

Letter: Meyers Catalyst Project renamed

To the community,

Meyers: Did you know the Catalyst Project is back on the table?

The following letter and referenced attachments will also be provided to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors for the Oct. 28 meeting.

The Meyers community deserves a clear and transparent process:

Our efforts, along with others in the community, have focused on engaging the public, repeatedly requesting the county and TRPA to ensure full community involvement, including the use of a validated survey, and attempting to help convert the acronyms, ever-changing terminology, and “TRPA-speak” into terms the general public can better understand. There are many issues which have not yet been vetted with the Meyers community. In addition, the Meyers Community extends well beyond those who were able to attend a 9am meeting on a workday (Oct. 16), and members of the Nevada-side’s Tahoe Chamber.

We were told by our county supervisor that our community gets to decide what we want built here.

“What can be built in Meyers is up to the community of Meyers.” – Supervisor Norma Santiago, Feb. 23, 2014, guest column

We were also told the Catalyst Project was gone.

“The catalyst project is dead. You have my word on it. If you want, I’ll put it in writing.” – Supervisor Santiago, Feb. 26, 2014

“There is no catalyst project. There is no large development.” – Supervisor Santiago, Feb. 23, 2014.

However, the current recommendations to move forward with a plan that is contrary to most public feedback, that pushes TRPA’s new zoning on our community without full vetting with the public, and that recommends the inclusion of the provisions which allowed the “Catalyst Project” in the plan, run contrary to the promises made to our community.

El Dorado Planning Commission recommendations:

We are concerned the Planning Commission recommendations before you do not represent the outcome of a clear and transparent, communitywide process. On Oct. 16, your Planning Commission was presented with information about different drafts of the new Meyers Area Plan, and provided with “options” to pick and choose on for height, density, and other issues. However, the results of the feedback that had been obtained to date from the community – a great deal of it from TRPA and EDC’s own surveys – were not made clear, nor was the community ever told that once they made a selection, it could be easily overturned by one meeting. Many residents and business owners have volunteered extensive time and resources in an attempt to ensure a transparent and clear update process, as noted in the attached letter signed by several of us that were able to attend the Oct. 16 Planning Commission meeting. We also posted a summary of the results of the agencies’ own surveys along with ours on our website – we encourage you to read the surveys directly, including the hand-written comments. We have also previously submitted petitions with upwards of 200 signatures opposing the larger developments allowed by the January 2014 versions of the “Incentive Program.”

Comparison: Community’s feedback vs. EDC Planning Commission Recommendations:

Community feedback:	Planning Commission recommendation:
Retaining regulations which keep developments on the SW end of town less dense (10-15 units/acre)	Making developments throughout the entire Meyers 'strip' more dense (40 units/acre)
Limiting height to buildings similar in size to Bob Dog's Pizza and Century 21 (35 feet or less)	Allowing building heights which are 10 or more feet taller than Bob Dog's Pizza and Century 21 (42 feet throughout, and 45 feet for the Incentive Program)
A blend of existing and new businesses which retain the smaller scale of Meyers and fit within our community (Design and uses closer to 1993 Community Plan)	Incentives which draw in large corporate/resort-owned developers who can afford the requirements, thereby threatening the viability of existing smaller businesses, not retaining the smaller scale of Meyers, and creating new development that does not fit within our community (More height, more density, more uses)
Notification when large projects are proposed (Conditional Use Permit requirements, MAC required to follow Brown Act for public process)	Not requiring consistent notification when large projects are proposed (Many uses now "Permissible," and MCAC not subject to Brown Act for public process)
A new Meyers Community Advisory Council (MCAC) elected by <u>local residents</u> (The community already assumed the MCAC would be subject to Brown Act in new plan - the question was whether locals or BOS elect the members)	Not requiring the Meyers Advisory Council (MCAC) to even follow the most basic public meeting laws, let alone to be elected by <u>local residents</u> .

Continuing confusion of terms:

In the table above, which represents the language in the March surveys, the reference to the CIP "as is" in El Dorado County's surveys referred to the January 2014 draft, or the "second draft" as it is now referred to, with the height, density, and other incentives (which your staff are now referring to as "the top Tier"); most surveys did not support it as it was outlined in the January 2014 aka 2nd draft aka Tier One of the Community Incentive Program (aka Catalyst Program).

In other words, the Catalyst Program was renamed to the Incentive Program; then the Community Incentive Program, then the Top Tier of the Community Incentive Program. The January 2014 draft is now referred to by staff as the "second draft," and the June 2014 as the "third draft." Worse yet, most people had no idea there were any new drafts until late January when we began our efforts. Therefore, the "new draft" was thought to be the January draft. Further, as most people appeared unaware that TRPA's Regional Plan called for any changes to

Meyers zoning and land use, references to “existing draft” or “existing plans” were often thought to mean the 1993 Meyers Community Plan; however for over 18 months, staff often made references to lowering height or density compared to the “existing plan,” which to the agencies, generally meant the first draft Meyers Area Plan that represented the RPU’s plan changes. Even professional planners would cross their eyes to follow these terms.

Yet the changes have been advertised in media messaging, as well as handouts for the public, as “reducing” height, density, etc. For example, we’ve attached the technical response to a handout provided to the public at our community-led meeting. One obvious example is pasted below:

EDC: “The Area Plan reduces maximum height limits to 35 feet for most projects, and in limited cases allows for up to 45 feet for projects that meet a series of requirements to ensure they improve walkability, benefit the environment, and provide other community benefits (Land Use and Zoning Ordinance section 70).” Our Response: “More apples and oranges. The ‘starting point’ height under the 1993 Plan was 26 feet; TRPA’s Town Center zoning raised it to 56 feet, so the draft Area Plan is simply less of a TRPA-proposed increase compared to the 1993 Community Plan. Regardless, the question now is, does Meyers want 45 foot tall (approx. 4 stories) buildings?”

We request you delay your recommendations and submissions for CEQA review until the community has been fully engaged in this process. This would not only provide the information needed to direct planners regarding the community’s interests, but it would also allow our community to have a new Plan we can be proud of, and which supports our vision for the future.

Sincerely,

Angie Olson, Jennifer Quashnick, Diana and John Sanders, Moya

Sanders, and Diane Verwoest