

North Tahoe Citizen Action Alliance

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Revised Residential Bonuses

The Placer County Board of Supervisors accepted an amendment to Section 17.54.120 (c) of the Placer County Zoning Ordinance at their meeting on July 21, 2009. The amendment revises the Residential Density Bonuses section of the Zoning Ordinance to allow eligible development projects within the North Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Project Plan Area to request a residential density bonus increase beyond the current maximum of 50% to a maximum of 100%. This amendment is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines per Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines. The amendment was unanimously passed by the Board of Supervisors.

This zoning ordinance is to incentivize the building of affordable housing. The median income in Placer County is now \$72,400 for a family of four. Moderate income is 120% of median, low income is 80% of median, and very low income is 50% of median income. Residential density is 15 units per acre without any bonuses.

After this passage, the amount of density bonus a developer is entitled to within the redevelopment area of Lake Tahoe is 100%; Placer County except for Lake Tahoe is still limited to 50%. The award of the density bonus is at the discretion of the Planning Director. The bonus is determined by the quantity of low or very low income households included in the development.

A development in which 10% of the total units are for low income households, a density bonus of at least 20% shall be allowed, and for each 1% increase above the 10%, the density bonus shall be increased by 1½%. Therefore, for a mixed income development of 100 units of which 63 units are low income, a total of 200 units are allowable, of which 137 may be moderate rate housing, at the rate of 30 units per acre.

Amount of Density Bonus

Low income (>\$58,250)

Very Low Income (>\$36,400)

% units	% bonus	% units	% bonus
10	20	5	20
20	35	10	32.5
40	65	20	57.5
63	100	37	100

A development in which 5% of the total units are for very low income households, a density bonus of at least 20% shall be allowed, and for each 1% increase above 5%, the density bonus shall be increased by 2½%. For a mixed income development of 100 units of which 37 units are very low income, a total of 200 units are allowable, of which 163 may be moderate rate housing, at the rate of 30 units per acre.

When this issue was presented before the North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council (NTRAC) at their June 2009 meeting, the Placer County representative was questioned as why this zoning amendment was only for the Lake Tahoe redevelopment area, that is Tahoe City, Tahoe Vista, and Kings Beach. The answer given was because these were urban areas, and most of Placer County was not urban. However, this new zoning is not applicable to communities like the North Auburn Redevelopment Area or the Sunset Industrial Redevelopment Area. Why the concentration on Lake Tahoe for affordable housing? Affordable housing quotas exist for all redevelopment areas of Placer County

This new zoning provides a remarkable incentive for developers to build affordable housing in the Lake Tahoe area, even though the majority of the housing in the development would not be affordable. This of course would place additional impact on the environment and community resources, but be very profitable to developers.

New Regional Plan Update– A Good Concept for Southlake, Misapplied to North and West Shores

TRPA’s proposal for “updating” the existing Regional Plan consists of several elements, but the most controversial is the Land-Use Element. This element attempts to redefine the guiding vision for commercial, tourist, and residential uses by adopting the theory of “new urbanism.” The theory is described by language such as “high-density, compact, mixed-use, transit oriented development, urban nodes, and transect zoning.” The origins of “new urbanism” came from a response to uncontrolled growth or urban sprawl, and instead, redirects growth back into the center of cities. Great idea!

In Article I (a) (5) of the Bi-State Compact establishing TRPA it declared, “Increasing urbanization is threatening the ecological values of the region...” Urban sprawl in Lake Tahoe was stopped 30 years ago. While South Lake Tahoe at Stateline is distinguished by urban characteristics, the New Regional Plan proposes to create new “urban nodes” with unprecedented high densities and vertical growth on the North and West Shores.



From Crystal Bay to Tahoma the communities are actually rural suburban with traditional neighborhood commercial areas more closely aligned with Main Street type development. Commercial development is limited to one block from Highways 28 and 89 which by definition is already “transit oriented.” The topography of the North and West Shores has always limited the roadway infrastructure to a twenty five mile thin ribbon around the North and West shorelines.

South Lake Tahoe is configured in a concentric pattern, much more flat land, and already high densities at the Stateline. As the City of South Lake Tahoe initiated redevelopment the first step was to purchase hundreds of the old, low density, economically obsolete motel units near Stateline and replace them with the “new urbanism” model. The Embassy Suites was first, constructing 400 units after removing 526 old units. Heavenly Village required 750 units be surrendered to construct 460 new fractional and time share units. Project 3 (Chateau and Convention Center) will demolish 577 units to construct 488 units. These are examples of good planning utilizing “new urbanism” and “smart growth” principles. There is

a net reduction of tourist accommodation units! This is downsized redevelopment that uses less of the existing roadway and utility infrastructure. These projects are also located within walking distance of 5000 hotel rooms, casinos, restaurants, and entertainment contributing to an economic “critical mass” of business patrons.

This model is not what is proposed on the North and West Shore. Boulder Bay in Crystal Bay and the Homewood Resort are similar in scale to the South Lake Stateline developments but are not removing more old units than they are building. These two CEP projects are adding new units on a massive scale. Each project is scaled at 350-400 units, but Homewood has no existing units to remove, and Boulder Bay would remove about 100 units. This is not the same redevelopment that is being done at South Lake Tahoe. Would the Embassy Suites have been approved for 1600 units (4 times what was removed first)? An equivalent proportion of expansion of new units is proposed for Boulder Bay. Alternatively, if TRPA approved units at Boulder Bay in proportion to what was removed at Southlake first, Boulder Bay would be allowed only 72 units. Embassy Suites, Heavenly Village and the Chateau (Project 3) replaced 1864 old motel units with 1348 new units. In Homewood there are no existing TAU's, so nothing is removed first.

The Southlake projects fit in to the surrounding commercial/tourist urban environment. Traffic was reduced, open space created, and the character was retained and enhanced after removal of hundreds of old motel units. On the North and West Shores these “large scale development” projects would alter forever the rural character and scale, force roadway and utility expansion, and reignite the debate about carrying capacity and environmental degradation of Lake Tahoe.

In upcoming newsletters we'll present some of the physical consequences to roadway and utility infrastructure that is a consequence of adding new units on the North and West Shores at the scale proposed in the New Regional Plan. We'll talk about the economy and the shutting down of Project 3 at Southlake Stateline. Stay tuned.

Homewood Mountain Resort Land Capability Challenge

The recent Land Capability Challenge was by Homewood Mountain Resort stating no wetlands exist on the Fawn Parcel. Friends of the West Shore were attempting to have declared that over half are wetlands. However, the settlement was for much more than Homewood Mountain Resort was initially requesting. The TRPA Hearing Officer took great strides in allowing wetlands to be completely developed at the request of the developer. Friends of the West Shore and their attorney Michael Lozeau, also representing the League to Save Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Area Sierra Club, vigorously opposed this action fighting to preserve more wetlands than were requested to be developed.

NTPFD Citizen Emergency Information Team

The North Tahoe Fire Protection District (NTPFD) is forming a Citizen Emergency Information Team (CEIT) with the assistance of several NTCAA members. This team will respond to a call from the NTPFD in the event of a serious fire event, to provide support in providing information to the public. If you wish to participate, please call the NTCAA office at 530-546-8125.

Upcoming Events/Key Dates

Agendas for TRPA Governing Board and APC, and also Placer County BOS are not available until a few days before the meeting. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a meaningful emphasis to the meetings. Other meetings/events not shown here, or changes, will be announced by email.

August 26, Wednesday	NTFPD PIO Meeting	6 pm, Station 52, Kings Beach
September 2, Wednesday	NLTRA Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
September 8, Tuesday	NTPUD Board Meeting	10 am, NTEC, Kings Beach
September 8, Tuesday	Placer County BOS Budget Mtg	8:30 am, Auburn
September 9, Wednesday	TRPA APC Meeting	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
September 10, Thursday	NTRAC Meeting	6 pm, NTEC, Kings Beach
September 16, Wednesday	NTFPD Board Meeting	6 pm, TCPUD Board Room
September 18, Friday	TCPUD Board Meeting	8:30 am, TCPUD Board Room
September 22, Tuesday	Placer County BOS Meeting	8:30 am, Auburn
September 23, Wednesday	TRPA Governing Board	9:30 am, TRPA Stateline Office
October 16-18	Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference	NTEC, Kings Beach

TRPA – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
 NLTRA – North Lake Tahoe Resort Association
 TCPUD – Tahoe City Public Utility District
 NTEC – North Tahoe Event Center (NTCC)
 BOS – Placer County Board of Supervisors

APC – Advisory Planning Commission
 NTPUD – North Tahoe Public Utility District
 NTFPD – North Tahoe Fire Protection District
 NTRAC- North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand” Albert Einstein