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8 December 2007

Deschutes County Planning Commission
C/o Terri Hansen Payne
Community Development Department
117 NW Lafayette
Bend, OR 97701

Re: The Village at Sunriver, PA-07-6,TA-07-6

Dear Commissioners:

I have recently become aware of the proposed demolition and redevelopment of the Sunriver Mall. Although I have been away from Sunriver for many years except for occasional visits, as one who played a contributing part in the early development, and was a property owner and full-time resident for seventeen years, I still have a great love for and a deep emotional attachment to the community. Therefore I feel it important to express some of my thoughts regarding the proposed project. Let me first explain my early involvement and hopefully add to your knowledge of the history of the Country Mall.

In July of 1969 on a first trip to the Northwest by our family of seven, heading south from Bend, we were welcomed by a colorful billboard exclaiming "Fifteen Miles to Sunriver, the Healthiest New Town in America". We had heard about John Gray's new development, and overwhelmed by the beauty of the place we stayed three days, beginning what was to be the great adventure of our lives. In April of 1971, I closed my architectural practice of nearly twenty years in Ann Arbor, Michigan and we moved to Sunriver where I had been hired as Resident Architect and Development Manager, a position I held for four years. Following sale of Sunriver to Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance, I remained in the community practicing architecture, serving as a Fire Department Captain, Member of the Sunriver Transition Council, Vice-Chairman of the Deschutes County Planning Commission during the development of the Comprehensive Plan, and Professional Advisor to the Sunriver Design Committee. In 1988 I left Sunriver to become Director of Planning and Design for the Sea Ranch, California, where we remained for twelve years until my semi-retirement in 2000 and return to architectural practice.

The early years at Sunriver were an exciting time, working with a closely-knit staff and talented consultants with a unique collaborative spirit. Following the vision of John Gray and a remarkable master plan by Robert Royston and his firm, we were all spiritually bound by the notion that we had indeed found utopia and worked diligently to build our "new town". The first magnificent pieces of what Sunriver was to be, the Lodge, Lodge Condominiums, Great Hall and some recreational facilities were already in place when I arrived, but over the next few years, we continued development of new lots, more prototype housing such as the Meadow Houses and Ranch Cabins, and other needed facilities such as the first bicycle paths and other amenities.

From the beginning, buyers and guests had been promised that there would be a commercial center but by 1972, nothing had existed but the first gas station with an adjacent convenience store. With Sunriver Management convinced that it was imperative to move forward right away, Saul Zaik of the renowned Portland architectural firm of Zaik/Miller/Butler and I flew to San Francisco, where in collaboration with Robert Royston, the concept of what was to be the Sunriver Country Mall evolved. Early summer of 1974 marked the opening of "Phase I" the handsome group of stucco buildings with red metal roofs and blue window frames. The mixed-use buildings included various shops on the ground level with business space or spaces that could be apartments above. Building elements were linked together with a broad covered boardwalk constructed with lumber from the old City of Bend water flume and a heavy timber supporting roof structure. Plants and large boulders were carefully hand placed by Seattle landscape architect William Teufel, and the experience completed with timber benches designed by Bob Royston's firm and lovely clay refuse receptacles molded by Sunriver's Resident Potter, Steve Williams. When given the opportunity to make opening remarks as the celebratory ribbons were cut, the entire design and construction team were proudly presenting a true model of what the Country Mall could and should be.

The Phase II structure, the original Country Store also designed by Zaik/Miller/Butler, was completed the following winter, and in the mid-eighties converted to the first US post office and former Sunriver Realty offices. Although not as substantially built as Phase I., the structure still retained much of the original prototype architectural character and has since functioned well for various types of office use. In Phases I & II all of the major destinations: grocery store, bakery, pharmacy and post office were in close proximity. Royston's original plan for the Country Mall that had suggested a Sunriver "Mercantile" where one could sit by a wood stove, sip coffee and eat a doughnut when picking up mail. However, with the relocation of the Post Office to the Business Park, except for the Country store, that opportunity is now gone and perhaps therein lie some of the reasons for the recent decrease in Mall activity.

Unfortunately, following the first sale of the Mall to an outside investment group, in the development of future buildings, the skillful design and magical site relationships of those first structures was ignored. What transpired was an unimaginative arrangement of mundane frame structures placed around an ill conceived, overly large plaza. The character, inviting human scale and relationship of the friendly tenant spaces of the clustered Phase I development were nowhere to be found. The later buildings contributed little to the Sunriver architectural experience.

Now thirty years later, I agree that rejuvenation and revitalization of the Mall is needed and some buildings do need major repairs or replacement. Nevertheless, my experience and memories of the Sunriver Country Mall as it was originally conceived, have prompted me to make the following comments about the proposed demolition and redevelopment of the "Village at Sunriver" and express my opinions as to the possible negative impact on the Sunriver community as a whole.

CONFLICTING CONCEPTS

The vision of John Gray and the many other individuals who made Sunriver a reality was that through a high level of planning, a new town could be built where people could live harmoniously with nature while preserving the unique natural surroundings with structures that were subordinate to the forest. Sunriver was planned to be a balanced community where families and people of all incomes and ages could live, work, and enjoy recreation the year-around. To support this lifestyle, there would be a unique and interesting retail/commercial center, "The Country Mall" and a Research and Development (Business) Park with business activities that could someday provide employment for many permanent residents.

Sunriver was to be "a planned recreational community" with a "Lodge/Resort", not a resort with a companion community. Home site circles and condominium clusters were skillfully designed to

minimize the presence and intrusion of automobiles. Trail systems for bicycles and pedestrians, and other amenities were planned to get people out of their autos and offer the best opportunity for residents and guests to be at one with the rivers, forest, and surrounding natural landscape. In each of the early Sunriver Lodge/Resort structures, early Country Mall buildings and individual houses, placement of buildings has been "site specific" design intended to respond to existing topography and natural rock outcroppings with minimal grading and placement to allow little if any tree removal, maximizing view potential with reasonable privacy between buildings. **The "Village at Sunriver" however, as proposed is the antithesis of the vision of John Gray that The Plan of Sunriver was intended to assure.** Rather than be subordinate to the natural environment, the plan for the "Village" is in contrast an inappropriate urban scheme that would totally dominate the community. The proposed master plan for the "Village" is a classic example of typical high density urban infill, with repetitive blocks of similar multifamily housing unit configurations arranged in a somewhat rigid pattern to assure placement of as many dwelling units (beds and bodies) as possible on the proposed expanded site.

There is little recognition shown for the natural character of the land and existing vegetation. The objective has obviously been to maximize housing unit count and lot coverage by minimizing setbacks and the near elimination of undeveloped natural open space. Also, while maximizing housing, the area of retail space, the very thing that supposedly needs to be revitalized has been significantly reduced in size.

CIRCULATION AND PARKING

As mentioned earlier, one of the important aspects of the Plan of Sunriver has always been to minimize the impact of the automobile. In addition to the unique road system developed by the Royston firm, in each of the previously developed projects and even for individual home sites, parking has been designed to reduce the visibility of automobiles by carefully placed individual garages, or clustering of parking areas between groups of existing or planted trees. In the Mall, in most cases, large undivided rows of cars have been helped with separation by groups of trees.

In any redeveloped mall, surface parking for retail occupancies and a combination of well screened surface guest parking and individual garages for all dwelling unit should be provided in exact accordance with currently prevailing County standards. The same parking standards now applied to retail uses and dwelling units should apply to mixed-use buildings.

Although there should be better screening of service areas, parking for the existing Country Mall buildings has been reasonably spread around the perimeter of the developed areas with convenient access to most businesses. In my opinion, the suggestion of a multi-storey urban type parking garage (structure) in this rural setting is outrageous, even if partially buried in the frozen earth. The idea that shoppers and apartment or hotel occupants could be shuffled through ice and snow in 20 below weather with bags of groceries or luggage is ludicrous and being greeted by a parking structure as you first enter Sunriver would be criminal. Although I am philosophically opposed to placement of any hotel on the site, the only place where a parking garage might be conditionally acceptable is totally in ground beneath a hotel complex.

The present mall access road is in fact a collector providing convenient access to the present mall parking areas. The only purpose for its removal is to increase the available site area for housing, not for the enhancement of access to businesses. The restoration of the original Beaver Drive and the traffic created thereupon could have a serious negative impact on Forest Park. The placement of another traffic circle so close to the entrance circle (which itself was an unnecessary mistake) could create a possible bottleneck for traffic entering Sunriver.

The road system as proposed through the Village appears unworkable for fire trucks and other large service vehicles. Fire trucks and semi's require stringent turning radii. It appears that little consideration has been given to placement of dumpsters and other trash retention areas or to the required truck access to those spaces. Many of the drives between blocks of living units are dead end without turnouts or turning circles and would shortly become impassible in the winter. Snow removal from the narrow streets between towering buildings on both sides would be extremely

difficult. Passing stopped delivery vehicles would be problematic any time of year.

COMMON LAND AND OPEN SPACE

The proposed transfer of Commons land is one of the most disturbing issues, particularly those parcels at the entrance of Sunriver bordering Abbot Drive and Abbot Circle #1. As one enters Sunriver, the undeveloped natural state of these buffers between roadway and structures leading to the Lodge and from Circle One to all points north gives an immediate impression of the visual character of the entire development. Here, buildings do not rigidly align with and crowd the pavement but rather are partially screened from view by native lodgepole pine and other natural vegetation. To place multifamily housing towering above the roadway would be a terrible mistake.

Should improvements be made to the intersection of Beaver Drive and Abbot Drive or not, a Commons greenbelt along the Abbot Drive entrance road will be important there as well.

In my opinion, Common land was intended to be and should remain sacrosanct. It was deeded to each property owner with his purchase and should not be taken away for any reason.

As you carefully study the proposed conceptual master plan for The Village at Sunriver it is clear that with the exception of minimal lawn and recreational plaza areas closely related to the proposed resort hotel complex, undeveloped open space has been virtually eliminated. The entire site is covered with either proposed buildings, parking structure, surface parking or internal streets. Although paved streets and surface parking are not considered by the County "impervious" for purposes of determining "lot coverage", visually and sensibly they are not open space. Try to imagine Sunriver without nearly half of the land remaining in a natural state.

BUILDING HEIGHT

Height restrictions in Sunriver were established for good reasons. First of all, if buildings are to be subordinate to the forest, they should be to all of the forest, not just the tallest Ponderosa pine. If there is a "hierarchy" of height, and visual importance, it is first and foremost the towering peak of a snow-capped Mt. Bachelor, a view that strongly influenced many of our decisions to come to Sunriver. Of next importance are the manmade Sunriver Lodge and historical Great Hall structure, the major remnant of Camp Abbot. All of us, designing and building houses have faithfully abided by the zoning regulations and Sunriver Design Rules. The buildings of the "Village at Sunriver" should be limited to three stories or 30 ft. A "hotel" if part of any development plan should not be an exception and should not be more than three stories above natural grade including basement parking provision.

Forest fire vulnerability and resultant structure fires have and will always be a threat at Sunriver. From my long experience as a Sunriver Fire Captain, you must be sure that the fire fighting capabilities exceed the requirements of any possible problems created by new buildings.

BUILDING DESIGN

Portrayed in the recently offered Village Web Site drawings, are narrow European ski village type streets lined with tall buildings shading one another. Without riding on sidewalks or in a street, one cannot imagine bicycle access to merchants located somewhere in the interior of the Village. Although interesting designs, they do not look to be snow friendly and in no way reflect the spirit and character John Gray's vision of Sunriver. I strongly recommend that first, the existing Phase I mall buildings be retained and refurbished to their original condition and secondly that new and replacement buildings replicate the scale, details and character of those low, modest buildings.

CONCLUSION

I appreciate the desire of Sunriver Owners and Board members to see the Mall upgraded. Although I wish to compliment the applicants on their professional submittal, in my opinion, the current proposal for "The Village at Sunriver" does not in any way reflect the spirit of what the

Country Mall was originally conceived to be. Accordingly, I respectfully request that the applications for plan amendment PA-07-6 and text amendment TA-07-6 to revise Deschutes County Code (DCC) be denied by the Deschutes County Planning Commission.

Respectfully Submitted,

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