

Vail Valley Partnership Public Policy & Program Overview



Support. Unite. Lead.

OVERVIEW:

This whitepaper outlines key legislative and public policy positions and associated programs of Vail Valley Partnership, the regional chamber of commerce representing Eagle County

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WHO WE ARE:

Vail Valley Partnership is the regional chamber of commerce, with close to 900 members throughout Eagle County who collectively represent over 80%+ of the local workforce. We are dedicated to the vitality of the Vail Valley. We support local businesses. We unite key stakeholders. We lead collaborative efforts throughout the community.

WHAT WE DO:

As business leaders dedicated to the vitality of our community, Vail Valley Partnership focuses on issues that impact our trade region, our communities, our businesses, and our citizens.

The Partnership's goal with our advocacy efforts is to advance issues and rely on local government to carry out their roles for good, public policy. We represent YOUR BUSINESS interests with government.

Our strategic priorities provide some of the most visible evidence of our role as the voice for business.

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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



FEDERAL: UNITED STATES

- Immigration / Workforce
- Transportation
- Health Care
- Business Friendly Environment
- Economic Resiliency

STATE: COLORADO

- Workforce Housing
- Transportation
- Health Care
- Workforce Development
- Business Friendly Environment
- Economic Resiliency



LOCAL: EAGLE COUNTY

- Workforce Housing
- Health Care
- Workforce Development
- Transit & Transportation
- Early Childhood
- Economic Resiliency

COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Work actively to ensure the needs of Eagle County and our employers are addressed by public policy and legislative efforts.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Building communities to which residents, visitors and investors are attracted
- Promoting the communities
- Striving to ensure future prosperity via a pro-business climate and economy
- Representing the unified voice of the employer community
- Reducing transactional friction through well-functioning networks & connections

ADVOCACY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

As business leaders dedicated to economic vitality of Eagle County, Vail Valley Partnership focuses on issues that impact our trade region, communities, businesses and citizens.



LEARN MORE AT VAILVALLEYPARTNERSHIP.COM

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VISION: *Community vitality.*

MISSION: *Leading collaboration.*

Our mission is focused around five primary goals:

1. Building communities to which residents, visitors and investors are attracted;
2. Promoting the communities;
3. Striving to ensure future prosperity via a pro-business climate;
4. Representing the unified voice of the employer community; and
5. Reducing transactional friction through well-functioning networks.

With this in mind, our programs are focused on Service to Businesses & Members, Economic & Tourism Development, and Community Vitality & Advocacy.

We remain focused on advancing Eagle County by promoting and leveraging **economic competitiveness**; advocating on behalf of **small business**; asserting our role as the Valley's hub of **business resources and information**; and appreciating that we cannot do any of this without innovative **education and workforce development** strategies and a strong **transportation** infrastructure.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCY EFFORTS

Work actively to ensure the needs of Eagle County and our employers are addressed by public policy & legislative efforts.

HOUSING

Addressing our affordable housing issue is essential to the continued success and growth of our business community across industry sector.

TRANSPORTATION

Push for transportation infrastructure improvements, expanded transit access, and increased air service development.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION

Seek to be more competitive by supporting high quality education systems that address workforce needs through innovative programming.

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Advocate for the tools and resources necessary to lead locally, regionally, nationally and globally. This includes healthcare, immigration, broadband, and other issues that impact our business community.



HOUSING:

Vail Valley Partnership's [board of governors](#) has identified affordable housing as our number one strategic priority area. As locals know, Eagle County's cost of living is higher than many other places. To no one's surprise, housing is the key element pushing Eagle County's overall cost of living above the U.S. average.

We believe in policies that allow local governments and developers to build and preserve not only designated affordable homes, but also homes for those in the "missing middle" income brackets and beyond. Policies focused on increasing housing supply – such as construction litigation reform, reviewing and revising outdated land use and zoning policies, increasing sustainable and viable access to capital, and ensuring competitive housing markets – create an environment where residents can live where they work, simultaneously investing in their communities and their family's financial security.

We believe:

1. Communities such as ours need to find ways to get to yes and to provide efficient entitlement processes;
2. Housing needs also fall in the middle, not just at the low end of the spectrum;
3. It will take all kinds of projects, and all kinds of public-private partnerships and compromises, to solve our needs;
4. Local governments need to support housing at an elected official and staff level as our communities need to be places where you can live, work, raise a family, start a business and retire;
5. Preserving livability requires housing to stay affordable for as many as possible;
6. Rental vacancy rates under 1% and increased short-term rentals cause undue upward pressure on long-term rental rates and is detrimental to the business community related to employee retention and attraction;
7. Innovative projects should be encouraged –this might include walkable communities asking for parking variances, micro-apartments, or other yet to be identified projects embracing national trends;
8. Development needs to recognize and mitigate any environmental concerns through the planning process, and should embrace sustainability practices;
9. Housing of all types has public benefits including the increased tax base that supports special districts (fire, recreation, water, metro, etc.);
10. A key to addressing the housing challenges in Eagle County is political will, exploring things such as fee waivers and density bonuses for workforce housing

[Learn more](#) about our position on workforce housing in Eagle County.



TRANSPORTATION:

Interstate 70 is a critical transportation corridor connecting Colorado's Front Range and the Western Slope. This interstate is the only major east-west highway to move tourists and residents, as well as goods and services. Severe congestion in the corridor infuriates travelers, harms local communities and small businesses, impacts our tourism economy, creates safety risks, wastes fuel, and hampers intrastate and interstate commerce.

We support the recently passed "Sustainability of the Transportation System" legislation package (SB260) which outlines \$5.3b for transportation infrastructure funding by increasing various fees including those on electric vehicles, gas, and adding a state surcharge on deliveries and shared rides. This bill creates new sources of dedicated, sustainable funding for the state's transportation infrastructure.

Transit

We are supportive of the Regional Transit Optimization efforts taking place in Eagle County with the following **Planning Goals:**

1. Enhance Transit Service and Increase Ridership
2. Explore Administrative and Operational Efficiencies
3. Support the newly developed Eagle Valley Transit Authority

We support exploration of the following **Specific Transit Enhancements:**

1. Improvements to frequency and pricing for ECO routes
2. Free and frequent transit between Ski Resorts [serving Vail – Eagle Vail – Avon – Beaver Creek – Edwards]
3. Establish Eagle – Gypsum route
4. Climate Action Goals: electric busses, increased ridership

Air Service

Increasing air service and visitors coming through Eagle County has a direct economic benefit on every community – and every business – in Eagle County. Survey data shows over \$275 million dollars are spent by visitors coming through the airport – with guests visiting our communities staying longer and having a higher repeat visitation rate than those who arrive through Denver International Airport. Because so much of our local economy, job market and businesses depend on the dollars spent by tourists and second homeowners who come through the Eagle County Regional Airport, the EGE Air Alliance plays a real, significant role that directly impacts Eagle County's residents and



communities, and Vail Valley Partnership is proud to continue to work to increase non-stop flight access from key destination markets.

We encourage inclusion of air service development funding in any future local transit funding measure.

[Learn more](#) about our position on transportation & transit.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION:

Workforce development is a key strategic priority area. Eagle County's population is currently one of Colorado's youngest, but is rapidly aging. While the youth, 18 to 25, and 46 to 60-year-old segments of the population remain constant at 25%, 8%, and 19% of the total population, respectively, state demographers are predicting a decline in the "family age" group of 26 to 45-year-olds, from almost 40% of the total in 2005 to about 24% by the year 2035. The older population, 61 and above, grows markedly, forecasted to comprise 22% of the total by 2035.

This demographic shift, and an increasing demand for skilled workforce across industry sectors, requires a concerted community approach to workforce development efforts. The Partnership takes a lead role in a variety of workforce efforts, including representing Eagle County's business community on the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments economic development district board, working closely with education partners such as Colorado Mountain College, Eagle County School District, and Youth Power 365, and leading talent pipeline efforts.

The Partnership also believes we should collectively focus our efforts on policies that will lead to a sustainable workforce and healthy business climate – such as investing in K-12 and higher education, better aligning resources to address social needs (such as early childhood care and food insecurity). Good public policy must focus on equity, breaking down barriers of entry to employment, and focusing on workforce development initiatives while also fostering tax friendliness and a reasonable regulatory environment. These policies help grow and attract a well-educated and productive workforce, which fosters vibrant, diverse communities.

We engage and are involved in these efforts because we believe workforce development and education is important to our business community and future business growth.



CareerWise Youth Apprenticeship

[CareerWise](#) coordinates apprenticeships among businesses, students, and educators that create opportunities for long-term impact. Today, the burden of educating the newest members of Colorado's workforce falls directly on our schools; therefore, this is something that needs to change and should be a joint effort.

CareerWise apprenticeships in Eagle County breaks down financial barriers, creating a highly skilled workforce that meets the complex demands of Colorado mountain resort companies, and provides multiple options for the student upon successful completion of the program. A robust, business-led apprenticeship program that meets the needs of all students will put Colorado schools and businesses on a path towards success.

Vail Valley Works

Vail Valley Partnership has made a commitment to strengthening Eagle County's current and future workforce. Vail Valley Works (an affiliated 501c3 foundation led by the Partnership) is the premier local source for professional development. Our professional development programming is designed to establish, train, and support a network of local leaders who are ready to take on the challenges of an ever-changing community. Programming includes:

- **[Signature Courses](#):** The quality of life in a community is determined by the quality of its leadership. Vail Valley Works Signature Courses are curated to explore two vital pillars of leadership – 1) Finding your internal leadership style, 2) Expanding your leadership network
- **[Specialty Courses](#):** Vail Valley Works Specialty Courses are designed to help professionals upskill through specialized trainings. These courses offer opportunities to expand your current skill set or acquire something completely new! Upskilling is a proven way to bring more value to your organization and make yourself a stronger job candidate.
- **[Affiliate Courses](#):** Affiliate courses are learning opportunities curated by subject matter experts. These courses cover a wide range of topics and come in a variety of formats. Many of these courses are "101-level" learning – perfect for those looking for an introduction to a new skill, industry, or topic without a hefty investment.

[Learn more](#) about our workforce development and education efforts.



ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS:

Vail Valley Partnership focuses on issues that impact our trade region, our communities, our businesses, and our citizens.

As the largest Chamber of Commerce in the mountain region, and one of the largest Chambers of Commerce in Colorado, we are uniquely able to advocate effectively on behalf of Eagle County business in a way that few other organizations or associations can. We are actively involved in a variety of regional, state, and national associations to help achieve our goals and be a successful advocate for Eagle County and our business community.

We believe we must recognize our strengths while addressing our weaknesses. The heart of Eagle County's economy is small business, reliant on our key industry sector of tourism and recreation. It is incumbent to continue to strengthen our local economy by supporting our emerging sectors to provide economic diversification and a stronger community. In addition to the areas outlined above, key focus areas of the Partnership include:

- Health insurance and lower health care costs
- Immigration reform & DACA
- Early childhood care
- Regional equity
- Broadband and high-speed internet access

We take an active role to advocate for a business-friendly community because we believe [™] that a strong business community leads to a strong community as a whole.

[Learn more](#) about our public policy positions.

Mountain Healthcare Coalition

Mountain Healthcare Coalition is a newly formed healthcare purchasing collaborative developed by Vail Valley Partnership in collaboration with Vail Health. Our goals include:

- Develop a comprehensive Community Healthcare Program to create more stability in insurance premiums, now and in the future;
- Provide broader accessibility to health insurance and coverage options within the community;
- Work to provide a community-wide wellness mind-set and culture;
- Provide education about access to a broader range of choices to promote better healthcare decision making;



- Provide ongoing support to community health programming including but not limited to MIRA bus, health fairs, and related community health education efforts

[Learn more](#) about the Mountain Healthcare Coalition.

Immigration

Vail Valley Partnership continued to urge Congress to act and pass a bipartisan, permanent legislative solution to enable Dreamers who are currently living, working, and contributing to our communities to continue doing so. We also support streamlined and efficient visa reform to increase the cap and availability of H-2-B and J-1 visas. We believe:

- Immigration brings entrepreneurs who start new businesses that hire American workers.
- Immigration brings young workers who help offset the large-scale retirement of baby boomers.
- Immigration brings diverse skill sets that keep our workforce flexible, help companies grow, and increase the productivity of American workers.
- Immigrants often work in innovative, job-creating fields such as science, technology, engineering, and math that create life-improving products in addition to filling the talent deficit gap in Eagle County where there are currently 2 available jobs for every unemployed person.

[Learn more](#) about our position on immigration.

Broadband

Regional broadband access is a big issue that is a key to our continued economic growth. Northwest Colorado Council of Governments is focused on a Regional Broadband Strategic Plan that focuses on improving broadband throughout the region, primarily for the sake of contributing to economic development, but also to improve quality of life and address public safety needs. The Regional Broadband Strategic Plan focuses on improving broadband by increasing capacity, decreasing cost, and improving reliability.

Sustainability

Climate change is an unavoidable topic as the legislature, the county, and local towns seek ways to reduce its impact. The Partnership firmly believes that clean air and water benefit our community, and we can meet environmental goals with reasonable, well-developed policies that don't sacrifice a thriving economy for environmental extremes. We believe that public policy



related to sustainability must account for and seek to balance social, economic, and environmental needs.

Economic Development

Eagle County's economic development plan is founded upon a guiding principle of "Community Sustainability" in the pursuit of our economic development objectives. This principle states that the decisions, policies, and programs that we pursue in the implementation of this plan should aim to create outcomes that are *economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially acceptable*.

Vail Valley Economic Development, a program of Vail Valley Partnership, provides leadership, coordination, and communication amongst various local partners to achieve the five core objectives of the Eagle County Economic Development Plan:

- Build a Business-Friendly Eagle County
- Market the Vail Valley Business Brand
- Retain, Grow, and Recruit Businesses
- Support our Opportunity Segments
- Provide Support for a Quality Workforce

[Learn more](#) about our economic development efforts and programming.

Public Policy Criteria & Process

Vail Valley Partnership (VVP) focuses on developing and enhancing the economic vitality of the Vail Valley. In the simplest of terms, this means serving as the voice of business, via our role as advocates and a trusted source and information repository for the business community.

We are pragmatists who believe in collaboration to meet the goals of a diverse set of residents and businesses. We are conveners and leaders who understand that politics and policy aren't black and white – that issues have nuance and complexity. And we believe many Eagle County residents support politicians rejecting political hostility and divisiveness, instead focusing more on common ground.

We seek to build a business-friendly Eagle County that allows businesses to fully compete for customers and market-share based on the goods and services they provide. VVP's



legislative strategy is to support policy proposals that fit our mission and oppose measures that detract from our goals.

We use these broad criteria when determining positions on policy issues:

- Does the proposal enhance the broad competitive business environment?
- Does the proposal help maintain or enhance an environment conducive to business and a level playing field for businesses in the Vail Valley now and into the future?
- Does the proposal provide the opportunity for competitive business practices regardless of the size or age of a business?
- Does the proposal allow the VVP to take the lead or play a supporting role, as relevant, in advancing issues and relying on local government to carry out their roles for good public policy,

Topics will be presented to the VVP's government affairs committee at discretion of staff to avoid presenting unrelated items to the board. Positions are taken by a majority vote. As is the case with any piece of legislation, the VVP Government Affairs Committee can choose to support, oppose, or remain neutral. Or choose to not engage in the debate at all.

VVP's Government Affairs Committee does not have the ability to take a position on issues on behalf of the Partnership, as all issues and official positions must be approved by the Board of Governors. However, to insure nimble and timely response to issues, it is acceptable for staff to promote Government Affairs Committee recommendations when projects or issues fall between board meetings, and for staff to take positions aligned with the criteria outlined in this position paper or as otherwise determined by the Board of Governors of the Partnership.

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