



OGDEN // 225 20th St, Ogden, UT 84401
SALT LAKE CITY // 1470 S 400 W, SLC, UT 84115
SOUTH MAIN // 4140 S Main St, Millcreek, UT 84107

December 10, 2023

USA Climbing
Attn: Board of Directors
Cc: Marc Norman
John Muse

Dear USA Climbing:

We are writing to reiterate The Front Climbing Club's (The Front) opposition to USA Climbing's proposed commercial climbing gym as part of its National Training Center project in downtown Salt Lake City, Utah, (as proposed by USA Climbing to the Utah Legislature and through in-person meetings) and to inform you that we are suspending our support of USA Climbing (USAC) events.

The Front has been a strong supporter of USAC events, staff, and athletes for many years, but we have consistently communicated our opposition to USAC opening a commercial climbing gym in Salt Lake. Our understanding is that other local gyms in Salt Lake also have strong concerns about the commercial aspect of the project. A publicly funded, directly competing commercial climbing gym mere blocks from established, local gyms is not in line with USAC's mission or recognition of "the critical role that climbing gyms play in our organization". While we would support a project directly for the benefit of USAC athletes, USAC staff has made it clear in direct conversations with The Front that the anticipated membership revenue from the project will be a key revenue source for USAC. As such, USAC's proposed commercial gym is a direct threat to the local businesses that have long supported USAC and the local Utah communities.

The Front has maintained a close and productive working relationship with USAC since USAC moved to Salt Lake. Below are some highlights of The Front's support of USAC:

- Since 2018, provided annual free and reduced memberships to USAC staff and athletes, valued at roughly \$40,000 for 2023 alone
- Hosted the below competitions:
 - Annual Boulder and Lead/TR Youth Qualifying Events
 - 2019 Youth Bouldering Divisional Championships
 - 2020 Open Sport and Speed (cancelled due to Covid)
 - 2022 IFSC Paraclimbing World Cup
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 - 2023 Youth Bouldering Divisional Championships
 - 2023 Youth Lead/TR National Championships
- Hosted several Level 1 and Level 2 Route Setting Clinics
- Constructed USAC-requested media infrastructure capital improvements to our newest facility
- Justin Wyse, The Front's Chief of Staff (cosigner to this letter), is a member of USAC's Coaching and Collegiate Committees
- Eddie Morillas, The Front's Director of Routesetting (another cosigner), is a USAC Level 4 National Route Setter

Notably, many of the above events hosted by The Front have been a loss or break even to The Front. In any case, we have put our money where our mouth is in supporting USAC.





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Meanwhile, USAC has pursued operating a 45,000-65,000 sq. ft. commercial mega-gym mere blocks from The Front's headquarters and The Salt Lake Bouldering Project, heavily funded by grants and taxpayer money. USAC has represented to the Utah Legislature that it expects on a "regular commercial use side 3,000 members and over 300,000 visits per year", with an unspecified amount "open to the public with a sliding fee scale, including no cost for those with economic need - ensuring access for all." Experience dictates that most of these 3,000 members will come from The Front and other local, established commercial gyms' paying membership base (just ask us or Salt Lake Bouldering Project about downtown market saturation).

Although The Front does not support the commercial component of USAC's project, we understand the need and support the creation of a dedicated training space for the US National Team. On several occasions we have offered to collaborate with USAC to design and build a training facility in connection with The Front's ongoing 46,000 sq. ft. headquarters expansion. The expansion has been designed to offer premier competition training and event hosting and we believe it would be an opportunity for USAC to greatly reduce its capital requirements and speed up delivery for a training facility. To date, our offer has been ignored, but it still stands.

Despite our disagreement with USAC's actions, we plan on continuing to provide USAC staff and Tier 1 athletes' free access to our facilities. However, until we have assurances that the project will be in line with USAC's mission and not a direct threat to our business, our support of USAC events will remain suspended. We thank you for your attention to this matter and invite the opportunity to discuss these issues directly with the USAC Board of Directors.

On behalf of The Front Climbing Club,

Dustin Buckthal, Chief Executive Officer
Justin Wyse, Chief of Staff
Eddie Morillas, Director of Routesetting

