

The other side of the story...

A Community Friendly Snow King

We've been carefully watching discussions of Snow King's Phase II master plan since they began back in 2015. And all along we've said the same thing: Town hill is important to the community. Things need to be done smart and done right.

The ski area has given all of us so many wonderful memories; let's not ruin its small town feel by trying to keep pace with other resorts, adding amenity after amenity...

Phase II plans discussed already include a new gondola, downhill mountain bike trails, zip lines, a summit restaurant and observatory, expanded boundary ski areas, and other improvements.

Recent additions, already built and in place include the new Treetop Adventure ropes course, Cowboy Coaster, Amaze'n Maze, Tube Park, warming hut, and other amenities. Town approved each of them piecemeal.

Town fast-tracked these items while the community waited patiently for an updated master plan and a disclosure package on what's being proposed. Folks want to know how local neighborhoods will be impacted.

Owners of Snow King have a track record of getting sweet deals and advantageous arrangements from town, but giving little community benefit back in return. They pay a pittance in rent for much of the town-owned land at the base, yet turn around and charge the public to use it. Snow King managers have done a lot of 'taking' and very little 'giving.'

Snow King no longer needs special treatment to remain financially viable. They have new

deep-pocket owners with massive commercial entitlements in place on several holdings at the base of the hill. Condos and restaurants are already sprouting up, and more are coming.

Threats in the past to shut down the lifts if they didn't get their way was pure bullying. The days of crying poverty are over.

Snow King owners do not need to turn the resort into an amusement park in the name of sustainability. And we cannot continue to negotiate with a gun to our head: Approve this or we'll have to shut the lifts down.

The town, the Forest Service, and the community at large all deserve transparency. We need to know the real proposed plans for the resort's expansion. And the community deserves a say in the approval process.

The recent public engagement meeting and formation of a stakeholder group, as well as another upcoming public open house in March are encouraging signs. There is much to consider.

Expansion in balance and harmony with nature and wildlife should be the top priority. Surrounding neighborhoods are still waiting to have their say as well.

The current stakeholder group is commercially-oriented. The broader community needs to weigh in, too. Local residents will suffer the increased traffic and noise pollution that expansion will bring. They need to be heard, perhaps in a second stakeholder group.

Let's get all the facts out on the table and get this right. We need to keep our community values in our last of the Old West ski hill.

*Balance and harmony
with nature and wildlife*
