

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Post Office Box 238
Vail, Colorado 81658

August 1, 2021

Mayor and Town Council Town of Vail
75 South Frontage Rd
Vail, CO 81657

RE: Residence at Main Vail Appeal (DRB21-0233)

Dear Mayor and Town Council:

The Vail Homeowners Association urges that the appeal of the Design Review Board's denial of design approval for the Residence at Main Vail be denied. This appeal, being taken by the Town to overturn the experts that the Town appointed, flies in the face of assurances given by the Town, the normative process of project approvals and the best interests of the community.

From the very beginning, there has been concern about the design of this project. When the project was originally proposed, it was depicted as another "big box," low-cost apartment building perched at the main entrance to Town. When VHA raised concerns about the "design"—that it had the appearance of another ugly building ala Solar Vail—we were assured by Town officials (principally George Ruther) that those early depictions were only "conceptual" and that since the Town was to be an owner of the project, it would ensure that the ultimate design would be architecturally compatible with TOV standards and its prominent place at the entrance to Vail.

The final design is anything but that. While there have been some minor changes from the original design, it is still basically a "big box," ugly apartment building that doesn't uphold the Vail brand. In large part that is because the design is a result of an upside-down process where the Vail Local Housing Authority (VLHA) insisted that there had to be at least 144 beds in the structure. Ordinarily, design would proceed from first evaluating what might be accomplished in keeping with the site limits and in compatibility with the location and visibility of the project. Instead, the Residences at Main Vail proceeded from what would be necessary to accommodate 144 beds, i.e., a large rectangle building that will stand out as a sore thumb at the entrance to Town.

While there was some justification for requiring 144 beds while there was a possibility of swapping the project with Vail Resorts for the Booth Heights site, that disappeared long before the design work started when VR bowed out of further discussions last year. Nonetheless, the design continued to be driven by the number of beds and not a normal design process.

Now the Council is confronted with the unusual spectacle of the Town appealing to itself to overturn the experts that it appointed to ensure that all buildings in the Town were up to the Vail standard. Adding to the unseemingly nature of this appeal is the VLHA's rather vociferous memorandum that the DRB decision should be overturned. It seems that the VLHA has allowed its single purpose desire to build housing to trump what's best for the Town.

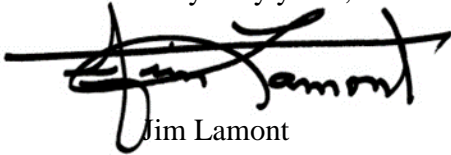
Its not like there won't be housing at that location. Upholding the DRB decision will not result in no housing being built. It will only result in that housing being up to Vail standards. The alternative—overturning the DRB decision as happened with Solar Vail—will mean another spectacularly ugly building, this one at the entrance to Town.

You will undoubtedly hear that there is no time to redesign the building because it must be ready by September 2022. Not so. That is an artificial deadline that was created by the negotiations with Vail Resorts and which is no longer a valid concern since VR has forfeited any interest in the project. More importantly, proper design should not be sacrificed to meet artificial deadlines. Indeed, the Town has always contemplated that events may push back the completion of the building until the fall of 2023. In fact, that very eventuality was built into the contract that the Town executed with Triumph Development. Paragraph 4 (e) provides that if the project cannot be started by September, then it must be commenced in 2022 with a completion date of August 2023.

The Council should also consider the implications of overruling the DRB on the prospects for the planned sales tax increase for housing. If the community cannot trust the Town processes to produce buildings that will maintain and enhance the Vail brand, then why should it trust the Town with millions more to construct similar eyesores?

This building is going to be there for decades to come, signaling to all Vail's standards as a community. There is time to get this right. The VHA urges the Council to take the long view. Reject this appeal. Go back to the drawing board and come up with an appropriate design for the site and location, even if that means a number of beds that is less than 144. Create a building that all will be proud of for the generations to come. The last thing Vail needs is another building that the DRB has rejected.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Lamont", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Jim Lamont
Executive Director