

## LAW REVIEW

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### **“PUTTIN’ ON THE RITZ” – VERY COOL**

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If you haven’t checked out the new five-star Ritz-Carlton Highlands Hotel at Northstar, I recommend you do so—before the holiday crowds arrive to enjoy our timely fresh snow.

Hundreds of guests, mostly locals, attended the ribbon cutting ceremony and grand opening events last week. No one was disappointed. No less than 10 parking valets and doormen/doorwomen greeted us. I was impressed, but then again I was impressed when the Best Western opened in Truckee some 20-odd years ago. We’ve come a long way. The Ritz-Carlton takes Tahoe/Truckee to a new level.

The \$300 million 170-room hotel is perfectly perched mid-mountain at Northstar, accessed by vehicle or by gondola from the Northstar Village.

As you walk up the stairway into the grand octagonal lobby, the hotel centerpiece, you know you’re in for something special. The wood and stone treatment is contemporary, but reflective of the Sierra. Floor to ceiling windows maximize views in every direction.

As high-end architects seem to say these days, the building was “inspired by National Park Lodges and the iconic Ahwahnee in Yosemite.” I tire of that phrase but you won’t tire of the Ritz. In whichever direction you head from the

magnificent open “Living Room” you will find something interesting—little seating areas, a giant ballroom (which will serve superbly for local gatherings), a gift shop, art gallery and of course, the proverbial spa.

To tell you the truth, I have never been in a spa, I guess it’s a guy thing, but even I could tell this is no ordinary spa. The Ritz-Carlton spa and fitness center is 17,000 square feet. That’s as big as my house.

The martini bar isn’t bad either—check out the polished wood trim. Look out on the outdoor pool.

As everyone knows, the signature restaurant, Manzanita, was created by San Francisco’s James Beard Award Winning chef, Traci Des Jardins. I haven’t tried the food but I’m sure it will be worthy of a Ritz-Carlton and that’s the word from two of our best local restaurateurs, Mark Estee and J.J. Morgan of Moody’s Bistro and Baxters.

I had the privilege of being involved in permitting the Ritz-Carlton, as well as the exciting new Village at Northstar, as California counsel for East West Partners. We started way back in 1999. When I had hair.

The facility is the first LEED-designed resort in the Ritz-Carlton chain and one of the first major five-star caliber mountain resorts to seek LEED-certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The building recycled 16,000 tons of material and has a list of over 20 LEED-recognized features including convenient underground parking. The Village at Northstar was the first ever LEED-certified ski resort village.

The rooms, while not particularly large, are tastefully decorated—not overdone. I didn't see a single “bear” salt and pepper shaker or table lamp. (Ask about their special room rates). Elizabeth Carmel's award winning photographs are everywhere. And they don't disappoint.

Of course, the Ritz-Carlton Highlands features ski-in, ski-out access. In fact, from Northstar you can ski down to Martis Camp, maybe put down a deposit on a half-million dollar lot, and tour the new Martis Camp “Family Barn,” a spacious family center with bowling alley, soda fountain, movie theater, and you name it. I guess it's safe to say North Tahoe/Truckee has changed.

I am excited about having the Ritz-Carlton in our backyard. It's special. My wife has already set her sights on the spa. I'm not there yet, but I'll be sampling the Manzanita and hanging around the martini bar.

Congrats to East West Partners and Northstar as well as architect Mark Hornberger, one of the best resort designers in the business. Ritz-Carlton Highlands—welcome to town.

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