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Housing proposal evokes strong reactions

Scott Franz
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Young professionals in Steamboat Springs are emerging as the most vocal supporters of a housing proposal that would add 450 units, including some for workers with lower incomes, to the west side of the city in the coming years.

The professionals see the proposal as a lifeline for younger community members who currently cannot afford to buy homes already available in the city limits.

"Will you make room for the future teachers and emergency service workers of this community, or are you guys going to be known as the council that was too scared to move forward, that was too obsessed with fiscal conservatism to think about where to put all the humans?" realtor Matt Eidt asked the City Council Tuesday night.

With the housing proposal chugging along and facing new obstacles and demands from the elected officials at each council meeting, Eidt accused the council of getting caught up in "paralysis by analysis" and urged them to advance the project.

While some council members share Eidt's concerns, other council members who are seeking more investment from the developer up front say they are looking to minimize the housing proposal's risk to the community.

Brynn Grey, the developers, are also seeking concessions from the city, such as a delay in adding a \$1 million

See **Proposal**, page 6A



COLORADO AVALANCHE INFORMATION CENTER/COURTESY

The avalanche that killed Steamboat Springs resident Jesse Christensen on Tuesday broke along the ridgeline and was about 880 feet wide.

Questions linger

Investigation of Tuesday's fatal avalanche continues

Matt Stensland
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Investigators have learned more about the avalanche that killed Steamboat Springs resident Jesse Christensen, but questions remain.

On Wednesday, Colorado Avalanche Information Center Director Ethan Greene visited the slide in the Flat Tops Wilderness Area near West Lost Lakes.

The avalanche broke at the ridgeline of a 33-degree slope at an elevation of 10,460 feet. It was two feet deep and ran nearly 400 feet.

Christensen's body was found in some trees in the debris field at the

For more

A fund has been established for Jesse Christensen funeral expenses and other costs the Christensen family is incurring.

See page 14A

bottom of the slide. Greene said they believe Christensen had been buried about a foot deep before he was dug out by Sean Searle, who had been riding snowbikes Tuesday morning with Christensen. He survived the avalanche.

Greene and Routt County Search and Rescue have not yet interviewed Searle. Garfield County officials could not be reached for comment. Attempts to reach Searle

were not successful.

Based on the photos, Search and Rescue Incident Commander Michael Boatwright believes the men were traversing the side of the hill about two thirds of the way up when the avalanche broke.

Boatwright said the terrain created an especially dangerous avalanche. The debris field was able to compress and potentially cause major trauma to someone stuck in it.

"It hits a pocket, and it all funnels in," Boatwright said.

It is not known how long Christensen was buried before he was uncovered by Searle.

See **Avalanche**, page 2A

SKI REPORT

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Midmountain base | 60 inches |
| Summit base | 74 inches |
| Trails open | 165/165 |
| Lifts open | 16/16 |
| Total snow* | 238 inches |

*Midmountain measurement at Steamboat Ski Area since Nov. 2. For up-to-date road conditions, call 511 or visit cotrip.org.

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Director: Training can save life

Avalanche continued from 1A

"That's the big mystery," Boatwright said.

After trying to revive Christensen, Searle hiked up to a spot where he could get cellphone reception and send a text message to his wife.

The first rescuer to arrive at Christensen's location found no obvious signs of trauma.

Both men had ava-

lanche airbag packs, but is unclear whether they had avalanche beacons.

"If they did, they weren't working, and there has been some debate about that," Boatwright said.

It is also not clear why the men were riding in a wilderness area where motorized vehicles are prohibited.

The avalanche broke on a surface hoar layer,

which is essentially a layer of large crystals. A hoar frost layer forms on clear, cold nights. Greene said they suspect it formed Jan. 19.

"It's also described as the winter equivalent of dew," Greene said.

Greene said similar weak layers have been observed throughout the region.

"They can stay in the snowpack for a long time," Greene said. "If you hit them in the right place you can still trigger these."

Greene said to understand how much of a threat the weak layer is, people should read the daily avalanche forecast.

He also advised people to educate themselves about avalanches and know how to properly use avalanche safety gear.

"A little bit of avalanche training can save your life," Greene said.

To reach Matt Stensland, call 970-871-4247, email mstensland@SteamboatToday.com or follow him on Twitter @SBTStensland

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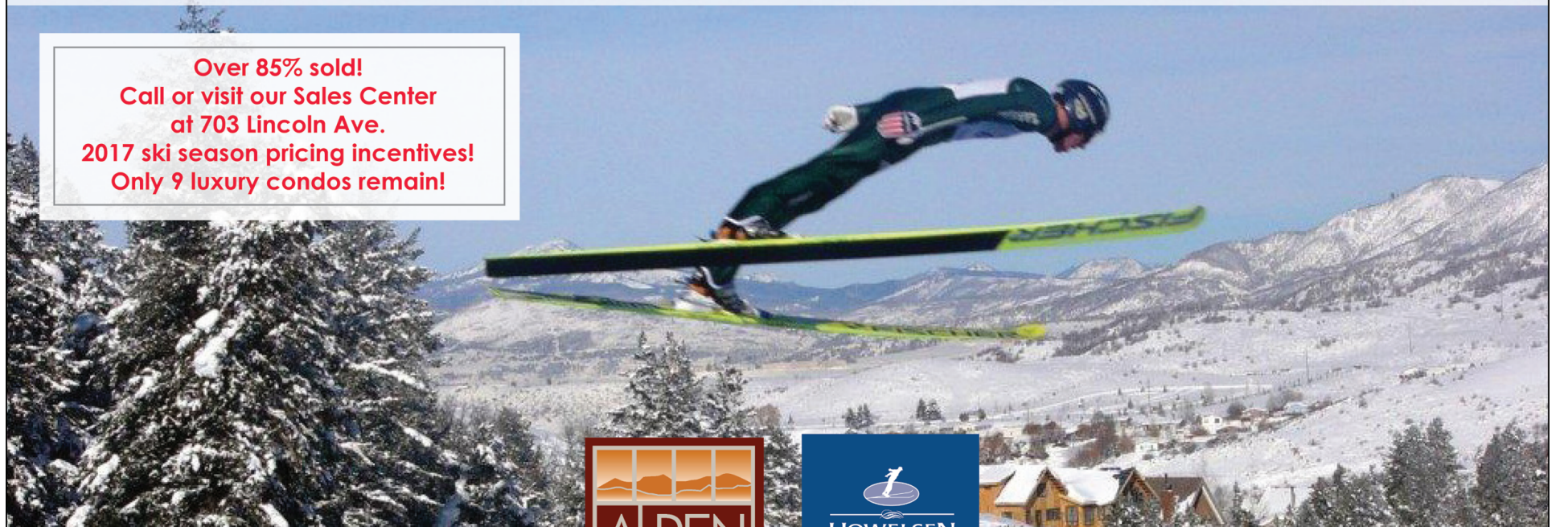
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