

City of Steamboat Springs Planning Department

137 10th Street

P.O. Box 775088

Steamboat Springs, CO 80477

RE: Owner Statement: Variance Request to Remove Stairways from Village Drive to Duplex Decks

Village Drive Townhomes | Duplex Building

To the City of Steamboat Springs Planning Staff and Commission,

As a future owners of a duplex unit located within the Village Drive Townhomes development, we respectfully submit this letter in support of the project's request for a variance to remove the two stairways connecting our private decks to the public sidewalk along Village Drive.

After careful consideration of how we intend to live in these homes and the unique conditions of the site, we believe the removal of these stairs is not only appropriate but preferable. Our reasons include security, functionality, privacy, and long-term livability. We appreciate the City's commitment to thoughtful planning and offer the following as the basis for our support of this request.

1. Security and Privacy

Our primary concern is that the proposed stairs would create direct access points from a high-traffic public sidewalk to our private outdoor spaces. Village Drive serves as a busy pedestrian route to and from the resort, transit stops, and nearby multi-family developments. Introducing ground-level access from this corridor compromises the privacy we expect in our homes and increases potential security risks. These stairways make our homes more vulnerable to unwanted access, loitering, and opportunistic theft.

2. Liability and Risk Exposure

From a liability standpoint, the presence of publicly accessible stairs leading to a residential property introduces a range of legal exposures. Courts have increasingly held property owners responsible for maintaining secure boundaries, even in cases where injury occurs to individuals who were not lawful invitees. A stairway from a busy public sidewalk to an elevated private deck invites unintended use and, in some cases, unwanted behavior.

There is also a heightened risk of slip-and-fall incidents, particularly in winter months when snow and ice are persistent concerns. These stairs would be rarely used for their intended purpose but would still need to be diligently maintained to prevent injury. If someone were to fall or be injured while accessing the deck, regardless of whether they were authorized to do so, homeowners could be held liable.

3. Lack of Functional Use

We understand that the stairways were originally included to meet code requirements that prioritize pedestrian-oriented design by orienting primary entries toward the street. However, in this case, the design team faced a fundamental conflict. The code prohibits garages from fronting the main street while also requiring primary entries to do so. This created a condition where the front facade cannot support vehicular access and does not serve as a functional pedestrian entry either. All circulation instead occurs behind the building.

As future residents, we know our homes will be accessed exclusively from the rear, where the garages, parking areas, and private walkways are located. Guests, deliveries, and everyday activity will naturally use that side of the property as there is no parking available on Village Drive. The stairways on Village Drive, though conceptually aligned with pedestrian-friendly goals, do not provide a meaningful entry experience. They lead from a busy public sidewalk directly to an elevated deck off our main living space rather than to a front door or foyer.

This outcome represents a compromise driven by well-intentioned code requirements rather than a solution that reflects how the homes will function. While we respect the broader goals of connectivity and active frontage, the stairs in this location do not enhance access or improve circulation. Their removal allows the project to maintain a well-designed and visually engaging street presence without introducing elements that are unnecessary or confusing from a usability standpoint.

4. Unique Conditions of the Duplex Units

It is important to note that the duplex units are different from the other five units in the Village Drive Townhomes development. In the other buildings, the front-facing stairs lead to functional garage access points or service entries. In contrast, the proposed stairs for the duplex building connect the public sidewalk directly to private elevated decks off our main living rooms.

Requiring stairways at these locations would invite public access to what we see as essentially a patio or balcony space intended for personal use. This fundamentally alters our intended purpose and enjoyment of that space. The reasoning behind stairways on other units does not apply to these two homes. Instead of enhancing access, the stairs create a disconnect between our intended residential use and public exposure.

5. Practical and Seasonal Considerations

In winter months, these stairs would be especially impractical. Maintaining snow-free access would create a seasonal burden for us. Since our intended primary access is located in the heated parking and private drive area at the rear, these stairways would

likely go unused. Their removal improves safety and aligns with how the homes will function throughout the year.

In conclusion, we believe removing the stairs is a thoughtful and necessary adjustment that will improve the safety, privacy, and livability of our future homes. We support the developer's request for a variance and respectfully ask the Planning Department and Commission to consider our perspective as future residents of this community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Name: Dr + Mrs Agur

Date: 21 Aug 25

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To the City of Steamboat Springs Planning Staff and Commission,

I am one of the future owners of the duplex units at Village Drive Townhomes, and I'm writing to support the variance request to remove the two stairways that were designed to connect our elevated decks to the public sidewalk along Village Drive.

While I understand these stairs were included to meet code requirements around primary pedestrian access and street engagement, I also recognize that their inclusion was more of a design workaround than a functional solution. The layout of these specific units creates a situation where the front elevation technically meets the code, but not in a way that results in a usable, safe, or practical pedestrian entry. I don't believe this reflects the intent of the code or how these homes will actually function.

Our daily access will be from the rear, through the garages and private drive. There is no parking or meaningful drop-off opportunity along Village Drive. The proposed stairs, while attached to the deck, do not lead to a front door or any logical entry point. They simply land on the deck outside our main living room windows. Including them introduces the potential for confusion, privacy concerns, and safety risks.

Village Drive is a busy sidewalk corridor, used by residents heading to and from other developments and the ski area. Connecting that activity directly to our elevated decks—spaces we view as private extensions of our homes—invites unnecessary exposure. We would be responsible for maintaining a point of access we do not use, do not want, and cannot secure in a meaningful way. It also creates a maintenance obligation in winter that does not come with a practical benefit.

I understand that this situation is the result of a broader design compromise made earlier in the process. I also understand that design teams sometimes balance competing requirements in ways that look good on paper but fall short in execution. This variance request is simply an opportunity to bring the design in line with how these homes will actually be used and lived in—while still respecting the architectural intent and the goals of the code.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Name: Mrs. Rhonda Parton

Date: 8-21-25