

Boomers, stock market boost vacation home market

By Marilyn Much, Investor's Business Daily

Vacation-home demand has been on a steady climb as a strong stock market, low interest rates and tempting deals have prompted high-end households to spend more freely on second residences and summer getaways.

The push comes as more high-net-worth buyers have opted to put some of the earnings they've gained from a rising stock market into second homes in spots that support a more leisure lifestyle.

Contributing to the increased demand are baby boomers home shopping for a place to vacation now, and retire to later.

Real estate brokers in resort locales from Massachusetts' Cape Cod to Nevada's Lake Tahoe report brisk second-home buying activity during the year's first quarter.

Read the whole story

Tourist stops change dramatically as climate shifts

By Matt Villano , USA Today

From Alaska to Miami, the phenomenon of climate change – the

catch-all phrase that describes subtle but significant changes to Earth's atmosphere – is wreaking havoc on some of the most beautiful destinations in the country. Perhaps the most concerning news: There has been no recent evidence that the trend will slow or stop any time soon.

Shrinking Lakes

All Andrew Glasgow wanted to do was share the wonder of Mount Shasta and Shasta Lake with his wife and two young sons.

He had visited the mountain before, many times. He remembered the awe-inspiring grandeur of the snow-covered triangle reflected in the turquoise waters of the lake below. His family simply had to see it. So, for Thanksgiving last year, he booked a trip. But when they arrived, the scene was totally wrong. There was virtually no snow on the mountain itself. And the lake – if you wanted to call it that – was nothing more than a glorified puddle.

Warming temperatures and drought conditions in California likely were two of the factors contributing to what the Glasgows spotted that day. Other lakes have been affected by climate change as well. Rising temperatures in Lake Tahoe are suspected to have caused a drop in the number of bottom-feeding creatures in the lake – the very same creatures that eat algae and therefore give the lake its world-renowned clarity.

Read the whole story

Tahoe geology more than just granite

By Kathryn Reed

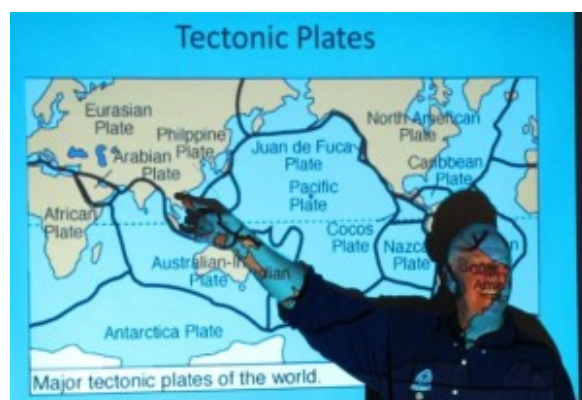
Volcanoes aren't usually something people associate with Lake Tahoe.

However, evidence of their existence is all around. It was volcanoes that plugged the valley to form the lake. Mount Watson, Mount Pluto, Cave Rock and Martis Peak are the major markers of the volcanic activity from millions of years ago.

Lava flow cut off the Truckee River drainage. Volcanic bombs are dispersed in various parts of the Lake Tahoe Basin. These rocks can be the size of a fist and as large as a Volkswagen.

Dave Schnake, local geologist and Tahoe Rim Trail Association board member, spoke about the various geologic formations in the basin to about 90 people last week at the South Lake Tahoe Library as part of the Friends of the Library programs.

"It's not something that happened. It is happening," Schnake said of the changing landscape.



Geologist Dave Schnake talks about rock formations in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/Denise Haerr

Underground activity that finally reached the surface is in large part how the mountains came about.

“When magma reaches the surface you get a line of volcanoes,” Schnake said.

Nevada is full of mountains – having more mountain ranges in the United States than any state except Alaska.

About 70 million years ago this active volcanic activity subsided.

The rocks at Sand Harbor are other evidence of underground objects reaching the surface. Their roundness was formed under water and has nothing to do with wave action.

Most land movement is so minuscule that in a normal lifespan it is not noticeable. Geology tends to be measured in millions of years.

The Sierra Nevada is rising, but it’s hard to notice. Schnake said the biggest movement today is because of groundwater being drained from the San Joaquin Valley. This is pushing them up because it is taking weight off of the mountain range.

It takes something like the earthquake in Nepal to make massive movement. Schnake said Kathmandu moved 10 feet.

Substantive knowledge about plate tectonics wasn’t known until the 1950s as submarines started mapping the ocean floor. Deep ocean drilling also brought forward more information. This led to better understanding of how the continents separated.

The Earth is always moving in some ways – some noticeable, some not.

Areas around Lake Tahoe have had plenty of changes through the years. A chunk of Slide Mountain slid off in 1983, with debris reaching Highway 395. The scar from the slide at Emerald Bay is still visible.

The McKinney Bay slide was more than 10,000 years ago. Schnake said it caused a wave more than 300 feet that sloshed back and forth for days.

Nev. employment headed toward pre-recession levels

By Andrea Domanick, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada's jobs outlook continues to point up, with employment expected to return to pre-recession levels by mid-2016, Nevada's Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation reported Friday.

Job growth is expected to climb by 45,000 jobs in 2015, 52,000 jobs in 2016 and approach 60,000 jobs in 2017, surpassing peak levels last seen in 2007.

Employment peaked in 2007 at 1.28 million jobs; as of third quarter 2014, the state is at 1.20 million jobs.

Read the whole story

USDA vague on benefits of organic produce

By Peter Whoriskey, Washington Post

Are consumers right to think that organic food is safer and

healthier?

It seems like a straightforward question, especially for Miles McEvoy, the chief of the National Organic Program at USDA. That's the section of the federal government that champions organic farming practices and defines what food deserves the coveted organic label.

But in an interview Wednesday, McEvoy wouldn't speculate about any health benefits of organic food, saying the question wasn't "relevant" to the role of the National Organic Program. Nor would he say whether growing consumer demand for organics reflects widening public skepticism of conventional U.S. agriculture.

Maybe McEvoy is unwilling to tout organics over conventional agriculture because, after all, conventional agriculture is the larger part of the USDA's realm. Or maybe he thinks, as some others do, that the science on organics is too tentative.

Read the whole story

Human trafficking a problem in Lake Tahoe

By Linda Fine Conaboy

STATELINE — Not many people spend much time thinking about human sex trafficking. It's often a daunting and maybe even intangible topic. Just exactly what is human sex trafficking?

Law enforcement focuses on the human aspect of the topic, identifying human trafficking as the primary vehicle, and defining it as the recruiting, harboring, transporting,

providing or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through force, fraud or coercion.

There can be commercial sex trafficking such as domestic servitude, agricultural farm laborers can be illegally obtained and there are other work environments where employees may be coerced illegally such as at hotels, sweatshops and even forestry jobs. Human trafficking is often described as modern day slavery and as such is an immensely underreported crime.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Rodriguez gave a talk April 29 to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe at Harrah's Lake Tahoe. The federal prosecutor is well schooled in the topic of human sex trafficking. Her presentation was titled Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Minors: A Federal Perspective.



Michelle Rodriguez, assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of California, says human trafficking is an issue in Lake Tahoe. Photo/Linda Fine Conaboy

When describing the role of the pimp in human sex trafficking, Rodriguez displayed a photo of a stereotypical person dressed in white fur from head to toe, puffing on a big cigar, and

leering at the camera.

There's a new face for the pimp now, she said. He's usually a regular, run-of-the-mill person – and doesn't have to be male. The new pimp is typically younger, gang affiliated and may have a reliance on drugs and alcohol. And this person can have direct ties to the families of the girls with whom he or she becomes involved.

The astronomical use and acceptance of social media makes it easy for primarily young girls to be recruited into a life they would probably not choose had they been schooled in the perils that await them by logging onto some of the questionable sites constantly popping up. Even legitimate locations such as Facebook can hold danger for those who are young and easily led. In other words, anyone with access to a computer or a smart phone can be recruited. In the past, Rodriguez said, recruitment was normally by word-of-mouth – not anymore.

She pointed out that boys can also become victims, although fewer males than females are victims of human sex traffickers. Why? Because prime recruitment time happens when girls seem to be rebelling, discovering their sexuality or have a bad life at home. Not that boys don't have a problem, Rodriguez said, but girls more so. Those who feel underappreciated with no strong parental role model or guidance tend to be the most vulnerable.

Pimps are always looking for a fresh face, she said. They can find them, besides via social media, at bus stops or shelters, through others, in the mall or even at school.

Other offenses falling under this genre include engaging in pornography and/or circulating photos of it. Receipt, distribution and possession of child pornography is a crime. There is a lot of this type of activity at South Lake Tahoe, Rodriguez said.

“It’s a fiendish activity,” she said. “It’s a compulsion and some people are wired that way. They can’t stop themselves.

“But it is still a crime. There is a very graphic law that describes this. Sometimes a person will move into a home, but with designs on a specific family member. When these cases are being prosecuted, even the sexual act must be proven.”

Additionally, when a sex trafficker is finally apprehended, it’s a laborious process to establish a case and to prosecute them. It then becomes the role of the prosecutor to identify the elements of the specific violation and to present the facts to establish each element.

The Lake Tahoe Basin has a human sex trafficking problem. People come here looking for minors, Rodriguez said.

“It’s an ongoing problem and we all have to be vigilant for it. South Lake Tahoe is not immune from the same social ills and criminal activities that other communities face. They may appear to be rarer here, but it’s not that they’re not here,” Rodriguez said. “People have sexual interests and some are not healthy and are criminal. South Lake Tahoe is not insulated, it would be absurd to think that it is. So being vigilant is no less a concern in South Lake Tahoe than in other communities.”

Some of the signs that a person may be at risk or being held against her will include:

- Evidence of being controlled
- Visible signs of physical abuse
- Recently from a foreign country
- Non-English speaking
- Transient residency

- No engagement with the community
- Afraid to talk
- Runs away.

Signs a person may be a victim of sex trafficking:

- Tattoos reflective of a pimp
- Advertising on websites
- Older boyfriend (or girlfriend)
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Unusual gifts.

After Rodriguez's talk, there was a round-table discussion about human trafficking in South Lake Tahoe.

The group identified several key needs. They include:

- A need for more foster homes
- Emergency placement sites
- Specialized treatment
- More public information on this issue
- What can be done when a problem is detected
- A need for children aging out of foster care
- Prevention and awareness of online solicitation

"I would like the coalition to meet within two weeks to decide where we want to go with this. We need to get our feet on the ground and do something. We're not clear yet what it is, but at least we're headed in the right direction," Cindy Archer, Soroptimist president, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Nev. schools won't be rated this year

By Trevon Milliard, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada schools will not be issued star ratings this year under the state's system to hold schools accountable for their performances.

No such evaluations will be made for schools' performances this year. Instead, school ratings from 2013-14 will be rolled over for the 2014-15 school year.

The Nevada State Board of Education unanimously granted the reprieve on Thursday as problems plague the state's standardized tests, which were done online for the first time this year. These annual tests – given in third through eighth grade – were previously done with paper and pencil.

The board already considered waiving school ratings this year because of the state's transition to online tests based on the new Common Core academic standards. But the testing snafu only gave more reason.

[Read the whole story](#)

Calif. launches push to

accelerate drought innovation

By Geoffrey Mohan, Los Angeles Times

The Brown administration's effort to speed innovation to address the state's endemic droughts was launched to little fanfare Tuesday.

No specific funding or timeline was included in the program posted to the California Energy Commission's website. A spokesman for the commission said it would begin this summer and is likely to follow well-established channels for research and development grants, which can take several months to a year to pass through the process.

Among the programs Brown seeks to accelerate are desalination powered by alternative energy, on-site water reuse, and various software and equipment approaches to economizing water use in agriculture.

Read the whole story

Stricter greenhouse gas emission targets in Calif.

By Chris Megerian and Michael Finnegan, Los Angeles Times

Gov. Jerry Brown accelerated California's effort to slash greenhouse gas emissions Wednesday, burnishing the state's reputation as a pacesetter in the battle against climate change.

In an executive order, Brown said the state must cut the

pollutants to 40 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2030, more than a decade after he leaves office.

That is an interim target, intended to help California lower emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050, a goal set by Brown's predecessor, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Read the whole story

Chateau project given go-ahead for next phase

By Kathryn Reed

While concern remains about the adequate number of parking spots and the safety for pedestrians crossing Highway 50, the South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission on Thursday unanimously approved changes to the next phase of the Chateau project.

A special meeting was required April 30 to answer questions from a meeting earlier this month.

The approval will allow Tahoe Stateline Ventures (TSV) to proceed with the 32-unit condo project. This full ownership lodging facility will give owners the opportunity to put their units into a rental pool.

Also part of the next phase are amenities for the lodging property, like a pool; 19,477-square-feet of retail; upgrades to the streetscape; and public fire pits.

This next phase encompasses 3.4 acres and should break ground this summer.

The project requires 6,307 square feet of commercial floor area from South Lake Tahoe. The City Council already approved that allocation, but it must come back to that board for the commodity to be assigned to this project. That is likely to occur May 19.

TSV is a subsidiary of Owens Financial. This is the lending institution that acquired all of the parcels on the 11.4-acre site near the state line after the project went bankrupt under Randy Lane of Lake Tahoe Development Company.

"They are trying to sell it to a real developer," Lew Feldman, attorney for the TSV, told the commissioners.

It is unusual for a bank to become a developer. The thinking was if the project that was first approved in 2007 made progress from being more than concrete and rebar that it would be more enticing to prospective developers.

TSV has permits with the city and TRPA, with the former having been revised a couple times.

TSV is working under the 2007 permit from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency that lists Lake Tahoe Development Company and the now defunct South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Agency as the permittees. While people keep saying the permit goes with the landowner, nowhere in the permit does it state that. The permit says, "[The permittee] also understands that if the property is sold, [permittee] remains liable for the permit conditions until or unless the new owner acknowledges the transfer of the permit and notifies TRPA in writing of such acceptance."

TRPA has not received anything in writing from TSV, though TRPA and Feldman said something would be forthcoming.

In the interim, it is not known what kind of liability the city may still have if someone were to be injured at the site or other legal issues arose because City Attorney Tom Watson

refused to return *Lake Tahoe News'* phone calls.

The overpass for Highway 50 linking the Chateau to Heavenly Village that was in the 2007 plans was eliminated with a recent revision. Commissioners on Thursday discussed whether this next phase should trigger TSV having to put in upgrades to pedestrian crossings along the highway.

A traffic study has shown no pedestrian accidents since the improvements were made to Friday Avenue. Jan McCarthy, who owns the nearby Stardust Lodge, said her guests do not have difficulty crossing the highway.

It was decided that in Phase A, which includes the bulk of the lodging, that the property owner will have to pay his share for improvements.

While there are not enough parking spots for all of the potential users at the site – especially and maybe only if a convention center type entity were built – the commissioners spent the most amount of time on that issue. It's an issue that was brought up when the project was first approved. At that time using casino lots was the answer.

The commissioners acquiesced; realizing at least with the next phase there should be ample on-site parking.

No one has a crystal ball to know if a convention center will ever be built. When the Redevelopment Agency was part of the project it was going to invest \$55 million in what was to be a 40,000-square-foot community facility. That money is off the table since Gov. Jerry Brown dissolved redevelopment agencies.

In order to substantially change the project, the developer at that time would likely have to go through the environmental process again. That takes years and costs six figures. What the build out at the site will look like will in large part be determined by what the market dictates.