

Kings Beach Commercial Core **Improvement Project**

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“Completed in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements for the 2007 North Lake Tahoe-Truckee Leadership Program”

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Abstract

The fate of the future appearance and functionality of downtown Kings Beach will be determined with the forthcoming decision on the “preferred alternative” for the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project. Will downtown Kings Beach continue to be bisected by a four lane state highway which has become the stage for chronic high speed automobile traffic and an increasing number of pedestrian injury accidents and fatalities? Or will the community decide that the downtown core should become a more pedestrian-friendly, walkable community, with features that slow or “calm” the traffic which flows along Highway 28? Whatever the decision, the outcome will affect the character and future of Kings Beach for many decades to come. The decision must and will be made this spring.

In any community, decisions that impact residents, businesses, and visitors, can at best, be controversial, and at worst, divisive. This project which began in 1996 is no different. It is the goal of this project to use one such issue and its related public meetings as an opportunity to assess the methods of communication, and as a case study to provide recommendations for future such projects in the area. Specifically, we are focusing on the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project (KBCCIP), and the community outreach provided by the Sierra Business Council (SBC).

Background

The original “Brockway Vista” subdivision (Kings Beach) was developed in 1926 as a typical grid system. In 1930 SR 28 was constructed as a *two-lane forest road which cut diagonally through the subdivision leaving parcels along the highway slightly askew from the rest of the grid* (EIR 2007). The width of the original two-lane road allowed for roadside parking; however, during the 1960s the highway was expanded to four lanes impacting roadside parking and pedestrian safety. In order to address these impacts and water quality issues, Placer County and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) adopted the Kings Beach Community Plan (KBCP) in 1996, an overall plan for Kings Beach. The KBCP called for the *establishment of goals and objectives, special policies, and strategies for redevelopment funding and implementation concerning land use, transportation, conservation, recreation and public service* (Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Projects Feasibility Analysis 2000).

In accordance with environmental laws, regulations, and policies, Placer County distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) in December 2002 related to the development of the DEA/DEIR/DEIS for the project. In addition, notices were featured in four local newspapers and letters were submitted to interested individuals, agencies, and groups inviting them to participate in a scoping meeting for the proposed project. The meeting was facilitated by Placer County and held in December 2002. Concerns raised by the community included: traffic congestion, pedestrian and bicycle mobility, economic impacts, and issues related to parking and right-of-way acquisition. Other issues important to the

community include environmental issues, safety, multi-use opportunities, sightlines and views, and maintenance. Comments from that meeting were considered in the preparation of the DEA/DEIR/DEIS for the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project, a project to help achieve the broader community plan.

Introduction

The proposed Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project is designed to improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation, water quality, and aesthetics in the Kings Beach Commercial Core area. The Commercial Core extends from the intersection of State Route (SR) 28 and Highway 267 to the intersection of SR 28 and Chipmunk Street. Based on the format agreed upon by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Caltrans and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), Placer County released the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA)/Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)/ Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) document to the community for a 60-day review period. The purpose of the document is to provide the community with a descriptive environmental analysis of the project. Four roadway alternatives are being studied as part of the environmental review process for this project.

The four alternatives being considered are:

Alternative 1

- No build alternative

Alternative 2

- Three lane alternative with roundabouts at Bear and Coon Streets
- 9 foot sidewalks
- 5 foot bike lane
- On-street parking (not allowed in the summer)

Alternative 3

- Four lane alternative with left hand turn lane at each intersection
- Stoplights at Bear and Coon
- 5 foot sidewalks
- 5 foot bike lanes
- On-street parking year round

Alternative 4

- Three lane alternative with roundabouts at Bear and Coon Streets
- 17 foot sidewalks
- 5 foot bike lane
- No on-street parking

In an effort to assist the community with understanding the environmental document and the project, Placer County contracted with the Sierra Business Council to develop a series of workshops to address and answer community concerns regarding the four proposed alternatives and their potential impacts on the community. The workshops were organized as follows; Workshop 1 presented detailed information about the four roadway alternatives being considered. This provided an opportunity for the community to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the issues related to this project. Workshop 2 presented the same information as Workshop 1, but in Spanish. Workshop 3 residents and business owners were asked to participate outdoors in an interactive visual exercise that measured components of the alternatives. This exercise was intended to move the community toward a consensus on a preferred alternative. Workshop 4 scheduled to be held May 29th, will be held to discuss outcomes of Workshop 3 and reach final community consensus on a preferred roadway alternative. A preferred alternative will be forwarded to the Placer County Board of Supervisors and identified in the final DEA/DEIR/DEIS after review of agency and public comments.

As part of the 2007 Leadership Class, our group set out to observe and assess the community education and consensus process organized by the Sierra Business Council and to assist them with their first of four workshops intended to educate the Community about the project alternatives. The Sierra Business Council developed seven questions related to the project (see attached Stakeholder Interview in the Appendices) and supplied a list of businesses to be surveyed. The results of those surveys have been incorporated into a matrix and will be described in more detail later in this document.

Proposed Indicators

Through interviews with Kings Beach business owners within the core improvement project area, we determined there were several indicators that would assist the Sierra Business Council in deciding what to discuss in Workshop 1 of the Kings Beach Core Improvement Project workshop series.

First, we determined 75 percent of business and property owners we sampled would like more information about the alternatives. This indicated the aim of the Sierra Business Council's first workshop, to educate the public about alternatives, was a good start to the process. Fifty percent of the business and property owners surveyed said they would attend the workshops.

Safety: Through our research we determined that safety was the foremost issue on the minds of business and property owners within the project area. Eighty percent of business owners sampled had concerns about safety (which, for the purposes of our analysis, was bundled with concerns about liveable/walkable communities and sidewalks) in the Kings Beach commercial corridor. The Sierra Business Council used this indicator in its first community workshop by presenting data on car speed safety -- in other words, how long does it take cars

traveling at various speeds to stop for pedestrians. The consultants also offered data on roundabout safety and the pros and cons of roundabouts as they pertain to safety and traffic calming effects. They also presented the length of pedestrian crossings, from curb to curb, in the various alternatives.

Parking: Sixty percent of our 20-business sample said parking is an important issue. The parking picture varies vastly from alternative to alternative. The Sierra Business Council used this indicator from the Main Street Business Survey Report to present visual information to attendees at the first workshop, using maps of the project area showing the on-street and “replaced parking.” In addition, they provided a chart to show how much replaced parking is necessary for each alternative. The consultants also presented the current parking-usage rate within the project area.

Slowing traffic=encouraging business: Fifty percent of those surveyed not only saw slowing traffic as a safety issue; they also saw it as a means for encouraging business in the project area. The Sierra Business Council did not provide hard data in the first workshop regarding this issue. In the second workshop the consultants presented anecdotal information from other pedestrian-friendly towns and how sidewalks increase business, sales tax income and property values.

Desire to combine alternatives: When asked what other questions they would like answered, 50 percent of the business owners asked if two of the alternatives could be combined. This meant the Sierra Business Council not only had to address this question during the first meeting, but they also had to be flexible in their workshop process to allow that the community and business owners may ask for a combination of alternatives, thus possibly delaying or complicating the process.

Residential sidewalks: Forty-five percent of business owners indicated that they wanted information about sidewalks from the residential areas of Kings Beach to access the commercial core – another piece that was not addressed in the survey. The Sierra Business Council addressed this concern in the first workshop.

There were several other issues raised by business and property owners in the project area – speeding and traffic controls, economic impacts of the alternatives, and impacts of heavy traffic with three-lane alternatives, to name a few – but the aforementioned proposed indicators seemed to be on the minds of most of those surveyed.

Promotion – Utility

Our proposed indicators were essential part of the formulation of the Kings Beach Core Improvement Project workshop series. Our survey results brought to light the key concerns held by business and property owners in the project area.

It was important that the consultants use this data when formulating their information for the first workshop.

The advantages of using these indicators are that the public will be informed on issues that are of concern to them. Through the education process business owners and community members will be able to formulate an opinion as to which alternative, or combination thereof, they think is best. The information speaks to the concerns of the people who deal with and *will* deal with these issues everyday.

The disadvantage of our proposed indicators is that they only represent the opinion of business and property owners and not that of the community at large. If the Sierra Business Council only used our analysis information to formulate its first workshop, it would be a short-sighted effort.

In this particular case, there are a number of indicators that led to the development of the roadway alternatives. The depreciation of the quality of the lake is one. The amount of people who have been injured trying to cross the highway is another, the fact that there is no bike lane running through the Kings Beach area, and perhaps the most prevalent of all, is the number of businesses that are struggling to survive in the Kings Beach Commercial Core. All these indicators were used by Placer County to develop the roadway alternatives.

The goal and purpose of using these interview responses as an indicator was to have an advantage or a leg up on the topics that would need to be addressed in the workshops. It would give the SBC an insight on the business concerns. It would allow for a chance to prepare the materials for topics they would need to use in the public workshops. The list of questions ranged from how educated the businesses felt they currently were, to the concerns that needed to be addressed in order to make an educated recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

GOAL AND PURPOSE

Our goal was to be very hands on in a current public process. The most amazing part of choosing this project was the timing. Our project is happening here, and now. We were able to be a part of a process in which a very important decision will be decided for the future of Kings Beach. This is a real community process at its best. We gathered together in the first leadership meeting because we all felt this would be an amazing opportunity to participate in a leadership roll. It would be an opportunity to be of help to our community, and to learn from them as well. By going door to door, we met a lot of new people. We engaged business owners into the process of community involvement, many for the very first time. We were able to see the process grow. The first meeting had an attendance of 50-70 people, by the second meeting, 200-225.

Throughout our paper we have discussed how our indicator is influencing the workshops. It is also going to be influencing policy. The community decision that

comes from this process will be presented by the SBC to the Placer County Board of Supervisors. This "community recommendation" will weigh heavily on the decision the Board of Supervisors will make for a chosen roadway alternative.

Methodology

Our process began by asking the Sierra Business Council how they most needed our help in the Kings Beach Core Improvement Project workshop process. With dozens of businesses within the project area, the SBC provided our group with an interview script, list of questions, and businesses to contact. Through telephone and face-to-face interviews, our group surveyed 20 businesses and property owners within the project area. We helped determine what questions exist in the community, and defined the primary issues and concerns. The second part of our project analyzes the data itself, highlighting both areas of current community consensus and areas of concern and confusion. It was our intention that both the raw data, and our analysis, would be useful in the development of the workshops.

We compiled the results in a spreadsheet and then broke out several of the answers by category. Once we compiled our interview results into matrix form (see next two pages), we presented the data to Sierra Business Council Program Manager Dave Polivy for use in Workshop 1, when all of the major issues and questions would be addressed for attendees.

Stakeholder Interview Results

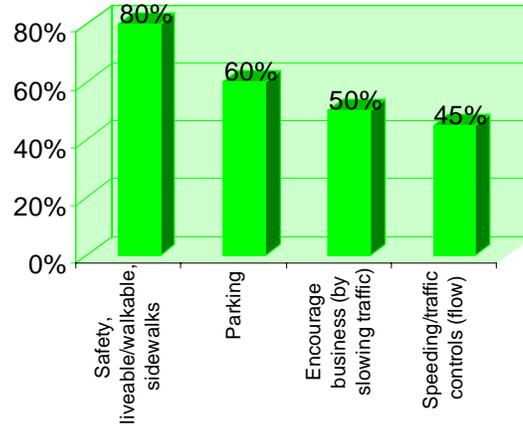
Question

Response

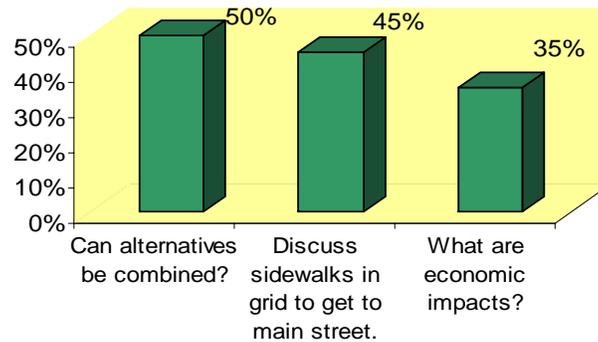
Are you aware that there are 3 roadway alternatives being considered for Hwy 28 through Kings Beach?	90% YES 10% NO
Do you understand the differences between the 3 alternatives and what they are seeking to accomplish?	40% YES 40% NO 20% Other
Would you like to be more educated about the intricacies of the alternatives and how they are going to accomplish the project goals?	75% YES 20% NO 5% Other
Do you think the community needs to be educated about the alternatives before they are asked to make a decision about which they prefer?	80% YES 10% NO 10% Other
Will you be attending the public workshops in late April and early May?	50% YES 50% NO
Is there anything else you would like to add for consideration during this process?	50% YES 30% NO 20% Unsure

Interview Results (continued)

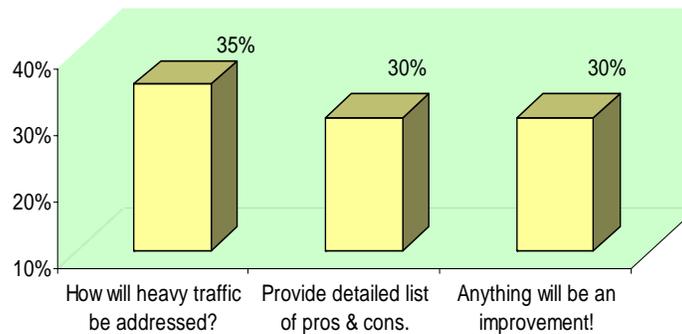
What issues are most important when considering alternatives?



What questions would you like answered?



Is there anything else you would like to add for consideration?



Limitations

Clearly, there are limitations to a project of this size and scope. Our study and analysis were limited in that we did not survey the entire business and property owner population in the project area. Also, some interviews were conducted face to face and others by phone, which did not create an even playing field for results. (Surveys conducted by phone tended to be shorter than those that were in person.)

Also, as mentioned before, we feel the survey information used by the Sierra Business Council was not complete in that only business and property owners were interviewed; community members were not included in this survey process.

In addition, by grouping our data into categories, the intent of some answers may have been skewed by placing them into a one-size-fits-all category. However, we feel this was the most effective way to present the information to the Sierra Business Council so they wouldn't have to read 20 surveys and could use the data in a timely manner.

Conclusion/Recommendations and Summary

While the vast majority of respondents were aware that an improvement project was taking place, a significant number of those also felt that they, personally, and their community, as a whole, needed additional education and information about the alternatives and their impacts. It seems somewhat counterintuitive, then, that only half of the respondents planned to attend the educational workshops. These findings suggest the need for new education and outreach methods and approaches, if the goal of this and all similar projects is to have an educated citizenry guiding long-term community planning.

Additional research, and indeed, a future leadership project, could certainly be focused in this area, and the results distributed to community organizations. Questions to consider: how is community involvement advertised? Encouraged? Communicated? Solicited? What communication and education methods are most effective with residents? Business owners? Guests? What additional (non-traditional, non-governmental) research may be available from regional organizations? Ski area surveys? Airport reports? Incorporating such information into outreach and communication strategies would increase the diversity of perspectives, and while this complicates consensus-building, it more accurately reflects community as a whole.

Public decision-making is often strongly influenced by the will of a few vocal citizens, or worse, even fewer well-funded special interests. Using citizen interviews and public forums helped SBC narrow the concerns, and capture the ideas, of the community, which will hopefully result in an agreeable, sustainable, and safe solution.

Appendices

Stakeholder Interview document as prepared by Sierra Business Council

Ask for the manager, owner of the business, or property owner.

Name:

Date:

Business:

Hi, my name is _____, and I am a participant in the Truckee/North Tahoe Leadership program and am volunteering with the Sierra Business Council. I am here today to talk to you a little bit about the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project and get some of your thoughts about the future of Kings Beach. Do you have 10-15 minutes to talk with me?

First off, I am not an expert on the Commercial Core Project and will likely not have a lot of answers to some of your questions, but I will be happy to write down all of your questions and make sure they get answered in the coming weeks. First, I want to tell you about the process that is going to take place pretty soon. The public draft of the Environmental Impact Report will be released in late march and then there will be a 60-day public comment period. During that time, the Sierra Business Council (contracted by Placer co. Dept. of Public Works) will be facilitating 4 workshops, including one in Spanish, in an effort to reach community consensus by the end of the process. The community's consensus will then be presented to the Placer co. Board of Supervisors and the other regulating agencies for approval.

As stated in the Environmental Impact Report, the intent of the proposed action is to address bicycle and pedestrian circulation, preservation of scenery, and water quality needs within the Kings Beach Commercial Core area in a manner consistent with the Kings Beach Community Plan.

Are you aware that there are 3 roadway alternatives being considered for Hwy 28 through Kings Beach? You can refer to the diagrams here and walk folks through the alternatives.

Do you understand the differences between the 3 alternatives and what they are seeking to accomplish?

What issues are most important to you when you are considering these alternatives?

Would you like to be more educated about the intricacies of the alternatives and how they are going to accomplish the project goals? Do you think the community needs to be educated about the alternatives before they are asked to make a decision about which they prefer?

What questions would you like answered through this process?

Will you be attending the public workshops in late April and early May? There are no dates yet, but we will announce them as soon as possible.

Is there anything else you would like to add for consideration during this process?

Thank you for your time, we will get back to you with answers to your questions, and we look forward to seeing you at the workshops.

Businesses Interviewed

Taneva Auto Parts

Steven Brown, property owner of the Lake Tahoe Mixed Use Villages

Lucky 7 Tattoo Shop

Copy Edge Digital Printing

Print Art

Ferrari Crown Resort, Snow Peak Lodge, Anne's Cottages, & The Falcon

Tahoe Bike and Ski

Mad About Music, Mr. Video.

Front Porch

Brockway Theater

Lakeside Galleries

Kings Beach Car Wash

Sierra Shirts and Shades

Pastore Ryan

Lighting Showroom

Garwood's/Caliente Southwest South

The Robin's Nest

Hearts for the Home

Enviro-Rents Kayak and Sport

The Kings Beach Car Wash

Century 21 Kings Beach

References

Jones & Stokes. Draft Environmental Assessment (NEPA)/Environmental Impact Report (CEQA)/Environmental Impact Statement (TRPA). Volume 1 of 4: Report. Placer County, California. March 2007.

Harding Lawson Associates. Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Projects Feasibility Analysis. Carson City, Nevada. September 14, 2000.

Sierra Economic Development District. Main Street Business Survey Report. Placer County, California. January 2006.

Steve Teshara, Executive Director, North Lake Tahoe Resort Association (Personal Communication, May 2007).

Ron Treabess, Director of Community Partnerships and Planning, North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, (Personal Communication, May 2007).