

Letter: Placer County must stop Squaw development

Publisher's note: This letter was sent to the Placer County Board of Supervisors this week and is reprinted with permission.

To the Placer County Board of Supervisors,

We are local businesses and nonprofit organizations writing to encourage responsible decision-making for Squaw Valley and the Tahoe-Truckee region.

Each of us shares a deep commitment to the natural resources, recreational opportunities, local businesses, and visitor experience that define life in North Lake Tahoe.

Those values, however, are at risk.

KSL Capital Partners is proposing development in Squaw Valley of a size, scale, and scope North Lake Tahoe has never seen.

Their application to Placer County asks for entitlements to develop more than 1,500 bedrooms and the equivalent of four city blocks of 100-foot tall buildings – as well as a 90,000 square foot indoor amusement park with fake rivers, waterslides, an arcade, indoor skydiving, and more.

All told, the project is so big, it would take 25 years to complete.

Squaw Valley is not an island; it's an integral part of the greater North Lake Tahoe community, economy, culture, and environment. And any development approved for Squaw Valley would impact the entire region:

- KSL's proposal would have unacceptable impacts on our natural resources, including Squaw Creek, Granite Chief

Wilderness, our starry night sky, and even the clarity of Lake Tahoe itself.

- Proposed development seeks to funnel visitors indoors—to an indoor water park designed to “compete with the Lake”, instead of celebrating and respecting the region’s greatest asset: the great outdoors.
- Local businesses, many of which already struggle to survive slow winters and ongoing drought, would be eclipsed by 300,000 square feet of new commercial development.
- And the famed Tahoe visitor experience would diminish under the weight of new highrises and the estimated 8,000 new daily car trips they would add to our region’s roads each summer Sunday.

Our opposition to KSL’s proposal is echoed by hundreds of comment letters submitted to Placer County in response to the project’s Draft Environmental Impact Report. Of the 338 comment letters submitted by local jurisdictions, regulatory agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens, nearly all – 97 percent – expressed either outright opposition to KSL’s proposal, pointed out flaws in the environmental analysis, or both.

Those letters represent a widespread understanding of what’s at stake here in North Lake Tahoe and, also, a deep commitment to securing a better outcome.

We do not oppose all development. But the question before us is: do we want this development? Our answer is no.

We urge the Placer County Board of Supervisors to reject KSL’s proposed development and, instead, encourage landowners and the community to work together to create a blueprint that makes sense for Squaw, Tahoe, and beyond.

Sincerely,

Tom Mooers, Sierra Watch and 42 other entities