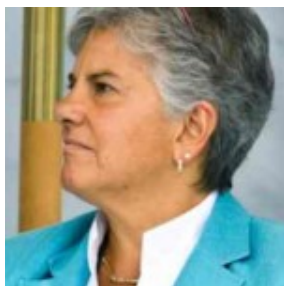


Opinion: Sustainable Lake Tahoe becoming reality

By Joanne Marchetta

We were invited to give the opening presentation at a national conference of weather journalists this month on the South Shore called Operation Sierra Storm. The main theme was Tahoe as a world leader in environmental sustainability and as we move into this new era of climate change, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has a lot to share with the world about what is happening here to adapt to the threats that come with it.

In the face of climate change, we all can contribute and make a difference. Sustainability for Lake Tahoe communities includes bringing mobility options, natural resource protection, health and social well-being, and a healthy economy together in ways that increase the long-term resilience of the natural and built environments. A number of sustainability actions are taking place at all levels around Lake Tahoe – from local green building codes to major transportation improvements – and 2014 is shaping up to be a critical year to press forward on climate change priorities and continue the positive progress happening in our communities.



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First, the TRPA has partnered with other agencies and

organizations to form the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program to bring a cohesive approach to everyone's efforts. The program is implementing greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies across the basin and will establish sustainability indicators as part of Lake Tahoe's climate action plan. The collaborative group is expected to release the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Action Plan in February with the Tahoe basin's first complete greenhouse gas emissions inventory.

It's also important to know that while this new partnership is taking shape in the basin, Lake Tahoe's sturdy regional framework has already put many sustainability measures in place. TRPA years ago established an urban boundary to stop sprawl, capped the roadway capacity of the Basin to reduce reliance on the private automobile, integrated land use and transportation plans, and set environmental standards on new development to stop additional impacts.

TRPA adopted the new Lake Tahoe Regional Plan in 2012 moving the basin into the 21st century with incentives for property owners to upgrade buildings with modern environmental design and to redesign town centers more around walking and biking. When we look at what has been done here to reduce our footprint on Lake Tahoe, there is a lot that is exportable to other communities and it is no wonder that conferences like Operation Sierra Storm are drawing people to come learn from us.

While implementation of the Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan is projected to reduce per capita emissions in the region by 7 percent by 2035, those reductions account for only mobile sources of greenhouse gases like cars and light trucks. The emissions inventory is showing that stationary sources like homes and buildings are an area where big improvements could also be realized. The Sustainable Communities Program is working to establish minimum energy efficiency standards for new buildings in the Lake Tahoe Basin through local Area Plans and building codes. The partnership is bringing together

existing actions with new and innovative ideas.

Along with the Sustainable Communities Program, TRPA in its role as the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization is making it possible to implement mobility options in our transportation plans. We are opening a grant program this month to bring forward community-based ideas for mobility and streetscape improvement projects. Called the On Our Way Community Grant Program, we are looking for community-based organizations to identify local improvements that will enhance streets and neighborhoods. The first grant application round will run from Jan. 15 to March 14. The program aims to help meet regional goals of encouraging biking, walking and transit use and supporting economic vitality by studying neighborhood-level improvements such as safe routes to schools and downtown street-design projects.

And last, there are more people all around us who are changing their daily habits to make a healthier Lake Tahoe and more sustainable planet. Whether you are shopping locally, insulating your home, or leaving your car at home one day a week, you are part of what will make Tahoe a better place to live. If you are one of the many who are stepping up with new ideas or are prepared to lead your community forward, I encourage you to find out more about the sustainability efforts taking shape in the Region and get involved. Lake Tahoe is on a world stage and we have an opportunity not only to adapt our communities to climate change, but to set an example for communities around the nation and the globe.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.