

Ski Run on road to setting itself apart from rest of SLT

By Kathryn Reed



A buzz filled the air as more than 50 people gathered to plot a course to make Ski Run Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe a destination.

Going from the lake to the mountains, the businesses and property owners on this street are eager to do what's needed to be done to make this a place locals and visitors frequent. And ideally those people will visit by foot as they shop and eat along the way.

“It was like a breath of fresh air. There were people in the room who have lived here 40 years, some who have been here a year or two. It was fresh blood, it was the old boys network, it was people not on Ski Run, people around the corner and from the marina,” said Shannon O’Brien who owns Shannon’s Lake Tahoe Day Spa. “We want to get people to utilize the street for events, but also create a community space we can call our own where families can come shop, eat and play.”

O’Brien moved her business to Ski Run about 16 months ago and has been on the Ski Run Business Improvement District board for seven months.

A slew of city staff was on hand for the two-hour meeting that packed the upstairs at Riva Grill. Jerry Birdwell was the only councilman at the meeting. He owns the Black Bear Inn on Ski Run so he had a vested interest in attending the meeting.

The city paid Lani Lott of L.L. Consulting in Phoenix to facilitate the meeting. Although the city didn't go out for a request for proposal for her services, Lott is expected to continue to work with the city and Ski Run businesses.

The Ski Run BID was formed in 2003 to beautify the area. For now it still excludes the businesses at the marina, but that is likely to change soon. Businesses are assessed a fee that the city collects each year when business licenses are renewed. The money is used by the BID board to enhance the area.

Another thing that may change is including some of the businesses along Highway 50 that consider themselves part of the neighborhood. This will necessitate a vote of the businesses and ultimate approval by the City Council.

Meeting attendees sat at nearly a dozen tables, with each small group tasked with coming up with things they'd like to see improved and potential plans for the future.

Many of the ideas presented Wednesday were ones that have been broached in the past — bringing a farmers market to Ski Run, closing off the street between the highway and Pioneer Trail for events, having music, and turning the parcel Safeway owns into a city park.

Some of the upgrades talked about include hanging decorative banners, wreaths and flowers along the street lamps. Individual businesses do some of this, but it's not a collective effort.

It's possible the BID will morph into two entities — one to include property owners who care about how the area looks and one geared toward business owners who want to market the area.

Another public meeting is planned for March 10. The time and location have yet to be determined.

The BID board plans to fine-tune its bylaws a bit. Committees will be formed. And then the work will begin to implement some of the ideas discussed this week. The plan is to set immediate, two- and five-year goals.

Already Ski Run has a Facebook page to get its message out to the masses.