

Silver Star of future: a destination resort

1981?

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Highly popular since its development in 1958, Silver Star is moving toward a different future.

A mountain with day facilities only at present, next season, will have a number of amenities to please both local skiers, and those from further destinations.

Funding is now in place, through a federal-provincial Tourism Industry Development Subsidary Agreement (TID-SA) grant, to develop sewage and other services for on-site accommodation. While several Okanagan and Southern Interior mountains have moved in this direction, Silver Star's plan will be unique.

DEVELOP STRATEGY

Rather than the rows of faceless condominiums, which dot several B.C. mountain resort landscapes, Silver Star will be moving towards a "European" style facility, with small inn and lodge facilities. Development Project Manager Doug Simmons said the whole concept has been designed to provide a high degree of service.

According to a Silver Star booklet on future plans, the modern day skier profile has changed, precipitating a renaissance in ski areas of the 1980s. Increased demand for destination resorts, fully equipped to challenge the skier on the slopes during the day, supply entertainment and dining amenities in the evening and comfortable accommodation overnight, in one location, has led Silver Star Sports Ltd. on its program of resort development.

With new owners and managers in the fall of 1981, a long term strategy of mountain operations was developed. The booklet states that it is important to understand that the primary objectives of management are not directed toward land development and related profits, but toward viable operation of a quality destination resort and lift company.

Simmons said the development will be fairly unique in terms of Canadian ski operations.

He said the whole village will be accessible on skis, and will resemble an 1890s western mining village, possibly like Barkerville.

This, he feels, will also have summer potential.

"We are trying to make this mountain an attraction, which will draw people. There will be a lot of atmosphere and ambience.

"With personalized little inns, we will be able to offer a kind of service that you just can't with huge concrete towers.

There are already three groups moving ahead with developing facilities. One is a 50-to-60 room "flagship" in the downtown core of the village, while the other groups are moving ahead on one 12 and one 20 bed facility.

"Those will be real man and pa operations," Simmons said.

While the mountain has approval from the ministry of lands, parks and housing for a total of 3,000 beds on the site, Silver Star is moving

cautiously. By the end of this year, they are hoping for 200 to 300 beds, and to maintain the pace annually.

START IN MAY

"We are hoping for about 1,000 beds at the end of five years," Simmons said. "We are flexible in our thinking, but find our prime interest in the owner-operated inn making up most of this number."

The mountain is shooting for a May construction time for the water and sewer system necessary for development. The actual construction program should begin in June.

Promotion of these additions to the mountain will begin in a blitz during May and June. These promotions will outline certain ski packages, as well as the new beds.

In past, the Silver Star ran ski packages through local hotels, and the development of on-site accommodation will not affect this in the near future.

FILLING BEDS

"We would like to see every bed in the Okanagan filled this year," Simmons said. "There has been a

real upswing in this direction, with four formal bus tour bookings last year ballooning to 85 this year."

The current marketing program is making inroads in central British Columbia, Vancouver, Seattle, Spokane, Calgary, Edmonton, the prairies and Eastern Canada.

In attendance projections for the mountain there will be 170,000 visitors this season, and that will increase by 10,000 the following year. A total of 190,000 skiers has been projected by 1984-85, rising by 20,000 skiers a year until 1987-88, when 250,000 visitors are forecast.

Between 1983 and 1988 it is expected that accommodation for 1,500 people will be built on the mountain, and 70 per cent occupancy over a 150 day season would create 157,500 new visitors.

"We are trying to promote more mid-week use of the mountain, and this aspect will certainly be enhanced by the construction of the village," Simmons said.