



NOVEMBER  
2021

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A stylized sun graphic on the left side of the page. It features a thick, light green curved line representing the sun's edge, with several short, light green lines radiating outwards to represent sunbeams. Below the main curve, there is a dashed light green line that also curves, with more radiating lines below it.

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# CHAPTER 1:

## INTRODUCTION

*“The future West Vail is a complete neighborhood with increased housing options for year-round residents, streets that support multiple modes of transportation, and a vibrant, walkable destination where residents and visitors can shop at local businesses and gather as a community. Though just minutes from a world-class resort, West Vail retains a familiar, neighborly feel.”*

*Vision Statement*

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This plan presents the Town of Vail with a cohesive vision for the West Vail neighborhood. It includes a suite of recommendations and strategies to assist with implementing the stated overarching vision (on the previous page) and the three visions created for each topic area (commercial area, housing, and transportation and stated in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 respectively). The plan was developed to address key community priorities that include promoting a stronger sense of place, enhancing local economic vitality, growing the neighborhood’s opportunities for resident housing, and enhancing the multimodal transportation network. This plan is also meant to be a model for sustainable development within the Town of Vail. In particular, this plan is intended to serve as a guide for the redevelopment of the commercial area (dubbed “West Vail Center” in this plan) as a walkable and prosperous place with new opportunities for businesses and housing, creating a new heart for the West Vail neighborhood.

## PLAN PROCESSES

This plan’s strategies and recommendations were informed by a robust public engagement process conducted over the course of fifteen months (Spring 2020 – Summer 2021). To complement insights gained from this process, this plan drew on economic and demographic data, an analysis of current transportation and traffic data, and a review of the existing land use conditions, Town plans, zoning regulations and their implications.



*Vision 1: Commercial Area: West Vail Center*



*Vision 2: Housing*

To support desired changes in West Vail, the recommendations in this plan are intended to be both inspiring and attainable. At the same time, the plan aspires to preserve multi-family housing and build more units where it is desired and appropriate. Some of the recommendations in the plan can be achieved in the short-term, while others will require sustained collaboration and effort over time. Importantly, this plan seeks to build upon West Vail's past successes, retaining policies and infrastructure that serve the community.

## PLAN OUTCOMES

When the recommendations, strategies, policies, and programs within this plan are acted upon, the outcomes for West Vail will be profound. There will be new and preserved resident-housing units. This will mean that more people can afford to stay in Vail and new residents can move in, bringing life and energy to the neighborhood. There will be a revitalized commercial center where residents and visitors can conduct essential shopping trips, take advantage of dining options, and where multimodal accessibility is enhanced. The West Vail neighborhood will be more connected to other parts of Vail and the greater Eagle County region. It will also become more comfortable to walk and bike around for local neighborhood trips.

A primary outcome of this plan is to preserve the things that residents love about West Vail – its mix of housing types, its easy access to essential businesses, and its community spirit – and to enhance it for future generations of West Vail residents. Market forces have changed dramatically in recent years, and zoning changes, financial incentives to property owners, and new policies are needed to strike this balance between the preservation of character while also providing new housing, businesses, and services.



*Vision 3: Transportation and Mobility*





Figure 1.1: Project Area



## ABOUT THE PLAN

The West Vail Master Plan describes how the neighborhood may transform over the coming years. Conversations with community members and an analysis of on-the-ground conditions turned into a vision for what West Vail could and should be. This plan tells the story of that vision, breaks it down into discrete goals, and offers a set of recommendations and strategies on how to get there. As a practical planning tool, the plan will serve as a guide for the Town of Vail as it considers housing policy and future land use changes as well as upgrades to transportation infrastructure.

This plan builds on the work of other plans adopted in Vail, including the Vail 2020 Strategic Action Plan (2006), the Vail Town Council Action Plan 2018-20, the Vail Land Use Plan (2009), Vail Housing 2027, the Vail Economic Development Strategic Plan, the Chamonix Master Plan, the Vail Transportation Master Plan, the Vail Civic Area Plan, the Vail Open Lands Plan, and the Environmental Sustainability Strategic Plan. These plans reflect the Town's goals to foster a year-round community and economy that prioritizes environmental sustainability and contains housing opportunities for residents of varying income levels. The recommendations of the West Vail Master Plan reflect and complement these Town-wide goals.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT AREA

The project area for this plan is the Town land west of Donovan Park on the south side of Interstate 70 (I-70) and west of Buffehr Creek Road on the north side of I-70. It includes the North Trail and Davos Trailheads as well as Ellefson and Buffehr Creek Parks. Parts of the Matterhorn and Highland Meadows neighborhoods on the south side of I-70 were not included in the study area as many parcels are part of unincorporated Eagle County. While the study area itself was analyzed in depth to form the recommendations in this plan, the Town of Vail and the greater region were also examined for context, connectivity, and economic trends.



*Gore Valley Trail*



*Buffehr Creek Park*

## SUSTAINABILITY IN THE WEST VAIL MASTER PLAN

The Town of Vail has previously adopted ambitious plans related to environmental sustainability and open space conservation. The West Vail Master Plan furthers the goals of those plans and includes actions to address Climate Change through the following measures:

ACTION	IMPACT
Recommending improvements that increase access to public transit and the ease of traveling on foot and by bike	Decreases dependence on cars; encourages no or low-emissions forms of transportation
Recommending the inclusion of car-charging infrastructure	Encourages the use of electric vehicles in West Vail
Concentrating development in the commercial center	Discourages inefficient, sprawling land use patterns
Concentrating necessary businesses and amenities in the commercial area	Reduces the need to drive to other communities for essential services
Recommending an additional roundabout along the Frontage Road	Reduces idling (and therefore emissions) of vehicles compared to a traditional intersection
Recommending greenspace, gardens, and street trees in the redesigned commercial area	Reduces the need to drive to gathering spaces; improves air quality, temperature control, carbon absorption
Recommending adding housing density in West Vail in the form of townhouse, multi-family, and apartment-style housing options	Reduces commuting distances and associated emissions by enabling more people who work in Vail to live in West Vail; increases energy efficiency of housing in West Vail with more heat-efficient housing types
Recommending adding housing in the commercial area (e.g. businesses on the ground floor and housing on upper floors) or near existing transit stops in residential neighborhoods	Increases residents living near transit, encourages an efficient land use pattern
Recommending the increase in deed-restricted units in West Vail.	Supports more socially equitable and inclusive housing options.



Charging station



Aerial view of I-70 and West Vail Center



Landscaped sidewalk in Vail

## PLAN ORGANIZATION

The plan is organized into 5 chapters: Introduction (1), West Vail Center (2), Housing (3), Transportation and Mobility (4), and Implementation (5). The Introduction contains a vision statement for the overall plan. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 have vision statements that address the focus of that particular chapter. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 contain goals, recommendations, and policies related to the content of that chapter. Chapter 5 describes the strategies the Town can undertake to implement the recommendations from this plan.

### Chapter 2: West Vail Center

Chapter 2 envisions three development scenarios in which the commercial area of West Vail is transformed into a new “West Vail Center.” The vision and goals for this chapter delineate what this reinvigorated area will look like and how it will function. The recommendations explain how the Town of Vail can start working towards the realization of any of the three scenarios through zoning changes and public-private partnerships.

### Chapter 3: Housing

Chapter 3 analyzes housing issues primarily in the residential areas of West Vail. The recommendations in this chapter address ways to preserve and add primarily resident housing in the area through rezoning, Town Code updates, and programs and policies.

### Chapter 4: Transportation and Mobility

Chapter 4 describes changes that can be made to the roads, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, multi-use paths, and transit network to make West Vail more connected. The recommendations for capital projects, policies, programs and infrastructure in West Vail will contribute to making the area easier to navigate either with or without a car.

### Chapter 5: Implementation

Chapter 5 describes the various strategies the Town of Vail can use to implement the plan. Specific detail on approaches to incentivizing and financing the redevelopment of West Vail Center are discussed in detail

## Appendices

The plan includes two appendices. Appendix A is the set of analyses completed for Phase 1 of this project. Appendix B includes a summary of the public engagement process including the materials presented for each public-facing event.





SAFeway

STOP

City Market



# CHAPTER 2:

## WEST VAIL CENTER

*“The reimagined ‘West Vail Center’ is the center of economic and social life in West Vail. It’s a place to live, meet a friend for a cup of coffee, conveniently pick up groceries and other essentials, and access transit connections to the rest of the town and valley. As the western gateway to the Town of Vail, the commercial center is aesthetically pleasing and inviting, with new and upgraded mixed-use buildings that reflect the neighborhood’s scale and mountain setting while providing much-needed resident housing. The area’s new pattern of development is oriented to pedestrians, accommodating to bicyclists, and accessible by both car and transit. Vibrant, active businesses in the commercial area serve both locals and visitors, supporting and meeting the needs of West Vail’s year-round community.”*

*Vision Statement*

# INTRODUCTION



*West Vail's commercial area is home to businesses and services that are essential to Vail's year-round community. This plan initially considered the commercial area as the parcels next to the North Frontage Road between the Fire Station and Buffehr Creek Park. As the project evolved and the likely redevelopment opportunities became apparent, the project team focused on the four parcels at the heart of the commercial center, those between McDonald's/West Vail Mall and City Market.*

*At present, the commercial center meets the everyday shopping needs of the West Vail neighborhood and the Town of Vail, but its opportunities as a vibrant gathering place and a western gateway to the Town have not been fully realized. This chapter presents three scenarios that reimagine West Vail's commercial area as "West Vail Center," a lively, pedestrian-friendly destination for locals and visitors. This chapter also makes recommendations for zoning changes and design principles that will set West Vail Center on the path towards the scenarios.*

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Vail’s commercial area overlooks I-70 and resembles typical strip-style commercial development: a low-density arrangement of one- to three-story buildings that face multiple parking lots. The commercial area represents the only flat land area within the study area that is suitable for large-scale development.

### LAND USE

At present, over half the area is devoted to surface parking lots and roadways, leaving a limited portion of the area to be occupied by tax-generating businesses. About 21% of the commercial area (8.0 acres) is taken up by parking, while circulation (roads), driveways, loading zones, and other infrastructure for vehicles make up 11.8 acres (31.4%). Building footprints make up 7.0 acres (19%). In all, impermeable surfaces make up 71% of the land area, while 29% of the land area is natural. These natural areas are small or concentrated as the grassy hillside behind the stores. These areas also lack seating and other amenities that would encourage their enjoyment as gathering spaces.

### TRANSPORTATION & ACCESS

It is challenging for pedestrians to access and navigate the West Vail commercial area. The area is framed by one major arterial, the North Frontage Road, and neighborhood collectors Chamonix Road and Chamonix Lane. There are a limited number of marked crosswalks in the area, and there are very few existing sidewalks that connect businesses within the commercial area. There are no pedestrian connections between the nearby North Recreation Path along the North Frontage Road and the area’s businesses.

### HOUSING

The area’s current zone district, Commercial Core 3 (CC3), only permits employee housing units (EHUs, defined as housing restricted to individuals working full-time in Eagle County). At present, there are 67 EHUs in the commercial area located on three parcels – Vail Das Schone (30), Vail Commons (18), and the Highline/Doubletree (19). A permit for additional units on the Highline/Doubletree property has been approved.



*Vail das Schone includes ground floor commercial and employee housing units above*



*Safeway includes 40,500 square feet of grocery retail and a Starbucks*



*West Vail Mall is anchored by Christy Sports*



*Vail Commons includes a 50,000 square foot City Market with one of two pharmacies in Vail*

## A HUB FOR THE COMMUNITY

Other commercial areas in the Town of Vail, including Lionshead and Vail Village, function as base areas for Vail Mountain Resort and primarily offer upscale dining and shopping that cater to visitors. In contrast, West Vail's commercial area contains a mixture of businesses that supply everyday necessities and conveniences. These community-oriented businesses, which include grocery stores, fast casual restaurants, a hardware store, and a dentist's office, make it possible for Vail to be a year-round community where people live. While serving residents, these community businesses also draw a significant portion of their business from visitors and this should not be dismissed. Vail residents value the convenience and casual feel of the commercial area.



*Shoppers outside City Market*



*Westside Cafe and Market*



*Soap's Up in Vail das Schone*

## INFLUENCE AND FOCUS AREAS

This plan considers the commercial area in two groupings: a 12.8-acre "Focus Area," and a 4.9-acre "Influence Area." The focus area is the center of the commercial area and includes the primary retail businesses in the area (e.g. West Vail Mall, Safeway, City Market, Ace Hardware). The redevelopment scenarios presented in this chapter are concentrated within the focus area. The influence area is the remaining area and includes important adjacent businesses that were not considered for redevelopment given the type of existing use and recent or planned redevelopment.

### *Influence Area*

- **Phillips 66 Gas Station**, located north of the roundabout
- **1st Bank** anchors a two-story structure next to the gas station that also includes Northside Grab 'n Go on the ground floor
- **Highline Vail**, a Doubletree-brand hotel with 116 hotel rooms and two restaurants. An expansion of the hotel that would provide 195 hotel rooms, expanded conference facilities, an employee housing dormitory unit, and 15 employee housing units was approved in 2020.

### *Focus Area*

- **McDonald's**, a popular fast food stop for visitors and residents
- **West Vail Mall**, a shopping complex that is anchored by Christy Sports and contains several fast casual restaurants, a liquor store, and a dry cleaner. A brewpub and restaurant currently sits vacant
- **Safeway**, a full-service grocery store that contains a Starbucks inside
- **Vail das Schone** includes Ace Hardware, a UPS Store, an escape room, a laundromat, and 30 EHUs
- **Vail Commons**, a Town-owned property, includes City Market, a restaurant, a dentist's office and the Vail Child Care Center. It also includes 18 EHUs



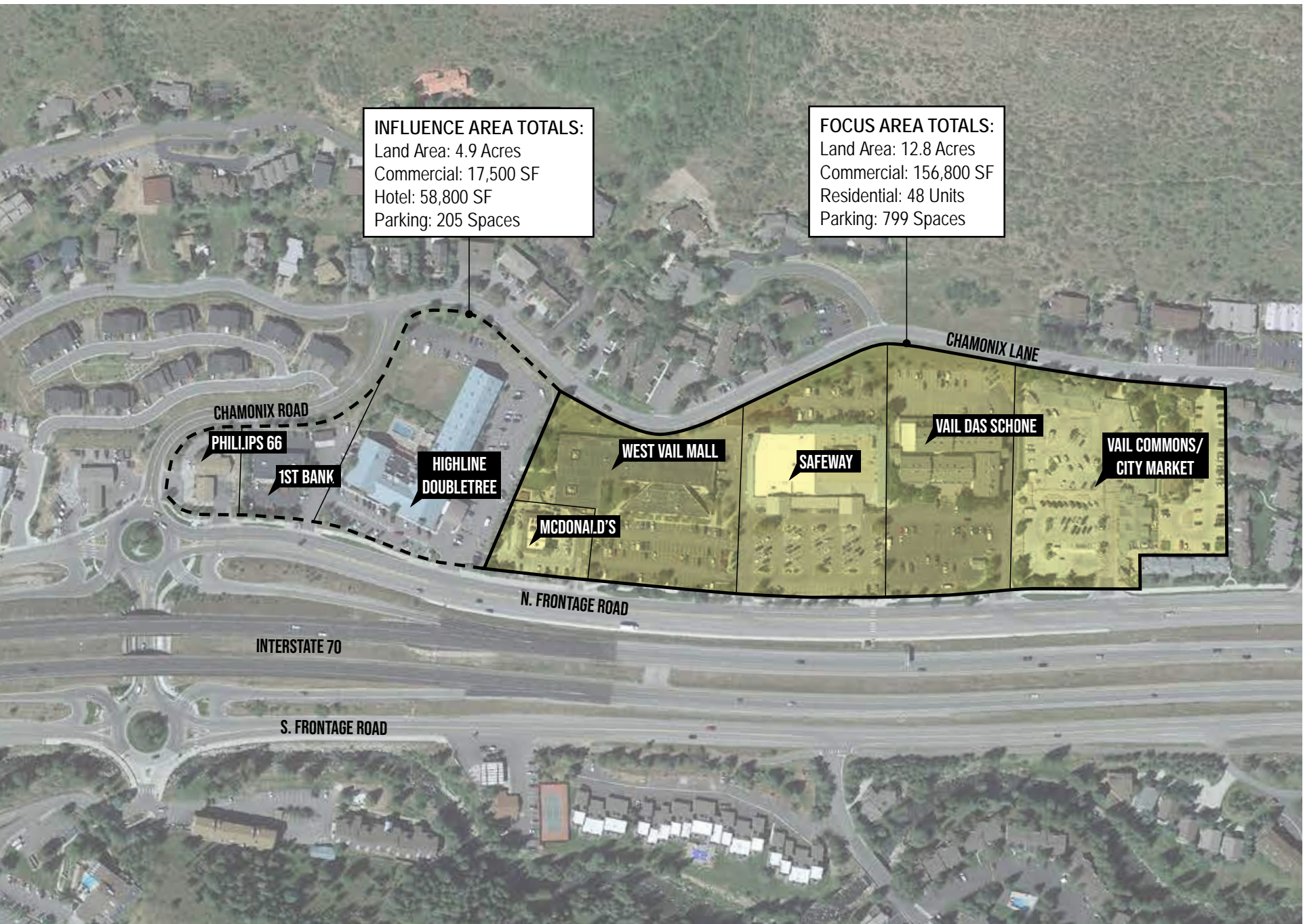


Figure 2.1: West Vail Center Existing Program

# COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

In September 2020, community members shared their goals and priorities for the West Vail neighborhood through a community survey and a Virtual Open House event. Several key priorities emerged regarding the commercial area. Community members were particularly interested in businesses that serve the local community and meet everyday needs, such as a grocery store. Respondents listed the

“outdated commercial area” as a primary concern for the West Vail community. Respondents were in favor of a variety of upgrades to the commercial area, including underground parking, outdoor dining opportunities, improved street crossings, affordable housing, and mixed-use buildings. Respondents also expressed interest in connections from residential areas to the commercial area for people walking and biking.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS: PRIORITIES FOR THE COMMERCIAL AREA

Respondents to the community survey included Vail residents and residents from surrounding communities. Responses were analyzed as a whole and by place of residence.

### *What do respondents appreciate most about West Vail?*

- Grocery stores
- Locally-owned businesses
- Locally-serving businesses
- Parks and trails
- Walking and biking options

### *What do respondents want to see in West Vail in the future?*

- Pleasant streetscapes (lighting, benches, and landscaping)
- People who work here can live here
- More local-oriented businesses (i.e. hardware store, dry cleaners)

### *What issues do respondents see in West Vail?*

- Highway noise
- Outdated commercial area

### *What types of businesses do respondents think are important to keep, add, or expand in West Vail?*

- Grocery store
- Casual dining
- Hardware and home improvements
- Liquor store
- Gas station

### *What amenities would respondents like to see in the West Vail commercial area?*

- Outdoor dining
- Walking and biking paths
- Underground parking
- Mixed use buildings
- Affordable housing



Drawing from the existing conditions analysis and the priorities established by the community, the following pages outline a future for “West Vail Center”, a renewed and revitalized version of West Vail’s commercial area. The scenarios described within this chapter set the foundation for attractive spaces for local businesses, desired amenities, including outdoor dining, connections for people walking and biking, and housing. West Vail Center can serve as the heart of Vail, a place that is distinct from Lionshead and Vail Village and that both residents and visitors can enjoy.



*A series of large surface parking lots are located in front of buildings along North Frontage Road*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

### *Where did the name “West Vail Center” come from?*

At a public workshop regarding future design ideas for the commercial area, the project team asked attendees to help come up with a name. “West Vail Center” was the most popular choice by far. Other contenders included “Chamonix Center” and “West Vail Village.”

### *Why “West Vail Center”?*

“West Vail Center” suggests that the area is a hub for the community: a place to gather and socialize. It reflects a type of commercial development that is convenient, walkable, and well-located, providing key amenities and services to surrounding neighborhoods. Rebranding the area also helps clarify the desired concept, making it easier to champion the vision years after this plan has been completed.



*Vail das Schone and other properties include surface parking behind their building, along Chamonix Lane*

## WHY CHANGE?

There are many factors and attributes that indicate West Vail Center is ready for a transformation. West Vail Center represents a major opportunity to provide more housing for residents, to drive additional business activity in the Town, and create a sense of place and community.

### Housing

Much of Vail is “built-out,” meaning that there is limited vacant land for new development. Large-scale redevelopment of these 12.8 acres represents a singular opportunity to provide potentially hundreds of housing units for Vail residents and meet the Town’s housing goals. Chapter 3: Housing addresses housing conditions and needs in more detail.

### Economic Development

The current development pattern limits the commercial square footage and the types of businesses present. By redeveloping the commercial area to better utilize its land area and create new building forms, the Town of Vail could provide a more complete, diverse offering to improve its economic competitiveness with the nearby communities of Avon, Edwards, and Eagle. Adding new businesses, dining, and housing in West Vail Center would also help to grow the Town’s tax base and match similar growth elsewhere in Eagle County and in Summit County in recent years. Redevelopment could create desirable new spaces for a variety of new businesses, including fast casual dining, upgraded food markets, office space, community organizations, health and wellness, and lodging. Any redevelopment scenario should retain a grocery store and other essential business types that residents and visitors depend on.

### Sense of Place

With its strip development style, the commercial area does not reflect Vail’s iconic “mountain town” character. There are few public amenities in West Vail Center, such as seating areas and gathering spaces, resulting in residents and visitors completing their errands without lingering to explore the area or socialize. The design of West Vail Center does not embrace the mountains or distinguish itself from other commercial areas across the country. As a result, the area does not support what residents love about West Vail, including its mountain environment, small-town feel, and neighborliness. This sense of place could be unique and distinctive from a curated base village environment.



*Food halls offer a creative way to provide community gathering space while supporting new restaurants*



# THE MARKET ADVANTAGES FOR WEST VAIL CENTER



*Health and wellness businesses, such as fitness studios, are community-focused places that are growing in popularity in commercial and mixed-use areas*



*A smaller specialty market could accompany a larger supermarket to provide more options and a greater variety of offerings*

With its desirable location and other market factors, West Vail Center holds key advantages over other commercial centers of its type:

## **Low Real Estate Supply within Vail**

There is little space available for local businesses to expand or for new businesses to come to Vail. Brokers in the area report that numerous businesses have been looking for space to expand or open new locations. By increasing square footage through redevelopment, West Vail Center can provide in-demand commercial space.

## **Excellent Highway Visibility and Location**

The commercial area is the only stop with services between Summit County and Eagle-Vail, Avon, and Edwards. Its high visibility makes it an attractive location for existing and new fast casual restaurants, hotels, and other businesses.

## **Strong Commercial Rents and the Vail Brand**

The strength of the Vail brand makes this area appealing to regional and national businesses.

Most spaces in West Vail Center are occupied and rents are on par with the market in Vail indicating that this area performs well economically even with the short comings of its physical configuration.

## **Robust Retail Sales**

According to sales tax data for the area, retail sales in the existing commercial area are consistent with high-performing urban locations and are well above downtowns and local commercial districts in many seasonal mountain communities.

## **Consolidated Property Ownership**

The existing commercial area's ownership pattern, which is consolidated in a relatively small number of owners and parcels, facilitates land assemblage and partnerships for redevelopment.

## RIVERWALK CASE STUDY—EDWARDS, CO

Riverwalk is an example of a mixed-use district in the Vail Valley that is similar to West Vail Center in land area and anticipated uses. During the development of this plan, the project team took a walking tour of the area, which illuminated the advantages and shortfalls of the area's design.

Riverwalk is both a destination for visitors and a place where residents can meet their everyday needs. As its name suggests, Riverwalk is close to the Eagle River and has a walkable, main-street feel. Multi-story mixed-use buildings promote a dense development pattern that is inviting to pedestrians. Several businesses and public spaces in the area act as social hubs, including a movie theater, locally-owned casual restaurants, boutiques, and an amphitheater. The area includes a conveniently located grocery store that offers an alternative to major chains. An underground parking structure serves the area.

Riverwalk was built in phases, starting in the early 1990s, with no overarching master plan. As a result, the area has suffered from circulation issues, and a lack of cohesion in its design. The area has several design flaws, such as narrow, uneven and dangerous

sidewalk and curb conditions and wind conditions through the area. The area also has functional flaws: each building has its own homeowners' association (HOA), and there are condominiumized first-floor units in which turnover is minimal. Because of this, ground-floor space is used by offices that can afford to purchase the space, taking retail units away from businesses that receive foot traffic and contribute to vibrant street life. The core also faces away from the river, the area's primary natural asset.





### PROGRAM SUMMARY

- **Commercial Square Footage:** 235,000 square feet
- **Residential Units:** 192
- **Hotel rooms:** 60 rooms (1 hotel)
- **Parking Provided:** 973 parking spaces, provided in both above ground surface lots and a large below-grade parking deck (one level).
- **Zoning:** Zoned as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) which includes limitations on overall floor area, building heights, and parking requirements.



AMPHITHEATER



FOUR-STORY MIXED USE



HOTEL



THREE-STORY MIXED USE

## GOALS FOR WEST VAIL CENTER

### **1** *Quality housing in and around West Vail Center maintains and expands the neighborhood's year-round community of residents.*

Developing additional resident housing in and around West Vail Center will help the Town work towards its resident housing goals, support a neighborly and vibrant environment, and provide a proximate customer base to support businesses. Strategies to achieve this goal include allowing more and a greater variety of housing types in the zoning regulations and mandating deed restrictions on a large portion of new housing units in and around West Vail Center.

### **2** *Access to and circulation within West Vail Center is comfortable, efficient, and convenient for people using all transportation modes.*

West Vail Center is currently car-oriented. Walking and biking to and within the area can be challenging. By reconfiguring the commercial area to better accommodate all modes of transportation and encouraging a “park once” strategy, people will choose to walk or bike, reducing vehicle trips and associated emissions. Under a park-once strategy, people will park once in a central garage or lot before walking to and from different stores. For West Vail Center, convenient parking opportunities should remain a priority, given the importance of parking for the types of businesses it supports (e.g. grocery). Strategies to achieve this goal include providing comfortable pedestrian facilities, wayfinding signage, facilitating connections to transit, and centralizing parking.

### **3** *Essential existing businesses that serve and sustain West Vail's resident community are retained.*

Vail residents and visitors deeply appreciate the ability to buy groceries and complete other errands within the Town. The businesses in West Vail Center are also an important economic generator. Amidst potential redevelopment, maintaining these uses and community-serving businesses is a priority. Key strategies to achieve this goal include partnerships and incentives.

### **4** *There are opportunities for new businesses to locate in West Vail and offer a distinct experience and crucial social spaces within the Town.*

West Vail Center should be a distinct shopping destination with a different identity and an alternative to what is offered in Vail Village or Lionshead. New businesses should continue to differentiate West Vail Center and offer an authentic “West Vail” experience. West Vail Center businesses should support the area's function as a community gathering place, with businesses that contribute to social life in Vail (e.g. coffee shops, bookstores, mid-range and/or fast-casual restaurants, health and wellness businesses, non-profits, and professional offices).



## **5** *Within West Vail Center, a human-scaled and human-centered environment feels inviting to both locals and visitors.*

West Vail residents are eager for a community-oriented shopping center where they can run into neighbors, meet up with a friend, and gather as a community. Visitors enjoy these types of spaces as well, being able to wander and get a sense of the place and its offerings. Key strategies towards achieving this goal include providing public gathering spaces, creating a pedestrian-friendly environment, and restricting service business (i.e., offices, spa services, etc.) to upper floors to support active retail and restaurant spaces on the street level.

## **6** *West Vail Center is a memorable place with an architectural style and aesthetic that reflect West Vail's mountain setting.*

The current West Vail commercial area neither reflects nor complements its stunning mountain environment. Residents and visitors are looking for a stronger sense of place that embraces the mountainous setting and contributes to community character. This sense of place should be encouraged within West Vail Center itself as well as on the roads and entrances to the center. Design elements that contribute to character and sense of place include a defined gateway, distinctive architecture, natural materials, and excellent views.

## **7** *Sustainability is woven into all aspects of the physical design and program of West Vail Center.*

The current configuration of West Vail Center, which contains substantial surface parking and large one-story commercial buildings, does not support a land-efficient growth pattern in West Vail. With the redevelopment of West Vail Center, there is an opportunity to further the Town of Vail's sustainability goals as they pertain to land use, housing, and transportation. Low impact development elements such as minimizing hardscape and impervious surfaces, using native landscaping, preventing light pollution, and encouraging building material reuse should be incorporated. All design should be led by sustainability principles, striving towards net zero buildings. Gardens could be located in the Center for use by the community or restaurants growing food. In addition, the transportation design of West Vail Center should enable easy and comfortable walking and biking and support access to public transit and electric car charging. New residents housed in the area would be able to fulfill many of their daily needs sans vehicle.

## **8** *The Town works collaboratively, strategically, and creatively to enhance West Vail Center.*

Transforming West Vail Center will be a complex process. The vision for the area must remain at the forefront, guiding future decisions around zoning changes, developer agreements, and new projects. Achieving the vision will require collaboration between the Town and the private sector (i.e., developers). To engage the private sector, the Town will need to be nimble in its decision-making, making changes and agreements that support the economic feasibility and viability of desired projects. There are several smaller actions the Town should undertake to demonstrate measurable progress and drive resident support.



Figure 2.2: Framework for Redevelopment

## A FRAMEWORK FOR REDEVELOPMENT

This Framework Diagram identifies key elements that any redevelopment should incorporate. These elements were identified through the public engagement process. The Framework Diagram is intended to serve as a foundation for redevelopment, ensuring that any new development concept is representative of the community’s desires for West Vail Center.

# FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS

## Redesigned North Frontage Road

It is recommended that the North Frontage Road have an enhanced streetscape, traffic calming features, and comfortable options for all modes of travel. The North Frontage Road should function as a gateway to West Vail Center that is welcoming and visually appealing. For further detail on these recommendations, see Chapter 4: Transportation.

## Taller Buildings Nearest North Frontage Road

To provide a sound buffer from I-70, taller buildings should be located near the North Frontage Road with shorter buildings towards the back. Due to lower elevations along the North Frontage Road, taller buildings would not block views from Chamonix Lane. This orientation is intended to best support sun exposure in West Vail Center, but should continue to be evaluated through the design review process.

## Diverse Housing Types along Chamonix

Today, Chamonix Lane’s development is largely one-sided, with properties overlooking the backs of commercial buildings and parking in West Vail Center. Providing a variety of housing options fronting Chamonix would enclose the street and encourage a neighborly feel.

## Enhanced Pedestrian/Bike Connections

Yellow arrows on the Framework Diagram indicate opportunities for enhanced pedestrian and bike connections between adjacent residential areas and West Vail Center. Some of the connections from Chamonix Lane currently exist but could be formalized and/or made ADA accessible. Connections to the Highline hotel and bus stop will be especially important.

## Public Gathering Spaces

West Vail Center should include a variety of gathering spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy. These spaces are placed in sunny locations that are protected from harsh winds, based on a climate analysis.

## Convenient Parking Underground/Structure

Given the scarcity of buildable land in Vail, substantial surface parking should be discouraged. To make efficient use of the land area, the majority of future parking for West Vail Center should be underground or in structures. Developing a parking structure underneath the North Frontage Road should also be explored further with CDOT as it could act as a catalyst to future redevelopment.

### EXAMPLE IMAGES



*Diverse housing options along Chamonix Lane*



*Improved pedestrian connections from Chamonix Lane*



*Taller buildings placed nearest the Frontage road to protect viewsheds*



*A redesigned Frontage road comfortable for all modes of transit*



### Concentrated Mixed-Use Center/Core

As the name West Vail Center suggests, the future design should include an identifiable “core” that functions as the center of commercial and social activity. Redevelopment should include a mix of uses (commercial and residential) and innovative designs for the public realm.

### West Vail Mobility Hub/Transit Center

This should be an enhanced bus stop along the North Frontage Road. Future residents and jobs in the area should promote transit use and designs should support bus travel as a viable option by providing amenities for transit riders, such as: bike parking, restrooms, a waiting area, and real-time bus arrival/departure information.

### Notable Gateways

In addition to streetscape improvements and a redesigned North Frontage Road, there should be iconic gateways that people see when entering West Vail Center. One gateway should be at the existing roundabout and a second should be at an entrance to West Vail Center.

### Walkable, Well-Connected Grid

The future design should enhance connectivity within the center and to neighboring properties, creating a comfortable, inviting environment for people walking or biking. This connectivity could take the form of traffic-calmed, multimodal streets navigable by car or pedestrian pathways.

### Sustainability

New buildings in West Vail should embrace green building practices. Elements can include green roofs, solar panels, material choices, and energy efficient building techniques. Low impact practices should also be embraced such as use of sustainable, recycled, and locally sourced materials, low emissions materials, salvageable materials, and minimizing construction and development waste.

### Grocery Store as Anchor

These scenarios show one major grocery store and one specialty store. While two major stores could remain in any redevelopment, having one major and one specialty store would create variety and allow for more space dedicated to other uses. If two major stores are included, their configuration and layout should align with the goals of the plan.

#### EXAMPLE IMAGES



*Active and inviting gathering spaces*



*An identifiable center or “core”*



*Mobility hub with amenities*



*Notable gateway elements*



*A walkable and connected grid of streets and pathways*



*Green roofs and sustainable building elements*





# SCENARIOS

*This plan offers three realistic design scenarios for redeveloping and enhancing West Vail Center.*

- > **SCENARIO 1** is a “quick wins” strategy, in which primary improvements could occur in the five years following the adoption of this plan
- > **SCENARIO 2** presents a phased approach, in which property owners individually redevelop their properties at different points in time
- > **SCENARIO 3** presents a “master-planned” option in which the redevelopment for all properties is planned together, then built over time

*Implementation of any scenario will require changes to the zoning regulations and Town Code. Design principles to guide these modifications are contained herein.*

## **EACH SCENARIO REPRESENTS ONE PATHWAY TO A REIMAGINED WEST VAIL CENTER.**

*This plan does not recommend any one scenario over another. Rather, this chapter contains detailed descriptions of each scenario that outlines the potential as well as the barriers to be overcome. Taken together, the scenario descriptions are intended to serve as a guide to redevelopment that will assist the Town of Vail in evaluating any feasible development concept.*



Figure 2.3: Scenario 1 Illustration

## SCENARIO 1 OVERVIEW

Scenario 1 improves the existing site layout and efficiency of West Vail Center through substantial improvements to its circulation, access management, and aesthetic qualities. This scenario can be completed in the short-term (under five years) with no major property redevelopments. As such, this scenario is a viable option if comprehensive redevelopment is not immediately feasible. Notably, Scenario 1 could be completed as a prelude to Scenarios 2 or 3. This scenario does not fully achieve the vision, but does represent a step in the right direction.

Scenario 1 assumes that the focus area property owners partner with the Town, entering into an agreement to create more coordinated and well-designed parking, complete beautification improvements, and activate open spaces. This scenario also redesigns the North Frontage Road, creating a gateway roundabout, landscaped medians, new access routes, and improved pedestrian and bike facilities. Potential infill development includes new housing along Chamonix Lane, restaurants with rooftop dining, and a new transit center/mobility hub.





HIGHLINE  
DOUBLETREE

WEST VAIL MALL

SAFEWAY

VAIL DAS SCHONE

VAIL COMMONS/  
CITY MARKET

A

C

D

B

**KEY ELEMENTS**

<b>A</b> West Vail Mall Courtyard Activation	<b>C</b> Vail das Schone Community Green
<b>B</b> Transit Center/ Mobility Hub	<b>D</b> Redesigned Parking and Connectivity

**PROGRAM SNAPSHOT**

Commercial: . . . . . 168,800 SF (12,000 SF New)

Residential: . . . . . 69 Units (21 New Units)

Parking Provided: . . . . . 817 Spaces (18 New Spaces)

**SCENARIO 1: QUICK WINS**

Figure 2.4: Scenario 1 Overview



# KEY FEATURES:

## HOUSING

- 21 new housing units including two sets of townhouses along Chamonix Lane and a floor of apartment-style units in an expanded West Vail Mall. An additional floor of residential could be explored on other commercial buildings in West Vail Center.
- Housing units in Vail das Schone and Vail Commons are retained

## BUSINESS MIX & PUBLIC SPACE

- Multiple new gathering spaces with opportunities for outdoor dining
- New active businesses (brewpubs and fast casual dining, coffee shops, boutiques) in West Vail Mall and Vail das Schone
- Flexible open space for farmers' markets, art shows, and other events
- Two major supermarkets (Safeway and City Market) remain, as does McDonald's
- Existing essential businesses such as the hardware store and daycare center remain

## TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION

- One driving lane of the North Frontage Road is removed to make room for a landscaped median and paths for people walking and biking
- A new gateway roundabout near West Vail Mall improves access for drivers turning into the commercial area parking lots
- A mobility hub includes a kiosk that offers transit information, grab-and-go food options, bike parking & other infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging stations
- Existing parking lots are consolidated and beautified, with upgraded landscaping throughout and pedestrian pathways that connect the lot to the businesses
- The City Market parking structure is refaced and includes improved vehicular circulation, parking efficiency, pedestrian connections, and landscaping. A formalized pedestrian connection to Chamonix Lane increases the walkability and accessibility of West Vail Center from surrounding neighborhoods

## BARRIERS TO OVERCOME

Since this scenario primarily involves upgrades to existing facilities and does not involve total redevelopment of any parcel, it is more achievable in the short-term than the other two scenarios. Like the other scenarios, this scenario requires some consensus among property owners — the property owners and the Town of Vail will have to coordinate on beautification and façade upgrades as well as pedestrian pathways and parking lot reconfigurations. However, any property owner in the focus area could take the lead on upgrades or redevelopment on their parcel. For example, West Vail Mall could add the envisioned apartments or reconfigure the commercial pads to facilitate outdoor dining.



## SCENARIO 1: QUICK WINS

**KEY ELEMENTS**

<b>A</b> West Vail Mall Courtyard Activation	<b>C</b> Vail das Schone Community Green
<b>B</b> Transit Center/Mobility Hub	<b>D</b> Redesigned Parking and Connectivity

Figure 2.5: Scenario 1 Oblique View



# A

## WEST VAIL MALL COURTYARD ACTIVATION

An upgraded West Vail Mall with vibrant outdoor spaces, housing, and a new business mix. In Scenario 1, West Vail Mall features new gathering spaces, pedestrian connections and pathways, a new residential floor, and improved landscaping.



Figure 2.6: West Vail Mall Courtyard Activation

### Key Elements:

- Additional pedestrian pathways connect to the adjacent parking area and other properties
- An additional floor provides eight residential units and commercial space for coffee shops or restaurants with rooftop patios
- Upgrades to the existing courtyard include café seating, responding to the community's interest in outdoor dining opportunities
- A sidewalk along an internal street with diagonal parking would incorporate additional café seating
- Façade and architectural improvements



Examples of outdoor dining and courtyard spaces

## SCENARIO 1: QUICK WINS



## B VAIL DAS SCHONE COMMUNITY GREEN

A community gathering space with enhanced pedestrian connections. A reimagined patio space revives the space in front of Vail das Schone. Ground-floor businesses could make use of the area, and customers could use adjacent sidewalks to connect to other businesses or parking locations.



### *Key Elements:*

- Additional pedestrian pathways connect to the adjacent parking area and other properties
- Improvements to the building façade
- The front of Vail das Schone includes a redesigned “green” with a new patio where residents and visitors can gather and socialize



*Examples of small-scale community green and gathering spaces*

## SCENARIO 1: QUICK WINS

## C

## REDESIGNED PARKING AND CONNECTIVITY

A well-organized, pedestrian-friendly parking lot with enhanced landscaping. The individual parking lots along the North Frontage Road are combined to become one shared parking lot with pedestrian pathways and landscaping improvements. The parking lot for the Whole Foods in Crossroad Commons in Boulder, CO is an excellent example of this type of efficient, pedestrian-friendly design.



*Aerial view of Crossroad Commons in Boulder, CO*

### *Key Elements:*

- The parking lot becomes a combined parking area serving all businesses
- A street-like driving lane is located adjacent to the buildings with landscape improvements and convenient “on-street” parking
- The rest of the parking lot is improved by adding enhanced paving and landscaped areas as well as pedestrian connections buffered with landscaping
- A centrally located open space could be used to host farmers’ markets, arts festivals, or other pop-up events

### A CASE STUDY: CROSSROAD COMMONS IN BOULDER

Crossroad Commons in Boulder is a commercial center that includes a very popular Whole Foods. The center contains a newly redesigned parking lot configuration that is pedestrian friendly. Located along a major thoroughfare in Boulder, this commercial center is just as accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users as it is to drivers. A similar redesign of the parking lots in West Vail Center could feature pedestrian connections and landscaping throughout. The new design could also include a street-like driving lane along the fronts of the buildings to enhance circulation and contribute to a sense of place.



## SCENARIO 1: QUICK WINS



## D

## TRANSIT CENTER/MOBILITY HUB AND FLEXIBLE PLAZA

A new mobility hub with commercial space and a community plaza. Between the North Frontage Road and the redesigned parking lot, there could be a new transit center/mobility hub that facilitates multiple modes of transportation.



### Key Elements:

- A plaza area could host pop-up events, such as festivals or farmers' markets. Located between the transit center/mobility hub and Safeway, the area is integrated into the parking lot's design and landscaping
- The hub would include amenities such as restrooms, outdoor seating, and a grab-and-go food and beverage kiosk
- The kiosk would provide real-time bus information and transportation infrastructure, such as bike storage and parking, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and a drop-off zone



*Examples of mobility hub facilities*

## SCENARIO 1: QUICK WINS





Figure 2.7: Scenario 2 Illustration

## SCENARIO 2 OVERVIEW

In Scenario 2, the Town takes a more active role in redeveloping West Vail Center, initiating the first phase by redeveloping the Town-owned Vail Commons/City Market property. This serves as a catalyst for the redevelopment of other parcels that are privately owned. The catalyst project includes a large, shared parking structure, a new and enhanced grocery store anchor, and a variety of new housing options. In a future phase, a new central plaza is built to serve as a main gathering space that connects the different areas of West Vail Center. Other parcels include smaller outdoor gathering spaces.

As in Scenario 1, this scenario redesigns and activates the North Frontage Road and improves access and aesthetics throughout the area. Additional buildings along the North Frontage Road help mitigate highway noise and create a separation between West Vail Center and I-70. This scenario includes a substantial number of new housing units of varying types, including townhomes, small multi-family units, and walk-up apartments. New mixed-use buildings will contain retail space on the ground floor and residential units or office space on upper floors.





**KEY ELEMENTS**

<b>A</b> Mixed Use Buildings Along Frontage Road	<b>C</b> West Vail Plaza
<b>B</b> Variety of Housing Types	<b>D</b> Mixed Use Grocer

**PROGRAM SNAPSHOT:**

Commercial: . . . . . 201,000 SF (54,000 SF New)

Residential: . . . . . 350 Units (302 New Units)

Parking Provided: . . . . . 1,183 Spaces (384 New Spaces)

**SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL**

*Figure 2.8: Scenario 2 Overview*

# KEY FEATURES:

## HOUSING

- 350 housing units, 304 beyond what currently exists. Three sets of townhouses along Chamonix Lane, a floor of apartment-style units in an expanded West Vail Mall, and hundreds of new apartment-style units in new mixed-use buildings
- Housing units in Vail das Schone and Vail Commons are replaced as those properties redevelop

## BUSINESS MIX & PUBLIC SPACE

- Multiple new gathering spaces with opportunities for outdoor dining
- A plaza adjacent to the grocery store is a central gathering place with café seating
- Attractive new retail spaces for active businesses (brewpubs and fast casual dining, coffee shops, boutiques)
- Storefronts along the North Frontage Road that contribute to a lively street environment
- A large multi-story grocer and a smaller specialty foods store replace Safeway and City Market
- Existing essential businesses such as the hardware store and daycare center are retained within West Vail Center but may relocate

## TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION

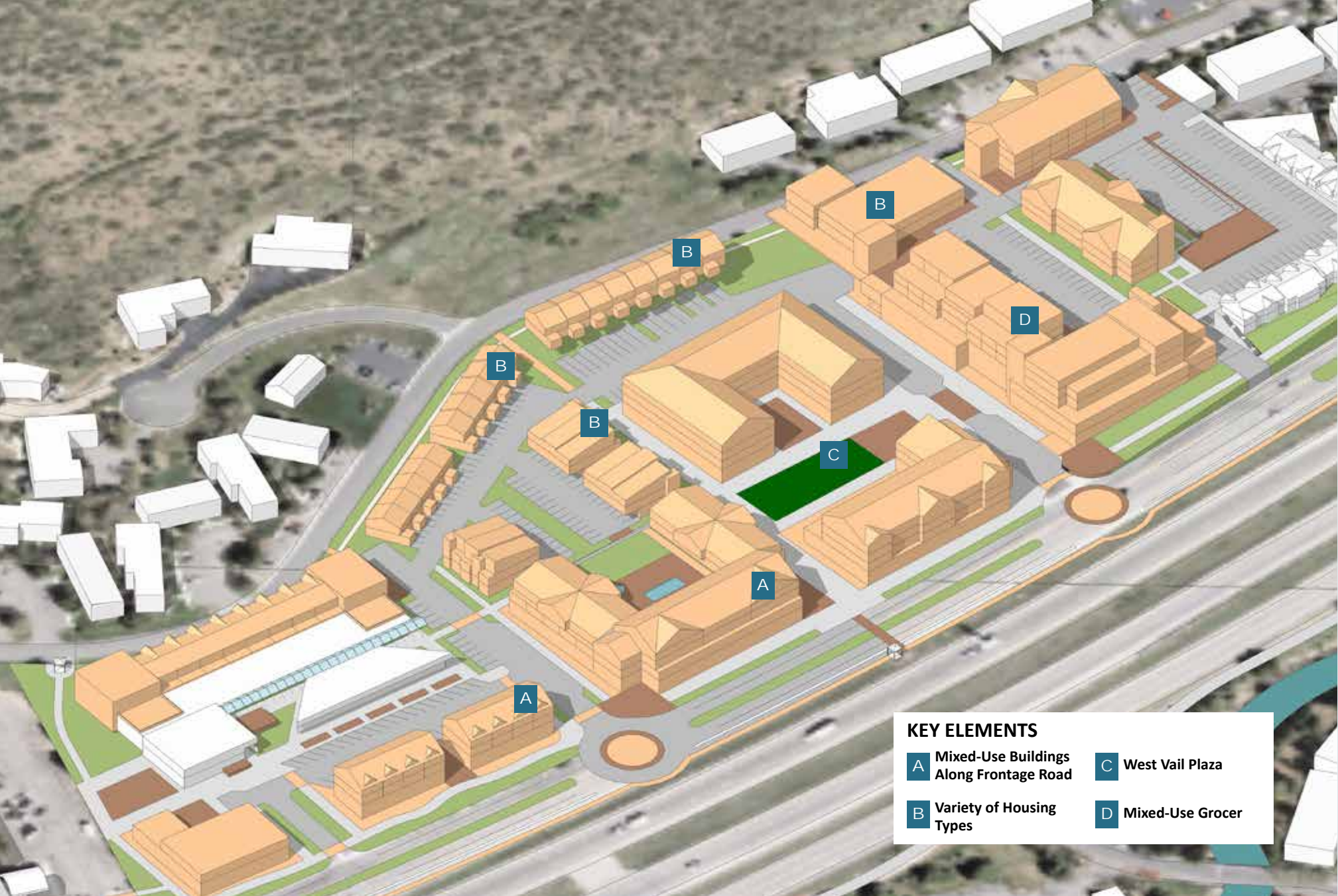
- A buried parking structure underneath the Safeway and Vail das Schone parcels provides ample shared parking for West Vail Center
- Surface parking lots are replaced with plazas and businesses, creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment and reducing conflicts with vehicles
- The 1,183 spaces provided falls between “Schedule A” and “Schedule B” of the Town’s parking code. Schedule A is the lower number, meant for Vail Village and Lionshead, while B is the higher number for everywhere else in Vail
- One driving lane of the North Frontage Road is removed to make room for a landscaped median and paths for people walking and biking. Two roundabouts are added along the North Frontage Road, improving access to West Vail Center
- A mobility hub includes a kiosk that offers transit information, grab-and-go food options, bike parking and other infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging stations
- A formalized pedestrian connection to Chamonix Lane increases the walkability and accessibility of West Vail Center from surrounding neighborhoods

## BARRIERS TO OVERCOME

While the Town owns the Vail Commons parcel, it does not own the City Market building, so the Town will have to coordinate with City Market as it contemplates redeveloping the property and creating a new underground parking garage. After beginning the redevelopment process with this “catalyst” property, the Town will need to incentivize owners of the other properties to redevelop as well. These efforts to spur redevelopment will require sustained effort, resources, and political will.

Given the phased nature of this scenario, it may be challenging to achieve consensus on a shared vision and aesthetic for West Vail Center among the different property owners. This can be addressed by establishing common design criteria and aesthetic guidelines for West Vail Center prior to launching the phased redevelopment process (see the Zoning Recommendations section of this chapter and Chapter 5: Implementation).





## SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL

Figure 2.9: Scenario 2 Oblique View



# A

## MIXED-USE BUILDINGS ALONG FRONTAGE ROAD

Modestly scaled mixed-use buildings buffer highway noise from I-70. Along the North Frontage Road, there is a series of mixed-use buildings with retail space on the ground floor and residential units or office space on upper floors.



### Key Elements:

- This location provides ideal visibility from I-70 for businesses
- Placing taller buildings in this location serves two purposes: First, buildings of this scale help to slow traffic along the North Frontage Road. Second, the buildings provide a sound buffer
- The mixed-use buildings vary in scale, but heights preserve views from residences along Chamonix Lane
- Several small, shared greenspaces are located adjacent to the buildings, complementing retail uses and providing gathering spaces for residents and visitors



*Examples of modestly scaled mixed-use buildings*

## SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL

## B VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES

Options for housing create opportunity for residents to live and work in West Vail. This scenario includes a wide variety of housing options in West Vail Center that would be a mix of market rate and deed-restricted units and would be walkable to transit and new shopping and dining opportunities.



### *Key Elements:*

- 50-75% of new units would be deed-restricted (restricted to full-time residents of Vail who work 30+ hours a week for an Eagle County business)
- There are three rows of townhouses and flats along Chamonix Lane with drive-up access from within West Vail Center
- There are walk-up apartments (above retail space) and two-story multi-family buildings internal to West Vail Center
- Along the North Frontage Road, there are more mixed-use multi-family housing types



*Examples of housing types that may be appropriate for West Vail Center*

## SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL



## C

## WEST VAIL PLAZA

A new public space in West Vail offers residents and visitors a place to dine, lounge, and gather. A central plaza is located between the current Vail das Schone property and a new mixed-use structure along the North Frontage Road. This area accommodates outdoor dining and events, complementing the nearby grocery store and fast casual restaurants.



### Key Elements:

- This plaza is activated on all sides with retail, restaurants, and personal services
- Similar to the flexible plaza space in Scenario 1, this plaza area could be used for pop-up events, such as farmers' markets and arts events
- With its central location, the plaza is attractive to both visitors to and residents of West Vail Center
- The area is protected from the wind and road noise by buildings while still allowing ample sun exposure for warmth
- Parking for the area is available in a nearby underground structure that serves businesses and residences
- The mixed-use nature of this area contributes to a vibrant, downtown feel within West Vail Center



*Examples of plaza spaces near mixed-use buildings*

## SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL

## D MIXED-USE GROCER

A new, larger grocery store with residences above anchors West Vail Center. A new mixed-use building containing a multi-story grocery store and additional housing is located on the eastern edge of the plaza. This redevelopment, which occurs on the Town-owned parcel, catalyzes the redevelopment of the rest of the center.



### Key Elements:

- The redeveloped grocery store is large enough to meet the needs of the neighborhood and Town and includes a café
- Outside the store, there is a central plaza with potential for additional outdoor dining
- Convenient parking for the area is available in an underground structure that serves businesses and residences



Examples of grocery stores within mixed-use developments

## SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL



# POTENTIAL PHASING

1

## *Phase 1: Town Property (City Market) Redevelopment*

The revitalization of West Vail Center begins with the redevelopment of the Town-owned City Market property. The redeveloped property will feature a large grocery store that serves as an anchor for West Vail Center. Underneath the grocery store, there is a large shared parking structure that will enable proximate parking for the grocery store as well as a “park once” environment, in which a customer can comfortably walk between multiple stores and destinations without re-parking their vehicle. This phase will involve the replacement of existing housing units and the daycare center as well as the construction of additional housing units.



*Phase 1: Town Property (City Market) Redevelopment*

2

## *Phase 2: Safeway Redevelopment and Infill, West Vail Mall Improvements*

Following construction of a new anchor grocery store and underground parking structure, the Safeway parcel can now redevelop with a different mix of uses and configurations. The shared parking structure eliminates the need for surface parking on this lot. This phase would activate the North Frontage Road with a new mixed-use building and a variety of housing options. It also includes the improvements to West Vail Mall as described in Scenario 1, which include improved open space, parking layout, and enhanced pedestrian access from Chamonix Lane.



*Phase 2: Safeway Redevelopment and Infill, West Vail Mall Improvements*

## SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL



# POTENTIAL PHASING

## 3 Phase 3: Vail das Schone Infill

As with the Safeway parcel, the new underground parking structure on the Town land allows the Vail das Schone property to redevelop on its surface lots. This phase also adds a mixed-use building (commercial and residential) on the North Frontage Road and townhouses along Chamonix Lane. Pedestrian connections throughout the area enable comfortable access to businesses in West Vail Center for people walking. In this phase, a new community gathering space and plaza is created between Vail das Schone and the new mixed-use building.



Phase 3: Vail das Schone Infill

## 4 Phase 4: Final Infill

In the final phase, the West Vail Mall parking lot and McDonald's redevelop into mixed-use structures. This phase could also include replacing Vail das Schone with a newer mixed-use structure.



Phase 4: Final Infill

## SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL





Figure 2.10: Scenario 3 Illustration

## SCENARIO 3 OVERVIEW

Scenario 3 assumes a collaborative process between the Town, property owners, and developer(s). The scenario includes a new, two-story grocery anchor that would be located closer to I-70. A housing development is included on the current Town-owned City Market property that may be 100% deed-restricted, given the Town's ownership. The current Safeway and Vail das Schone properties become the "central core," anchored by a pedestrian-friendly "Main Street" and a series of small plazas.

This scenario differs from Scenarios 1 and 2 in that it blurs the parcel boundaries to integrate redevelopment in a "master-planned" fashion. In place of the current parcels, the design concept creates three distinct areas: the grocery store/restaurant, a mixed-use grid area, and a residential area. As in Scenario 2, this scenario creates a "park-once" environment with shared underground parking, pedestrian connectivity, and new buildings along the North Frontage Road.





**KEY ELEMENTS**

<b>A</b> West Vail Center Gateway	<b>C</b> A Series of Gathering Spaces
<b>B</b> Main Street	<b>D</b> Enhanced Connectivity

**PROGRAM SNAPSHOT:**

**Commercial:** . . . . . 185,000 SF (282,000 SF New)

**Residential:** . . . . . 475 (427 New Units)

**Parking Provided:** . . . . . 1,247 Spaces (448 New Spaces)

**SCENARIO 3: MAIN STREET**

*Figure 2.11: Scenario 3 Overview*

# KEY FEATURES:

## HOUSING

- 429 new housing units of varying types, including townhouses along Chamonix Lane, multi-family units, and multi-story apartment buildings
- Housing units in Vail das Schone and Vail Commons are replaced as part of the master development plan

## BUSINESS MIX & PUBLIC SPACE

- The design includes multiple new gathering spaces with opportunities for outdoor dining
- Attractive new retail spaces for active businesses (brewery and fast casual dining, coffee shops, unique retail) on multiple properties
- Storefronts along the North Frontage Road contribute to a lively street environment
- A large multi-story grocer (located on the North Frontage Road) and a smaller specialty foods store replace Safeway and City Market
- Existing essential businesses such as the hardware store and daycare center relocate to new locations within West Vail Center

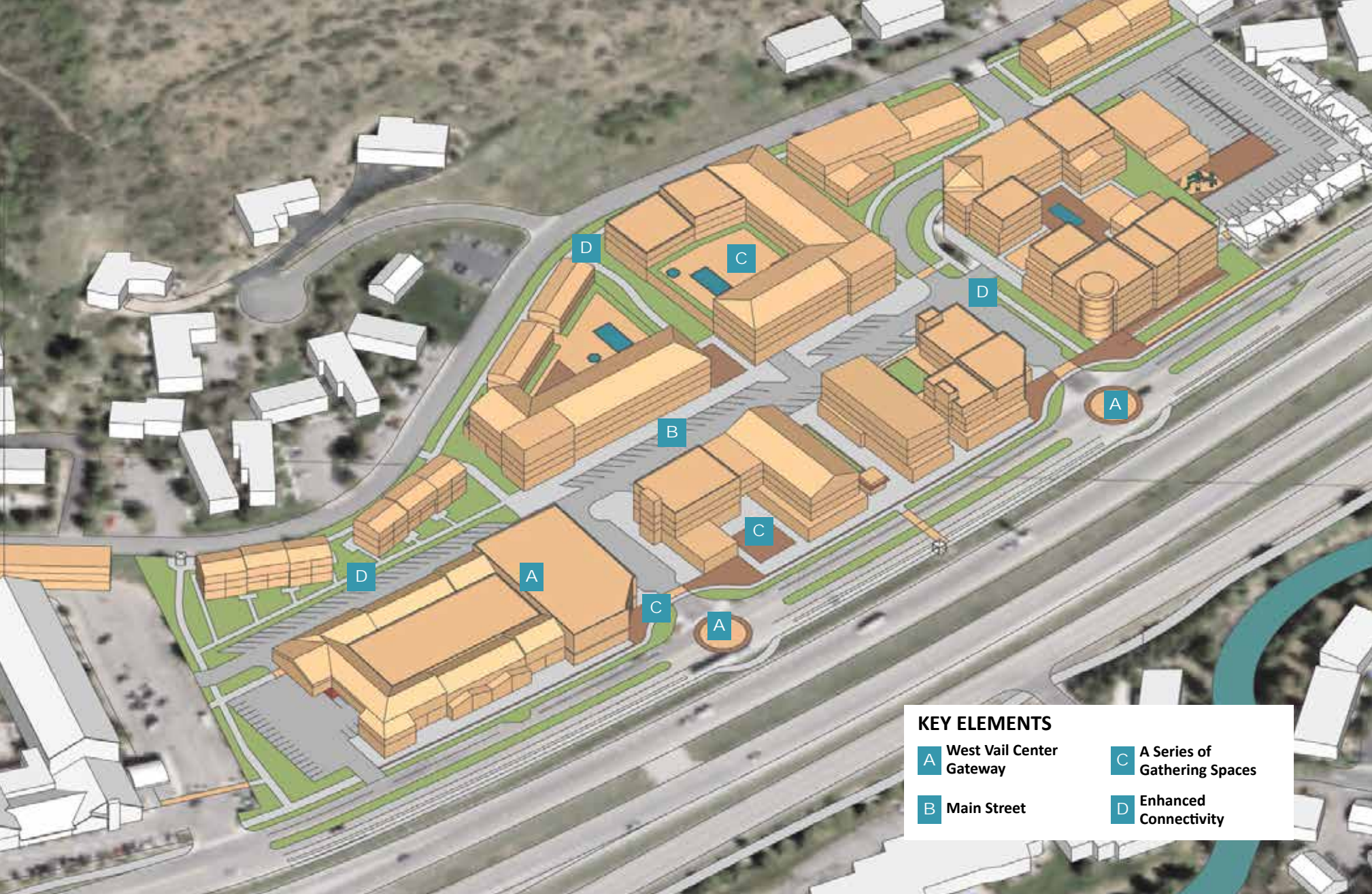
## TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION

- An internal roadway with angled parking on both sides creates a Main Street feel
- Surface parking lots are replaced with plazas and businesses, creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment and reducing conflicts with vehicles
- The 1,247 spaces provided falls between “Schedule A” and “Schedule B” of the Town’s parking code. Schedule A is the lower number, meant for dense, mixed use locations like Vail Village and Lionshead, while B is the higher number for everywhere else in Vail
- One driving lane of the North Frontage Road is removed to make room for a landscaped median and paths for people walking and biking. Two roundabouts are added along the North Frontage Road, improving access to West Vail Center
- A mobility hub includes a kiosk that offers transit information, grab-and-go food options, bike parking and other infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging stations

## BARRIERS TO OVERCOME

Scenario 3 involves a master-planned and coordinated redevelopment. This would likely only happen if all parcels came under the same ownership, or at least the three parcels not owned by the Town of Vail. Unlike previous scenarios, which preserved some uses in their locations (e.g. siting a redesigned grocery store on the same parcel as one of the current grocery stores), this scenario shifts old uses to new locations. Essential amenities such as the existing daycare will need to relocate temporarily while redevelopment takes place. In addition, because this scenario adds a “Main Street,” other roadways within West Vail Center, and two new roundabouts, it will require additional transportation planning.





## SCENARIO 3: MAIN STREET

Figure 2.12: Scenario 3 Oblique View



## A

## WEST VAIL CENTER GATEWAYS AND GROCERY ANCHOR

Attractive gateways support a destination-feel in West Vail Center. Two roundabouts along the North Frontage Road act as gateways to West Vail Center. Additional signage and landscaping features support the sense of arrival.



*Example of a gateway roundabout*

### *Key Elements:*

- Clear signage orients visitors to the area and creates a brand for West Vail Center
- Lighting and landscaping help establish a sense of place

A new two-story larger square footage grocery store activates the North Frontage Road at the western gateway location. This area is an ideal location for this type of grocery store within West Vail Center – the store receives prime visibility from the highway and its scale contributes to a downtown feel within the area.



*Example of a large grocery store in a mixed-use building*

### *Key Elements:*

- The existing fast casual restaurants in West Vail Mall are relocated to the ground floor facing the North Frontage Road, contributing to active street life.
- The main entrance to the grocer is located on the ground floor and would contain elevators and escalators to bring customers to the main shopping level above. This design allows for convenient parking under the grocery store and in small adjoining surface parking areas.
- Café seating and residences across the street from the grocery store contribute to a lively neighborhood feel



## B MAIN STREET

A central thoroughfare with pleasant streetscapes and vibrant storefronts. A two-block Main Street is the social and economic core of West Vail. The street is designed with pedestrians in mind, with wide sidewalks, a series of small plazas, and pedestrian passages that link to other areas within West Vail Center. The Main Street is designed to receive lots of southwesterly sun, making it an attractive place to spend time in all seasons.



### *Key Elements:*

- The new internal street is framed on each side by two- to four-story buildings with active businesses (e.g. cafés, retail shops) at the street-level and residential units or office spaces on the upper floors
- The street will connect a series of small plazas that can host outdoor dining or group activities
- The new corridor retains an intimate scale that feels inviting to pedestrians
- The street features rows of angled on-street parking in addition to a nearby parking garage beneath the grocery store



*Examples of main streets in mountain town settings*



## C

## A SERIES OF GATHERING SPACES

A series of public and private gathering spaces scattered throughout the site offer a multitude of ways for residents and visitors to enjoy Vail's moderate mountain climate and ample sunshine. While a single, large gathering space can sometimes feel empty at certain times of day, these smaller, distributed gathering spaces receive more consistent use throughout the day as spaces where people can eat lunch, walk their dogs, read, or meet up with friends.



### Key Elements:

- Plaza areas with café seating located along the Main Street and adjacent to mixed-use buildings
- Each residential building includes private gathering space and outdoor amenities
- Festival lighting adds to the ambiance of the space
- A mobility hub offers transit information, grab-and-go food options, bike parking & other infrastructure (similar to that of Scenario 1)



Examples of gathering spaces

## SCENARIO 3: MAIN STREET



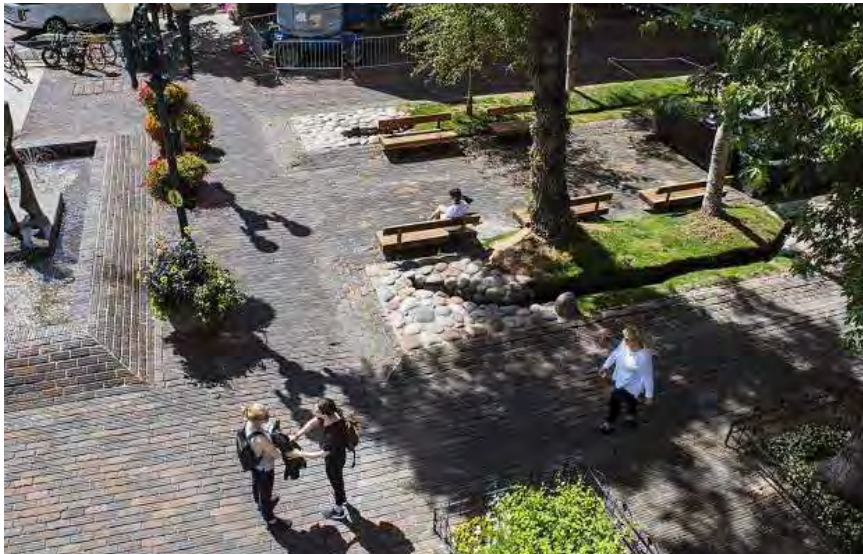
## D ENHANCED CONNECTIVITY

West Vail Center offers a walkable grid of streets and passages that connect key destinations and residences within.



### Key Elements:

- Directional signage in key locations informs people walking of the distance to specific destinations
- New connections between West Vail Center and surrounding streets so that people can enter from many directions and using all modes
- Wide internal sidewalks and sidewalks on the North Frontage Road contribute to a comfortable and lively pedestrian atmosphere



Examples of off-street walking and biking connections

## SCENARIO 3: MAIN STREET

## SCENARIO PROS AND CONS



SCENARIO 1: QUICK WINS

### PROS:

- Quick and cost-effective
- Best if anticipate no major redevelopment in next 3-5 years
- Better utilizes existing space for community uses
- Convenient

### CONS:

- Could delay bigger, better investment in the near-term
- Could make long-term phasing more difficult
- Still auto-oriented



SCENARIO 2: PARCEL-BY-PARCEL

### PROS:

- Property owner flexibility
- Majority of existing small businesses and residential remain for mid-term
- Town controls catalyst
- Reuses some existing structures for less waste and construction
- Blends convenience with walkable
- Straightforward phasing

### CONS:

- Less predictability in overall master plan and timing
- Shared parking may be considered “too far” for some retailers
- Underground structure complex and expensive
- Could lack sense of cohesiveness due to individual build-out





**PROS:**

- Grocer conveniently located and simpler development product
- Quiet, quaint “Main Street” environment away from the North Frontage Road noise
- Series of small plazas for businesses to activate
- Blends convenience with walkable
- Offers most housing

**CONS:**

- Most disruption to existing businesses and residents - relocation and construction/demolition
- Would require partnership/agreements with master developer
- Less visibility to Main Street retailers from the North Frontage Road
- More complex phasing



*New housing types*



*Wayfinding signage*



*Landscaping helps cultivate a destination-feel*

# POTENTIAL BUSINESS MIX

Scenarios 2 and 3 offer 201,000 and 185,000 square feet of commercial space or 54,000 and 28,000 new square footage beyond existing. The following diagram shows a potential business mix, with both new and existing business types. Square footage figures represent best estimates.





## FEASIBILITY EVALUATION

The project team prepared a planning level proforma analysis of Scenarios 2 and 3 to gauge their financial feasibility. The analysis subtracts the value of the development from the estimated costs. The difference is the residual land value (RLV), the amount a developer could pay for the property and still achieve a profit. This technique is appropriate at the Master Plan conceptual stage. Many factors could change or be optimized by a creative developer through more refined design and value engineering; these scenarios are illustrative only. This analysis does not include some public costs such as roundabouts and North Frontage Road improvements and any major utility infrastructure or public spaces in the project. Those are areas where partnerships, creative financing, and a role for the Town may be needed.

The purpose of this analysis is to determine if the scenarios are within the realm of possibility based on the balance of land uses, typical costs, and development value. Costs are particularly difficult to gauge at this time due to the changing construction costs and housing prices at the time of this plan.

Parking is a large cost, and it is assumed in these scenarios that parking would be constructed below ground for the most part to create more space for buildings above ground. The analysis uses the parking ratios depicted in the scenarios, between that of the Town's Schedule A and B.

The threshold used for evaluation is that the RLV should fall in the range of at least \$120 to \$150 per square foot of land at this level of planning. The sale of the West Vail Mall in 2018 equates to \$120 per sq. ft. and is the most recent large transaction; \$150 is 25 percent above this. Both scenarios fall within or above this range:

- Scenario 2 results in an estimated RLV of \$131 per square foot of land;
- Scenario 3 results in an estimated RLV of \$192 per square foot of land.

Scenario 3 is the most financially viable because it maximizes the development potential of the site with 450 residential units compared to 350 in Scenario 2. This demonstrates the following:

- Residential densities considerably higher than what exists and is allowed today are needed to incentivize redevelopment and cover the cost of public benefits.
- Market rate housing development is a key component of development feasibility. This analysis assumes that half of the project residential units (50 percent) will be deed restricted and half will be market rate. A higher percentage of deed restricted units or price caps may reduce the development feasibility and require the Town to further subsidize the development.

The analysis modeled commercial rents at or slightly below currently rents of West Vail Mall. Finding financial feasibility at these rents suggests that with greater commercial square footage and a large residential component, rents can remain relatively reasonable for locally-owned and community-serving businesses.

### PUBLIC FINANCING AND TOWN SUPPORT

A limitation of a RLV analysis is that it does not account for the timing of costs and revenues. A complex redevelopment like this will have large upfront costs with a delay before sale or lease revenue is produced. The delayed timing of revenues increases the risk of the project and the rate of return a developer would need to justify the risk. Given the risks, there will likely be a need for a public financing mechanism and participation from the Town on public costs such as parking, placemaking amenities (streetscaping), and North Frontage Road and mobility hub improvements. Chapter 5: Implementation recommends approaches to public financing and incentives with mechanisms such as tax increment financing (TIF) and a general improvement district.

# ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

The current layout of West Vail Center is in line with the zoning for that area. The resulting pattern is that of large footprint buildings with large surface parking lots. Therefore, achieving this plan’s vision and allowing for the scenarios as depicted will require updates to the Town’s zoning regulations. It is recommended that the current zoning, Commercial Core 3, be revised to support the modifications included in Scenario 1. The more in-depth redevelopments of Scenarios 2 and 3 will require significant modifications to the zoning or be brought in as a Special Development District. This section provides high-level recommendations to the Town for revising the code to support Scenario 1 and design principles to guide the development agreements and potential new zone districts of a Scenario 2 or 3.

## SCENARIO 1

These revisions are intended to enable to the area to support Scenario 1 with additional housing opportunities, better pedestrian circulation, activated plazas, and kiosks. To incentivize the development of housing on top of West Vail Mall and townhouses lining Chamonix Lane, it is recommended that the allowable density be increased modestly in terms of both units per buildable acre and gross residential floor area (GRFA). Housing projects at less than 100% Employee Housing Units should be considered as well.

Landscaping requirements should remain, with smaller spaces counting towards the total and further support for property owners to reach the minimum requirement. The parking schedule could be amended to reduce the requirement for parking in West Vail, given the shared use potential and to create additional space for landscaping and outdoor business space.

The current zoning requires that all business activities be conducted entirely within a business and that outdoor displays be located directly in front of the business and entirely on the establishment’s property. It is recommended that these requirements be relaxed to support farmers’ markets, events, and other uses of the plazas, community green, and

flexible space.

Summary of recommendations:

- Allow housing that is not 100% employee housing
- Increase allowed units per buildable acre and reduce the GRFA
- Amend landscaping requirements to encourage smaller landscaped buffers within and between the surface parking lots
- Amend the parking schedule to slightly reduce parking requirements for each lot
- Coordinate agreements between landowners to facilitate shared parking and connectivity between lots
- Partner with property owners and restaurants on using close-in parking for outdoor dining
- Relax business activity requirements

## SCENARIO 2 AND 3 DESIGN/LAND USE PRINCIPLES

To implement Scenarios 2 or 3, the Town could either create a new zone district to reflect the scenarios in advance or modify the zoning during the redevelopment process to align with the development plan. The merits of these two approaches are discussed in Chapter 5: Implementation.

With either approach, the following design principles should be incorporated into any zoning changes, as they reflect the vision and goals of this plan and would ensure outcomes align with the framework of the scenarios.

- **Allow slightly taller buildings** if they provide public benefit (resident housing) and maximize protection of viewsheds. It is recommended that if 50-75% of units are deed restricted, building heights of up to 4.5 stories (60’) at the North Frontage Road and 3 stories (38’) at Chamonix Lane, with 3.5 (45’) in between the North Frontage Road and Chamonix Lane should be allowed. By working with the topography and placing taller buildings at these heights closer to the North Frontage Road, viewsheds from Chamonix Lane residences would be preserved. It



is recommended that variable heights be required amongst North Frontage Road buildings (no taller than 4.5 stories) to preserve sun exposure throughout the area.

- **Lower setback requirements** to the North Frontage Road and adjacent properties. Building closer to the North Frontage Road sidewalks would create an inviting, activated, pedestrian shopping environment. Rear setbacks can remain unchanged, so units are not built up to Chamonix Lane. Setbacks from internal streets will also need to be determined and should vary based on whether the ground floor is commercial (0-10') or residential (10-15').
- **Increase the site coverage maximum** to allow more flexibility in achieving the Town redevelopment and housing goals. It is recommended that below grade improvements not count towards site coverage calculations here. The lot coverage requirements should allow for internal streets and some surface parking to support quick errands. Likely, the appropriate requirement is higher coverage than what currently exists and is required but is lower than that found in Vail Village or Lionshead.
- **Support additional housing density** to utilize new allowable lot coverage and building heights and create additional resident housing opportunities. The redevelopment of the area akin to the scenarios would likely result in housing densities from 30 to 45 units/buildable acre of site area. GRFA requirements should also be modified to reflect new allowable lot coverage and building heights. A variety of housing types should be encouraged, such that no development is one unit type.
- **Develop a new parking schedule** specific to West Vail that is reflective of a more mixed-use, shared parking environment. This new parking schedule should be in between that of Vail Village and Lionshead (Schedule A) and that of other commercial areas found in Vail (Schedule B) in terms of spaces required.
- **Reduce or remove minimum lot size requirements** to allow for the development of townhomes or residential buildings and create

flexibility in the phasing of the redevelopment process.

- **Adjust landscaping requirements** to be more similar to Lionshead by allowing smaller, pocket-style landscaped areas. Likely, due to the utilization of Chamonix Lane hillsides for housing development in redevelopment scenarios, landscaping requirements will need to be reduced slightly to allow these units.
- **Alter allowable business types** to reflect a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use environment. Most of the allowable uses, aside from auto parts stores, would likely continue to be appropriate, but conditional uses such as outside car washes and commercial storage may no longer be appropriate, even conditionally. Currently conditional uses, brewpubs and daycares, should become allowable uses. In addition, restrict inactive uses (i.e., offices, residential) on the ground floor in areas that are designed to be activated (e.g. North Frontage Road, new Main Street, and plazas).
- **Develop ground floor treatment regulations** that require commercial and residential entrances to be appropriately spaced and face the street or public spaces. Commercial spaces should have 50-70% transparency, with a higher percentage required for businesses along the North Frontage Road, where the double frontage to internal streets should be managed as well.
- **Develop design guidelines** that foster a pedestrian-friendly environment with a mountain aesthetic. Guidelines should address the following topics: reducing mass and scale of buildings to be human and pedestrian-scaled; wall articulation standards that avoid long, solid planes of walls; upper floor step backs to create proportion around streets and public space; desirable building materials and architectural elements; roof forms; parking structure design; and site features like landscaping and streetscape elements. Overall, the design guidelines should support the vision and desired character for West Vail Center, as described in this plan.
- **The Town's building requirements**, including those maintaining public safety (fire access), would remain in effect.



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# CHAPTER 3:

## HOUSING

*“West Vail will remain the heart of resident-occupied housing in Vail. Through updates to zoning regulations, resident-first housing policies, and the construction of new housing in the commercial core, residents can find quality places to live in the West Vail neighborhood. New and upgraded units will reflect the scale and varied character of West Vail’s existing housing stock.”*

*Vision Statement*

# INTRODUCTION



*This chapter analyzes and provides recommendations for housing in West Vail. The chapter addresses the potential for new housing development in West Vail Center and surrounding residential neighborhoods, the preservation of residential character, and providing a place for residents to live in West Vail through policies and zoning regulation changes.*



## WHAT IS RESIDENT HOUSING?

The provision of “resident housing”, or housing occupied by year-round residents, is the focal point of housing efforts by the Town of Vail. The Housing Department’s vision is to be the “resort community leader in ensuring the availability of homes for year-round Vail residents.” Resident housing is viewed as essential community infrastructure, “critical to maintaining and sustaining the resort community,” and can be both owner and renter-occupied. In its 2016 housing plan, the Town established ambitious goals around increasing the supply of resident housing units in West Vail. The Town deploys a multi-pronged approach to providing resident housing, including the Vail InDEED program and deed-restricted developments such as the Chamonix Townhomes. These deed restrictions require that home occupants be working at least 30 hours a week for an Eagle County business. Throughout the West Vail Master Plan process, members of the public spoke to the importance of “keeping the lights on” and a neighborly feel for West Vail. This chapter contains several strategies, recommendations, and policies to support resident housing in West Vail.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Vail was historically more affordable and lived in by residents, with fewer oft-vacant second homes than other areas of Vail. Today, it is known as the locals’ neighborhood, as approximately 72% of housing units in the study area are resident-occupied, compared to 46% Town-wide. Despite similar demographics amongst residents, the home prices in West Vail are dramatically different than those elsewhere in the Town. As of July 2020, the average home price in West Vail is \$1.3 million, while it is \$3.4 million elsewhere in the Town (Eagle County Assessor’s Data). Unlike in years past, many West Vail homes are now being purchased by non-residents. Increasingly, homes in West Vail are being converted into short-term rentals, with approximately 10% of West Vail housing units registered with the Town as short-term rentals. Overall, it is becoming more challenging for year-round residents to find housing both Town-wide and in West Vail specifically. The full analysis of existing conditions is included as Appendix A.

## ZONING AND LAND USE

West Vail’s current zoning regulations support single family homes and duplexes in the residential neighborhood areas and limited residential opportunities in West Vail Center.

Most of West Vail’s residential neighborhoods are zoned as Two-Family Primary Secondary Residential, allowing single family homes or duplexes, depending on the lot size. Many West Vail homes predate West Vail’s 1986 incorporation into the Town. Accordingly, many of these dwellings are aging and the Town’s zoning regulations were not applicable when these dwellings were built. As a result, the majority of dwellings do not comply with the zoning regulations for units allowed, lot size, or lot coverage. There are many multi-family dwellings built on lots that only allow a single-family home or duplex, with 65 such lots and 260 units more than allowed. If redeveloped, the number of units would be greatly reduced to conform to regulations. The housing units also tend to be eclectic, with a varied character that residents appreciate. The variety also extends to different price-points and rents, allowing a mix of people to live in the neighborhood.

In West Vail Center, the commercial area, the current zoning (CC3) only allows for employee housing units (EHUs, occupant must work 30+ hours a week for an Eagle County business). Only some of the lots have housing units at all, and few are built to the density allowed in the code. Overall, the land area in West Vail Center is poorly utilized and does not offer many housing opportunities given the acreage and transportation connectivity. Throughout the West Vail project area, there are very few vacant parcels open for new development, and to continue to support resident housing, better utilization of the existing lots is necessary.

## HOUSING POLICY

The Town has been proactive in using regulatory tools and available funding sources to address the lack of housing and provide opportunities for year-round residents. Vail has long mandated deed restrictions and EHUs in new developments, such as the Chamonix Townhomes, but is increasingly seeking to put deed restrictions on existing units, rather than only building new units to achieve housing goals.

Through its Vail InDEED program, the Town acquires deed restrictions on existing homes that restrict sale to and occupancy by people who work for an Eagle County business 30 or more hours per week. There is no income limit or appreciation cap; the goal of the program is to attract and retain year-round residents who will contribute to a year-round community. The program funding depends on the availability of discretionary revenues, as it does not have a dedicated funding source. As of June 2020, the Town has acquired 44 deed restrictions through Vail InDEED, with 13 of them in West Vail.

The two primary regulatory tools the Town uses are inclusionary zoning and commercial linkage. Inclusionary zoning requires new projects in designated areas to provide 10% of its net new square footage as EHUs, either on-site or as a fee-in-lieu, a payment that will contribute towards building such housing elsewhere in Eagle County. Commercial linkage is a requirement for businesses to provide units or pay a fee towards the Town's housing programs based on a factor of the jobs created. The Town is currently exploring the addition of a residential linkage fee and updating the commercial linkage fee. A linkage fee is a type of impact fee charged based on the employment generation characteristics of new development. Residential linkage fees link the jobs generated from the spending of new household income to housing demand.

The Town has a complex system for EHUs, but many types of developments that have these units allow for an additional unit on the lot beyond what is otherwise allowed by the zone district. Of the EHUs in West Vail, the majority are on Town-owned property (Chamonix Townhomes and Vail Commons). Largely through these developments, West Vail has four times the concentration of EHUs than the Town overall.



*Examples of multi-family housing units*



## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Members of the public participated in this master plan process to share their goals and priorities and also to review the ideas and recommendations contained in this chapter.

In the September 2020 Virtual Open House, participants highlighted the importance of continuing to provide resident housing and a neighborly feel. Participants were eager to see new units embrace a mountain town character and enhanced quality. They generally expressed support for additional deed-restricted units and were concerned about the proliferation of short-term rentals.

In the January 2021 Housing Workshop, participants provided more detailed feedback on a draft vision, goals, potential zoning changes, and desired future housing types. Participants generally expressed openness to zoning changes in designated areas and were interested in a mix of housing types. In the Commercial Area Workshop held in February 2021, participants supported providing additional housing in West Vail Center, with the qualification that many of these units should be deed-restricted. In both workshops, participants shared a desire to see much of the new housing development in West Vail concentrated in and around West Vail Center.

The recommendations and policies of this plan are also intended to align with the Vail Housing 2027 strategic plan (2016). That plan's vision speaks to a "diverse, resilient, inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable mountain resort community where year-round residents are afforded the opportunity to live and thrive." The plan also establishes deed restrictions as the primary mechanism and calls for innovative housing solutions. These key themes of innovation, vibrancy, sustainability, and inclusivity served to guide the recommendations of this plan.

## HARNESSING DEED RESTRICTIONS

Vail, like many tourism destination communities across the country, attracts second homeowners who out-compete what year-round residents can afford in the housing market. Over the past five years, over 75% of homes in Vail have been sold to non-residents, and existing or would-be residents are increasingly finding it hard to find housing in Vail. Yet these year-round residents are essential to staff local businesses and create community vibrancy. The Town of Vail has taken a proactive response to these challenges, with a multi-pronged approach to support resident housing.

The Town's housing-related efforts are focused on placing deed restrictions on new and existing units throughout the Town. The Town has established a goal of 1,000 new deed restrictions in the Town by 2027. Most frequently, a deed restriction in West Vail will only require that the occupant work 30+ hours a week for an Eagle County business. Therefore, the unit cannot be sold to a second homeowner or one looking to make it a short-term rental. Through deed restrictions, an increasing number of units are only open to year-round residents.

The Town's deed restriction requirements are rather open, as they seek to maximize the number of property owners who want to place deed restrictions on their homes or the number of units a developer may build.

## WHY CHANGE?

As described in the existing conditions, there are many factors that indicate West Vail is ready for a change in its housing policies and zoning code. The current housing stock does not conform to either the existing zoning or the desired future for the area. The market forces at play do not bode well for West Vail to continue to be a year-round resident community. And finally, the potential transformation of West Vail Center is a key opportunity to better incorporate and expand the housing offering into the commercial core of the neighborhood.

### MARKET FORCES

Current real estate trends indicate that the amount of housing available to year-round residents will continue to diminish. In mountain resort communities, second home buyers will almost always out-compete local wage earners in the housing market and Vail is no exception. Over the past 5 years, 75% of home sales Town-wide have been to second home buyers, diminishing the number of housing units occupied by residents. West Vail has a higher proportion of its housing units occupied by residents than elsewhere in the Town, but that proportion is expected to decline given the high home prices both in West Vail and Town-wide. To afford a home at the average West Vail price, \$1.3 million, a household would need to make over \$200,000 or three times the Area Median Income (AMI). While high, the housing prices of West Vail represents a relative bargain to the rest of the Town (\$3.4 million average price), and second home purchasers are likely to increasingly consider, outbid, and purchase homes in West Vail.

### NON-CONFORMITIES AND THE HOUSING STOCK

There are hundreds of non-conforming lots in West Vail. Most of these lots have more dwelling units than the zoning regulations allow or exceed the allowable lot coverage. The current zoning code requirements prohibit the redevelopment of these lots at the existing number of units. For all lots where the existing number of units exceeds the allowable number of units by more than one, if the lot is redeveloped or the structure is destroyed, the allowed number of units built would revert to the zoning code. With largely single-family homes and duplexes allowed throughout West Vail, redevelopment of these non-conforming multi-family properties would result in a significant loss of units. Many of these multi-family units in West Vail are home to year-round residents. Many of these buildings are older, have not been updated, and may have deferred maintenance. Because of their condition and limited attractiveness to second



*Existing residential properties in West Vail*



homeowners, they often rent for less than other area units.

To recoup the resulting loss of units from these non-conformities, many landowners would look to redevelop the property as high-end single family homes or duplexes likely sold to second homeowners.

Additionally, many of the dwellings in West Vail are older and becoming run-down. Changes in code and new policies and programs are necessary to support landowners in enhancing their property and improving aesthetics of the Town.

## **OPPORTUNITY IN WEST VAIL CENTER**

The Town of Vail is essentially built out; there are few undeveloped lots or properties remaining in the Town. West Vail Center, if redeveloped, is one of the last opportunities to have a significant influence on new housing in Vail. The existing low-density development pattern in West Vail Center is an inefficient use of land, with only 48 units in the 12.8-acre focus area. Increasing allowed residential densities would catalyze new developments, create a customer base for new and existing businesses, and expand housing opportunities in Town, with a mix of market rate and deed restricted units that offer additional year-round resident housing.

## **BENEFITS OF RESIDENT HOUSING**

The benefits of resident housing are numerous, with impacts beyond the people who have attained housing and support West Vail businesses throughout the year. In 2019, the Town commissioned a study of the economic impact of investing in 1,000 units of resident housing when it was designing the Vail InDEED program. The study found that the reductions in commuting were worth \$825,000 per year (applying the value of people's time) and would save 95,000 gallons of gas annually. These new residents strengthen the sense of community, and the value of increased volunteerism related to living in a community was estimated at \$1.2 million per year. Increased school enrollment can bring an additional \$200,000 into the school system. In addition, if employees could find housing in Town, employers would save money through more efficient operations and offer a better guest experience through lower employee turnover.



*Existing residential properties in West Vail*

## GOALS FOR HOUSING IN VAIL

### **1** *A growing number of deed-restricted units in West Vail address the trend of conversion to second homes.*

The Town of Vail has committed to acquiring 1,000 additional resident housing units by 2027. Dedicated resident housing is vital for maintaining community and providing opportunities for year-round residents to live and thrive. To achieve this unit goal, the Town is deploying a multi-pronged approach: building new deed restricted units where land allows and placing deed restrictions on existing units through its Vail InDEED program. West Vail has long been a predominantly year-round resident neighborhood, and intentional efforts will be necessary to continue to offer residents opportunities to live there. In this plan, strategies and recommendations will look to increase deed restricted units in West Vail Center and preserve or slightly increase the number of units in surrounding neighborhoods. These efforts must be a collaboration between the public and private sector, with incentives that encourage the private sector to develop deed restricted units.

### **2** *The Town's zoning regulations and programs allow for and support residents and landowners in making continued improvements to their properties in a way that preserves units and enhances aesthetics.*

Many of the housing units in West Vail are 30+ years old and are showing their age. Aesthetic enhancements and upgrades are necessary to maintain the appeal of the neighborhood. Key strategies towards achieving this goal include changes in the Town Code and incentives programs that reduce fees, encourage redevelopment, and ease the development process.

### **3** *New construction and updates to existing housing reflect West Vail's mountain environment and align with the neighborhood character.*

West Vail has a unique neighborhood character that residents appreciate. It is a high priority that new or rehabilitated housing units reflect the mountain environment in which they are located. Key strategies towards achieving this goal include updating both design guidelines and the zoning regulations.

### **4** *West Vail's residential areas host a continuum of housing options taking many forms (single family, duplexes, multi-family, and accessory dwelling units) to accommodate residents through all phases and stages of life.*

Given the community feel and amenities available in West Vail, residents often look to remain in the neighborhood, even as their circumstances change. In order to meet the needs of residents in every phase and stage of life, a diversity of housing types is needed. Key strategies towards achieving this goal include zone district changes and other zoning regulation changes to support a variety of housing types to achieve density and better facilitate accessory dwelling units.



**5** *New housing and transit stops are strategically located so that 90 percent of West Vail housing units are within a five-minute walk of a transit stop.*

One of the Town's key sustainability goals is reducing the vehicle miles traveled by its visitors and residents. Encouraging transit use is a key element of this, particularly for trips that cannot easily be accomplished as a walk or bicycle ride. In people's decision to take transit, the proximity of the bus stop to one's home is a major factor. So that residents are frequent transit users, new housing should be predominantly located within a five-minute walk of a transit stop. Housing near transit and commercial services should also have lower parking requirements, supporting residents and visitors adopting car-free or car-lite lifestyles and providing additional space for housing. At present, 82% of West Vail housing units are within a five-minute walk of a transit stop. This desired increase, to 90%, would be achieved through zoning changes to support density near existing transit stops. All new development in West Vail Center will be within a five-minute walk of transit.

**6** *While West Vail is primarily a residential community, there is a managed level of short-term rental units that allow visitors to stay in West Vail and support local businesses.*

In West Vail, as in many tourism communities, the number of short-term rentals is growing. Short-term rentals represent an attractive investment proposition and accelerate the conversion away from resident housing. The number of short-term rentals in the community can be managed to a level that continues to support a majority percentage of units as resident housing. Strategies to achieve this goal include placing deed restrictions on existing units and working with Town Council to establish short-term rental regulations.

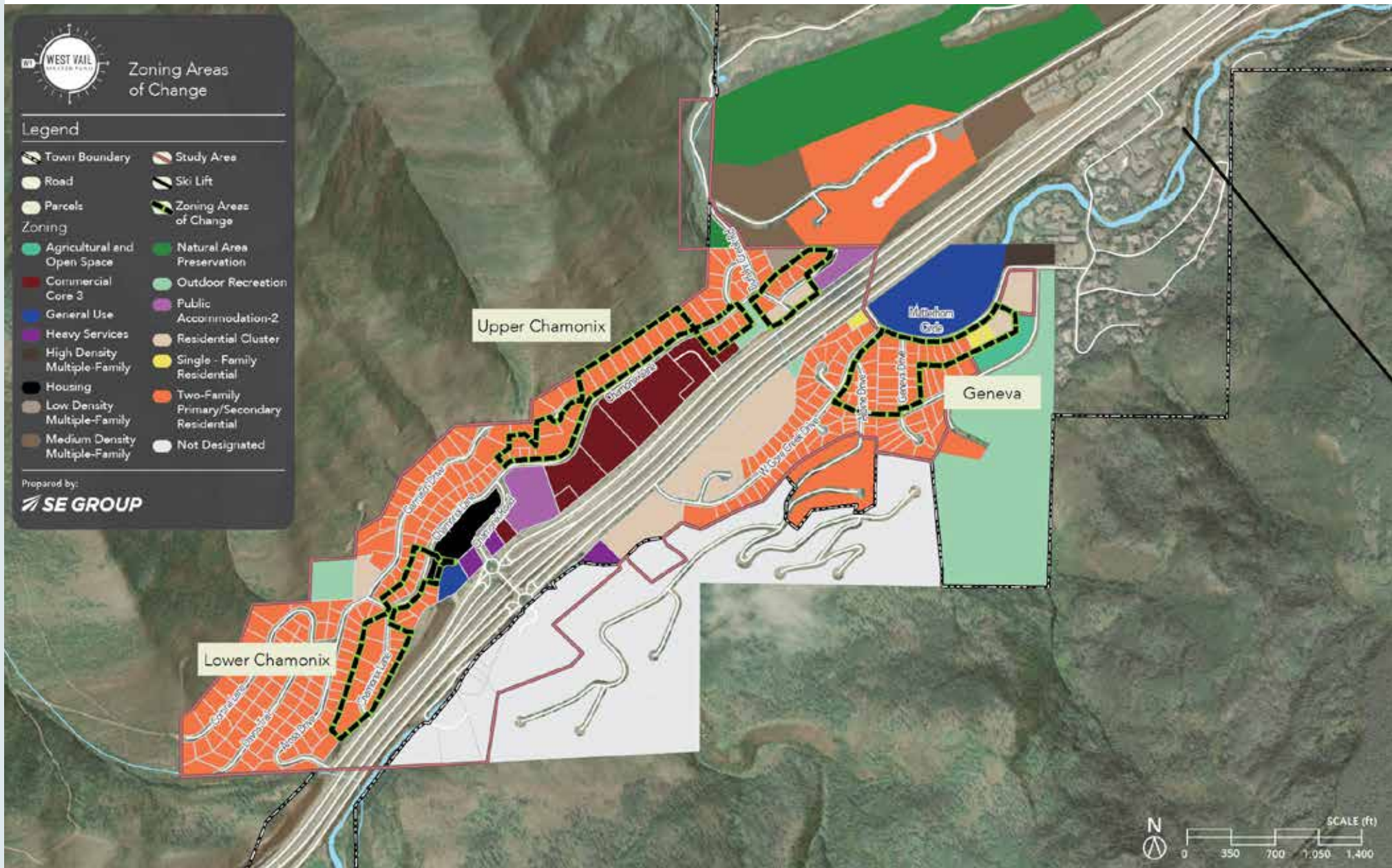


Figure 3.1: Zoning Areas of Change



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations provide policies, actions, and other strategies towards achieving the goals outlined previously.

## ZONE DISTRICT CHANGES

The recommended zone district changes are intended to resolve the many non-conformities, create better alignment with the Town's Land Use Plan, and support additional housing units while maintaining the desired neighborhood character. As previously described, the current zoning regulations support relatively low density neighborhoods, with many non-conforming multi-family properties. In these recommendations, the allowable density is increased in areas where higher density development already exists, where transit connectivity is strong, and where the Land Use Plan calls for medium density residential. Other changes recommended here are intended to support additional deed restricted units, adjust parking requirements to account for proximity to transit and West Vail Center, reduce non-conformities, and allow for a diversity of housing types that support a continuum of housing for all stages of life and family structures.

The zoning recommendations shown here contain both zone districts that already exist in the Town of Vail code (with some modifications) and new zone districts that could be created to better support resident housing. Key elements, such as units allowed per buildable acre and parking requirements, are presented here, but further associated requirements can be found in the Town's zoning regulations.

The three areas recommended for new zoning designations are shown in **Figure 3.1** and represent areas where there is already a concentration of multi-family units.

The recommended zone districts are based on a housing unit analysis of existing unit counts and potential unit counts under different zone districts. A visual model of this analysis for Lower Chamonix is included as **Figure 3.3**.

## Zoning Recommendation #1

**A new zone district, West Vail Multiple-Family 1, is recommended.**

This zone district is intended to support resident housing in areas well-connected to transit and that have an existing supply of multi-family housing. This district would have a **minimum density requirement** equal to the existing Low Density Multiple-Family Residential zone that allows 9 units per buildable acre. Therefore, on all but the smallest lots, multi-family developments would be required. When redeveloped, at least one unit must be deed restricted. This new zone district would allow up to 18 units per buildable acre only if half (50%) of the additional units beyond the minimum density are deed restricted. If the number of deed-restricted units required is not a round number, the developer would have to round up or pay a fee. For example, for a 2/3-acre lot, 6 units would be required at a minimum with one deed restricted unit, with up to 12 units if 4 units are deed-restricted.

If developed at 9 units per buildable acre, other requirements such as building height and lot coverage would be the same as those for the existing zone district Low Density Multiple-Family Residential, however, the Gross Residential Floor Area (GRFA) requirement would be increased. At above 9 units per buildable acre, the requirements associated with Medium Density Multiple-Family would come into effect, with a commensurate increase in the GRFA requirement. The Town's current GRFA requirements for multiple-family development result in small building square footage. Therefore, if GRFA requirements remained in place as is, there may be a limited incentive to redevelop or there would not be appropriately-sized units for the variety of Town resident needs. With more flexibility, there is both a greater profitability opportunity and greater opportunity for larger or multi-bedroom units.

Lots with greater than 18 units/buildable acre at present would be allowed to redevelop to existing unit counts if they comply with deed restrictions and other dimensional requirements.

It is recommended that short-term rentals not be allowed on the additional units beyond existing of redeveloped lots in this zone district.

## Zoning Recommendation #2

**A new zone district, West Vail Multiple-Family 2, is recommended.** This zone district has a similar intention to that of West Vail Multiple-Family 1 (supporting resident housing in well-connected areas), although at lower densities to match the character of areas where it is applied. This district would have a **minimum density requirement** equal to the existing Residential Cluster zone that allows 6 units per buildable acre. Therefore, lots would be a mix of duplexes, triplexes, and small multi-family. When redeveloped, at least one unit must be deed restricted. This new zone district would allow up to 12 units per buildable acre only if half (50%) of the additional units beyond the minimum density are deed restricted. If the number of deed-restricted units required is not a round number, the developer would have to round up or pay a fee. For example, for a 2/3-acre lot, 6 units would be required at a minimum with one deed restricted unit, with up to 12 units if 4 units are deed-restricted.

If developed at 6 units per buildable acre, other requirements such as building height and lot coverage would be the same as those for the existing zone district Residential Cluster, however, the GRFA requirement would be increased. At above 6 units per buildable acre, the Town would develop new dimensional requirements, between that of Low-Density and Medium Density Multiple-Family with a commensurate increase in GRFA, that would come into effect.

Lots with greater than 12 units/buildable acre at present would be allowed to redevelop to existing unit counts if they comply with deed restrictions and other dimensional requirements.

It is recommended that short-term rentals not be allowed on the additional units beyond existing of redeveloped lots in this zone district.

## Zoning Recommendation #3

The Upper Chamonix area includes most residential lots on Chamonix Lane from behind the Highline hotel to Buffehr Creek Park, the lots along Buffehr Creek Road below Chamonix Lane, and the lots along Meadow Ridge Road. **It is recommended that the area be rezoned as West Vail Multiple-Family 1**, where 9 units are allowed per buildable acre with a deed restriction or up to 18 units if 50 percent of additional units are deed restricted.

This area currently has 151 units, while only 54 are allowed. If no zoning change was made, and it was left as Two-Family Primary Secondary Residential, over time, as lots are redeveloped, up to 97 of these units would be lost, many of which are currently occupied by year-round residents. If zoned as West Vail Multiple-Family 1, the area could have 102 units with the minimum zoning densities applying. At 50% of the additional deed-restricted, the area could have 226 units. At minimum zoning, the area would primarily be duplexes, triplexes and small multi-family (3-5 units). With the additional density associated with deed-restricted units, the area would be a mix of small multi-family (3-5 units) and medium-sized multi-family (6-10 units), with some large multi-family (10-12 units). Potential units counts and deed-restricted unit counts are summarized in **Table 3.1**. Further study of the roadway's volume to capacity ratio and other transportation modifications would be necessary prior to significant redevelopments that would add units and vehicle trips to Chamonix Lane.

## Zoning Recommendation #4

The Lower Chamonix area, along Chamonix Lane near the Frontage Road, is recommended to be **rezoned to West Vail Multiple-Family 1** (as defined in Zoning Recommendation #1), where at least 9 units per buildable acre are required, and up to 18 units are allowed per buildable acre if 50 percent of the additional units are deed-restricted.

This area currently has 65 units, while only 23 are allowed. If no zoning change was made, and it was left as Two-Family Primary Secondary Residential, over time, as lots are redeveloped, up to 42 of these units



would be lost, many of which are currently occupied by year-round residents. At 9 units per buildable acre, the area could have 51 units and at 18 units per buildable acre, 106 units. Dependent on the size of the lot, this area would have a mix of small multi-family (3-5 units), medium multi-family (6-10 units), with a few large multi-family possible (10-12 units with deed restricted units), and triplexes and duplexes east of the intersection of Chamonix Lane and Arosa Drive. Potential units counts and deed-restricted unit counts are summarized in **Table 3.1**.

## Zoning Recommendation #5

The Geneva area, along Geneva Drive, Gore Creek Drive, Alpine Drive, and Matterhorn Circle, is recommended to be **rezoned to West Vail Multiple-Family 2** (as defined in zoning recommendation #2), where at least 6 units per buildable acre are required with a deed restricted unit, and up to 12 units are allowed per buildable acre if 50 percent of the additional units are deed-restricted. The area currently has 60 units while only 43 are allowed by current zoning (Two-Family Primary Secondary Residential). If no zoning change was made, over time, as lots are redeveloped, up to 17 of these units would be lost, many of which are currently occupied by year-round residents. This new zoning designation, West Vail Multiple-Family 2, would allow for up to 52 units at a minimum or 120 with additional deed restricted units. Potential units counts and deed-restricted unit counts are summarized in **Table 3.1**. Dependent on the size of the lot, this area would have a mix of duplexes and triplexes, and some small to medium multi-family at maximum density.

The new recommended zoning is shown in **Figure 3.2**.

*The new densities in these areas represent the maximum potential build-out and are unlikely to occur, particularly in the short-term. To achieve the prescribed levels of units, all lots would need to be redeveloped. While some lots may redevelop to the maximum allowed, many others are unlikely to flip and would remain single family homes or duplexes. The purpose of understanding a potential loss in units through redevelopment is to “test” what may happen naturally over time if no zoning changes are made.*

Table 3.1: Zoning Recommendations Summary

	UPPER CHAMONIX	LOWER CHAMONIX	GENEVA
<b>Zoning Designation</b>	West Vail Multiple-Family 1	West Vail Multiple-Family 1	West Vail Multiple-Family 2
<b>Lots</b>	27	18	30
<b>Existing Unit Count</b>	151	65	60
<b>Short-term Rental Licenses (2020)</b>	12	7	6
<b>Deed Restricted Units (2020)</b>	11	2	1
<b>Units Allowed Under Current Zoning</b>	54	23	43
<b>Allowed Units - Minimum Density</b>	102	51	52
<b>Allowed Units - Maximum Density</b>	226	106	120
<b>Resulting Deed Restrictions - Minimum Density</b>	31	18	30
<b>Resulting Deed Restrictions - Maximum Density</b>	93	45	64
<b>Primary Unit Type</b>	Small, medium-size multi-family, townhouses at maximum	Small, medium-size multi-family, townhouses at maximum	Duplexes, triplexes, small to medium multi-family at maximum



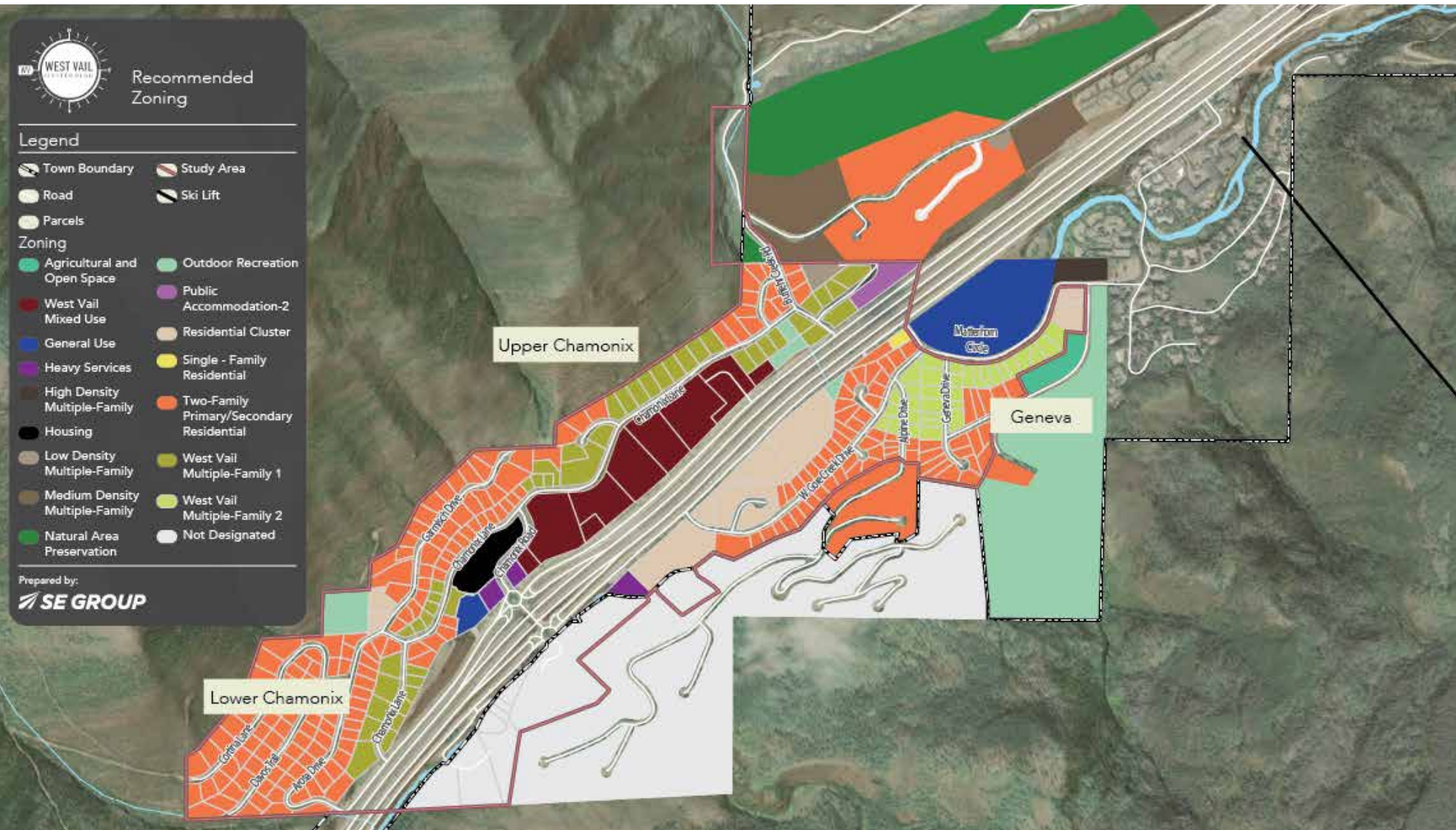


Figure 3.2: Recommended Zoning



# HOUSING UNIT ANALYSIS

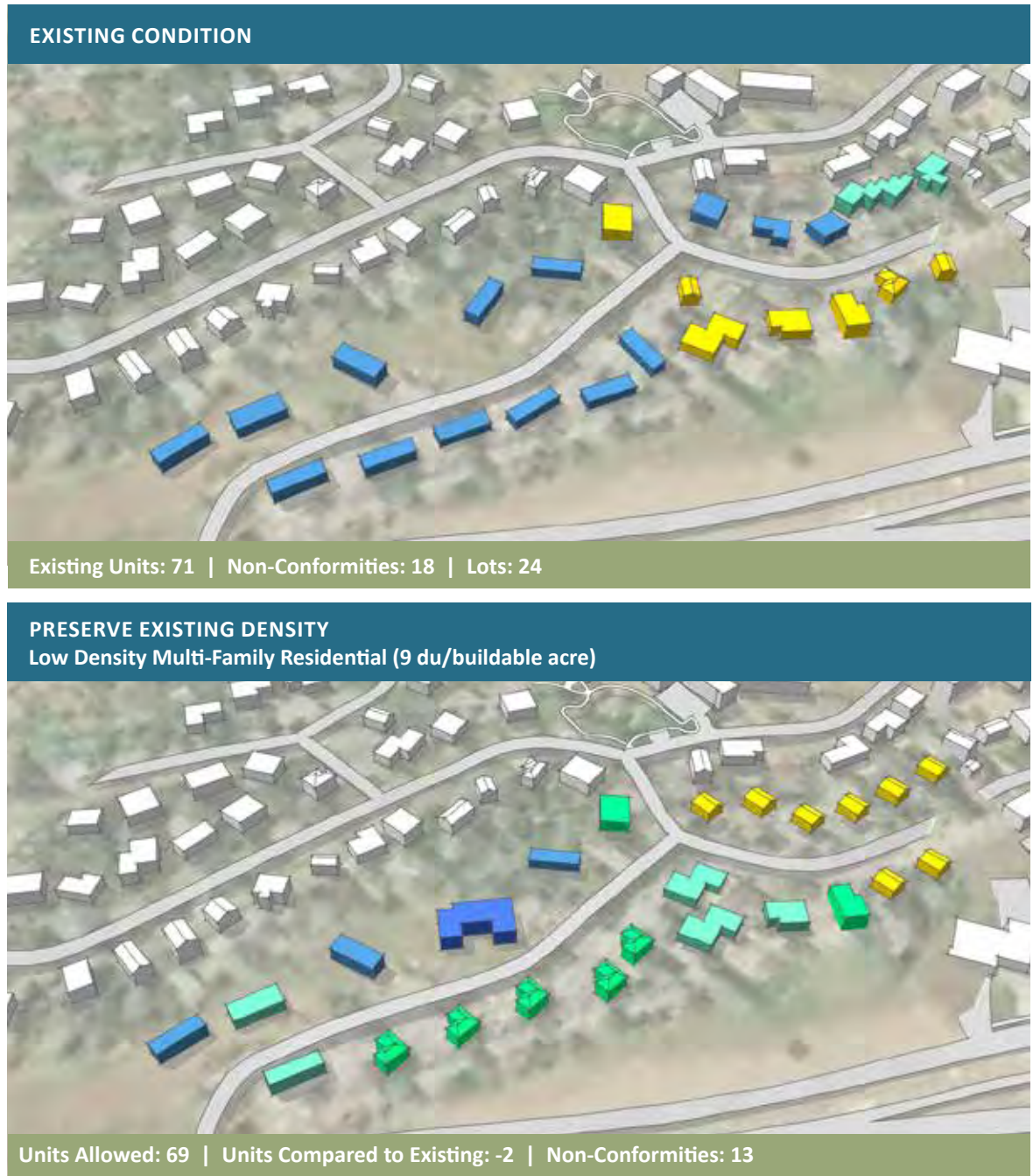
During the planning process, a housing analysis was undertaken to compare the number of existing housing units and non-conformities to different Town of Vail zone districts.

The “Lower Chamonix” analyzed here represents slightly more lots than the area recommended in **Figure 3.1**.

At present, the number of units allowed by zoning in the Lower Chamonix area is 31, much lower than the 71 that currently exist. Therefore, if no zoning change was made, the number of units would decrease over time, with more single family homes and duplexes and fewer multi-family developments. Changes could be made to either preserve existing density or increase density under other zone districts. The public was asked their preference during the Housing Workshop and many expressed interest in either retaining or increasing density.

This type of analysis and public feedback was carried forth for all three areas of change, to understand the issue and consider future options. This analysis informed the zone district recommendations of this chapter. The zone districts described in Zoning Recommendations #1 and #2 match the densities depicted here, with additional modifications to support resident housing and reduce non-conformities.

Figure 3.3: Housing Unit Analysis for Lower Chamonix





**LOSE DENSITY OVER TIME**  
 Current Zoning: Two-Family Primary/Secondary Residential





Units Allowed: 31 | Units Compared to Existing: -40

**INCREASE DENSITY**  
 Medium Density Multi-Family Residential (18 du/buildable acre)



Units Allowed: 137 | Units Compared to Existing: +66 | Non-Conformities: 4

**Legend**

-  Single Family
-  Duplex
-  Triplex
-  Small Multi-Family (3-5 units)
-  Medium Multi-Family (6-10 units)
-  Large Multi-Family/ Apartments (10+ units)

## NEW HOUSING AND TRANSIT CONNECTIVITY

Currently, about 82% of Town housing units in West Vail are located within a 5-minute walk of a bus stop. This level of connectivity is unusual in mountain communities and enables many residents to go to work, ski, or complete other key tasks without a vehicle. To support fewer vehicle trips in West Vail going forward, preserving or enhancing this level of connectivity for residents is essential. Locations where additional density is recommended in this plan are all within a 5-minute walkshed of bus stops. With the redevelopment of the residential neighborhoods and West Vail Center, the percentage of West Vail housing units within a 5-minute walk of a bus stop could be up to 90%.



## VAIL TOWN CODE CHANGES

The Vail Town Code prescribes how units can be built, modified, or redeveloped. Several changes to the code are recommended here to encourage redevelopment that preserves the character and scale of the neighborhood and supports resident housing.

### Town Code Recommendation #1

The Town Code establishes maximum site coverage and building heights for new structures. In the West Vail Multiple-Family zone districts, an increase in allowable site coverage is recommended (beyond that of Residential Cluster, Low Density Multiple-Family, and Medium Density Multiple-Family zone districts). This increase should only be to the degree that it will be helpful to achieving the densities allowed by these zone districts.

### Town Code Recommendation #2

The GRFA requirement can create challenges for the development of multi-family to the allowable density in West Vail. For the West Vail Multiple-Family zone districts, an increase to allowable GRFA is recommended.



### Town Code Recommendation #3

The Town of Vail has relatively generous parking requirements in residential areas. Higher parking requirements mean that a larger portion of a lot is dedicated to parking, making it harder to develop more units. Areas of West Vail with proximity to key commercial services in West Vail Center and transit connectivity do not require a car-dependent lifestyle. **Figure 3.4** shows a parking overlay district of all lots within a 5-minute walk of West Vail Center. **In this district, along with West Vail Multiple-Family 1 zone district, it is recommended that the parking requirements and potential reductions to such requirements be subject to future study.** Study of such reductions should include analysis of potential emergency services impacts including parking in fire lanes, fire vehicle, turnarounds, and enforcement capacity. Pending the results of this study, in areas where parking is currently provided, the amount of parking spaces provided could be reduced to meet the new requirements. Therefore, building would be allowed on existing parking lots.



*Parking Examples*

### Town Code Recommendation #4

On many lots in West Vail, the driveway or parking area expands across the front of the house, creating a wide expanse where cars are backing up directly onto the streets and passing pedestrians. This creates both an uncomfortable situation for pedestrians and is not aesthetically pleasing. **It is recommended that the Town amend the code to establish a maximum width of parking access as the width of two vehicles in the West Vail Multiple-Family districts.** Creativity in site design may be needed to maximize density with this parking requirement. An exception may be granted if an applicant can provide an aesthetic buffer or pedestrian-safe design.





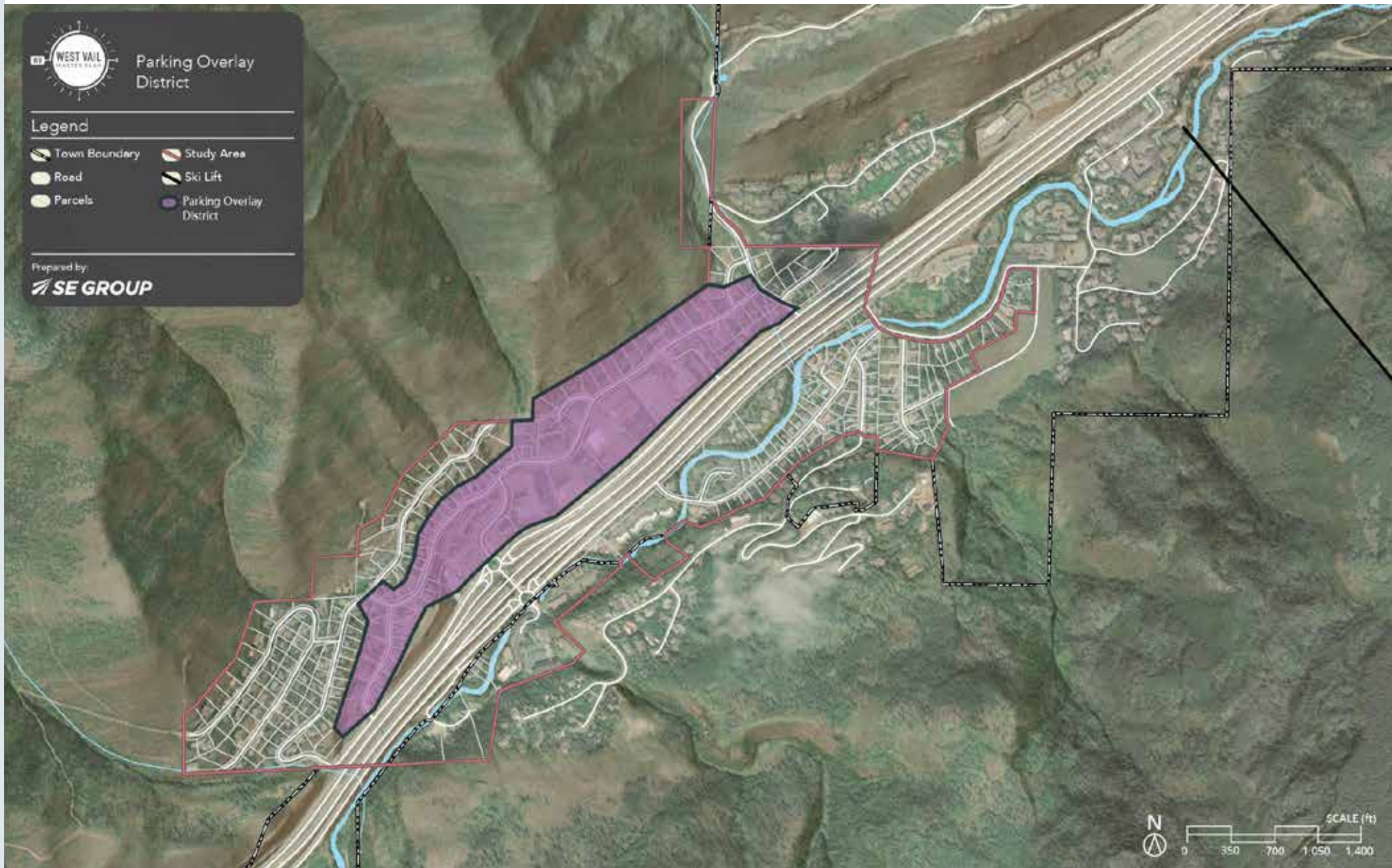


Figure 3.4: Parking Overlay District



## WEST VAIL CENTER TRANSFORMATION

As described in Chapter 2, this plan envisions a transformed West Vail Center. Currently, West Vail Center has limited housing opportunities and the land area is not well utilized, with large surface parking lots and commercial buildings with no residential component. Redevelopment of West Vail Center offers new and expanded opportunities for housing. This plan presents three potential scenarios for redevelopment, each representing different opportunities for housing. The scenarios are described fully in Chapter 2, with the potential changes as they relate to housing described here in Chapter 3.

### Scenario 1

Scenario 1 improves the existing site layout and efficiency of West Vail Center, offering short-term opportunities for redevelopment. For housing, the scenario includes potential townhouses along Chamonix Lane and an additional story for housing above West Vail Mall.

The scenario includes 13 townhouses along Chamonix Lane on the existing Vail Das Schone and Safeway parcels. It is recommended that the Town purchase the land area (approximately 1 acre) to develop these townhouses or work with the businesses to develop the housing for their employees.

Approximately 8 new housing units could be developed as an additional story on the West Vail Mall. There may be an opportunity to develop additional housing units on top of other buildings in West Vail Center.



*Example of alley-loaded multi-family residences*

These two new sets of housing units would result in 69 housing units in West Vail Center, an increase from the 48 existing units which are split between Vail Das Schone and Vail Commons.

It is recommended to increase the allowable density of CC3, from 12 units per buildable acre to 18, to allow for the number of units planned for the West Vail Mall addition and Chamonix Lane townhomes regardless of whether the parcels are or are not subdivided. All lots in West Vail Center are a part of the Town’s inclusionary zoning, where a

minimum of 10% of new GRFA must be EHUs. The existing CC3 zoning requires all housing units to be EHUs. It is recommended to modify this requirement and allow projects at less than 100% employee housing. This would more than satisfy the inclusionary zoning policy while also allowing market-rate housing to incentivize redevelopment.

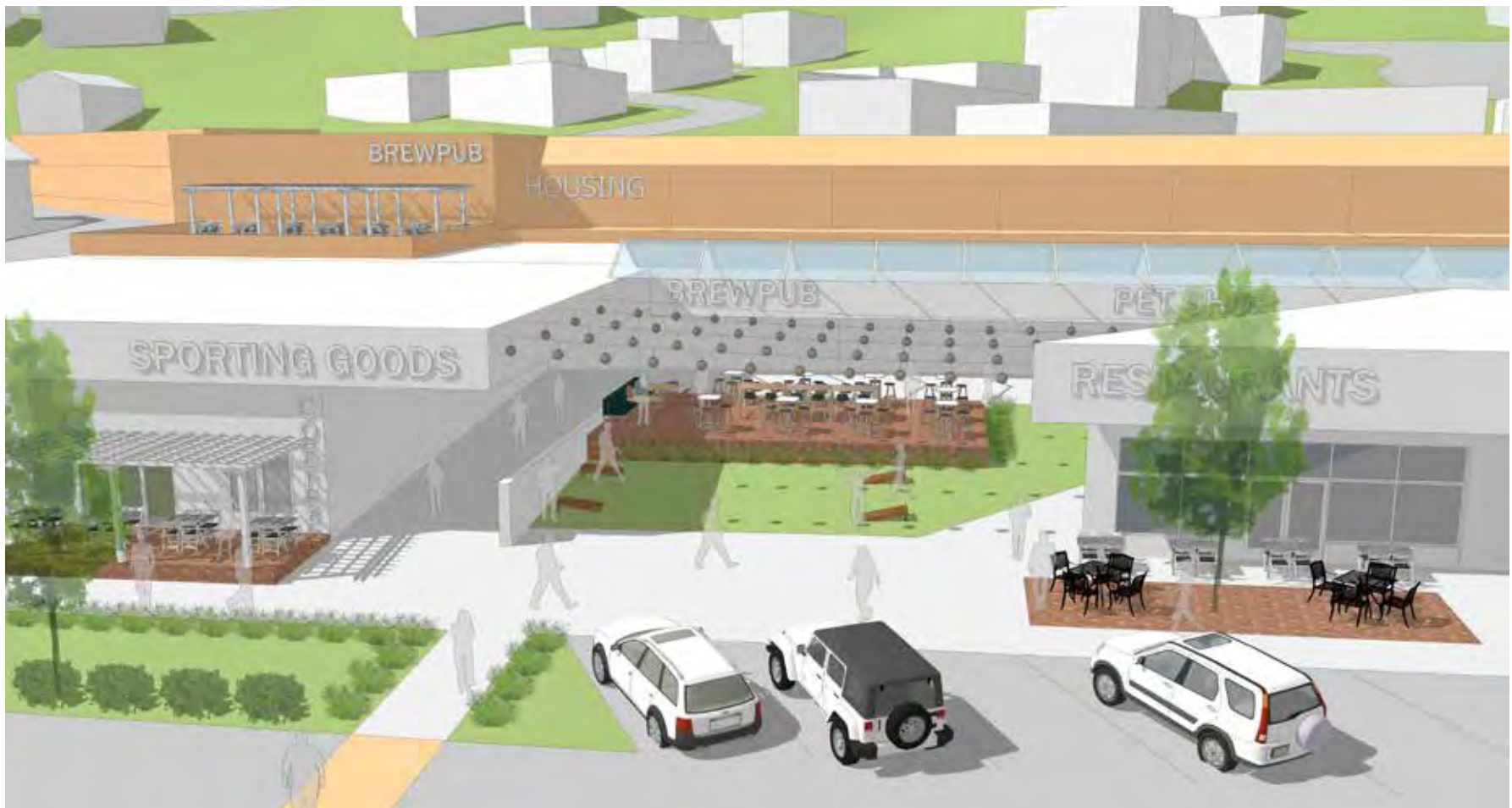


Figure 3.5: Rendering of new housing atop West Vail Mall (Scenario 1)



## Scenarios 2 and 3

In Scenarios 2 and 3, more far-reaching redevelopments take place that bury parking and include new apartment buildings and multi-story mixed use buildings, with retail space on the ground floor and residential units or office space on upper floors.

The redevelopment of these parcels is intended to create additional and more attractive commercial and residential square footage. With underground parking, several market-rate units, and other incentives provided by the Town, the project can still “pencil” while still containing a high percentage of deed-restricted housing units. By the Town investing in a parking structure or other incentives for the

redevelopment of West Vail Center, the investment can be returned as a public benefit with resident housing. Some market-rate units, such as top floor penthouses, can help the project carry the cost of the lower priced deed-restricted units. In addition, creating a base of year-round residents who frequent the businesses in West Vail Center would help support the businesses and foster vibrancy. Further information on potential financing structures can be found in Chapter 5: Implementation.

As described in Chapter 2, it is recommended that redeveloping to higher building heights (3-4 stories depending on location) be dependent on the proportion of deed-restricted units included. For 3-4

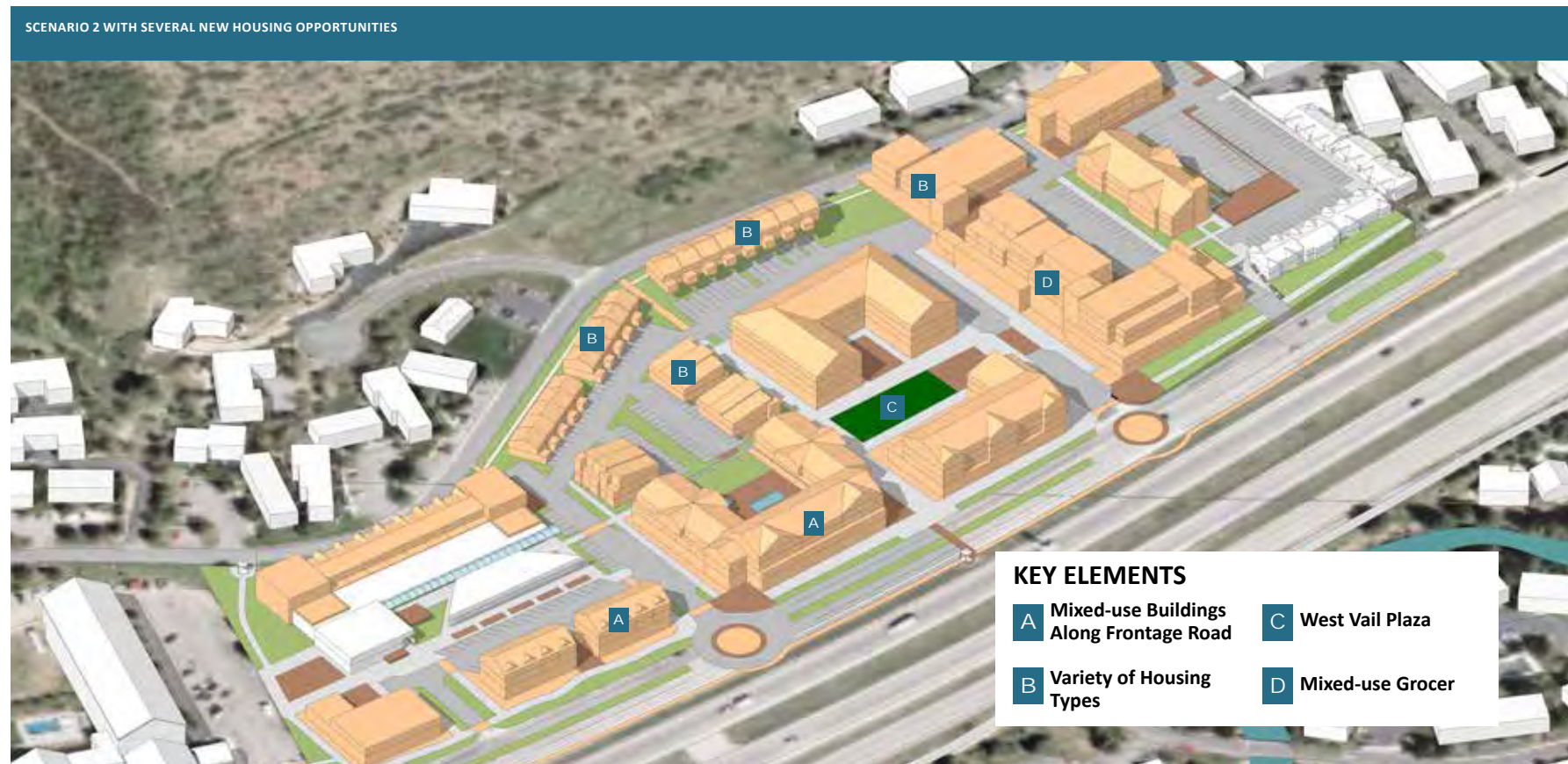


Figure 3.6: Oblique view of Scenario 2 with several new housing opportunities

stories to be developed, it is recommended that the units be 50-75% deed-restricted. The scenarios as described in Chapter 2 are reflective of if the developer chose to pursue that percentage of deed restrictions. It is recommended that the only requirement of the deed restrictions be an occupant working 30 hours a week for an Eagle County business, with no income targets or price appreciation cap.

It is recommended that the updated zoning and development agreements seek a variety of dwelling unit sizes for redevelopment within the overall West Vail Center. This variety creates a mix of price points and better allows residents to remain in place as life circumstances change. Overall, the scenarios include a variety of housing types – townhouses, mixed use buildings, walk-up apartments – to support a mix of price points and resident demographics, both socioeconomic and family structure. It is also recommended that new housing units be a mix of owned and rental.

### *Potential Unit Counts and Types*

Scenario 2 is a parcel-by-parcel redevelopment, where new buildings are added to each lot, including townhouses along Chamonix Lane

and buildings lining the North Frontage Road. All of these buildings are intended to have a residential component. When all phases are complete, the development could have approximately 350 units, an increase from the existing 48, at approximately 30 units per buildable acre. At 50-75% deed restricted units, the development would provide 175-260 resident housing units, an increase from the existing 48.

Scenario 3 is a Main street-oriented, master-planned development where current parcel boundaries disappear as the area redevelops. Similar to Scenario 2, the redevelopment includes a variety of housing types – small multi-family, apartment buildings, and mixed-use buildings. This development could have approximately 475 units, an increase from the existing 48, at approximately 50 units per buildable acre. At 50-75% deed restricted units, the development would provide 240-350 resident housing units, an increase from the existing 48.



*Example of mixed use with residential*



## POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

There are several policies and programs the Town can deploy to fund and encourage additional deed restricted units, aesthetic improvements, and realize other housing goals for West Vail. The policies and programs include a mix of guiding framework, process modifications, funding mechanisms, and other items for further study. While these policies and programs were devised to apply to West Vail, the Town could choose to deploy these Town-wide or establish a West Vail overlay within which they would apply.

### Policy and Program Recommendation #1

The new zone districts would allow the existing number of units in these residential neighborhoods by making the properties in these areas conforming with density and supporting greater flexibility with other development standards. These lots, while older and sometimes run-down, provide essential housing opportunities for year-round residents. Yet as landowners look to redevelop these lots, even to the existing number of units, they may be forced to raise the rent or unit prices in order to pay for the renovation, possibly to the rates of the open market. **It is recommended that the Town develop an incentive or credit program to provide the landowners with funding to improve their property while continuing to provide resident housing.**

### Policy and Program Recommendation #2

Short-term rentals are essentially turning second-homes and year-round resident homes into hotel beds for visitors. Often, for property owners, the revenue from short-term rentals exceeds that of a long-term renter or the costs of a monthly mortgage. This makes short-term rental conversion an attractive investment. Additionally, short-term rentals impact the neighborly feel of a place. At present, about 10% of housing units in West Vail are registered as short-term rentals with the Town. It is recommended in the West Vail Multiple-Family districts that no short-term rentals be allowed for additional units on redeveloped lots. **The Town should explore additional short-term rental regulations such as a Town-wide or neighborhood-wide cap on the number of units allowed to be short-term rentals, a high yearly license fee to reduce the financial gap, and/or a set of good-neighbor regulations that ensure minimal impact to surrounding neighbors.** Other ideas include disallowing the use of short-term rentals until a few years after a property has been purchased, only allowing a certain number per street, or grandfathering in existing short-term rentals for a period of time and allowing no more after a certain date.

### Policy and Program Recommendation #3

ADUs, or small additional dwelling units on a lot, are an important opportunity to provide housing to residents through a continuum of housing. Examples of ADUs include basement lock-offs or garage apartments. Development of these types of units has been relatively limited in West Vail, in part due to the strict regulations and mandate that these units be EHUs. **The Town should explore additional flexibility with the requirements, while continuing to ensure that the units primarily house year-round residents and are not used as short-term rentals. Fee refunds are also recommended to encourage the development of these units.**

#### Policy and Program Recommendation #4

Vail InDEED is a successful Town program to place deed restrictions on existing units, paying the owner to cover the gap between the deed-restricted and open market values. **It is recommended that the Town continue to grow the Vail InDEED program and provide an additional, consistent funding stream.** As more deed-restricted units sell, the Town should study the market difference between the deed-restricted market and open market and adjust payments to meet or exceed this difference.

#### Policy and Program Recommendation #5

For those looking to build or renovate deed-restricted units, the fees associated with the process (building permits, development fees) can be significant or even a deterrent to undertaking the process. **It is recommended that Town of Vail fee refunds be available for deed-restricted units in line with the existing rebate system for Eagle County housing tax credits.**

#### Policy and Program Recommendation #6

Deed restrictions are central to the Town's goals around resident housing and a vibrant community and particularly fundamental to the goals outlined in this plan. **The Town should continue to evolve the deed restriction program, funding, and mechanisms in order to meet the goals outlined in this plan.**

#### Policy and Program Recommendation #7

For many developments, going through the public review process can be expensive and lengthy, increasing the costs that units must be sold at. The community's vision for West Vail has been thoroughly vetted through this Master Plan and its robust public engagement process. Any subsequent rezoning process for West Vail Multiple-Family and design standards/rezoning for West Vail Center would involve significant public engagement. **Therefore, it is recommended that the Town reduce the development review requirements within West Vail residential neighborhoods primarily for the newly recommended West Vail Multiple-Family zone districts.**



## HOW MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES ARE ADDRESSING RESIDENT HOUSING CHALLENGES

In many mountain resort communities, it is a challenge for year-round residents and the local workforce to find and afford housing. As towns seek to address these challenges, there is no “silver bullet,” and most deploy a myriad of approaches to secure housing for residents and improve the quality of the resident housing stock. Interesting and innovative approaches that the Town of Vail or partners may consider are described below.

The City of Aspen, through the Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority (APCHA), has a decades old program with a large supply of resident housing units. The APCHA is working closely with the private sector on property improvements, by selling units to private companies who retain the deed restrictions and use tax financing to update properties. The APCHA also has a credit program where the private sector can receive credits for building affordable housing that can then be bought and sold for future projects.

Mountain Village, responding to very limited building and improvement activity on deed-restricted lots, chose to waive all planning, building, and development fees for improvements or new construction on deed-restricted lots. In nearby Telluride, the Town has embraced a creative mix of housing types to increase the number of units, with tiny home and dorm-style developments. Second homeowners in the area have

established a housing social venture fund, the Trust for Community Housing, that delivers grants to first time renters and homebuyers and incentivizes second homeowners and short-term rental owners to participate in the long-term market.

Boulder is a larger, Front Range community facing many of the same issues. The City has recently developed a grant program to support middle income home buyers. Towards improving its affordable housing stock, the City developed a \$40 million partnership through private sector donations, federal and state agencies, private activity bonds, and tax credits.

Jackson, Wyoming has implemented an expedited approval process for price-restricted housing projects. In recent code amendments, the Town grandfathered in non-conforming uses and created a density bonus system.

The Town of Truckee, in the Lake Tahoe region, offers a long-term rental grant program that financially incentivizes homeowners shifting their home from non-rented or a short-term rental to a long-term rental. The Town of Truckee has a robust first-time homebuyer program that utilizes a variety of funding sources and is incentivizing homeowners to develop accessory dwelling units.

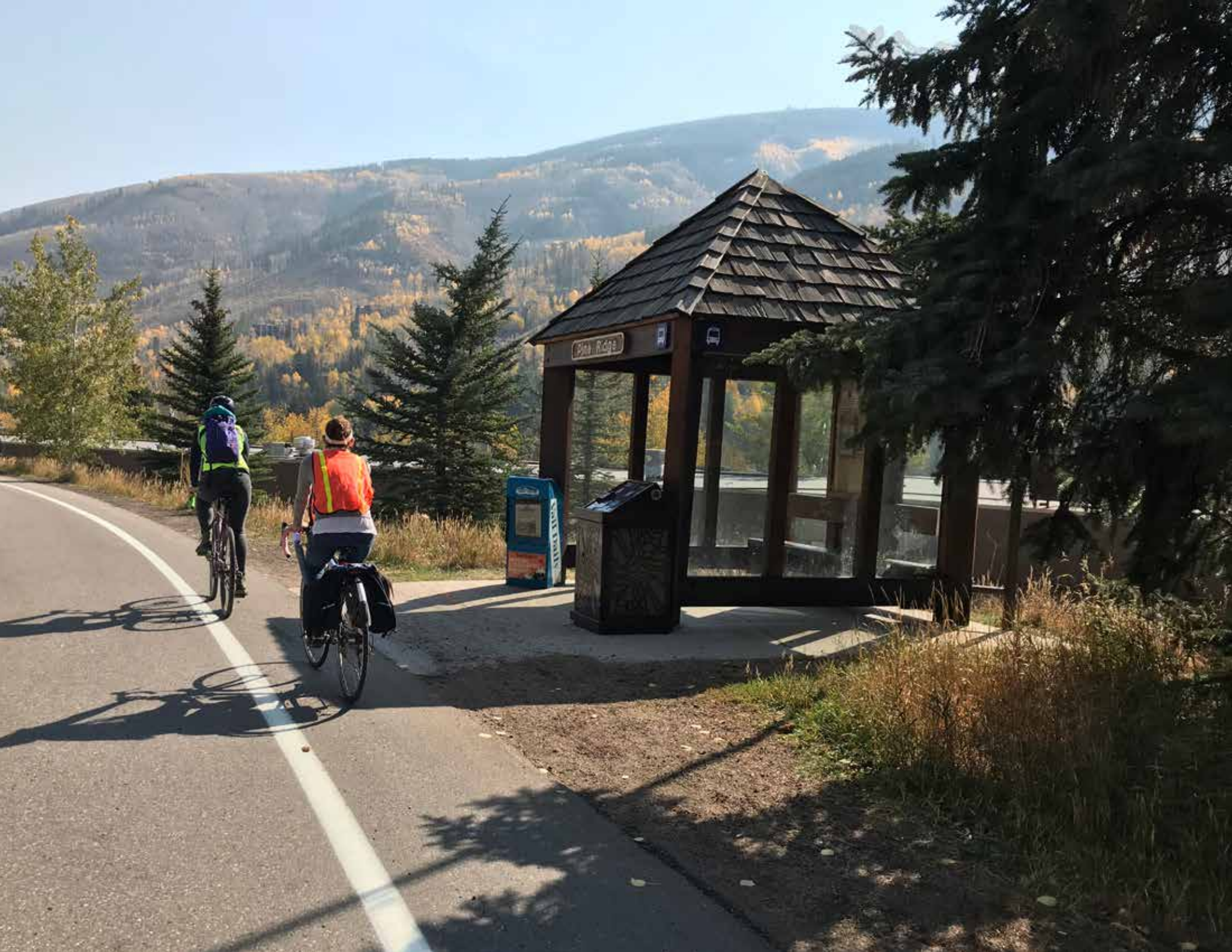


MOUNTAIN VIEW MEADOWS. JACKSON HOLE, CO



BURLINGAME RANCH. ASPEN, CO







# CHAPTER 4:

## TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

*“This plan aims to enhance connectivity for people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving in and around West Vail. The reimagined transportation network will integrate a variety of transportation modes, making multimodal trips through West Vail comfortable and convenient. A multimodal transit hub located in West Vail Center will offer easy connections to the rest of the valley, improving the experience of travel within the neighborhood.”*

*Vision Statement*

# INTRODUCTION



*The last community-wide transportation planning effort in Vail was conducted in 2009 with the Vail Transportation Master Plan. In the subsequent decade, the wider community's mobility needs have shifted. For example, some residents have relocated further down valley to communities like Eagle and Edwards but still travel to Vail for work and shopping trips. Vail Mountain Resort and the Town itself continue to attract more and more skiers and tourists, which creates a variety of pressures on the transportation network. As the only neighborhood for local shopping and essential services, West Vail has grown in significance, but the mobility and connectivity framework of the community has not changed. The West Vail Master Plan is an opportunity to build upon West Vail's strengths, identify some of the mobility challenges, and chart a roadmap for creating a more connected community.*

*This chapter highlights the predominant transportation challenges that were identified through an existing conditions analysis and through community outreach. These include a lack of facilities for people walking and bicycling, travel conditions that are made challenging by winter weather and topography, and a lack of direct connections within the community due to barriers like I-70 bisecting the community and a disconnected residential street network. The transportation component of the West Vail Master Plan fully illuminates the causes of these challenges and provides comprehensive solutions that will make West Vail a more comfortable and convenient travel environment. An efficient, multimodal, and user-friendly transportation network will support the overall future vision for West Vail that is described in this plan.*



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The transportation planning aspect of the West Vail Master Plan began with an in-depth review of the existing transportation system in West Vail, including profiles of roadway infrastructure, transit service, and walking and bicycling facilities as well as crashes. The following is a summary of the Existing Conditions memorandum; the full report is available in Appendix A.

West Vail attracts a range of transportation users who often travel to the Town of Vail by vehicle but seek to use active modes for trips within West Vail and to the Vail Village area. However, multimodal travel in West Vail is challenging due to the topography, lack of a street grid, land use patterns that concentrate commercial activity in one area along the North Frontage Road, and I-70 bisecting the community. This chapter summarizes the existing strengths of West Vail’s transportation system and identifies challenges that could be addressed through recommendations and policies.

### ROADWAYS AND PARKING

I-70, which is managed by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), runs through Vail and offers access to other communities throughout Eagle County, Denver to the east, and Grand Junction and Utah to the west. The North and South Frontage Roads are the two arterials serving the West Vail project area, providing connectivity to both Vail Village area and East Vail. The Frontage Roads are managed by CDOT. Within West Vail, destinations are served by a network of public and private local streets.

There is a significant amount of both public and private parking available in West Vail. Public parking is available at Donovan Park (just outside of the project area) as well as along the North Frontage Road. Private parking lots serve the West Vail Center businesses and multi-family residences.

### TRANSIT

There are three transit agencies providing service in West Vail—Vail Transit, ECO Transit, and Bustang. Vail Transit offers service within the Town of Vail, ECO Transit offers service within the Eagle County region and to Leadville, and Bustang (operated by CDOT) offers service between Grand Junction and Denver. Ridership on Vail Transit varies seasonally, with the highest ridership occurring during the winter months. Total ridership on Vail Transit routes that serve West Vail declined approximately 16% from 2010 to 2019. Vail Transit’s West Vail Express route, operating in the winter only, and connecting West Vail to Vail Village was introduced in late 2017; it now accounts for approximately 4% of the system’s ridership and contributed to an increase in overall



*North Frontage Road roundabout*



*Neighborhood street with striped shoulders to accommodate people biking and walking*



*Vail Transit service in West Vail*

ridership on routes serving West Vail in 2018. The West Vail Express route also accounts for a large share of the ridership in West Vail; in 2019, 17% of joint West Vail routes (Local and Express) ridership was on the West Vail Express route, up from 15% the previous year. This chapter offers recommendations for adjusting transit service to better serve the needs of residents and visitors.

## WALKING AND BICYCLING

West Vail community members walk and ride bicycles at a relatively high rate due to the abundance of recreational opportunities in the area. However, the formal network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the study area is limited. Sidewalk and multi-use path presence is mainly limited to the Frontage Roads, with very limited sidewalk presence in residential areas due to topography and maintenance challenges relating to snowfall. Sidewalks in the area vary from 8-foot-wide attached sidewalks (no buffer between the roadway and sidewalks) to 10-foot wide detached sidewalks (buffer present between the roadway and sidewalk). A unique aspect of West Vail is that facilities like the North Recreation Path (described in the following paragraph) serve as both multi-use paths and sidewalks. The existing sidewalk system chiefly serves the commercial businesses along the North Frontage Road, although there are limited sidewalk connections between the North Frontage Road and the businesses themselves. Pedestrians are left to walk through surface parking lots. A pedestrian connection is available between the North and South Frontage Roads via an I-70 underpass at Chamonix Road. This underpass sidewalk is physically separated from the roadway with a barrier.

Both pedestrians and bicyclists can access the Gore Valley Trail, which is a multi-use path running along the South Frontage Road. The trail is a separated facility with some exceptions where it is on the shoulder of a roadway. The Gore Valley Trail provides connections to the Vail Village area and the Vail Pass Trail into Summit County to the east and the Eagle Valley Trail to the west. The North Recreation Path is a multi-use path that connects the commercial core of West Vail with points to the east and also connects to the Gore Valley Trail via the Chamonix Road underpass. The North Recreation Path is separated from the roadway in most areas, with the exception of a segment adjacent to the McDonald's restaurant where it is an attached facility, and a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile segment east of Buffehr Creek Road where the path is a 12-foot-wide marked shoulder.

Aside from the Gore Valley Trail and North Recreation Path, there are limited bicycling facilities. The North and South Frontage Roads both have wide shoulders through the project area, which are utilized by people bicycling, although the shoulders are not marked specifically for bicycle usage. The wider shoulders were striped following a recommendation in the 2009 Vail Transportation Master Plan.



*Example of the limited pedestrian access to West Vail Center from Chamonix Lane*



*Example of a sidewalk and ramp in need of repair*



*Location where the North Recreation Path transitions to a wide shoulder*





Figure 4.1: Existing Transportation Infrastructure



## LEVEL OF TRAFFIC STRESS (LTS) ANALYSIS

The project team conducted a bicycle and pedestrian comfort analysis using the Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) framework to better understand multimodal travel in West Vail. LTS is a methodology based on national research and best practices for measuring both bicycle and pedestrian comfort. The original LTS guidance provided a framework for evaluating bicycle facilities that was adapted to pedestrian facilities based on the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Streets Guide and safety research, as well as research from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).<sup>1</sup>



Figure 4.2: West Vail Pedestrian Level of Traffic Stress

LTS is a national best practice scoring system used to classify the comfort of specific bicycle facilities. Scoring is from LTS 1 to LTS 4, with LTS 1 being comfortable, “low-stress” bicycling and walking environments for those ages 8 to 80, and LTS 4 being places where bicycling and walking is very uncomfortable or even impossible, with limited or no accommodations for people walking or bicycling. Facilities with LTS 1 and 2 scores are considered low-stress facilities, while LTS 3 and 4 facilities are considered high-stress. Scores are based on characteristics like number of travel lanes, vehicle speeds, and bicycle/pedestrian facility types. Given the unique blend of travel facilities in the West Vail project area, the project team adapted and customized this methodology to create LTS scoring tables that reflect the nuances of bicycle and pedestrian travel in West Vail.

1. Original LTS guidance: *Network Connectivity for Low-Stress Bicycling* (Mekuria, Furth, Nixon, 2012)





Figure 4.3: West Vail Biking Level of Traffic Stress

Modifications to the traditional scoring system for West Vail reflected that on-street pedestrian travel may be comfortable on local roadways that do not have separated facilities and that steeper segments may dictate that some paths of travel will be high-stress for certain users or may pose more challenging travel conditions during winter.

The LTS analysis found that while bicyclists can generally access destinations throughout West Vail on low-stress travel facilities, pedestrian travel is more limited due to a lack of comfortable east-west sidewalks and paths and high vehicle speeds (Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3). Additionally, both bicyclists and pedestrians experience north-south travel barriers due to limited opportunities for crossing I-70.

The project team evaluated the accessibility of key destinations in West Vail to bicyclists and pedestrians traveling on exclusively low-stress facilities. The travelshed analysis sought to determine whether different destination types can be reached within a 20-minute low-stress bicycling or walking trip. 20-minutes was determined based on West Vail's goal for creating a neighborhood where residents can access of their most basic, day to day needs within a 20-minute walk or bike ride.



Figure 4.4: West Vail Center 20-minute walkshed

**Figure 4.4** shows the travelshed for a 20-minute walk from the commercial core of West Vail. This showed that the limited connectivity between the north and south sides of I-70 present a barrier to pedestrian travel, thus informing recommendations around studying a bicycle/pedestrian grade separated crossing of I-70. Additionally, pedestrians can travel comfortably on the multi-use paths but have limited access to residential neighborhoods. The dedicated pedestrian facilities leading from West Vail Center north to Chamonix Lane are important connections for residences along Chamonix Lane. Otherwise, pedestrian connectivity within the commercial core is chiefly restricted to walking trips between businesses.





Figure 4.5: Parks 20-minute walkshed

**Figure 4.5** shows the walkshed around parks, finding that Donovan Park (which is just outside the study area), Ellefson Park, and Buffehr Creek Park all have good connectivity to the immediate surrounding neighborhoods. Ellefson Park is accessible to residents of Cortina Lane and Davos Trail, while Buffehr Creek Park is accessible to residents of the Chamonix Lane neighborhood as well as to visitors of West Vail Center. Donovan Park is well served by the Gore Valley Trail.

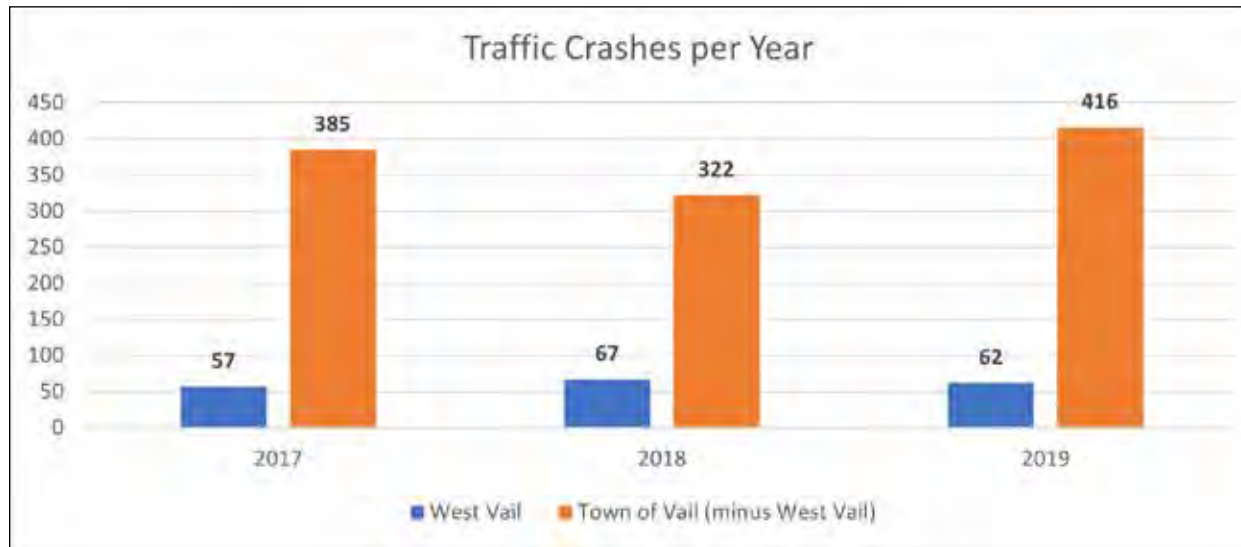
## TRAFFIC SAFETY

Of the 209 crashes reported in West Vail from 2017 to the first quarter of 2020, 72% have occurred in six locations. Of the crashes occurring at these six high-crash locations, 59% were recorded outside of the three gas stations in West Vail. This suggests that traffic volumes and access into and out of the gas stations create a number of conflicts and safety concerns. In addition, the gas stations are located in close proximity to the I-70 eastbound and westbound ramps at the Chamonix Road roundabouts, where traffic volumes and speeds are relatively high compared to the rest of the project area.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Despite having a small footprint, West Vail offers a multimodal system that serves a range of users, with some key gaps that can create a barrier to travel. The existing conditions analysis of the transportation system yielded the following key findings that influence the recommendations:

- Transit ridership on Vail Transit routes serving West Vail has declined over the past 10 years, with ridership on West Vail Red, Green, and Express routes decreasing each winter season. This decline has occurred over a time period when overall ridership on Vail Transit has increased.
- While the Gore Valley Trail is a high-comfort, separated bicycle and pedestrian facility connecting active transportation users to destinations both east and west of the project area, there are limited on-street bicycle facilities that are comfortable for recreational bicyclists. The presence of sidewalks throughout the project area is also limited.
- Preliminary analysis of traffic crash data from 2017 to 2020 showed that 72% of crashes in West Vail occur at six locations, and that the roadway segments immediately adjacent to the three gas stations represent the top three crash sites. This suggests that there may be access management challenges which can be addressed through implementation of the 2009 Access Management Plan.



*Crashes in West Vail vs. Town of Vail (2017-2019)*



## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

West Vail community members were asked about transportation throughout the public engagement process. Specific touchpoints included many Advisory Committee meetings, a community survey, an August 2020 focus group, a September 2020 Open House event, and two workshop sessions that took place in December 2020. In addition, the project team routinely met with Town Staff for targeted conversations about topics like traffic calming treatments or transit service.

Some of the top issues that consistently emerged during outreach were concerns about a perception of speeding vehicles, a desire to have more opportunities for walking and bicycling around the community, and a need to have multiple transportation mode options for traveling to and within West Vail Center.

Some key themes emerged from the community engagement efforts that inform this chapter's recommendations:

- Workshop participants were generally in favor of recommendations that would add connectivity for people walking and bicycling while also maintaining existing vehicle circulation. For example, participants expressed that traffic calming in the form of striped shoulders would be received more favorably than vertical treatments like speed humps.
- Participants were concerned with maintaining community character. While there was general agreement that additional lighting was needed in certain areas to make walking at night feel more comfortable, there was also a sentiment that any additional lighting should be compatible with the community priority of preserving dark skies.
- While speeding routinely emerged during previous outreach activities as an area of concern, some workshop participants suggested that speeding may be a perceived problem, rather than a pervasive issue.
- Workshop participants expressed enthusiasm for recommendations that would support the adoption of more sustainable travel options like riding transit, using e-bikes, or driving electric vehicles.

Appendix B includes more detailed documentation of all the public engagement efforts conducted during the planning process.

## WHY CHANGE?

The transportation network in West Vail has the potential to shape the community and move towards its goals of sustainability and sense of place. By creating a community where residents, visitors, and employees of all ages and abilities can comfortably and conveniently travel by all modes, West Vail will become a vibrant and inclusive neighborhood. There are currently a number of barriers to traveling in West Vail that inform decisions about where, when, and how people run errands, choose to live and work, and raise their families. By implementing infrastructure and programs that shift towards a community where you can travel by all modes to conveniently access grocery stores, Vail Mountain Resort, parks, and bus stops, the social capital and economy grows.

By growing the network for biking and walking, users can be healthy and active, reduce reliance on the automobile, make more spontaneous trips, and enhance the reputation for recreation that Vail holds.

By improving the transit system through improved access to bus stops, continual assessment of routes, and integration with regional transit, living car-free becomes an increasingly viable option. This makes West Vail more affordable, reduces congestion and parking demand, and increases the diversity of West Vail residents and employees.

By ensuring that the vehicle network and parking is convenient and efficient, West Vail ensures that travelers can access businesses and travel locally and regionally.

## GOALS FOR MOBILITY IN WEST VAIL

### **1** *Bicycling and walking trips throughout West Vail are comfortable and convenient due to new infrastructure and other enhancements.*

Currently, West Vail has relatively limited bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, particularly off the Frontage Roads. Adding infrastructure throughout the community can make existing trips more comfortable and encourage people to ride a bicycle or walk more frequently. Key elements of implementing this goal include formalizing walking paths, creating a pedestrian-oriented environment in the commercial area, pedestrian scale lighting, and developing a connected network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

### **2** *Driving and parking in West Vail is efficient and supportive of new and emerging technologies (i.e., electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles). Emergency access remains efficient through West Vail.*

Driving is and will continue to be a primary mode of travel in and to West Vail. It is important that the driving infrastructure and emergency access remains efficient and supports the reduction of congestions and emissions where possible. Key strategies to implement this goal include managing vehicle access along the Frontage Roads, managing parking, and supporting electric vehicles.

### **3** *Create a pedestrian-friendly and inviting environment on the North Frontage Road that contributes to the transformation of the commercial area into West Vail Center.*

The North Frontage Road is part of a 300-yard expanse of concrete that contributes to high vehicle speeds and an unfriendly environment for pedestrians. Modifications to the roadway, along with street-facing commercial development, could create an inviting, pedestrian-friendly environment. Possible modifications include a road diet, enhanced crossings, access management changes, traffic calming, and noise impact mitigation.

### **4** *Transit is user-friendly and connects with key destinations in the Vail Valley and beyond.*

Use of transit helps reduce the vehicle miles traveled and can ease parking and congestion challenges in the Town. From West Vail, transit can provide vehicle-free access to employment, recreation, and other key destinations and activities in the Town of Vail and the Eagle Valley. Use of transit in West Vail has declined in recent years, and enhancements that support greater convenience and promotion of the service are important.



## **5** *Residents and visitors are informed of the many alternatives to driving and the Town actively collects data to implement new programs and policies.*

*The Town of Vail, as part of its sustainability efforts, aims to reduce environmental impact of transportation by decreasing the vehicle miles traveled by commuters and guests. For West Vail, it is important to both raise the awareness of the alternatives the Town has already put in place, collect data on existing levels of use, and develop new opportunities and alternatives.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of recommendations for improving transportation in West Vail were developed based on community input and on existing conditions analysis findings. The following set of recommendations are divided into five categories: bicycle and pedestrian connections, access management for the Frontage Roads, transit improvements, parking, and policies and programs. Opportunities within each category are described in detail. Recommendations are shown in **Table 4.1**.



*North Recreation Path*



Figure 4.6: Proposed Transportation and Mobility Projects



Table 4.1: West Vail Master Plan Transportation Projects

PROJECT CODE (shown on map)	PROJECT CATEGORY	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
1	Bicycle, pedestrian	North Frontage Road at Buffehr Creek Road	Upgrade striped shoulder to a protected facility (see Figure 4.18) by adding bollards and a two-foot wide painted buffer where the North Recreation Path transitions to an on-street facility east of Buffehr Creek Road. This project should be implemented in the short-term prior to Project #12. Continue plastic bollards to the intersection of Buffehr Creek Road in order to prevent vehicles from using the path as a right turn lane. The North Recreation Path crossing of Buffehr Creek Road should be marked with green-backed skip striping and W11-1 signage (MUTCD) <sup>2</sup> with the addition of an arrow (W16-7P).
2	Transit, bicycle, pedestrian	North Frontage Road & Safeway	Implement a mobility hub - this could include shared micromobility (scooters, bikes), interactive information kiosk, bike parking, real time arrival information, e-charging stations, and enhanced wayfinding.
3	Bicycle, pedestrian	Chamonix Lane, behind City Market	Add ADA-compliant pedestrian access between Chamonix Lane and West Vail Center
4	Bicycle, pedestrian	Roundabout on North Frontage Road	Add flashing beacons, marked crossings, curb ramps, and widened sidewalks to enhance pedestrian comfort at all crossing locations adjacent to the North Frontage Road roundabout. In addition, a sign should be added at the westbound off-ramp alerting drivers to the path crossing.  Wayfinding signage directing bicyclists and pedestrians to utilize the multi-use path on the east side of the I-70 undercrossing should also be added. Widen the sidewalk on the northwest side of the roundabout to create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians, especially for those with mobility challenges.
5	Bicycle, pedestrian	Chamonix Lane	Add signage, pedestrian-scale lighting, and widen painted shoulders from 2' to 4' to promote slower driving speeds while enhancing bicycle and pedestrian comfort.

2. Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

Table 4.1: West Vail Master Plan Transportation Projects (continued)

PROJECT CODE (shown on map)	PROJECT CATEGORY	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
6	Bicycle, pedestrian	Buffehr Creek Road	Add additional signage, pedestrian-scale lighting, and painted shoulders to promote slower driving speeds while enhancing bicycle and pedestrian comfort.
7	Bicycle, pedestrian	Gore Creek Drive	Add signage and pedestrian-scale lighting to promote slower driving speeds while enhancing bicycle and pedestrian comfort.
8	Bicycle, pedestrian	Alpine Drive	Add signage, pedestrian-scale lighting, and painted shoulders to promote slower driving speeds while enhancing bicycle and pedestrian comfort.
9	Bicycle	South Frontage Road (west of roundabout)	Add bicycle signage to Gore Creek Trail on South Frontage Road west of the roundabout including green-backed skip striping at crossing and adding W11-1 signage (MUTCD) with the addition of an arrow (W16-7P).
10	Bicycle, pedestrian, transit	South Frontage Road @ Conoco Station	Short-term: Paint continuation of the Gore Valley Trail across driveways at the Conoco station. Long-term: Extend island to abut the South Frontage Road so path travels through island and bus boards closer to South Frontage Road. Implement turn restrictions for both driveways as noted in the Access Management Plan.
11	Bicycle, pedestrian	Bicycle and Pedestrian Grade Separated Crossing of I-70	Preliminary location for I-70 bicycle and pedestrian grade separated crossing. Requires further study to determine under or over crossing and to consider cost, weather, personal safety, ease of use, ADA access, and feasibility.
12	Bicycle, pedestrian	Extend North Frontage Road multi-use path east of Buffehr Creek Road	Upgrade wide shoulder to multi-use path (already proposed with new hotel development)



Table 4.1: West Vail Master Plan Transportation Projects (continued)

PROJECT CODE (shown on map)	PROJECT CATEGORY	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
13	Bicycle, pedestrian	Chamonix Road	Widen and extend the multi-use path/wide sidewalk that is already planned on the east side of the road. The planned path should be enhanced to ensure a minimum width of eight feet. The path should also extend continuously between the North Frontage Road and Chamonix Lane.  Add bicycle shared lane markings (sharrows) on the Chamonix Road southbound lane and add signage on the path to denote that only bicyclists traveling northbound should use the path and that pedestrian travel is bi-directional.
14	Bicycle, pedestrian	I-70 Underpass	Restrict bicycle use on the west side underpass. Add signage to direct people biking to use the east side of the underpass.
15	Bicycle, pedestrian	North Frontage Road	Implement a road diet to remove continuous turn lanes based on access management recommendations; reallocate right-of-way based on proposed scenarios in Figures 4.12-4.15.
16	Bicycle, pedestrian	North Frontage Road between Chamonix Lane (southwest) and roundabout	Add paved multi-use path (10'-12' wide) to increase connectivity for people walking and biking and to the transit stop.
17	Access management	North Frontage Road and South Frontage Road Driveways	See Access Management Plan recommendations.  At each driveway of the West Vail Center, move the path crossing north, towards the commercial businesses, so that vehicles can clear the path crossing prior to waiting for a turning opportunity.
18	Bicycle, pedestrian	North Frontage Road and Buffehr Creek Road	Add pedestrian-scale lighting to the North Frontage Road west of the roundabout and along Buffehr Creek Road between the North Frontage Road and Lions Ridge Loop.

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

As noted in the Existing Conditions analysis, despite having high levels of bicycle and pedestrian travel in the community, West Vail does not currently offer a connected network of comfortable, or low-stress, walking and bicycling facilities. Through the community engagement and infrastructure analysis process, the project team identified a set of recommendations for creating a more comfortable and connected network that will allow users to travel throughout the community by foot or bicycle more easily. This section profiles both the types of infrastructure treatments that would advance multimodal connectivity while also describing locations where these treatments should be deployed.

### Traffic Calming

When discussing walking and bicycling in the community, public outreach participants cited a lack of separation from vehicle traffic and high vehicle speeds as a common barrier or challenge of multimodal travel. While vehicle speeds can contribute to discomfort for people walking and bicycling, a recent traffic speed study conducted by the Town of Vail does not suggest that vehicle speeds on neighborhood streets are sufficiently high to present a consistent speed-related concern. Further study is needed to understand the level to which vehicle speeds pose a safety issue for pedestrians and bicyclists. The programmatic recommendations portion of this plan details potential next steps for the Town of Vail to assess vehicle speeds on an on-going basis.

Regardless of actual travel speeds, the overwhelming discomfort felt by people walking and bicycling calls for traffic calming treatments that result in more awareness from drivers of the presence of other modes. The Town of Vail will pursue traffic calming on neighborhood streets in West Vail by exploring implementation of pedestrian-scale lighting, signage, and striping that delineates a designated shoulder for people walking and bicycling.

### *Pedestrian-scale Lighting* Project 18

Community members identified poor lighting as one of the main barriers to feeling safe during non-daylight hour walking and bicycling trips. Specific locations with a lack of lighting noted during public outreach include Buffehr Creek Road and the segment of the North Frontage Road west of the roundabout. Community members also cited a need to maintain low lighting, in order to minimize light pollution, as a community priority. To maintain a view of night skies while enhancing night-time walking comfort, the Town of Vail will install pedestrian-scale lighting.



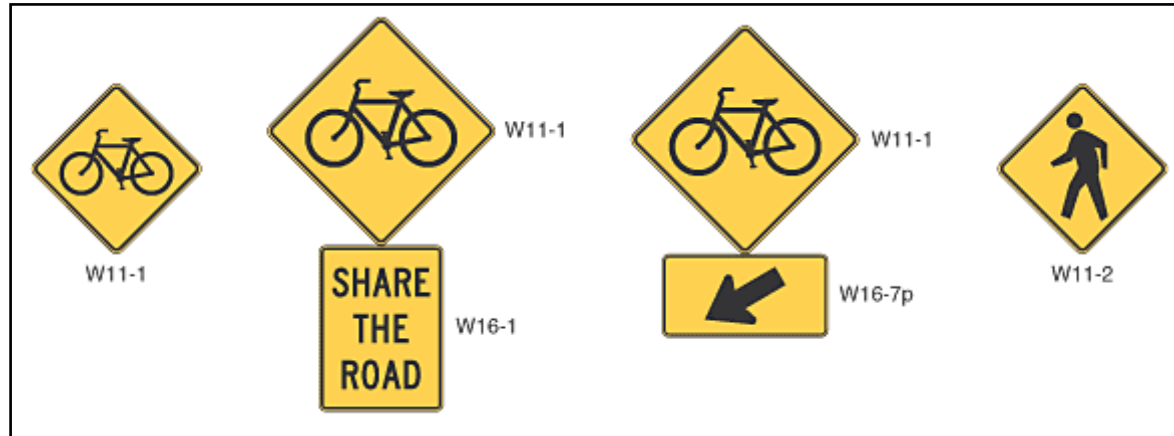
*Example of pedestrian-scale lighting (source: Schreder lighting)*



## Signage Projects 1 4 5 6 7 8 9 13 14

Enhanced signage presents an additional opportunity for the Town to foster an environment in West Vail that is more conducive to comfortable walking and bicycling trips. Installing signs that alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians and bicyclists serves as reminder to be vigilant. Signage should be prevalent throughout the community and installed using the requirements listed in Chapter 2 of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), 2009 edition.

The MUTCD stipulates that signs should be on dedicated posts, should be outside the clear zone (the area on the side of the roadway where vehicles can pull over in the event of an emergency), should be optimized for night-time visibility, should minimize the effects of mud splatter and debris, should not be positioned so as to obscure other signs, should not obscure the sight distance to approaching vehicles on the major street for drivers who are stopped on minor-street approaches, and should not be hidden from view. Sign location and spacing should be calculated according to driver Perception-Response Time (PRT). PRT is a function of distance and vehicle speed; for West Vail, where most residential streets have vehicles traveling 20-25 mph, signs should be placed a minimum of 100 feet before locations where pedestrians and bicyclists join the roadway. Subsequent sign spacing intervals should be determined based on PRT, which can be calculated using the MUTCD<sup>3</sup>. Signs should be placed at key locations where there is a high presence of people walking and biking. Per the MUTCD, warning signs alerting drivers to the presence of non-motorized travelers should be yellow with a black border. When a sign is placed ahead of a crossing it should also feature a supplemental plaque denoting the distance to the crossing. The proliferation of unnecessary signage should be avoided.



Non-vehicular warning signs (Source: MUTCD)

3. MUTCD, Section 2C.05 Placement of Warning Signs (2009)

### *Pedestrian Facilities*

Additional pedestrian facilities can greatly contribute to a sense of comfort during walking trips. As noted in the Existing Conditions, West Vail generally has limited presence of sidewalks outside of the dedicated multi-use paths and a segment of Chamonix Lane. Opportunities to add additional sidewalks on the residential streets in West Vail may be limited due to cost constraints or the existing right-of-way not being sufficiently wide to accommodate both vehicle travel lanes and sidewalks.

However, striped shoulders, like the example shown below on Chamonix Lane, are a treatment that has proven popular in the community. These striped shoulders provide a designated space for walking at a low cost. They also visually narrow the roadway, slowing vehicle speeds. Striped shoulders can be implemented on any roadway in West Vail where there is sufficient width for both a striped shoulder and two-way vehicle travel. An example of a roadway cross section with striped shoulders is shown in **Figure 4.7**. On more narrow roadways, striping can be added to one side of the street. Although this striped shoulder is not wide enough to meet the AASHTO requirements for a bike lane, this shoulder can still provide a designated space for people bicycling that is more comfortable than sharing the travel lane with vehicles.



*Example of striped shoulders on Chamonix Lane*

### *Vertical Traffic Calming Treatments*

Speed humps, or speed tables, were assessed as a potential treatment. According to NACTO, “speed humps are parabolic vertical traffic calming devices intended to slow traffic speeds on low volume, low speed roads. Speed humps are 3–4 inches high and 12–14 feet wide, with a ramp length of 3–6 feet, depending on target speed.” At this time, speed humps were not determined to be a feasible tool in West Vail due to the potential for impacting emergency vehicle response time and for impeding operations of maintenance equipment. While this type of traffic calming measure was not deemed appropriate as part of the West Vail Master Plan, the Town of Vail should collaborate with peer communities that are currently utilizing this treatment, like Breckenridge, to learn more about outcomes and how to potentially implement speed humps while limiting impacts to emergency vehicles and snow removal in the future.



**Priority Corridors for Multimodal and Traffic Calming Enhancements** Projects 5 6 7 8

Chamonix Lane, Gore Creek Road, Buffehr Creek Road, and Alpine Drive were identified as high priority corridors for traffic calming during the outreach and analysis process due to their higher vehicle volume and higher demand for walking and bicycling. Traffic calming enhancements should be implemented on these roadways first. While the traffic calming elements described previously can each be deployed independently, these priority roadways should implement the full set of traffic calming measures (striping, signage, and lighting) in order to become more comfortable travel facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. A rendering of a priority corridor is shown in **Figure 4.7**. Additional local roadways can also be evaluated for feasibility of this set of traffic calming enhancements.

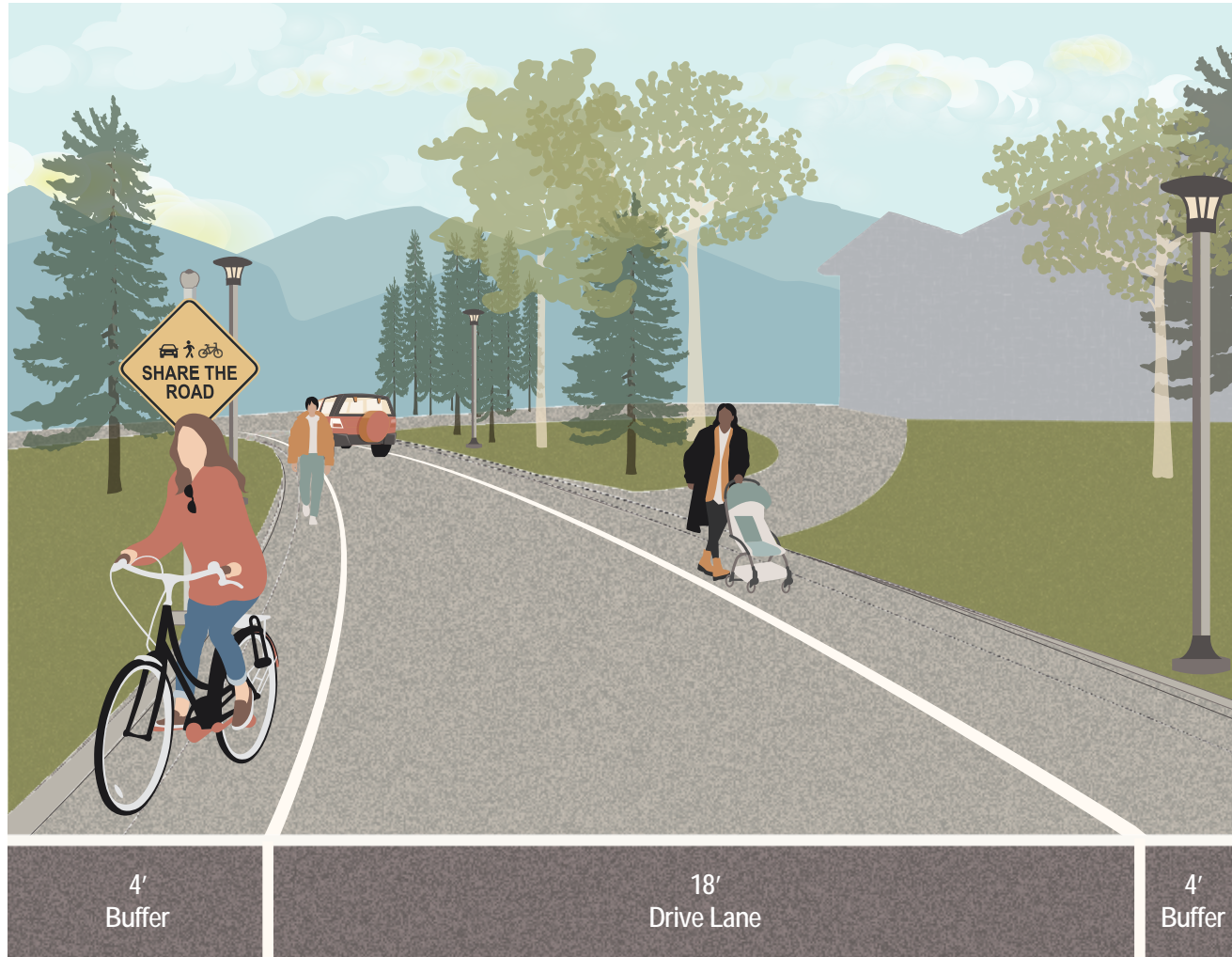


Figure 4.7: Illustration of Multimodal and Traffic Calming Enhancements

## Completing Existing Projects 9 16 Multi-use Paths

In addition, Chamonix Road is a critical connection for community members traveling from the North Frontage Road into the residential areas in the northern section of West Vail in the area from Ellefson Park to Buffehr Creek Road. There is a six-foot sidewalk planned for the eastern side of the roadway, extending from the rear of the Highline Doubletree Hotel, joining Chamonix Road across from Lower Traverse Way, and extending approximately 250 feet north to Chamonix Lane where the proposed sidewalk would be narrowed to five feet wide and would follow Chamonix Lane for approximately 300 feet. This planned sidewalk should be augmented by building a multi-use path with a minimum width of eight feet and extending the facility south to connect with the North Recreation Path at the North Frontage Road roundabout (Project #13). Since there is insufficient space available for a multi-use path that can accommodate bidirectional travel for bicyclists and pedestrians, the path should serve bidirectional traffic for people walking but only northbound bicyclists, with southbound bicyclists using the bike lane, as shown conceptually in **Figure 4.8**.

Signage should be installed to convey this traffic pattern. Given the grade of the roadway, southbound bicyclists will be traveling at a faster speed and should share the southbound travel lane on Chamonix Road with vehicles. Sharrow markings will be added to the southbound travel lane to alert drivers that the travel lane is a shared facility with people biking.



Figure 4.8: Illustration of a One-Way Bicycle Facility

The recreation path system through the Town of Vail is immensely popular and provides bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities the opportunity to enjoy multimodal travel on a dedicated right of way. However, the Gore Valley Trail and North Recreation Path should be further enhanced by extension into additional areas of the community.

The North Recreation Path could extend west of the roundabout to serve as a parallel travel facility to Chamonix Lane, provide access to the residential areas and trailhead in the western portion of the community, and to provide more comfortable access to the bus stop at the intersection of Chamonix Lane and North Frontage Road (Project #16). This portion of the North Recreation Path would also serve as a pedestrian facility for individuals traveling to or from the on-street parking available on this segment of the North Frontage Road.

The Gore Valley Trail currently serves as a separated facility for people bicycling and walking parallel to the South Frontage Road. However, west of the roundabout the Trail terminates as the South Frontage Road and users are required to travel on the South Frontage Road until the trail resumes a dedicated right of way west of Kinnickinnick Road (Project #9). The South Frontage Road has a wide shoulder but is not comfortable for many users given the high vehicle speeds and volumes. It is recommended to either extend the Gore Valley Trail west of the roundabout or implement more comfortable bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the South Frontage Road through treatments like bicycle lanes, wide striped shoulders, or additional sidewalks. The crossing from the current terminus of the path to the westbound lane of the South Frontage Road, just west of the traffic circle, should be striped with green thermoplastic pavement markings to denote the path continuation for bicyclists. This should also include W11-1 signage (the MUTCD designation for a bicycle sign) to alert drivers that people on bicycle will be crossing the roadway. This path extension would enhance connectivity between West Vail and destinations like Stephens Park.



## North Frontage Road Diet Project 15

The North Frontage Road currently has one travel lane in each direction. However, due to the high volume of vehicles turning into and out of the commercial driveways for the West Vail Mall, there are left and right turn deceleration and acceleration lanes along the corridor between the roundabout and Buffehr Creek Road. The existing cross section of the North Frontage Road is shown in **Figure 4.9**. These turn lanes create the perception that the North Frontage Road is four lanes wide, which results in higher vehicle speeds and uncomfortable conditions for people walking or bicycling along or across the North Frontage Road.

This plan recommends restrictions in access to driveways along the North Frontage Road, which results in the removal of acceleration and deceleration turn lanes at those locations. This allows for implementation of a road diet, which is the reallocation of right-of-way from vehicle travel/turn lanes to other uses like bicycle lanes or a landscaped median.

CDOT manages the North Frontage Road and requires turning lanes in locations where the volume of vehicles making a left or right turn during the peak hour exceeds certain thresholds. Given both the intensity of development programmed for the West Vail Center (detailed in Chapter 2) and the need to accommodate regional shopping trips with a high supply of on-site parking, it is unlikely that the need for

deceleration turn lanes where access points are located will decrease over time. Therefore, anywhere there is a driveway with right turn access, a right turn lane will be needed and anywhere there is left turn access, a left turn lane will be needed. However, acceleration lanes are not required and turn lanes can be removed in locations where access points are closing or left turn movements are restricted. This plan recommends that the Town of Vail update the 2009 Access Management Plan to either close access points or restrict left turns into and out of certain access points in order to alleviate the need for auxiliary lanes. These access recommendations are expanded in greater detail in the following section (project #17).

The additional roadway space gained from removing turn lanes could be reallocated to develop a roadway cross section that enhances access for users of all modes while also creating a more inviting and aesthetically pleasing environment. It is proposed that part of the right-of-way be dedicated to a raised center median with landscaping. This median would serve to both visually narrow the vehicle travel lanes, which would have a traffic calming effect, while creating a visual buffer between I-70 and West Vail Center. The road diet should be studied further in light of potential increases in vehicle trips associated with the redevelopment of West Vail Center. At the next phase of design, further study will be required to assess impacts to emergency services and snow removal.

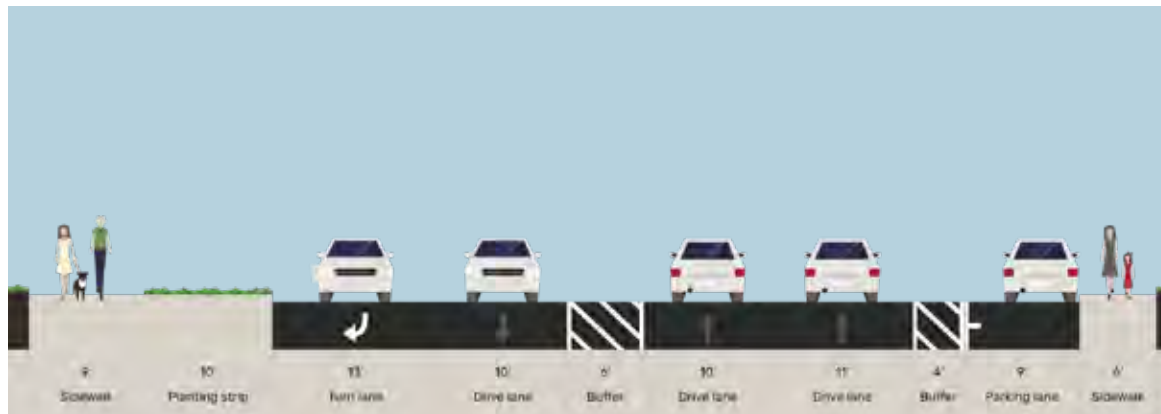


Figure 4.9: North Frontage Road - Existing Cross Section (at Safeway Driveway, Eastbound)

Potential scenarios of cross sections for the North Frontage Road following the road diet implementation are shown in **Figure 4.10**, **Figure 4.11**, and **Figure 4.12**. By removing the eastbound left turn lane, the existing striped buffer next to the eastbound parking lane can serve as a bicycle lane through the corridor. In locations where the westbound right turn lane is removed due to closure of an access, a protected bicycle lane can be added. Alternatively, the additional right-of-way gained by removal of a westbound right turn lane could be utilized for on-street parking. In all alternatives, the curb-to-curb width remains consistent to the existing conditions.

**Figure 4.10** shows a location where there is a right turn pocket and a buffered bike lane in both the eastbound and westbound directions. The buffered bike lane is located between the travel lane and parked lane. This requires additional width of a second buffer but may be more intuitive for bicyclists and reduce conflicts with users entering and existing parked vehicles. This cross section is preferred at locations that require a turn lane.

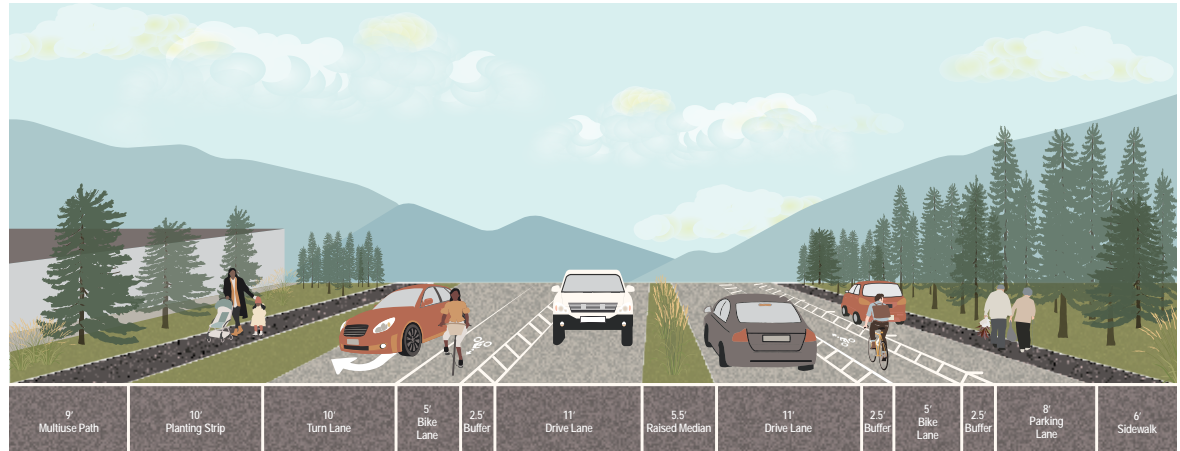


Figure 4.10: North Frontage Road Cross Section: Eastbound and Westbound Buffered Bike Lanes with Right Turn

**Figure 4.11** shows a similar cross section to **Figure 4.10** except at a mid-block location without a right turn access present. The additional right-of-way allows space for a wider bike lane, buffer, and landscaped median. This cross section is preferred at mid-block locations.

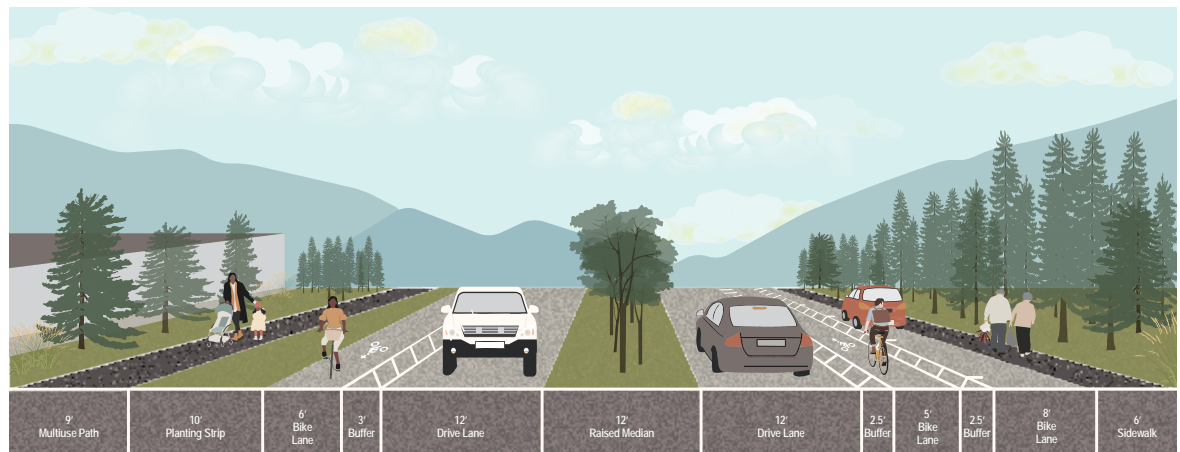
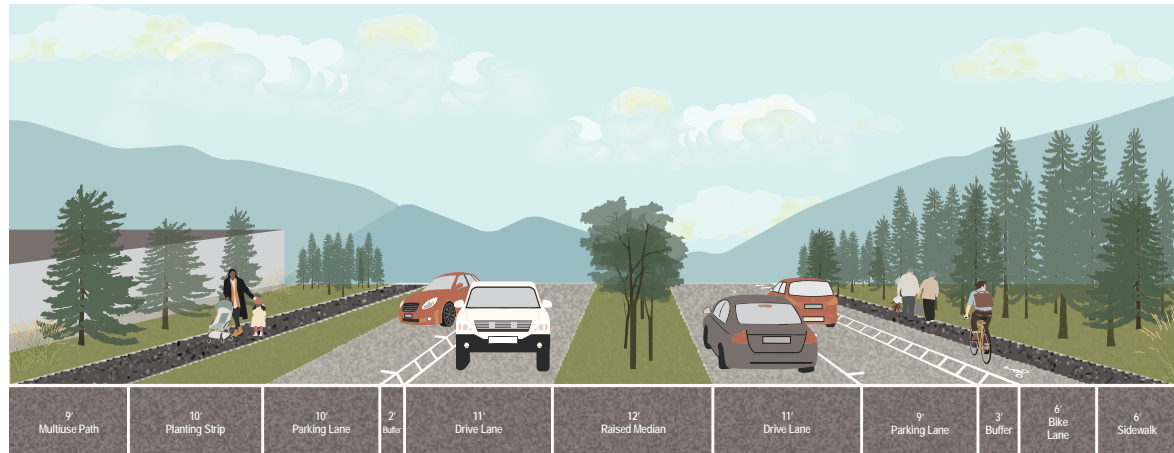


Figure 4.11: North Frontage Road Cross Section: Eastbound and Westbound Buffered Bike Lanes with no Right Turn



**Figure 4.12** shows a cross section option at a mid-block location where there is no right turn lane required. This shows parking on both sides of North Frontage Road and a parking protected bike lane just eastbound. Westbound bicyclists are expected to ride on the multi-use path on the north side of the roadway. The parking protected bike lane offers additional protection from moving traffic by using the parking as a buffer. This scenario may experience more pedestrian conflicts, as users travel to or from their parked vehicle.



*Figure 4.12: North Frontage Road Cross Section: Eastbound Buffered Bike Lanes with On-Street Parking Both Sides*

Concern was voiced by Advisory Committee members that snow currently impedes travel in two of the four travel lanes on the North Frontage Road. The need for snow storage along the North Frontage Road while maintaining uninterrupted movement of all modes is a complicating factor, but there are both design and programmatic strategies that can be used to address this challenge. For example, the Town could adopt a policy that on-street parking is prohibited during major snow events and the parking lane could be utilized for temporary snow storage. Alternatively, the median could be designed to accommodate snow storage by featuring a rollover curb with a landscaped bed. Snow can be stored between the travel lane and the landscaping, or atop landscaping that is latent in the winter months.

In addition to snow storage, sufficient space must be allocated for accommodating movement adjacent to parked vehicles. With the presence of North Frontage Road on-street parking, a sufficient buffer between parked vehicles and traffic should be provided to ensure open vehicle doors do not pose a hazard and that people exiting vehicles on the driver's side have sufficient space to maneuver. An additional consideration prior to implementation is emergency vehicle response time. Further study will be needed to examine any potential impacts on response times for fire engines, ambulances, or any other emergency vehicles that must utilize the corridor.

The North Frontage Road has the opportunity to become a comfortable multimodal route for West Vail and the road diet plays a key role in the reimagining of this critical local and regional travel facility.

## Crossings

To improve the safety of crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists, it is recommended that enhanced crossings be added at several locations where pedestrians currently experience uncomfortable conditions.

### *West Vail Center Driveways* Project 17

Vehicles seeking to turn out of the West Vail Center driveways are forced to block the North Recreation Path crossings in order to provide the necessary sightline to find a gap in traffic to exit the driveway. It is recommended that the path crossing at each driveway be moved north, towards the commercial businesses, so that vehicles can clear the path crossing prior to waiting for a turning opportunity. The path crossings should be kept clear using signage alerting drivers to the path crossing, paving or painting treatments that delineate the path from the driveway (such as green paint or brick pavers), a vertical treatment that raises the path crossing above the driveway maintaining the grade of the path, or a combination of all three. The recommended path crossing treatment is shown in **Figure 4.13**.



Figure 4.13: North Recreation Path Crossing at City Market Driveway

## Buffehr Creek Road at North Frontage Road Project 1

The crossing of Buffehr Creek Road for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling on the North Recreation Path can be hazardous due to westbound vehicles entering the widened shoulder to make right-turn movements onto Buffehr Creek Road as shown here. This issue can be addressed through the installation of bollards along the shoulder that would prevent vehicles from utilizing the facility as a turn lane. The bollards should be placed inside of a two-foot wide painted buffer to add additional separation between vehicles and path users. These bollards should extend further east than the intersection, as shown here, as an interim treatment to provide vertical protection on the section of trail that is a wide shoulder. In the long-term, this section of shoulder should be upgraded to a trail. Additional signage increasing driver awareness of the on-street bicycle facility should also be installed. In addition, green thermoplastic pavement markings can be added in between the white lines of the crosswalk to delineate the crosswalk as a path of travel for bicyclists.



*Buffehr Creek Road and North Frontage Road intersection*



*Example of a wide shoulder protected by bollards*



## Mid-block North Frontage Road Crossing Project 12

The current mid-block pedestrian crossing at the bus stop on North Frontage Road is uncomfortable for pedestrians, given the speed and volume of vehicles. The multimodal travel improvements and transit enhancements recommended in this chapter may increase the demand for pedestrian crossings on the North Frontage Road even further. It is recommended that an enhanced crossing treatment like a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) (shown here) be installed on the North Frontage Road between the existing bus stops. RRFBs are currently in place at the existing roundabout crossings, so there is already community familiarity with this type of crossing device. Given the proposed changes to the cross section of North Frontage Road, further study of the volume and speed on the roadway should be conducted to confirm the appropriate crossing treatment. Town of Vail can reference the *City and County of Denver's Uncontrolled Pedestrian Crossing Guidelines*<sup>4</sup> to understand how vehicle volume and speed will impact pedestrian crossing treatments.



Example of an enhanced crosswalk with a RRFB

4. [https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/705/documents/guidelines/PWES-015.0-Uncontrolled\\_Pedestrian\\_Crossing\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/705/documents/guidelines/PWES-015.0-Uncontrolled_Pedestrian_Crossing_Guidelines.pdf)

## Roundabouts Projects 4 14

During community outreach, community members shared that crossing the roundabouts as a pedestrian or bicyclist is difficult under existing conditions. It is recommended that additional signage and lighting be installed at the roundabouts to both alert drivers to the presence of bicyclists and pedestrians and to inform active transportation users of vehicles exiting I-70. Each leg of the roundabout should have an RRFB installed, similar to that which is on the northeast leg of the roundabout currently. The sidewalk on the northwest side of the roundabout should also be widened to at least six feet. To control the flow of active users crossing at the roundabouts, the western side of the I-70 underpass should be open to pedestrians only. By restricting bicycle travel to the eastern crossing, drivers will encounter bicyclists on only one side of the roundabout and pedestrians will enjoy the full right of way on the western crossing. Signage should be added to alert people biking to use the eastern side of the underpass.

The new roundabout east of the study area provides an example of an intersection treatment that serves all users. The roundabout has only one travel lane in each direction, which can help calm vehicle speeds and provide a more comfortable experience for those navigating the roundabout by bicycle or walking (shown here).

While the North Frontage Road roundabout pedestrian crossings have RRFB signals, Town staff expressed concern that the pedestrian signals were being underutilized. Signage encouraging pedestrians to request the crossing lights should be installed to aid in the education of users.



*Roundabout at the Simba Run underpass*

### Formalizing Desire Lines Project 3

Pedestrians in West Vail will sometimes take informal paths that serve as direct connections to their destination; these paths are created over time by pedestrians taking the shortest connection. These paths are not recognized by the Town of Vail and are not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These paths demonstrate there is a community need for more direct walking paths. In order to make these pathways more accessible to community members of all ages and abilities, it is recommended the Town surface three of these paths with either pavement or crusher fines that would allow travelers using wheelchairs, baby strollers, or other devices to also enjoy these additional pedestrian connections. Two of the proposed formalized paths enhance pedestrian access to the West Vail Center by providing an accessible path from Chamonix Lane to the center. The third recommended connection provides access between Garmisch Drive and Chamonix Lane, providing enhanced connectivity for people walking and biking.



*Example of pedestrian desire line between Chamonix Lane and the North Frontage Road businesses*

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing of I-70 Project 11

I-70 presents a major barrier for pedestrians and bicyclists seeking to connect between the northern and southern portions of West Vail. There is community support for additional infrastructure that would connect the two sides of the community and allow for non-motorized crossings in between the two existing underpasses to help minimize out of direction travel. A grade separated, overcrossing would require further study to determine feasibility and an appropriate location. The picture to the right shows an example of a bicycle and pedestrian bridge in Portland, OR to provide inspiration for what a potential I-70 crossing could look like. It is recommended the Town of Vail further study the opportunity to meet this transportation need.

The Town of Vail can also consider a larger capital project to connect both sides of West Vail. “Highway capping,” the practice of building over an interstate highway to create room for new community assets like



*Rendering of a proposed pedestrian Blumenauer Bridge, City of Portland, OR*



parks, lower-speed surface streets, or development, is becoming popular in heavily urbanized areas (shown below). As a significant regional destination and a growing community, the Town of Vail can explore the opportunity of putting a cap over I-70 in order to create new space in an otherwise geographically constrained setting, eliminate the barrier that is currently challenging community cohesiveness, expand the walk and bikeshed of West Vail by improving connectivity, and to create a more welcoming environment for both residents and visitors.



*Before and after - highway capping project in Dallas, TX (source: Klyde Warren Park)*

## Access Management Project 3

The 2009 Vail Transportation Master Plan featured an Access Management Plan that has not yet been fully implemented. The West Vail Master Plan updates the 2009 Access Management Plan to support implementation of the recommended road diet for the North Frontage Road and to improve conditions at a key crossing of the Gore Valley Trail along the South Frontage Road.

**Figure 4.14** displays the update to the 2009 Access Management Plan as it pertains to the North Frontage Road. The key modifications include addition of a roundabout at the driveway that currently serves Safeway and to no longer add a driveway adjacent to the bus stop. This roundabout would have mountable curbs to support emergency vehicle

movements during periods of congestion. The access plan will evolve as new development occurs and the recommendations for West Vail Center discussed in Chapter 2 are implemented. Circulation impacts from any new roundabout, including implications for emergency vehicle response time, should be assessed prior to design and construction. For example, if/when the existing parking structure adjacent to City Market is redeveloped, the driveway serving that parking structure will be converted to a right-in/right-out access point and the driveway immediately to the west will become a full movement access point. The driveway closure for access point 2 shown in **Figure 4.14** is contingent on future redevelopment. The Town of Vail should implement the updates to the 2009 Access Management Plan in the near-term in order to facilitate the North Frontage Road road diet and complement the redevelopment of West Vail Center.



Figure 4.14: Proposed Modifications to the 2009 Access Management Plan



Along the South Frontage Road, the gas station east of the roundabout currently has two full access driveways. The 2009 Access Management Plan proposed that the western driveway shown in **Figure 4.25** remain full access while the eastern driveway be converted to ¾ access once the gas station is redeveloped. However, the Gore Valley Trail crosses both driveways and there is an ECO Transit stop located in between the two driveways so it is recommended that access restrictions be put in place in the near-term, prior to redevelopment, to ensure trail users and transit riders can access this location. As shown in **Figure 4.15**, it is recommended that the driveways be converted to one-way, with the western driveway serving vehicles entering the gas station

and the eastern driveway serving vehicles that are exiting. It is also recommended that the driveway access be narrowed and the curb radii tightened (Project #10). This will slow down turning vehicles and reduce the size of the conflict area between turning vehicles and people walking and biking on the South Frontage Road sidewalk. Lastly, the island between the two driveways should be extended north, as shown in the gray box in **Figure 4.15**. This still allows space for the bus to pick up passengers at that stop outside of the South Frontage Road right-of-way, but reduces the amount of pavement and conflict area between vehicles and people walking and biking.



Figure 4.15: Proposed Access Management for South Frontage Road Gas Station Driveways



## TRANSIT

There are several recommendations and associated strategies the Town of Vail and Vail Transit should consider for maintaining existing ridership, looking for opportunities to attract new riders, better leveraging resources, and adapting for the future. These recommendations are summarized in **Table 4.2**. The following section profiles a mobility hub that will be implemented at the West Vail Center along with four recommendations for improving transit service. Additional recommendations that impact transit are made in other sections of this report. These include Transportation Demand Management strategies and bicycle and pedestrian connections that serve as first and last mile solutions.

Table 4.2: Summary of Transit Recommendations

TRANSIT RECOMMENDATION CODE	NAME	DESCRIPTION
1	Annual Performance Evaluation of Current System and Continuous Improvement	Vail Transit can take on a performance monitoring program to analyze ridership, route productivity, and customer/community feedback on an annual basis. The results can help Vail Transit regularly adjust service to best match needs.
2	ECO Transit Service Integration	The opening of the Mobility Hub will likely spur need for an additional ECO Transit connection in West Vail. Vail Transit can coordinate with ECO Transit to identify opportunities for better aligning the two services.
3	Consider a Ride-Hailing Partnership for Late Night Service	While Vail Transit currently does not offer late night service due to the operating cost, community members would value after hours transportation service. A ride-hailing partnership could fill that transportation need at a relatively low cost.
4	Ongoing Bus Stop Connectivity and Access Improvement	Improving access to bus stops by adding more shelters, bike racks, signage, adding paved walkways leading to stops, and other case-by-case treatments would enable more community members to connect with Vail Transit service.
5	Mobility Hub	A Mobility Hub is a location for a bus stop that includes other first last mile connections and a comfortable, intuitive place to connect for people traveling from across the region.

## Annual Performance Evaluation of Current System and Continuous Improvement Project 1

The introduction of the West Vail Express route is an example of how Vail Transit has continually evaluated its routes and overall connectivity to improve the rider experience. It is recommended that Vail Transit continue to annually review each route, its performance (ridership gain or loss year-over-year, route productivity, and seasonal variations), and customer/community feedback received to identify possible route adjustments and service level changes that may be necessary.

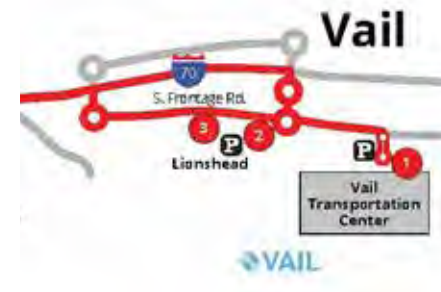
Some opportunities that may be worthy of future consideration include:

- Improved East Vail to West Vail connectivity (for example, without having to make a transfer at the Vail Transportation Center)
- Ability to move more seamlessly between destinations on the south and north sides of I-70 within West Vail
- Reconfiguration of routing in response to infrastructure and development changes (e.g., the proposed mobility hub in West Vail)

## ECO Transit Service Integration Project 2

ECO Transit service can be more fully integrated into West Vail, possibly adjusting routing to the Valley Route to connect to Vail Transit bus stops on the North Frontage Road. Although largely out of the control of Vail Transit and dependent on ECO Transit's ability to make this change, which would impact ECO Transit operationally, this recommendation will become especially important as the proposed North Frontage Road mobility hub is built. Having ECO Transit make a stop at the proposed mobility hub will be critical for overall regional transit connectivity.

The Town of Vail and Vail Transit should discuss this need with ECO Transit and work towards a mutual agreement on how this connectivity could be achieved and how negative impacts will be mitigated.



ECO Transit service in West Vail

### Consider a Ride Hailing Partnership Project 3 for Late Night Service

Another opportunity area is late night service (trips after 9:00 PM), when West Vail travel patterns change to more variable needs. An option to consider for replacing at least a portion of West Vail fixed route bus service could be a ride hailing partnership with a transportation network company (TNC) such as Uber or Lyft. Vail Transit may find that ride hailing could better serve some of the West Vail late night transportation needs by creating a flexible model where riders are picked up and dropped off according to individual needs, while still allowing for the possibility for trips to group multiple passengers.

### Ongoing Bus Stop Connectivity Project 4 and Access Improvement

Vail Transit can improve the rider experience by continuing to make incremental bus stop infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalk/pathway connectivity, bus shelters, bike racks, bus pullouts, and passenger loading/unloading pads. Safety, accessibility, and user comfort all benefit from these investments and should be included in the Town of Vail's ongoing capital improvement plan. This chapter includes a number of recommendations that will improve first and last mile connections for people biking and walking to transit including a proposed mobility hub.

A part of this recommendation is potentially adding new stops or moving existing stops as transit rider needs and land use changes within West Vail. One example of this is the potential need for a new bus stop opposite of the existing West Vail Fire Station bus stop; this request was made as a part of the outreach effort of this plan (**Figure 4.16**). A new stop would eliminate riders having to spend time to go the opposite direction of their likely desired travel destination when getting on at the West Vail Fire Station. Further study should be completed to understand the costs and benefits of this new stop.



Figure 4.16: Proposed West Vail Fire Station Bus Stop



## Mobility Hub Project 5

As discussed in Chapter 2, a mobility hub located at the West Vail Center would allow users to switch seamlessly between transportation modes and be less reliant on a vehicle. The mobility hub could include a structure similar to the existing Lionshead Transportation Center (shown here) with dynamic real time displays showing bus arrival information, a kiosk that both provides trip planning resources and offers travelers an opportunity to purchase coffee or food items, power outlets, and wireless internet. In addition, the mobility hub could host a bike share station, secure bicycle storage, charging stations for electric bicycles, and a designated area for ride share loading and unloading (Figure 4.17).



Figure 4.28: Lionshead Transportation Center



Figure 4.17: Illustration of West Vail Center Transit Mobility Hub

## POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The infrastructure enhancements described in this chapter can meet the goals of the West Vail Master Plan if they are supported by a policy framework that helps to guide plan implementation. **Table 4.3** summarizes the transportation policies and programs being recommended for West Vail. These range from parking management policies to recommendations on how best to prepare West Vail for the growing prevalence of electric vehicles.

### Parking Policy Recommendation 1

#### 1.1 - Shared Parking

The Town of Vail zoning regulations currently require varying numbers of parking spaces for commercial businesses based on the type of establishment. For example, eating and drinking establishments are required to have 1.0 space per 250 square feet of seating floor area and retail stores are required to have 2.3 spaces per 1,000 square feet of net floor area. The Town also provides credits for multiple use, or shared, parking facilities. Shared parking facilities are parking areas that serve multiple businesses; this is especially effective when businesses have complementary peak demand times. Shared parking facilities receive a 2.5 percent reduction in parking spaces when the shared parking facility has 101-200 spaces, and the reduction increases by 2.5 percent for every 100 vehicle increment up to 1,000 or more spaces, or a 25 percent reduction.

The West Vail Center, as described in Chapter 2, will provide ample shared parking to businesses. It will also be connected both locally and regionally by high quality bicycle and pedestrian connections along with a mobility hub for transit riders. Since West Vail Center will integrate into a multimodal transportation network, it is recommended the Town allow additional multiple use parking credits to ensure that while parking be made available, West Vail Center will also be a destination that community members can reach by foot, bicycle, or bus.

#### 1.2 - Parking Minimum Reductions

In addition to the multiple use parking credits the Town offers for multiple land uses sharing a parking facility, it is also recommended the Town provide additional reductions for shared parking facilities that are located adjacent to a transit stop or served by the low-stress bicycle network. Development located adjacent to multimodal facilities will have fewer patrons arriving by private vehicle and thus requiring parking. By lowering the amount of parking required, the Town can reduce the cost of additional development while helping to promote active travel modes.

#### 1.3 - Oversize Vehicle Parking

The Town of Vail determined in early 2021 that the Children's Garden of Learning will be temporarily relocated from its current site to the Charter Bus Lot on the South Frontage Road. This relocation causes a need for oversize vehicles to park elsewhere in the community. Per a study conducted by the Town in January 2021, it was determined that a temporary location for oversize vehicle parking could be along the North Frontage Road either west of the West Vail Fire Station or across from City Market. Both locations would conflict with the recommendations of the West Vail Master Plan and are likely not suitable long-term solutions. At the time the West Vail Master Plan was being finalized, the Town was examining multiple locations throughout the community to store oversize vehicles with the goal of offering a variety of oversize vehicle parking options rather than concentrating that type of parking in a single location. As the Town begins to implement the transportation recommendations of this Master Plan, care should be taken not to locate permanent oversize vehicle parking in any location where those vehicles may present a conflict with the existing or new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Table 4.3: Summary of Policy Areas and Supporting Programs

POLICY CODE	NAME	DESCRIPTION
1	Parking	Revisiting the Town of Vail’s maintenance policy to consider prioritizing snow removal on travel facilities utilized by bicyclists and pedestrians can help make multimodal transportation a more reliable travel option throughout the year. This policy can be accomplished through acquisition of specialized equipment.
2	Maintenance	Electric vehicles are increasingly common but rural communities have lower adoption rates due to a lack of charging infrastructure. The Town of Vail can encourage greater usage of electric vehicles by residents and visitors through provision of public charging stations throughout the community. Autonomous vehicles, while not yet prevalent, carry significant implications for transportation that the Town of Vail can proactively address through policies that would manage autonomous vehicle flows and ensure their operations can integrate into existing mobility patterns as smoothly as possible.
3	Technology	The Town of Vail can enact a municipal-level Transportation Demand Management program that incentivizes people to travel by foot, bicycle, transit, or shared vehicle rides whenever possible. Incentives can include a robust marketing campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of multimodal travel or a parking cash-out program that provides a monetary award to businesses that commit to not utilize their full parking allotment.
4	Transportation Demand Management	Improving access to bus stops by adding more shelters, bike racks, signage, adding paved walkways leading to stops, and other case-by-case treatments would enable more community members to connect with Vail Transit service.
5	Bikeshare	Building on the successful bike sharing pilot that the Town of Vail operated in 2020, the Town can adopt a permanent bikeshare program to facilitate bicycle travel between popular destinations within the community. The full program should include hubs in neighborhoods or at local parks to further support bike mobility.
6	Wayfinding	It is recommended the Town of Vail expand upon its existing wayfinding signage program by installing additional signage in locations where new multimodal infrastructure is added and to add bicycle and walking travel time information onto existing and new signs. The proliferation of unnecessary signage should be avoided.
7	Data Collection	To help understand transportation network performance over time, the Town of Vail should implement an extensive data collection program that would facilitate performance tracking. Metrics like transit ridership, vehicle speeds, and bicycle/pedestrian volumes will inform whether how well the transportation network is serving users of all modes and will also support decision-making on prioritizing implementation of proposed transportation projects.



## Maintenance Policy Recommendation 2

One of the chief barriers to walking and bicycling in West Vail that community members identified is the frequency of snow events in the winter. The Town currently plows streets and multi-use paths based on a priority system, with the Frontage Roads and roundabouts being top priority and residential streets being a lower priority, followed by sidewalks and multi-use paths as the lowest priority. The priority system is intended to designate routes that must be plowed by 8:00 am following a snow event (top priority) and routes that must be plowed no later than 9:30 am (lowest priority). While the interval is not long, snow concerns that are not addressed by morning commute time will limit options for walking or bicycling trips. Procurement of additional specialized equipment for plowing sidewalks, proposed separated bicycle facilities and multi-use paths may allow the Town to maintain those facilities concurrently with top priority facilities, which would allow community members more travel options during winter weather events.



*Electric vehicle charging station in Vail*

## Technology Policy Recommendation 3

### 3.1 - Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicles (EV) are a growing share of the overall vehicle fleet due to a combination of factors, including regulatory and financial incentives that encourage production and use, a growing number of auto manufacturers offering EV options, and consumer preferences that are shifting towards more environmentally sustainable travel modes. While EVs bring community benefits, with lower levels of noise and tailpipe emissions, the technology can be more difficult to adopt in rural communities where driving trips tend to be longer and where cold weather may impact battery performance. To better accommodate EV integration, the Town of Vail can provide both on-street and off-street EV charging stations as well as incentives and requirements for provision of EV charging stations and infrastructure by developers. For example, EV charging stations could be installed as part of the West Vail Center redevelopment.

### 3.2 - Autonomous Vehicles

While not yet widely available, West Vail has an opportunity to begin planning for Autonomous vehicles (AVs) to ensure the community is able to maximize the benefits of this new technology while minimizing potential downsides. While AVs can potentially open new travel opportunities for community members who do not drive, decrease parking demand, and potentially reduce traffic collisions, there may also be some drawbacks. Research on travel behaviors suggests that AVs may increase overall travel demand while decreasing transit usage. To preempt some of the potentially negative impacts, the Town can take measures such as: proactively installing sensing technology to help manage vehicle flows; updating parking requirements and building standards to reflect a potentially lower need for parking as well as modifying parking facility designs to accommodate driverless vehicles and establishing a program for integrating any shared AV services (e.g. autonomous Uber or Lyft vehicles) with the future mobility hub to ensure travelers have the opportunity to easily connect with transit service.

## Transportation Demand Management Policy Recommendation 4

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a set of strategies and policies for incentivizing people to travel by means other than driving alone. Instead of providing additional transportation supply, TDM identifies barriers to using existing but under-utilized transportation options and provides tools for overcoming those barriers. For example, community members might utilize transit at a lower rate because they are unaware their local bus route serves a significant shopping center. A marketing campaign about local transit service is a low-cost intervention that may shift some vehicle trips onto existing bus service. The Town of Vail can look to TDM as a tool for encouraging community members to utilize the expanded multimodal facilities and additional transit service that may emerge as a result of the West Vail Master Plan.

Successful TDM programs are multifaceted. For instance, the Town can pair marketing campaigns about the benefits of transit service with a parking supply management program like encouraging property owners to lease parking spaces separately from dwelling units in order to disincentivize vehicle ownership. To ensure West Vail is a place where non-vehicle owners can have an uncompromised experience of the community, the Town will have to deploy diverse TDM strategies in tandem with one another.

## Bike Share Policy Recommendation 5

The Town of Vail enjoyed a successful bike share pilot in the summer of 2020. Riders logged over 900 miles of travel in the first four weeks of the pilot, which exceeded projections. West Vail had three bike share stations located at Ellefson Park, the bus stop adjacent to the West Vail Mall, and at Donovan Park (just outside of the project area of this Plan). The popularity of the program suggests there is a community need for additional transportation options and bike share is effective for facilitating short-distance travel that is environmentally friendly and does not represent a disproportionately high cost burden for the Town. It is recommended that the Town make bike share a permanent option for the warm weather months and that additional station locations be evaluated throughout West Vail. Bike share stations can be funded through Town subsidies or private development and user fees can help offset operating costs.



*Bike share pilot in Vail*

## Wayfinding Policy Recommendation 6

In order to make West Vail a more multimodal community, the Town should expand the current existing wayfinding signage program (example shown below) to locations in West Vail where additional multimodal enhancements are proposed. For example, the additional shoulder striping proposed for Chamonix Lane, Gore Creek Road, Buffehr Creek Road, and Alpine Drive may induce additional walking and bicycling trips; wayfinding signage should be visible throughout these corridors. In addition to expanding the presence of signage, the Town should also consider adding walking and bicycling travel time to help multimodal users better plan their travel.



*Example of existing wayfinding signage in West Vail*

## Data Collection Policy Recommendation 7

To facilitate future transportation planning efforts, the Town of Vail should implement a data collection and performance tracking system. Data on factors like 85th percentile vehicle speeds, traffic volumes on key roadways, bicycle and pedestrian counts, and transit ridership by stop can be used to identify travel patterns in West Vail and enable the Town to respond to shifts in travel demand. In addition, a data collection program will position the Town to understand the breadth of mobility issues more fully. For example, while vehicle speeds were cited as a concern during the outreach process, data from a recent speed study suggested vehicles travel at speeds close to the posted speed limit on most West Vail roadways. However, the speed study represented a limited number of observations; conducting speed studies at regular intervals will allow staff to monitor roadway safety conditions and proactively respond based on trends that emerge.

**Table 4.4** shows some of the metrics that the Town of Vail can track along with the benefits of tracking each metric. The Town of Vail can use traditional infrared equipment to collect vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian counts. In addition, the Town can leverage new Big Data sources that utilize anonymously tracked cell phone GPS data to identify origins and destinations as well as travel routes. Utilizing Big Data would allow the Town to develop a data tracking process that relies less on physical infrastructure, and thus data can be collected more regularly.



Table 4.4: Proposed Metrics for Transportation Performance Tracking in West Vail

METRIC	TRACKING BENEFIT
Vehicle Volumes (Average Annual Daily Traffic and peak hour turning movement counts)	Gaining a better understanding of traffic volumes through West Vail to help determine where capacity issues may exist.
Vehicle Speeds	Conducting speed studies at regular intervals can help the Town understand if there are particular locations where enforcement or traffic calming measures are needed. Speed studies can be targeted to certain corridors. 85th percentile speed will also inform the appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities to ensure people of all ages and abilities feel comfortable walking and biking.
On-Street Parking Occupancy and Duration	As the West Vail Center redevelops, there may be additional demand for on-street parking on the North Frontage Road. Regularly studying parking occupancy and duration will allow the community to make informed decisions about whether additional parking regulations are needed to help manage the supply of on-street parking spaces.
Bicycle Counts and Pedestrian Counts	Anecdotally, the multi-use paths traveling through West Vail are utilized at a high rate. Tracking counts of pedestrians and bicyclists on the paths, as well as other multimodal facilities in the community, can help the Town better understand travel behavior, which in turn will inform the understanding of mode share. This will also assess if the pedestrian volume threshold for mid-block pedestrian crossings is met.
Transit Ridership by Stop	Vail Transit is undertaking a transition to an Automated Passenger Counting system. This data can show stop-level transit ridership in West Vail, which will help the community make decisions on scheduling and service hours.
Mode Share for All Trips	While the Census Bureau reports mode share for work commute trips based on travel survey data, communities like West Vail should not rely solely on Census mode share data because of the high rate of recreation-related travel. Tracking and reporting mode share will help the Town identify whether additional resources should be allocated to any particular travel mode.

# IMPLEMENTATION

Planning level cost estimates for the transportation infrastructure projects recommended in this chapter are shown in **Table 4.5**. The total estimated cost of recommended projects is approximately \$16.7 million. Given the significant recommended investment in transportation, phased implementation can be pursued in order to help the Town of Vail adequately budget for these improvements over time.

The implementation phasing shown in **Table 4.5** splits recommended projects into the short- (0-5 years), medium- (6-10 years), and long-terms (10+ years).

Table 4.5: Planning Level Cost Estimates and Phasing for Transportation Projects

PROJECT CODE	PROJECT	ELEMENTS	PLANNING LEVEL COST ESTIMATE	IMPLEMENTATION PHASE
1	N Frontage Road @ Buffehr Creek Road	Buffered bicycle lane	\$ 44,000	Short term
2	N Frontage Road & Safeway	Signage	\$ 332,000	Short term for crossing, Long term for mobility hub
3	Chamonix Lane, behind City Market	Enhanced Crossing	\$ 222,000	Medium term
4	Roundabout on North Frontage Road	Mobility Hub	\$ 10,000	Short term
5	Chamonix Lane	Enhanced Crossing	\$1,013,000	Short term
6	Buffehr Creek Road	Multi-use path connections	\$ 3,000	Short term
7	Gore Creek Drive	Signage	\$ 235,000	Short term
8	Alpine Drive	Shoulder striping, Signage, Lighting	\$ 79,000	Short term

PROJECT CODE	PROJECT	ELEMENTS	PLANNING LEVEL COST ESTIMATE	IMPLEMENTATION PHASE
9	South Frontage Road (west of roundabout)	Signs every 325 feet for 1,750 ft (2 sign types), Enhanced crossing (280 sq ft)	\$ 8,000	Short term
10	S Frontage Road @ Conoco Station	Enhanced path crossing, Loading island for bus stop	\$ 73,000	Short term for Gore Valley Trail crossing, Medium term for bus stop island
11	Bicycle and Pedestrian Grade Separated Crossing of I-70	Bicycle and pedestrian bridge	\$5,850,000	Long term
12	Extend North Frontage Road multi-use path east of Buffehr Creek Road	Multi-use path extension	\$ 352,000	Long term
13	Chamonix Road	Multi-use path, Signage, Sharrow markings	\$ 173,000	Medium term with hotel redevelopment
14	I-70 Underpass	Signage	\$ 1,000	Short term
15	North Frontage Road	Buffered bicycle lane, Raised median, Striping	\$ 122,000	Medium term
16	North Frontage Road between Chamonix Lane (southwest) and roundabout	Multi-use path, Pedestrian-scale lighting	\$ 560,000	Long term
17	North Frontage Road and South Frontage Road Driveways	Signage, Turning islands, Striping	\$7,552,000	Medium term
18	North Frontage Road and Buffehr Creek Road	Pedestrian-scale lighting	\$ 109,000	Short term
<b>TOTAL COST OF IMPROVEMENTS</b>			<b>\$16,738,000</b>	



## FUNDING SOURCES

The following section summarizes outside funding sources the Town of Vail could pursue in order to implement the transportation projects recommended in this chapter. The list of funding sources shown here is not exhaustive and is intended to supplement local spending on transportation infrastructure improvements.



*RAISE is the federal transportation bill passed in 2021*

## Federal

- **Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP):** Projects that address safety issues on any local or regional public roads and trails or paths can be eligible. The funded activities must be consistent with Colorado’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan and projects are selected competitively through CDOT. While many of the projects listed in this chapter may have a safety benefit, especially for active transportation users, further study would be needed in order to identify eligibility for this funding source.
- **USDOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) (formerly BUILD and TIGER):** Since 2009, USDOT has distributed grants for planning and capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant local or regional impact. RAISE funding can support roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports, or intermodal transportation.
- **FTA §5311 Rural Area Formula Program:** This program makes federal resources available to rural areas for transit capital and operating assistance. Rural areas are those areas with a population of less than 50,000 as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Surface Transportation Block Grants:** The Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG) provides flexible funding for projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance on any Federal-aid highway, bridge and tunnel projects on any public road, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and transit capital projects, including intercity bus terminals.
- **Federal Stimulus:** The West Vail Master Plan was developed during a time when new federal stimulus became available to local governments. The American Rescue Plan provides funding to support transit, walking, and biking, particularly shovel-ready projects that improve safety. In addition, a surface transportation reauthorization bill – Build Back Better – is being developed in cooperation between the Biden Administration and the 117th Congress. This surface transportation bill promises to include funding support for local multimodal transportation projects.

## State

- **CDOT Funding Advancements for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery Act (FASTER):** This category includes safety-related projects, such as: asset management, transportation operations, intersection and interchange improvements, shoulder and safety related widening, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Projects are advanced by local governments and selected based on priority and data within CDOT Region 4.
- **Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO):** Funding from the Colorado Lottery is awarded to a variety of project types, including trail projects, across the state by the GOCO Board.
- **Revitalizing Main Street Program:** This program, operated under CDOT, supports infrastructure projects that provide open spaces for mobility, community activities, and economic development in the wake of the COVID-19 emergency. These quick-win activities will improve safety and create new community spaces to encourage healthy activity and mobility in Colorado communities. Eligible projects encourage healthy communities by creating more space for active travel through wider sidewalks or reallocating vehicle travel lanes to bicycle lanes.
- **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP):** Federal funds are allocated by CDOT under TAP to transportation improvement projects that expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve quality of life, and protect the environment.



*Great Outdoors Colorado funds many trail projects across the state*

## Local

- **Local Tax:** Funds generated by sales, use, specific ownership, and property taxes can be transferred to general funds or directed towards capital projects. These can either be permanent or a local option tax that is subject to voter approval.
- **Transportation Utility Fees:** Transportation utility fees are a financing mechanism that treats the transportation system like a utility in which residents and businesses pay fees based on their use of the transportation system rather than taxes based on the value of property they occupy. The fees are not subject to voter approval and are based on the number of trips generated by different land uses. They are enacted on property owners and renters alike, paid on an ongoing monthly basis.
- **Other funding options that could be considered with further analysis** are parking fees, transportation impact fees, and special assessments.





# CHAPTER 5:

## IMPLEMENTATION

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

This plan recommends that the Town deploy one of two pathways to implementing the redevelopment of West Vail Center.

### Special Development District

One pathway, a Special Development District (SDD), would be a new district where an approved development plan would allow for uses on the site different from the underlying zoning. Property owners would voluntarily elect to participate in development planning and funding and financing mechanisms through the SDD. This approach may allow for more creativity, financial incentive to property owners, sharing of costs, and public benefits to Town residents and property owners. In this process the Town and the developer would work together to establish the building heights, public spaces, unit mix, commercial spaces, and other components. With a strong West Vail Master Plan guiding the development decision, an SDD can have a transparent process and bounds in which it is expected to perform. A SDD would not be necessary to achieve Scenario 1.

### Zoning Approach

The Town may also implement this plan through adopting a new zone district or modifications to the existing CC3 zone district.

#### *Scenario 1*

For Scenario 1, simple modifications to CC3 would be required. The allowable density would need to be changed from 12 units per buildable acre to 18 units per buildable acre. Additionally, the requirement that all housing units be EHUs would need to be modified to allow for the new market-rate housing to incentivize redevelopment, as depicted in the Scenario. Housing projects at less than 100% EHUs should be considered. For additional detail about Scenario 1 zoning recommendations, see the Zoning Recommendations section of Chapter 2.

#### *Scenarios 2 and 3*

For Scenarios 2 and 3, a new zone district would reflect the design principles and residential densities defined in Chapter 2. This option, the new zone district, may result in a more predictable, faster development process than the use of an SDD. However, the final product may have less creativity in the design and there may be less cohesion as a result. Under a zoning approach, the developer can build according to the zone district's regulations, as described in this plan, rather than the more flexible but less predictable approach under an SDD.

Zoning updates must include requirements for housing types that incentivize redevelopment while providing a strong supply of new resident housing units. In commercial areas of Vail, inclusionary zoning requires a minimum of 10 percent of new GRFA to be built as EHUs. This plan recommends exceeding that minimum, with 50 to 75 percent of units as deed-restricted resident housing. Deed restrictions should be structured within the Vail InDEED parameters: residency and employment requirements but no income limits. The Town is also considering a new housing mitigation fee program (linkage fees) to replace inclusionary zoning at the time of this writing.

If a zoning approach is used, the following design considerations are recommended to be followed:

- Allow more flexibility in how EHUs can be delivered in West Vail Center, including flexibility in unit sizes, configurations, and parking requirements.
- Allow slightly taller buildings so long as they provide public benefits (i.e., sufficient resident housing) while maximizing protection of viewsheds.
- Adopt and require design guidelines that add a layer of predictability and ensure high design quality within West Vail Center.

Additional recommendations and guidelines for the updated zone district can be found in the Zoning Recommendations section of Chapter 2.

## TOWN PROPERTY AS CATALYST

The Town of Vail owns the land under Vail Commons, the eastern-most parcel within West Vail Center. It was developed as a City Market grocery store and the Vail Commons deed-restricted and employee housing neighborhood. City Market leases the land from the Town and the lease expires at the end of 2044 (49 years from 1996). The lease allows the parties to renegotiate the lease terms upon expiration of the original term; 4 years advanced notice are required. City Market has the right of first refusal if the Town offers the property to another tenant at terms more favorable than agreed to initially by City Market.

At any time however, the two parties could renegotiate the land lease to allow redevelopment of or reinvestment in the property. The Town can allow additional development density through zoning or a development agreement to provide a financial incentive for redevelopment. The Town can also continue to offer below market rent to the tenant. In a master developer scenario, the lease could potentially be bought out to relocate the store. With vision and leadership, the Town has options for being a catalyst in West Vail Center by being proactive with this parcel.



*Vail Commons*



## FINANCING TOOLS

Colorado law allows several revenue generation and financing tools that can be used to help pay for the elements of the redevelopment. Four mechanisms recommended as most suitable for West Vail Center are summarized below.

### Business Improvement District

A business improvement district (BID) is a district-based quasi-public or private agency governed by a board of directors that can be appointed by the mayor, elected by the district, or assumed by an existing Urban Renewal Authority (URA), Downtown Development Authority (DDA), or General Improvement District (GID) board. BIDs are formed by petition and election by a majority of non-residential property owners to provide services such as planning, managing development activities, promotion or marketing, business recruitment, and/or maintenance. BIDs are generally operationally-focused and act as a type of manager of a business district, focusing on maintenance, small capital projects, and “clean and safe” types of activities. BIDs have the power to assess costs of service to local property owners through either an additional property tax (mill levy) or a special assessment charge. Examples in Colorado include Downtown Boulder, Downtown Manitou Springs, Downtown Grand Junction, and Cherry Creek North.

- **Application:** A BID could assist property owners in sharing costs to implement Scenario 1. The BID could fund modest improvements to parking circulation, snow removal, wayfinding and branding, and similar activities. A GID described below could also be used.

### Tax Increment Financing

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is authorized in URA plan districts established by an URA which is statutorily authorized to remove and prevent blight. The Vail Reinvestment Authority (VRA) is the Town’s Urban Renewal Authority, formed in 2003 to assist with blight removal and associated redevelopment activities in Lionshead. To form a URA, the governing body of the municipality must identify four of eleven factors of blight and that urban renewal activities are in the public interest of regulating health, safety, welfare, and morals.

TIF works by directing incremental new tax revenue to the authority to fund redevelopment projects and activities. Once the tax base has been set as of a defined point in time, growth in assessed value (and associated taxes) due to new development and market appreciation is captured in the TIF area. TIF revenues can be bonded against or used to reimburse costs as revenues accrue (pay as you go). Changes in Colorado law in 2015 require the municipality initiating the TIF area to reach agreements with other taxing entities if their mill levy is to be included in the TIF. Prior to this change in legislation, URAs could unilaterally pledge the new tax revenues from all taxing entities with a mill levy in the affected area. To maximize the revenue potential, the Town and URA would need to negotiate with other taxing entities.

The Town’s mill levy is 4.701 and Eagle County’s is 4.485 which generate approximately \$338 and \$323 in property tax per \$1.0 million of assessed value as shown below. If all or a portion of the School District mill levy of 24.069 is used, the potential TIF revenues and financing potential would be much higher than if the Town only had access to the funds in the Town mill levy. If resident housing is a significant portion of the redevelopment, there may be a motivation for the School District to participate to support housing for teachers and to grow enrollment from local families.

Table 5.1: Mill Levy Potential Funding for TIF

TAXING ENTITY	RESIDENTIAL MARKET VALUE	ASSESSMENT RATIO	MILL LEVY \$ per \$1,000 of Assessed Value	PROPERTY TAX per \$1.0M of Assessed Value
Town of Vail	\$1,000,000	7.20%	4.701	\$338
Eagle County	\$1,000,000	7.20%	4.485	\$323
School District	\$1,000,000	7.20%	24.069	\$1,733

### Public Improvement Fee

A Public Improvement Fee (PIF) is a fee based on sales transactions imposed by a development entity within its boundaries and used for funding infrastructure improvements. The fee resembles a sales tax, but it is an additional charge over and above the required state and local sales taxes. In some cases, a PIF (implemented with a Town or County’s involvement) replaces a portion of the local sales tax. This is referred to as a credit PIF. These PIFs have most often been used on major regional destination retail projects including Glenwood Meadows (Glenwood Springs), Willits Town Center (Basalt), and Beaver Creek (retail sales assessment).

The public pays a PIF as a percent of the value of a retail purchase or transaction. PIF rates in Colorado (not including credit PIFs) are generally in the 0.5 to 2.0 percent range. PIFs are a voluntary private contract that can generate supplemental revenues for project-related infrastructure without the requirement of an election.

- **Application:** A PIF could be applied to retail sales, including groceries, in West Vail Center to assist with public improvement costs such as structured parking and other infrastructure and placemaking elements. The following table shows an example of how the retail square footage of Scenario 3 generates revenue via a PIF.

Table 5.2: PIF Potential Revenue for Scenario 3

RETAIL SQ. FT. SCENARIO 3	AVG. SALES PER SQ. FT.	PERCENT TAXABLE SALES OR SPACE	PIF	ANNUAL REVENUE
185,000	\$450	67%	1.0%	\$558,000

## General Improvement District

A general improvement district (GID) is a public infrastructure district that applies an additional property tax or assessment to a specific improvement area to pay for new public infrastructure (CRS 30-20-501). GIDs can be used to fund any public improvement or service the Town is authorized to undertake or provide. It is commonly used to fund infrastructure facilities (such as roads, utilities, parking garages, pedestrian improvements, and/or stormwater) in a defined district or subarea shared by or serving multiple development projects.

A GID is initiated by petition of a majority of the owners of property in the district. A GID can levy a property tax (additional mill levy) to pay for the specified improvements. It can alternatively or additionally levy an assessment which would allow for a varied fee structure based on benefits. Revenues can be bonded against to pay for up-front infrastructure costs.

A GID is a legal entity which is separate from the municipality, even though Town Council can serve as the board of directors. As a GID is a separate entity, a town or city is not responsible for the debts of the district. The advantage of a GID over other types of special districts such as Title 32 Metropolitan Districts is that the Vail Town Council can serve as the Board of Directors for the GID and have direct oversight. In contrast, metropolitan districts are often governed by board elected by the property owner(s)/developer(s).

The GID can work in concert with the other tools listed above: TIF and a PIF to combine the revenue sources to maximize the funding and financing potential. A GID or other type of district financing tool is recommended to be used in West Vail Center to assist with public costs that support the plan's vision and intent.

## HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 3 outlines many recommendations for zoning changes, land use code changes, and new policies and programs as they relate to housing. As most of the recommendations in this chapter are regulation-based and do not require capital investment, implementation can begin right away with the Planning and Environmental Commission (PEC) and the Town Council.

This plan recommends that the Zone District Recommendations (#1-4) and the Town Code Recommendations (#1-6) are reviewed in detail by the Planning and Environmental Commission (PEC) and submitted as a package for adoption by Town Council. If recommended together, the changes will act as an extension of implementing the West Vail Master Plan and will have one public hearing process.

Alternatively, the PEC could submit the Code Recommendations first, as they are less controversial and have more minor affects on development and aesthetics in the neighborhoods than the zoning changes. This could build momentum and support for the Zone District Recommendations to come as a second package for adoption.

As for the recommended policies and programs, more research and outreach are needed to understand the best approach to implementation. Outreach to property owners will be key to understanding the issues in more depth. What incentives property owners would take to update their properties needs to be explored further (#1). Short-term rental regulations (#2) have been a controversial topic across Colorado especially in mountain communities. Fine-tuning the right approach that works for West Vail will take targeted outreach and analysis of how short-term rentals are affecting the long-term housing market, hotels, and the sales price of homes. Allowing more flexibility for Accessory Dwelling Units (#3) is straightforward, although with small lots and not much developable land, these changes are unlikely to have a big impact on new housing units.

Policy and Program Recommendations #4-7 will require collaboration between the Planning Department and Housing Departments of



the Town of Vail. It is recommended that these departments meet quarterly to discuss how they can collaborate on executing changes that will further the implementation of this plan. For example, waiving fees would be under the purview of the Planning Department, while supporting Vail InDEED and furthering deed-restrictions would be under the Housing Department. All of these policies further the housing goals discussed in this plan.

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY IMPLEMENTATION

Successfully implementing the transportation elements of the West Vail Master Plan over the next decade will require leadership, partnership, and fiscally responsible budgeting. Chapter 4 identifies the transportation infrastructure projects, transit services, policies, and programs that are recommended in order to accomplish the plan's vision for West Vail. Table 4.5 identifies the priority phase for each infrastructure project based on its ease of implementation, cost estimate, community support, and importance in accomplishing the established vision. The Town of Vail and its partners should work to implement infrastructure projects based on the identified phasing. Infrastructure projects in sum are expected to cost over \$16 million; therefore, strategically implementing projects over time will provide the most benefit and incremental change.

The final section of Chapter 4 identifies a number of federal, state, and local funding sources. These include a list of the current funding sources and possible new external funding sources that the Town should consider pursuing. A critical step in obtaining external grants is having a Master Plan and project priorities that are supported by the community and elected officials. Although projects are prioritized as a part of this plan, this prioritization should maintain a level of flexibility. If a funding source becomes available that is geared towards a certain project type or location, the Town has the ability to modify the prioritization list in order to leverage this opportunity. Although many smaller projects are grouped in this plan as one project, the Town should consider the

phasing of projects, as appropriate. This means that projects can be completed for part of the defined extent or only including part of project description, if deemed appropriate. The desire to implement projects in a phased approach may arise if there are opportunities through partnerships, funding sources, repaving schedule, or changes in project needs. Program and policy recommendations, as well as some transit recommendations, do not require a capital investment and therefore can be considered for implementation in the short-term.

Implementation of projects, programs and policies will require working closely internally between departments (e.g. Public Works, Fire and Emergency Services, Vail Transit, Vail Parking and Transportation Task Force) and externally between partner agencies (e.g. Eagle County, CDOT, ECO Transit, developers). The Town should continue to track the metrics in **Table 4.4** and conduct before and after studies to ensure that this work is moving towards the goals and resulting in desired outcomes. When implemented, the transportation recommendations holistically will deliver the outcome described in the transportation vision and goals.



*Chamonix Lane bus stop*



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