

## Letter to Lyons Board of Trustees

### Re: Moss Rock Hotel Proposal

Feb. 7, 2022

From: Cathy Rivers, 122 Peregrine Lane, Lyons, CO

Thanks for this opportunity to speak tonight.

I've lived in Lyons nearly 24 years and have seen many changes. We've lived through tough challenges: the 2013 flood, wildfires, hailstorms; lack of affordable housing; parks overrun during the pandemic, summer traffic jams, etc.

Despite all these problems, I have always considered it, with its ups and downs, the best community I've ever lived in. Lyons is blessed with a vibrant arts, music and 'can do', community-minded culture, with a uniquely funky vibe and character. Lyons can boast a variety of restaurants, coffee shops and eclectic variety of business establishments. Not to mention Lyons is surrounded by an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities, and natural beauty that still takes my breath away.

This love for my community calls me to speak up tonight about the Moss Rock hotel proposal. I was dismayed that public input at the Jan. 24 PCDC meeting was almost entirely pro full hotel development, while citizen concerns about size, parking and other issues were not adequately represented. (The bulk of the emails submitted expressed significant concerns, but were not mentioned.) Most people I've spoken with about the hotel have two principal concerns:

-the proposed size of 79 rooms is too big, is not compatible with our small town vibe, aesthetic and community character.

-the need for 180+ parking spaces is not adequately addressed.

I also have to question the approach of the developers and investors; come into Lyons, buy up half a block right in downtown, remove businesses with little notice, raze the property, put up a chain link fence, before any public input or standard permitting process is completed. It gives the impression that decision has already been made. That public input seems an afterthought. More heavy-handedness than a handshake for their introduction.

Years ago, a few developers came to town with a plan to build a new town hall and library, incorporating retail spaces. We had a chance to vote on it as a community. Why not with this hotel project that will make such a big impact on Lyons?

### **Matter of BALANCE and SCALE.**

Am I in support of a hotel in downtown Lyons, and do I think it could be a community asset and help revitalize downtown businesses? YES!

#### **-Size.**

Yes, let's give people a chance to stay, visit our shops and restaurants, attend local weddings, not just drive through to Estes Park. But I feel strongly that **79 rooms, at 50,000 square feet, is completely out of scale for Lyons. Way too big.**

**A 35 room, 2 story, well designed building** would be much more appropriate for small town Lyons. The hotel project as proposed needs adjustments. Don't sacrifice the elements that make Lyons a great place to live, and visit: its unique identity, vibrant character, small town charm.

**-Parking:** We already bear the burdens of summer traffic jams, overflow visitors parking in neighborhoods. 79 rooms with multiple guests, plus 100 or so employees. Where will they park? A PCDC commissioner commented that the municipal code that says the Town can provide some parking for businesses is outdated and completely inadequate in this case. Lyons' **10 year Comprehensive Plan** states that the 'Town does seem to have a role in resolving parking issues for future business development'. The need for 180+ parking spaces for a project this size wasn't considered in determining this role. The Hotel needs to provide its own parking and not burden the Town, exacerbating the existing parking problems.

The hotel studies referenced by Moss Rock, supporting the proposed 79 rooms, were based on average number of rooms per hotel in Boulder (pop 108k), Longmont (pop 98k) and even Estes Park (pop 6500), entirely inappropriate for determining the size needed for Lyons. Not just comparing apples to oranges; more like apples to watermelons. No single project or combination of structures should be allowed to dominate or overwhelm the surrounding neighboring buildings. But should appropriately ENHANCE Lyons' environment and unique character, support pedestrian flow and provide its own adequate parking. Are Moss Rock profitability and the anticipated tax revenue for Lyons the sole determining factors for the size? Of course, as a business, the proposed hotel needs to be profitable, and the Town needs the income, but should these business goals supersede all other concerns?

The Moss Rock developers are marketing the concept of a quaint, **'boutique hotel'** and **'cottage hotel'**. I looked into those terms.

'Boutique hotel' is *'a small, sophisticated, and fashionable business or establishment. Generally smaller in size, more intimate, unique in character, with attention to detail, usually featuring a strong artistic sense and focus on design. Features a great sense of that city's culture. Many outstanding boutique hotels have less than 30 rooms. Boutique hotels are usually an extension of celebrating the city.'*

'Cottage Hotel' a small vacation house, typically in a rural area.

Is Moss Rock living up to these definitions, proposing a 79 room, 50,000 square foot, 3 story building in Lyons? I don't think so.

**The architectural style and 3 story size** currently proposed belongs in Longmont or Boulder, not Lyons. A contemporary design incorporating some local materials could create a beautiful, aesthetically pleasing building that honors Lyons, its people, history; conscious of sense of place, context. The design and size needs to be PROPORTIONATE to the scale of Lyons and compatible with its small town character. The hotel can, and should be, an asset Lyons needs and its citizens can be proud of. Because it fits, not dominates.

As a designer consulting with homeowners and businesses desiring to create successful exteriors, I advise my clients that homes and buildings need to represent the neighborhood and community as a whole and offer a sense of place. The right design is appropriate in the context of the town, its neighborhoods and surrounding environment, yet offers appealing, distinctive qualities.

**Balance.**

This is a crucial moment for Lyons.

I am asking the Board to carefully consider, who do we want to be as a community? What do we value? How do we move forward, in a sustainable way, bolstering our businesses while wisely planning growth that supports our residents, community values, highest common good and well-being, into the future?

How do we avoid becoming just another 'Boom Town'?

(Listen to Greg Brown's 'Boom Town'. <https://youtu.be/dG49FbIzmlg>)

This beloved community is our home.

Let's 'take the time to get it right'. We deserve it. Once built there's no turning back.

In the words of a local business person, 'We're not there yet'.

Thank you.