

SLT to chip away at affordable housing quagmire

Publisher's note: *This is one in a series of stories about affordable housing in the Lake Tahoe-Truckee region. All articles may be accessed via the home page under Special Projects, 2017 Affordable Housing.*

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe intends to acquire three vacant parcels on Riverside Avenue with the intent to turn them into housing.

The city's Successor Agency owns them. This came about when the state dissolved redevelopment agencies. Per the state, the agency must get rid of what it owns.



The parcels have been on the market at different times in the last few years. Part of the difficulty in selling them is that there are no development rights associated with the lots. One escrow fell through and other offers have not been accepted.

The City Council last month gave direction to staff to come up with a contract to make the deal work between the city and Successor Agency. (The council acts as the directors for the Successor Agency.) The deal is expected to be consummated in October. The city will have to pay fair market value. Collectively, the parcels were appraised at \$250,000.

The city could use one-time funds, possibly from excess reserves, for this purchase knowing that it will likely recover those dollars when it sells the property to a

developer.

The council at its February strategic planning session talked about how businesses in the area would like the land to be converted into a parking lot. However, current zoning would not allow that use. The plan area statement would have to be amended for parking to come to fruition.

Affordable housing is an allowable use.

Kevin Fabino, who heads the city's planning department, in August told the council it would be reasonable to merge the three parcels into one to allow for more density. Five or six units might be able to be built on that site.

While it was acknowledged this was not going to make a huge dent in the ongoing affordable housing issue plaguing the area, it would do more for the community than parking.

Councilmember Brooke Laine threw out the possibility of using some of the sewer unit allocations from the former Knights Inn motel for Riverside Avenue. Right now South Tahoe Public Utility District doesn't allow the transfer of sewer allocations, but that board could change that rule if it so desired.

One thing the council will have to define is affordable housing. To the lay person it is often interchanged with work force or even fair market housing. However, legally, affordable housing has specific requirements based on income and can come with deed restrictions.

The exact type of housing will be decided at future council meetings.

The city has some commodities it could tie to the parcels as well to entice developers. Or it could leave it up to the next buyer to secure those rights.