

Future of Meyers wrapped in area plan

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – You sense it descending Highway 50 approaching the Lake Tahoe Basin. Things are a little different in the village a few miles west of South Lake Tahoe.

Cycling is all the rage. Golf can be played with a club or a foot. The Grade has long been the place to walk and socialize. Ski swaps reflect a community sharing thoughts and equipment. Santa arrives in a helicopter. The snow is a little deeper. The juice in the greyhounds at Divided Sky is a little sweeter. Dogs rule the outdoor dining at Getaway Café.

Meyers has come into its own as a quiet, recreational enclave full of possibility. This potential made its way into a fourth draft before the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency on Wednesday.

No action was taken, as this is but one in a number of meetings to be scheduled. El Dorado County is proposing a new area plan – in the works for at least five years – to replace the 1993 area plan.

County planner Brandan Ferry told the TRPA Governing Board's Regional Plan Implementation Committee that developing this plan meant keeping in mind Meyers "has its own identity" as a recreational hub.

"That's a key tenet to this plan," Ferry said.

Much of its focus is on bike and pedestrian trails and making them more user friendly with subtleties such as landscaping, benches and planter boxes. More acreage was zoned for recreation and conservation at 176 and 348, respectively. Conservation is critical, as Ferry identified the area as

being the No. 1 pollutant of watersheds in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Key issues are being addressed to make the corridor an ideal place to live, work and visit. Interestingly enough, the regulatory agency is also undergoing a review of the region's collective of corridors. This one just happens to be the main entrance into the basin.

Meyers is loosely defined as an area spanning about 669 acres between the Pioneer Trail and Highway 89 intersections along Highway 50.

Within that area, the county studied provisions in commercial floor space, area allocations, density and land use. As a result of 14 public meetings, community and county input maintained the threshold for building height up to 42 feet for mixed use. That's 14 feet less than the allowance provided in the regulatory agency's Regional Plan.

The proposed plan serves to consolidate three existing commercial and community services zoning districts along Highway 50. This one proposed zoning district will be referred to as the "Meyers Community Center" for the sake of a title. A citizen action committee of sorts referred to as the Meyers Advisory Council will oversee the area.

The council's job will be crucial to the profile of the village.

One of the key challenges is integrating a community off a highway with a Main Street vibe.

Unlike the Stateline area, there are no lodging establishments in Meyers. But this could change as Meyers has a little wiggle room for potential development.

The question comes into play when considering that up for sale is the Tahoe Paradise Golf Course, with its sprawling 50 acres

of prime location, location, location.

When asked by TRPA board member Austin Sass about the property's possibilities, Ferry responded the land may see a cultural facility, transit center or a cross country ski area as examples.

"So that 50 acres could be developed?" Sass asked.

Whatever is placed there would need to protect the environmentally sensitive headwaters of Meyers Creek.

The public comment period on the plan's environmental impact report was completed. But more meetings will be planned, and more work needs to be done.

Transit transitioning

No other aspect of the plan is expected to command more scrutiny than the area of transportation.

On any given Sunday traffic backs up heading west as tourists make their way out of South Lake Tahoe through Meyers. On the flip side, critics contend motorists speed through town at other times, creating a safety hazard.

"Is Caltrans involved?" TRPA board member Jim Lawrence asked.

To that, Ferry affirmed the agency's role, saying: "We're working tightly with them," adding that the goal of "traffic calming" was a priority with the plan.

The proposal calls for removal of the U.S. Agricultural "Bug" Station at its current location, a crosswalk at Apache Avenue and two roundabouts. One would be situated at Pioneer Trail and the other at the junction of highways 50 and 89.

The latter has prompted concern among some Meyers residents because of safety concerns. A few attended the meeting out of about a dozen people in the audience, signaling a large

departure from the large, raucous crowds that gathered for the plan's early discussions.

Resident Leona Allen said she's concerned about roundabouts becoming a safety hazard and snow removal problem, especially after hearing from area law enforcement. This is despite transportation officials' claims of the opposite. She insists the focus should be on traffic "flowing," not necessarily "calming."

Allen was joined by Judy Clot, who also expressed opposition to a roundabout. She believes it will develop more congestion.

The Tahoe Paradise Park board member would like to see more stoplights, having witnessed a man in a wheelchair trying to cross the unusually wide highway with three children and almost getting hit by a car.

"They don't stop," she said, declaring people "don't notice." Further, Clot noted flashing lights near the agricultural center haven't helped either.

Clot advocated for a member of Tahoe Paradise Park to serve on the Advisory Council.

The Meyers Area Plan will need final approval from TRPA and the county.