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Lift One corridor soon to be transformed



Agreement anticipates three years of work before new lift starts spinning

Kaya Williams, Aspen Journalism



A view of Aspen's Lift One corridor from above on Thursday shows the former base of Lift 1A surrounded by fencing, with the Skiers Chalet buildings downslope and poised for future relocation in the vicinity. A construction sequencing agreement for redevelopment, finalized July 31, was key to moving forward with the plans that involve multiple stakeholders. Jason Charne/Aspen Daily News



Eighty years after the installation of Lift One — 55 years after it was replaced with Lift 1A and decades after the debate began about the future of Aspen Mountain's western base — the birthplace of modern skiing in Aspen is about to be transformed, as detailed in a much anticipated construction sequencing agreement between two lodging developers, the Aspen Skiing Co. and the city of Aspen.

Long seen as a quiet neighborhood beloved by ski bums and nostalgics, the Lift One corridor at the end of South Aspen Street is poised to become a [destination for luxury lodging and public amenities](#), with a nod to skiing's past. But it'll likely be at least three winters before a lift is spinning there again.



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A new ski lift, stretching down to Dean Street by the original base of Lift One, is the centerpiece of the plans, which voters narrowly approved in 2019. Long framed as this project's raison d'être, a revival of Aspen's skiing roots for a new era, proponents said the new lift wouldn't happen without redevelopment at the base, and its installation became entwined with the pitch for everything else, as others lamented the loss of "old Aspen" those changes would represent.

process by which the new lift gets ordered, installed and opened is a "[critique aspect](#)" of the project, according to the sequencing agreement that requires four



different parties to coordinate on construction, and it depends on substantial progress on both the Aman Aspen and Chalet Alpina projects.

Based on an estimated timeline in this agreement, the Aspen Skiing Co. would order the lift in the fall of 2028, install it in 2029 and cut the ribbon in the winter of 2029-30. SkiCo is already in the process of [removing Lift 1A](#) in anticipation of upcoming permits and construction for the lodging projects, and Chalet Alpina crews have removed the remains of the original Lift One for storage and restoration offsite, with plans for eventual reinstallation and display in the corridor.

In the meantime, skiers and riders will have to take the Silver Queen Gondola or the new Nell Bell lift up the mountain from Gondola Plaza, the ski area's busier base to the east. However, they could still have the option to ski down to the Lift One corridor and exit the slopes there. The agreement requires Aman Aspen crews to maintain a [ski corridor](#) past the site throughout construction, and SkiCo intends to maintain Schuss Gully to get there "as conditions allow," Mak Keeling, the company's vice president of mountain planning, wrote in an email. (Two other nearby runs, Norway and Normandy, will be closed.)

City of Aspen Community Development Director Ben Anderson wrote to Aspen Journalism on Tuesday that the next phases of building permits for Chalet Alpina and Aman Aspen are "likely imminent." This sequencing agreement — signed by representatives of the city, SkiCo and both lodging projects, and [finalized July 31](#) — was the key to moving forward.

"Starting very soon," Anderson wrote, "the entire area will have significant disruption."





A rendering of the Chalet Alpina project at the west base of Aspen Mountain illustrates a new Lift One flanked by high-end development, with the Skiers Chalet Lodge restored and relocated near the base of the hill by Dean Street. Crews began some site work in 2025, with construction expected to ramp up soon; the new lift, under an estimated schedule, would start spinning in the winter of 2029-30. Courtesy of Chalet Alpina

The agreement gives everyone good reason to stay on track: In addition to the benefits of mutually agreed-upon progress, both SkiCo and lodging developers could face steep fees if they cause certain delays that impact the new lift.

“As a member of the Aspen community, Chalet Alpina, alongside the corresponding parties, is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the agreement, coordinating closely with its partners and minimizing disruption throughout construction,” according to a statement from a Chalet Alpina representative. A public relations representative for Aman Group declined to comment on questions related to construction sequencing.

According to the [estimated sequence](#) in this new agreement, both lodging projects could begin shoring and excavation this year. Chalet Alpina could hit that milestone first, as their crews have already completed some work on utilities and for the historic assets; Aman Aspen needs to do some access and infrastructure work before really digging in.



The Aman Aspen building would [start to take shape](#) next year, starting with its subgrade structure that includes a parking garage. Chalet Alpina would [begin work](#) on its subgrade structure — which also includes a parking garage — early next year, and its main buildings will [start to spring up](#) in 2028.



Cones and construction equipment sit at the base of Aspen Mountain's Lift 1A, also known as the Shadow Mountain lift, on Wednesday. Work to remove the lift is already underway as crews prepare for a major redevelopment of the Lift One corridor; the red building pictured here will be demolished to make way for the project, while some older historic assets will be relocated and restored. Jason Charme/Aspen Daily News

The city used this agreement to make sure it and lodging developers “were coordinating and that the city park interest was acknowledged,” Anderson wrote in a follow-up email. “But the timeline to construct is fully on the applicants.”

The historic Skiers Chalet Lodge and Skiers Chalet Steak House, both slated for restoration and relocation on the site, could be picked up and moved to their new spots as soon as this fall, Anderson wrote Tuesday, “but there is a fair amount of grading that needs to be achieved before this can happen.”

The lodge building will be moved downslope to Dean Street and will eventually house daytime and seasonal locker rooms, a SkiCo ticket office and the Aspen Historical Society's Aspen Snowsports History Museum at Skiers Chalet. Once



Chalet Alpina crews move the building and get it in “white box” condition for future tenants, SkiCo and the historical society will be responsible for outfitting the spaces to their needs. Cost-sharing agreements have multiple parties pitching in on some elements of the Lift One corridor project.

Until this point, the opening date of the Aspen Snowsports History Museum “has been an estimation because we were waiting on the sequencing agreement to give us a more concrete timeframe,” the historical society’s president and CEO, Kelly Murphy, wrote in an email to Aspen Journalism. “Finish work done by late 2029 and opening early 2030 seems the most reasonable at the moment, but could change based on fundraising and construction progress.”

Chalet Alpina has already begun marketing its offerings, with timeshares starting “under \$3M” and six full-ownership residences in a separate building that “start from the mid-\$30Ms,” [according to its website](#). There is little information online about the Aman Aspen project, which is proposed as a traditional hotel with four full-ownership residences. [Other Aman properties](#) are [priced](#) for an ultraluxury market.

Who owns what at Lift One?

Lift One Lodge Aspen LLC is responsible for the Chalet Alpina project, formerly known as the Lift One Lodge. It’s a joint venture between the [Irongate Group](#), led by Jason Grosfeld with a mostly beachy portfolio, and [HayMax Capital](#), led by Michael and Aaron Brown with several other projects in Aspen.

Aspen City Holdings LLC owns the Aman hotel project, which is being developed by OKO Group. Both Aman Group, a luxury hospitality brand, and OKO Group, an international real estate development firm, are [led by Vladislav Doronin](#), who purchased the land and hotel approvals in 2022 from a group led by Jeff Gorsuch, Bryan Peterson and Jim DeFrancia. (They had pitched it as a Gorsuch Haus hotel.)

The Aspen Skiing Co., which falls under the Aspen One umbrella, owns the [southernmost parcel](#) in the Lift One corridor. SkiCo has access to other facilities and land in the corridor for ski-area operations thanks to a set of agreements and easements.

The city of Aspen also owns property in the corridor, with multiple public parks [adjoining](#) the corridor, and ski-area projects. The city is on the hook for some [adjoining](#) with lodging and ski-area projects. The city is on the hook for some



improvements to parks and infrastructure.

The Aspen Historical Society will eventually outfit space in the Skiers Chalet Lodge for its Aspen Snowsports History Museum, featuring amenities that include interactive exhibits, a cafe and a venue for community gatherings. The nonprofit wasn't involved in the construction sequencing agreement "because our work will come at the end and won't affect the sequencing," the nonprofit's president wrote to Aspen Journalism.

Equipment from the 55-year-old Lift 1A sits on the hill above South Aspen Street on Wednesday. The Aspen Skiing Co. started removing the lift in late July, in anticipation of major redevelopment in the Lift One corridor that will eventually bring a new lift to the site. Kaya Williams/Aspen Journalism

What will happen when

This agreement has been [in negotiations for years](#), and outlines more than 50 milestones distributed among the city, SkiCo, Aman Aspen and Chalet Corral projects.



The estimated schedule [isn't a legally binding commitment to a certain timeline](#): The agreement recognizes that it might evolve as construction proceeds, and notes that progress depends on — among other factors — the city's building permit process. The schedule indicated that Chalet Alpina would get its [shoring and excavation permit](#) and that Aman Aspen would get its [access and infrastructure permit](#) by July 15; as of Tuesday, neither permit had been issued, but they are expected soon.

Chalet Alpina developers have received [a notice of approval](#) for some updates to their plans that the city deemed “insubstantial” in nature, authorizing a 27-unit timeshare design with rooms that can lock off into 104 “lodge keys.” The lodging component was previously planned for 34 units and the same number of keys, and was envisioned in a 2023 Subdivision/Planned Development Agreement as a [combination](#) of hotel and timeshare units. Developers [requested last year](#) to move to a 100% fractional-ownership model for the lodging units. The city has ensured in its approval conditions that the rooms [can be rented to the general public](#) when available; Anderson signed the notice Aug. 4.

The fact that this construction sequencing agreement is also signed off and recorded is a big deal, because it “[clears the path](#) for commencement and completion” of the Chalet Alpina and Aman Aspen projects, the agreement says. Although the city gave Chalet Alpina a permit to start some prep work last September, it wouldn't release any more permits for either project until this agreement was locked in.

SkiCo started taking down Lift 1A [the same week](#) the sequencing agreement was finalized in late July. SkiCo's Keeling wrote to Aspen Journalism on Tuesday that the “first step” for the Aman Aspen project “is to relocate the utilities adjacent to their project,” and that “the relocated utilities required the removal of the bottom terminal of 1A.”

Other milestones will affect when SkiCo can install and operate the new lift.

The base terminal for the new lift sits on top of a “base pad” that sits on top of Chalet Alpina's subgrade structure. So, construction crews have to dig out and build the subgrade structure first — then [build the base pad on top of it](#) — before SkiCo can put in that part of the lift.

One of the towers for the new lift is planned “[adjacent to and potentially actually integrated into the foundation](#)” of the Aman Aspen hotel, this



agreement says. SkiCo reps and Aman Aspen developers [still have some details to hammer out](#) on those plans.

The Colorado Passenger Tramway Safety Board also has some rules for operating a chairlift or gondola close to other structures, such as maintaining a certain amount of “[air space](#)” and ensuring that [nearby buildings](#) have fire alarms and sprinkler systems in place.

In order for a new lift to debut, both the [Chalet Alpina](#) and [Aman Aspen](#) projects need to be far enough along that their main buildings are “enclosed” — that is, not just hulking foundations and frames but buildings with roofs and walls on the outside — and that those buildings have initial fire alarms and sprinklers “installed or otherwise addressed” to the satisfaction of the safety board, according to this agreement. Construction on the lodging projects could continue after the lift starts spinning, as well; this agreement considers the implications and seeks to avoid ski-season disruptions as much as possible.

SkiCo needs a [continuous seven-month window](#) in the warmer months to install the new lift, and in turn needs some headway to order that lift in advance. So, this agreement requires both developers to issue “greenlight notices” — essentially, telling SkiCo that it can place that order — by the fall before an installation year. Unlike the estimated timeline in this agreement, those notices trigger [binding obligations](#), requiring developers to finish certain parts of their projects by specified deadlines.

[Based on](#) a lift installation in 2029 and a debut in the 2029-30 ski season, developers would give SkiCo those notices by Oct. 31, 2028, and SkiCo would order the lift in November for installation starting the next April or May, depending on snow conditions.





A Chalet Alpina sign on South Aspen Street includes a link to the development's construction updates webpage, as seen on Wednesday. Some prep work began in 2025 with more significant construction on the timeshare-and-residence concept planned for the next several years. Kaya Williams/Aspen Journalism

There are also consequences if developers issue the greenlight notice but don't fulfill their remaining conditions for SkiCo to install and operate the lift on time. Those [fees](#) start at \$25,000 per day in December — either Dec. 1 or the first day of top-to-bottom skiing on Ajax, whichever is later — and escalate to \$50,000 by the end of the first ski season, a rate that holds in subsequent winters if the delays continue. If both developers haven't fulfilled their conditions, they each pay 50% of the bill; if just one developer is delayed, they have to pay the full amount.

The agreement includes some provisions for early installation of the lift before all the greenlight conditions are fulfilled, but those options are only available to SkiCo if either lodging developer (or both) stalls out for at least 12 months. The [base pad](#) on the Chalet Alpina site would still have to be finished before the new lift goes in. And developers would get a few months to restart construction with a “good faith intention” to finish before SkiCo could proceed with an early installation.



This agreement puts SkiCo on the hook, too: If developers do everything they're required to do for the lift to run, and SkiCo delays their work so the lift doesn't start regular operations by "Dec. 15 or the opening of Aspen Mountain for top-to-bottom skiing for the subject ski season" — whichever is later — the company will owe each of the development teams [\\$15,000 per day](#) until it opens the lift.

These fees apply only during the ski season, deemed to end April 15. And they [max out](#) at \$18.36 million for each of the lodging teams, and \$4.05 million for SkiCo to the developers. Those amounts would reflect, on behalf of any party, multiple years of delays. And the fees wouldn't apply if the projects get delayed by "[force majeure](#)" events, including "acts of god, fire, floods" and other similar events outside a party's reasonable control.

SkiCo's payment to developers only applies if the lodging property is [open for regular business](#). The ski-in, ski-out nature of the corridor is a major selling point: Chalet Alpina's website, for example, has leaned heavily into the property's relationship with the mountain and the lift.

"Chalet Alpina's Resort Residences sit directly on Aspen Mountain, with true ski-in, ski-out access — a privilege only a handful of properties in Aspen can claim," its [website states](#). The Aspen Historical Society makes note of that lift access, too, in materials about its plans for a museum.

"To have the Aspen Snowsports History Museum at Skiers Chalet at the place where lift-served skiing began in Aspen — and still continues — in a historical former ski lodge makes perfect sense," the historical society's Murphy wrote to Aspen Journalism. "The museum will be surrounded by the energy of the slopes and will be a gathering spot for the community and its visitors."

Installing the lift any earlier than the schedule in this agreement would depend "on many factors — largely the construction progress of the two developers," according to SkiCo's Keeling. The fees, he wrote, are meant to "incentivize all parties to the swiftest possible completion of their respective work."

"We — along with the community — want to see this work done as quickly as possible."

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