

TRPA extension designed to spur redevelopment in basin

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – South Lake Tahoe developers and property owners have two years to come up with a viable plan to transform the Raley's and Mikasa centers at the Y and still retain special incentives from TRPA.

Both properties are part of the Community Enhancement Program the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency initiated in 2008.

“The focus of the CEP is to encourage revitalization projects in downtown and recreation areas that demonstrate substantial environmental, as well as social and economic benefits. The program provides incentives for mixed-use development projects on existing disturbed or underutilized sites,” TRPA's website says.



The old Mikasa and Miller's Outpost buildings are part of the Community Enhancement Program.

Photo/LTN file

Big components of the CEP are allocations for commercial floor area, tourist accommodation units and multi-residential bonus units. TRPA has in effect made these items commodities that are sold and traded among jurisdictions. There are also a limited number of them arbitrarily set by the TRPA. The CEP has added to that overall pot without the project developers needing to secure them in some other way.

While the Governing Board of the bi-state regulatory agency at its February meeting cited economics and the realization project proponents are not able to get financing as reasons to extend the CEP permit for two years, the truth is no movement has even occurred at the two South Tahoe locations.

This compares to Homewood, which is in the middle of the environmental document process. Boulder Bay – the project to renovate the Tahoe Biltmore in Crystal Bay – will be before the Governing Board on March 23.

“Limbo” is the word Hilary Hodges, interim director of the Development Service Department for South Lake Tahoe, used this week in describing to *Lake Tahoe News* where the Tahoe Valley Community Plan is. That document is relevant to the CEP discussion because without it developers must work in the confines of current zoning regulations.

Building heights and multi-use projects would likely be stumbling blocks working with today’s rules. Those issues are being addressed in the city’s General Plan and TRPA’s Regional Plan.

The odd thing is the TRPA stipulation for a project to be included in the CEP was it had to be part of an approved community plan. Neither of the South Tahoe projects is in a community plan because one is not approved for the Y. A plan area statement governs that area, but that is not in the league of a community plan.

“The two CEPs at the Y are in the program with the condition

that they can't break ground until an approved community plan is adopted for Tahoe Valley," explained TRPA spokesman Jeff Cowen. "Homewood is doing its master plan as part of its CEP application."

Hodges said, "The city would like to move Tahoe Valley forward." The problem is TRPA's Regional Plan update that was originally supposed to be approved in 2007 has had one delay after another. The importance of the Regional Plan's completion is so the city's document would conform to it. If it doesn't, then it's possible lawsuits would ensue or permits would never be issued.

Hodges would not venture a guess to when the Tahoe Valley Plan would come before the council. Last year the original community team came together in hopes there would be movement, but TRPA expressed concerns with going forward, so the group was disbanded again.

At the TRPA meeting last week, Wyatt Ogilvy spoke on behalf of the BB LLC project on 18 acres in downtown Kings Beach. The mixed-use project is one of nine CEP projects.

"Ultimately by providing a two-year extension you provide the incentive to move forward and adequate time," Ogilvy told the board. He said his group is going forward with hiring an environmental consultant to prepare the necessary documents.

Dave Ferrari, general manager of Ferrari's Family Resort in Kings Beach, has plans to overhaul their business, which would also come with significant environmental improvements.

"Our head is above water, but not by much," Ferrari said. He said it's hard to move forward with short time lines to get things done when financing is not in place and permitting and environmental review can take years.

Ultimately the board agreed to the two-year extension of the CEP permits, with a review of where the projects are in one

year.