# TRPA attempting to get handle on commodities to foster redevelopment throughout basin


In order for the Lodge at Edgewood to have enough tourist accommodation units the company bought an old hotel in South Lake Tahoe. A stipulation was for Edgewood Companies to turn the property into a park. Photos/LTN

**By Kathryn Reed**

A 30-year-old policy that is unique to Lake Tahoe is proving its ineffectiveness by having a pronounced detrimental impact in the basin.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency created a policy where commercial floor area (CFA) and tourist accommodation units (TAUs) have a value unto themselves. The purpose was to curtail development. It worked. Some might say a little too well because it also curbed redevelopment that might bring environmental and economic gains.

With hotel units essentially having a price tag, it means a lodging property owner wants more for the parcel than the appraised value. Perspective buyers aren't likely going to pay that added cost. That leaves many dilapidated hotels scattered about the basin, but mostly in South Lake Tahoe. And with there being a limited number of TAUs allowed, it means places like Placer County that has so few hotels in the basin is scrambling to acquire them.

It would be up to the Governing Board to abolish this policy that stifles the free market, creates an inflated value for properties and doesn't allow zoning to regulate development.

For now the bi-state regulatory agency is loosening the rules a bit by creating a three-year pilot program involving these commodities. The Regional Plan update that was adopted in December 2012 created bonus units based on certain criteria, mostly having to do with moving development out of sensitive areas like stream environmental zones and into town centers.

The pilot program has 80,000-square-feet of commercial floor area and 61 tourist bonus units. This means only a couple projects will likely come to fruition during the pilot. Interested parties have until March 28 to apply. The Governing Board will rank them and then decide who gets to participate in the pilot.

The program will be evaluated on an annual basis to assess its effectiveness.

"We plan to do quite a bit of monitoring to evaluate the program. We have a proposed monitoring plan that includes looking at how much SEZ is restored and how much coverage was reduced," Jennifer Cannon, TRPA senior planner, told *Lake Tahoe News*. She said other criteria would also be used to assess the effectiveness of the pilot.

In 2008, the TRPA tried a different plan called the **Community Enhancement Program** to try to spur redevelopment. Nothing got built, though the Homewood Mountain Resort and Boulder Bay projects are still on the table. TRPA officials say the recession had a lot to do with the CEP's not being effective. A difference with the pilot program is that there is an end date.

One of the agency's strategic initiatives also involves looking at the commodities program to see if more substantive, long-term changes should be made.

Tom Lotshaw, spokesman for TRPA, said the initiative is designed to look at "what some of the strengths are and what some of the weaknesses are and how it can be improved so it protects the lake and facilitates the kind of redevelopment we need in our community."

At today's TRPA Advisory Planning Commission meeting a presentation will be made about what the findings have been from interviewing more than 50 stakeholders. The themes coming out of those discussions are: people don't understand the system, the system needs reviewing, it doesn't adequately support redevelopment, access to the commodities is constrained, and that it is impacting housing.

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**Notes:**

· The APC meets Feb. 10 at 9:30am, 128 Market St., Stateline.