

# Entrepreneurs redefining South Lake Tahoe

By Daniel Duane, Bloomberg

Chris McNamara, an experienced rock climber and BASE jumper, was dangling from a cliff near the city of South Lake Tahoe in March 2016 when he had a vision: “It was snowy and super beautiful, and I realized this place ought to be a world capital of outdoor recreation—San Francisco’s cool, alternative mountain city, like what Boulder is for Denver,” he says. “We’ve got skiing and mountain biking. There’s sailing and stand-up paddling. I’m trying to get other entrepreneurs to realize they can do what I did, trade in their commute for a better lifestyle and still pop down to San Francisco for meetings.”

South Lake Tahoe has 21,000 year-round residents, spectacular nature—and a long way to go in the charm department. Tawdry casinos, strip malls, and run-down motels dominate the landscape. Still, it’s just three hours from the Bay Area; gondolas to the immense Heavenly Mountain Resort depart from downtown; and the average home price is \$390,000, compared with \$1.16 million in San Francisco.

McNamara’s vision shouldn’t be that far-fetched: Of all the areas along the lake, South Lake Tahoe has the best combination of affordability and convenience to skiing and beaches. “My inspiration comes from what Tony Hsieh did,” he says, referring to the Zappos chief executive officer’s \$350 million attempt at revitalizing downtown Las Vegas.

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