

April 22, 2015

Honorable Mayor and Town Councilors,

My wife and I have only been here for a couple years, but we decided that we would try to build a business here because we see considerable potential for a thriving, vibrant, progressive community in the mountains that few other places have, even Aspen.

Frankly, we feel Basalt needs us, and people like us, much more than we need Basalt. Eighty percent of our work is elsewhere. Our family and most of our friends live elsewhere. Art, culture, and entertainment is mostly elsewhere. Why are we here? We find ourselves asking this question daily.

My only answer is that I am still optimistic. I see all of Basalt, not just the Pan & Fork, as a raw gem. Sensible development of the Pan & Fork property is a first step toward having all of the things we should all want; better parks, trails, active storefronts, a lively riverfront, attainable housing, culture, art, better schools, etc.

The bottom line is—we're seeing a lot of poorly conceived thinking circulate and validated by those who don't mind holding the floor, like we saw again Tuesday night (May 14th council meeting). I take issue with the notion that those willing to speak up in that venue truly represent the majority of Basaltines. Certainly, they do not represent Basalt's future, unless your vision for Basalt's future is as a sleepy bedroom community with no discernible character or identity of its own.

Let me be clear, the antithesis to smart growth downtown, where growth belongs most, is homogenous, characterless, socially, ecologically, and economically dysfunctional sprawl. More specifically, pertaining to the arguments presented May 14th; maintaining an imaginary viewshed (that doesn't presently exist without removing an existing building and three or four old growth trees) from arbitrary points downtown is ludicrous and cheapens the science of town planning.

Please consider, we moved 36 families from what was once our densest (at more than 50 units/acre) and probably most active downtown property so we could 'see the river' from some arbitrary point? **That's like telling your low income neighbor to move their house so you can have a bigger lawn!** I understand we all want to maintain public access and honor the river landscape, but the viewshed idea is so far out of the ball park that it should not be considered, as presented, as a sound basis for defining building envelopes.

Some have contended that a large park would serve as a draw for downtown. We need to consider context. At the May 24th council meeting, several attendees spoke about moving affordable housing to the outskirts and encouraging 'others' to live in the suburbs and drive to the park downtown--this couldn't be more backwards. This idea that affordable housing should be cast to the hinterlands, and ghettoized at our periphery while we decentralize our historic core is regressive and contrary to the last fifty years of urban planning theory and research and proven not to be a good model for growth. We should be encouraging density where it counts. By encouraging housing downtown, especially attainable options, we are providing lower income residents easy access to services, transit, and amenities, thereby reducing our carbon footprint by encouraging walking and simultaneously utilizing those people to activate our downtown storefronts, parks, and sidewalks. Density, whether comprised of lower, middle, or higher income individuals should be the primary driver for socio-economic vitality downtown. Density defines walkability and walkability drives activity. Activity is vitality.

The key here is consistent activity. We're not going to see a very consistently active park if the majority of people using it need to drive to get to it. At best we'll have a situation like Basalt Sunday Market--lively for about two hours, one day a week, before everyone gets in their cars and drives home (hopefully sober), and mostly dormant in winter.

Please, I encourage you, as our representatives to understand the broader dilemma and the consequences of inaction or poorly informed action based purely on sentiment and anecdotal evidence. Please honor the citizen-driven Our Town process. The DAAC and survey are unfortunate machinations of small town politics that never should have come to fruition. As a professional designer, it was clear from the outset that the DAAC and survey had blatant flaws. The citizen input gathered in more than 400 drawings and expressed in over 3,000 ideas via the Citizen Center provides ample evidence of a desire for change.

Please consider the evidence provided, honor the current process, embrace change, and help make Basalt a livable, sustainable, progressive community within which we can be proud to reside.

Best Regards,

Nick Aceto,
116 Lakeside Ct.
Basalt, CO 81621

Pam Schilling

From: Lynn Nichols <lynnonichols@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2015 12:23 PM
To: Pam Schilling
Cc: Pam Schilling
Subject: Think outside the Park

If the Basalt community and Basalt Town Council believe a hotel will be successful, what are our options for its location and how can we explore those options?

Swap Lions Park for the CDC parcel and build the hotel closer to downtown increasing the built density and preserving the entire Pan and Fork parcel for use by everyone. This idea also eliminates the potential conflicts between park users and hotel guests. Town Hall and Wyly could explore moving to existing built spaces in River Walk or Riverside Plaza (19,000 sq.ft. available) which would also help encourage more retail/businesses to move into those adjacent spaces which have been vacant.

Collaborate with the Aspenalt Motel to redevelop their property to better serve the targeted hotel market. That hotel is already on the river!

Collaborate with Frank Traverna (owner of Clark's Market) and the 3 owners of the adjacent parking lot to redevelop that parcel to accommodate a hotel, retail/restaurants/business that would benefit from proximity to a hotel. This parcel is also where underground parking could be located which is more central to downtown and possibly less costly because of flood plain issues related to construction. The Clark's Market/parking lot parcel is BIG and its right in the center of our town. Creating built density in this area and preserving the Pan and Fork as a park can be a win-win.

Collaboration between private land owners, CDC, the town and a willing, creative developer is key. The Town of Basalt is so fortunate to have this opportunity to have built spaces ripe for redevelopment and open space that can be highly successful as a park.

The community understands what happens when development occurs near the river as demonstrated with the Aspenalt Motel, 7-11 gas station, 8 buildings along Two Rivers Road, Riverside Plaza, River Walk and Frying Pan River Lodge. To keep repeating this pattern of allowing development to be built along our rivers is a mistake.

Think differently. Think outside the Park!

Lynn Nichols
Basalt CO
927.4130

Pam Schilling

From: charles cole <charliecole@q.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2015 11:01 AM
To: Pam Schilling
Subject: Fwd: to the editor

Hello Pam,

I would appreciate your distributing this letter to the council members. Thank you, Charlie

Begin forwarded message:

From: charles cole <CHARLIECOLE@q.com>
Date: April 22, 2015 9:33:08 AM PDT
To: mail@aspentimes.com
Subject: to the editor

In your article "Aspen developer puts Basalt plan on hold", Tues. April 21, there are some representations made by Jim DeFrancia, Lowe Enterprises, to which I would like to respond.

First, ----"DeFrancia said the situation is confusing because the firm based its plan on a recommendation made by Basalt's Downtown Advisory Committee" and following: "we are certainly very surprised and startled over the opposition to what the town's own(committee) recommended".

Lowe Enterprises, Mr. DeFrancia, asked for and received an opportunity to present a development proposal at one of the regularly scheduled weekly meetings of the DAAC. Prior to that meeting, neither Mr. DeFrancia nor any other representative for Lowe Enterprises had come to the committee asking for direction or concepts for development for any parcel in downtown Basalt.

It came as a surprise to me, and I believe other committee members, that Lowe would outline a development plan for the Pan and Fork at a time when the committee was still very much engaged in gathering and sorting through information from which it could draw conclusions and eventually file a report.

The Lowe proposal was specific to hotel size,60+/- rooms, 12 fractional units hotel managed, 46 to 54 residential units 1 to 3 bedrooms, all with a total buildout of 120,000 to 150,000 sq. ft. None of this could have evolved from any committee recommendations. The committee had not yet agreed by vote, acclamation, or any other method on what it felt appropriate for the Pan and Fork and be willing and able to make a recommendation. To suggest otherwise is skewing the facts.

Charlie Cole, member, Downtown Area Advisory Committee