Study: Cheaper to rent than own in El Dorado, Placer

By Benjy Egel, Sacramento Bee

Median home ownership and rental prices are further apart in the Sacramento metropolitan area than nearly any of the most populous U.S. regions, according to an Urban Institute report released this week.

Monthly mortgage payments in Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer and Yolo counties will eat up 32.9 percent of a median family income after a 3.5 percent down payment, the report found, while renting a three-bedroom house in those counties means giving up 26.4 percent of one’s paycheck.

Read the whole story

Troubling maintenance yard in SLT to be relocated



The Tahoe Keys' corporation yard will be relocated by May 2023. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Five acres of land bordering the Upper Truckee River near the mouth of Lake Tahoe are a reminder of how the environment wasn't always a priority. A maintenance yard next to a river. That wouldn't happen today.

Daily, trucks drive into the yard – which isn't paved. Old dumpsters are rusting. Debris clutters the landscape.

This is the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association's corporation yard.

After more than 20 years of wrangling, TKPOA and California Tahoe Conservancy have reached an agreement to relocate the yard, which means this swath of land in South Lake Tahoe will eventually be restored.

The Conservancy owns the land, but was essentially stuck with TKPOA as the tenant because of a 99-year deal it had with the previous owner – Dillingham Development Corp. – the builder of the subdivision. That agreement wasn't going to expire until

2075.

CTC acquired the land through several lawsuits involving Dillingham, which had wanted to build 26 units on the marsh. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Sierra Club and state of California were all involved. This was in the 1980s and 1990s.

The new deal will allow the yard to stay as is until April 30, 2023. The new yard will be built on 1 acre of land on the side of Venice Drive away from the river that the Conservancy owns. Boats used to be stored there, but now it's vacant. TKPOA will take title to that land.

The TKPOA board in October voted to approve the new agreement, with the homeowners weighing in last month. Of the 1,529 property owners, 633 voted. Of those, 519 said yes.

"We're designing a new site," Kirk Wooldridge, TKPOA general manager, told the CTC board on Dec. 7. He said the organization has been setting aside money for this.

Aimee Rutledge with CTC explained to the board that the disturbed land will be absorbed into the 600-acre **Upper Truckee Marsh restoration project**. The goal is to restore it to wetlands – what it was a half century ago.

"There is a lot of potentially hazardous use that is inconsistent with the marsh," Rutledge said of the corporation yard.

One of the contingencies in the deal is that TKPOA will grant access to the site via Colorado Circle for the CTC use the land as a staging area for the marsh restoration. Currently, this is a highly popular route to get to the river for people who live in the neighborhood. The well-worn trail is used by walkers, dogs and those who enjoy the rope swing in warmer weather. But all of that was going to change anyway with the restoration project.

The restoration project is slated to begin in 2019.

CTC board happy with leader's improvements



Patrick Wright

While there was no action taken in closed session Thursday by the California Tahoe Conservancy board, it was a better experience for Patrick Wright compared to **June**.

Wright, the executive director of the state agency based in South Lake Tahoe, this summer was told by his board he better get his act together. Apparently he has done so.

Improved communication by Wright with the board, staff and stakeholders was acknowledged Dec. 7.

While his salary was to be discussed in open session, that didn't happen. The item was pulled because there is suddenly a question as to who should be giving him a raise – state officials or the CTC board. That issue has not been resolved.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Drug lab shut down on West Slope, 1 arrest



Joshua Martin

El Dorado County sheriff's detectives on Dec. 6 discovered a large scale, commercial style butane extraction lab in Camino.

They were following up on a narcotics investigation in the 5000 block of Monte Vista Way.

Via a search warrant they seized numerous items used in the commercial manufacturing of concentrated cannabis, including multiple commercial vacuum ovens, a closed loop butane oil extraction system, multiple 5 gallon cylinders of butane, and a commercial decanter system.

Also confiscated: $14,000 in cash, almost $10,000 in silver, approximately 300 pounds of marijuana and four firearms.

El Dorado County hazmat was called to assist for the potential of explosive solvent chemicals being used in the manufacturing process.

Joshua Martin, 43, of Camino was arrested on charges of manufacturing a controlled substance and conspiracy.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Vail Resorts making Whistler its priority

The big news Thursday from Vail Resorts wasn't its quarterly earnings report, but instead the hefty investment coming to Whistler Blackcomb.

This is the second season the Broomfield, Colo.-based company has owned the Canadian resort. The $52 million cash infusion for next year will include a 10-passenger gondola, a new six-pack lift and a high-speed quad. The goal is to improve lift capacity by 43 percent.

In October, *Bloomberg* reported, "In the next seven years, Vail will invest $276 million in capital improvements at Whistler, on and off the mountain."

The ski resort behemoth that owns Heavenly, Kirkwood and Northstar in California is planning a companywide capital outlay of $150 million in 2018. Specifics will be released in the spring. It is not known if the Tahoe properties will see any of that money.

As for the earnings, the company on Dec. 7 reported a $28.4 million net loss. A year ago the first quarter loss was $62.2 million. It is normal for Vail Resorts to post a loss in the first quarter, which ended Oct. 31, because the ski resorts aren't open.

A bright spot is season pass sales as of Dec. 3 are up 14 percent for the number sold and 20 percent higher in revenue compared this time last year.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

EDC looking to revise plan for American River

El Dorado County is accepting comment on its River Management Plan.

The plan focuses on whitewater recreation on the 20.7-mile segment of the South Fork of the American River between the Chili Bar Dam and the confluence of the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area.

The initial plan was adopted in 2001 by the Board of Supervisors. The county says the proposed update is based on the county's understanding of what river management actions have been found to be logical, supportive of safe river use, effective in minimizing conflicts between river users and consistent with the county's environmental protection commitments.

No changes are proposed regarding carrying capacity, the management actions to address capacity exceedances or the implementation of the quiet zone.

A public hearing for the proposed project is tentatively scheduled for the Board of Supervisors meeting on Feb. 6 in Placerville.

Comments on this **negative declaration** will be accepted through Jan. 5.

U.S. homeless count rises, pushed by West Coast crisis

By Christopher Weber and Geoff Mulvihill, AP

The nation’s homeless population increased this year for the first time since 2010, driven by a surge in the number of people living on the streets in West Coast cities.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released its annual Point in Time count Wednesday, a report that showed nearly 554,000 homeless people across the country during local tallies conducted in January. That figure is up nearly 1 percent from 2016.

Of that total, 193,000 people had no access to nightly shelter and instead were staying in vehicles, tents, the streets and other places considered uninhabitable. The unsheltered figure is up by more than 9 percent compared to two years ago.

Read the whole story

Advertisers learn that everything is partisan

By Sapna Maheshwari, New York Times

In today’s political climate, even pizza, bourbon and coffee can be partisan issues.

A year after the presidential election, a range of advertisers are learning that it doesn’t take much — sometimes just a

single Twitter post – to land them in the middle of a social media firestorm that splits along party lines. In some cases, they land there even if they've done nothing. And it has become clear in the past month that long-used strategies for how brands should respond to the ensuing outrage may need rewriting.

Last month, people shared videos of themselves destroying Keurig coffee machines after the company said it would pull ads from Sean Hannity's Fox News program, a decision based on the supportive comments the host made about Roy Moore, the embattled Republican candidate for Senate in Alabama. This month, the hashtag #BoycottJimBeam emerged after actress Mila Kunis, a spokeswoman for the liquor company since 2014, said on "Conan" that she has been donating to Planned Parenthood under Vice President Mike Pence's name in a form of "peaceful protest."

Read the whole story

Mother Nature turns off rain/snow spigot

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

What happened to the rain?

Less than a year after the drought was declared over, precipitation has been relatively scarce in the Sacramento area and Northern California so far this season. This week's cold snap is accompanied by a round of dry weather that's expected to last at least another 10 days.

It’s too soon to panic about a prolonged dry spell, however.

The National Weather Service said precipitation this season is actually running slightly ahead of schedule in the northern Sierra Nevada, thanks to a wetter-than-average November. But the weather gauges are emptier the further south you go, and rainfall truly has been in comparatively short supply in practically every California city.

Read the whole story

International visitors’ habits explored at Nev. summit

By Thomas Moore, Las Vegas Sun

French tourists to Nevada seek the outdoors and cultural opportunities, while Chinese tourists are switching from group arrangements to independent travel.

Travel tendencies of international tourists were among the discussion topics on the second day of the Governor’s Summit on Tourism at the Flamingo Las Vegas.

Gov. Brian Sandoval underlined tourism’s importance to the state during his luncheon speech at the summit, hosted by the Nevada Department of Tourism. He noted that one-third of the state’s tax revenue comes directly from the tourism industry.

Read the whole story