

SPRUCE LIFE

Magazine of the Spruce Peak Community

MOUNTAIN CULTURE
INFLUENCERS, DESIGNERS AND PASSIONS

DESIGNING “THE ONE”



SPRUCE'S NEXT PROJECT PROMISES TO BE THE NEW STANDARD FOR MOUNTAIN CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

Over the last 10 years, renowned San Francisco-based architect John Ashworth, a principal at Bull Stockwell Allen Architects, has played a large part in creating the Spruce Peak experience—having designed everything from Spruce Camp to the Village Green and Rink to the Adventure Center and Alpine Clubhouse. Now he's teaming up with award-winning interior designer Kim Deetjen of Burlington's TruexCullins to work on the most ambitious residential project ever conceived here: The slopeside luxury homes One Spruce Peak, which will be located at the base of the Spruce slopes and will have approximately 30 two- to five-bedroom units.

We sat down with both of them for a revealing conversation about how technology is shaping alpine design, the secrets to making a vacation home feel truly relaxing, and why kitchen islands are the new hub of family life.

What are some of the most exciting trends in alpine architecture and design?

Ashworth: We've been moving away from compartmentalization—a formal kitchen, dining room, and living area—and towards communal floor plans. We're looking for a larger, more fluid space where people can gather—big kitchen islands are a huge trend. One group might be cooking, another might be playing a game, but everyone is together. It's an opportunity for families to embrace multi-generations. Kids, parents, and grandparents are all connecting.

We're also seeing buildings that open from the inside out and bring the outside in. That means lots of glass and floor-to-ceiling glazing that can open up so you feel like you're part of nature.

Deetjen: The goal is to make a connection between indoor and outdoor living spaces. For example, we make sure our kitchens are located by the glass, instead of inward, and as you go outdoors, it becomes the grill and outdoor dining area.

Ashworth: Another trend that Stowe captures really well is a desire for a sense of authenticity. People want to feel like they're in the mountains and have gotten away from urban life. They're looking for an environment that is like no place else.



02 John Ashworth, Principal 03 Alpine Clubhouse, the Club Residences and Adventure Center



What does "mountain contemporary" mean, and how can it be done here in Vermont?

Ashworth: It's much more open and airy; there has been a trend away from gables and heavy overhangs. But at the same time, you still incorporate noble materials like stone and timber that reflect a warmth you'd expect in the mountains.

Deetjen: Think contemporary without going too stark. It's a welcoming aesthetic and keeps that sense of Vermont craft and quality. But the millwork and casework is cleaner. For

example, in a traditional mountain aesthetic you'd have raised panels or details on the kitchen cabinets, whereas with mountain contemporary you might have shiplap paneling—a very streamlined vertical or horizontal board treatment without fussy detailing. Hardware is simpler: Rather than each bathroom having four different types of tiles and stones and trims, you go with one stone and you detail it beautifully in a larger format. It's a cleaner approach using a more controlled palette of materials that are indigenous to the place.

Ashworth: If you look back at the traditional mountain aesthetic, it feels heavy and dark: The windows are small and the furniture is huge. There are a lot of rustic elements—almost like Yellowstone Lodge. Recently designers have moved away from what we call "parkitecture" towards a fresher look that is light to the touch and at the same time very real.

(continued page 16)

"A vacation home is also an opportunity to bring in one's alter ego. I live in a traditional English stone cottage, yet my dream is to have a glass box in the mountains."

- Kim Deetjen

What is your connection to Stowe and to Spruce Peak?

Deetjen: I grew up skiing here and consider Stowe my home mountain. I was born and raised just south of Boston and first came to the Trapp Family Lodge as a little girl. Now I live in Burlington, I raised my two boys here, and skiing is our passion. I can bring my love of the mountains and interior design together in a place near and dear to my heart.

There isn't anything close to Spruce Peak in the northeast. It does such a great job of speaking to the history of skiing and New England. Families can create memories and enjoy all four seasons, whether it's golfing in the summer, walking up Mt. Mansfield in the fall, or skiing the Front Four, with Spruce Peak Village at the heart of it.

Ashworth: Stowe and Spruce Peak have a magical connection for me and for our architectural firm. Our founder, Henrik Bull, grew up in Stowe. He felt so strongly about it—and Spruce Peak in particular—that he chose the One

Spruce Peak site for his architectural thesis at MIT in the 1950s. Bull is retired, but was thrilled to learn that the firm had been selected for a project that has meant so much to him. There was a sense of poetry about that for our firm, and it was an honor to be able to come back to it after all these years.

I also concur with Kim that Spruce Peak has done one of the best jobs of any resort developer in capturing the essence of what that location is all about. The goal was not to make it New England in the painted clapboard colonial sense, but to create a mountain resort that felt like it belonged in Vermont and had a sense of both history and future about it. The level of attention, the commitment, the desire to create something one of a kind, and of its place, is truly unique.

What inspires you about the location of One Spruce Peak?

Ashworth: The topography affords spectacular views towards Mansfield, the Notch, Spruce, and down valley. You

are in the premier slopeside setting, right along Sunny Spruce. It's the last ski-in ski-out property within the village. It captures the best of what the resort offers.

Deetjen: As the highest location in Spruce Peak Village, it commands the greatest view of Mansfield and also has the closest proximity to the transfer lift. You feel really connected to the Notch, Mansfield, and the whole ski experience.

What part of the One Spruce Peak design process are you most excited about?

Deetjen: I'm very excited about our collaboration, John, and bringing our collective experience to this building.

Ashworth: A world-class team has been assembled for One Spruce Peak. Our firm has unparalleled mountain resort experience both internationally and throughout the states. TruexCullins brings a perspective on design that is indigenous to Vermont and the mountains. The desire is to create something timeless.



04 The TruexCullins team plan for design. Left to right: Pam Picker, Kim Deetjen and Matthew Bushey

One Spruce Peak was originally conceived over a decade ago. What has changed since then?

Deetjen: Ten years ago we might have been designing a study or computer workstations into these units. Today we are putting plugs and charging stations by sofas or on a kitchen island. You can plug in when you need to, but the minute you're done, you put it away and you're reminded of nothing but the view and the mountains. The pace of life is so fast these days that when a family gets to this destination, they want to check their devices at the door, and connect with each other and the place.

Our family has a rule when we go on ski vacations that there are certain times when we are all checking our email and messages, but then those devices get put away and it is movie time, game time, social time over dinner. We are designing the units so that they have everything you need if you need technology—but it's invisible.

Ashworth: Technology has informed a whole new generation. The seamlessness, the wirelessness of it has translated into more open and transparent spaces. The way people live is much more fluid as opposed to compartmentalized. Just like phones now have multi functions, with design, we're trying to achieve many things within the same space—whether it's work, family time, or relaxation.

The millennial generation has been brought up on cool, sleek devices like the iPhone. But there has also been a backlash against visible technology and being glued to your phone. One of the wonderful things about Stowe and Spruce Peak is being able to get out on the mountain and have a true, honest, authentic physical experience that is healthy, mind-opening, and active.

How is designing a ski home different from designing a primary residence?

Deetjen: When designing a ski home, you have to accommodate for all the gear. In this case, One Spruce Peak residents have access to a ski valet and other services—but you still need a certain amount of storage.

We also look for real durable materials, like stone flooring, that can handle all kinds of conditions: people coming in with ski boots, or mud from hiking or biking. So you don't have to spend time worrying about it. Then there's the social piece. You have to make sure the space works well for a couple—or for that couple plus their three kids and four grandchildren. How do you design a living room that is comfortable for ten people, but doesn't feel empty with just two? There are a lot of tricks: providing a bench on one side of the dining table instead of all chairs, a coffee table with pullout ottomans for added seating around a fireplace.

Ashworth: We try to make sure that it feels like the homeowner has gotten away from everyday life, in an environment that's different from their primary home. A primary home is a reflection of the individual, whereas a second home is a reflection of the place where the individual wants to be. In the mountains, stone, wood, and the colors of local flora and fauna are important components of that.

Then, we make the space relaxed and welcoming so people feel like they're truly on holiday. We do that by making things easy: There is a

mudroom where you can put your gear and coats, and throw your long johns into the washer-dryer; the open floor plan is conducive to socializing.

Deetjen: A vacation home is also an opportunity to bring in one's alter ego. I live in a traditional English stone cottage, yet my dream is to have a glass box in the mountains.



05 One Spruce Peak Southern elevation sketch
06 Exterior stone materials
07 Timber to make a cohesive style with Spruce
08 West exterior elevation sketch



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30 LUXURY SLOPESIDE RESIDENCES

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