

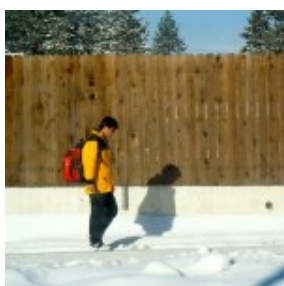
Cantilever walk to be built at S. Tahoe's 'convention center'

By Kathryn Reed

Normally before construction projects that impact pedestrians begin the first thing to be built is walkways for them. That didn't happen in 2007 when ground was broken at the would-be convention center in South Lake Tahoe. Instead, walkers and cyclists are next to traffic without any barrier.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke is appalled this was allowed to happen.

With the project stalled in bankruptcy court and projections construction will not begin until 2013 at the soonest, he wants to improve the area even if the bankrupt developer won't. The City Council this month approved the expenditure of nearly \$200,000 to build a cantilever walkway at the site next building season.



This time next year people won't have to walk in the street next to the fenced bankrupt

convention
center
project.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

The council on a 3-1 vote went along with this \$183,000 idea presented to them by Jim Marino, the city's assistant engineer. Councilman Bruce Grego was absent from the Nov. 16 meeting. Mayor Kathay Lovell voted no without explanation.

The money to pay for the project comes from taxes being collected by the city's Redevelopment Agency from the site via property tax dollars.

"We need the cantilever because of the elevation change," Marino explained.

Marino said if the same project the city and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency approved for the 11-plus acre site at the state line were built, the new sidewalk would be taken out to bring the first floor decking to street level.

"It solves two problems," Councilman Bill Crawford said. "We get a little bit better physical appearance and it's a safer place for pedestrians, and we possibly avoid trouble down the road."

Lovell questioned whether the cantilever design would put the city more at-risk in terms of liability.

"The cantilever should not increase liability. We can get design immunity," City Attorney Patrick Enright told her.

Staff will have to work with Caltrans to get the necessary right-of-way issues worked out. With the cantilever plan, it means getting rid of the concrete barriers now dividing the fence and highway.

The schedule is have the design and engineering done by mid-January, Caltrans permits in hand by mid-April, bids open in May, project awarded June 6, and construction done July 26.