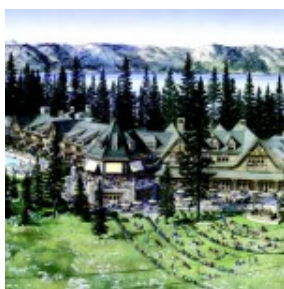


Homeowners rally to fight Homewood development

By Austin Fay

HOMEWOOD – Something has to be done in regards to the proposed Homewood Mountain Resort development. That was the overriding sentiment of Friday's meeting of the Friends of the West Shore, a nonprofit organization aiming to provide a community voice to Homewood's development plans.

Water usage, the height of the new lodge (which will almost be twice as high as the 32-foot-high existing north lodge), traffic and whether or not the new Homewood development fits into everyone's view of the West Shore were issues that brought people to the edge of their seats.



A rendering of what Homewood's owners would like to build.

This group of homeowners aims to incorporate environment, community and economic sustainability into what JMA Ventures of San Francisco wants to do. JMA bought the resort a few years ago and also now owns Alpine Meadows Ski Resort.

Currently, Homewood's population is just less than 370 full-time residents, with about 1,000 second homeowners. The

expansion proposal would almost double the town's population. The mountain is about 1,100 acres, including the base area.

The large elements of the 316 mixed-unit proposed plan will consist of a 75-room five-star boutique hotel, 40 condominium residences in the north base, 99 condominiums at the south base, 13 on-site residences for staff, 30 penthouse units, 36 residential condominiums with 20 lock-out units so the condo owner can rent the space, 16 townhomes, grocery store, a full-service restaurant, spa, fitness facility and up to 25,000 square feet of retail space.

Gold-level LEED certification will be sought from the U.S. Green Building Council.

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Homewood Mountain Resort's master plan is here.

Thirty community members gathered at the Rideout Community Center on the West Shore on July 2 to talk about what the developer wants to do. According to the group's handouts, Friends of the West Shore's goal "is to have the Homewood Mountain Resort development reflect and enhance the rustic quality and scale of surrounding community, historical buildings both past and present, and protect our natural resources."

The group also believes the developer's plans are too big and "the current HMR proposal will negatively change the character of the West Shore forever."

When asked by Roger Kahn, a small business owner, how many

were year-round West Shore residents, nine of the 30 raised a hand.

When asked if their financial wellbeing was dependent on the West Shore, five people raised a hand, including David Tirman, executive vice president with JMA Ventures. Tirman was there to field questions about the proposed development.

“Currently, the revenues are not covering the costs of (Homewood’s) operation,” Tirman said of the reason for the development.

But that isn’t good enough for some of the residents.

“We need to be alert on this issue, we can’t just close our eyes and say, ‘we can remain fine on this issue because Dave’s (Tirman) such a great guy and wouldn’t do anything wrong’,” Susan Gearhart, president of FOWS said. “But every issue on deck is a viable issue, the economics are a viable issue, the community is a very viable issue.”

Tom Rosenberg, a homeowner on the West Shore for 25 years, is writing an opinion piece for the July 4 *Sacramento Bee* discussing how “the leadership of the TRPA has lost its sense of direction ... and the way the Homewood project has been presented is very questionable.”

These are sentiments the group shares. Rosenberg is a writer who has taken an interest in FOWS, but is not a member.

“We’re not a five-star mountain, we’re never going to be a five-star mountain,” Claudia Williams, a Homewood resident, said after the meeting.

Rob Weston, a small business owner on the West Shore, put an emphasis on economic sustainability at the meeting.

“We have to remember what’s being proposed is a year-round resort – 100 year-round jobs on the West Shore,” Weston said.

He said most of the people at the meeting were NIMBYs (not in my backyard) and CAVE (citizens against virtually everything) because they are against development in Lake Tahoe.

The environmental impact report for the project is expected sometime in September. The public will have a chance to formally comment at that time.

The project is subject to Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Placer County oversight. Tirman expects to break ground in 2012 if permits are in hand, building ordinances are complied with, there's a buoyant economy, and no unforeseen obstacles.

The next meeting of Friends of the West Shore is at 10am July 24 at Tahoe City Public Utility District building at 330 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City. Residents of the West Shore will be able to ask questions and speak directly with TRPA representatives.