

Can Vail, hospital strike a deal?

Four things that might happen

- The town of Vail might get a new municipal complex.
- Vail Valley Medical Center, the Steadman Clinic, the Steadman Philippon Research Institute and Howard Head Sports Medicine center might get new space on the town hall site.
- There could be as many as 200 underground parking spaces.
- A pedestrian bridge could link the new facility with the existing hospital.

Next step in redeveloping Vail's town hall property could come this evening
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VAIL, Colorado – In Vail, 40 years is a long, long time. That means the town hall and its annex are approaching relic status.

Combine an aging building with a town medical center that's increasingly squeezed for space, and you have the germ of an idea now being studied,

whether a medical-municipal complex can replace the old town facilities.

The Vail Town Council Tuesday is scheduled to discuss putting just less than \$100,000 into continuing a feasibility study on the plan. That study is being conducted by Triumph Development of Vail for the interested parties – the town, Vail Valley Medical Center, the Steadman Clinic and the Steadman Philippon Research Institute.

The first part of that study determined that the basic idea is workable. The new work, scheduled to be completed within 90 days, will include looking at the municipal complex site in more detail, including examining the soil underneath the site.

Triumph Development Chief Operating Officer Michael O'Connor said the next phase of the study will include confirming assumptions from the first part of the study, including potential costs. The next phase of the study will also take an in-depth look at soils and ground water on the site. That will be especially important when it comes to planning for a potential underground parking garage.

But more detailed study means spending more money for professional services.

Medical center CEO Doris Kirchner said there's a firm commitment from that organization to go ahead with more study on the project.

The same is true for town officials.

“These two buildings are approaching the end of their useful life,” Vail Town Council member Kevin Foley said. If the town can replace those buildings with the help of private partners, everyone can benefit, he said.

“If we take our time and do this right, it seems like the perfect solution,” Foley said.

Fellow council member Margaret Rogers agreed. Rogers, who's running this fall for a second term on the council, is among those in the valley who are touting “health and wellness” as way to grow the economy in Vail and the valley.

While Rogers acknowledged that “many, many questions” remain before moving ahead with the project, she said she believes in getting those questions answered.

Council member Kim Newbury, who also supports the idea of the project at this point, said even if this study doesn't result in a plan, the work being done now is still worthwhile.

“If this doesn't work, we'll still learn valuable lessons about the site,” Newbury said.

But if the plan does work – well, that's what has people excited.

“Once that (new) building is done, it will add tremendous space for us,” Kirchner said.

And, while there's not yet a timeline for building, Kirchner said she believes that if the project is a good deal for all involved, it will be built, no matter the state of the economy.

“The Steadman Philippon Research Institute's work isn't going to stop,” Kirchner said. “That work needs to get done, and the clinic supports that work.”

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