

City, TRPA at odds over what potential Y tenants need to do

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe officials are being vague about what the boarded up Mikasa-Miller's Outpost site might be turned into. At the same time, they are frustrated with TRPA allegedly being obstructionists to getting tenants into the Y retail center.

"The biggest stumbling block is the required traffic study and air mitigation fee," City Manager Tony O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Nowhere else have I run into something like this."



Work is going forward to fill in the blank sign at the Y.
Photo/LTN file

O'Rourke said it's unusual for a property zoned for retail to have to go through the types of studies the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is requesting when the use is not changing.

Based on the bi-state regulatory agency's 1987 Regional Plan,

any building that has not been used for 90 days in a two-year period must go through this sort of analysis.

“It’s standard throughout California for any new business to offset their traffic impacts and that’s why a traffic analysis is needed for the property. Taking a fresh look at potential traffic impacts going forward is actually in the best interest of the new business to make sure any mitigation costs are based on reality during this down economy versus being tied to a textbook formula,” explained Julie Regan, TRPA’s chief of external affairs.

O’Rourke said the air quality fee could cost the entire center about \$160,000.

To this, Regan said, “The cost estimate of \$160,000 for a traffic study seems on the high side to our planners so perhaps there’s an opportunity for our transportation team members to assist in making the project less expensive for the applicant.”

City Councilman Tom Davis at a South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association meeting last week told that board, which he is a member of, a company out of London that has stores in Southern California is looking to move into the Y location. He reiterated his frustrations with TRPA at today’s City Council meeting.

He said the tenants are proposing about \$1 million in improvements. Davis said four businesses may occupy the center that was last anchored by Miller’s Outpost and Mikasa.

O’Rourke said a few potential tenants have been speaking with the Garfinkle family, the property owners. This rendering is what was proposed at one time for the area.

What the area would be transformed into remains to be seen. Because a community plan has not been done at the Y, any redevelopment is limited. However, the Tahoe Valley Community

Plan is expected to be discussed in a work session by the South Lake Tahoe City Council on April 19.

“TRPA supports economic revitalization of the Y area, especially since the old Mikasa site is nearly 100 percent covered with asphalt which affects water quality,” Regan said.

O’Rourke isn’t convinced, stating TRPA’s rules are killing redevelopment and in these competitive economic times roadblocks and added costs could send potential investors elsewhere.