues, expand our reach and ensure transparency and coverage. VHA is thankful for support and participation from the Vail community. We are pledged to remain at the forefront of advocating on behalf of the mutual interests of full and part-time residents and property owners.

vailhomeownersassoc@gmail.com

Post Office Box 238 Vail, Colorado 81658

Telephone: (970) 331-2099 Email: vha@vail.net Website: www.vailhomeowners.com