The Wall Street Journal
Uncovering the Steep Costs of a Custom Ski Home
By Sanette Tanaka
November 9, 2012
http://blogs.wsj.com/developments/2012/11/09/uncovering-the-steep-costs-of-a-custom-ski-home/

Scott Markewitz

Be prepared to spend for a custom ski home in Aspen, Colo.

In today's Mansion section, we discuss the top places to ski and the latest in ski-home design. But rather than buy or rent a ski holiday retreat, why not build one?

To figure out what exactly it takes to build a luxury winter estate, residential design and build firm Pollack+Partners analyzed costs of custom estates in seven top skiing destinations.

Be prepared to spend the most in Aspen, Colo., where project costs clock in at $1,235 per square foot. Aspen is followed by Big Sky, Mont.; Telluride, Colo.; Jackson Hole, Wyo.; Vail, Colo.; Park City, Utah; and finally, Whistler, British Columbia, which came in at $715 per square foot.

These homes are not your drafty one-room mountain cabins. They incorporate coveted design features like handcrafted cabinetry, indoor spas and swimming pools, integrated lighting systems and wine cellars, says Chris Pollack, president of Pollack+Partners.

Mr. Pollack says they searched for ski areas where the most expensive homes were being built. "We wanted to look at the areas that attracted the wealthiest clientele, the areas that were exclusive," he says.

To break down the costs, Pollack+Partners interviewed architects, constructors, real-estate brokers, designers in each area. The final project cost is made up of construction costs and fees, such as architectural and engineering fees. These types of fees account for roughly 30% of the project cost. Winter estates can be pricier than other listings in order to ensure that they can weather the snow. Some use special items, like climate-specific building materials.

Estate styles don't change much from city to city, though there are slight variations, Mr. Pollack says. Aspen is known for modern homes, while Telluride is associated with log cabin-style properties, he adds.