

THE ASPEN TIMES

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ASCENDIGO BLUE



LYNN GOLDSMITH/SPECIAL TO THE ASPEN TIMES

Singer/songwriters Hayes Carll, right, and Allison Moorer were the highlighted performers for Ascendigo Blue Aspen 2023, held on Saturday at St. Regis Aspen. The annual benefit is to help those on the autism spectrum, which is Ascendigo's primary goal.

Candidates agree: Core's a mess

What's gone wrong, and what should be done?

Julie Bielenberg
The Aspen Times

Editor's note: This is part of a series about mayoral and City Council candidates' views on the top issues Aspen faces today.

In a city that thrives on high-end boutiques, posh eateries, chic bars and lacks workers, affordable housing, and locals-friendly businesses in the core, how do the candidates for the Aspen City Council and mayor feel about downtown's current construction status and is there an answer?

MAYORAL CANDIDATE TRACY L. SUTTON

Sutton isn't impressed. "Residential and commercial construction projects in the downtown core need to be completed. We need a vibrant downtown core for both visitors and locals to enjoy. This is critical for local businesses," she said. "I know of cases where long permitting processes have been an issue.



KELSEY BRUNNER/THE ASPEN TIMES

The former Bidwell building site near the Red Onion in downtown Aspen remains mainly a hole in the ground.

In general, construction projects have stalled for a variety of other reasons, including a lack of workers, inflation, and rising interest rates.

"I am concerned that uncompleted projects will continue to damage the charm and character of Aspen's downtown. Our charming downtown is essential to our appeal as a mountain destination."

Her solution? "This issue has been relevant for some time. I think the city should have addressed it sooner. We need measures that speed up permitting processes and discourage long construction

delays. We also need to discuss with developers what their specific concerns are. More than anything, a process should be initiated as soon as possible."

MAYOR TORRE

"Current downtown commercial construction is a mess. The unfinished projects of one developer are having negative impacts on our community, businesses and visitors. These projects were approved before my terms. We are trying to work with these projects to get them completed, and many have their permits, but the

CANDIDATES, A7

The SIL pops up downtown

Platform for independent fashion designers, most of them women

Sarah Girgis
The Aspen Times

When Natalie Bloomingdale launched The SIL in 2017, it was a passion project intended to help clients neglected by the fashion industry.

"My PR company represented a lot of female brands, young brands and emerging talent," she said. "It was disheartening to see some of these creative and talented designers not get the level of exposure I thought they deserved

because of the rise of affiliate marketing."

In the early days, The SIL, an acronym for "Stuff I Love," was an incubator for mostly female emerging designers looking for representation in the industry. It has since grown into an online cult shopping destination for those looking for high-quality fashion that can't be found elsewhere.

"We're a platform for independent fashion designers," she said. "I'm really marching to the beat of my own drum by design, I wanted to keep it individualized and independent."

To that end, Bloomingdale has rejected participating in any affiliate marketing, which she acknowledged "has probably slowed growth" since there is no commission structure, no incentive for influencers or media outlets to promote the site.

But that hasn't stopped The SIL, which now carries 27 unique designers, from growing in popularity.

Bloomingdale credited her clientele for the company's success, emphasizing how supportive they have been and how they are "hungry" for what she presents because what's on The SIL is really only available on The SIL. "That's really our key differentiator," she said.

Because of her unique

business model, the designers featured on The SIL often produce one-of-a-kind capsules and capsule pieces exclusive to them.

"There's no mass production here," she reiterated.

On Wednesday and Thursday, Bloomingdale and her team will host a trunk show at a private home in downtown Aspen featuring a handful of designers ranging from

THE SIL, A6



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THE SIL

From page A1

customizable made-to-order to vintage and ready to wear.

According to Bloomingdale, the designers will be sending special pieces to Aspen that have never been sold elsewhere for the two-day event.

Highlights include Keehn Deutch, who will be showing their newest collection and taking custom orders, as well as ikat coats from ZAZI Vintage, furs from Chasseur NYC, and cashmere

womenswear from Margaret Birdseye.

The trunk show will also feature handbags from Los Angeles-based celebrity favorite Tyler Ellis and New York based jewelry line Of Rare Origin.

"I've always flirted with the idea of somehow doing something in Aspen, it's such a great market," Bloomingdale said. "I thought what a perfect opportunity to highlight all these brands that were started by wonderful girl bosses. I'd love it if more people supported them."



COURTESY PHOTOS/THE COLLECTIVE YOU

Natalie Bloomingdale founded The SIL to represent emerging designers and female-founded companies. She's hosting a trunk show in Aspen this week.



Margaret Birdseye will bring California cool cashmere sweaters to The SIL trunk show Wednesday and Thursday in Aspen.



Jane Pendry-designed Dovima Paris will be available at The SIL Trunk show this week.



Female-founded ZAZI Vintage, which will be available at The SIL trunk show, partners with the UN Ethical Fashion Initiative. The initiative creates and strengthens social enterprises in emerging economies by connecting them globally.

IN BRIEF

From page A5

The 2022 dollar volume of \$3.58 billion was a 16% decline from 2021's record-shattering \$4.28 billion. Perhaps more telling, though, was the decline in transactions. The 1,973 transactions were the fewest since 2014.

Travis Cox, team leader of Keller Williams Mountain Properties, said while there's plenty of national news about a cooling real estate market, the local market is still strong.

While the "crazy times" of 2021 and the second half of 2020 have subsided, Cox noted that what's declining in most places is the rate of price appreciation. The speed of transactions is also cooling off, with fewer contracts being written within a day or two of a property hitting the market.

"You don't want a house to go under contract in an afternoon," Cox said, adding that a significant portion of those quickly written deals fell through before closing.

Alex Griffin, the local manager for LIV Sotheby's International Real Estate, said despite national and state news, "the sky is not falling."

Griffin noted that while interest rates have risen in the past year, current mortgage rates are in the low-5% range. Still, that's quite a bit higher than rates in the 3% range seen in 2021.

Documentary focuses on Lake Tahoe housing crisis

The Lake Tahoe housing crisis is a hot topic, and local resident Elizabeth Cameron has documented the difficulties of finding places to live.

Cameron was a coach for the Palisades Tahoe ski team five years ago, before moving away to pursue other ventures. When she returned in late 2021 for the winter season, housing prices had skyrocketed.

"I was so blown away by how just five years prior, it had been so easy to find a place," said Cameron. "I was just shocked by how much more difficult living up here, from a rental perspective, had become in just five years."

The idea struck for Cameron to create a short documentary about the housing crisis in the basin, specifically centered around skiers and snowboarders. From there, she posted on Facebook looking for people to help create the film.

"I was blown away by the community response and support," Cameron said. "So it's grown into a much bigger project."

Now, the 30-minute documentary, Room and Board, will be playing at the Mammoth Film Festival at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, March 4, and features many voices in the community, including local snowboarder Irie Jefferson, Christine Savage with Beyond the Boundaries and Stacy Caldwell with the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation.

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