

# SLT council passes plan for Y, residential hotels



A greenbelt is planned for the Y as part of the Tahoe Valley Area Plan. Rendering/Design Workshop

**By Kathryn Reed**

With the approval of two items Tuesday, the South Lake Tahoe City Council took significant steps to mapping out the city's future.

One issue was the Tahoe Valley Area Plan and the other was single room occupancy hotels. The council members individually said how important these two votes were on June 2.

It has taken more than 20 years for the city to approve a development plan for the Y. A previous city manager hijacked one plan that had been created by a citizens' committee. Then the powers that be decided to wait for the TRPA to finish its Regional Plan update.

Steve Leman, who was on the committee years ago, had high praise for this iteration of the plan, calling it balanced, creative, comprehensive and professional. He also alluded to wanting to possibly go forward with a small project in the area on the land he owns on Emerald Bay Road.

But Lemman also wondered if the city missed its golden opportunity to renovate this area now that the state has done away with redevelopment.

John Hitchcock, planner for the city, highlighted some of the changes that evolved through public meetings that started 16 months ago as well as staff input from the last time the city went through the process. They include creating a greenbelt. How to go forward with this proposal will be on the council's next agenda.

"The storm water facility becomes multi-use space instead of single," Hitchcock explained. It will also have scenic, recreation and open space components.

Another change is updating the stream environmental zone map through the use of consultants, which included digging in the dirt to determine if the area originally mapped was SEZ. Hitchcock said planning for a 20-year, one-hour storm is sufficient, and that it is most important to capture the first flush of a storm when it comes to dirty water reaching the lake.

But Laurel Ames questioned why the city was reducing the stream environmental zone area from what has been on the books for decades and wondered why the flood plain was not greater. She pointed out how many people in Texas weren't in a flood plain either, but still were flooded.

Ames wanted to show the council and audience a map of what the zoning changes looked like but the city would not accommodate her by loading her thumb drive. (She was allowed to do so at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency meeting last week.)

Shannon Eckmeyer, representing the League to Save Lake Tahoe, had high praise for the plan. She is also on the city's Planning Commission, which approved the plan at its last meeting.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board is expected to vote July 22 on the Tahoe Valley Area Plan.

As for the hotel issue, health and safety are the driving forces to mandate property owners upgrade their establishments. Single room occupancy (SRO) hotels are essentially long-term housing in a hotel room with a hot plate or microwave and a fridge. Owners are able to retain the hotel designation and therefore the tourist accommodation units. These TAUs then add value to the structure with this unique commodity attached to it.

Tuesday was the first reading of the ordinance, with the second set for June 16. The ordinance would become effective 30 days later. Property owners will have one year to meet the rules. Having enough electrical power is a main worry because it could lead to a fire. (Fire Chief Jeff Meston said recent hotel fires were not an electrical issue.)

An on-site laundry facility is no longer required.

For places that might install a communal kitchen, it will be up to the owners to set the rules. Some people want to install a tiny sink, but that would trigger a hook up fee for each sink. South Tahoe Public Utility District counts kitchens as a sewer unit. Hook up fees are \$3,600.

The city is working with STPUD to get that lowered for the low-income housing.

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#### **In other action:**

· The council approved the Chateau project's acquisition of 6,307 square feet of commercial floor area for the next phase, which is slated to break ground in August and take 18 months to complete. It includes a condo-retail mix, with the condos potentially used as tourist rentals.

- The vacation home rental ordinance will be on the June 16 agenda.
- There may be fewer bear boxes at Connolly Beach. Info about the beach's history will be on a future sign. Councilman Tom Davis brought up needing to provide access to public restrooms.