

# A Christmas gift to Edgewood and Heavenly

To my friends and colleagues who blindly joined the chant to pass the TRPA Regional Plan Update – you screwed up.

Despite what you may have been told, the new plan does not create any new concept of European villages surrounded by open space and view corridors to the lake – that’s in the old plan.

In reality, the new plan proposes the elimination of hundreds of acres of open space.

To all of you who have climbed on the bandwagon saying we need to revamp the town to jumpstart our economy, I agree. The *Mountain News* has always been an huge advocate of “fixing the product.” But the new plan abandons fixing problem areas, so why have you been told otherwise? My guess is that if you follow the chain of command back through the ranks of the Nevada Chamber, past the faux pro-RPU orgs, past the vague speeches and letters, what you will find at the pinnacle are two very powerful entities: Edgewood and Heavenly.

Here’s the bottom-line difference between the old plan and the new. Buried in the latest ver-

sion of the 1,400-page document, is a newly-created “Resort Recreation” designation that would allow high-density development on land outside of the urban boundary, specifically for Edgewood and Heavenly.

For Edgewood, the plan lists a 250-acre site which is the meadow and forest east of the casinos where Borges Sleigh Rides operates around Friday’s Station, the historic Pony Express stop.

Finally, it’s clear what the Loop Road is all about – it leads directly to this potentially mammoth development on virgin land.

For Heavenly, the plan points to a 65-acre site surrounding the California Lodge, encompassing the parking lot and large tracts of undeveloped forest to the west.

The verbiage is clear in the EIR that this does not bode well for the environment: “This impact would be potentially significant because it would potentially lead to development of vacant land not currently contemplated for commercial, tourist, and multi-level development.”

Aside from flying in the face of TRPA’s core purpose, this plan



## Tay’s Tales

By  
Taylor  
Flynn

could be economically damaging to California-side counties and particularly the City of South Lake Tahoe. Here’s why:

The newly-established high-density resort area at Edgewood could cause the transfer of motel tax units (called TAUs), commercial floor area, and residential units – valuable and limited tax generating commodities – away from other counties and SLT.

Proponents of the Stateline-area “Vision Plan,” created by the former Gaming Alliance, have already made it clear that they intend to build up their area while advocating the downsizing of everyone else. By shifting the urban boundary further into Nevada, you can already hear the giant sucking sound of business

and tax revenue out of South Lake Tahoe.

Furthermore, the city already gets the short end of the stick with Heavenly (whose offices are located in Nevada), and this plan could make it even shorter. The city gets almost zero sales tax revenue from Heavenly, which operates on federal land, even though the city provides services such as road maintenance, snow removal and emergency services. This plan gifts development rights on (mostly) public land so that Vail Corp. can pursue it’s real estate dreams of high-rise condos around the California Lodge, but with no clear compensation to the taxpayers of SLT.

The reason this all seems like such a great deal for Nevada is because it’s exactly that. This plan represents the ransom paid to Nevada after its legislature threatened to pull out of the TRPA. If this were a movie, this is the scene where Nevada is holding a gun to TRPA’s head and saying “our way or the highway.” This is also the reason why the TRPA, which is supposed to be a neutral agency, has become a

cheerleader for the high-growth RPU. It’s called “survival.”

My main issue with the RPU has been the lack of honesty in the public debate. During the summer, when everyone was scratching their head over the logic of the Loop Road proposal, proponents said nothing about the 250-acre development site – not during the Loop Road debates, not during RPU hearings, and not during the economic analysis of the Vision Plan (performed by marketing guy Carl Ribaud, husband of Edgewood’s treasurer).

The problem is that this is about back door politics and corporate deals, rather than what should have been the most public process of all – a community hammering out its blueprint for the future.

We all know that Tahoe is an incredible natural attraction and that we need to fix the built environment to match her beauty – that we need to preserve open space and fix urban blight. But what this plan does is preserves blight and paves over open space.

To those who say this is the answer to our economic recovery, I couldn’t disagree more.