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## Where can we build housing?

Town of Vail and its housing authority are putting new focus on housing for young professionals. **A3**



The Lions Ridge apartments, seen here close to completion on Monday, are currently under construction on the east side of the Timber Ridge property in Vail. The new apartments are aimed at combating the lack of housing for year-round employees, and they are not intended for seasonal employees.

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# Town of Vail focuses again on housing issues

How can the town accommodate its professional class?

By Scott N. Miller  
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VAIL — Steve Lindstrom moved to Vail in 1973. He'd like to know how the town is going to find a way to be the longtime home of the next version of him and his family.

Lindstrom is a longtime member of the Vail Housing Authority, an appointed town board charged with helping develop new housing in town. The authority was first organized in the early 1990s, when the valley's housing shortage was particularly acute.

With little to show for its early work, that first version of the authority lasted only a few years before it was essentially dissolved.

Lindstrom said the authority was revived in the early 2000s as a way to help the town organize the Middle Creek apartments.

The authority recently received another boost, when Alan

Nazzaro was hired as the town's housing manager. It's a new job, and while Nazzaro remains a fresh face at the town offices, Lindstrom and others have high hopes for the new guy.

"The fact they created a new position says the town establishment recognizes that there's a problem that's going to keep rearing its head," Lindstrom said.

Lindstrom describes himself as part of a group that's "aging out" of community involvement.

The question, he said, is who will be next in the homes the Lindstroms and their peers now occupy. A lot of those homes are being purchased either by young retirees or second-home buyers, Lindstrom said. That leaves the question of where Vail's next professional class will live.

Vail Town Council member Greg Moffet has been asking those same questions for years. While many in town clamor for rent-by-the-bedroom housing for seasonal workers, Moffet wonders where the town's future entrepreneurs, doctors and nurses will live.

Moffet said he was recently in a medical office in town and asked

the employees where they live.

"Not one lives in Vail," he said. "A lot said they'd like to live here, but they just can't. ... We need a professional class as much as we need an employee class here."

Professionals are the people who have young families and volunteer to serve on town boards and, later, run for elected office.

The town is now planning a new neighborhood in the Chamonix area, roughly behind the fire station in West Vail. The current plan calls for 53 units, mostly townhomes, on the 3.2-acre site.

The town has owned the property for more than a decade, and the original plan called for a rental project. But that idea has been supplanted.

"Chamonix is our last shot at building a new neighborhood in town," Moffet said.

But after Chamonix, then what?

That's when ideas become more vague. And that's the territory Nazzaro is supposed to help the town navigate. While fully cognizant of his new-guy status, it's obvious that Nazzaro has some ideas.

"What drew me to this job was that Vail has been ahead of the

curve in respect to a lot of other communities," Nazzaro said.

That said, though, it appears that the current housing crunch is at least the equal of what the valley experienced in 2007, just before the national economic slump hit hard in the Vail Valley.

But easing the housing crunch will require a broad-based approach, Nazzaro said.

"We have to take a holistic view of the entire market," he said. "We need to find where the gaps are and where we need to be filling them."

Some of that approach will almost certainly involve going outside the town boundaries. Vail and Avon officials have talked about working on projects — perhaps on land in Eagle-Vail owned by the Colorado Land Board. That group owns thousands of acres in the state and manages it for the benefit of the state's schools. The land board owns a 640-acre parcel in Eagle-Vail. There are no current plans for the property, but it could be used for housing.

And, Moffet said, Vail has a history of looking outside the town in the name of workforce housing. The town was a major player in

## ON THE HORIZON

**Lions Ridge apartments:** The new apartments, under construction on the east side of the Timber Ridge property in Vail are aimed at year-round, not seasonal, residents. The first apartments will be ready for move-in late this year. When finished, it will have 113 units, divided between studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments in four buildings.  
**Chamonix:** Current plans call for 53 for-sale units on roughly three acres in West Vail. Work could start in 2016.

the acquisition and development of Miller Ranch in Edwards.

Working on one or more projects there could help fill a major need, Nazzaro said, adding that he's been encouraged by the current political will he's seen.

Nazzaro said it's also important to be quick to alter course if needed. The Chamonix parcel is a good example, he said.

"We need to be flexible if we get into that and find out we don't have the product people want," he said.



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