

Chris Lane 4/9/15

Subject: CDC Parcel Lowe development proposal

April 9, 2015

Dear Basalt Town Council Trustees:

I am a former Basalt Town Council member, a recent DAAC committee member, a current south side homeowner, and a 20-year resident of Basalt. My children are in the Basalt schools and my wife works in Basalt as well. I would like to share my view on the Lowe Development proposal since this parcel is critical to the success of our community

Generally speaking, I am not opposed to development, especially as it pertains to this location of the CDC parcel. I have no conflict of interest with the Lowe proposal and want solely to ensure that our fine town is improved from a social, economic, environmental, vitality, and town character standpoint.

I commend Lowe for beginning an ongoing dialogue with the Town of Basalt and, more importantly, its citizens, regarding this critical parcel of land. I appreciate all the hard work that has been done so far in a short timeframe and the collaborative approach taken to bring something to the citizens of Basalt for consideration. Components of the development such as a brew pub, coffee house, amphitheater, pedestrian connections to the down town area, underground parking, festival amenities and promotion of multi-season activities all fit well with what our community needs. However, we still have significant work ahead of us to get this development proposal to be its absolute best for our town.

As a reminder to all of us involved in this proposed development project, currently, this land parcel is zoned such that the only right a developer has is to build a mobile home park and nothing more. Therefore, it is 100 percent in the hands of the citizens of Basalt to decide the fate of this parcel. Make no mistake: The top priority of this development is to ensure that it becomes something that promotes a thriving community for our existing citizenry and our children. While a reasonable return on investment is an obvious necessity for the developer, it must not take primacy over community needs. Is Lowe truly willing to continue to listen to Basalt citizens and possibly even take on a potentially less profitable project in exchange for something that will be economically sustainable decades into the future? The citizens of Basalt have already spent millions of dollars in infrastructure to subsidize this project dramatically; therefore we should get exactly what our community needs.

At its most basic level, Lowe proposes 12 luxury residences and 40 condominiums, and has suggested a 60-room boutique hotel, though this hotel component of the development (which includes most of the community benefits) is allegedly not guaranteed. There are numerous concerns that must be addressed.

Phasing must be guaranteed: First, the hotel and ancillary community benefits must be tied to any residential development that might be allowed so that both the developer and the town benefit. As currently proposed by Lowe, they would develop the residential component with no guarantee of the hotel and other amenities. That is unacceptable. This proposal must be an all or nothing deal that guarantees our community what it needs.

Living spaces that are affordable will bring diversity (and vitality): Luxury residences as proposed are not, and have never been, what DAAC anticipated or suggested. This should not be part of the development, or it should be limited. It further "sterilizes" town and dramatically impairs diversity (both economic and social) and vitality (assuming second homeowners). If luxury development is required to make the deal financially viable to the developer, then a compromise must be reached on some sort of offset.

Regarding the 40-condominium complex, this is "Real Estate Development 101." Essentially anyone could

construct a condo-complex by making one phone call to a contractor/architect. That type of development as proposed, assuming it is architecturally stereotypical and expensive for citizens to purchase, brings little benefit to the community and is probably not the best use of that space. Lions Park may be more appropriate for residential uses of any sort. However, if affordable, small, diverse, unique living units that allow for young people, teachers, policemen, elderly, or working class citizens to live in them is constructed (read: units costing less than \$250k), then this type of development might bring more enduring and diverse life to our down town area. Still, while housing of any sort is probably not the best use of that site, if it is necessary to "make ends meet," then we MUST have low-cost, affordable living spaces for our citizens (I'm not referring to deed-restricted employee generation offsets). Affordable living spaces will create vitality in our down town area.

Adequate and appropriate open spaces bring pedestrians (and vitality): Sadly, Lowe is misrepresenting the open space allocation relative to what they promised throughout this process. They are falsely claiming that "58 percent of the developable land would be open space" (Aspen Times, Scott Condon). This simply is not accurate because they are counting the other (town owned) parcel as open space. As background that you know: There are two parcels of land – one owned by the town that is and will always be open space and space to allow our river to flood (as necessary); the other parcel owned by the CDC is the developable parcel closer to the street. Lowe claimed that this CDC parcel would be 33% open space. It currently is not quite that large, especially when walkways between private condos and a driveway to a parking garage for a private hotel are counted as "open space." This project needs more space that allows and promotes access for the public (10% at least). For example, moving the hotel just a bit further toward RMI might create more access to the river from down town area.

Retaining our small town character promotes social diversity (and vitality): Again, while I commend the efforts of Lowe to date, this project as currently proposed is still a typical development that one might find in a suburb of Denver. Lowe has not gotten "outside the box" enough to really think about what makes Basalt and its citizens tick, what makes us different than any other place in the country, and what will satisfy us – the decision makers – to allow for development that revitalizes our down town while affording Lowe a reasonable return on their investment. For example, integrating Lions Park has not been addressed – though DAAC recommended that Lowe engage on this issue. Height limitations of the buildings have not been addressed, though it is clear through our history that our citizens have limitations to how high we're willing to allow buildings to be built. There is so much that goes into creating vitality, social diversity, and small town character that it's challenging to even put it into words.

Overall, I believe that with further collaborative work between Lowe and the citizens of Basalt, we can make this development proposal one that is profitable AND not just good, but the BEST, for our town. Lowe has a lot of work ahead of them to figure out how to do that. I anxiously await their revised suggestions. Anything less is unacceptable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Lane", written in a cursive style.

Chris Lane
Basalt