

Opinion: More shenanigans with Meyers plan

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Publisher's note: Tahoe Regional Young Professionals has issued a statement since the column was posted that says, "Mr. Curtzwiler made the incorrect statement that TRYP was 'behind the project' for the catalyst project. This is completely unfounded and untrue. Our organization does not take stances on political or planning issues."

To the community,

The following is a letter sent by [Steve] Teshara. The Jason Drew mentioned is a member of the Tahoe Chamber board of directors as well as a member of the Tahoe [Regional] Young Professional group which is behind this new project.

This is what the original fiasco project was all about.



Kenny
Curtzwiler

Yes, it would be nice to upgrade Meyers, but not at the expense of what is now here. I can't believe how quiet my opponent has been throughout this whole project. She is on the board and has to know about this and how the community feels. I understand why Norma [Santiago] is quiet and went to a town

meeting in Pollock Pines and found out she is not very well liked due to the fact that she is pushing an agenda down there that no one wants either. They actually want to increase the density first proposed as well as the height limit to accommodate this "bed and breakfast" concept when in actuality it is a hotel. Why, oh why, are they trying to be so sneaky about this project, not Brendan [Ferry], but the people who actually run the town. How many town centers do we need? Besides, Meyers is made up of about seven different areas from Golden Bear to Christmas Valley.

Kenny Curtzwiler, Meyers

Here is the letter:

Sustainable Community Advocates

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Date: July 7, 2014

To: Brendan Ferry, Principal Planner El Dorado County

Adam Lewandowski, Long Range Planning Manager Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

Fr: Steve Teshara, Principal

Re: Comments on 3rd Draft of the Meyers Area Plan (June 2014)

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Third Draft and the list of June 2014 changes to the earlier 2nd Draft. As you are aware, I attended many of the early meetings of the Meyers Community Advisory Council and nearly all of the larger community meetings organized by El Dorado County with the

assistance of the TRPA. As Chair of the South Shore Transportation Management Association (SS/TMA) I have been involved for the last twenty years in many Meyers Area transportation and community mobility planning initiatives. I have reviewed each of the previous draft Meyers Area Plans.

Unfortunately, several of the June changes constrain the value of the Area Plan and make the adopted Community Vision, Plan Purpose, and a number of the stated Goals and Policies, much less likely to occur. I strongly urge you to reconsider these changes.

My comments build on those you recently received from Jason Drew, a Meyers resident. For convenience, I have restated Jason's concerns from his e-mail of June 29, summarized in the following three paragraphs:

- Height Limit. The 35-foot height limit is undesirable in the Town Center. This height limit constrains creativity and the potential for architectural character to be integrated in new commercial or multi-family structures. 42 feet provides more flexibility while still keeping structures from blocking viewsheds. The additional 7 feet is not enough to create another full story but does provide for additional dormer or attic space, which is important for architectural character or, in the case of small commercial businesses, the ability to integrate additional onsite covered storage.

- Density. The original plan called for 40 units per acre in what will now be the Town Center. The new draft calls for 15 units per acre. This drastic reduction will make it very difficult, if not impossible, to make the finances work on small commercial or tourist redevelopment projects. Although some participants at the March public meeting were in favor of the 15 units per acre, I don't believe most people in the room understood what 15 units per acre looks like or means for penciling out the finances on a project. For example, many bed and breakfast properties or boutique hotels in other areas of

the Basin or in other tourist destinations easily exceed this density. Bed and Breakfast accommodations are often 4 to 5 room facilities on a typically one-quarter-acre lot. This would put B&Bs at 16 to 20 units per acre and exceed the draft revised Plan limit. In order to encourage the type of redevelopment and investment our community wants, the Plan needs to provide density limits that make them viable.

[See specific example of a successful boutique hotel property in Truckee cited below].

- Commercial Floor Area (CFA). The Plan has focused on encouraging and promoting small business. This is commendable, but the requirement that one half of the CFA available in the Plan be set aside for small businesses (defined as less than 2,500 square feet) is troubling. Rarely will a commercial enterprise or small business have the capital to revamp an existing structure, redevelop a blighted site, or develop a new site at this size. Typically what happens is a larger project, with economies of scale, will redevelop or revamp an existing property (which may have multiple structures) at say 8,000 to 10,000 square feet and then will sell or lease smaller spaces to interested small businesses. Rarely do small businesses themselves have the capital to make the necessary investment to revamp or redevelop a site. By setting aside one half the available CFA for businesses less than 2,500 square feet, the Plan will unintentionally limit the variety and pace at which new businesses may start and thrive in Meyers. Please consider dropping this to one quarter of the available CFA or less.

In addition to the above, I respectfully submit the following comments:

- Boutique Hotel Example. The adopted Meyers Community Vision and other language in the Plan reinforce Meyers as “a hub for outdoor activities.” Based on this focus, I see the popular Cedar House Sport Hotel in Truckee as an excellent example of

the type of lodging property investment that should be allowed and encouraged by the Meyers Area Plan.

The Cedar House Sport Hotel is comprised of 42 units located on 1.34 acres. An event center and restaurant is located on a separate adjacent parcel. There would be no Cedar House Sport Hotel if Truckee had limited tourist accommodation units to no more than 15 per acre.

I encourage you to visit the website. Below is a sampling of the property's marketing position. I have stayed there and know many who have enjoyed the experience, so I can vouch for the claims. Cedar House has some great ratings on sites such as TripAdvisor.

Cedar House Sport Hotel – Where Style Meets Adventure

Cedar House Sport Hotel is:

Inspired by the mountains

Enhanced by nature

Designed for adventure

"The Cedar House Sport Hotel explores our need to connect to nature, emphasizing in its design a harmony that is sympathetic to the human body, mind and spirit. Strength, Structure, Environmental Awareness, and Respect to the natural materials used are found in the themes throughout the design. The Cedar House Sport Hotel was inspired by its setting high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, nestled in the Martis Valley, just minutes from historic downtown Truckee and Lake Tahoe."

Several Recent Plan Changes Are Inconsistent with draft Plan Goals and Policies

The recent changes in height, density provisions are inconsistent with several Goals and Policies. Here are just two examples:

- Land Use, Goal 1. This goal includes “tourist accommodation.” With the revised density limit of 15 units per acre, no tourist accommodation is likely in the Meyers Area Plan.
- Land Use, Policy 1.2: This policy includes reference to a “bed and breakfast inn.” With the revised density limit of 15 units per acre, no bed and breakfast accommodation is likely in the Meyers Area Plan.

Community Incentive Program

The 3rd Draft Plan eliminates Land Use provisions of the Community Incentive Program related to height and density. A related change was made to Section 130.A.1 (Scenic Quality).

As with the changes to height and density cited above, those in charge of making these decisions have failed to provide adequate justification to support the changes. No justification is provided in the short table “June 2014 Revisions to the draft Meyers Area Plan”. Absent adequate justification, the specific changes discussed in this memorandum that were made to the Land Use chapter should be reversed. There was substantial rationale for including them in previous draft Plans. In the alternative, corresponding changes should be made to the related Plan Goals and Policies. Goals and Policies cannot promise to deliver what they are unable to deliver.

There is much to like and support in the Meyers Area Plan. Please don’t undermine the Plan with changes that have no basis in good planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments for your consideration. I would be happy to discuss further with you prior to the start of formal hearings on the Plan.