

# VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION



Vailiens on Parade

## Visioning Vail - The Vail Community: Are We on the Right Track?

August 7, 2015

**The Vail Community - Are We Headed in the Right Direction?** For most of its history, Vail's leaders have focused on providing a quality lifestyle for its full and part-time residents and visitors alike, an outdoor lifestyle, centered on the mountains, a pristine environment and cultural enrichment. Some now question whether that perspective is changing as in recent years the Town leaders have [spent a good deal of time and money](#) researching how best to court the youth market (those aged between 20 - 35, Millennials or Gen Xers) and those from 35 into their 50's, otherwise known as Gen Yers. A principle aspect of that effort has been an increasing number of special events aimed at those market segments, especially the Millennials.

The focus on the youth market has been seen as an "investment" in the future as conventional wisdom predicted that the older skier generations were on the decline. While older generations may, in general, be less active as

"old age" creeps up, that is a doubtful proposition when applied to Vail's residents and repeat visitors who have embraced the outdoor and cultural lifestyle that is at the heart of the Vail experience. Indeed, many of the Vail founders remain active well into their 90's and some into centenarian status.

To a significant degree, the efforts to market to the youth group have been [successful in enticing that market](#) to town, albeit with increases in congestion and, some would say, without the commensurate economic impact that justifies the consequences. Many of the youth-oriented events result in a "flash mob" occurrence where the Town is filled for a relative moment and then the attendees are gone, not having spent much time or money in Vail, but with numbers that overwhelm Vail's infrastructure (since the event promoters are not required to provide parking for the events and Vail roadways are pressed to capacity and beyond).

Aside from the immediate impact, this is a long-range strategy since, lacking the financial wherewithal of their seniors, the youth market is not able to invest in the community for the most part. And, with the cost of a Vail vacation rising, especially for a winter ski trip, the youth market is increasingly pressed to invest in even a short Vail stay. This begs the question of whether focusing on this segment of the market is a prudent strategy.

There are those who suggest a better plan would be to focus on the senior market (those aged 60 and older, otherwise known as the Greatest, Silent and Boomer generations) and their international equivalents. They have the present financial resources to invest in the community and, to the extent they bring their immediate and extended families to Vail, they would build brand loyalty. It is, after all, that senior market that is once again beginning to invest in Vail as the real estate market heats up and more people decide to settle in Vail as their work life draws to a close.

The numbers bear this out as retirees in the valley are on the increase and, according to the experts, will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Much of this growth is in the second homeowner population as new community members locate here but continue to hold on to their original residences. Focusing on that market would entail putting quality over quantity, eliminating congestion and improving Vail's infrastructure for the future.

To look at the issue in another light, for most of its first fifty years Vail has been a "[transformational](#)" community-one that was principally concerned with the quality of life and well-being of its residents; a community that rested on personal relationships and shared goals. But questions now are being raised whether Vail has shifted to a "transactional" community where pocketbook concerns predominate and the focus is on the efficiency of impersonal, monetized, person-to-person service transactions. In such a community there is less concern for the quality of life in the push to increase the bottom line or increase sales tax receipts.

A concomitant issue that has yet to be addressed is the increasing age of the community. Without any fanfare, Vail has become somewhat of a "retirement community" as its work force ages out and many residents move into their golden years. This "aging" creates its own set of unique problems, ones that the community has not yet had to face due to the fact that, at 50, Vail is still a relatively young city. The [Vail Valley Medical Center and others](#) are providing some valuable guidance on aging at altitude but more geriatric services are needed, particularly in the area of housing.

To build community diversity, the Town of Vail has historically focused its housing policies on providing "workforce housing." It has yet to factor into its housing policies the fact that many of its workers are retiring and many year-round and part-time residents will be in need of "elder" care, including housing. For many, "aging in place," where they remain a valued and engaged part of the community, as opposed to being isolated or relegated to some specialized care facility, is most desirable. This is not an issue that should be shunted off to the doorstep of Eagle County's overstressed Department of Social Services. The Vail Homeowners Association believes that having an ethical community based housing policy should be a Town responsibility.

Another important issue is whether there is a need for a stronger sense of community. The Vail Homeowners Association believes that everyone in Vail, including second homeowners, should have notice and opportunity to engage in the setting of Vail policies and the decisions of Vail's government. There should be complete transparency in Vail's governmental processes. Decisions should be based on consensus, not imposed as a matter of right or power, such as has happened recently, resulting in costly litigation. When decisions are not transparent and appear as edicts and the "us-against-them" mentality takes hold in litigation, sense of community and the idea that we should all be working toward a common goal is undermined.

Expanding conflicts with property owners over [congestion](#), [environmental policy](#) and [property rights](#) is a sign that something beyond the lawsuits may be wrong. These subjects seem to be causing tempers to flare and lawsuits to fly between property owners and the Town of Vail and the lawsuits are causing an adversarial gap between property owners and our local government. Each of these conflicts affect the young and seniors alike.

Vail now appears to be at or near a tipping point. We have weathered the Great Recession and developers are putting [real estate promotions and construction back into hyperdrive](#). The Vail Homeowners Association believes it is time to consider, "What kind of community do we want for Vail?" VHA urges those affected by these issues to speak up, especially in the upcoming Town Council election. Discuss these issues with your friends and neighbors and ask those running for office whether they think these are legitimate issues, and if so, how they would address them.

**Questions or Comments?**

[Contact the Editor](#)

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