

Placer County tries to spur tourist development

Placer County this week took steps to make it easier for developers to build lodging for tourists.

The Board of Supervisors on Oct. 20 approved the North Lake Tahoe Town Centers Economic Development Incentive Program and Implementation Plan.

“The program seeks to build more certainty into the development and permitting processes, reducing the risk to investors interested in projects in the North Tahoe communities,” the county said in a press release.

One of the big problems with development in the Lake Tahoe Basin is that the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has thwarted a traditional free market as well as the ability of jurisdictions to put in normal zoning laws by creating commodities out of tourist accommodation units and commercial floor area.

South Lake Tahoe has plenty of TAUs, but not much CFA, while the opposite is true for Placer County. It is so bad Placer has been in the business of buying hotels in the city so it would have TAUs for developers.

TRPA is working on a **pilot program** to convert TAUs to CFA and vice versa. That was not brought up at this week’s meeting.

TRPA per the Regional Plan also wants to keep development – new or renovations – in town centers. For Placer County, this means Tahoe City and Kings Beach.

Tahoe City and Kings Beach do not have a wealth of choice for tourists to stay. To help spur development Placer County has incorporated the proposed Tahoe City Lodge into its

environmental documents that are being created for the Tahoe Basin Area Plan.

The lodge is a 120-unit hotel on 3.1 acres that is being proposed to be built across from Commons Beach on Highway 28.

But there are other locations that want to benefit from the new program.

Alex Mourelatos of Mourelatos Lakeshore Resort in Tahoe Vista told supervisors the program should include smaller projects outside of town centers.

Under the program, Placer County would buy and bank tourist accommodation units and make them available to developers who meet certain criteria. Initial funding to do this will come from capital and transient occupancy tax reserves and the county's general fund.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report