



## **Midtown Tahoe, The Lake Trail, and The US Outdoor Capital**

*By Chris McNamara and Corey Rich*

Lake Tahoe, geographically, is one of the most amazing places on earth. But unlike Colorado or the Alps, The Lake still lacks vibrant downtown areas. And the outdoor adventure/recreation potential is still largely untapped.

For a decade, I assumed that Tahoe's, (especially South Lake's) urban layout was just the way it would always be. As I came across great small towns around the world, from Carbondale, Colorado to Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland to Chamonix, France, I saw their vibrant attractions as something that could only arise from pre-car urban planning. I figured that to get my own dose of a great small town I would have to travel.

Then something changed.

I read "Happy City" and "The Triumph of the City" and began to see that behind great mountain towns in Colorado were regular people taking focused action over time. And I began to see more and more of those people around Lake Tahoe.

So the question became this: Why not work to change Lake Tahoe into the most vibrant mountain community in the U.S.? In South Lake, why not swap an often-held perception of run-down motels and aging casinos for pride in a thriving U.S. hub for outdoor recreation, filled with innovative people and businesses? Why not become recognized as the Outdoor Capital of The World?

Much of this vision is in the [Area Plans](#): plans created by hundreds of dedicated community members to improve the built and natural environment around Tahoe. The area plans set a broad vision. Now it's time to create inspiring and achievable goals that implement that vision.

### **Three Goals by 2030**

- Lake Tahoe is recognized as US Outdoor Capital of the World through:
  - The most extensive trail network for hikers and bikers, especially moderate trails
  - Established as the moderate rock climbing mecca of the US
  - New Community events (shows, farmer's markets, festivals, races)
  - Improved access to backcountry adventures
  - Better marketing of the amazing fall and spring MTB conditions
  
- Midtown Tahoe - A true downtown by The Lake on Ski Run Blvd
  - A vibrant place where locals and visitors eat, work, shop and just hang out
  - Improved commercial and residential density (exit the aging strip mall paradigm)
  - Improved quality of existing apartments and new housing
  - More higher-wage, year round jobs
  - Raise the architectural bar
  - Support the other three downtown zones: The Y, Harrison Ave, Heavenly Village
  - Instill long-term confidence in investing in Ski Run and a consistent CFA price
  - Implement the [Tourist Core Area Plan](#)
  
- The Lake Trail - a singletrack bike trail around Lake Tahoe. It would use about 60% of the Tahoe Rim Trail and other portion would stay below Mt. Rose and Desolation Wilderness areas. You can hike or bike it in 4-12 days and stop at a different AirBnb or hotel each night.

I'm not inventing this goal; hundreds of people before me have worked hard to make Tahoe better. Instead, I'm announcing my goal (semi) publicly for three reasons:

- To keep myself accountable, as in, "I said it publicly, so now I'm committed."
- To inspire others to give back more to their communities today, not when they get old and/or dead. It turns out you're happier giving away money and energy today, whatever amount. It's also true that investing in community development is a lot more rewarding than buying stocks.
- The whole vision depends on having others join and/or continue their great work. I've received huge inspiration from [Tahoe Mountain Lab](#), [TAMBA](#), [TAFF](#), [CTC](#), [Tahoe Fund](#), [Tahoe Prosperity Center](#) [TRYP](#) [LTBMU](#) [Tahoe Rim Trail](#), TRPA and many others. I'm a big fan of line "People overestimate what they can do in a year, and underestimate what they can do in 10" and "[In Praise of Incrementalism](#)" for getting major projects done, one step at a time.

Resources that have shaped this vision: [Giving What We Can](#) and the books [Walkable City](#), [Triumph of The City](#), [Happy City](#), and [A Pattern Language](#)

## 2017 Projects

Complete [1111 Ski Run](#) - design by [David Goldman](#)

Help Fundraise for [Angora Fallen Leaf Trail Project \(you can donate here\)](#)

Support the 10th Anniversary of the Angora Fire

Get plans for deed-restricted housing on Larch Lots (creating 4-6 new rental units)

Bring five more jobs in South Lake

Bring community support to make five new businesses successful like:

- [Blue Granite Climbing Gym](#)

- [South Lake Tahoe Brewing](#)

Complete the [Inventory Trails Project](#)

Help get the [South Tahoe Greenway](#) approved

Get pilot “neighborhood connector trails” project completed

Help create more moderate climbing routes

Have Lake Tahoe show up #1 on Google search for “Outdoor Capital of the World”

Get [Ski Run Presents speaker series](#) up and running

## 2016 Scorecard

✓ - Raise the architectural bar of one house as an example of before and after.

½ ✓ - Remodel a dated office building on Ski Run into an inspirational space.

½ ✓ - Get all MTB trails logged in popular apps with the [Inventory Trails Project](#)

Begin the design/permitting process for two residential homes near Ski Run.

✓ - Help create two new moderate climbing areas like [Castle Rock](#) and [Whiskey Cliff](#)

✓ - Create a place to share new climbing routes: [New Climbing Routes Around Tahoe](#)

½ ✓ Identify five major donors for trail and infrastructure projects and/or convince more people to make tax-deductible contributions to nonprofits in their community

✓ - The Lake Trail - Plan for a single-track mountain bike trail around Lake Tahoe.

✓ - Create 5-10 new good-paying jobs.

½ ✓ Create development “How to Guides”: How to upgrade vacation rentals in a way that improves the neighborhood, profits and jobs, How to upgrade a dilapidated building on a tight budget, etc.