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March 11, 2026

Good morning,

My name is Ann Nichols with the North Tahoe Preservation Alliance, and I also served on the community team that worked on the Tahoe Basin Area Plan during the Regional Plan Update process.

At the time, the public was told that Area Plans would allow communities to help shape development in ways that reflected local priorities. Many of us spent more than two years working on that process.

However, many of the community recommendations — including lower building heights and more modest development intensity — were ultimately overridden.

Today we are seeing another consequence of how the Area Plan system is being implemented.

Because projects are deemed to conform to an Area Plan, they can proceed without comprehensive environmental review, even when development intensity increases significantly.

The 39 Degrees North project in Kings Beach illustrates this problem. The project proposes substantial increases in building height, mass, and development intensity in the town center. Yet because it is considered consistent with the Tahoe Basin Area Plan, it has not been required to prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement. Instead, environmental review has largely consisted of confirming that the project fits within existing zoning.

This raises a fundamental question for the Commission:

Should major redevelopment projects in the Tahoe Basin be able to proceed without updated environmental analysis simply because they conform to an area plan adopted more than a decade ago?

Environmental review should not be frozen in time.

Since the 2012 Regional Plan Update, the Basin has experienced greater wildfire risk, increased congestion, and far higher peak visitation.

The lake experiences total impact, not programmatic assumptions from 2012.

Area Plans were intended to give communities a voice in shaping development — not to become a loophole allowing large projects to bypass meaningful environmental review.

Thank you.

Ann Nichols

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“Helping preserve the natural beauty and rural character of North Lake Tahoe”

Preserve Lake Tahoe (Video): https://youtu.be/WKzPL-EwEUw

TikTok Video: https://www.tiktok.com/@northtahoepreservation?_t=8XCELbNFbSt&_r=1

Instagram Video: https://www.instagram.com/northtahoepreservation/