

Booth Creek Narrows Wildlife Crossing in East Vail.

Letters to Vail

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Booth and Pitkin Creek Wildlife Habitat Preserved and West Lionshead Redevelopment Proceeds

October 12, 2024

The Town of Vail (TOV) and Vail Resorts (VR) reached a court settlement that conveys ownership of a large tract of wildlife habitat in East Vail in exchange for the public/private development of a 5th portal to Vail Mountain in West Lionshead, to be developed by East West Partners. The Vail Homeowners Association (VHA) celebrates the Booth Heights decision and looks forward to the beneficial effects of invigorated pursuit of the redevelopment of West Lionshead.

Booth Heights Settlement Milestones: The settlement accomplishes two major community goals. First, it furthers a 50-year effort to acquire, preserve and restore a blocked portion of a major north-south wildlife migration trail known as the Booth Creek Narrows wildlife corridor. Blocking the corridor by urbanization and the interstate highway is contributing to the decline of indigenous populations of wildlife herd animals and other mountain species. Booth Heights was the name attached to a proposed housing development to be located on a highly sensitive tract of bighorn sheep habitat near the East Vail interstate interchange.

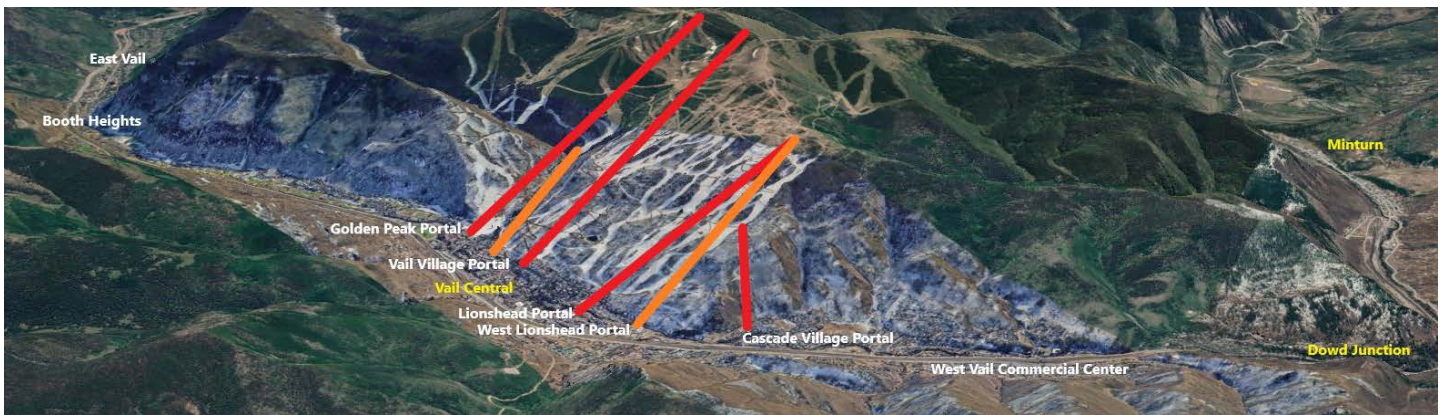
The area between Booth Creek and Pitkin Creek is a geologic formation of converging cliff bound, steep-sided canyons (narrows) containing the streams of Booth, Pitkin and Gore Creeks. The narrows are named for John Booth a late 19th century Eagle County pioneering settler and prospector.

With preservation of the bighorn sheep habitat, the opportunity to construct a wildlife crossing over Interstate 70, which could restore a wildlife corridor in the area, comes to life. The corridor includes large tracts of native open space that are essential to the well-being of wildlife, as well as cleansing urban pollution caused by I-70 and resort development that have been built among these once pristine streams, wetlands, aquatic habitat and subsurface aquifers.

The Town of Vail now owns the open space land in its native condition on either side of the interstate highway, giving it greater focus with political bodies and funding foundations. The TOV, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and supporters of wildlife can more effectively advocate for a suitable wildlife crossing by reconnecting open space tracts the TOV already owns. Restoration of a wildlife corridor will directly benefit the bighorn sheep herd, for which the area is known, in addition to easing the path of many other migrating species that traverse the corridor.

Much of the organizational ground work has been completed due to the community rallying around the bighorn sheep and local wildlife issues. These energies can now be turned to the task of preserving and improving wildlife habitat throughout and surrounding the area.

West Lionshead Redevelopment:



In the future, lift alignments (in red) indicate augmentation to increase capacity and new lifts (in orange) are to be constructed.

Settlement of the [Booth Heights](#) dispute reinvigorates efforts to construct a 5th mountain portal providing an additional access to Vail Mountain’s recreational facilities from the Town. A new plan is to be prepared for the West Lionshead Area under the auspices of the Town of Vail (TOV), Vail Resorts, Inc. (VR) and East West Partners, in coordination with the previously introduced USFS/VR 2024 Master Development Plan (MDP). East West Partners is a locally based, nationally recognized resort management and development corporation having financial stature.

In addition to serving as a primary transportation and service hub, the intended effect of a West Lionshead portal is to reduce or limit close-in vehicular access to the four other ski portals. In recent years, Golden Peak, Lionshead and Vail Village have experienced elevated frequency of undesirable traffic conditions.

Over time, the MDP provides for increased up-mountain lift capacity at all Town portals. As the 2024 plan is implemented in stages and capacities increased, it is important that collateral improvements are compatibly developed at all portals.

In this light, opportunities for redevelopment of West Lionshead should be given a fresh look. West Lionshead is one of the most important and consequential areas of land available for development within the Town of Vail. What is built there will have substantive influence upon the entire community. It is one of the most meaningful

opportunities for the community in recent years. Development of West Lionshead places an exclamation point upon furthering the goals set out in the visioning of Vail.

To some extent, current planning for this area is antiquated. Transportation and energy technologies are changing rapidly. Developers claim there is no longer the need for the number of parking spaces that are required by local traffic codes or that can fully satisfy consumer demand. Adherence to parking rules has benefited the community over the years. Today, some envision airport style “bump and run” drop off and pick-up terminals for mass transit and private vehicles that are removed from but are within walking distance of lift portals.

Policy makers are more confident that mass transportation by bus or train should become the dominant means of accessing prime destinations throughout the Town. Access restrictions to Vail and Lionshead core areas have become more widely accepted elsewhere in the world and will become more restrictive.

The underlying intent of the West Lionshead site is to facilitate the transfer and transport of people, supplies and equipment to in-town and on-mountain VR owned or operated resort facilities. Through the process of elimination “nowhere else to put it”, the plan, as it was originally conceived, is to become the central hub for on-mountain operations for Vail Mountain and a default emergency staging center for unforeseen community crises.

Most of the functions of loading and delivery are planned to be within enclosed areas for parking, maintenance and delivery beneath commercial and residential buildings. This configuration has been built into contemporary downtown Vail, allowing the public streets to become nearly vehicle free.

Importantly, the settlement agreement addresses worker housing which is planned to be built in association with the redevelopment. Plans include an up-mountain lift to transport visitors, workers and supplies to their destinations or distribution stations. The lift out of West Lionshead is yet another step forward in reducing the effects of congestive tourism, particularly in Vail Village and Lionshead.

Historically, improvements and redevelopment consciously diverted the effects of tourism away from adjacent residential neighborhoods. Such has been the cooperative relationship, when and where possible, between resort activities and residential owners since Vail’s inception. The Vail Homeowners Association urges that, as it has through these proceedings, our relations continue to safeguard Vail’s quality of life and remains one of the many strengths of the community.

VHA strives to provide clear and concise discussions of matters affecting the Vail community in the belief that an informed citizenry will be an engaged citizenry. Our intent is to promote more citizen involvement and community discussions of issues facing the Town. If these are issues that concerns you, please make your views known to candidates and [town officials](#). By joining with VHA, as a member, paid-subscriber or reader, you can add your voice to sustain what is good about our community and to shine a spotlight on important issues. See back editions of VHA communications on the Association’s website.

To receive VHA letters and reports as a Reader, Paid-Subscriber or Member.

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