

Opinion: Tahoe City residents being ignored in planning



This is one vision for a section of Tahoe City. Rendering/Design Workshop

By Melody Monk

As a long time Tahoe City resident, arriving in 1972, I am concerned the Tahoe City Community Plan decision making process has been seized by special interests: Tahoe City Public Utility District, Chamber of Commerce, and the Resort Association.

I attended a Tahoe City “visioning” meeting May 8, 2013, at the Gatekeepers Museum and found that the committee members, sadly, had no patience for any public comment, and second homeowners and locals appear to be left out of the conversation. We live here, what do we all really want?

The committee members are hell bent on maximizing development, scale and height. I guess this is only natural for the Chamber of Commerce, Tahoe City business owners, the Resort Association, and now the TCPUD as owners of the golf course. Although the Tahoe City Golf Course was purchased with supposedly no intent to develop it, now there is talk of a huge hotel right on that golf course, which was purchased with our public money.

Most of us moved up here, being willing to live a harder lifestyle in the mountains, to be among nature and our beautiful and very rare clear lake, and to take care of that gift. No one at the meeting was speaking about what we leave future generations, the vastly growing algae in Lake Tahoe, the animals or the forest or the detrimental effects of large resort development. It brought tears to my eyes, literally.

TRPA designated "Town Centers" as areas targeted for redevelopment. Tahoe City is a designated town center that would shockingly allow up to 56 feet in height and 40 units/acre density compared to the present allowable 34 feet in height and 15 units/acre density. That's a huge difference. The Tahoe City team is even going for the maximum height allowed of 56 feet. To give you a comparison, the new unsightly Domas building in Kings Beach is 48 feet. Interestingly, the Kings Beach Plan team doesn't want heights greater than 48 feet and those only on the mountain side of the highway. Smartly, they want to keep the low scale beach feel. I'd like to see the same in Tahoe City. Why visit Lake Tahoe when you can't even see the lake?

In the last few minutes of the meeting, the team all agreed to incorporate more parcels into the Tahoe City Town Center: the Golf Course (owned by the TCPUD using our money), "64 Acres" where the empty and little used Transit Station is located, and the lakefront parcel located between Tahoe Tavern and Tavern Shores. These three large parcels will be zoned "mixed use recreation", which with these changes certainly doesn't mean open space. Recreational use businesses can, and probably will, fill the area because they can.

This is all justified by "trying to save a dying Tahoe City". I wonder about the wisdom of embracing large resort development like Northstar and Squaw's new condo proposal and water park (we need this by Lake Tahoe?) as the solution to the economic woes of the recession. It seems to me low scale development on the order of Truckee, Calistoga, Santa Cruz,

Carmel, Yountville, and Healdsburg ... authentic mountain charm, is the real solution. These are the places people really want to go.

How can Tahoe City compete with Northstar's horseback riding, golf, tennis, pool, bike trails, skiing, and skating rink, and why would we? Don't get me started on the proposed Northstar roller coaster. What? Tahoe City has Lake Tahoe and bike trails, but it needs its open space and opportunities for recreation. Let's have more to do, more quality low scale lodging, and the right amount of commercial given the limitations of our infrastructure and small population. Please!

We're already at maximum capacity for the summer and New Year's holidays. And that's the stated opinion of the Chamber of Commerce. We don't want to look like South Lake Tahoe. Let's keep our quaint charm. Who wants to leave the city to visit just another overdeveloped city?

Please, people, get involved and find out what is in store for you if no one becomes aware of what is being planned or takes any action. Gentrification is not good. Read "Down Hill Slide" by Hal Clifford to see what happened with the rape of Vail. Don't be fooled by the "green wash" postcards being mailed. Please check it out yourself. I'm honestly scared for our beautiful jewel, Lake Tahoe.

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