

Chapter 8

SCENIC RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The landscape of the Tahoe Region is one of its most impressive attributes. It is characterized by rugged mountain peaks, the vast surface of Lake Tahoe, and thickly forested slopes. The variety and combination of striking landscape elements make it a truly unique and beautiful place.

Despite significant development and alteration of the landscape for over a century, the Tahoe Region continues to attract great numbers of visitors. Its powerful and stunning inherent landscape maintains visual dominance over most of the area. The public is able to enjoy abundant views of natural features from the region's scenic highways, recreation areas and bike trails. The TRPA Compact declares that, "Maintenance of the social and economic health of the region depends on maintaining the significant scenic ... values provided by the Lake Tahoe Basin." (TRPA Compact, Public Law 96-551-Dec. 19, 1980, Article I)

The high scenic quality of the Tahoe Basin is a product of several factors:

1. The visual dominance of the Lake, a water feature visible from many areas of the Basin as a single, large feature.
2. Distinctive mountain landforms that surround the flat plane of the lake and create an enclosed landscape type.
3. The skyline (often ridgelines) that define the earth-sky silhouette.
4. Conspicuous water-land edges.
5. Conspicuous edges between different vegetation types.
6. Various natural elements, such as streams, rock formations, and sandy or rocky beaches that are less visually dominant than the lake, but comprise feature-based landscape types on a smaller scale than the Tahoe Basin itself.

Although the Lake Tahoe landscape is extensive, varied, and complex, viewers predominantly observe the landscape from major roadways or from the surface of the lake. Privately owned lands are located generally on or near the perimeter of the lake, in most cases along major roadways that encircle the lake. This is where most of the major development in the Basin has occurred.

Large areas of the Basin that are in public ownership (national forests and state parks) provide natural landscapes of exceptionally high scenic quality. These areas are generally not as easily accessible to the average visitor or resident as lands adjacent to or near major roadways, and therefore are seen by most people as distant background or middle ground landscapes rather than foreground. Publicly

owned areas are managed in large part to provide opportunities for public recreation. The development and operation of recreational use areas can affect visual quality and result in visual impacts. The Heavenly Resort ski runs are an example.

Scenic quality is most threatened along major roadways, including those surrounding the Lake, since most development is located in these areas. Degradation of scenic quality can result from development that: is incompatible with or dominates the natural landscape; blocks important views including views of the lake; causes removal of large trees or other visually significant natural features; or substantially alters the natural topography. Therefore, the focus of early studies was on identifying significant visual resources that are seen from major roadways and from the Lake itself and establishing thresholds for maintaining the visual quality of such resources. Further discussion on the development of the thresholds follows.

8.2 BACKGROUND

The TRPA Compact provided for the development and implementation of environmental carrying capacities or thresholds. In 1982, TRPA completed inventory work necessary to define and establish threshold standards for preservation of scenic quality. Numerical standards were established at that time for roadway and shoreline travel route ratings and roadway and shoreline scenic quality ratings. Additionally, TRPA adopted a management standard policy statement for overall community design elements. In 1993, TRPA adopted numerical standards for designated public recreation areas and bike trails.

In accordance with the 1980 Compact directive to develop environmental threshold carrying capacities, TRPA convened a threshold study team to assist in the development of the scenic resource threshold. The firm of Wagstaff and Brady, a landscape architecture and urban planning firm, was selected as the consultant for the study team.

The purpose of the 1982 Study Report was to establish threshold standards for scenic quality and develop a methodology for measuring change in scenic quality over time. The team began by developing a draft value statement focusing the scope of their work on protection of the natural landscape while also emphasizing the identification and protection of existing visual resources as envisioned and outlined in the 1980 Compact. This three-part value statement was derived from existing goal statements contained in various TRPA, local, state and federal documents relating to the Tahoe Basin. They are as follows:

1. Maintain and enhance the dominant natural-appearing landscape for the vast majority of views and lands in the Basin.
2. Maintain and/or improve the aesthetic characteristics of the man-made environment to be compatible with the natural environment.
3. Restore, whenever possible, damaged natural landscapes.

8.2.1 MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING OF INDICATORS AND STANDARDS

SR-1 Travel Route Rating

The travel route rating threshold tracks long-term, cumulative changes in views from major roadways in urban, transitional, and natural landscapes in the region and also changes in views from Lake Tahoe looking toward the shore. To establish the threshold travel route ratings, an updated analysis of the principal travel routes was conducted in 1982. The results of that analysis were adopted as the baseline condition. This allows threshold levels to be tied to measurable degrees of change in scenic resource status which result from certain observable and recognizable changes in the landscape. To secure threshold attainment, all roadway travel routes with a 1982 score of 15.5 or greater and shoreline travel routes with a score of 7.5 or greater must maintain those scores. All travel routes with a 1982 score of 15 or less for roadway units, or 7 or less for shoreline units must demonstrate improvement until a score of 15.5 or 7.5 is reached.

The 1982 analysis examined each of the region's state and federal highways plus Pioneer Trail. It focused on 46 travel segments (called "travel units"), each of which represents a continuous, two-directional viewshed of similar visual character. The following aspects were considered and rated:

1. Man-made features along the roadway and shoreline;
2. Physical distractions to driving along the roadways;
3. Roadway characteristics;
4. View of the Lake from the roadways;
5. General landscape views from the roadways and shoreline; and
6. Variety of scenery from the roadways and shoreline.

Roadway travel route ratings reflect all six aspects. Each was given a rating from 1 (low or absent) to 5 (high). A composite rating was calculated by summing the ratings of the six aspects. Therefore the composite rating for an individual roadway travel unit could range from 5 to 30.

For the shoreline portion of the 1982 inventory, 33 shoreline units were surveyed and evaluated. The following aspects were considered and rated:

1. Man-made features along the shoreline.
2. General landscape/background views from the shoreline units.
3. Variety of scenery from the shoreline units.

For each aspect, numerical ratings from 1 to 5 were assigned, with 1 for low, 3 for medium, and 5 for a high rating. Shoreline units could have scores from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 15. The results of the 1982 update were

summarized in the 1982 *Study Report for the Establishment of Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities* (TRPA 19892) and became the baseline condition against which threshold standards are measured.

The 1982 study report recommended that scenic quality of the travel experience (travel route rating) on major roadways and shoreline units be monitored through periodic updates (threshold evaluations) in order to maintain and attain the ratings established in the 1982 update. Mechanisms for ensuring this level of scenic quality were adopted in the Regional Plan. The threshold is based on average scenic quality as the minimum standard to be met, and beyond that to maintain the baseline condition for units that had better than average scenic quality in 1982.

SR-2 Scenic Quality Rating

The scenic quality rating threshold protects specific views of scenic features of Tahoe's natural landscape that can be seen from major roadways and from the Lake. To secure threshold attainment, all 1982 scenic quality scores must be maintained.

Building on previous work by the Forest Service, the scenic resources in the region including views of the natural landscape and distinctive natural features were identified, mapped, described, and evaluated in 1982. At that time there were 205 scenic resources visible from roadway units and 185 from shoreline units. Four more scenic resources, three that are visible from roadways and one from the lake, were added to the inventory in 2001. Scenic resources include the following:

1. Foreground, middleground, and background views from roadways of the natural landscape;
2. Views to Lake Tahoe from roadways;
3. Views of Lake Tahoe and the natural landscape from roadway entry points into the region;
4. Unique landscape features such as streams, beaches, and rock formations that add interest and variety, as seen from roadways;
5. Views of the shoreline, the water's edge and the foreground as seen from the Lake;
6. Views of the backdrop landscape, including the skyline, as seen from the Lake; and
7. Visual features seen from the Lake that are points of particular visual interest on or near the shore.

Scenic quality threshold ratings are a unitless composite index of the relative scenic quality of specific natural features. As defined in the 1982 Study Report, the relative quality of each resource is rated using the following indicators:

- Unity defined as the degree to which individual elements of a view form a single, coherent, and harmonious scene.

- Vividness defined as the positive visual impression imparted by a scene or its elements and its memorability.
- Variety defined as numerous or different parts that are seen together. A scene may exhibit variety in topography, vegetation types and patterns, and surface geology as well as landform and the presence of water features including lakes or streams.
- Intactness defined as the degree to which a landscape retains its natural condition, or the degree to which modifications emphasize or enhance the natural condition.

These indicators are well documented in academic and professional literature as useful measures of relative scenic value between resources.

Each indicator is rated using an index from zero (absent) to three (high). Ratings for all four indicators are summed to form the threshold rating. The ratings are intended to express the comparative scenic quality of low (rating of one), moderate (rating of two), and high values (rating of three), among all roadway or all shoreline mapped scenic resources and should not be mistaken for absolute measurements of scenic quality.

Scenic quality ratings do not provide a means of evaluating urban or recreational development, but are used to ensure that development does not remove or substantially degrade individual scenic resources. The ratings are used to evaluate development only insofar as development affects the scenic quality of natural features. This threshold is more sensitive to change from development than the travel route rating threshold, because the view of the resource could be blocked or significantly modified by an individual project. It can, however, be difficult to accurately predict the effects of a development proposal on a specific resource during the project review process.

SR-3 Public Recreation Areas and Bike Trails

The public recreation area threshold protects the viewshed associated with public recreation areas and certain bicycle trails. To secure threshold attainment, all 1993 scenic quality scores must be maintained.

The Public Recreation Area and Bike Trails threshold applies to 37 public recreation areas including beaches, campgrounds, and ski areas. It also applies to 11 segments of Class I and Class II bicycle trails. It was considered important to protect views and scenic resources associated with public recreation areas and certain bicycle trails because they are major public gathering places, they are generally highly scenic places to begin with, and people at recreation sites are mostly static (compared to the travel routes) and thus have the time to linger and focus more attention on the views and resources at hand.

The threshold involved three general types of scenic resources: (1) views from the recreation area or bicycle trail; (2) views of natural features within the recreation area or along the trail; and (3) the visual quality of man-made features within the recreation area or adjacent to the trail. For bicycle trails, lake views are also included and rated. Threshold ratings for views from the recreation area or bicycle

trail, views of natural features, and lake views are generated using the same criteria established for the scenic quality rating system and include ratings of unity, vividness, variety and intactness. Each is assigned a value from one (low) to five (high). The sum of the ratings for each indicator represents the threshold rating for the resource. Man-made features are rated using different criteria and include the following:

- Coherence refers to a coordinated approach to the man-made facilities in terms of possessing some unifying characteristic or quality.
- Condition refers to the general physical condition of the man-made elements.
- Compatibility is the sense of fit between the man-made features and the surrounding natural landscape. Man-made features that are highly compatible blend in with their surroundings and defer to the form, colors, and textures of the natural landscape.
- Design quality refers to the relative presence or lack of architectural qualities that make the man-made elements a visual feature in and of themselves.

Each of these criteria is assessed and given a numerical rating between one (low) and five (high). The sum of the ratings is the threshold rating for the feature.

As with the other thresholds, the ratings are intended to express comparative scenic quality ratings of low, moderate, and high values, and should not be mistaken for absolute measurements of scenic quality.

SR-4 Community Design

The community design threshold is a policy statement that applies to the built environment throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin, not just to roadways or shoreline units. Design standards and guidelines found in the Code of Ordinances, the Scenic Quality Improvement Program, and adopted Community Plans provide specific implementation direction. To secure threshold attainment, design standards and guidelines must be widely implemented to improve travel route ratings and produce built environments compatible with the natural, scenic, and recreational values of the region.

The visual quality of the built environment has become an increasingly important issue with residents, local businesses, and community leaders. Early on, design and signage policies of local governments and TRPA proved inadequate to protect scenic quality. It became evident that a greater sensitivity to site design and the potential for visual impacts was needed to protect the Lake's future as a premiere vacation area.

The Goals and Policies contain a Community Design Subelement within the Land Use Element, which sets forth policies for new and existing development. The following goals in the Regional Plan guide implementation of the threshold.

- Goal #1 - Insure preservation and enhancement of the natural features and qualities of the region, provide public access to scenic views, and enhance the quality of the built environment.
- Goal #2 - Regional building and community design criteria shall be established to ensure attainment of the scenic thresholds, maintenance of desired community character, compatibility of land uses, and the coordinated project review.

The community design threshold is implemented in two ways. First, the community plan and redevelopment plan process has been used to develop design standards and guidelines that are tailored to the needs and desires of individual communities. The standards are considered “substitute” standards because they replace all or portions of TRPA ordinances adopted to regulate the same subject. This process has been used extensively throughout the region to provide community-specific sign standards, yet it has also addressed issues such as building height and architectural design guidelines. Secondly, the site planning and design principles contained in the ordinances and guidelines are implemented as part of individual development or redevelopment projects, and are reviewed and approved, by TRPA and local government.

8.3 THRESHOLD STATUS

The history of monitoring and assessment differs for the distinct elements of the scenic quality and community design thresholds. Region-wide monitoring for travel route ratings occurred in 1971, 1982, 1986, and as part of the 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006 Threshold Evaluations. Monitoring of the community design threshold was conducted as part of the 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Threshold Evaluations. This represents the most extensive and well-documented chronology of change to resources available within TRPA’s entire environmental threshold evaluation system. In contrast, the bike trails and recreation areas were inventoried in 1982, and their condition assessed based solely on fieldwork completed for their associated roadways in 1993 and 2001.

8.3.1 SR-1 TRAVEL ROUTE RATINGS

Status of indicators

Non-Attainment

As of 2011, 33 of the 54 roadway units are in attainment of the roadway travel route threshold standards while 21 units are not. This is the same condition as in 2006. At the same time, scenic conditions have improved in 9 units and have a 2011 composite rating that is higher than in 2006. Of these 9 units, 3 were already in attainment of the threshold standard in 2006. Among the 6 units that were not, none increased enough to reach the threshold standard and so remain out of attainment. They are, however, closer to reaching the threshold standard. Ten of the 21 roadway units that are not in attainment as of 2011 need a composite score increase of 1.5 points or less to reach attainment.

The 2011 condition for shoreline units shows 21 shoreline units are in attainment of the shoreline travel route threshold standards and 12 units are not. Compared to 2006, scenic conditions in one unit, Unit 12-McKinney Bay, improved enough to reach attainment while improvements occurred in 4 other shoreline units compared to 2006. Of the 12 shoreline units that are not in attainment, 9 need a composite score increase of 1 point or less to reach attainment. The current status of each unit is presented in Appendix 1.

Trends

The roadway and shoreline travel units that are not in attainment are in areas where development is present, although not all developed areas are out of attainment. In order to reach attainment or move closer to it, cumulative, positive changes in the visual conditions of the built environment must occur. Monitoring data show an overall positive trend toward improvement of scenic conditions in both roadway and shoreline units, particularly in areas where substantial redevelopment has occurred.

Fieldwork completed for this evaluation and the evaluation conducted in 2006 identified the following trends related to scenic thresholds.

Improvements in Commercial and Urban Districts

Past threshold evaluations have noted that most of the roadway units where scenic conditions have improved are within community plan areas. Scenic improvements occur when degraded structures are removed, new and remodeled structures feature distinctive and regionally appropriate architecture and employ attractive materials and appropriate colors, landscaping and landscaped open space is increased, and signage complies with current standards. Between 2006 and 2011, relatively few development and redevelopment projects were carried out in the Basin and notable improvement in the built environment was less than what it has been. Recently, most new projects have been public works improvements of streets and highways and of roadside areas. These projects result in positive yet modest improvements in scenic conditions. Continued and more substantial improvements can be expected as redevelopment projects that comply with current standards and guidelines move forward, collectively raising the composite score of the unit they are in.

Improvement in Shoreline Units

In shoreline units, positive changes at the parcel level have occurred since adoption of the Shoreland Ordinances following the 2001 Threshold Evaluation. As more shoreland redevelopment projects are implemented under the Shoreland Ordinances, their cumulative, positive effect will raise the composite scores of the shoreline units themselves thus moving them toward and ultimately achieving attainment.

2011 Status evaluation relative to threshold attainment schedules

The contributions of compliance measures to threshold attainment and the achievement of interim targets are summarized in Appendix 1.

Threshold interim target status and threshold target dates

Currently 21 of the 54 Roadway Travel Units do not meet the threshold standard. The interim target is to increase the number of roadway travel units meeting the minimum composite score by at least 2 units by 2016. Achieving the interim target is likely since 12 units currently out of attainment need a composite score increase of from 0.5 to 1.5 to reach attainment.

Roadway units that are currently out of attainment occur primarily in communities where the density of development is moderate to high. Achievement of this threshold standard is substantially dependent on partner agencies commitment to facilitate scenic improvements on the ground, and private landowners' willingness to adhere to established design and development guidelines. Further, it may not be possible some units to ever reach attainment due to certain unalterable physical characteristics that limit the maximum composite score that could reasonably be attained. Thus, it is not possible to estimate an attainment date for this standard.

Currently 12 of the 33 Shoreline Travel Units do not meet the threshold standard. The interim target is to increase the number of shoreline units meeting the minimum composite score by at least 1 unit by 2016. Achieving the interim target is likely since 6 units currently out of attainment need a composite score increase of 0.5 to reach attainment.

Shoreline units that are currently out of attainment occur in areas of moderate to high density development of the shoreline area. Achievement of this threshold standard is substantially dependent on redevelopment of structures in compliance with the Shoreland Ordinances that were adopted in 2002. The ordinances place limits on the surface area of building facades facing the lake that can be exposed to view from the lake based on the building's exterior colors, materials, and screening by trees and shrubs. The pace at which future redevelopment will occur and its locations are unpredictable yet they have substantial influence on the composite scores of shoreline travel units. Thus, it is not possible to estimate an attainment date for this standard.

8.3.2 SR-2 SCENIC QUALITY RATINGS

Status of Indicators

Non-Attainment, but Near Attainment

Of the 208 identified and mapped scenic resources associated with roadway travel units, 205 (98.5%) have composite scores equal to or greater than their original scores and are therefore in attainment of the threshold standard. Three of the 208 scenic resources are not in attainment. As of 2011, the composite score of 3 roadway scenic resources had increased beyond what it was in 2006. No scores declined.

Of the 184 identified and mapped scenic resources associated with shoreline travel units, 168 (91.3%) have composite scores equal to or greater than their original scores and are therefore in attainment of the threshold standard. Sixteen of the

184 scenic resources are not in attainment. As of 2011, the composite score of 21 shoreline scenic resources had increased beyond what it was in 2006 and none declined.

Overall this threshold is non-attainment, but very near attainment. Appendix 2 contains a listing of scenic resources with changes in composite scores noted in this and prior evaluations.

Trends

Trends affecting the scenic quality rating indicator are the same as those described above for the travel route rating indicator.

2011 Status evaluation relative to threshold attainment schedules

The contributions of compliance measures to threshold attainment are summarized in the forms contained in Appendix 2.

Threshold interim target status and threshold target dates

No interim target has been established for this indicator since 98.5% of roadway scenic resources and 91.3% of shoreline scenic resources meet the threshold target. Since no interim targets have been established, there is no target attainment date.

8.3.3 S-3 PUBLIC RECREATION AREAS AND BIKE TRAILS

Status of indicators

Non-Attainment, but Near Attainment

Of the 382 scenic resources associated with public recreation areas and bike trails, 376 (98.4%) have composite scores equal to or greater than their original scores and are therefore in attainment of the threshold standard. Six of the 382 scenic resources are not in attainment. As of 2011, the composite score of 9 scenic resources had increased beyond what it was in 2006. No scores declined.

Overall this threshold is in non-attainment, but very near attainment. Appendix 3 contains a listing of scenic resources associated with public recreation areas and bike trails with changes in composite scores that were noted in this and prior scenic threshold evaluations.

Trends

Since threshold adoption in 1993, various improvements to recreation areas and bike trails have been funded and implemented, resulting in upgraded and new public facilities that have a positive effect on scenic quality. Improved maintenance of recreation facilities has also contributed to improved scenic quality.

The El Dorado Beach at Lakeview Commons project, a joint effort of the California Tahoe Conservancy, the City of South Lake Tahoe, and El Dorado County serves as an example of agencies acting to make improvements to public facilities.

Public Recreation Areas and Bike Trails Not Protected

There remains a number of developed public recreation areas and bikeway facilities that are not included in the 1993 Lake Tahoe Basin Scenic Resource Evaluation inventory. These facilities should be added to the inventory so the scenic resources associated with them are similarly protected.

2011 Status evaluation relative to threshold attainment schedules

The contributions of compliance measures to threshold attainment are summarized in the forms contained in Appendix 3.

Threshold interim target schedules and threshold target dates

No interim target has been established for this indicator since 98.4% of scenic resources associated with public recreation areas and bike trails meet the threshold target. Since no interim targets have been established, there is no target attainment date.

8.3.4 SR-4 COMMUNITY DESIGN

Status of indicators

Non-Attainment, but Near Attainment

This threshold is in non-attainment, but near attainment. The effects of changes to the built environment, central to the evaluation of the community design threshold, are identified and discussed throughout this report. Although a numerical standard to assess threshold attainment for community design does not exist, it is possible to draw conclusions from the numerical ratings of other scenic quality indicators and their attainment status. Overall, the contributions from the built environment toward attainment for travel route and scenic quality ratings have increased substantially over time. It is evident that the quality of the built environment is improving in many areas of the Basin. The majority of improvements are occurring within the urban/commercial centers.

Trends

During the course of the 2011 threshold evaluation certain trends related to community design standards were noted. They are described below.

Increased Use of Regionally Appropriate Architectural Elements and Other Design Changes

Public and private redevelopment continues to occur in the Lake Tahoe Region, although at a slower pace since the 2006 evaluation. Projects that have been implemented exhibit high quality, attractive design and employ materials that are appropriate to the region. Increasingly, redeveloped commercial and residential properties feature architectural styles commonly referred to as “Tahoe rustic”, “Old Tahoe”, or “National Park”. They often employ natural wood and stone materials, have steeply pitched roofs with dormers, and use paned glass in windows. Such elements help create a strong, recognizable, high quality architectural theme for the region compared to the structures they replace.

Public/Private Projects Result in Improvements

Throughout the region, public and joint public/private investments have produced improvements in community character. Examples include sidewalk/landscaping projects, erosion control and water quality improvement projects, land acquisitions by public agencies and subsequent removal of decrepit structures, and the numerous projects involved in the South Lake Tahoe redevelopment area. Such projects improve the appearance and function of community areas. As noted in prior evaluations, redevelopment projects can spur other investments in redevelopment on nearby properties.

Change in Community Character

Goal #2 of the Community Design Threshold states, “Regional building and community design criteria shall be established to ensure...maintenance of desired community character...” The Regional Plan defines community character broadly as “that which respects the recreational and natural values of the region.” Some community plans and the South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Plan provide more specific direction. However, definitive descriptions of desired community character for most areas of the region are lacking. Clear statements of desired community character must be developed before an assessment of the requirements of Goal #2 can be made.

2011 Status evaluation relative to threshold attainment schedules

The contribution of compliance measures to threshold attainment and the achievement of interim targets are summarized in the forms contained in Appendix 1.

Threshold interim target status and target dates

No interim targets are established for community design; however, it is possible to draw conclusions regarding attainment status from the status of other scenic quality numerical threshold indicators. Overall, the contribution of aesthetic improvements in the built environment through redevelopment has clearly contributed to movement toward attainment of travel route and scenic quality ratings. The community design threshold standard is achieved as such improvements continue to be implemented. It is not possible to predict the pace of redevelopment. Therefore no dates have been established for attainment.

An assessment of success in attaining the goal of maintaining desired character cannot be made since the desired character for many communities has not been articulated. It is anticipated that the updated Regional Plan will provide mechanisms for desired community character to be identified and described for all communities. Once this has occurred, changes in community character can be monitored and assessed for movement toward or away from stated goals.

8.4 EIP IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

8.4.1 COMPLETED EIP PROJECTS AND CONTRIBUTION TO THRESHOLDS

Various capital improvement projects focused on scenic resource improvement have been identified in the environmental improvement program. TRPA Records indicate that 19 of these capital improvement projects have been completed to date. In addition another 18 EIP projects have had numerous subprojects completed to date (Table 8-4).

The Scenic Resources EIP (10/30/00) contains 89 projects. Most of these projects involve public or private investment in physical improvements. Some of them, however, are modifications to the regulations that will reduce the negative effects of new projects. Trends identified during this and prior evaluations illustrate a direct link between physical improvements to the built environment and improvements in scenic quality. Such improvements have directly improved scenic quality ratings at the travel route and scenic resource level.

Specific projects to facilitate attainment of the scenic thresholds are contained in the current version of the EIP. The table on the following pages lists the capital improvement projects that have been completed to date.

Table 8-4: Completed EIP Capital Improvement Projects

EIP Number	Title	Project Description	Status
58	Highway 50 Utility Under grounding Elks Club Drive Area	Utility companies & El Dorado County will put underground existing overhead utilities lines along Hwy 50 near Meadowvale Drive, property owner will remove derelict buildings, and billboards.	Completed
60	North Stateline Community Plan Urban Design Project	Washoe County, NDOT, casinos & other property owners will install urban design and WQ improvements. Phase I will begin in 1998 and only include Nevada side.	Completed
83	Scenic Road Unit #7 Meeks Bay Improvement	Implement landscape frontage improvements, access controls, sign conformance, replace fence at campground, reforestation of resort campground throughout the mapped area of concern. Underground utility lines adjacent to roadway.	Multiple subprojects completed
86	Scenic Road Unit #11 Homewood Improvement	Implement landscape frontage improvements, access controls, building upgrades, sign conformance & walkways throughout the mapped area of concern. Underground utility lines adjacent to roadway throughout the unit.	Subproject completed
87	Scenic Road Unit #13 Sunnyside Improvement	Implement landscape frontage improvements, access controls, building upgrades, sign conformance & walkways throughout the mapped area of concern. Underground utility lines adjacent to roadway. Remove solid barriers along Ward Creek.	Subproject completed
88	Scenic Road Unit #14 Tahoe Tavern Improvement	Install landscape frontage improvements, access controls, sign conformance, building upgrades throughout the mapped area of concern.	Subproject completed
89	Scenic Road Unit #15 Tahoe City Improvement	Install Tahoe City downtown project: sign conformance, access controls, landscaping frontage improvements, walkways & building upgrades throughout the mapped area of concern.	Subproject completed
91	Scenic Road Unit #18 Carnelian Bay Improvement	Install landscape frontage improvements, access controls, sign conformance, building upgrades, walkways throughout the mapped area of concern. Convert existing head-in parking to parallel parking.	Subproject completed
93	Scenic Road Unit #20 Tahoe Vista Improvement	Multi-phase project involving landscape frontage improvement access controls, walkways, architectural upgrades. Screen or relocate satellite dishes, sign conformance w/cp standard utility	Subproject completed
94	Incline Village State Route 28 Downtown Pedestrian Paths	Construct new pedestrian paths, sidewalks, landscaping, and water quality improvements. This will be Phase I of the Scenic Roadway Unit #22 improvement projects needed for threshold attainment.	Completed

EIP Number	Title	Project Description	Status
95	Scenic Road Unit #25 Ponderosa Area Improvement	Ponderosa Ranch design and site improvements: landscape frontage improvements, screen or relocate satellite dishes, access controls, walkways, sign conformance, building upgrades in conformance with community plans.	Multiple subprojects completed
96	Scenic Road Unit #31 Meadow Improvement	Underground overhead utility lines adjacent to roadway throughout the unit. Access controls, walkways, sign conformance, landscape frontage improvements, and landscape screening along US 50.	Completed
97	Scenic Road Unit #32 Casino Area Improvement	Underground overhead utility lines adjacent to roadway throughout the unit. Landscape center median throughout casino core, walkways, screen or relocate satellite dishes, landscape frontage improvements, sign conformance, architectural improvements.	Multiple subprojects completed
98	Scenic Road Unit #33 The Strip Improvement	Install Tahoe City downtown project: sign conformance, access controls, landscaping frontage improvements, walkways & building upgrades throughout the mapped area of concern.	Completed
99	Scenic Road Unit # 35 Al Tahoe Improvement	Install landscape frontage improvements. Building upgrades, shared-use path, access controls, screen or relocate satellite dishes, sign conformance throughout the mapped area of concern. Replace overhead lights in large parking areas along US 50. Screen tennis courts at middle school , install non-reflective roofs on middle school buildings.	Multiple subprojects completed
100	Scenic Road Unit #36 Airport Area Improvement	Install landscape frontage improvements. Building upgrades, walkways, access controls, screen or relocate satellite dishes, sign conformance throughout the mapped area of concern. Underground utility lines. This is Phase II of the project.	Multiple subprojects completed
102	Scenic Road Unit #44 Kingsbury Grade Improvement	Sign conformance, sidewalks, and utility undergrounding.	Multiple subprojects completed
104	Scenic Road Unit #40 Brockway Cutoff Improvement	Install Tahoe City downtown project: sign conformance, access controls, landscaping frontage improvements, walkways & building upgrades throughout the mapped area of concern.	Completed
106	Scenic Shore Unit # 15 Tahoe City Improvement	Revegetate slope in commons beach, add landscape screening between lake and commercial development, replace light-colored metal roofs with darker colors, clean up appearance of marina upgrade building materials on large metal warehouse.	Completed

EIP Number	Title	Project Description	Status
108	Scenic Shore Unit # 19 Carnelian Bay Improvement	Implement CTC Carnelian Bay projects, reduce color contrast on Sierra Boat Co. building and related scenic improvements. Add landscape screening to uses within mapped area of concern.	Completed
134	Tahoe City Utility Undergrounding Phase 2	Underground overhead utility lines adjacent to roadway throughout the unit.	Completed
331	City of South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Area Sign Replacement Program	Redevelopment Agency will implement the sign ordinance, establishing a low interest revolving loan fund within the redevelopment plan area (Stateline/Ski Run CP) to bring existing signs into compliance.	Completed
336	Tahoe Meadows Linear Park	Construct a multiuse path along highway 50 from the intersection of Pioneer Trail and US 50 to Ski Run Boulevard. Implement landscape frontage improvements between the highway and the path.	Completed
420	Carnelian Bay State Rout 28 Utility Undergrounding	Sierra Pacific Power and Pacific Bell will put underground overhead utilities along SR 28 in Carnelian Bay CP.	Completed
503	Scenic Road Unit #2 Camp Richardson Improvement	Reduce excess signage, install landscape screening, especially along campground, reduce clutter and distractions visible from roadway, underground utility lines, improve organization of uses along roadway at resort.	Multiple subprojects completed
506	Scenic Shore Unit #30 Edgewood Improvement	Add landscape screening and reduce clutter in mapped areas of concern, underground utility lines along shoreline reduce contrast of lakefront structures.	Subproject completed
541	South Stateline Highway 50 Scenic Improvement	Hold a design workshop with the gaming alliance to re-start implementation of the scenic improvement package and develop contingency plan for lack of 3 travel lanes through casino core.	Completed
869	Scenic Road Unit #22 Crystal Bay Phase II	Phase II scenic improvements along SR 28 through Incline commercial and tourist CPS and other mapped areas of concern does not include utility undergrounding.	Multiple subprojects completed
872	US 50/Ski Run Boulevard Utility Undergrounding	Underground overhead utility lines at the intersection of US 50 and Ski Run Blvd. Additional undergrounding up Ski Run Blvd. to Pioneer Trail is scheduled for Phase II.	Completed
875	Sign Amortization Program	Phase I consists of TRPA conducting inventory of non-conforming signs and notifying sign owners Phase II consists of sign owners bringing signs into conformance. Separate schedules in effect in PAS 032, 089a.	Completed

EIP Number	Title	Project Description	Status
10001	Roadway Unit #2 Camp Richardson	Landscape and screen parking areas; landscape, revegetate and screen group campground; prevent roadside parking.	Multiple subprojects Completed
10003	Roadway Unit #25 Ponderosa Landscape Screening	Landscape screening needed along Ponderosa Ranch Parking and stables, Tahoe Storage Units need to be screened , parking needs to be organized to eliminate off site parking and screen on site parking.	Multiple subprojects completed
10007	Roadway Unit #28 Spooner Summit Restore Temporary Construction Sites	Additional work needs to be completed at the intersection of Hwy 28 and Hwy 50. Recent road work has caused reduction in the unit score which was already at risk. The guardrails need redesigning to reduce contrast, new parking lot needs landscaping, and the construction staging area needs to be fully restored.	Subproject completed
10009	Roadway Unit #28 NDOT Maintenance Yard Spooner Summit	NDOT maintenance yard needs improved screening, siting, and design of structures. Spooner Summit is a Gateway to Tahoe. Attaining and Preserving Scenic quality within this gateway is a priority.	Completed
10013	Shoreline Unit #4 Taylor Creek Meadow Parking Lot Improvement	Screen Parking lot from lake view shed.	Completed
10014	Shoreline Unit #5 Ebright	Minimize the visibility of the new trail that was cut through manzanita and other shrubs on California State Park land between Eagle Point and Cascade Properties	Completed
10015	Shoreline Unit #6 Emerald Bay Road Scar Treatment	Vikingsholm dirt road scars along north slope of Bay need to be revegetated and rock used in stabilization should be stained a darker color.	Completed

8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.6.1 ALL THRESHOLDS

STATUS OF PRIOR THRESHOLD RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior Threshold Evaluations have identified improvements in scenic conditions as well as problems that hinder attainment of the scenic quality thresholds. They made recommendations for actions that would help reverse negative trends and move the region toward threshold attainment. Some of these recommendations have been accomplished while others are incomplete at this time or are ongoing.

The following table lists and describes prior recommendations made for all four threshold indicators and gives their current implementation status.

Table 8-5: Status of Prior Threshold Recommendations

Recommendation	Rationale	Status
Buoy sticker program	Implement the proposed buoy sticker program to better identify buoys with permits and allow easier removal of those without.	Completed
Highway design standards and guidelines	TRPA should coordination with Caltrans and NDOT to ensure that roadway projects do not have significant impact on scenic resources of the Region.	Ongoing
Recreation area enforcement program	TRPA should work with the USFS and State Parks of both states to enforce restrictions on temporary and seasonal uses so that undesignated parking, unpermitted signage, and other uses near recreation areas, bike trails, and within the scenic corridor viewshed do not occur. (EIP #503, #10001)	Ongoing. Additional parking has been provided that has improved the parking situation in many recreation areas. Signage compliance has also improved in many recreation facilities operated by the USFS.
Region wide view enhancement and development of scenic turnouts	Targeted vegetative clearing, thinning, or pruning should be accomplished to maintain or improve lake views from certain roadway units. This must be carefully planned and executed to avoid creating new scenic impacts from other viewing points.	Ongoing. Continue to collaborate with NDOT and Caltrans to identify areas for appropriate thinning to enhance views to the lake.
Amend Code Chapter 20, Coverage	TRPA should amend Chapter 20 of the Code to permit additional coverage to be used on driveways when the coverage will lengthen a driveway to create a deeper setback.	Incomplete
Identify and pursue scenic conservation easements	Identify and pursue the opportunity to use scenic conservation easements, to mitigate potential impacts from development in visually sensitive areas, particularly to preserve lake views.	Incomplete
Update Lake Tahoe Scenic Resource Evaluation	TRPA should update the Lake Tahoe Scenic Resource Evaluation to add newly acquired public recreation sites, developed scenic overlooks, major public gathering areas, extensions of existing bike trails, and new bike trails to assure timely threshold protection.	Incomplete. Staff proposes to update the Evaluation after adoption of the updated Regional Plan

Recommendation	Rationale	Status
Develop a demonstration painting project	Develop a demonstration painting project or a widely dispersed simulation that illustrates the benefits of minimizing color contrast when choosing exterior building colors.	Staff proposes to drop this recommendation. TRPA has adopted a pallet of earth tone colors that are appropriate for use on building structures.
Amend Code Chapter 29, Historic Resource Protection	TRPA should amend Code Chapter 29, Historic Resource Protection, to include a region-wide inventory of historic structures, historic places, and historic development patterns that create distinctive scenic features and community character. The structures and areas inventoried would establish the important architectural and landscape architectural features necessary to consider when planning redevelopment or reuse of affected properties. It will usually be possible to protect these features and accommodate redevelopment if their details and patterns direct the manner and style of redevelopment activities.	Incomplete
Data information system	Develop a modern data archive and retrieval system that allows easy access by TRPA staff and the public to information critical to protection of scenic resources. This system should be GIS based and available on line. It should allow query from a map and by other metadata elements (e.g., date, location, name, content)	In progress. TRPA has recently purchased ACCELA which will improve the ability to retrieve data and TRPA's GIS is accessible to the public via the internet.
Develop scenic banking and offsite mitigation program	TRPA should develop a system to bank scenic credit. This system should address the problem of removing structures in advance of a specific project proposal for redevelopment of the site. Dr. Stephen Sheppard is currently working on this program. (EIP #542)	Incomplete. TRPA has an interim banking system in place that uses the visual magnitude system.
Complete and adopt proposed shorezone ordinances	Adopt the proposed Shorezone Ordinance with the new shorezone scenic system. Until these provisions are adopted, TRPA should use the determination of visual landscape type, the adopted visual magnitude system outlined in the SQIP and Design Review Guidelines, and the provisions of the Scenic BMP program as tools to assess potential for significant impact and as a guide for effects of proposed mitigation.	In progress. Staff continues to use the existing scenic review system to evaluate project effects until litigation on the shorezone ordinances are resolved.

Recommendation	Rationale	Status
Code amendments for Chapter 30, Design Standards	Develop a new section of Code Chapter 30, Design Standards that creates limits on the size and scale of new structures using a floor area ratio or other equivalent quantitative measure. These limits should be specific to the different landscape types (urban, transition, natural), the degree of visibility of the proposed project, and setback from scenic corridors and viewpoints. (For example, increased mass would be allowed for structures in urban areas with good vegetative screening and generous setbacks.) This would also require amendments to Chapter 22, Height Standards, to reflect a different approach to determining maximum height. (EIP #537)	Staff has completed work on inventorying different landscape types along the shoreline of Lake Tahoe. Amendments to allow additional mass based on landscape type is deferred until after adoption of the Regional Plan.
Amend Code Chapter 30, Design Standards, to protect lake views from the roadway, to potentially differentiate shoreline types, and to consider transfer systems.	Amend the Code to specifically require all new projects along the roadways to avoid net loss of lake views, including reducing the structural mass or height currently allowed. Project assessment must consider the effects of all aspects of the project, including primary and accessory structures and proposed landscaping.	Incomplete
Code amendment Chapter 22, Height	In coordination with a new approach to permitting size and mass of structure, TRPA should amend Chapter 22 of the Code to clearly identify how additional height findings are made, particularly with respect to establishing a tree canopy height. It will be important to include trees that will be used to provide the screening of the building or structure from the sensitive viewpoint.	Incomplete
Code amendment Chapter 30, Design Standards	Amend Chapter 30 of the Code to strengthen restrictions on new sports field and ski area lighting which would be visible from threshold travel routes, threshold recreation areas and bike trails, and the region's wilderness areas. TRPA should clarify the existing exterior lighting standards relative to location and direction of light sources and acceptable levels of building and landscape area lighting. TRPA should also add standards to establish specific maximum lighting levels for parking lots and garages, and more general standards for commercial, recreation and tourist accommodation uses. (EIP #537)	Staff has recommended changes to TRPA's lighting standards in the updated Regional Plan

Recommendation	Rationale	Status
Stateline CP Amendments	The Stateline CP update should discuss the need to install public design improvements, the time schedule established in the Community Plan's US 50 scenic improvement package, and the possibilities of urban improvement given the revised Loop Road project. A special improvement district or similar method should be investigated as an implementation strategy. (EIP #541)	In progress
Enhanced signage program	Work with the local governments to revise and then consistently enforce a substitute sign ordinance that meets the requirements of Code Chapter 26. Work with other jurisdictions, including the USFS related to concession areas, to improve the pace of signage replacement and compliance. (EIP #545, #546, and #875)	In progress. Staff is collaborating with local governments to incorporating substitute sign ordinances into local Area Plans.

Recommended Changes for 2011

Work completed for this evaluation identified various actions and resource specific improvements needed to restore or enhance scenic quality. They are described in the following list.

- Consider revising Chapter 30, section 30.15, of the Code of Ordinances to establish a maximum allowable visible lakefront façade. Chapter 30 currently allows additional visible area of lakefront façade based on a parcel's linear Lake frontage. Additional lakefront façade area allowed for each 10 feet of linear Lake frontage over 100 feet, but places no limit on the maximum allowable. This is an issue in cases where the lake frontage of the parcel is very large.
- Conduct a study of individual shoreland redevelopment projects that have occurred under the 2002 Shoreland Amendments to Chapter 30 of the Code of Ordinances. The goal of the study should be to determine the effectiveness of measures that are now required by the shoreland amendments and to determine if adjustments to those measures are needed. The study should involve field reviews from the lake redeveloped parcels to collect information on setbacks, amounts of screening, exterior colors, and extent of glass surfaces. Conditions should be photographed for documentation.
- Consider narrowing the value and chroma of TRPA approved earth tone colors to a value of 6 or lower and chroma of 4 or lower. This would exclude some currently allowed colors for exterior surfaces that contrast strongly with the shoreland landscape due to their value or chroma even though the color is an appropriate hue.
- Prohibit the use of white tent structures by concessionaires In shoreline areas that are in view from the lake since the tents tend to remain in place

throughout the summer season. Only allow tents that use TRPA approved colors.

- Establish a routine of photographing proposed project sites prior to the start of any construction or demolition as a means of photo-documenting pre-project conditions. Apply this to all development and redevelopment project sites. As needed, collect post-project photographs for comparison in order to illustrate the nature and degree of change in visual conditions imparted by the completed project.
- In scenic roadway unit #26, Sand Harbor, work with NDOT to implement treatment of light colored rock slope protection with a darkening spray such as the commercial product Natina which has successfully been used by Caltrans on rock slope protection along SR 28 in places from Tahoe City to Kings Beach. The goal is to darken the rock so it blends with the surrounding landscape and substantially reduce its color contrast which can be seen from great distances.
- In scenic roadway unit #28, Spooner Summit, work with NDOT to implement treatment of metal beam guardrails near the intersection of SR 28 and U.S. 50 with darkening spray such as the commercial product Natina which has successfully been used by Caltrans on new metal beam guardrails near Echo Summit and Emerald Bay.
- In scenic roadway unit #44, Kingsbury Grade, work with NDOT to implement application of surface stain/coloration to new textured concrete retaining walls. The goal should be to produce a surface coloration similar to what Caltrans has achieved on new textured concrete safety barriers installed on U.S. 50 near Echo Summit.

Implementation of supplemental compliance measures

No additional supplemental compliance measures are recommended at this time.

Modifications or deletions of past compliance measures

No modifications or deletion of past compliance measure are recommended at this time.

8.6 REFERENCES

- Wayne D. Iverson, Stephen R. J. Sheppard, and R. Andrew Strain. 1992. Managing Regional Scenic Quality in the Lake Tahoe Basin. *Landscape Journal*. pp. 23-39.
- TRPA. 1982. Study report for the establishment of environmental threshold carrying capacities. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Zephyr Cove, NV
- TRPA. 1989. Scenic Quality Improvement Program and Technical Appendices. Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Zephyr Cove, NV.