

# VAIL FIREBREAK



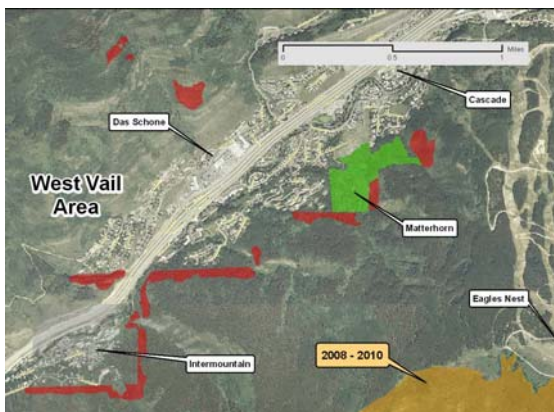
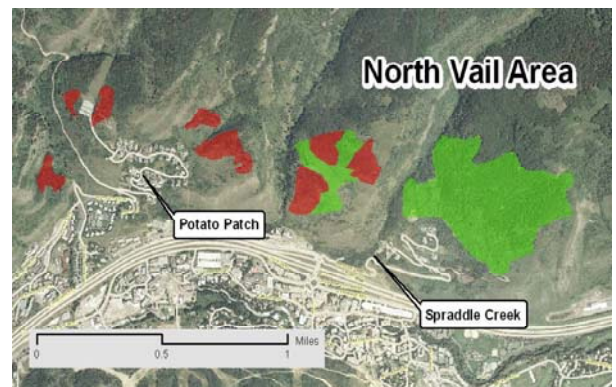
Aspen Regeneration and Fire Break Clear-Cut Above Spraddle Creek Subdivision

[Photograph © James Franklin Lamont](#)

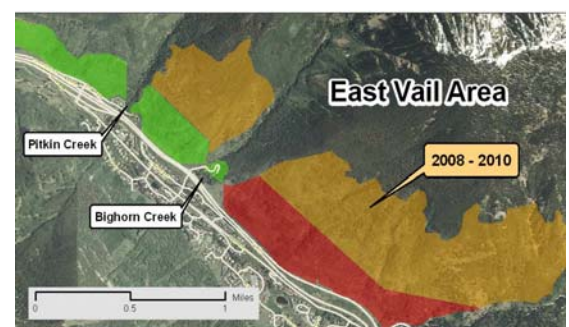


**Forest Management:**  
**Large Groves of Aspens and Evergreens Clear-cut, more to follow...** Several large aspen and lodge pole pine areas, covering several hundred acres on public land, adjacent to the community

of Vail, are being clear-cut. (See maps.) The purpose of the clear cutting is to spawn new growth of aspens as part of the community's defensive barrier against wildfire. The downed trees, depending on the area, will either be left where they fell, removed by helicopter, or cut and stacked to dry for later controlled burns. Enforcement by the Town of Vail to remove dead trees from private property is proceeding, but not in a heavy-handed manner. The USFS is in the review process to allow clear cutting hundreds, if not thousands, of acres of lodge pole pines, both dead and uninfected trees. The areas proposed to be clear-cut are north of Vail in the Piney Creek drainage and south of Minturn in the Tigawon/Notch Mountain area. The Association is working to insure that there is restoration of the area's scenic beauty, that all neighborhoods have upgraded defenses to reduce the threat from wildfire, and that there is an excellent emergency response effort should a major wildfire threaten the community.



[\(See Town of Vail: Vail Valley Forest Management Plan\)](#)







**South Frontage Road construction staging for Solarius Project. The Frontage Roads are critical to shaping Vail's future.**

**Vail Frontage Road Parking:** The Association advised the Town of Vail Parking Committee that their Board was still considering whether it would favor parking on the Town's frontage roads during the coming winter ski season. There is an overriding concern for the safety of pedestrians and motorists. As well, there are concerns about adverse effects upon consumer spending by diminishing the quality of the "Vail experience".

The rapid change in economic conditions is causing concern over any factor that could adversely affect sales tax revenues, which is the principle funding for the Town of Vail government. It is anticipated that when Vail Resorts (VRI) decides to move forward with the parking component of the proposed Ever Vail development, concern for increasing the inventory of publically available parking will ease.



The Association suggested several methods the Town of Vail could pursue to help relieve the parking demand. They included a change in Town regulations that would allow private property owners to allocate their unused required on-site parking spaces for visitor parking, paid or otherwise. It was suggested that an online reservation system be established so that visitors could reserve an unused parking space on a daily paid basis. Other suggestions include congestion pricing through

increased parking rates, so that the amount of available mid-day short-term parking is increased for retail shoppers, and others who contribute to sales tax generation through their recreational activities. Costs to customers could be reduced through a well regulated rebate coupon.

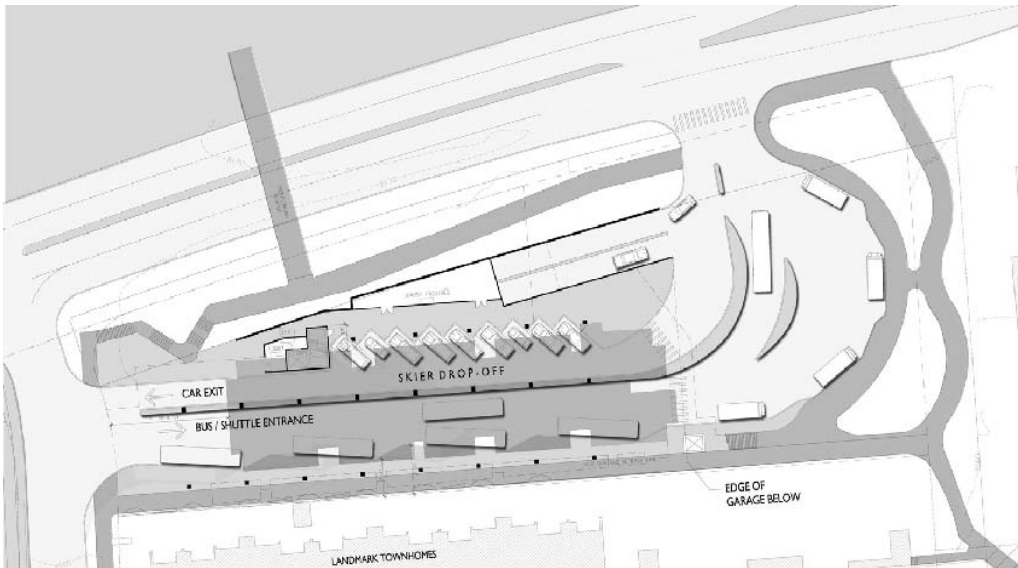
In response to the eventual inability for Vail to meet the parking demand from down valley skiers and employees, the Association urged the Town to begin setting up a permanent park and ride system in collaboration with Eagle County and the communities west along I-70 to Gypsum. A regional van pooling system for employees, operated by the private sector, was also recommended.

Employees are competing for parking with skiers and shoppers. Construction workers as well, are placing heavy demands on available public spaces. For buildings under construction the Association suggests that once the parking floors are completed, they be opened for construction worker parking. Vail Resorts' Vail Front Door

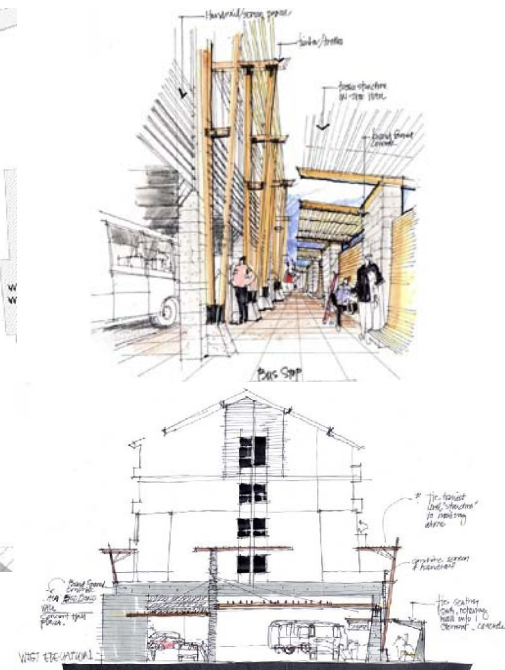
and Arrabelle Projects are opening in the near term with an estimated 500 spaces for their clients, which they report will help relieve public parking demand.

Where practical, it is suggested that construction workers be bused to their work site from outlying park and ride lots. Presently, construction workers are filling the Vail Village Parking Structure, to the detriment of retail business and the sales tax revenues they generate for the Town. The Association suggests that perhaps it is now time for a summer “morning only” parking fee, with a rebate discount for merchant customers, to be charged in the Town’s parking facilities. The Town owned and operated parking structures were built to insure that those businesses and residential uses, which fund much of the Town’s operations through the sales taxes they generate, be given preferential position in the allocation of parking spaces.

The Town’s Parking Committee has begun making recommendations on both the summer and winter season parking plan to the Vail Town Council. The Committee appears to be working towards both long and short-term solutions, across a broader range of interrelated parking and transportation challenges. How long matters will remain under debate within the Parking Committee will be determined by the Council’s flexibility to let interested parties continue to seek adequate solutions. [\(Take Our Poll – Should Frontage Road Parking Change?\)](#)



Transit Development with Employee Housing and Below Grade Parking



Transit Center Sketches

### **Lionshead Mass Transportation Terminal Approved by a 3-2 Vote of Vail**

**Town Council:** The Association argued for the inclusion of the mass transit terminal to be built as part of the North Day Skier Parking Lot Project, where the proposed VRI affordable housing for the Arrabelle Project is to be built. If the terminal had not been included in the project, the public would have lost a critical piece of land necessary to relieve traffic congestion at Golden Peak, on the frontage roads and elsewhere. The terminal project is by no means certain as it still must survive the construction budgeting process. [\(See North Day Lot Plan Options\)](#)

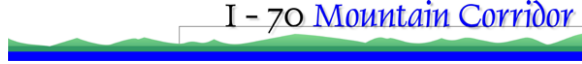
There are indications that access by bus mass transit is going to increase from the communities west of Vail including the Eagle County Airport; and from the east to the Denver metro area including Denver International Airport. Some believe that Lionshead, to remain competitive, should have its own transit terminal. VRI prefers a terminal located at the future Ever Vail, near the proposed new up-mountain lift and commercial center. The Town’s technical advisors officials have said that additional terminals, including the North Day Lot proposal, will be necessary at Ever Vail and as part of the redevelopment of the Lionshead Parking Structure. Each terminal will evolve, changing to meet more specialized needs as demand matures. Neither VRI nor the Town could say when any of the projects will proceed.



In a related matter the TOV approved an outline submitted for the redevelopment of the Lionshead Parking Structure, even though VRI continues to make no commitment on releasing the deed restriction that has thus far stymied the project. It is important to note that independent of the redevelopment proposal, the language of the deed restriction allows the Town of Vail the right to build a Transportation Center as part of the Lionshead Parking Structure - whether it is redeveloped or not. However, the cost and time differential between the two Lionshead sites could be considerable. With a terminal on the North Day Lot site being available within two year of the beginning of construction. If work proceeds on the North Day Lot, it is not expected to begin until the spring of 2009.

Debate continues over the issues of transit terminals versus affordable housing. Some say that it appears the Town is allowing VRI to avoid its commitment to affordable housing on the North Day Lot. VRI refuted those allegations stating that it is fully committed to its Arrabelle Affordable Housing Project on that location. But, it prefers a smaller terminal on the site to accommodate hotel passenger vans and skier drop-offs, citing prioritization of costs as its motivation. Others believe it is incorrect to sacrifice transportation priorities solely for affordable housing. A fall-off in construction within the region brings a forecast of an expected increase in availability of affordable housing, resulting from a decline in housing demand for construction workers. The matter is further compounded by adjacent property owners who fear being adversely affected by the resulting environmental factors of the Project.

There are others who believe the North Day Lot is too important for transportation, other infrastructure functions and commercial uses necessary to sustain the Lionshead commercial center. An opportunity exists to relocated the North Day Lot housing to the beginnings of a new affordable housing area, which could be expanded, being developed immediately across I-70 (accessible by the Lionshead/I-70 Pedestrian Bridge) between the Sandstone Elementary School and east to Spraddle Creek. [\(See VHA May Newsletter\)](#)

  
**I-70 Mountain Corridor Collaborative Plan Approved – Implication for East Vail.** Key players representing interests along the I-70 mountain corridor attended a recent negotiation conference and have agreed to a series of improvements to the freeway over the next several decades. Vail will have lane expansion on West Vail Pass and at Dowd Junction. The agreement centered on willingness by the State to pursue the study of a railed mass transit between Denver, Summit County and perhaps points west. The agreement does not appear to block efforts for a “privatization” project to proceed, such as the Vail Mountain I-70 Bypass Tunnel, if it is not a “burden” to State and Federal budgets. “Congestion Pricing”, a form of tolling, is also not out of the question; even though tolling is a hot button political issue in the affected region.

It is worrying that in nearly three-years of ongoing negotiations, some key participants from other communities have reported that they were not made aware by the Vail representatives that there was measurable public sentiment in the Vail community for no lane expansion through Vail. The West Vail

Pass expansion program agreed to in the negotiations appears to be incompatible with the community’s sentiment of no lane expansion through East Vail. No public hearings have been conducted by the Town of Vail with respect to lane expansions in East Vail, which is proposed as part of the West Vail Pass lane expansion plan that is now under study by CDOT.

#### **Spring Runoff:**

Worry over spring flooding resulting from record winter snow pack proved to be unfounded. Cooler temperatures have extended the high water season well beyond previous years. A flood prone location in Vail Village, illustrates the level of the community’s concern and preparedness.





### **Vail Village Master Plan - Proposed Changes:**

The Planning Commission reviewed the first in a series of text changes to the Vail Village Master Plan. The Association observed that none of the suggested language should create a circumstance of "inverse condemnation" by prohibiting the re-development or remodeling of buildings by banning the use of Town of Vail rights-of-way to stage construction. It was advised that construction staging should occur so as not to interfere with the needs of adjacent property owners and the surrounding neighborhood. Further, the Association advised that no language be included that inferred that there were not additional open space lands to be considered and protected, such as portions of the landscape berms on the Vail Village Parking Structure.

[\(See Vail Village Master Plan\)](#)

[\(See Proposed Updates to Vail Village Master Plan\)](#)



**Economic Snapshot:** A key indicator to summer and winter business is projected air traffic on major carriers into Eagle County Airport. Estimates from authoritative sources indicate to date, traffic for this summer is down 5.6% in comparison with 2007. The effects of escalating fuel costs and air fares further into 2008 are unknown. The increase in international arrivals seen last winter season could be adversely affected due to significant fare increases. If the level of services in the coming months is not agreeable to local authorities and business interests, increased subsidies might be requested by airlines serving the Eagle County Airport

Sales tax receipts for the end of the winter season show Vail Village minimally improved in comparison with a continued strong showing from Lionshead. Overall, there was positive sale tax growth in the reporting period for the community as a whole. Reported volume on real estate sales in the highest value categories continue to mask a slowing in most other groupings.

**I-70 CDOT Summer Work Program:** Work on several Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) summer projects has begun in the Dowd Junction area. Working at night has thus far eliminated the massive traffic jams experienced last year. Construction on the noise berm and the truck de-chaining area has begun in the Bald Mountain neighborhood in East Vail. The noise berm is where polluting road sand from I-70 on Vail Pass is to be relocated. "Quiet pavement" is to be installed along the length of I-70 through Vail. It is hoped that the experimental pavement will reduce road noise pollution.



Work is underway to stabilize a massive landslide at Dowd Junction. The slow moving landslide includes the area above I-70, as pictured, extending over a large area on the northeast slope of Grouse Mountain. The slide has been a concern ever since the construction of I-70 through Dowd Canyon in the 1970's. A major slide could have catastrophic consequences. CDOT is looking at several options to bypass the slide area, one being a bypass tunnel between West Vail and Eagle-Vail.



"The Edge" newly installed public art by Boulder sculpture Gail Folwell. The work is part of a \$1 million public art investment made by VRI in the Vail Front Door Project in Vail village. The artwork was authorized under Adam Aron and supervised by Bill Jensen.



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