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June 9, 2006

Workforce housing project moves ahead in Tahoe Vista

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bonanza news service
June 2, 2006

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With a new developer, a new plan and extended outreach to the community, Alex Mourelatos is looking to make workforce housing a reality on the North Shore.

After four years of developing a plan to bring the Cedar Grove project to Tahoe Vista, Affordable Housing Development Corporation backed out because of changes in the project and money. Now Mourelatos, who owns 12.2-acres of land off National Avenue, has brought on Pacific West Communities to build fewer units that cover only 30 percent of the land space.

Representatives from area agencies and residents from Tahoe Vista and Kings Beach who have the bulk of the questions regarding the project are scheduled to meet next week in a focus group. Mourelatos said he wants the group to provide input on design, unit mix, site layout, building type, colors and roadway. The group will also help pick a new name for the project to replace the Cedar Grove tag.

One goal of the project is to provide for-sale and rental housing that meets the needs of low-, moderate- and above-moderate income levels to create a residential village, according to Mourelatos.

"We want better community outreach in general," said Mourelatos, a board member with the Workforce Housing Association of Truckee Tahoe. "My desire is to hear from all parts of the community. I want to hear from the local area workforce."

This next phase will be analyzing a fifth alternative to include in the environmental impact report that is scheduled for public review this fall, Mourelatos said.

"The goal is to continue to work towards a mix of housing that fits the need of workforce housing," said Andrea Clark, vice president for Pacific West Communities, which built Gray's Crossing in Truckee and is working on the Alder Drive project there. "Workforce housing can have increased benefits. Having that workforce goes above and beyond having housing, it provides a social fabric for our community."

Placer County Redevelopment Agency, which has given money toward the project's environmental impact report, has committed up to \$6 million to an affordable housing project that successfully completes the EIR process.

"There's a very significant need for affordable housing the Tahoe Basin," said Rich Colwell, chief assistant executive officer for the county. "I believe Alex is going above and beyond. He and his family are going to great lengths to include the community."

Despite Mourelatos' approach, opponents of the project still have concerns they say they would like addressed.

Dave McClure, a Tahoe Vista resident and business owner who is on the focus group, said he is concerned with the impacts an affordable housing development could have on the community, including the water and sewage system, post office and recreation areas.

"This is a chance to upgrade the community," McClure said. "It's an entirely different ballgame here. We have to work things out here in the Basin."

Bonanza News Service - Ryan Salm Alex A. Mourelatos points out the boundaries of his property in Tahoe Vista on Wednesday. This property will be the future site of Cedar Grove, Tahoe Vista work force housing.



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Tahoe Vista resident Leah Kauffman, who is also on the focus group, said she is concerned with the density.

"Generally, I think there is a need for affordable housing," Kauffman said. "I would like to see for-sale housing. I would give that my highest priority. My concern has always been to redevelop our existing housing."

Kauffman also stressed that she would like to see workforce housing in "different pods" throughout the community rather than in one location.

"I would like to keep an open mind," Kauffman noted. "We were told that this is coming from a new perspective, and I want to make sure that is true."

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