

Martis Valley West Parcel Specific Plan

Project Description

September 4, 2013

Introduction

The proposed project is comprised of two components, the East and West Parcels, which are located on either side of SR 267 within the Martis Valley Community Plan. The West Parcel comprises approximately 1,185 acres adjacent to the Northstar Resort, west of SR 267. The East Parcel is comprised of a total of approximately 6,376 acres, of which 660 acres are zoned for residential and commercial development. The proposed project would shift a portion of that allowed development from the East Parcel to the West Parcel. Current zoning allows 1,360 residential units and 6.6 acres of commercial uses within the East Parcel (the remainder of the East Parcel is designated Forest and zoned for Timberland Production). Under the proposed project, 775 acres of the West Parcel would be rezoned from Timberland Production to residential and commercial, allowing for 760 residential units and 6.6 acres of commercial uses. The remaining 345 acres would remain designated Forest. The 660-acres of the East Parcel currently zoned for development would be redesignated Forest, and a limited conservation easement would be placed over the entire 6,376 acres or it will be sold fee simple to conservation groups. As a result, no development would occur on the East Parcel, and the total amount of development would be 600 residential units fewer than allowed under current zoning. The combination of uses on the West Parcel at buildout would be 760 residential units, including single-family homes, townhomes, cabins and condominiums, and 6.6 acres of commercial land for homeowner amenities, small community retail and similar uses.

The proposed project is the result of collaboration and agreement between the project applicant and four conservation organizations--Mountain Area Preservation Foundation, Sierra Watch, Trust for Public Land and Truckee Donner Land Trust—regarding conservation, preservation and development of the East and West parcels. With the above conservation group, the project applicant agreed to reduce the overall development density allowed by current zoning by 600 residential units, from 1,360 units to 760 units. The development zoning would be transferred to the West Parcel as discussed above, and the East Parcel would be redesignated Forest, with a conservation easement. Furthermore the property owner has agreed to their willingness to transfer the entire East Parcel, comprised of over 6,376 acres, to conservation groups for permanent open space either via fee simple or a limited conservation easement.

Project Location and Setting

The project site is located midway between the Town of Truckee and the north shore of Lake Tahoe within the Martis Valley Community Plan (MVCP) in Placer County on either side of SR 267 (see Figure 1). The Martis Valley encompasses approximately 44,800 acres and is located in both Nevada and Placer counties. Within Placer County only, the Martis Valley includes approximately 25,570 acres.

West Parcel

The West Parcel is located southeast of the Northstar Resort, and uphill and east from the Sawmill reservoir (see Figure 2). The West Parcel is undeveloped and consists of coniferous

forest. The parcel is designated Forest in the MVCP and is zoned Timberland Production. There are no permanent structures on the West Parcel.

The West Parcel is located on undeveloped forested land that has been regularly maintained through harvest procedures. Historically, the site has been used for mining, logging and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and downhill skiing. Unauthorized mountain biking and hiking also occurs through the site.

The West Parcel is mainly characterized as two benches--an upper and lower bench. The upper bench forms a natural amphitheater with moderate to minor slopes. The lower bench is nestled between two ridgelines and runs parallel to SR 267. The majority of slopes fall between a minimum of 10% and 15%. Slopes greater than 25% occur along the ridge that runs northwest/southeast through the project site, and within the northeast portion of the site (see Figure 3). The steepest portions of the ridge exceed 30% in some isolated areas. The parcel's elevation varies from approximately 6,600 to 7,800 feet in elevation, a rise of roughly 1,200 feet.

The West Parcel falls primarily in the upper portions of the West Martis Creek watershed. Approximately 85 acres fall within the Tahoe Basin watershed. Mixed conifer forests predominate in the West Parcel, which also contains red fir, white fir, and white fir/red fir forest. Existing Timber Stand data reflect the average conifer on the West parcel is 70 feet in height and is 12 inches diameter at breast height (dbh).

The only roads within the West Parcel are dirt logging roads. There are no public or private utility facilities within the West Parcel. The only utilities lines that cross the West Parcel are the Calpeco transmission lines.

East Parcel

The East Parcel is also located on forested land that is harvested for timber. Access is from SR 267.

The majority of the East Parcel is designated Forest and zoned Timberland Production. In addition, approximately 660 acres are designated low density residential and General Commercial and zoned Single-Family residential and Neighborhood Commercial. The existing residential zoning would allow for up to 1,360 dwelling units on the East Parcel.

The East Parcel is similar in character to the West Parcel, with expansive forests and no structures. The parcel has historically been used for logging and mining. There are dirt roads throughout the East Parcel, but no utility lines or facilities.

The East Parcel is located within the Martis Creek watershed. An unnamed tributary to Monte Carlo Creek is located adjacent to the northeast boundary of the East Parcel. A small portion of the East Parcel drains into the Tahoe Basin, approximately 180 acres, however no portion of the proposed development area drains into the Tahoe Basin.

Project's Relationship to Previous Plans

On August 16, 1994, the County Board of Supervisors adopted the Placer County General Plan. The Placer County General Plan established an overall framework for the development of the county and the protection of its natural and cultural resources, whereas community plans address characteristics unique to each community and identify specific goals, policies, and programs appropriate to the local area. In addition, community plans address land use, circulation, housing, public services, and other community-specific issues. The goals and

policies contained in the Placer County General Plan are applicable throughout the unincorporated areas of the county. The Placer County General Plan establishes assumptions, goals, and planning principles that provide a framework for land use decisions throughout the county and is based on the belief that Placer County will experience continued growth and economic development because of its desirable climate, physical setting, plentiful resources, and proximity to the Sacramento metropolitan area. The general plan acknowledges that public services and recreational facilities will need to be expanded to accommodate this growth and offers a number of planning principles as guidelines.

The Placer County Board of Supervisors approved the initial Martis Valley General Plan (MVGP) in 1967, which was later converted to a community plan. The primary function of the MVGP and associated update was to guide growth in the region in an orderly fashion and to allocate specific areas for development that would cause the least impact on the environment. The 1967 Martis Valley General Plan provided a land use plan for the Martis Valley. The 1967 MVGP allocated to the West and East Parcels densities allowing up to 2,500 residential dwelling units, as well as multiple commercial acres and associated infrastructure. In 2003 the Martis Valley Community Plan Update was adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors, which reduced and consolidated development density from both parcels solely to the East Parcel. The updated plan called for a total density allocation of 1,520 residential units and numerous acres of commercial, but at the same time pre-calculated a reduction, resulting in a total density allocation of 1,360 residential units and 6.6 acres of commercial on the East Parcel. The East Parcel was named Martis Ranch in the updated plan.

As discussed above, the proposed project would transfer residential and commercial land use designations from the East Parcel to the West Parcel. In addition, a phased Specific Plan would be prepared for the West Parcel, which would reflect the revised zoning and provide additional standards and guidance for the development of the West Parcel.

Project Objectives

The State CEQA Guidelines (Guidelines §15124[b]) require that the project description contain a clear statement of project objectives, including the underlying purpose of the proposed project. The statement of objectives is important in helping the lead agency (Placer County) to develop a reasonable range of proposed project alternatives for evaluation in the EIR. The MVWP project objectives are to:

- Provide new residential development consistent with the vision, goals and policies of the MVCP, particularly:
 - Conserve large, intact and interconnected areas of natural open space that contributes to the last remaining habitat linkages between the Sierra Nevada and Mount Rose Wilderness Area in the Carson Range (Policy 1.A.6).
 - Minimize habitat fragmentation by development and roads to protect open space from human encroachment (Policy 1.A.6).
 - Insure that long-term conservation of important resource lands is achieved through a combination of regulatory actions, acquisition of easements, purchase of development rights, and both public and private land acquisitions (Policy 1.A.8).
 - Encourage the concentration of multi-family housing in and near village centers and neighborhood commercial centers (Policy 1.B.1).

- Encourage the planning and design of new residential subdivisions to emulate the best characteristics (e.g., form, scale, and general character) of existing, nearby neighborhoods (Policy 1.B.2).
 - Require residential land project design to reflect and consider natural features, noise exposure of residents, visibility of structures, circulation, access, and the relationship of the project to surrounding uses (Policy 1.B.4).
 - Require that significant natural, open space, and cultural resources be identified in advance of development and incorporated into site-specific development project design (Policy 1.B.9).
 - Identify available opportunities and designate land for small commercial centers where some of the needs of local area residents can be met, eliminating the need for trips outside the area (Policy 1.C.3).
 - Encourage the sustained productive use of forestland as a means of providing open space, maintaining the quality of Martis Valley's scenic vistas and to conserve other natural resources.
 - Encourage the preservation of timber producing lands as regional open space, and protect these areas from urban encroachment (Policy 1.J.1).
- Transfer the MVCP density allocation on the East Parcel to the West Parcel.
 - Minimize isolated development that leads to fragmentation of open space and natural resources by developing on lands in proximity to existing development.
 - Minimize visual impacts of development by using the natural features and terrain of the project site to screen buildings.
 - Limit new infrastructure and disturbance by developing on lands in proximity to existing development.
 - Enhance and maintain extensive trail system and associated recreational uses, such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and biking.
 - Implement a land use plan that is responsive to community concerns, such as visual character, traffic management, parking availability, recreational facilities, environmental issues, and the desire for expanded community services and amenities.
 - Develop a project that is consistent with the planning guidelines and principles of adopted plans and policies.
 - Create a development that draws upon the historic Sierra and Tahoe regional architectural traditions.
 - Develop a financially sustainable project that does not require the diminishment of services to existing residents.
 - Incorporate sustainable design concepts to ensure long-term preservation, the enhancement of resources, and the reduction of site impacts.

- Reinforce North Lake Tahoe as a four-season destination resort.

Project Characteristics

Proposed Land Uses

The West Parcel proposed land uses would accommodate the construction of up to 760 residential units and 6.6 acres of commercial uses, as well as the associated access roads, connections and supporting infrastructure. The majority of development would be located on the western portion of the project site, with limited development near the project entrance. The conceptual land use plan is shown in Figure 4.

Residential units would be a mix of single-family homes, townhomes, cabins, multi-family residents and condominiums. The anticipated residential unit mix is shown in Table 1. While the ultimate mix of units will be based on site characteristics and market conditions, the total number of units would not exceed and is anticipated at 760. As shown in the table, the number of single family lots may range from 300 to 500; the range of townhomes/multiplexes would be 125 to 350 units; the range of cabins would be 40 to 200 units; and the number of condominiums would be zero to 170 units. The resort residential development within the Tahoe basin would be clustered as required by TRPA. The development would be phased, and multiple phases are anticipated. No large hotels would be erected.

Commercial development would consist of homeowner amenities, recreational services and community supporting retail, such as small restaurants or cafes, recreational amenities, a sundries shop, family entertainment, concierge services and meeting rooms. These uses would be geared toward project residents rather than attracting an outside population.

Table 1 Residential Unit Range					
Unit Type	Probable Mix	Possible Unit Mix Range			
Single Family Lots	375	300	375	360	500
Townhomes/multiplexes	265	250	125	350	200
Cabins	120	40	200	50	60
Condominiums	0	170	60	0	0
Total Units	760	760	760	760	760
			Possible low unit types		
			Possible high unit types		
Note: Any combination of unit type may occur up to 760 units. Unit type will be determined by market demand and project terrain.					

The Specific Plan will include development standards that specify the allowable uses by zone, building heights, setbacks and other design requirements. The Specific Plan will also include design guidelines that direct the aesthetic quality of the development.

Circulation

Access to the project site would be provided via SR 267. A new three-legged intersection would be constructed at the project entrance and SR 267 with the following configuration:

- Left-turn lane on northbound (westbound) SR 267 for turns into the project site,
- Left turn acceleration lane on northbound (westbound) SR 267 for left-turns out of the project site,
- Right-turn lane on southbound (eastbound) SR 267 for turns into the project site, and
- Dedicated right- and left-turn lanes on project access road.

A two-lane roadway will be constructed to provide access from SR 267 to the interior of the project site. Internal streets will have two lanes. Hiking and bike trails will be provided throughout the project site and will connect to the existing and planned trail system.

A bus stop is proposed to be constructed at the entrance of the project. The bus stop could service both west and eastbound transit routes, and keep riders from crossing SR 267.

An emergency vehicle access (EVA) would be provided by connection to the Fibreboard Freeway, a paved two-lane road that touches the southeastern corner of the project site and connects to SR 267. The EVA would provide access for emergency vehicles only, unless needed to evacuate residents. The EVA would be summer only.

Infrastructure and Utilities

Water, sewer, electrical and gas improvements are shown in Figure 5, and described below.

Water

Water service will be provided by the Northstar Community Services District (NCSD). It is anticipated that one of two options will be used to serve the project site. The first option is to connect to the NCSD water system in Highlands View Road. This option would require installation of approximately 8,600 linear feet of water lines within the SR 267 and Highlands View Road rights of way and NCSD utility easements. The second option is to construct a new well on the project site near SR 267. The well would be owned and operated by the NCSD and would serve the proposed development.

Within the project site, it is expected that 8-inch water lines would be located within rights of way and NCSD utility easements. Fire hydrant assemblies shall be located per NCSD with 6-inch laterals.

It is expected that two 350,000 gallon water storage tanks would be constructed within the project site, at an elevation of approximately 7,750 feet mean sea level (msl). At this time it is anticipated that the tanks would each be approximately 28 feet in diameter and approximately 10 feet tall. It is also anticipated that the tanks would be partially buried for aesthetic purposes, with the outlet piping near existing grade.

Wastewater

Sewer service and wastewater treatment would be provided by NCSD. It is anticipated that wastewater would be collected with 6-inch to 8-inch sewer lines located within project streets and NCSD utility easements. The collection system would flow by gravity to a new sewer lift station located just north of the project site near SR 267 (see Figure 5). It is anticipated that a 4-inch force main would be constructed within the SR 267, Highlands View Road and Northstar rights-of-way and NCSD utility easements to convey wastewater to an existing 12-inch sewer

main located on Northstar Drive. Another option would be to construct a gravity sewer main that conveys wastewater to the NCSD lift station located on SR 267. It is anticipated that approximately 17,000 feet of sewer line, a combination of both gravity line and force main, would need to be constructed for the project (See Figure 5).

Drainage

Per FEMA Map Number 06061C000 F, the entire Martis Valley West Parcel project is within the Zone-X FEMA flood hazard area. Zone-X describes areas of 0.2% annual chance flood; areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depths of less than 1 foot or with drainage areas less than 1 square mile.

Low Impact Development techniques will be used during the engineering design of the project. Temporary Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used extensively during construction, such as silt fence and tree protection, and a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared and submitted to the California Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan Region). Permanent BMPs, such as storm water treatment and infiltration facilities, will be implemented to the greatest extent possible. In the event of a very large storm that results in discharges to surface waters, the NCSD Reservoir will ultimately receive the majority of pre-treated runoff from the proposed project. Upper Martis Creek may receive a small portion of pre-treated runoff from a very large storm event near SR 267.

Dry Utilities

Electrical lines, natural gas lines and communications lines would be installed in the rights-of-way of project streets and within utility easements. It is anticipated that these lines would connect to existing lines in SR 267. Approximately 4,000 linear feet of joint trench would be extended from the project connection to existing electrical lines and communication lines in SR 267. Approximately 3,000 linear feet of gas trench would be needed to connect the project to the existing gas line in SR 267.

Public Services

Fire protection services would be provided by the NCSD along with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF). The project is located about 4.5 miles from the Northstar Drive Fire Station, 5.5 miles from the Northstar Highlands Fire Station and 5.8 miles from the Kings Beach Fire Station (see Figure 6).

Law enforcement would be provided by the Placer County Sheriff's Department. The Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District would provide elementary, middle, and high school education. Sierra Pacific Power Company and Southwest Gas Company would provide electrical and natural gas services, respectively. SBC would provide telephone service to the project.

Parks and Recreation

The project will support active and passive recreation. Open space or a neighborhood park would be proposed within the project site for passive recreation. Residents would also have access to recreational amenities, which could include a swim, tennis and fitness center.

The proposed project, in order to further enhance active recreation, would provide trails throughout the plan area, including connections to existing and planned trails in Martis Valley. Trails would include biking, hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

Employee Housing

Placer County requires that projects in the Sierra provide housing for 50 percent of employees needed to serve the project. The proposed project would designate 6.6 acres commercial development. The actual number of employees will be determined when the commercial components are proposed. As discussed above, a number of different types of small-scale commercial facilities and homeowner amenities are anticipated to be developed, some of which would require few or no employees.

Off-Site Improvements

The following offsite improvements would be required in order to implement the project:

- Left-turn lane on northbound (westbound) SR 267 for turns into the project site,
- Left turn acceleration lane on northbound (westbound) SR 267 for left-turns out of the project site,
- Right-turn lane on southbound (eastbound) SR 267 for turns into the project site
- 17,000 linear foot sewer force main to connect to NCSD sewer main on Northstar Drive. The new force main would be located in SR 267, Highlands View Road and Northstar Drive rights-of-way. A short segment would be located outside of the rights-of-way between Highlands View Road and Northstar Drive.
- 8,600 linear foot water line to connect to NCSD water system in Highlands View Road (One option).
- 4,000 linear foot trench for electrical service in SR 267 right-of-way.
- 3,000 linear foot trench for natural gas in SR 267 right-of-way.

Construction Activities

The proposed project would use traditional construction methods and materials, including mass excavation; vertical shoring; cast-in-place concrete footings, walls, columns, and decks; structural steel; light metal framing with wood and stone veneers; metal roofing; and landscaping and hardscaping. Blasting would not be widespread; however, localized blasting of bedrock and large boulders might be required during foundation excavation, utility trench construction, and roadway and parking area subgrade preparation. Specialized blasting techniques would be used to minimize ground vibrations and prevent flying debris.

In the construction sites, areas would be protected from disturbance to maximize the preservation of specimen trees and native vegetation. The Project's goal when possible would be for balanced sites, minimizing off haul or import of grading and stabilizing materials. Much of the retaining wall construction would make use of boulders and rocks reclaimed from the grading operation.

Staging Areas

Construction staging areas would be established during project development. These fenced staging areas would be located on disturbed sites and would be used for vehicles, equipment, materials, fuels, lubricants, and solvent storage. The stockpiling or vehicle staging areas would

be identified in the improvement plans and would be located as far as practical from existing dwellings and protected resources in the area.

Grading

As excavation activities occur in the proposed project site, excavated materials totaling approximately 1 million cubic yards would be moved within the project site. The roads will be designed to balance earthwork, so that cut and fill material will not need to be imported or exported. Rocks that are removed during excavation will be stored onsite for use in retaining walls.

Schedule

Buildout of the overall proposed project is anticipated to occur over 25 years. The ultimate buildout date will depend on market conditions. Infrastructure will be installed in accordance with the developments phasing plan with the utilities and primary access and emergency access roads installed in the first phase. Spur and auxiliary roads and associated utilities will be installed within each phase as needed.

Requested Actions

The following actions would need to be undertaken by Placer County in order to implement the proposed project for the entire project site (both East and West Parcels):

- Certify the MVWP EIR and adopt the Mitigation Monitoring Program.
- Amend the MVCP land use plan. Under the MVCP, the West Parcel acreage is zoned Timber Production (TPZ) and the East Parcel is zoned TPZ, Single-Family Residential and General commercial. The project proposes to designate the entire East Parcel as Forest, with a conservation easement. In addition, the West Parcel would be redesignated for residential, commercial and forest uses.
- Rezone the East Parcel TPZ and the West Parcel single-family residential and commercial.
- Adopt the MVWP Specific Plan.
- Approve a Development Agreement.

Because 85.3 acres of the West Parcel are within the Tahoe Basin, they are subject to the jurisdiction of TRPA. It is proposed the 85.3 acres be rezoned Resort Recreation. As part of this effort, a new Area Plan would be created pursuant to the Regional Plan, and specific to the portion of the project located within the project site.

Additional permits and approvals that might be required for the proposed project from federal, state, and local agencies, for which this EIR may be used during the decision-making process, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) NPDES permit and approval of the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP),
- State Water Resources Control Board filing of Notice of Intent to obtain a General Construction Activity Storm Water Permit before project construction, and

- Section 401 permit.
- Annexation of the project site into NCSD.
- CalTrans encroachment permit.