

Population Growth and Its Discontents:
Examining Working-Class Political Representation in Colorado's Mountain Towns

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Abstract

Much attention has been given in recent years to the problems associated with post-pandemic tourism and population growth in Colorado's small, amenity-rich mountain towns. The causes and impacts of this phenomenon in general have been covered at length in prior literature, so I spend limited time in this paper explaining the relationship between growth and strains on affordability and physical infrastructure. Instead, I aim to explore the unique ways Colorado mountain towns are affected by these issues, and offer novel solutions to these problems in three key areas: housing, infrastructure, and local fiscal policy.

After exploring and addressing these "growing pains" faced by Colorado resort communities, I then turn to an explanation of why the solutions I suggest have not yet been widely implemented. The answer, I argue, is that local governments across the United States are currently experiencing a crisis of representation, leaving the voices of working class constituents (the same people most affected by the affordability struggles of these towns) essentially out of the conversation surrounding urban policy. I conclude the paper by exploring some solutions to this political representation problem, including reforming the scheduling of municipal elections and the compensation of local officeholders, and finally offering an optimistic outlook for the future of urban governance in Colorado and across the country into the future.

The Amenity Trap

Introducing the Amenity Trap

Colorado's mountain towns, like many amenity-rich communities across the country, are in crisis. In the wake of COVID-19 travel restrictions and, in particular, the subsequent advent of remote work, tourism and migration to Colorado's outdoor recreation-oriented mountain towns have reached historic highs,¹ and the influx of visitors and new residents is straining local systems, both financial and physical. Increasingly, the service workers on whom local tourism economies depend are being priced out of town, forcing outmigration, longer commutes, and, in some cases, sharp upticks in homelessness.² The "Amenity Trap" is the name that economists Megan Lawson and Kris Smith have given to this cycle of development and population growth, where small, amenity-rich towns risk being "loved to death" through the strains on infrastructure and cost of living posed by tourists and new residents.³

The problems facing Colorado mountain towns are well-researched; in fact, they are largely analogous to the problems facing many major cities in the United States, including housing affordability and infrastructure challenges. The reasons these troubles are more acute in small, amenity-rich towns like the Colorado communities on which I will focus are primarily natural, including limited buildable area and significant seasonal strain due to variable levels of visitation based on seasonal tourism. In this paper, I will focus less on these problems themselves, due to the wealth of already-existing literature on this topic, and instead emphasize

¹ Blevins, "Survey of Colorado's High-Country Residents a 'Wake-up Call' on the Devastating Implications of the Affordable Housing Crisis."

² One 2020 study found that with every \$100 increase in median rent, homelessness increased by nine percent: Cackley, "Homelessness: Better HUD Oversight of Data Collection Could Improve Estimates of Homeless Population."

³ Lawson and Smith, "Amenity Trap: How High-Amenity Communities Can Avoid Being Loved to Death."

some more novel solutions to these problems, accompanied by a discussion of why they have been difficult to implement so far.

The two foremost studies⁴ on amenity-rich mountain towns in Colorado focus primarily on six Colorado counties that contain the state’s most popular tourist destinations: Grand County (home to Winter Park and Grand Lake), Eagle County (Vail and Eagle), Pitkin County (Aspen-Snowmass), Routt County (Steamboat Springs), San Miguel County (Telluride), and Summit County (Breckenridge, Keystone, Frisco, Dillon, and Copper Mountain). These six counties represent much of Colorado’s outdoor recreation economy, and will serve as a representative sample for the state’s most strained amenity-rich communities in my treatment of political representation later in the paper.

Importantly, I want to emphasize that Colorado mountain communities are faced with a choice. In addressing the visitation and migration problems posed today, localities could oppose growth itself, opting to limit building permits, new utilities licensing, and town expansion. But this approach, where it has been tried, has invariably resulted in “unattainably expensive housing, long commutes for workers, wider income disparities, and a limited tax base.”⁵ Instead, I want to argue that communities should pursue a pro-growth approach to these issues, solving the problems posed by greater tourism without constraining the economic engine that has the potential to make everyone in these communities better off, so long as they share equally in the gains made.

And finally, I want to note that some solutions will be common across issue areas. Throughout this paper, I will repeatedly emphasize the role for inter-jurisdictional coordination,

⁴ These, which are drawn from throughout this paper, are the previously referenced “Amenity Trap” by Lawson and Smith and the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments’ “Mountain Migration Report,” from 2021.

⁵ Lawson and Smith, “Amenity Trap”

including regional cooperation and multilevel knowledge-sharing and financial assistance from the state and federal governments. Additionally, a common theme among problems faced by Colorado localities is that larger urban areas, which are facing many of the same problems, albeit in slightly different contexts, can serve as models for progressive, pro-growth development strategies in smaller towns. Local leaders should look to cities that have experienced these problems in the past, and take careful note of the strategies that worked, as well as those that failed.⁶

Colorado's Housing Challenge

The foremost challenge for Colorado mountain towns, and one from which many related problems stem, is housing. Colorado has a particularly severe housing shortage statewide: according to the Rocky Mountain Institute, the state faces an overall shortfall of around 325,000 units.⁷ This is due in part to significant shortcomings in the state's major cities,⁸ and in part to challenges in smaller mountain communities, which I will discuss in this section.

The basis of the statewide housing problem is that job and population growth in Colorado have consistently outpaced the growth of the housing stock in cities across the state.⁹ In Colorado's mountain towns, alongside the traditional challenges to building an adequate supply of housing—local opposition¹⁰ to housing construction chief among them, expressed through exclusionary zoning and onerous development regulations—exist even more obstacles for growth, like a limited area of buildable land and the variable utilization problem that comes with

⁶ For more on the promise of cooperation and solution-sharing between cities, see Emanuel, *The Nation City: Why Mayors Are Now Running the World*.

⁷ Warsing, "Solving Colorado's Housing and Climate Crisis."

⁸ Summers, "Denver Has One of the Worst Housing Shortages in US."

⁹ Byers, "Colorado Springs Housing Affordability Report."

¹⁰ Endemic local opposition to new development has been represented by the term "NIMBYism," meaning "Not In My Backyard."

the seasonal nature of many resort towns' economies. In particular, research has identified a critical shortage of housing on the lower end of what Lawson and Smith call the "housing bridge," the scale of housing affordability ranging from unhoused and emergency services at the bottom to luxury housing at the top.¹¹ And when prices rise on the higher end, as they have in recent years, this disrupts residents at every level, resulting in the displacement of working-class renters off the lower end.

The housing shortage in rural Colorado communities can be characterized in large part by problems on the housing supply side, where local opposition constitutes a primary obstacle to construction. The toolkit for solving the local opposition problem is well-researched,¹² although the reasons that NIMBYism has been such a successful local political movement are less obvious, and will be discussed in the second part of this paper. Of greater interest to local leaders in Colorado's mountain towns, however, are recent innovations to address the geography dilemma. Unfortunately, not much can be done about the buildable land shortage, as these cities would not likely alter the physical landscape that has made them such magnets for migration in the first place. Accordingly, increased density is the only solution: with physical constraints on building outward, mountain towns must build upward instead. This means eliminating restrictions on density, which currently exist in some form in every county in my analysis, by zoning for smaller lot sizes, encouraging a mix of multifamily housing, and allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on existing lots.¹³ Additionally, efforts to expand residential zoning to more areas and creatively redevelop vacant and underutilized public lands for residential use

¹¹ Lawson and Smith, "Amenity Trap"

¹² For one example, see Ross and Glazer, "Overcoming NIMBY Opposition to Affordable Housing."

¹³ Favilukis and Song, "Why Zoning Is Too Restrictive."

have shown promise and should be explored.¹⁴ To address the high construction costs and associated difficulties with building in remote mountain locations, municipalities should emphasize modular and panelized construction practices, which were shown to reduce construction costs by ten to twenty percent compared to on-site construction,¹⁵ as well as streamlining the permitting and development process.

Another housing challenge faced by resort communities across Colorado is the problem of utilization. In many Colorado mountain towns, a large part of the housing stock are second homes, which may only be occupied for a few weeks out of the year. Short-term rentals, though critical to local tourism, have also been the source of scrutiny amid a worsening housing shortage. Some Colorado localities have taken creative measures to curb this type of land use, among them Durango, where local officials capped short-term rentals at two to three percent of a neighborhood's total housing stock,¹⁶ and Winter Park, where property owners have been provided cash payments to lease to local workers instead of tourists.¹⁷ Where this happens, it is generally good policy to distinguish between rentals that are owner-occupied and those that are not, in order to incentivize efficient utilization. Deed restrictions and graduated, variable-rate real estate transfer taxes¹⁸ should also be part of the solution, the latter of which will be expanded on in a later section of this paper.

In summary, solving the small-town housing crisis will require a combination of traditional, big-city solutions aimed at fostering density and eliminating barriers to construction,

¹⁴ The Forest Service Flexible Housing Partnerships Act, introduced by US Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO), is one such example.

¹⁵ Burnett et al., "Using Economies of Scale to Produce Starter Homes."

¹⁶ Romeo, "The AirBnB Apocalypse." To avoid compromising tourism capacity, short-term rental restrictions should only be pursued if adequate support is given for hotels.

¹⁷ "Short-Term Fix Program."

¹⁸ Implementing real estate transfer taxes is prohibited in all but twelve Colorado localities, so change at the state level would be needed to make this policy a reality. More on this in a later section.

as well as innovative fixes to the unique challenges posed by mountain town geography and housing utilization. The question of why many of these policies have not yet been widely enacted, despite enjoying broad popular support, will be covered in the second half of this paper.

Building and Maintaining Critical Infrastructure

Infrastructure is another aspect of local policy with significant implications for municipal capacity and governance, and like housing, poses unique challenges for remote resort communities. In addition to the construction difficulties detailed in the previous section, infrastructure needs in Colorado mountain towns are difficult to judge due to fluctuations in visitation between seasons and from year to year. And where needs are understood, local governments tend to suffer from budget constraints, over-regulation, and a lack of experience in infrastructure planning.

The variation in seasonal population that characterizes many Colorado mountain towns complicates infrastructure planning significantly, but new technology may hold the key to predicting local needs. To address planning uncertainty, municipalities should take advantage of recent advances in so-called “big data” processing to engage in scenario planning and make more informed decisions about infrastructure needs and development.¹⁹ Additionally, the use of novel datasets like social media tags and anonymous cell phone records can provide local governments with a more precise understanding of their visitation and infrastructure needs, leading to better policy outcomes.²⁰

¹⁹ Stoker et al., “Planning and Development Challenges in Western Gateway Communities.”

²⁰ For a more in-depth discussion of the promising role emerging technologies can play in urban governance, see Newsom and Dickey, *Citizenville: How to Take the Town Square Digital and Reinvent Government*.

Rural infrastructure development is still a difficult task due to constraints on local budgets, planning knowledge, and flexibility, but these problems can all be addressed through a creative mix of cross-governmental collaboration. For one, infrastructure needs like transportation and energy transmission affect multiple jurisdictions across counties, so regional cooperation must play a role, as municipalities can do more by pooling their resources and coordinating service. But this often still leaves local authorities without the funding and expertise they need to execute complex projects. This is where the federal government has a role to play: through cooperation with federal partners like the US Economic Development Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, local governments can make use of infrastructure expertise and knowledge-sharing to inform their own planning.²¹ And though the federal government faces its own budgetary challenges, it is critical that grants and other funding be made available to support infrastructure development in amenity-rich destinations. Fortunately, a recent change in the Census designation of “urban” communities to count housing units in addition to a community’s permanent population may grant mountain towns new access to previously out-of-reach funds.²² And finally, public-private partnerships and philanthropic involvement should be explored as alternative sources of funding for key infrastructure projects.

Paying For It: Progressive Fiscal Policy

State and federal support, private sector partnerships, and other alternative funding sources are generally promising vehicles for supplementing municipal budgets, but specific fiscal fixes are necessary to ensure that local tax revenue is raised in an efficient manner that also aligns with local priorities. In this section, I will focus on specific considerations local

²¹ “Aligning Plans and Resources.”

²² Schneider, “Census Bureau Raises the Bar on the Definition of ‘Urban’ in America.”

governments must make in order to orient fiscal policy towards their goals of growth and inclusion, and to ensure the long-term health and resilience of municipal budgets.

Broadly, fiscal policy in these communities should be aligned with local economic drivers, primarily tourism. For many towns, the transition to an amenity destination has been a relatively recent one, and some municipalities still rely on outdated tax regimes built around the old commodity-based economies. In order to recoup lost revenue, local tax systems in these towns should be re-oriented around today's drivers of economic growth, like resort activity,²³ real estate sales,²⁴ and incomes on investment and rents stemming from the tourist economy.

This can, however, lead to budgetary challenges, as local tax revenue can become over-reliant on the volatile tourism industry. To this end, the goal of local economic development policy in these communities should be to vary revenue streams by diversifying the economy. Luckily, tourism economies, though fickle in their own right, are already far more resilient than the natural resource-extraction model from which many of these communities transitioned, due to the service-oriented companion industries that develop alongside the tourism sector.

As outlined in the previous section, increasing federal aid to local governments would go a long way in addressing municipal budget shortfalls and restoring the so-called “urban-federal axis.” As the federal government expands its role in municipal budgets, however, the primary goal of policymakers at the state level should be to get out of the way of local leaders, instead providing municipal administrations maximum flexibility to execute fiscal policy as they see fit,

²³ One proposal worth exploring is the bipartisan Ski Hill Resources for Economic Development Act (or SHRED Act), also sponsored by Senator Bennet, which would allow the US Forest Service to redirect revenue from ski area fees, reinvesting the funds in local natural resource management, providing a critical revenue stream for amenity communities.

²⁴ Many promising prospects for real estate transfer taxes are described in greater depth in other research, including targeted deed recording fees, utilization-based transfer taxes (which distinguish between second homes and primary residences), and productive land value taxes. For more, see the Fiscal Policy section in Lawson and Smith, “Amenity Trap.”

and in response to evolving financial conditions and needs. Many states, including Colorado, still regulate municipal finances to a significant extent, depriving local governments of the critical flexibility to set their own tax policy and adjust revenue streams as needed.²⁵ The foremost goal of state leaders today should be to return fiscal authority to local governments at once, and only intervene in municipal finance when absolutely necessary.

The Political Representation Problem

Introducing the Political Representation Problem

In the first part of this paper, I have explored many of the unique problems facing Colorado mountain towns and amenity-rich communities across the country, providing a combination of empirically tested, big-city solutions to well-known problems and more novel solutions that specifically address the problems of remote, outdoor recreation-based localities. Of the more widely-popularized solutions I have discussed, many have received support from cross-cutting, bipartisan majorities of constituents,²⁶ and yet remain to be implemented fully in most cities across Colorado and the nation. What explains this disconnect between the will of local citizens and the policies enacted by their governments?

In answering this question, it helps to simplify the debates from earlier in this paper down to two sides: on one, the workers on whom local economies rely that have been increasingly displaced from their communities, and on the other, the wealthy homeowners that have directly benefited from rising housing costs and have fought to oppose progressive efforts to improve affordability and equity locally. Though some urban issues defy this categorization, I find this dichotomy a broadly useful one for understanding the problems facing local governments today.

²⁵ Blevins, “Colorado Communities Are Harvesting Record Real Estate Transfer Taxes. But They Are Not Banking on the Boom.”

²⁶ “Poll Reveals Strong Bipartisan Support for Action on Housing Affordability.”

In other words, most fights divide communities between those that want to challenge the status quo, and those that want to uphold it.

As discussed before, the reforms I have suggested that would meaningfully alter the status quo and make urban life more equitable and accessible in Colorado have not been implemented on a significant scale anywhere in the state, despite popular support for many of them. This reality reveals a fundamental truth of local politics in the United States, which I will spend the rest of this section attempting to illustrate: in the vast majority of cases where two sides are competing for representation in local policy, the one with more resources wins, even if the other side enjoys stronger popular support.

Conventional wisdom has long suggested that government is most intimate, faithful, and responsive at the local level. Many Americans believe municipal government to be more or less immune from the political dysfunction and asymmetrical representation so often experienced at the federal and state levels, and local leaders consistently enjoy better approval ratings and higher levels of trust than politicians at any other level.²⁷ But, by most metrics discussed in the first part of this paper, local governments are failing to execute the will of their constituents and decisively solve the problems they currently face. In this section of the paper, I will explain this tension between the popular will and actual local policy, as well as shed some light on the state of local government generally in the United States today. Specifically, building on the pioneering research detailed in *Hometown Inequality: Race, Class, and Representation in American Local Politics*, I would suggest that, far from its popular perception as the most responsive level of government, local government is indeed in a crisis of representation itself, resulting in the distortion of preferences and a lack of progressive policy implementation at the local level, feeding the crises detailed in prior parts of this paper.

²⁷ Brennan, “Americans’ Trust in Government Remains Low.”

In *Hometown Inequality*, researchers Brian Schaffner, Jesse Rhodes, and Raymond La Raja pose a comprehensive case for the crisis of representation at the local level based on a study of hundreds of millions of voter files spanning hundreds of US cities of all different sizes. What they find, in their words, is that “local policy is almost completely unresponsive to the preferences of members of the least affluent group.”²⁸ Their exhaustive analysis proves, quite convincingly, that local government in the United States has long since stopped serving the disadvantaged, and now represents almost exclusively the most affluent members of society. This problem of political representation is an indispensable lens through which every other conflict in urban policy today must be seen; this disconnect is why, after decades of advocacy, so many American cities still suffer from chronic housing shortages, poor affordability, and severely inadequate infrastructure.

As sinister as it sounds, much of this crisis in representation can be explained simply through the principle of participation in local government. Following Progressive Era reforms to professionalize city government, including off-year elections, nonpartisan ballots, at-large municipal races, and the new city manager model, voter turnout plunged in cities across the United States.²⁹ The reason for this, simply, is that the reformers’ aim was to decrease popular political participation, making it harder for poorer residents—mostly immigrants—to vote, since they were the fuel for the political machines that reformers were trying to kill. These efforts largely achieved their goal of professionalizing local governance, but the cost ended up being the very essence of participatory democracy at the local level, and in turn representation and policy responsiveness in municipal governance.

²⁸ Schaffner, Rhodes, and La Raja, *Hometown Inequality: Race, Class, and Representation in American Local Politics*, 168.

²⁹ Schott, “Progressives against Democracy.”

Turning now to my own analysis of local political representation, I find these same policies severely limiting participation in the six amenity-rich Colorado counties I studied. Importantly, all six counties hold some type of municipal election outside of the biannual federal contest, and the turnout difference between these two elections in every county very clearly supports the view that off-year elections suppress participation. In Grand County, a leader in voter turnout among our focus counties, a slim majority of eligible voters (50.2%) returned a ballot in the 2021 off-year municipal election.³⁰ Though this relatively high turnout is worth celebrating, the county's 89% turnout in the 2020 presidential election shows there is still much room for improvement between municipal and federal election participation.³¹ In Pitkin County, the picture is far worse, with turnout at 32.6% in the 2013 county election,³² compared to 50.8% in the 2014 federal election.³³ In Routt County, where more recent numbers are available, the same gap persists: turnout was 47.7% in the 2021 municipal election,³⁴ compared to the 2022 federal election, when 62.7% of eligible voters cast a ballot.³⁵ The contrast is particularly stark when looking at raw numbers: in San Miguel County, a May 2023 referendum on the Telluride Fire Protection District received only 1,193 ballots,³⁶ compared to 4,175 in the 2018 midterm election (still only 64% of the county's registered voters).³⁷ In Eagle County, the most sobering fact is not a voter turnout number, but that in the 2022 midterm election, only two out of seven countywide races were even contested—and in both of those cases, the incumbent won.³⁸ And in

³⁰ Golden, "Majority of Grand Votes in Odd-Year Election."

³¹ "Grand County Election Results."

³² "Pitkin County - 2013 Coordinated Election Results."

³³ "Pitkin County - 2014 General Election Results."

³⁴ "Routt County - 2021 Coordinated Election Results."

³⁵ "Routt County - 2022 General Election Results."

³⁶ "Official Results 2023 Election Telluride Fire Protection District."

³⁷ "Election Night Reporting - November 6, 2018 General Election."

³⁸ Longwell, "Voting Blues: Eagle County Follows Statewide Wave in Voting for Democratic Candidates."

Summit County, despite a turnout of 68%, only 10,205 ballots of the 14,416 returned included a vote in the County Surveyor race, compared to 14,275 votes for the gubernatorial race at the top of the ticket.³⁹ In light of these statistics, it is no wonder that these communities have proven so unresponsive to local policy preferences—the voters participating in the elections that decide the direction of urban policy, in most cases, represent a small fraction of the total electorate.

The reason low turnout is such a problem, particularly in these communities where policy debates tend to split neatly between the working class and the wealthy, is that the wealthy vote in far greater numbers than the working class. The analysis from *Hometown Inequality* shows that those that vote at the highest rates (and therefore participate in every election, even the off-year ones), tend to be far whiter, wealthier, more conservative, and are more likely homeowners than the electorate at large.⁴⁰ Their analysis shows that this problem persists when taking into account other forms of participation: in addition to voting, wealthier homeowners are more likely to attend community meetings, communicate with local officials, and stand for election as candidates themselves.⁴¹ It is precisely this group that stands in the way of many of the reforms detailed earlier in this paper, and the only way to overcome the opposition of this vocal minority is to fix the problem of political representation itself.

Solutions to the Political Representation Problem

In *Hometown Inequality*, the researchers find that one institutional reform shows significant promise in improving outcomes for representation at the local level—election timing.⁴² As my own analysis shows, aligning municipal elections with high-turnout federal

³⁹ “Election Night Reporting - November 8, 2022 General Election.”

⁴⁰ Schaffner, Rhodes, and La Raja, *Hometown Inequality*, 86.

⁴¹ Schaffner, Rhodes, and La Raja, *Hometown Inequality*, 223.

⁴² Schaffner, Rhodes, and La Raja, *Hometown Inequality*, 203.

contests in Colorado mountain towns would almost instantaneously increase participation on critical local issues, leading to far more representative local government than currently exists in the state. There is no reason that this reform should not be immediately implemented across the state (and, for that matter, the nation).

However, this would not solve the problem entirely. My analysis also showed that turnout is not the only indicator that counts: even in relatively high-turnout elections, participation on specific questions still varies significantly. For instance, many voters will indicate their choice for high-visibility federal offices like Congress or the presidency, but leave state, county, or local races on the same ballot blank. This represents a problem of information, which in my view stems from the decline in local political reporting accompanied by the crisis of local media that has played out in recent decades.⁴³ This problem defies any simple institutional fix, but coordinated efforts by nonprofit and local advocacy groups could help promote independent journalism on local politics as a starting point.

These solutions would broadly help the participation problem in local government, but how can we ensure local councils and executive leadership look like the people they represent? One promising reform is raising pay for local offices. The reason local officials are disproportionately wealthy is primarily the opportunity cost of serving in municipal government, as compensation is typically low and campaigns for office tend to be costly.⁴⁴ Raising the pay for local officeholders would encourage more people to run than just those that are already independently wealthy, and the public funding of local campaigns is another idea that should be further explored to lower the financial burden of running for office and promote wider class representation in local government.⁴⁵ Indeed, salary increases have recently been implemented in

⁴³ Fischer, “The Local News Crisis Is Deepening America’s Divides.”

⁴⁴ Schaffner, Rhodes, and La Raja, *Hometown Inequality*, 231-232.

⁴⁵ “Public Campaign Financing.”

Grand County, Eagle County, and Summit County, which will hopefully help attract a diverse set of candidates for local office in those communities in the next election.⁴⁶ These fixes do face obvious political hurdles, but should no doubt be explored as a mechanism to improve descriptive representation locally. And since local government is often a starting place for higher elected officials, improving representation at the local level may have the indirect effect of making state government and the federal government more representative as well.

In Conclusion: Looking Forward

In the first part of this paper, I offered a range of policy solutions to address the problems that rural mountain communities across Colorado face today. But the ambitious slate of reforms I recommended is not likely to be implemented anywhere in the state until cities fix the political representation problem that is currently depriving poor and working class residents of their voice in critical local policy debates. Just as political representation is the lens through which these towns' problems must be viewed, it is also a necessary prerequisite for any meaningful progress on the issues they face.

Fortunately, I am hopeful for the prospects of improving political representation in Colorado mountain towns. Local elected officials still *want* to be representative of their constituents—it is, after all, how they earn their reelection. The dynamics of local political participation have simply tilted the conversation in favor of the wealthy, but it is nothing that cannot be undone by persistent advocacy on the part of local political reformers and community organizers. And progress may be slow to take root, but cities in Colorado and across the country have shown interest in reforming towards democratic participation; I expect this trend only to continue as the body of research on local political representation grows.

⁴⁶ Sinton, “New Bill Gives Colorado County Officials Raises in Nine Counties.”

Simply put, I believe the odds of reforming our local political institutions are good. And with better local representation, stakeholders from every segment of Colorado's mountain communities can come together to pursue urban policy that allows tourism and outdoor recreation to flourish alongside a strong class of service workers and a system of physical infrastructure that withstands the seasonal needs of these communities. With this progress, I believe the amenity trap may cease to be a trap at all, instead posing an opportunity for Colorado mountain towns to demonstrate to the rest of the country what a blueprint for sustainable, responsible growth in the twenty-first century can look like.

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