

Hill Building Renovation
Exterior Alteration Application
April 10, 2017

Introduction

Purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive description and evaluation of renovation plans proposed for the Hill Building located at the top of Bridge Street and base of Vail Mountain in Vail Village. Renovation plans will maintain existing retail use on the main level and residential use on upper levels, but will thoroughly transform the building resulting in significant enhancement to the architecture and appearance of the building. As outlined in greater detail below, renovation plans conform to the zoning standards prescribed by the Commercial Core I zone district (CCI) and have been designed in conformance with applicable elements of the Vail Village Master Plan and the Vail Village Urban Design Guide Plan.

The review process for this project involves Planning and Environmental Commission review of an Exterior Alteration application. This report and project information provided under separate cover has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Section 12-7B-7 Exterior Alterations or Modifications for CCI. This project narrative has been prepared by Braun Associates, Inc. and the design package has been prepared by 4240 Architecture.



These photos from the 60's show the Hill Building in its original form.

History of Hill Building

The Hill Building has played a long and important role in the history of Vail. Blanche Hill owned the property for approximately 50 years and it was the site of one of Vail Village's earliest developments. The original building was a relatively small structure designed by Fitz Hugh Scott. The building epitomized the alpine style evident in many of Vail's original buildings. Vail

Blanche Hill Ski Shop, at the time Vail's first Ski Shop, was one of the original tenants of the building. Residential use was added to the building in subsequent years and this home served as Blanche Hill's personal residence.

Since the 60's a number of major additions were made to the building and for the past twenty years the building has remained relatively unchanged. Additions were not always kind to the clean, simple alpine architecture of Scott's original building. Additions were made in a somewhat haphazard manner that resulted in a building lacking in coherency. Building massing, roof lines and forms, and building materials are just some of the elements of the building that are inconsistent with the Town's design architectural and urban design goals for Vail Village.



The curved building corner at southwest corner of building, un-aligned roof lines, angled eaves and use of brick are some of the existing building features that are inconsistent with the Town's architectural goals for Vail Village.

New owners who recently acquired the property have a long history with and appreciation for Vail. Simply stated, their goal is to create a family home and to restore the building in a manner that acknowledges and responds to its history, the early architecture of Vail Village and the Town's design goals for Vail Village.

Overview of Project Parameters and Approach to Design

The proposed project is best characterized as a major renovation of the existing building. Basic parameters for the scope of the project include:

- Land uses will remain unchanged with retail on the ground floor and a single residence (with a small secondary unit) on upper floors.

- The first level retail store will remain relatively unchanged with only modest changes to the floor area of this space. The exterior of the retail space will however see significant changes to window treatments and a comprehensive re-skin of exterior wall materials.
- The upper levels will be removed with the exception of flooring and structural elements of the building.
- While there will be major changes to interior spaces and the overall organization of the residence, there will be only a slight decrease from Gross Residential Floor Area.
- The overall height of the building is relatively unchanged and there will be only nominal increases to its existing ridge heights.
- The most notable changes to the building footprint include a small increase for a new central stair to serve the residence and a reduction of building footprint on the south side of the building.

In summary, when compared to a demolition/rebuild, the proposed building renovation is relatively modest in scale.

The design approach for the renovation of the Hill Building is twofold; first, the goal is to heal the building and its public surroundings by finding clarity amidst the building's evolution over the past 50 years, and second, to acknowledge the evolution and character of the Town around the Hill Building as the Town has matured into the founders' vision of a European alpine village over the same time span. Because of the Hill Building's significance and interwoven history with Vail Village, the basic form and massing of the building is retained (although an addition to the southwest corner, blocking the view of the mountain from Wall Street, is to be removed). Along Wall Street and at the south façade, the building is stepped back to reduce its apparent mass and create a more favorable street experience for pedestrians.

While the original building and subsequent additions were executed in a modern alpine character, the renovation focuses on finding an expression that is in harmony with the traditional European alpine model which the Village has adapted since its inception. In place of today's white-painted board-and-batten siding and horizontal wood railings, materials such as stone, stained timbers, stucco, and decorative millwork have been selected to work together with the building's surroundings and the Vail Village Urban Design Guide Plan. In connection with these material selections, the ground-floor interface with the public realm is enhanced by delineating the retail fenestration from the residential use above, presenting a more inviting experience to pedestrians and helping to increase street activation. All of these refinements have in mind breathing new life into a legacy building which will enhance the experience of Vail Village for years to come.

Zoning Considerations

The following addresses how the proposal conforms to relevant zoning standards as prescribed by the CCI zone district:

Site Area

The minimum lot size in Vail Village is 5,000 square feet. As permitted by Town Code (definition of a “site”), “a site may consist of a single lot of record, a portion of a lot of record, a combination of lots of record”. The proposed site consists of two parcels, Lot L consisting of .127 acres and a Portion of Lot C consisting of .068 acres. Total site area is .195 acres or 8,494 square feet. With these two parcels being designated the “site”, all zoning standards are applied to the combined parcels, i.e. no setback applies to the common lot line between the two parcels, allowable density is based on both parcels, etc.

Setbacks

There are no prescribed setbacks in the CCI zone district. There are only minor changes proposed to existing building setbacks. Building setback is reduced slightly on the south side of the building and slightly increased by two expansions on the east side of the building. A number of existing upper floor decks and portions of the roof extend over property lines. In some cases these encroachments are removed. In other cases the decks are retained but with no increase to the extent of existing encroachments.

Density Control

Allowable GRFA is 6,795 square feet. Existing GRFA is 7,014 square feet. Section 12-7B-19 Reconstruction of Existing Uses; Compliance Required allows for any building within CCI to be re-constructed to “the same or substantially the same enclosed floor area provided the building substantially comply with the applicable provisions of the Vail Village Urban Design Guide Plan and Design Considerations”.

6,920 square feet of GRFA is proposed. This exceeds allowable GRFA by 125 square feet but is 94 square feet less than what could be proposed in accordance with Section 12-7B-19. Refer to the section below for how the project complies with applicable provisions of the Guide Plan.

Site coverage

Site coverage is limited to 80% of site area unless otherwise prescribed by the Vail Village urban design guide plan and design considerations, or 6,795 square feet. Existing site coverage is 6,693 square feet (79%). Proposed site coverage is 6,322 square feet (74%).

Landscape

Landscape standards state that no reduction to existing landscaping is to occur unless “sufficient cause is shown by the applicant or as specified in the Vail Village design considerations”. The definition of landscaping includes, among other things, planted areas and plant materials, including trees, shrubs, lawns, flowerbeds and ground cover, . . . and core development such as walks, decks, patios, terraces, water features and like features not occupying more than 20% of the landscaped area”. Existing landscape area consists of 586 square feet of softscape area and 1,796 square feet of hardscape areas. Given that existing hardscape areas exceeds the 20% of total landscape area, the key factor in conforming to the “no reduction” standard is the change to softscape areas.

Proposed softscape area is 591 square feet. While nominal, there is a slight increase to softscape area. Notable changes to existing landscaping include a new planter bed on the south side of the building, removal of a small planter on the west side, re-design and expansion of planters on the north side and removal of planters on the east side to allow for re-design of the residential entry and improved visual access to storefront windows.

The removal of four spruce trees on the east side and southeast corner of the property is proposed. Three of these trees are located on Town of Vail land. There are a number of reasons for the removal of these trees:

- The trees are likely 50 years old and have simply outgrown their location.
- The trees are literally engulfing the existing structure and represent a wildfire and safety hazard.
- The trees present a major hindrance to the construction of the renovated building.

Trees more suitable for the “urban” setting of the project are proposed for these areas.

Two crab trees located at the south side of the building are also proposed for removal. These trees are located on Vail Resorts property. Vail Resorts has provided verbal approval for these trees to be removed. Currently these trees are located in front of a large, blank wall. As proposed, this blank wall will be replaced with a new “storefront” with display windows. Removal of these trees will open up views to these windows.



Existing trees have outgrown their location and present safety and logistic challenges that warrant their removal.

Parking and Loading

The proposed renovation will have no effect on required parking.

An existing garage parking space is located on the property. As a part of the proposed building renovation, the garage will remain and will not increase in size, location or shape. The space is a non-conforming use and is permissible to remain in accordance with Chapter 18-Non-Conforming Uses of the Zoning Code. The space is can also remain based on the Mall Act of 1972. The Mall Act was adopted by the Town in order to limit vehicular access and strengthen the pedestrian character of Vail Village. The Mall Act did however, acknowledge specific to vehicle use on Bridge Street that vehicle access would be permitted to existing parking spaces. The garage in the Hill Building was in place at the time the Mall Act was adopted and as such access to this space is permitted.

Vail Village Urban Design Guide Plan

The Guide Plan/Sub-Area Concepts:Gore Creek Drive/Bridge Street

The Guide Plan/Sub-Area Concepts of the Urban Design Guide Plan identify physical improvements that are desired for the Village. In most cases improvements address the public domain or encourage private development to be designed in response to the urban design goals of the Plan. There are no such improvements identified by the Plan that are proximate to the Hill Building.

Design Considerations/Urban Design Considerations

The Urban Design Guide Plan includes two categories of design considerations – Urban design considerations address large-scale land use planning issues as well as form considerations and are primarily the Planning and Environmental Commission. Architectural and Landscape Considerations are reviewed primarily by the Design Review Board. Below is an assessment of how the project addressed the eight Urban Design Considerations:

1. Pedestrianization

The Hill Building is bordered by pedestrian-only streets and pedestrian streets with limited delivery traffic. Given the relatively limited scope of this project, particularly there being no change to existing land uses, the proposal will have no change to existing pedestrianization.

2. Vehicular Penetration

The proposal will have no change to vehicular penetration in or around the site.

3. Streetscape Framework

Streetscape framework addresses how landscaping and commercial storefronts can influence the quality of the walking experience in Vail Village. While there is only a nominal change to existing softscape areas, landscape improvements will create better defined planter beds on the north side of the property, add new planter beds to the south side and replace three over-grown trees with new trees and planting beds.

Expanded storefront windows will be provided on all sides of the building. Of particular significance are new windows on the east and south sides of the building that will provide architectural interest to the building and visual interest for the pedestrian.

4. Street Enclosure

While proposed renovations will provide some improvement to Streetscape Enclosure, views and how pedestrians move around the building, the limited scope of changes to the building will not result in any meaningful change to Streetscape Enclosure.

The second floor at the northwest corner of the building will be pulled back a distance of approximately 6'. This will "open up" the corridor between the Hill Building and the neighboring Plaza Lodge, providing an improved ratio between this walkway and the two adjacent buildings. The second floor of at the southwest corner of the building will also be pulled back. This change will open a wider view plan to Vail Mountain for pedestrians walking south through this plaza area.

5. Street Edge

With the nominal changes proposed for the main level of the building there are no significant changes to how the building influences Street Edge considerations.

6. Building Height

Only nominal changes occur to the roof. Proposed ridgelines are equal to or only 1-2' higher than existing ridge lines and are well within allowable building heights. The proposed roof conforms to the 60/40 split with 38% of the roof being over 33' and under 43'.

7. View Corridors

Adopted view corridors #2 and #4 are proximate to the Hill Building. Proposed changes respect both of these view corridors.

View Corridor #2 is from Seibert Circle to Vail Mountain and the purpose of this corridor is to "protect views of the ski runs and ski base as seen from upper Bridge Street". The westerly plan of this corridor runs along the eastern edge of the Hill Building. As depicted on plans provided, the proposed building does not encroach into this view corridor.

View corridor #4 is in the corridor between the Hill Building and the Plaza Lodge, the purpose of this corridor is to "protect views of the Gore Range as seen from the alley between Founders Plaza and Seibert Circle". Proposed changes to the north side include the removal of existing upper level decks and in doing so will improve this view corridor. The eave line of the existing building defines the upper extent of the view corridor. The new roof, while at essentially the same height, has more prominent overhangs and as proposed the overhang will extend into the view corridor. This

portion of roof is well above the Gore Range View. It is suggest that during the PEC site visit this aspect of the proposal be evaluated. While technically an encroachment into the view corridor, the proposed building is very much in keeping with the purpose of this view corridor.

8. Sun/Shade

Proposed building massing will have a slightly positive improvement to shadow patterns around the building. Sun/shade studies on sheet G006 of the Exterior Alteration plan set indicate morning and afternoon shadow patterns on the Equinox and Winter Solstice.

9. Service and Delivery

Uses on the property will remain unchanged as a result of this renovation and as such no changes are anticipated with respect to service and delivery.

Vail Village Master Plan

Below is a brief summary of how the proposed renovation relates to relevant sections of the Vail Village Master Plan.

Goals, Objectives, Policies

Foremost among the goals, objectives and policies in support of the renovation of the Hill Building include:

Goal #1 – Encourage high quality redevelopment while preserving the unique architectural scale of the Village in order to sustain its sense of community and identity.

Objective 1.2: Encourage the upgrading and redevelopment of residential and commercial facilities.

Objective 1.4: Recognize the “historic” importance of the architecture, structures, landmarks, plazas and features in preserving the character of Vail Village.

Illustrative Plan

The Action Plan is an element of the Illustrative Plan section of the master plan. The Action Plan identifies improvements envisioned for the Village. The Action Plan includes eleven sub-areas and the Hill Building is located in the #3 CCI Sub-Area. The only improvement in this sub-area that is proximate to the Hill Building is the “Seibert Circle Study Area” which addresses the potential for plaza improvements to the top of Bridge Street. This improvement has been implemented.