

**Alta Planning Commission Minutes**  
**February 11, 2013, 3pm**  
**Community Center, 10361 E. Hwy 210, Alta, Utah**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Planning Commissioners:** Jan Striefel, Jon Nepstad, Joan Degiorgio, Rob Voye, Roger Bourke, and Skip Branch.

**Town of Alta staff:** John Guldner (staff), Claire Woodman (staff), Lauren Reber (counsel), Mayor Tom Pollard.

**Members of the public:** William Harrison, Councilman Cliff Curry, Robin Cohen, Toby Levitt, Onno Wieringa, Marcus Dippo, Linda Johnson, Merebea Danforth, Councilman Harris Sondak, Mark Haik, and a videographer.

**INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR.**

Joan Degiorgio: The meeting will start with the Base Facilities Zone discussion since there are invited guests.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 14, 2013, PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS.**

January 14, 2013 Planning Commission Minutes

Motion: Mr. Branch made a motion to adopt the January 14, 2013, Planning Commission minutes.

Second: Mr. Voye

All members voted in a verbal affirmation.

**CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF AMENDING ELEMENTS OF THE BASE FACILITIES ZONE.**

Joan Degiorgio: We are looking at coverage, height, and setbacks for "Zone A" which includes Snowpine Lodge, Alta Lodge, and the Rustler Lodge. Ms. Degiorgio read through the bullet points on page three of the staff review (see attached). We will limit discussion today to hearing input on setback, coverage, and height.

John Guldner: Recalled that in the past:

- Height was individually determined by the Planning Commission.
- Coverage has always been 25%. There were 20 guest rooms per net developable acre until 1989, which was then increased to 33 guest rooms per developable acre.
- In 2008, the residential aspect was discussed, there were worries about the Base Facilities Zone (BFZ) losing its commercial base, and so residential uses were not allowed.
- Also in 2008, a hotel room was defined as 600 square feet and there was a 60 feet height limitation established.

Presently:

- We are worried about viewshed and are ready to determine a more proper height that protects viewshed while still giving businesses a road presence.
- I suggested 60% coverage since that was the maximum that could be found while looking at other cities.
- The residential aspect is included since that helps with financing hotel expansion.
- There is flexibility with regards to setbacks, so that is open for discussion.

Toby Levitt (representing Alta Lodge): Agree with sentiments about residential as not being able to sell any condos limits capital development. 25' height is okay, 60' is way too much. Being right on the road, being limited to 17' height may be too small.

Marcus Dippo (representing Alta Lodge): The Planning Commission needs to consider what keeps the most doors open for us.

There was discussion on "store front" coverage in the front of a property. It was noted that it is commercially zoned so road side presence is not limited to lodging.

Robin Cohen (representing the Snowpine Lodge): Comparisons that I have read between Alta and Aspen and Vail makes little sense. What is the vision for the Town along the road?

Joan Degiorgio: We're struggling with that and do not have that answer. Now we are trying to pull what we have together a little bit better and allow for evolution.

Skip Branch: Advocate for responsible growth, however we grapple with ends of spectrum. On a good snow day, we have too many cars; however in the summer there is limited economic opportunity.

Joan Degiorgio: Now we are addressing scale; should there be a uniform look, or is no uniformity a good thing?

Roger Bourke: We know the things we do not want.

Robin Cohen: The Snowpine Lodge is a unique property on a small area. Ms. Cohen shared noted she has from the Snowpine architect:

- 15' setbacks are okay, will work with UDOT on front setback.
- Would like restaurant, lounge, and entry way on road level with sloped roof. Would like 35' height to peak of roof and 25' height to fascia line. Do not want it to be too imposing on road and would like it to be aesthetically pleasing.
- Would like to add wing to block view of the Rustler Lodge. Would like to add on a maximum of 20 rooms. Perhaps add a conference room, spa, and swimming pool.
- Equipment on roof will be screened.
- Would like to keep architectural compatibility within the existing building material for any add-ons.

- Coverage should be consistent for all of the properties up here, but 60-65% sounds good.
- Question from the architect: If achievable through engineering means, is there a need for the 30% slope restriction?

John Guldner: The restriction is on slope over 30% of natural grade. So the area by the road by the Snowpine Lodge is man made from the road cut. There is no natural grade at the Snowpine that is over 30%.

Toby Levitt: Normal reasons for having setbacks may not apply up here. Not having a setback makes sense. There are coverage limitations to preserve open space but open space is already there. We should maximize the small bit of commercial space that we have.

Rob Voye: Setbacks on sides was initiated for snow removal. Issue is between the Snowpine Lodge and the Rustler Lodge. We could determine setbacks and then not have to deal with coverage.

Marcus Dippo: Alta Lodge and Deep Powder House share a common boundary on the ramp.

There was discussion on property lines and setbacks.

Roger Bourke: Assuming that the United States Forest Service (USFS) land will not be built on, why limit people with setbacks?

There was discussion on property lines and setbacks.

Jon Nepstad: The height issues at Snowpine caught my attention. The sign is 17' so ideally you'd like to be twice as high.

Joan Degiorgio: Asking for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) could be an option.

Robin Cohen: I do not understand what the problem would be with the setbacks as long as there is enough room for firefighting and snow removal. As far as height goes, we could try to get a CUP.

Rob Voye: We are trying to avoid the tunnel effect as you drive through Town.

Robin Cohen: Length of our road presence is very short. Land on east is USFS, and will remain hopefully undeveloped.

Joan Degiorgio: Sum up what we have heard so far: 25' height, no coverage limitation and setbacks, setbacks above 4 levels, and table the residential discussion.

Jan Striefel: Without any coverage limitations we run the potential risk of having the entire lot built on. We could have 60% building coverage and then pools, patios, landscaping, pads, etc.,

on the other 40%. That way we would be assured that 40% of the property would not be covered with a building.

Rob Voyer: Hesitant to force that down a property owner's throat. On the other hand I would think the property owner would want to do something like that to make their buildings and properties beautiful.

Skip Branch: There will be a day when the people who own all of the lodges no longer own them. No limitations are frightening.

Toby Levitt: Still do have density requirements, so we can only have so many rooms.

- Joan Degiorgio: I thought we were not going to be looking at number of rooms anymore. We are only concerned about what is on the outside, not with what is on the inside.
- John Guldner: We talked about it, but got sidetracked on Form Base Code. Density requirements did not get totally taken out. We need to figure out how to measure density for parking and employee housing.

Toby Levitt: We like employee housing, but if it counts against coverage, it is difficult to expand.

Joan Degiorgio: The Planning Commission does not seem totally comfortable with no limitations.

There was discussion about setbacks.

Mark Haik: Whichever path you choose, you need to consider what the Alta Ski Lifts Company (ASL) wants to do between the Snowpine Lodge and the Albion Ticket Office. What are the available properties where the lift company wants to build something regardless if it is on public or private property. You have to look down the road; many of the lodges are at the end of their useful life. Have to decide what are the potential building parcels on the public and private land and how are we going to connect those things ideologically both to fulfill the aspirations of summer development where there is potentially maybe more pedestrians but at the same time you want to connect those parcels in the winter to generate more street traffic. Walkability, signage, etc., you have to look at the whole thing. You should look where and what is the relationship to the developable parcels on the public land that the lift company aspires to and how will those be juxtaposed against the private parcels and how are you going to arrange things to connect them.

Joan Degiorgio: We want to look at "Zone A" now, and then look at the other zones, and then finally look at how those all connect. This is what is before us right now; we do not have enough from the ASL to do what you're asking. It is a good comment.

There was continued discussion on setbacks:

- Rob Voyer: 15' between Rustler Lodge and Snowpine Lodge is a good idea. My view is the goal is to increase the number of beds in town. Do we really need a 15' setback everywhere? Is it possible to set one 15' setback here and no setbacks anywhere else?
- Cliff Curry: The requirement should be consistent.
- Roger Bourke: Maybe the rule should be that there should be a setback between buildings and private land.
- There was discussion on this concept.
- Lauren Reber: The issue of what happens in the future has been brought up several times. Have to be careful with how you word it.
- Language of establishing a minimum distance from adjacent private land or minimum distance between buildings was discussed.
- Robin Cohen: Space between buildings is good for not having tunnel effect.
- Joan Degiorgio: It is very likely that the public land will never be built on. We might consider building in a margin of safety, say 10', to be safe.
- Roger Bourke: That is excessively safe. Having a stipulation that property owners need to make sure there is room between adjacent buildings is enough.

Joan Degiorgio: Summed up the recommendation so far: 25' height, 15' setback from private land, some coverage limitation.

Toby Levitt: Parcels are already limited with snow removal and avalanche concerns. Could lose all that if coverage is too constrained.

Mark Haik: Under the assumption that at some point in the future these properties are going to be substantially redone, you have to consider that really under the current state of affairs where there is a limited winter season and the Town's aspiration is for hotel rooms, you really should seek some counsel from people in the hotel business. It is pretty straightforward that with the number of days you are open and the potential and current revenue they are going to be able to tell you what kind of capital investment is going to occur and how many rooms are marketable. What you are ultimately planning for is going to be patently unpalatable to the marketplace you desire, i.e. hotel rooms. You may be wasting your time presently if you are going to seek capital investment to put in hotel rooms there are equations in here and they are going to be looking for a lot of hotel rooms especially if the price point is going to be nearly affordable to whoever you are going to market to. They are going to be very expensive.

Joan Degiorgio: Recommendation for coverage?

Roger Bourke: 75% coverage.

Jan Striefel: If it goes up to 75% it should include pools, patios, etc.

Rob Voyer: 75% triples coverage.

Joan Degiorgio: Wrap up "Zone A" with a draft recommendation: 25' height, 15' setback from private property, 75% coverage inclusive of everything, greater than 4 levels need a setback, requirement for rooftop equipment masking, and the residential element will be tabled.

**INTRODUCTION OF DISCUSSION ON AMENDING THE INTERCONNECT STATEMENT IN THE GENERAL PLAN.**

Joan Degiorgio: The Town Council worked on the Vision Statement and added a statement about interconnect. Read through Vision Statement (see attached). There are two scales of interconnect; the big interconnect, and the Alta interconnect.

Tom Pollard: There was a public hearing at last month's meeting on the Vision Statement and it is close to final. The statement about interconnect lacks specific mode, it's a broad statement.

Roger Bourke: The definition of interconnect I proposed is specific so we can discuss it further (see attached).

Tom Pollard: Thought of the Town Council is that something is going to happen but we do not have vision or place to determine what the mode will be.

Skip Branch: Two separate and distinct concepts: 1) ski interconnect, and 2) mountain transportation

Harris Sondak: Seems appropriate to think about both summer and winter connections.

Joan Degiorgio: Asked Mayor Pollard if he wants the Planning Commission to look at interconnect in the body of the General Plan?

Tom Pollard: As you look at areas in the General Plan and are bringing specific areas up to date, this is important to address. Need to be up to date and aware of what might happen in the future and make sure our viewpoints are aligned. Need a consensus viewpoint in what role the Town of Alta wants to take in this process as we move forward.

Roger Bourke: The statement in the Vision Statement is presumptuous.

Tom Pollard: My presumption is that all of those factors will be taken into consideration and something will happen and will be determined by those statements.

Rob Voyer: There are so many hurdles for this to get off the ground. Personally, I feel we should be in favor of this and should not be an impediment.

Onno Wieringa: Skiing is the essence of our community. Need to separate ski interconnect from mountain transportation and they should be discussed separately. Passed out handout with proposed language for section 4.8 of the General Plan and read aloud (see attached).

Joan Degiorgio: Could leave the heading the same and then have part 1 and part 2 of section 4.8.

Mark Haik: Concur with Onno and Skip that you have to separate the transportation questions from the ski interconnect questions and leave open summer connections. Seriously consider what are your priorities. Whether it is the ski interconnect questions or a mountain transportation

question it goes directly to the economic viability of this community. Unless you are willing to step up to the plate and say these are the items we are in favor of, and prioritize them, and communicate them to the other jurisdictional partners and players you are not going to get what you want. You have to look down the road so your aspirations for the mountain transportation line up with the business district that you are talking about. Unless you are getting it to line up and get it out there it will not come together.

Ron Phillips: I work for Canyons on Ski Link and would like to make supporting comments of what has already been said. For political reasons, the Mountain Transportation Study was done without the participation of Summit County and Summit County resorts. So it looked at mountain transportation but did not consider the over the top cableways as part of the transportation system in any detail at all. Considered transportation for up the canyons, but not over the top. The interconnect system has already begun. There are four resorts connected by two connections. Canyons is proposing connection to Solitude, and we have a long way to go before approval. The interconnect system may cost \$50-100 million, and the gondola from the Canyons to Solitude is estimated at costing \$10 million. Those investments will be made primarily, if not all through private enterprise. The cost of a mountain transportation system, especially if rail is involved, is \$1.5B-4 billion and would be mostly funded by public resources. Those are distinctions that you may want to keep in mind as you consider your statements in your plan. We appreciate your positive attitude at looking at all of these options. \$50-100 million from the private sector can happen a lot easier than \$1.5-4 billion from the public sector.

Roger Bourke: Referred to and went through the handout with his comments(see attached). Recommended that the Planning Commission take a walk up Grizzly Gulch.

Joan Degiorgio: Let's start looking at section 4.8 and look at separating ski interconnect from mountain transportation.

Rob Voye: Object to the sentiment of "earn your turns." A downhill skier versus backcountry skier both earn their turns.

Linda Johnson: Believes that Solitude is planning on building a lift to the top of the mountain that will connect into honeycomb close to Grizzly Gulch. In FCOZ planning, we are looking at forward thinking ways of developing resort villages at bottom of lifts, including land exchanges with the USFS.

Mark Haik: Aware of numerous configurations to connect the nearby areas that are substantially on private property that the USFS will not have anything to do with. Advocate that you should direct staff to get exhibits to adequately explain who are the other jurisdictional players are and what are the possibilities for interconnection. You are way behind the curve in terms of your base knowledge of what goes on in your extended neighborhood.

John Guldner: The Planning Commission is the land use authority for anything that is not on the USFS property, i.e. lift towers and lifts.

Ron Phillips: If you go to [www.skilink.com](http://www.skilink.com) you can find a transportation study, environmental study and you are welcome to examine those. Have a powerpoint I would be happy to present as well.

Robin Cohen: Potential for USFS land exchange made me think of how does the Snowpine protect its eastern border with no setbacks? If that's a possibility, we need to reconsider the setback issue.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING.**

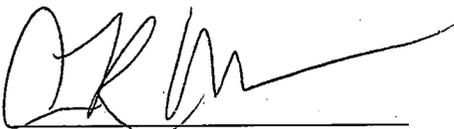
The next meeting date was tentatively set for March 18<sup>th</sup>, 4pm, at the Alta Community Center.

**Mr. Branch moved to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Voye seconded the motion with all Planning Commission members that were present voting in the affirmative. The motion was carried.**

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The content of the minutes is not intended, nor are they submitted, as a verbatim transcription of the meeting. These minutes are a general overview of what occurred at the meeting.

These minutes were passed and approved on the eighteenth day of March, 2013.



Claire R. Woodman  
Assistant Town Administrator

February 5, 2013

Staff Review, Recommendation to the Alta Planning Commission  
Re: Base Facilities amendments

We have addressing amending the height and coverage in the Base Facilities (bf) zone. We know we don't like the recently changed 60' height above the road or the 25% coverage limitation. We know we want to reduce the height limit to preserve the views of the mountain from the road, and to eliminate the "wall effect" of structures as viewed from the southside. We've talked about increasing coverage to compensate for the reduction in height and because 25% seems overly restrictive especially considering the amount of open space provided by Forest Service/FR-50 zoning adjacent to the bf zone. We have looked at other areas to see what they have done, including but not limited to Aspen. At our last meeting it was noted that "someone must have struggled with these issues before, we don't want to reinvent the wheel". Unfortunately we are going to have to reinvent the wheel, or at least fine tune it for Alta. We are different. We don't have a traditional central business district like Aspen, or Park City, with lots, blocks, alleys and walkways. We can use those other areas for ideas, but in the end, now, we have to come up with our own limits. It's great that we are different. We are already narrowed down to five defined areas concentrated at the base of the ski area. Already like one of the numerous zones in one of the larger places we've looked at. At this point we can't really go wrong. We know what we'd like to change, we've heard it from the community in past meetings and open houses and we agree. Less height and more coverage in the bf zone.

We want a height that gives road presence to the lodges without ruining the view of the mountain from the road or the ski hill. We want to increase coverage to compensate for less height while still preserving a reasonable scale on site for the five lodge properties and preserving reasonable setbacks for snow removal/storage, emergency access etc.

The following provide good examples of what other mountain communities, including us in the past have done. We can use them as a basis to move forward with our amendments.

- 1) In 1989, Alta amended the zoning ordinance, creating the base facilities zone, allowing a 65% increase in density for the lodges. Height was not addressed, still determined individually because "the unique nature of topography, vegetation, soils, climatic, and aesthetic characteristic of the canyon defy uniform regulations..." taking into account natural setting, relationship with other structures and open spaces, contour intervals and topographic features, scenic vistas and sight lines etc.

If we now apply that same increase to allowable coverage, increasing the coverage by 65% to match the 65% density increase that would allow for 41% coverage. No help here on height as everything is individually determined. The height was amended in 2008 to allow 60' above the road, which all now agree is too much.

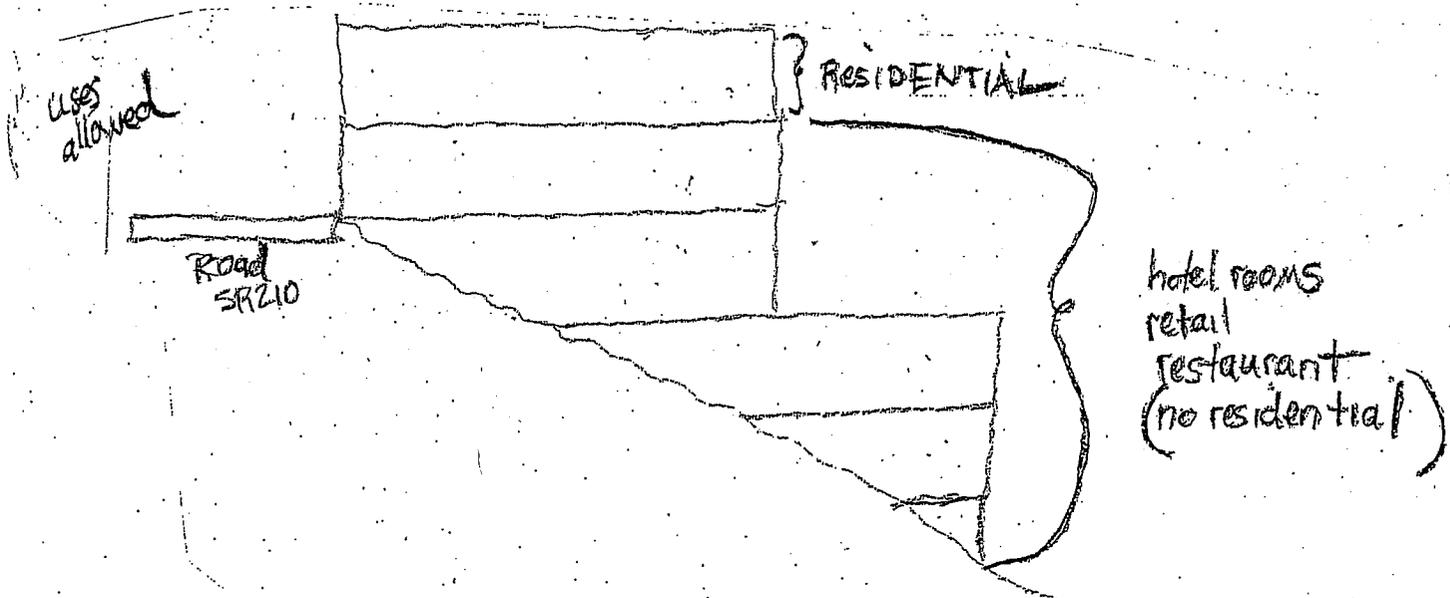
- 2) We have talked a lot about what Aspen does. Aspen has an elaborate zoning ordinance with many districts, a number of which allow lodges. None of them really mirrors our situation with five defined areas, below the one access road in a steep narrow canyon. Aspen allows hotels on parcels as small as 3,000 square feet, compared to our smallest bf property of ~51,000 square feet (Snowpine). 5' setbacks are required on all 4 sides, coverage on the smallest lot would be 63% per the required setbacks, higher coverage would be allowed with larger lots. Aspen has a standard 28' height limitation, with up to 40' after detailed design review taking into account the same basic factors as Alta's original ordinance.
  
- 3) Park City also has numerous zones that allow hotels. In a similar area Park City allows 50% coverage, which can be increased to 60% if acceptable amenities such as playgrounds, trails, bus shelters, landscaping etc. are provided. Minimum setbacks are required on all sides, generally 20' in front with 10' on the sides and rear yards. Park City has a 35' height limit which can go up to 43' to accommodate such things as gabled roofs and elevator towers. Development can go above the height restriction by doing a Master Planned Development in which "The Planning Commission may consider an increase in height based on site specific analysis and determination" using criteria such as increased open space, landscaping and buffering, minimization of visual impacts on adjacent structures etc.
  
- 4) Salt Lake County, Foothills Canyons Overlay Zone (fcoz) this zone is an overlay zone the same as our bf zone is an overlay to the FM-10 zone. It contains numerous guiding principles but few defined standards. There are defined setbacks and limitations of disturbance (coverage) from streams, steep slopes and ridgelines. Everything else is determined on a case by case basis via detailed review under the same basic criteria used by others, namely, minimization of visual impact, protection of steep slopes, preservation of trees, erosion control etc. Lodge height is also determined on a case by case basis "because of the unique nature of the topography, vegetation, soils..." exactly the same as our original underlying zone for the base facilities, using the criteria of "protection of natural setting, relationship to other structures and open spaces, contour intervals and topographic features, to the maximum extent feasible, the building height should not exceed the height of surrounding trees and vegetation, protections of scenic vistas, especially view from public rights-of-way and public lands" and other elements deemed appropriate to ensure that the provisions are met.

The above provide good guidelines for us in reviewing our approach to amending the bf zone. They highlight the fact that we are on the right track and are considering the same issues that other mountain communities did with their zoning. They do not however give us a template to plug into our existing zone. We still have to do that ourselves. I think we are there and only need a little further fine tuning. I also feel strongly that we need definitive standards, not elaborate floor area ratio tables, or provision of certain amenities in exchange for greater density or height or whatever. We are dealing with a very specific, concentrated five parcel area at the base of our ski area. It has been developed

under county zoning, amended twice by Town zoning amendments to height, coverage and density. After nearly two years we are still focusing on the same elements. Definitive standards provide certainty. Certainty that I think is important to developers, neighbors and the Town. With that, staff would recommend the same basic change as in January, with a few dimensions amended after further review and the discussion in January. That recommendation, for Zone "A", Snowpine, Rustler and Alta Lodges follows:

Zone "A", Snowpine, Rustler and Alta Lodges

- 25' height limitation above the road, with diagram, attached. 60' maximum height.
- 60% coverage limitation.
- 25' side yard setbacks total, minimum 10' each side (e.g., 10' and 15', 12' and 13' etc with 10 the absolute minimum)
- 10' rear yard setback
- Front setback individually determined based on existing conditions and Department of Transportation review/approval
- No more than 4 levels or 48' height without a step back in building design to alleviate the appearance of a solid high wall when viewed from the south, with diagram attached
- Applicant may provide architectural alternatives such as color/material variations, facades, decking etc. as an alternative to physical step backs in building design to avoid the solid high wall effect. Such alternatives must be approved by the Planning Commission on a case by case basis, diagram/drawing attached
- The top floor of any 4 plus story building may include self contained residential units that may or may not be included in the hotel rental pool, diagram.



25' max height

Road SR 210

Property Line

10'

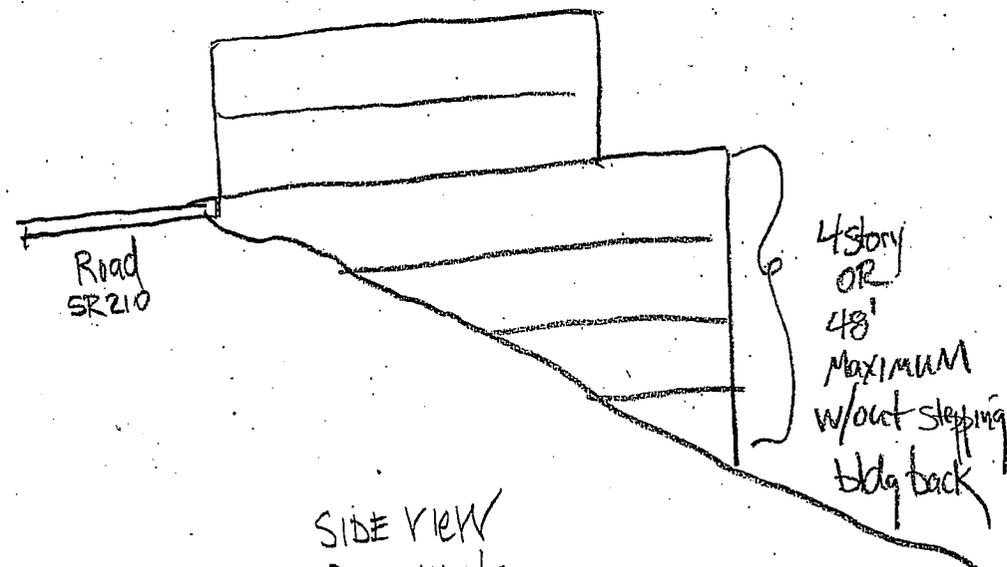
60% MAXIMUM COVERAGE

10'

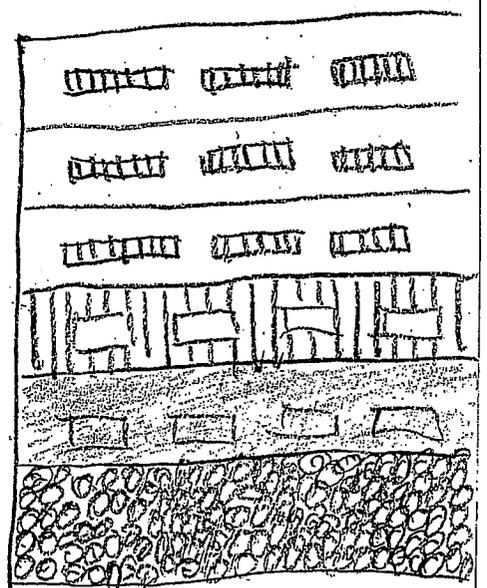
Rear Property Line

15'

60% Maximum Coverage  
25' SIDE yard setback TOTAL  
10' minimum  
10' Rear yard setback

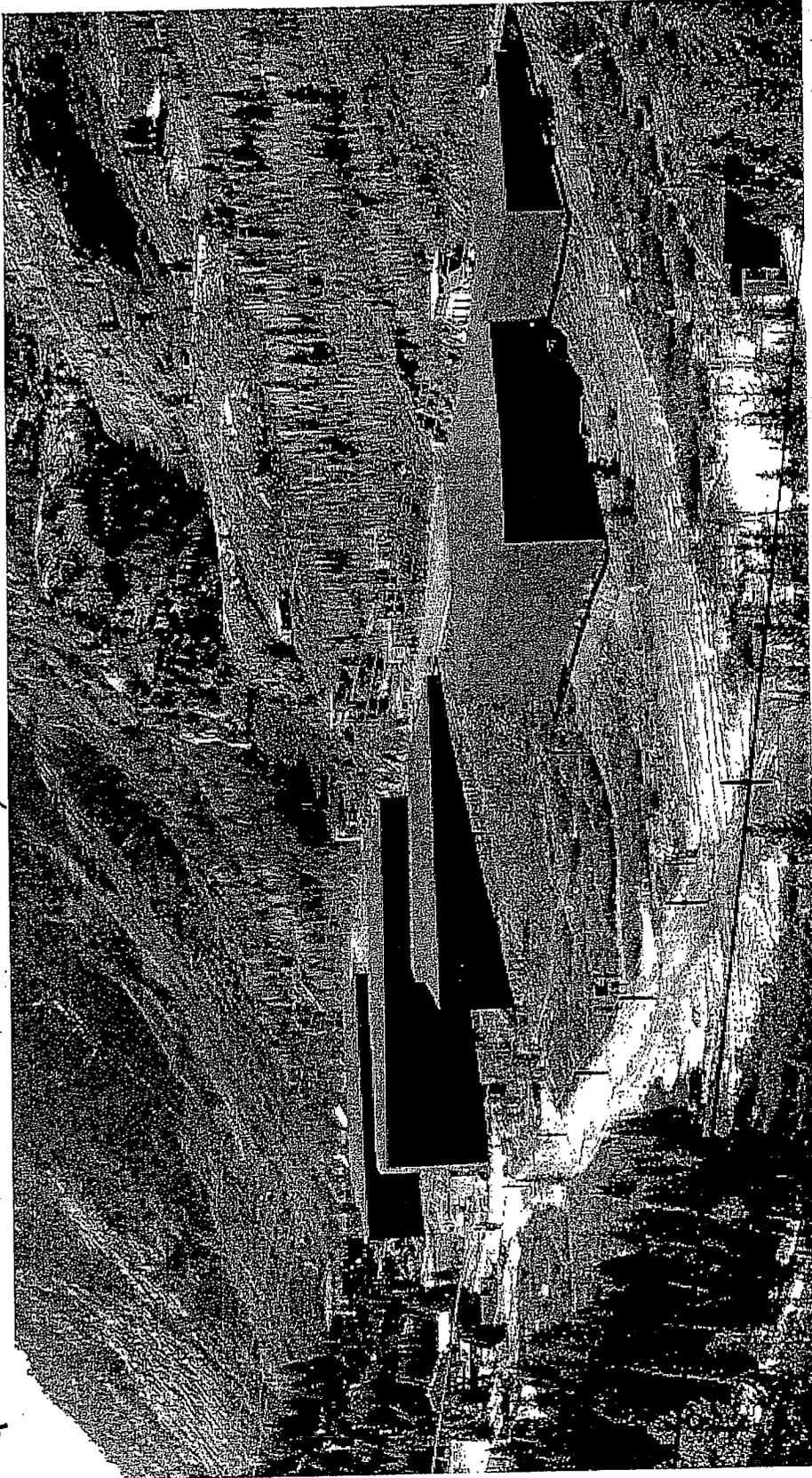


SIDE VIEW FROM WEST



View From South  
Architectural Alternatives to Physical Step Back

Schematic Showing 17' Height above Road  
& 15' Setbacks from Rear & Side Yards



Peruvian lodge  
~ 93% coverage

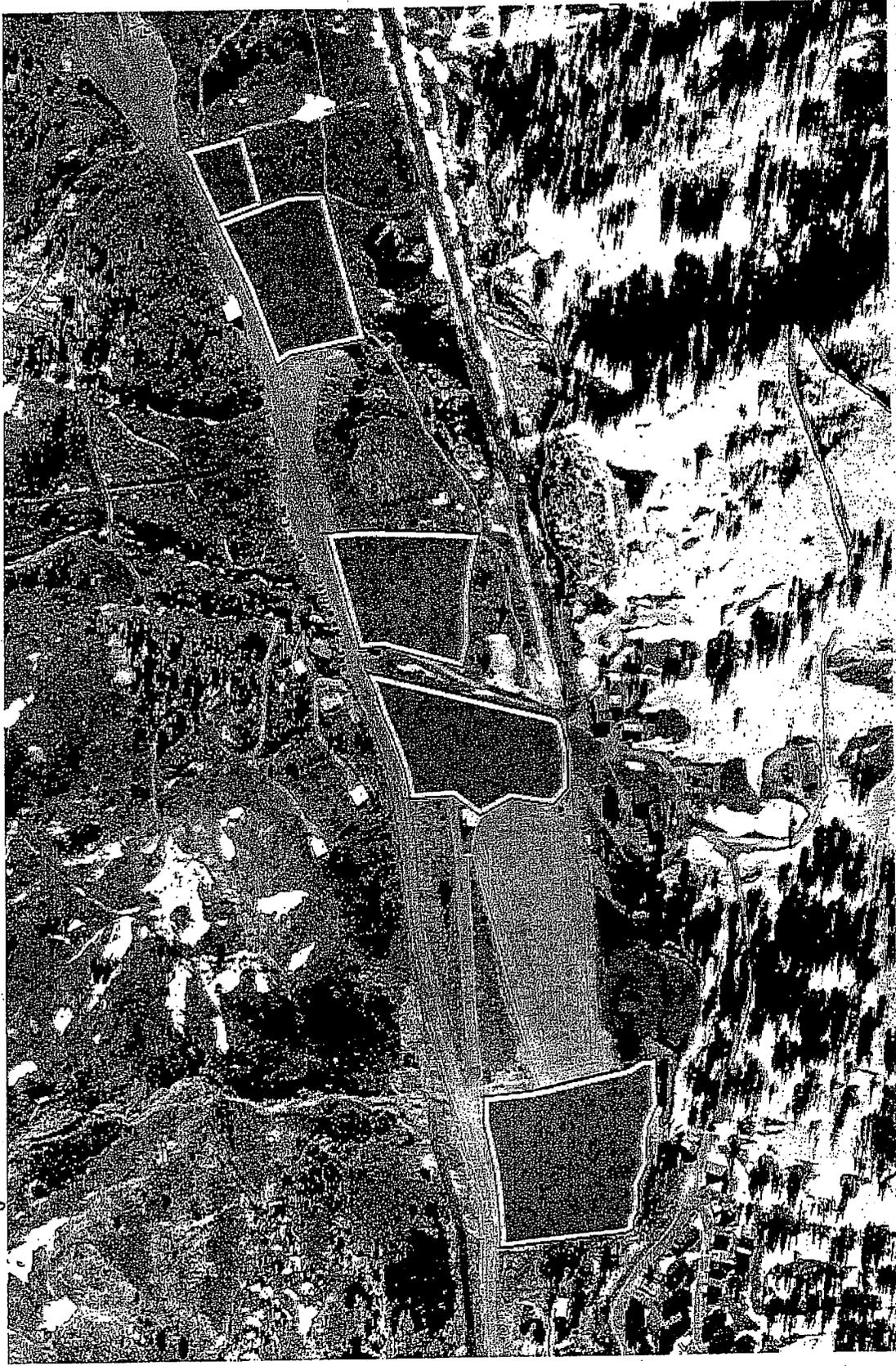
Goldminers  
Daughter  
~ 86% coverage

Alta Lodge  
~ 90% coverage

Rustler Lodge  
~ 88% Coverage

Snowpine  
~ 79% coverage

Approximate Coverage-figures w/15' setbacks on Rear & Side yards only



Peruvian lodge  
~ 93% coverage

Godwin's  
Daughter  
~ 86% coverage

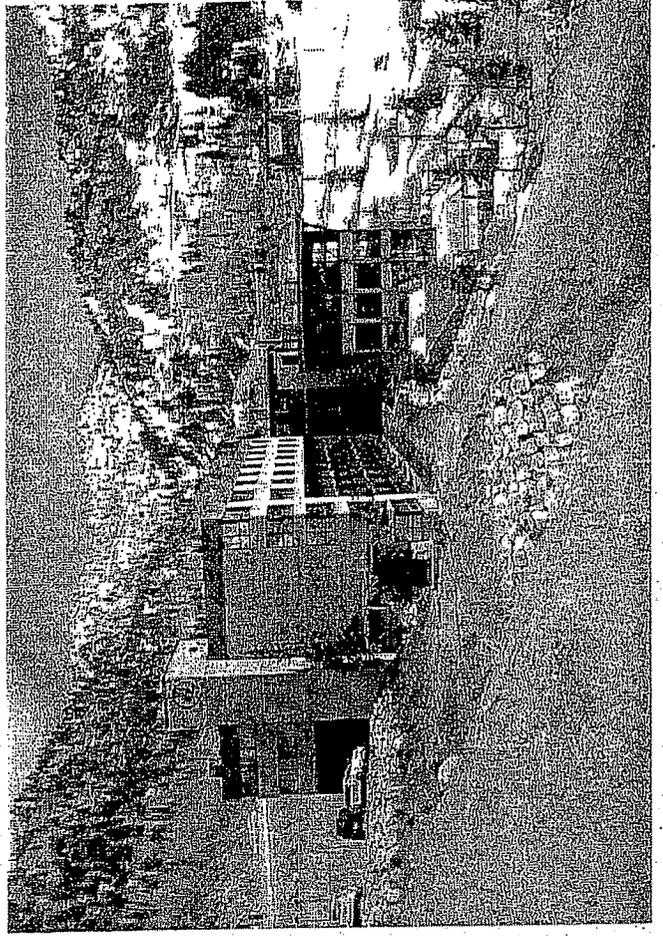
Alta lodge  
~ 90% coverage

Rustler lodge  
~ 88% coverage

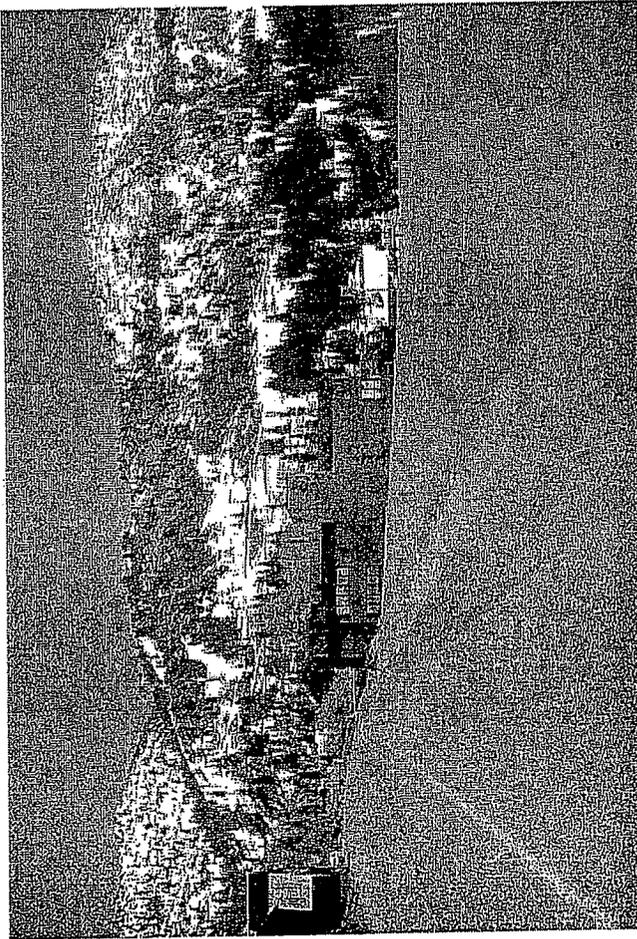
Snowpine  
~ 79% coverage



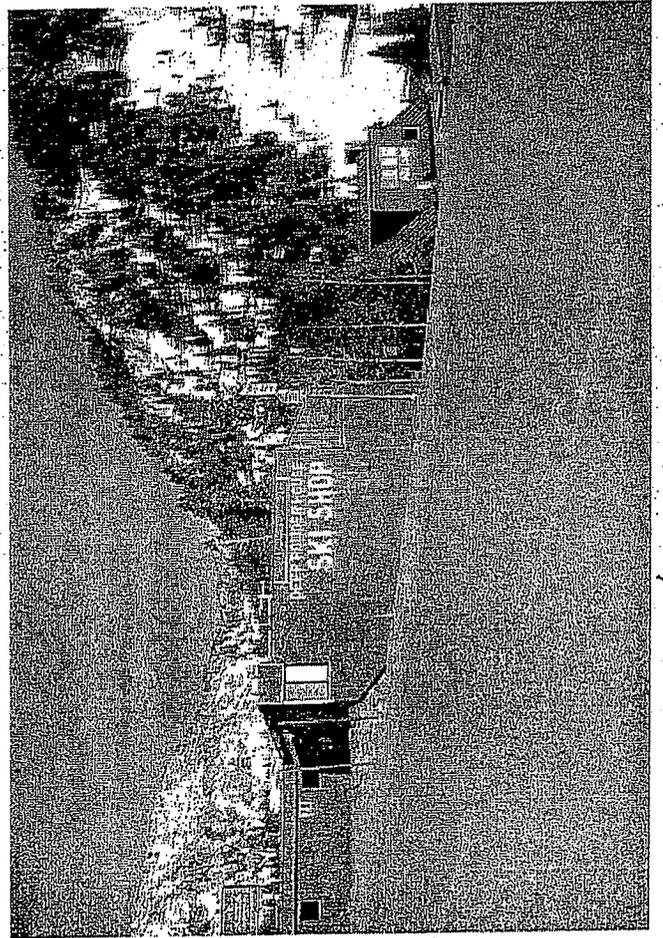
Snowpine South Side



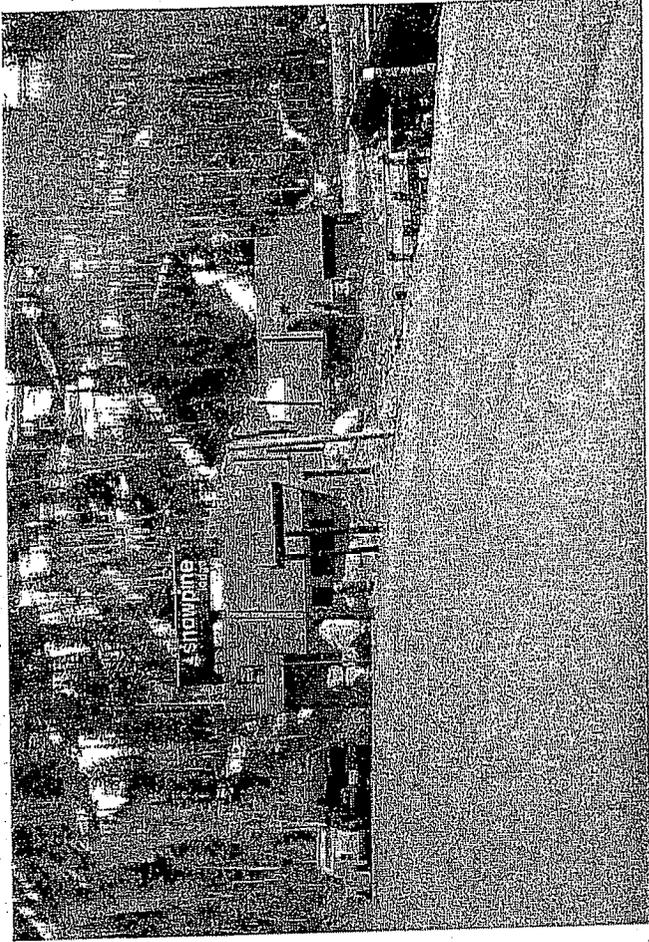
Rushier West & South Sides



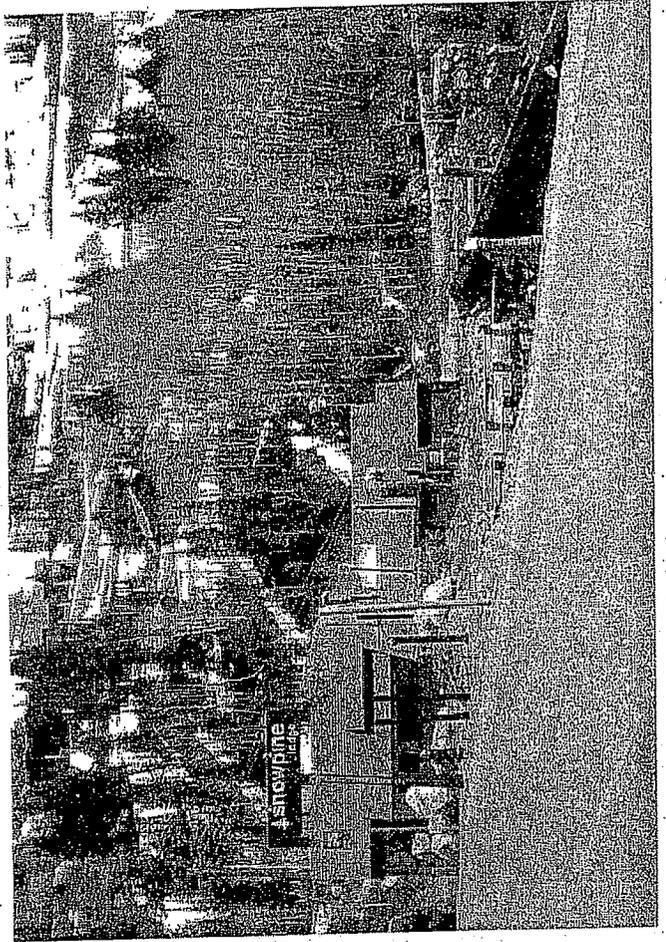
Rushier Lodge - West Side



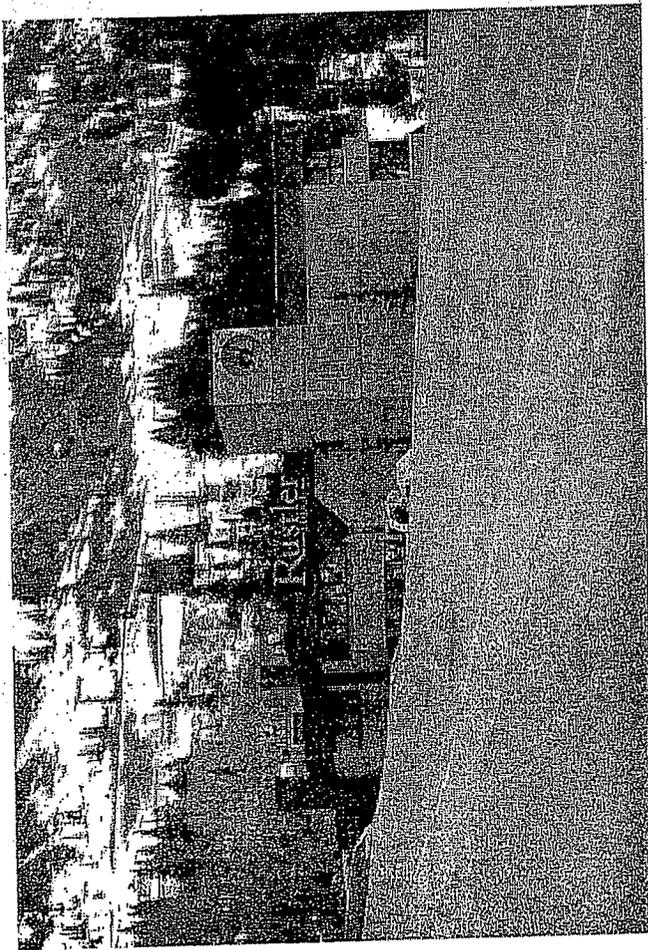
Deep Powderhouse / Alta Lodge - West Side



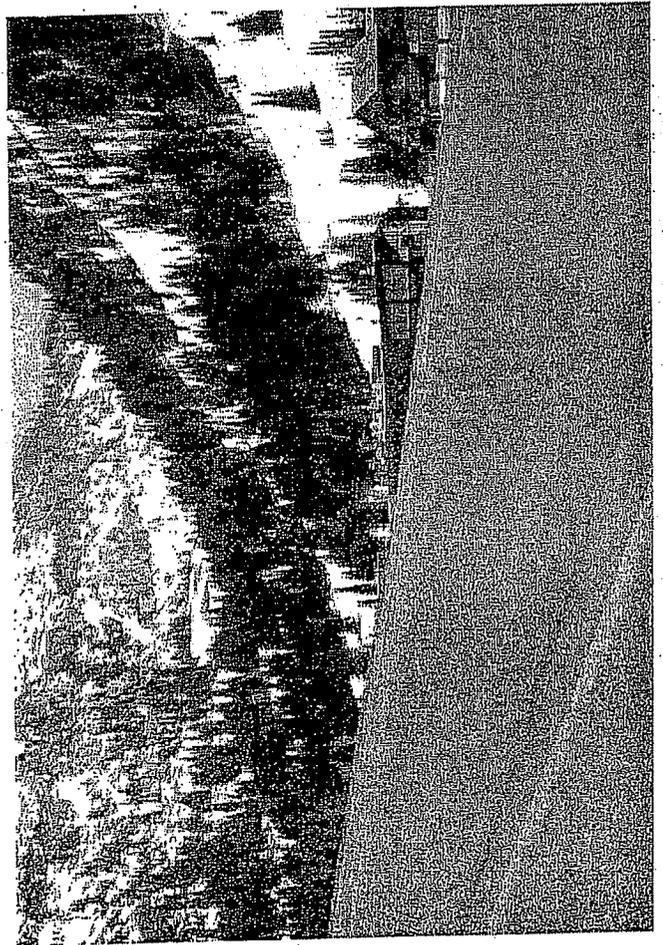
Snowpine West Side



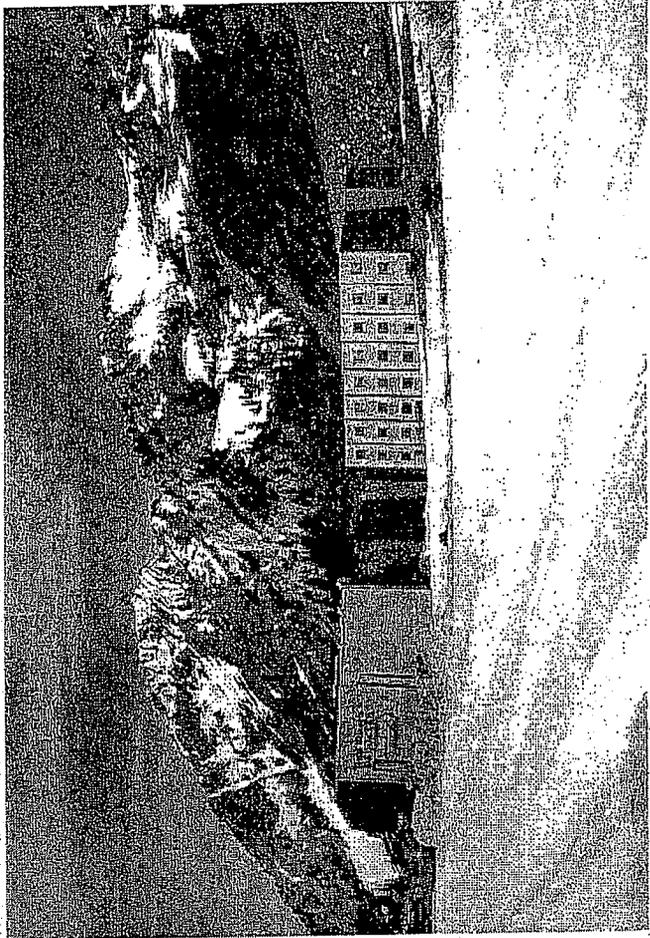
Snowpine West Side



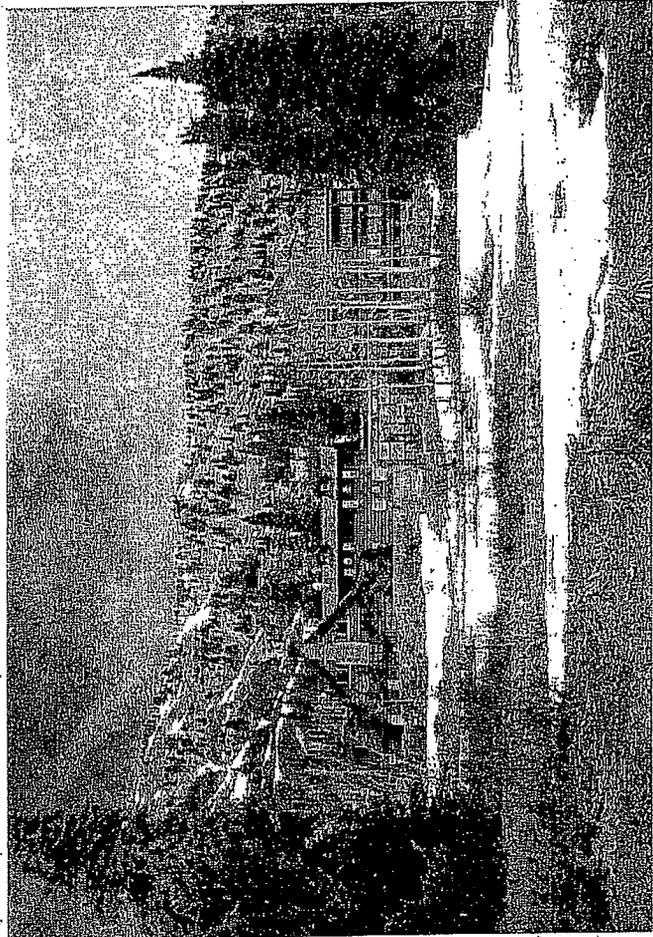
Rustler Lodge West Side



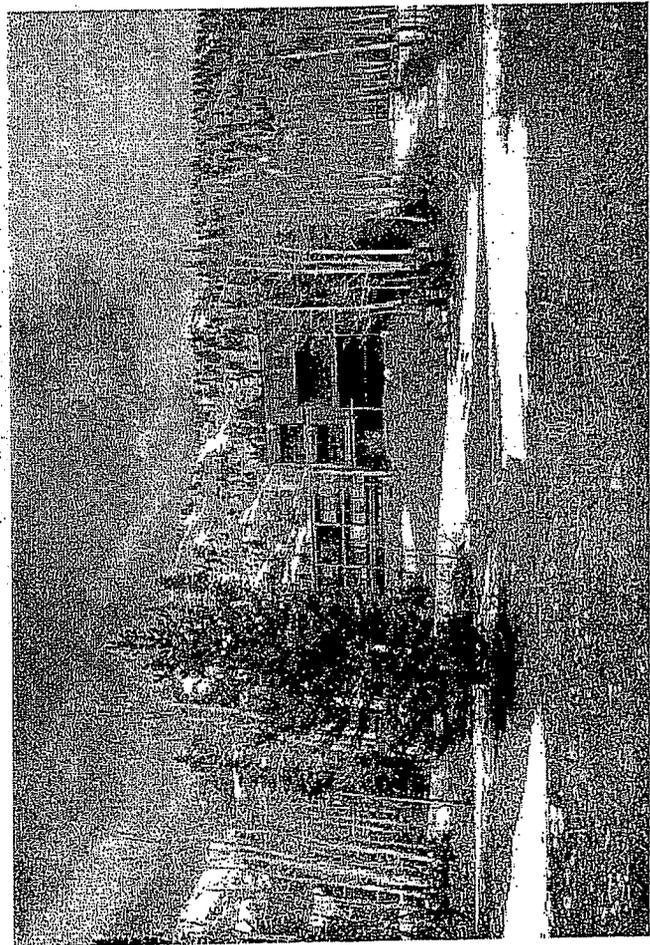
Goldminers West View



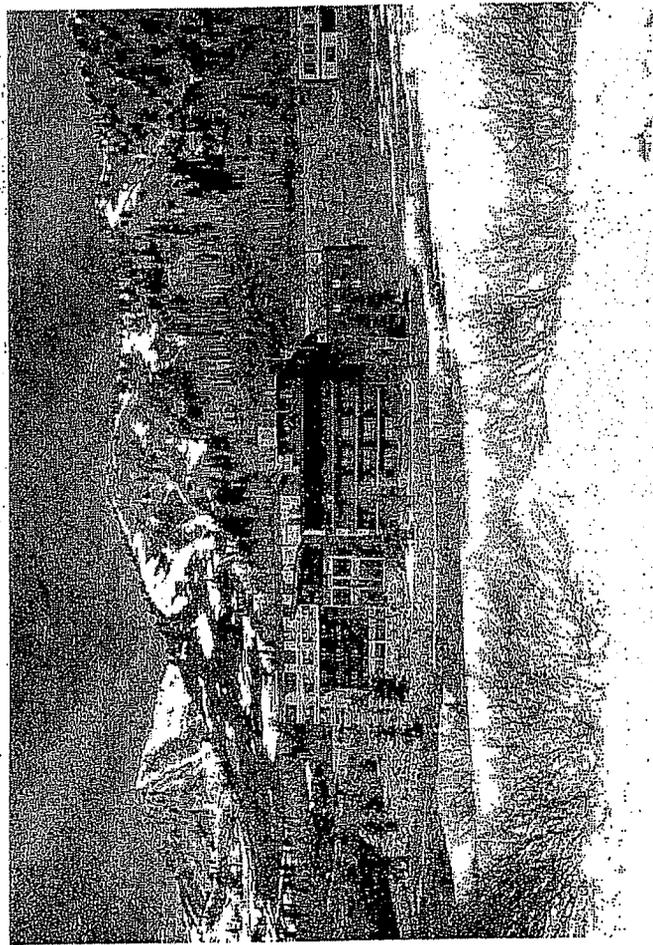
Goldminers East Side



Alta Lodge South Side



Alta Lodge South Side



Rushier Lodge South Side

Portion of



## **Alta Context**

Historically, in the late 1800's, Alta was a silver mining boom settlement. In 1938 Alta became a different kind of boom town, this time for skiing; and formally incorporated as a municipality in 1970.

Naturally, Alta is part of a stunning canyon surrounded by Mount Baldy, Mount Superior, Devil's Castle and Sugarloaf Peak where winter storms provide an average of 500" of the "greatest snow on earth." There are over 200 species of wildflowers and wildlife such as moose thrive in the short summer season. The headwaters of Little Cottonwood Canyon watershed start in Alta's famed Albion Basin- a critical contributor to the watershed that provides culinary water for Alta and Snowbird as well as hundreds of thousands in the greater Salt Lake Valley.

Culturally, Alta is "home" to its unique combination of residents and visitors, with a relaxed but exuberant pace of life and reverence for the natural surroundings.

## **Alta Vision Statement**

By 2032, with guidance from residents, visitors, employees and local businesses, Alta continues to strive for responsible and sustainable growth and development. Alta has remained committed to protecting its scenic and sensitive resources, especially critical watershed area. Alta utilizes responsible standards for design and development while maintaining the unique context, scale and visual patterns that respect and define the landscape. Development remains concentrated in the commercial core away from sensitive areas and Albion Basin looks much like it did in 2012, with minimal development.

In the winter, Alta continues to be a winter sports recreation destination, which brings thousands of people to the area and sustains our economy. In the summer, Alta's economy has grown, yet maintains an emphasis on responsible recreational awareness and stewardship. Alta supports the Town Community Center which is the social and cultural hub of the Town. After careful consideration and analysis of effects on environment, watershed, wildlife, public safety and traffic, Alta is now connected not only to Snowbird but also to Big Cottonwood Canyon and Summit County.

Visitors and residents alike flock to the Town to experience Alta as a place of inspiration, relaxation and enjoyment through all seasons, and to appreciate our spectacular alpine setting – the fabulous winter powder snow and glorious summer wildflowers. Alta remains the sanctuary that so many people from near and far treasure.

# Comments from Roger Bourke

## Interconnect

"interconnect" as used in this discussion is "a system of lifts that allow skiers (and boarders?) to travel back and forth between adjacent ski areas on skis"

The connection between Alta and Snowbird is consistent with this definition. Other potential connections to adjacent areas could also be consistent, e.g., another Snowbird connection in the Peruvian Ridge area, a connection to Brighton in the Catherine's Pass/Sunset Peak area, and a connection to Solitude in the Grizzly Gulch/Black Bess area.

The concept that is under immediate consideration is the last: An Alta lift up Grizzly Gulch and a companion Solitude lift that would terminate on the same ridge.

The question of an interconnect with adjacent areas can be looked at from two standpoints, either as a general issue--should or should not Alta be lift connected to Big Cottonwood Canyon and beyond--or from a more narrow view--what are the pros and cons of the proposed connection to Solitude via Grizzly Gulch? This discussion takes the narrow view, but many of the considerations are more broadly applicable.

### Grizzly Gulch/Black Bess connection to Solitude

Assume, for the purposes of discussion, that a lift, either a chair or gondola, is constructed from near the base of Sunnyside to or near the ridge line that separates Big from Little Cottonwood Canyon, and Solitude constructs another lift running from near the top of Summit chair to the same ridge. Construction and maintenance on the Alta side would entail improving the road up Grizzly Gulch, building a bridge across Utah 210 so that skiers could return to the base and cats and snowmobiles could access the mountain, and the associated winter maintenance activities including nightly grooming, patrolling, etc. Further assume that skiers could travel in either direction between Solitude and Alta on a single ticket, similar to the current arrangement with Snowbird.

Some of the considerations are these:

#### *Business*

- This connection will create more business for Alta Ski Lifts. More tickets will be sold, because there will be skiers from BCC who will come into Alta. Further, this connection will enhance the attractiveness of the region because it will facilitate a broader more European-like experience skiing from the base of Snowbird to the base of Solitude and back. That enhanced attractiveness will lead to more business, some of which will be at Alta.
- It is unclear if the enhanced regional attractiveness, particularly with Alta at the center of this complex, would lead to more lodging business. Daytime food service may see only small changes as some potential lunch customers will go to Solitude and some will come to Alta.

#### *Environment*

- Construction of a lift in Grizzly Gulch will change the character of that area. While GG experienced major development a century ago, and remnants are still visible, it is currently a virtual wilderness with power lines as the only significant man-made objects available only to hikers in summer and winter. Currently there is limited snowcat skiing in winter, but the majority of winter use is accessed by skiers, boarders and snowshoers hiking.
- Were the GG lift used for summer passengers, it would flood Twin Lakes Pass and surroundings with people and associated environmental consequences-- plant damage, displacement of wildlife, human waste, over crowding, etc. In effect, it would create another Secret Lake condition. Despite snow cover, many of these adverse consequences would accrue in winter as well.
- The GG/BB connection effectively creates a single ski resort running from Snowbird to Solitude, with potential of extension to Park City and surroundings. As such, it moves a substantial portion of the Wasatch from unbuild wildlands, accessible almost exclusively by human power, to a sparsely built up area with inescapable signs of development. In short, it lessens the number of places where one can "get away from it all." Along with the population expansion along the Wasatch, those places are more and more rare.

#### *Other factors*

- Vagaries of weather and snow conditions will inevitably catch people in the wrong canyon with the associated turmoil in terms of transportation, lodging, equipment, etc.
- The area from Cardiff to Flagstaff to Twin Lakes Pass to Wolverine Bowl has traditionally been the province of those who "earn their turns" by hiking. A lift will deny them that opportunity for these areas.
- Skier compaction is an effective method for reducing avalanche danger. The region described in the bullet above will see many more skiers when lift served. Also, the lift will facilitate patrol access to those area for avalanche control.
- A larger lift served area will create more public safety issues, for example remote rescue demands.
- The Grizzly Gulch residential area will experience a mix of skiers and houses and oversnow vehicles as in the Albion Basin and Deer Valley with the attendant conflicts. Should snowboarders be allowed on the Grizzly Gulch lift, the conflicts will be even more severe.
- If tickets are sold that allow skiing in three resorts--Solitude, Alta and Snowbird--on a single pass then some scheme for setting the prices, distributing the revenue and controlling access must be established at the outset. Can one buy a single area, two area or three area day or season pass? If all resorts used RFIDs it would help, but that is not currently the case.

# Comments from Roger Bourke

## Some questions for the Planning Commission to ponder

- Is the definition of "interconnect" as used above acceptable?
- Should we move from the general question of *any* interconnect to the specific, or, as is done here, from the specifics of a GG/BB connection to the general?
- Does the PC actually have any real influence on whether or not an interconnect materializes? Note the 1992 PC position strongly opposes *any* interconnect, but the Snowbird connection happened anyway. And in 2005 the PC opposed a link to BCC, but that is part of Alta Ski Lifts' master plan. Also SL County's 1989 General Plan calls for "...avoiding ski terrain expansion within the plan area." In short, are we doing any good here?
- Shall this group be remembered as:
  - Having enabled the completion of the finest ski complex in North America, or
  - Having protected a small mountain range near a major population center for the enjoyment of people ever after?

Handout from Onno Wieringa

## Section 4.8 Ski Area Lift Interconnecting

The Town is supportive of receiving future proposals for connecting Alta and other areas with the understanding that the Town will want a review of applicable planning elements at the time of the proposal.

~~1992~~

# From Alta's General Plans

## SECTION 4.8 INTERCONNECT

AFTER A SERIES OF PUBLIC HEARINGS, THE TOWN OPPOSES THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO LINK ALTA WITH OTHER SKI AREAS:

It is the town's position that none of the proposals presented to the public to date have adequately addressed the myriad of questions and potential problems involved with the construction and operation of an interconnecting transportation system linking various ski areas. (Public safety issues are a paramount concern.) One example of this would be the increase in back country rescue demands due to increased use.

Environmental impacts have not been fully studied in either the construction or operational phases. Proposals so far would involve many jurisdictions - The Town of Alta, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Park City, Summit County, the State, the U.S. Forest Service, as well as other federal agencies.

Access to other ski areas is available by ground transportation within one hour or less. There are serious concerns about effects on the watershed and wildlife, potential adverse visual consequences as well as noise, difficulties in providing proper safety and sanitary facilities, and other possible problems, thus making such a system impractical and unnecessary.

~~2005~~

## SECTION 4.87 INTERCONNECT

AFTER A SERIES OF PUBLIC HEARINGS, THE TOWN CONTINUES TO OPPOSES THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO LINK ALTA WITH OTHER SKI AREAS OUTSIDE LITTLE COTTONWOOD CANYON.

It is the town's position that none of the proposals presented to the public to date have adequately addressed the myriad of questions and potential problems involved with the construction and operation of an interconnecting transportation system linking various ski areas. Public safety issues are a paramount concern. One example of this would be the increase in back country rescue demands due to increased use. Environmental impacts have not been fully studied in either the construction or operational phases. Proposals so far would involve many jurisdictions - the Town of Alta, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Park City, Summit County, the State, the U.S. Forest Service, as well as other federal agencies.

Access to other ski areas is available by ground transportation within one hour or less. There are serious concerns about effects on the watershed and wildlife, potential adverse visual consequences as well as noise, difficulties in providing proper safety and sanitary facilities, and other possible problems, thus making such a system impractical and unnecessary.

~~CURRENT~~

## SECTION 4.8 SKIING AND TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

THE TOWN STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE SUCCESSFUL SKIING INTERCONNECT WITH SNOWBIRD. FURTHER STUDIES SHOULD BE CONDUCTED TO INVESTIGATE THE FEASIBILITY OF SKIING AND GROUND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ALTA, OTHER SKI AREAS, AND THE SALT LAKE VALLEY.

S.L. Co.

## MOUNTAIN TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM/SKI INTERCONNECT

FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND EVALUATION OF SKI INTERCONNECT EXPANSION BY SALT LAKE COUNTY WILL BE AS A MOUNTAIN TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM SERVING SALT LAKE COUNTY INCLUDING DOWNTOWN SALT LAKE CITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, WASATCH, AND SUMMIT COUNTIES AND THE COTTONWOOD CANYONS AND PARK CITY SKI RESORTS. CONSIDERATION OF A SYSTEM SHOULD BE VIGOROUSLY PURSUED AND INCLUDE PARTICIPATION BY AFFECTED GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES, ADDRESSING TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS IN THE COTTONWOOD CANYONS, AVOIDING SKI TERRAIN EXPANSION WITHIN THE PLAN AREA, ADDRESSING OTHER EXISTING TERRAIN USES, AND ASSESSING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND THEIR MITIGATION. NO SPECIFIC TRANSPORTATION MODE IS RECOMMENDED AT THIS STAGE. (SEE THE GLOSSARY IN APPENDIX 6 FOR AN EXPLANATION OF TERMS.)

SKI INTERCONNECT IN ITS PRESENT FORM SHOULD BE MAINTAINED, IMPROVED AND FULLY MARKETED AS GUIDED SKI TOURS AMONG THE CANYON SKI RESORTS AND PARK CITY.

PROPOSALS TO EXPAND INTERCONNECT BEYOND GUIDED GROUND TOURS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE BROADER TRANSPORTATION AND SKI RESORT EXPANSION POLICIES OF THE PLAN.

THE PROPOSED INTERCONNECT CHAIRLIFT/SKI TERRAIN SYSTEM CONNECTING THE CANYON RESORTS AND PARK CITY BY ITSELF DOES NOT MEET THE GOALS OF THE PLAN.

IMPLEMENTATION OF A MOUNTAIN TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM WILL REQUIRE AMENDMENT TO THIS PLAN.

AMONG CRITERIA FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF MOUNTAIN TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM OPTIONS ARE THE FOLLOWING:

1. FOUR-SEASON USE
2. VISUAL AND NOISE IMPACTS
3. MINIMUM (OR NO) IMPACTS TO OTHER EXISTING USES
4. ABILITY TO PERFORM UNDER ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

5. PROVEN PERFORMANCE RECORD OF TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC SAFETY OR COMPLIANCE WITH ESTABLISHED PUBLIC SAFETY CODES OR REGULATIONS
6. WATERSHED IMPACTS - construction and operational phases
7. WILDLIFE IMPACTS
8. EFFECTS ON TOURISM
9. MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND DECISIONMAKING PROCESSES
10. LIFE-CYCLE COSTS (full costs of construction, operation and maintenance for the life of the transportation mode)
11. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FINANCING OPPORTUNITIES
12. MITIGATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACTED TERRAIN OR OTHER USES
13. LONG-TERM RAMIFICATIONS FROM POTENTIAL ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENT -- ski terrain, resort development, commercial enterprises
14. CONSISTENCY WITH THE SALT LAKE COUNTY WASATCH CANYONS MASTER PLAN AND THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE WASATCH-CACHE LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
15. COMPATIBILITY WITH CANYON AND AFFECTED AREA-WIDE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Authority to make decisions on a potential mountain transportation system is shared by multiple governmental entities and current analysis is fragmented among them. Cooperation is necessary among the U.S. Forest Service, the affected counties and local governments, other governmental entities and the ski resorts to coordinate analysis and share information relative to independent but cohesive decisions leading to planning, design, construction, and operation of a Mountain Transportation System.

No particular transportation mode (tram, roads, cog rail, "super tunnel", cable systems, etc.) should be the focus of consideration until the full range of alternatives are comprehensively analyzed for environmental impacts, watershed implications, engineering feasibility, costs and benefits, socio-economic impacts, and public and private financing options. Modes of transportation for a Mountain Transportation System should be

fully addressed before any option is approved by Salt Lake County or other governmental entities with approval authority.

A Mountain Transportation System would not, by itself, offer the most attractive ski terrain additions for ski resorts, and has as its highest potential an opportunity to efficiently move people between Cottonwood Canyon ski resorts, the Salt Lake Valley, and other ski areas (with potential for Heber Valley).

A Mountain Transportation System must be compatible with this Plan, particularly by recognizing use areas and levels, and by proposing transportation modes that support and perpetuate them. A System could be constructed and operated in phases, but would be subject to amendment of this Plan to recognize the provisions of a Mountain Transportation System.

The present guided tour interconnect affords skiers the opportunity to ski cross country between resorts and ski at more than one resort area in a single day. The program adds another dimension to the Wasatch ski experience.

Proposals have been considered to expand ski interconnect by building conventional chairlifts and opening new ski terrain among the canyon resorts and Park City. This concept, addressed in the Governor's Task Force on Interconnect, identified specific corridors, and by itself would be inconsistent with the policies of the Plan. If new ski terrain were incorporated with the proposed chairlift interconnect, as would be likely, it would conflict with the Plan's policies regarding downhill ski area expansion and protection of existing backcountry ski areas. Alta's Town Council has established a policy opposing any ski lifts in Grizzly Gulch due to public safety concerns. The proposal may have adverse implications for the Salt Lake Valley in terms of infrastructure capacities and economic benefits. A chairlift system could contribute to transportation problems in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons. The attractiveness of riding in an open chair from Jupiter Bowl to Snowbird is questionable and not satisfactory for four-season use. Finally, a chairlift "interconnect" would not satisfy criteria outlined in this Plan for a Mountain Transportation System.

The chairlift interconnect system concept by itself should only be further considered as a component of an overall transportation system that links the Salt Lake Valley with the ski resorts of Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons, Park City, and possibly the Heber Valley. For the long-term benefit of the Wasatch Mountain region, a mountain transportation system should be comprehensively evaluated before portions of a system are put in place that could be inconsistent with a wise use of our finite Canyon resources.

It would be premature to endorse any one inter-canyon/resort transportation system. Likewise, it would be inappropriate to advocate construction of any system without the analysis, coordination and criteria reviews called for in this Plan. The Inter-Resort Transportation System study underway through the Mountainlands Association of Governments offers an opportunity to perform such analysis.