Co-housing project planned for Truckee

By Sage Sauerbrey, Moonshine Ink

When a system is put under pressure, it must evolve or falter. Such is the case with the local housing market. Thanks to an innovative community, current pressure has led to evolution. One concept gaining steam in Truckee involves a new way of living with your neighbors. Enter the Truckee River Village, a proposed co-housing center.

“The vibrant community life is really the draw at the end of the day,” project manager Jan Holan said of the development. The project currently plans for 30 to 35 housing units to be built on West River Street at the current location of Unique Boutique.

Co-housing is a relatively new idea; the term was coined in 1988. The loose criteria for co-housing is that it is co-developed, co-designed, and co-organized by the residents, has extensive common facilities that supplement and facilitate daily living, is designed to encourage community interactions, and is resident-managed (in this case in the form of a homeowners association).

Read the whole story

100+ pounds trash plucked

from SLT bike trails

Catherine Cecchi with Clean Tahoe moves a heavy pallet out of the way for her crew to retrieve. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

How long has it been since there was a Burger King in South Lake Tahoe or even on the South Shore?

The answer is years. The question is relevant because a wrapper from that fast food restaurant was picked up this week along a bike trail here. It’s either been there a long time or someone brought it in from outside of the area and instead of tossing it in a garbage bin, discarded outside as litter.

About 50 people volunteered an hour or so of their time on June 12 to help clean up sections of the bike paths, all under the guidance of Clean Tahoe and League to Save Lake Tahoe leaders, with support from Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Bike Coalition.

A pile of household trash just off the bike trail near the Y in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Items collected June 12:

• Band-Aids – 2
• Grocery bags – 22
• Other bags – 47
• Balloons – 2
• Batteries – 2
• Bottles – 32
• Bottle caps – 171
• Cans – 34
• Car parts – 15
• Cigarette butts – 1,117
• Cigarette lighters – 3

- Clothing – 19
- Construction material – 26
- Cups – 41
- Dog poop bags – 19
- Dog poop without bags – 5
- Fishing line/net – 5
- Food waste – 20
- Food wrappers – 120
- Glass bottles – 20
- Glass oil lamp – 1
- Glass pieces – 187
- Gum – 31
- Historic metal – 2
- Lids – 71
- Metal pieces – 55
- Paper pieces – 346
- Plastic pieces – 420
- Plates – 22
- Pull tabs – 12
- Q-Tip – 3
- Receipts – 35
- Reflectors – 3
- Rope – 20
- Rubber bands/hair ties –

6
• Six-pack holder – 4
• Straws/stirrers – 76
• Syringes – 1
• Styrofoam cups – 22
• Styrofoam pieces – 130
• Styrofoam plates – 3
• Styrofoam take-out containers – 5
• Take-out containers – 6
• Tampons – 2
• Tobacco packing – 22
• Toys – 4
• Utensils – 28
• Zip ties – 10

In the short amount of time the crew collected 101.5 pounds or 73 gallons of debris.

Fortunately gloves were handed out to those who did not bring them, and grabbers were provided to those who didn't want to get that close. When you are picking up people's hygiene products and sex prevention devices, it's best to have your own protection.

There were three starting locations: 1. Clean Tahoe office near the Tahoe Valley Pharmacy, with people then going to the trail from Helen Avenue to behind the Crossing center; 2. behind Motel 6; and 3. Highway 50-Los Angeles Avenue. The

latter two met up in the Rubicon area.

Volunteer Rosemary Manning picks debris. Photo/Kathryn Reed

This cleanup has been going on for several years, with most being on a Saturday. The was the first to be on a Tuesday night. The hope was to get a different group.

Catherine Cecchi, who runs Clean Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News* the trash found along the bike trails and in neighborhoods is different than what is found on beach cleanup days.

“There are a lot more food wrappers and a lot more to-go cups,” she said of the bike path as she filled her large orange bag that had “Don’t Trash California” written on it. “At the beach there is more recreation stuff; alcohol and cigarette butts.”

Still, there were plenty of cigarette butts picked between the

three groups – 1,117. So many were found embedded in dry pine needles.

Volunteers with their full bags.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

A pile of household trash was found across the path not far from a residence. A guess is that it was brought there by a critter. An envelope was still part of the mess; something Cecchi took a photo of with the hope of tracking down the owner of the contents. Leaving trash out for animals – intentional or otherwise – can come with a fine.

Someone’s unexpired permanent residence card was salvaged. A plastic pallet was left to be picked up by the Clean Tahoe crew later in the week. Christmas decorations had seen better days.

It was the itty-bitty pieces of Styrofoam that were so annoying to pick up. Some looked like they may have once been bigger pieces of packing material.

One thing veteran volunteers have noticed is the decline of plastic bags. An assumption could be the bag ban in the city limits means there aren’t as many out there.

Plan to split Calif. into 3 states to be on Nov. ballot

By John Myers, Los Angeles Times

California's 168-year run as a single entity, hugging the continent's edge for hundreds of miles and sprawling east across mountains and desert, could come to an end next year – as a controversial plan to split the Golden State into three new jurisdictions qualified Tuesday for the Nov. 6 ballot.

If a majority of voters who cast ballots agree, a long and contentious process would begin for three separate states to take the place of California, with one primarily centered around Los Angeles and the other two divvying up the counties to the north and south. Completion of the radical plan – far from certain, given its many hurdles at judicial, state and federal levels – would make history.

It would be the first division of an existing U.S. state since the creation of West Virginia in 1863.

Read the whole story

Arrests made in Truckee robbery

A Truckee man turned himself into police on June 12 regarding an April robbery.

Raymond Jesus Soltero, 18, and two juveniles face charges stemming from an alleged marijuana robbery in Truckee on April 27.

According to police, Soltero had arranged to buy concentrated cannabis from the victim. Police said a gun was used in the robbery of about 6 ounces of cannabis.

The juveniles were arrested May 30. The weapon believed to have been used in the crime has been recovered.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. works to implement Groundwater Management Act

By Sean Hood, Water Deeply

California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires each local Groundwater Sustainability Agency to develop and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan for its basin and the first plans for critically overdrafted basins are due to be completed by January 31, 2020. Each plan must be designed to achieve safe yield within 20 years.

This new regime of groundwater management is a monumental change in California water law. Overlying land owners have long enjoyed the right to extract groundwater for beneficial use on their land, and the agricultural, municipal, mining and industrial sectors rely heavily on groundwater resources to meet their water needs. It is difficult to fathom the collective investment that California businesses have made in reliance on the right to make beneficial use of groundwater.

In response to SGMA's passage, public and private stakeholders have scurried to identify new water sources to augment existing supplies. However, the Department of Water Resources' recently issued Water Available for Replenishment report seems to confirm longstanding conventional wisdom: There is no water supply panacea for solving California's groundwater management crisis.

Read the whole story

Carson City fire 500+ acres, 30 % contained

The Voltaire Fire burning in Carson City remains at 504 acres and 30 percent contained.

Crews are continuing aggressive work on containment lines on June 14. People are advised to continue to avoid Voltaire Canyon Road.

The fire started earlier this week when two campers were burning poop in a hole, according to officials.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Looking into Trump's impact

on tourism in U.S.

By Bing Pan, The Conversation

Are fewer people visiting the U.S. now that Trump is president?

Some have blamed the Trump administration for a sharp downturn in international tourist arrivals in 2017, as measured last September. A more recent revision of the numbers suggests that might not be accurate.

So what's driving the latest trends in U.S. tourism – and what does that mean for the nation's image on the global stage?

I am a researcher who studies tourism. Many factors impact the volumes of travel between countries, including travelers' income levels, exchange rates, diplomatic relations and hospitality infrastructure. Even the release of a movie can affect the volume of tourists.

Many elements played a part in the lackluster performance of the U.S. international tourism industry in the past two years. Ample evidence shows that the Trump administration contributed to this. It's hard to quantify the exact amount, but it's likely less significant than many people think.

Inbound tourism is flat

Inbound tourism is very important to the economy of the U.S., as it brings in international visitors and foreign currency. In 2016, visitors to the U.S. generated $245 billion in travel spending. That counted as one-third of U.S. service exports, making tourism number one among that category.

However, in 2016, the number of international tourists to the U.S. dropped by more than 2 percent, while international tourism spending remained almost flat. This is in sharp contrast to a 4 percent increase worldwide in international

arrivals in 2016.

Data for 2017 are less clear. Numbers on the U.S. are still being revised by the National Travel and Tourism Office. The United Nations World Tourism Organization reported that international tourism arrivals worldwide in 2017 were up 7 percent. I believe the U.S. is unlikely to match this pace, even with revised numbers.

The causes of the flat performance deserve a little more in-depth investigation.

First, as a mature tourist destination, it’s very hard for the U.S. to generate 5 to 7 percent of increase annually. The U.S. is a long-haul destination for China, South Korea and Europe. In terms of tourism worldwide, residents from those areas generated the most growth last year. Those citizens are more likely to travel to nearby destinations.

Second, among all the factors affecting travel between nations, exchange rates might be the one of most important, since they determine visitors’ spending power. Canada is the largest inbound nation for the U.S. In 2016, 19.3 million Canadians visited – a quarter of total international visitors. The value of its currency has been dropping compared to U.S. dollars in recent years.

Trump administration’s impact

Has the new administration played a role in tourism numbers?

Strictly speaking, to investigate the effect of one factor on international arrivals, you would have to conduct a controlled experiment. For example, you could tell half of the world’s population, randomly, that Trump is our president and the other half it was Hillary Clinton, then measure the different amounts of visitors from those populations. Of course, that’s not possible.

However, many data points hint at the Trump administration's impact on tourism. International visitation from certain countries is declining. There were already 3 percent fewer visitors from the Middle East to the U.S. in 2016.

What's more, data on airline reservations tell a similar story. Olivier Jager, the CEO of ForwardKeys, a company that specializes in air reservation data, has been tracking changes since President Trump took office. In a March 2017 report, air bookings from seven Muslim countries in the Trump administration's travel ban decreased 80 percent from last year.

An updated news release shows strong recovery in the Americas, but bookings from the long-haul market remain flat, lagging behind an uptick trend globally.

Finally, international sentiment toward new U.S. policy is now mostly negative. The Pew Research Center found the overall image of the U.S. suffered a sharp decline since Trump took office.

There's also some anecdotal evidence. For example, in the responses to a Facebook post by The New York Times, many Europeans said they would avoid trips to the U.S. due to the Trump administration. Recently, one of our own colleagues, Mark Harvitz of the University of Waterloo, declined to travel to the U.S. to accept an award due to a self-imposed travel ban to the U.S.

However, there are exceptions: Chinese visitors are actually more likely to visit the U.S. under the Trump administration.

In conclusion, the Trump part of "Trump slump" might be true, but international tourism to the U.S. can hardly be described as a slump. It would be more accurate to say that the U.S. is lagging behind other nations. We cannot put all the blame on the Trump administration.

The U.S. has a strong reputation as an international destination, due to its wonderful naturally endowed resources and its cultural influence around the world. However, perhaps it’s time for the tourism industry to beef up its marketing muscle, in order to mitigate the negative political climate and to boost continuing growth.

Bing Pan is an associate professor of tourism management, Pennsylvania State University.

Calif. wants federal money for water projects

By Laura Tsutsui, Politico

California is one step closer to getting a cut of $2.5 billion over the next decade for its water needs now that the House has passed a bill aimed at funding water research and infrastructure projects.

The drought-stricken state has positioned itself as independent of the federal government – most notably, the Trump administration – on issues ranging from immigration to health care coverage. However, it still turns to federal lawmakers when it needs a financial boost for an issue as central to the state as water.

The Water Resources Development Act, which passed the House last week by a vote of 408-2, identified more than 40 projects nationwide to fund with federal cash. The Senate is expected to pass its own version this summer.

Read the whole story

Dramatic decline in Tahoe's clarity – 9.5 feet

By Kathryn Reed

Despite $2 billion being spent on environmental improvement projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin over the course of more than a decade with the primary goal to improve the clarity of the lake, Mother Nature is foiling those plans.

UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center on June 13 released the annual lake clarity report for 2017, which shows a decline of 9.5 feet to 59.7 feet from a year ago. The previous lowest level was 64.1 feet recorded in 1997.

Scientists are blaming the decline on the confluence of weather extremes – the drought and then the winter deluge.

"We are not shocked by it. I think everyone was expecting a low clarity year based on the drought conditions we had followed by what really is one of the wettest winters on record," Tom Lotshaw, spokesman for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Still, the trend of the last few years is declining clarity. It dropped 3.9 feet in 2016 and 4.8 feet in 2015. In other words, the clarity of Lake Tahoe has dropped more than 18 feet in three years.

"If you look at the bigger picture we know that these clarity numbers can vary wildly from season-to-season and year-to-year. That is why the total maximum daily load looks at five years. That five-year average even after this low year is still at 70 feet," Lotshaw said. "The longer term declines we

were seeing for 20 to 30 years has been stabilized."

Clarity is measured by taking various readings with a Secchi disk, which looks like a white dinner plate. It is put over the side of a boat and with the naked eye someone looks to see how far down they can clearly see it.

Numbers are usually the worst in summer and then improve in the fall and into winter. In 2017 the fall readings continued to decline. Then the winter rains just flushed a tremendous amount of sediment into the lake. Usually runoff is not a concern until spring.

"This report serves as a stark reminder about the importance of conservation and restoration efforts. Without that progress, the lake would already have been lost. We must continue investing in those efforts if we're going to save Lake Tahoe," Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said in a statement.

California Natural Resources Secretary John Laird and Nevada Director of Conservation and Natural Resources Bradley Cowell issued the following joint statement: "While annual clarity declines are not unusual, the record decline experienced last year warrants an in-depth review to further understand the causes and impacts, and to help ensure the 2017 decrease is an anomaly, and not a trend. After 20 years of significant investment to protect the clarity of Lake Tahoe, we take this development seriously. As the natural resources leads for our states, we are asking the science community to take a fresh look at factors affecting lake clarity and recommend actions to continue our success in protecting the ecological health of Lake Tahoe in a time of changing climate."

While officials talk about climate change being a serious issue in the basin, no answers have been forthcoming. Weather extremes are predicted to become the norm, not be an anomaly. The lake is warming, which presents other issues. A warmer

lake keeps the fine sediment particles closer to the surface which in turn diminishes clarity.

A bright spot though is that Geoff Schladlaw, director of TERC, said numbers collected so far in 2018 are encouraging, calling them “more in line with the long-term trend.”

UC Davis researchers are hoping an autonomous underwater vehicle and an underwater robotic glider that are new tools in its arsenal will help provide data that can provide answers and solutions to ongoing and growing concerns at Tahoe.

Even so, most of the money, time and scientific studies have been spent on worrying about lake clarity in the middle of Tahoe. Those who frequent the beaches worry more about the muck and the discoloration – it being more brown than clear – by the shore. But that’s a whole different issue called the near shore, which until the last handful of years wasn’t even on officials’ radar.

Paid parking returning to Harrah’s-Harveys

Harrah’s and Harveys at Stateline will be charging for parking starting June 16.

It will be similar to what took place last summer.

Paid parking will run this summer on days and nights during major special events and peak holiday periods. Parking rates be $20 for self-parking and $25 for valet parking. Cash and credit cards will be accepted. Total Rewards loyalty members rated Platinum and above will continue to self-park for free.

Complimentary valet will also be available for all Total Rewards loyalty members rated platinum and above.

Casino officials are hoping to improve the parking experience for guests.

Effective dates include all days/nights when there is a concert or special event scheduled including concerts/events at Harveys Outdoor Arena and major holiday periods, including July 4 and Labor Day Weekend, Aug. 31-Sept. 3.