

Chat Session

4/3/14

Johnson Residence – 20 River Cove

It's very disconcerting to see all the empty storefronts around town.

Our restaurants are our main attractions.

What is going on with Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI)?

RMI and Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC) will be two really good things for the town.

RMI's Innovation Center in Basalt will replace the Windstar location in Old Snowmass.

A critical mass of residents and visitors is needed to help support the businesses.

Easy pedestrian access to downtown and river recreation needs to be part of the plan.

Over the last 20 years development has turned its back on the river and that's a missed opportunity.

Is there currently access to the Fryingpan River? Response: other than the trail at the back of Riverwalk there are only a couple of fishing access easements.

We need walking paths along the Fryingpan River. How can we get access for them?

If access to the Fryingpan River is not possible because of private property issues, should we focus our energy and resources on the Roaring Fork River, instead?

The river park should have a reflexology path in a quiet area. That would be amazing. We could have a children's project to gather the rocks for it.

This side of Basalt needs a nice, upscale hotel – something different from what's planned for Willits.

People who come here on vacation don't want to stay in a parking lot and look at Whole Foods. They want to see quaint places like this side of Basalt; not the same stuff they see when they're at home.

Tax increment financing (TIF) could be used to pay for infrastructure improvements.

Willits Town Center (Willits) is thriving and we're not. That's the reason for this 'us vs. them' feeling.

What's going on with the Aspenalt? Are they okay with plans for redevelopment? Response: they have indicated their willingness to work with redevelopment efforts and who knows, they

could end up with a bigger, better hotel to manage. It would have to be a mutual agreement – no eminent domain decree – with the Szczelinas treated fairly.

How did the Prinster cabin get to be built so close to the Fryingpan River? If their property was redeveloped too, could the new structure be built in the same spot? Response: The Prinster cabin was situated before the regulations concerning river setbacks were in place. New development would have to abide by the river setbacks.

Is the work being done in the river going to help prevent erosion to the riverbank nearest the library? Response: the river improvements include riverbank reinforcement and other features to help prevent erosion along that entire stretch of river on both sides.

Perhaps the reflexology path could be located at Confluence Park.

The path along the river behind Gold Rivers needs to be improved, beginning at the access area along Two Rivers Road. If you didn't know it was there, you wouldn't know it's there.

Some stretches of the rivers are better suited to walking paths, not bike paths. We need to keep that in mind. Bike paths take more room.

A walking path made of crusher fines would be appropriate. We need to make sure all the parks are joined together by trails.

The river trail along Cherry Creek in Denver has split use marked with a line for walkers on one side and people on bikes or rollerblades on the other. It works really well for everybody.

Could we turn Two Rivers Road (2RR) into either a trail only or just a one-way road with the side closest to the river being a trail like they have at Cherry Creek? That would be a great way to link East Basalt with West Basalt.

I'd like to see a bike path along the river starting at Midland Park. It would have to join up with the Emma Trail via a connection along the library and post office parcels but it could be done. The current way to get to the Emma Trail from downtown is not pleasing and how you're supposed to get from the post office to the trail is unclear and confusing..

The current trail system is confusing, especially for tourists.

Basalt needs to be more welcoming. What's needed is an entire package of welcomeness, not just pockets of welcomeness. A better trail system could help with that.

Would a new entrance to Basalt have to be paid for by TIF? Response: CDOT has said that it will not pay to relocate the main entrance to Basalt, e.g. a roundabout at Midland Avenue, so the Town would have to find other ways to pay for that. TIF is one possibility. The cost would be in the millions.

Has anybody tried talking to the building owners who are charging so much for rent?

What's interesting to me is that I pay lower taxes on my Aspen property than I pay on my Basalt property.

Taxes aren't what's driving places like Hestia out of Basalt; it's people like Bob Ritchie who are charging top dollar for rent.

Isn't having some rent coming in better than having none?

Landlords have to settle for 'C grade' tenants because something is better than nothing. Case in point is the massage parlor by the Green Drake.

This side of Basalt needs an anchor like a boutique hotel or a Trader Joe's.

Be careful what you wish for. We could have a parking nightmare if we had Trader Joe's downtown. That's what happened in Denver when the newest store opened there. The people who live in the neighborhood have to compete for parking spaces with shoppers.

Perhaps Clarke's could be replaced by a Trader Joe's if there was remote parking for people going downtown and a shuttle to ride here.

I think we really need a boutique hotel over here. Basalt's hotel situation is embarrassing. My guests stay up in Aspen when they visit. A boutique hotel needs about 100 rooms to be viable.

I heard that the former Total Merchant Services (TMS) space was being considered as a hotel but it would fit only about half that number (40 – 50 rooms). Maybe the hotel could be split with one part in TMS and the other part across Midland Ave. on the corner of the CDC parcel. Or maybe there could be two different hotels, one on each parcel, for different market segments.

The section of road between Lions Park and the CDC parcel could be removed to make one big parcel and that could open up a whole bunch of possibilities.

The more downtown Basalt deteriorates (C grade commercial tenants = C grade hotel guests) the more attractive a public/private partnership will become to current hotel operators.

If I had my 'druthers' I'd want to see a 100 room boutique hotel, Trader Joe's, and nice shops in downtown Basalt.

We don't consider Basalt a bedroom community anymore. We are here all day, we shop here, and we play here.

Hotels need occupancy that's guaranteed at about 85% - that translates to a 100 room hotel.

That wouldn't be impossible if the owners/operators had a good business plan.

In my work I run across a lot of people who are coming here for conferences. A lot of current conference centers are either very expensive or very tired-looking. Basalt could put itself on the map with a really great conference center.

We have a good bus system that could support conference attendees' transportation needs.

Another way to bring business here is to make Basalt a destination wedding location. Put a nice gazebo along the river and there you'd have it. That would be pretty simple to do.

All we'd need is a pretty piece of land for that, which we basically have with the park parcels. The river speaks for itself.

It's sad to see the town so lifeless when we have so much quaintness.

Trader Joe's should be located on the periphery of town otherwise we could end up with a Faustian Bargain.

The town used to have annual events but they've all slipped away. We need annual events to draw people here.

Snowmass Village and Carbondale have a variety of well-established annual events and people flock to them in the thousands.

How about having a hotel on the periphery and a central anchor to draw guests into downtown. Whatever happens, the parking situation has to be resolved.

Who owns the property along the river between Stubbie's and Harry Teague's office?
Response: the property on which the visible foundation is located is slated to become Real America's affordable housing units and the rest is parkland.

Maybe we just need a mini Trader Joe's like the Whole Foods store in Willits is a smaller version of Whole Foods in the cities.

Maybe Sprouts would be interested in coming here if Trader Joe's isn't.

Clarke's Market never operated well. There's always been a lot of wasted space in there.

I'm terrified that Tad's pharmacy is going to have to leave Basalt.

Parking could be stacked into a smaller space so it wouldn't require a huge parking lot.

But the traffic getting to and from could still be a problem.

That's the trade-off. If you want the vitality you have to put up with the traffic unless you figure out some off-site situation that people would actually use.

Basalt needs things to help make it unique. I was in a specialty shop that sold olive oil and vinegar. They had a really great tasting bar and you could stay there for hours.

Basalt should provide unique things that'll attract tourists. They have money and want to spend it. I work at a shop in Aspen and you wouldn't believe the amount of money that people spend on stuff. Tourists want a quaint environment, too, and Basalt certainly has that.

A tourist economy has to be balanced with middle-class housing for young professionals and families. You need locals to shop in the stores when it's not tourist season. Plus, tourists like to be in places where they can mingle with the locals.

Having a place that empties out after the shops close isn't the answer – then it feels like Disney Land.

The current trend is for young professionals to live in urban centers.

We just moved here recently and Basalt still feels like a mountain town - it's not corporate. I hope this side of Basalt doesn't end up becoming like Willits.

The key to success is to have shops that the locals will shop in, too. You can't gear everything just for the tourists. Locals don't buy expensive baubles.

The Roaring Fork Club is selling weddings like crazy and they don't have a hotel. All those guests are staying in Aspen because Basalt's hotels are not of the caliber they want.

There should be arches or some prominent marker at every access point to the rivers.

It's unclear whether or not the path along the river at Riverwalk is public. There's nothing to say people are welcome to walk along here and where the path leads. Having a sign at both ends of the path would be helpful.

Having a more attractive entrance to Basalt could help brand the town. Redirect traffic into Basalt with an attractive sign at the up-valley traffic light.

We need a more direct route into town.

Does Basalt have a brand? If we don't, we need a town branding effort.

Connectivity could be part of Basalt's identity/brand.

We need a great deli and a great coffee spot like Peach's.

Healdsburg in Sonoma County has a wonderful town square. It makes you want to stay and walk around there.

Taos has a privately owned store that's like Whole Foods. Maybe somebody could copy the Trader Joe's format here in Basalt.

Trader Joe's has a cult following and it has affordable health food.

Fryingpan Road is gorgeous – it's like driving through a national park. That road would be great for a marathon from Basalt to Ruedi or vice versa. A marathon along Fryingpan Road could easily become nationally known. It's beautiful and challenging.

The town would need an entity to take that on. That's a lot of work.

Whoever is marketing Basalt needs to incorporate activities at the Ruedi Reservoir into the marketing campaign.

Basalt is already nationally known for its fishing.

The End. Time for refreshments.