

Out-of-towners appreciate South Shore's rebirth



While skiing will inevitably always be Heavenly's main attraction, the resort wants to be a year-round destination just like the rest of the South Shore. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Megan Michelson, Ski

I'm eating a vegan burger, made from scratch with green-chile pinto beans, at an Irish pub across the street from the Heavenly gondola, steps from the border of California and Nevada. I've been skiing all morning and need to refuel, and this place, McP's Taphouse, is a ski-pole's length from Heavenly's groomed paradise.

The pub used to be in a dark, dingy space a few blocks down. And this spot, where I'm enjoying my burger and side of "Irish

fries,” smothered in gravy, was a cavernous and depressing hole in the ground a mere 18 months ago.

For over six years, a halted construction project occupied a full city block in prime real estate neighboring the Heavenly village. It was a hollow symbol of the economic downturn, an ever-present blemish on a tourist town trying desperately to give itself a makeover. Locals took to calling it, simply, “the hole.”

“That hole in the ground was the shining star for how dysfunctional things were here,” says Heavenly’s vice president and COO, Pete Sonntag.

Eventually the south side of Lake Tahoe became known as a place where you could stay up all night playing roulette and sleep all day in cheap motels with in-room Jacuzzis. You could wake up hungover, eat bacon and eggs at a casino buffet, then start drinking bloody Marys at the local dive bar. Skiing wasn’t on the to-do list for many of the town’s visitors.

“There’s a sense of optimism now,” Heavenly’s Sonntag says.

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