

Nothing common about S. Tahoe's lakeview project

By Kathryn Reed

While the hum of men and their machines permeate the air, so does the anticipation of what Lakeview Commons will be when the work is completed in a month.

The \$6 million project in South Lake Tahoe on the waterfront at El Dorado Beach is winding down. A TRPA extension is allowing dirt to be moved through Friday, though that may need to be extended into next week. (Usually dirt in the basin can't be moved past Oct. 15.)

The eyesore is gone and the dream of a team of community activists is nearly a reality.



Work on
Lakeview
Commons in
South Lake
Tahoe should
be done in
November.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Hand-cut rock quarried from the Carson City-Mound House area is still being placed. But most of the terraced area closest

to Lake Tahoe is done. What was once a steep hill of unattractive dirt is now seating for those who want to stare into the emerald water.

While the beach was always popular with tourists, especially with Campground by the Lake being on the other side of Highway 50, it's likely locals will frequent this area in the future.

Even in its raw form, the beauty is evident. From the highway the transformation is not obvious. The dirt that can be seen at street level will be covered with paving stones.

The 27 picnic tables and 20 barbecues still need to be installed. A double built-in barbecue with cooktop is near the boathouse. This will be open to the public.

In that area will be a stone gas fire pit with seating area. The city or its concessionaire will power up the pit.

While it has not been decided if the construction fence will come down for the winter (fine tuning needs to be done in the spring), it is from the water that the renewal of this area is most dramatic.

This has become a one-of-a-kind place on the South Shore.

"It takes a team," Steve Jessop with Clark and Sullivan construction firm told *Lake Tahoe News* during a private tour Wednesday. "It's been a fast-paced project."

While the project is a year late because of legal issues, the city has been pleased with the company's professionalism and speed (especially with winter lasting into June) to accomplish what it has to date.

Jim Marino, who is overseeing the project for the city, is a bit like a kid showing off a new toy. And he's a bit like a proud father showing off his adopted baby. After all, he has not been part of the project since Day 1.

Walking through the site Marino talks about how he envisions events being staged at Lakeview Commons – concerts, kids programs – he sees no limit to the possibilities.

Not in the original design was power at the beach. This was added so if events were to be staged there, electricity is in place.

While the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency allowed overhead lights at Sand Harbor and Tahoe City Commons, the bi-state regulatory agency nixed that from Lakeview Commons. So, instead, the lights are built into walls.

Other lights will be installed in the railing at the east end of the project. A stainless steel railing that is part of the structural wall still needs its cedar cap. Under that cap will be LED lights.

Native plants, under the direction of landscape architect Brett Long, are still being put into the ground. Part of the landscaping is designed to help stabilize the slope.

As with any project, surprises and changes were part of the process. Concrete footing were buried – and had to be removed. Marino said they could have been there since the 1940s or '50s.

The boathouse

Finishing touches are being put on the bi-level building that will provide food up top and house non-motorized boats below. Cooking apparatuses will not be installed so the concessionaire does not compete against local businesses, Marino said.

It's expected the city this winter will put out a request for proposal seeking a concessionaire to run the whole operation. There is still some question as to what the original deed that gave the property to El Dorado County says is an allowable use

in terms of for-profit entities. Recreation and open space are what the original group of property owners from the 1920s wanted the land to always be used for.

In the beginning when Lakeview Commons was just a concept the idea was for the boathouse to store boats for the public. It may be that boats could also be rented from there – canoes, kayaks, paddleboards – nothing with a motor.

It has been built to LEED gold standards. Solar panels should help generate enough electricity that it will be self-sustaining.

Bathrooms are part of the facility.

Across Lakeview Avenue the existing restrooms will be demolished next year and new ones built with a Department of Boating and Waterways grant.

What's next?

The steel railing is the end point of phase one. Phase two goes to Rufus Allen Boulevard and will include a cantilever bridge. While TRPA is OK with that, it will be Caltrans that needs to be convinced an encroachment permit should be granted and that the bridge is a good idea.

A grant from the California Tahoe Conservancy supplied the funding for phase one. But the \$2.4 million to \$2.7 million needed for phase two remains elusive.

Nor is there money to complete the improvement on the campground side of the highway. All of this at one time was called the 56-acre project – because it is 56 acres. El Dorado County owns 40 of those acres, which is leased by South Lake Tahoe. The city owns the remainder.

Peter Eichar with the Conservancy said the ball is the city and county's court in terms of how things proceed. With the state agency without dollars, it is not in a position to help

at this point.

A dilapidated pier is swimming distance from shore. One day the city wants to replace it. While safety and aesthetic reasons call for its removal, TRPA rules are such that if a pier is removed, the owner has two years to replace it or they lose the right to do so. The city doesn't want to take that chance.

It's possible as the city plots out its list of capital improvement projects each year, that phase two of Lakeview Commons will become a priority. Some of the council members will be touring the site today.

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