

2009 is behind us and as we look forward to 2010 and our future, there is much to be excited about in Telluride. Our real estate market finished the year on a noticeable upswing, the Telluride Airport received a major facelift, new hotels opened, old hotels are new again and Telluride Ski and Golf Company continues to lead the charge with new terrain and services. Despite the doom and gloom of 2009, the Telluride region is showing signs of resurgence and resiliency.

Although difficult to say our market is back, or that we have hit bottom, our real estate market ended 2009 with very strong numbers. In the last quarter alone, 95 properties closed for \$87 million and another 54 contracted for \$47 million. Compared to the first 3 quarters of 2009 and the Telluride region closed 98 properties for \$77 million. 2010 is off to a great start and our real estate market has a pulse again. With historically low rates and motivated sellers, there has never been a better time to invest in Telluride.

The Telluride Airport was closed the summer of 2009 for completion of the major phase of runway improvements. The "dip" is gone, following \$24 million in work this past summer and just one summer's work remains for the airport to be able to accommodate 74-passenger Q400 planes. The bulk of that work is already approved and funded by the FAA for next year. Accessibility has always been a blessing and a curse and believing in the general perception that Telluride is difficult to get to, is becoming farther from the truth.

Capella Telluride opened February 12, 2009 in the heart of the Mountain Village. Named one of the world's hottest new hotels by Conde Nast Traveler, Capella Telluride is redefining mountain luxury with 100 hotel rooms and 60 one, two, three and four bedroom luxury residences. Capella Telluride offers the finest ski-in/out location and provides guest with an unprecedented level of personal service. Its world-class amenities include an exclusive Capella lounge, boutique spa and indoor pool, a fitness center, ski valet, multiple restaurants, a skating rink and kid's club. Capella will be Telluride's first 5 Star Luxury Hotel.

The Peaks Hotel recently sold to a local group of investors and promises to return our anchor hotel to its former glory and is now managed by the Grand Heritage Hotels flag. Work has already begun on restoring The Peaks and to fulfilling its potential. Along with Capella, Telluride now enjoys two major hotels in the Mountain Village.

The Telluride Ski and Golf Company has been hard at work opening new terrain and luring (first ever) FIS and USSA to Telluride for a snowboarding World Cup the week before Christmas. Thanks to early season snow, we hosted athletes and the international media and by all accounts, The Telluride Ski and Golf Company gets a gold medal for putting on a first class race. Early indications are that we can expect this event to return to Telluride.

Telluride continues this year on an unprecedented run of terrain expansion, opening Gold Hill Chutes 2-5 for the 2009-10 winter season. Revelation Bowl opened in 2008-09 as the biggest story in ski country, along with Gold Hill 1. Palmyra Peak, Black Iron Bowl and Gold Hill 6-10 opened in 2007-08 to huge public response. All told, the resort has expanded by more than 400 acres over the past three seasons, adding to Telluride's already legendary terrain and offering some of the most spectacular skiing and riding on the planet. The resort's vertical drop is now one of the largest in North America at 4,425 feet, with 3,845 vertical feet lift-served.

What does 2010 have in store for us? No one really knows. However, with a new airport, new hotels, new terrain and the most beautiful and unique resort in North America, 2010 is looking like our glass may be half-full again.

Eric Saunders, Immediate Past President of the Telluride Association of REALTORS®