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January 22, 2015

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Truckee Railyard project eyes summer 2015 groundbreaking



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TRUCKEE, Calif. — After being stalled for years due to a lawsuit and the economic downturn, the Truckee Railyard project is picking up steam.

On Oct. 2, 2014, Truckee Development Associates submitted preliminary applications to the town of Truckee, said Denyelle Nishimori, planning manager for the town.

The Phase I land use application outlines a roughly 30,000-square-foot, independently owned and operated eight-screen movie and performing arts theater, a brew pub restaurant, a retail building with an office above, mixed income housing, a 32,000-square-foot grocery store, and downtown workforce housing for property east of the town's Commercial Row.

"The Railyard is a great in-fill project for Truckee," said Lynn Saunders, president and CEO of the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce. "It takes an unsightly parcel of land that is set in a highly desirable location right beside our historic downtown, and recreates it into an innovative mixed-use development that will only expand our assets."

Yet, project details continue to be modified, Nishimori said.

"Although we have a preliminary application, we have not done much work on it because the concepts, plans, diagrams are continually changing," Nishimori said. "... The preliminary applications are basically at a standstill."

Recent changes include location of the grocery store, its parking going from under the store to surface parking, and more parking spots, said Rick Holliday, founder and president of Holliday Development.

Meanwhile, the decision to not relocate the Union Pacific Railroad balloon track facility to the eastern end of the project site as outlined in the 2009 approved Railyard Master Plan is mentioned in the other preliminary application.

"Subsequent economic and policy events — namely the dissolution of redevelopment agencies in California — as well as conversations between (Union Pacific) and (Truckee Development Associates) have resulted in a determination that such a move is no longer preferable," it states.

Rather, the track that is used to turn snow removal equipment around will stay in place, with Union Pacific provided an easement for use, Holliday said. Meanwhile, uses could be developed within the circular track.

"Keeping the rail operations in the center of the development emphasizes Truckee's history as an industrial rail town," states the application.

Town staff will provide feedback on the preliminary applications, once revised ones reflecting recent changes are submitted, Nishimori said.

On Monday, Holliday said revised plans are anticipated to be submitted within 30 days.

Afterward, a formal application for Phase I and a master plan amendment will need to be submitted, triggering a town review process, Nishimori said. With approvals, building can begin.

Installing infrastructure — sewer, utilities and roads — will be the first order of business, Holliday said. That portion of the project is estimated to cost \$15 million to \$20 million, with \$5 million raised as of earlier this week.

Holliday said he anticipates breaking ground this summer; it's hoped the remaining infrastructure financing will be secured in the coming months.

“With many years of planning put into the project, it is exciting that these hopes and dreams will be coming to fruition,” Saunders said.

According to previous reports, an overhaul for the Railyard property was first envisioned in 1995.

After initial plans were proposed, a group of residents under the monikers “Friends of Truckee” and “Team Truckee for Smart Growth” filed suit against the town and developer in July 2009, alleging violations of the California Environmental Quality Act in the preparation of the Railyard’s Environmental Impact Report.

The suit was settled in 2011, and it was ruled the plaintiffs shall not oppose or challenge any further permits or approvals of the Railyard Master Plan.

Visit townoftruckee.com or truckeerailyard.com to learn more about the Truckee Railyard project.