

AT THE INTERSECTION OF EVERYTHING

1890



1955



Negativity, on a national level, is pervasive in today's news cycle and comment sections. It seems it's easier for people to complain about what's happening than to actually be a part of the solution. Aspen isn't immune to this either, where people joke that even if Aspen Skiing Company gave the entire community season passes, there would be a contingent that laments it.

But that engagement is also what makes the Roaring Fork Valley a unique place. Living in the Aspen area is a conscious choice, and few people complain about being "stuck" here. Instead, it requires either the kind of person who works three jobs or has three homes. But at the end of the day, generally speaking, everyone is choosing Aspen—and, fundamentally, its community—over anywhere else in the world.

There are many obstacles that make that decision hard work. Housing stands at the top of the list. Behind it are transportation (read: traffic), appropriate wages, professional opportunity, environmental impact, access to health care, education

and general affordability. All are intertwined and no one problem can be addressed without examining the others.

For example, the Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority was created more than 30 years ago and stands out as a model for subsidized housing programs in other resort communities. Today, APCHA houses less than half of the workforce; without it Aspen wouldn't be the town we know. But, as the valley continues to grow, Aspen's urban growth boundary doesn't. That means increasingly the workforce must commute from as far as Rifle and Parachute, at least 90 minutes away by car. Communities like Basalt, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs are dealing with their own growth issues as a result, stressing the schools, real estate and traffic along Highway 82.

Let's remember that growth isn't isolated to the Roaring Fork Valley. The world's population is now 7.6 billion people, and America is the third most populous country, behind China and India. In the United States, citizens are increasingly pushed out of places in which they were raised: San Francisco, New

Housing, transportation, the environment, technology—tip one and you topple another. Planning for the future requires looking at the system as a whole while remembering our two best assets: mountains and people.

BY CHRISTINE BENEDETTI

2019



Architecture firm Rowland+Broughton is tackling a restoration of the 1890s-era Mesa Store building for its new headquarters. "It's kind of like going back in time," says Dana Ellis, the project manager. The firm aims to recreate the historic facade while designing an interior that will inspire the company for the future. Interestingly, the neighborhood on the west end of Main Street was its own commercial hub before automobiles took over. Ellis explains they are building in a bike suite and imagining how the neighborhood could evolve over time. One thing that won't be going the way of the horse and buggy is the color. "Historically, it was red. We're keeping the blue though. I don't think anyone's mad at the blue."

York, Seattle and, yes, even Denver because they can no longer afford it. Aspen is no exception.

Between each statistic, though, are seeds of hope. And that's what this issue of *Aspen Peak* is about. Aspen has consistently proved its resiliency and progressive approach when faced with challenge. In 1891, at the height of the silver boom, Aspen was producing one-sixteenth of the world's silver. Just two years later, the Sherman Silver Act demonetized silver, and the town's population dwindled seemingly overnight. For several decades, only the heartiest families remained, surviving on ranching—and each other.

By the 1940s, a second boom was underway, with recreation and culture as the currency. With the development of Aspen as a ski and wellness outpost, the town experienced a rebirth and has been on an upward trajectory since. During the '70s, hippies rediscovered the town, followed by the celebrities who found it to be their Shangri-La during the '80s and '90s.

With each new era, Aspen responded. It preserved open space when sprawl

threatened the upper valley, limited development when building size became contentious and addressed valley-wide transportation on a scale that hasn't been duplicated in another rural area, all while becoming an international icon. And this conversation is continuing today. Each year, a new doe-eyed class of "living-the-dream" residents arrive. Some stay for a winter and others put down roots for a lifetime. With them, they bring innovative ideas and approaches that often complement what's already in progress.

Ultimately, they stay for the community, Aspen's most important asset besides its mountains. The town, and valley, is a conglomerate of dreamers, hard workers, eccentrics, athletes, stoke-lovers, outliers, opportunists and romantics. At the end of the day, no matter how difficult it can be when faced with the challenges of living in this particular place, people can look to their neighbor and to the mountain sky and feel a sense of shared gratitude to call the valley home. It's an unspoken commonality between all who live here, and that can't be read in a comments section or in a headline. ■

RENDERING COURTESY OF ROWLAND+BROUGHTON