



21 June 2018

Members of the Council:

On June 20, 2018, the DRB denied the proposed changes to the approved plans for the Solar Vail employee housing project by means of a 2-2 vote.

The grounds for denial were general incompatibility with Vail architecture. More specifically, the DRB had no issues with the colors or materials or the general form and detailing of the proposed building facades, but rather took issue with the simplicity of the south facing roof (the side facing I-70). While acknowledging that the simple roof would not be visible from the immediate vicinity, they were worried about the impact this roof would have on views from Vail Mountain and other elevated viewpoints in town.

Rapidly rising construction costs (lumber up 60% since January as of two weeks ago and drywall up 15%), we have been forced to revise and simplify the building design as much as possible while still keeping the number of units at 65. Among other steps, we removed the previously approved north wing of the building that would have been on / in the 40% sloped hillside and simplified both the parking garages and the roof design to try and bring the building cost back within the supportable budget. While the USGS height of the ridge increased by 10', the height of the building itself (as measured by the TOV) was essentially unchanged.

At the June 6th meeting of the DRB, we presented the revised design for the building that was subsequently approved by the PEC (6-1 vote) on June 11 for conceptual review. At that meeting the members of the DRB had asked that we look into adding dormers or other means of breaking up the simplicity of this roof. Based on cost considerations and the fact that adding dormers, etc that serve only an unoccupied attic space provided no tangible benefits to the building occupants, we decided not to follow the advice of the DRB members and re-presented the building on June 20 without any changes.

While we appreciate that our proposed building is challenging for the DRB, we would like you to consider the following arguments:

- (1) The existing Solar Vail building is not only old and in dire need of significant investment, it is also a building design that would likely not be approved today. The proposed new building is a significant improvement.
- (2) The proposed Solar Vail design is, in our opinion, not out of character with the immediate neighborhood. We have no neighbor to the immediate east, north, or south. Our neighbor to the west is the Red Sandstone Gymnasium, the Red Sandstone School and the new parking structure, a very utilitarian and commercial set of buildings. Further to the west is the Lions Ridge Apartment complex which is very similar in overall design. The buildings to the south,

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across I-70, are governed by a very different and very specific set of design guidelines that do not apply to the Solar Vail site.

- (3) It is very difficult if not impossible to treat a deed restricted employee housing project following the same design criteria used for multi-million dollar private residences and hotel/condominium projects. If employee housing in the upper Vail Valley is to become a reality, the DRB has to have the tools to approve design solutions that are more straightforward and simple, yet appropriate in their specific locations. The Solar Vail Project meets those criteria.
- (4) The project will not/ cannot go forward with additional costs not directly related to the occupancy and operation of the building. The DRB recommendation would add marginal cosmetic elements to the roof but would not change the general appearance of the building nor add any utility. We cannot absorb cost for further redesign or cost escalation resulting from not being able to locking in subcontractor pricing. We need you to not only override the DRB decision but do it without delay.

Thank you,

Henry Pratt, GPSL Architects

Johannes Faessler, Sonnenalp Properties

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