

# TRPA OKs S. Tahoe's blueprint to revitalization

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – A sense of hope filled the packed room Wednesday as the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board unanimously approved South Lake Tahoe's Tourist Core Area Plan.

Of the 16 people who spoke Nov. 20, only Jennifer Quashnick representing the Tahoe Area Sierra Club and Friends of the West Shore was against the plan. She represents the two groups suing the TRPA over the Regional Plan that was adopted nearly a year ago.

Nearly every person who spoke after her later mocked Quashnick, who said she had the support of the more than 2.4 million Sierra Club members. The speakers then said how many people they represent.



South Tahoe officials want more of the town to be visually appealing like Heavenly Village. Photo/LTN file

Even Governing Board Member Bill Yeats, who is an ardent

supporter of the Sierra Club and has been the group's attorney, said he was pretty sure not every member was in lockstep with her.

He went on to say, "I find it difficult to agree with (the Sierra Club), but find no problem with this plan."

Coverage and height issues have been some of the concerns with the plan. These are some of same concerns people raised as the Regional Plan was being updated. Today's thinking is that if there are town centers, then people will park once and walk to places. The goal is also have mixed uses in these areas.

"No new coverage can be created," Hal Cole, South Lake Tahoe's rep to the board, said. "Since 1987 we have been trying to repair the damage done since the 1960s."

1987 was when the first Regional Plan was adopted. While it limited growth, it also was a stumbling block to redevelopment. The 1960s brought shoddy construction, an abundance of hotel rooms for the Winter Olympics that were at Squaw and unprecedented development without any concern for the environment.

South Tahoe's plan complements the area plan approved earlier this fall for Douglas County's commercial area at the South Shore.

While the area plans do not have specific projects associated with them, they do provide incentives for private landowners. Part of this has to do with swapping land coverage from sensitive areas to the town centers, streamlining the permitting process, and access to commodities like commercial floor area and tourist accommodation units.

The South Lake Tahoe plan covers the same area as the community plan adopted in 1994 that went from Stateline to Ski Run Boulevard. The area plan is a new tool that TRPA wants jurisdictions to use in conjunction with the Regional Plan.

Hilary Roverud, who runs the city's planning department, told the board since the 1994 document was approved more than 1 million square feet of coverage have been removed from that area, vehicle miles have been reduced, and stormwater runoff has been captured so not as much sediment is reaching Lake Tahoe.

"Without redevelopment, today we are looking toward the Tourist Core Area Plan to help create public-private partnerships," Roverud said.

The city on this same day took a major step in stimulating cash flow from that area. The \$7 million parking garage bonds were refinanced Nov. 20 at an average interest rate of 4.94 percent. The 30-year bonds have a 5.1 percent interest rate. The old rate was more than 7 percent. This means a more than \$250,000 annual savings to South Lake Tahoe.

The area plan will come back to the City Council because TRPA made some changes. One item deals with strengthening coverage reduction and stream environmental zone restoration strategies, and another centers on improving total maximum daily load coordination. Here are the area plan modifications.

The City Council has one meeting in December – on Dec. 10.