



ISSUE BRIEF: SOLITUDE RESORT PROPOSED PARKING LOT EXPANSION

PREPARED BY UTAHNS FOR BETTER CANYON ACCESS / OCTOBER 2025

An overview of Solitude's proposed plan to bulldoze an aspen forest for more parking:

Solitude Mountain Resort and its owner, Alterra Mountain Company, want to build two large, interconnected parking lots on what is now a steep, forested hillside on the north side of Big Cottonwood Canyon Road, across from the eastern (Village) entrance to the resort.

Their current proposal would create parking for 593 cars. This would require them to clear-cut nearly 15 acres of the aspen forest, bulldoze the terrain, and build up to 40-foot retaining walls to make it usable for parking. The proposed site is currently a roadless, forested hillside covered with quaking aspen trees. It is home to moose, deer, thousands of birds, and other animals.

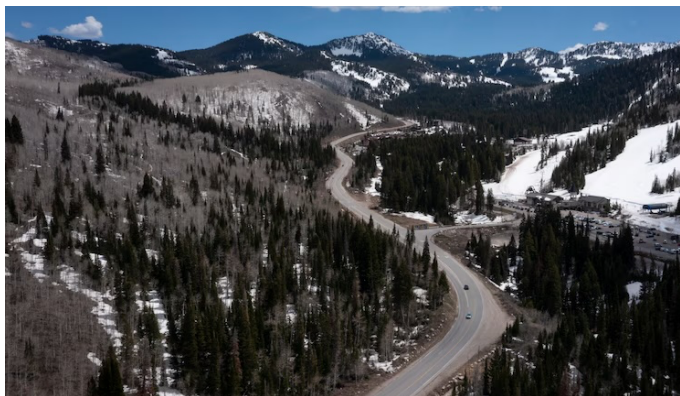
Alterra is a large ski resort conglomerate owned by two private equity firms, Denver-based KSL Capital partners and Chicago-based Henry Crown & Company. The conglomerate currently owns Deer Valley and resorts in California, Washington, Idaho, West Virginia, Vermont, and Canada.

Impact and implications:

This would devastate an ecosystem and disrupt residents, all for a parking solution that's as inefficient as it is ineffective.

The proposed 593-spot parking lot would dramatically alter 14.96 acres of land, as the steep slope requires the access road to have switchbacks and up to 40-foot-high retaining walls to hold back the hillside where it doesn't get bulldozed.

For comparison, the existing Solitude lower parking lot is significantly smaller in acreage and can hold more than double the number of cars in the proposed lot.



In addition, its placement worsens congestion between Brighton and Solitude by creating another parking lot turnout that will have hundreds of cars queuing up to turn into and out of the lot along a stretch of canyon road already plagued by traffic jams on busy days. The passengers of those cars would then need to walk (or be shuttled) across the canyon road to get to the Solitude village—creating yet another friction point for traffic.

Is Alterra allowed to do this? And what can be done in response?

Alterra is performing some legal gymnastics to try to make it so. While Alterra owns the part of the hillside on which the parking lots would be built, they would need to access that hillside through land owned by Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities, which has so far opposed the project.

The site of Alterra's proposed parking lots is zoned for residential use and is situated outside the ski resort's boundary.

The Town of Brighton is now considering a clarification to section 10.04.070 of the Town's ordinances explaining its legislative intent: ski resort support facilities like parking lots are only allowed within existing ski resort boundaries in FM-10 and FM-20 zones, which are Forest Multifamily Zones.

This clarification is important because, without it, Solitude can claim the right to build commercial support facilities (like parking lots) anywhere in the Town of Brighton, avoiding the land use rules that apply to other businesses and individuals.

Utahns for Better Canyon Access (UBCA) opposes Solitude's proposed parking lot.

UBCA is dedicated to preserving access to our canyons for visitors, workers, and residents, in perpetuity. UBCA believes in the importance of our canyons' trails, streams, and forests as places for recreation, exploration, and quiet enjoyment. UBCA opposes these proposed parking lots for three basic reasons:

1. First, the project, if it is allowed to proceed, **will dramatically increase traffic congestion** along what is already the busiest stretch of Big Cottonwood Canyon Road, especially during the ski season. The project will bring hundreds more vehicles into the canyon every day, with more delays, more exhaust pollution, and more noise. Approval of this project will needlessly compromise our region's effort to develop sustainable, transit-focused strategies to deal with canyon traffic.
2. Second, the project would **make Big Cottonwood Canyon Road even more dangerous and chaotic** for both pedestrians and vehicles than it is at present, especially during ski season. Alterra proposes to build a traffic light intersection near the eastern/Village entrance to its resort, with pedestrians and parking shuttles regularly crossing Big Cottonwood Canyon Road, while vehicles coming up the canyon make left-hand turns into the new parking lots, and while other vehicles attempt to go up or down the canyon.
3. Third, the project will inevitably **increase the level of contamination** flowing into Big Cottonwood Creek, Salt Lake Valley's most important source of drinking water.

UBCA is *not* anti-ski resort or anti-development—the ski resorts in the Wasatch canyons are valuable community assets everyone should be able to enjoy. But they should be managed and regulated in a responsible, sustainable manner.

Better solutions are already underway.

The Utah Department of Transportation is in the process of preparing an environmental study specifically relating to transportation in Big Cottonwood Canyon. The study should provide a roadmap for future transportation projects. Also, UDOT has announced it will build a parking and transit facility for 1,500 cars at the mouth of the canyon. The facility will provide frequent bus service up and down the canyon and bus stops at Solitude, Brighton, and other locations.

Proposed Solitude parking lot site

Solitude Mountain Resort is seeking a conditional use permit to build a 593-space parking garage on the property it owns near Old Stage Road, just across State Route 190 from the ski area's village.



Source: Solitude Mountain Resort CUP application, Google Maps

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTOPHER CHERRINGTON | The Salt Lake Tribune

UBCA is not alone in its opposition:

Since the spring of 2025, many agencies and advocacy groups have publicly opposed the proposed Solitude parking lots. They include the Mayor of Salt Lake City and the Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities, the Brighton Community Council, the Central Wasatch Commission's Stakeholders Council, Wasatch Backcountry Alliance, and Save Our Canyons.



The Brighton Community Council wrote that the proposed parking lots present a new level of danger for pedestrians, will cause chaos for traffic going up and down the canyon, and cause “a great loss for forest health, water quality, wildlife, and wildfire safety.” The community council concluded that the proposed parking lots “violate every Canyons plan over the last 40 years, including the [Forest Service] Plan, and [the] Salt Lake Wasatch Canyons Master Plan ... [T]he focus must be on improved transit, as Solitude has recognized for many years.”

The Central Wasatch Commission's Stakeholders Council wrote that Solitude's proposed parking lots would violate

the letter and spirit of the 2014 Mountain Accord Charter and present serious fire safety and pedestrian safety problems.

The Central Wasatch Commission Council stated: “On peak days, over 1,100 guests could be crossing SR-190 [Big Cottonwood Canyon Road] during morning and afternoon surges at a high speed, low-visibility stretch of road.” The chaos inherent in Solitude's proposed intersection will “introduce safety risks and traffic conflicts ... ultimately increasing the likelihood of accidents and creating a new layer of congestion.”

Please join us in taking action against this proposal and making your voice heard.

- **Attend meetings of the Brighton Town Council and Planning Commission.** These bodies will consider Alterra's application to proceed with its proposed parking lots. The Town of Brighton's website provides information on public meetings: www.brighton.utah.gov/towncouncil
- **Make a donation to help UBCA advance its advocacy work:** [UBCA website]
- **Send emails to members of the Brighton Town Council and Planning Commission** and tell them what you think. Their email addresses are listed below.

Brighton Town Council	Jeff Bossard, jeffbossard@brighton.utah.gov Keith Zuspan, keithzuspan@brighton.utah.gov Lise Brunhart, lisebrunhart@brighton.utah.gov Dan Knopp, danknopp@brighton.utah.gov Carolyn Keigley, carolynkeigley@brighton.utah.gov
Brighton Planning Commission	Donna Conway, psustonehome@yahoo.com Don Despain, dondespain3@gmail.com Ulrich Brunhart, ulrich@juabbuilders.com Tom Ward, skirun26@gmail.com Ben Machlis, benmachlis@gmail.com
Alternate Planning Commission	Brian Reynolds, bhreyne@gmail.com John Carpenter, johncarp@gmail.com

Utahns for Better Canyon Access (UBCA) is a Utah non-profit corporation organized in accordance with section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code