

# Opinion: TRPA and city working together on redevelopment

By Julie Regan

A recent article on LakeTahoeNews.net has created unfortunate speculation and misinformation about TRPA's role in redevelopment. Having moved to Lake Tahoe in the early 1990s, I know firsthand that public discourse can tend to jump to the negative. I believe we need to take every opportunity to promote informed, civil dialogue, so here are five key facts to add to the conversation.

**Fact No. 1:** TRPA supports environmental redevelopment projects that prove to be beneficial to the local economy and the environment. Consider the fact that our staff in recent years has recommended approval of affordable housing near Ski Run, the Red Hut plaza redevelopment, and the Heavenly Gondola Village.



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In addition, we are recommending approval of the Boulder Bay redevelopment project at the present Tahoe Biltmore site in Crystal Bay. I mention this project because the city, TRPA, and the community can learn from the innovative design principles being proposed by Boulder Bay to help us revitalize the Y area.

**Fact No. 2:** TRPA is part of this community. Our dedicated employees live here, raise families here, and support the economy and the community in innumerable ways. While the habit of blaming TRPA as the scapegoat for all occasions will always be the orientation of some, the causes of the dismal state of the Tahoe economy are far more complex than any single source. Widespread problems are affecting tourist towns across the country. Closer to home, the rise of Native American gaming throughout California and the resulting loss of casino jobs is a significant driver of our current economic turmoil. Add to that shifting demographics with second homeownership spiking, the national recession, the bubble bursting in our real estate market, and the facts tell the story. TRPA certainly has a role to play and we take responsibility that our environmental regulations are a factor in the mix. But TRPA is updating itself and changing with the times – we are trying to be part of the solution now, not the problem.

**Fact No. 3:** No one has applied for a permit to redevelop the Mikasa site at this point. The entire discussion about a potential \$160,000 fee is based purely on speculation. When a permit application does come in, there may in fact be no fee at all. The city will be working with any prospective businesses at the Y and TRPA's transportation specialists will assist in making the project work for our community.

**Fact No. 4:** When a business comes forward with a permit application for the Mikasa site, the city will be the permit review entity – not TRPA. Assuming the outcome in the absence of facts generally does not move our town forward. If there were any air quality/traffic mitigation fees, they would go back to the city, not to TRPA, for transportation or air quality improvements. Such funds are legally restricted to on-the-ground environmental improvements like bike trails, intersection improvements, or sidewalks.

**Fact No. 5:** Ten years of scientific research has shown that stormwater runoff from developed areas is causing the lake's

clarity decline. Doing nothing and leaving run-down, vacant buildings as they are actually hurts the Lake more than redeveloping the built environment. TRPA wants to see the economic revitalization of our town, especially considering the lake and community will benefit as well. This means we all have to work together to get the job done. I'm committed to this because I care about my community and the lake. I know you do too.

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