

Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Documents Series #6

Area Plans Background

December 2013



Lake Tahoe
Sustainable Communities Program

California Strategic Growth Council

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Acknowledgements

Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization Governing Board

The Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) Governing Board is comprised of the members of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Governing Board and one representative of the US Forest Service. The TRPA staff serves both the TMPO and TRPA. The TRPA Governing Board is responsible for adopting the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan and Code of Ordinances. The TMPO Governing Board is responsible for adopting the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

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Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative

This citizens group is responsible for sustainability planning recommendations, projects, and programs . More information is available at www.sustainabilitycollaborative.org.

Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities

This group, comprised of representatives from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization, California Tahoe Conservancy, El Dorado County, Placer County, City of South Lake Tahoe, North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, and Sierra Nevada Alliance, was responsible for preparing the original SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant application and has provided ongoing support for completion of these SGC grant-funded tasks.

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Introduction to the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program

The need to embrace sustainability in all planning and implementation activities in the Lake Tahoe Region and beyond has been recognized in a number of ways. At the national level, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has created the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program and the Department of Interior Bureau of Reclamation has initiated the Truckee River Basin Study that will include adaptive strategies to respond to climate change and other uncertainties. At the state level, California has adopted the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 requiring greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for passenger vehicles for 2020 and 2035 for each region covered by a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and created the Strategic Growth Council, which has awarded grants for sustainable community planning and natural resource conservation. At the Lake Tahoe Region level, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) has updated the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan to include sustainability policies and mitigation measures, and the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) has adopted a Sustainable Communities Strategy as required by the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008. At the local level, local governments in the Lake Tahoe Region are in the process of integrating sustainability principles into their local plans.

In the summer of 2010, a partnership of agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions came together as “The Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities” in order to apply for a grant from the Strategic Growth Council. Collectively, the Partnership is supporting execution of the Strategic Growth Council 2011 Sustainable Communities Planning Grant that was officially awarded to the TMPO in August of 2011. The Partnership is comprised of Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, El Dorado County, Placer County, City of South Lake Tahoe, California Tahoe Conservancy, and Sierra Nevada Alliance.

The TRPA, in partnership with other key stakeholders in the Lake Tahoe Region, is a participant in all of these national, state, regional and local efforts. Often they are complementary and of common interest to stakeholders. Hence, the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program has been created as a Basin-wide program with staff from different agencies and organizations participating in the various efforts. To the extent possible, the products from these efforts will be available through the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program website and as a series of documents.

Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Documents Series

This series of documents is organized to generally reflect the tasks associated with the grants received from the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC). The series as currently envisioned includes the following:

- 1. Sustainability Framework and Vision** – This document accompanies the California Tahoe Conservancy *Tahoe Basin Sustainability Planning Guidebook* document (Appendix A) and includes an overview of the Sustainable Communities Program, the framework within which all of the regional and local level plans work, and the vision for sustainability based on input from over 5,000 participants in the regional planning process. The *Tahoe Basin Sustainability Planning Guidebook* was prepared in 2011 and describes how this effort was originally envisioned. The Sustainability Framework and Vision has more detailed and updated language related to the

newly adopted Regional Plan and the framework for Area Plans, input from participants in that process, and the interaction of sustainability components. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 1: Roadmap & Organizational Structure.

2. **Sustainability Action Plan Background** – This document includes the initial greenhouse gas emissions inventory and reduction targets, and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. It reflects the adopted Regional Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, and Sustainable Communities Strategy policies, and is the basis for the sustainability (a.k.a., climate change) action plan. This document serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 3: Goals, Objectives, & Strategies.
3. **Sustainability Action Plan: A Sustainability Action Toolkit for Lake Tahoe** – This includes the revised greenhouse gas emissions inventory and reduction targets, and climate change and adaptation strategies vetted through the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative and the Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities. This document also includes community level outreach and action strategies. This document serves as the “deliverables” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Tasks 3.D, 4.A, and 4.D: Lake Tahoe Sustainability Action Plan and Outreach Activities.
4. **Sustainability Indicators Reporting Plan**– This includes: (1) an assessment of existing Lake Tahoe Region measurement and monitoring efforts, (2) identification of a suite of sustainability indicators, (3) development of a sustainability metrics reporting plan, and (4) initiation of a sustainability dashboard. This measurement and tracking approach is intended to be consistent with and a key element of the larger Lake Tahoe Basin Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Program required by California State Appropriations Bill #3110-0140 in addition to serving as the ‘deliverables’ for SGC Round 1 Task 4.B: Develop Performance Measures, Indicators and Monitoring Program, including a Tracking and Accounting System and SGC Round 2 Task 4.A: Obtain Regional Indicators Data.
5. **Area Plans Framework** – This includes the framework for Area Plans and initiation of those Area Plans. The framework (i.e., Regional Plan policies and code, conformance review checklist, and model Area Plan contents) serves as the “deliverable” for SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 4, Subtask C: Lake Tahoe Livable Communities Program.
6. **Area Plans Background** – This document, it includes an assessment of the sustainability and livability measures needed in each planning area and the barriers to local implementation of those sustainability measures. This document serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 2: Situation Assessments.
7. **Development Commodities Transfer Policies Analysis** – This includes identification and analysis of the potential market effectiveness of proposed transfer of development rights and bonus unit policies considered for inclusion in the Regional Plan. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 4, Subtask E: Development Rights Incentives Program.
8. **Development Commodities Tracking and Exchange System** – This includes the concepts, processes, software requirements, and other system specifications, as well as the results of implementing the development commodities and exchange system. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 2 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 3: Regional Development Rights Tracking System.

9. **Economic Development Strategy** – This includes analysis of existing and targeted industry clusters and recommendations on the clusters and incentives that will be most effective in creating and maintaining a sustainable economy for the Lake Tahoe Region. Also included is stakeholder outreach resulting in recommendations for implementation of commodities transfer policies. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 4, Subtask F: Economic Incentives Strategy.
10. **Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative Strategic Plan** – This document includes the LTSC’s mission, charter, and business plan which provides the strategy for the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative to continue, on an ongoing basis, to act as an independent entity that “champions” sustainability in the Lake Tahoe Region. This serves as the “deliverables” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 1.B: Establish Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative and SGC Round 2, Task 4.E: Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative Support.
11. **Annual Report** – This is the initial annual report on the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program and will be included as part of future TRPA annual reports. It will be updated using current sustainability indicators data, and can act as a template for similar sustainability planning reports in other regions. This serves as the “deliverables” for the SGC Round 2 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Tasks 4.B: Implement Regional Data Sharing/Management Program, 4.C: Web-Based Dashboard Implementation and 4.D: Prepare and Publish Final Tahoe Annual Report.
12. **Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Summary** - Other documents that are an integral part of the sustainability efforts in the Lake Tahoe Region include the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan, Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy, and various local government Area Plans. This document provides a summary of these plans, the products described in previous reports in this series, and how they work together within the Sustainability Framework for the Lake Tahoe Region. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 2 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 2: SB375 Local Planning and Implementation Tool-Kit.

While providing valuable information about the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program to Lake Tahoe Region stakeholders, this series is also designed to provide a reference for other regions involved in addressing the critical issue of sustainability.

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Area Plan Background

In addition to creating the Sustainability Action Plan for the Lake Tahoe Region and providing important resources for the update and implementation of the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan and Regional Transportation Plan (Mobility 2035), the LTSCP has provided key funding and information for creation of select area plans (a.k.a., livability plans in the SGC round 1 grant application).

- The sustainability vision statements in Document #1, also discussed in Appendix B of that document and Appendix A of this document, outline the regional vision underlying the Sustainability Action Plan as well as select area plan level vision statements. Those area plan vision statements are summarized below.
- The LTSCP also provides a framework for the area plans (Document #5) and funding for select recently completed and ongoing local government area plans. One of the most important inputs to the area planning process is the assessment of barriers to achieving the sustainability vision for the area plans. This assessment for the select area plans is included as Appendix B of this document and is summarized below.
- Local governments in the Lake Tahoe Region have the option to prepare area plans. A number of local governments have initiated this process. Two area plans have been adopted and additional area planning efforts have been initiated. In accord with the recent amendments to the Regional Plan and Code, all new area plans must include green sustainability measures. The status of the local government area planning efforts is also included below.

Area Planning Sustainability Vision

The three areas for which vision statements have been developed are from each of the three California local governments in the Lake Tahoe Region: South Lake Tahoe (City of South Lake Tahoe), Tahoe City (Placer County), and Meyers (El Dorado County).

- **South Lake Tahoe Sustainability Vision**
 - **Diverse natural ecosystems and other resources** in South Lake Tahoe and improved Lake water clarity to maintain a healthy balance between human (built) and natural environments that make the Basin a unique and special place.
 - **A sense of community that enhances the Highway 50 corridor as the heart of the community** by creating an interconnected series of compact mixed-use districts that serve the needs of residents and visitors.
 - **Enhanced recreational opportunities and choices** that attract nature lovers, sport enthusiasts, and families through numerous recreation and lodging options, ecotourism destinations, and multiple businesses that highlight the natural and cultural environment of South Lake Tahoe.
 - **Diverse housing and lodging choices** that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors of all physical and economic abilities that recognize the seasonal, visitor-oriented nature of many businesses, preserve and enhance the existing supply of

housing, and provide a sustainable and walkable environment in proximity to local businesses, services, and neighborhood centers.

- A connected transportation network with Highway 50 as a multi-modal corridor that provides diverse options for convenient travel within the City, to surrounding communities, and regionally; walking and biking to local destinations; and transit centers that also serve as social gathering places.
- A vital local economy with a transformed Highway 50 corridor and public-private cooperation that has created a prosperous and healthy region; diverse locally-owned businesses that offer good wages, services, and amenities to the community and visitors; and an economic base driven by creative, environmentally-sound, and “green” businesses.
- A high quality of life with improved public health, fire-safe open spaces and built environment, education, and job opportunities, and enhanced social well-being of South Lake Tahoe residents and workers.

- **Tahoe City Sustainability Vision**

- Stream Zone, lakeshore, and other natural environments that maintain a healthy balance between humans and nature, provide scenic corridors and vistas that make the Basin a unique and special place, and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy natural settings.
- A sense of community and place based on Tahoe City’s status as the oldest community in the Region that preserves its diverse architecture and cultural identity, provides a scenic, unifying character in harmony with nature, open vistas and unique landscapes, and public gathering spaces for social interaction focused on the lakeshore.
- Enhanced recreational opportunities and choices for the permanent population and visitors based on Tahoe City’s location at the headwaters of the Truckee River, easy access to the Lake, recreational activities integrated into the community, and multiple options for all community members to be physically active.
- Diverse housing and lodging choices that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors of all physical and economic abilities and that recognize the seasonal, visitor-oriented nature of many businesses in Tahoe City.
- A connected multimodal transportation network with increased travel choices within Tahoe City and surrounding communities, including a well-connected trail system and improved water and land transit that reduce traffic congestion, lower household transportation costs, and provide more opportunities for walking and biking by residents, workers, and visitors.
- A vital local economy with waterfront redevelopment / revitalization along the lakefront and the Truckee River that promotes economic development, improves access, enhances viewsheds, and maintains the lake as an exceptional place where Tahoe City can thrive in harmony with the natural environment.
- A high quality of life with improved public health, education, and job opportunities and enhanced social well-being of Tahoe City residents.

- **Meyers Sustainability Vision**

- Diverse natural ecosystems and other resources in the Meyers area that maintain a healthy balance between human (built) and natural environments, and connect the community to surrounding natural areas that make Meyers a unique and special place.
- A sense of community and appreciation of history as the southern gateway to the Region and Pony Express way station that preserves Meyers historical, architectural, and cultural identity; recognizes its environmental and recreation values, and creates linkages to public spaces for social gathering and interaction on both sides of Highway 50.
- Enhanced recreational opportunities that take advantage of surrounding spectacular mountain vistas while protecting it for future generations, foster an outdoors community ethic that thrives in harmony with the natural environment, and provide easy access to area recreation amenities that offer multiple options for all Meyers residents to be physically active.
- Diverse housing and lodging choices that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors of all physical and economic abilities that recognize the seasonal, visitor-oriented nature of many businesses, preserve and enhance the existing supply of housing, and provide a sustainable and walkable environment in proximity to local businesses, services, and neighborhood centers.
- A safe, connected multimodal transportation network with increased travel choices that connect both sides of Meyers, reduce traffic speeds through the community, lower household transportation costs, and encourage walking and biking to local destinations by residents, workers, and visitors.
- A vital local economy that balances the needs of commercial and residential areas, builds upon the sense of community by business owners, and promotes south shore visitor attractions, many opportunities to access nearby outdoor recreation, and the upper Truckee River.
- A high quality of life with enhanced public health, education, mountain culture, job opportunities, and social well-being of Lake Tahoe's communities

Area Planning Sustainability Barriers

The focus of this assessment was on the major physical and regulatory barriers to sustainable development and redevelopment, and ways to overcome these barriers. The entire assessment is included as Appendix B.

In general the assessment indicated that development regulations in local zoning codes are perpetuating the type of auto-oriented segregated land use pattern that caused many of the problems that now exist in the Lake Tahoe Region. The Regional Plan Update in 2012 set the context for local plans to focus environmental redevelopment in mixed use pedestrian/transit oriented development centers. This will require local plans and codes to include enhanced design guidance and regulatory incentives.

The assessment provided more specific analysis and recommendations regarding these three major barriers to sustainable development: segregated land uses, lack of detailed development and design guidance, and prohibitive permitting processes and regulation.

- **Segregated Land Uses**

The spatial arrangement of uses determines travel distances, infrastructure needs and impacts on natural resources. Traditional auto-oriented zoning which separated uses and placed the most intense development on highways and arterials became very common in the United States after World War II. This was the predominant approach used for most of the development in the Lake Tahoe Region as well. As recently as 1990 mixed use was not allowed in the Lake Tahoe Region and the 1987 Regional Plan did not include the term mixed use in any goals and policies.

Alternatively, mixed use development reduces the amount of land needed, travel distance, infrastructure and impacts on natural resources. The 2012 Regional Plan Update recognized that this change is needed and encourages it. Although a few recently approved projects have shown the potential benefits of this approach (e.g., Heavenly Village), most local plans and codes in the Lake Tahoe Region still need to be updated to include mixed uses.

Recommendations for mixed use are detailed in Appendix B and include:

- Allow or require mixed use depending on the area
- Require first floor active uses (retail, restaurants, offices, etc.) in core areas
- Allow prioritization and variation of active uses in different neighborhood centers and key nodes

- **Lack of Detailed Development and Design Guidance**

For mixed use development to be most successful it must be designed with consideration for more than the architecture of single standalone buildings. How the buildings relate to each other, the pedestrian spaces in between them, how the buildings and pedestrian spaces relate to the streets, the sense of safety and sense of place, sunlight and shade, vegetation and street furniture are some of the important design considerations. The development should be perceived as if it was designed as a coherent whole. The 2012 Regional Plan update calls for centers with buildings and spaces interconnected by pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities.

The recommendations for improved development and design guidelines address the following:

- Building site
- Location of parking
- Height
- Building orientation
- Facades
- Screening
- Landscaping and defensible space
- Pedestrian connections

- **Prohibitive Permitting Processes and Regulation**

To protect the fragile environment in the Lake Tahoe Region, TRPA has adopted and enforced unique and stringent development regulations to protect natural resources. At the same time, developments must also be processed through a local government to ensure their plan and code

requirements are met. The combination of stringent regional standards and the additional local government permitting processes makes it much more difficult to attract investment and redevelopment that will result in environmental improvement. To more clearly define these issues and possible solutions, stakeholder meetings were convened in the City of South Lake Tahoe and Meyers.

The stakeholders indicated that applying stringent environmental regulations on a parcel-by-parcel basis is problematic and often not the most effective approach to improving the environment. The specific types of regulations that were identified include coverage, commercial floor area, and best management practices (BMPs) for stormwater control. The 2012 Regional Plan Update addresses this by providing bonus units and, through area plans, allowing area-wide approaches. It is recommended that TRPA continue to support and provide assistance in developing area-wide approaches.

The 2012 Regional Plan Update addresses the additional process requirement by allowing the regional and local processes to be combined in many instances. With some exceptions, this arrangement is permitted when an area plan has been adopted and found in conformance with the Regional Plan, a memorandum of understanding between TRPA and the local government is in place, and TRPA conducts an annual review of the local jurisdiction permitting activities.

In addition to these three major barriers, pilot planning efforts resulted in recommended updates to land use, development, and design regulations for the Tahoe Valley Area Plan in the City of South Lake Tahoe, the Meyers Area Plan in El Dorado County, and the Placer County town centers identified in the Regional Plan. More detailed analysis of barriers, including specific amendments and suggested land use and zoning maps were prepared for the Tahoe Valley and Meyers Area Plans. They are also included in Appendix B.

Local Government Area Planning Status

The status of local government area planning efforts is summarized below. A map of preliminary area plan boundaries is provided at the end of this section.

Two area plans have been prepared and adopted by local governments and TRPA. These are the Douglas County (Nevada) South Shore Area Plan and the City of South Lake Tahoe (California) Tourist Core Area Plan. Even though they are in different states, these two areas are adjacent to each other and encompass the most intensely developed area in the Lake Tahoe Region. The underlying vision for the area was created by a cooperative effort between property owners, the City of South Lake Tahoe, Douglas County, and other parties. Like the Tahoe Valley, Meyers and Placer County efforts described above, the area plans were preceded by preparation of a vision document and conceptual design standards.

There are six area plans that are proceeding due largely to the availability of Strategic Growth Council grant funds administered through the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program. These plans will incorporate many of the sustainability recommendations discussed above and in the appendixes.

- **City of South Lake Tahoe (California) Tahoe Valley Area Plan**

The Tahoe Valley Area Plan (TVAP) includes the South “Y” area included in the existing Tahoe Valley Community Plan. The City is currently preparing a draft of the TVAP with TRPA review and consideration anticipated in mid to late 2014.

- **Meyers (El Dorado County, California) Area Plan**

This plan includes the Meyers Town Center and surrounding Recreation and Conservation lands. A public review draft of the Meyers Area Plan has been and is available on the County's website (<https://www.edcgov.us/Meyers/>). The associated environmental document is being prepared with TRPA review and consideration expected in early 2014.

- **Placer County (California) Area Plan, North Tahoe East**

This Area Plan will include Kings Beach, North Stateline and surrounding areas. A number of public meetings have been held and an existing conditions report has been prepared. TRPA review and action is expected to be requested in 2015.

- **Placer County (California) Area Plan, North Tahoe West**

This Area Plan will include Carnelian Bay, Tahoe Vista and surrounding areas. A number of public meetings have been held and an existing conditions report has been prepared. TRPA review and action is expected to be requested in 2015.

- **Placer County (California), Tahoe City Area Plan**

This Area Plan will include Tahoe City, Tahoe City Gateway, Lake Forest, Dollar Hill and surrounding areas. A number of public meetings have been held and an existing conditions report has been prepared. TRPA review and action is expected to be requested in 2015.

- **Placer County (California) Area Plan, West Shore**

This Area Plan covers the area from the El Dorado County line to the Sunnyside area. A number of public meetings have been held and an existing conditions report has been prepared. TRPA review and action is expected to be requested in 2015.

The remaining area plans that are in the process of being prepared and adopted are:

- **Douglas County (Nevada) Tahoe Douglas Area Plan**

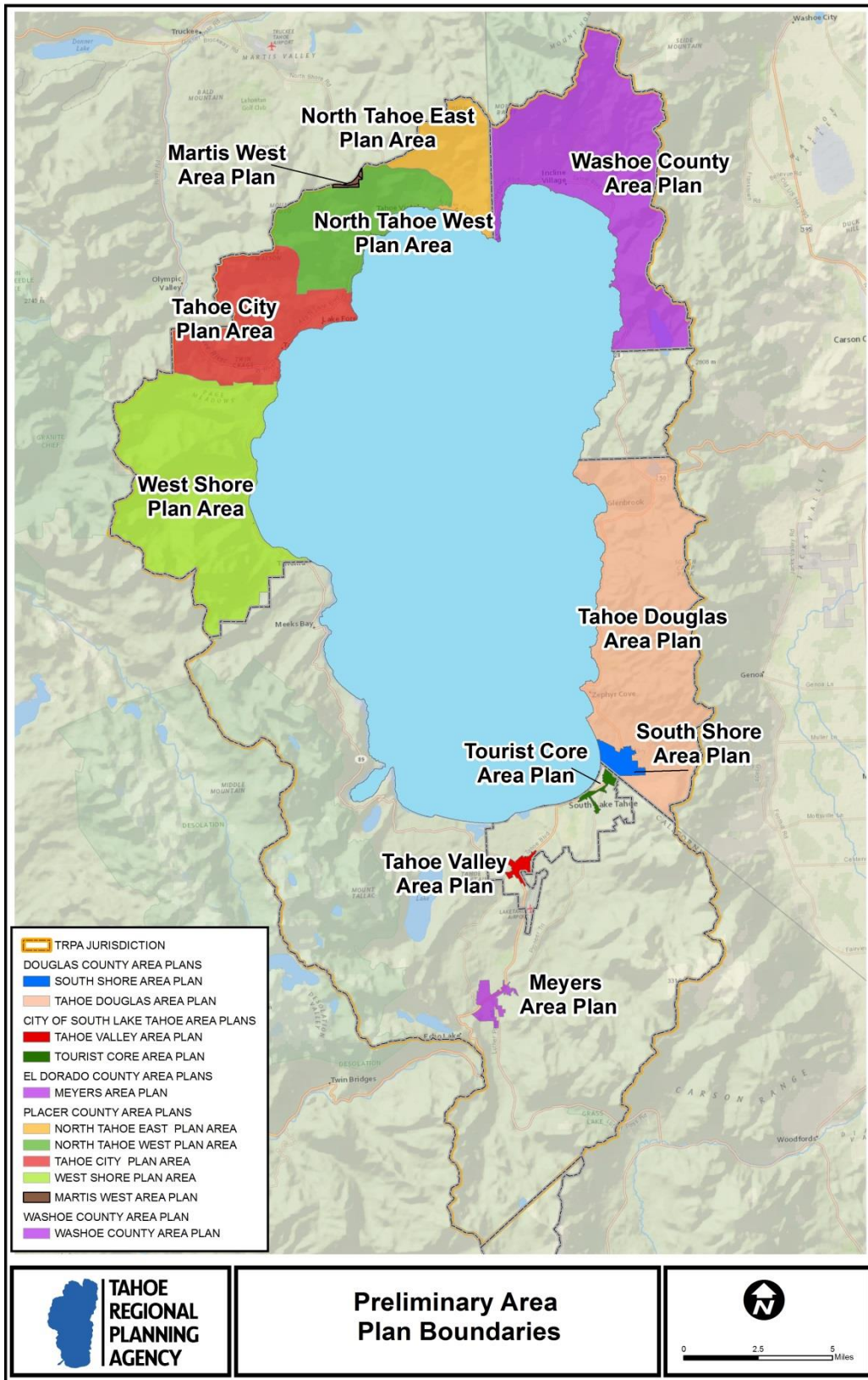
Douglas County is preparing a draft of the Tahoe Douglas Area Plan, which will include the remainder of Douglas County not in the recently adopted South Shore Area Plan. TRPA review and consideration of this plan is anticipated in mid to late 2014.

- **Placer County (California) Martis West Area Plan**

This Area Plan covers slightly over 100 acres of privately-owned Conservation and Recreation lands near the Northstar ski resort. It is anticipated that the Area Plan will include proposed amendments to the Regional Land Use Map. This planning process is in the preliminary stages.

- **Washoe County (Nevada) Area Plan**

This Area Plan is expected to cover the entire portion of Washoe County within the Tahoe Basin. This planning process is in the preliminary stages.



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Appendixes

- A. Tahoe Livable Community Health, Impact, and Livability Assessment Product Definition**
- B. Tahoe Basin Sustainability Barriers Assessment Report**

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Memorandum

To: Michael Ward, Eoin Dougherty
From: Jeff Goldman
CC:
Date: Revised October 9, 2012
Subject: Tahoe Livable Community Health, Impact, and Livability Assessment Product Definition

The purpose of this memo is to identify and distill key livability principles contained in a wide variety of regional and local strategic planning and vision documents, connect these principles to goals and objectives of Tahoe Livable Community plans as a foundation for regional and local sustainability, and engage with community members and stakeholder groups to validate these principles. The concept of “livability” is relevant to the pilot communities but also feeds into the greater regional sustainability framework. This memorandum provides an understanding of the key aspects of “livable communities” in the Tahoe Basin that will inform the selection of relevant data to measure the existing livability baseline among the three pilot communities.

This document will also serve as a basis for identifying data that can be used to establish a livability baseline, regionally and locally, based on these principles, major issues, opportunities, and challenges (barriers) to achieving “livability” in the Basin. It should also be useful for selection of relevant indicators in the Tahoe Basin along with the Regional Plan Update, Environmental Improvement Program and recommendations from the Collaborative and stakeholders.

Also, when considering quality of life, it is important to understand that it is influenced by many factors such as education, employment, housing, pollution and safety, as well as factors such as climate change, green infrastructure, sustainability, and ecosystem resilience.

The development of livability principles has been informed by plans and public input from both the community and regional levels. Specifically, the identification of key definitions of livable communities is based on input gathered at community meetings as part of the Tahoe Regional Sustainability Planning project, stakeholder engagement, community plans, the Tahoe Regional Plan update, and other strategic planning or visioning documents that address livability. This allows each community to decide which principles to emphasize and how they might adjust the principles to reflect local context.

The recommended Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) and community “livability” definitions will also be discussed with reference to the six *Federal Livability principles*, to ensure they capture the essence of those principles and *Pathway: A Vision for Tahoe’s Future*¹.

¹ May 2007 Regional Vision Summary

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The discussion in this memo is organized in the following manner:

- Regional and Local Framework for Livability
- Livability Definition for the Tahoe Basin
- Livability Principles for the Region and the Three Pilot Communities
- Next Steps

Regional and Local Framework for Livability

Generally, community “livability” focuses on high quality of life, multi-modal and connected neighborhoods, improved community health² and a vibrant economic base. In the Basin, the understanding of what comprises a “livable community” may have some variation based on the specific needs of the community. Because livability relates to the human condition and experience, it should address economic prosperity, including income levels that allow workers the ability to live in the Basin and business opportunities that allow local businesses to thrive.

However, the various regional plans that guide development and conservation in the Basin bear testimony to the fact that ultimately “livability” in the region depends on how the quality of life of residents and visitors of all age groups and physical abilities is enhanced by easy access to affordable quality housing, transportation, and recreation.

Goals, visions, and objectives mentioned in the various regional documents, such as the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Regional Plan Update, Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan, city and county general plans and various community plans were reviewed to understand both regional and local perspectives and preferences guiding development in the Basin. Throughout these documents and other materials that were reviewed, the following six recurring principles are present and appear to highlight a general sense of agreement regarding critical factors that contribute to livable communities and a sustainable region:

Unique natural environment – Both Tahoe residents and visitors take immense pride in the stunning natural beauty that the Basin offers and the communities are dedicated to reduce deterioration of this iconic natural resource, preserve the significant scenic quality of the Basin, and enhance the ecological environment.

Year-round recreation –The Lake, the mountains, and other attractions provide a variety of indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities throughout the year for residents and the great numbers of visitors drawn to the region. This also provides a huge opportunity to increase tourism while attracting industries whose owners and employees value the natural setting of the Tahoe Basin.

Sustainable local economy – Although the Basin offers many economic development opportunities, in recent years the region has suffered due to market conditions. In addition, the Basin’s economy has been dominated by seasonal businesses. However, the ingredients for successful economic development are all present in the area. Therefore, as the *Prosperity Plan* pointed out, some innovative efforts to create greater regional and local sustainability, including green tourism, green building and infrastructure, sustainable design, scientific research and applications for environmental resource renewal and management, renewable energy, and

² Includes environmental health, such as clean air, water, and urban ecosystems, and public health.

October 9, 2012

health and wellness can pay dividends to the local economy. An emphasis should also be placed on diversifying the region's economic base beyond seasonal tourism, including recruiting more year-round businesses, developing programs to keep seasonal employees year-round, and reducing dependence on economic activity associated with second home owners.

Balanced mix of land uses – All the planning jurisdictions in the Basin agreed that sprawling development has adverse impacts on both a community's social health and environment. Therefore, growth in the region needs to be balanced with the communities' interest in creating vibrant social centers, along with the rural lifestyle. An appropriate mix of land uses will also help in creating more walkable and bikeable communities by promoting residential uses close to daily destinations.

Diverse range of housing – There is a regional need for a diverse range of housing and lodging choices that cater to year-round residents and workers, and visitors of all age groups, physical ability and economic levels.

Connected transportation system - A connected multimodal transportation system will allow efficient and safe transportation choices to residents and visitors that will also reduce traffic congestion and adverse impacts on the environment.

Although community health was not explicitly mentioned in many of the materials we reviewed, embedded in the six principles are themes that contribute to community health, including social interaction and gathering places, pursuit of active lifestyles, access to healthy foods and other goods and services that support health, enjoyment of nature, recreation, affordable housing, incomes that support workers' ability to live in the Basin, and a sustainable local economy.

In May 2012, community workshops were held for North Tahoe East Plan Area, North Tahoe West Plan Area, West Shore, Tahoe City, and Meyers. During these workshops, community members discussed what they liked or disliked about the community, how they would like to see the community grow over the next 20 years, and what unique values and assets need to be protected. For all the communities the recreational opportunities and the rural mountain charm that the community offered were among the top preferences. Some of the challenges that were consistently discussed at each of the community workshops were affordability, people-friendly connected street networks, deteriorating local economy and access to the Lake. Although each area created their own vision statement for the respective community, a majority of the workshop members agreed on the importance of the following factors in improving community livability:

Transportation alternatives – Provision of efficient multi-modal alternatives to driving single-occupancy vehicles, such as transit, pedestrian and bike access, seemed to be one of the highest priorities for the communities. Most of the workshop attendants agreed that improving infrastructure for walking and biking would provide residents and visitors with a low cost alternative to reach their destinations, including safe walkable and bikable alternatives. There was also discussion regarding preferences for creating transit hubs that can also serve as social gathering places.

Housing affordability – Due to the prevalence of second home ownership and the vacation rental market, costs of housing has been very high relative to what workers can afford to pay. This has led to residents and the workforce moving to the outskirts of the Basin and commuting into the Basin every day, resulting in rising commute costs. Therefore, increased housing affordability and diverse housing stock that caters to all economic segments of the community will help in

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reducing adverse impacts to the environment that result from increased traffic congestion, and will help revitalize the local economy by bringing people back into the declining communities.

Recreational access – Overwhelmingly the community members agreed they enjoyed being in an area with many recreational opportunities. Enhancing access to the Lake and regional recreational sites and providing affordable recreation choices was of interest to all the communities.

Environmental and visual quality – Community members agreed that high quality environmental performance was the key to maintaining the uniqueness of the region. Scenic vistas were also important to the communities. Some of the ideas for maintaining high visual quality in the basin included moving the parking areas along the lake across the road to be adjacent to the commercial areas, and keeping vistas to the Lake uninterrupted by removing overhead power lines.

Economic revitalization – Balancing the needs for commercial and residential uses to ensure that employment centers and neighborhood retail are in close proximity to residential areas encourages small businesses that primarily serve local consumers (residents and workers). Workshop attendants also wanted to ensure commercial activities support the needs of visitors to the communities to stimulate local economic growth.

Community identity and a sense of place – The Basin communities take pride in their historic and cultural diversity. Therefore, maintenance of the rural mountain architectural charm along with each community's unique identity was of importance to the community members. The community members also discussed the need to foster social interaction that would also help in promoting a sense of place for each community.

Livability Definition for the Tahoe Basin

In addition to the community preferences discussed at the community workshops on the various community plans and the TRPA Regional Plan Update, a consensus definition of “livability” for the Basin that aligns with the six federal livability principles proposed in 2009 by the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (a collaboration among the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) emerged. The Partnership defines “livability” in communities as improved access to affordable housing, increased transportation choices, and lowered transportation costs that, in turn, protect the environment, specifically:

1. ***Provide more transportation choices*** to decrease household transportation costs, reduce dependence on oil, improve air quality and promote public health.
2. ***Expand location and energy-efficient housing choices*** for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
3. ***Improve economic competitiveness of neighborhoods*** by giving people reliable access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs.

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4. **Target federal funding toward existing communities** through transit-oriented development and land recycling to revitalize communities, reduce public works costs, and safeguard rural landscapes.
5. **Align federal policies and funding** to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the effectiveness of programs to plan for future growth.
6. **Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities** by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods, whether rural, urban or suburban.

Except for principle #4 (target federal funding), these livability principles address many of the same issues that appeared in community meeting notes and various community planning documents within the Basin. According to the Partnership, the federal principles are guided by the thought process that “incorporating livability approaches into transportation, land use, and housing policies can help improve public health and safety, lower infrastructure costs, reduce combined household transportation and housing costs, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and improve air and water quality, among many other benefits.”

Also important is Tahoe’s regional equivalent to these federal livability principles, embodied in the May 2007 *Tahoe Basin Regional Vision Summary* (Pathways 2007). According to this regional visioning summary, the overall sustainability planning concepts are:

1. Strengthen gathering places and economic centers.
2. Improve mobility, an enhanced travel experience, and a variety of transportation options.
3. Provide a variety of housing and lodging choices to meet the needs of residents and visitors.
4. Improve recreation opportunities.
5. Restore degraded watersheds, habitats, and other important natural areas.

The Pathway 2007 planning principles, in combination with the federal livability principles and concepts embedded in local plans, inform both a basin-wide (regional) definition of livability and local variations of the regional definition based on the unique characteristics and concerns of communities within the Basin.

Therefore, while a livability definition for the Basin should reflect the unique characteristics of the region and its priorities, it can also align with state and federal guidance for environmental, community and economic development, housing, and transportation planning programs that seek to improve quality of life, environmental performance, and economic vitality. Consistent with the California Strategic Growth Council grant that is funding the Tahoe Sustainable Communities planning process, livability principles should also address increasing long-term resilience of natural and built environments in the Basin in the face of climate change. Based on the community priorities and policy guidance contained in the Regional Plan Update, we propose the following regional and local livability principles for the Tahoe Basin.

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Regional Livability

- ***Protect, restore, and enhance the diverse natural ecosystems, and other resources*** in the Lake Tahoe Basin and its communities to maintain a healthy balance between human (built) and natural environments that make the Basin a unique and special place.
- ***Foster a sense of community that maintains the richness of everyday life*** by preserving the historical, architectural, and cultural identity of the community that is linked to the Basin's environmental values, creating public spaces for social gathering and interaction, and improving the distribution of community and social services through regional-municipal collaboration and cooperation.
- ***Enhance recreational opportunities and choices*** that take advantage of the Basin's unique natural beauty while protecting it for future generations, providing easy access to the Lake and other regional destinations, and offering multiple options for all community members to be physically active.
- ***Provide diverse housing / lodging choices*** that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors of all physical and economic abilities and that recognize the seasonal, visitor-oriented nature of many businesses in the Basin.
- ***Promote a connected multimodal transportation network that increases travel choices within, to, and from the Basin*** that reduce traffic congestion, lower household transportation costs, and encourage walking and biking to local destinations by residents, workers, and visitors.
- ***Support a vital regional and local economy*** by balancing the needs of commercial and residential areas, building on local visitor attractions, maintaining Lake Tahoe as an exceptional place where communities thrive in harmony with the natural environment, promoting greater renewable energy use, use of locally grown food sources, and better integrating Tahoe into a larger regional economy that includes Truckee, Reno, and Carson City.
- ***Promote a high quality of life*** by increasing opportunities for improved public health, education, and job opportunities; enhancing the social wellbeing and economic equity of Lake Tahoe's communities; and building greater economic and ecological resiliency into the Tahoe Basin through energy, water, and other natural resources conservation.

Community Livability

South Lake Tahoe

- ***Protect, restore, and enhance the diverse natural ecosystems and other resources*** in South Lake Tahoe and improve the Lake's water clarity to maintain a healthy balance between human (built) and natural environments that make the Basin a unique and special place.
- ***Foster a sense of community that enhances the Highway 50 corridor as the heart of the community*** by creating an interconnected series of compact mixed-use districts that serve the needs of residents and visitors.

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- ***Enhance recreational opportunities and choices*** that attract nature lovers, sport enthusiasts, and families through numerous recreation and lodging options, ecotourism destinations, and multiple businesses that highlight the natural and cultural environment of South Lake Tahoe.
- ***Provide diverse housing and lodging choices*** that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors of all physical and economic abilities, that recognize the seasonal, visitor-oriented nature of many businesses, that preserve and enhance the existing supply of housing, and that provide a sustainable and walkable environment in proximity to local businesses, services, and neighborhood centers.
- ***Promote a connected transportation network and Highway 50 as a multi-modal corridor*** with diverse options for convenient travel within the City, to surrounding communities, and regionally; to encourage walking and biking to local destinations; and to provide transit centers that also serve as social gathering places.
- ***Support a vital local economy through transformation of the Highway 50 corridor*** and public-private cooperation to achieve a prosperous and healthy region; diverse locally-owned businesses that offer good wages, services, and amenities to the community and visitors; and an economic base driven by creative, environmentally-sound, and “green” businesses.
- ***Promote a high quality of life*** by increasing opportunities for improved public health, fire-safe open spaces and built environment, education and job opportunities, and enhanced social wellbeing of South Lake Tahoe residents and workers.

Tahoe City

Page 7 (Tahoe City) Support a vital local economy:

- ***Protect, restore, and enhance the Stream Zone, lakeshore, and other natural environments*** to maintain a healthy balance between humans and nature, provide scenic corridors and vistas that make the Basin a unique and special place, and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy natural settings.
- ***Foster a sense of community and place based on Tahoe City status as the oldest community in the Basin*** by preserving its diverse architecture and cultural identity, providing a scenic, unifying character in harmony with nature, open vistas and unique landscapes, and public gathering spaces for social interaction focused on the lakeshore.
- ***Enhance recreational opportunities and choices for the permanent population and visitors*** based on Tahoe City's location at the headwaters of the Truckee River, provide easy access to the lake, integrate recreational activities into the community, and provide multiple options for all community members to be physically active.
- ***Provide diverse housing and lodging choices*** that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors of all physical and economic abilities and that recognize the seasonal, visitor-oriented nature of many businesses in Tahoe City.
- ***Promote a connected multimodal transportation network that increases travel choices within Tahoe City and surrounding communities***, including a well-connected trail system and improved water and land transit that reduce traffic congestion, lower

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household transportation costs, and provide more opportunities for walking and biking by residents, workers, and visitors.

- ***Support a vital local economy*** by promoting waterfront redevelopment / revitalization along the lakefront and the Truckee River that promotes economic development, improves access, and enhances viewsheds, and maintaining the lake as an exceptional place where Tahoe City can thrive in harmony with the natural environment.
- ***Promote a high quality of life*** by increasing opportunities for improved public health, education, and job opportunities and enhancing the social wellbeing of Tahoe City residents.

Meyers

- ***Protect, restore, and enhance the diverse natural ecosystems and other resources*** in the Meyers area by maintaining a healthy balance between human (built) and natural environments, and connecting the community to surrounding natural areas that make Meyers a unique and special place.
- ***Foster a sense of community and appreciation of history as the southern gateway to the Basin and Pony Express way station*** by preserving Meyer's historical, architectural, cultural identity, environmental and recreation values, and creating linkages to public spaces for social gathering and interaction on both sides of Highway 50.
- ***Enhance recreational opportunities that take advantage of surrounding spectacular mountain vistas*** while protecting it for future generations, fostering an outdoors community ethic that thrives in harmony with the natural environment, and providing easy access to area recreation amenities that offer multiple options for all Meyers residents to be physically active.
- ***Provide diverse housing and lodging choices*** that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors of all physical and economic abilities, that recognize the seasonal, visitor-oriented nature of many businesses, that preserve and enhance the existing supply of housing, and that provide a sustainable and walkable environment in proximity to local businesses, services, and neighborhood centers.
- ***Promote a safe, connected multimodal transportation network that increases travel choices while connecting both sides of Meyers***, reducing traffic speeds through the community, lowering household transportation costs, and encouraging walking and biking to local destinations by residents, workers, and visitors.
- ***Support a vital local economy*** by balancing the needs of commercial and residential areas, building upon the sense of community by business owners, and promoting south shore visitor attractions, many opportunities to access nearby outdoor recreation, and the upper Truckee River.
- ***Promote a high quality of life*** by enhancing public health, education, mountain culture, and job opportunities and the social well-being of Lake Tahoe's communities.

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Next Steps

Once there is agreement on a definition of livability and its components, the next steps are to: 1) develop specific objectives under each principle that would help to tie these principles directly to indicators of progress toward livability, and 2) identify data points based on these objectives to assess baseline livability conditions regionally and in the pilot communities to monitor progress toward achieving livability. Below are examples of data that may be collected. This is not an exhaustive list, nor does it capture all of the specific data points that may be relevant regionally or local. The focus should be on readily available data in the public realm (from TMPO, county health departments, Census Bureau, etc.) so as not to create an undue burden on agency staff responsible for using the data to monitor progress toward achieving sustainability.

The livability baseline assessment will need to specify the procedures and methods by which a policy or program may be judged as to its effectiveness in achieving livability outcomes (targets) based on measures or indicators that derive from the livability principles. The assessment will need to establish the framework for this analysis so that it can be repeated periodically to ensure that indicators are the right ones to measure progress and whether sustainability actions are affecting the indicators. The framework should also identify who will monitor use of the indicators, how local indicators and monitoring can “roll up” to regional indicators and progress, and criteria for using community-specific indicators.

ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY/ RESOURCES

- Water quality (lake / tributaries)
- Forest, stream environments, and other habitat health
- Invasive Plants
- Endangered species

COMMUNITY / SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- Number of and character of community gathering places
- Number of community events and participation
- Number and type of community organizations and institutions

OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Access open space / recreation lands and facilities (Lake, recreation, public places, civic amenities)
- Usage of recreation areas

HOUSING DIVERSITY

- Rental vs ownership
- Full-time vs part-time residents
- Housing cost / affordability

- Housing problems (overcrowding, condition, overpayment)
- Vacancy rates
- Housing stock available for year-round occupancy

Transportation Choices

- Vehicle miles traveled
- Travel mode (vehicle, transit, pedestrian, bicycle)
- Miles of bicycle and pedestrian facilities by type
- Miles of sidewalks tracked against miles of streets
- Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity
- Bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Number of cycling events and participation (i.e. bike valet, slow rollers, education opportunities)
- Increased frequency of transit service between Tahoe, Sacramento, and the Bay Area

Regional / Local Economy

- Jobs by industry sector and type
- Employment / unemployment rate
- Tax base (property, retail sales, other)

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- Percent of residents who work in the Basin
- Commercial vacancy
- Commercial building condition
- Median HH / per capita income
- Educational attainment
- Availability of adult education / skills training
- Seasonality: year-round vs season employment

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Appendix A

Reference Materials Reviewed

1. 1987 TRPA Regional Plan and 2011 Draft Regional Plan Update
2. 2010 Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan
3. 2004 El Dorado County General Plan
4. 1994 Placer County General Plan
5. 1994 Placer County General Plan
6. 2011 Washoe County Master Plan
7. 2011 City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan
8. 1995 Bijou/Al Tahoe Community Plan
9. 1993 Meyers Community Plan
10. 1993 Stateline Community Plan
11. 1994 Stateline/ Ski Run Community Plan
12. 1994 Tahoe City Community Plan
13. 2010 Final Report of Sustainability Measures Lake Tahoe Watershed, Nevada & California
14. 2007 Pathway 2007 Evaluation Report
15. Community workshop minutes:
 - a. North Tahoe East
 - b. North Tahoe West
 - c. Tahoe City
 - d. West Shore
 - e. Meyers Community Identity Workshop
16. Community vision statements:
 - a. North Tahoe East
 - b. North Tahoe West
 - c. Tahoe City
 - d. West Shore
17. Federal livability principles HUD portal at)

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/sustainable_housing_communities/Six_Livability_Principles

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TAHOE BASIN SUSTAINABILITY BARRIERS ASSESSMENT REPORT

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December 2012

Tahoe Basin Sustainability Barriers Assessment Report

Prepared for

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

By

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December 2012

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Introduction

PURPOSE

The Lake Tahoe Basin is a region of local, national, and international importance, known for its unique alpine environment and unparalleled, year-round recreational opportunities. In addition to its role as a vital habitat for wildlife, Tahoe's natural environment helps define the culture of local communities in the Basin and is a key element of the region's economic success, attracting visitors from around the world. As such, ensuring sustainable development practices that protect the natural environment is critical for the continued ecological, social, and economic health of the Tahoe Basin.

While much has been accomplished over the last three decades to protect Tahoe's natural environment and reduce sprawling development through regional regulation, it is acknowledged that further steps are necessary to ensure continued progress. The purpose of this report is to identify the major physical and regulatory barriers to sustainable development and redevelopment that still exist in Tahoe and to assess ways to overcome them.

BACKGROUND

Much of the development that currently exists in the Tahoe Basin, particularly in the region's commercial centers, was constructed in the 1960s and 1970s when Tahoe's population and tourist centers were growing rapidly. As in most regions of the US during that time, land use and development regulations in Tahoe typically favored development patterns that separated commercial and residential use types and produced auto-oriented transportation and site designs. This resulted in sprawling, uncontrolled growth in the region that threatened to permanently damage the Basin's natural resources and beauty.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) 1987 Regional Plan focused on growth control and limiting development practices that degraded the natural and built environment around the Basin. These growth control and environmental best practices have become the accepted rule in the region and important factors in slowing the rate of development in the Basin. However, ecological degradation of Lake Tahoe and its environs has continued, in large part due to non-point source pollution originating from existing town centers. According to TRPA, although Lake Tahoe's clarity has begun to stabilize recently after declining at a rate of over one foot per year since measurements began in 1969, fine sediment and nutrients carried in stormwater runoff from areas around the Basin still pose a significant threat to the Lake environment and need to be reduced. Current development regulations found in local zoning ordinances—many of which have not undergone major revisions in decades—perpetuate the type of development that is most problematic environmentally.

In recognition of ongoing environmental quality challenges in the Tahoe Basin, the TRPA Regional Plan Update (RPU) currently being reviewed focuses on two primary strategies. The first is a shift toward "environmental redevelopment" that replaces older, environmentally degrading developments with more sustainable development or restored landscapes. More specifically, this means providing regulatory incentives and design guidance for existing, older properties to redevelop or retrofit according to established environmental best practices. The second strategy is to provide the regulatory structure for the construction of mixed-use and pedestrian/transit-oriented development (PTOD), which will help reduce the development footprint in the Basin. Policies in both the land use and transportation elements of the RPU specifically prioritize mixed-use development and PTOD. These steps outlined in the RPU are important milestones

toward achieving a more environmentally sustainable future for Tahoe, but challenges remain in implementing this strategy on a regional basis. This report identifies three primary barriers to sustainable development and achieving the “environmental redevelopment” envisioned in the RPU.

APPENDICES

Pilot planning efforts as part of the Tahoe Livable Community Planning (TLC) project include updates to the land use, development, and design regulations in the Tahoe Valley area of South Lake Tahoe, Meyers, and town center districts in Placer County to implement RPU goals of environmental redevelopment. To aid in the development of these regulations, more detailed analysis of barriers to sustainability were completed for the Tahoe Valley area of South Lake Tahoe and Meyers and included in the Tahoe Valley Development and Design Standards Issues and Options Working Paper, May 2012 and Meyers Community Plan District Regulations Diagnostic Report, September 2012, respectively. These reports are included as Appendices to this paper.

Approaches to Regulating the Built Environment

In the United States, jurisdictions have traditionally taken an interest in regulating the built environment for a number of reasons, including the maintenance of stable residential areas and the prevention of health and safety hazards. More recently, other purposes have emerged such as promoting transit-oriented development, maintaining aesthetic values, encouraging infill development, creating walkable communities, and protecting environmental resources. The power to regulate physical development is rooted in the police power that the State grants local governments. The Lake Tahoe Region is unique in this respect because TRPA's regulatory powers originate in the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact, a 1969 agreement between the California and Nevada legislatures to create the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for the protection of Lake Tahoe. The Compact, as amended in 1980, defines the purpose of TRPA: "To enhance governmental efficiency and effectiveness of the Region, it is imperative there be established a Tahoe Regional Planning Agency with the powers conferred by this compact including the power to establish environmental threshold carrying capacities and to adopt and enforce a regional plan and implementing ordinances which will achieve and maintain such capacities while providing opportunities for orderly growth and development consistent with such capacities."

Zoning and subdivision controls are the most common tool that jurisdictions use to implement their plans, visions, and goals. A zoning code translates the policies of a comprehensive land use plan into parcel-specific regulations to implement land use, urban design, open space, and natural resource conservation goals articulated in comprehensive plans. Zoning regulations have traditionally been used to separate incompatible land uses, assign the geographic location of activities, minimize nuisance impacts and environmental harm, and coordinate or time development intensity with supporting public infrastructure. They are also effective in regulating the three-dimensional aspects of development with height, bulk, setback, and architectural design standards. It is important to keep in mind, however, that zoning is a tool that can work only on an incremental basis as individual parcels develop or redevelop.

In sum, zoning regulations deal with two basic concerns:

- How to minimize the adverse effects that buildings or using one's property can have on its neighbors; and
- How to encourage optimal development patterns and activities within a community, as expressed in planning policies.

ROLE AND TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN STANDARDS

Development and design standards play an important role in regulating the built environment because they help shape the physical form of development. Specifically, development and design standards address a wide range of three-dimensional aspects from the height and bulk of structures to site layout, landscaping, and architectural detailing. Standards help establish a cohesive environment that is compatible with a community vision.

Development and design standards are typically tightly integrated into a zoning ordinance alongside land use regulations, although they are also sometimes incorporated into other planning documents such as general plans, community plans, or area plans. The scope and specificity of the standards depends largely upon the type of zoning ordinance in which they are found. Three principal types of zoning ordinances are in use in

the U.S. today: Euclidean, performance-based, and physical form codes. All of these code types regulate the three-dimensional aspects of structures to some degree through development standards; however, physical form-based codes tend to set the most specific requirements for design and address physical elements beyond the private parcel, including the design of streets and public spaces. The pros and cons of these basic types of zoning are summarized in Table 1. In this table, the term “prescriptive” is intended to describe a rule-making process and the degree to which clear and objective standards for land use and development provide certainty to landowners, developers and the public at large.

TABLE 1: COMPARISONS OF TYPES OF ZONING ORDINANCES

	Type of Zoning Ordinances	Pro's and Con's
Euclidean	Most American zoning codes follow some variation of the Euclidean model, named after Euclid, Ohio's zoning code. Euclidean zoning schemes divide jurisdictions into districts or zones, wherein certain types and intensities of uses are allowed. Historically, these districting schemes have been relatively homogeneous, with separate zones for residential, commercial and industrial uses, and have worked to segregate dissimilar uses. More recently, Euclidean codes also have been used to create mixed use zoning districts, although that was not the original intent. Euclidean zoning codes typically specify allowed uses, maximum residential density, and bulk and dimensional standards.	Euclidean codes tend to be largely prescriptive and therefore work best at preventing the most basic problems or nuisances. They are less effective in dealing with fine-grain neighborhood character issues that often arise in places where infill and redevelopment are most common. Within newly developing areas, Euclidean codes need to be linked to land division or subdivision regulations. These latter regulations often play a very important role, supporting zoning, because they provide the statutory basis and standards for decisions on street networks, pedestrian connections, and the location of parks, open spaces, and civic facilities.
Performance-Based	Performance-based codes include objective, quantifiable standards that are applied to uses to reduce impacts, promote land use compatibility, and improve the quality of development. The regulations and review procedures in these codes generally focus on how uses operate. Basic performance standards may include standards that directly limit impacts (e.g., noise standards) as well as standards that control impacts indirectly by constraining intensity of operations (e.g., floor area, residential density).	Performance-based codes are somewhat less prescriptive than form-based codes, at least in terms of design details, and allow for more architectural creativity and context-based solutions. They may be more complicated to administer than conventional zoning or form-based codes, but they can provide more certainty as to use and density/intensity and so may be favored by the development community and neighborhood organizations over codes that prescribe architectural design or rely on discretionary procedures involving public hearings and conditions of approval to ensure land use compatibility.
Physical Form-Based	Form-based codes prescribe the design or type of building, street, or neighborhood subarea, with limited or no restrictions on use. They typically include generic design prototypes for housing and commercial buildings and their relation to the street and to each other. This approach may differentiate neighborhoods, districts, and corridors; provide for a mixture of land uses and housing types within each; and provide specific measures for regulating relationships between buildings and between buildings and outdoor public areas, including streets.	Form-based codes tend to be highly prescriptive and are therefore thought of as very predictable. They are a way to express what is desired rather than what is discouraged or prohibited. These codes address matters outside those traditionally thought of as zoning (e.g., street design, sidewalks, parks, and civic spaces), and so often portrayed as more “holistic” than conventional zoning. They provide a way to bring planning and design considerations into zoning. These codes are effective where strong design guidance is needed and limitations on use and intensity are not critical.

ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT CODES IN THE TAHOE BASIN

The zoning regulations currently found in municipal codes throughout the Tahoe Basin generally follow a hybrid approach of Euclidean and performance-based zoning. Use designations are typically referenced directly from the TRPA's Regional Plan designation system, which separates uses based on type (e.g. recreation, residential, commercial, etc.). Despite a few exceptions, local municipal codes generally do not offer extensive guidance on building form or urban design. The TRPA Regional Plan and Code of Ordinances do establish certain environmental thresholds such as parcel coverage aimed at reducing the human impact on the natural environment, but local ordinances do not specify how these thresholds should be attained in most cases.

In an effort to achieve a more integrated land use pattern in the Tahoe Basin, TRPA has proposed a shift in land use policy for the developed areas of the region in the RPU. The focus has shifted from a Euclidean, separated-use zoning approach to one that supports and promotes mixed-use development in pedestrian- and transit-oriented town centers. More emphasis is placed on physical form and a wider range of uses is allowed. Specifically, the RPU calls for a Transect Zoning System typically associated with physical form-based zoning ordinances. This system creates zones that place greater emphasis on the form and intensity of the built environment than on the uses contained within the zones. The overall goal is to encourage development and redevelopment in existing town centers that is more physically cohesive, less land-intensive, and helps further attainment of environmental thresholds.

The change in approach for land use planning articulated in the RPU is complemented by a proposed regulatory structure where Regional Plan goals, policies, and ordinances are implemented using an integrated system of regional and local government planning. Land Use policies proposed in the RPU allow local jurisdictions to prepare Area Plans which, if found in conformance with the Regional Plan, may supersede existing PASs, Community Plans, and other TRPA regulations. Area Plans are intended to provide local jurisdictions with greater planning and permitting authority so that they can be more responsive to unique, local circumstances and environments. Once an Area Plan (including zoning and development codes within the plan) have been found in conformance with the Regional Plan, the local jurisdiction may assume development review authority by Memoranda of Understanding with TRPA.

By identifying large-scale barriers to RPU's vision for a Tahoe Basin where development has a smaller impact on the natural environment, this report provides concepts and ideas for local jurisdictions to consider in developing Area Plans and building a framework for a more sustainable development code.

Barrier 1: Segregated Land Uses

Land use planning is a critical dimension in any effort to create more sustainable and livable communities. The spatial arrangement of land uses, parcels, buildings, roads, and other infrastructure greatly impacts the amount of resources that are needed to build and sustain a community. As previously discussed, traditional Euclidean zoning, which was the predominant land use model in the US for most of the 20th century, segregates land uses into different zones with the goal of minimizing use incompatibility. While this approach is perhaps the simplest to administer, it often leads to resource-intensive urban sprawl and auto-oriented development. In contrast, communities that adopt a land use approach that allows for the mixing of different but complementary uses (e.g. housing and retail or office) can reduce the amount of land needed for development, design neighborhoods oriented toward pedestrian mobility, and thereby reduce fuel consumption. A mixed-use approach is more sustainable than traditional Euclidean zoning and improves livability of residents by reducing travel times, offering transportation flexibility, and preserving open spaces.

EXISTING SETTING AND REGULATIONS

Historically, land use planning at the regional and local levels in the Tahoe Basin has employed Euclidean zoning techniques to separate uses. This trend is apparent in many town center areas throughout Tahoe, such as Tahoe Valley in South Lake Tahoe, Incline Village in Washoe County, and the Stateline casino district in Douglas County. Here, the development and design standards regulating the size, orientation, and style of development is heavily influenced by adopted land use regulations that cluster commercial-only and tourist-related development in pockets along primary arterials and highways outside the walking shed of most residential neighborhoods. Characterized by large format retail structures and deep, street-fronting parking lots, these areas are typically dominated by strip style development. Where bike lanes and sidewalk access for pedestrians are provided, they are usually inconsistent and uncomfortable, further discouraging non-auto forms of transportation.



Segregated Land Uses

The Euclidean land use approach has traditionally led to commercial developments that are of the single-use, auto-oriented, strip mall format. The amount of land covered by buildings and surface parking is high despite the relatively low intensity of use.



Mixed-Use

A mixed-use approach allows residential and commercial uses to occupy the same building footprint, thereby reducing land consumption, fostering pedestrian orientation, and allowing parking to simultaneously serve both residential and business needs.

As late as the 1990s, land use regulations adopted as part of local community plans and development codes in the Tahoe Basin did not allow mixed-use development; the 1986 TRPA Regional Plan did not even include the term “mixed-use” in any of its goals or policies. During the previous decade, however, regulations governing mixed-use districts have slowly been introduced into planning documents and development codes. For example, TRPA has proposed a land use approach for its RPU based on the form-based transect model that would introduce opportunities for mixed-use projects in town center and tourist areas. At the local level, the City of South Lake Tahoe completed a Draft Community Plan for the Tahoe Valley commercial area in 2006 that called for “a new option for urban living within [South Lake Tahoe], where residential and commercial uses blend into an active living community.” Although the plan has not been adopted, the City’s 2011 General Plan update was adopted with policies specifically designed to promote mixed-use development and redevelopment. Despite this progress toward a mixed-use regulatory structure in the Tahoe Basin, many jurisdictions have not updated their general plans or municipal codes to reflect this new approach, and as a result, there is a patchwork of land use approaches being implemented across the Basin. Additionally, upon the anticipated adoption of the RPU in 2013, the codes in these jurisdictions will not fully implement RPU policies in town center areas that are designated as mixed-use.

RECOMMENDATION

Allow or Require Mixed-Use in Town Centers and Require Active Uses in Key Areas or Corridors

The continuation of Euclidean land use patterns in combination with inconsistent land use regulations within the Tahoe Basin are significant barriers to sustainable development. The mixed-use policies provided in the RPU represent an important first step in overcoming them, but further progress is needed. Specifically, the implementing regulations at the local and regional levels should be updated to allow a greater mix of uses and support pedestrian- and transit-oriented development.

Active uses at the ground floor should be required in core areas. Retail shops, restaurants, offices, galleries, hotels, or residential units with lobbies can feel inviting to passersby. There may be targeted areas along key corridors where ground-floor active uses should also be required. Additionally, automobile-oriented establishments and drive-in and drive-through facilities should be limited.

Notably, “active” use does not mean that all uses must be retail. Jurisdictions can prioritize retail uses and neighborhood centers at key nodes or along specific corridors to avoid the “over-retailing” of mixed-use areas. Uses that generate sufficient densities or employees, residents, customers, or other uses may be appropriate and successful in creating vibrant town centers. For example, housing opportunities provide 24/7 usage, “eyes on the street”, and a market for retail. Uses such as day care centers, banks, and food stores, can both create jobs while allowing transit users and other visitors to park once and link trips. Flex space that can be adapted for restaurant or retail use in the future may also be allowed if, based on current market conditions, it is not initially feasible to locate active-pedestrian-oriented uses on the ground floor.

Recent efforts as part of the Tahoe Livable Community Planning (TLC) project have included proposed updates to the land use, development, and design regulations in town center areas to allow for a mix of uses. Pilot plans are currently underway in South Lake Tahoe, Meyers, and town center districts in Placer County to provide a general framework for implementing a mixed-use approach.

Barrier 2: Lack of Detailed Development and Design Guidance

Development and design standards, which address the overall layout of a project site, the form of buildings, and the spatial relationship between structures, are another important element for supporting environmental sustainability and livability. Standards that address landscaping and site coverage can help communities reach sustainability goals by reducing stormwater runoff. Additionally, standards that address site planning and the building/pedestrian interface can support walkability and the convenience of transit.

Creating the livability, ambiance, and charm that make people feel good about certain places goes beyond architectural beauty. What gives great places that special “feel” are factors such as how buildings align to the street and to other buildings, their distance from the street curb, the size of entryways, the amount of sun and shade that buildings displace, the proximity of street trees, and whether the outdoor spaces between buildings are “left over” or purposefully created.

EXISTING SETTING AND REGULATIONS

The physical form of development is not regulated in an organized or complete fashion in the current regulatory framework. As noted in the discussion of Barrier 1, zoning in the Tahoe Basin has traditionally been defined by a list of uses, as opposed to a coherent concept of how these uses should be physically deployed. This may be appropriate in rural and wilderness areas where development is limited and single-family residential is the most intense form of development. However, in the more developed town areas, which represent the largest opportunities for “environmental redevelopment,” use-based regulations alone may not fully implement the vision of complete communities established in the RPU.

While most municipal codes in the region have over time adopted individual standards to address specific issues on an ad hoc basis, they primarily rely on the land use designations themselves to determine the form of development. The results in the Basin have been mixed. On the one hand, the community of Tahoe City has been successful in attracting development to its town center area that is compact, pedestrian-oriented, and appropriately scaled and designed for the local environment. In contrast, the strip commercial developments located in South Lake Tahoe’s Tahoe Valley district are characterized by oversized building footprints, overabundant parking, deep and inconsistent setbacks, structures oriented away from the street, and an overarching architectural style that does not reflect Tahoe’s unique context. Combined, these factors make Tahoe Valley less pedestrian-friendly and contribute significantly to the area’s stormwater runoff levels and other environmental issues. The conditions found in Tahoe Valley are common in many commercial town centers in the Tahoe Basin.

Current regulations do address some dimensional requirements such as building heights and land coverage. Generally, these requirements are too simplistic—a one-size-fits-all approach. They also work in unnatural ways to separate buildings and create inefficient spaces, especially in core areas of the Region’s communities. Their focus on negative space precludes the accomplishment of built form objectives, which require a contextual approach to promote high quality development. Noted in its absence is a district-by-district set of requirements that reflect the typology of development and the character of various areas in the Region. Community Plan areas do address character and form-giving elements. However, this is typically done through design guidelines and policy statements, leaving large areas open for interpretation and negotiation.

The RPU calls for town center areas to incorporate designs with well-connected pedestrian, bike, and transit facilities that encourage non-automobile movement into existing and proposed development. The extent to which individual jurisdictions in the Tahoe Basin have adopted development and design standards in their county or municipal codes varies. In some Community Plan areas, additional standards and design guidelines (the latter of which are advisory only) may also be applicable. In general, however, the specificity of existing standards tends to be low, and in some cases, standards are incompatible with pedestrian-oriented and sustainable development patterns. For example, Table 2 includes a selected set of key commercial standards from the South Lake Tahoe municipal code that relate to site design and impact the pedestrian realm. The third column in the table describes issues within the current standard and identifies sample solutions to improve its effect on sustainability and livability. While the code in every Tahoe jurisdiction is somewhat different, many of the issues regarding sustainability and livability present in South Lake Tahoe's current code can be found elsewhere as well.



Generic, Auto-Oriented Development

Auto-oriented commercial developments are often designed without considering regional and local context or non-motorized access. Dominated by surface parking, this development recedes from the street and does not relate to Tahoe's architectural heritage.



Context-Specific, Pedestrian-Friendly Development

In pedestrian-oriented developments, local conditions typically require a site-specific approach that considers local needs and styles. The design of this development supports an active street environment and a distinct sense of place.

TABLE 2: SOUTH LAKE TAHOE MUNICIPAL CODE COMMERCIAL SITE DESIGN STANDARDS (SELECTED)		
Standard	Requirements	Existing Conditions and Possible Standards to Improve Sustainability/Livability
Front Setback	20 feet	In order to accommodate parking at the front of the parcel, most buildings are constructed with setbacks much deeper than 20 ft. Establishing a maximum setback in addition to a minimum would encourage parking to the back or side of the parcel and create a more pedestrian-friendly sidewalk.
Building Orientation	None	The front facades of many buildings are oriented toward the side or back of the parcel instead of toward the street. Requiring main entrances along the street improves pedestrian access and local character.
Pedestrian Circulation	A pedestrian circulation system shall be incorporated into the site plan to assure that pedestrians can move safely and easily both on the site and between properties and activities within the neighborhood year round.	An obvious pedestrian circulation route is rarely present in most development. Supplementing this requirement with specific standards for pedestrian paths (e.g. width, origin and destination, materials, etc.) would provide property owners with guidance for meeting the spirit of the standard.
Landscaping		
Highway 50	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turf edge required between curb line and sidewalk• Parcel setbacks must contain randomly spaced evergreen trees, one tree per 35 feet of highway frontage	Landscaping is minimal or non-existent on many commercial properties. Large areas of paved surface without proper drainage are common. Requiring more specific standards for the location, variety, and amount of vegetation and requiring stormwater retention areas would reduce the impact of development on the environment and improve the pedestrian environment by establishing a more inviting community character.
Setbacks	Plantings required from TRPA recommended native and adapted species	
Surface Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Landscaped perimeter required equal to required yard setback containing one tree for every four parking spaces. Perimeters facing a street, recreation area, or lake, must provide 3-foot screen.• Landscaped islands encouraged	
Off-Street Surface Parking		
Location on Parcel	Parking not permitted in required yards adjacent to a public street	Even where required yards are present, surface parking dominates the street frontage on most parcels. Requiring a minimum setback between surface parking and the sidewalk (e.g. 40 ft.) would help improve the pedestrian environment.
Driveway Location	“Clear zone” requirements influence driveway location but provide significant discretion	The number and size of curb cuts is excessive throughout the area. Establishing more precise requirements would reduce the number of curb cuts and thus conflicts between pedestrians and autos.
Shared Facilities	Permitted if: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses have different peak periods• Parking demand will not overlap• Facility will meet peak demand• Property owners sign reciprocal agreements approved by City	Few, if any, developments share parking facilities with neighboring developments. Establishing minimum requirements beyond which new development must study and implement the use of shared parking facilities would help reduce overall parcel coverage in the area.

RECOMMENDATION

Establish Development and Design Standards to Promote Pedestrian- and Transit-Oriented Development

The lack of comprehensive development and design standards in jurisdictions throughout the Tahoe Basin is a barrier to sustainable development and environmental redevelopment. In concert with land use regulations, development and design standards provide the district- and site-specific guidance needed to develop the mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented communities envisioned in regional and local planning documents. Development and design standards should provide guidance on a number of form- and design-related issues and generally promote a desirable physical form.

Building Site: Standards should provide guidance regarding where buildings are located on a site by identifying instances where a building may or must be built to the street (e.g. in Town Centers) and where setbacks are required (e.g. in transition areas). Caution should be taken to ensure standards respond to site characteristics and do not force poor environmental design.

Parking Location: Standards should address the design and location of parking and accessways, as these factors directly affect the quality and character of the street and pedestrian environment. Typically, parking should be located behind or to the side of buildings and accessed from side streets. As with standards addressing building site, caution should be taken to ensure standards respond to site characteristics and do not force poor environmental design.

Height: Height standards should support desired development patterns while respecting view corridors and addressing apparent massing. In certain areas, a minimum height along corridors in core areas may be appropriate to create a continuous street wall and support pedestrian-oriented development. Additionally, limitations on the height of any building face may be incorporated to address building design and transition to lower density districts. For example, appropriate setbacks on upper floors and buffers can help ensure that higher density development can filter into lower density zones without disrupting neighborhood character.



Consistency in the street wall—with buildings at the street and coherent first floor heights—creates a harmonious appearance that is comfortable and interesting for pedestrians.

Building Orientation: Buildings should be oriented to face public streets. Frontages should be generally parallel to streets, and the primary building entrance should be located on a public street.

Facades: Standards should provide minimum façade requirements for the overall look of buildings as seen by the public. Façade control should address four-sided architecture, articulation, fenestration, maximum building length, building entrances, and the location of parking/garages.



Buildings with articulation, that are stepped on upper floors, and that have a complementary level of design on all sides, such as the building on the left, create a more pleasant and engaging experience for pedestrians than flat, blank walls, such as the building on the right.

Screening: To ensure a more pleasant pedestrian experience, service facilities such as trash enclosures and mechanical equipment should be located out of the pedestrian path and screened with enclosures and devices consistent with the building architecture in form, material, and detail. The design should be sure to maintain accessibility for maintenance and trash collection.

Landscaping and Defensible Space: Standards should address the type, amount, and location of landscaping and how it would complement the natural and built environment. Much of the Tahoe Basin is considered an extreme fire hazard environment, necessitating the use of “defensible space” techniques to reduce the wildfire threat to homes. Standards should address the integration of defensible space concepts into landscape design.

Pedestrian Connections: On-site access and circulation standards can be set to require a system of pedestrian walkways that connect all buildings on a site to each other, to on-site parking areas, and to open space or pedestrian amenities. Regular connections should be provided to the public sidewalk as well as to adjoining commercial and residential areas. Additionally, requirements for mid-block connections and other direct pedestrian routes can improve access while also breaking up large parcels. These types of pedestrian connections can increase the walking options for pedestrians, transform auto-oriented areas, and even provide greater connectivity throughout larger areas.

As noted under Barrier 1, pilot plan efforts under the TLC program have begun the process of updating the standards in certain communities around the Basin to conform with a mixed-use, sustainable development approach. These standards address the aspects of the built environment described above as well as lighting and light pollution, massing and articulation, architectural style, and bike access.

Barrier 3: Prohibitive Permitting Process and Regulations

Regulation and oversight play an important role in protecting and enhancing environmental resources. In the Tahoe Basin, TRPA plays an important role in adopting and enforcing environmental quality standards for the protection of the region's unique ecological environment. In this role, the Agency shares regulatory power over land use and development with municipal and local governments. While this system of layered oversight ensures that both regional and local priorities are considered, such a hierarchy can be difficult to navigate according to property owners and residents interviewed during stakeholder meetings. Additionally, the complexity of some environmental regulations and the cost of implementing them can make development and redevelopment prohibitive. As a consequence, the redevelopment of properties that do not meet current best practices for sustainability and livability may be postponed, thereby perpetuating the environmental issues that have contributed to reduced lake visibility and other problems.

ISSUES

In the winter and spring of 2012, five meetings were held with 22 stakeholders in South Lake Tahoe and Meyers to discuss the opportunities and challenges of development in the Tahoe Basin. Stakeholders ranged from small business owners and homeowners to real estate professionals and topics such as land use regulations, development and design standards, and regulatory structures were discussed. In discussions of the Basin's regulatory organization and TRPA's environmental regulations, two salient themes emerged.

First, it was generally agreed that the overlapping responsibilities of TRPA and local jurisdictions is inefficient and confusing for residents and agency officials alike. Currently, TRPA and local jurisdictions share permitting authority, requiring project applicants to obtain permits from both agencies before commencing construction. In addition, numerous stakeholders reported receiving conflicting information from one agency to the next regarding application requirements and inconsistent enforcement of code standards.

The Regional Plan addresses this issue by providing a regulatory structure where Regional Plan goals, policies, and ordinances are implemented using an integrated system of regional and local government planning. Local jurisdictions may prepare Area Plans which, if found in conformance with the Regional Plan, may supersede existing TRPA regulations. Once an Area Plan and the zoning and development codes within the plan have been found in conformance with the Regional Plan, the local jurisdiction may assume development review authority of a certain class of project by Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with TRPA. The MOU will specify what activities described in the plan are exempt from TRPA review and describes procedures to ensure effective implementation. Each Area Plan should include administrative provisions detailing development review procedures and identifying the applicable review authority.

Second, stakeholders reported that regulations addressing area-wide performance applied on a property-by-property basis make redevelopment and reinvestment in properties prohibitively expensive, and as a result, projects are sometimes scaled back or shelved. These regulations include coverage limitations, commercial floor area allocations, and best management practices (BMPs). For example, one stakeholder interviewed in South Lake Tahoe who built a new structure for his business reported that approximately 25 percent of the total cost was spent on the purchase of new commercial floor area (CFA) allocations and a consultant to assist in calculating the CFA necessary for the structure. While he was able to proceed with his project, he considered this added cost to be overly burdensome.

The design and installation of infrastructure to implement environmental BMPs (e.g. bioswales, infiltration trenches and basins, channel trains, sediment traps, etc.) can also be financially challenging for property owners. In 2001, TRPA set deadlines for the implementation of BMPs throughout the Basin, but the final deadline expired in 2008 with a large number of properties still out of compliance. According to TRPA, as of December 2009, 12,397 properties had implemented BMPs with another 31,000 (71 percent) remaining. BMPs are a requirement of approval for new construction, but property owners who have no redevelopment plans for existing properties have little incentive to implement them. Feedback from stakeholders suggests that BMP requirements may actually be a disincentive for property owners to propose redevelopment due to the added cost.

BMPs implemented on a parcel-by-parcel basis are much less effective than when BMPs are implemented through a coordinated regional or sub-regional approach. BMPs are most effective when applied on at least a neighborhood scale since properties where they are not implemented will greatly undermine any water pollution reduction gained from properties where they are implemented.

Programs such as these are better addressed on an area-wide programmatic basis rather than through development standards that apply on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Zoning is a tool that can work only on an incremental basis as individual parcels develop or redevelop, not on a larger-scale programmatic basis. For example, communities such as Tahoe City and Kings Beach have successfully implemented community-wide streetscape improvements along their main streets, which would have taken years, and possibly decades, if improvements occurred only as a result of redevelopment. Ultimately every property owner must do her part to contribute to a sustainable environment, but greater coordination at the sub-regional scale could lead to more efficient and effective results.

REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE

The RPU and Code of Ordinances have identified new incentives to encourage environmental redevelopment in the region's urban centers. For example, proposed changes to the Transfer of Development Rights program would grant development bonuses to property owners who tear down existing homes in environmentally sensitive areas and transfer development rights to a town center area. Similarly, property owners who reduce excess coverage in town centers, regional centers, or high density tourist districts would be eligible under newly proposed regulations to earn multi-residential bonus units, tourist accommodation bonus units, and/or CFA. The RPU continues to require implementation of BMPs for all property owners, but it also includes additional incentives. A number of changes relate to modifications in land use coverage regulations that allow for greater flexibility in BMP implementation as long as BMPs are certified for the property.

The intent of these proposed changes in the RPU and Code of Ordinances is to help reduce the costs of environmental regulations on individual property owners by allowing some intensification of development in established urban centers and by allowing flexibility in meeting environmental standards. In addition, the preparation and adoption of Area Plans will allow local jurisdictions to propose comprehensive programs and funding mechanisms for land coverage, development rights, and water quality treatments that address these development issues on an area-wide basis rather than parcel-by-parcel. Like Area Plans, the comprehensive programs must meet certain thresholds for attaining regional goals, but will allow local communities to decide on and coordinate sub-regional approaches tailored to their specific needs.

RECOMMENDATION

Continue Support and Provide Assistance for the Development of Area-Wide Programs

The RPU and accompanying Code of Ordinances provide a framework and allowances for the development of programs to address sustainable redevelopment issues on an area-wide basis that can make development in the Tahoe Basin more efficient and affordable. Through the adoption of conforming Area Plans, local jurisdictions can play a key role in this task and seize the opportunity offered in the RPU to utilize environmental redevelopment incentives.

The TRPA has taken an active role in supporting the development of conforming Area Plans. The TRPA should continue to provide assistance for the drafting of Area Plans and area-wide incentive programs. Given TRPA's expertise in environmental stewardship, its staff is in a unique position to ensure that local planning efforts are consistent with RPU environmental standards and goals.

Taboe Regional Planning Agency

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Appendix A: Tahoe Valley Development & Design Standards, Issues & Options Working Paper

Taboe Regional Planning Agency

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Tahoe Valley Development & Design Standards

Issues & Options Working Paper

Prepared for

The City of South Lake Tahoe

By

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Urban and Regional Planners

May 2012

Introduction

PURPOSE

The Tahoe Valley area of South Lake Tahoe is an important commercial center for the local community and the region. As a center of planned growth, Tahoe Valley has been the focus of a number of local and regional planning efforts, not least of which is the draft Tahoe Valley Community Plan, which sets forth a detailed vision for the physical development of the area. The purpose of this Issues and Options Working Paper is to distill the basic choices and present the “big ideas” for consideration when preparing development and design standards that translate the community’s vision for this area into the built environment.

This Issues and Options Working Paper is the culmination of the first stage of the effort to craft development and design standards for the Tahoe Valley area, which consisted of a background review of current regulatory context, interviews with stakeholders, and a site tour of the Tahoe Valley area. This paper will serve as the starting point for drafting a set of development and design standards to present to the City and residents for review.

BACKGROUND

Currently, local jurisdictions and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) have regulatory authority over physical development in the Tahoe Basin. The TRPA Code of Ordinances, local Municipal Codes, Planning Area Statements (PASs) and Community Plans establish zoning parameters. PASs regulate use and density but do not describe a coherent concept for how development should be physically deployed. Community Plans, on the other hand, are tailored to individual commercial, tourist, and public services areas (although they can also include residential uses), contain more form-related regulations, and are developed by local jurisdictions.

Through the Regional Plan Update, the TRPA is pursuing a regulatory structure where Regional Plan goals, policies, and ordinances are implemented using an integrated system of regional and local government planning. Land Use policies proposed in the Regional Plan Update allow local jurisdictions to prepare Area Plans which, if found in conformance with the Regional Plan, may supersede existing PASs, Community Plans, and other TRPA regulations. Area Plans are intended to provide local jurisdictions with greater planning and permitting authority so that they can be more responsive to unique, local circumstances and environments. Once an Area Plan (including zoning and development codes within the plan) have been found in conformance with the Regional Plan, the local jurisdiction may assume development review authority by Memoranda of Understanding with TRPA.

Approximately eight years ago, the City of South Lake Tahoe began the process of developing a Community Plan for PAS 110, better known as Tahoe Valley. This effort culminated in the Draft Tahoe Valley Community Team Plan in 2006. The plan, which was not adopted, contained a vision for and detailed policies to create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and well-connected business and community center that fosters high quality design and acts as a welcoming gateway to South Lake Tahoe. In 2007, the City hired a consultant, Mintier & Associates, to complete the Tahoe Valley Community Plan. The resulting draft plan fully integrates the vision and policies of the Community Team Plan while also ensuring consistency with the City’s General Plan and the TRPA Regional Plan. The current effort to draft Development and Design Standards is intended to provide the physical development standards to implement the TVCP’s vision, goals, and policies,

implement the goals and policies of the recently adopted General Plan and the Regional Plan Update, and enable the TVCP to be found as a conforming Area Plan by TRPA Governing Board.

ISSUES ADDRESSED

The City of South Lake Tahoe's existing regulatory framework may be interfering with the City's ability to achieve its vision and implement policies for the Tahoe Valley area and get the type and quality of development it wants. Based on background research and staff and stakeholder interviews, the following themes provide a framework for this Issues and Options Working Paper. Running through all of the themes is the idea of ensuring consistency between the community, municipal, and regional planning efforts.

- Reflecting the area's role as a regional and community center as well as an important gateway to South Lake Tahoe;
- Raising the level of design to enhance the area's character and to promote efficient development;
- Connecting people and places by supporting transit- and pedestrian-oriented development; and
- Making regulatory tools that are easy to understand and use.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations proposed for consideration in this paper are grouped into three topical areas summarized below. These recommendations do not all carry the same weight—some are more important and will have more far-reaching effects than others. These distinctions are discussed in the body of the paper.

Recommendation 1: Establish Tahoe Valley as a Gateway and Community Activity Center

- 1-A Adopt District Designations to Enhance Character and Implement Plan Visions
- 1-B Provide Public Plazas to Accommodate Community Gatherings
- 1-C Require Direct Pedestrian Connections

Recommendation 2: Design for Pedestrian- and Transit-Oriented

- 2-A Establish Site Design Standards to Encourage a Pedestrian-Friendly Environment
- 2-B Establish Building Form Standards to Encourage a Strong Sense of Place
- 2-C Design Parking to Support Pedestrian- and Transit-Oriented

Recommendation 3: Make Development Standards Easy to Understand and Use

- 3-A Develop a New Format and Organization
- 3-B Simplify, Refine, or Eliminate Unnecessary Regulations
- 3-C Use Graphics to Reduce Wordiness
- 3-D Tabulate and Cross-Reference Standards

Approaches to Regulating the Built Environment

In the United States, jurisdictions have traditionally taken an interest in regulating the built environment for a number of reasons, including the maintenance of stable residential areas and the prevention of health and safety hazards. More recently, other purposes have emerged such as promoting transit-oriented development, maintaining aesthetic values, encouraging infill development, and creating walkable communities. The power to regulate physical development is rooted in the police power that the State grants local governments. The Lake Tahoe Region is unique in this respect because TRPA's regulatory powers originate in the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact, a 1969 agreement between the California and Nevada legislatures to create the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for the protection of Lake Tahoe. The Compact, as amended in 1980, defines the purpose of TRPA: "To enhance governmental efficiency and effectiveness of the Region, it is imperative there be established a Tahoe Regional Planning Agency with the powers conferred by this compact including the power to establish environmental threshold carrying capacities and to adopt and enforce a regional plan and implementing ordinances which will achieve and maintain such capacities while providing opportunities for orderly growth and development consistent with such capacities."

In order to assert their police powers, jurisdictions adopt zoning codes, which are intended to implement jurisdictional plans, visions, and goals. A zoning code, as contained in the City of South Lake Tahoe Municipal Code, translates the policies of a comprehensive land use plan into parcel-specific regulations. As such, zoning should be used to implement broad environmental goals such as land use, urban design, and open space plans, rather than to serve in itself as the primary planning tool to resolve more specific issues such as local traffic circulation, sensitive habitat protection, or the creation of traditional neighborhoods.

Zoning is a way to make explicit an agency's policies for development and urban design, to ensure fairness (so all lots in a given zone may be developed to similar intensities and are subject to similar restrictions and public contributions), and to avoid abuses of discretion. Zoning regulations have traditionally been used to separate incompatible land uses, assign the geographic location of activities, minimize nuisance impacts and environmental harm, and coordinate or time development intensity with supporting public infrastructure. They are also effective in regulating the three-dimensional aspects of development with height, bulk, setback, and architectural design standards.

In recent decades, zoning has been called on to address an increasingly diverse variety of public policy goals related to environmental protection, economic development, neighborhood revitalization, aesthetics, public safety, and transportation mode choice. Jurisdictions have also used zoning to address market issues (e.g., controls on "big box" or large-format retail stores and franchise food operations). Zoning is less effective in realizing these types of public policy goals than it is in addressing physical form and uses of land. Another limitation of zoning is that it can work only on an incremental basis, as individual parcels develop or redevelop.

In sum, zoning regulations deal with two basic concerns:

- How to minimize the adverse effects that buildings or using one's property can have on its neighbors; and
- How to encourage optimal development patterns and activities within a community, as expressed in planning policies.

ROLE AND TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN STANDARDS

Development and design standards play an important role in regulating the built environment because they help shape the physical form of development. Specifically, development and design standards address a wide range of three-dimensional aspects from the height and bulk of structures to site layout, landscaping, and architectural detailing. Standards help establish a cohesive environment that is compatible with a community vision.

Development and design standards are typically tightly integrated into a City's zoning ordinance alongside land use regulations, although they are also sometimes incorporated into other planning documents such as general plans or community plans. The scope and specificity of the standards depends largely upon the type of zoning ordinance in which they are found. Three principal types of zoning ordinances are in use in the U.S. today: Euclidean, performance-based, and physical form codes. All of these code types regulate the three-dimensional aspects of structures to some degree through development standards; however, physical form-based codes tend to set the most specific requirements for design and address physical elements beyond the private parcel, including the design of streets and public spaces. The pros and cons of these basic types of zoning are summarized in the table on the next page. In this table, the term "prescriptive" is intended to describe a rule-making process and the degree to which clear and objective standards for land use and development provide certainty to landowners, developers and the public at large.

COMPARISONS OF TYPES OF ZONING ORDINANCES

	Type of Zoning Ordinances	Pro's and Con's
Euclidean	Most American zoning codes follow some variation of the Euclidean model, named after Euclid, Ohio's zoning code. Euclidean zoning schemes divide jurisdictions into districts or zones, wherein certain types and intensities of uses are allowed. Historically, these districting schemes have been relatively homogeneous, with separate zones for residential, commercial and industrial uses, and have worked to segregate dissimilar uses. More recently, Euclidean codes also have been used to create mixed use zoning districts, although that was not the original intent. Euclidean zoning codes typically specify allowed uses, maximum residential density, and bulk and dimensional standards.	Euclidean codes tend to be largely prescriptive and therefore work best at preventing the most basic problems or nuisances. They are less effective in dealing with fine-grain neighborhood character issues that often arise in places where infill and redevelopment are most common. Within newly developing areas, Euclidean codes need to be linked to land division or subdivision regulations. These latter regulations often play a very important role, supporting zoning, because they provide the statutory basis and standards for decisions on street networks, pedestrian connections, and the location of parks, open spaces, and civic facilities.
Performance-Based	Performance-based codes include objective, quantifiable standards that are applied to uses to reduce impacts, promote land use compatibility, and improve the quality of development. The regulations and review procedures in these codes generally focus on how uses operate. Basic performance standards may include standards that directly limit impacts (e.g., noise standards) as well as standards that control impacts indirectly by constraining intensity of operations (e.g., floor area, residential density).	Performance-based codes are somewhat less prescriptive than form-based codes, at least in terms of design details, and allow for more architectural creativity and context-based solutions. They may be more complicated to administer than conventional zoning or form-based codes, but they can provide more certainty as to use and density/intensity and so may be favored by the development community and neighborhood organizations over codes that prescribe architectural design or rely on discretionary procedures involving public hearings and conditions of approval to ensure land use compatibility.
Physical Form-Based	Form-based codes prescribe the design or type of building, street, or neighborhood subarea, with limited or no restrictions on use. They typically include generic design prototypes for housing and commercial buildings and their relation to the street and to each other. This approach may differentiate neighborhoods, districts, and corridors; provide for a mixture of land uses and housing types within each; and provide specific measures for regulating relationships between buildings and between buildings and outdoor public areas, including streets.	Form-based codes tend to be highly prescriptive and are therefore thought of as very predictable. They are a way to express what is desired rather than what is discouraged or prohibited. These codes address matters outside those traditionally thought of as zoning (e.g., street design, sidewalks, parks, and civic spaces), and so often portrayed as more "holistic" than conventional zoning. They provide a way to bring planning and design considerations into zoning. These codes are effective where strong design guidance is needed and limitations on use and intensity are not critical.

WHAT TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS DOES SOUTH LAKE TAHOE HAVE?

The zoning regulations currently found in Chapters 5 and 32 of the City of South Lake Tahoe's Municipal Code follow a hybrid approach of Euclidean and performance-based zoning. Use designations are referenced directly from the TRPA's Regional Plan designation system, which largely separates uses based on type (recreation, residential, commercial, etc.). With some exceptions, the Municipal Code offers little guidance on building form or urban design.

Through its General Plan Update, the City has indicated its intention to shift from a traditional zoning approach to one based to a greater extent on physical form. Specifically, the General Plan calls for a Transect Zoning System, which is typically associated with physical form-based zoning ordinances. This system is intended to replace Euclidean, separated-use zoning by creating zones that place greater emphasis on the form and intensity of the built environment than on the uses contained within the zones. The overall goal is

to encourage an environment that is more physically cohesive and identifiable. Despite their emphasis on form, South Lake Tahoe's eight transect zones also have land use requirements ranging from conservation uses (least intense) to tourist center uses (most intense).

The change in approach articulated in the General Plan Update must now be implemented through the City's zoning regulations. Incorporating form-based coding techniques and standards into South Lake Tahoe's regulatory framework will help implement important city and regional goals such as pedestrian- and transit-oriented development and more mixed-use development by adding standards and review criteria that address the details most important in establishing these development patterns. As one of the City's first major zoning revisions subsequent to the General Plan Update, the crafting of design and development standards for Tahoe Valley provides a good opportunity to begin shaping the City's zoning regulations in a new direction.

PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Selecting the right development and design standards for the Tahoe Valley is essential to ensure new development is both high quality and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood character and that the standards are reasonable, understandable and predictable for applicants, City officials and staff, and the community at large. Carefully considered standards are especially important in infill areas, such as Tahoe Valley, where the fit between new development and existing uses is a consideration, along with what the new uses are and what the new buildings look like.

Development design standards must also be crafted to implement the vision embodied in the goals and policies of the City's General Plan, the TVCP, and the Regional Plan. There is also a need to ensure standards are appropriate for the diversity of character within the area and specific standards are essential to implement policies for identified areas such as the core area at the "Y" and the neighborhood area near the hospital.

Recommendation 1: Establish Tahoe Valley as a Gateway and Community Activity Center

Regional and local planning efforts have already identified the importance of Tahoe Valley as a gateway to the region and a center of community activity. Its location at the intersection of two major roadways and its existing commercial uses offer Tahoe Valley unique opportunities to enhance this role and to become a vibrant mixed-use district. Development and design standards will help accomplish this goal by giving shape to the physical environment.

Developing a characteristic “look and feel” in the built environment can play an important role in fostering a sense of place and enhancing a community’s identity. At the district level, standards should help establish a visual identity that enhances Tahoe Valley’s role as a gateway and unique district within the City, but at the same time ensure a seamless transition to other districts. The standards should also recognize existing distinctions in built form at the sub-district level that contribute to the mixed-use nature of the area and provide visual interest and variety. The City may consider codifying these sub-district distinctions in the development and design standards in order to preserve and enhance their presence in the community. In order to improve Tahoe Valley’s role as a community activity center, additional standards may be introduced to foster the creation of new public gathering spaces and the improvement of pedestrian circulation.

EXISTING SETTING

Tahoe Valley is a 335-acre area that is substantially influenced by two large arterial streets that carry significant regional traffic through its core—Highway 50 and State Route 89 (SR-89). It was developed primarily in the 1950’s as a commercial corridor for highway travelers, and as such, is largely characterized along its arterials by strip commercial development, large format retail, and parking lots. The buildings here tend to be unarticulated, spread far apart, and set back large distances from the street to provide for parking at the front of the parcel. As is typical of auto-oriented development patterns, pedestrian and bicycle amenities in Tahoe Valley are few, with inconsistent sidewalk access, an excessive number of curb cuts and long blocks. Additionally, access between adjacent parcels is often difficult or non-existent, which further contributes to the area’s auto-oriented nature. Public gathering spaces in the area, such as the post office or grocery store, are informal and not suitable for special events. Overall, Tahoe Valley’s main commercial development along Highway 50 and SR-89 lacks a strong sense of unique identity or connectedness.

Commercial uses dominate throughout the area, but within the Tahoe Valley area, there are distinct differences in size and intensity. At the “Y” intersection of Highway 50 and SR-89, large parcels accommodate two large strip commercial developments and two large-format retail buildings, which contain national retailers and a Raley’s supermarket as tenants. Further along the arterials as one travels away from the “Y,” small-scale commercial developments dominate, which are home to a larger number of local businesses.

At least two other areas with distinct physical attributes exist in Tahoe Valley. The first is the neighborhood surrounding 3rd and 4th Streets directly southeast of Highway 50, which includes a number of single-family, multi-family, and mobile home uses. Barton Memorial Hospital and a number of small medical offices are also located here. Overall this area is characterized by relatively narrow, quiet streets, varied building setbacks, wandering sidewalks, and a well-distributed canopy of pine trees. The second distinct area is just north of the “Y” intersection and runs along James Ave. and Eloise Ave. Here there is a variety of uses including single- and multi-family residential, commercial, public service (including a solid waste transfer and recycling facility),

and light industrial. As a result of the wide range of use types, some land use incompatibilities exist in this area. The urban form is characterized by relatively narrow streets, varying building setbacks, inconsistent sidewalk access, and the presence of several large fenced lots that are used for outdoor storage by commercial and industrial businesses.



Pedestrian access between parcels is limited or obstructed. Parking is prioritized over comfortable public spaces.

LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

Current zoning, the Regional Plan, and the General Plan broadly classify the Tahoe Valley Area. The Tahoe Valley area is currently within the Commercial/Public Service Land Use Classification. In the Regional Plan Update, this area is proposed to be classified as Mixed-Use with the majority of the area within the Town Center District.

The General Plan classifies the Tahoe Valley as within the Town Center Land Use Category. The Town Center designation provides for a mixture of uses including tourist accommodation, commercial, intensive recreation, high-density residential and mixed use residential. Neighborhood feature designations in the General Plan for the Tahoe Valley Area include Economic and/or Tourist Center, Mixed-Use Development, and Neighborhood Gathering Place.

The TVCP identifies a number of subareas within the Tahoe Valley with unique characteristics. Specifically, the TVCP establishes four districts and three sub-districts/overlays within Tahoe Valley, described below (See Figure 1):

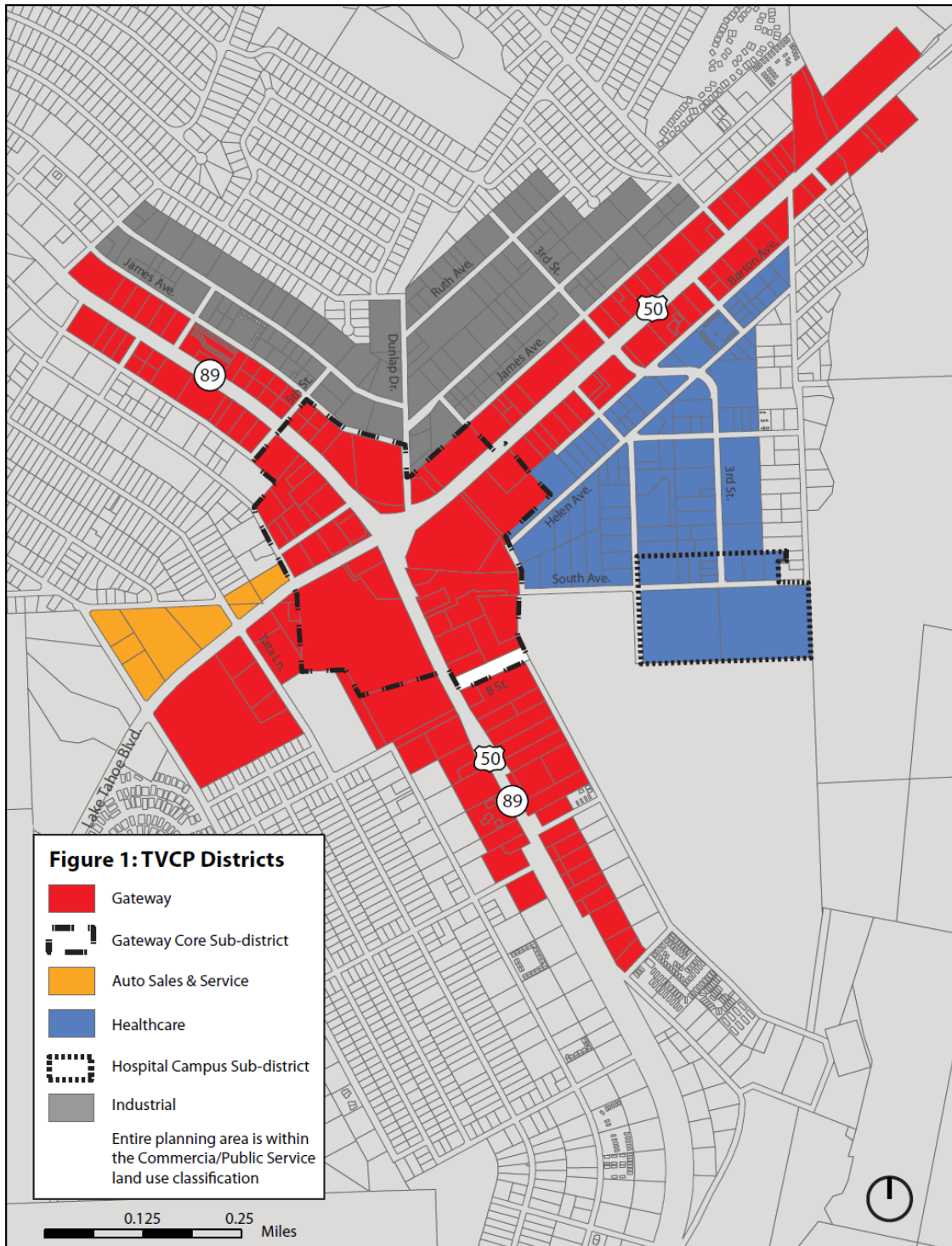
Districts

1. **Gateway District** – Includes the properties around the “Y” intersection and virtually all parcels fronting Highway 50, SR-89, and Lake Tahoe Boulevard east of the “Y.” This district is intended as a fine-grained mixed-use area that is organized in a compact development pattern and provides an aesthetically-pleasing environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. It will also feature well-landscaped public spaces and cultural and entertainment facilities.

2. *Auto Sales and Service District* – Includes the properties at the western edge of the planning area fronting the north side of Lake Tahoe Boulevard. This district is intended as the primary area for auto sales and service in South Lake Tahoe.
3. *Healthcare District* – Includes the properties on the eastern side of the planning area surrounding 3rd and 4th Streets and directly southeast of Highway 50. This district is intended as a mixed-use residential area that is anchored by Barton Hospital and medical offices.
4. *Industrial District* – Includes the properties just north of the “Y” intersection running along James Ave. and Eloise Ave. The TVCP calls for this district to support the industrial needs of South Lake Tahoe and for existing housing to be phased out over time.

Sub-districts/Overlay Zones

1. *Gateway Core Sub-district* – Includes the properties directly surrounding the “Y.” This sub-district is intended as the “heart” of Tahoe Valley and should be a place for intensive retail activity serving residents and tourists as well as an area of public gathering.
2. *Commercial Activity Center Overlay Zone* – This sub-district is intended as a “floating zone” that would facilitate the development of a “catalytic project” by creating a new mixed-use retail commercial center to house local, regional, and national businesses of all sizes.
3. *Hospital Campus Sub-district* – Includes the area within the immediate vicinity of Barton Hospital. This sub-district should remain the core area for healthcare providers and related services.



Chapters 5 and 32 of the South Lake Tahoe Municipal Code establish local land use and development standards that apply citywide and those that apply to property within the Commercial/Public Service Land Use Classification. These standards give guidance on large scale urban design issues by establishing minimum lot sizes and dimensions. Additionally, the Code requires incorporation of a pedestrian circulation system into site plans, but does not provide guidance on specific design requirements. The Code does not establish standards for public open space other than in areas that are already subject to Community Plans (e.g., Bijou/Al Tahoe and Stateline). Although Chapter 32 contains specific standards for PAS areas that vary somewhat from citywide standards, it does not establish unique sub-district standards to account for potential variation of the built environment within PASs.

PLAN CONTEXT

The primary planning efforts related to Tahoe Valley—the Regional Plan Update, the South Lake Tahoe General Plan, and the TVCP—all set forth a consistent vision for the area. Namely, they describe Tahoe Valley as a walkable, mixed-use commercial area that serves as a welcoming gateway to the region and to South Lake Tahoe.

Regional Plan Update

One of the overarching goals of the TRPA Regional Plan Update (RPU) is to improve the quality of development in the Tahoe Basin. In particular, TRPA seeks to encourage the rehabilitation of existing buildings and the construction of new development in existing “Town Center” areas, which fall under the “mixed-use” or “tourist” land use categories, and to direct development away from more environmentally sensitive areas. In the RPU’s Conceptual Land Use Diagram¹, the Tahoe Valley planning area is classified as mixed-use with a “Town Center District” overlay. A number of policies in the RPU Draft Land Use Element² specifically address the goal of improving the quality of Town Center Districts such as Tahoe Valley:

LU-1.2: Redeveloping existing town centers is a high priority.

LU-2.15: Rehabilitation, reconstruction, and upgrading of the existing inventory of structures, or other forms of coverage in the Tahoe region, are high priorities of the regional plan.

LU-3.4: Development is preferred in and directed towards town centers, regional centers and the high density tourist district, as identified on the regional land use map. Town centers, regional centers and the high density tourist district shall have the following characteristics:

- A concentration of non-residential and mixed-use development at a higher intensity than exists in other areas of the region.
- Existing or planned transit service.
- Highway access.
- Infill and redevelopment opportunities.

¹ Dated March 1, 2012

² Dated January 18, 2012

- Capacity for receiving transfers of development rights and relocations of existing development.
- Existing or planned housing in the vicinity.
- Existing or planned street designs with continuous sidewalks, paths and other infrastructure that promotes walking, bicycling and transit use so as to encourage mobility without use of private vehicles.

General Plan

The South Lake Tahoe General Plan envisions Tahoe Valley as a “mixed-use sub-regional center” that serves the needs of residents and visitors and as the “main gateway for people entering South Lake Tahoe.” The City’s Land Use Diagram designates Tahoe Valley as a “Neighborhood Gathering Place” while the Bike/Pedestrian Circulation Diagram details plans for new bike and pedestrian trails throughout the area. The General Plan establishes several policies aimed at accomplishing this vision, including:

LU 2.7: Tahoe Valley Community Plan Area – The City shall transform the Tahoe Valley Community Plan area into an attractive gateway commercial district that serves both residents and visitors.

LU 2.11: Tahoe Valley Node Purpose – The City shall ensure that the Tahoe Valley Gateway District will be a primary area in the city for resident serving commercial uses, workforce housing (e.g., housing affordable to local workers in all industries), and affordable housing. The City should work with property owners to transform the Node into a contemporary, pedestrian oriented, mixed use, commercial service district served by a transit center and alternate transportation opportunities.

LU 8.11: Gateways – The City shall enhance the economic vitality and physical image of the city’s southern and eastern gateways. This includes infrastructure improvements, pedestrian and bicycle facilities improvements, scenic view corridor protection, and highway design improvements along Highway 50.

LU 8.13: Pedestrian Connectivity – The City shall require new developments to provide connections to surrounding pedestrian networks.

ROS 2.5: Functional Open Space in Redeveloped Areas – The City shall incorporate new functional open spaces in redeveloped areas to serve as both public amenities and to provide opportunities for urban water quality improvements.

Draft Tahoe Valley Community Plan

The vision established in the Draft TVCP for Tahoe Valley is closely aligned with the City General Plan and the RPU, including the establishment of Tahoe Valley as an interconnected, economic and community center, but supplements them with additional planning guidance.

The TVCP includes several policies designed to accomplish its vision of establishing land use districts within Tahoe Valley. While the policies drafted for the Community Team Plan and the Mintier Plan are consistent in their intent and vision, the policy numbering below is based on the Mintier Plan for consistency purposes. The relevant policies include:

LU 2.1: Gateway District Revitalization – Promote the revitalization of the Gateway District with a combination of motels, hotels, restaurants, other visitor- and local-serving uses. The Gateway District should include opportunities for local and national businesses, and large and small businesses. Mixed-use developments are encouraged.

LU 2.2: Mixed Use Projects – Promote mixed-use projects in the Gateway District that incorporate residential/office and commercial uses. These projects can achieve this vertically or horizontally within the same structure or in different area/structures on the same site.

LU 2.3: Gateway Core – Create a vibrant core district focused on the “Y” intersection that includes retail and entertainment uses to meet the needs of local residents as well as tourists and includes office, residential, hotel, and a community activity center such as a public plaza. The Gateway Core should be the most unique and recognizable district in South Lake Tahoe.

LU 2.6: Public Plazas – Create public plazas in the Gateway Core that respond to resident and tourist needs and aesthetic values while helping to promote social interaction. They should provide an area for people to gather, interact, relax, reflect, and pass time.

LU 3.1: Auto Sales and Service District – Encourage the modernization of the Auto Sales and Service District in order to enhance the customer shopping experience, promote the long-term success of businesses, and encourage pedestrian flow between automobile dealerships.

LU 4.1: Healthcare – Encourage the concentration of healthcare providers and services in the Healthcare District to provide convenience to patrons. This area will provide a mix of residential and healthcare uses within a cohesive neighborhood setting that encourages walking. This area will also include consolidated parking.

T 3.1: Pedestrian Priority – Give pedestrian safety and convenience highest priority in site planning and roadway design.

REC 1.1: Hierarchy and Interconnection – Develop an interconnected system of open spaces, community parks, plazas, bike and pedestrian trails, and other types of public and private spaces as part of new development and redevelopment of existing sites.

Draft Design Guidelines

Subsequent to the adoption of the City’s General Plan in 2011, City planning staff also drafted a set of citywide design guidelines that have not been adopted by the City Council, but which provide insight on how the City may approach design review in the future. South Lake Tahoe’s draft design guidelines address a wide range of development and design issues at all scales, from landscaping to site design. Regarding urban design issues, for example, they highlight the need for development to contribute to a City and district sense of place and community identity by establishing landmarks, creating useable public spaces, and requiring clear patterns of pedestrian circulation. In particular, gateways are designated as pedestrian-oriented urban features that convey a clear message about the City to residents and visitors. Rather than setting prescriptive standards, the guidelines are mostly suggestive about how projects should accomplish desired design outcomes, thus allowing considerable flexibility.

ISSUES

An analysis of the existing ordinances governing Tahoe Valley suggests the need to address three significant gaps when crafting development and design standards to implement the vision established for Tahoe Valley in local and regional planning documents. The first issue is a lack of specificity in the current regulations. That is, there seems to be a “one size fits all” approach to development that does not consider local variation. The TVCP establishes a number of districts and sub-districts with differing goals and purposes that are intended to encourage placemaking strategies. These district distinctions should be reflected in the regulations through standards that are calibrated for individual districts and add interest and variation to the area’s built environment.

Second, the existing ordinances are inconsistent in addressing pedestrian circulation issues, both within and between parcels. Making Tahoe Valley a pedestrian-oriented commercial center is a key policy goal at the regional and local levels, but the South Lake Tahoe Municipal Code does not contain any related standards that require circulation plans for new or existing development. Despite requiring such plans, the TRPA Code does not set specific standards for their implementation. A set of standards addressing pedestrian movement should offer clear options for improving non-motorized circulation throughout Tahoe Valley.

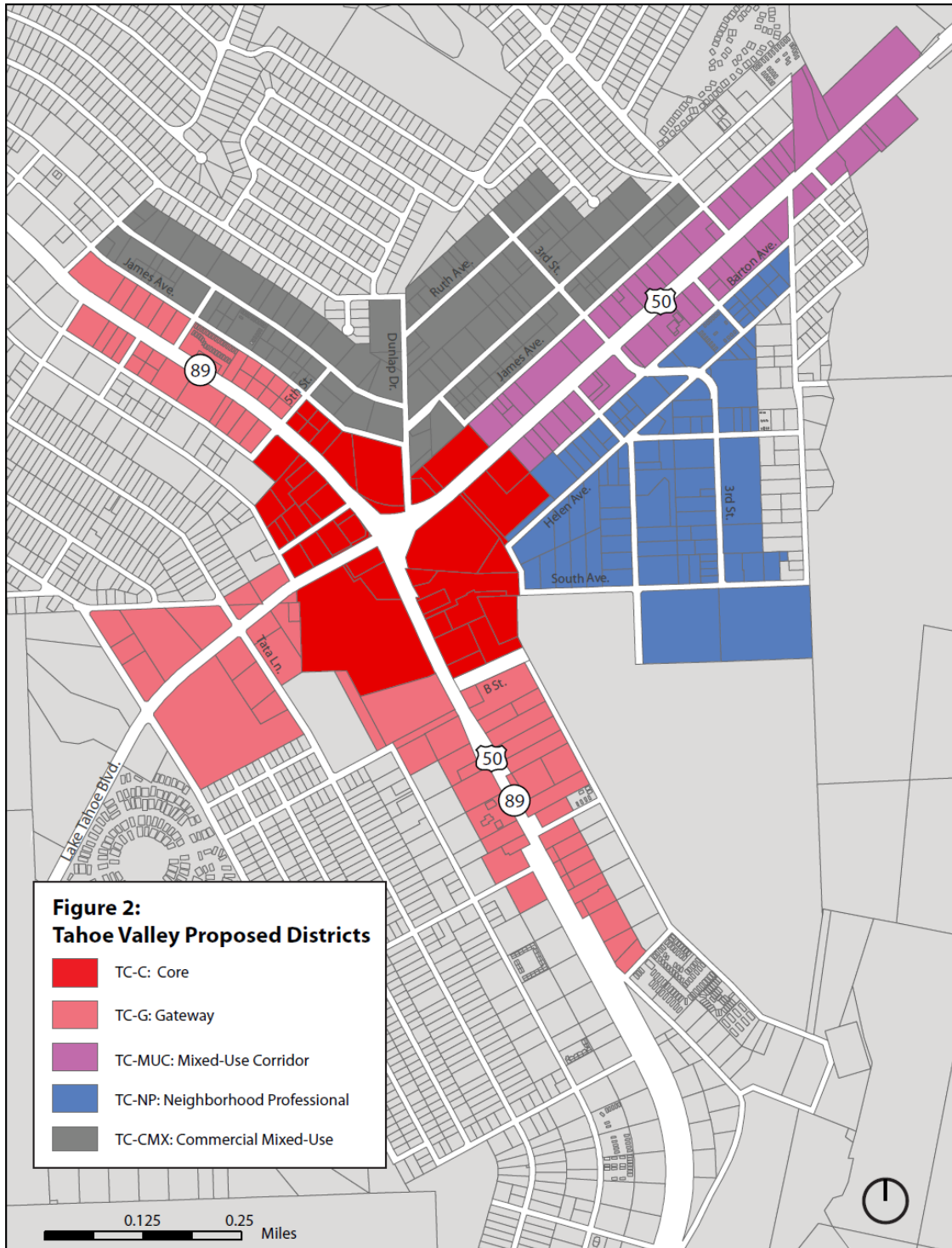
Lastly, local and regional ordinances do not address the need for public open space. Many cities require owners of commercial and multi-family residential developments to allot a portion of their property for public or semi-private open space, particularly in mixed-use districts. Creating useable public spaces among and between structures where local residents and visitors gather and interact can help foster a sense of community and local identity. The TVCP and South Lake Tahoe General Plan specifically call for more public open space in the Tahoe Valley area and new standards should help implement this goal.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Recommendation 1-A: Add New Districts and Sub-districts to Implement the Community Plan

To implement the goals and policies of the TVCP and the General Plan, the City should consider adopting new districts into its existing zoning framework. Classifications may be based on the district and sub-district designations identified in the TVCP that address the unique characteristics and needs of individual areas. For example, districts may reflect differences in neighborhoods or individual streets. The proposed districts presented in Table 1 below utilize a districting approach to effectively implement the policies and land use designations in the TVCP and reflect the different characters and development patterns in the Tahoe Valley area (See Figure 2).

TABLE 1: PROPOSED ZONING DISTRICT DESIGNATIONS		
Proposed District		TVCP District Designation
TC-C	Town Center Core	Gateway Core Sub-district
TC-MUC	Town Center Mixed-Use Corridor	Gateway District
TC-G	Town Center Gateway	Gateway District
		Auto Sales & Service District
TC-NP	Town Center Neighborhood Professional	Healthcare District
		Hospital Campus Sub-district
TC-CMX	Town Center Commercial Mixed-Use	Industrial District



Recommendation 1-B: Provide Purpose Statements to Reflect the Character and Intent of Each Sub-district

The City should supplement this refined set of zones with purpose statements at the beginning of each section to clarify the overall purpose of the Tahoe Valley District as well as the more specific intent of each sub-district. As demonstrated in the example below, purpose statements drawn from the TVCP, General Plan, and Regional Plan will clarify the distinctions among districts and ensure that each zone is clearly complementary to others. The purpose statement should explain in general language the objectives of the zone and how it fits into the City's land use policy. These statements serve as a guide for specifying use regulations and standards and for administration of zone regulations; they also can provide a basis for the findings required for action on discretionary permits. Development standards for each subdistrict will reflect the purpose statements and provide clear standards to accomplish the broader land use goals described in the General Plan of making the Tahoe Valley a more vibrant community and economic center for South Lake Tahoe.

Purpose:

The purposes of the Tahoe Valley Districts are to:

- Provide for the orderly, well-planned, and balanced growth of the Tahoe Valley area and support the area's role as an important commercial center and gathering place for local residents.
- Promote the Tahoe Valley area as a pedestrian- and transit-oriented, mixed-use activity center and gateway to South Lake Tahoe and expand its role as an economic center for South Lake Tahoe.
- Encourage a mix of uses that promotes convenience, economic vitality, and a pleasant quality of life and improve access to a greater range of facilities and services for surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Establish design standards that improve the pedestrian-orientation and visual quality of development and create a unified, distinctive, and attractive character along mixed-use streets.
- Additional purposes of each Tahoe Valley District:
 - *TC-C Town Center Core.* This district is the heart of the Tahoe Valley area and intended to become a place of public gathering and intensive retail activity meeting the needs of both area residents and tourists. This district allows for vertical mixed-use projects with a focus on ground-level active storefronts and pedestrian- and transit-oriented development that encourage pedestrian activity and supports multi-modal transportation. Allowable uses include tourist accommodation, retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as mixed-use residential development.
 - *TC-G Town Center Gateway.* This district is intended to create an attractive mixed-use commercial corridor that provides a welcoming gateway to South Lake Tahoe. The physical form varies to reflect the commercial mixed-use character of the gateway corridor and to transition from surrounding, lower-density districts to the Tahoe Valley Core.
 - *TC-MUC Town Center Mixed-Use Corridor.* This district is intended to facilitate the transformation of the eastern portion of Lake Tahoe Boulevard into a multi-modal, mixed-use corridor. Allowable uses include a rich mixture of employment, service, public facility, recreation, institution, entertainment, and housing organized in a compact development pattern, creating an aesthetically-pleasing environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and automobile drivers.
 - *TC-NP Town Center Neighborhood Professional.* This district is intended to allow one or more of a variety of residential and non-residential uses to encourage a greater mix and intensity of uses in a pedestrian-scaled environment at a scale and form that is appropriate to its neighborhood context and adjacent residential uses and forms. Allowable uses include commercial, public, healthcare, and office uses, as well as residential development.
 - *TC-CMX Town Center Commercial Mixed-Use.* This district is intended to provide for a mix of small- and medium-scale retail, service, and industrial uses to meet local and regional demand in a manner compatible with a pedestrian environment.

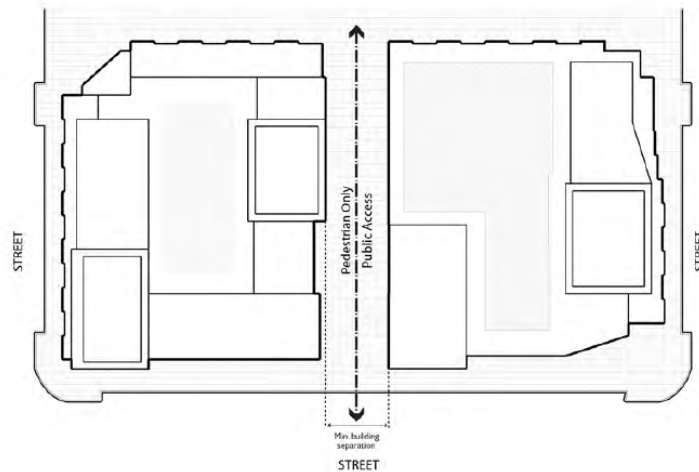
Recommendation 1-C: Provide Public Plazas to Accommodate Community Gatherings

Public spaces between buildings can improve the pedestrian environment and provide formal and informal gathering spaces for residents to relax, linger, and host community events. Such spaces should be strategically sited within the built environment so that they are well trafficked, visually pleasing, and safe. Spaces that are well-connected to streets, sidewalks, and ground-floor businesses tend to be the most successful. In order to encourage the introduction of vital public places, special bonuses should be given to developments that host them.

A key component of the vision for the Tahoe Valley established in the TVCP is to provide an area for public gathering in the heart of the Tahoe Valley area. To implement this vision, public open space should be required with large mixed-use and non-residential developments. This could be a requirement of a certain ratio of required open space to square footage of development above an established threshold. Design standards should address elements such as minimum dimensions, location, and improvements to ensure the public areas are designed to create a welcoming, usable, and vibrant area for customers, visitors, and residents.

Recommendation 1-D: Require Direct Pedestrian Connections

Mid-block connections, which allow pedestrian access through a parcel or a development, and other direct pedestrian routes can improve access while also breaking up large parcels (see figure below). These types of pedestrian-only connections can increase the walking options for pedestrians, transform auto-oriented areas, expand retail exposure, and even provide for vehicle deliveries if well designed. A maximum block length should be established (e.g., 350 feet) after which a mid-block pedestrian connection would be required to allow access through the interior of a parcel or development.



On long blocks, mid-block pedestrian connections improve access and circulation throughout a development

On-site access and circulation standards should be set which require a system of pedestrian walkways that connect all buildings on a site to each other, to on-site parking areas, and open space or pedestrian amenities. Regular connections should also be provided to the public sidewalk as well as to adjoining commercial and residential areas. Walkway standards should include requirements for minimum width, paving, grade separations, bollards, landscaping, lighting, or other means to clearly delineate pedestrian areas for both day and night use.

Recommendation 2: Design for Pedestrian and Transit Orientation

There are many elements of planning and design that affect the experience of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders in getting around the city. Development and design standards can address the form of buildings, the spatial relationships among them, and the public spaces they collectively create; these qualities are foundations of a pedestrian-oriented and transit-supportive place. For motorists, active, walkable streets are one element of a “park-once” district, where walking connects multiple destinations.

Creating the livability, ambiance, and charm that make people feel good about certain places goes beyond architectural beauty. What gives great places that special “feel” are factors such as how buildings align to the street and to other buildings, their distance from the street curb, the size of entryways, the amount of sun and shade that buildings displace, the proximity of street trees, and whether the outdoor spaces between buildings are “left over” or purposefully created.

EXISTING SETTING

The highway/auto-oriented development that is currently present along Tahoe Valley’s main arterial roads has several characteristics that detract from the goal of promoting a pedestrian-friendly environment. First, while building setbacks vary considerably throughout the area, they are typically very deep, thus allowing for both formal and informal parking arrangements at the front of the parcel. As a result, parking lots are a significant part of the streetscape along the main arterials and sometimes encroach upon sidewalks, where they exist. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some commercial uses may be providing more parking than what is actually needed while others are lacking adequate parking facilities.

Second, many buildings are not oriented toward the street, turning instead inward toward the side or back of the parcel. This design tends to leave large gaps in the street wall and prevents ground floor transparency, which is crucial to inviting, pedestrian-oriented environments. Many façades also lack any kind of articulation or modulation, presenting instead monotonous, blank walls that tend to give pedestrians the perception of longer walking distances along the sidewalk.

Third, landscaping along the arterial corridors is sparse, even on private parcels. In many cases, the presence of parking lots precludes any kind of plantings at the front of a parcel along the sidewalk or street. Although Tahoe Valley has large stands of pine trees, the overall effect of landscaping in the area does not promote a consistent pedestrian environment along the arterials or between parcels.

More generally, the majority of development in Tahoe Valley is one to two stories in height. Architecturally, a number of buildings along the arterials are designed using a “mountain” theme, although the quality of materials and design varies greatly. Residential structures in the east and north of the planning area have a more consistent mountain theme. Most structures in the Tahoe Valley core at the “Y” intersection are designed in the strip commercial or “big box” style. Overall, there are few unifying design characteristics that are common to all districts of Tahoe Valley.



Deep and varied setbacks create uneven street walls. A lack of sidewalks or landscaping creates an unwelcoming pedestrian environment.



Building frontages oriented away from the street break up the pedestrian environment and often result in streetscapes dominated by parking.

PLAN CONTEXT

The TRPA Regional Plan Update, the South Lake Tahoe General Plan, and the TVCP describe a consistent goal for pedestrian- and transit-oriented design (PTOD) in Tahoe Valley—creating a more interesting, lively, safe, and comfortable experience for non-automotive visits. The General Plan and TVCP, in particular, present policies that lay the groundwork for development and design standards that promote PTOD.

In general, the RPU focuses on larger-scale planning issues than design for pedestrian and transit orientation. Nevertheless, as mentioned under Recommendation 1, the Land Use Element Policy 3.4 does call for town center areas such as Tahoe Valley to incorporate designs with well-connected pedestrian, bike, and transit facilities that encourage non-automobile movement into existing and proposed development.

General Plan and Draft Tahoe Valley Community Plan

In order to establish their vision for creating a friendlier environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders, the South Lake Tahoe General Plan and the TVCP focus on policies that improve pedestrian access to buildings, minimize the visual and physical impacts of parking, increase amenities for cyclists, and create comfortable walking environments through the use of landscaping, lighting, and building design. While the policies drafted for the Community Team Plan and the Mintier Plan are consistent in their intent and vision, the policy numbering below is based on the Mintier Plan for consistency purposes. General Plan and TVCP policies that support PTOD in Tahoe Valley include:

General Plan

LU 5.3: Commercial Center Enhancement – The City shall encourage the upgrade and/or expansion of existing commercial centers, including: improvements to parking and landscaping areas; redesigns to accommodate bicycles, pedestrians, and transit facilities; and remodeling to include “green” technology and improve energy efficiency.

TC 3.18: Commercial Building Access – The City shall facilitate pedestrian access to commercial buildings by requiring building entries to be oriented towards sidewalks or walkways.

LU 8.3: Minimizing Parking Impacts – The City shall minimize the visual impact of parking by requiring it to be located at the rear and/or side of buildings with landscape screening, where feasible.

TC 4.2: Parking Management Strategies – The City shall develop a Parking Management Plan with strategies that strive to create “park-once” environments, including parking maximums, shared-use parking for mixed-use projects, and on-street parking, where appropriate.

LU 8.1: Mountain Architectural Theme – The City shall promote the use of a “mountain” architectural theme in all new and remodeled developments. Mountain architecture features the use of pitched roofs, natural colors, and natural material such as rock and wood.

Tahoe Valley Community Plan

LU 1.1: Distinctive Design – Create distinctive, connected, and walkable districts that have a strong sense of identity while avoiding repetition in building design and siting.

LU 1.2: Architectural Style – Promote the use of “mountain” architectural theme in new development and through remodeling. Mountain architecture features the use of pitched roofs, natural colors, and natural material such as rock and wood.

LU 1.3 Inter-connected Development – Ensure that every project is planned to enhance the physical, visual, and social connections to surrounding parcels and to the larger community.

LU 1.4: Visual Impact of Parking – Minimize the visual impact of parking by locating it to the rear and/or side of buildings and providing landscape screening.

LU 1.6: Lighting – Establish pedestrian-scaled and strategically-placed lighting along US 50, SR 89, and Lake Tahoe Boulevard that promotes pedestrian safety and comfort and enhances architectural and site design concepts. Prevent unnecessary and intrusive lighting that detracts from the beauty and view of the night sky.

T 2.2: Shared Parking and Driveway Consolidation – Require shared-use parking facilities and agreements between businesses/uses on adjacent parcels.

LU 2.7 Building Orientation – Orient buildings directly onto the four corners of the “Y” intersection and adjacent plazas so their entrances face and have frontage to the intersection with parking behind.

LU 2.8: Viewshed – Maximize views of the surrounding trees and mountains from the “Y” intersection through appropriate building design.

T 2.4: Driveway Consolidation – Reduce the number of driveways along Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Emerald Bay Road and encourage the development of shared driveways to improve traffic flow and pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience.

T 2.5: New Project Access – Require new projects located on corner parcels to provide their vehicle access from side streets instead of from Lake Tahoe Boulevard or Emerald Bay Road, unless a traffic analysis documents the rationale for why highway access would be superior.

T 3.2: Pedestrian Comfort – Provide wide and well-lit sidewalks that encourage daytime and nighttime use. Sidewalks should also be well-shaded in the summertime.

T 3.3: Pedestrian/Automobile Buffer – Develop landscape strips and/or railings between sidewalks and arterial roadways to buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic.

T 4.3: Bicycle Storage – Install bicycle racks or lockers at all public parks, gathering areas, and the transit center, and require them in all new private construction developments or remodels that require major or minor design review.

EXISTING REGULATIONS

TRPA Code of Ordinances

Historically, the TRPA's primary mission has been to preserve the undisturbed environment of the Tahoe Basin and, as a result, its regulations tend to be less specific about development and design standards relating to the more urban areas of the Basin. For example, it provides detailed setback requirements for development in areas with scenic resources or sensitive environmental needs, but leaves standards for other areas to local jurisdictions. Overall, in areas without adopted Community Plans, TRPA regulations are quite general as they relate to site design and built form in urban environments like Tahoe Valley, providing mostly qualitative descriptions of desired design outcomes. One notable and important exception is the regional standards for building height, which allow heights up to 56 feet (4 stories) in the Town Center District which includes the majority of the Tahoe Valley area.

South Lake Tahoe Municipal Code

The City's Municipal Code offers the most direct and detailed guidance on design and development standards for the Tahoe Valley area related to pedestrian and transit orientation.

Site Design

The overall layout and design of a parcel and its immediate neighbors can have important consequences for how pedestrians experience their surroundings. The Municipal Code establishes several standards that relate to site design, as noted in Table 2 below; given Tahoe Valley's predominantly commercial character, a selected number of key commercial standards that affect the pedestrian realm were selected for demonstration. Where the current standards are lacking or vague, new standards may need to be considered for adoption by the City.

TABLE 2: MUNICIPAL CODE COMMERCIAL SITE DESIGN STANDARDS (SELECTED)	
<i>Standard/Location</i>	<i>Requirements</i>
Front Setback	20 feet
Building Orientation	None
Solar Access	None
Exterior Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum Architectural Height: 26 feet • Maximum Freestanding Height: 20 feet
Landscaping	
<i>Highway 50</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turf edge required between curb line and sidewalk • Parcel setbacks must contain randomly spaced evergreen trees , one tree per 35 feet of highway frontage
<i>Setbacks</i>	Plantings required from TRPA recommended native and adapted species
<i>Surface Parking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaped perimeter required equal to required yard setback containing one tree for every four parking spaces. Perimeters facing a street, recreation area, or lake, must provide 3-foot screen. • Landscaped islands encouraged
Off-Street Surface Parking	
<i>Location on Parcel</i>	Parking not permitted in required yards adjacent to a public street
<i>Driveway Location</i>	"Clear zone" requirements influence driveway location but provide significant discretion
<i>Shared Facilities</i>	Permitted if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses have different peak periods • Parking demand will not overlap • Facility will meet peak demand • Property owners sign reciprocal agreements approved by City
<i>Off-Site</i>	Must be within 300 feet of lot line for the provided use. If further than 300 feet, a vehicle shuttle must be provided.
<i>Ratio Reduction</i>	Requires City approval of applicant-submitted parking analysis.

Building Design

In concert with site layout, building design frames the pedestrian experience in the built environment. The Municipal Code requires that building proposals consider a number of design elements, including architectural style, design palette, articulation, facades, and roof design. However, it steers clear of advocating a particular building style and establishes specific design standards for just a few building elements, such as height (which is mandated by the TRPA Code of Ordinances), roof treatment, and screening of mechanical equipment. The only guidance on the key elements of building siting, scale and massing is that "new buildings and structures shall be subordinate to the area's scenic features. Projects shall not decrease the visibility of such features" (SLTMC 5-20.A.5). More specific guidance on these important design elements may help considerably in achieving the community vision for Tahoe Valley.

Draft Design Guidelines

The South Lake Tahoe Draft Design Guidelines offer comprehensive guidance on a number of issues related to site layout and building design. In particular, the guidelines advocate design solutions, particularly in

commercial areas, that are meant to create a pedestrian-oriented environment. For example, it emphasizes shallow setbacks, articulated building frontages, locating entrances on street frontage, and breaking down outdoor parking into small units to minimize their visual impact. Still, to allow for design flexibility, the guidelines do not prescribe particular design solutions; the draft language is suggestive rather than highly detailed. While development and design flexibility can be an asset that fosters creativity in the built environment, the City may consider adding some specificity to key guidelines and adopting them as standards to ensure the implementation of goals for PTOD articulated in the TVCP.

ISSUES

In order to implement the vision outlined for the future of Tahoe Valley, two main gaps need to be addressed in the current set of development and design regulations. First, existing regulations do not address a number of elements of the built environment that are critical for creating pedestrian and transit orientation, such as building orientation, parking location, and façade design. While the regulations should be balanced to allow for flexibility and design creativity, minimum standards should help in establishing a consistent design approach that implements the overarching idea of PTOD.

Second, where regulations do exist, they may be at odds with the TVCP vision. For example, the current minimum front setback required in Tahoe Valley is 20 feet. In portions of the district with considerable commercial frontage this may be too deep. Given the trend of supplying (sometimes informal) non-landscaped parking fronting the main arterials, it may also be necessary to require *maximum* setbacks to ensure a consistent street wall. The City's Draft Design Guidelines approach design with an emphasis on PTOD and may provide a good starting point for creating development and design standards for Tahoe Valley.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Recommendation 2-A: Establish Site Design Standards to Encourage a Pedestrian-Friendly Environment

Careful site planning, including the placement of buildings and their relationship to the street, can improve the pedestrian experience by allowing direct access from the street, public plazas or other public spaces. The following are important design characteristics to consider.

- **Building Site.** Standards should give guidance regarding where buildings are located on a site. Standards should identify instances where a building may or must be built to the street (e.g., on primary street frontages) and where setbacks are required (e.g., in areas that transition from commercial to residential uses). Appropriate uses and treatment of the setback area may also be identified. Standards should also address the location of parking and accessways. As discussed further in Recommendation 2-C, the design and location of parking directly affects the quality and character of the street and pedestrian environment.
- **Building Orientation.** Buildings should be oriented to face public streets. Building frontages should be generally parallel to streets, and the primary building entrance should be located on a public street. Developing a street wall (made up of one or more buildings) that encloses the physical space of the street, can provide a more cohesive, safe, and attractive experience, where pedestrians can see building entrances, signs, and businesses. This can be created by regulating setbacks from the street edge (either consistently set back or equal to zero) and identifying appropriate treatment and use of the setback area.

- **Solar Access.** Solar access is an important component in supporting a pedestrian-oriented environment. Standards should require a minimum amount of solar access for public plaza areas, porte cocheres, and other public areas.
- **Landscaping.** Standards should address the type, amount, and location of landscaping and how it would complement the natural and built environment, giving consideration to the Tahoe Valley environment and the need to accommodate snow and provide defensible space.
- **Lighting and Light Pollution.** Standards for lighting should provide minimum lighting requirements for the safety and security of pedestrian, residents, customers, and businesses and allow for building and business identification. Lighting standards should also ensure that lighting is designed to complement the overall building design, avoid glare on neighboring properties, and prevent light pollution.

Recommendation 2-B: Establish Building Form Standards to Encourage a Strong Sense of Place

In addition to site design considerations, building form can play an important role in creating pedestrian-oriented environments by maintaining the proper scale and providing visual interest to the passersby.

- **Height.** Upon adoption of the TVCP as an Area Plan by the TRPA, a maximum allowed height of 56 feet will apply to all areas of Tahoe Valley other than the proposed Commercial Mixed-Use District, where the maximum allowed height will be 45 feet. The Development and Design Standards may refine where maximum heights should be achieved in order to reflect the different characteristics in the area. For example, a higher height may be appropriate in the core area whereas areas adjacent to residential areas should maintain a lower height.

Additional height standards may be considered such as requiring a minimum height along certain corridors to create a continuous street wall and support pedestrian-oriented development. Additionally, limitations on the height of any building face may be incorporated to address building design and transition to lower density areas. For example, appropriate setbacks on upper floors and buffers can help ensure that higher density development can transition into lower density zones without disrupting neighborhood character. Scenic vistas must also be considered when determining appropriate heights.

- **Massing and Articulation.** Standards should provide minimum requirements for the bulk and shape of buildings. Bulky buildings can feel intimidating and uninteresting to the pedestrian, and make a negative contribution to the skyline. Careful massing can break up the appearance of larger buildings so they appear smaller, but also more interesting to pedestrians at the street level.
- **Façades.** Standards should provide minimum façade requirements for the overall look of buildings as seen by the public. Large transparent façades entice shoppers and curiosity among pedestrians by day and window shopping at night. Some cities have transparency requirements (e.g., at least 50 percent of the frontage must be transparent) to allow maximum visual interaction between sidewalk areas and the interior of buildings. Façade controls should address articulation, fenestration, maximum building length, building entrances, and the location of parking/garages.
- **Design.** Recesses, projections, variation in roof levels and materials create visual interest and variety in locations of shadow and light. Porches, stairs, and balconies can signal habitation and encourage interactions between residents and passers-by. Architectural detail and articulation on all sides of the building, entrances, and elements such as awnings and trim create a harmonious appearance. Building

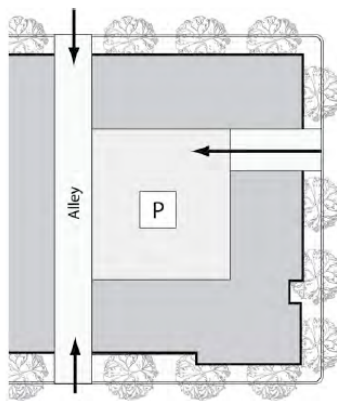
materials, use of color, signage, and public art can also contribute to the comfort and safety of the pedestrian.

- **Screening.** Service facilities such as trash enclosures and mechanical equipment should be screened with enclosures and devices consistent with the building architecture in form, material, and detail. They should not obstruct sidewalks or public areas. Roofs and trellises are recommended for screening views from above.
- **Service Areas.** Service areas are a necessary part of any development. Integrating these areas into the building design can provide for convenient loading/unloading for vehicle deliveries, storage, and refuse, while ensuring a safe, pleasant experience for pedestrians.

Recommendation 2-C: Design Parking to Support Pedestrian- and Transit-Oriented

Even as Tahoe Valley transitions to a more pedestrian-oriented district, automobile access will remain vital to a large number of residents and visitors. As a result, parking and vehicular circulation needs to be carefully designed to avoid pedestrian conflicts and ensure attractive pedestrian facilities, such as landscaping, lighting, and walkways. Tahoe Valley should encourage walking, cycling, transit use, and other modes of personal transportation in balance with automobiles, especially since the prevalence and convenience of other modes will reduce demand for vehicle parking, freeing up space for other more vibrant uses.

- **Location.** Driveways should be minimized to reduce curb cuts, as frequent driveways disrupt pedestrians' sense of safety on a sidewalk. Parking lots should be located on the side or rear of a site, typically behind a building to ensure a consistent street wall. It may even make sense to have certain pedestrian frontages designated where no curb cuts are allowed. Existing curb cuts would have to be relocated to side streets or alleys with redevelopment.



Parking should be located behind buildings with single vehicular access from a street or back alley to reduce curb cuts.

- **Design.** Parking areas should be well-designed so that they enhance the public realm and do not detract from it. Structured parking should be wrapped with active uses if it faces a public street and designed as an integral part of the development it serves. This can be achieved through using the same cadence of columns, bays, windows/openings, using relevant high-quality materials, such as glass, perforated metal, or decorated screens. Additionally, snow storage should be considered in any parking scheme.
- **Ratios and Shared Facilities.** An overabundance of parking leads to an inefficient use of land and an unwelcoming visual environment. The amount of parking provided should be the least amount required to meet the needs of existing and proposed development. Existing parking ratios should be examined to ensure they appropriately reflect demand. Incentives for shared parking on adjacent parcels should be explored to increase land use efficiency.
- **Bicycle Parking Location and Design.** Safe and convenient bicycle parking should be provided at key locations throughout the area. Both short- and long-term bicycle parking should be required. Short-term bicycle parking is designed to serve shoppers, customers, guests, and other visitors to a site who generally stay for a period of less than four hours. Short-term bicycle parking should be visible from the street and located close to the main building entrance (e.g., within 50 feet). Short-term bicycle racks should be anchored and should permit locking. Long-term bicycle parking is designed to serve employees, students, residents, commuters, and others who generally stay at a site for four hours or longer. Long-term bicycle parking should provide covered spaces as well as enclosed, covered, or guarded storage areas.

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Recommendation 3: Make Development Standards Easy to Understand and Use

Creating a set of development and design standards that is concise and user-friendly is critical to implementing the community's vision for Tahoe Valley. The standards in South Lake Tahoe's current zoning ordinance are complex and difficult to navigate and should rely more heavily on illustrative graphics and straightforward language. Clearer organization and formatting will allow all users to implement their development plans more efficiently and could serve as a model for an update of the entire zoning ordinance in the future.

EXISTING ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT

Design standards for community plan areas are located in Articles I through IV of Chapter 5, Land Use Development Standards of the South Lake Tahoe Municipal Code. Articles I, II, and III contain design standards for Stateline/Ski Run, Bijou/Al Tahoe, and "Y" Industrial areas, respectively. While there are no standards included, Article IV is reserved for the "Y" Commercial Community Plan Design Standards, which are the focus of this effort. The organization and format of the existing community plan design guidelines could be improved upon to make the standards more user-friendly. The following items should be taken into consideration in developing an approach to the Tahoe Valley Development and Design Standards:

- **Standards rely heavily on text-based descriptions.** Almost all of the standards are described through text only—rather than graphics—even where complex requirements are presented.
- **Important information is difficult to find.** Because of the text-heavy nature of the standards, they can be daunting to navigate visually. In some cases, tables are used to enhance visual structure and could be used with greater frequency.
- **Organization and text display are disorderly.** The organization of the standards is difficult to understand due to a lack of visual hierarchy. A consistent format that enhances visual clarity and structure could improve ease of use.
- **Use of cross-referencing lacks detail.** Standards in other documents, particularly the TRPA Code of Ordinances, are heavily cited without detailed cross-referencing. Often, the standards list only a chapter in the Code of Ordinances and it is up to the user to sift through the chapter to find the related section or article. Additionally, with the recent reformatting of the TRPA Code, all cross-references will require updating.

The City should retain the current practice of providing detailed purpose statements that signal the intent of specific groups of standards.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Recommendation 3-A: Develop a New Format and Organization

In developing the Tahoe Valley Design and Development Standards, the City should reevaluate the format and organization of standards for community plan areas. The regulations for each area should start with a purpose statement followed by a list of allowed uses specifying the level of discretionary review required, development and design standards applicable to those uses, and supplemental regulations addressing any

additional concerns. For an example, see the Annotated Outline included in Appendix A. The focus of many district regulations will be form-based development and design standards. However, use regulations should be listed before the development and design standards because the first question from code users tends to be what a property can be used for followed by how a building must be built.

- **Purpose Statement.** Each district should have a specific purpose that is based on relevant General Plan and TVCP policies and explains in general language the way the district is intended to be used and how it fits into the City's land use policy. These statements will serve as a guide for administration of district regulations, and can provide a basis for the findings required for action on discretionary permits.
- **Land Use Regulations (*Staff effort*).** Allowed uses should be classified according to use groups and presented in tables intended to provide a quick and easy summary of development possibilities in a given district. Use tables can specify the level of review required, list any limitations on permitted uses, and provide cross-references to other sections of the title where additional regulations apply.
- **Development Standards.** Form-based coding techniques should be used for development standards. The standards of each district can list dimensional requirements for lots, build-to lines, setbacks, frontage types, location of parking, minimum open space, and building heights.
- **Supplemental Regulations.** Supplemental regulations will include elements such as performance criteria that implement General Plan policy and ensure compatibility among uses in a given district. Examples of supplemental standards include but will not necessarily be limited to:
 - Building design, orientation, and entrance location;
 - Street façade design and window transparency;
 - Pedestrian amenities;
 - Landscaping, buffering, and screening;
 - Transitional requirements where higher intensity districts abut single-family neighborhoods; and
 - Access requirements

Recommendation 3-B: Consolidate, Simplify, and Refine Standards

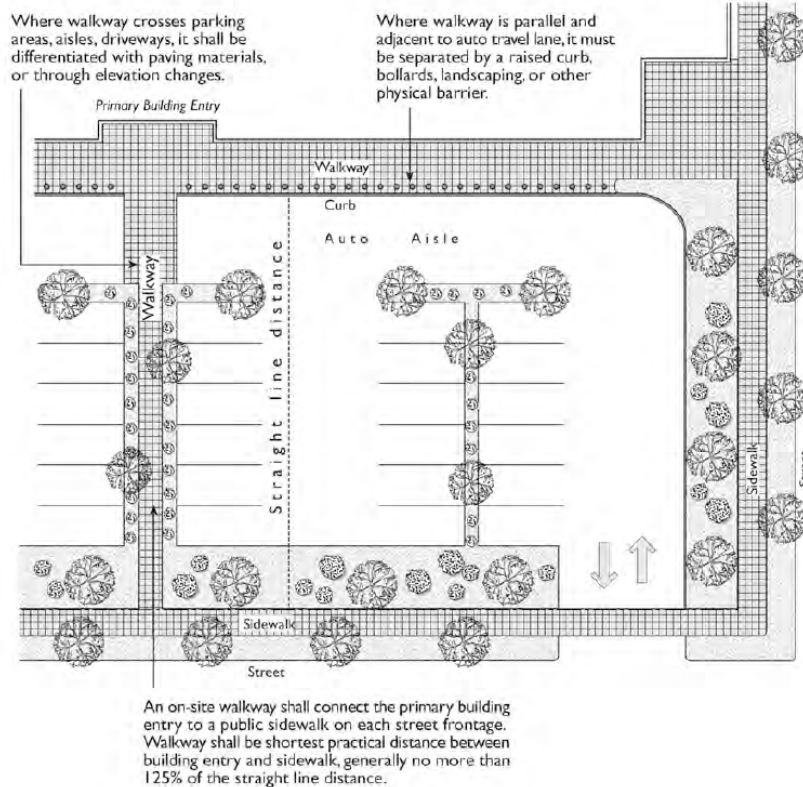
The City should ensure that the Development and Design Standards function as efficiently as possible and with the fewest number of provisions necessary to achieve its goals. To this end, unnecessary sections should be removed in order to avoid ambiguity, reduce duplication, and reduce the sheer bulk of the Code. Use and development standards and other requirements that are applicable to all areas within the City should be consolidated. Opportunities for applying uniform requirements throughout the City should be pursued, reserving special standards for where a distinct difference necessitates an area be treated differently. Further, the Code should express the same regulations in the same way and use different language when provisions are different to avoid any confusion or uncertainty.

Recommendation 3-C: Use Graphics to Reduce Wordiness

In many instances, graphics (e.g., photos and architectural illustrations in plan or section views) can communicate development regulations more clearly and in less space than written standards. For example, images can clearly depict standards for build-to lines and setback requirements, while verbal equivalents are prone to misinterpretation and uncertainty. Graphics should be used extensively with form-based standards

to strengthen written provisions and to provide visual examples of both lawful and unlawful development. With visual clarification, fewer standards will be subject to competing or incorrect interpretations, and regulations can be cleared of much of the jargon which can obscure the regulation's intent. The following sample code graphics and tables exemplify the kinds of graphic tools that can be used to clearly and concisely communicate intended development types.

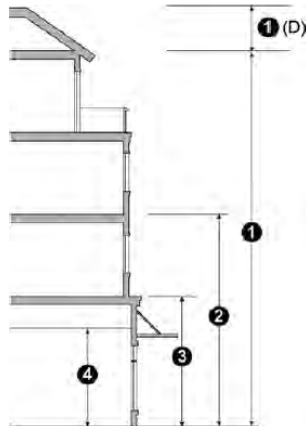
SAMPLE CODE GRAPHIC



Graphics can communicate development regulations more clearly and in less space than written standards.

SAMPLE CODE TABLE

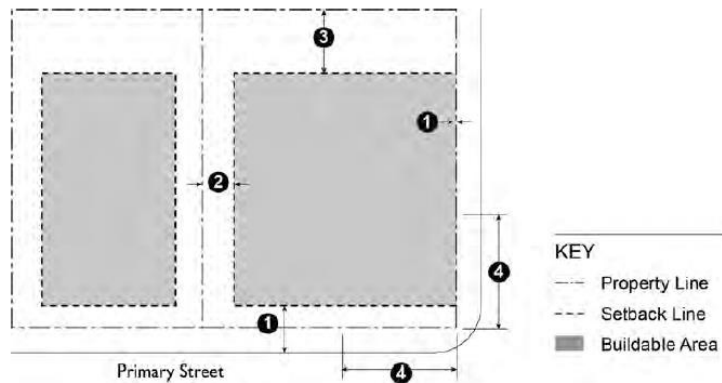
TABLE XX: HEIGHT STANDARDS



Subdistrict	TC-C	TC-G	TC-MUC	TC-NP	TC-CMX	#
Building Maximum (ft)	50; 30 along Main Street 30 within 40 ft of an RS District					1
Building Minimum (ft)	25; Applicable only along Main Street		n/a			2
Maximum Stories	4	4	4	4	4	
Ground Floor Minimum Height						
Ground Floor Residential Uses (ft)	12	12	12	12	12	
Ground Floor Non-residential Uses (ft)	16	16	16	16	16	3
First Floor Ceiling Height, Non-residential Uses (ft clear)	12	12	12	12	12	4
Note: This table is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to recommend or reflect any standards or categories of standards that may be considered for the Tahoe Valley area.						

SAMPLE CODE TABLE

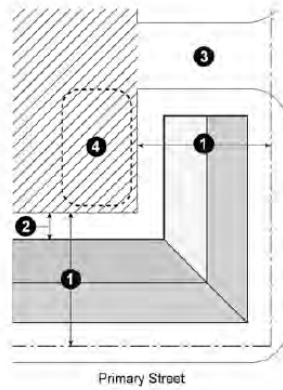
TABLE XX: BUILDING PLACEMENT STANDARDS



District	TC-C	TC-G	TC-MUC	TC-NP	TC-CMX	#
Street Frontage Setbacks (ft)						
Main Street	Property line or 15 ft from curb (the greater)					1
All Other Street	0 min, 5 max	0 min, 5 max	0 min, 5 max	5	5 min, 15 max	1
Interior Side	0 min; 10 min adjacent to RS District					2
Rear	0 min; 30 min adjacent to RS District					3
Corner Build Area (ft)	30; Buildings must be located in accordance with the required setbacks within 30 feet of every corner. Public plazas may be at the street corner provided buildings are built to the edge of the public plaza.					4
Note: This table is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to recommend or reflect any standards or categories of standards that may be considered for the Tahoe Valley area.						

SAMPLE CODE TABLE

TABLE XX: PARKING AND LOADING



Subdistrict	TC-C	TC-G	TC-MUC	TC-NP	TC-CMX	
Setback from Street-facing Property Line (ft)	40	40	40	20	20	❶
Setback from Buildings and Public Plazas (ft)	5 ft. walkway plus 3 ft landscape; Applicable only to above ground lots.					❷
Surface Parking Location	Behind building	Behind or to the side of building				
Access Location	Side street or alley wherever possible.					❸
Curb Cuts	Minimized and in area least likely to impede pedestrian circulation.					
Loading and Service Area	Side or rear of lot; Must be screened from public ROW.					❹
Note: This table is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to recommend or reflect any standards or categories of standards that may be considered for the Tahoe Valley area.						

Recommendation 3-D: Tabulate and Cross-Reference Standards

The Development and Design Standards can rely more extensively on tables and cross references to convey development standards, provide quick access to all relevant regulations for a particular topic, and to avoid unnecessary repetition of provisions. Tables and cross-references greatly improve the readability of complex regulations. This also will facilitate “searches” with hyperlinks in a Web-based version of the document.

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Next Steps

The recommendations in this paper lay out a series of ideas and choices for the Planning Commission to discuss in a public workshop, during which Commissioners and the public can ask questions about how development and design standards can implement the vision outlined in the TVCP. The workshop will also provide the opportunity for Commissioners and the public to identify unanswered questions or additional issues that need to be considered. Feedback received on the recommendations will provide direction for the Draft Development and Design Standards that will be prepared for review.

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Appendix A: Annotated Outline

The following Annotated Outline shows the proposed organization for the Tahoe Valley Development Standards. The numbering system follows that of the South Lake Tahoe Municipal Code. Draft purpose statements are included for each sub-district. Commentary, *in italics*, is intended to explain the anticipated content of a section.

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Article IV Tahoe Valley Development Standards

5-15 Purpose

This section will identify the general purposes of the Tahoe Valley Districts, as well as the more specific intent of each subdistrict.

The purposes of the Tahoe Valley Districts are to:

- A. Provide for the orderly, well-planned, and balanced growth of the Tahoe Valley area and support the area's role as an important commercial center and gathering place for local residents.
- B. Promote the Tahoe Valley area as a pedestrian- and transit-oriented, mixed-use activity center and gateway to South Lake Tahoe and expand its role as an economic center for South Lake Tahoe.
- C. Encourage a mix of uses that promotes convenience, economic vitality, and a pleasant quality of life and improve access to a greater range of facilities and services for surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- D. Establish design standards that improve the pedestrian-orientation and visual quality of development and create a unified, distinctive, and attractive character along mixed-use streets.

Additional purposes of each Tahoe Valley District:

Town Center Core (TC-C). This district is the heart of the Tahoe Valley area and intended to become a place of public gathering and intensive retail activity meeting the needs of both area residents and tourists. This district allows for vertical mixed-use projects with a focus on ground-level active storefronts and pedestrian- and transit-oriented development that encourage pedestrian activity and supports multi-modal transportation. Allowable uses include tourist accommodation, retail, commercial, and office uses, as well as mixed-use residential development.

Town Center Gateway (TC-G). This district is intended to create an attractive mixed-use commercial corridor that provides a welcoming gateway to South Lake Tahoe. The physical form varies to reflect the commercial mixed-use character of the gateway corridor and to transition from surrounding, lower-density districts to the Tahoe Valley Core.

Town Center Mixed-Use Corridor (TC-MUC). This district is intended to facilitate the transformation of the eastern portion of Lake Tahoe Boulevard into a multi-modal, mixed-use corridor. Allowable uses include a rich mixture of employment, service, public facility, recreation, institution, entertainment, and housing organized in a compact development pattern, creating an aesthetically-pleasing environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and automobile drivers.

Town Center Neighborhood Professional (TC-NP). This district is intended to allow one or more of a variety of residential and non-residential uses to encourage a greater mix and intensity of uses in a pedestrian-scaled environment at a scale and form that is appropriate to its neighborhood context and adjacent residential uses and forms. Allowable uses include commercial, public, healthcare, and office uses, as well as residential development.

Town Center Commercial Mixed-Use (TC-CMX). This district is intended to provide for a mix of small- and medium-scale retail, service, and industrial uses to meet local and regional demand in a manner compatible with a pedestrian environment.

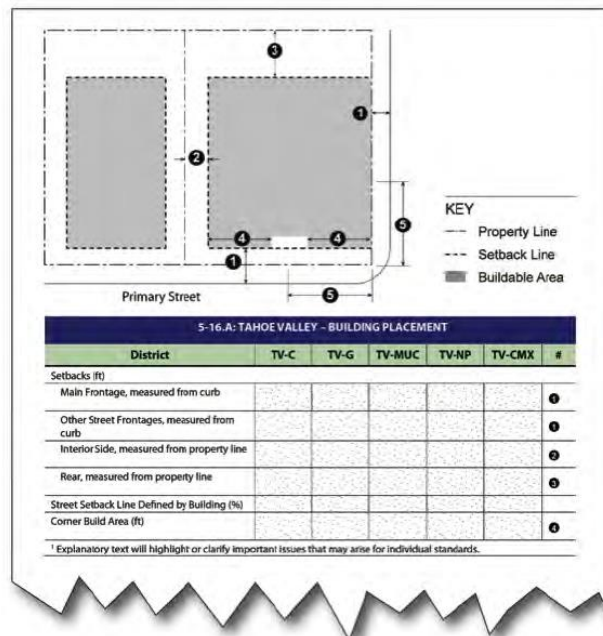
5-16 Use Regulations (Staff Effort)

Use regulations identify what types of uses are appropriate for a district or parcel. These regulations will be drafted in a separate effort by City Staff.

5-17 Development Standards

Development and design standards help shape the physical form of development and establish a cohesive environment that is compatible with the community vision articulated in the Tahoe Valley Community Plan. Standards will address a wide range of three-dimensional aspects from the height and bulk of structures to site layout, landscaping, and architectural detailing.

It is anticipated that the standards will be organized under six primary themes including Building Placement, Building Height, Building Form, Building Design, Parking and Loading, and Site Improvements. Within each theme, the standards will be presented in table format and will be keyed to graphics that illustrate the applicable standards. When necessary, tables and graphics will be supplemented with text to highlight important issues. Graphics will be in plan and/or axonometric view as appropriate to illustrate the standards. Below is an example of how the tables and graphics will appear.



5-18 Supplemental Standards

Supplemental standards will be included that address design issues that are difficult to summarize in a table format such as performance criteria that implement General Plan policies and ensure compatibility among uses in a given district. Examples of supplemental standards include the location and design of district-wide pedestrian accessways or the siting of public plazas and bicycle storage facilities.

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Appendix B: Stakeholder Interview Summary

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1 Introduction

BACKGROUND

Approximately eight years ago, the City of South Lake Tahoe began the process of drafting a community plan for the Tahoe Valley district, which is one of the City's primary commercial areas. Strategically situated at the intersection of Highway 50 and State Route 89, Tahoe Valley serves an important role as both a regional and community center. In order to complete the Tahoe Valley Community Plan, the City is currently crafting Development and Design Standards that will shape future growth in Tahoe Valley and implement the policies and vision articulated by the residents who took part in the planning process. The Plan calls for a transformation of Tahoe Valley into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and well-connected business district that fosters high quality design and acts as a welcoming gateway to South Lake Tahoe. The Development and Design Standards will build upon the foundation of the recently-adopted General Plan, the Draft Tahoe Valley Community Plan, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Regional Plan, and other relevant planning endeavors. The Development and Design Standards are important as they will establish the detailed, form-based rules for what can be built in the area. Zoning and development standards are where "the rubber meets the road" – the place where all the goals and visions of the County's General Plan are translated into specific numbers and standards.

PURPOSE OF "CODE USER" AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

In order to learn about the issues associated with crafting the Development and Design Standards, interviews were conducted with a cross-section of "code users" and stakeholders – people who regularly use the Zoning Ordinance in South Lake Tahoe or have a specific interest in zoning to implement the Community Plan. The code users interviewed included developers, planners, real estate professionals, landowners, and residents.

The County's consultants conducted two hour-long interview sessions on February 28, 2012. The team interviewed a total of five stakeholders in two groups. The interviews were conducted by staff from the consulting team— Martha Miller and John M. Francis of Dyett & Bhatia, Urban and Regional Planners, as well as Hilary Roverud of the South Lake Tahoe Planning Department. The interviewees were asked a series of questions regarding overarching concerns as well as specific topics. People attending were also given the opportunity to discuss issues of significance to them that were not otherwise discussed in response to specific questions.

2 Stakeholder Comments

A strong consensus among stakeholders emerged about what the major issues are as they relate to the Development Code update. While the stakeholders may ultimately differ on the exact recommended changes, there was clear agreement that the zoning and development codes need to be revised to make it more understandable, and to support achievement of the Community Plan's major policy goals. Those interviewed pointed out numerous ways in which current Municipal Code actually works against achieving the community's vision for the future. Generally, stakeholders thought the County's regulations were effective in achieving quality development. Following is a list of the major themes heard during the stakeholder interviews. A comprehensive list of the comments received, organized by topic, is below.

1. Streamline the development process and consider providing greater incentives to spur development that the community considers desirable.
2. Allow greater building heights in select areas of Tahoe Valley to increase development potential.
3. Development standards should improve the pedestrian realm.
4. Site design and parking requirements should balance snow storage, auto user, and pedestrian needs.
5. Incentivize the rehab and remodeling of existing structures.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

General

- Development and Design Standards do not vary that much between specific plan areas in South Lake Tahoe because they flow from the TRPA Code.
- Some of the major standards that should be addressed include build-to lines, parking, and driveways.
- Development in the area should be authentic and not "fake suburban." It would be better to have development that is inconsistent but actually works on the ground than development that has a "clean" aesthetic but does not produce a successful environment.
- When developing the Accurate Audio Video site, did not have any issues with the current standards.
- Projects need to pencil out, but environmental benefits should be incorporated into the standards.
- In Tahoe, you can buy for less than you can build right now—there is a lot of interest from people who want to rehab buildings, which is great.
- There is a desire for a common area/park that helps foster a greater sense of community.

Height

- As an architectural style, "alpine rustic" puts you in a box. Putting mechanical in pitched roofs can be problematic. Recent trends in architecture do not require 7:12 roofs. This problem is common in South Lake Tahoe. Is alpine rustic a necessary building form? Could you allow for flat roofs as long as they meet snow load requirements? It is a question of community character.

- Appropriate height requirements depend on how the building addresses the street architecturally.
- Mixed use office and commercial would be a positive from the point of a developer. Height is the key factor—developers need another story or two to add value to their properties. In addition to the main corridors in the Core, the Third Street corridor is another potential area to accommodate additional height.
- If not given limits, builders will maximize height and bulk. Developers want to get the most for their money, but not every building in the area should be three stories.
- Question of first floor height vs. allowing a third story. What is the trade off and how important is it to regulate first floor height?

Site Design and Parking

- Building at the front of the lot can be an advantage because it provides the opportunity to highlight distinctive architecture and to improve signage. Having parking in the front looks like suburban sprawl. Successful mountain towns have buildings up front and they work because they allow people easy walking access.
- Snow storage is a key issue. Parking should not be cut up with planters because it makes snow storage impossible. If there was a plan for removing snow then that might be fine, but people do not want to pay for the planning. Parking area design should leave enough room for the snow.
- At the 50/89 intersection, the main parcels have large buildings set back from the street and large parking lots at the front of the parcel. The feasibility of building another structure on the lot closer to the street is low because of the loss of parking and snow storage area. Also, businesses want the building to be exposed to the highway to attract business—they do not want it hidden behind another building. Some property owners will not be interested in doing more development on their parcels.
- Parking lots need to be both aesthetically pleasing and functional. In other parts of the basin there are beautiful lots that are not effective because they are not well designed for the amount of traffic.

Circulation and Landscaping

- The vision articulated in the Community Plan is for continuous, landscaped, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks. However, installing a pedestrian edge along a highway as currently exists seems incongruous. This is not an environment that is conducive to pedestrian orientation because the highway is unpleasant and it is not enough of a destination. There is not enough mixed use development. Need to create a destination (e.g., Heavenly Resort).
- Landscaping is not important in itself—it contributes more toward appearance/aesthetics.
- The Accurate Audio Video was built slightly further back than the minimum setback to allow for a sidewalk and landscaping in the front.
- Local merchants want sidewalks, streetlights, and a pedestrian-friendly environment. Good examples include Stateline and the north shore of Tahoe. Also want to see things like drainage improvements, which help the environment.

LAND USE REGULATIONS

- The regulations are laborious. Properties have to be fully analyzed for highest and best use.
- People are interested in old motels and what you can do with them—what other uses are allowed? In order to make the properties work, they are looking at allowed density, lot coverage, floor area, and land use. Highway 50 corridor hotels are penalized because thresholds for coverage are a disincentive. Ground floor retail with upper story residential is feasible if three stories is allowed.
- The existing built environment and ownership pattern is a big impediment to change. What do you when one property owner does not want to make any changes?
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ADMINISTRATION AND PROCESS

General

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- The development process should be simpler and streamlined. Make it easier for developers who want to build in the City. For example, make it easy for people to make building improvements on existing properties. Need to find a balance between having standards that protect the character and the environment and allowing people to come into the community to invest and build.

Incentives

- There is lots of interest in land assemblage if the incentives were in place.
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- Entitlements and coverage limits should be incentives for providing amenities.
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Appendix B: Meyers Community Plan District Regulations, Diagnostic Report

Taboe Regional Planning Agency

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1 Introduction

BACKGROUND

Approximately eight years ago, the City of South Lake Tahoe began the process of drafting a community plan for the Tahoe Valley district, which is one of the City's primary commercial areas. Strategically situated at the intersection of Highway 50 and State Route 89, Tahoe Valley serves an important role as both a regional and community center. In order to complete the Tahoe Valley Community Plan, the City is currently crafting Development and Design Standards that will shape future growth in Tahoe Valley and implement the policies and vision articulated by the residents who took part in the planning process. The Plan calls for a transformation of Tahoe Valley into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and well-connected business district that fosters high quality design and acts as a welcoming gateway to South Lake Tahoe. The Development and Design Standards will build upon the foundation of the recently-adopted General Plan, the Draft Tahoe Valley Community Plan, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Regional Plan, and other relevant planning endeavors. The Development and Design Standards are important as they will establish the detailed, form-based rules for what can be built in the area. Zoning and development standards are where "the rubber meets the road" – the place where all the goals and visions of the County's General Plan are translated into specific numbers and standards.

PURPOSE OF "CODE USER" AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

In order to learn about the issues associated with crafting the Development and Design Standards, interviews were conducted with a cross-section of "code users" and stakeholders – people who regularly use the Zoning Ordinance in South Lake Tahoe or have a specific interest in zoning to implement the Community Plan. The code users interviewed included developers, planners, real estate professionals, landowners, and residents.

The County's consultants conducted two hour-long interview sessions on February 28, 2012. The team interviewed a total of five stakeholders in two groups. The interviews were conducted by staff from the consulting team— Martha Miller and John M. Francis of Dyett & Bhatia, Urban and Regional Planners, as well as Hilary Roverud of the South Lake Tahoe Planning Department. The interviewees were asked a series of questions regarding overarching concerns as well as specific topics. People attending were also given the opportunity to discuss issues of significance to them that were not otherwise discussed in response to specific questions.

2 Stakeholder Comments

A strong consensus among stakeholders emerged about what the major issues are as they relate to the Development Code update. While the stakeholders may ultimately differ on the exact recommended changes, there was clear agreement that the zoning and development codes need to be revised to make it more understandable, and to support achievement of the Community Plan's major policy goals. Those interviewed pointed out numerous ways in which current Municipal Code actually works against achieving the community's vision for the future. Generally, stakeholders thought the County's regulations were effective in achieving quality development. Following is a list of the major themes heard during the stakeholder interviews. A comprehensive list of the comments received, organized by topic, is below.

1. Streamline the development process and consider providing greater incentives to spur development that the community considers desirable.
2. Allow greater building heights in select areas of Tahoe Valley to increase development potential.
3. Development standards should improve the pedestrian realm.
4. Site design and parking requirements should balance snow storage, auto user, and pedestrian needs.
5. Incentivize the rehab and remodeling of existing structures.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

General

- Development and Design Standards do not vary that much between specific plan areas in South Lake Tahoe because they flow from the TRPA Code.
- Some of the major standards that should be addressed include build-to lines, parking, and driveways.
- Development in the area should be authentic and not "fake suburban." It would be better to have development that is inconsistent but actually works on the ground than development that has a "clean" aesthetic but does not produce a successful environment.
- When developing the Accurate Audio Video site, did not have any issues with the current standards.
- Projects need to pencil out, but environmental benefits should be incorporated into the standards.
- In Tahoe, you can buy for less than you can build right now—there is a lot of interest from people who want to rehab buildings, which is great.
- There is a desire for a common area/park that helps foster a greater sense of community.

Height

- As an architectural style, "alpine rustic" puts you in a box. Putting mechanical in pitched roofs can be problematic. Recent trends in architecture do not require 7:12 roofs. This problem is common in South Lake Tahoe. Is alpine rustic a necessary building form? Could you allow for flat roofs as long as they meet snow load requirements? It is a question of community character.

- Appropriate height requirements depend on how the building addresses the street architecturally.
- Mixed use office and commercial would be a positive from the point of a developer. Height is the key factor—developers need another story or two to add value to their properties. In addition to the main corridors in the Core, the Third Street corridor is another potential area to accommodate additional height.
- If not given limits, builders will maximize height and bulk. Developers want to get the most for their money, but not every building in the area should be three stories.
- Question of first floor height vs. allowing a third story. What is the trade off and how important is it to regulate first floor height?

Site Design and Parking

- Building at the front of the lot can be an advantage because it provides the opportunity to highlight distinctive architecture and to improve signage. Having parking in the front looks like suburban sprawl. Successful mountain towns have buildings up front and they work because they allow people easy walking access.
- Snow storage is a key issue. Parking should not be cut up with planters because it makes snow storage impossible. If there was a plan for removing snow then that might be fine, but people do not want to pay for the planning. Parking area design should leave enough room for the snow.
- At the 50/89 intersection, the main parcels have large buildings set back from the street and large parking lots at the front of the parcel. The feasibility of building another structure on the lot closer to the street is low because of the loss of parking and snow storage area. Also, businesses want the building to be exposed to the highway to attract business—they do not want it hidden behind another building. Some property owners will not be interested in doing more development on their parcels.
- Parking lots need to be both aesthetically pleasing and functional. In other parts of the basin there are beautiful lots that are not effective because they are not well designed for the amount of traffic.

Circulation and Landscaping

- The vision articulated in the Community Plan is for continuous, landscaped, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks. However, installing a pedestrian edge along a highway as currently exists seems incongruous. This is not an environment that is conducive to pedestrian orientation because the highway is unpleasant and it is not enough of a destination. There is not enough mixed use development. Need to create a destination (e.g., Heavenly Resort).
- Landscaping is not important in itself—it contributes more toward appearance/aesthetics.
- The Accurate Audio Video was built slightly further back than the minimum setback to allow for a sidewalk and landscaping in the front.
- Local merchants want sidewalks, streetlights, and a pedestrian-friendly environment. Good examples include Stateline and the north shore of Tahoe. Also want to see things like drainage improvements, which help the environment.

LAND USE REGULATIONS

- The regulations are laborious. Properties have to be fully analyzed for highest and best use.
- People are interested in old motels and what you can do with them—what other uses are allowed? In order to make the properties work, they are looking at allowed density, lot coverage, floor area, and land use. Highway 50 corridor hotels are penalized because thresholds for coverage are a disincentive. Ground floor retail with upper story residential is feasible if three stories is allowed.
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Appendix B: Meyers Community Plan District Regulations, Diagnostic Report

Taboe Regional Planning Agency

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Meyers Community Plan District Regulations

Diagnostic Report

Prepared for

El Dorado County and TRPA

By

DYETT & BHATIA
Urban and Regional Planners

September 20, 2012

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El Dorado County

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Introduction

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Located just north of Echo Pass on Highway 50, Meyers serves as an important gateway to the southern portion of the Lake Tahoe region. The Meyers Community Plan, adopted in 1993, has been an important tool for guiding development in the community over the last 20 years. The overall vision of the plan—to promote economic health, cohesive community design, environmental conservation, and recreational uses—remains valid. However, there are a number of provisions proposed as part of the TRPA Regional Plan Update (RPU) that warrant refinements to the Meyers Community Plan and implementing regulations.

The area within the Meyers Community Plan is designated as a “Town Center” in the Tahoe Regional Planning Authority’s (TRPA) Regional Plan Update (RPU). Town centers are envisioned as walkable, mixed-use centers served by reliable and convenient public transit, with complete streets that encourage biking and walking. As described in the RPU, areas designated as “Town Centers” have the following characteristics:

- A concentration of non-residential and mixed-use development at a higher intensity than exists in other areas of the region.
- Existing or planned transit service.
- Highway access.
- Infill and redevelopment opportunities.
- Capacity for receiving transfers of development rights and relocations of existing development.
- Existing or planned housing in the vicinity.
- Existing or planned street designs with continuous sidewalks, paths and other infrastructure that promotes walking, bicycling and transit use so as to encourage mobility without use of private vehicles.

Additionally, through the Regional Plan Update, the TRPA is pursuing a regulatory structure where Regional Plan goals, policies, and ordinances are implemented using an integrated system of regional and local government planning. Land Use policies proposed in the Regional Plan Update allow local jurisdictions to prepare Area Plans which, if found in conformance with the Regional Plan, may supersede existing PASs, Community Plans, and other TRPA regulations. Once an Area Plan and the zoning and development codes within the plan have been found in conformance with the Regional Plan, the local jurisdiction may assume development review authority of a certain class of project by Memoranda of Understanding with TRPA.

This project, the update of development of district regulations for the Meyers Community Plan area, is intended to provide the physical development standards to implement the Community Plan’s vision, goals, and policies and implement the goals and policies of the RPU.

The purpose of this Diagnostic Report is to distill the basic choices and present the “big ideas” for consideration when preparing district regulations that translate the community’s vision for Meyers into the built environment. This paper is the culmination of the first stage of the effort, which consisted of a

background review of the current regulatory context, interviews with stakeholders, and a site tour of the plan area. This paper will serve as the starting point for drafting a set of land use, design, and development standards to present to the County and residents for review.

KEY ISSUES

The location and physical characteristics of Meyers provide both opportunities and challenges to achieving the vision outlined in the Community Plan.

- **Access:** Situated along Highway 50 at the intersection of State Route 89 (SR 89), businesses in Meyers have a large potential customer base of local residents and visitors. At the same time, however, the community's close proximity to the population and tourist center of South Lake Tahoe means that motorists are less likely to stop in Meyers as they enter or leave the region for their retail and service needs. As a result, Meyers has traditionally been more of a "drive-by community" than a destination itself.
- **Natural and Recreational Resources:** The stretch of Highway 50 traversing Meyers is designated as a scenic corridor by Caltrans, offering breathtaking panoramic vistas of Tahoe's alpine peaks and access to one of the Tahoe region's only groves of western juniper trees. Additionally, the biking and hiking trails that traverse the community planning area provide access to some of the region's best recreational resources. Currently, however, there is no signage or other indication of how to explore these resources while visiting the area.
- **Community Design and Built Environment:** There are a number of buildings in Meyers that contribute positively to the character of the community and reflect the vision of the Community Plan. Additionally, the bike paths running parallel to Highway 50 are a unique resource that offers enhanced access to local businesses and recreation. Unfortunately, there is an overall lack of coherence in how buildings in the community are designed and how they address the streets and bike paths, which undermines a strong sense of place. The unusually wide Highway 50 Caltrans right-of-way further exacerbates site design issues by forcing development to be built far from the roadway, and effectively hindering pedestrian circulation between the opposite sides of Highway 50. Landscaping along the highway corridor itself is typically minimal or non-existent, making it less inviting to potential visitors.

The physical characteristics discussed above suggest that one of the greatest needs for Meyers is a more cohesive physical environment that highlights the community's assets. By fostering a greater sense of place and identity, the Meyers community can signal to local residents and visitors that Meyers is not just a drive-by community on the way into or out of the Tahoe Basin, but rather a district that is itself a destination.

An important component of any approach to creating a sense of place and district identity is to have clear development and design standards in place so that as site development occurs, there is a cohesive physical form that supports the vision for the area. The recommendations for development and design standards appropriate for Meyers are the focus of this paper.

Complementary to development standards, area-wide programs can go a long way in distinguishing an area as a distinct district and creating a sense of place. Such programs include banner programs, sign programs, wayfinding programs, and other 'branding' activities. Potential programs suggested during interviews with

local stakeholders that may be pursued separately or as part of a comprehensive Community Plan update include the following:

- A local wayfinding program identifying local amenities, directing visitors to trailheads or other points of interest, which could include shared parking facilities (supporting a 'park once' district) or an enhanced visitors' center;
- A parking program to ensure sufficient parking for hikers and bikers accessing the local trails, passers-by taking in the view, or visitors arriving to shop, eat, or participate in special events. Coordinated and clearly identified parking areas can help entice driver's to stop by providing easy access and ability to park once and visit multiple destinations;
- A streetscape and signage improvement plan that establishes a unified community image to communicate Meyers' unique identity as well as a sense of arrival. Such a program could also encompass the establishment of a preferred landscaping palette along Highway 50 and the commissioning of public art.



Consistent street lighting and landscaping as well as a district-wide signage/banner concept can help create a unified streetscape and reinforce local identity. Above, the Ski Run district in South Lake Tahoe.

Lastly, it is clear from stakeholder feedback and an examination of site conditions that the Highway 50 right of way is a significant impediment to creating a sense of place and a better pedestrian environment in the community. Since development standards alone cannot address this issue, the community and County should actively engage with Caltrans to pursue an eventual redesign of the roadway that is both multi-modal and aesthetically pleasing. One option would be to redesign this section of highway as a boulevard with a fully landscaped median. However, as discussed in this paper, despite the excessive highway width, much can be done to improve the physical condition in Meyers through development standards that address the way buildings and other structures interface with the roadway, each other, and other community features.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations proposed for consideration in this paper are grouped into three topical areas summarized below. These recommendations do not all carry the same weight—some are more important and will have more far-reaching effects than others. These distinctions are discussed in the body of the paper.

Recommendation 1: Refine Zoning Districts to Reflect the Plan Vision

- 1A Revise District Designations
- 1B Adopt District Purpose Statements

Recommendation 2: Update Land Use Regulations

- 2A Require Active Ground Floor Uses in Key Areas
- 2B Allow for Mixed-Use Development
- 2C Utilize Use Types in the El Dorado County Code
- 2D Allow Temporary Uses

Recommendation 3: Design for Pedestrian Orientation and Local Identity

- 3A Establish Site Design Standards to Create a Cohesive District
- 3B Establish Building Form Standards to Support a Sense of Place
- 3C Ensure Adequate Identification of Individual Tenants
- 3D Design Parking to Support a “Park Once” District

Approaches to Regulating the Built Environment

In the United States, jurisdictions have traditionally taken an interest in regulating the built environment for a number of reasons, including the maintenance of stable residential areas and the prevention of health and safety hazards. More recently, other purposes have emerged such as promoting transit-oriented development, maintaining aesthetic values, encouraging infill development, and creating walkable communities. The power to regulate physical development is rooted in the police power that the State grants local governments. The Lake Tahoe Region is unique in this respect because TRPA's regulatory powers originate in the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact, a 1969 agreement between the California and Nevada legislatures to create the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for the protection of Lake Tahoe. The Compact, as amended in 1980, defines the purpose of TRPA: "To enhance governmental efficiency and effectiveness of the Region, it is imperative there be established a Tahoe Regional Planning Agency with the powers conferred by this compact including the power to establish environmental threshold carrying capacities and to adopt and enforce a regional plan and implementing ordinances which will achieve and maintain such capacities while providing opportunities for orderly growth and development consistent with such capacities."

Zoning and subdivision controls are the most common tool that cities use to implement their plans, visions, and goals. A zoning code, such as Title 17 of the El Dorado County Code, translates the policies of a comprehensive land use plan into parcel-specific regulations to implement land use, urban design, open space, and natural resource conservation goals articulated in the General Plan. Zoning regulations have traditionally been used to separate incompatible land uses, assign the geographic location of activities, minimize nuisance impacts and environmental harm, and coordinate or time development intensity with supporting public infrastructure. They are also effective in regulating the three-dimensional aspects of development with height, bulk, setback, and architectural design standards.

In sum, zoning regulations deal with two basic concerns:

- How to minimize the adverse effects that buildings or using one's property can have on its neighbors; and
- How to encourage optimal development patterns and activities within a community, as expressed in planning policies.

There are three primary approaches to zoning in use in the U.S. today: Euclidean (i.e. use-based and hierarchal schemes), performance-based, and physical form codes. The pros and cons of these basic types of zoning are summarized in the table on the following page. The table uses the term "prescriptive" to describe a rule-making process and the degree to which clear and objective standards for land use and development provide certainty to landowners, developers and the public at large.

COMPARISONS OF TYPES OF ZONING ORDINANCES

	Type of Zoning Ordinances	Pro's and Con's
Euclidean	Most American zoning codes follow some variation of the Euclidean model, named after Euclid, Ohio's zoning code. Euclidean zoning schemes divide jurisdictions into districts or zones, wherein certain types and intensities of uses are allowed. Historically, these districting schemes have been relatively homogeneous, with separate zones for residential, commercial and industrial uses, and have worked to segregate dissimilar uses. More recently, Euclidean codes also have been used to create mixed use zoning districts, although that was not the original intent. Euclidean zoning codes typically specify allowed uses, maximum residential density, and bulk and dimensional standards.	Euclidean codes tend to be largely prescriptive and therefore work best at preventing the most basic problems or nuisances. They are less effective in dealing with fine-grain neighborhood character issues that often arise in places where infill and redevelopment are most common. Within newly developing areas, Euclidean codes need to be linked to land division or subdivision regulations. These latter regulations often play a very important role, supporting zoning, because they provide the statutory basis and standards for decisions on street networks, pedestrian connections, and the location of parks, open spaces, and civic facilities.
Performance-Based	Performance-based codes include objective, quantifiable standards that are applied to uses to reduce impacts, promote land use compatibility, and improve the quality of development. The regulations and review procedures in these codes generally focus on how uses operate. Basic performance standards may include standards that directly limit impacts (e.g., noise standards) as well as standards that control impacts indirectly by constraining intensity of operations (e.g., floor area, residential density).	Performance-based codes are somewhat less prescriptive than form-based codes, at least in terms of design details, and allow for more architectural creativity and context-based solutions. They may be more complicated to administer than conventional zoning or form-based codes, but they can provide more certainty as to use and density/intensity and so may be favored by the development community and neighborhood organizations over codes that prescribe architectural design or rely on discretionary procedures involving public hearings and conditions of approval to ensure land use compatibility.
Physical Form-Based	Form-based codes prescribe the design or type of building, street, or neighborhood subarea, with limited or no restrictions on use. They typically include generic design prototypes for housing and commercial buildings and their relation to the street and to each other. This approach may differentiate neighborhoods, districts, and corridors; provide for a mixture of land uses and housing types within each; and provide specific measures for regulating relationships between buildings and between buildings and outdoor public areas, including streets.	Form-based codes tend to be highly prescriptive and are therefore thought of as very predictable. They are a way to express what is desired rather than what is discouraged or prohibited. These codes address matters outside those traditionally thought of as zoning (e.g., street design, sidewalks, parks, and civic spaces), and so often portrayed as more "holistic" than conventional zoning. They provide a way to bring planning and design considerations into zoning. These codes are effective where strong design guidance is needed and limitations on use and intensity are not critical.

Currently, the Community Plan is implemented through a primarily Euclidean approach. The district development standards are minimal, setting minimum requirements for lot area, required frontage, and setbacks. Maximum height and other standards not specifically addressed by the Community Plan are established in the TRPA Code of Ordinances. The Community Plan also includes design guidelines. Although generally only advisory, guidelines provide important direction for the review of development projects. Guidelines that are well-integrated with specific development and design standards can also help to ensure that development is consistent with the Community Plan by offering a more detailed description of the Plan's development objectives than may be apparent through standards alone. The updated district standards should work with the design guidelines to implement the community vision established in the Plan. As a general rule, the following distinctions can be drawn between guidelines and standards:

- **Guidelines** are non-quantifiable directions for development. Either mandatory or advisory, guidelines express desired outcomes rather than the specific, quantitative means for achieving them. Enforcement of guidelines in site plan and design review is done on a case-by-case basis and there is some discretion to allow for design flexibility.
- **Development and Design Standards** are quantified, measured or mapped items and are typically included within a zoning ordinance. They may be fixed (setbacks, building height, or upper-story setbacks) or performance-based (noise levels or screening requirements related to visibility from a public street). Standards must be met in order for a project to receive development approval unless a variance or exception is granted as specified in the zoning ordinance.

Recommendation 1: Refine Zoning Districts to Reflect the Plan Vision

The Community Plan establishes a number of community goals to achieve its vision. These include providing a mix of commercial, recreational, and public service uses, establishing a positive visual appearance and sense of permanence, improving pedestrian and bike circulation, and expanding access to recreational opportunities in the area. The Community Plan identifies five separate land use districts summarized below. Where possible, any major land use or development changes that have occurred since the adoption of the Community Plan in 1993 are noted.

MCP-1: Yank's Station

Considered the historic heart of Meyers, Yank's Station is one of two commercial nodes in Meyers. The Community Plan characterizes land uses in this area as 'retail goods and services', although there are also auto repair and light industrial uses on Santa Fe Road. Yank's Station is home to the only grocery store in the community (Lira's Market), two gas stations, a building supply company, and a bike shop, all located along Highway 50. The predominant development type along Highway 50 is 1-2 story small and medium scale commercial. Along Santa Fe Road the primary development character is single story industrial. The most recent, large-scale development in Yank's Station is the construction and renovation of several structures next to Lira's Market by the California Conservation Corps (CCC).

MCP-2: Lake Valley

The primary land use type established in the Community Plan for this district is community/public service. The most prominent developments are government uses, including a Highway Patrol Station (built subsequent to the adoption of the Community Plan), a USDA Forest Service work center, and the agricultural inspection station located within the existing Highway 50 right of way. In addition to government uses, a wide range of recreational uses are also permitted, but there has been little to no development of this type to date. East of Highway 50, this district is sparsely developed with only a few small single story buildings. Due to the relatively sparse development pattern, the bike paths running parallel to the highway are a dominant physical feature of the district. Due to the location and configuration of lots in this district, retail and service uses are appropriate land uses. However, due to the large amount of land in public ownership, a much smaller amount of these retail and service uses would be ultimately be developed in the Lake Valley area than in the Yank's Station and West Meyers areas.

MCP-3: West Meyers

Along with Yank's Station, this district is the other primary commercial node in Meyers. Its designated land uses in the Community Plan is recreation and retail services. West Meyers is home to a number of small businesses including restaurants, real estate offices, and recreational rental services. The predominant development type is 1-2 story, small format commercial. Meyers Station, which was built on the east side of Highway 50 after Community Plan adoption, provides spaces for several local small businesses. Also during that time, the Tweeten auto mechanic site, located on a large parcel west of Highway 50 at the southern gateway to Meyers, closed and remains vacant today. The current Meyers Visitors' Center is located in this district.

MCP-4: Industrial Tract

This district is located along Highway 89 and consists of light industrial uses, storage and warehousing, as well as public service yards. The predominant development type is single story industrial. This area is expected to continue as an industrial and public service area.

MCP-5: Upper Truckee River

The land use theme established in the Community Plan for this district is residential and recreational uses. Currently, this district consists almost entirely of vacant land with just a few single-family residences.

These districts are carried forward directly into Subsection IV of Chapter 17.58 of the El Dorado County Code.

ISSUES

While the Community Plan is titled the “Meyers Community Plan”, the plan area encompasses only areas designated as commercial and public service. Thus, the plan area is relatively small, consisting of 155 acres along the Highway 50 and 89 corridors. The Meyers “community” is actually much larger than the plan area, including a number of residential neighborhoods and other commercial and public service areas.

As described above, the Community Plan identifies five separate land use districts within the relatively small plan area. While this differentiation is helpful in understanding the character, intent, and background for the purposes of the Community Plan, such differentiation may not be necessary for the purposes of development and design standards. For the sake of establishing user-friendly zoning regulations, the total number of districts should be minimized. Three of the five districts in Meyers are mixed-use and oriented toward Highway 50 with little differentiation in development standards.

The Meyers Community Plan district regulations are contained in Chapter 17.58 of the El Dorado County Code. Chapter 17.58 carries forward the five separate districts identified in the Community Plan. However, the County Code does not include purpose statements for the districts. Purpose statements define the intent of each district, clarify the distinctions among districts, and ensure that each district is clearly complementary to others. In addition, they explain in general language the objectives of the district and how its consistency with the community’s land use policy. These statements serve as a guide for specifying use regulations and standards and for administration of zone regulations; they also can provide a basis for the findings required for action on discretionary permits. Development standards for each district should then reflect the purpose statements and provide clear standards to accomplish the broader land use goals described in the Community Plan and the RPU.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Recommendation 1A: Revise District Designations

To implement the goals and policies of the Community Plan, the County and the Meyers community should consider adopting new zoning district designations into its existing zoning framework that more readily identify the goal and purpose for the area. As discussed above, the Meyers community extends beyond the Community Plan area boundaries. The current name of the Zoning District in the El Dorado County Code, Meyers Community Plan (MCP) Districts, does not reflect the role of the area as the commercial center of the community. Subdistricts should be identified where necessary to address unique characteristics of individual

areas that warrant differing use or development regulations. As with the district designation, the name of each subdistrict should reflect the role and differing characteristics of each area.

The proposed districts presented in Table 1 below utilize a districting approach to effectively implement the policies and land use designations in the Community Plan and reflect the different characters and development patterns in the Meyers area (See Figure 1). In addition to renaming the subdistricts to more directly relate to the role of each area, it is proposed to combine the MCP-1: Yank's Station, MCP-2: Lake Valley, and MCP-3: West Meyers districts. These are all mixed-use areas with frontage on Highway 50, the most influential element of the plan area. Combining these districts would simplify the code for users and treat similar properties more equitably in terms of requirements.

TABLE 1: PROPOSED DISTRICTS			
Proposed District Designations		Community Plan Designations	
MCC-MX	Mixed-Use	MCP-1	Yank's Station
		MCP-2	Lake Valley
		MCP-3	West Meyers
MCC-I	Industrial	MCP-4	Industrial Tract
MCC-RT	Residential/Tourist	MCP-5	Upper Truckee River

One district boundary change is also recommended. Specifically, the mixed-use district boundary should expand slightly north to include five small parcels east of Highway 50, on which is located a fur retail business. Due to the commercial nature of the property and its proximity directly adjacent to other businesses within the mixed-use district, there is interest in the community for making it a more integral part of the district. This proposed district boundary change is reflected in Figure 1.

As discussed below, this refined set of zones should be supplemented with purpose statements at the beginning of each section to clarify the intent behind each zone.

Recommendation 1B: Adopt District Purpose Statements

In Meyers, the overarching vision for the community articulated in the Community Plan is largely still relevant. As district regulations are developed, it is important to provide a clear link between the specific development and use regulations and the vision they are intended to implement. District purpose statements provide this essential link between Community Plan policies and district regulations.

The refined set of districts described above should be supplemented with purpose statements to clarify the overall purpose of the Meyers Community Center District as well as the more specific intent of each sub-district. As recommended below, purpose statements drawn from the Community Plan and Regional Plan will clarify the distinctions among districts and ensure that each district is clearly complementary to others.

Meyers Community Center District Purpose:

The purposes of the Meyers Community Center (MCC) Districts are to:

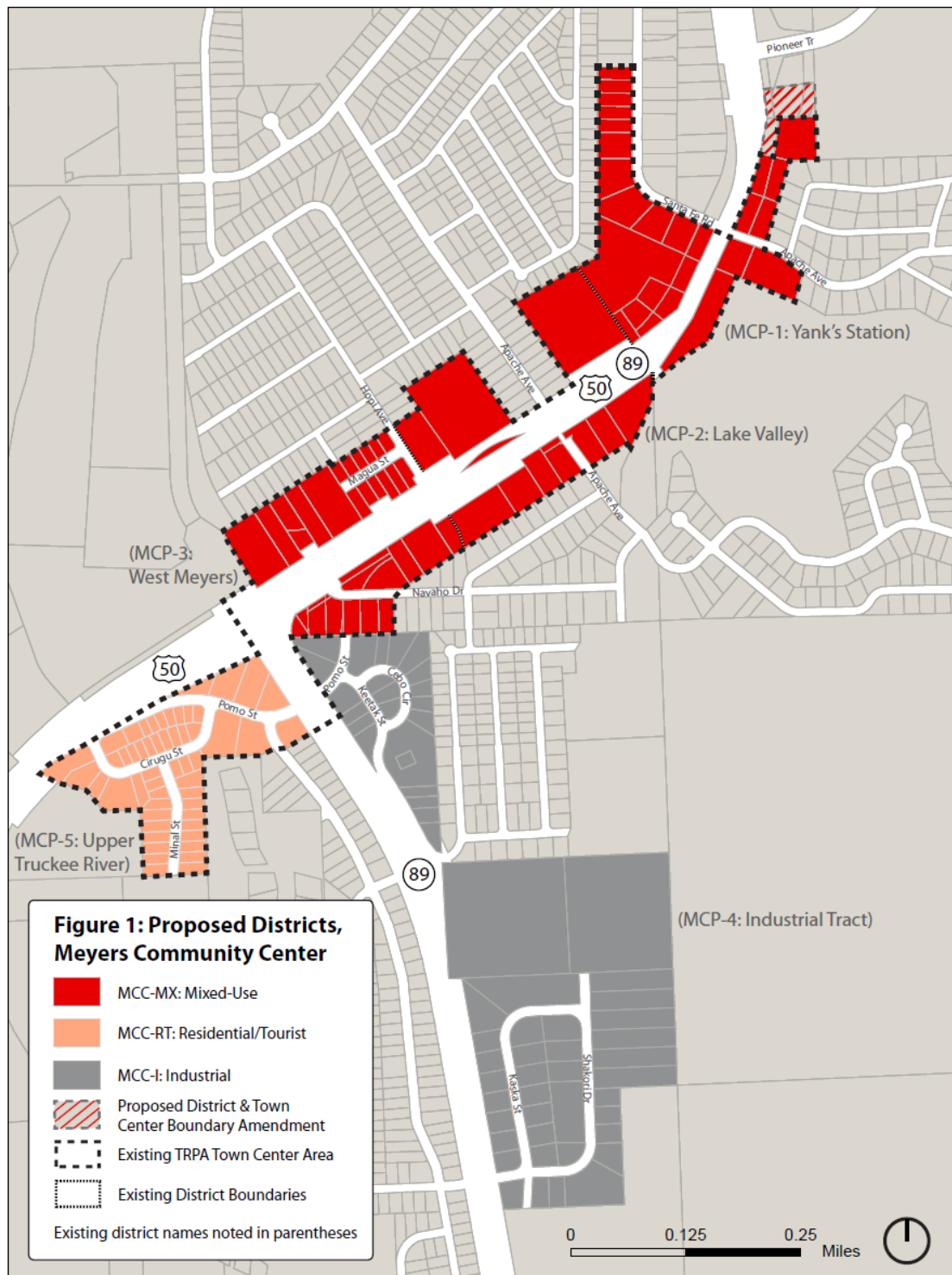
- Provide for the orderly, well-planned, and balanced growth of the Meyers area and support the area's role as the commercial center of the Meyers community.
- Establish the area as a distinct district with a unique identity and as a destination for residents and visitors.
- Promote Meyers as an outdoor sport and recreation hub for accessing the Tahoe Basin's wealth of hiking, biking, and skiing trails and other recreational opportunities.
- Encourage a mix of uses that promotes convenience, a locally-based economy, and a place where people can live, work, and play in a mountain community setting.

Additional purposes for each MCC District:

Mixed-Use (MCC-MU). This district is the heart of the Meyers commercial area. It is intended to become a place of public gathering and retail and service activity, meeting local needs and drawing travelers. This district allows for mixed-use development with a focus on ground level active storefronts that relate to the Highway 50 corridor and the bike/pedestrian path. Design standards are intended improve the pedestrian- and bicycle-orientation and visual quality of development to create a unified, distinctive, and attractive character along Highway 50. Allowable uses include a mix retail, service, public, tourist, and residential uses organized in a compact development pattern.

Industrial (MCC-I). This district is intended to provide for a mix of small-scale service and light-industrial uses such as offices, small-scale manufacturing, and contractor services to meet local and regional demand.

Residential/Tourist (MCC-RT). This district is intended to provide low-density residential housing, tourist accommodation, and recreational uses in a natural setting and to create a welcoming gateway to Meyers and the Lake Tahoe Basin.



Recommendation 2: Update Land Use Regulations

Community center areas should feel like vibrant places to gather, shop, and access services. The types of uses could range from shops to cafes, commercial services to tourist accommodation. The objective is to provide a mix of land uses that offer goods and services at different times of the day and week and provide a consolidated “one-stop” area for people to live, work, shop, and participate in entertainment and community activities in close proximity to each other. Additionally, due to Meyer’s location, it is important to portray a lively and distinct sense of place in order to let travelers know they have arrived somewhere. Activity and vibrancy are important clues to change travelers’ impressions of Meyers as a place to stop and explore rather than an indication that they are getting closer to another destination. In particular, providing active uses at the street level can be effective in promoting activity and a sense of community character and identity.

EXISTING SETTING

Currently, Meyers is primarily known as a commercial district, hosting commercial, retail, and service uses. A few of these uses, including Lira’s Market and a small number of restaurants, have business hours into the evening, but the majority of uses are active only during the day and are auto-oriented. Also of note are a number of public service and industrial uses that, with the exception of the post office, generally do not produce a great deal of visits or foot traffic.

Overall, as is true in many communities, the land uses that are actually present in Meyers do not represent the full diversity of uses that are permitted. The most prevalent type of allowed use in the Community Plan area is commercial. Residential, public, and recreation uses are also allowed. Allowed uses by individual district are summarized in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: PERMITTED USES BY DISTRICT		
Community Plan District		Permitted Uses
MCP-1	Yank’s Station	This district allows for the widest variety of uses of all the districts within the plan area, including multi-family residential development; tourist accommodation; commercial retail, entertainment, services, and some light industrial; public services; and recreation. Single family residential development is not allowed.
MCP-2	Lake Valley	The allowed uses in this district are much more limited, focusing on public services, commercial entertainment, and recreation as listed under MCP-1. Residential and tourist accommodation uses are limited to employee housing, single family residences, and bed and breakfast facilities. Retail and commercial services are largely not permitted.
MCP-3	West Meyers	The allowed uses in this district are generally consistent with those in MCP-1. Notable exceptions include the treatment of residential and tourist accommodation uses. Multi person dwellings (dormitories), nursing and personal care, time-share units, and hotels/motels are not allowed. However, single-family development is allowed.
MCP-4	Industrial Tract	Allowed uses in this district are primarily commercial service or industrial in nature, with some retail and recreation uses allowed with a special permit. Residential or tourist accommodation uses are not allowed.
MCP-5	Upper Truckee River	This district is the most restrictive as far as allowed uses. Allowed uses are limited to single-family residences, bed and breakfast facilities, day care, local public health and safety facilities, cultural facilities, essential public services, and some recreation uses.

Currently, the only residential uses allowed by right in the plan area are single-family residences in MCP-5: Upper Truckee River and nursing and personal care in MCP-1: Yank's Station. Multi-family development is a special use in MCP-1: Yank's Station and MCP-3: West Meyers. Single-family residential development is allowed as a special use in MCP-2: Lake Valley and MCP-3: West Meyers. However, single-family residential development is not typically considered to support the vision of walkable, mixed-use areas.

LAND USE DEFINITIONS

The uses allowed in the Community Plan utilize the use definitions included in the TRPA Code of Ordinances. When the El Dorado County Code was updated to incorporate the Community Plan, the use regulations were incorporated as is, using the TRPA Code of Ordinances definitions rather than the use definitions used in other parts of the County. This can cause confusion as uses are not regulated consistently within the County. For example, a day care facility is considered a 'day care center and preschool' in the district regulations for Meyers but an 'independent day care facility' in all other parts of the County. Additionally, El Dorado County is currently in the midst of a Zoning Code Update which includes a revised set of use types. The Board of Supervisors is currently reviewing the Public Review Draft Zoning Ordinance.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Recommendation 2A: Require Active Ground Floor Uses in Key Areas

The Community Plan identifies two primary commercial cores in the plan area, Yank's Station, located at the north end of the plan area, and West Meyers, located just north of the intersection of Highways 50 and 89. While these districts allow for active retail uses, a wide variety of other uses that may not generate a large amount of foot traffic are also allowed. These uses, while important to the community, do not provide a concentration of activity to give the area identity. Active uses at the ground floor should be required in limited areas along Highway 50 to provide a concentration of activity. Retail shops, restaurants, and personal services are examples of ground floor uses that spur activity and create a unique local character. Other uses may be located on upper floors or other areas of the site.

Recommendation 2B: Allow for Mixed-Use Development

The RPU designates the entire plan area, except for the MCP-4: Industrial Tract, as "Town Center". The Town Center designation allows mixed-use development to support the vision of these areas as walkable, mixed-use centers. A mixed-use development strategy is also consistent with the vision established in the Community Plan for creating an economically viable and pedestrian-oriented community. The use regulations should be revised to expand the allowances for mixed-use development, including allowing multi-family residential development in all areas except MCP-4: Industrial Tract and MCP-5: Upper Truckee River. In areas where active ground floor uses are required as recommended in Recommendation 2A above, residential uses could be allowed on upper stories or at the back of the site. The uses fronting Highway 50 would still be active.

Additionally, the uses allowed in the MCP-2: Lake Valley District should be expanded to allow more retail and commercial service uses as are allowed in MCP-1: Yank's Station and MCP-3: West Meyers. The large amount of public ownership in the MCP-2: Lake Valley District results in more public and semi-public uses actually locating in that district and less area dedicated to retail and service uses. However, it does not mean that retail and service uses should not be allowed. Due to the location and configuration of lots in MCP-2:

Lake Valley District, retail and service uses are appropriate land uses. The allowed uses should be updated to allow retail and service uses and recognize role of this area as part of a larger district an important part of the continuum of uses along the important Highway 50 corridor rather than an area of public and semi-public uses separating two commercial nodes.

Recommendation 2C: Utilize Use Types in the El Dorado County Code

Consistent and unambiguous regulations are important for the ease of use of any zoning code. Currently, El Dorado County and TRPA share permit authority in Meyers, however, differing regulations and lack of clarity has led to much confusion as to which regulations apply. The RPU proposed to address this issue by allowing local jurisdictions to assume development review authority after adoption of a conforming Area Plan—the district regulations to be developed through this planning effort is a component the larger effort to develop a conforming Area Plan. The ultimate goal is to ensure that development in Meyers is subject to the rules and regulations of the El Dorado County Code, which are consistent with the RPU. As a result, the use regulations for the Meyers Community Plan District should utilize the use types proposed in the El Dorado County Code update rather than relying on those defined in the TRPA Code of Ordinances. Where it is necessary to regulate a use addressed in the TRPA Code of Ordinances but not currently in the El Dorado County Code, a new use type should be incorporated in the El Dorado County Code.

Recommendation 2D: Allow for Permitting of Temporary Uses

Part of the strategy for supporting the area's role as a community center and for promoting active uses in Meyers could be to allow for temporary uses such as farmers markets, outdoor performances, and other community events such as art fairs or seasonal celebrations. In stakeholder interviews, residents and business owners expressed interest in hosting such events in Meyers. Chapter 17.23 of the El Dorado County Zoning Ordinance allows a number of temporary events to be conducted with temporary use permit approval subject to specific standards that primarily address performance criteria such as duration, type of event, and parking. These allowances however, do not apply in Meyers. Temporary events in the Meyers area are instead subject to TRPA regulations which require a more involved discretionary review process to allow temporary events unless the area is designated as a Special Events Area. The Meyers Community Plan area should be designated as a Special Event Area and district regulations should include tailored provisions for the Meyers area to allow temporary events through a streamlined review process subject to standards and criteria that address compatibility issues and potential environmental impacts.

Recommendation 3: Design for Pedestrian Orientation and Local Identity

There are many elements of planning and design that affect the experience of pedestrians, cyclists, and visitors to an area. Development and design standards can address the form of buildings, the spatial relationships among them, and the public spaces they collectively create; these qualities are foundations of a pedestrian-oriented and transit-supportive place. For motorists, active, walkable streets are one element of a “park-once” district, where walking connects multiple destinations.

Creating the livability, ambiance, and charm that make people feel good about certain places goes beyond architectural beauty. What gives great places that special “feel”—or identity—are factors such as how buildings align to the street and to other buildings, their distance from the street curb, the size of entryways, the amount of sun and shade that buildings displace, the proximity of street trees, and whether the outdoor spaces between buildings are “left over” or purposefully created.

EXISTING SETTING

Highway 50 is arguably the most dominant feature of the built environment in Meyers, and as a result, development in the community is highly influenced by the road’s traffic patterns and dimensions. As the primary route into the southern portion of the Tahoe Basin from the west, Highway 50 carries substantial traffic, particularly during the winter and summer tourist seasons. Additionally, the portion of the highway that runs through Meyers has an unusually wide right of way—more than 300 feet in some places—that includes not just the roadway itself, but also empty parcels to its east and west, which are owned by Caltrans. As a result of these factors, the urban form in Meyers is more typical of suburban-style strip development than a small mountain community. This pattern is manifested in four primary ways.

First, existing development is designed with deep building setbacks from the roadway—typically, at least 100 feet—and little physical coordination between parcels. Part of this large setback is unavoidable due to Caltrans ownership. However, in some cases, the setback is deeper than necessary due to buildings being setback with parking located in front of the building. In stakeholder interviews, some business owners expressed the desire to build closer to the roadway in order to increase their visibility for passing motorists, but due to the constraint of Caltrans ownership and regulations regarding development on these parcels, they are unable to do so. Although there is a bike/pedestrian path through much of the district, site-to-site access between parcels is very poor and most business are oriented toward automobiles rather than specifically addressing the bike/pedestrian path. Large separations and poor connections between uses mean that visitors may have to park multiple times for a single visit to the area. These issues generally result in a poor relationship between buildings, the bike/pedestrian path, and the street and do not support a unified, walkable district.

Second, most existing buildings in Meyers are not constructed with pedestrian or bicycle orientation in mind. There is often little to no transparency into ground-floor areas, blank, unarticulated walls are common, and the quality of architecture and building materials varies greatly throughout the community. While the bike/pedestrian path is a unifying element throughout the district and an important connection to areas beyond, few, if any buildings are oriented toward the path or provide dedicated access from the path. Access from the path to businesses is typically the driveway. Third, site landscaping is minimal to non-existent on

most properties, which detracts from the visual appearance of the community. Issues of building and landscape design are particularly important in helping to create a unified sense of identity for Meyers.

Lastly, the placement and size of business signage takes on particular importance due to the wide dimensions on Highway 50. Currently, there is a tension between the desire for prominent signage to attract passersby to local businesses and the need to protect the visual aesthetics of the scenic corridor by placing limits on signage. The issue of visibility is of particular importance for businesses which are tenants in multi-unit developments, where they have less control over how much signage they are allotted and have to compete for attention with other businesses.

REGULATORY CONTEXT

The current development standards provide little direction for the area's physical development, establishing regulations only for parcel size, lot frontage, and setbacks. As noted earlier, the Community Plan also establishes a number of detailed guidelines on issues ranging from driveway access and landscaping to building colors and styles that are intended to establish a consistent identity for Meyers. However, the guidelines are advisory in nature and do not include fixed (setbacks, building height, or upper-story setbacks) or performance-based (noise levels or screening requirements related to visibility from a public street) standards that must be met in order for a project to receive development approval. Additionally, the guidelines fail to establish a strong set of physical development standards that are aimed toward improving conditions for pedestrian circulation and access in the area.

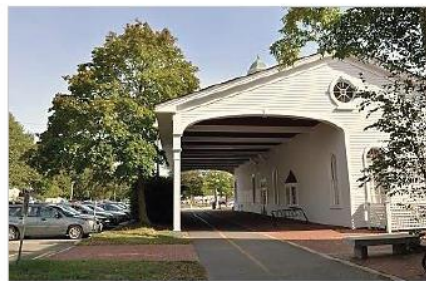
The guidelines in the Community Plan are clear in their intent but do not provide the complete set of tools necessary for consistent implementation of the vision established in the Community Plan. While these guidelines may provide a good starting point, there is currently a lack of standards addressing building façades, massing and articulation, height, and other detailed design elements that can help provide a unique identity and sense of place.

The Community Plan includes a set of required Substitute Sign Standards that replace certain sections of the County Code and the TRPA Code of Ordinances. The most significant deviation from these codes is the allowance of temporary winter signs placed on private property close to the roadway when snow banks limit the visibility of permanent signs. The design guidelines include detailed design recommendations as well as a provision for developing a coordinated sign plan for multi-tenant complexes that "minimizes visual conflicts and competition among tenant signs, yet insures adequate identification for each tenant." However, the signage standards do not sufficiently address the challenges facing business owners due to the highway width and the special qualities of Meyers' scenic setting, especially as the sign standards relate to individual tenants. Visibility is important and allowable sign area is limited. Sign standards should balance the economic health of the area while protecting scenic resources.

ISSUES

As described above, current regulations lack the detailed development and design standards addressing key elements of the built environment are critical for creating pedestrian and bicycle orientation, such as building orientation, parking location, and landscaping. While the regulations should be balanced to allow for flexibility and design creativity, minimum standards should help in establishing a consistent design approach that supports Meyers as a destination in its own right and a cohesive district. Where regulations do exist, they should be updated to fulfill the Community Plan vision. For example, the current minimum front setback required in Meyers is 20 feet. Given the Highway 50 right-of-way is much wider than the actual roadway, a

setback may not be needed. The wide right-of-way is further accentuated by structures that are built farther back than the minimum setback. This suggests the need to require *maximum* setbacks to increase access and ensure a more prominent street wall, located as close as possible to the roadway and organized around the bike/pedestrian path, which can serve as the unifying public-realm element throughout the district and an important connection to areas beyond. Buildings should also be oriented to address the bike/pedestrian path and provide dedicated access so bicyclists and pedestrians to minimize potential conflicts with automobiles. The following photos offer examples of successful interfaces between bike/pedestrian paths and businesses in a variety of settings. Common to all are active frontages directly adjacent to the bike/pedestrian path.



RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Recommendation 3-A: Establish Site Design Standards to Create a Cohesive District

Careful site planning, including the placement of buildings and their relationship to the public realm, can promote a sense of place and improve the pedestrian experience by allowing direct access from the street, other business, or the bike/pedestrian path. The following are important design characteristics to consider.

- **Building Site.** Standards should identify instances where a building may or must be built (e.g., within a certain distance of the bike/pedestrian path) and where setbacks are required (e.g., in areas that transition from commercial to residential uses). Appropriate uses and treatment of the setback area should also be identified to ensure the relationship between the bike/pedestrian path and buildings. Regulating setbacks so buildings are set back a consistent distance from the existing or planned edge of the bike/pedestrian path and identifying appropriate treatment and use of the setback area will help portray a cohesive, vibrant area to entice people to pull off the highway and establish an attractive and connected pedestrian environment in which people can visit multiple businesses once they've gotten out of their cars.
- **Building Orientation.** Buildings should be oriented to face the street and the bike/pedestrian path. Building frontages should be generally parallel to and have a primary building entrance should be located on a public street or the bike/pedestrian path.
- **Landscaping.** Standards should address the type, amount, and location of landscaping and how it would complement the natural and built environment, giving consideration to the Tahoe environment and the need to accommodate snow and provide defensible space. Section 17.18.090 of the El Dorado County Zoning Ordinance already requires landscaped buffers for off-street parking lots, but additional standards for landscaping between the front façade of buildings and the roadway or bike path would help improve the pedestrian and bicycling environment throughout Meyers.

Recommendation 3-B: Establish Building Form Standards to Support a Sense of Place

- **Height.** Buildings in the Meyers area are typically 1-2 stories up to approximately 30-35 feet in height. A height limit of 35 feet consistent with existing development should be retained to reflect community character and maintain significant vistas. Development and design standards may refine where maximum heights should be achieved in order to reflect the different characteristics in the area. For example, a higher height may be appropriate in commercial nodes whereas areas adjacent to residential areas should maintain a lower height.
- **Transparency and Openings.** Standards should limit the length of a blank wall provide minimum transparency requirements for the overall look of buildings as seen by the public to entice shoppers and curiosity among pedestrians. Some communities have transparency requirements for commercial development (e.g., at least 50 percent of the frontage must be transparent) to allow maximum visual interaction between sidewalk areas and the interior of buildings.

- **Design.** Recesses, projections, variation in roof levels and materials create visual interest and variety in locations of shadow and light. Porches, stairs, and balconies can signal habitation and encourage interactions between residents and passers-by. Architectural detail and articulation on all sides of the building, entrances, and elements such as awnings and trim create a harmonious appearance. Building materials, use of color, signage, and public art can also contribute to the comfort and safety of the pedestrian.
- **Screening.** Service facilities such as trash enclosures and mechanical equipment should be screened with enclosures and devices consistent with the building architecture in form, material, and detail. They should not obstruct sidewalks or public areas.
- **Service Areas.** Service areas are a necessary part of any development. Integrating these areas into the site and building design can provide for convenient loading/unloading for vehicle deliveries, storage, and refuse, while ensuring a safe, pleasant experience for pedestrians.

Recommendation 3-C: Ensure Adequate Identification of Individual Tenants

The Meyers district standards should contain a specific provision that guarantees a minimum amount of sign area for each tenant of a multi-tenant business complex. Alternatively, the existing guideline which suggests a coordinated sign plan for multiple-tenant complexes could be made into a standard with a requirement to identify the amount of sign area reserved for each tenant. The coordinated sign plan would be reviewed to ensure adequate identification for each tenant. Additionally, the district regulations could establish the framework to allow additional signage as part of a district-wide wayfinding, public art, or other 'branding' type program aimed at promoting the area as a distinct, unified district.

Recommendation 3-D: Design Parking to Support a "Park Once" District

Automobile access is vital to the Meyers area as a key strategy in getting travellers to perceive Meyers as a destination—that is, it should be easy and convenient to pull off the highway and access local businesses. However, another key feature of enhancing the Meyers area is making it convenient and attractive for pedestrians and bicyclists. As a result, parking, access, and vehicular circulation need to be carefully designed to avoid conflicts and support the entire area as an integrated district.

- **Access.** Parking areas should be accessed from a side street whenever possible. Access points along Highway 50 and across the bike/pedestrian path should be minimized to avoid conflicts.
- **Location.** Parking lots should be located on the side or rear of a site, typically behind a building to ensure a consistent street wall and enhance visibility.
- **Shared Facilities.** An overabundance of parking leads to an inefficient use of land and an unwelcoming visual environment. Programs and incentives for shared parking should be explored to increase land use efficiency and provide coordinated parking that serves the Meyers district. Having coordinated parking can not only support a "park once" atmosphere, but can also serve to help enforcement of parking restrictions and make it easier to identify cars that have been left for long periods of time.

Next Steps

The recommendations in this paper lay out a series of ideas and choices for the community to discuss in a public workshop, during which the El Dorado County Planning Commissioners and the public can ask questions about how land use, development, and design standards can implement the vision outlined in the Community Plan. The workshop will also provide the opportunity for Commissioners and the public to identify unanswered questions or additional issues that need to be considered. Feedback received on the recommendations will provide direction for the Draft District Regulations that will be prepared for review.

El Dorado County

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Appendix A: Stakeholder Interview Summary

Introduction

In order to learn about the issues associated with crafting the land use, development, and design standards for the Meyers Community Plan (Community Plan), interviews were conducted with a cross-section of stakeholders—people who are familiar with development in the area or have a specific interest in zoning to implement the Community Plan. The stakeholders interviewed included developers, planners, real estate professionals, environmental advocates, business owners, property owners, and residents.

The TRPA/County's consultants conducted three hour-long interview sessions on June 15, 2012. The team interviewed a total of 16 stakeholders in three groups. The interviews were conducted by staff from the consulting team—Martha Miller and John M. Francis of Dyett & Bhatia, Urban and Regional Planners—as well as John Hitchcock and Pat Dobbs of TRPA. The interviewees were asked a series of questions regarding overarching concerns as well as specific topics. People attending were also given the opportunity to discuss issues of significance to them that were not otherwise discussed in response to specific questions. Although the focus of this planning effort is to update land use, development, and design standards for the Community Plan, interviewee comments addressed a wide range of topics that should be considered in a comprehensive update of the Community Plan. These comments are included in this stakeholder interview summary for consideration during a future comprehensive update.

Introduction

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2 Stakeholder Comments

A strong consensus among stakeholders emerged about what the major issues are as they relate to the Meyers Community Plan District Regulations update. While the stakeholders may ultimately differ on the exact recommended changes, there was clear agreement that the district regulations need to be revised to make it more understandable, and to support achievement of the Community Plan's major policy goals. Generally, stakeholders thought the Plan's regulations were effective in achieving quality development but refinements could be made to provide clarity and facilitate achievement of community goals. Following is a list of the major themes heard during the stakeholder interviews. A comprehensive list of the comments received, organized by topic, is below.

1. Promote a distinct sense of place.
2. Enhance the Highway 50 corridor and the interface of the highway and abutting properties.
3. Streamline the development process and improve consistency in the enforcement of existing regulations.
4. Provide greater flexibility in signage regulations to allow businesses to increase their visibility while protecting the scenic character of the community.
5. Highlight and promote natural and recreational assets in Meyers such as its mountain vistas and bike and hiking trails.

LAND USE, DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS UPDATE

General Comments

- Town centers located away from main highways have a greater sense of community. Meyers could focus future development around a community center concept. The highway divides the area. What is the heart of Meyers?
- Slow people down and have them stop in Meyers. Meyers is not just a drive-by community.
- The Meyers Community Plan envisions nodes of growth. This concept is still relevant.
- Highlight the bike trail as a resource that will draw people into the community and make the economics work for local businesses. Potentially use bike paths as unifying trait of Meyers.
- Public art can be used to create sense of place.
- The flat typography and scenic vistas make Meyers great for accessibility.
- Regulations should address demolition of structures on abandoned properties.

Design and Development Standards

General

- The current design guidelines work well.
- Since the implementation of the Plan, the standards have worked well. They are not too constraining for property owners and are aesthetically pleasing (e.g. wood, rocks, natural elements, colors, etc.).

- The standards should stay flexible.
- Standards should harness assets that are already in Meyers that would make local residents and visitors value it more.
- Meyers Station is good example of the type of development the community wants to see.

Signage

- Signage is an issue because of the width of the Caltrans highway right of way. Landowners can purchase use easements for the right of way in front of their property but it can only be used for landscaping and signage. Other property owners have Caltrans property right up against their developments.
- Signage is a big issue. Issues such as the right of way width and snow storage limit visibility. Also, business owners do not update their signs because any changes require an update to all existing non-conforming signage, which is expensive.
- Merchants want good signage but the sign regulations are restrictive.
- The fact that Meyers is on a scenic corridor means there are a lot of restrictions on signage. Businesses would like a lot more signage.
- Snow banks hide businesses and signage. Businesses put up banners in the winter to increase visibility.
- Because signage is so restricted, businesses want to maximize sign area. This creates a problem when there are multiple tenants on one site that have to share the overall sign allocation. May need signage regulation that allows at least one sign per tenant. Should have reasonable amount of signage available for businesses.
- Public art is important. Consider a coordinated art and signage program with a unifying theme.

Building and Lighting Design

- Buildings should be more aesthetically pleasing. Progressive, contemporary architecture and building materials should be allowed. Some examples include development in Vail, CO and Jackson Hole, WY.
- The current standards are fine. There are great views from Meyers that need to be protected because they encourage people to get out of their cars and take pictures. Four story buildings, as are allowed in Town Center areas by TRPA, may be too high. Don't increase height allowance above current regulations.
- The California Conservation Corps building under construction is designed fairly well but the roof is not earth-toned as it should be according to current standards.
- The shed in front of agricultural station is an eyesore.
- Lighting design in Meyers needs to be addressed, particularly since lighting technology is evolving. It is important to consider the different kinds of lighting needs that exist in the area (e.g. parking, bike trail, signage, highway). Standards should be consistent throughout the corridor because it is such a small area. Consider implementation of a lighting program that, among other things, requires consistent fixtures.

Site Design and Parking

- People want to build closer to the highway (at the front of the lot) in order to have more visibility on the road.
- Narrowing the roadway would make visibility even harder because buildings would be set back further from the street.
- Buildings should be closer to the trail and parking should be located at the back of the parcel—this would make uses more prominent and more aesthetically pleasing. Include bike parking in front as well.
- There is a concern that if people don't see parking on the front of a parcel they might think that there is not any available.
- Bike paths are somewhat of an afterthought in the design of the community currently. There should be an intelligent interaction between the bike path and buildings.
- Give people the feeling that they can park at one business and walk to others as well.
- Consider how the concept of outdoor dining can contribute to the public realm.
- Meyers Station parking lot is not well designed—the way it is all cut up means that it is hard to navigate, especially for large vehicles. Parking is too cramped.

Landscaping and Circulation

- Attractive landscaping is very important. The Meyers Station development is very inviting. Meyers could look like the entrance to a state park.
- A more unified streetscape would make the community more appealing. A good example is the Ski Run beautification project in South Lake Tahoe. It would be great to have something that reflects Meyers from a landscaping perspective.
- Highway width is an asset because it allows wide views of surrounding vistas. Pull-offs for tourists that have information about surrounding peaks should be considered. This will help businesses too.
- Most of the year people are going to be driving in this area because of weather constraints, not walking.

Land Use Regulations

General

- Land use designations in the Meyers plan are appropriate.
- Existing allowed uses may be too broad. It is important to have complementary uses throughout the core. For example, what are complementary uses next to restaurants? Some communities limit the number of real estate offices. Reexamine the five subzones.
- Allow more active uses along the sidewalk.
- Focus active uses in the nodes.
- Hotels have not been financially feasible in Meyers. Not enough of a destination being so close to South Lake Tahoe.
- It would be great to have a coffee shop in Meyers.

Special Events

- It would be beneficial to have special events in Meyers (e.g. farmers' market, carnival), but there is no space.
- Farmers markets currently need a temporary use permit, which takes a long time to obtain and requires a public hearing. Need a special event designation in Meyers to allow for such things with less administrative hassle. Consider implementing a special event permit not tied to a specific location.

Visitors' Center

- It would be beneficial to develop a public/private visitors' center in order to give a sense of arrival.
- Are visitors' centers going to be relevant with the advent of mobile technology? They may have been relevant 20 years ago, but less so now.
- The public parcels around the current visitors' center may make more sense in private ownership in the future. The Forest Service has no money to maintain these sites. How can visitor's services be maintained in Meyers? Typical providers of visitor's centers (Forest Service) will not have the funding to build them. Other funding sources will have to be found.
- Could visitors' center be reimagined as a place for tourist parking? Privately run through a business improvement district?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMPREHENSIVE AREA PLAN UPDATE

General Comments

- People are unaware about what kind of recreation facilities are in Meyers. Increasing awareness could bring visitors who enjoy the outdoors.
- Consider expanding the plan area to include scenic vistas.
- Consider some site-specific changes to the boundary lines of sub-districts and the Plan area overall.
- Keep fees for commercial floor area in the Plan (\$25/square foot).
- Caltrans does a poor job with signage in terms of aesthetics.

Circulation

- Is it possible to get Caltrans more involved in traffic calming efforts along Highway 50?
- Consider installing medians on the highway. They would work well for snow storage and as pedestrian shelters.
- Caltrans should stripe the roads to let people know where curb cuts/business entrances are.
- Roundabouts on the state highway are not a good idea.
- Roundabouts work well, even if at first they can be confusing to drivers.
- Having a school in Meyers makes it unique, but pedestrian connectivity is poor and unsafe. Would be good to have large, painted crosswalks and flashing lights.
- Narrowing the highway right of way could allow an alignment that is more winding and highlights existing businesses. Would need to set aside an area for people to chain up in the winter, though.

Parking Regulations

- There is not enough public parking in the area.
- Private parking requirements seem appropriate.
- Too much parking is never the problem. There is often not enough parking because of snow and tourists parking in private lots. Recreational tourists often park in Lira's Market lot and take spots that could be used by customers. Tourists get towed and get mad. Tourist believe they are doing the right thing by carpooling, but they are hurting local business.
- Consider a change to not require parking for improvements between a building and walkway/bike path that support public active uses.
- What about envisioning the visitor's center as a public parking area that highlights the best features of Meyers?
- Consider an in-lieu parking program.

Commercial Floor Area

- Consider requiring outdoor dining for ground floor retail without needing extra commercial floor area (CFA).
- CFA requirements are a barrier to outdoor dining.
- CFA is easy to acquire, but hard coverage is more difficult. To increase coverage above 30%, a project proponent must pay for the difference between 30 and 70%. For every foot brought in, proponent must retire two feet somewhere else. Outdoor dining is incorporated into coverage.

ADMINISTRATION AND PROCESS

- There are often conflicts between different plans and regulations governing the area (e.g. scenic corridor, design guidelines, fire regs, etc.)
- It seems unfair that properties that are grandfathered in to older standards do not need to do anything to improve their properties over time.
- The fur store at the northern end of the Plan area is not in the community plan so the owner can do what he wants with his property even though it doesn't fit into the community aesthetic.
- There was supposed to be an implementing agency to administer the Community Plan (Meyers Town Council, Meyers Round Table, etc.) but that ever really happened. Meyers Round Table was not empowered to make decisions.
- The design review process is not working because agencies do not coordinate their requirements. There is no lead agency.
- The length of time it takes to build in the area is very frustrating. Different agencies constantly provide conflicting information about what the requirements are.
- Enforcement is not consistent between different representatives of regulatory agencies. They won't give people a written list of requirements. Each project should have a project manager at the regulatory agency so the property owners have more consistency and predictability.

- It takes so long for people to get development moving along. Things could be streamlined, especially for projects that meet requirements.
- BMP's are necessary but expensive. There needs to be universal, consistent enforcement so that everyone is doing his fair share.

3 List of Interviewees

- Kristi Boosman – resident
- Rene Brejc – resident, business owner
- Carol Daum – property owner
- Greg Daum – property owner
- Marge Daum – property owner
- John Dayberry – resident
- Shannon Eckmeyer – League to Save Lake Tahoe
- Carl Fair – business and property owner, former member of the Meyers Community Plan committee
- John Garofalus – resident
- Jennifer Gleckman – resident
- Kathi Lishman – resident
- Mike Murphy – business and property owner
- Lisa O'Daly – California Tahoe Conservancy
- Bryan Schwartz – business and property owner
- Rebecca Schwartz – business and property owner
- Coleen Shade – resident

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