



COMMUNITY DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

Community design is the process of understanding and developing the built environment in response to environmental conditions and according to the community's needs and aspirations. Community design is often mistaken for architecture; however, architecture alone does not define a community's design tradition, if there is one, nor does it consider the broader context of the street, block, or neighborhood. Community design is the total experience of public spaces, outdoor lighting, public art, landscaping, signage, and open spaces that add character to the entire community. Accordingly, the scope of the Community Design Element is to examine the existing conditions of the architecture, signage, pedestrian facilities, outdoor lighting, development density, building height, and open space standards to determine how each element contributes to the broader design of the community.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The current character of the Village's community design can be described as undefined and unremarkable. The Village developed one project at a time without the benefit of a master plan or zoning standards. The 2010 TSV Redevelopment Plan described the Village's community design as follows:

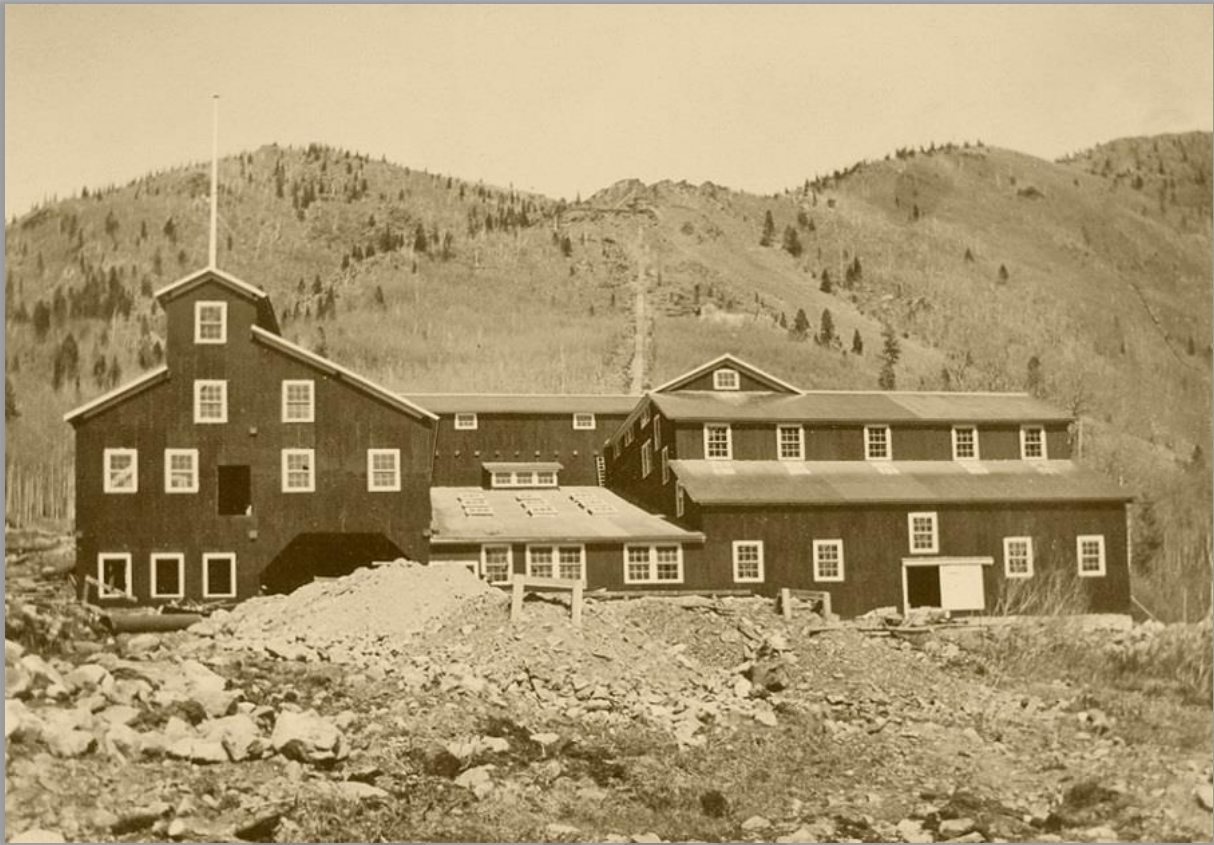
Taos Ski Valley has evolved and developed in a very spontaneous fashion over the last several decades. This has resulted in an eclectic and funky organization of circulation systems and buildings that reinforce the character of this place. Residents and visitors alike cherish the little surprises and chance encounters that occur in this environment. However, vehicular and pedestrian circulation is confusing. – p. 6.

A few European style buildings have been credited for establishing a community design tradition in the Village. There are several remarkable buildings within the Village that emulate Alpine or Bavarian design traditions; however, a few scattered buildings do not create an urban design tradition.



Undeveloped properties represent an opportunity to unify the Village Core and enhance community design.





Historic buildings from the mining era should be used to inspire architecture for new developments.

PREVIOUS PLANS

The Village has addressed community design and development issues since the Village was first incorporated in 1996. The Village adopted its first Comprehensive Plan 2001. The Village later adopted a Master Plan in 2007 and an updated Master Plan in 2010. Other plans have been offered by Taos Ski Valley Inc. Below is a summary of these plans and a brief description of the roadway improvements that have been considered.

- **2001 Comprehensive Plan**

The Village Council recognized the importance of urban design when it adopted the first Comprehensive Plan in 2001. The Comprehensive Plan included the following recommendations for transportation and circulation:

Design Standards

1. All new construction will be in harmony with the character of the Village and will respect the form, design, height and bulk of neighboring construction. Newly developed standards will respect the predominant nature of the Village core.
2. New construction will respect the natural views found in the Village, will seek to minimize the disturbance of existing vegetation and trees and will favor the use of natural materials on the outside of the building.
3. In order to assure that the above stated design standard policies are implemented, the Village has developed a Design Review process and design review guidelines.

Signage

1. The Village has developed and implemented signage regulations, with the objective being to minimize visual clutter while providing adequate information for residents and visitors.
2. The Village of Taos Ski Valley desires to keep signage to a minimum while still allowing businesses to notify customers of their location and type of business. Signage will be in harmony with the scale and type of architecture of the building in question.

- **2010 Master Plan**

The recommendations of the Master Plan were created in part through a series of community meetings. Community members were asked to express their concerns and share their recommendations for future development within the Village. Several recommendations were included under the theme of "Place-Making," as follow:

- maintain the Village character.
- creating a central location in the Village for orientation information and way-finding.
- promote the natural and other amenities that are in the Village.
- preserve green space within development areas.

The Master Plan included a number of GOALS and ACTION ITEMS related to community design under the heading "Commercial Development." They are summarized below:

- improved streetscapes
- improved pedestrian friendly design
- protect view corridors
- support multi-use developments that encourage walking over vehicular traffic
- promote a general style of a European Alpine Village within the CVZ
- require good urban design:
 - *Parking behind or below buildings*
 - *No gated streets - Public / Life Safety*
 - *Buildings that form a street wall*
 - *Doors accessible from the sidewalk*
 - *Active ground floor uses, including storefronts, stoops, porches, or forecourts*
 - *Pedestrian-scaled signage*

Another section of the Master Plan is the "Regulatory Plan." The recommendations of the Regulatory Plan are divided into geographic sections. Development criteria related to community design are outlined for each section.

VILLAGE CORE DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA:

- The Village core is the location of the highest density, intensity and building height in the Village.
- All building entrances must open onto one of the pedestrian plazas.
- Building height is in scale with the mountains.
- The ground floor of all buildings is at least 50% retail use.
- All streets are designed with sidewalks and pedestrian facilities.
- Parking is below grade in structures.

KACHINA CENTER DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA:

- Buildings south of the wetlands must be focused around a pedestrian plaza.
- Design 40% of the ground level space for commercial/retail purposes.
- All development respects viewsheds.
- Height is restricted to minimize impacts on views and visibility of development from roadways.

AMIZETTE DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA:

- Amizette is the “Gateway” to the Village of Taos Ski Valley.
- Creating a central location in the Village for orientation information and way-finding.

- **2010 TSV Redevelopment Plan**

Taos Ski Valley, Inc. hired Design Workshop to prepare a Redevelopment Plan in 2010 to address the deficiencies on urban design and the lack of amenities within the Village but are typically found in comparable resort developments. Although the Plan was not formally adopted by the Village Council, many of the recommendations were brought forward into subsequent planning efforts.

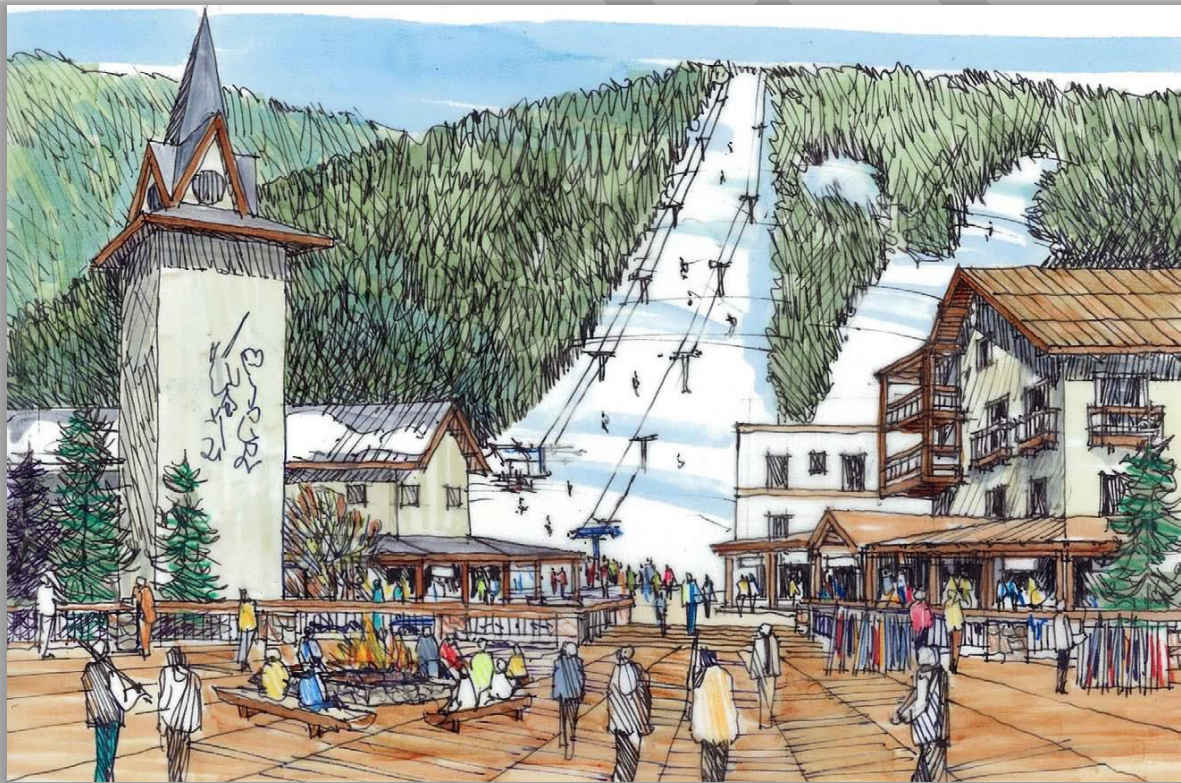
The Redevelopment Plan proposed several improvements to enhance the visitor experience and generate a stronger sense of place and quality urban design –

- a new Village entry road
- an improved skier drop off area
- a new recreation center at the Twining campgrounds
- a retail street from Thunderbird to Lift #1
- a skier plaza at the bottom of lift #1
- a central plaza on the north side of the Rio Hondo
- reconfigured access to Lift #1 from Sierra del Sol condominiums
- new ski-in / ski-out accommodations

- **2014 Parcel Conceptual Plan**

The Planning & Zoning Commission and the Village Council amended the Zoning Regulations to include the Core Village Zone to the zoning map and adopted a variety of development standards to facilitate new development within the Village Core. The Core Village Zone allows property owners to submit a Parcel Conceptual Plan for the purpose of “facilitating the redevelopment and revitalization of the CVZ area, stimulating a consistent and sustainable mixture of commercial, residential and recreational land uses, promoting a reasonable bed base of residential and lodging units to support the resort, fostering a vibrant pedestrian activity zone, and providing a base village environment that supports resort operations and provides a positive resident and visitor experience in multiple seasons.”

The Parcel Conceptual Plan was based largely on illustrations (below) and recommendations from the TSV, Inc. Redevelopment Plan of 2010.



- **2015 Tax Increment Development District (TIDD)**

The Village Council unanimously approved the formation of the TIDD and village residents and property owners overwhelmingly approved the TIDD in early 2015. The TIDD is a public finance “mechanism” whereby the developer provides the up-front financing for a variety of public infrastructure improvements in return for the dedication of future gross receipts taxes and property tax increments. The tax increments are used to support bond issuance. The bond proceeds are used to reimburse up-front outlays. A portion of the incremental taxes are dedicated to the local government to pay for the on-going operations and maintenance of the infrastructure after it has been developed and dedicated to the local government. The TIDD estimated over \$52 million in overall infrastructure needs. The following table identifies only the improvements listed under “Public Spaces.”

TIDD Projects

Project	Year	Cost Estimate
Visitor Drop Off	2014-2015	\$1,650,000
Public Plaza Areas	2015-2017	\$2,750,000
Riverwalk	2016-2017	\$1,350,000
Parking Lot Upgrades & RV Park	2018	\$1,100,000
Route 150 / Village Entry	2017	\$1,650,000
TOTAL		\$8,500,000

EXISTING ORDINANCES

Zoning

The zoning ordinance requires utility boxes, mechanical equipment, and satellite dishes to be shielded from public view. It also regulates architecture to encourage “alpine rustic elegance” architecture. Many other community design features are regulated by the zoning ordinance, including signage, outdoor lighting, landscaping, and fencing.

The Village works with a Community Design Committee to review existing ordinances and to recommend amendments to the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Village Council. The Village Council approved a variety of amendments to the sign standards based on the Committee’s recommendations.

Subdivision Ordinance

Subdivision development can have irreversible impacts on community design. Accordingly, the subdivision ordinance regulates development to minimize the impacts of grading and drainage infrastructure and the cut and fill for roadways.

**The Hall and Schnitzer residences are the best examples of
“Alpine Rustic Elegance” architecture.**



**The Scott and
Chris Hall
Residence on
Cliffhanger
Loop.**



**The Schnitzer
Residence on
Blue Jay Ridge
Road.**

GOAL, POLICIES, and OBJECTIVES

The goal, policies, and objectives present a framework for evaluating new development proposals and for implementing community design projects.

GOAL

The Village is designed and developed to enhance the natural beauty and to create a community design tradition that defines its unique sense of place.

POLICIES

1. The Village will encourage distinct community design standards between the Village Core and Kachina areas to create a stronger sense of place and identity.
2. Public art contributes to the sense of place and beauty of the built environment. Art should be included in the design of public spaces, including trails, parks, pedestrian areas, and plazas.
3. The Village will work with the TIDD Board and developers in incorporating public spaces and urban design elements into proposed development.
4. The Village believes that community design should not be contrived or imported from other places or cultures.
5. The Village recognizes that community design traditions evolve over time. The Village will encourage new development to meet the highest standards of community design.

OBJECTIVES

1. The Village will work with the Chamber of Commerce, business owners, and property owners to adopt a comprehensive plan for signage and wayfinding in the Village core, Amizette, and Kachina.
 2. The Planning & Zoning Commission and Village Council will update the zoning regulations to codify community design requirements. Amendments will focus on community design standards for the Village Core and the Kachina areas for the overall purpose of distinguishing them as separate but interrelated places.
 3. The Village will set aside lodger's tax revenues for a public art program.
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4. The Village will enforce the sign code and outdoor lighting code by conducting a full “sweep” of the Village to identify non-conforming signs and lighting fixtures.
5. Design and develop a gateway in the Amizette area to welcome visitors to the Village and provide way-finding information.

CONCLUSIONS

To be concluded...

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