9 SCENIC RESOURCES

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes a discussion of existing visual conditions, a summary of applicable visual quality regulations, and an analysis of potential visual impacts that could result from implementation of the Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan and Tahoe City Lodge alternatives. As discussed in Chapter 4, "Approach to Environmental Analysis," this analysis is provided to fully document the environmental effects of the four area plan and lodge alternatives. The broad geography and long timeframe to which the area plan applies and the policy-oriented nature of its guidance is such that the EIR/EIS is prepared at a programmatic level, i.e., a more general analysis of each resource area with a level of detail and degree of specificity commensurate with the overall planning level of the area plan. Similarly, because the Kings Beach Center design concept lacks sufficient detail for definitive impact analysis, that portion of the project is also evaluated in a programmatic fashion. The proposed Tahoe City Lodge represents a project that contains a greater level of detail and specificity such that a project-level analysis is included in this chapter.

The primary visual resources/aesthetics issues raised during scoping included scenic effects of: development on ridgelines, increased building height, parking regulations, and town center boundary revisions; area plan policies that address view corridors to Lake Tahoe; and use of visual simulations from multiple vantage points to address scenic effects.

The methods of analyzing project-related impacts on visual resources/aesthetics in this chapter are consistent with the TRPA scenic threshold monitoring system. Scenic threshold monitoring data collected by TRPA in 2015 are used to determine existing conditions for the Plan area. The area plan review includes an evaluation of the long-term effects of implementing policies and standards proposed in the area plan alternatives. The evaluation of the Tahoe City Lodge project includes a site-specific assessment of the current visual conditions and visual effects of the lodge alternatives, supported by visual simulations.

9.2 REGULATORY SETTING

9.2.1 Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

LAKE TAHOE REGIONAL PLAN

TRPA implements its authority to regulate growth and development in the Lake Tahoe Region through the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan, which was updated by TRPA in 2012. The Regional Plan includes Resolution 82-11, the Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities (threshold standards), Goals and Policies, Code of Ordinances, plan area statements (PASs), the Scenic Quality Improvement Plan (SQIP)/Environmental Improvement Program (EIP), and other guidance documents.

Regional Plan Goals and Policies

The Goals and Policies document of the Regional Plan establishes an overall framework for development and environmental conservation in the Lake Tahoe region. The goals and policies present the overall approach to meeting TRPA's environmental threshold carrying capacities (discussed below), and establish guiding policy for each resource element. The Conservation Element (Chapter 4) of the Goals and Policies document considers 10 subelements, including a Scenic subelement.

Code of Ordinances

According to the TRPA Code of Ordinances, if a project is visible from Lake Tahoe, a state or federal highway in the Tahoe Basin, Pioneer Trail, or a public recreation area or bikeway, the potential scenic impacts of the project from those areas must be analyzed.

Scenic Standards

Chapter 36, "Design Standards," and Chapter 66, "Scenic Quality," of the TRPA Code contain standards pertaining to scenic quality. These chapters establish a process for analyzing projects for scenic quality and define those circumstances that require preparation of scenic assessments and/or other documents. Sections 66.1.3, 66.1.4, 66.1.5, and 66.2.4 describe scenic quality standards for roadway and shoreline travel units, and for public recreation areas and bicycle trails.

Height

Chapter 37 of the TRPA Code contains standards pertaining to height. Maximum building height limits range from 24 feet to 42 feet based on the slope of the parcel and to building's roof pitch. Additional height is allowed for buildings that meet the specific criteria outlined in Section 37.5. Chapter 13 allows area plans to designate height limits of up to 56 feet within town centers. The applicable findings in section 37.7 must be made to permit any building with height greater than 26 feet.

Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities

TRPA adopted environmental threshold carrying capacities in August 1982 for the purpose of maintaining and improving the various resources of the Tahoe Basin. Scenic quality is an exceptional attribute of the Tahoe Basin, and specific threshold carrying capacities were developed to protect and improve the scenic resources of the area. TRPA threshold standards require maintenance of threshold rating values for roadway and shoreline travel routes, individually mapped scenic resources, recreation area scenic resources, and compatibility with the natural environment. The following describes the scenic resources threshold indicators that are relevant to the project.

Travel Route Ratings

Long-term, cumulative changes to views of the landscape from state and federal highways in the region and from the surface of Lake Tahoe are tracked by the TRPA travel route ratings. Roadways have been divided into 53 segments called "travel units" based on their landscape characteristics. Lake Tahoe's shoreline is divided into 33 separate travel units. The following visual conditions are given numerical ratings to determine the threshold score for travel units: human-made features along roadways and shoreline; physical distractions to driving along roadways; roadway characteristics; views of the lake from roadways; general landscape views from roadways and the lake; and, the variety of scenery viewed from roadways and the lake.

Within the study area for the Tahoe City Lodge project, Roadway Travel Unit 15, Tahoe City, extends from the point at which Tahoe Tavern Road joins SR 89 south of the Truckee River to east of the downtown portion of Tahoe City where Burton Creek crosses SR 28. This includes the location of the proposed project on the north side of SR 28. Shoreline Travel Unit 15, Tahoe City, extends along the shore of Lake Tahoe from William B Layton Park south of the Truckee River to east of downtown Tahoe City. The land above and adjacent to the shoreline includes the proposed project site. The roadway travel unit currently has a rating that meets or exceeds the threshold standard, but the shoreline unit does not (TRPA 2015).

Scenic Quality Ratings

The purpose of the TRPA scenic quality threshold is to maintain or enhance views of individual, existing scenic resources that are visible by the public from roadway or shoreline travel routes. The scenic resources in the region include certain views of the natural landscape and distinctive natural features that were identified, mapped, described, and evaluated as part of the 1982 Scenic Resource Evaluation. Scenic resources include such things as foreground, middle-ground, and background views of the natural landscape from roadways; certain views to Lake Tahoe from roadways; certain views of Lake Tahoe and natural

landscape from roadway entry points into the region; unique landscape features, such as ridgelines, prominent mountain peaks, and rock formations that add interest and variety, as seen from roadways. Scenic Resources have been identified and mapped within both the roadway and shoreline travel units adjacent to the Tahoe City Lodge site. They include the following scenic resources:

- 15.1 – Views of a forested area from near Rocky Ridge Road, east of Tahoe City, with considerable residential and some commercial development;
- 15.2 – Interrupted panoramas and glimpses of the lake above houses and between trees between Sierra Terrace Road and Rocky Ridge Road;
- 15.3 – Views of mixed deciduous vegetation in Tahoe State Recreation Area;
- 15.4 – Views of downtown Tahoe City along the SR 28 corridor facing southwest near the Grove Street intersection;
- 15.5 – Broken vistas of the lake to the southwest from central Tahoe City between Grove Street and the Tahoe City Lodge site; and
- 15.6 – View of the Truckee River stream zone with attractive views of the river, unusual outlet structure, and whitewater; but the view is marred by intensive commercial development, traffic, and signs.

Public Recreation Areas and Bike Trails Scenic Quality Ratings

The TRPA public recreation area scenic quality threshold applies to specific public recreation areas, including beaches, campgrounds, ski areas, and segments of Class I and Class II bicycle trails. Public recreation areas with views of scenic resources are valuable because they are major public gathering places, hold high scenic values, and are places where people are static (compared to people on the travel routes) and, therefore, have more time to focus their attention on the views and scenic resources. Scenic resources seen from public recreation areas include: views of the lake and the surrounding natural landscape from within the recreation area; views of distinctive natural features that are within the recreation area; and views of human-made features in or adjacent to the recreation area that influence the viewing experience. Commons Beach in Tahoe City and the bike trail that runs through it are TRPA-listed public recreation areas in the vicinity of the proposed Tahoe City Lodge project.

Community Design

The TRPA community design threshold is a policy statement that applies to the built environment and is intended to ensure that design elements of buildings are compatible with the natural, scenic, and recreational values of the region. The community design threshold is implemented in two ways. First, the community and redevelopment plan process has been used to develop design standards and guidelines that are tailored to the needs and desires of individual communities. These standards and guidelines are considered “substitute” standards because they replace all or portions of TRPA Code that would otherwise regulate the same subject. Secondly, the site planning and design principles contained in the TRPA Code are implemented as part of individual development projects, and are reviewed and approved by TRPA and local governments.

Scenic Quality Improvement Plan/Environmental Improvement Program

The SQIP was adopted to provide a program for implementing physical improvements to the built environment in the Tahoe Basin. The SQIP is intended to contribute to the attainment of the scenic resources thresholds in the Goals and Policies document of the Regional Plan (see above) and serves as an implementation guide for the Regional Plan. The EIP, adopted in 1998 and updated in 2010, incorporates elements of the SQIP. The EIP includes a list of specific projects throughout the Basin that are needed to attain and maintain the thresholds (TRPA 2010). One of the program elements addresses improving the scenic quality of roadways. Currently the Tahoe Vista Utility Undergrounding Project is the only scenic improvement project on the five-year EIP project list in the Plan area.

9.2.2 Local

PLACER COUNTY

This section includes a summary of and references to relevant policies from the Placer County General Plan.

Placer County General Plan

The Visual and Scenic Resources Element of the Placer County General Plan (2013a) includes a number of goals and policies intended to protect visual and scenic resources as quality-of-life amenities for residents and as a principle asset for the promotion of tourism and recreation. Specific policies require the county to ensure that new development is designed to protect the quality of scenic areas, utilize natural landscape features and vegetation, minimize land alterations, and otherwise minimize visual impacts of development. The Placer County General Plan also calls for the development of a system of scenic routes and for the preservation, enhancement, and protection of the scenic resources visible from the scenic routes (Goal 1.L). Applicable goals and policies of the General Plan include the following:

- **Goal 1.K:** To protect the visual and scenic resources of Placer County as important quality-of-life amenities for county residents and a principal asset in the promotion of recreation and tourism.
  - **Policy 1.K.1**. The county shall require that new development in scenic areas (e.g., river canyons, lake watersheds, scenic highway corridors, ridgelines and steep slopes) is planned and designed in a manner which employs design, construction, and maintenance techniques that:
    a. Avoids locating structures along ridgelines and steep slopes;
    b. Incorporates design and screening measures to minimize the visibility of structures and graded areas;
    c. Maintains the character and visual quality of the area.
  - **1.K.2.** The county shall require that new development in scenic areas be designed to utilize natural landforms and vegetation for screening structures, access roads, building foundations, and cut and fill slopes.
  - **1.K.3.** The county shall require that new development in rural areas incorporates landscaping that provides a transition between the vegetation in developed areas and adjacent open space or undeveloped areas.
  - **1.K.4.** The county shall require that new development incorporates sound soil conservation practices and minimizes land alterations. Land alterations should comply with the following guidelines:
    a. Limit cuts and fills;
    b. Limit grading to the smallest practical area of land;
    c. Limit land exposure to the shortest practical amount of time;
    d. Replant graded areas to ensure establishment of plant cover before the next rainy season;
    e. Create grading contours that blend with the natural contours on site or with contours on property immediately adjacent to the area of development; and,
    f. Provide and maintain site-specific construction Best Management Practices (BMPs).
  - **1.K.5.** The county shall require that new roads, parking, and utilities be designed to minimize visual impacts. Unless limited by geological or engineering constraints, utilities should be installed underground and roadways and parking areas should be designed to conform to the natural terrain.
  - **1.K.6.** The county shall require that new development on hillsides employ design, construction, and maintenance techniques that:
    a. Ensure that development near or on portions of hillsides do not cause or worsen natural hazards such as erosion, sedimentation, fire, or water quality concerns;
    b. Include erosion and sediment control measures including temporary vegetation sufficient to stabilize disturbed areas;
    c. Minimize risk to life and property from slope failure, landslides, and flooding; and,

d. Maintain the character and visual quality of the hillside.

- **Goal 1.L:** To develop a system of scenic routes serving the needs of residents and visitors to Placer County and to preserve, enhance, and protect the scenic resources visible from these scenic routes.

9.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

In the in the Placer County portion of the Lake Tahoe Region, human activity has had a notable influence on the landscape. Beginning with the Comstock era around 1859, demand for timber resulted in extensive logging within the area with large portions appearing virtually deforested by 1890 (USGS 2005). Urban development began in the early 1900s with small vacation resorts and a few communities. After World War II, demand for recreation, tourism, and permanent housing fueled large increases in development. Commercial development increased to become the second largest developed land use next to residential by 2002. Even so, concentrated development in the region is largely confined to private lands, which make up 10 percent of the land region-wide, compared to 90 percent in public ownership (TRPA 2012b). Today, less than two percent of the land within the Plan area is vacant and privately owned (Placer County 2013b:3-9). Thus, while some new development will occur, most new projects involve redevelopment of previously developed sites and transfers of development from one location to another.

9.3.1 Visual Environments

The Plan area contains a mix of environments, including urban centers, residential neighborhoods, small commercial nodes that serve the residential neighborhoods, recreation areas, and undeveloped stretches of wild and rural landscapes. These elements are described by three general visual environments: urban, rural, and a rural transition environment between the urban and rural areas (TRPA 1989:vii).

- Urban Areas: Urban areas are dominated by commercial uses, public service activities, and residential uses (human-made development). Urban areas within the Plan area are Tahoe City, Kings Beach, and North Stateline.

- Rural Transition Areas: Rural transition areas are a combination of human-made development and natural landscape features. Within the Plan area, rural transitional areas include most other areas along SR 28 and SR 89, including Tahoe Vista, Carnelian Bay, Sunnyside, Homewood, and other residential areas throughout the Plan area.

- Rural Areas: Rural areas are dominated by natural elements and processes. Rural areas within the Plan area include most of the backcountry areas and higher elevation areas outside of residential neighborhoods.

NATURAL FEATURES

The dominant natural features of the Plan area are the expansive alpine lake (Lake Tahoe) ringed by rugged mountain peaks with thickly forested slopes.

Lake Tahoe

Lake Tahoe is a lake with remarkable color, clarity, size and depth. The lake's water clarity allows a viewer to see approximately 70 feet deep, though the clarity has declined from greater than 100 feet since readings began in the late 1960s (TRPA 2012b). Lake Tahoe is the second deepest lake in the United States and the tenth deepest in the world, with a maximum depth measured at 1,645 feet. The color of Lake Tahoe's water is highly variable, influenced by depth. Water color ranges from clear, light green at the shallow lake edges (especially noteworthy in areas near Tahoe City), to dark blue in the deeper areas. The Lake is approximately

22 miles long and 12 miles wide, with 72 miles of shoreline and a surface area of 191 square miles (USGS 2008). The expansiveness of the Lake allows for long-distance views throughout the area.

Mountains

Distinctive mountain ridges and peaks surround the flat plane of Lake Tahoe and create an enclosed landscape. The Plan area is ringed by several high mountains rising to elevations of almost 9,000 feet in some areas. The mountains are thickly forested, predominately by evergreen species, and many have rocky summits that maintain patches of snow for much of the year.

Dark Skies

Rural and rural transition areas in the Plan area have dark skies with little light pollution from urban areas, making them ideal locations for astronomical viewing. Views from lake side beaches and from watercraft on the Lake are especially expansive and free of nighttime light interference. Lighting associated with urban development and human presence can result in light pollution and spillover, which can adversely affect the dark night skies that contribute to the natural scenic character of the area.

Scenic Roadways

In the Plan area, SR 28 and portions of SR 89 are Eligible State Scenic Highways (Caltrans 2009), although they have not been officially designated as such.

TAHOE CITY LODGE PROJECT SITE

The site of the proposed Tahoe City Lodge project is currently developed. At least three buildings occupy the site along with an enclosed but defunct swimming pool and paved parking areas. The site supports several large, old aspen and pine trees. The building situated directly on N. Lake Boulevard is currently occupied by a few businesses, but many of the units are unoccupied. The main tenant is the Thai Kitchen Restaurant. The facility once served as a motel but has since been converted to businesses and office space. The building along the east edge of the property is mostly unoccupied but houses Jiffy's Pizza, an operating business. The buildings have a white stucco finish and appear dated and in need of repair and upgrade. A former swimming pool, since filled in, is located at the interior of the site surrounded on three sides by buildings. A Plexiglas gazebo with several broken or missing panes encloses the former pool. There is a paved vehicular entrance and internal parking area at the east end of the Thai Kitchen. The pavement is cracked and broken in places and has been patched over time. Overall, the existing development on the site has a blighted appearance. Exhibits 9-1 through 9-4 show photos of the project site and its existing condition.

Roadway Travel Unit 15, Tahoe City, extends from the point at which Tahoe Tavern Road joins SR 89 south of the Truckee River to east of the downtown portion of Tahoe City where Burton Creek crosses SR 28. This includes the location of the proposed project on the north side of SR 28. In 1982, the roadway travel route composite rating for Unit 15 was 12. To be in attainment of the TRPA Roadway Travel Route Scenic Threshold, the unit must have a composite rating of 15.5 or greater. In 1986, the rating increased to 13. In 2001, after the Tahoe City Beautification Project and redevelopment of Tahoe City's historic downtown corridor was completed, the rating increased to 16.5 where it has remained since. The most noticeable enhancements of the Tahoe City Beautification Project include sidewalks, landscaping, rockwork and streetlights. These aesthetic amenities made Tahoe City a more pedestrian-friendly destination with a revitalized the commercial core.

Shoreline Travel Unit 15, Tahoe City, extends from William B Layton Park south of the Truckee River to east of downtown Tahoe City. The land above and adjacent to the shoreline includes the proposed project site. In 1982, the shoreline travel route composite rating for Unit 15 was 5. To be in attainment of the TRPA Shoreline Travel Route Scenic Threshold, the unit must have a rating of 7.5 or greater. In 2006, the composite rating increased to 5.5, where it has remained since.

Source: Ascent Environmental 2015

Exhibit 9-1 **Existing Project Site 1**

Source: Ascent Environmental 2015

X14010026 01 038

Exhibit 9-2 **Existing Project Site 2**

Source: Ascent Environmental 2015

Exhibit 9-3 **Existing Project Site 3**

Source: Ascent Environmental 2015

X14010026 01 039

Exhibit 9-4 **Existing Project Site 4**

SCENIC THRESHOLD STATUS

Roadway Travel Route Ratings

There are 18 roadway travel units within the Plan area. The adopted numerical threshold standard for roadway travel units is 15.5. To be in attainment, the current rating assigned to any roadway travel unit must be at least 15.5, and must be at least equal to the rating that was originally assigned in 1982. Seven (39 percent) of these are currently not in attainment of the adopted threshold standard. As of 2015, three of the roadway travel units were rated lower than their original rating and 13 were rated higher than their original rating. Table 9-1 shows the original and current scores, and Exhibit 9-5 depicts the location and current status of roadway travel units in the Plan area. The improvement in ratings for roadway travel units in the Plan area was largely the result of private redevelopment projects, streetscape and roadway improvements, and utility undergrounding. Scores that declined within the Plan area were the result of new development that blocked lake views (TRPA 2015).

Table 9-1 Status of the TRPA-Designated Scenic Roadway Travel Units within the Plan Area

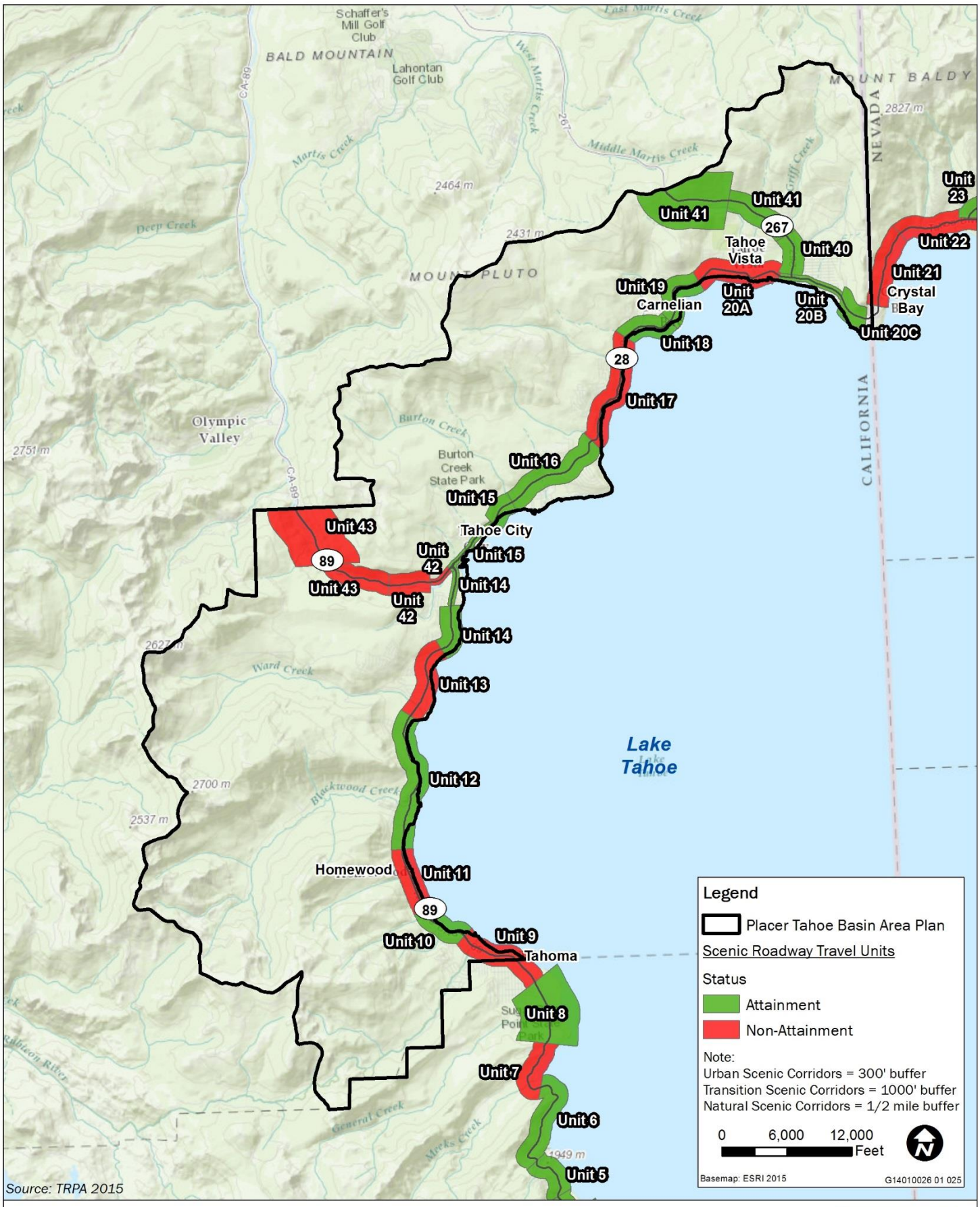
Travel Unit Name	Unit Number	1982 Score	2015 Score[1]	Status[1]
Tahoma	9	13	14	Non-attainment
Quail Creek	10	14	15.5	Attainment
Homewood	11	13	12.5	Non-attainment
Tahoe Pines	12	17	17.5	Attainment
Sunnyside	13	14	14	Non-attainment
Tahoe Tavern	14	13	15.5	Attainment
Tahoe City	15	12	16.5	Attainment
Lake Forest	16	13	16.5	Attainment
Cedar Flat	17	17	16	Non-attainment
Carnelian Bay	18	14	16	Attainment
Flick Point	19	14	16	Attainment
Brockway Cutoff	40	15	15.5	Attainment
Brockway Summit	41	21	21	Attainment
Outlet	42	10	13.5	Non-attainment
Lower Truckee River	43	20	19	Non-attainment
Tahoe Vista	20A[2]	10	13.5	Non-attainment
Kings Beach	20B[2]	10	16	Attainment
Brockway	20C[2]	10	16	Attainment

[1]The 2015 score and status is based on scenic threshold monitoring data collected by TRPA and partner organizations in 2015.

[2]Unit 20 was divided into units 20 a, b, and c in 1996 to reflect differences in visual character in these areas.

Shoreline Travel Route Ratings

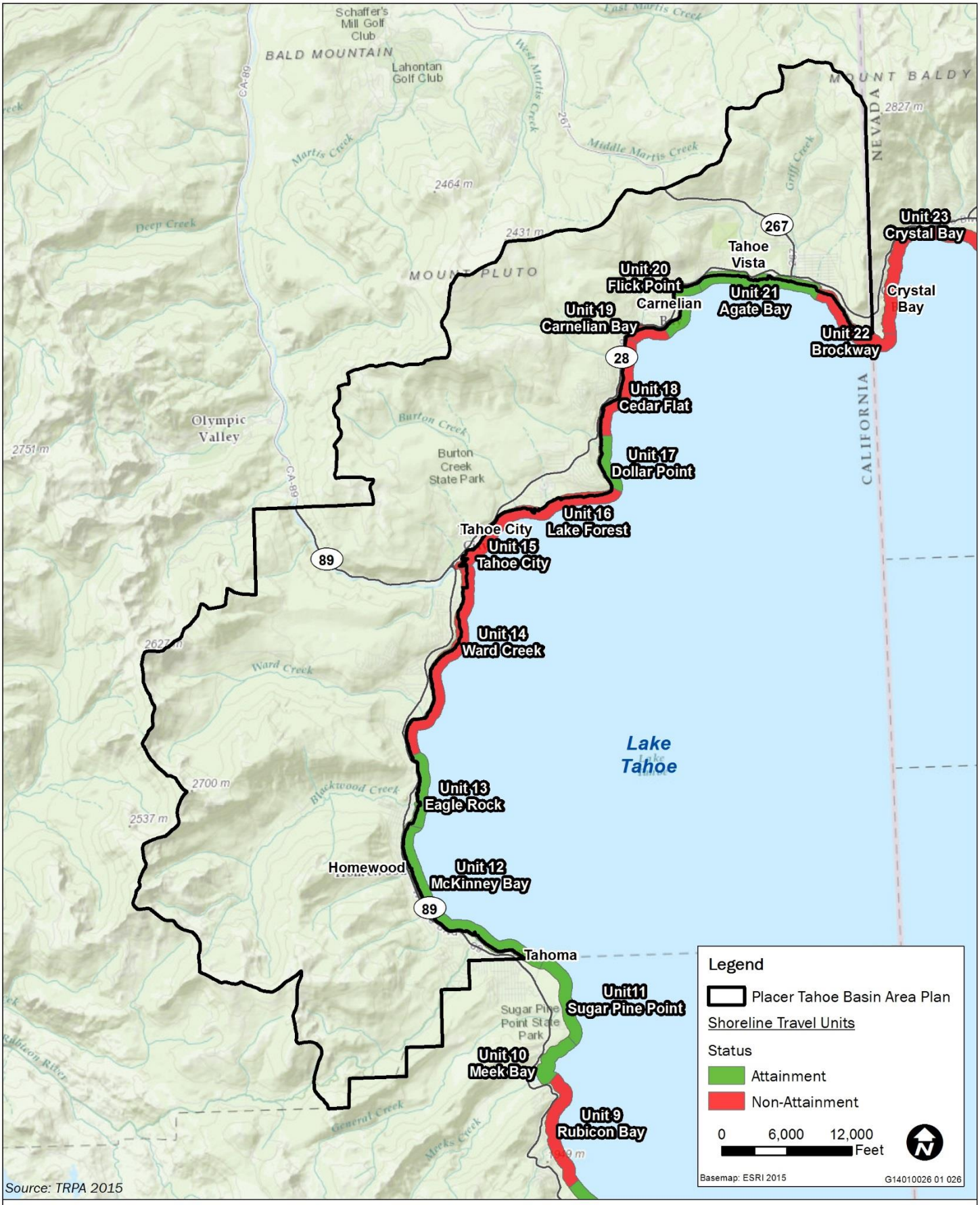
There are 11 individual shoreline travel units within the Plan area. The adopted numerical threshold standard for shoreline travel units is 7.5. To be in attainment, the current rating assigned to any shoreline travel unit must be at least 7.5, and must be at least equal to the rating that was originally assigned in 1982. Six (55 percent) of these are currently not in attainment of the adopted threshold standard. As of 2015, four of the roadway travel units were rated lower than their original rating and three were rated higher than their original rating. Table 9-2 shows the original and current scores, and Exhibit 9-6 depicts the location and current status of shoreline travel units in the Plan area. Overall, the shoreline travel unit ratings declined from 1982 through 2001 as the result of new shoreline development that degraded natural views. Since TRPA adopted revised ordinances governing the design of structures along the shoreline in 2002, the shoreline travel unit ratings in the Plan area have generally improved as older shoreline development is replaced with newer development that complies with the new standards (TRPA 2015).



Source: TRPA 2015

Exhibit 9-5 **Roadway Travel Units**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL



Source: TRPA 2015

Exhibit 9-6 **Shoreline Travel Units**

Table 9-2 Status of the TRPA-Designated Scenic Shoreline Travel Units within the Plan Area

Travel Unit Name	Unit Number	1982 Score	2015 Score[1]	Status[1]
McKinney Bay	12	9	9.5	Attainment
Eagle Rock	13	11	11	Attainment
Ward Creek	14	10	9.5	Non-attainment
Tahoe City	15	5	5.5	Non-attainment
Lake Forest	16	5	4	Non-attainment
Dollar Point	17	10	10	Attainment
Cedar Flat	18	8	7.5	Non-attainment
Carnelian Bay	19	5	6.5	Non-attainment
Flick Point	20	8	8	Attainment
Agate Bay	21	8	8	Attainment
Brockway	22	10	9	Non-attainment

[1]The 2015 score and status is based on scenic threshold monitoring data collected by TRPA and partner organizations in 2015.

Scenic Quality Ratings

The threshold standard for Scenic Quality is not numerical but is a non-degradation standard. This means that a scenic resource is considered in attainment if its scenic quality rating remains equal to or higher than the rating it was originally assigned. There are 60 roadway scenic resources that are viewed from main roads within the Plan area. Of these, four had ratings in 2015 that were below the original 1982 rating and therefore considered in non-attainment. On the other hand, there were 11 scenic resources with ratings higher than their original rating. This represents improvement in the quality of these scenic resources. These changes in roadway scenic quality ratings were driven by the same factors, described above, that affected changes in the roadway travel unit ratings.

The Plan area includes a total of 63 shoreline scenic resources that are visible from the lake. As of 2015, four had ratings that were below the original and are in non-attainment and the remaining 59 had ratings equal to or higher than their original rating, indicating no degradation or improvement in scenic quality.

Public Recreation Areas and Bike Trails

The threshold standard for Public Recreation Areas and Bike Trails Scenic Quality is a non-degradation standard, similar to the roadway and shoreline scenic resource standards described above. There are 95 scenic resources that are viewed from public recreation areas and bike trails within the Plan area. As of 2015, all of these scenic resources were in attainment of the standard, and three had ratings higher than their original rating, indicating improvement in their scenic quality.

Community Design

The threshold standard for Community Design is a policy statement that states “It shall be the policy of the TRPA Governing Body in development of the Regional Plan, in cooperation with local jurisdictions, to ensure the height, bulk, texture, form, materials, colors, lighting, signing and other design elements of new, remodeled and redeveloped buildings be compatible with the natural, scenic, and recreational values of the region.” To attain this standard, TRPA and its partner jurisdictions must implement design standards and guidelines that result in new or redeveloped buildings that are compatible with the area’s natural, scenic, and recreational values. Design standards and guidelines must address the key elements of design that affect community character including mass, color, materials, architectural design, and other design elements as outlined in the policy statement. To be compatible with the region’s values, design standards and guidelines also need to be sensitive to the context in which they are applied. In more natural areas, design standard and guidelines should, in most cases, focus on minimizing the visibility of development to reduce distractions from the natural scenery. In more developed areas of the region, design standards and guidelines should seek to achieve visual interest reflecting the desired character of the individual community in which they are located.

Overall, the policy statement has been implemented through design standards in the Code of Ordinances, Local Jurisdiction design standards, and through area plans and community plans. These standards have resulted in increases in travel route and scenic quality ratings over time, which have accelerated over the past ten years. Specifically, the visual quality of the built environment is improving in most areas of the Basin due to redevelopment projects that replace older non-conforming development with development that is consistent with current design standards and guidelines.

9.4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

9.4.1 Methods and Assumptions

Each of the area plan alternatives is examined in light of the potential for development or redevelopment, the nature and character of that development, and where it would be likely to occur. In addition, the analysis considers the effects of removing existing development and restoring lands in accordance with regulatory requirements and incentives of each alternative. As described in Chapter 3, Alternatives, each alternative offers different standards that would affect the location, height, density, type, and design of new development and redevelopment. For all of the alternatives, the existing growth management system and Regional Plan standards would remain as they are, with the exception of substitute standards specifically described Chapter 3, Alternatives. The scenic quality regulations outlined in Chapter 66 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances would remain under all alternatives, and some alternatives would include additional scenic quality standards for specific zoning districts. TRPA shorezone regulations in Code Chapters 80 – 86, and the scenic review process for shorezone projects in Code Section 66.3 would not change under any alternatives.

With the exception of the Tahoe City Lodge project, assessed separately herein, no specific projects or developments are proposed or would be approved as a result of this area plan. Therefore, the analysis evaluates the effects of implementing the development standards, and design standards and guidelines that would apply under each alternative. The Tahoe City Lodge project and Kings Beach Center design concept provide examples of the application of proposed standards at these sites. Assumptions must be made about the likely type, location, and scale of development, redevelopment, and restoration under each alternative. It is important to note that any new development or redevelopment project would be subject to project-specific environmental review requirements, as well as a project/site review for consistency with the required development standards, design standards, and design guidelines.

Methods that comprise the TRPA scenic threshold monitoring system were used to study the Tahoe City Lodge project's potential impacts on visual resources. The method is based on visual characteristics of the landscape (TRPA 2010). The condition of these characteristics, when considered as a group and expressed as a numerical rating, represents the relative level of excellence in scenic quality that the visual landscape exhibits. Assessing the condition of the characteristics under pre- and post-project scenarios provides an understanding of the status of scenic quality and the visual effect of a proposed action.

Photo simulations, prepared by the project applicant, demonstrate the appearance of the project in different key views: those along SR 28 near and adjacent to the project site. They illustrate the size, mass, and architecture of the proposed project and two alternatives. Images of Alternative 1, the proposed project, are also shown from the Tahoe City Golf Course and adjoining residential area to the north, and the surface of Lake Tahoe. Exhibit 9-7 shows a map of the viewpoint locations and the direction of view for each of the simulation images. Photos of the existing view paired with its corresponding simulation are presented under Impact 9-1. Comparing the simulated image to the photo of existing conditions provides a means of accurately depicting the project and determining the nature and extent of change, which facilitates the evaluation of consequences on the visual environment.

Exhibit 9-7

Tahoe City Lodge Viewpoint Locations

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

9.4.2 Significance Criteria

Significance criteria relevant to aesthetics and scenic resources are summarized below.

TRPA CRITERIA

The Scenic Resources/Community Design, and Light and Glare criteria from the TRPA Initial Environmental Checklist were used to develop significance criteria to evaluate the Scenic Resource impacts of the alternatives. The TRPA significance criteria include whether the project would do any of the following.

- Block or cause substantial degradation of an existing view of Lake Tahoe or other scenic vistas seen from a public area.
- Decrease the TRPA Travel Route or Scenic Quality rating for roadway or shoreline travel units, or bicycle trails and recreation areas.
- Be inconsistent with the TRPA SQIP, TRPA Design Review Guidelines, or applicable height and design standards.
- Create new sources of light or glare that are more substantial than other light or glare in the area, or cause exterior light to be cast off-site.

CEQA CRITERIA

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines and the Placer County CEQA Checklist, impacts relative to aesthetic or scenic impacts would be significant if the project would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

9.4.3 Environmental Effects of the Project Alternatives

Impact 9-1: Effects on scenic or visual quality

Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would include policies, development standards, and other provisions that could result in changes to the location, intensity, and form of the built environment within the Plan area. The provisions of Alternatives 1 – 3, including those related to town center boundaries, building height, density and coverage, secondary residential units, and limited conversions of CFA to TAUs would not have substantial effects on the mass and location of development allowed within the Plan area. In addition, any project proposed under Alternatives 1 – 3 would be required to comply with a series of existing requirements and proposed Area Plan standards that would minimize adverse effects on the existing visual character or quality of the Plan area, the TRPA scenic threshold ratings, scenic vistas, scenic resources, or views of Lake Tahoe. However, the provision in Alternatives 1 and 3 that would allow non-contiguous project areas could allow, in some areas, additional visual mass to be placed between major travel routes and Lake Tahoe,

which could block or degrade views of Lake Tahoe or views toward the shore from Lake Tahoe. Therefore, Alternatives 1 and 3 would have a **potentially significant** impact on scenic and visual quality, and Alternative 2 would have a **less-than-significant** effect. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 9-1 would reduce potentially significant impacts of Alternatives 1 and 3 to a **less-than-significant** level because it would prevent a non-contiguous project area from resulting in an increase in visual mass that could block or degrade views of Lake Tahoe from scenic travel routes or views of the shore from Lake Tahoe. Alternative 4 would have **no impact** because it would include no changes to policies or standards that could result in changes scenic or visual quality.

Tahoe City Lodge Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would physically change the project site in a way that would be visually evident, that would affect the visual quality of the site and its surroundings, and thus, TRPA Travel Route ratings. Under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, the project site would be redeveloped with a lodge that would include a mix of hotel rooms and 1- and 2-bedroom suites or hotel rooms and commercial uses. Effects on scenic or visual quality from implementation of any of the alternatives would result in **less-than-significant** impacts, because the existing site would be renovated and aesthetically improved in accordance with the policies and standards of the Area Plan, and because redevelopment of the site would be compatible with the surrounding area and be visually beneficial by improving the appearance of the project site to a level consistent with downtown Tahoe City.

Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan Program-Level Analysis

Alternative 1: Proposed Area Plan

Alternative 1 would include policies, development standards, and other provisions that could result in changes to the location, intensity, and form of the built environment within the Plan area. These changes to the built environment could affect the existing visual character or quality of the Plan area, the TRPA scenic threshold ratings, scenic vistas, scenic resources, or views of Lake Tahoe. The provisions of the Area Plan that could affect scenic or visual quality include policies and standards that address: town center boundaries, building height, density and coverage, the use of non-contiguous project areas, secondary residential units, and limited conversions of Commercial Floor Area (CFA) to Tourist Accommodation Units (TAUs).

With the exception of the proposed Tahoe City Town Center boundary change and provisions that would allow non-contiguous project areas, secondary residential units, and CFA to TAU conversions, the components of Alternative 1 that could affect scenic or visual quality were analyzed at a programmatic level in the TRPA RPU EIS (TRPA 2012a:3.9-22 through 3.9-28). That analysis found that at a regional level, the provisions proposed in Alternative 1 are likely to result in a greater pace and degree of redevelopment activity. The RPU EIS determined that this would result in beneficial scenic impacts, especially when that redevelopment occurs within travel units that are not in attainment of scenic threshold standards. The RPU EIS analysis also found that allowances for increased building height could substantially increase visual mass and magnitude, which could degrade scenic views. The RPU EIS prescribed a mitigation measure that would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level by requiring that three- or four- story buildings in town centers comply with specific findings and performance standards. Those findings and performance standards were incorporated into the TRPA Code of Ordinances and are included as part of the Area Plan proposed under Alternative 1.

Tahoe City Town Center Boundary Revision

Alternative 1 would modify the Tahoe City Town Center boundary to remove 7.12 acres of land near the Fairway Community Center and Tahoe City wetlands, and to add 4.2 acres surrounding the Tahoe City Golf Course clubhouse. This change would allow additional uses and more intensive development near the Tahoe City Golf Course clubhouse, but would reduce the total amount of land available for more intensive land uses by 2.91 acres and reduce the intensity of development possible near residential areas adjacent to the Fairway Community Center. Scenic threshold ratings would not be affected by this map revision because neither the area proposed to be added to the town center, nor the area proposed to be removed, are readily visible from TRPA-designated scenic travel units or resources. The nearest scenic travel unit (Roadway Unit 15) is approximately 500 feet to the south of the area that would be added to the town center, and views to

the area are mostly blocked by existing buildings and vegetation. None of the TRPA-designated scenic recreation areas (Commons Beach and Tahoe State Recreation Area) in the vicinity of Tahoe City provide views into the area. Of the TRPA-designated scenic resources in the vicinity of Tahoe City (resources 15-1 to 15-6) only resource 15-6 provides views toward the area that would be added to the town center. Scenic resource 15-6 is located on the south side of Fanny Bridge approximately 1000 feet from the area that would be added to the town center. Because of the distance from scenic resources and travel routes to the area added to the town center; the presence of existing trees and buildings that would screen views of development occurring within the town center addition; the fact that any project in the town center would comply with required design standards related to color, and materials that would cause the development to blend with the natural development; and the requirement for projects to undergo a project-level analysis and mitigate impacts related to scenic threshold ratings; the town center boundary revision would not degrade the quality of scenic or visual resources, including scenic resource 15-6 and roadway travel unit 15. Therefore, the Tahoe City Town Center boundary revision, by itself, would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic or visual quality. This map revision would allow for the proposed Tahoe City Lodge project, the effects of which are analyzed separately below.

Building Height and Setbacks

Within the Tahoe City and Kings Beach Town Centers, the maximum building height limits under Alternative 1 would be increased, and building setback distances would be decreased within some town center subdistricts. Heights of up 56 feet and four stories would be allowed within core areas, and heights of 46 feet and 3 stories would be allowed outside those core areas. Exhibits 9-8 and 9-9 show the location of core areas in the Tahoe City and Kings Beach Town Centers. Building height in the town centers is currently limited to 42 feet, subject to requirements and limited exceptions outlined in Chapter 37 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances. As such, this change could result in buildings that are between 4 and 14 feet taller than are currently allowed in various parts of the town centers.

Currently, new or redeveloped buildings along SR 28 or SR 89 in the Tahoe City of Kings Beach Town Centers are required to include a minimum 20-foot setback. This setback can be reduced if TRPA finds that a reduced setback will not cause a decrease in the applicable scenic threshold standard, as described in TRPA Code Section 36.5.4. Alternative 1 would replace the existing setback requirements with reduced setback distances within several subdistricts to promote pedestrian activity. In some cases, the new setback standards would include maximum setback distances instead of minimum distances to create a consistent active pedestrian space between roadways and buildings. The new setback distances are as follows:

- 10-foot maximum in the Mixed-Use Town Center (Tahoe City) and Mixed-Use Mountain side Town Center (Kings Beach) subdistricts;
- 20-foot maximum in Mixed-Use Neighborhood (Tahoe City) subdistrict;
- 5-foot maximum in Mixed-Use Lakeside Town Center subdistrict; and
- 10-foot minimum in the Mixed-Use Neighborhood Tourist (Tahoe City) and Mixed-Use Waterfront Recreation (Kings Beach) subdistricts.

Taller buildings in combination with reduced setbacks would have a greater potential to block views of mountains, ridgelines, Lake Tahoe, and other scenic views, which could have an adverse effect on scenic vistas, block or degrade existing views of Lake Tahoe, or decrease scenic threshold ratings of affected travel units or scenic resources.

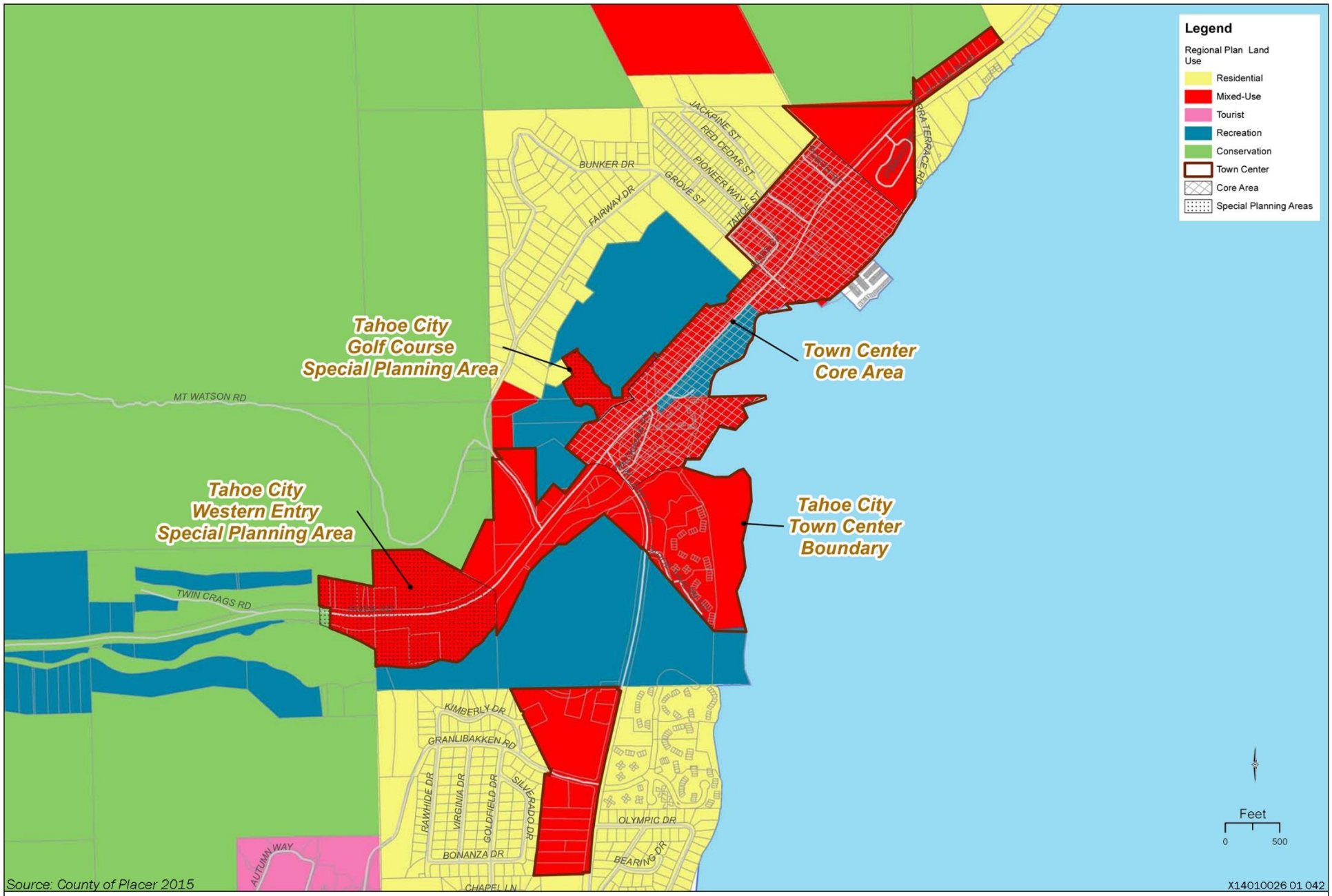


Exhibit 9-8

Tahoe City Town Center

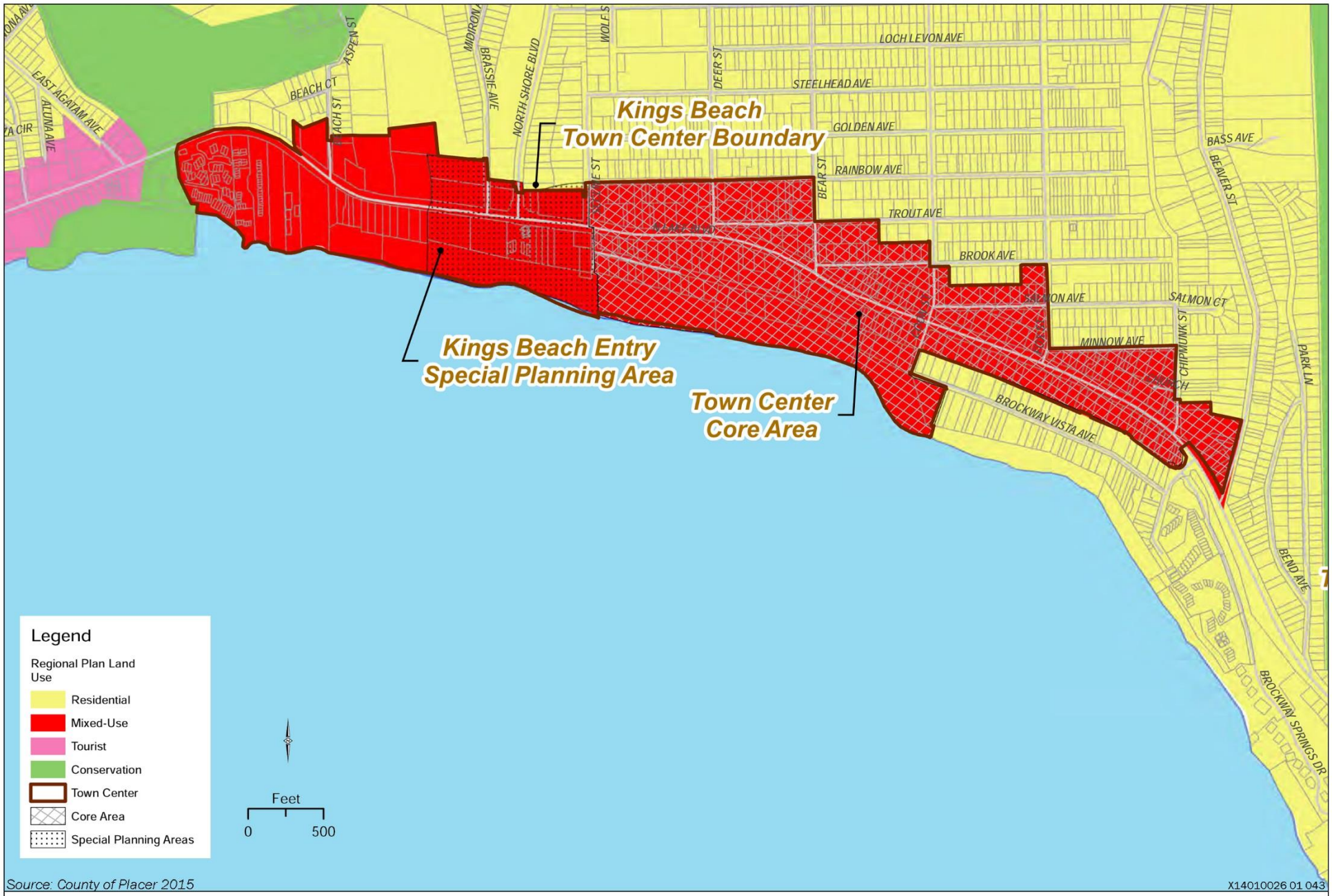


Exhibit 9-9

Kings Beach Town Center

However, Alternative 1 would require that four-story buildings located between SR 28 or SR 89 and Lake Tahoe maintain 35 percent of the site as open view corridors to Lake Tahoe. If existing development does not already maintain 35 percent of the site as an open view corridor to the lake, then a redevelopment project would be required to increase the width of open view corridors by at least ten percent. This requirement would reduce the potential for taller buildings to degrade views of Lake Tahoe, and in some cases this would expand views to the lake because it would require that redevelopment projects provide larger view corridors than they are currently required to provide.

Additionally, the implementing ordinance proposed under Alternative 1 includes Standard 3.09, which reads in part: "To ensure compatibility with adjacent uses and viewshed protection, buildings must not project above the forest canopy, ridgelines, or otherwise detract from the viewshed." The ordinance also requires that any project that proposes buildings with three or more stories can only be permitted if the following findings can be made:

- When viewed from major arterials, scenic turnouts, public recreation areas, or the waters of Lake Tahoe, from a distance of 300 feet, the additional height will not cause a building to extend above the forest canopy, when present, or a ridgeline. For height greater than that set forth in Table 37.4.1-1 for a 5:12 roof pitch, the additional height shall not increase the visual magnitude beyond that permitted for structures in the shoreland as set forth in subsection 66.3.7, Additional Visual Magnitude, or Appendix H, Visual Assessment Tool, of the Design Review Guidelines.

- With respect to that portion of the building that is permitted the additional height, the building has been designed to minimize interference with existing views within the area to the extent practicable.

- The portion of the building that is permitted additional building height is adequately screened, as seen from major arterials, the waters of lakes, and other public areas from which the building is frequently viewed. In determining the adequacy of screening, consideration shall be given to the degree to which a combination of the following features causes the building to blend or merge with the background.
  - The horizontal distance from which the building is viewed;
  - The extent of screening; and
  - Proposed exterior colors and building materials.

- When viewed from a TRPA scenic threshold travel route, the additional building height granted a building or structure shall not result in the net loss of views to a scenic resource identified in the 1982 Lake Tahoe Basin Scenic Resource Inventory. TRPA shall specify the method used to evaluate potential view loss.

The Kings Beach Center design concept would include a combination of hotel (which could include condominiums or privately-owned units), commercial, professional office, and retail uses; a government service building; public plaza; community park; and parking on 4 acres on SR 28 generally between Fox and Coon streets, in Kings Beach. Because the concept project is within the core area of Kings Beach, it would be allowed the extra height and would be required to comply with a 10-foot maximum setback from SR 28. Design details are not yet developed, but because of its location north of, and on the mountain side of SR 28, it would be less likely to affect sensitive views of Lake Tahoe than projects south of SR 28, between the roadway and the lake. The height of the concept project could appear more massive from viewpoints surrounding the area, particularly from Fox Street, looking southwest, Coon Street, looking southeast, and from SR 28 itself, looking north. However, because of its location north of SR 28, its distance from Lake Tahoe, and because it would be required to comply specific implementing ordinances of the Area Plan, including Standard 3.09 described above, the Kings Beach Center design concept is not expected to substantially block scenic views from any sensitive locations or have a substantially adverse scenic effect.

Finally, because buildings with three or more stories, such as the Kings Beach Center design concept, could only be permitted if they would not project above the tree canopy or block ridgeline views, are adequately screened, and do not degrade TRPA-designated scenic resources; and because projects that propose four stories between SR 28 or 89 and Lake Tahoe would be required to maintain views to Lake Tahoe, the

increased height allowed within town centers and reduced setback distances would have a **less-than-significant** impact on scenic and visual quality.

Density and Coverage

Alternative 1 would change maximum transferred coverage limits and density limits within the Tahoe City and Kings Beach Town Centers, consistent with Regional Plan standards. The alternative would increase the maximum allowable coverage to 70 percent of high capability lands for redevelopment projects that are greater than 300 feet from Lake Tahoe or on the mountain side of SR 28, such as the Kings Beach Center design concept, or SR 89. The change would also reduce the maximum allowable coverage to 50 percent of high capability lands for projects within 300 feet of Lake Tahoe and on the lake side of SR 28 or SR 89. These changes could result in larger buildings on the mountain side of the SR 28 and 89, and smaller buildings between SR 28 or 89 and Lake Tahoe. The combination of increased density and coverage allowances on the mountain side of SR 28 and SR 89 in the Tahoe City and Kings Beach Town Centers could allow larger buildings than would currently be allowed, which could adversely affect scenic and visual quality.

However, the effects of the increased coverage allowances would be limited because the provision would only apply to already developed high capability lands. As shown in table 14-7 in Chapter 14 (Geology, Soils, Land Capability, and Coverage), much of the Tahoe City and Kings Beach Town Centers are low capability land that would not qualify for increased coverage, and much of the high capability land is already at or exceeds the maximum allowable coverage proposed under Alternative 1. The change in maximum allowable coverage would allow an estimated seven and nine percent increase in coverage in Tahoe City and Kings Beach, respectively, which would have limited effects on the amount of visible mass likely to occur within each town center. Consistent with Regional Plan requirements, increases in density or coverage within town centers would also promote transfers of development from elsewhere, which would have corresponding benefits to scenic quality in other areas. As described above, all projects would be required to comply with design standards and scenic regulations, and any three- or four-story buildings would also have to demonstrate that a series of findings can be made that would prevent the degradation of scenic threshold ratings, impacts to scenic vistas, or degradation of scenic or visual quality. Therefore, the density and coverage limits proposed under Alternative 1 would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Non-Contiguous Project Areas

Alternative 1 would allow redevelopment projects within the Tahoe City and Kings Beach Town Centers to use non-contiguous project areas. This change would not affect the development potential or total visible mass allowed within a town center. However, it would allow development potential (e.g., allowable density and coverage) from multiple non-contiguous parcels to be consolidated onto one or more parcels within the same town center. This provision could result in larger buildings or denser development on some parcels, with corresponding increases in open space on other parcels within the same town center. All development standards including height, setback, and design standards would apply to projects that utilize a non-contiguous project area.

Overall, the allowance for non-contiguous project areas, would have negligible effects on scenic quality because the visual mass, development standards, and scenic regulations within each town center would not change. However, a project could propose a non-contiguous project area that included parcels on both the mountain and lake side of SR 28 or SR 89. In this scenario, visual mass that would otherwise be allowed on the mountain side of the major highways could be placed on the lake side. Increased visual mass between the major highways and Lake Tahoe would have the potential to block or degrade views of the lake or from the lake, which could adversely affect scenic threshold ratings. This impact would be **potentially significant**.

Secondary Residential Units

Alternative 1 would allow second residences on some residential parcels smaller than 1 acre. These secondary residential units would be subject to the residential allocation requirements of the TRPA growth control system. As a result, secondary units would not increase the total number of residences that could be developed within the Tahoe Region, although the number and density of residential units within the Plan area could increase. Secondary residential units would be subject to the Area Plan development standards, and as a result they

would not increase the height or development footprint that could otherwise be permitted on residential parcels. Alternative 1 would also require that secondary residential units be visually compatible with the primary residence on the parcel, and comply with the same design standards and guidelines as the primary residence. Because the secondary residential units would not increase the scale of development (i.e., footprint and height) that could be placed on an individual parcel, and they would be visually compatible with the primary residence, the provision would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Conversion of CFA to TAUs

Alternative 1 would also establish a commodity conversion program that would allow limited conversions of existing or unallocated CFA into TAUs. The commodity conversion program would allow up to 400 additional TAUs within town centers with a corresponding decrease of 450 square feet of CFA for each new TAU. Because the program would require corresponding decreases in commercial development for any increase in tourist accommodation development, it would maintain approximately the same total amount of development potential that could occur. The visible mass of buildings that could be developed in the Plan area would not change because visible mass is limited by coverage, height, setback, and other standards that would not be affected by this program. Because the commodity conversion program would not substantially alter the development potential or the visual mass of buildings that could be developed, it would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Conclusion

All new development and redevelopment projects proposed under Alternative 1, including the Kings Beach Center design concept, would be reviewed pursuant to CEQA and Chapter 3 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances. These project-level environmental reviews would evaluate the specific location, design, and other characteristics of a proposed project to determine if the project would degrade the visual character or quality of the site, decrease the TRPA scenic threshold ratings, have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, damage scenic resources within a scenic highway, or degrade views of Lake Tahoe or other scenic vistas. This project level review would provide an additional mechanism to evaluate and reduce the adverse visual effects of individual projects that could be approved under to Alternative 1.

As described above, Alternative 1 would include a number of policies, development standards, and other provisions that could result in changes to the location, intensity, and form of the built environment within the Plan area. The policies and standards of the alternative that address town center boundaries, building height and setbacks, density and coverage, secondary residential units, and limited conversions of CFA to TAUs would have a **less-than significant** effect on scenic and visual quality, for the reasons described above. However, the provision in Alternative 1 that would allow non-contiguous project areas could have **potentially significant** effect in some instances because it could allow additional visual mass to be placed between major travel routes and Lake Tahoe, which could block or degrade views of Lake Tahoe or views toward the shore from Lake Tahoe.

Alternative 2: Area Plan with No Substitute Standards

Alternative 2 includes an Area Plan with the same regional plan implementation measures as Alternative 1. Under Alternative 2, the Area Plan would not include programs or standards that were not specifically analyzed under the 2012 RPU EIS. Alternative 2 would include the same provisions as Alternative 1 related to building height, setbacks, density, and coverage. Similar to Alternative 1, Alternative 2 would allow second residential units on some residential parcels, with the additional requirement that secondary residential units be deed-restricted for low or moderate income individuals pursuant to a TRPA-certified housing program. This additional requirement would not change the visual effects of the secondary residential unit provision. Alternative 2 would not modify the Tahoe City Town Center boundary, not allow non-contiguous project areas, and not allow conversions of CFA to TAUs.

As described under Alternative 1, above, the Alternative 2 policies and standards related to building height, density and coverage, and second residential units would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Alternative 3: Reduced Intensity Area Plan

Alternative 3 includes all the elements of Alternative 1, the proposed project, but certain aspects have been modified to respond to scoping comments, including concerns about effects on scenic resources. The differences between Alternatives 3 and 1 relate to building height limits, coverage and density limits, the CFA to TAU conversion program, and secondary residential units on parcels less than 1 acre. In other respects, Alternative 3 would be identical to Alternative 1.

Building Height and Setbacks

Maximum building height in the Tahoe City, and Kings Beach Town Centers is currently limited to 42 feet subject to requirements and limited exceptions outlined in Chapter 37 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances. Under Alternative 3, the maximum height limits within the Tahoe City Town Center would be increased with heights of up 56 feet allowed within core areas on the mountain side of SR 28, and 46 feet allowed outside of core areas and on the lake side of SR 28. Buildings would also be limited to no more than three stories throughout the entire town center. As such, this alternative could result in buildings that are between 4 and 14 feet taller than currently allowed within various portions of the Tahoe City Town Center. In the Kings Beach Town Center, maximum heights would be increased to 48 feet on the mountain side of SR 28 and height limits would be decreased to 36 feet on the lake side of SR 28. This provision could result in buildings that are 4 feet taller than currently allowed on the mountain side of SR 28, and 6 feet shorter than currently allowed on the lake side of SR 28 in the Kings Beach Town Center. Alternative 3 would include the same building setback limits as Alternative 1, described above.

As with Alternative 1, taller buildings and reduced setbacks allowed under Alternative 3 would have a greater potential to block views of mountains, ridgelines, Lake Tahoe, or other scenic views; which could have an adverse effect on scenic vistas or decrease scenic threshold ratings. Any project that proposed three-story buildings under Alternative 3 would be required to demonstrate that the findings described under Alternative 1, above, could be made. The reduced building heights on the lake side of SR 28 in Kings Beach and North Stateline would decrease the potential for future development to degrade views of Lake Tahoe or from the lake, or degrade other scenic views. Thus, Alternative 3 would have beneficial effects in the locations where maximum height limits are reduced, and, for the same reasons as Alternative 1, Alternative 3 would have less-than-significant effects in locations where height limits are increased. Overall, the height limits proposed in Alternative 3 would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality, and this effect would be less than under Alternative 1.

Density and Coverage

Alternative 3 would increase maximum density limits within town centers, but it would reduce the maximum transferred coverage limits. Density limits would be the same as Alternative 1, except that deed-restricted affordable housing projects could achieve an additional 25 percent density increase. The alternative would decrease the maximum allowable coverage to 50 percent of high capability lands for all projects in the Tahoe City and Kings Beach Town Centers. As described in Chapter 14, “Geology, Soils, Land Capability, and Coverage,” this change would have no effect in the Tahoe City Town Center because developed properties are already limited to 50 percent coverage and all undeveloped parcels are located on low capability lands. In the Kings Beach Town Center, Alternative 3 would result in a 0.33-acre decrease in maximum allowable coverage. The density changes could result in more residential or tourist units within town centers, but the coverage limits would result in no change or slight reductions in the footprint of development allowed within town centers. Taken together, the density and coverage provisions of Alternative 3 would not have a substantial effect on the visual mass that could be developed in town centers. In addition, consistent with Regional Plan requirements, increases in density or coverage within town centers would promote transfers of development from elsewhere, which would have corresponding benefits to scenic quality in other areas. For these reasons, the changes to coverage and density standards in town centers would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Secondary Residential Units

Secondary residences would be allowed on all residential parcels less than 1 acre under Alternative 3. This provision would allow secondary residences in more locations than under Alternative 1. But, as described

under Alternative 1, secondary residential units would not increase the visible mass that could be developed on individual parcels. In addition, secondary units would be would be subject to design and development standards, including requirements that they be visually compatible with the primary residence on the parcel. For these reasons, the provision of Alternative 3 that would allow secondary residential units would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Conversion of CFA to TAUs

Like Alternative 1, Alternative 3 would establish a commodity conversion program that would allow limited conversions of existing or unallocated CFA into TAUs. This program would be the same as under Alternative 1, except the total number of TAUs created under the program would be limited to 200, and the maximum size of TAUs created under the program would be limited. This provision could result in an increased proportion of tourist accommodation development and a reduced proportion of commercial development, but it would not change the overall development potential or the standards that apply to new or redevelopment projects. For the same reasons described under Alternative 1, the CFA to TAU conversion program would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Conclusion

As with Alternative 1, Alternative 3 would include a number of policies, development standards, and other provisions that could result in changes to the location, intensity, and form of the built environment within the Plan area. The policies and standards of the alternative that address building height and setbacks, density and coverage, secondary residential units, and limited conversions of CFA to TAUs would have a **less-than significant** effect on scenic and visual quality, for the reasons described above. The provision in Alternative 3 that would allow non-contiguous project areas would be the same as described under Alternative 1. As described under Alternative 1, above, this provision would have a **potentially significant** effect because it could allow additional visual mass to be placed between major travel routes and Lake Tahoe, which could block or degrade views of Lake Tahoe or views toward the shore from Lake Tahoe.

Alternative 4: No Project

Alternative 4 is the no project alternative. Under this alternative, no changes would be made to existing policies, development standards, or other provisions that could result in changes to the location, intensity, or form of the built environment within the Plan area. The alternative would not affect the existing visual character or quality of the Plan area, the TRPA scenic threshold ratings, scenic vistas, scenic resources, or views of Lake Tahoe. Therefore, Alternative 4 would have **no impact** on scenic and visual quality.

Tahoe City Lodge Project-Level Analysis

Alternative 1: Proposed Lodge

The existing building on the site extends eastward about half of the way along the State Route 28 frontage. The remainder of the frontage is open and is paved for parking. With Alternative 1, Building 1 would extend 145 feet along the SR 28 frontage of the site, compared to about 85 feet for the existing building. The proposed building would be set back about 10 feet from SR 28, consistent with the proposed setback standards in the Area Plan and the same distance as the existing building. Exhibits 9-10 through 9-12 show the proposed new building along with photos of existing conditions.

There are no existing visual features on the site that would be considered scenic resources. Thus the project would not substantially damage scenic resources. Several large trees are present on the site and Alternative 1 is designed to preserve trees between Buildings 1 and 2, at the northwest corner of Building 2, and at the northeast corner of Building 1. As a condition of approval, TRPA would require that the project implement tree protection measures that are developed by a certified arborist to preserve these trees during final design and construction of the project. As a result, many of the existing trees will remain. However, some trees, including those within the footprint of proposed new buildings, would be removed.

Exhibit 9-10 **Viewpoint 1: Alternative 1**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Source: Hornberger + Worstell Architects 2016

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Exhibit 9-11 **Viewpoint 2a: Alternative 1**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

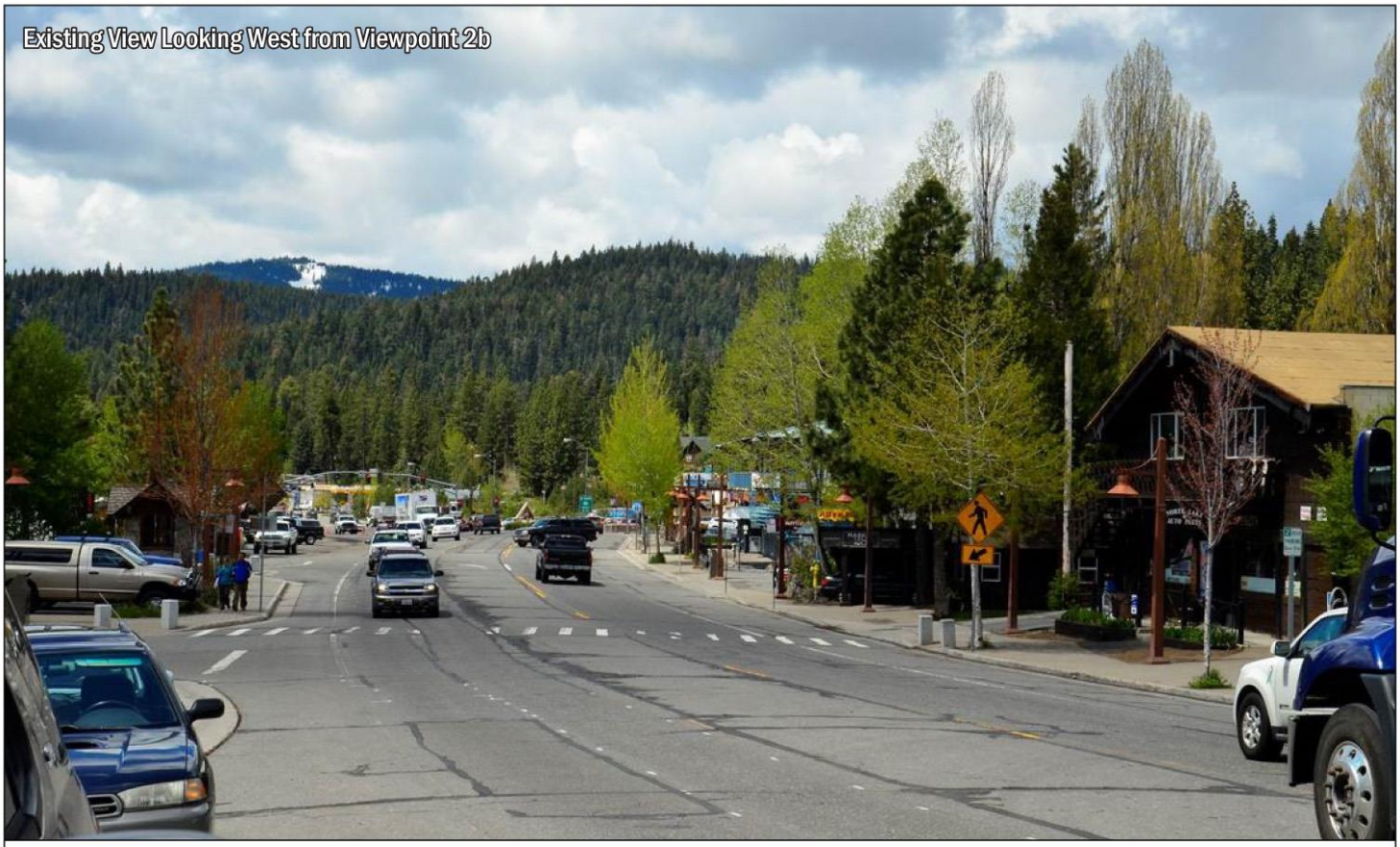


Exhibit 9-12

Viewpoint 2b: Alternative 1

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Exhibits 9-10, 9-11, 9-12, and 9-13 show the proposed new building compared to existing conditions from four view points along SR 28. In Exhibit 9-10, the new building is shown from a point west of the site, and the existing Bechdolt Building is visible in the foreground. The proposed building's front porch feature, common to other buildings in Tahoe City, is seen at ground level adjacent to SR 28. Colors and textures of exterior surfaces are similar to nearby buildings. Existing large trees on and near the site screen much of the west end of the project and some of the side that faces the street in this view. Exhibit 9-11 shows the building from a point approximately 154 feet east of the site. The street side of the proposed building is in view and architectural detail along the front façade is evident. Existing trees next to the site block most of the east side of the project. From this close vantage point, a portion of the roof structure encroaches into views of the ridgeline in the background. The effect of a building on distant ridgeline views is inherently dependent on the distance of the viewer from the building. To provide a standardized and objective approach to evaluate whether a building would impact ridgeline views, TRPA has adopted a standard in Code Section 37.7.1 that prohibits buildings from extending above a ridgeline when viewed from a distance of 300 feet along a major arterial. Exhibit 9-12 shows a view of the proposed building from 300 feet to the east of the building along SR 28, consistent with TRPA's standard approach for evaluating effects on ridgeline views. From this viewpoint, views of the ridgeline in the background are intact and the building is visible in the foreground well below the ridge. Exhibit 9-13 shows the proposed building from directly across the street and articulation of the building's façade is visible. The fourth floor is only partially visible from this vantage point because it is set back farther from the street than the lower three floors. The increased height and length of the new building, compared to the existing building, are evident in this exhibit.

Exhibits 9-14, 9-15, and 9-16 show views of Alternative 1 from the Tahoe City Golf Course, the private residential area north of the golf course, and from the surface of Lake Tahoe, respectively. Exhibit 9-14 shows the effect of the project on views toward the lake from the residential area north of the golf course. A portion of the lake is in view, and the existing building encroaches slightly on the view of the water. Compared to the existing condition, the increase in size of the proposed building is evident, but the additional amount of lake surface that would be blocked by the new building does not appear substantial. Exhibit 9-15 shows the effect of the project on views toward the lake from the golf course. In this view, even though the proposed building is larger, it appears less obtrusive since its colors blend well with the intervening trees, especially when compared to the high contrast white of the existing building. The project would have no effect on the visibility of the lake in this view. Exhibit 9-16 shows how much of the proposed four story building would be seen from a point just off shore on the surface of Lake Tahoe. The upper floors of the building would be visible above the rooftops of buildings that are part of the Tahoe Marina Lodge and would block a small portion of forested hillside behind the project site. The effect would not be substantial. The photo simulations show that the proposed project would not block or have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, or cause substantial degradation of an existing view of Lake Tahoe or other scenic vistas seen from a public area.

Through Tahoe City, SR 28 is within TRPA Roadway Travel Unit 15. This travel unit is in attainment with a composite score of 16.5, based on the most recent TRPA scenic monitoring data. The components that make up the composite score include human-made features in view from the roadway, physical distractions to driving, roadway characteristics, views of the lake from roadways, general landscape views, and the variety of scenery within view. Most of these components would be unaffected by the project. The size of the proposed buildings, compared to the existing buildings on the site, would represent an increase in the amount of human-made features in view from the road. However, the improved aesthetics of the new buildings and elimination of existing visual blight would maintain or improve the current rating for human-made features within Roadway Travel Unit 15. Thus, the composite score would be maintained or would improve.

The nearest roadway scenic resource (resource 15-4) is a view from SR 28 just west of Grove Street looking westward down the highway. It includes roadside development on the north side of the street and mountain peaks on the western horizon. This resource was given a scenic quality score of 5 in 1982. In 2001, the score increased to 7, and it has not changed since that time. The proposed Tahoe City Lodge project would not appear in this view, or within the view from any other scenic resource, because the project site is about 1,500 feet farther down the highway and lower in elevation than the scenic resource viewpoint.

Exhibit 9-13 **Viewpoint 3: Alternative 1**

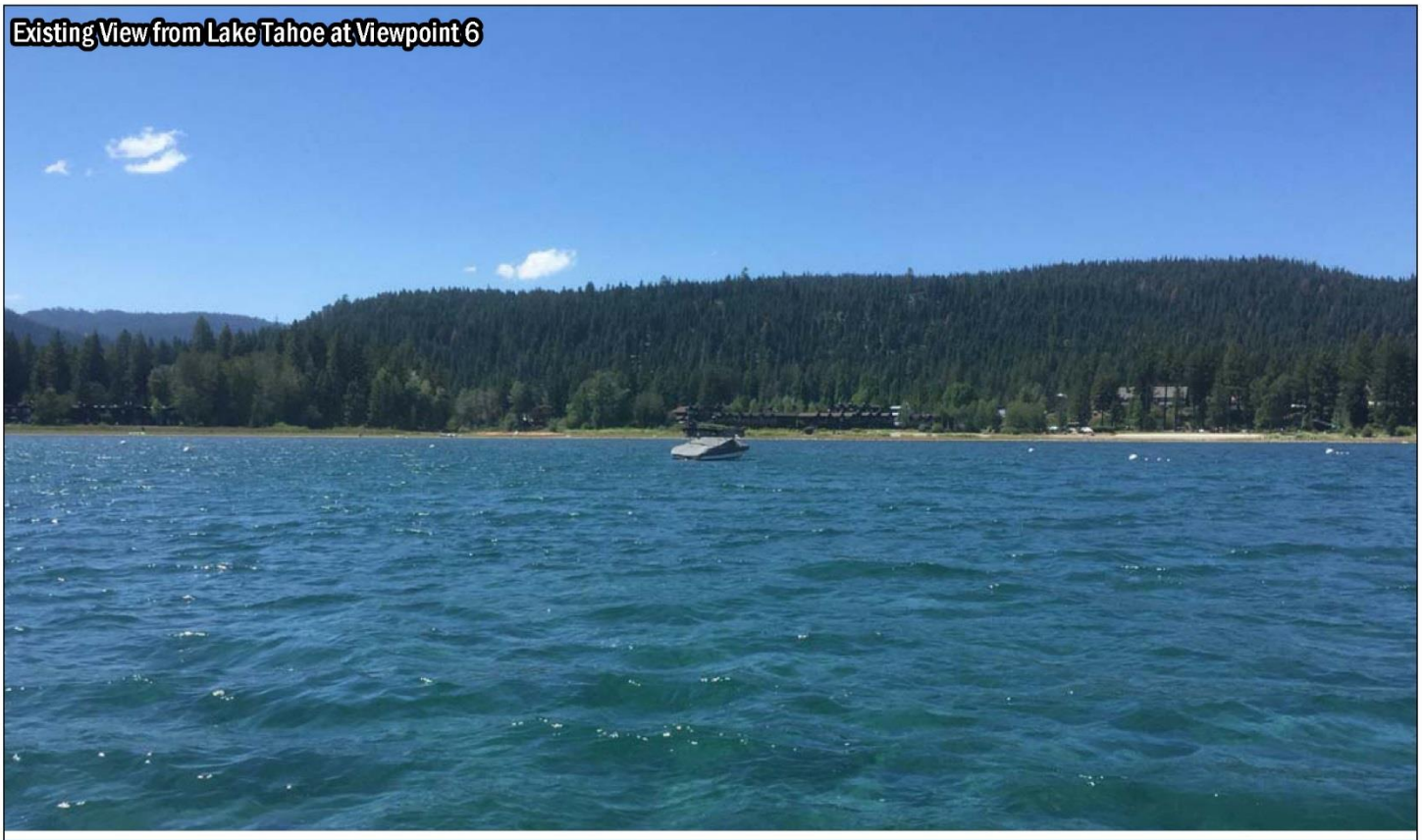
ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Exhibit 9-14 **Viewpoint 4: Alternative 1**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Exhibit 9-15 **Viewpoint 5: Alternative 1**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL



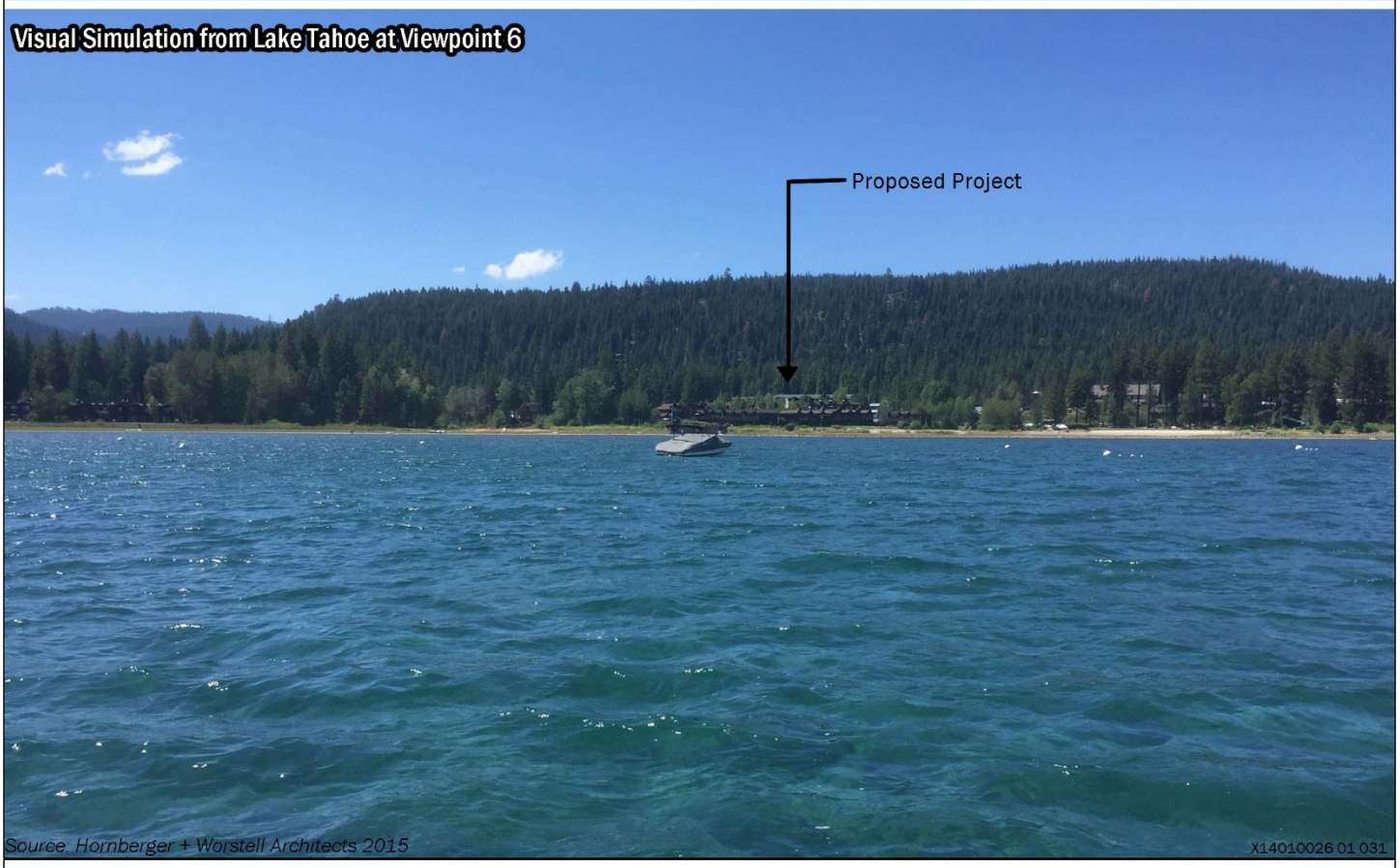


Exhibit 9-16 **Viewpoint 6: Alternative 1**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Shoreline Travel Unit 15 is the portion of Lake Tahoe in front of and adjacent to Tahoe City. Components that make up the composite score of shoreline travel units include human-made features along the shoreline, views of the general landscape and background, and the variety of scenery. As demonstrated in Exhibit 9-15, the project would have a minor influence on the components of the composite score, and the current composite score of 5.5 would be maintained. Shoreline scenic resource 15-3 is a view from Lake Tahoe in the vicinity of Commons Beach looking toward the shore. It includes a middle ground view of Tahoe City above the shoreline, including the area where the proposed project would be located, and forested hills in the background. This resource was given a scenic quality score of 7 in 1982, and it has not changed since that time. Because it would only be minimally visible and would be colored to blend into the background, the proposed Tahoe City Lodge project would not degrade this view. The proposed lodge would not appear in the view from any other shoreline scenic resources.

Scenic resources viewed from TRPA-listed public recreation areas and bike trails were first inventoried and given a scenic quality score in 1993. Listed sites in the vicinity of the proposed project include Commons Beach and the bike trail that runs through it. The Tahoe City Lodge project would not appear in the same view as any scenic resources associated with these recreation sites.

The golf course component of Alternative 1 would include the relocation of the club house and putting green, the expansion of the clubhouse, changes to the entryway, and SEZ restoration within the golf course. The existing Tahoe City Golf Course clubhouse is essentially unseen from SR 28 and scenic resource 15-6 because it is on the north side of a stand of coniferous trees that screen views from the highway. The clubhouse is about 75 feet east of the existing putting green. In Alternative 1, the locations of clubhouse and putting green would be swapped. The new, larger clubhouse would be constructed where the putting green is now and the putting green would be rebuilt where the clubhouse currently sits. The redeveloped clubhouse would be mostly screened from view by existing trees, as is the existing putting green. While, some trees may be removed to accommodate the proposed realignment of the golf course access road and improvements to parking, it is expected that the new clubhouse would be almost completely screened from view from SR 28 and scenic resource 15-6. Even if trees were removed such that the new clubhouse was not screened from SR 28 or scenic resource 15-6, the new clubhouse would not be a visually dominant feature because it would be located approximately 500 feet from SR 28 and 1000 feet from scenic resource 15-6, which is over twice as far as existing development. In addition, the clubhouse would be dark-colored, such that it would blend into the background to a greater extent than existing development in the vicinity. This aspect of the project would have little or no impact on scenic and visual quality, and it would not degrade scenic threshold ratings.

For the reasons described above, effects on scenic or visual quality from implementation of the Tahoe City Lodge in Alternative 1 would result in **less than significant** impacts to scenic and visual quality.

Alternative 2: Reduced Scale Lodge

Alternative 2 would result in lodge buildings that would be smaller in scale than Alternative 1 and provide fewer hotel rooms. The buildings on the west and north sides of the site would be smaller than those in Alternative 1. Under Alternative 2, the third and uppermost floor of Building 1 would provide amenities such as a pool but no hotel rooms. Exhibits 9-17, 9-18, and 9-19 show Building 1 from the same viewpoint locations on SR 28 as Alternative 1 (Viewpoints 1, 2a, and 3). Because the proposed buildings in Alternative 2 would be shorter than under Alternative 1, and the buildings are clearly below the distant ridgelines when viewed from a distance of 154 feet in view 2a, simulations from viewpoint 2b are not included. The architectural style, building materials, colors, and textures would be the same as Alternative 1.

The impacts of Alternative 2 on scenic or visual quality would be similar in nature to those of Alternative 1. In views from the Tahoe City Golf Course, the residential area north of the golf course, and from the surface of Lake Tahoe, the buildings in Alternative 2 would have less of an effect on views than Alternative 1 because they would be smaller and lower in height. For the reasons described under Alternative 1, above, Alternative 2 would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Exhibit 9-17 **Viewpoint 1: Alternative 2**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Exhibit 9-18 **Viewpoint 2: Alternative 2**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Exhibit 9-19 **Viewpoint 3: Alternative 2**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Alternative 3: Reduced Height Lodge

Under Alternative 3, the lodge building that would be lower in height than Alternative 1, but with a larger footprint so as to yield the same number of units. The reduced height would be achieved by eliminating the fourth floor, but instead of an open courtyard in the internal portion of the site, Alternative 3 would contain buildings. This area would not be directly visible from viewpoints outside the project site but its configuration would give Alternative 3 a more massive appearance than Alternative 1. Exhibits 9-20, 9-21, and 9-22 show the building associated with Alternative 3 as seen from the same three viewpoints on SR 28 as Alternative 1 (Viewpoints 1, 2a, and 3). Because the proposed buildings in Alternative 3 would be shorter than under Alternative 1, and the buildings are clearly below the distant ridgelines when viewed from a distance of 154 feet in view 2a, simulations from viewpoint 2b are not included.

The impacts of Alternative 3 on scenic or visual quality would be similar in nature to those of Alternative 1. The architectural style, building materials, colors, and textures would be the same as Alternative 1 and the golf course component of Alternative 3 would be very similar to Alternative 1. In views from the Tahoe City Golf Course, the residential area north of the golf course, and from the surface of Lake Tahoe, the building in Alternative 3 would have less of an effect on views than Alternative 1 because of its lower height. For the reasons described under Alternative 1, above, Alternative 3 would have a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Alternative 4: No Project

Under Alternative 4, a lodge building would not be developed on the project site. Instead, the existing buildings and grounds would be renovated. The exact nature and extent of renovations are currently unknown. It is assumed that any renovations would be an aesthetic improvement over existing conditions, however the extent of improvements would likely be minimal. This would be a **less-than-significant** effect on scenic and visual quality.

Mitigation Measure 9-1: Limit visible mass near Lake Tahoe within non-contiguous project areas

This mitigation measure applies to Area Plan Alternatives 1 and 3.

Prior to approving a project that would use a non-contiguous project area, the county and TRPA shall revise the implementing ordinance to prevent a project from increasing visible mass between SR 28 or SR 89 and Lake Tahoe beyond what would be possible without the use of a non-contiguous project area. The revision to the implementing ordinance shall prohibit a project that uses a non-contiguous project area from locating land coverage or density on the lake side of SR 28 or SR 89 that would otherwise be allowed on the mountain side of SR 28 or SR 89. This mitigation measure could be implemented by revising Section 2.09.A.3 of the Area Plan implementing ordinances to include a version of the following text:

> Projects using a non-contiguous project area shall not increase the density or land coverage in any portions of the project area that are between SR 28 or SR 89 and Lake Tahoe, beyond the limits that would apply to those portions of the project area without the use of a non-contiguous project area.

Significance after Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 9-1 would reduce potentially significant impacts to scenic or visual quality (Impact 9-1) to a **less-than-significant** level, because it would prevent a non-contiguous project area from resulting in an increase in visual mass that could block or degrade views of Lake Tahoe from scenic travel routes or views of the shore from Lake Tahoe.

Exhibit 9-20 **Viewpoint 1: Alternative 3**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Exhibit 9-21 **Viewpoint 2: Alternative 3**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Exhibit 9-22 **Viewpoint 3: Alternative 3**

ASCENT ENVIRONMENTAL

Impact 9-2: Effects on community character

Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would consolidate and update existing building and site design standards throughout the Plan area to clarify existing requirements. They would add new standards for site design, building form, and street frontage improvements to create visual interest and promote pedestrian activity within mixed-use areas. Alternatives 1- 3 would also include new design standards that would be required in mixed-use areas, including areas that are currently out of attainment with scenic standards. Though appropriate to achieve environmental gains and other objectives of the Regional Plan, the increased height of up to 56 feet and four stories allowed in core areas of town centers, would be taller than many, but not all, of the existing buildings in town centers, but would be consistent with applicable standards. In combination with proposed policies and new standards for site design, building form, and street frontage improvements, the resultant visual effects in the Plan area would not substantially detract from community character. The policies and design standards in Alternatives 1 - 3 would be consistent with applicable TRPA height and design standards, design review guidelines, and the SQIP. Because Alternatives 1 - 3 would not be inconsistent with the SQIP, TRPA Design Review Guidelines, or applicable height and design standards, this would be a **less-than-significant** effect under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3. Alternative 4 would make no changes to existing design standards or guidelines. Because all existing design standards and guidelines would remain in effect, Alternative 4 would have **no impact** on community character.

Under Tahoe City Lodge Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, the project site would be redeveloped with a lodge that would be designed to comply with the applicable design standards and guidelines and height standards. Alternatives 1 – 3 would replace the existing development on the site with new buildings that would be an aesthetic improvement, but taller and larger than nearly all other existing buildings along SR 28 in Tahoe City. Because Alternatives 1 – 3 would result in buildings that are an aesthetic improvement, but larger than surrounding buildings, and they would comply with applicable design standards and guidelines, the impact on community character would be **less than significant**. Under Alternative 4, a lodge building would not be developed on the project site. Instead, the existing buildings and grounds would be renovated resulting in a slight aesthetic improvement over existing conditions, which would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on community character.

Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan Program-Level Analysis

Alternative 1: Proposed Area Plan

Alternative 1 would consolidate and update existing building and site design standards throughout the Plan area. Existing standards from the *Placer County Standards and Guidelines for Signage, Parking and Design* (Placer County and TRPA 1994), including standards related to signage, building colors, materials, and screening would be continued with minor refinements and clarifications. Height limits within town centers would be consistent with or less than maximum height limits allowed by Chapter 13 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances. Outside of town centers, height limits would be unchanged and consistent with the limits described in TRPA Code Chapter 37. While height limits would be consistent with the TRPA Code of Ordinances, the increased height of up to 56 feet and four stories allowed in core areas of town centers, could result in buildings that are taller than much of the existing built environment in the Plan area.

Alternative 1 would also add new standards for site design, building form, and street frontage improvements to create visual interest and promote pedestrian activity within mixed-use areas. The new site design and building form standards would vary between zoning subdistricts, in order to reflect differences in the character, scale, and development intensity of each community. Standards in all mixed-use subdistricts would address maximum building setbacks for non-residential uses, limits on blank walls, minimum amounts of windows on building frontage, minimum amounts of building articulation, architectural detail, upper story setbacks, and limits on maximum building length along street frontages. New streetscape requirements would also apply to these same mixed-use areas. The exact streetscape requirements would also vary by subdistrict, but they would require street trees, connections between buildings and pedestrian paths, and pedestrian lighting.

The design standards proposed in Alternative 1 would address the topics in TRPA Code Chapter 36, including site and building design, exterior lighting, and landscaping standards; and they would be adopted as equal or superior substitute design standards pursuant to Code Section 36.2.2. The design standards in Alternative 1 would also address the specific requirements for site design, building height, building design, lighting, landscaping, and signing as required by TRPA Code Section 13.5.3. Design standards and guidelines in Alternative 1 would be consistent with and implement the SQIP, because they incorporate protections for natural features and would result in a context-sensitive design of the built environment that reflects differences in the character of unique communities consistent with recommendations in the SQIP.

Under Alternative 1 parking standards would be modified to reduce the number of parking spaces that are required by some development projects, and promote alternative parking strategies, including shared parking. This change is expected to reduce the total amount of parking within the portions of the Plan area where multi-modal transportation opportunities exist. Parking areas often have negative effects on community character because they tend to detract from the natural environment and contribute little visual interest. Thus, reduced parking requirements under Alternative 1 could positively affect community character.

The Kings Beach Center design concept, while not yet developed to a degree to which features that may influence character can be assessed in detail, would be required to comply with existing building and site design standards—as refined—for signage, building colors, materials, and screening, and height limits would be limited to that allowed by Chapter 13 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances. Compliance with these standards would prevent substantial adverse effects to community character in the Kings Beach Town Center core area.

As described in the evaluation of TRPA's Built Environment Scenic Threshold Standard: "the aesthetic and visual quality of the built environment will continue to improve because projects are not approved by TRPA unless project proponents can demonstrate compliance with scenic design requirements" (TRPA 2012b:9-23 through 9-24). The new design standards in Alternative 1 would apply to the mixed-use subdistricts in Tahoe City, Kings Beach, North Stateline, Tahoe Vista, Carnelian Bay, Sunnyside, Homewood, and Tahoma. Five of those areas are located within travel units that are not in attainment of scenic threshold standards: Homewood (Unit 11), Tahoma (Unit 9), Sunnyside (Unit 13), Tahoe Vista (Unit 20A), and the portion of Tahoe City that is west of the intersection at SR 28 and 89 (Unit 42).

Alternative 1 would include design standards that are consistent with applicable TRPA standards and guidelines, and it would include new and additional design standards that would improve the character of mixed-use areas, including areas that are currently out of attainment with scenic standards. Though appropriate to achieve environmental gains and other objectives of the Regional Plan, the increased height of up to 56 feet and four stories allowed in core areas of town centers, would be a departure from much of the existing built environment, but would be consistent with applicable standards. In combination with proposed policies and new standards for site design, building form, and street frontage improvements, the resultant visual effects in the Plan area would not substantially detract from community character. The policies and design standards in Alternatives 1 would be consistent with applicable TRPA height and design standards, design review guidelines, and the SQIP. Because Alternatives 1 would not be inconsistent with the SQIP, TRPA Design Review Guidelines, or applicable height and design standards, this would be a **less-than-significant** effect on community character.

Alternative 2: Area Plan with No Substitute Standards

Alternative 2 would include the same design standards and guidelines as Alternative 1. For the reasons described above, Alternative 2 would have a **less-than-significant** effect on community character.

Alternative 3: Reduced Intensity Area Plan

Alternative 3 would include similar design standards and guidelines as Alternative 1. While, height limits would be lower than both Alternative 1 and existing conditions in some areas, height limits would be increased from existing conditions in other areas. For the reasons described above, Alternative 3 would have a **less-than-significant** effect on community character.

Alternative 4: No Project

Alternative 4 is the no-project alternative and would make no changes to design standards or guidelines. Because all existing design standards and guidelines would remain in effect, Alternative 4 would have **no impact** on community character.

Tahoe City Lodge Project-Level Analysis

Alternative 1: Proposed Lodge

The visual character of Tahoe City along SR 28 is a product of the development along the street in combination with the natural elements of the setting. Natural features include forest trees and Lake Tahoe where it is seen from the road above Commons Beach. Roadside development is absent on the lake-side of SR 28 above Commons Beach for a stretch of about 1,000 feet and sidewalks of masonry pavers line both sides of the street. Street trees and pedestrian scale lighting are integrated with the sidewalks. Development is mostly continuous on the north side of the road and on-street parking is allowed throughout this area. Exhibits 9-23 through 9-26 contain photos showing the visual character along SR 28. Many buildings are wood frame structures up to three stories tall although most are one to two stories. Most of the buildings are less than about 100 feet wide along the side that faces SR 28; only four buildings are wider than 150 feet. The smaller buildings are set back from the curb about 15 to 30 feet. The largest buildings are set more than 100 feet back and have large paved parking areas in front.

For the purposes of this analysis, the mass of a building was considered equivalent to the surface area of the façade that faces SR 28. The façade surface area was determined by multiplying the width in feet of the side of the building that faces SR 28 by the number of stories the building is comprised of. This provides a conservative comparison of the proposed lodge project's mass to the mass of other buildings in the vicinity, because the fourth story of the proposed building would be substantially set back from the front of the building and would include less than half the floor area of the third floor. Due to this design, the visibility of the fourth floor would be limited and the building would appear similar to a three story building to many viewers along SR 28 (see Exhibits 9-10, 9-11, and 9-12).

Based on the calculation of building mass described above, building 1 of the proposed project would be the second largest building along SR 28 in Tahoe City. A total of 40 buildings along either side of N. Lake Boulevard in Tahoe City, including those that currently occupy the project site, were examined in terms of the length of the side that fronts SR 28 and number of stories. It should be noted that the land in the project vicinity slopes upwards to the east, so that buildings further east along SR 28 could appear taller than buildings on the project site because the maximum elevation of those buildings could be higher, even if the building height is less. Alpenglow Sports is roughly 350 feet east of the project site. The building is three stories tall and about 40 feet wide along SR 28. The Tahoe City Downtown Association building is about 450 feet east of the project site. The building is a total of three stories high and measures about 135 feet in width. While this building is shorter than the proposed lodge, the maximum roof elevation would be approximately four feet higher than the proposed lodge because it is located upslope from the lodge site, which would make the visible mass appear similar to the proposed lodge building. Cobblestone East, which houses several commercial businesses, is approximately 350 to 400 feet farther east of the Downtown Association Building, is also a three-story building, and measures about 110 feet in width. A former firehouse and the North Tahoe Arts building are on the opposite side of SR 28 from the project site and about 225 feet east. Both are three-story buildings and approximately 70 feet wide. Other buildings are one or two stories high. Four of the 40 buildings examined (10 percent) are over 150 feet wide. Seven (17 percent) are between 100 and 150 feet wide and 16 buildings (40 percent) are between 50 and 100 feet wide. Thirteen (33 percent of the total) are less than 50 feet wide.

The proposed Tahoe City Lodge would exhibit distinctive architecture on a site that is presently occupied by old development that is in poor condition and appears blighted. Proposed buildings would consist of materials suited to the Tahoe Basin including heavy timber, stone, and wood sheathing with accents of steel and boardform concrete. Colors of exterior surfaces would conform to applicable design standards and guidelines. Aesthetically, the proposed building along SR 28 would be a substantial visual upgrade

Source: Ascent Environmental 2015

Exhibit 9-23 **Existing Community Character 1**

Source: Ascent Environmental 2015

X14010026 01 040

Exhibit 9-24 **Existing Community Character 2**

Source: Ascent Environmental 2015

Exhibit 9-25 **Existing Community Character 3**

Source: Ascent Environmental 2015

X14010026 01 041

Exhibit 9-26 **Existing Community Character 4**

compared to the existing buildings on the site. The project would not degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site or its surroundings. At four stories (53 feet) tall and a frontage of 145 feet long directly on SR 28, it would be the second largest building on N. Lake Boulevard in Tahoe City. While the aesthetic characteristics of the building would complement the visual character of Tahoe City's main street, the size and scale of the new building would be larger than nearly every other building on the street. In this sense, the project could seem out of character to some viewers. However, the dimensions of the building would comply with applicable height and other design standards; the fourth story would be substantially set back from the façade, which would limit the visible mass of the building; and the topography of the lodge site is lower than some adjacent sites such that the maximum elevation of the lodge buildings would be lower than some nearby buildings. Because of this stepped-back design, from most vantage points the lodge would appear to be a 3-story building, as depicted in Views 1, 2, and 3.

The existing Tahoe City Golf Course clubhouse is essentially unseen from SR 28 because it is on the north side of a stand of coniferous trees that screen views of clubhouse from the highway. The clubhouse is about 75 feet east of the existing putting green. In Alternative 1, locations of the clubhouse and putting green would be swapped. The new, larger clubhouse would be constructed where the putting green is now and the putting green would be rebuilt where the clubhouse currently sits. The redeveloped clubhouse would remain screened from view by existing trees, as would the existing putting green. However, some trees may be removed to accommodate the proposed realignment of the Golf Course access road and improvements to parking. Still, it is expected that the new clubhouse would be almost entirely screened from view from SR 28. This aspect of the project would have little or no impact on community character.

The dimensions of the proposed lodge would comply with applicable height and other design standards. The size and scale of the proposed lodge would be larger than nearly every other building on the street. However, the aesthetic characteristics of the building would be a substantial improvement over existing conditions, which would complement the visual character of Tahoe City's main street. For these reasons, implementation of Alternative 1 would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on community character.

Alternative 2: Reduced Scale Lodge

Alternative 2 would result in lodge buildings that would be reduced in scale as compared to Alternative 1. Exhibits 9-17, 9-18, and 9-19, above, show the building associated with Alternative 2 as seen in the same three views on SR 28 as Alternative 1. The impacts of Alternative 2 on community character would be similar in nature to those of Alternative 1 but somewhat reduced because the building would be reduced in scale and the project would have less mass making it similar to other buildings in the area. As viewed from directly across the street, the building would appear lower in height than Alternatives 1 or 3. The third floor would be stepped back from the street relative to the floors below and only the top edge of the third floor, at most, would be visible from the street. Most of the third floor would be obscured by the street façade of the second floor. The building in Alternative 2 would appear similar in scale to the larger three-story buildings along SR 28, particularly the Tahoe City Downtown Association Building and Cobblestone East. For these reasons, Alternative 2 would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on community character.

Alternative 3: Reduced Height Lodge

Under Alternative 3, the lodge building would be shorter than that proposed under Alternative 1. Exhibits 9-9-20, 9-21, and 9-22, above, show the building associated with Alternative 3 as seen in the same three views on SR 28 as Alternative 1. The impacts of Alternative 3 on community character would be similar to those of Alternative 1 but somewhat reduced since the building would be lower in height, and consistent in height with some other buildings in Tahoe City. Because the street-facing façade of the top floor of Alternative 3 would not be stepped back as it would in Alternative 2, it would appear taller than Alternative 2 from a mid-distant vantage, such as from the south side of SR 28. The top floor would be on the same plane as the lower two floors and thus would be in full view. The building would be closer in scale to the larger three-story buildings along SR 28, particularly the Tahoe City Downtown Association Building.

Alternative 4: No Project

Under Alternative 4, a lodge building would not be developed on the project site. Instead, the existing buildings and grounds would be renovated for continued commercial use. The exact nature and extent of

renovations are currently unknown. However, it is assumed that any renovations would be an improvement over existing conditions and would comply with existing design standards and guidelines, which would result in a **less-than-significant** impact on community character.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

Impact 9-3: Effects from light and glare

Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would maintain the substantive requirements of existing exterior lighting standards, convert portions of existing discretionary lighting guidelines into required standards, and add new standards that address prohibited lighting, fixture types, glare, and light trespass. These standards would reduce the potential for future projects to result in substantial light or glare, new sources of light or glare that are more substantial than other light or glare in the area, or exterior light that is cast off-site. This would be a **beneficial** effect on light and glare conditions. Alternative 4 would make no changes to exterior lighting design standards or guidelines. Because all existing lighting design standards and guidelines would remain in effect, Alternative 4 would have **no impact** on light and glare conditions.

New sources of light can result from exterior lighting of new development while glare results from high-shine surfaces, such as building windows (glass) and high-gloss painted surfaces. Tahoe City Lodge Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would include new safety and convenience lighting. The introduction of new sources of light in this urban setting during nighttime hours would not substantially alter the amount of illumination that currently exists, recognizing the existing night lighting of roadways, sidewalks, parking lots, and commercial areas. Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would have a **less than significant** impact from light and glare because impacts would be limited by lighting standards proposed as part of Area Plan in Alternatives 1 – 3, or by existing lighting standards and guidelines for Alternative 4.

Placer County Tahoe Basin Area Plan Program-Level Analysis

Alternative 1: Proposed Area Plan

Alternative 1 would replace the current lighting standards and guidelines found in Chapter 4 of the Placer County Design Standards and Guidelines for Signage, Parking and Design (Placer County and TRPA 1994), with the lighting standards found in Section 3.09.D of the Area Plan implementing ordinances. The current standards and guidelines include four required exterior lighting standards, and a series of discretionary lighting guidelines. Alternative 1 would maintain the substantive requirements of the existing lighting standards, convert elements of the current lighting guidelines into required standards, and add additional required lighting standards.

New lighting standards included in Alternative 1 would prohibit certain exterior fixture types, including drop-down lenses and mercury vapor light, that have a greater potential to create excessive or off-site lighting impacts. Alternative 1 would also include new standards that require that all exterior luminaries meet the most recently adopted criteria of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) for "Full Cut Off" luminaires, which would prohibit lighting fixtures that would allow any light to project beyond a 90-degree angle. Other new standards in Alternative 1 would prohibit uses that would create significant, direct glare visible beyond the boundaries of the lot where the use is located. In addition, Alternative 1 would reduce light trespass by prohibiting lighting that would cast light exceeding 1 foot-candle onto public streets or light exceeding 0.5 foot-candle onto residential areas.

Alternative 1 would maintain the substantive requirements of existing exterior lighting standards, convert portions of existing discretionary lighting guidelines into required standards, and add new standards that address prohibited lighting, fixture types, glare, and light trespass. These standards would reduce the potential for future projects to result in substantial light or glare, new sources of light or glare that are more substantial than other light or glare in the area, or exterior light that is cast off-site. Alternative 1 would have a **beneficial** effect on light and glare conditions.

Alternative 2: Area Plan with No Substitute Standards

Alternative 2 would include the same exterior lighting standards as Alternative 1. For the reasons described above, Alternative 2 would have a **beneficial** effect on light and glare conditions.

Alternative 3: Reduced Intensity Area Plan

Alternative 3 would include the same exterior lighting standards as Alternative 1. For the reasons described above, Alternative 3 would have a **beneficial** effect on light and glare conditions.

Alternative 4: No Project

Alternative 4 is the no-project alternative and would make no changes to exterior lighting design standards or guidelines. Because all existing lighting design standards and guidelines would remain in effect, Alternative 4 would have **no impact** on light and glare conditions.

Tahoe City Lodge Project-Level Analysis

Alternative 1: Proposed Lodge

The lighting strategy proposed for the Tahoe City Lodge project would address the practical lighting needs of the site and area plan requirements for exterior lighting, described above. The proposed light fixtures would include shields to prevent outward glare. The proposed lighting plan would create low-level illumination indirectly lighting building entries, walkways and landscape features. Uncontrolled spread of light beyond the property would not occur.

The project applicant is planning to build the project to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for the project. One of the credits the project would seek to achieve this certification is Credit SS8.0-Light Pollution Reduction, which provides effective strategies for avoiding impacts related to light and glare through the use of cutoff luminaires, low reflectance surfaces, and low angle spotlights.

Codes, regulations, and design standards pertaining to lighting described above would limit illumination. Design standards would also control exterior materials of new buildings and minimize reflectivity. Therefore, potential impacts related to light and glare for Alternative 1 would be **less than significant**.

Alternative 2: Reduced Scale Lodge

The lighting strategy proposed for the Tahoe City Lodge project under Alternative 2 would be the same as Alternative 1. For the same reasons as Alternative 1, the impact from light and glare under Alternative 2 would be **less than significant**.

Alternative 3: Reduced Height Lodge

The lighting strategy proposed for the Tahoe City Lodge project under Alternative 3 would be the same as Alternative 1. For the same reasons as Alternative 1, the impact from light and glare under Alternative 3 would be **less than significant**.

Alternative 4: No Project

Under Alternative 4, a lodge building would not be developed on the project site. Instead, the existing buildings and grounds would be renovated for continued commercial use. The exact nature and extent of renovations are currently unknown. However, it is assumed that any changes to exterior lighting would comply with Chapter 4 of the Placer County Design Standards and Guidelines for Signage, Parking and Design, which would limit substantial light or glare, new sources of light or glare that are more substantial than other light or glare in the area, or exterior light that is cast off-site. As a result, Alternative 4 would have a **less than significant** impact from light and glare.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.