WHY SMALL TOWN?

The short answer is that there is good urbanism in small towns too.

Longer answer starts with a discussion we had in the board of CNU Colorado. Some of the members rightfully argued that CNU Colorado has been focusing on Denver Metropolitan Area and Front Range too much. If this is a chapter aiming at representing the whole state, we need to start organizing events that can reflect that.

Another parallel discussion was about the decision of working with other organizations, and especially with the Universities. For two simple reasons: The students need to know what good urbanism is and what CNU (the national organization) and CNU Colorado (the chapter) do. The second reason is more about practicality; being an all-volunteer based non-profit organization – I always joke about this by saying that we have a lot of strong opinions but not much labor – we decided to team up with others who can put more labor in organizing more ambitious events. Thus, for this half-day mini-conference we teamed up with the University of Colorado – Boulder’s CeDAR (Community Engagement, Design, and Research Center). Also, Mountain Lab, a creative hub within the Department of Environmental Design contributed to this effort.

In order to increase the constructive relationship between the small towns and the university we thought this conference would set the agenda by focusing on challenges and issues that small mountains towns deal with daily. Also we aimed at highlighting the best practices addressing these issues. Thus we invited the planning directors of three mountain towns; Silverthorne, Vail, and Steamboat Springs. We asked two questions: What planning issues do you have on your agenda? And what are some of the best practices addressing these issues? The event took place on Saturday, April 9, 2016, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., at Sustainability, Energy and Environment Complex (SEEC) of University of Colorado, Boulder.

Korkut Onaran
President, CNU Colorado
Principal, Pel-Oma Architects and Urbanists

Presenters and audience at the Colorado’s Next Urbanism panel, April 9, 2016. The event was hosted by the Sustainability, Energy and Environment Complex (SEEC), University of Colorado, Boulder.
CEDaR

CEDaR is an interdisciplinary center that joins the university and community in innovative planning and design of neighborhoods and cities. CEDaR develops educational programs; conducts applied research on community engagement, design, and urban management; and draws on the knowledge and creativity of the University and community to develop design and policy innovations and create an urban built environment that is socially-inclusive and environmentally-efficient.

Importance of CEDaR
• Brings together the energy, skills and creativity of the University and community to work on joint projects
• Provides opportunities for students to engage and learn from community projects
• Builds long-term partnerships that both meet local needs and advance research goals

Our Work
• Organize research on community development strategies, community engagement tools, and critical problems in urban management and design
• Strengthen the voice of diverse and underrepresented groups, including children and youth, and encourage their participation in public discussion about how cities and landscapes are designed and managed.
• Develop partnerships with cities, agencies and nonprofits to create opportunities for students and faculty to do useful projects that meet local needs.
• Engage current debates about critical problems in the future of cities and regions.

CEDaR offers planning and design services for public and private agencies and community groups. We develop designs, plans and other research at a site, building and landscape scale; support neighborhood, area and comprehensive planning; and conduct policy and program research on urban planning, policy and management topics. In addition, CEDaR works with non-profit and other clients to develop internships, mentorships, client-focused design/planning studios, and client-focused capstones/theses.

Brian Muller
CEDaR

Mountain Lab

We believe that the Rocky Mountain West is the Last Great Place. The issues we face in the west provide a framework for problem-solving at all scales and a wide variety of regions. We address the natural, social, and economic forces at play locally to identify and solve problems of the natural and built environment.

The Mountain Lab is a hub for collaborative and creative work to address and develop solutions for the problems facing the West, and by extension, many other great places.

We use this beautiful region as our laboratory to address and solve the problems that impact the quality, longevity, and identity of the region. The culture of the West has imbedded in it a stewardship for the land. This ethic is reflected in our work.

We focus on solving problems of the natural and built environment. We develop physical solutions to address problems in the West, with an eye on how these solutions work in other regions, social settings, and contexts. Imbedded within the issues of the natural and built environment are social and economic factors that are part of the solution. Our partnerships and processes provide integrated solutions. We look at the systems involved, and document the process to allow it to inform solutions in other places.

Our approach is based in design thinking. Design thinking is a collaborative approach to problem solving that immerses participants in multi-disciplinary teams. We understand the problems facing the west are complex, and true solutions require multi-layered responses. We bring together diverse thinkers to represent different viewpoints, as well as wide ranging knowledge

John Lanterman
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Silverthorne, Colorado is located 60 miles west of Denver along I-70. It was established as a camp in 1967. The community is down valley to other destinations. It has no resort but serves as a support to neighboring resort communities. Current challenges for the Town of Silverthorne include economic stability, economic development, housing, and guiding development to create the identity envisioned for the community.

The comprehensive plan update, Blueprint Silverthorne 2004, has provided a platform for casting vision and discussing challenges. The plan included a Core Concept Study as well as a Parks, Open Space, and Trails plan, which together set the stage for constructing recreational opportunities and creating places for people to gather, in addition to addressing the stability of the economy, diversification of sales tax revenue, economic development, infrastructure, market rate and workforce housing, urban renewal authority resurrection, and investment in the community through the creation of a downtown. The new plan assigns design districts with defined areas for the gateway, central core, riverfront, business and commercial areas. According to master plan there are some limited areas open for expansion but they are limited because of public and federal lands. The master plan shows districts, provides examples of the new development happening as Silverthorne attempts to build up its image and identity while creating economic opportunities for the town.

Looking forward, Silverthorne faces the following challenges: “build-out”, workforce housing, arts, culture, and recreation, traffic congestion, building a well-rounded community, and creating amenities for second homeowners and visitors.

Recreation, Arts, and Culture

As it moves forward, Silverthorne intends to increase its focus on the Arts and Culture Strategic Plan. We will be investing heavily in recreation then moving forward into the arts. This makes a statement about who we want to be as we move forward. The goal of enhancing the arts and cultural scene in Silverthorne makes the $9 million performing arts center an important project. Construction of the facility begins this year. The Lake Dillon Theatre Company, considered third in the state for quality theatre productions, is moving to Silverthorne. There will be more to come as the vision of this plan becomes a reality.
Urban Renewal

The Silverthorne Urban Renewal Authority Plan has been resurrected. The area of the urban renewal district now includes two vacant pieces of property: one on the north end and one on the south end of town. These two areas hold potential for greenfield developments with a larger retail format. The intent of including these two areas in the urban renewal area is to generate funds through tax increment financing at these locations to funnel additional municipal revenue into downtown enhancement projects. Why is an urban renewal authority necessary for Silverthorne? A couple of blighted properties in town provide impetus for urban renewal. In the core area of town, the Old Dillon Inn, formerly a hopping night spot, has been boarded up for eight years. Next to this property sits the First Interstate Inn. The visitors’ reviews complaining about this property tells us that this is another obstacle to creating an inviting downtown. Properties like this have inspired Town Council to ask planners to make improvements to the image of downtown. Also, the City purchased a property that used to be a gas station to enhance the front-door image of the community. The structure was torn down and a public-private partnership with adjacent owners was initiated to create a more welcoming entry to the city.
Parking
Silverthorne lacks on-street parking because of the need to leave room for public works to plow the snow. To demonstrate the ease of implementation of on-street parking and the need for it within the town, I took a can of paint and sprayed temporary parking. These spaces were actually being used. After this pilot, I did some measurements and found that 450 on-street parking spaces could be added in downtown. It may take some investment to make it a reality but would help to address the need for parking.

Housing
Housing is major concern in Silverthorne. To address the need of housing within the area a county-wide housing authority has been established. It serves all of the communities in Summit County. A needs analysis was conducted in 2012. An update will be coming soon. The primary finding of the analysis is that thousands of housing units are needed to accommodate the workers of jobs that are being created in the community. In Summit County, there is a voter approved funding stream, 5A funds, which is designated for each individual jurisdiction to invest in housing in their community. The 5A funds are generated by new construction that comes into the community. There is a $2 per square foot impact fee that goes into this housing fund.

The Town of Silverthorne is purchasing land and using different tools to address the need of housing that Summit County is experiencing.

The town is pursuing land banking and has recently purchased 52 acres of the Smith Ranch, which is the next project where housing can be incorporated. Without the 5A revenue stream, Silverthorne would not have been able to purchase this land. Owning 52 acres in the heart of Summit County is important for the city as land values continue to rise. The city is also incorporating density bonuses and buy-down programs, as well as public-private partnerships, as tools to provide housing within the community. This is the beginning for the city but land banking is the goal as they move forward with housing solutions. The Smith Ranch property has market-rate housing adjacent. The town of Silverthorne foresees doing a couple hundred units of workforce housing on this site.

While there is a need for workforce housing, there is also a demand for market rate housing. Everyone wants to live in the mountains these days. Pioneer Creek Ranch, annexed 10 years ago, sat dormant for a period of time but is now resurrected. The development includes 140 high-end units, market rate housing, priced from approximately $500,000 to several million dollar properties in that area. Forty units have been presold and $12 million in infrastructure is being installed this summer. Market rate housing will always be there but, as you bring that in, there must be workforce housing as well to support the market.
Economic development

The town of Silverthorne is sales tax dependent with no revenue stream directly to the town from property taxes. Because of this, supporting sales tax generating businesses is important to the economic vitality of the community and the city’s ability to invest in infrastructure and amenities, first for its residents and then for visitors. Silverthorne is the gateway to the western slope. Starting with the outlets, the town has established itself as a regional retail hub. Recently, Target and Lowes have been added. People are concerned about having too many of the big boxes. However, sales tax dependence leaves limited options for revenue growth. We asked residents how they would like to have amenities paid for, the vote came back unanimously in favor of attracting big box stores, the sales tax generators. From a planning perspective, it was a surprise. I wonder if they would see sprawling development into the mountains as a result of this kind of growth. A surprising number of people who are second home owners or travelling I-70 corridor, are used to seeing these types of businesses, national chains. In a growing community, like Silverthorne, I feel that it is important to go after sales tax generators to sustain amenities and increase the tax base. A funding tool used to entice national chains to locate in Silverthorne is the Enhanced Sales Tax Incentive Program (ESTIP). Under this program, up 50% of the sales tax is shared back to be used for public improvements. More than likely without this program some companies may not have come. With this, the town can share back a portion of the sales tax for improvements. To date, we have shared back $5 million. Acorn building torn down, the slide illustrates a hotel and gateway amenities to help front door image.

Concluding thoughts

Do not be afraid of public-private partnerships as the town by itself can only do so much. Streamline the development review process, because time is money. If it is good for the town, do not hold up development unnecessarily in process. Same thing goes for development code modifications. We have gutted a lot of the stuff in the main town core area because we want to make sure if it’s right for the community, and it can easily be done. Create a business friendly environment. Long term, is the implementation of the vision. It is difficult to stay focused on the long term vision as one looks at what exists today. It is vital to help people catch the vision so there is momentum to move forward. It is important to get out and tell your story so that somebody else does not tell another version for you.
Housing

Affordable housing needs to be addressed. It is an economic development issue that affects community character. The question remains whether or not there is community will to move forward. While there is need for affordable housing, there is push back against the issue. Linkage was repealed in 2009. Inclusionary zoning requirements were suspended 2013. Many deed restrictions have been released. The costs of development and the costs of the infrastructure needed to support development challenge affordability.

Both housing infill and annexation will be needed to address housing and growth constraints. The cost of moving into green-field will be tremendous. Right now the city does not have funding to bring to the table, and the regulatory tools for affordability have been suspended. There is an insistence from the community that development needs to pay its own way. If the town wants more affordable housing, the community must be willing to bring something to the table. Other counties have designated funding for housing (such as the 5A funds for Silverthorne) which are not available in Steamboat Springs. They have had a tendency to present a wish list from public works and what needs to

Planning and community development

Over the past five years, the planning and community development officials have faced negative department reputation, a poorly written and poorly organized development code, a lack of adherence to process, little interest in long-range planning, affordable housing push back, and a general lack of public investment. However, there are also ways they have been able to be a bit innovative. Looking forward, the next five years involve completing the development code update as well as addressing annexation, affordable housing, and parking. There are a couple of areas where we need creative solutions for the challenges we face.

From the present moving forward, the first task is to complete the Community Development Code update. The current code is unclear and, at times, contradictory. It is currently not a framework to guide the planning process and community development but it is instead difficult to navigate, and time consuming to administer. Code needs to easily lead to doing things that reinforce and advance vision, to help applicants in getting to ‘yes’, while being flexible enough to accommodate new knowledge. The second best answer to ‘yes’ is a quick ‘no’, instead of keeping them in a long ‘maybe’. We are trying to rewrite code with an intent or objective statement for every goal in the code, by emphasizing what is desired more than what is prohibited and the willingness to work with community, council, and planning commission to support as of right development. Previously, everything went to council. Even if you wanted to have a food cart downtown, that would have gone to w
be paid for, on day 1 before you sell a single lot. We are going to have to look at ways to phase the infrastructure. This is a place where we need innovative thinking.

Annexation issues need to be revisited. Referendum overturned the 2010 annexation proposal to add additional acreage to the town to make room for growth. Tremendous opportunity for green-field development exists abut the tremendous cost associated with infrastructure development extended out there is an obstacle to moving forward. Like other cities, Steamboat Springs has no property tax. City expansion to accommodate residential growth is viewed as a net cost to them as it does not directly bring in revenue to a town dependent on sales tax. The current policies require development to pay its own way, 100%. Developers who want to build affordable houses are resistant to build when they are required to do things like widen US 40, build a new water plant, and put in all the other infrastructure because it cuts into their ability to make a profit. The prior annexation, Steamboat 700, was for 700 acres. A developer bought 540 acres and still owns them but is trying to figure out what to do with this land.

Parking

There is a difference between perception and reality when it comes to downtown parking. There is resistance to put in parking meters and the reigning sentiment is to “keep it free.” Many have said there should be a parking garage to solve the problem but there is still a question of who will pay for the construction and who will park in it, if the parking on the street remains free. There seems to be an assumption that “others” will park there so that the town can park on street for free without trouble. Parking Studies have been conducted in 1947, 1974, 1997 and 2014. In every study, employee parking was identified as a problem. In 1947, meters were installed. In 1952, meters were removed. In 1974, 1997, and 2014, the implementation of a parking structure was proposed. Also in 2014, the discussion of parking meters was revived. Meters and license readers were rejected. When ULI joined the discussion they framed the parking issue differently and pointed out that this is a mobility issue not a parking problem. Again this year, council made parking a priority but feel uneasy about bringing up a contentious issue such as parking fees. Meters were again rejected. Innovation is needed to come to a solution that will work for the community.
Creative participation strategy
To invite the public in the planning challenges of Steamboat Springs, the town used a creative way to visualize the challenge of balancing housing, commercial, and public developments. We laid out a map of the area, with the capacity for development in different areas of town marked out for residential, industrial, other uses. We created scenarios for adding 1,500-4,500 additional residents with the amount of additional residential construction needed, as well as how much additional retail, and industrial to support the population would be needed. Poker chips represented each of these elements. Working in teams, people spent 2-3 hours trying to balance where the additional population and services should be placed. Chips for single family could be traded in for multi-family. Infill was favored but ultimately with 4,500 residents, a number reasonably predicted by the state as future growth for Steamboat Springs over the next 20-30 years, the construction was directed west toward the proposed annexation site. It is going to be a challenge to bring this up with the community as part of the affordable housing, economic development, and community character discussion. Infill will only go so far, and that will be expensive as well.

The discussion of downtown sidewalks has gone on for 30-years. Parking issues have been discussed for 70-years. While the base area URA was successful, the downtown URA was opposed. Although, streetscape funding was ultimately approved. There are results within the community from the downtown investment over the last few years from the community supported urban renewal. Four years ago, a ULI panel was brought in, breaking the long term stall in the discussion of downtown improvements, including completing sidewalks and improving access to the river. Even though it took another 3 years after the discussion to move forward, it got the momentum going. Council found other funding and construction was slated to begin May 2016, throughout downtown, particularly on [Hampdon] Street with the new promenade, new lighting, new landscaping and a new river park is just being finished this summer. The total was $11 million for downtown that they finally managed to come up with. I think this was a great process, even though I am unsure how an urban focused institute would do in a little mountain town. But it was received very well. I recommend this type of process when there is a sticky issue and you need the community talking again.
The town of Vail was incorporated in 1966. It is a unique town that developed in a valley with limited land to grow. The opportunities are limited also because much of the surrounding land is public. In Eagle county, there are 52,197 residents, which includes a 25% increase in population since 2000. 12,800 (26%) of residents in Eagle County are under the age of 18.

Fiscal stability

Of the town’s $68.6 million annual revenues from 2015, 65% comes from taxes, sales tax being the largest contributor at 37% of total budget, real estate transfers tax trails behind at 10%, property and ownership tax at 6%, ski lift tax and franchise fees make up 9%, and construction use tax 3%. Municipal Services accounted for $39.3 million, or 73% of 2015 expenditures, with the remaining 27% ($14.3 million) spent on capital improvements.

Sales tax growth was demonstrated with the numbers from the last decade. I provided assurance of the stability of Vail’s economy stating, “Sales tax collections are an important indicator of the resort community’s overall economic health. With the exception of the recession years, Vail’s sales tax collections have shown steady increases.” A hold on capital spending during the economic downturn, along with a healthy rebound in revenue resulted in a growth of reserve levels from 2010-2012. Over the last five years, cash funding of major capital improvements has utilized some of those reserves and kept the town debt-free, while maintaining balances well above the reserve minimum level adopted by the Town Council.

Vail Vision

Vail wants to be the premier international mountain resort community and aims to grow a vibrant, diverse economy providing citizens and guests with exceptional services and an abundance of premier recreational, cultural and educational opportunities. As the town seeks to enhance economic vitality, grow a balanced community, and elevate the experience we aim to look to the past to plan for the future. This includes evaluating the plans and revisiting the goals not yet attained. The following quote demonstrates just how relevant this strategy is for Vail:

The town is at a point of crisis in its existences as it is trapped by its success. Its choices are several, continue at its current rate of growth and totally destroy the valley, grow more slowly and accept mediocrity of the current problems, or grow with wisdom and attempt to achieve a greater ideal of service to the residents and guests.

The Vail Plan: August 1973.

Goals from the 1973 plan that inform the current planning in Vail include:

1) Grow a diverse year-round economy
2) Sustain a strong sense of community and enhance the presence of community character
3) Address transportation, pedestrianization and loading/delivery needs.

To support economic development, the town has engaged in redevelopment projects by engaging public policy and private enterprise and public investment in public infrastructure. The town has also worked with the Vail Reinvestment Authority established in 2003 to address “blight” in Vail. To enhance the growth of a diverse year-round economy, Vail hosts events and festivals such as Vail’s farmers market and art show, the GoPro mountain games, Taste of Vail, Vail Jazz Festival, International Dance Festival, Vail Lacrosse Shootout, Burton US Open Snowboard Championship, and World Alpine Ski
The Vail Valley Medical Center represents a $200 million reinvestment in the community. It is now the second largest employer in the area with more than 900 jobs. These provide year-round, non-resort, service sector employment for current and future residents. With the growth in destination healthcare, this facility contributes $30 million into the economy, including more than 100,000 visitor nights. It is classified as a level III Trauma Center. Additional opportunities for growth and expansion exist both within the organization and in spin off industry and education. This facility is home of the Steadman-Philippon Clinic and Research Institute and is accredited by the United States Olympic Organization for sports and orthopedic medicine research and treatment.

Housing

In the Town owns 3.6 acres to address the affordable housing issue. This property was purchased to build affordable housing as well as build a new fire station for the west portion of the community. The Chamonix neighborhood is being marketed by the Council and the community as “Vail’s newest residential neighborhood for families”. Unfortunately, it is probably Vail’s last residential neighborhood for families. Many affordable housing developments attempt to maximize the number of units, but this is a project with a different goal. They could create greater density but consciously chose the lower density for the purpose of addressing the needs of those who are currently leaving Vail because of the affordable housing issue. It will have somewhere between 40 and 60 dwelling units, a mix of units such as duplex, single family, multi family, as these are the types of housing they see people moving to in down valley communities because this type of housing doesn’t exist in Vail.

In an effort to create more affordable housing, programs and policies have been implemented such as commercial linkage and inclusionary zoning, 50% onsite obligation, pay in lieu program, EHU buy down program, EHU exchange program, and the Vail local housing authority. With regard to affordable housing, the town can only do so much. We can only build so many units. An opportunity exists that before units are lost to the free market or sold to the secondary home market, the town should be stopping that sale from happening, intervening in any way they could. There are buy-down programs and exchange programs. I think the Town of Vail must attain control of the land resources and stop losing units in the town of Vail just to build new units.

The cost of real estate and construction have accelerated at an increased rate, far beyond wages. Every year the gap widens. The cost of construction and the possibility of someone being able to afford a unit is getting harder. One of the first affordable housing projects in Vail was a 52-unit development created in partnership with City Market on a 6-acre parcel owned by the city of Vail. When it was built, the units could be built for cost and sold to future owners with deed restrictions on them, limiting the maximum resale appreciation price. Selling them at cost made them affordable without additional subsidy. Land was thrown in and amortized over 55 years. Today, for the Chamonix project, the Town of Vail has already put $4.4
million into the land and infrastructure and they will still need to add more subsidy into these future homes so that they can be sold at an affordable price to families working in the community. It is a huge problem and a funding priority for a lot of the resort communities and small towns across the western slope. Simply, there is not enough land and resources and wages in place for sufficient affordable housing to be built in mountain communities. I don’t think it is unique to any one of them. It is an issue for each mountain community. Vail Resorts recently committed $30 million towards finding affordable housing solutions within their resort communities. Be mindful, however, that is $30 million spread over 9 resorts in 3 states. It is clearly an issue and not unique to any one resort community.

Creating connectivity

Addressing transportation, pedestrianization, and loading and delivery involve many elements. The two major projects underway are the centralized facilities concept at Lionshead and Vail Village and dispersed facilities implementation. I-70 underpass is a project that has been in the transportation master plan for over 25 years. It is an opportunity. If you are familiar with Vail, there are 3 interchanges on the I-70 corridor, east Vail, west Vail, and main Vail. This is a new underpass being constructed without any exits. The goal is to provide connectivity between the north and south sides of the interstate. Recall the earlier slide that demonstrates the layout of the community along I-70, community is bisected by freeway corridor. $32 million project started in the fall. Digging under the interstate was to begin in April 2016 to put these improvements in. This is a partnership between CDOT and Federal Highway Administration to relieve congestion that we see coming in the west Vail and Main Vail roundabouts. We have adopted a level of service for their streets at service level B, a pretty high standard. We believe quality of life and livability are greatly affected by traffic congestion. This project relieves congestion and provides another route for transit to get through. It does provide for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity north and south as well as improving emergency vehicle access and response. This project is one I never thought I would see done because the price kept escalating. I pushed, saying that if they were going to do it, they need to get it done now before the price increases any further. This is one of those reinvestment projects that the town committed to doing with the private sector. If they would invest in the community, the town would invest public funds for the improvements in the future.

Restore the Gore

Gore Creek runs right through the center of the town of Vail. It was listed by the Colorado department of health as being an impaired waterway for water quality purposes. The Creek is still listed as a gold trout fishery but there are portions where the water quality is impaired. The department of health used the metric of macro-invertebrates, mayflies, stoneflies, and caddis flies, to determine the adequacy of water quality in the creek. Gore Creek is one of those treasured amenities within the community. To be listed as an impaired stream, along with something like 20-22 statewide on the list, was not desirable. The Town has made an aggressive, proactive effort and is focused on getting off the impaired list within 10 years, understanding some water quality issues for improvement. The master plan was just adopted to address some of these issues. A piece of the project has been a public education campaign. We understood that a lot of the impairment and impacts to the creek were focused around human activity immediately.
adjacent or into the creek. This is an educational campaign that is currently underway. We will spend just shy of $1 million on the campaign. We believe public education is the driver behind some of these impacts. The campaign talks about how a little wild goes a long way. The founders of Vail and the original planners of Vail were insightful enough at the time, to preserve a riparian corridor around the stream through the entire town the area was platted for preservation not neighborhood construction, except for a small portion in east Vail. This tract of land is immediately adjacent to the creek, varying in width and size and configuration as it runs through the entirety of the town of Vail, is owned by the town of Vail as public land. Over the last 50 years there has been significant encroachment upon that. Private property owners no longer saw this as public land they were adjacent to but instead their private backyards. As a result, much of the riparian habitat, such as willows immediately adjacent to the creek, was removed. Now the town is undergoing a significant effort to restore and repair some of those damaged conditions. Unfortunately, it takes about 50 years to get to the conditions of today. $7-8 million dollars will be spent over the next several years in restoration. However, I foresee it taking a much longer time to see the restoration fully realized.

Village Character Preservation

One of the important attributes of the Vail community is uniqueness and identity. “A little wild goes a long way” is an interesting project. In the past the developers worked with families who lived, worked, and grew up in the Vail community. There was an increased motivation to preserve the character of our community. As land values increased and redevelopment activity came about, developers changed significantly. No longer were they dialing a local number to talk to somebody, they were calling New York, NY or Chicago, IL or Phoenix, AZ or Dallas, TX or Los Angeles, CA. A lot of the development turned from family business to speculative development which brought change in the character and approach to development process. To ensure the maintenance of the community character that exists a set of design standards was created with a consultant team to illustrate what the town wants people to envision when they think of Vail. Think about places like Santa Fe, NM - adobe homes & structures, Martha’s Vineyard - ships-lap siding, white picket fences, flower boxes, Savannah, GA - old brick homes along a heavily treed boulevard, these are places that have a very unique identity and character associated with them. A town loses its character if anything is allowed to happen. The town of Vail has been questioned for its authenticity, as it is a master planned community with a European influenced design, some kind of Disneyland of the Rocky Mountains, the Tyrolean truck stop. It is important to Vail as a resort community to have recognition and identity but any small town wants to have recognition and identity.

The ULI recently put together something that is resonating with the Vail community about how to attract guests, or tourists, and their dollars without losing its soul. In that article, put together by Ed McMahon, he identified a number of characteristics and issues that should be addressed. I was pleased to see that many of the things happening in Silverthorne and Steamboat Springs are on the list as well. These are things that are important and happening in those communities, such as enhancing and protecting the community gateway and focusing on authenticity. Steamboat Springs is an example of the western rural mountain town. It creates a very different image to say “Steamboat Springs” than to say “Telluride”. They are very different communities. It is important to keep the authenticity. Something included in a report for Vail was that not only they need to bring the guests into Vail but we also need to focus on things like restaurants and hotels and public restrooms. When they started the redevelopment opportunity, one of the things

Diversifying tourism and extending the season is an important priority

Renting second homes has both positive and negative impacts on Vail.
that continually came up was if you have a young child who needs a bathroom, just down the street isn’t good enough. Focus on those support facilities that support your guests in the community.

Parking vs. transportation

A parking problem is really a transportation problem. Think about the purpose of parking: to get people to put their cars in park and get out of their cars. Building parking spaces is not going to solve the problem. It is just too costly. Vail is undertaking efforts to involve the private sector and utilize the existing parking spaces that sit empty. For example, a church and bank adjacent to one another use the parking during opposite times in the week.

Informal accommodations

People can now afford multiple homes and they are smart business people renting their homes out on a regular basis. More lights are on. When something like this happens, forget anything with affordable housing. When a property sale happens, it is more likely an outside owner. This is a serious problem to address but he is not sure how to address it. Good impacts include more heads in beds, increased tax revenue, more diverse accommodation options, more jobs, addresses market demand, and this keeps lights on. Some not so good include fewer homes for locals, increased property value (less affordability), parking, noise, trash, rising rental rates, loss of lodging tax revenue (unless and until there is a policy change), and change in character of neighborhoods.

The new sharing economy is one of the biggest challenges faced by Vail, Steamboat Springs as well. The shared economy has both opportunities and some negative community impact. Vail has not regulated short term accommodations to this point. However, in the future we will begin to regulate and address the impacts associated with VRBO and AirBnB, for example.

I had an opportunity about a year ago to serve on a ULI panel down in the gulf coast of Florida in an island community, Ana Maria Island. ULI was asked to come down with a range of panelists to address this very issue. This is a Florida beach cottage community that was being overrun by this approach to accommodations. The small cottages were replaced by mini-hotels and the impacts were tremendous. Property values were going through the roof. No longer were cottages for residential use. Property was not looked at from a commercial perspective for commercial use. Single family homes built on tiny lots that had 8-18 bedrooms with a pool on some properties going property line to property line. These were intended to be accommodations which drastically changed the character of the community.

I also talked about the importance of keeping schools in their community. This place had a school in their community but costs were so high people were moving off the island at an increasing rate. At the time they were there, 54% of the K-5th grade students lived on the island but this was a trend line that was about to cross. This meant that 46% of the kids were being bussed onto the island. It won’t be long before the school is closed and they will be bussing the kids off of the island. It is important with these amenities that have many benefits, to understand the impacts that come with them.

Partnerships and collaboration

The development review process has the potential of being an economic development tool. When they started on $2.5 million dollars of redevelopment, they had a process in place. They realized through the volume of work that the process they were following, was not truly the only way. There are other ways to get to the end of the development review process. This opened an opportunity to focus on new ways. New strategies have allowed them to improve on the development review process. Developers want to mitigate risk. Similar to Steamboat Springs, Vail has adopted a getting to ‘yes’ process, making the goal development review not hindrance process. We are looking for ways zoning code could be used to help, not hurt, development partners, and creating new solutions instead of additional problems. In Vail, 95% of the land area is in private hands. However, 100% of the land use plans apply to the land in total. The only way to implement the master plans is to work in partnership with those who own the land. To achieve the goals of the plan, partnership and collaboration with the private sector is needed. You must keep your community’s interest in mind as you move forward.
Questions and Answers

From left to right, John Lanterman, Mark Leidal, George Luther, and Tyler Gibbs,

**Tom Clark**: In 2006 at an international conference on this sort of planning and development, and globalization in Steamboat, upshot was a book I edited, in the book there was a chapter on affordable housing in which I recommended that we consider regional tax base sharing in Colorado as a partial remedy to the affordability issues. It was founded on the notion that the down valley is subsidizing the up valley. They get the people but not the tax base. The up valley gets the tax base cannot accommodate all of the tourists. It resulted in an interview that could still be archived with the Colorado Public Radio. I want to suggest that they think of further solutions that may reach beyond their borders. Pooling some increment of the regional tax base a little bit like TIF, but channeling that from the wealthy communities to the less wealthy communities to aid in subsidizing affordability. In a way, it’s a moral argument. It is going to take a different shape depending on which up and down valleys are being compared. It is a possibility I would like to float and hear a response.

**George Ruther**: That is something the town is looking more aggressively into. Regionalism and regional partnerships is something I am presenting to council, looking at partnership between the town of Vail and Eagle County surrounding affordable housing and the administration of some of that. While they can move some of the impacts down valley and housing down valley, they are just expanding infrastructure expenditures to get those people back in to work. Right now, about 70% of those occupying the affordable housing are living and working in the town, even though not required to work and live there. That is a model or approach they want to push as far as they can to keep the people where the jobs are.

**Tom Lyon**: As a planning objective, providing residence for those who work in your community is a noble goal. I have a second home up near Jackson Hole, where affordability on the Idaho side where I live is an issue. The problem seems to be widespread and in the chapter in my book you will find more about affordability.

**Audience member**: It seems that the ultimate beneficiaries of the subsidies are the businesses operating there, like a lot of other public investments, roads and everything else. It surely seems appropriate to include them in the coffer.

**Mark Leidal**: In Summit County the question is who are you trying to help. In Silverthorne we were talking about workforce housing, and not necessarily low income housing.

**John Lanterman**: How would you start housing conversation in Steamboat Springs?

**Tyler Gibbs**: There is a task force, a cross section of the community. I think it is really a matter of community will.

**Audience member**: The economy has ups and downs. I was in Steamboat Springs when the community bought a hotel for affordable housing, a transit package, then the economy went down the tubes. The property was financed and the town had debt on this. Timing is such an important part of that.

**Tyler Gibbs**: The hotel has just been sold by the city to a private investor. Because of a failed project it sours support for the government getting involved in affordable housing. One challenge with mobile workforce and vacationers is that it is hard to get a sense of community. Trying to house people on site of the development does not provide residents with the community amenities they need everyday.

**Audience member**: The Vail model for family housing instead of workforce housing is great. Families want a different style of housing than what has been the traditional workforce housing model. Of course everyone wants detached single family but that is not possible.

**George Ruther**: In the Chamonix development they are finding that people are willing to make those tradeoffs. They realize they can live down valley and have a yard and a swing set and all those things but they are 35 miles from their job. It is interstate traffic. But this is stuff they are willing to trade. We have done a market study with potential buyers and at town council meetings we talked with Tom and his crew. Town council said the challenge is to bring people back. It can be successful as long as people realize there are going to be some tradeoffs.

**Tyler Gibbs**: We have not really seen the multi-family development focused on families.

**John Lanterman**: A favorite word came up -authenticity. With workforce housing and VRBO, how are you dealing with authenticity with where you are now and maybe moving forward? It’s a potential future topic.

**George Ruther**: Sense of place: in Vail, we believe that authenticity comes with great restaurants, great skiing, great place to raise a family, neighborhood parks (1 for every 600 people), amenities and experience creation.

**Mark Leidal (Silverthorne)**: Creating an experience right now, setting the vision, not trying be anyone else.

**Tyler Gibbs (Steamboat Springs)**: As an architect, my first instinct is to talk about buildings and streetscapes. It is a little harder. There isn’t a consistent style like Santa Fe. It’s an interesting challenge. What works? Can you write it down and design it? No. We are going to work with it and explore.
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CNU and CEDaR are hosting a conference bringing together leadership from neighborhoods, small towns, cities, and the University of Colorado Boulder to explore innovations in community-building Colorado-style – creating engaged communities with diverse economies and entrepreneurial ecosystems, where innovative ideas for efficient infrastructure, sustainable urbanism and smart decisionmaking are incorporated in planning and design. This conference will bridge between the experience of local governments and development of research at the University. Panels and workshops focus on innovative place making, management of catalyst projects, affordable housing, design of green infrastructure and food systems, experience of creative districts, engagement with children and youth, and more.

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