



Snowmass Village Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Plan

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Acknowledgments

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About Snowmass Village

The Town of Snowmass Village (Snowmass Village or the Town) is a Home Rule Municipality in Pitkin County, Colorado nestled high within the Brush Creek Valley. The community is strongly associated with the world-class Snowmass Ski Area operated by the Aspen Skiing Company and has had a strong recreational identity since its incorporation in 1977. Encompassing 25-square-miles, the Town boasts superior recreational opportunities, spanning everything from organized group sports to remote wilderness experiences to authentic weekly summer rodeos.

In addition to recreation, Snowmass Village's natural setting is a key feature of the community, and a core reason for choosing to locate here. Mountains surround the community, including Burnt Mountain Ridge, Burnt Mountain, Baldy Mountain, Chapel Peak, Garret Peak, Clark Peak, Mount Daly, and Capitol Peak. Owl Creek and Brush Creek converge within the Town and then flow north into the Roaring Fork River. The geology and vegetation in the Town ranges from high desert to high alpine environments, and the expanses of exposed gray bedrock help inform the identity of the community. On south-facing slopes, the alkaline soil that develops from the Mancos Shale supports Gambel oak, sagebrush, serviceberry, and chokecherry. The north-facing slopes feature aspen, subalpine fir, Douglas fir, Engelmann spruce, and blue spruce. Wildlife is plentiful throughout the Brush Creek Valley, and include black bear, elk, moose, mule deer, porcupine, raccoon, coyote, beaver, skunk, badger, bobcat, mountain lion and red fox, among others.

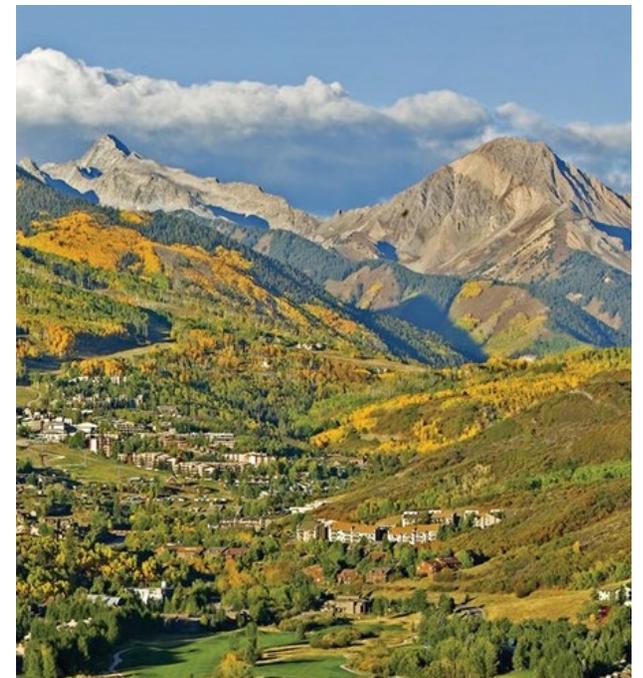
Town owned recreational resources are managed by the Town of Snowmass Village Parks, Recreation and Trails Department, which houses a staff of 24 employees. The Parks, Recreation and Trails Department is directed by the Town Manager and the Town Council, with the overall management and administration of department resources handled by the Parks, Recreation and Trails Director. The mission of the Town of Snowmass Village Parks, Recreation and Trails Department is to “Provide safe, expertly managed recreation programs and facilities that promote community cohesion, physical fitness, as well as family and individual well-being.”

Community Character and Goals

In the 2010 Town of Snowmass Village Comprehensive Plan, the community characterizes itself with the following attributes, all of which have informed the development of this POSTR plan:

- A premier sports mountain with a wide variety of terrain that attracts all levels of sports enthusiasts
- A resort that benefits from its proximity to Aspen, but has its own individual identity
- A strong connection to the natural environment
- Stimulating atmosphere
- Significant opportunities for a variety of recreational and cultural activities
- A clustered, low-density development pattern that allows for the physical and visual openness and connection to the mountains to dominate valley views

- A Town Core that has an intimate, village feel
- A traffic system that allows convenient circulation, mobility, and parking
- Physical separation from other communities that allows Snowmass Village to be isolated in a dramatic valley setting
- Friendly interactions with community members and guests
- The presence of a vital, permanent community of residents that not only takes an active role in governance but values participation in “community life” as a whole
- A casual lifestyle



Who is Snowmass Village?

Residents



Permanent Population:
2,826



55% Male 45% Female



Median Age: 40.0



56% Residential Units
Permanently Occupied



33% of Workforce
Live in Village

Overnight Visitors



Peak Season Effective
Population: 11,000



Nearly 40% Arrive
with Children



Primarily Baby Boomers
(50-69)



38% Residential Units for
Part Time Residents



Annual Occupancy: 45%
Peak Season Occupancy: 84%

Recreation



4.6 Acres of Parkland
Per 1,000 Residents



26.5 Miles of
Unpaved Trails



7.6 Miles of Paved Trails



5.5 Miles of Groomed
Nordic Trails



4 Playgrounds



About This Plan

Parks and recreation, spending time outdoors, incredible scenic views, and family atmosphere are all integral to life in Snowmass Village. They are the reasons why many people move here, choose to visit, or buy second homes here. The Snowmass Ski Area and the immense recreational opportunity afforded there has shaped the Town's physical form, identity and quality of life since its inception and the Town's parks, open space and trails offerings have played an increasingly important role in the recreational landscape of the Town and the region in recent decades.

The Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Plan (POSTR Plan) is a long-range planning and implementation document to guide the future development of the parks, open space, recreation, and trails within the Town. A detailed inventory of current facilities provides a snapshot of what exists today and how those resources are serving the present-day population. Analysis of those resources, coupled with current trends and desires, reveals opportunities that may improve service levels and the ability of the Town to recapture the costs of providing outstanding facilities and programs to its residents. Lastly, the

POSTR Plan includes goals, recommendations and guidelines that articulate the community's priorities and can guide decision-makers to invest in projects that meet the community's vision for parks, open space, trails and recreation in Snowmass Village.

PROJECT AREA

The project area for the POSTR Plan encompasses all of the land area within the Town of Snowmass Village. Connections to National Forest, ski area, City of Aspen, Pitkin County and other recreational resources are also considered, but projects which fall outside the Town boundaries are beyond the scope of this project. Throughout the POSTR planning process, comments were received that pertain to Pitkin County, Forest Service or other lands and those comments have been passed on to the appropriate land manager or recreation provider where possible.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This POSTR Plan is both a reference tool to examine the existing conditions of the Town of Snowmass Village's parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities, and a road map for where we would like to go in the future as a community. Each chapter

serves a specific purpose. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth summary and analysis of Snowmass Village's existing resources, including a look at walkability, connectivity and the market assessment. In addition, Chapter 2 summarizes the common themes from the public engagement process, and investigates the wayfinding in the region. Chapter 3 deals with the topic "Recreation Means Business," and includes a discussion of trail use, visitor spending, economic benefits and fiscal impact analysis. Chapter 4 states the goals and objectives for the parks, open space, trails and recreation resources, which are aspirations that the community has for the future and will guide the community when making decisions about potential opportunities. Chapter 4 also includes the policies and administrative guidance necessary for the efficient operation of the department. Chapter 5 presents the Master Plan projects and implementation strategies to be accomplished in the future, Chapter 6 provides POSTR Standards for building and operating the system, while Chapter 7 covers how to "Make it Happen" including funding opportunities and an implementation matrix.

The POSTR Plan is one element of a broader library of community plans that inform the future development of the Town of Snowmass Village, and

is intended to relate to the other community plans either in place or currently underway. A Community Connectivity Plan (CCP) was developed concurrently with the POSTR Plan and the two documents work in tandem to promote trail connectivity and recreational access within the Town. The Town is also planning an update to the community's Comprehensive Plan, and this POSTR Plan has been designed such that its recommendations can be nested within that of the broader comprehensive plan.

WHAT MAKES THIS PLAN UNIQUE?

Snowmass Village is very different than the suburban communities found on Colorado's Front Range, and this POSTR Plan respects that difference and recognizes that the Town will need to view their view parks, open space and trails resources differently in order to be successful. In Snowmass Village, the effective seasonal population (permanent population + second-home owners and visitors) is nearly four times that of its year-round residents. This presents challenges in providing excellent services, but also opportunities. Parks and recreation opportunities can help draw visitors in for specific activities and events that cost money to participate in, or for activities that are free but encourage people to spend time in-town at restaurants and shops. These parks and recreation offerings can increase the desirability of a destination and serve to draw people into a community, providing all the economic benefits those visitors bring with them – like job creation, contributions to gross domestic product (GDP), and tax revenues.

People choose to live in and visit Snowmass Village because of the lifestyle and quality of life afforded here, and a big part of the Snowmass Village lifestyle is access to world-class recreational opportunities.

The Town of Snowmass Village works very hard to provide these outstanding parks, open space, trails and recreation opportunities to its residents. The Town also realizes the potential economic development benefits that may come from drawing in visitors, and that those benefits can help offset the cost of providing resources and facilities to locals. This plan addresses those opportunities and the implications of embarking on such an approach.

THE BENEFITS OF RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Discussions of the benefits of parks, trails and recreation are often narrowly focused on recreational or environmental aspects and fail to see the big picture—the total package of benefits that a park, trail or recreation program can provide to communities, including public health, economic and transportation benefits, and even the effect on quality of life, community pride and identity. Among other benefits, improved recreational resources can make our communities more livable; improve the economy through tourism and civic improvement; preserve and restore open space; and provide opportunities for physical activity to improve fitness and mental health.

When seen as a whole, the evidence about the far-reaching benefits of recreational resources is compelling, especially given the minimal public investment involved compared to other undertakings with the same community goals, like transportation improvements or development projects.

Why Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation? Because they:

- Are a good investment and Improve the Environment
- Promote Healthy Living
- Raise Quality of Life
- Encourage Community Transformation
- Enhance Economic Revitalization and Sustainability





Public Engagement

First and foremost the Town of Snowmass Village's parks, open space, trails and recreation resources must serve the community. As such, this POSTR planning process included extensive public engagement, to ensure that the community's opinions are heard and needs are addressed. The following summarizes the various aspects of the public engagement process undertaken to support the development of the POSTR Plan.



STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH (OCTOBER 5-6, 2015; ON-GOING)

Over 40 stakeholder discussions were conducted with various agencies, homeowners associations, community groups, sports clubs, and individuals, including the following:

- General merchants
- Sporting merchants
- Lodging managers
- Mothers / parents
- Utilities (Water and San & SWFD)
- Aspen Skiing Company
- Institutional partners
- Transit providers
- Outdoor recreation providers
- Employee housing representatives
- Realtors / development representatives
- Recreation program users
- Snowmass Master HOA representatives
- Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association



- Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council
- Challenge Aspen and advocates for disabled residents
- Snowmass Western Heritage Association (Snowmass Rodeo)
- Pitkin County Open Space and Trails
- Aspen Parks and Recreation
- US Forest Service

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE (OCTOBER 6, 2015)

Our initial Open House was met with enthusiasm from the Snowmass Village community. It was held on Tuesday, October 6th in the Snowmass Recreation Center Gymnasium. Overall, over 60 people of all ages participated. Participants discussed existing conditions and future opportunities for parks, open space, trails and recreation by through facilitated discussion stations regarding the intent of the POSTR Plan, the community profile, the vision for parks, recreation and trails in Snowmass Village, recreation programming, a map of Town Park, and winter and summer trail maps. Participants provided comments on station boards with sticky notes and markers, through the comment box, and wrote in comments about their vision on a large poster board.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP (FEBRUARY 17, 2016)

The public workshop was held on Wednesday, February 17, 2016. Approximately 50 Snowmass Village residents and non-residents attended the workshop to give input on parks, open space, trails and recreation improvements. The workshop was the culmination of the initial information gathering phase for the POSTR Plan, with the community-

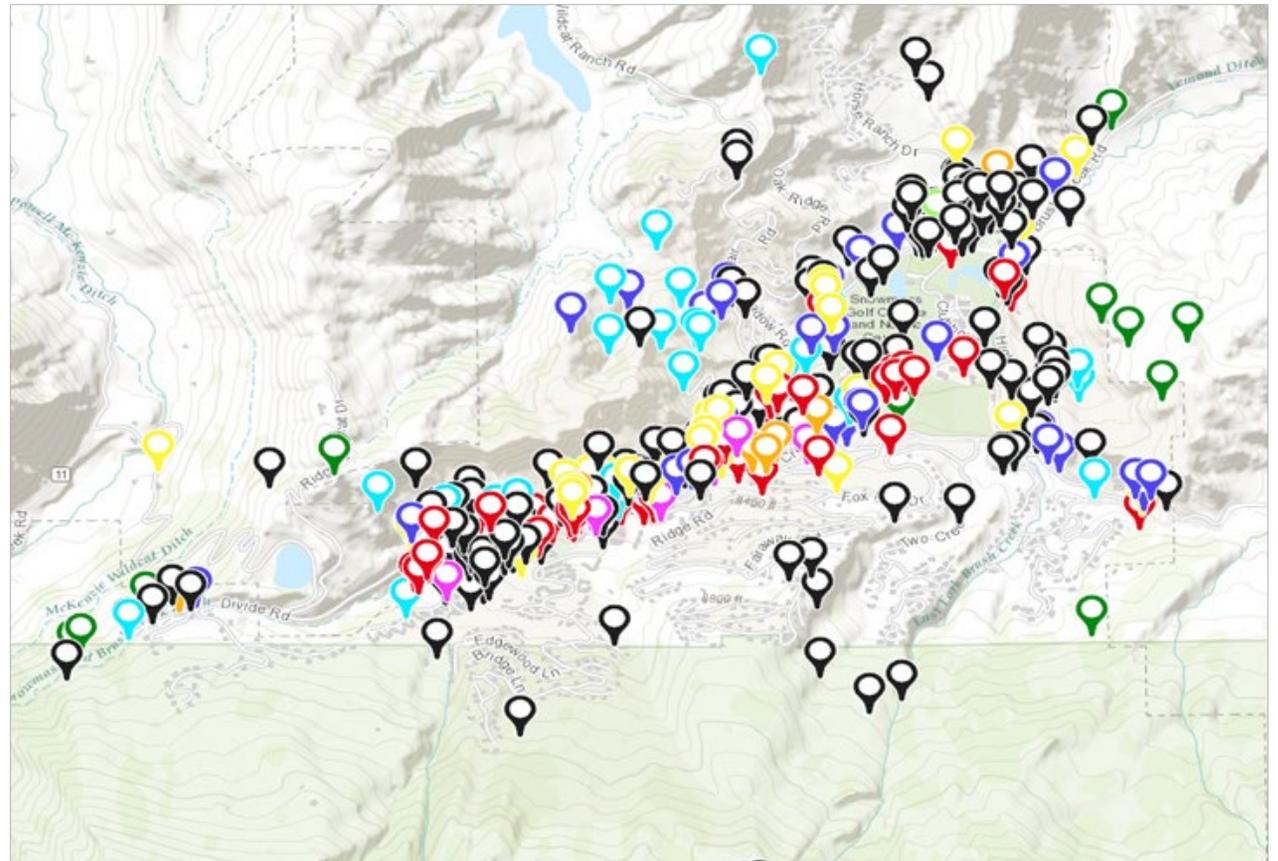
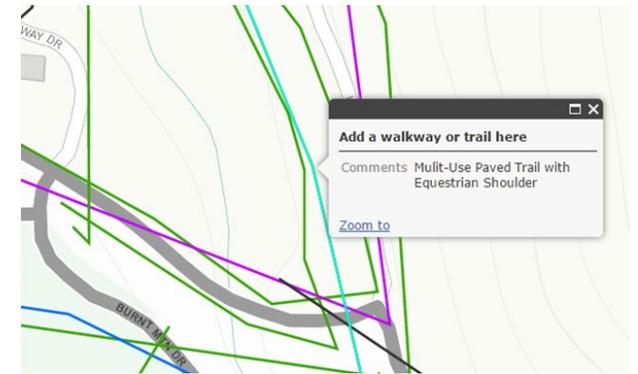
wide survey (see below) closing a week afterward. A wide range of potential improvements were provided and participants were asked to “vote” for the recreation center amenities, Town Park amenities, and recreation programs they felt are most important for the Snowmass Village community in a green dot exercise in which participants used green dots to show support for a project or activity. Open-ended write-in boards for recreation center amenities, Town Park amenities, and recreation programs were also provided. Large floor maps of Town Park and the trails system within Snowmass Village were also available for participants to draw on to demonstrate their ideas for new connections and amenities. Facilitated discussion stations similar to those in the Public Open House were also available, as was a station on ensuring safety on multi-use trails. Finally, attendees participated in the “Snowmass Bucks” exercise in which each participant was given \$5 Snowmass Bucks (like monopoly money) to allocate to various aspects of POSTR system to understand their funding priorities.

STEERING COMMITTEE

An ad-hoc steering committee of approximately 36 people were involved at different points in the process. Membership fluctuated over time. The steering committee was open to all those who were interested in participating and included a wide range of user groups and positions. In addition to providing input throughout the planning process and reviewing the POSTR Plan and recommendations, the Steering Committee also served as “Plan Ambassadors,” reaching out to a broader cross-section of residents and gathering their input. In the end, this POSTR document strives to reflect the values of the Steering Committee, and their input was critical to creating the most effective, enduring document.

WIKI-MAP

A wiki-map is an online editable map that allows community members to provide location-specific comments and to draw trail lines and connections on a digital map, similar to the google maps interface. An single interactive Wiki Map was used for the both the POSTR and CCP Plans, which allowed respondents to add parks, trails, open space, benches, and other ideas to the locations that they think needed them most. The wiki-map was open from the end of November through the end of February and received 670 total comments.



COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY

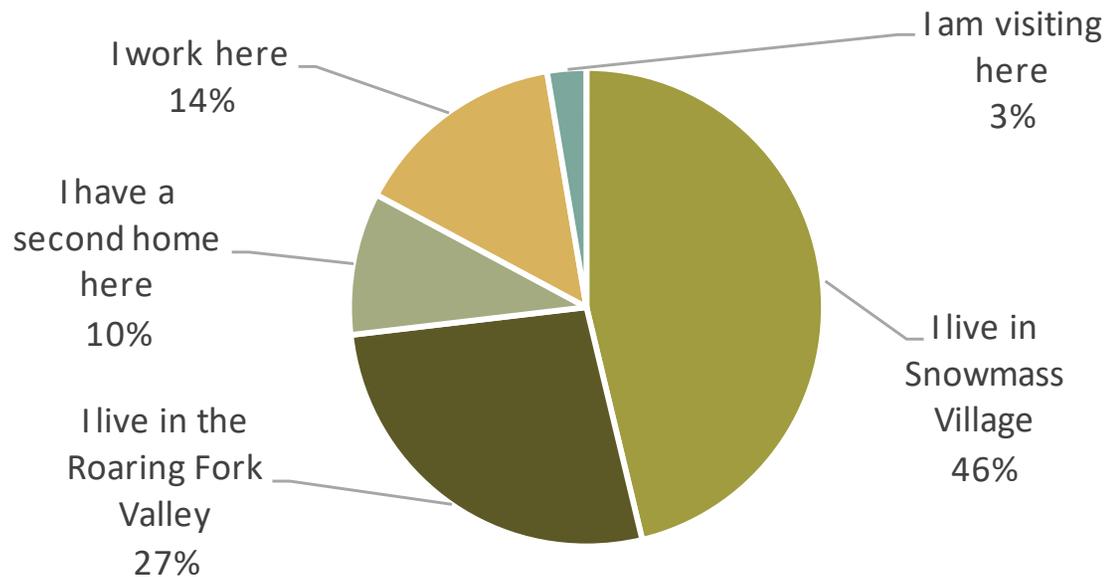
A community survey was conducted to gather public feedback on the parks, recreation facilities, open space, trails, programs and other community investments in Snowmass Village. The survey was a critical component for public engagement in the POSTR planning process targeted at residents, visitors and second-home owners. The survey explored the community's preferences, gaps, and future opportunities and covered the following topics:

- Recreation Center Facilities and Programs
- Parks, Playgrounds and Multi-Use Field Space
- Open Space and Town Gardens
- Recreational Trails
- Recreation Department Communications
- Respondent Demographics

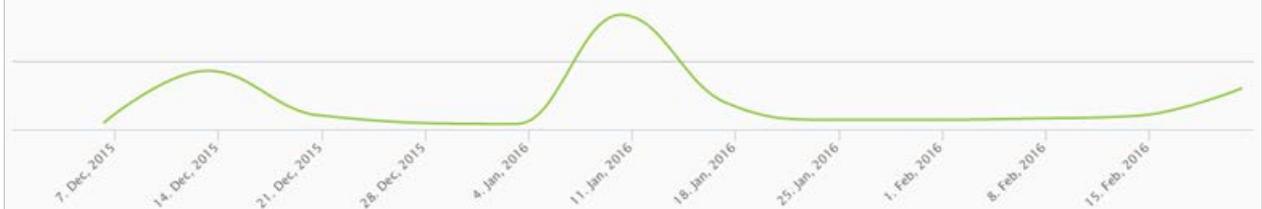
The survey was distributed by the Town through their email lists, and steering committee members were also encouraged to share the survey with their contacts. In addition, the survey was available at a laptop at the Recreation Center Front Desk and was advertised on the Town and Recreation Department Website, postcards distributed throughout the community, on social media, and in the newspaper.

The survey was open from the first week in December through the end of February and over 366 individual responses were received. Respondents included a mix of Snowmass Village residents, RFV residents, Snowmass Village second-home owners, Snowmass Village workers, and visitors. A variety of ages, incomes and family types are represented in the results.

What Brings You to Snowmass Village?



Response Timeline





YOUTH AND FAMILY SURVEY

A number of community groups and organizations were contacted during the POSTR Plan process for their perspective and vision for the Town of Snowmass Village's parks, open space, trails and recreation. One group that represents a significant portion of the Town's population is youth and families. To ensure this important community segment was sufficiently engaged, individual stakeholder interviews were set up with parents and mom's groups, and a partnership with the Aspen School District was pursued. A family

and youth specific survey was distributed to all district students and their families through school district email blasts and hard-copy newsletter. The youth and family survey received responses from 43 local families and included many of the same questions as community-wide survey, as well as a few new questions targeted at youth programming and per-registration. The youth and family survey included an option to just answer new questions if they had already responded to community-wide survey.