

Squaw wants back on world map of destination resorts

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Major change is coming to what is arguably the Sierra's most famous ski resort.

Squaw Valley USA, acquired in November by the Colorado-based investment firm KSL Capital Partners, is planning a \$50 million upgrade to the resort made famous by hosting the 1960 Winter Olympics.



An infusion of cash is designed to put Squaw back on world stage.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

It's doing so, CEO Andy Wirth said, through a novel competitive approach involving three of the world's best mountain planners.

"In essence, this is basically a bake-off," Wirth said.

Three companies – Vancouver, Canada-based Ecosign Mountain Planners, Ltd.; International Alpine Design of Avon, Colo.,

and the Salt Lake City-based SE Group – are designing proposals for \$50 million worth of mountain improvements.

On Feb. 1, Wirth and colleagues plan to decide which proposal they like the best and then proceed with improvements to be built over the next three to five years.

Nothing's off the table. Changes could include renovation of the High Camp lodge, accessed by the resort's iconic tram, new or relocated ski lifts, regraded ski runs and new restaurants.

"The only thing changing here is everything," said Wirth, 46. "We want to make sure we have the best of the best. This is an incredible piece of rock on which we operate."

None of the coming changes will compromise Squaw's reputation as a "mountain of legend," with extreme terrain such as KT-22 and the Headwall serving as beacons for adrenaline junkies, Wirth said.

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