

S'mass developers announce green program

By Catherine Lutz

Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

SNOWMASS VILLAGE — Creeping along Brush Creek Road in a line of traffic that includes several belching dump trucks, you wouldn't know that a green village is being conceived and built out of the most intense construction activity this town has ever seen.

And it's certainly tough to imagine that 1 million square feet of new development in Base Village — not to mention a redeveloped Snowmass Mall and Snowmass Center sometime in

the future — will be subject to a laundry list of environmentally friendly standards.

But that's what Related WestPac, owner and developer of Snowmass' three main commercial nodes, publicly promised to the community at a luncheon on Thursday announcing some of those programs and celebrating the company's acceptance into the LEED Neighborhood Development Pilot Program.

Asked if such an ambitious green concept could become reality, George Pataki, former governor of New York and founder of a

green consulting firm, answered, "Yes, absolutely. Of course there will be those who say you shouldn't build. But development is going to occur. And you have to ask, 'can you do it intelligently?'" (Related WestPac) says they're going to develop it in a way that's respectful to our environment ... and that's enormously exciting."

Pataki was one of several speakers during the luncheon to expound on the vision and plans for a greener Snowmass Village, whose existing infrastructure Aspen Skiing Co. Environmental

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Developers partnering with RMI, George Pataki

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Affairs Director Auden Schendler calls "a disaster." Built piecemeal onto a hillside, Snowmass is currently an example of sprawl made up mostly of inefficient, 1970s and 1980s buildings.

On the other hand, Mayor Doug "Merc" Mercatoris told the crowd, Snowmass has been somewhat of a green leader. It has the first free, rural mass transit system in the state. It completed an extensive stream restoration project, and is installing solar panels on two new municipal developments.

"The town of Snowmass Village has always been dedicated to the environment," said Mercatoris. "People live here because of the natural environment, and it's not the easiest place to live."

Mercatoris also said he is looking forward to learning from what Related WestPac and its environmental partners will be doing.

The company's initial set of green initiatives focuses on reducing the impacts of construction — obviously a time of heavy pollution. Related WestPac President Pat Smith announced a real-time air-monitoring program to measure particulate matter in the air and implement measures such as dust control or slowing down of construction activity if there's too much. Moving and disposing of soil is being coordinated in an effort to reduce truck trips, he said, preventing some 489 tons of carbon dioxide from

being spewed into the air. The company's street sweeper uses B20 biodiesel fuel, which reduces carbon emissions by 15 percent over traditional diesel. Overseeing all of this is a green specialist who will monitor construction and make sure buildings are properly built according to design.

Related WestPac is also installing a microturbine on Brush Creek — a 100,000 kilowatt-hour renewable energy source that can power the equivalent of a chairlift for one year.

Prefacing his remarks about Related WestPac's involvement with the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program, Related President Jeff Blau told luncheon attendees that Snowmass is going green "on a new scale."

Blau noted that New York-based Related, which is better known for high-end urban development, has done \$6 billion worth of green development, including Tribeca Green in lower Manhattan.

Blau then announced that Related WestPac is aiming for LEED silver certification for its 225-room flagship Base Village hotel. If granted, it will be one of only two hotels in the country with that ranking.

Beyond that, the company is committing that every building in its 80-acre master-planned development (Base Village and the redeveloped Snowmass Mall and Snowmass Center) will be LEED certified. Smith said the goal

is to make all the buildings 15 percent more efficient than they were originally intended. And as a whole, the project is one of 238 projects in the new LEED Neighborhood Development Pilot Program, a rating system for neighborhood design that uses the principles of new urbanism (see related story).

By designing to LEED standards, Base Village will save the equivalent of 4,400 barrels of oil and 11.3 million gallons of water — which is equal to providing energy to 240 homes and taking 950 cars off the road, Blau said.

Related WestPac is also hiring consultants to help it develop its environmental initiatives: locally based Rocky Mountain Institute and the consulting firm Pataki-Cahill Group.

Pataki, who has worked with Related in the past on some of its green developments, provided the link between government and private work during his presentation on Thursday.

Citing some of New York state's groundbreaking environmental programs — like hybrid buses and the country's first mandatory cap on carbon emissions — Pataki said, "Government has done a lot but can't do it alone."

"I'm sure this partnership (between Snowmass Village and Related WestPac) is going to show that government can set the bar high and when you have the right partners it can go even higher."

Related WestPac is taking on a chunk of the expense of being green, which can

be quite costly. While some of the costs will be passed on to the customer, who is increasingly willing to pay the price for such efforts, said Smith, "We're taking profit out of our pockets."

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What is a green neighborhood?

By Curtis Wackerle

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SNOWMASS VILLAGE — Rick Fedrizzi, president and founding chairman of the U.S. Green Building Council, said that attending an event announcing green initiatives for new Snowmass Village development was like coming full circle.

More than 13 years ago, Fedrizzi came to Old Snowmass to visit Amory Lovins and the Rocky Mountain Institute, the environmental think tank, for advice on green building standards. Since then, the council has developed multiple green building programs under its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) umbrella. And on Thursday, Fedrizzi was one of several speakers talking about the commitment Snowmass developers

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have made to LEED standards.

At a minimum, all buildings in the 80-acre Snowmass development will receive a LEED basic certification, and the Base Village flagship hotel will be gunning for the LEED silver standard. The project has also been accepted into the LEED Neighborhood Development Pilot Program, which seeks to expand LEED's sustainability concepts beyond the four walls of buildings and into urban planning concepts.

"The kind of things we're going to see here are going to send a very strong message," said Fedrizzi. When tourists come visit Base Village on their ski vacations, they will leave educated about sustainable practices, and they will take that knowledge back home, creating a ripple effect, Fedrizzi said.

The neighborhood design program synthesizes concepts from the U.S. Green Building Council, the National Resources Defense Council and the Congress for New Urbanism. To achieve the standard, a neighborhood development must score points in three areas: smart location and linkage, neighborhood pattern and design, and green construction and technology.

In each area there is a checklist with required items and optional bonus items, and the award is based on a point system. Development is evaluated in the planning stage, after approval has been granted and again when a development is complete or near complete. At that point, LEED administrators determine if the development should be granted LEED certification and if it should receive silver, gold or platinum accreditation.

Smart location and linkage revolves around building development in a way that doesn't contribute unnecessarily to sprawl. Requirements are for projects to be built in close proximity to existing communities and public transportation,

that new development that doesn't compromise existing water bodies and wetlands and is in close proximity to existing water and sewer infrastructure.

Bonus points are given for being close to jobs, schools and bike paths. The development also scores additional points if it is being built on previously contaminated lands, reducing pressure on unsoiled soils.

Neighborhood pattern and design requires non-gated communities and compact development. Bonus points are awarded for providing affordable housing, reducing the parking footprint and being close to public parks.

Green construction and technology requires contractors to minimize dust, erosion and waterway contamination during the construction process. Bonus points are awarded for reducing water use once the buildings are built, reducing the urban heat island once buildings are built and designing buildings to maximize sun exposure.

The amount of interest the neighborhood development program has received, and the general enthusiasm in the marketplace for green and sustainable building, is "beyond our wildest dreams," Fedrizzi said.

Greenwashing is a dirty word that Fedrizzi and other green building advocates take seriously. To those who seek to engage in it, Fedrizzi cautioned that the market is now savvy enough to understand what greenwashing is and it knows it when it sees it. Because of this, most of entities are likely to follow through on their green promises, because if they don't, the public, the media and the marketplace will be there to call them out on their failure.

"You only get labeled a greenwasher once," Fedrizzi said.

Catherine Lutz contributed to this report.

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