

Coronavirus:
The Latest

Utah breaks yet another daily record with 546 new confirmed COVID-19 cases

×

UTAH

Lake of dreams

Jordanelle aspires to lure rich to new 'Little Tahoe'

By Deseret News | Oct 5, 2001, 10:10am MDT

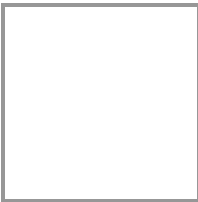
Gib Twyman staff writer

GRID VIEW



Deer Crest is a deluxe development perched high on the east side of Little Baldy Peak above the Jordanelle Reservoir, abutting Deer Valley Resort. | Tom Smart, Deseret News

1 of 3



JORDANELLE, Wasatch County — It certainly would not do to mix your red wines with your white wines.

So you have the separate wine coolers in the kitchen, the better to chill the various vintages at optimal temperatures, according to proper hue.

It would be poor form to have to call Jeeves to adjust your bath water because it has cooled a tad.

Therefore you have the heating element in the part of the tub against which you rest your back.

And under no circumstances should your tootsies tread snow if they don't wish to, nor should your SUV suffer the indignity of sliding on ice.

Thus, life would be incomplete without the heated sidewalk and driveway.

Welcome to Deer Crest, the upper-crustiest place in Utah's latest version of the best address in the West, high atop its 7,950 foot perch on the east side of Little Baldy Mountain, abutting Deer Valley Resort at the Wasatch-Summit county borders.

And Deer Crest — it of the \$6.9 million, 8,500-square-foot, ski-in, ski-out home involving the coolers and heaters and other fancy-pants touches described above — is the Zsa Zsa Gabor poster girl for an elaborate recreational/residential/commercial complex that few Utahns may realize is poised to explode.

It is the vast network of developments designed one day to surround and embrace the Jordanelle Reservoir.

"Right now, Jordanelle is the best-kept secret in Utah — maybe the country. People don't understand what's going on up here," said Paul Taggart, joint venture partner for Deer Mountain, another Jordanelle development fronting U-248 on the north side of the reservoir.

In the eyes of Taggart and other visionaries, Tahoe is coming to Utah. Or Sun Valley is coming. Or Jackson Hole.

Or any other playground/neighborhood/enterprise zone catering to the rich and absolutely fabulous with which Jordanelle seeks to compete.

Though Jordanelle is in early first-phase development, it has devoted pilgrims.

"I love Deer Crest. Love it, love it, love it!" Elizabeth "Zibby" Toser gushed over the phone from the Park Avenue apartment in New York where she lives with husband Jim Toser, a securities-banking-commercial real estate mogul.

"We could have built in Sun Valley or Aspen, sure, but this part of Utah has the beautiful lake, the gorgeous mountains, plus the old mining heritage of Park City, like someone has really lived there — as opposed to, say, Vail.

"The people are really nice and the cowboy tradition really appeals to me," said Zibby, an interior designer, who added that the Tosers' Deer Crest home has 12,000 square feet, nine bedrooms and "oh, I don't know how many" bathrooms.

The can't-keep-track-of-the-rooms Tosers may typify Deer Crest's clientele, rolling-in-dough carte blanchers collecting second, third or fourth homes much like a 12-year-old would charms for a bracelet. Zibby and Jim must choose between vacationing here or the farm in Millbrook, N.Y., where they raise miniature horses.

But Deer Crest represents a smidgen of all that is happening at Jordanelle. In fact, its very scope is either exhilarating, impressive, frustrating or frightening.

The perspective depends on whether you are residents in surrounding areas concerned about perceived traffic, water, sewer and environmental impacts (see accompanying story on residents' fears).

And it depends on whether you're a developer dreaming of immense profits. Or Wasatch County, in a position to reap tens of millions of dollars for its general and educational funds at buildout.

That date variously is predicted to be 10, 15 or 20 years.

"A lot of people think we sold the county down the tubes to the developers. But this will be without doubt one of the greatest things to happen in Heber Valley's history," said LaRen Provost, Wasatch County commissioner, who helped set up the Jordanelle Special Services District, which administers reservoir development.

As presently constituted, Jordanelle construction will sprawl over 22,000 acres, masterplanned for 12,646 residential units involving approximately 50 separate developers. Hundreds of units may be added on 3,500 acres owned south of the reservoir by billionaire James Sorenson, who has yet to apply for density determination.

Stand at the reservoir now and spin slowly. Virtually everywhere the eye now drinks in hills, trees, streams and lake promises to be checkerboarded with houses in a 360-degree sweep.

Yet planners believe the project retains a healthy share of the wilderness that is its calling card.

"Seventy percent of land mingling and surrounding the project is on state or federal land. You'll still feel the open space," said Dan Matthews, manager of the Jordanelle Special Services District.

Plans call for three 18-hole golf courses in one development alone — Victory Ranch, a 7,000-acre enclave that has seen golfing great Tiger Woods visit for fishing getaways. Another 18-hole course is slated for the 572-acre Tuhaye Ranch development on the reservoir's east side.

While some portions are designed for primary residential ownership — Tuhaye and 428-acre Deer Mountain as examples — the major thrust is toward deep-pocketed second-homers, anxious to sample Jordanelle's outdoor smorgasbord of snow-skiing, water-skiing, boating, fishing, hiking and hunting.

While those are dalliances the well-heeled can enjoy at dozens of pleasure preserves, one thing sets Jordanelle apart.

Access.

"Jackson Hole is out of the way from almost anywhere. Take the Lear (jet) into Sun Valley, you've still got a major drive ahead of you.

"Salt Lake International brings Jordanelle to your doorstep."

"Forty minutes without a stoplight," said Daryl English, owner of the Stillwater Lodge, a luxury condominium/hotel complex at the west portal to Jordanelle, just off U.S. 40's state-of-the-art Mayflower interchange, scheduled for completion before the 2002 Olympics.

"There's no place like this in the country with four-season recreation you get to this easily," said English, who lives in Chicago but keeps a Park City home.

The only other playpen for the rich and famous in the West with a comparable travel time is in fact Lake Tahoe.

You can hop a flight in New York City at 7 a.m. and be on the Hair Fire ski run outside your Deer Crest home by 1 p.m. that afternoon, Zibby Toser said.

"In fact," she added, "I took off from Manhattan one morning and gave a luncheon for 30 at Deer Crest at noon."

If second-home buyers bite on the access and four-season lure, it means Wasatch County reels in huge revenues, with minimum impacts, as planners foresee it.

"You get people paying millions of dollars into the Wasatch County School District who couldn't find a Heber Valley school with a road map. They won't be sending their kids there," Matthews said.

"You'll have people who won't flush their toilets 30 times a year pumping revenue into the economy," said Ann MacQuoid, a member of the Board of Park City Realtors.

Deer Crest alone will funnel approximately \$10 million a year into the Wasatch County general fund at buildout, according to projections cited by county planner Al Mickelsen — more than the current \$9 million county budget.

"It can mean tens of millions of dollars a year. That's why Heber Valley should be welcoming this with open arms," Provost said.

Such sums come only if things proceed according to developers' schemes.

Even before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the sluggish economy was beginning to bug even the pep boys who peddle high-end real estate around Jordanelle.

"You do tend to lose sleep. No question consumer confidence has been low nationwide and sales are not near what we'd like to see," said Taggart, whose Deer Mountain group leans on the financial muscle of equity partner Sun America, footing approximately 50 percent of investment costs.

However, Taggart said, Deer Mountain wrote six contracts in a recent 30-day period, including four in nine days.

"This will pay off. Just look at those views," Taggart enthused, pointing to a north-to-south vista across Jordanelle. "All the way to Mount Nebo, 60 miles away."

But it will take a lot of buying to make ends meet. That's because developers already have ponied up huge impact fees. For anyone who believes fast-talking developers took Wasatch County's supposedly bumpkin politicians to the cleaners, Jordanelle investors feel the opposite.

"They have made us pay for everything before a shovel went into the ground," Taggart said. "If anyone thought we were buying a Chevrolet, they've made us pay for a Rolls Royce."

"The thing we always heard in meetings was: 'This will hurt the Heber City widow on the fixed income,' "Provost said. "There's no way we were going to make anyone's gray-haired grandma pay for rich people to play at Jordanelle."

Thus, Victory Ranch already is on the hook for \$200 million worth of infrastructure costs involving roads, water, sewer, drainage, gas, power, communications, trail systems, golf courses, landscaping, impact fees and Provo River improvements, according to documents projecting costs earlier this year, provided by Mickelsen.

"The beauty of what the commissioners did is, they had a blank canvas. Because they planned from day one, Jordanelle hasn't cost the taxpayers a penny," Mickelsen said.

Not that some Heber Valley residents believe it. A persistent local rant about the new fire station just off the Mayflower interchange goes something like this: The rich guys got the new rigs and full-time firefighting staff; the valley settles for volunteers.


"Ask 100 residents and 100 will say they got robbed on the fire deal. There's still a lot of misinformation," Provost said.

"The fact is, the developers put up every dollar for the fire station," Mickelsen said.

Because of such costs, Dale Berg, partner in Sowby and Berg, consultants to Victory Ranch owner Robert Larsen of Park City, doubts Jordanelle ever will reach master-planned density.

"When all is said and done, it wouldn't surprise me to see it come down to 3,000-some-odd units," he said.

Even in smaller scale, planners believe Jordanelle can live up to the idea of a "Little Tahoe."

Deseret News graphic  DNews graphic Jordanelle area developmentRequires <u>Adobe Acrobat</u> .	In the grand vision, fine restaurants dot hills with shore-front views — although not too close. The Bureau of Reclamation requires a "take line" buffer zone, prohibiting building within 100 feet, and Matthews said no developer is planning a structure closer than one-quarter mile to the reservoir.
--	--

"Boating, skiing, fishing will still be there for the public," Matthews said.

In the vision, some "real people" even live around Jordanelle, attending schools such as one planned across the road from Deer Mountain.

"We didn't want just rich folks. We wanted diversity and a community," Taggart said.

In the vision, groups choose Jordanelle for meetings at places like Stillwater's 5,000-square-foot conference center.

In the vision, they'll rub tastefully adorned elbows with jet-setters walking to the Deer Crest gondola via an under-the-freeway pedestrian passageway.

"The Deer Crest ski lift drives the business here," said Stillwater's English. "The gondola ties us to Deer Valley and some of the best ski terrain in the world. After that, you can come back to sit by one of the most beautiful lakes in the world,"

No one would agree more than Zibby Toser, who can ski-and-see right out her door but admits to a problem in paradise.

"I'm having trouble getting the heated towel racks installed," she said.

Tomorrow: Water and sewer issues swirl around Jordanelle.

RELATED

The dream continues

Developers' vision a nightmare to some

SPONSORED 1/5

 *DeseretNews*

