

# New Solar Vail apartments open with 65 units

The Sonnenalp has 75% of the new units; Vail Health has master leased another eight

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Sebastian Faessler, left, Johannes Faessler, center and Vail Mayor Dave Chapin, right, Tuesday cut the ribbon on the new Solar Vail Apartments.

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## The team

- Sonnenalp properties.
- RA Nelson.
- Gwathmey, Pratt, Schultz Architects.
- Town of Vail.

VAIL — Noelle Weiss has only lived in her new apartment for a few days. So far, she's a fan.

Weiss and a number of other Sonnenalp employees are moving into [Solar Vail](#), a new 65-unit apartment building just east of Red Sandstone Elementary School. The new apartments — studios, one- and two-bedroom units — replace the 1970s-vintage, 24-unit building that was on the site until last summer.

The new building has 47 units reserved for Sonnenalp employees. Another eight of the units have been master leased by Vail Health. The remaining 10 units are available, but probably not for long.

Those units are all deed-restricted, meaning that only people who work an annual average of 30 hours per week can live there. That keeps the apartments out of the short-term rental pool and available to local residents.

The town of Vail paid just more than \$4.2 million to buy deed restrictions for every unit. Those restrictions were purchased using money from the [Vail InDeed program](#). The contribution from the town represented about 20% of the project's budget.

## Getting workforce housing done

During a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Monday, Sonnenalp owner Johannes Faessler said that while the apartments took not quite 18 months to build, the idea is much older.

**People tour the one-bedroom units during the ribbon cutting and open house for the Solar Vail apartments Tuesday in Vail.**

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Faessler told the group gathered for the celebration that his company had started planning to replace Solar Vail in the early 2000s. But, he said, planning and working to make the finances work took several years. The national economic slump that began in 2008 resulted in more years of delay.

Faessler said planning continued to evolve until town approvals – and the town’s deed-restriction purchase – were granted in 2017.

The end result is modern, of course, and looks to be a fine place to live. The studio units are spacious, for studios, and could be adequate for couples. The one-bedrooms are more spacious still, and could accommodate someone sleeping in the living room as well as the bedroom.

The units are also insulated to cut down on noise, especially in the units on the south side of the building, which faces Interstate 70.

Weiss is on the highway-facing side, and said her place is “pretty quiet,” and well worth the unhindered view of Vail Mountain.

## **Sustainability and durability**


Jason Kiefer was general contractor RA Nelson’s project manager on the Solar Vail job. Kiefer said particular attention was paid to sustainability and ease of maintenance on the building.

For instance, the carpet in the hallways and common area is carpet tiles that can be replaced one by one if needed. The interior lighting is with energy-efficient LEDs.

In an email after the celebration, Kiefer said he believes the new Solar Vail “is a combination of durability, efficiency and LEED-like sustainable materials.

**A number of people from the Sonnenalp, the construction and design teams and the town of Vail gathered Tuesday for the ribbon-cutting for the new Solar Vail apartments.**

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And, he added, the building is pre-wired for solar panels in the future. The building could go “off-grid” without much more work.

After the ribbon-cutting, when those gathered headed upstairs for snacks in the Solar Vail community room and tours of a couple of units, Vail Mayor Dave Chapin said “I wish we had 10 more of these.”

Those touring the units were impressed, by both the size of the units and the finishes, which seem designed for both durability and comfort.

Before the ribbon-cutting, Sonnenalp employee Sarah Salomon and her daughter, Reese, were outside in the warm sun, ready to celebrate.

Asked if she lived at Solar Vail, Salomon said no.

“But I wish I did,” she said.

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