THE FUTURE ISSUE

IN THE YEAR

ASPIN 2037
Aspen’s next generation of entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders are serious about the future (and think you should be too). We asked, and they answered—with all of Aspen’s inherent challenges, why move here, stay here, invest here? The consensus? The future is as bright as we make it.
prefer to leave their city existence for a more holistic, connective existence.

Wang: Though transient in nature, Aspen is more of an incubation pod rather than just a stop along the way. The younger crowd will come here… meet other like-minded people, get inspired, grow and find direction. When opportunity strikes and the time is right, they move on to do amazing things, either here or elsewhere.

What is Basalt like in 2037?
Jessica Jacobi (senior marketing manager, Digital Services, Aspen Skiing Company): I hope the conversation about individual towns will become one about the Roaring Fork Valley as one whole.

Rispoli: Unlike Aspen, Basalt has room to expand physically. I believe Basalt could turn into a full-blown city complete with corporate office buildings, its own hospital and a substantially larger population. There is a lot of appeal to a beautiful area just 15 minutes from world-class skiing and, with an amazing reservoir, an extensive outdoor trail system, all without the multimillion-dollar expense of Aspen.

Burley: Higher density development will keep the footprint of the town relatively small yet will increase economic vibrancy and business diversity.

How do Aspenites get around town and the valley in 2037?
Jacobi: Hopefully, emerging technologies allow transit services to become so seamless that using them will be the first-choice option over single-occupant cars. A small-scale light rail running the length of the valley would be the realization of a long-standing valley dream. Speaking of dreams… connecting the mountains with gondolas could be a way to enhance the resort experience while transporting people around in ways that don’t clog the streets.

Mesirow: You can expect Aspen to be the town of the foot, with walking, bicycles and personal electric devices taking prominence. The valley will be linked by a continuous loop transit system that allows residents to move freely.

In 1947 the SkiCo opened the first lift, creating a winter sport industry here that previously didn’t exist. Do you imagine new industries springing up in the valley by the year 2037? What are they?
Rispoli: Our next generation of mountain town careers will be those not easily automated; service could remain a large component. They will come from the demands of the millennial generation who prefer experiences to products. That could create a boom for ecotourism. Thrill seekers, nature lovers and day hikers alike will travel here for access to our national forests.

Mesirow: Though not new, I would expect to see Aspen grow as a spot for intellectual and cultural tourism with an increase in retreats, festivals and workshops. The rise of the sharing economy should change the way we interact with one another, and the rise of remote work should mean a diversification of our economy. Powder days will still rock.

Burley: I see a resurgence of local agriculture already happening and that will continue to expand in the next 20 years. This trend of
regional production could also manifest in other cottage industries.

By the year 2037, I hope my business/organization is...

Jacobi: I’d like to see more women in leadership positions both in our company and in the ski industry at large. As a member of the digital team at SkiCo, I hope to help build a future where a guest turns on her phone, or whatever new wearable device of the future, and can easily navigate an integrated and unique Aspen Snowmass experience. From figuring out and accessing which mountain to ski that day based on conditions and groomed runs to knowing what’s happening in town and what friends and family are doing—ultimately creating deeper personalized experiences, all with one device or media that could be integrated into your goggle lens or a new IContact lens you can place directly into your eye...

Wang: I hope my business has grown into a brick-and-mortar situation where I can share my take on global cuisine, specifically street food. My dream is to have a noodle house here in town that serves up items like Taiwanese beef noodles, Filipino pancit, Vietnamese pho and, of course, a great bowl of ramen.

The biggest game-changer for Aspen or for my business in the future is...

Rispoli: Half a century ago, people would send postcards of Aspen, and in a week the recipient would stare in awe at the image. Today, we upload a photo of us paragliding midflight and it reaches thousands instantly. Aspen cannot hold back the flood of people that will flock to this beautiful town. The town’s biggest challenge will be coping with that.

Jacobi: The future of snow.

Lauren Sumner (Aspen police officer): Growth. Growth and change can be synonymous in small towns like ours and can be seen as a negative thing by some citizens. The director of the police academy at Colorado Mountain College, Stewart Curry, said jokingly that, “Cops hate two things: change and the way things are,” which can be the view of small towns as well.

Clarity Fornell (weaver): The change that I would like to see is for the businesses within the commercial core. Don’t get me wrong, I feel incredibly inspired walking past some of the high-end retail store windows. But it is too difficult for most locals to rent equally visible spaces, which is necessary to make a business thrive in this town. I am fortunate enough to be a part of the new Maker + Place and have high hopes that more unique shared spaces begin to emerge soon.

Burley: Focusing on building a high-density, well-connected core of all the cities in the valley is key to maintaining a rural, small-town feel while still embracing future growth and development. Look to Europe for models of how mountain communities deal with long-term development and do not be afraid of large, bold infrastructure projects that will vastly improve the long-term quality of life in the valley.

Brittanie Rockhill (luxury real estate broker): More people being able to work remotely. As more people acquire the flexibility to work remotely, I would like to see more young professionals make their way here. Overcoming the hurdle of fewer career opportunities in our small mountain town would be a game changer.

I hope this one thing about Aspen stays true forever:

Skye Weinglass (artist; owner, The Bird’s Nest Gallery and Lil’ Boogie’s): I hope the spirit of Aspen stays alive… the funky, unique, grassroots, artistic, athletic, local spirit.

Any predictions for 2037?

Stephanie Janigo (co-founder, Messenger Aspen): Bitcoin will be the global currency.

Rispoli: The electrification (building charging stations, small-cell Wi-Fi, autonomous vehicle lanes) in Aspen and the valley will spur a major infrastructure and economic boon to the valley.

Sumner: I have already seen the level of surveillance increase dramatically since I have been here, from the police force to security cameras. I believe that this will only increase as people realize how important it is to their businesses and homes. From my view, I see this as a great thing. I think a level of this is just seeing officers out walking the streets in uniform, which we are encouraged to do. Then we are able to build relationships with people and be active in deterring crime and keeping everyone safe.

Rispoli: Remember all of those mineshafts that were cut directly underneath Aspen by Hyman, Wheeler and Cowenhoven during the silver boom? I sure hope those tunnels hold up!

Mesirow: Female millennial president