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Related Companies President Jeff Blau, Santa Claus and Mayor Bill Boineau look out upon a crowd of several hundred during the Base Village grand opening ceremony this week.

New is good, say fans of Base Village

By Madeleine Osberger
Sun Staff Writer

Visions of sugar plums, or at least some hot toddies, likely filled the heads of the hundreds of revelers at Tuesday's grand opening of Base Village commercial spaces.

Related WestPac CEO Dwayne Romero took a pragmatic view of the opening of a half-dozen new stores and four new bars and restaurants. For Romero, the Snowmass Village renaissance is about the "three Ts": team, taxes and timing.

"We have a wonderful future in front of us,"

the developer's representative said to a surprisingly large crowd on a cold and wet Monday evening. "The community is the most important element of what makes up our team." As to taxes, Romero said the new businesses would provide an essential "lifeline of support for our economy."

How about the timing?

Romero said he hoped that next year at this time, the community would be celebrating the unveiling of the Viceroy hotel. His boss, Jeff Blau, President of the Related Companies,

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said he hopes that in two years it'll be time to fete The Little Nell – Snowmass.

For the Lawlor family of Indiana, there's no need to wait that long to celebrate as the new base area is a huge improvement to the resort they've come to enjoy over the years.

"I love it. The kids like it too," said Lawlor of Lafayette, Ind. Standing in the middle of The Sweet Life, where free Gummy Bear shots were being doled out, Lawlor said his family welcomes "the new selection of restaurants."

Jennifer Hayes, co-owner of the eatery, said waits of up to 45 minutes for a table were not uncommon this week. What she has heard repeatedly about the new base is how it will help to keep people here after their ski day.

"People that have been coming to Snowmass for 15 years, an overwhelming number of people, said 'now we don't have to go to Aspen'" to après, Hayes said.

As good as it can be

Certainly that would be music to the ears of Aspen Skiing Co. (the original partner in the development, along with Intrawest) as well as Related WestPac.

Skico President Mike Kaplan, during the ribbon-cutting ceremony, spoke of how the Janss brothers always envisioned multiple villages to serve the needs of Snowmass guests. But it wasn't until this week, 41 years after the first chairlift was built, that there was more than one pod. Now, instead of looking to the past, Snowmass Village's commercial scene is forward reaching.

Some 560 workers helped get the new base area businesses and infrastructure completed, up and running, said Related WestPac President Pat Smith. Yet the credit should be offered to "everybody that's here in the community (who) made it happen," he said.

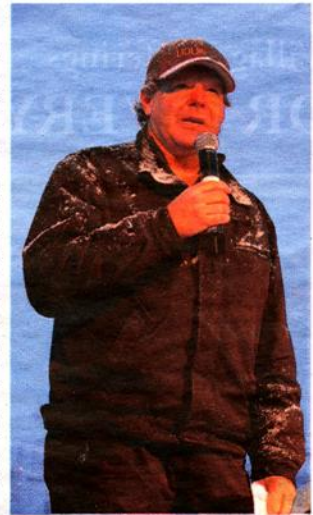
Newly elected Mayor Bill Boineau and former mayor Doug Mercatoris both spoke to the crowd about the homework that was done investigating other resorts in order to get to this point in time. Boineau urged locals and guests to "Make this resort the next place to be."

Inside the handsome digs of the Performance sports shop, local Jim Ve-shancey noted, "I like the space here. It looks a lot more modern than their store in town."

Longtime Villager Mary Griffin could be called an expert on the new retail scene. Standing in the middle of the new Sneaky's Tavern, she said, "I went to every single store (in Base Village) and I'm very impressed." A bit skeptical at first as to what the new businesses would bring to Snowmass, Griffin said she believes the new shops and restaurants offer "a great improvement."

Visitor Andrew Oestrike said he is so impressed with Snowmass at this point in time that "I think I'm going to move here next winter."

A man who goes by "just Jim" waited patiently for his chance to see the interior (and sample the goodies proffered) at Junk and Liquid Sky. When asked why he would endure a 30-minute plus line to



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Pat Smith credited the community as a whole for the continued progress of the Base Village vision.

get in, Jim said he was doing it out of "curiosity."

While there was no line to get in, Generation Snowmass, a new shop selling children's clothing, ski wear and toys, was doing a land-office business.

"It's been awesome. This is a huge infusion of energy," said owner Bob Boselli, who also operates the adjacent store of a similar name that hawks adult logowear. This is his fourth Snowmass store; his main Aspen business, Aspen T-Shirt Company, was started 23 years.

Sifting through the Webkins dresses, art kits and other toys, Debbie Kobak of Chicago compared the Snowmass Village of old to the new one unveiled this week.

"I've been coming here since I was a little girl. Now I'm a mom trying to keep my kid from imploding because she wants everything (in this store)," Koback said with a smile.

She described the renaissance celebration thusly: "It was warm, welcoming, full of eye candy!"

Just down the way from the Generations stores are the new North Face shop and the forthcoming Japanese restaurant Buchi, Jeffrey Klein's foray into Snowmass fine dining. On Monday evening, Klein and Buchi's chef offered delicious sushi samplings from a small cart on the plaza. He hopes to have the new restaurant open sometime between mid-January and early February.

It's been nearly two years since Related WestPac acquired the base area commercial space from Aspen Skiing Co. Related's Jeff Blau was asked following the ceremony how committed the development firm is to continuing and completing Base Village's vision.

"We are committed, we're here," Blau said. "We'll continue to make Base Village as good as it can be."

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