

## Red Lion penthouse in virtual reality

*Iconic Vail Village property is currently unfinished, but that's not stopping the walkthroughs*

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VAIL — Gamers and dreamers aren't the only ones donning virtual-reality headsets in 2017. No, it's an altogether different demographic — prospective property buyers — who have been driving the virtual world's push toward mainstream, especially in the valley, where real estate offices are contributing the most investment into virtual-reality technology.

At the iconic Red Lion penthouse in Vail Village, a property currently being redeveloped by Liv Sotheby's, a virtual reality headset shows potential purchasers exactly what the finished product will look like.

The project has been underway since the summer of 2016, and this year new engineering took place that will give the place a different look and feel, with a new staircase, a new entryway, fewer walls and more windows, to name a few changes. Situated in an extremely visible location at Seibert Circle in Vail Village, the construction has been drawing curiosity as to what the finished product will look like, so virtual reality technology — and a top-tier version of it — was an obvious choice in displaying this project, said those associated with it.



SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

A virtual view of the living room area in the penthouse property above The Red Lion, which is currently being redeveloped, as viewed through virtual reality. Prospective buyers can feel what it's like to walk around the room using new virtual reality technology from [getawalkthrough.com](http://getawalkthrough.com)

"When you look at the historical data for the Vail Valley and luxury buyers, 90 percent of those people don't live here," said Dave McHugh, a broker with Sotheby's. "When they come for a vacation, they go home and it's out of sight, out of mind. But now we're able to engage

them from home, with our real estate."

### A BIG DEAL

Sotheby's has sold \$20 million to \$30 million in property over the past few years using virtual reality technology, and brokers now share stories of buyers signing closing papers without even visiting in person. McHugh said here in Eagle County, the company started down that path a couple of years ago when the Sotheby's Beaver Creek office received a visit from a major player in the virtual-reality industry.

"He wouldn't tell us who he was, he told us he wasn't going to buy anything, but he stayed for about a half hour and asked a bunch of questions," McHugh said. "Then he handed us his business card, and we realized it was Gregory Lee, CEO and chairman of Samsung North America."

With Lee's help, Samsung partnered with Matterport to bring 3D technology into the Liv Sotheby's office in Beaver Creek, where McHugh works.

"The Samsung experience we have in our office allows you to put on the goggles and have a virtual experience, moving your head and feeling like you're in the property" McHugh said. "But we're taking that to the next level now by making it immersive in 3D, where you can actually walk around."

### 'FOREFRONT OF WHAT'S COMING'

The fully immersive virtual-reality tour prospective buyers can take of The Red Lion penthouse property represents the highest level of virtual reality technology Sotheby's has used on a redevelopment property.

"With our technology, you're literally in the house, to scale, and you can walk around, see the whole place and the scale feels exactly the same," said Jeremy Thiesen, the chief technology officer at [getawalkthrough.com](http://getawalkthrough.com), which created The Red Lion penthouse virtual reality experience.

Thiesen was himself in the real estate development business before joining the virtual world. [Getawalkthrough.com](http://Getawalkthrough.com) has only been in business for 14 months, but the company is already seeing a high demand for its product.

"We've modeled a lot of homes that already exist," Thiesen said. "We've already done about 1,800 of those."

Virtual models of properties that are yet unfinished is new ground for [getawalkthrough.com](http://getawalkthrough.com), which is another one of the elements of The Red Lion penthouse that is



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Mark Grimaldi, a broker at Sotheby's Beaver Creek office, wears virtual reality goggles to check out the finished version of the new penthouse above The Red Lion in Vail. Although the \$11.5 million penthouse isn't yet complete, Sotheby's uses new virtual reality technology to grant prospective buyers a full exploration of the three-floor property.

so exciting for those involved.

"To me, virtual reality is the forefront of what's coming," Thiesen said. "When you put that headset on and you feel like you're somewhere else, that's an experience you can't have anywhere else. This is totally different."

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