Protecting the lake, benefiting the community



The Upper Truckee Marsh, as seen in the 1950s, would have have been developed today. Photos/League to Save Lake Tahoe

Publisher's note: ***This is one in a series of stories Lake Tahoe News will be running leading up to the 50th anniversary of South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 30.***

By Darcie Goodman Collins

As the city of South Lake Tahoe turns 50 this year, I have

been contemplating the League to Save Lake Tahoe's relationship with the city. As many people are aware, we have not always had the strongest partnership.

To understand the legacy between the city and the League, we should consider the environmental challenges we inherited as our organizations grew during the 1960s. Unbridled development without any urban planning had already begun to impact the lake. The Tahoe Keys had destroyed hundreds of acres of valuable wetland. The region lacked any long-term vision. By the 1990s, however, the idea of redevelopment gave hope for revitalization on the South Shore. The League, the city and other interested parties ironed out a plan for Tahoe's first redevelopment project, the Heavenly Village. The League worked to get as many old motels torn down as possible, and sought to gain as much wetland and shoreline restoration as possible from the project. The Heavenly Village now serves as a model for redevelopment around the lake.

Finding a redevelopment model to help Tahoe's communities revitalize while also benefitting the lake is a bright spot from the past 50 years. In reflecting on my three-year tenure as the League's executive director, I also found many positive points.

For example, the Tourist Core Area Plan passed in 2013 with relatively little controversy. We supported it after the city addressed our concerns on new zoning identified in the draft plan. Also in 2013, we were thrilled when the city passed a landmark plastic bag ban, the first community at the lake to do so. The ban will substantially reduce the amount of plastic waste in our streams and lake. And this past year, the League was very pleased to see the commercial service option dropped from the Airport Master Plan process. This will help keep airport noise in check, to the benefit of wildlife and community members, as well as eliminate any need to expand the airport's footprint. The city is also making step-by-step progress toward achieving pollution-reduction targets set by

the TMDL, an EPA program to reduce sediment flowing into the lake.

These encouraging examples remind us that we can protect the lake while also benefitting the community.

Next up, the League will be keeping a close watch on the Tahoe Valley Area Plan and the Loop Road project to ensure they maximize benefits for the lake. The League supports the Tahoe Valley Area Plan, which will be brought forward for adoption within the next few months, for its open space and environmental benefits.



In the 1960s when the Tahoe Keys was built environmental concerns were not a major concern for most people.

The second phase of the TMDL will be more challenging, and the city will have to identify several new water quality improvement projects to meet pollution reduction requirements. We are also encouraging the city to improve public

transportation and winter road sanding operations, a huge source of sediment flowing into the lake. As the city moves forward with more redevelopment, we're hoping to see the city create targets for coverage reduction and restoration on sensitive lands. We are committed to productive dialogue with city staff and policy makers to identify solutions to these current challenges.

The League's purpose has always been to act as a strong watchdog for the lake. However, we can't Keep Tahoe Blue without community involvement. I was born and raised in South Lake Tahoe and care deeply about its future. Since coming on board, I've built a robust community engagement program because I believe the more residents gain hands-on experience tackling the lake's environmental challenges, the more they'll understand what solutions are needed and stand up for them.

For example, in addition to our two new volunteer programs, Eyes on the Lake and Pipe Keepers, which call on community members to help with scientific monitoring, we are now partnering with Lake Tahoe Unified School District to develop a Tahoe-based environmental curriculum. Students will use the lake itself as a laboratory to study geography, biology, public policy and other subjects.

The environmental movement is evolving, and finding more productive ways of achieving results. We are encouraged that the city is also growing and responding more to the concerns of its citizens.

Environmental progress is slow without true partnerships. With the League, the city and the community working together, we can achieve so much, for much less money and in a quicker, more efficient way. We wish the city a very happy 50th anniversary and look forward to collaborating to improve our environment and benefit our community.

Darcie Goodman Collins is a native of South Lake Tahoe and

serves as executive director for the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

Not all dreams of South Lake Tahoe founders realized 50 years after incorporation



One of the first things to change in the city was signs. This is Highway 50 near Park Avenue in 1964. Photo/Bill Kingman

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By Laurel Ames

Despite the grumbling by South Tahoe residents about the county seat located in Placerville, 60 miles away, and the difficulty of getting to El Dorado Board of Supervisors meetings, emotions did not coalesce about various irritations until it was revealed that El Dorado County was largely financing the West Slope county government with funds they collected in the Tahoe basin.

Those funds were primarily the locals' property taxes, and the taxes and fees paid by the developers of new subdivisions that were exploding around the communities. The new subdivision projects were clear-cutting trees, gouging out flat home sites, and installing sub-par roads, with only a thin layer of asphalt. Because the decisions about how large, how many and where the subdivisions would be built and what level of engineering they needed were made in Placerville, they received only a very cursory review.

In addition, developers were throwing up poorly-designed shoddily-built buildings on Highway 50, damaging or filling wetlands and shoving streams into ditches, plus building on the beaches and had already dredged the Upper Truckee Marsh for the Tahoe Keys – all of it approved by the county Board of Supervisors.

But the worst evidence of our powerlessness was the indefensible proliferation of ugly signs along the highway, each competing to be larger and more gaudy in color, with a fast increase in every kind of lighting, moving lights blinking, flashing and bursting across the signs.

“We’ve become incorporated five years too late.” — Brad Murphy, first mayor of South Lake Tahoe, the Tahoe Daily Tribune reported Dec. 1, 1965. But he proclaimed the city would now take leadership in protecting the lake’s beauty.

After incorporation, everyone agreed that the sight down the highway at the state line was a horrible vision of our new city. The *San Francisco Chronicle* described it as “The Market Street of the Sierra.”

With the feeling that we were being ripped off, being surrounded by poor standards of building, by the county’s failure to recognize the special Tahoe environment and the shoddy level of county-provided public services, including poor snowplowing service, slow sheriff response times, and little road repair, plus the failure to even acknowledge the need for a community vision for the South Shore area that recognized the importance of the lake for our community, people began to talk about creating their own local government.

A small core group came together to build a strong organization of dissatisfied residents to figure out how to get ourselves our own locally elected officials, keep our taxes in the basin and under our control, and assure that the former charm of our mountain town was restored, while our lake was protected. Creating a new city was the solution, and incorporation was the legal process. Volunteers soon joined in for the numerous tasks – from typing stencils for the mimeograph machine to organizing fundraisers and everything else in between.

That group was made up of Betty and Tom Mitchell, the Bijou Elementary School principal; Mary and Vaughn Burlingham, a developer; and myself and Wink Ames, an insurance broker and my husband at the time.

"The people of Lake Tahoe's South Shore formally have taken steps to control and preserve the natural beauty of this area. The overwhelming vote for incorporation proves the people do care what happens to the lake. We now have

> ***local government control and do not have to rely on those from other areas to take care of our needs.” —– Wink Ames***

With the help of many others, we researched local government law and faced the problems of attaining property owner signatures when 67 percent of the lot and cabin owners were not residents, all in an era when there were no computers, no faxes and no copy machines. It was plain hard work after buying the property owner rolls from the county assessor to sort the thousands of names and addresses by hand (first, we cut the county records into individual strips by name and address and then laid them out, one by one, in a very primitive sorting system) until we could write (again by hand) addresses on envelopes, paste on stamps and mail requests for a signature to residents and out-of-town property owners so we could form our own town.

Betty Mitchell remembered the numerous “addressing parties” that locals came to in order to help the effort. And then the county, which was watching us attack their golden egg, threw up a big hurdle – they interpreted the state law on signatures required for incorporation to be every signature on a property deed. We were dumbfounded, as the county required only one signature for many actions, including paying property taxes. We were looking at properties that individually were owned by up to 18 people. The decree by the county set us back, until a local lawyer volunteered to help. We sued the County (Ames vs. Board of Supervisors) and a judge agreed with us – only one

signature per parcel.

Following two years of work by volunteers, our efforts paid off in a wildly successful election, and the city of South Lake Tahoe was born on Nov. 16, 1965 – the date of the vote.



El Dorado County approved development on the South Shore without regard to the environment. Photo/LTN file

How the city has shifted

This past few weeks Betty Mitchell, Wink Ames and I have looked back, reminisced, and thought about what the city was in the beginning, and what it is now. Fifty years is a long time, but our memories came together over highlights and details.

By far the most significant and we hope long-lasting change was from the challenge to the city from the myriad ugly, ugly signs and billboards. It wasn't easy, and Mitchell remembers her husband, who had been appointed to the first Planning Commission, was irate about a large Harrah's sign stuck in the ground on property in California next to the highway. That sign, among others of the most gross, was targeted for removal in the first phase of cleaning up the signs. But Harrah's put pressure on a city councilman, the city manager put pressure on Tom Mitchell, who stood his ground, but the other planning

commissioners caved and gave Harrah's 14 years to remove the sign.

Today, all those signs are gone, much of the gaudiness has gone away, and, except on the Nevada side, signs are now classier, muted from the wild abandonment of the 1960s, but still subject to the whims and senses of the city Planning Commission, as those who read the city agendas can see. The city's early vision of signs that were not obtrusive was on the road to attainment until this past summer when the city got two new very large very bright-colored lighted signs – Auto Zone orange and BevMo red. Oops. Is this the vision for the city's future?

The other great success we remembered was the city action to kill the proposed freeway from Meyers to Harrah's parking lot at Stateline. The route of the four-lane freeway was through every meadow in town, as it further rerouted the Upper Truckee River along the airport, and curved toward Stateline across the river and ran parallel to Barbara Street. Just past the north end of the airport, in the middle of that meadow, a large freeway flyover, with off ramps and on ramps to the flyover to connect to another freeway that would replace Highway 89 up the West Shore. That 89 freeway right-of-way can still be seen in the form of the large lagoon on the town side of Venice Drive in the Tahoe Keys. The roadways would cover up all of the meadow at the intersection of 50 and 89. Another place to see the old proposed freeway is the snow storage yard for Caltrans at the end of Sierra Boulevard.

The freeway then headed toward Stateline across Trout Creek meadow, Bijou Creek meadow, across the drainage above Pioneer Trail, across Ski Run, up the hill, through the houses and down to the Harrah's parking lot. Caltrans had spent years buying up right-of-way, businesses and houses, as they advanced their plans.

The new City Council got wind of the enormity of the road and

how it would affect the town, and called Caltrans (at that time the Department of Highways) to meet with the community at a meeting in the new high school auditorium – and the city turned out. The Caltrans engineers were there with their presentation, and the freeway opponents brought in experts and organized local speakers. South Tahoe was passionately opposed to the freeway.

The highlight of the event was when the head Caltrans engineer was asked if they had prepared mock-ups (models) of the freeway, and he said “no”. But Bill Ledbetter, CEO of Harveys, had managed to obtain a full-color picture of the mock-up of the exit into Harrah’s parking lot, had made 400 8 x 10 color glossies and had them handed out to the audience as the question was being asked. The Caltrans rep slunk back to his seat and the City Council took up the issue of signing an agreement with Caltrans to proceed with the project. The vote was 4-1 against.

When the city went off the rails

Several years later, a different group was formed by Ed McCarthy (later the founder of the Council for Logic and mentor of Terry Trupp, later the mayor of the city who was arrested for drug dealing) that announced that the freeway was desperately needed and campaigned for a vote of the people to approve the freeway. His ads said, in full caps, “THE STATE OF CALIF WILL BUILD AND PAY FOR ANY KIND OF ROAD WE WANT.” By that time the time-share developers were building time-shares and they signed up their new owners to support a new parkway. People voted for it, even though “parkway” was just a nice name for a freeway. But it was too late, and a combination of Caltrans harboring a grudge against the city, and the later advent of CEQA and new environmental rules that would have prevented the super-sized road in the wet meadows, ended the idea of splitting the city into two sides and destroying parts of large wetlands of the largest river in the Tahoe basin.

While later the city hungered for the two loop roads at the state line, one above and one to connect to the road near the Edgewood golf course, and even today wants a larger loop road above the existing loop road, it has not attempted to reignite any effort to build a freeway through the city's meadows. The early city had its head on straight, and the town held a vision of protecting the meadows. Wink Ames noted that he ran for the second City Council on a platform to protect the environment and the communities, and that local control would be brought to us by thoughtful and responsible representatives. Ames got the most votes.

At the beginning, the new city quickly hired a land use planner, and citizens got to work in a yearlong process called 14,000 Planners. As Ames remembers, the planner told the groups that they could have any kind of community it wanted, provided they could articulate and agree on a picture of what that vision was. They met for a year and turned out the city's first General Plan, which was aimed at creating a true mountain village style community, protecting the remaining open spaces, limiting sizes of building to be compatible with the small communities of Stateline in California, Bijou, Al Tahoe and Tahoe Valley. And protecting the large pine trees for their significant role along the highway for the scenic values of the communities was important to the residents.

"I really believed it would work," Ames said of the 14,000 Planners plan. "But the vision is gone. It doesn't look any better now."

Mitchell noted that the community wanted local control and they thought that, in addition to snowplowing that was better than the hit-or-miss of the county, road repairs and a city police department, they would see their town start to look better. But it never happened.



BevMo's sign lacks a mountain feel. Photo/LTN

My thought is the city lost its vision of being a series of mountain villages and has not replaced that with a cohesive new vision, as demonstrated by the new BevMo and Auto Zone. The Chateau at Stateline is seen as an improvement over the Hole in the Ground (brought to us by city approval) but lacking an architecturally pleasing exterior reminding us all that when the beautiful Outdoorsman building was remodeled into a drug store, the best building South Shore ever had was lost forever.

And worst of all, the water at the lake's edge in the summer, which was astoundingly clear in 1965, is now lost to streaming algae, milfoil mats and a shoreline that is no longer the "pristine purity and crystal clarity" that the politicians used to brag about in 1965. Instead, the city, when faced with state and federal rules to protect the lake, took umbrage at the concept that the locals would be stewards, and led the fight against a regional agency, fought the legislation that required new development rules, and did not accept fiscal responsibility for protecting the lake – garnering the city its moniker in out-of basin government offices as "welfare queens" in that the city wanted the state and feds to pay for protecting the lake, but to reap the benefits from living at Tahoe.

Today, as you drive down Highway 50, try to imagine the

highway lined with tall pine trees, with the Y a real Y with a hundred old Ponderosa pines in the center – an area that is now all pavement. Fifty years from now, will the remnants of tall pine trees still exist, or will the highway run past a solid wall of 42-foot tall buildings, side by side?

The city of South Lake Tahoe can try again for a new vision for the town and embrace protecting the meadows, the lake, and the big trees, emphasizing the natural values of the surroundings in their decisions.

Based on the last 50 years, it looks like a long shot.

Laurel Ames was one of the key players in getting South Lake Tahoe to incorporate. She still lives in the city.

South Lake Tahoe turns 50

South Lake Tahoe turns 50 this year in November.

Ballot measures: South Lake Tahoe voters make critical financial decisions for the

city



Linear Park in South Lake Tahoe received a makeover with the help of Measure R funds. Photo/LTN file

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By Kathryn Reed

One reason South Lake Tahoe incorporated 50 years ago was to have a greater say in how it was governed. Residents were a bit disgruntled with how the powers that be in Placerville were doing things at the lake.

It took a vote of the populace to make the city of South Lake Tahoe a reality. But that wasn't the end of ballot initiatives in the city. Through the years voters have had an opportunity to decide on a number of issues.

All tax proposals, by law, must go to voters – whether it's at

the city, county or state level. But a city can bring other issues up for a vote – like parking. The June 3, 2014, Measure P was the last item a City Council put on the ballot.



Anti-paid parking advocates took their cause to voters in June 2014. Photo/LTN file

This came about because of the controversial metered parking program the city had initiated in various parts of town. While the issue had been talked about for years, approved by various councils and included in budgets, after it became a reality a group of citizens called Tahoe for Tahoe wanted the meters and the program to be abolished. Because of legal reasons they could not get a measure on the ballot themselves. The city, knowing it could essentially be stabbing itself in the foot, agreed to take the issue to the people.

And the people said get rid of the program. It required a 50 percent plus 1 percent vote to pass. It did so with 66.96 percent.

The meters associated with the program were removed Aug. 31, 2014.

The first vote put to the people after incorporation came on Nov. 6, 1984. It was called Measure C. This would have created the county of Tahoe. It failed, with the naysayers casting 22,027 votes and proponents having 18,434 votes.

This idea, though, has not gone away. There are people today who believe the basin portion of El Dorado County would be better off being its own county.



Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, which was Embassy Suites when it opened, is a still a player in redevelopment.

Next came another Measure C, but for a completely different reason. This was to increase the transient occupancy tax to 10 percent in most parts of the city and to 12 percent at specific hotels in the redevelopment area.

Voters on Nov. 8, 1988, said yes with 77.5 percent. It required a 66 percent yes vote to pass.

This was the start of redevelopment in the city. The purpose of the higher tax rate was and still is to help pay off the $110 million bond debt in case property taxes were ever insufficient. Every year at least some of those TOT dollars have gone to the debt. That debt won’t be paid off for more than 20 years. There was a time before the recession that only $100,000 from the TOT was needed to help with the debt. As property values rise, the property taxes increase, which in turn means less TOT required to pay the bills and more of it going to the general fund.

The city didn’t ask the voters for anything else until 12 years down the road. This time it was a joint measure with El

Dorado County and the Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District. The three formed the Community Facilities District Recreation Joint Powers Authority.



Hockey keeps becoming more popular at the city owned ice rink. Photo/ Jessie Marchesseau

A special election was called on Sept. 19, 2000, where voters were asked to pay a 30-year $18/year tax to fund recreation. This was known as Measure S. The $6.5 million in bonds are to paid off in 2030. The money paid for the city ice rink that is now operated by a private company, the ball field next to Lake Tahoe Community College and $50,000 a year of TPRID, as well as bike trail improvements.

Sixty-nine percent of the voters said yes.

Hotel taxes were back before voters two years later.

Measure Z passed on Nov. 5, 2002, with 56.1 percent of the voters saying yes. It needed 50 percent plus 1 percent vote.

This measure added $1 to every hotel room night to add to the city’s transient occupancy tax revenue. TOT along with property and sales taxes are the three main revenue sources for South Lake Tahoe.

It was in place from Feb. 1, 2004, to Oct. 31, 2006. Measure Z brought in about $1.1 million a year when it existed, which at

the time helped the city make ends meet.

This was the last time the city raised the TOT.



South Lake Tahoe lodging establishments are assessing a fee that goes toward marketing. Photo/Provided

However, in 2006 the South Lake Tahoe Tourism Improvement District was formed. The group of lodging establishments agreed to assess guests $3 per night at hotels-motels and $4.50 night at time shares and agent-managed vacation home rentals. That money is then used for marketing purposes by the district. It is considered a fee and that is why it did not have to go to the voters.

They did this the day after Measure Z expired.

The sales tax in South Lake Tahoe went from 7.25 percent to 7.75 percent after voters gave the go-ahead on Nov. 2, 2004.

Measure Q passed with 58 percent of the vote. It needed 50 percent plus 1 percent for approval.

That extra half percent goes directly to South Lake Tahoe. This is unlike most sales tax that is set by the state, collected by the state, and spent by the state. Some is filtered back to the county and then the city, but not a ton compared to what is collected.

Voters on Nov. 8, 2005, said no to raising the snow removal fee. This was called Measure R – not to be confused with the later recreation measure by the same name.

This Measure R would have increased the snow removal tax from $20 to $40 per parcel. It required a two-thirds approval, but only 54.2 percent of the voters said yes so it failed.

Voters on Nov. 3, 2010, were asked to revise Measures S with Measure B, which stood for ball fields. It would have given more money to ball fields, but the bike community came together to help defeat the measure.

It needed 66 percent to pass; it received 60.54 percent.

Next up was the idea to increase the maximum amount on business license fees. It would have increased the not to exceed amount from $3,387 to $10,000 per calendar year.

But voters on Nov. 2, 2010, said no to Measure E – but barely. It required a 50 percent plus 1 percent vote. It received 50.81 percent.



Bicycle trails are improving with Measure S/R funds. Photo/LTN file

Ball field and bicycle advocates came together in 2011 to successfully rewrite Measure S. What is now known as Measure R was approved by voters that Nov. 8. It rejiggered how money could be allocated, making it less restrictive. More existing

ball fields and bike trails have received upgrades instead of the money mostly going to new facilities.

On the June 5, 2012, ballot the business license cap was revisited by the city.

The analysis from the city attorney at time regarding Measure B said, “Passage of Measure B will reduce the business license tax on 95 percent of businesses in the city of South Lake Tahoe by 5 percent. The measure increases the maximum any business pays from $3,448 to $20,000 based on the tax rate for each type of business. The current business license tax rates and maximum tax are increased annually for inflation, but if Measure B passes, the tax rate per $1,000 of gross receipts and the maximum tax of $20,000 shall not be increased for inflation.”

It passed with 55.61 percent of the votes.

The next ballot measure likely to be put forth by the city will come in 2016. It may be to raise the transient occupancy tax or create an amusement tax or both, all with the purpose of creating a funding source for recreation improvements.

South Lake Tahoe – a 50-year work in progress



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Voters Approve Formation of a New City

First City Councilmen Elected

South Tahoe Chosen as Name for the New City

Brad Murphy 1,377 Jerry Martin 1,194 Eugene Marshall 1,082 Norman Woods 996 Donald Clarke 871

South

South Lake Tahoe voters in November 1965 agreed to form an incorporated city.

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By Kathryn Reed

"The people of Lake Tahoe's South Shore formally have taken steps to control and preserve the natural beauty of this area. The overwhelming vote for incorporation proves the people do care what happens to the lake. We now have local government control and do not have to rely on those from other areas to take care of our needs."

– Wink Ames

Ames was one of the founding fathers of South Lake Tahoe and went on to serve on the City Council. The quote above was his official statement to the media after the votes were counted.

From dirt roads to a major federal highway. From just a few year-round residents, to thousands. From ranching to gaming's housing hub to a recreation mecca. South Lake Tahoe has gone through a multitude of changes through the years.

Before the vote to incorporate took place in November 1965, the area was divided more into neighborhoods that still exist – Al Tahoe, Bijou, Bijou Park, Stateline, Tahoe Valley and Tallac Village.

There were 12,000 people who called South Lake Tahoe home in 1965. The vote to incorporate was 2,011-614. Voter turnout was 65 percent. With approval, South Lake Tahoe became the 398th city in California.



Norm Woods is the longest serving member on the City Council. Photo/South Lake Tahoe

The first council consisted of Brad Murphy who was the top vote getter at 1,377; Jerry Martin (1,194); Eugene Marshall (1,082); Norm Woods (996); and Donald Clarke (971).

What has changed through the years is not the number of votes, but the voter turnout. With the city having a population of about 21,500 people, a total of 9,414 votes were cast for City Council in November 2014 when voters could vote for three candidates. Wendy David received the most at 1,727.

Woods is the longest serving member at 21 years – 1965-70 and

1976-92. By the time current members Hal Cole and Tom Davis finish their terms, each will have served 20 years. Cole from 1994-2006 and 2008-16; and Davis from 1992-2004 and 2010-2018.

From 1965-68, all mayors served a six-month term. Today they serve a one-year stint.



Echo Motel on Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard comes down June 26, 1989, for the first phase of redevelopment. Photo/South Lake Tahoe

Pictures of everyone ever elected to the council are on a wall in the room where the five electeds meet, with the dates served posted as well.

Originally the council met in the basement of what was the Tahoe Savings & Loan Building. It is now El Dorado County offices on Takela Drive.

City offices have moved throughout the years, including being in what is now the senior center. Today they are at Lake Tahoe

Airport and on Tata Lane.

Fire, police and snow removal were the three tenants upon which incorporation were sold to the public.

In 1966, the city took over Lake Valley Fire Protection District stations that were in the city limits.

The first police chief, Ray Lauritzen, was hired in April 1967. He then started hiring officers.

Plow drivers were adept enough by the end of 1966 to clear all city streets within 12 hours.

Not everyone was happy with the city being its own entity and no longer under complete control of El Dorado County. A move for disincorporation was put on the ballot in 1968 and was defeated.

John Williams served as the first city manager until 1969.

In 1966, Pioneer Trail was open year-round from Meyers to near the state line.



The base of the gondola was put in by American Ski Company. Photo/Heavenly Mountain Resort

Planners in the early 1970s expected the city to one day have a population of more than 50,000 people. This was at a time when there was talk of Pioneer Trail being more like a freeway. Even Caltrans was going to build a bigger highway and had the right-of-way to do so.

When the Greenway Bike Path, which may start construction this summer, is completed, much of it will be along that former Caltrans right-of-way that goes from Meyers to almost the Nevada border.

Entertainment and recreation have long been integral to South Lake Tahoe’s economy and tourist draw. The Stateline casinos in some form have existed since the 1940s. With the opening of Lake Tahoe Hard Rock this week, there is another reason for people to visit.

While technically there isn’t a ski resort in the city limits,

the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley put all of Lake Tahoe on the map as a winter wonderland.

Heavenly Mountain Resort's gondola opened for the 2000-01 season. It made it so skiers near the bulk of the hotel rooms could be whisked to the mountaintop without having to drive to one of the base lodges. Two years later Vail Resorts would own the gondola and ski resort. The village, anchored by two Marriott properties, continues to be the hub of tourist activity in South Lake Tahoe.

While the city has made considerable improvements through years, some things never change. The first talk of doing something with signs was in 1967. Regulations about billboards, neon, motif, color, type and style have been made ever since then. Even last year the council was still talking about what to do about sandwich boards. And signs are likely to continue as a topic when it comes to design standards in the Tahoe Valley Area Plan.

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Notes:

- The city is planning open houses at various city building throughout June and July.
- A time capsule unveiling and citywide treasure hunt will take place in September.
- Homecoming and community parade is set for October.
- The 50th anniversary dinner and gala at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel is Nov. 7.