

Chamber backs gondola plan

Project, resort touted as 'unique economic development opportunity'

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OGDEN — The board of directors of the Ogden/Weber Chamber of Commerce has given developer Chris Peterson's multimillion-dollar plan for Malan's Basin and Mount Ogden Golf Course a ringing endorsement.

The board adopted a position statement Thursday in support of Peterson's concept and initial proposal, describing it as a "work in progress."

"We are committed to continued review and input on the project to ensure the best possible results for all concerned," the statement says. "The Ogden/Weber Chamber of Commerce pledges to provide accurate and updated information as the project develops and details are refined based on community input."

Dave Hardman, president and chief operating officer of the Ogden/Weber Chamber of Commerce, said the position statement should carry weight with local residents.

"We want the community to know that the chamber, as the strongest business organization in the community, is supportive of this unique economic development opportunity," he said.

Peterson said he is pleased with the chamber board's endorsement.

"It is a major step forward when a diverse group of thoughtful, respected business people like those on the chamber of commerce board stand up and affirm that the resort and gondola transit system I have proposed would be a good thing for Northern Utah," he said in an e-mail to the Standard-Examiner.

Ogden Mayor Matthew Godfrey agrees that support from the chamber is vital to the success of Peterson's proposal.

"Having the chamber on board is impressive," he said. "They are a major segment of our community. They provide the bulk of the jobs and economic development."

Ann Millner, president of Weber State University and a member of the Ogden/Weber Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, wasn't present when the position statement was voted on, but indicated she was abstaining because of Peterson's interest in buying university property, said Weber State spokesman John Kowalewski.

"President Millner abstained from voting because she anticipates that she will need to facilitate an evaluation of a study of this issue on campus," Kowalewski said.

Peterson's development proposal, which he has said is valued at about \$500 million, has drawn widespread praise and criticism from the public.

Supporters maintain the proposal could be a catalyst for economic prosperity in Ogden, while detractors believe it could eliminate valuable open space and trails.

Peterson proposes to buy Mount Ogden Golf Course along with buffering property from the city, and about 150 acres of adjoining land from Weber State University. Information was not available from city officials regarding the size of the buffer property.

However, Mary Hall, who is a member of the grassroots organization Smart Growth Ogden, has estimated the property encompasses about 65 acres.

Peterson has promised to redesign the golf course, make it more playable, keep green fees at the current level, and build about 400 upscale homes around and throughout the property.

Peterson also proposes to build a roadless year-round resort at Malan's Basin, which consists of 1,279 acres on the west side of Mount Ogden that he purchased last year.

The sale of Mount Ogden Golf Course would be used by the city to help fund its leg of a proposed gondola system from downtown to Weber State University that has been estimated to cost at least \$20 million.