

# BUSINESS WALK

## POST-EVALUATION SUMMARY

South Shore — November 4, 2010



In partnership with:



Supported by:



El Dorado County, Office of Economic Development, the City of South Lake Tahoe, TahoeChamber.org, Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan, Lake Tahoe Community College and the Sacramento Metro Chamber launched the inaugural South Shore business walk on November 4, 2010.

The Metro Pulse Business Walk Series is geared toward helping local businesses in specific areas pinpoint major successes, as well as any concerns the community may be having. The South Shore business walk allowed business and civic leaders to get a pulse of the local business climate and act promptly to provide any support that may be needed. The leaders will then be able to act on behalf businesses in the community—small, medium and large—to promote the area's prosperity.

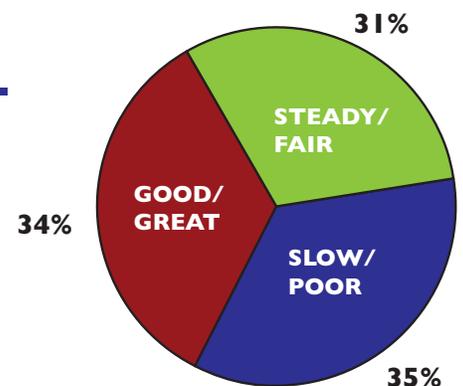
Volunteer walkers asked three basic questions of local business:

- How is business?
- What do you like about doing business in the area?
- What improvements are needed in the area?

During the South Shore business walk, 41 business and civic leaders visited 134 businesses; 125 of those businesses were available and willing to respond. The overall responses were positive—businesses reported that, year over year, they were able to remain at least steady or fair during these challenging economic times. South Shore businesses like their community, lifestyle and location and the clientele it attracts. To improve business conditions in the community, they would start with marketing/events, government relations and redevelopment.

The remainder of this report provides detail on the responses to each of the interview questions, as well as some actions the partners are taking to respond and promote the prosperity of the area.

FIGURE 1: HOW IS BUSINESS?



### How is business?

In general, the South Shore business community is weathering the recession. Approximately two thirds of surveyed businesses (65 percent) indicated that business is at least steady or fair (Figure 1). A little more than one third (34 percent) actually said business was either good or great, while 31 percent cited that they are at least steady or fair. Many companies acknowledged that sales numbers are seasonal. Numerous companies look forward to summer and winter, when tourism peaks in South Shore. They equate their success to the community, the tourists, their store's uniqueness and the overall "destination nature of the area."

*continued to page 2*

Thirty-five percent reported that their business was slow or poor. These responses were attributed to shifts in consumer spending, “shoulder seasons,” downsizing and overall economic conditions and employee cuts. Several businesses acknowledged the need to take off their blinders and start thinking outside the box. Many of the respondents who stated that they are “just getting by” are hoping for a big winter and are thinking of ways to attract more foot traffic to their businesses.

### What do you like about doing business in the area?

When asked what they like best about doing business in the South Shore area, 63 percent of respondents cited the area’s community and clientele (Figure 2). People in South Shore love their community and many stated that they enjoy meeting people from all over the world. A large number say they have lived in this area their whole lives; they enjoy the small-town feel and the opportunity for regular customers. The local area businesses understand that they need to work together to keep their community moving forward. Many reported benefitting from word-of-mouth referrals between local businesses. They believe this has enhanced the area and allows them to build lasting relationships with many of their clients.

Location was the second most-mentioned response (30 percent). Many respondents stated that South Shore is their home and community—they have the ability to work, live and play “all in their own backyard.” A lot of business people said they moved from the Bay Area and/or Southern California for “a life in the mountains.” Respondents enjoy the rural landscape but like the close proximity to Sacramento and Reno. They believe the location provides great access to various amenities such as local schools, hotels, distinctive shops and restaurants.

Lifestyle was the third most-mentioned response. Twenty-three percent of businesses cited a laid-back, easy-going atmosphere as the reason they love living in South Shore. Many enjoy the mountain view that they wake up to every day and said that even when times are tough, they don’t dream about moving away from South Shore because of all that surrounds them. For them, the area has become a lifestyle choice to work and live. The relaxed atmosphere and different demographics (kids, skate and snow boarders, retired folks, tourists and locals) allow for a variety of businesses to be successful. The beautiful

scenery from the mountains to the lake evoke a “great sense of gratitude for life,” according to several respondents. Residents and tourists alike are able to involve themselves in several outdoor activities such as canoeing, hiking, skiing and boating.

“Other” responses included these general comments:

- City of South Lake Tahoe offers valuable programs
- Historic area provides charm and character
- Low crime rate creates a sense of security

### What improvements are needed in the area?

The South Shore business community is viewed as both a positive place to work and live based upon responses. That said, there is always room for improvement. In fact, five percent of respondents stated nothing needs improvement, appearing satisfied overall (Figure 3).

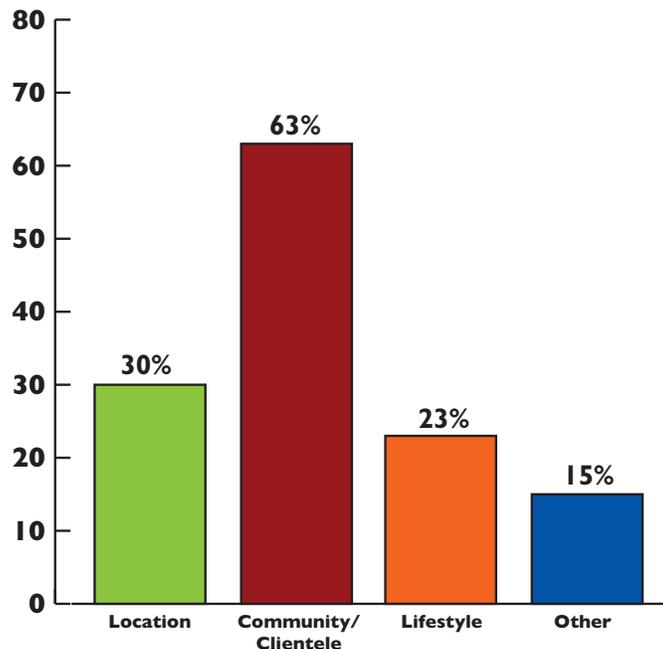
Marketing and events was the most frequently reported response when asked what could be improved in the South Shore area (44 percent). Many respondents feel that the surrounding area knows about the wonderful things South Shore has to offer but the rest of the country doesn’t. Respondents cited a desire for more advertising and marketing, both domestically and internationally—their hope is to increase tourism volumes during off-peak seasons. Of those interviewed many are looking for

more exposure, accessibility and affordability with respect to local marketing and promotion options for both their business and the South Shore area. Several cited the need for more events, especially during non-peak seasons. Some examples include dog shows, team events, concerts, cultural events and arts exhibits. A large events facility was also requested. A few respondents requested more community events to help out local schools or charities in the area and a campaign to promote “Shop Local” awareness.

Government regulations ranked second (27 percent) on the improvements list.

Of the business people polled, several feel that local and county government agencies need to become more business-friendly and demonstrate a commitment to keeping companies in business. Specifically, they described a perceived divide between the business community, the county, the city and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Respondents believe there needs to be more streamlining of permitting and fees, along with collaboration between government bodies. Companies are

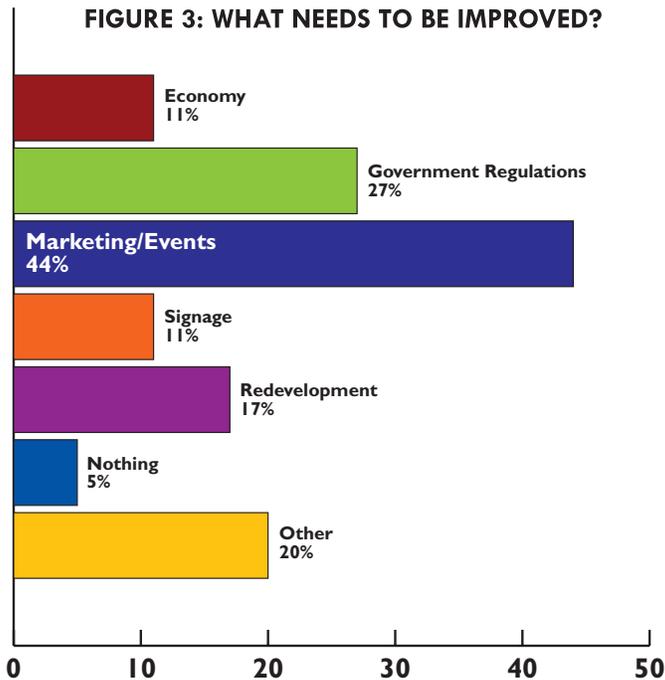
**FIGURE 2: WHAT DO YOU LIKE?**



looking for “less government” interference as well as lower taxes to help keep companies afloat. Many companies being billed for various permits mentioned that, while they understand the reason for the permit, they feel the process to get them is tedious.

Redevelopment was the third most-cited response (17 percent). In particular, respondents expressed a desire for redevelopment of the “Y.” Many feel this area is the first thing people see when they come to South Shore, and respondents

**FIGURE 3: WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED?**



want it “spruced up” to give South Shore a more refined look. A few cited a desire for more bike lanes, streetlights and better landscaping. Many are looking for an overall cleanup of various areas in South Shore because they believe it impacts consumer’s decisions on where to shop. There is a need to turn old unused buildings into something great.

Business development was the fourth most-cited (15 percent) area for improvement. The local businesses are looking for business coaching programs, financial education programs, legal aid programs and advisory panel options. Businesses are also looking for project funding to implement environmental regulations, free trade zones in the industrial area and want to see the Prosperity Plan implemented. A few requested information on how to get funding for certificate/degree programs.

Signage and economy (11 percent) tied for the fifth most-mentioned response. Respondents believe signage needs to be less restrictive in the area; essentially companies are looking for more flexibility regarding the signs in front of their businesses. Their perception is that companies are not being informed of the changes in signage regulations; they are just fined for any violations. Sign permits were also reported as an issue. Respondents believe the city provides local businesses one set of

rules while companies located outside the city boundaries have another, creating a perceived loss in revenue. For those inside the city limits understand the necessity to keep Tahoe beautiful but feel that more common ground needs to be found. Many stated that they are worried people don’t know where they are located without improved signage.

With respect to the economy, respondents want to see the creation of more jobs and that vacant stores are filled, as well as the availability of more lending options. They believe consumers are still traveling to South Shore, just not as frequently as in the past. They believe this change in consumer spending has hurt South Shore businesses. High gas prices are also a major concern—if gas is too high, tourists don’t come.

In addition, some respondents provided several “other” responses for improvements needed in the South Shore, including:

- More reliable bus service and dial-a-ride options
- Improvement district for the Meyers commercial area

## RECENT ACTIVITIES

### LAKE TAHOE BASIN PROSPERITY PLAN

The Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan has just been released, representing an unprecedented collaboration between the five counties in the Tahoe Basin and the City of South Lake Tahoe with additional participation from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, educational institutions and business leaders. The premise was simple—diversify the local economy to develop a sustainable economy thereby increasing living wage jobs while preserving the environment.

The three “industry clusters” (how buyers and suppliers organize within an industry such as tourism) perceived as having the greatest likelihood of raising the standard of living for residents are: Tourism/Geotourism, Health/Wellness and Environmental Innovation.

- It was recommended that in order to grow our tourism economy we must first preserve and share our authentic assets which range from our favorite cafés, beaches and trails, arts and culture to our various entertainment options (festivals, concerts and gaming). And second, we must initiate an invigorated effort around recreation in the form of team sports, masters events and elite athletic events such as the Amgen Tour of California.
- Health/Wellness was identified as a cluster dependent on and related to tourism. The hospitals on both the North and South shores are each pursuing centers of excellence (oncology and orthopedics, respectively), and both will require that our communities are sustainable and attractive to potential patients and their families. Also identified was the concept of alternative medicine and health/wellness facilities including day spas and resorts offering a full week of outdoor exercise, nutrition and spa treatments.
- The third industry cluster looks at environmental innovation

## RECENT ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

by leveraging the tremendous natural assets of the Tahoe Basin as well as the number of qualified individuals already located here. Ideas for this cluster ranged from a High Alpine Research and Visitor Center to the pursuance of environmentally sound practices for all local institutions and businesses. Implementation plans are well underway with the establishment of a Prosperity Center.

For more information on how to get involved, contact Michael Ward at [mklward@pacbell.net](mailto:mklward@pacbell.net) or visit [tahoeprosperity.org](http://tahoeprosperity.org) to read the full plan.

## FREE BUSINESS COACHING

TahoeChamber.org's efforts to grow the local economy have always included providing valuable resources to businesses. Those services have recently been expanded through partnerships with the City of South Lake Tahoe and the California Small Business Development Center.

The City of South Lake Tahoe secured a grant that allows them to offer FREE business coaching services through TahoeChamber.org utilizing a team of experts—the Tahoe Tactical Team. The “team” is a cadre of coaches with years of successful professional experience in their fields including human resources, public relations, accounting, marketing and more. The coaches are ready to make a positive difference for businesses, and will do so in a friendly, understanding manner. They are locals and know what's happening in town and promise to help businesses make informed business decisions. This opportunity is even better than free. It's priceless and in this case, it's also free!

For more information or to register for services, call the city at 530-542-6047. Contact the chamber by calling 775-588-1728.

## Participating South Shore Businesses

Thank you to the following businesses for providing valuable feedback:

- 3 TURN BAR
- ABHOW/TAHOE SENIOR PLAZA
- ABUNDANT HYDROPONICS
- AECOM
- AGS HYDROPONICS & ORGANICS
- ALOHA ICE CREAM
- ALPACA PETE'S
- ALPINE ANIMAL HOSPITAL
- ALPINE CHIROPRACTIC AND SPORTS CLINIC
- ALPINE FAMILY PRACTICE
- ANGIE'S SIGNS
- ARTRAGEOUS FINE FRAMING
- AT&T
- AUNTIE Q'S ANTIQUES AND TREASURES
- AVALEX INC.
- AWARDS OF TAHOE
- BARTON HEALTH CARE
- BARTON HOME HEALTH
- BARTON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
- BEAR BEACH CAFE
- BEST WESTERN PLUS TIMBER COVE LODGE MARINA RESORT
- BLUE ANGEL CAFE
- BLUE GO
- BONANZA PRODUCE CO
- BORGES CHIROPRACTIC
- BOYD'S BARBERSHOP
- BUDGET INN
- CALIFORNIA COLORS COLLISION REPAIR
- CARDNO ENTRIX
- CARPET NETWORK
- CARPETS PLUS
- CASSIDY COATING & SURFACING SYSTEMS
- CHARTER ADVERTISING
- CITY OF ANGELS (2 LOCATIONS)
- COSMIC CREATIONS
- CUT LOOSE
- DAYS INN
- DIAMOND RESORTS INTERNATIONAL
- DOLLAR SIGNS AND GRAPHICS
- DOWNTOWN CAFE
- DR. GEORGE WORTH
- DR. NICOLE JANE, ORTHODONTIST
- DR. RICHARD L KAHN
- EDWARD JONES
- EFREN'S AUTO CARE
- EL DORADO SAVINGS BANK
- EMERALD BAY PHYSICAL THERAPY
- ENVIRONMENTAL INCENTIVES
- EVENTMASTERS
- FANTASY INN
- FARMERS INSURANCE GROUP
- FASTFRAME
- FLIGHT DECK RESTAURANT & BAR
- FOX GASOLINE & CARWASH
- FRANK'S TV & ELECTRONICS
- FREDERICK WENCK D.D.S.
- GAIALICIOUS GLOBAL GIFTS
- GETAWAY CAFE
- GRAND CENTRAL PIZZA
- HELP-U-SELL
- HOT GOSSIP
- IHOP
- JEFF CHAMBERLAIN, D.D.S. FAMILY DENTISTRY
- JOHN J. CASTELLANOS, A.P.C.
- KEVIN J. CASSIDY DENTAL PRACTICE
- KINGS BEVERAGE COMPANY
- LA PROMESA
- LAKE TAHOE EYE CARE
- LAKE TAHOE PEDIATRICS TOTAL CARE
- LAKE TAHOE PLUMBING & HEATING, INC.
- LAW FIRM OF LAUB & LAUB
- LIRA'S
- LOCAL'S BRUNCH CAFE
- LOS MEXICANOS RESTAURANT
- MARCELA INCOME TAX
- MARCIA SAROSIK DANCE STUDIO
- MARCUS ASHLEY FRAMING
- MARINE PERFORMANCE
- MAYA'S MEXICAN GRILL
- MCDONALDS (2 LOCATIONS)
- MEEKS LUMBER AND HARDWARE
- MILLER'S CUSTOM CABINETS
- MOUNTAIN ALOHA MASSAGE & BODYWORK
- MOUNTAIN VIEW MANAGEMENT CORP
- MOUNTAIN YOGA
- OUTSIDE TELEVISION
- PAWFECTION PET SALON
- POWDER HOUSE SKI & BOARD
- PRAXAIR
- RED HUT RETAIL SHOP
- RICH'S SMALL ENGINE SERVICE
- RIVA GRILL
- ROADRUNNER GAS AND LIQUOR
- ROSS GROELZ, D.D.S.
- RUDE BROTHERS BAGEL & COFFEE HAUS
- SAFE HAVEN CHIROPRACTIC
- SAFEWAY
- SCOTT W. SOUTHARD, M.D., INC.
- SESSIONS SALON
- SHERWIN-WILLIAMS
- SIERRA ATHLETIC CLUB
- SIERRA VETERINARY HOSPITAL
- SKI BUM FAMILY INC (K&K SERVICES)
- SKI BUTLERS SKI RENTALS
- SKI RUN BOAT COMPANY
- SOUTH SIDE AUTO BODY
- SPROUTS CAFE
- STEVE'S TRANSMISSION SERVICE
- SUBWAY
- SUGAR PINE BAKERY
- SUPER 8
- TAHOE BOWL
- TAHOE FAMILY DENTISTS
- TAHOE HEALTH TOUCH
- TAHOE HEMP CO.
- TAHOE PARADISE CHEVRON & FOOD
- TAHOE POOL SERVICE SUPPLIES
- TAHOE RENTAL CONNECTION
- TAHOE SPORT FISHING COMPANY
- TAHOE VALLEY PHARMACY
- TAHOE WOMEN'S CARE
- THA TAHOE CLINIC
- THE DESIGN SHOPPE
- THE RADIATOR DOCTOR
- THE TUDOR PUB
- THE VILLAGE BOARD SHOP
- TIMELESS SCULPTURES
- TRINITY LANDSCAPE & SNOW REMOVAL
- VITALITY LAKE TAHOE
- WATTABIKE
- WESTERN NEVADA SUPPLY
- WILLIAM A. DOWNEY, O.D., INC.
- YELLOW SUBMARINE
- YONKER CONSTRUCTION, INC.

The Sacramento Metro Chamber is the largest and oldest voice of business in the greater Sacramento area. Representing nearly 2,000 member businesses and business organizations in the six-county Sacramento region, the Metro Chamber serves as the region's leading proponent of regional cooperation and primary advocate on issues affecting business, strengthening the regional economy and quality of life. As a founding member of Partnership for Prosperity<sup>1</sup>, and in its role as managing partner of Metro Pulse<sup>2</sup>, the Metro Chamber executes the Business Walk Series in cooperation with its local chamber and public sector partners. The Metro Chamber has partnered with 17 other regional jurisdictions and economic development organizations to provide one-on-one support for county businesses and throughout the Sacramento metropolitan region. These organizations, through Metro Pulse, are meeting one-on-one with businesses throughout the six-county Sacramento region to identify and address individual business needs and ensure continued growth and economic prosperity. For additional information concerning Metro Pulse, visit [metropulse.org](http://metropulse.org).

<sup>1</sup> Partnership for Prosperity is the Sacramento region's economic development strategy, which focuses on developing people, place and business.

<sup>2</sup> Metro Pulse is a coalition of 18 public and private sector partners focused on ensuring that the Sacramento metropolitan region is the best place to do business in California.