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Published on Aspen Daily News Online (<http://www.aspensdailynews.com>)

Aspen isn't affordable

Editor:

I have a comment on the recent news that Mick Ireland wants to spend \$200,000 of our money to promote Aspen as affordable and friendly to the middle class. I suppose the idea has merit but it is a double-edged sword. Do we want Aspen to become a haven for the have-nots or the haves?

When I began coming to Aspen there was very little lodging at Snowmass or at Highlands so you had to stay in Aspen and you could get some deals. We skied at Highlands and got great prices especially when we came as a group. We stayed at one of the hotels on Main Street and ate at the Skiers Chalet and had a blast. We avoided shopping unless it was for specific ski gear, which was priced competitively. So I speak as one that has experience in not being a millionaire and coming to Aspen.

So what attracted me to Aspen? At the time it was known as the number one ski resort in the U.S. and it was frequented by the rich and famous. I wanted to mingle in that mystique. I didn't want to come to a modest resort, I wanted the best.

Aspen has never been an affordable resort. If I want affordable I go to Breckenridge or Loveland or Steamboat. So why the pressing need to market the town as middle class friendly? That's not what brings people. That's what turns them off.

Allow me to quote Ski Magazine and you guess what resort they are talking about ...” Your family ski vacation shouldn't be a lot of work, That's the unswerving focus of the place. Get yourself up the mountain and we'll take it from there.” “I like being treated like a VIP and not surprisingly, the heart of the this resort experience is service.” One reader asks “There are lifties when you get off the lift?” Some sniff “It's like a country club on snow and it's not for budget skiers.” “This resort knows it's customers and those customers deal the resort a winning hand of five aces. Grooming, On-Mountain Food, Lodging, Dining and Service.”

So who is Ski Magazine talking about? Not Aspen! How about Deer Valley, the No. 1 ski resort in America. You know what? I would like to experience Deer Valley and there is nothing in the article about affordable.

I think Mick does not understand who Aspen appeals to. He tries to make the City less attractive to the wealthy. He is trying to fit a square peg into a round hole with our cash. I can't think of any new and additional retail space in town in many years and how about hotels? There is only one way to lower the cost of a room and that is to have a larger supply. We have seen what happens to developers trying to add new spaces in town. Lift One is bankrupt and has been trying to get approval for hotel and retail space for six years. There is something wrong when the free market is not allowed to function as it should and that it should suffer at the hands of socialist leaning politicians.

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Source URL: <http://www.aspendailynews.com/section/letter-editor/136989>