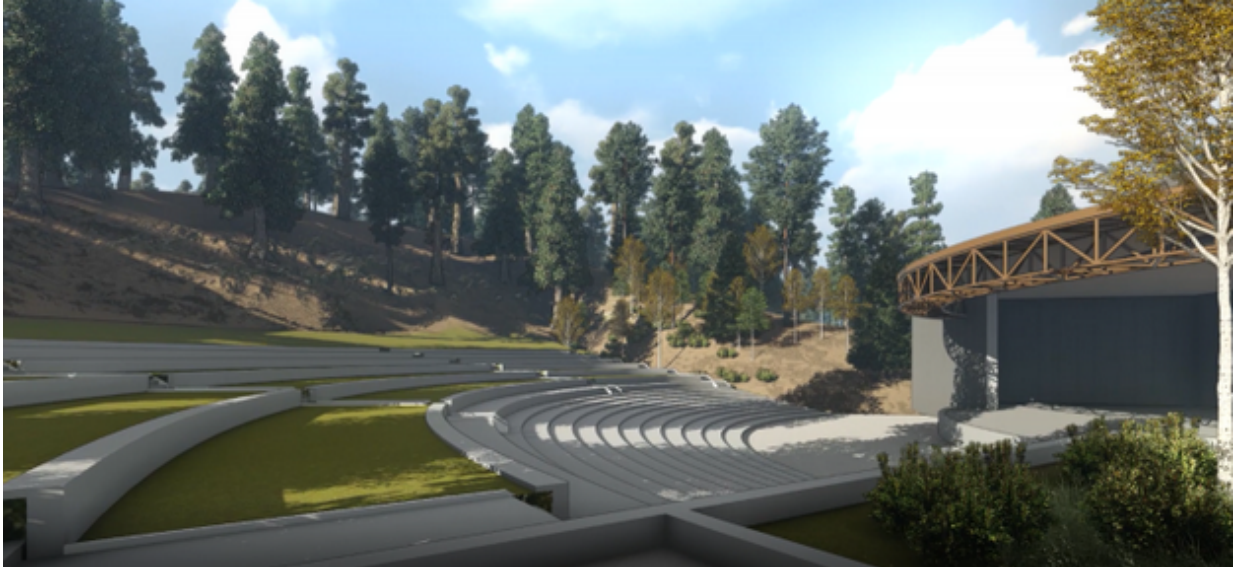


Truckee performing arts venue makes progress



The Stages at Northstar is inching closer to reality.
Rendering/Provided

By Carole Jablon-Bernardi

When Abraham Lincoln ordered the completion of the Dome of the Capitol Building while the Civil War loomed, critics loudly protested. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in the middle of World War II, dedicated the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. John Kennedy asked for legislative support of the arts in 1962 while relaying both presidential acts mentioned above, adding, "The life of the arts, far from being an interruption or a distraction in the life of a nation, is closer to the center of a nation's purpose – and a test of a nation's civilization."

While Lake Tahoe cannot be categorized as a large city heavily populated by political critics or lobbyists, it seems to support a trend of community performing arts centers that continue to surface in mountain resort areas, and small towns throughout the country. This effort is now happening in North

Lake Tahoe with The Stages at Northstar.

In 2015, the Tahoe Regional Arts Foundation (TRAF is now a 501(c)3) introduced a conceptual project for a multi-faceted indoor-outdoor performing arts center built on 17 acres of Northstar's Castle Peak area. The land, provided by Vail Resorts under a 75-year sublease (no fee) plan, would make the facility a tenant of Northstar but managed by TRAF.

At that time, the plan called for an outdoor amphitheater (potentially 3,000-plus seats), two indoor theaters, and a main theater that would seat 500 at 33,000 square feet.

Fast forward to the most recent update on the project.

On July 24 TRAF signed a consultant agreement with USC's School of Dramatic Arts.

"USC's SDA will consult with us during the predevelopment and construction phases of the theaters. Post construction the Tahoe Regional Arts Foundation will work with the USC SDA on cooperative educational programming," TRAF's board Chairman Keith Vogt told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Vogt this month spoke to an interested and somewhat anxious community audience.

As with any conceptual project, the design has been tweaked and is still waiting for final approval by the board of directors. Securing funding has not changed greatly with a goal of \$50 million still the big target, and an endowment to help ensure its success. TRAF has secured its first seven figure grant donated as start-up funding. Down the road there will be "donor naming opportunities" for specific structures and areas of the center.

A feasibility study was completed in 2014 and was updated this year. Changes were due to the difference in the economy in the last three years, reflected in the contributions to the county

from theater activities.

Traffic and noise impact studies are in the works.

Fiscal impact has remained the same, projected at \$4 million. Vogt assured the audience that numerous businesses in the North Lake Tahoe community should feel a positive impact from the project's completion.

Once funding has been met it will take two building seasons to construct (possibly in stages), with the earliest completion being 2021.

"The basic issue for all the arts in the Tahoe region is a severe lack of space. We want to fill that void and provide an iconic theater space for our high school and community college students to learn how the theater works," Vogt said.

TRAF will ultimately manage and operate the center, with a starting staff of approximately five administrators.

Performing arts centers have the ability to become cornerstones of the creative life of their communities, but they cannot succeed without support from their communities. TRAF has "supporters" which include the Truckee Community Theater, Innerrhythms, Reno Philharmonic, the Economic Development Agency of Western Nevada (EDAWN), North Lake Tahoe Resort Association and Placer County. At the Truckee gathering this month, numerous accolades were voiced on the positive aspect the project could have on the community. One attendee even shouted, "How soon can you build it?"

Improving the quality of life for the communities they serve is certainly a priority when soliciting support from residents, and business owners alike.

Bob Taylor, executive director of the long standing Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival at Sand Harbor, said, "The most important factor in the success of any artistic project (such as this)

is tremendous wide-spread community support. All three of the theaters I work for, in Lake Tahoe, Boise, Idaho, and Cleveland, Ohio, began as community driven efforts ... and they are all thriving, vital organizations 45, 40 and 56 years, respectively, thanks to those visionary leaders.”

In March, President Trump, in his first federal budget, took a different approach than his predecessors. He proposed eliminating the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Humanities. But many in Tahoe-Truckee are no longer taking their lead from Washington.

While it's hard to argue against the arts as a whole, like all development in the greater Lake Tahoe area it needs to be scrutinized. How will this affect traffic in Truckee as well as the Lake Tahoe Basin? What about the height of the structure. And noise? While the project is outside the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's jurisdiction, the impacts will be felt in the basin. Some would like the Governing Board to at least be given a briefing on the project.