

The Vail Community: Are We Headed in the Right Direction?

August 7, 2015

Correspondence:

Nice job in pulling together forward thinking on “Are We headed in the Right Direction?”. This is a lengthy topic and discussion, but I thought I would share with you a couple of thoughts. Having lived in NYC, Greenwich, Connecticut, Vail, Colorado, and Jupiter Island, Florida, I have watched all of them go through cycles and transitions. Greenwich is a good example, since we have been there almost 41 years. A quiet little town has turned into top-brand jewelry, art, restaurants and fashion stores as has Rodeo Drive and Worth Avenue in Palm Beach. Traffic is worse, real estate and rents have gone up, yet people keep coming to these meccas. In short, economics will drive this as much as anything.

The Homeowners Association under your leadership has done a great job over the years providing responsible and very sensible perspectives to our members and the community.

In short, growth and change to these “meccas” will continue. In Vail we have the significant value of a great mountain and a beautiful winter and summer environment that people can count on. Our Eagle airport must be further developed, transportation to and from that airport and perhaps even from DIA will be important to all of these communities. Congestion, environmental issues, property rights, promotions and construction back in hyper drive are all real and primarily driven, as you know, by economics. These millennials and more obviously all age, and some of them with great achievements, accomplishments and accumulations of wealth. A lot of these transitional and transformation issues over the next fifty years will be driven by them and more with the economics behind it directing the outcome.

In short, keep up the great work.

Warm wishes,

Bill

This is an excellent summary.

Best
Art

We enjoy your newsletter. We find them informative and thought provoking which is refreshing. Your most recent letter raised some interesting issues.

Marketing to whom at what end? The targeting of the 20's and 30's population seems at conflict with most Vail constituencies we can identify. There is obviously some tension in Vail between the various groups, some of whom overlap, that make up the city:

Vail businesses.
Vail Corp.

The out of country tourists that consider it a desirable destination and seem to spend a great deal of money in the village when they visit. (Primarily from Mexico and Latin America).

The tourists who come for a week or more and stay in rental housing or hotels.

The commuter tourists who arrive from the "front ranges".

The "second home" people who visit often and are invested in the community to a large degree.

The people from other Vail Valley towns who visit Vail to ski, hike, visit restaurants, Bravo!Vail, Vail Dance Festival, rock concerts or other uniquely Vail venues.

The year-round Vail residents who actually vote for the city officials.

An open discussion as to what is best for Vail should take all of these constituents into account and any marketing program should be clearly focused on it's intent and measured for it's effectiveness. Each of these constituencies have their own goals, many of which are in conflict with other constituencies. The city needs to be thoughtful, transparent and deliberate in choosing a marketing program as well as open about it's effectiveness in achieving the stated goal. Although we are biased as members of the "second home" group, we agree that it appears those of us who spend a great deal of money in the community should be courted if the goal is to bring business and tax revenue to the city.

It seems reasonable to assume land prices make economic diversity difficult within the city. The economic diversity seems to be divided between those who work and those who play, creating additional tensions. Other high income villages struggle with this same issue but to the best of our knowledge have not "solved" it. Vail is likely to stay a wealthy enclave served by workers from outside the immediate community.

Vail Corporation is conflicted with anything that decreases revenue on the mountain whatever the expense to the quality of life within the village. There marketing goals and those of the community may well be in conflict.

Since the city government is elected by the full time residents, the city is in conflict with many of the other constituencies other than to the degree that the other constituency raises tax revenue. It seems Vail Corp, other businesses and we "second home" people should be high on the list by that standard.

The city has a hard job in balancing what to do. It needs to decide what it wants to be and then set a plan to get there. It needs to embrace who it is and not be ashamed of it's uniqueness, wealth and exclusiveness. The city needs to be very transparent in it's goals and have marketing to accomplish those goals. It is OK to not be everything to everyone. Some existing constituencies may feel underserved and even unwanted. The process just needs to be deliberate, transparent and purposeful. Certainly crowding of the mountain, parking issues etc. are viewed negatively by most.

Thanks for what you do and continuing to work on behalf of we homeowners.

Ray

At age 85 I am one of those who have grown old with Vail. I started skiing here regularly in 1963. I became a second home owner/weekender in '74 and retired here in '92. I've built two homes here and hope to live out my days in the one I'm in now and then bequeath it to my children and grandchildren for their use. I enjoy winters here even though I no longer ski and we take full advantage of Bravo, the Dance Festival and the Jazz Festival. Although they do not impact me directly I have questions about the time, money and space devoted to some of the rock concerts and other free events. I support the idea of focusing on making Vail an international destination resort, the concept of enhanced community and expanded senior services and health care. I have a daughter who lives in Aspen and am impressed by some of the lessons we could learn from that community.

George

I just read your editorial about the Town of Vail's aging population and what direction the Special Events should be heading. I think it is VERY important not to discount the fact that the Special Events mentioned also make Vail a better place to live for workers. By this I am talking about the entry level dishwasher all the way up to the retail shop owner. As events get cancelled and lost (ie things like Great Race) Town becomes less "fun." If you pay close attention, the spirit of the worker directly affects the spirit of the guest. Not everything can be about the older Bravo crowd. Is Bravo a great program? Yes. Dance Festival? Yes. Should it mean that events like the Tuesday concerts get displaced? NO. Finding middle ground seems to be continually getting harder and harder to do. Every time CSE builds up an event to a critical mass that the event producers need to get to for maximum private funding, the boo birds begin complaining it's too crowded. If you saw the picture in the Vail Daily of the last Bravo show, you would notice that every single head in the crowd was grey. While the older established money is maybe the most important demographic, It is not the only demographic. This crowd can't support the restaurant, retail, and activity businesses on its own. Nobody wants to go into an empty establishment. This vibrancy is already seriously affected by the down valley flight of the workers. They don't want to stay after work or return after they get home. If the down valley towns start hosting ALL of the events for the younger generations I believe you'll start seeing the very demographic you're suggesting we should focus on leaving town (with their wallets) to attend those events. If you keep taking away from the younger demographics, they will stop coming altogether and the young vibrant atmosphere that drew the now "young at hearts" to begin with will disappear. We don't need to become a retirement community, you can get that anywhere. In my opinion Vail is, and has always been, a world class ski resort and with that comes fun. Lose this and Vail will no longer be Vail.

Bob

This is an outstanding and thoughtful discourse about critical and complex issues. I have never lived in Vail but I was involved as an engineer in its early years and have skied at Vail since 1963 and have stayed with friends countless times over the years.

My wife and I feel that Vail once had real charm but this character is going – unfortunately. It seems that it is no longer a town but is primarily a commercial enterprise, rather than a place centered in natural beauty and for recreation and appreciate of its environment. Our son skied in Garmisch-Partenkirchen last winter – the pictures indicate a town that has grown but has retained a human scale and perspective, respectful of its environment and livability and history, not catering to a display of ostentation. A strong contrast.

My compliments on your article!

Bert
