



Truckee Railyard as seen from above Glenshire Drive, looking southwest. Roughly 25 acres of the 75-acre site would be developed under the approved Master Plan. Photo courtesy of Sierra Business Council

All Aboard! - Almost

Editors Note: Author Beth Ingalls served on the Town Council from 2002 to 2006 when the railyard project was discussed and was recently included in a list of former mayors supporting the project.

The Truckee Town Council unanimously approved the Truckee Railyard Master Plan and certified its accompanying environmental impact report (EIR) on June 17. The decision paves the way for a mixed-use development which, when complete, will include a combination of housing, retail and office space, a boutique hotel, movie theater, civic center, parks and open space. With an overflow crowd at Town Hall, and almost universal support from those who spoke during the public comment portion of the evening, project developer Rick Holliday said the meeting was “an amazing personal experience.”

For Holliday, who in a recent phone interview reflected on his five year journey with the Railyard project as the primary owner, there have been a total of 107 Railyard meetings leading up to the June approval. While he’s extremely gratified by the outpouring of support and the 4-0 endorsement from the council, he’s frustrated with the threats of litigation from the “Friends of Truckee,” a local group whose stated mission is “to protect the downtown core and maintain current traffic patterns.” Aside from the obvious concerns that anyone

with so much invested personally and financially in a project of this magnitude would have, Holliday laments that \$15 million in federal stimulus

recalled how the vision for development at the railyard, formerly known as the Mill Site, has always been “the community’s vision” for downtown

\$40,000 grant from CCLR and jump-started the process of studying how the Truckee blighted property could be recycled, revitalized and eventually become a prime example of “infill” development. Subsequent rounds of funding from CCLR and other sources and the involvement of local organizations like the Sierra Business Council followed. Eventually, the project began to attract the attention of state leaders like Phil Angelides, and soon after that Rick Holliday, whose company specializes in public-private partnerships and sustainable infill projects.

Susman chuckles when he thinks back on how, in the early days, even fellow town leaders thought he was crazy for wanting to pursue the railyard as a development site. But throughout the years all that has changed, and thanks to the seed planted originally by the community itself, he’s been proud to play a part in facilitating the vision.

“The Truckee Railyard project is a perfect example of the Truckee way of making things happen, of overcoming obstacles and getting to yes,” he said.

Susman doesn’t mince words when he says he believes the Friends of Truckee are a “small group with a vested interest in protecting their individual businesses and their ability to demand high rents in the downtown.”



An artist rendering of buildings along the new alignment of Donner Pass Road as it extends into the Railyard Project development. Image courtesy Town of Truckee

money for shovel-ready infrastructure projects at the site will be lost, along with the local jobs the projects would create, if a lawsuit is actually filed before the deadline later this month.

Former Truckee Mayor and three-term Councilmember Josh Susman, involved with the railyard project since its conception, called the Friend’s threats “unfortunate.” Susman

Truckee, born several years after the Town’s incorporation in 1993.

At a conference in 2002, Susman had an impromptu meeting with the director of the Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR), a nonprofit organization focused on creating sustainable communities through responsible patterns of land use and development. That meeting led to the first

TRUCKEE DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION presents



DOWNTOWN TRUCKEE THURSDAYS
Think local. Be local. Buy local. Give local.

EVERY THURSDAY Through AUGUST 20TH 5-9pm
Farmers' Market starts at 4PM

LIVE MUSIC • STREET FAIR • VENDOR BOOTHS • FOOTHILL FARMERS' MARKET

Jul 16TH Music by **Quartet Minus One**
Dogtown presented by Humane Society of Truckee Tahoe

Jul 23RD Music by **Ridin High**
Get Active Get Involved presented by Mountain Area Preservation

Jul 30TH Music by **The Renee DeFields Band**
Go Green presented by Truckee Recycling

Aug 6TH Music by **Neva and the After-Party**
Relay for Life presented by The American Cancer Society

Aug 13TH Music by **Drop Theory**
Family Day presented by KidZone

Aug 20TH Music by **Joe Mama**
End of Summer Fiesta presented by Truckee Downtown Merchants Association

BEER GARDEN • KIDZONE • CLIMBING CLASSES FOR KIDS
TAHOE OPEN MIC • BOUNCE HOUSE
GREEN BIKES • LOCAL ART

www.TruckeeThursdays.com



FREE PARKING
STARTING AT 4:00 PM

the Villager nursery & gifts

organic Gardens
Vegetables. Fruit Trees. Berries.


Lupine, Lilac, Hollyhock, Strawberry, Apple, Peony... If it thrives in Truckee, We have it in for your garden. Helping your mountain gardens thrive since 1975.



Education
free classes
timely topics throughout the seasons

25% off one Fruit or Berry (bush or tree).
We have a huge selection to choose from.
(with this coupon - expires 7/3/09)

NURSERY • CONSULTATION • INSPIRATION
10678 DONNER PASS RD
TRUCKEE • CA
WWW.VILLAGERNURSERY.COM


FOUR PEAKS

Restaurant at  **Sugar Bowl Resort**
Destination Dining, Elevated

French-inspired California cuisine in our elegant dining room or outside on the patio of a classic high-alpine Lodge, surrounded by the beauty of Donner Summit.

The Belt Room Bar offers the perfect venue for a cold drink after a hike on the Pacific Crest Trail or a bike ride up Old Hwy 40.



530.426.9000 • SUGARBOWL.COM

THE real1 graphic SOURCE

Signs

Digital B&W Printing

Blueprint Copies

Graphic Design

CAD Plotting

Large Format-
Scanning
Color Printing
Mounting
Laminating

Digital Color Printing

530.550.0454
TheRealGraphicSource.com
10925 Pioneer Trail, #4, Truckee, California

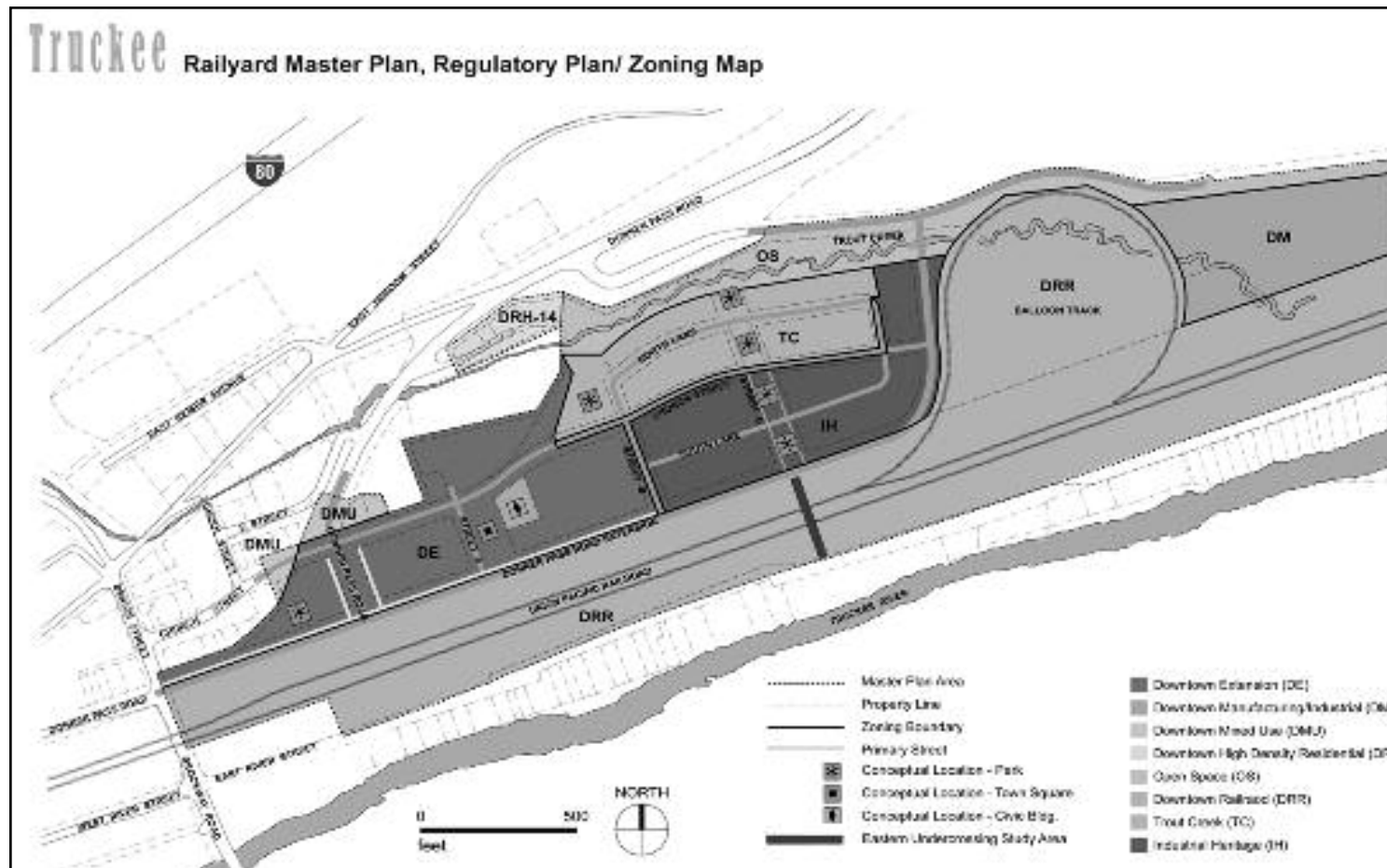


Aboard, from page 16

The group's underlying motives and even its membership have been an ongoing source of speculation, but Siobhan Smart, the public face of Friends of Truckee, denied that the group is fighting the project out of a fear of business competition. "The Railyard should be developed. We are not saying (Holliday's) plan is wrong and our plan is right. We are saying we are looking at alternatives," Smart explained. Specifically the group doesn't want Donner Pass Road realigned, wants improvements made in Brickelltown, feels traffic issues haven't been adequately addressed, wants to preserve the Union Pacific warehouse building and wants Trout Creek restoration to be included as part of the development plan.

Smart said even though she serves as the organization's board of directors and heads up all aspects, the Friends of Truckee is actually comprised of a "large number of members who are second homeowners, business owners, commercial property owners and full time residents." When pushed about the organization's lack of transparency, Smart said, "we have asked that our members have privacy. Community members who are part of Friends of Truckee are afraid to come out because of their positions in town." She and her husband Brian, owners of the Wagon Train restaurant, made a personal decision to "take the hits" themselves from any public backlash.

Moonshine did attempt to contact individuals who are thought to be involved with the Friends of Truckee for comment on the project, without success. One individual who refused speak on the record said, that "She (Siobhan) is the Friends of Truckee – she is the player. The Railyard project is a good project but the design in detrimental to all of downtown. It doesn't compliment



complement what we already have."

A quick internet search found that while Friends of Truckee is registered with the California Secretary of State, it is not currently listed with the IRS as a charity with 501c 3 status, as stated on its website, Friendsotruckee.com. The website itself is rather sparse, and doesn't provide any contact information other than a general email address and phone number. Smart says that people interested in the group can send an email or call.

Smart wants to make it clear that while a few members of her organization are solidly against the Railyard development project, the group as a whole is not opposed. "We believe the railyard should be developed and we like the developer – he (Holliday) really does nice work. We just want some alternatives to be studied in relation to traffic levels and Trout Creek restoration and other items of concern. Most of us are in support and we're not looking to stop the project."

Smart said that she has been working on resolving key issues with Holliday and that some of them have been worked out. "My goal is to resolve things prior to litigation, but we will sue if necessary. Using the legal process will bring people to the table."

Friends of Truckee have been outspoken about their dislike of the proposed "T" intersection which would be part of the early traffic and circulation improvements associated with the master plan area. Under the approved plan, Donner Pass Road as it heads east past Bridge Street will be re-aligned to shoot directly into the railyard, rather than "swooshing" or curving out to the left as it does now. While project proponents, planners and engineers feel this is a necessary improvement that will enhance the walk-ability, safety and natural flow of the project as an extension of the current historic downtown, Friends of Truckee believe that traffic levels, which are already very high, will be worsened if that and other circulation and roadway

improvements are put in place.

They are also opposed to the removal of the Union Pacific maintenance building, calling it a historic structure, which should be preserved as part of the development process. This building lies in the path of the new Donner Pass Road alignment.

Stoel Rives Attorney Tim Taylor, representing Friends of Truckee, outlined a host of perceived California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) violations and flaws in the EIR in a 16-page letter to the Town Council and spoke at the meeting on behalf of the group. Some have suggested that the Friends of Truckee are hiding behind lawyers, but Smart said she specifically "asked for members not to speak at the (June 17) meeting. We didn't want it to appear that lots of people were coming out of the woodwork at the last minute. In the event we file suit, we will be presenting a more in-depth argument."

Smart feels her concerns and ideas for project alternatives have been ignored for the last few years and that she has

repeatedly been shut down at the Town level. She was appreciative that Town Councilmember Richard Anderson took the time to address her list of issues at the meeting and Anderson, in turn, felt it important that "the Friends of Truckee's concerns were aired." Anderson is known for his attention to detail on the dais and his willingness to hash out minutiae. He is also a big supporter of the project, feeling it "will bring a variety of benefits to the town. It essentially transforms what is a blighted area into an organic extension of our downtown," he commented.

Steve Frisch, President of the Sierra Business Council, is an outspoken proponent of the railyard project. "The Railyard project is the right project at the right time for Truckee and the town needs it," he said. "There are so many reasons why it should be built. I'm going to be extremely disappointed if fear of commercial competition could stop this project."

~ Discuss this article with the author. Email bin-galls@moonshineink.com.