

Based on the analysis presented in the EA and the following Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), I have determined that implementation of Alternative 2 will not be significant in context or intensity and does not require analysis in an Environmental Impact Statement.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The following is a summary of the alternatives considered. For a complete description of alternatives see the EA, Chapter 2, pages 2-1 thru 2-8.

Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action Alternative provides a baseline for comparing the effects of the Alternative 2. The No Action Alternative reflects a continuation of existing management practices without changes, additions, or upgrades. As such, no new trails, infrastructure, facilities, or snowmaking lines would be implemented as a result of the No Action Alternative.

Alternative 2 – the Proposed Action

Alternative 2 was designed to accomplish Heavenly's objectives of improving existing facilities and infrastructure for more efficient and enjoyable use by the recreating public. Alternative 2 includes the following components:

Gondola Lodge

Alternative 2 includes constructing a new day lodge approximately 400 feet north of the top terminal of the Gondola.

The Gondola Lodge is designed to improve guest services in a critical location for Heavenly's winter and summer operations.

The Lodge would be a single-story building providing self-service dining, a small bar, open seating and restrooms. The footprint of the building is 14,965 square feet. Indoor seating capacity would be approximately 484 seats. A 5,624-square foot concrete patio, located on the south side of the Lodge facing Adventure Peak, would accommodate tables and chairs for outside dining as weather permits.

The Gondola Lodge would be set back into a hill, on the perimeter of Von Schmidt's Flats, to optimize skier/rider circulation. During construction, the building site would be leveled. The western end of the site would be excavated so that it is the same elevation as the east end of the site. The resulting retained slope behind the western side of the Lodge would be a maximum of approximately 33 feet high and 75 feet long with a 1.5:1 slope. Spoils from the excavation would be used to level the area in front of the Tamarack Express chairlift to reduce the amount of snowmaking needed in the winter, and to level out the old snow tubing area.

Because an existing summer maintenance road crosses the lodge site, an approximate 200-foot segment of the road would be relocated further north and east nearer to the existing handle tow lift (Red Fir lift) and approximately 260 feet would be re-aligned in front of the Lodge.

Alternative 2 includes constructing a new delivery road, approximately 500 feet long, from the existing maintenance road to the rear of the Lodge for service and delivery purposes. Other than the delivery spur, no new roads would be needed for Lodge construction or operations.

The Gondola Lodge would be open in the summer to support the Adventure Peak activities. The existing barbecue at Adventure Peak adjacent to the top of the gondola would remain, however, the kitchen building, temporary restrooms and Umbrella Bar would be removed and the Umbrella Bar would be relocated, and those areas would be restored. These facilities will be improved to blend in with each other visually as well as being consistent in their exterior design with other approved structures in the SUP area.

The design of the Gondola Lodge would be consistent with applicable provisions of the Forest Service's Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG).³ The Lodge design and operation would be LEED certified for environmental efficiency and sustainability. It would be a single-story building with a simple shed roof (3:12 pitch) that slopes from front to back in order to take advantage of existing views. The maximum height of the building would be 38.5 feet. This structure would be similar in design to the existing Gondola mid-station restrooms, Café Blue, and Gondola Sports.

Existing utilities and infrastructure in the area would be used to connect the Lodge to electricity, natural gas, fiber-optic and communication lines. Each utility extension would be approximately 150 feet long and would be installed within the maintenance road. Existing electrical switch gear that is near the lodge site would be relocated to the north and be combined with other existing electrical switch gear.

Snow Beach

As discussed previously, the Umbrella Bar that is currently located at the top of the Gondola would offer repetitive services once the Gondola Lodge is constructed, and therefore would be relocated. Consistent with the MPA 07, which envisioned a seasonal, open-air shelter at Snow Beach (near the base of Patsy's and Groove chairlifts) to accommodate additional seating, as well as additional food service and barbeque capabilities, the Umbrella Bar will be permanently relocated to this area once the Gondola Lodge is constructed. While the Umbrella Bar would not accommodate additional food service or barbeque capabilities, these services are planned for the future. Approximately 100 linear-feet of the existing summer maintenance road will be realigned to the south, around the Umbrella Bar facility.

³ FS-710