

# Opinion: Tahoe's progress is infectious

By Joanne Marchetta

It's been almost a year since the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency adopted a new blueprint for the future of Lake Tahoe. That day we came together around a common vision and the adoption of the new Lake Tahoe Regional Plan propelled us past planning and finally to action.

Whether your passion for Tahoe is a better environment, a better economy, or better social conditions in our communities – or all of it together – that common vision has something that'll work for everyone.



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**So let's pause for a moment and take stock on our progress since a year ago:**

- New bike and pedestrian trail connections are being completed all around the lake. You can now ride or stroll from Nevada Beach to Round Hill Pines Beach or all the way from Sugar Pine Point State Park to Dollar Hill.
- A new community house is coming on-line in Kings Beach – a rehabilitated motel is now a beautiful new nonprofit social services center for anyone in need.

- The Aspens, a \$9.5 million, 48-unit affordable housing project in South Lake Tahoe is finishing construction and is companion to the Domus affordable housing units completed in Kings Beach last year.
- Engaged citizens in the city of South Lake Tahoe with a passion for sustainability helped pass a new law limiting plastic bag use.
- Local residents championed new business and arts initiatives to benefit the community at a recent South Shore economic forum.
- The long-planned \$18 million Highway 89 Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization project in Tahoe City is now fully funded and construction plans are expected out next year.
- Along Highway 50, old dirt paths are now new sidewalks with curbs, gutters, bus shelters, and street lighting and more areas of this historic road are slated for the same.

The lessons of sustainability have taught us that all of these things are connected. Each of them is important for Lake Tahoe's health and they were made to happen by people who stepped in and got involved. Restoring our ecosystem and our communities together relies on new ideas coming equally from grassroots organizations, individuals, business groups, and agencies. The Regional Plan brought together the broadest coalition of supporters that the basin has seen in decades and today even more people are showing they are willing to step in, participate, and even lead Lake Tahoe's communities forward.

Local governments are stepping in to work within their communities to create area plans that will direct environmental improvements and future redevelopment efforts in town centers around the lake. Lake Tahoe Community College is

stepping in to create new education plans for students and the community. The city of South Lake Tahoe is contributing updated recreation strategies, and the Tahoe Prosperity Center is working to upgrade the basin's digital signal capacity to serve visitors and make business connections reliable. Whatever your interest or passion, there is a place for you to get involved.

Positive progress in Tahoe is catching. We are also hearing from other communities that they want to learn from us. Lake Tahoe is often looked to as a leader in environmental protection from areas like the Adirondacks in New York and Lake Atitlan in Guatemala, and we are growing our reputation as a model for sustainability. At the 2013 Lake Tahoe Summit this August at Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park at Sand Harbor, Al Gore returned to our mountain lake for the first time since 1997 when he and then-President Bill Clinton convened the first summit. Gore delivered a call to action for all of us. He challenged us to make Lake Tahoe a place known not only for its awe-inspiring beauty, but also for the commitment we share to advancing sustainability and becoming a model for the globe.

These positive changes are coming at a critical time for Lake Tahoe. Water quality improvements that have resulted from earlier plans are proving to have a beneficial effect on the lake's clarity. Science is showing that increased investment in infrastructure is a key driver of environmental gains. Now more than ever we need to choose to step in, to work together, and to look ahead. There will be those that encourage us to stop and look only backward. I encourage you to look around, find a place where you can get involved, and join us in moving forward.

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