

# Mono County Community Development Department, Planning Division

## Pre-Application Review Request

**Project Name:** Victory Lodge Specific Plan

**Project Address:** 333 Leonard Ave, June Lake

**Parcel Number:** 015-300-006-000

**Property Owner, Applicant:** Tom Goodwin

**Project Representative:** Athina Kaviris, Event Rentals and Coordination

**Anticipated Permit/ Application Type:** Specific Plan, Conditional Use Permit

### INTRODUCTION

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My name is Athina Kaviris. I'm a local wedding coordinator and the owner of a small event rentals business. While I am not the property owner, I am highly motivated to work with the County to explore a limited, well-managed use of Victory Lodge for intimate gatherings, with the owner's permission and oversight. This draft proposal isn't just free of negative impacts; it's a win for everyone involved.

My effort stems from a deep belief that Victory Lodge is truly a special property. One that is an ideal setting to celebrate meaningful life events. Few land uses could bring greater joy or make better use of the existing space. Manifesting the dream wedding of future couples hangs in the balance.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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I am submitting this pre-application review request for consideration of a new Specific Plan and associated Conditional Use Permit (if applicable) for Victory Lodge, a 16,500-square-foot estate constructed in 2008. The property is currently zoned Estate Residential with a Specific Plan Overlay (ER/SP); while this zoning allows for the creation of a Specific Plan, none has been adopted to date.

Victory Lodge presently operates under an approved Short-Term Rental (STR) Activity Permit which as a default, limits occupancy to 10 guests. With 9 bedrooms, 9.5 bathrooms, and covered parking for 14 vehicles, this represents a significant underutilization of the property's capacity. For instance, the dining room table is encircled by 14 stately, throne like chairs. Yet my understanding is that seating more than 10 guests is a violation under the current STR permit. It's not just chairs that are supposed to sit empty, so too should beds: luxurious king-size beds in beautifully appointed, gorgeously decorated bedroom suites. And perhaps most ironically, the home includes a large, purpose-built event room; one that under current restrictions, cannot be used for events.

This raises both practical and philosophical questions about what constitutes reasonable and appropriate use of a unique estate home of this size and design. The goal of this inquiry is to explore the feasibility of establishing a Specific Plan that would allow for limited, respectful use of the existing space.

An additional motivation for submitting this application is to gain clarity about unpermitted uses to ensure compliance with County policies. For example, it is unclear to me whether a private wedding ceremony held in the backyard, with no amplification and 10 persons present, would still be considered an impermissible "event" under current zoning and STR regulations. What defines an 'event', the activity itself, or the number of people present? And am I, as a coordinator, permitted to be there as well? This lack of clarity makes it difficult to ensure lawful and responsible use of the property

A Specific Plan and/or CUP would establish clear guidelines and allow for sensible use of this unique property.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROPERTY HISTORY

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In response to a Public Records Act request, I learned that complaints were made via phone call regarding noise and intoxicated individuals trespassing on neighboring property. While I don't know specific details, such as the number of complaints and dates they occurred, it's notable that no one filed a formal complaint, despite the availability of an easily accessible online form. The County form encourages complainants to contact the property owner first, which also did not happen. Had that courtesy been extended, a noise disturbance could have been immediately remedied. Upon first contact by the County enforcer, the property owner cancelled all upcoming weddings and to the best of my knowledge, no additional complaints have been made over the past 10 years or so. I respectfully ask that these informal complaints not be used to discredit or pre-judge this proposal, which stands on its own merits and includes proactive measures to prevent future concerns.

To proactively address noise concerns moving forward, I propose the following:

- Prohibit DJs from bringing personal speaker systems
- Requiring use of an on-site, volume-limited sound system
- Limiting outdoor amplified sound use for ceremony, first dance and speeches only
- Transitioning the event indoors after 8:00 PM, with all outdoor sound discontinued
- Requiring couples to sign contract agreeing to the consequence of their event being shut down for non-compliance
- All events must have a designated coordinator responsible for overseeing the event and ensuring compliance

There is a shared understanding among all involved that Victory Lodge is not an appropriate venue for large or disruptive parties. It is however suited for small, boutique-style weddings that attract more mature couples seeking an intimate celebration in a scenic and elegant setting.

## DRAFT PROPOSAL MEASURES

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### I. Occupancy

**A. Request to revise Occupancy in accordance with Mono County General Plan Section 26.040(C):**  
Upon certification by the Mono County Building Official that Victory Lodge meets all applicable building standards, occupancy should be adjusted to two persons per bedroom plus two additional persons. This would equal 20 guests. Final occupancy limits should also reflect the capacity of the existing septic system, as determined by Mono County Environmental Health. Victory Lodge is equipped with 9.5 bathrooms, supporting a higher-capacity evaluation.

**B. Request to distinguish between Occupancy Use and Special Event:**  
Personal gatherings by guests, such as intimate ceremonies or celebrations that remain within the property's approved occupancy limits and comply with all County regulations, as well as any additional stipulations to be established under the new Specific Plan, should not be classified as "events" and therefore should not be restricted as such. Making this distinction provides clarity for both property management, vendors such as myself and County enforcement.

### II. Special Events

In addition to allowing weddings that remain within the proposed 20-person occupancy, I respectfully request that a limited number of 50 guest max capacity gatherings also be permitted at Victory Lodge under the Specific Plan.

**A. Request to allow Special Events of 50 Guest max capacity during the Shoulder Seasons**

1. Mono County and the Village of June Lake, through the June Lake Chamber of Commerce, have demonstrated a clear commitment to supporting special events, so much so that public funding is

made available to encourage them. This support reflects an understanding that events are more than just entertainment: they are economic drivers that bring new visitors, stimulate local spending, and showcase the area's natural beauty.

Private weddings at Victory Lodge offer these same community benefits, without requiring public funding. Like publicly sponsored events, weddings bring guests who may not have otherwise visited June Lake. These guests book lodging, dine at local restaurants, purchase goods and services, and often return in the future as tourists in their own right.

Unlike large public festivals or concerts, weddings at Victory Lodge would be limited in size, well-managed, and subject to clear use restrictions—ensuring they are respectful of the surrounding community. And because they are privately funded, they place no demand on County resources while delivering similar economic advantages.

Recognizing small, private gatherings like weddings as a valid and beneficial land use aligns with June Lake's identity as a destination rooted in natural beauty, memorable experiences, and hospitality. With proper regulation and oversight, these events can enhance—not compete with—the area's ongoing efforts to strengthen its tourism-based economy.

2. In June Lake, the periods between the peak summer and winter tourist influxes are typically in the spring (April to early June) and fall (September to November). During these times, the area experiences a noticeable decline in visitor numbers, leading to reduced economic activity.

Hosting weddings at Victory Lodge during these shoulder seasons can provide significant benefits to the local community:

- **Economic Stimulation:** Weddings attract guests who utilize local accommodations, dine at restaurants, and shop at local businesses, injecting revenue during slower periods.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Events create side jobs for locals who have been laid off due to seasonal work.
- **Increased Tax Revenue:** Additional visitors contribute to the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), providing the county with funds that can be reinvested into community services and infrastructure.
- **Optimal Use of Facilities:** Utilizing Victory Lodge for events during off-peak times ensures that the property's potential is maximized without overwhelming local resources.

By permitting a limited number of well-managed weddings at Victory Lodge during the shoulder seasons, Mono County can bolster its tourism-driven economy, support local employment, and enhance community vitality without the need for public funding.

## **B. Request to allow one Special Event per month of 50 guest max capacity during the Peak Season**

I respectfully propose that Victory Lodge be permitted to host one event per month, with a maximum of 50 guests, during peak summer (June-August) and winter (December-March).

1. While demand for winter weddings is growing, there are currently no suitable venues in June Lake, representing a missed opportunity for both couples and the local economy. Victory Lodge is uniquely suited to fill this gap, with its spacious indoor gathering areas, high-end amenities, and dramatic alpine setting, making it an ideal location for a dream winter wedding.

Winter weddings at Victory Lodge would naturally remain indoors and would complement local recreational infrastructure, not compete with it, as guests would book lift tickets and lessons at June Mountain.

Allowing up to 4 winter weddings is a reasonable extension of the property's potential, perfectly aligned with June Lake's identity as both a ski destination and a place for unforgettable memories.

2. Couples who choose to get married at June Mountain are not just looking for a ceremony and reception site, they want a place where their close family and wedding party can stay together. They also need a venue to host a rehearsal or welcome dinner and often a farewell brunch. Victory Lodge offers that. Couples are more likely to book their wedding at June Mountain when every detail of their dream wedding weekend can be seamlessly accommodated within the heart of June Lake.

Additionally, the two existing summer wedding venues in June Lake require a guest minimum. This means, potential revenue from smaller weddings is simply lost. Couples turn elsewhere.

Under this proposal, Victory Lodge would only be able to accommodate one rehearsal dinner or small wedding per month. This modest request, to allow 3 total gatherings of 50 guests maximum over the course of summer would not overburden the community infrastructure. Rather, it strikes a balance between utilizing what Victory Lodge can offer and honoring the quiet, natural beauty that makes June Lake so special.

### **C. Request to allow Phased Permission for Additional Future Weddings**

As part of this proposal, I'd like to include a provisional pathway for allowing additional events in the future.

Specifically, I propose that after each full calendar year throughout which Victory Lodge conducted events and remained in good standing, one additional permissible event be added per year. This would require over 20 years for Victory Lodge to host a small event each weekend.

This phased approach reflects a strong commitment to accountability, community trust, and responsible use, while also recognizing the long-term potential for Victory Lodge to support meaningful, well-managed celebrations that benefit the broader June Lake economy.

## **SUPPORTING PROPERTY DETAILS**

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- 9 Bedrooms, 9.5 Baths, 16.5 K square feet, designated event room
- Covered parking for 14 vehicles plus additional uncovered 12 spaces
- ADA accessible: ramps, elevator, bathroom, bedroom
- Large indoor event room (downstairs)
- 2.93-acre property
- Adjacent properties have existing Specific Plan with STR permit

## **CLOSING**

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This draft proposal is offered in a spirit of collaboration, responsibility, and thoughtful land use planning. It reflects a starting point for discussion and a genuine effort to create a win-win solution that supports local business, protects community values, and unlocks the full potential of a remarkable property.

I look forward to working together toward the adoption of a Specific Plan for Victory Lodge.