

14K-square-foot duplex to offer 'elevated' views

Ski Trail Lane building site is steeper than Valley View ski trail



Photo by [Tom Ross](#)

The Emerald Properties duplex on Ski Trail Lane is the large roofed building under construction in the right center of the photograph. It is built on a lot with a challenging 34 percent grade; each home in the duplex has six bedrooms and 6.5 bathrooms.

By [Tom Ross](#)

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Photo by Tom Ross

Cerei Jones, of Lynx Development, and Steamboat architect Michael J.K. Olsen take in the view of the gondola building and the Steamboat Grand Resort Hotel from a staircase in a four-story duplex under construction on Ski Trail Lane.



Michael J.K. Olsen Architects/courtesy

When completed in summer 2010, the Emerald Properties duplex will feature cedar lap siding, large stone columns and covered decks with custom steel railings.

On the job

Locals working on the Emerald Properties duplex

- Millennium Bank financed the project in association with a Front Range bank
- Rick Adams Masonry - extensive stone work
- Fedewa Custom Works - cabinetry, countertops, trim and doors
- Tico's Roofing

Steamboat Springs — Residential elevators aren't unheard of in Steamboat Springs, but there's nothing in the city to match the twin elevator shafts built into a four-story duplex under construction this fall on Ski Trail Lane.

Walking up to the temporary railing and gazing 50 feet straight down into the empty elevator shaft is a vertigo-inducing exercise.

Designing, engineering and framing the 14,000-square-foot building has been a challenge for everyone involved.

Another challenge has been the steepness of the lot, which provides views looking directly into the lights of the Steamboat Ski Area base, with the Steamboat gondola rising on its cable just to the north. Views of the roofed-in building catch the eye from far below at the new Mount Werner Circle traffic roundabout.

Emerald Properties, of Boulder, is developing the project, and Lynx Development is supervising construction. Ragan Cahill, of Platinum Real Estate, LLC, in Boulder, is listing the two six-bedroom, 6.5-bath townhomes within the duplex at \$6.2 million for the north side and \$5.8 million for the south side.

"This is one of the steepest building sites in Steamboat," architect Michael Olsen said. "The grade is 34 percent. It was too steep to walk up and down the lot. It's steep enough to be an expert ski run."

Speaking of vertigo, the ski trail of the same name at Steamboat Ski Area is steeper than the duplex building site, at 43 percent, according to staff with Steamboat Ski and Resort Corp. However, the duplex lot is in fact worthy of a black diamond trail designation - the Upper Valley View ski trail on the lower mountain thrills cruising skiers with a 30 percent grade.

The elevators will cost about \$35,000 each, and although Olsen has taken care to design a point of interest at each landing, in the end they'll have a hard time competing with the visual impact of the completed four-story staircase.

"The stairs will descend in front of three sheer walls of glass," Lynx's Ceri Jones said. "They will have mahogany treads built on narrow steel stringers, and the landings will be made of elliptical pieces of glass," so you can see through them all the way down to the lowest level. One staircase wall will be faced with stone. The entire staircase will be pulled from the wall to give the feeling of floating.

And the glass landings will be lit from below, Olsen added.

More interesting light

Construction began with foundation work a year ago and continued halfway into a winter that saw 400 inches of snow on the ski area.

"We fully intend to be dried in before the snow arrives this year," Jones said. "I'm looking forward to this winter."

Jones - his first name is pronounced "Kerry" - is the mountain region manager for Lynx and has moved his family here from Boulder.

The structure itself is free-standing, but the gap between it and Ski Trail Lane is spanned by a heavy steel and concrete driveway that is effectively a bridge, Jones said. His company purchased the project, complete with approvals for building code height variances, from a previous developer.

Fortunately for Emerald Properties and Lynx, there is bedrock 4 to 6 feet beneath the surface of the steeply pitched lot. Jones said 250 four-inch micro piers support the construction project.

Olsen said the sheer verticality of the site drove the design of the structure. He added that he worked hard to find ways to soften the mass of the building when viewed from below. Decks concealed beneath large gables supported by structural hammer beams help to achieve the goal, he said. Moving down through the two homes, each level has a greater dimension.

The first, or street, level is devoted to large garages, a dramatic entryway and ski lockers. Walking down a flight - or stepping into the elevator - leads to a second level that is intended to function as a self-contained residence. It's intended to give the owners the option of living in a home that doesn't overwhelm a couple with its sheer size.

That level "is essentially a one-bedroom house," Olsen said. "It's not out of scale for a couple."

The master residence ultimately will be separated from the elevator landing by a pair of carved, European-style doors, Jones said.

The third level is designed to accommodate a family with young children, with a large kitchen/dining area and a flex bedroom with a folding dividing wall.

The lowest level is tricked out to please young adults with a certain amount of partying on their mind. There will be a showpiece bar with a large flat-screen TV in the middle of it and a covered party deck with a substantial hot tub. The bathrooms will be made more visually exciting with custom lighting effects worthy of a home in a large urban setting. A vertical light behind a diffusion panel will create a flowing panel in one of the bathrooms.

Throughout the home, Olsen said, he has strived to energize the spaces with the use of lighting effects.

"It's a little trendy, but we're trying to take something that's become commonplace in commercial buildings and translate it into residential," Olsen said. "I have this philosophy about light. It's something Americans are looking for - more interesting lighting in all aspects of their lives."

Going up?