

Douglas County approves South Shore Area Plan

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board next month will tackle the initial area plan under the 6-month-old Regional Plan.

In what some thought would be a big deal has been a rather easy process to date. On Thursday, the Douglas County commissioners approved all of the items associated with the South Shore Area Plan on 4-0 votes, with Lee Bonner absent.

While the League to Save Lake Tahoe submitted two letters and the Sierra Club one and reps from both groups spoke June 20, there was no other opposition.



With Douglas County approving new design guidelines, it's possible the Stateline casino core could have a more modern, even alpine look one day.

Photo/LTN file

They are likely to repeat what they said this week at the July

10 TRPA Advisory Planning Commission meeting and July 24 Governing Board meeting.

Douglas County opted to go with an environmental checklist for its review instead of a more stringent environmental process. Staff believes that by following what is in the Regional Plan, which had an environmental impact report and environmental impact statement, that duplicating those efforts was not needed.

Jennifer Quashnick with the Tahoe Area Sierra Club said there is a gap between the Regional Plan and checklist, adding that many of the changes have not been studied.

There is also a memorandum of understanding between the county and TRPA that the conservation groups have an issue with that is likely to be debated further at the TRPA level.

Richard Shaw, with Design Workshop in Aspen, developed the design standards and guidelines for the area plan. He is also the man behind the South Shore Vision Plan and Tahoe City's Vision.

"It's a visual guide that establishes the character for the area that is consistent with the mountain setting and environmental conditions," Shaw said.

He told the commission he sees the document as a guide to what the area could become. He said with revitalization, the South Shore has the "capability to be a full resort community."

This area plan affects the casino area of Stateline and Lower Kingsbury Grade.

This is a program document. Any projects must still be approved, and depending on what they are may require TRPA approval.

The county and South Lake Tahoe have been talking as each goes through the area plan process. The goal is that similar design

guidelines will be adopted so it looks like one contiguous community.

This is more likely to happen if the casinos revamp their facades.

South Lake Tahoe's plan on the other side of the state line will be the next one the TRPA will review. First, though, it has few local processes to go through. A special council meeting is set for July 2 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport, then the negative declaration will be released for a 30-day review. The Planning Commission will discuss the plan Aug. 8 and it will be on the council's agenda Aug. 20. The APC and Governing Board will vote in September.

A difference with the city is that it must adhere to the California Environmental Quality Act, which can slow the process down.