



Vail Road traffic backs up entering the Main Vail Roundabout during high winter season.  
Will it work for the next 50 years?

## Vail Homeowners Association Newsletter

News, Analysis, and Commentary for Vail Homeowners

February 20, 2013

### Vail - The Medical Center, Traffic, and the Next 50 Years

**Medical Office Building/New Town Hall is On Hold, but Traffic Congestion is Not:** The Town of Vail has, as yet, to say that it has abandoned their proposal to build the New Town Hall and whether they will continue to hold a portion of the Municipal Complex site for the development of a Medical Office Building. The Town's joint development proposal to do such a project was put on hold last November when a key player in the development of the Medical Office Building terminated their involvement.

**Setback Not Terminal:** Optimism continues that a viable proposal by the Vail Valley Medical Center (VVMC) for the western part of the Vail Municipal Complex site will be found, with time and persistence. The VVMC is continuing its planning consultant study of a comprehensive facilities plan for its main campus. The VVMC plan was previously scheduled for completion in 2012; it has now been rescheduled for later in 2013.

**Related Public Safety Solutions Also on Hold:** Suspended as well were pending

solutions, associated with both the Vail Municipal Complex site and Vail Valley Medical Center main campus, for public safety concerns over hazards from vehicular circulation and medical helicopter service. Valuable design work was completed demonstrating how the South Frontage Road traffic could function to safely serve both sites by a roundabout. There were also designs showing how a pedestrian bridge over the South Frontage Road could connect both sites, including moving patients from the Medical Center campus to the Medical Office Building site.

**Include New Solutions in Town's Master Plan:** The Homeowners Association has requested that the traffic and medical helicopter public safety solutions be included in the Town of Vail master planning document, as they would be applicable to whatever future redevelopment is done on either site. The information is important to include as it has relevance to the potential resolution of public safety issues for several affected neighborhoods.



Medical helicopter waits on helipad in Vail. [Operational noise](#), storm conditions, insurable liability and proximity to residential neighborhoods are factors in its potential relocation.

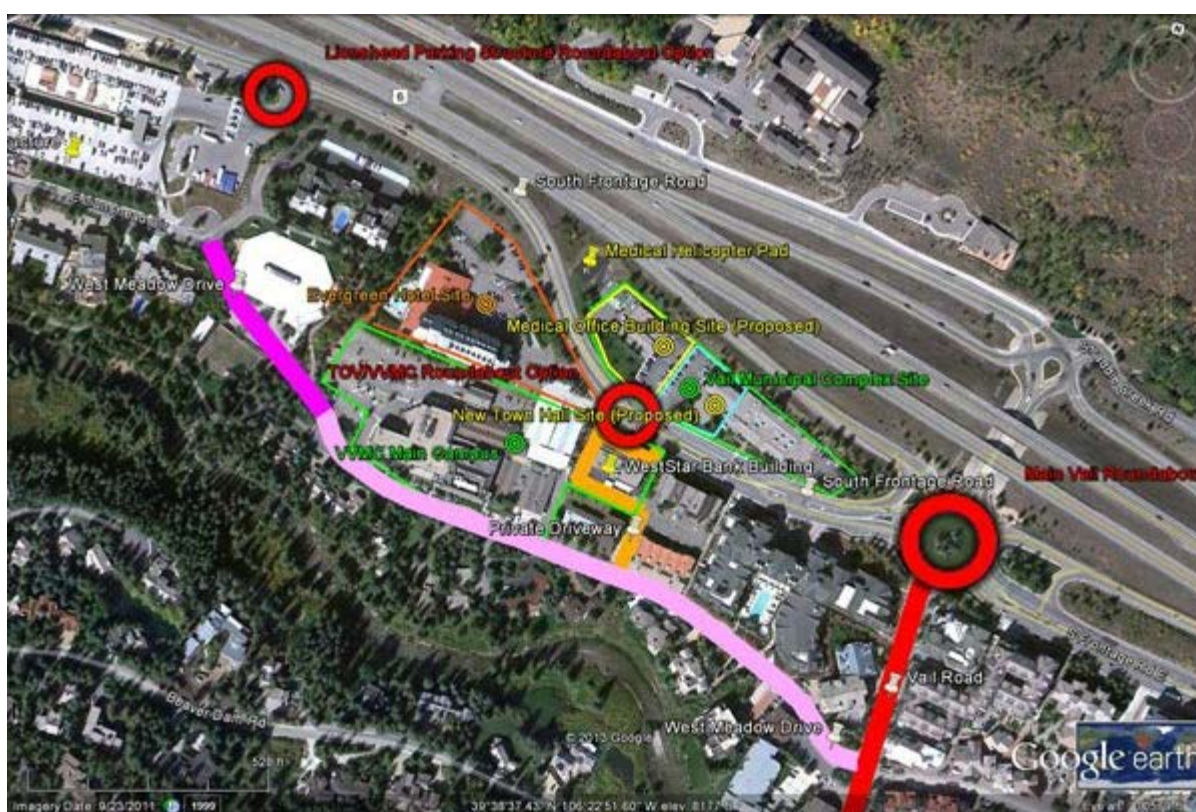
**Medical Helipad Location Needs a Permanent Home, but Not in a Residential Neighborhood:** The location of a helipad to serve the Medical Center should be planned to be relocated where it is not a threat to residential uses. The current site of the helipad is on Colorado Department of Highway (CDOT) right-of-way, which is immediately adjacent to the proposed Medical Office Building portion of the Municipal Complex site. CDOT has said it wants the helipad removed from its land and relocated elsewhere. The Federal Aviation Agency guidelines recommend not locating hospital helipads in or near residential neighborhoods. [Operational noise](#) and the effects of storm conditions will remain issues as long as the medical helipad is located in built-up areas. The Town, it is suggested, should hire its own helicopter aviation consultant to advise it on an appropriate location.

**Moving VVMC Access from West Meadow Drive to South Frontage Road:** During the course of planning for the Municipal Complex site, it became apparent that there would be



a need for a physical interconnection with the VVMC main campus. As a result, the adjacent residential neighborhood requested a solution to hazardous traffic conditions on a portion of Vail Road and West Meadow Drive, the main vehicular access route to the Medical Center. The neighborhood provided a [2003 traffic study](#) from the Town's files documenting that Vail Road, at its intersection with West Meadow Drive, has the potential to become overly congested during periods of heavy traffic. The neighborhood expressed concerns that the marked increase in recreational traffic from pedestrians, bikers and skateboarders on West Meadow Drive was becoming dangerous when mixed with Medical Center traffic.

**Affected Residential Neighborhood Wants Recommended Solution in Town's Master Plan:** The adjacent neighborhood urged the Town to fulfill its own master plan that recommends changing the primary vehicular entry to the Medical Center's main campus on West Meadow Drive, to its entrance on the South Frontage Road. Both the Municipal Complex site and the Medical Center campus have driveways immediately opposite each other on the South Frontage Road. There are multiple driveway entrances near this location that would require cross traffic turning that could cause public safety concerns during periods of heavy Frontage Road usage.

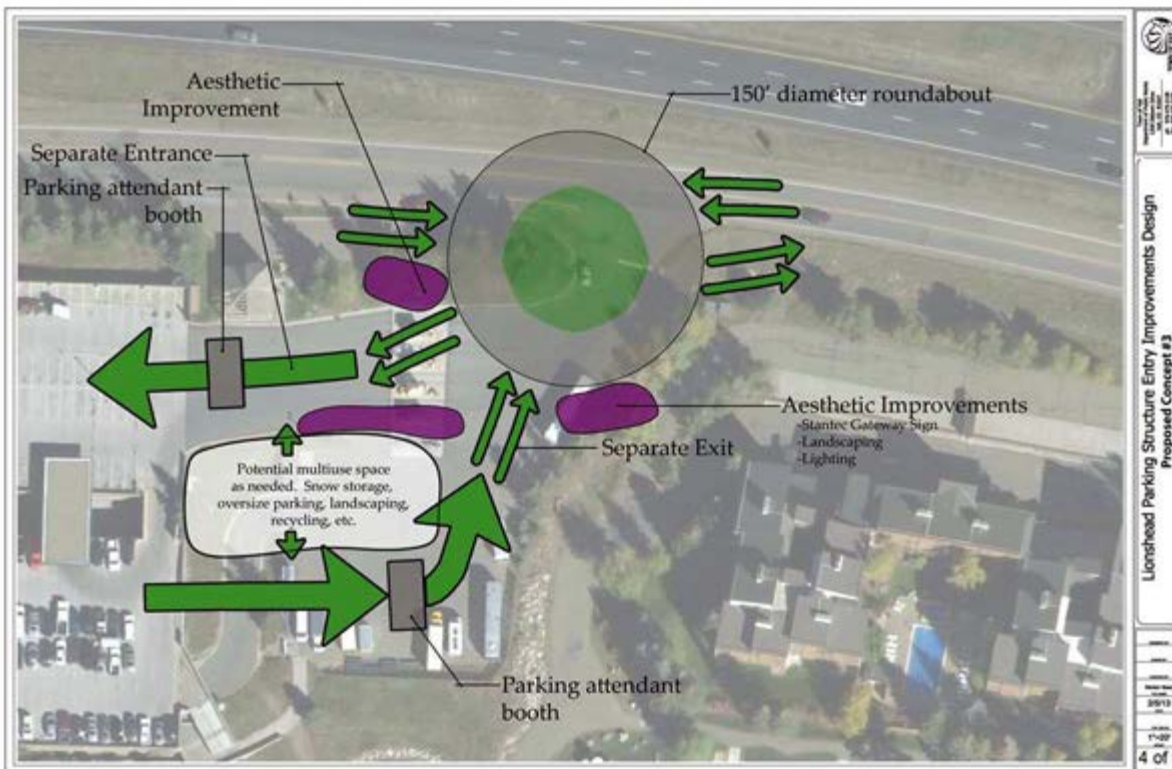


Smaller red circles indicate optional roundabout locations to access the VVMC from the South Frontage Road. ([enlarge](#))

**Relocation Can Improve Public Safety:** The Homeowners Association suggested a roundabout at the TOV/VVMC driveway entrances as a possible solution ([Option 1 on "enlarged" map](#)). The Town did further analysis and identified two additional potential locations for a roundabout on the South Frontage Road. One of those locations is at the main vehicular entrance to the Lionshead Parking Structure ([Option 2 on "enlarged" map](#)). A roundabout there would require VVMC bound traffic to travel further. The other option investigated by the Town would serve the Evergreen Hotel as well, and is located on CDOT land where the medical helipad is currently located ([Option 3 on "enlarged" map](#)). This option would necessitate the relocation of the helipad to a new site. Moving the helipad would also provide an opportunity to improve its long-term public safety and functionality.

**Closing Out VVMC Roundabout Options Not Appropriate:** Recently, the

Town staff proposed several options for the reconfiguration of the main vehicular entrance to the Lionshead Parking Structure. It was represented that the area taken by a roundabout and parking structure circulation would affect any potential facility that could be developed on the adjacent parcel of Town owned land, currently used for the parking of Charter Buses. The Homeowners Association noted that any change to the access for the Lionshead Parking Structure that precludes the relocation of the VVMC primary access to the South Frontage Road, without first making a commitment of land allocated to the roundabout on the Municipal Complex site, would be both shortsighted and unwise.



Proposal for Roundabout at Entrance to Lionshead Parking Structure

**Town Needs to Make Long-term Public Safety Commitments:** The Homeowners Association suggested to the Town Council that, because of the limitation of available land on which to build safe intersections, they are facing a choice between the economic advantage of constructing larger buildings or protecting the public from known traffic hazards. Having it both ways may be an impossibility. If the Town wants to have safe vehicular access either to the Medical Center main campus or the Municipal Complex, land will need to be allocated for the construction of a safe intersection at one of the potential roundabout locations on the South Frontage Road.

**More Landscape and Trees Needed:** There also needs to be a better balance maintained between asphalt and roadway landscaping. In some portions of the Frontage Road System, the sterility of asphalt dominates. By contrast, the trees planted in some neighborhoods along the Frontage Road in decades past have matured. They now screen these neighborhoods from the harshness of asphalt and parking lots, creating in these areas a townscape image that harmonizes with the beauty of its natural surroundings. Much more needs to be done to cause landscaping to be included in Town Frontage Road and other roadway projects.

**The Town Needs to be Concerned About Planning for the Next 50 Years:** Over the last decade the community has seen new buildings constructed throughout the Town Center. These buildings are built to last for 50 years or more. The Town's roadway system needs the same level of qualitative commitment so every neighborhood is given the opportunity to flourish. The planning that went into beautifying and improving the functionality of the public streets throughout Vail Village and Lionshead also needs to be



applied to Interstate 70 and the Frontage Road System so that the entire community's quality of life can also thrive and prosper for the next 50 years. The community wide resolution of the long-term planning needs for improving the safe and efficient traffic circulation of the entire Frontage Road System is a critical precursor to opening the way to either bury and sound-wall Interstate 70 or relocate it to a bypass tunnel under Vail Mountain.

The shrinking inventory of vacant public land adjacent to the Frontage Roads needs to be protected from over development. These Town owned sites are needed to enhance the long-term functionality and beautification of the critical Frontage Road Transportation Corridor, which, if it functions badly, will inhibit economic development. The community can continue to grow as long as it has the financial wherewithal and implements a visionary master plan that retains sufficient land to aesthetically and safely provide for unhindered traffic circulation of all modes of transportation along the Frontage Roads.

### **Vail's Eye View**



**Icy Winter Morning**

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