

Truckee going from 2 to 5 grocery stores



The Nugget grocery store plan received land-use approval from Truckee Planning Commission this week. Photo/Susan Wood

By Susan Wood

TRUCKEE – The number of grocery stores in Truckee is going to mushroom in the near future.

Plans are under way for the town to add three stores to the existing Safeway on Donner Pass Road and Save Mart on Deerfield Drive. From land use and landscaping to architecture and traffic, Truckee is chipping away at the planning intricacies involved with the additions.

In the coming months, the Truckee Planning Commission will bring proposals for a Raley's to the airport area, a grocer

like Whole Foods or Grocery Outlet across from Safeway, and a Nugget Market to the massive downtown Railyard Master Plan that has been in the works for decades.

The Planning Commission this week approved the development permit with revised and added conditions to construct the 34,483-square-foot Nugget Market on a 3.2-acre site where the railyard is located next to downtown. Union Pacific owns the property.

Part of the land use proposal calls for 149 parking spaces built by the Nugget and a 7,500-square-foot plaza to be maintained by the store. The plaza is intended to serve as a gathering place, a growing trend in the supermarket world.

Supplementary improvements include additional pay-to-park spaces agreed to by Truckee Development Associates as well as landscaping, sidewalk and street improvements. The project will even change Donner Pass Road in that area to a new street – Truckee Way.

Phase 1, located on the western side of the Railyard Master Plan, has already been approved.

“This is a big task to do for something requiring a lot of infrastructure to happen to get the project rolling,” town planner Denyelle Nishimori told commissioners Tuesday night.

Phase 2 of the project also lists an extension of Church Street. Concerns, issues, revisions and added changes were discussed Dec. 19, including road access, utilities, the store loading dock, snow on the store roof, parking – including 30 spots agreed to for bicycles – and affordable housing. To mitigate the proposal, 10 housing units are required. Much dialogue centered on architecture and landscaping.

During public comment, many speakers expressed favorable opinions about the project, especially since it runs adjacent to old town. The notion that store customers would venture

into the smaller shops downtown was a given.

More on the grocery store project is expected to come before the commission in February.

“Staff focused on a handful of issues relative to the overall project,” planner Kirk Skierski told *Lake Tahoe News*.

And more work needs to be done, as the conversation about grocery stores doesn’t end with the Nugget.



This is what the Raley’s Truckee could look like. Rendering/Stafford-King-Wiese

From railroad to Raley’s

Plans have also been in the works for years for a 40,000-square-foot Raley’s to be built on a 5.5-acre parcel off Highway 267 at Soaring Way and Joerger Drive near Truckee Airport. JMA Ventures, which owns Homewood Mountain Resort, owns the land.

The Joerger Ranch plan also calls for 19,000 total square feet of retail space and 224 parking spaces on the vacant lot. With

more traffic expected, infrastructure improvements will involve a widening of the highway at that intersection, along with multi-use, paved trails, sidewalks and landscaping.

As part of its real estate strategy, Raley's seeks expansion in regions it's a little familiar with. For example, two exist in South Lake Tahoe on opposite ends of the South Shore. Now it hopes to hit Truckee north off Interstate 80, after having given the Sacramento region a large presence.

"There's a lot of excitement around that," corporate spokeswoman Chelsea Minor said, adding the store is ready to go once all land-use permits are finalized. This project is estimated to go before the Planning Commission in January.

"The growth on the parcel of land makes it exciting," Minor told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The Raley's executive believes there's enough of a market in different sections of town to support a city of 16,000-plus permanent residents. It swells to more than 40,000 on ski holiday weekends.

"All of us are being realistic and thoughtful in designing the stores," she said.

Minor agreed that the latest supermarket trends involve making them a gathering place. Each time her company remodels or builds a supermarket, seating is a usual component along with other amenities. A bar was just put in to the new Santa Clara store. Truckee's may bring a mezzanine-level with seating for small gatherings.

"You may get your book club meeting there," she said.

Truckee's Raley's-anchored proposal spelled music to the ears of Kings Beach resident Shari Wade. For her, it's all about location, location, location.

"That's a good location near the airport for working people,"

Wade told *LTN*, while recently shopping at Save Mart. She works in an office building near the airport and admitted to avoiding Safeway in her hometown and work town based on “the lines being so long.”

At the outset, Wade believes five grocery stores “seems like a bit much” but takes solace in the fact that they’re spread out.

Another Save Mart shopper agreed to a certain degree.

“Truckee could probably sustain one more,” Peter Henry of Tahoe City said. “Yes, Safeway and Save Mart are busy – especially on Friday. They’re jam-packed. But Sunday’s a ghost town.”

Henry looked a little further to perhaps Truckee needing more stores to support more residential development with the upcoming Martis Creek project.

Even Placer County Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery welcomed the new additions, as she shops outside her jurisdiction in Truckee.

“People like me are looking for new choices. Safeway is crazy on the ski weekends. I try not to shop there at all then,” Montgomery told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I’m not sure if we need three, but definitely there’s a need for more.”



A boutique grocery store will go here, with the Truckee Safeway across the street. Photo/Susan Wood

And yet there is more

Another market – boutique in nature – is planned to go in across the very busy Donner Pass Road from Safeway. The store will be announced at a later date, but the Capitol Avenue Development Grocery Store project will involve a 17,568-square-foot store over 1.54 acres. The project will include two residential rental apartments as part of the deal and 44 on-site parking spaces.

Are five stores too much of a good thing?

Town Manager Jeff Loux said staff is used to hearing that question because upon initial mention the number sounds high. Government cannot turn down a project if it meets the land use and zoning qualifications just because there's competition.

Loux did point out that economically-astute grocers such as Raley's and the Nugget wouldn't be interested if they didn't do their homework. Both chains have discussed their concepts for several years.

"I believe they've done their marketing," Loux told *LTN*.

Michelle Willard of the Greater Sacramento Area Economic Council agreed.

"Unless they have done the analytics, they wouldn't be interested," Willard said.

From a personal standpoint, Willard said when she enters a ski town one of her first stops is the grocery store.

The real challenge lies in traffic control as growth continues and motorists running errands try to get through town.

That's why the locations of the projects are so important to the Truckee Chamber of Commerce.

"Not only is it sustainable (to have more), it's necessary to decentralize the traffic congestion," chamber spokeswoman Colleen Dalton said. "We needed to have a grocery store on the eastern side of town.

Dalton said the business community gives a "thumbs up" to adding a variety of stores in its 11 commercial districts at different sites selling unique food items at varying prices.

The food itself also appears to be changing.

"The next five years in grocery will be more transformative than the last 50," spokesman Dave Heinzinger for inMarket, a company that develops supermarket technology, told *Epicurious*.

The food magazine also pointed out that the new supermarket won't just lure people with products – but will give shoppers a pleasurable experience while there.

So, the idea is to take the dread out of grocery shopping – especially around the busy holiday season.