



# City of South Lake Tahoe Report to TRPA Governing Board

**Meeting Date:** March 23, 2022

**Title:** Consideration and Possible Recommendation of Approval to Amend the Bijou/AI Tahoe Community Plan to Add a Special Height Standard for City of South Lake Tahoe Aquatic and Recreation Centre

**Location:** Bijou/AI Tahoe Community Plan District #4, 56-acres

**Responsible Staff Members:** John Hitchcock, Planning Manager (530) 542-7405

## **Background:**

The City of South Lake Tahoe is proposing to amend the Bijou/AI Tahoe Community Plan (B/AT CP) to allow for additional building height for and lower roof pitch requirements for buildings that require flatter roofs to span large interior spaces for the City of South Lake Tahoe Aquatic and Recreation Center. The center would be located within the 56-acres project area of the B/AT CP Town Center District #4 (see Location Map 1 on page 7 of this staff report). The amendments were prepared pursuant to Chapter 12 of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Code of Ordinances, which allows local governments to adopt conforming Community Plans that contain policies and development ordinances that are consistent with and further the goals and policies of the TRPA Regional Plan.

## **Issue and Discussion:**

### Purpose and Need

The B/AT CP was adopted by the City in 1995. As required by the TRPA Regional Plan, the B/AT CP includes specific design standards to ensure development is compatible with the natural environment and contributes to the character and quality of the built environment.

District 4 of the B/AT CP is a “centralized public service district” where a large concentration of public and institutional uses are located. These include a recreation center, campground, sheriff’s station, police station, jail, middle school, ice arena, county offices, forest service offices, and the community college. The B/AT CP established four zoning districts, as well as design and development standards for each district. A special standard for this district allows TRPA to address height issues at the community college site and Lake Tahoe Unified School District properties on an individual project basis. The TRPA interprets this to include deviation from Chapter 37 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances and the community plan’s roof pitch standard, which requires that roofs have a pitch between 7:12 and 12:12. Because of the unique design characteristics required for large institutional spaces, most of the roof pitches at the college are

lower than 7:12. However, this standard is only applicable to buildings located on the campus of the community college. All other buildings/structures within District #4 would be required to have a minimum roof pitch of 7:12.

The City is proposing to construct a new multi-generational recreation center (recreation center) within District #4 and the 56-acres project area. The recreation center will be located south of Lake Tahoe Boulevard adjacent to the existing El Dorado County Library. The new recreation center will house a swimming pool, lazy river, a gymnasium, indoor track, office and meeting spaces, and a commercial-grade kitchen. The proposed design incorporates shed-style architecture, using low-pitched roofs with clerestory windows. This design was selected to provide solar access to the interior of the building, which can help reduce energy demands from lighting and heating and to also span large spaces (i.e., swimming pool, gymnasium). The proposed design is similar to many of the structures on the community college campus; however, the project cannot be approved as proposed due to TRPA height standard and the community plan standard that requires a minimum 7:12 roof pitch.

The proposed recreation center was designed for the functionality of services, energy efficiency, and its compatibility to the surrounding neighborhood and to ensure consistency with TRPA's scenic threshold standard. A strict adherence to the standard would cause a greater scenic impact and energy demand due to additional building height and greater volume. A roof pitch of 7:12 would result in exceeding TRPA's maximum height standard of 42 feet and create a greater volume of conditioned space that would be more visually intrusive and out of character with the surrounding neighborhood. High roof pitches result in a larger interior volume than needed which must be conditioned and maintained resulting in increased energy consumption and operation costs, which is contrary to the City's long-term sustainability goals. Additionally, high roof pitches also increase construction costs due to additional building material necessitated by the roof pitch requirement without any added functionality and is inconsistent with environmental and community sustainability goals.

The proposed height and roof pitch amendment would only apply to the new aquatic and recreation center. The objective of this action is to 1) revise the height standards in the B/AT CP District 4, specific for the center to allow heights in excess of TRPA Code Chapter 37, 2) encourage redevelopment in the 56-acres project area, and 3) encourage high-quality designs that achieve the City's long term sustainability and environmental goals.

The new center will be subject to the following design and development standards and guidelines:

- Citywide Design and Development Standards (Chapter 6.10 and 6.55 of the City Municipal Code),
- TRPA Code of Ordinances Section 37.7 and Chapter 66: Scenic Quality

- Findings 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 of TRPA Code Section 37.7 (Findings for Additional Building Height) for any proposed project exceeding height standards of TRPA Section 37.4 or 37.5 with a maximum allowable height of 42 feet

The standards and guidelines within the references listed above serve as mitigation to protect and preserve scenic quality and ensure that any future development is compatible with the natural environment. Specifically, these design and development standards require but are not limited to:

- Proposed development will not extend above the forest canopy or a ridgeline, when present.
- Any proposed building shall be designed to minimize interference with existing views within the area to the extent practicable.
- Find that any structure with a height exceeding height standards in TRPA Code Section 37.4 or 37.5 up to a maximum height of 42 feet is necessary for the functionality of that proposed use and the minimum necessary to feasibly implement the project.
- Proposed development is adequately screened, as seen from major arterials, the waters of lakes, and other public areas from which the building is frequently viewed.
- The maximum building height at any corner of two exterior walls of the building is not greater than 90 percent of the maximum building height.
- A frontal setback of 20 feet for commercial and public services buildings and 50 feet for recreational buildings.
- Requirement that the natural forest setting be preserved by maintaining the maximum number of trees in the project site.
- Proposed development shall have architectural treatments that use natural materials and colors that create visual interest variations in facades and building forms.

#### Initial Study/Initial Environmental Checklist

To evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the proposed amendment, the City contracted with Hauge Bruck Associates to prepare a joint Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Initial Environmental Checklist (IEC). The Draft IS/ND/IEC provides an analysis of the potential for the project to result in significant environmental impacts.

Areas of analysis include aesthetics, agriculture and forestry, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation and traffic, utility and services systems, and additional mandatory findings of significance related to potential cumulative impacts.

The analysis demonstrates that the project either has no impacts or has less than significant impacts in all of these areas and staff recommended a Negative Declaration (ND) be adopted by the City for the proposed amendment and is recommending a Finding of No Significant Effect by the TRPA Governing Board.

The IS/IEC was initially prepared to evaluate the proposed amendments to the entire 56-acre project area for public and quasi-public facilities; however, the TRPA Regional Plan Implementation Committee (RPIC) revised the proposed height and roof pitch amendments to only be applicable to the City of South Lake Tahoe aquatic and recreation center.

### Tribal Consultation

Pursuant to state law, the City has completed requirements for consultation with Native American tribes under Assembly Bill 52 and the CEQA Guidelines. The City received a comment from the United Auburn Indian Community acknowledging the proposed project and deferring to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. No other comments were received. Staff sent a notice to Chairman Serrell Smokey and Darrel Cruz, Cultural Resources Director of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. At this time, no comments have been received from the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California.

### Public Comment Period and Public Noticing

The Draft IS/ND/IEC sent, along with a Notice of Preparation and Notice of Completion, to the California State Clearinghouse for distribution to state and regional agencies for review. The IS/ND/IEC was also made available at City offices (1052 Tata Lane) and online at <https://www.cityofslt.us/DocumentCenter/View/16271/Project-Summary-Page-Bijou-AI-Tahoe-Community-Plan-Amendment-20211026>. The public review and comment period began October 22, 2021 and ended on November 22, 2021. A Notice of Availability and Notice of Intent, advertising the review period and the public hearing date, was mailed to all affected property owners within 300 feet on October 27, 2021 and published in the Tahoe Daily Tribune on October 29, 2021.

The City received seven public comments on the IS/ND/IEC. Six comments from members of the public and one comment from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). All comments from the public stated their opposition to the proposed amendment primary on the following grounds: scenic impacts, historic resource impacts, CEQA project segmentation and conflict of interest issues. TRPA comments primarily focused on editorial edits, project description clarification, and additional analysis in support of the proposed amendment.

A public notice was sent to all affected property owners on December 3, 2021 providing the date and time of the Planning Commission meeting to consider the B/ATCP amendments and IS/ND and was published in the Tahoe Daily Tribune on December 3, 2021.

On December 16, 2021, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing, receive public comment, deliberated and passed Resolution 2021-18 recommending that the City Council adopt the IS/ND and the Bijou/AI Tahoe Community Plan Amendments.

A public notice was sent to all affected property owners on December 17, 2021 providing the date and time of the City Council meeting to consider the B/ATCP amendments and IS/ND and was published in the Tahoe Daily Tribune on December 17, 2021.

### **Environmental Considerations:**

See "Issue and Discussion" section above.

### **Financial Implications:**

None

### **Policy Implications:**

#### City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan

The proposed amendment to the B/AT CP is consistent with the goals and policies of the City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan. The 56-acres project area is currently designated as recreation in the City's General Plan. Recreation land use designation is defined as follows:

*This designation provides for outdoor recreation areas, active and passive recreational uses, habitat protection, and public/quasi-public uses. This designation is applied to areas with existing and proposed outdoor recreation and areas without overriding environmental constraints.*

The Land Use and Community Design Element of the General Plan include the following goals and policies to encourage development, redevelopment, and upgrades to existing development.

*Goal LU-2 : To focus future commercial, multi-family residential, tourist, civic, and social gathering space development in community plan area in order to maximize incentives and create transit,- bicycle-, and pedestrian-oriented places that serve the needs of both residents and visitors.*

*Policy LU-2.1: Community Plan Redevelopment, Expansion, and Upgrade*  
*The City shall encourage public and private investment in the expansion and upgrade of commercial and tourist accommodation projects within the Tahoe Valley, Bijou/AI Tahoe, and Stateline/Ski Run community plan areas and use appropriate financing tools, such as redevelopment, to achieve economic and land use goals, as determined proper to achieve this objective.*

*Policy LU-2.2: Community Plan Preparation, Adoption, and Implementation*  
*The City shall periodically update and implement the four Community Plans as a way to focus development commodities and revitalization efforts.*

*Policy LU-2.5: Bijou/AI Tahoe Community Plan Area*  
*The City shall encourage the creation of a viable residential neighborhood with appropriate neighborhood amenities and compatible high quality family-oriented recreation and public facilities including government offices.*

#### Bijou/AI Tahoe Community Plan

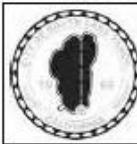
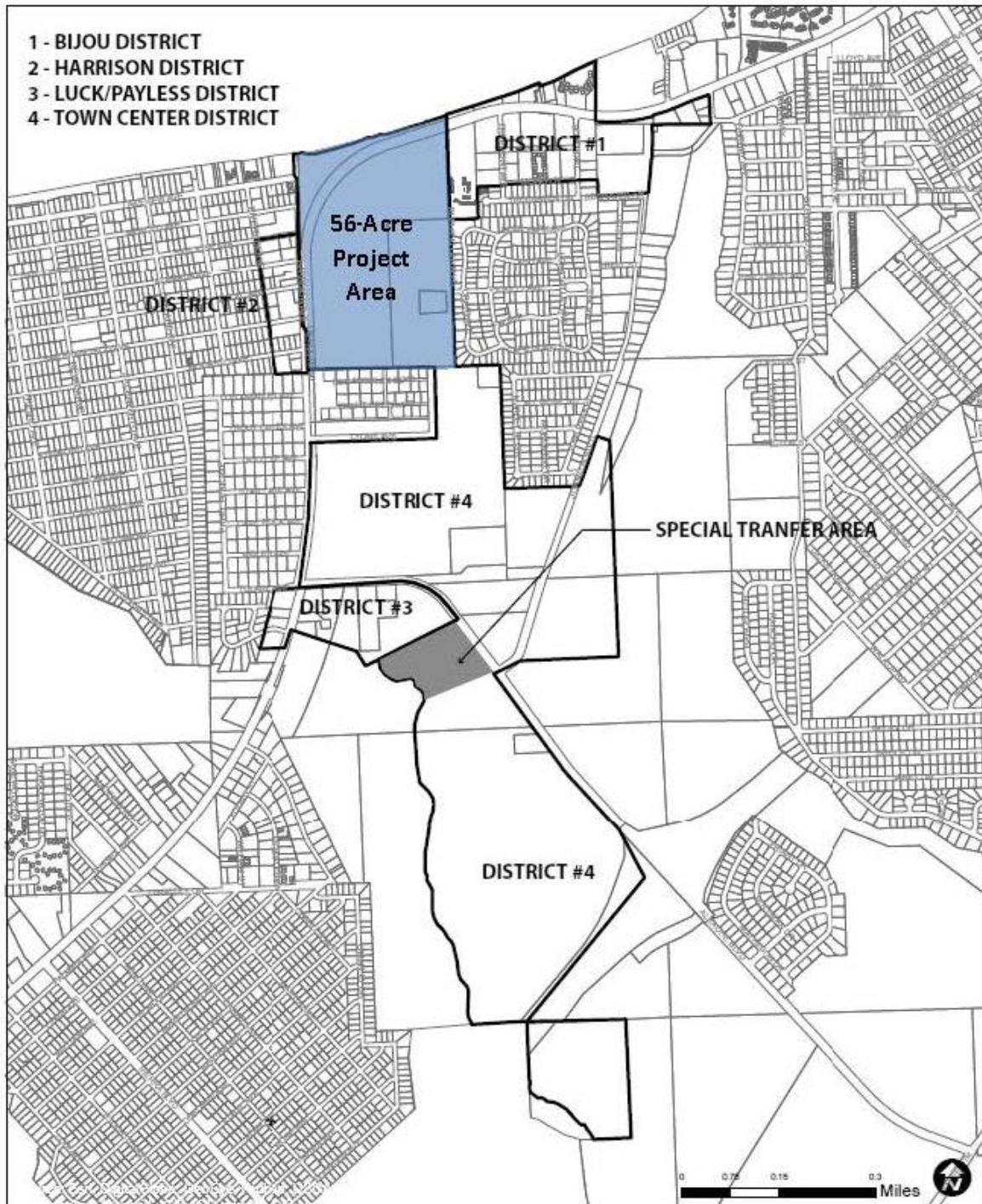
The B/AT CP was adopted by the City and states that the area “should serve as a family oriented and recreation center, as well as the Town Center for the local Community. To accomplish this goal, policies must encourage diversification of recreational and commercial attractions to create the high-quality development expected in a family oriented resort area.” The proposed amendments will further the goals of the B/AT CP by encouraging the redevelopment of an infill site with high quality recreation opportunities with development that complements the overall natural setting.

The proposed amendments are consistent with the B/AT CP “Town Center” designation, encouraging the relocation of city, county, state, and federal offices to the district and expanding recreational activities within the district and immediate surrounding areas.

In addition, the proposed B/AT CP amendment is consistent with the following policy:

*Policy A: Establish four unique, separate districts.*  
*Town Center District. Areas currently described as Campground by the Lake, South Tahoe Middle School, John Boulevard areas and Lake Tahoe Community College shall be combined to accommodate the following uses: Commercial (public service support orientation, or receiving area for transfer of SEZ/Scenic Corridor), Public Service, Recreation, and designation as a “Special Events Area.”*

**Location Map 1: Bijou/Al Tahoe Community Plan and the 56-Acre Project Area**



City of South Lake Tahoe, CA  
Bijou/Al Tahoe Community Plan

Exhibit 3  
Land Use District Map  
June 2020