

DATE: December 31, 2009

TO: Pam Kobylarz – Town of Mammoth Lakes

FROM: John Ashworth, AIA, LEED™ AP

SUBJECT: **Old Mammoth Place: Responses to December 4, 2009 ADP Memorandum from the Town of Mammoth Lakes**

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**MESSAGE:**

Dear Pam:

The following responses are in reply to the Town's memorandum dated December 4, 2009 documenting comments from the ADP and staff design review of Old Mammoth Place. Overall, we are pleased that the ADP and Town officials believe that many of project's design elements are responsive to the town's planning and design goals for the site and downtown area. We have also enjoyed the collaborative spirit that we feel has been an integral component of the project from the beginning. The project will benefit significantly from a number of the constructive suggestions that have been raised by the ADP and via our subsequent discussions.

The following paragraphs outline our detailed responses. We have generally organized this document to follow the structure of your original memorandum in order to cover all of the items referenced. Please let us know should you have any questions or require any additional information.

**ADP Items**

General Market/Northeast Corner:

In response to the discussion regarding accessibility/visibility of the market and the desire for a better sense of arrival when approaching the project from the north, we have made significant revisions to the project's overall plan and massing. As illustrated in our email correspondence on December 28, 2009, we are proposing to replace the previous residential over retail approach with a dramatic, cascading market extension that will reinforce pedestrian connections to both Old Mammoth Road and the market while defining the corner (while holding the street edge) with a landmark architectural feature. Architecturally, the cascading market sheds reinforces marketplace typology where traditional markets were often composed of repetitive and independently roofed bays. The market design language will be further characterized by a heavy timber "curtain wall" with glazed inserts

Roof and Building Massing:

The recently submitted (December 22, 2009) photomontages graphically illustrate how little of the low aspect roof elements are seen from the roadways adjacent to Old Mammoth Place. The section views previously submitted illustrate that these elements are not visible at all from either side of the sidewalks along Old Mammoth and Laurel Mountain roads. The montages also illustrate that very small portions of the hotel building eaves will be visible along diagonal views at the intersections of Old Mammoth Road and Laurel Mountain Road as it intersects the new connector road, and at the southeast corner at the intersection of Old Mammoth and Sierra Nevada roads. Within these views, however, the roofs appear as part of a varied tableau comprised of foreground buildings, planting, the public plazas and roadways.

In response to the request to break down further the building edges along the eastern and western edges of the site, the applicant has reconfigured the northeast corner of the site as previously mentioned. Along Laurel Mountain, we have: redesigned the buildings to add a greater variety to the proposed building mass, further articulated the eave lines using heavy timber brackets, cornice elements and other architectural features; enriched the material palette to greater variety, including the addition of heavy timber and additional metal accents

#### Façade:

The façade along Old Mammoth Road has been significantly revised to address the corner and to better relate the project and its commercial element to Old Mammoth Road. A significant portion of the building over glass (it was noted as looking top heavy) has been replaced with the heavy timber store front or curtain wall. The northeast corner, moreover, will now be comprised of double height retail with no residential on top. Along the rest of the street we have beefed up the arcade to better relate to the ground plane and propose the heavy timber storefront and additional solid infill along the storefront areas.

The comments regarding materials and detailing are valid concerns. We have revised our hotel/channel wall façade (please see attached documentation) in order to provide the Town and the ADP a more detailed understanding of our design intent. Detailing, however, more typically develop beyond a project's schematic stage as they require considerable attention and are a function of many factors. When the project moves forward toward construction, we suggest ongoing review and input from the Town (with ADP input) of the building's materials and detailing.

#### Materials and Colors:

As noted above, we suggest the Town's ongoing review of the building's materials as they relate to pattern, detail and color. This will be particularly important as we are proposing a contemporary mountain aesthetic when compared to what has been used in the past. The hotel material, for instance, should indeed feel rich and well detailed. The façade is not intended as "glass," but rather to have the crisp look and feel of corduroy snow. This is a function of the warm, translucence of channel wall construction and its insulating core. As suggested, clear glazing is proposed as an accent in conjunction with metal accents within the curtain wall and warm wood infill at the balcony returns and ceilings.

#### Building Base:

Along Old Mammoth Road, we have replaced the urban storefronts with a glazing system comprised of heavy timber with some solid infill for additional relief. Signage will indeed be important, not only for the retail spaces but for the project as a whole. As we have discussed as a group, we agree that a comprehensive sign package for the project should be developed in conjunction with the Town as the project moves forward.

#### Public Spaces and Water Feature:

The use of local landscaping, for example, wildflowers, can soften the plaza edges and contribute to a sense of place in relationship to the Town's mountain setting and denote specific times of the year. Additional

seasonal plants in large pots or hanging containers can also add an additional level of detail. We believe this seasonal level of planting is best undertaken as part of an operational plan for the complex. Please note that we have reviewed the plaza sizes against their proposed uses and believe they are sufficient for the proposed uses.

**Summary Items:**

We believe we have addressed all of the ADP's summary items in the responses above.

**Town of Mammoth Lakes Staff Comments:**

**Entry Statement at the Northeast Corner:**

Our proposed solution to the northeast corner has evolved through our ongoing teleconferences with Town representatives. We moved away from the suggested diagonal approach in order to better "stair-step" the grades at this corner location and have the building forms relate to the market while respecting the CSP's mandated height setbacks. Please see our response to the ADP comments above for a more detailed description of the proposed changes.

**Hotel Entry:**

The proposed revisions to the project's northeast corner should highlight the Old Mammoth Road/Old Mammoth Place intersection and significantly improve the hotel's overall visibility when arriving from the north. Stepping the hotel, as suggested in the comments, would eliminate the dramatic atrium courtyard that the applicant believes will be a signature feature for the hotel. As currently designed, the building forms its own covered porte-cochere while minimizing snow removal or the need for additional snow melting in this location. The forecourt area and connector road are already significantly wider and more expansive than previously contemplated in the CSP, including sufficient widths for hotel signage, two way traffic, pedestrian sidewalks on both the north and south sides of the street as well as streetscape planting.

**Retail Configuration:**

The applicant disagrees that it is proposing "split level retail" or that it would be a better solution to have all the retail at one level. The proposed solution is very different from the existing Village where neither the lower or upper retail streets in this location are integrated as part of a larger circulation pattern with anchors at either end of the development. As designed, the retail is fed from multiple grades as well as the hotel level, thereby better representing the natural contours on the site. The flow is circular in nature, allowing a visitor to experience all of the retail offerings without backtracking or crossing streets. The proposed revisions to the northeast corner, however, will improve the overall pedestrian flow and will definitely better integrate the market hall into the development and pedestrian traffic along Old Mammoth Road.

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Retail Scale/Anchor:

As part of our revisions, we are proposing a larger retail footprint at the site's northeast corner comprising up to approximately 5,000 square feet. This provides additional retail flexibility in terms of footprint size and configuration and could serve as an important retail anchor for the project. The demising walls shown in the current plans are for illustration purposes only. We assume the location of the actual walls (and hence the size and configuration of retail space), will be a function of market conditions. Other market halls suggest that there is indeed a market for the small retails "stalls" located on the west side of the market. These are perfect for local retailers, flower shops, farm stands, gourmet food stands, etc.

Storefront Setbacks:

While we have moved a significant portion of the retail closer to Old Mammoth Road, we are not sure we understand the Town's concern regarding "too generous of sidewalks." As currently designed and as sections and landscape drawings indicate, the sidewalks along Old Mammoth Road are not wider than what is considered desirable by many retail experts and communities. This is, particularly the case once roadside snow, planting, streetscape (benches, bicycle racks, streetlights) planting, outdoor dining/retail and sidewalk traffic are fully taken into account. Arcaded retail has also proved very successful in other locations, particularly where weather (shade or snow) is a factor.

Planter Modules:

We believe there may be a misreading of the landscape plans regarding the first row of planting along Old Mammoth Road. The current tree locations and flush planter detailing and surface materials are based on industry standards that should not limit access to and from cars from the adjacent roadside planting.

Laurel Mountain Road Façade:

Per the above comments, we have made extensive changes to this elevation (please see separate attachment). The revision incorporates all three of the Town's suggestions: changes in materials, additional building features to improve façade cadence and articulation and additional horizontal and vertical bay modulations.

Low Profile Roofs:

The design team has gone to great lengths to modulate and articulate the project's overall massing, visual variety and roof forms. Our site sections and subsequent photomontages also demonstrate the very limited visibility of the hotel massing which has limited eave articulation at the fifth level given the site's significant height and setback constraints. We concur with the ADP comment that the roofs are acceptable because the project's perimeter massing and articulation screen the hotel roof planes.

Design Concept:

The architectural design concept seeks to create high-quality mountain architecture specific to the opportunities afforded by the site and unique to Mammoth Lakes in accordance with its Design Guidelines.

Per the Town's request, we have reviewed the Guidelines in concert with the changes we have incorporated into the design: the revised retail storefront, for instance, or the significant façade revisions along Laurel Mountain Road intended to bring a greater variety of building mass and materials in keeping with the town's mountain setting. The two areas where we believe the Town is questioning our design approach are Section 4.2.2, related to roof forms and Section 4.2.8 related to materials.

In Section 4.2.2, the Guidelines ask for the building roof forms to be dominant features and note that flat roof forms are not generally allowed. In our case, we are working with mandated height constraints that limit our ability to articulate the roof forms in a traditional manner. Instead, we have chosen to maximize the site benefits (light, air and public spaces) and concentrate on the "wall" being the dominant element. As pointed out by the ADP, this has allowed us to provide rich articulation around the perimeter of the site while creating a sophisticated interior courtyard of corduroy snow.

The materials section 4.2.8 notes that a building's siding should be compatible with its neighborhood and surroundings. In general, we believe our material palette is straight forward and non-controversial. The exterior of the project is generally wrapped in wood-patterned cement board, with heavy-timber, metal panel, glass, stone and board formed concrete accents. Some, however, have questioned our proposed use of channel glass (corduroy snow) for the visible hotel facades located within the proposed hotel courtyard and facing the restaurants and southernmost public spaces. This is unfortunate as we believe the material, a state-of-the-art, energy efficient, translucent (vs. transparent) light diffusing material, is being confused with clear glass. Unlike glass, the material is not slick, reflective or cold. Color-wise, it has a warm amber glow. We also believe its look and feel have a distinct relationship to the mountains and Mammoth Lakes given its snow-like effect. It's a different material and it is true that channel glass would be new to Mammoth Lakes. That, however, is not a disqualifier since Section 4.1 of the Guidelines make clear that the architecture in Mammoth Lakes is eclectic and that the Guidelines overall objective is to maintain the eclectic nature of the town's architecture while improving its overall quality. While very little of this material will be visible to the pedestrian walking along the project's perimeter sidewalks, we believe that the quality execution of the hotel's channel wall façade will prove a signature element for the project.