



Proposed \$10.5 million Red Sandstone School/Town of Vail 160 car Parking Structure – Could it work?

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

Vail Parking and Housing Update

May 9, 2017

Adequate parking, its related public safety issues, and affordable housing are Vail's most pressing and intractable issues. These have long been subjects of concern for the VHA and matters that we have frequently reported on. Now after years of gridlock on parking there has been some progress, although the major issue continues to be ignored. There has, also, been some progress on the housing front, albeit only incremental and Vail's major initiative seems stalled. At the same time, affordable housing appears on the verge of trumping master planning and zoning as developers seize on offering housing as a way to increase density. This report is an update on these subjects.

The Parking Gridlock. In response to growing concerns about the availability of adequate parking, last July the Town Council began discussing increasing the mountain lift ticket tax as a means of financing additional structured parking. That quickly drew the attention of Vail Resorts, which promised to meet and discuss parking with the TOV, and the increase in tax was tabled. Since then, with one notable exception involving the reactivated Parking Task Force, not much has happened.

While there reportedly have been meetings between the TOV and VR, nothing is known about those meetings or any progress toward solutions; there are no plans for any new structured parking, and VR's long-standing commitment of \$4.3 million for parking continues to go unused. At the same time, Vail's number one public safety issue—overflow parking on South Frontage Road—continues to grow worse, raising more concerns about when a serious accident or worse is going to happen.

Any Port In A Storm? Recently, there was some Council interest in exploring whether a new parking structure at the Red Sandstone Elementary school, which is part of a proposed modification to the school, could be expanded to include public parking. But, this location is far away from the nexus of parking needs, and a

joint School Board/TOV project is fraught with difficulty. The VHA believes that this kind of a solution should not be seriously entertained, unless there are realistic studies to show that the location, financing and management are workable. VHA seriously doubts that it is.

The “Summer Only” Approach. In November the TOV reconstituted its Parking Task Force. This could have been an opportunity to address Vail’s needs in a comprehensive manner, but the Task Force’s charge was limited to only operational issues; long-range considerations were off the table. Construction of additional structured parking was not contemplated; even though, in the winter of 2016-17, there was parking on the Frontage Road for 20 days and during the summer for 22 days. Overflow summer parking has now eclipsed winter on-road parking, and the summer numbers do not include days when the TOV accommodated construction workers on the Frontage Roads. The total was 40% in excess of the allowable 30 day limit.

As it has turned out, the focus of the Parking Task Force was even narrower; it only addressed summer parking and transportation concerns and then in only a limited “study-the-issue” way. And, after studying the summer issues, the Task Force only recommended that more studies were necessary, proposing a user study to be conducted over the summer months to determine if implementing a parking “fee” for the summer months could relieve parking demand and reallocate parking spaces to tourism by incentivizing a higher turnover frequency. (Vail Village structure daily usage estimate: 60% tourist/20% employees, Lionshead daily usage estimate: 80% employees/20% tourist). In addition, the Task Force proposed requiring construction projects to have an off-site parking and transportation plan and increasing bus service frequency to some lesser served outlying Town of Vail neighborhoods to gauge the effect on the occupancy rate of the parking structures. No mention was made of employee off-site parking/shuttle service, but this was not a surprise from a business dominated group.

The VHA believes this type of “band-aid” approach to parking, while hopefully helpful, will not solve the fundamental lack of sufficient parking, and it will do nothing for the winter season overflow when public safety is most acute with ice and snow on the roads and guests in ski boots. Even for the summer, the Council still plans on utilizing South Frontage Road for overflow parking. It’s not that alternatives are not available. The Lionshead structure could be expanded, a redeveloped municipal site is a potential, and even the Ever Vail location is a possibility (see below). In addition, the \$4.3 million commitment from VR still remains as a start on financing.

As for now, it remains to be seen whether the Parking Task Force will be authorized to seek broader, long-range solutions to Vail’s parking problem.



Solar Vail redevelopment requesting the largest reduction to date in required on-site parking for employee housing.

Responsibility For Parking. Some are beginning to question whose responsibility it is to provide adequate parking. VR is one of the primary beneficiaries of parking and one of the major causes of overflow parking on

South Frontage Road. While VR has recognized its responsibility in the past by donating land for the construction of parking facilities, it has shifted the construction and management responsibilities of public parking to the TOV. Some are now questioning whether it is time for VR to do more. So far, that has not happened, but, absent voluntary action by VR, there are other ways VR's responsibility can be addressed.

VR operates its on-mountain activities under a Master Development Plan that requires approval by the US Forest Service. That plan was last updated in 2007 and is now beyond its useful life; currently, a new Master Development Plan is being prepared. One of the subjects of the earlier plan was guest and worker parking. As that plan recognized, adequate parking is a necessary component of proper management of mountain uses. As of the August 2007 Update, it was calculated that there was sufficient parking for 8,400 users, based on an assumed 2.8 person per car. (If the more usual average of 2.2 persons per car was used, there would only be parking for 6,600 users.) The Plan also recognized a "managed-to" number of 19,900 guests on the mountain, resulting in a significant deficiency in available parking. The Update noted, however, that parking was planned to be increased by expansion of the Lionshead parking structure (200 cars) and the Ever Vail development (750 cars), and, with those additions, there would be adequate parking for present and future needs.

Since 2007, the parking situation has grown much worse, and the inventory count in that Update is no longer accurate. Due to development and other changes, the available parking has shrunk by several hundred spaces, down to about 2,700 spaces; expansion of the Lionshead parking structure is no longer being pursued by the TOV, and VR has declared it is abandoning commercial development. Therefore, there is now parking for only between 6,000 (at 2.2 per car) and 7,560 users (at 2.8 per car).

As a result, public safety is more at risk as the Town's use of South Frontage Road for overflow parking has continued to increase in both the winter and summer seasons. (The Town of Vail only has parking rights on South Frontage Road during the winter season; it has no right to allow parking during the summer season although it continues to do so.) And the effects are spread to the Golden Peak area as people searching for parking drive there to look for parking or to try to drop off or pick up others. This also creates unsafe conditions on Vail Valley Drive where pedestrians accessing the Golden Peak ski base commingle with vehicular traffic.

The VHA believes that it is past time to stop condoning overflow parking. The new Master Development Plan for the mountain should address steps that should be taken to prevent base congestion or situations that put public safety at risk. A realistic inventory of available parking should be conducted that excludes Frontage Road parking as an acceptable practice. VR has the ability to take necessary steps to provide adequate parking. It already owns several acres of land west of Lionshead (the Ever Vail project area) and could provide surface parking there until development occurs. With the addition of the already approved lift at that location, there could be ready mountain access for hundreds of guests. VR could, also, work cooperatively with the TOV to develop more parking at other locations or in other ways. The VHA does not advocate a specific solution nor do we believe that the USFS needs do so; the USFS needs only to require that more parking must be made



Proposed Bridge Street/Hill Building Renovation – Service truck access should be required from an adjacent truck terminal.

available. Failing that, the “managed-to” number of guests should be reduced to bring that number into balance with the available parking.

Trucks On The Street. Lost in the discussion of parking is the congestion and noise that is caused by delivery truck on-street parking in Vail. At times, Vail’s streets look like a commercial loading operation. This does not need to be the case. More than ample off-street truck docking facilities have been provided in recent years at the cost of several millions of dollars. But, without enforcement, Vail’s streets are going to continue to be the preferred option. It is time to revisit delivery truck parking in the Town core and clean up Vail’s streets.

Affordable Housing. Vail has recently approved 130 new deed restricted units (32 at Chamonix and 96 as part of the Roost Lodge redevelopment). This will bring the total number of such units in Vail to almost 900 units. But Vail’s major initiative—its 10-year, \$50 million middle class housing program to “deed restrict” 1000 housing units in Vail—is stalled. Adopted last September, this super-sized plan was seen as the only alternative to affordable housing; because, without invading open space land, there are no other available building sites within the TOV, and use of open space is off the table. The plan was budgeted for \$500,000 for 2017, and a single sale cap of \$200,000 was imposed. There was supposed to be twice annual reports to the Council on the project.

So far, there have been no takers, and there have been no reports to the Council. To make matters worse, the major funding for the plan—a massive tax increase—appears dead with the overwhelming defeat of a similar Eagle County tax increase last year.

At the time the 2017 Housing Plan was adopted, one of the many questions raised by the VHA was whether anyone would be willing to restrict their resale profits for an average sum of just \$50,000. [Bigger questions are whether this level of social engineering to change the basic composition of the TOV population](#) is prudent or warranted and whether Vail will ever realize that the housing issue requires a valley-wide solution. Housing shortages are not confined to Vail. A number of down-valley communities are realizing that housing is a valley-wide problem that can’t be solved by any single community. It shouldn’t take much thought to realize that there are a number of available down-valley sites and that a valley-wide housing authority could comprehensively tackle this problem.



Mountain View proposal using SDD to set aside master plan, zoning GRFA and height limits.

Is Affordable Housing Going To Trump Master Planning And Zoning? In light of the Roost Lodge success, the developer for the Mountain View condominiums withdrew a request for a master plan amendment

and resubmitted the plans as a SDD proposal. Following the same playbook, the Mountain View proposal contains affordable housing. Other developers are rumored to be preparing similar requests.

SDDs have long been criticized as a pay-to-play system in which developers can buy a way around zoning restrictions. In the case of the proposed Mountain View project, it has no additional GRFA available; it exceeds zoning height limits and is out of scale with the neighborhood. It remains to be seen whether Town leaders will hold to Vail's master plan and zoning limits or whether the lure of affordable housing trumps agreed limits on the scale of development in Vail. VHA urges that SDDs should be limited to rare instances and that the default rule should be that proposed developments must meet zoning requirements or justify variances through the zoning process.

What You Can Do. If these are matters that concern you, get informed and become involved. Government responds to the public; silence only enables others with different agendas to act in your absence. If you are not already a member, join the Vail Homeowners Association. Together, we will continue to shine a spotlight on these issues that concern everyone.

VHA [Membership:](#)

The Vail Homeowners Association has entered into a sharing relationship with the following "community building" not-for-profit organizations. In this way, we increase the reach of our advocacy, and together we seek to improve our community in ways that will benefit all. From time to time, VHA will report on the agendas and activities of these organizations. This is a non-exclusive relationship, and other "community building" not-for-profit organizations may join our endeavors.



Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum and Hall of Fame
231 South Frontage Road East
Vail, Colorado 81657
970-476-1876
www.skimuseum.net

The museum's purpose is to preserve and communicate the lore of the modern mountain winter sports movement in Colorado and its contribution to the evolution of Vail and the state's mountain winter sports communities.

[Read more:](#)



PO Box 100 | Vail, CO 81658
P: 970-680-3525

C: 970-315-2675

www.vailcentre.org

The Vail Centre organization exists to provide learning experiences to those taking responsibility for inspiring Vail and the communities of the future.

[Read more:](#)



Walking Mountains Science Center
318 Walking Mountains Lane | PO Box 9469 | Avon, CO 81620
970.827.9725

www.walkingmountains.org

The mission of Walking Mountains is to awaken a sense of wonder and inspire environmental stewardship and sustainability through natural science education for the Vail community and Eagle County.

[Read more:](#)

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Post Office Box 238 Vail, Colorado 81658

Telephone: (970) 827-5680 E-mail: vha@vail.net Web Site: www.vailhomeowners.com