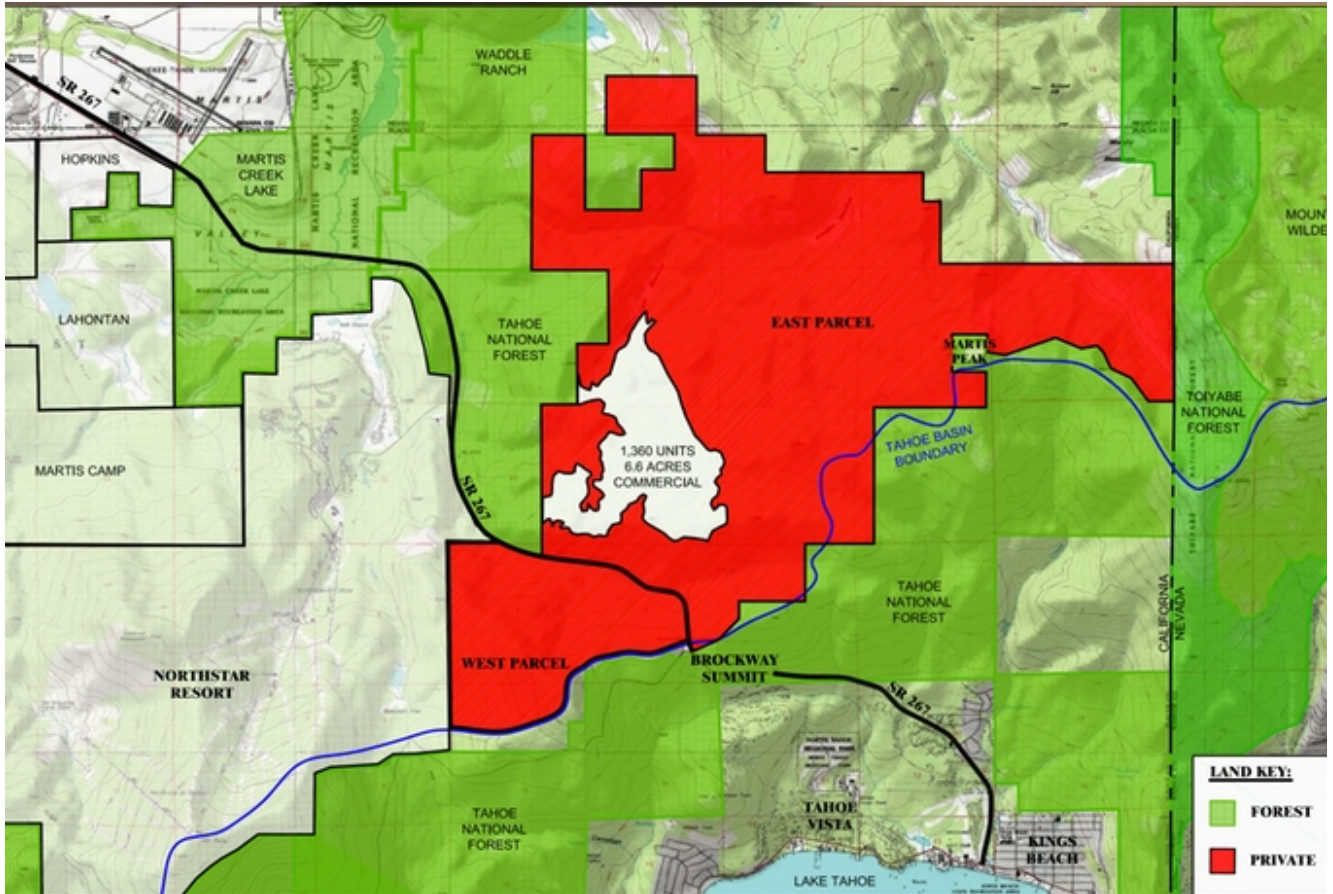


Impacts of Martis Valley project questioned



This map shows where the proposed development would go. Map/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – Developers tout the preservation of thousands of acres of open space and the reduction of houses that would be built in addition to permanently retiring 600 units.

Opponents question the impacts to the Lake Tahoe Basin, which this development would border, overall traffic, air quality and other environmental concerns.

The Martis Valley West plan would transfer residential and commercial uses from the east parcel to the west parcel, preserving the 6,376-acre east parcel.

On Nov. 19 the Placer County Planning Commission heard the pros and cons of the proposal. The commission was taking input and not voting on anything. The draft environmental impact report is being circulated for public comment.

Sierra Pacific Industries owns the land, with Mountainside Partners the developers. The 760 units proposed to be built are outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Kurt Krieg with Mountainside Partners told the commission that when it comes to visual issues the studies show "less than significant impacts". Traffic, he said, will not be a problem now that fewer units than what the land is zoned for will be built, thus having a 35 percent reduction in vehicle mile trips than if there had been full build-out. As for water, the site has wells that can be tapped. Krieg also pointed out that stormwater does not flow into the Tahoe basin.

He noted a study by the Conservation Biology Institute that backed up his assertions.

Blake Riva, principal with the company, went over some numbers:

- 50,000 acres of contiguous open space from Martis Valley through the Mount Rose Wilderness Area;
- 24,000 acres of open space in the Tahoe basin;
- 1,360 residential units currently zoned for the east parcel;
- 40 miles of existing private trails would become public.

The benefits, though, don't outweigh the negatives, according opponents.

The League to Save Lake, Tahoe Area Sierra Club, Friends of the West Shore and others all asked for the draft EIR to be

rewritten with more detail and then be recirculated.

“My overarching statement is this EIR is the most confusing I’ve ever reviewed,” Tahoe Vista resident Ellie Waller told the commission. This is from a woman who is well-versed in reading these types of documents. “The placement of cumulative impacts in the executive summary and not having a separate chapter like most EIRs is a prime example.”

A theme among the 10 people who spoke was cumulative impacts. Most said the information in the draft EIR is not substantive enough. And when people wanted to bring up the adjacent proposed **Brockway Campground** the chair of the commission, Ken Denio, didn’t want to hear those concerns. He wanted to only hear about the draft EIR. But the people’s point was the cumulative impacts section is so minimal it does not allow a robust discussion about what they perceive as real impacts.

“It is really astounding that this project will take the level of service from a D to an F. F is gridlock,” Laurel Ames with the local Sierra Club said of the traffic impacts.

Jennifer Quashnick with Friends of the West Shore questioned how the environmental document could look at traffic as though only 20 percent of homes would be occupied. She said even if these are predominately second homes, there is still the real possibility they could be full on many weekends.

One person asked for the entrance to not be on Highway 267 if possible.

Loren Enstad, who was fire chief of North Lake Tahoe Fire District from 1980-99, said firefighting resources are already stretched and that this project will add to the problem.

As for visual impacts, Anne Nichols with North Tahoe Preservation Alliance, said, “If you can see the lake, the lake can see you.”

While this project is outside of Lake Tahoe, the basin will be impacted. People have asked the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to weigh in, but have not had that request acknowledged by the bi-state planning agency.

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Notes:

- Comments will be accepted until Dec. 22 at 5pm; email them to cdraecs@placer.ca.gov. The extension makes it a 60-day comment period instead of 45 days.
- The draft EIR is **online**.