

# Linear Park upgrades expected to begin in summer

By Kathryn Reed

While the word “park” is in its name, this is not the four-letter word most would use for the stretch of land from Lake Tahoe Vacation Resort to Holiday Inn Express. “Ugly” is what it is.

Linear Park is going to get a complete makeover, with completion likely in 2013. It’s possible a final design plan will be in place in March.

Right now dirt, dead plants and non-working lights line the sides of the bike-pedestrian path that parallels Highway 50 and the gated Tahoe Meadows area.



The dirt and trail along Highway 50 known as Linear Park is about to be upgraded.

Photo/LTN

It is the residents of Tahoe Meadows who gave the city the land to create this park. The homeowners owned the land into the first travel lane of Highway 50.

But it was the Washoe who first called this area home – long before white people put gates around it to regulate who could access this lakefront property.

Tahoe Meadows was once a frequent fishing area for the Washoe, who spent their summers at Lake Tahoe. There was a pond nearby that was used to store the fish until the tribe needed them for food.

It is because of this history that it was decided by the now defunct city arts council to erect a statue in that location to honor the Washoe Tribe. The statue on the west end of the park was created by Arnold Aragon. It portrays a typical Washoe woman. Though Aragon, who lives in Schurz, Nev., is Crow and Laguna, he is married to a Washoe woman.

After it was erected in 2000, the original pedestal on which the statue sits began to crumble. In stepped the now-defunct Core 24 Charities, of which this reporter was a member. In 2005, a more durable quartzite pedestal was built. Tahoe Sand and Gravel donated materials.

The arts council had intended to place plaques in a semicircle that would have told the story of the Washoe. Money prevented that from happening.

However, after the revamped pedestal was put in, the city paid for a single plaque to be installed.

Core 24 when it disbanded gave the city more than \$20,000 to be used exclusively on upgrades to linear park. After all, the group had worked with the city and South Tahoe Public Utility District to establish a 2-inch water hookup near the old Shell station to supply needed irrigation. The group also planted 1,000 daffodil bulbs around the pedestal that to this day bloom each year.

It won't be until a March City Council meeting that the \$20,000 gets placed in the appropriate fund.

At the Feb. 21 City Council meeting the five approved an agreement with Brett Long Landscape Architecture for planning, design and construction support services.

The staff report says, "The preliminary project scope includes improving the existing landscaping, upgrading irrigation and supply, providing bus shelter pads and enclosures, class 1 bicycle trail repair and installing pedestrian lighting."

Councilman Tom Davis wants better lighting than what is on Ski Run Boulevard so pedestrians don't go from dark to light to dark. But it is those types of overhead lights that are proposed.

For one, they meet Tahoe Regional Planning Agency guidelines. They are also more compatible when houses are nearby because of spreading less light.

Nancy Kerry, who was acting city manager for the week while Tony O'Rourke was out of town, said the Tahoe Meadows Homeowners Association is willing to discuss the lighting issue.

The entire cost of the project is estimated between \$250,000 and \$370,000. The higher cost is if the bike path is revamped.

Long hopes the landscaping could be in place this summer. While native plants will be used, it's likely grass will go in some areas, along with adaptive accent plants.

When the park was first developed in the 1990s the irrigation system was not adequate and the plants died. People have continuously kicked in the low-level light standards. Now it is just rundown.

Long believes improvements can be ongoing after the initial upgrades are made – like signs and benches.