



Inclusivity in South Main

The vision for a compact, walkable, vibrant, friendly and beautiful neighborhood.

By Neighborhood Co-Founder Jed Selby

When I traveled the globe and country as a professional kayaker in my early 20s, I took careful note of the towns and places that I loved along the way. I also noticed towns I decidedly did not like.

Those travels informed a vision, shared with my sister Katie, that anchors South Main. We both understood the key elements that our favorite places shared. We wondered if it was possible to create a place with these timeless characteristics from scratch on the banks of the Arkansas River. We wanted to build a place we loved as much as our favorite neighborhoods and towns around the world.

We wanted to emulate these captivating places, so we dove headlong into cracking the code for building the elusive, truly lovable, neighborhood. We analyzed street widths, boulevard trees, scale, architecture, walkability, parks, outdoor recreation, food, culture, art, music, inclusivity and the resulting economic prosperity required for residents to survive and thrive.

As we begin Phase 2 of South Main, 18 years after launching our vision, the essential principles remain the same: that compact, walkable, vibrant, friendly and beautiful neighborhoods, close to world class outdoor recreation, are the essential components of any great place.

To my amazement and gratitude, South Main has become a wonderful place to live, work, raise kids and enjoy life. To be clear, there are many challenges we will face as we grow. We are about 25% built out. We have a long journey to becoming a completed neighborhood.

I believe it is very important that we value the last residents that will build or move into South Main as much as the first residents. It is critical that we value new businesses, despite inevitable competition that will arise. Remaining inclusive of all residents, regardless of when they arrived and where they came from, will require patience and an open mind as we all find our way.

Being compact, walkable and vibrant has its downsides as well. We all should recognize those. South Main is not a great fit for everyone. Vitality can be messy and loud. Living in a vibrant neighborhood isn't for everyone.

If we want both residents and visitors to have access to high-quality services, and we want shops to thrive and everyone to have an array of restaurants to choose from, there must be a critical mass of people. That means, at times, our community will endure parking shortages, unwanted noise, and new buildings that will block old views. Ultimately, we can expect the complications that happen in any prosperous downtown that attracts many visitors. While we want to remain a safe and enjoyable town, if we anticipate the realities that go along with the concentrated urban life in our downtown core, we will not be shocked and angered when these expected difficulties occur.

These are the inconveniences that exist in any great, compact, walkable and vibrant neighborhood around the world. In our opinion, it's worth the trade-off. Towns without the inconveniences of having a lot of people around tend to be ones where people drive everywhere. They are the towns that suffer from



suburban sprawl. Empty towns most often don't have great food, entertainment, art, services and amenities. They don't have the vibrancy and vitality that we have worked so hard to create.

Not recognizing and accepting the occasional headaches that come from visitors and growth leads to NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard). NIMBYism is a short-sighted and pervasive trend that plagues cities and town everywhere. It's something we should strive to avoid in Buena Vista. It is a mindset based on exclusivity and a belief that "my experience is more important than yours," or anyone else's for that matter. NIMBYism is the idea that "I moved here because I liked it exactly how it was, and I don't want it to ever change. NIMBYs say they have "a right to never be inconvenienced." It is the idea that "I am more important than the next resident because I got here first."

Inclusivity is an idea that gives people the benefit of the doubt and is an idea that keeps our minds and hearts open. It is an idea that each new resident, visitor and business adds to our community and our collective prosperity. Inclusivity is our vision for South Main. It is a vision that anyone who wants to be here and be part of this community is welcome, regardless of where they came from, their ethnicity or socioeconomic background. Inclusivity creates diversity. Diversity creates a rich, communal fabric and a neighborhood and town that is more interesting, fun and ripe with abundant economic, recreational and personal opportunities.

Please consider if a concert in the park, an elated wedding party or kids playing nearby will be a problem for you before buying a house in South Main. As the dining options and amenities improve, parking will become scarce at times and there will be more people around. We feel that the inconveniences that may occur from time to time are well worth the benefits that inclusivity brings. For those of us who love living in a vibrant neighborhood, it will improve our quality of life.

But for those looking to be in a very quiet neighborhood year-round, South Main may be a disappointment. To be certain, South Main is a quiet and tranquil community most of the time. We simply want to be clear that our stated and intended goal is to create a vibrant, inclusive neighborhood and to foster the excitement and vitality that makes a great place. We've come a long way already, but we can't wait to see what the future holds.

Jed Selby

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