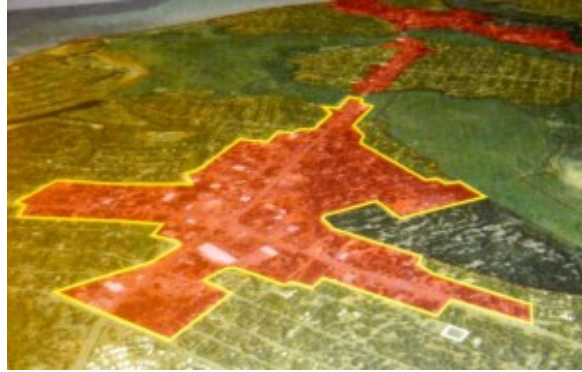


S. Tahoe embarks – again – on a plan for the Y



The cover of the draft Tahoe Valley Community Plan from March 2007. The area of study is largely the same today. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

A greenbelt going behind McDonald's and CVS at the Y in South Lake Tahoe. Another on the other side of Highway 50. Both being multidimensional by being stormwater basins, greenways and recreation conduits.

Those are ideas being floated in the Tahoe Valley Area Plan.

More than 60 people interested in what South Lake Tahoe is going to do with the Y attended a meeting Feb. 27 to offer input and hear what the city is thinking. Area plans are the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's latest planning tool for jurisdictions.

The city for years has tried to come up with a plan for what is considered the locals' side of town. It has never happened.

A team of community members in 2007 came up with a plan only to have the city wrestle it from their grip.

In a September 2009 *Lake Tahoe News* story Pat Frega, who served as a city planning commissioner and a Tahoe Valley Community Plan committee member, said at the time that even after two years, a majority of the dozen citizens who served on the community group still felt the project "was hijacked" by a council subcommittee because "we were going on a different course than what they wanted."

The city took over and came up with a plan. It, too, went nowhere.

City officials say they are determined to have a plan approved, with the goal of it being completed by the end of the year.

Another idea is to have a health care campus concept for Barton Health.

"We are encouraging the hospital to create a master plan for the whole district," John Hitchcock, city planner, said. "It would integrate all of their facilities."

The original plan talked about having a mountain feel. But it was acknowledged that could mean different things to different people.

Paul Brusso, owner of Ernie's restaurant, and Dan Passaretti of Passaretti's restaurant both voiced concern about whether their businesses would conform to whatever zoning rules the city implements. "Yes" was the answer.

People had the opportunity to place sticky dots on pictures of mountain architecture they liked. The Cedar House Sport Hotel in Truckee had the most dots.

One person expressed a desire to have mountain architecture, but hoped that there would still be room for originality so everything did not look the same.

Architect Keith Klein said it's important to take into

consideration what people see at eye level, especially if eye level is from the seat of a vehicle.

"You can put up a 3-foot fence and hide cars," Klein said in a veiled reference to Runnels Automotive.

John Runnels said he has wanted to make improvements since the 1980s. Interest rates stopped him in 1981 and then the city said wait until the 1993 plan was done. But no plan has ever been approved for the Y.

While people embraced connecting the areas of town, several said they never see the Y area as someplace that will be pedestrian oriented, especially when it comes to locals going to stores via foot from their residences.

Height of buildings has been an issue with other area plans in the basin. On Thursday it did not present a huge dilemma. People wanted to understand what 56 feet would look like. That is what the TRPA Regional Plan allows for in town centers.

Embassy Suites is 80 feet, the parking garage is about 50 feet.

Chuck Nelson had a handout of an elevated circular bypass for cyclists that Holland has built that he could see being put in at the Y.

Jerome Evans, who worked on community plan, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "There is no reason to believe any of this will happen. They are making everyone feel good and nothing is happening."

The area plan is not a project, but instead a blueprint for what the Y could evolve into. It will be up to the city and private individuals to devise projects that will go through a separate approval process.

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Notes:

- The South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission will discuss the area plan March 13.
- The City Council will talk about it April 1.
- Another public workshop is set for late April.