

SLT grappling with how to improve recreation

By Kathryn Reed

Even without a definitive recreation plan in place, South Lake Tahoe is moving forward with improvements.

This includes going ahead with a bike park at Bijou Community Park. The topic will be discussed by the Planning Commission this week and will be before the City Council in November. Bike paths are being improved, Regan Beach enhancements are being discussed and ball fields are being upgraded.

But a lot more needs to take place if the area is ever going to live up to its moniker of being a year-round playground.



Improvements to Bijou Community Park are being talked about. Photo/LTN file

Much of the South Lake Tahoe City Council discussion on Oct. 7 was about the draft master recreation plan that the city and El Dorado County are taking comments on. But what each council member stressed is the need to make sure Douglas County is at the table. Douglas used the same consultant for its rec plan.

Lauren Thomaselli, parks manager, on Tuesday pointed out how the South Shore falls below the national average when it comes

to providing adequate recreation facilities.

In the more than 1,600 responses the city and El Dorado County have received on the draft recreation master plan, trails continue to be an overriding issue for people. The problem is that they don't connect to one another, are disjointed and many are not in great shape.

The rec and swim center ranks high in terms of importance to people, but low when it comes to being a quality facility.

Another thing that keeps being pointed out is there needs to be a one-stop shop for people to find out what facilities exist on the South Shore, how to rent them, and when they are available.

While a master calendar would seem easy enough to devise, the problem is facilities are owned by various entities – including two K-12 districts, two counties, a college, one city, two states and private companies.

It's not just the 35,000 people who live on the South Shore who want to use the facilities, but the 1.6 million people who visit the area each year. It's a balancing act.

The council agreed the city should take the lead on bringing the parties together to create a gatekeeper type system. The electeds tasked staff with getting the stakeholders together and then asked for regular updates to be brought back.

Carol Chaplin, head of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, said her agency is ready to be the major marketing arm for whatever the city goes forward with in terms of promoting recreation on the South Shore.

Wendy David, speaking as president of Lake Tahoe Unified School District, said the district wants to be at the table too. With the expanded sports medicine facilities at South Tahoe High School, she said this has generated interest in

people wanting to bring larger and different types of recreation opportunities to the area.

In the two- to five-year span the city hopes to work on:

- Trail development
- Bike and pedestrian crossings
- Improve the swim-recreation center
- Improve Bijou Park
- Restore Regan Beach
- Upgrade Bijou Golf Course.

Funding to do these things could be the obstacle. Councilmember Brooke Laine more than once suggested dedicating a percentage of excess revenues to recreation capital improvement projects. Her colleagues did nothing with that suggestion.

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Notes:

- More info about the plan is online.
- The deadline to comment is Oct. 10.