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Alta homes proposal favors few over many

BY SKIP SILLOWAY

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I am a 35-plus-year visitor to Alta as a skier and hiker and I sit on the board of Friends of Alta, an organization devoted to less development and more conservation of the fragile Alta ecosystem.

I am conflicted between my role as an FOA board member and an instinct to permit property owners the right to benefit from their property. The more I have thought about this subject, the more I feel the proposed Patsey Marley project to allow 10 large homes to be built in Albion Basin at Alta is a special case where the greater good must be served at the expense of the narrower interest of the few.

Just because one owns a car that can do 100 mph does not mean the owner is allowed to use it that way.

This is a case where the greater interests of the many users of Little Cottonwood Canyon and the canyon itself must take precedence. Several factors influence me:

1. This subdivision application affects many more canyon users than simply the property owner and the 300+ Alta residents. Tens of thousands of us enjoy the frequent use of the Town of Alta and all that it offers. I conclude that the rights of the many current and future generations of users supersede the rights of the few.
2. The Town of Alta and the Albion Basin are under enormous pressure to develop. I worry that whatever allowances are made for the Patsey Marley project will be seen as precedential for Albion Basin. Large homes in Albion Basin would devastate the water, flora and fauna resources of that fragile ecosystem. Here again, the greater whole must be seen as requiring more protection than the rights of the very few.
3. I wonder how 10 large homes on 10 privately owned lots can be seen as "open space." Once these parcels are offered and sold, people and animals who now use the property will be discouraged and feel they are intruding. For the few, the many will be selected out.

4. The size and scale of the project will overshadow Alta. In this land of scarce resources, why is it that the few feel the right to claim more of those resources than the many who come, enjoy and leave? There is so little open space left in the greater Salt Lake Valley and so little available in Alta that every effort must be made to protect it for the greater number of users.

5. The development as proposed will simply overtax Little Cottonwood Canyon. Imagine the number of construction vehicles and laborers' vehicles needed to complete these large homes and doing so in a relatively short construction season. These few owners of property will be overusing the road.

I am sure compromises will be made, but whatever is decided in this complex issue, I hope nothing is done that would be seen as a precedent that would encourage development in Albion Basin.

Finally, I commend to your readers Wallace Stegner's Wilderness Letter. Written in the '60s and available via the Internet, it is no less vital today than it was then.

**Skip Siloway** is retired from commercial banking and lives in Salt Lake City.

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