

Building “C”, the third and final building at mixed-use the 8050 complex  
Mammoth Lakes, California

May 24, 2013

## **INTRODUCTION**

On April 27, 2005, the Planning Commission of the Town of Mammoth Lakes (“TOML”) approved Tentative Tract Map 36-229 and Use Permit 2005-01 that paved the way for the construction of Building “C”, the third and final building in the so-called 8050 complex in the heart of North Village. The requisite building permit was subsequently issued by the TOML to allow for construction of the approved building which totaled 41,134 square feet and included twenty-one residential condominiums with a total of 33 bedrooms. That building permit remains open and valid through November 28, 2014 as a result of an agreement dated January 22, 2009 by and between the property owner and the TOML.

The entitled but un-built Building “C” was envisioned, planned, and approved prior to the greatest global economic calamity since the Great Depression in the 1930’s. Additionally, time has allowed observation of and consensus reached by the community on several operational failures of the larger North Village development, none the least of which is the lack of pedestrian connectivity and street animation along Minaret Boulevard. In response to dramatic changes to the resort industry as a result of the Great Recession and with the objective of substantively addressing the unmet needs of the North Village neighborhood, the property owner engaged Severy Realty Group and Bull Stockwell Allen Architects to analyze the approved development program for Building “C” with the charge to make it more responsive to a fundamentally changed resort industry and seek design solutions focused on achieving the unmet place making goals of the North Village Specific Plan. On the following pages we outline the results of this comprehensive planning effort.

## **PROPERTY SUMMARY**

Location: 6085 Minaret Road in Mammoth Lakes, California

Parcel Size: 1.84 acres

Assessor Parcel Number(s): APN 33-044-04

Planning Area: North Village Specific Plan (“NVSP”)

Land Use Designation: Resort General (“RG”) per the NVSP

Existing Improvements: Subterranean parking garage with 137 stalls atop of which are two resort lodging buildings totaling twenty-eight units with fifty-seven bedrooms; 3,335 square feet of commercial space including an on-site fine dining catering enterprise, Toomey’s; roof-top fitness room and Jacuzzi terrace; and related site and landscaping improvements .

**SITE CONSTRAINTS and OPPORTUNITIES**

In that the 8050 site was originally planned in its entirety, the location of the third and final building atop the existing parking structure was pre-ordained years ago. However, the contextual analysis by the project team defined opportunities for better integrating the 8050 complex into the North Village neighborhood and making it a significant catalyst for the much needed animation of Minaret Road. One of the primary flaws with 8050 that would not be corrected should the currently entitled third building be constructed is that the complex essentially turns its back on Minaret Road, with a deadening effect on the pedestrian use and animation of this Village defining street. As such, the place making potential of the Village and that of its all-important pedestrian and vehicular spine, Minaret Road, is negatively impacted to the detriment of the entire community. The multi-disciplined planning team was guided by the foundational importance of creating a compelling and inviting streetscape along Minaret Road and providing strong and safe pedestrian connections to the surrounding Village. This commitment to “feet first” design pervades the reconfigured design concept for the property.

**PROJECT ENTITLEMENT OBJECTIVES**

The property owner, SFI Mammoth Owner LP, is committed to moving forward with this application to the Town of Mammoth Lakes for a Conditional Use Permit and tract map approval for the reconfigured Building “C” as more fully described on the following pages. In spirit and substance this application for the third and final piece of the 8050 complex reflects iStar’s commitment to help North Village realize its place making potential as a vibrant and economically sustainable destination for tourists and locals alike.

The current physical and operational deficiencies of North Village are commonly known and have been thoroughly documented in the North Village District Planning Study of November, 2008. That study, which was informed by numerous public inputs, delineated numerous flaws “that appear likely to inhibit the successful realization of the community vision for the District” that included poor pedestrian circulation, a streetscape with a dearth of animation and pedestrian vibrancy, and a village that lacks the critical mass of hot-bed visitor lodging necessary to insure economic sustainability to this critically important commercial/visitor serving node in Mammoth Lakes. The strength and resonance of that report lies in the fact that not only are the current performance struggles correctly identified, but well-conceived solutions are advanced. These planning objectives and recommendations have thoroughly informed the re-design of Building “C”. For this final piece of the 8050 complex to substantively address the current performance deficiencies in North Village, this project application will necessitate amendments to the District zoning for the following interrelated elements:

- Development density
- Building height
- Front yard building setback

With these approved amendments, the strategically located 8050 complex will be able to help insure that the planning recommendations objectives set forth in the North Village District Study are implemented to ensure the successful evolution of North Village Specific Plan “from an incompletely realized land use plan to a vibrant, successful, and sustainable visitor-oriented retail, entertainment, and lodging district.”

### **CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

Unfortunately, the currently entitled but un-built third building at the 8050 complex would not contribute to the collective community effort to improve the aesthetics, animation, vibrancy, and pedestrian connectivity of the Minaret Road streetscape. As designed, the building sits atop the existing parking podium and essentially “turns its back” to the all-important pedestrian and vehicular spine of North Village. Clearly, an opportunity lost to energize the streetscape and make North Village a more compelling destination both for visitors and local residents.

Fundamental to the redesign of this earlier building plan is to fully integrate it with Minaret Road, with a signature street level pedestrian porte cochere that would animate the streetscape and serve as an inviting portal into the hotel with its welcoming terrace overlooking the newly energized street with colorful umbrellas for casual gathering and dining. This architecturally prominent pedestrian entrance to the hotel would be enclosed so guests and visitors can easily and safely ascend to the ground floor level of the building free from the elements. The welcoming lounge and lobby area would be enclosed by a greenhouse-like structure with the existing porte cochere accessed off of Canyon Boulevard continuing as the point of vehicular entry for the entire complex. This new enclosed but heavily glazed lobby atop the existing parking garage will serve to conveniently knit the project together and provide the much needed pedestrian connectivity with Minaret Road to the benefit of the entire community.

In the entitled but un-built Building “C”, the ceiling heights on the ground floor are lower than the redesigned building as they were intended to only accommodate residential condominium uses with their nine (9) foot clear ceiling heights. Unlike the redesigned building, they were not tall enough to accommodate visitor serving functions such as guest lounges, food & beverage venues, spas, and/or meeting space. The newly designed building has the necessary fifteen (15) foot floor-to-floor height on the ground floor to accommodate these important hotel features and amenities. The ground floor of Building “C” is envisioned to include casual dining and a high quality spa that would feature private outdoor treatment rooms. Additionally, an expansive terrace that enjoys excellent solar orientation would have a large family-oriented pool and adjacent Jacuzzis. Access to the pool complex would be provided through the spa and the signature landscaping element, a Zen garden.

In the earlier approved iteration of Building “C”, the structural design was highly stylized such that the room layout lacked the standardization and uniformity that is critically necessary for efficient hotel operations. In the redesigned building, there is a much more rigorous standardization of

lodging rooms and the once dark rooms will be much more airy given the much better window to bay depth relationship.

The redesigned Building “C” totals 70,195 gross square feet. In addition to the above referenced ground floor guest services and amenities that are associated with a high quality hotel, Building “C” will include up to sixty-three (63) expansive (i.e. +/-520SF) and well-appointed guest lodging rooms that are simply envisioned as providing the finest accommodations in the eastern Sierra Nevada market. The standard lodging room inventory when combined with larger penthouse suites will deliver lodging capacity totaling seventy-three (73) bedrooms (exclusive of three non-bedroom loft spaces that are not intended let alone designated as sleeping areas).

#### **PROJECT DESIGN – INSPIRATION, DIRECTION and INTENT**

The updated design for Building “C” at 8050 derives from a synthesis of factors that include the above referenced embrace of Mammoth’s “feet first” land use objectives and a foundational focus on creating a better relationship and integration with the all-important Minaret Road streetscape. The proposed design underscores a contextual understanding of the property, the shared importance of the quality of the public and private realm, a commitment to help the North Village neighborhood realize its place making potential on an economically sustainable basis, and an environmental approach to architecture. In summation, the key elements of this planning approach will:

- Greatly improve the project’s relationship with the streetscape by introducing the porosity that allows for ease of pedestrian integration with Minaret Road. Unlike earlier schemes, the new building engages with the street rather than turning its back on it
- The inviting pedestrian porte cochere along Minaret Road is a signature architectural element that will serve to populate and animate this section of this important circulation spine in North Village and allow for ease of access to and from the hotel amenities
- Deliver much needed critical mass in terms of hot beds to substantively help the North Village achieve economic sustainability
- Provide an array of services and amenities that make North Village a much more compelling destination for tourists and locals alike
- Vehicular access to Building “C” will remain off of Canyon Boulevard so as to eliminate the need for any additional curb cuts along Minaret Road which would be disruptive to pedestrian flows along this important commercial street
- Improve the animation and vibrancy of the streetscape with the addition of terraces overlooking Minaret for casual gathering or dining
- Provide an array of amenities and related back-of-the-house functions that will allow for the lodge to operate efficiently thereby serving to attract an experienced and quality hotel

operator to reinforce 8050's quality as a compelling year-round destination for visitors and locals alike

- Deliver a LEED certifiable project consistent with the shared environmental values of the Town of Mammoth Lakes and the applicant
- Utilize a contextually sensitive architectural vernacular that departs from the repetitive and mostly uninspiring design solutions associated with earlier generation lodging properties within the community
- Deliver a project that takes into account snow country design issues and constraints
- Result in a compelling, iconic, and economically sustainable lodging project that acts as a catalyst for the revitalization and added vibrancy of North Village

#### **ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT and VERNACULAR**

The partially improved (i.e. existing parking structure) Building "C" site is perhaps best characterized as an "infill" parcel. This proposed third building would complete the ensemble of buildings that comprise the 8050 project. These contextual sensibilities established the logic of pursuing an architectural solution to the applicant's development program that took its cues from the adjacent buildings. As such, the proposed materials and color palette for Building "C" are informed by and complimentary to those found on the existing two buildings. However, exacting replication is not proposed.

The earlier approved design for Building "C" is incompatible with the operational needs of a high quality hotel. These design inconsistencies include:

- Earlier design lacked sufficient space to provide the lodging room inventory necessary for a hotel's economic feasibility and sustainability
- Earlier design did not have a rigorous structural grid such that room standardization, which is critical to effective hotel operations, was severely lacking
- The earlier design had twenty-one relatively large units encompassed in a highly irregular floor plan. These units would be quite dark as natural light penetration would be limited given the exceedingly deep building bay depths
- The earlier design had insufficient ceiling heights on the ground floor (i.e. only 9 foot clear height) that did not allow for inclusion of public lounges, restaurants, spas, and other amenity spaces and guest services typical of a high quality, full-service hotel
- The earlier design did not have the necessary back-of-house support space and functions critical to effective and efficient hotel operations (e.g. no service elevator)

In response to these design deficiencies, the multi-disciplined design team developed a much more rational plan aimed at satisfying the needs of the resort lodging industry. The completed

design that is graphically depicted on the following pages successfully addresses the deficiencies associated with the prior approved design for Building “C” such that this new design credibly positions Mammoth to have its first 4-star property and help reinvigorate North Village.

The revised building design is taller than that previously approved so as to achieve the room count and accommodate the high-bay communal function space necessary for economically sustainable lodging operations. However, in response to the need to deliver lodging rooms which have abundant natural light, the deep bay depths associated with the earlier design are gone such that the building’s girth has shrunk significantly (see “Original & Proposed Building C Plan Comparison” and “Massing Strategy” diagrams, Section 18). Cognizant that building setback issues were an issue with the Fireside Condominiums during the approval process for the earlier building, the architects have thoughtfully pulled the building back most significantly along the side of the building closest to the adjacent Fireside complex. There the setback areas have increased by as much as 17 feet.

The proposed taller and leaner building has an exterior expression that is purposefully “quieter” than the two original buildings at 8050 with architectural elegance achieved through honest expression, thoughtful detailing, and quality materials appropriate to the hardscrabble environment of the Sierra Nevada. The much more complicated and “busy” exteriors of the two earlier structures reflect the irregularity and non-standardization of their interior layouts. The earlier design for Building “C” is just as kinetic, with its parade of multiple roof forms and other complicating elements. From an ownership standpoint, this inordinate building complexity in snow country raises legitimate concerns regarding roof and building envelope performance integrity.

The development team submits that the redesigned Building “C” represents a creative and inspired architectural solution that will help North Village realize its place making potential as a compelling destination for tourists and locals alike.