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## **Report on Comment Letters Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report Village at Palisades Tahoe Specific Plan**

**May 4, 2023**

More than 2,600 comment letters were submitted to Placer County on its *Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR)* for Alterra's proposed development at Palisades Tahoe. Sierra Watch read them all. Some of the letters include detailed, science-based arguments against approving the RDEIR. Others convey personal concern – even anxiety – about major issues in the Tahoe Sierra. Combined, they reveal overwhelming opposition to the proposed project – and a shared commitment to securing a better future for the region.

### **Background**

Alterra Mountain Company seeks a new round of entitlements for its previously proposed development project, now known as the *Village at Palisades Tahoe Specific Plan*.

Alterra's application for entitlements, first filed in 2011, proposes to remake North Tahoe with development of a size, scale, and scope the region has never seen. Alterra's project would include:

1. High-rise condo hotels, many eight stories tall, containing 1,493 new rooms – as many bedrooms as three of South Lake Tahoe's Stateline casinos combined;
2. Nearly 300,000 square feet of commercial uses – enough to build a mall covering more than five football fields, further exacerbating the region's workforce housing crisis;
3. 90,000-square-foot indoor waterpark with artificial rivers, indoor water-skiing, video arcades, and North America's tallest indoor waterslide; and
4. Time-share units at the mouth of Shirley Canyon.

The project would make Olympic Valley a construction zone for 25 years. At build-out, it would add 3,300 new daily car trips to Tahoe traffic. And it would draw 78,263,299 gallons of water annually from the local watershed.

Placer County issued the original Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project in May 2015. In response, 338 comment letters were submitted by local jurisdictions, regulatory agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens. Consensus at that time was clear: an overwhelming majority of letter writers – 97% – opposed approval of the project and/or expressed serious concerns about the sufficiency of the environmental analysis.

As the proposed development made its way through Placer County’s decision-making process, opposition grew – as voiced by the public and its representatives. In May of 2016 the County’s own Squaw Valley Municipal Advisory Committee voted to recommend denial of the project. At a dramatic eight-hour public hearing that November, 80 people took to the podium to urge County Supervisors to reject Alterra’s opposition. But, on a 4-1 vote, they approved it anyway.

Sierra Watch, the conservation non-profit spearheading the campaign to keep *Tahoe Truckee True* (formerly *Keep Squaw True*), challenged those approvals in court. And won. In August 2021 the California Court of Appeals sided with Sierra Watch, finding that Placer County’s approvals had indeed been illegal. And the court ordered Placer County to rescind *all* of its 2016 approvals and entitlements.

In November of 2022, the Placer County Board of Supervisors followed through on the court order and voted unanimously to rescind its 2016 approvals, including “the Specific Plan, the Development Agreement, the Large-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, amendments to the Squaw Valley General Plan and Land Use Ordinance, zoning change, development standards, and related resolutions and ordinances... adoption of related findings of fact, statement of overriding considerations, and mitigation monitoring reporting program; and certification of the EIR.”

Meanwhile Alterra was pushing the County to fast-track a new round of entitlements for its old project. And, later that November, Placer County released its *Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR)* for Alterra’s would-be development – with no changes to the project as reviewed in 2015 and approved in 2016.

### **California Environmental Quality Act**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires thorough environmental review of large development proposals and ensures opportunities for public involvement in the planning process.

An EIR ensures that decision-makers, in this case the Placer County Board of Supervisors, are fully informed of the wide-ranging impacts of a project approval. An EIR also provides an iterative process through which they can accept and understand public reaction to a proposed project. According to case law, the EIR is "the heart of CEQA".

The primary method of communicating that reaction is through comment letters on an EIR. The RDEIR for the *Village at Palisades Tahoe Specific Plan* offered little new analysis and, instead, relies mostly on the assessment found in the original 2015 EIR. (The document is available at: <https://www.placer.ca.gov/2747/Village-at-Palisades-Tahoe-Specific-Plan>)

The comment period for the new RDEIR for the old project closed January 30, 2023. Public reaction has been overwhelming.

A number of regulatory agencies and conservation groups sent in letters, raising important issues – and pointing out inadequacies – ranging from water supplies to workforce housing. But the real story of the comment letters is the deep and broad engagement of individual citizens.

Of the 2,629 letters submitted by ordinary people on the Palisades Tahoe RDEIR, 8 expressed support of the project; 2,621 are against. That's 99.7%.

In general, the substance of the letters could provide the foundation for any future legal challenges. Combined, they assert that the potential impacts of such a massive project are simply too great to assess as required by CEQA. Most of all, they express a shared conclusion about Alterra's proposed development: *Tahoe deserves better*.

### **Comments from Agencies and Jurisdictions**

Placer County maintains land use decision-making authority in Olympic Valley. But other local jurisdictions and regulatory agencies have their own responsibilities, policies, and interests – many of which could be impacted by the proposed development.

Local water agencies must look out for the safety and security of their supplies; fire departments need to ensure safe evacuation routes; state agencies have an interest in preventing gridlock on area roads; regulators are responsible for the health of our wetlands and waterways.

Some such agencies submitted comments on the Palisades Tahoe RDEIR; many expressed either outright opposition or deep reservations about its adequacy and about the project itself. For example:

1. The *Olympic Valley Public Services District* is the Valley’s primary water provider and raises concerns about “vulnerability of the community’s sole source of water supply” and “requests reevaluation” of the outdated Water Supply Assessment (WSA). That old assessment, according to the District, is outdated and does not provide adequate assurance that demand from Alterra’s proposed development would not outstrip the valley’s limited supply. New research, according to the District’s comment letter, is required “to evaluate how the aquifer will perform under longer annual dry seasons and extended periods of drought spurred by future climate-driven changes to the Valley’s hydrology, including increasing average annual temperatures, as opposed to how the aquifer has performed historically as evaluated in a backwards-looking WSA.”

The District, also charged with securing public safety and managing the local Olympic Valley Fire Department, points out that the RDEIR’s evaluation of public safety in the face of growing wildfire danger is “not accurate.” Again, the County attempts to rely on outdated assessments from 2016, when new information is available. In its comment letter, the District quotes the old assessment and refutes its claim that Olympic Valley “is pretty favorable in terms of fuels and topography and the unlikely host event for a large wildfire.” The District disagrees, “to say that Olympic Valley is unlikely to host a large wildfire or require mass evacuation is not accurate and is not consistent with recent reports or District preparedness.” Indeed, the District has concerns about basic public safety and “the evacuation time and the lead time available in order to conduct an orderly evacuation.”

2. *CalTrans*, California’s Department of Transportation, writes of its concern “for the overall increase in traffic volumes, particularly during seasonal operation of recreational facilities and special events” and explains that the RDEIR does not adequately “provide trip generation information for the land uses that are proposed with the project.”
3. The *California Highway Patrol* also expresses its alarm for regional traffic and safety; its “concerns with such a project are specific to any associated increase in traffic congestion on the region’s already strained transportation infrastructure.”

“Each year traffic volumes in the region are increasing,” writes CHP. “During the ski season especially, the congestion on the weekends along SR-89 South, I-80, SR-28, and Olympic Valley Road are significant and the impacts to motorists well known to residents and visitors. Any anticipated traffic volume increases due to this project, without associated infrastructure and mitigation solutions, will only further impact emergency services and safety to the public within CHP-Truckee’s areas of responsibility.”

4. The *Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board*, the state regulatory agency responsible for water quality in the area, calls into question Alterra's claim that its project would include restoration of Washeshu Creek when, in reality, "increases in groundwater pumping from the project have the potential to dewater over 10 acres of wet meadow."

### **Comments from Conservation and Community Groups**

Comments from conservation and community groups reveal increasing alarm from a growing number of non-profits in the region.

Sierra Watch has long played the lead role in the ongoing campaign to keep *Tahoe Truckee True* – increasing awareness, facilitating public involvement, submitting comment letters, mounting legal challenges, and even making a movie about the struggle over Alterra's proposed development.

In this latest step in the CEQA process, Sierra Watch engaged experts in law, planning, traffic, water supplies, and fire danger to research and submit a thorough, 66-page comment letter. It clearly spells out "glaring examples of how the new RDEIR and the rescinded EIR fail to respect Tahoe and its mountain communities – and fall short of CEQA," with rock-solid arguments ranging from the impacts on the clarity of Lake Tahoe to the irresponsibility of telling Olympic Valley residents to survive a wildfire by sheltering in place in a parking lot.

Sierra Watch is not alone; its comments are furthered by letters from other organizations, including:

1. The *League to Save Lake Tahoe* addresses how the project threatens the multi-generational commitment to *Keep Tahoe Blue*. "The League opposed the same project when it was proposed in 2012 as the Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan, and continued to oppose it as it was approved by Placer County in 2016. We continue to oppose the Project in this, its most recent iteration. Consistent with our 2012 concerns, still unaddressed, the League's opposition is due to the significant, unanalyzed, and unmitigated impacts to Lake Tahoe's environment."

The League goes on to call out the RDEIR's "attempt to take advantage of loopholes it creates" as "an obvious ploy to avoid conducting the further analysis called for by the court."

2. The local volunteers of *Friends of Olympic Valley* submitted a detailed *Position Paper*, calling out the County for relying on old data in a changing world, "The Revised EIR (REIR) does not address the major and substantial changes with the climate, environment and economy that have occurred since the original plan was

approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2016. Great harm will come to Olympic Valley if the REIR as submitted does not analyze these changes.”

The group’s letter expresses the very real fears of local residents living in an area of high fire danger and limited infrastructure: “The ‘wildfire factor’ alone warrants a complete redo of the EIR since both the original EIR and the Revised EIR fail to consider new research about the risk of wildfire in Olympic Valley and in high elevation locations.” They cite a 2022 report that refutes the RDEIR’s attempt to downplay fire danger: the Olympic Valley Community Wildfire Protection Plan notes “*located in the middle of tens of thousands of acres of wildland, with hundreds of wooden homes and commercial structures, the Olympic Valley community has a very high exposure to catastrophic wildfire losses.*”

3. Truckee’s *Mountain Area Preservation* (MAP) writes that “the RDEIR attempts to undercut CEQA’s importance in its recent iteration, which is a disservice to both the environment and the community,” calling it “woefully inadequate” and pointing out how “the regional workforce housing deficiency has only worsened since the project was first approved in 2016.”
4. *Truckee River Watershed Council* raises “significant concerns regarding the impacts of proposed development to local groundwater aquifers, surface waters and sensitive habitat areas,” pointing out how “effects of the proposed development would be far-reaching and irreversible” and counter to TRWC’s mission to improve the health, function, and resilience of the watershed.”
5. The *Center for Biological Diversity*, with offices nationwide and more than 1,900,000 members, adopts the findings of Sierra Watch’s comments by reference and points out the RDEIR’s failure to “comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.”

### **Comment Letters from Individual Citizens**

Again, most of the letters – 2,629 – sent to Placer County came from individual citizens. Of those, eight expressed support of the project; compared to 2,621 against.

The volume of letters is remarkable – more than an eight-fold increase in participation from the 2015 Draft EIR, and likely a record for the most citizen comments submitted on a Revised Draft EIR in the history of CEQA.

Even more important is the combined content of the letters. Generally less technical than the comments submitted by agencies and organizations, the letters sent in by private individuals express a deep appreciation for Tahoe and demonstrate a shared commitment to its future.

The challenge is to ensure that decision-makers don't diminish or disparage that appreciation and commitment but, instead, honor and apply the sentiments and science of the letters in a truly public planning process.

Not surprisingly, most of the letters point to the issue of traffic and question the wisdom of adding more cars to a region already strangled by gridlock. It's impossible to overstate the impacts of Tahoe traffic on everyday life – and public safety.

For residents and visitors alike, the troubles of traffic go beyond what should be expected in a region known as an international destination. The traffic this past winter has been so bad that skiers can't get to the resort, lift-ops can't get to work, residents can't get to church or little league or to the store. And, as spelled out in one letter, an expectant mother – in active labor – got stuck in gridlock trying to get to the hospital. For example:

1. *David Bunker*: I am a long-time resident, parent and community member of Truckee-North Tahoe, and I do not believe that the Placer County residents or decision makers on the west side of the county understand the true impacts of this development proposal. I work during the week, and our entire region is paralyzed by traffic most winter weekends. We literally cannot drive our kids to sports practices, make it to the grocery store, or conduct the basic chores of daily life without sitting in hours of standstill traffic simply trying to make it across town.
2. *Meghon Shrewsbury*: For example, just yesterday I had a meeting to get to in Tahoe City and it took me 4 hours to go 20 miles.
3. *Alisa Adriani*: There are no public bathrooms between Truckee and Palisades. Cars are trapped for hours, forcing their occupants to urinate and defecate on roadsides, in driveways, in walkways, on the sides of homes.
4. *Mike McClay*: The report seems to miss the forest for the trees, so to speak. It contains volumes of information about road distances, directions, bus schedules, etc, yet fails to comment on the actual reality of transportation in the valley. Therefore it is not credible in my opinion.
5. *James DeNitto*: As a property owner and resident in Olympic Valley I wanted to express my concern for the evolution of the massive increase in traffic in and around the Valley. I feel hostage here from Friday thru Sunday where traffic to and from the valley is outrageous.
6. *Joann Remke*: As a resident, I can assure you that it does not take a 469-page “revised” EIR to conclude that the consequences of such an expansive and greedy proposed development at Palisades Tahoe would be disastrous to Olympic Valley and the surrounding communities. It takes only a weekend visit to the Valley for

anyone to understand that it cannot sustain such a significant expansion. Currently, it can take over two hours to get to the village from route 89 - a mere two mile route - even on the sunniest days. But to address substantial transit concerns the revised EIR does little more than propose an expansion of TART. Is any employee of Placer County naive enough to believe that the unavoidable congestion problems caused by the addition of 850 units (2400 individuals) will be resolved by public transit? Are the new residents parking their cars in Truckee and taking the bus to their new condos?

7. *Kathee Hansen*: I think you need to come up here and try to get to the store, the doctor, a freeway on-ramp, my home, my church, or any place people expect to have reasonable access to as a member of their community. And the gridlock continues...two days ago it took one hour to go a distance of 5 miles.

Traffic in Tahoe is much more than just a nuisance. For visitors, residents, and first responders, it's a matter of public safety:

1. *Michelle Anderson*: Locals are already stuck in our homes and can't go out on the weekends due to traffic problems. It is unsafe and hinders daily life and the enjoyment of the valley and surrounding areas. When my daughter needed urgent care we could not get through to Tahoe City because traffic from Olympic Valley was backed up to Carnelian Bay!
2. *Jess Durrence*: I am a Registered Nurse currently working and residing in Truckee, CA. I have lived in the area since 2009/2010 and have seen a huge change in a relatively small amount of time with regards to congestion and traffic on 89/267 and overflowing into Truckee. This impedes emergency vehicles from getting around, as well as staff and those patients just trying to get to important medical appointments. This traffic is worse than any large city at times with total standstills and no alternate routes. I understand we choose to live here and we make sacrifices to do so, but what is the limit. It took 3 plus hours at times last weekend to get from Truckee to Olympic Valley. Imagine if that were your loved one needing emergency care. Or it was a fire and you and/or your beloved family couldn't get out.
3. *Will Lowry*: My main concern on the Palisades development plan is over crowding and traffic. We are on Granite Chief road and during ski season traffic is backed up for hours. If we needed an ambulance for a health issue it would be impossible for it to get to us. There is nothing more important than public safety and this development would put it at risk every weekend during ski season.



4. *Haley Heneveld Dow*: Born and raised in Olympic valley on the main road, traffic has never been so insane and constant, watching ambulances sit in traffic, fire trucks, it's insanity and going to cost lives if it hasn't already.
5. *Deanna Quinlan*: I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed project in Olympic Valley. I am a local RN that works at TFHD. On weekends, especially holiday weekends or when there is inclement weather, most staff members coming from the West Shore, etc are unable to make it work. If you or your loved ones needed to access the hospital, wouldn't you want it to be fully staffed?
6. *Wayne Smith*: I am lucky enough to have grown up in Alpine Meadows, and to have called the north shore of Lake Tahoe my home for my entire life. I am writing to urge you to not approve, and stop further development in Olympic Valley by Altera/Palisades. My main reason for opposing this development is safety. My parents still live in Alpine Meadows, they are in their 70s, they are fit, active, and have lived in the valley for over 60 years. If they were to have an emergency, I fear that emergency services would not be able to get to them, and transport them in a timely manner. The traffic we already have has shut down our community, people can't get to and from work. It took my wife over 2 hours to make the 16 mile drive home from her job at Alpine Meadows over last weekend. The absolute last thing we need is more development.
7. *Zachary Moreno*: I am writing as a Tahoe City resident and first responder that I strongly discourage Placer County from approving the Palisades planned development proposal.
8. *Marianna Pucillo*: As someone who lives on the West shore of Lake Tahoe with requirements to be on call and come to the hospital in emergency situations (within 30 minutes) the horrific traffic on the weekends (and many weekdays) currently is causing significant delays in emergency care. It is more than just a traffic issue it is a safety and public health issue. What typically is a ~30 minute drive can take hours leaving my team understaffed. Adding thousands of daily car trips to this region will exasperate these issues.
9. *Ashley Davis*: As an RN and employee of our local hospital, I have grave concerns about the added traffic and visits to the region.
10. *Rob Woodruff*: I'm writing to voice my concern over palisades Tahoe development plans in Olympic valley. I live in Tahoe City and am already worried about what would happen if I needed to get my kids to the ER in Truckee with the current state of traffic gridlock. And the thought of increasing that already problematic volume is truly scary. My son has seizures and if he ever has one of

long length where we need to get to the specialist at Tahoe forest health, it could be disastrous. Please don't allow them to bring back these plans!

11. *Nikkie Starick*: These development plans are absolutely absurd. The traffic in town is NOT sustainable and we all know that. As someone that went into labor last week and sat in Palisades Tahoe traffic on Donner Pass road to get to the hospital was absolutely INFURIATING. I live 7 minutes away from Tahoe Forest Hospital, 7 minutes without Palisades traffic, unfortunately lil miss did not time her arrival in moms favor and made us sit in VERY unnecessary traffic while in active labor.

And, when wildfire comes to Olympic Valley, the combination of too many cars and not enough capacity could be calamitous. The Revised DEIR concedes as much, projecting that it would take evacuees more than 11 hours to escape 3 miles from Palisades Tahoe to Highway 89. Those stuck in the valley would be told to “shelter in place” in a parking lot or on a golf course.

The RDEIR baldly concludes that this would not generate a safety risk; commenters disagree:

1. *Jan Ellis*: Our roads cannot handle the increased traffic and when (not if) the issue of a major fire evacuation occurs, I fear with only the 2 lane roads we risk a gridlock inferno.
2. *Charlotte Gross*: My training as a Wildland Firefighter Type II, knowledge of fire ecology through prescribed burning, and lived experience as an inhabitant of this ecosystem that is increasingly prone to megafires has shown me that we cannot rely on information from nearly a decade ago to make decisions about the future. This is a matter of public safety. The firefighters and fire ecologists I work with share stories and data reflecting the unprecedented behavior of fire today. Simply adding more personnel to evacuation procedures is an empty gesture. A plan to shelter in place during a burn-over event is stunningly unethical. Have you trained in deploying a fire shelter? Does Alterra plan to outfit employees, visitors, and Olympic Valley residents with fire shelters if evacuation from a single-egress box canyon is impossible? The RDEIR does nothing to account for the safety of locals and visitors. It is irresponsible to rely on outdated data and safety protocols when lives are at stake.
3. *Kristen Cotner*: According to the 4th California Climate Assessment Report, wildfire risk will continue to grow in years and decades to come.
4. *Zeb Schreiber*: I am 14 years old. Evacuating Palisades Tahoe have always been a problem, imagine adding thousands more people into the mix. It would take over

11 hours to evacuate the 3 miles to highway 89. Alterra is going to build a death trap, If we don't stop them. Please save the place me and thousands call home.

5. *Angela M. Zivkovic*: We have no right to endanger the people who already live in this valley by building a large development that would add as much as 10% to the overall population of the valley. This is not about us having to wait a few extra minutes to get to Highway 89. This could mean the difference between a family being able to evacuate to safety in time, or not being able to do so because they are stuck in traffic with 1000 more people than should be residing here all trying to leave their residences and lodging at the same time. I request that the planning division address the concerns related to safety and circulation in the face of climate change expressed above about the inadequacy of the EIR, and the resulting threat to public health and safety of the development project.
6. *David Mercer*: I am a 48-year resident of Olympic Valley being born in Tahoe City, I have seen much change in my life and am not opposed to change and development if it is done with planning, thought and care to the community and its residents. I have been involved with and seen many urban interface fires first hand as part of my career as a California Licensed Timber Operator, before during and after the fires have burned through towns. It is only a matter of time before it happens here, or in the basin. Having nowhere to evacuate to, other than the parking lots of the ski areas. If we fill those open spaces with buildings, that will be filled with more people that also cannot possibly leave the area, during a completely realistic scenario, what do you think is going to happen? I hope some of you went to Paradise CA, or Greenville CA to take a look at how this really works and think about how that WILL play out in our communities. This will happen and this rests entirely on the shoulders of the county.
7. *Ramsey Etchison*: I am a 22 year resident of the Olympic Valley and Truckee. I oppose the proposed project because the impact on our communities safety in regards to emergency response, emergency evacuation and fire rescue will be unbearable. The area is already a danger zone and adding even more heavy traffic exponentially increases the potential for disaster on many levels.
8. *Laura Weeks*: If there is a fire in the basin, and you allow this project, you put me and my family in harm's way.
9. *Jane Eagle*: You personally may not be there when the fire happens, but you will be responsible. Cal Fire has said that every part of California will burn at some point in the near future.
10. *Collin Page*: As I am sure you all know, California is increasingly prone to wildfires. With the amount of people that could potentially be in the valley, if a

fire were to start (and that is not unlikely), the fire would scream down the valley, and the estimated evacuation time has been placed at ten hours. That is unacceptable. People will die.

California has been learning hard lessons about how drought and climate change are increasing the danger of wildfire and, also, diminishing the reliability of our water supplies. Citizen comments call out the Revised DEIR and its attempt to stick its head in the sand of a dry creekbed and pretend, instead, that nothing has changed since the original Water Supply Assessment for the project, researched back in 2012-2014.

Commenters express concern about how Alterra's thirst for water would certainly harm natural resources and potentially the flow of local faucets, pointing to limited supplies – and outdated data – as dangerous to the future of the valley.

1. *Robert Miller*: As a hydrologist, I understand (it doesn't take much research and general logic for anyone else to understand) that we do not have the water availability to support the amount of rooms this development proposes, nonetheless a waterpark! (Squaw) creek runs dry every fall. The local groundwater tables and aquifers are dropping as more development pops up, each needing more and more tap water. This Village proposal is not hydrologically sustainable or practical in any stretch of the Imagination.
2. *Rocio Mendoza*: I live in Olympic Valley and I have multiple concerns regarding the revised draft of the old EIR for the expansion of the Village at Palisades Tahoe. I find it concerning and irresponsible to want to add a water park to the project based on the drought records. I am worried the town's water supply could be severely compromised long term. I don't think the 2016 environmental report is accurate regarding the impacts on the water supply.
3. *Kim Seipp*: As a PhD hydrologist working at the wildfire-water nexus, I can confidently say that the increased strain on our water resources would have detrimental impacts on both local streams (like Squaw Creek) but also on the ecological health of the entire watershed. The estimated water demand is also substantially undersized. If this proposal is allowed to move forward, our region will not be able to handle the impacts, especially as climate change is altering the basin and decreasing the resilience of our ecosystems.

Concerns about water are sharpened by the proposed indoor waterpark, the top “amenity” in Alterra's proposal to transform Tahoe. Commenters are concerned both about the waterpark's demand on water resources and, in a broader sense, its threat to the outdoor values of the Sierra Nevada.

1. *Joanne Zachariades*: By building an amusement park it degrades the importance and value of our natural surroundings. It teaches our children and their families that they must pay a lot of money to enjoy a fun activity in an outdoor setting. That despite a world plagued by water shortages its “o.k.” to build a large amusement type park in the middle of a pristine valley no matter how much water and materials it wastes. It closes off their eyes to all that is here in the Tahoe area to explore and experience without leaving a trace. Words that the local community knows so well and take to heart every time they venture out on to the trails and into the water. We should be sharing with our visitors how to care for and have fun in the outdoors without trampling wildlife and degrading precious resources.
2. *Philip Blix*: I am a full time resident of Olympic Valley and support continued development here and elsewhere. However, what is being proposed goes against the spirit of the mountains and CEQA -- Olympic Valley is a sports center and mecca for outdoors enthusiasts for both summer and winter activities and what is being proposed would appear to focus on building up an entertainment center to compete with what is already available in nearby Reno.
3. *David Jeske*: Please do not pollute Tahoe with an artificial indoor waterpark. Tahoe is a natural treasure of outdoor splendor. Nothing we build can rival the amazing nature of the region, nor should we try. Let people who want to be in the outdoors come to enjoy it, and let people who want to ride an over chlorinated waterpark eyesore go somewhere else.

In Tahoe’s recent past, pretty much any development was considered good for local businesses. Not anymore – not this project. More than 60 local businesses wrote to Placer County to express their opposition in 2016.

This time, commenters wrote in from their perspective as owners of small businesses, expressing concerns about how features like the indoor waterpark and hundreds of thousands of commercial square footage would compete for workers in a limited labor pool and exacerbate Tahoe and Truckee’s workforce housing crisis.

1. *Kevin Hickey*: I am writing to express my grave concern about the new push to develop Olympic valley. I write to you as a local business owner and 24 year local. While I could go on and on about the problems, the bottom line is this is irresponsible development pure and simple. Are any of you in favor of this development local? Have any of you experienced the already impossible traffic surrounding Olympic Valley? ...Further development will make a horrible situation downright impossible. Any talk of this development reducing traffic is a joke. The new jobs created, create a necessity for employees to not only live somewhere but to drive to work every day, further clogging the roads. The list goes on and on. Please vote no!

2. *Will Halpin*: We have had to adjust business practices and scheduling of our place of business (in the Village) because we simply cannot get staff into the office reliably after 7:30 am, which is insane. Last weekend it took me 3 hours from Carnelian Bay to the parking lot at Palisades, just to work. People were urinating on the road, driving in the wrong lane, emergency vehicles were weaving in and out of the chaos, and I for one hideous moment considered what life would be like outside of Tahoe. Today, we have nobody besides myself in the office, because it is simply not worth risking spending your entire day on 89 or Olympic Valley Road.
3. *Andrew Hays*: The Tahoe region is at a point of crisis with unavailability of affordable housing and the resulting shortage of employees. Grocery stores go unstocked, mail goes undelivered, streets are unplowed, restaurants are shuttering. Basic services are going unmet. It is fair to wonder without action if Tahoe can remain a sustainable place to live or even visit. In a limited employment pool, how will small local business be able to survive when a project such as this only serves to exacerbate the problem? The County must answer the question, do we value these businesses as a part of a larger economy?
4. *Sandy Sahlman*: We have operated a family-owned ski rental business here in the valley for over 50 years, and hope to continue relying on tourism for our livelihoods in the future. Further development such as that being proposed by Alterra and Palisades Tahoe will be detrimental to all of us.
5. *Forrest T. Shepherd*: My small business has already been negatively impacted by Alterra's poorly managed parking and subsequent traffic gridlock. I can't imagine having to endure 25+ years of development traffic, ski traffic, and increased population traffic for the out-of-area-based workforce that would wind up building the valley.
6. *Sheila Greeno*: I own an auto repair business. We don't need more tourism to support our business. In fact, it makes it harder for us to service our loyal and local customers.

For some of the most important issues facing Tahoe, Alterra and Placer County pretend that little has changed since the original EIR was certified nearly seven years ago. It's a tactical attempt to shirk thorough assessment – and it's clearly inconsistent with the requirements of CEQA.

Some commenters objected to the Revised DEIR's reliance on old data for a dynamic problem: housing. Their letters called out the project and its mix of low-paying jobs and high-end condos as a recipe for furthering the region's workforce housing crisis and how that impacts individual employees and the strength of the community.

1. *Zach Tull*: As an employee of the resort, I do not feel they are doing enough to ease the current affordable housing crisis, and by increasing the number of workers without addressing the issue will exacerbate the problem even more.
2. *Kelly Sharp*: I work for the Transportation Department at Palisades Tahoe, operating a shovel and chaining buses. Alterra seems to push hard for development in Olympic Valley while ignoring the need to invest in the foundations to support massive changes. Creating 280 “beds” for imported laborers is corporate justification. TART is down to 9 drivers which left 3 Palisades employees working 12-16 hour days to drive J1s from Kings Beach to Palisades at 6 am. Alterra is gunning for bigger and better “Capital Improvements” without regard for the people and places that make up their company.
3. *Jenny Thompson*: My name is Jenny Thompson and this is my second season as an employee of Alterra at Palisades Tahoe. Given the lack of affordable housing for Alterra employees and the already intolerable traffic on 89, I am shocked that this Alterra development is regaining speed. I moved to Truckee to work for Palisades, but they had no employee housing so I lived in a basement in Glenshire for exorbitant rent. There were bugs, sewage problems, power outages, and a toxic landlord, but it was the only option on my ski instructor's salary. To get to the valley from Truckee, I have to leave at least 2 hours early on weekends and holidays or else get stuck in standstill traffic for hours--last weekend, my colleague in Olympic Valley left Truckee at 9am and didn't get to work until 2pm. The infrastructure of the Olympic Valley area simply will not support further development.
4. *Debby Broback*: It appears that the project and the county and the towns around here want to hide the service workers in employee projects away from the main stream. When and where do the people that support the needs of all these projects and tourism live? When and where do they get the chance to succeed and have a respectful place to call home? Where do the families go? There is more to housing someone than just giving them a dry, warm place to be, packed in with strangers. People need to have a place where they feel safe and respected... When will the county and the towns and the cities start doing something for the people that really are the foundation of the community. Tax money can't cook your meals, serve your food, clean your rooms and homes, staff the stores, fill the shelves, cast your broken bones, fill your prescriptions, take away your garbage, repair down electricity lines, clear the streets of snow, come to your aid, fill up your propane tanks, fix your broken pipes, fix your heater, replace a window, fix your car, staff the gas stations, keep the water flowing, educate the children, care for the elderly, maintain the parks and trails, make sure our poop goes away magically, and so many more vital yet under-valued things. None of us can live here and enjoy life without all the above and more. It is time to truly make a positive change for the

workforce. It's time to stop hiding them away in small complexes where most of us would not necessarily want to live. Unless of course you are a teenager and it is your first or second job. It is time to start respecting all the people that hold our community together and offer them a chance to succeed and hold their heads high instead of struggling every day just to get by.

Not just regarding housing, but for a broad range of issues, commenters called out the developer and decision-makers for claiming there was no “new information” to inform assessment:

1. *Jon D Shanser MD*: I strongly disagree with the folks at Alterra who believe that there have been ‘no significant changes’ since their original plan several years ago. We have witnessed 1-wildfires that we now know can cross the granite peaks of the Sierra, 2-climate change which adversely affects our snowpack and water supply, 3-increased traffic post Covid with so many more people living here and working remotely, 4-diminished clarity of Lake Tahoe due to traffic and pollution, 5-worsening emergency evacuation related to more cars and limitations due to Hwy 89 capacity.
2. *Mary and Stan Bennett*: A new hydrology study should be completed to reflect the new “normal” conditions as we experience multiple years of drought. Without it, planners and developers are making decisions based on outdated information.
3. *Paul D. Jones*: The County makes a glaring error when describing the proposed project with the assertion, or rather the admission, “No changes to the project description have occurred since the project was approved in November 2016”. The County of Placer Board of Supervisors cannot make an informed decision on the application until the EIR in support of the application is updated to reflect current conditions. The Partial EIR misstates the County’s obligations and the CEQA process. Those misstatements appear to be an attempt to inappropriately limit public comment on relevant issues and to improperly restrict the issues for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.
4. *Troy Turner*: Placer County Supervisors who review the REIR containing such a statement or potentially approving it may be party to a false statement when the following new information/circumstances outlined below does exist that are new or substantially more severe environmental impacts, and therefore warrant a complete revision of the EIR. The Specific Plan EIR “last revised in April 2016 ... approved by the County in November 2016” (REIR page 1-3) does not address the following new information or new circumstances which do exist, and therefore warrant a complete revision of the original EIR: (1) 3 of the last 8 days Palisades Tahoe parking lots are full at 10am – 10:15am (per Palisades Tahoe app alerts) and traffic on Olympic Valley Road is at a standstill until 1:30 - 2:30pm (per



observations recorded). These days do not include the Christmas and New Year period, numerous long weekends, ski/skate week, spring break, the FIS World Cup event, the Winter Wondergrass event, and across the potentially 6 months of the ski season. Additionally, these days do not include summer events like Tough Mudder, Iron Man, Wanderlust and similar festivals/events that Palisades Tahoe keep hosting in Olympic Valley that all cause traffic congestion both in Olympic Valley and Highway 89. These reoccurring days of increased gridlock are new information or new circumstances that was not considered in the EIR resulting in new or substantially more severe environmental impacts.

Some, frustrated with Alterra's ongoing effort to seek approvals for its failed project, suggest a shift from conflict to collaboration:

1. *David Leon Cowles*: Rather than another decade of litigation with untold millions of taxpayers dollars wasted, please seriously consider using a collaborative process bringing appropriate stakeholders at the table to come up with a mutually satisfactory agreement on this current shortsighted present proposal.
2. *Kaylan Hager*: I urge you to reject the proposed Palisades Village Development Project and to instead work to develop alternative projects that would better protect the environment and the local community of Lake Tahoe.

Most important and most impressive is what lies at the foundation of the letters: a shared appreciation for Tahoe and a deep commitment to its future. Whether conveyed by people who live in Tahoe full time or aspire to visit someday, it's that passion for place that makes the whole of the comments much greater even than the sum of their arguments:

1. *Jesse Cassidy*: Hello, my name is Jesse, and I have lived in the North Tahoe region of placer county for 13 years. And I have some concerns regarding Alterra's plans for Olympic Valley. When I decided to move here nearly 13 years ago, it wasn't because I dreamed of water parks, traffic congestion, and resort amenities. I moved here because I was drawn to the unique beauty of the region, and in particular the splendor of Olympic Valley. The granite cliffs, the large trees, the open nature. Alterra's proposed plans seek to ruin all that.
2. *Dan & Dee Desmond*: Throughout our lives the Lake Tahoe basin has been a special place for its natural beauty, outdoor recreation, inspiration, and peace. Our children, grandchildren, and friends from around the world see the Tahoe basin as a treasure to be preserved for future generations.
3. *Cameron Pund*: I am a 15-year-old kid that grew up living in the mountains and loving to be in the mountains. I enjoy doing outdoor activities. I am strongly

opposed to the proposed plans by Alterra for the development of a water park/ bowling alley. I think that adding this to the beautiful valley will take away from its natural looks. As well as increasing an already crowded road system on weekends, flooding the whole valley with way too many tourists. All of this takes away from the natural beauty of being in the mountains.

4. *Zeki Ghazoul*: I am a skier from the UK. Practically the other side of the planet from you. Much to my regret, I've not yet managed to visit Tahoe. I say this because I would really love to do so. The history Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Truckee has in the skiing world is known globally. The culture of the region as a true skiers home. It has a unique attraction to it, something that makes it stand out and attract so many people from so many backgrounds. It's why I'd love to spend a season there. And now I hear I might never get to, because in the near future, it may all no longer exist. The developments suggested by the Alterra corporation would ruin the uniqueness of Tahoe, turn an outdoor enthusiast's paradise, so hard to find in our modern world, into a basic gimmick, outclassed in size, quality and accessibility by many other places. Tahoe would lose all its attraction just for something that would damage it in so many ways. It would take the special out of the region, and turn away those the place was meant for. It would be a loss for everyone, from visitors both from across the US and international, to the local community, businesses and wildlife. For these reasons, and many more, I hope Placer County reconsiders allowing the Alterra corporation to destroy Tahoe, so that I, and many others, can someday visit the paradise (hopefully soon!)
5. *Dale Munsterman*: As a society, we can either choose to be thoughtful with our remaining natural areas, which we all love, or we can create another Disneyland-esque attraction on the paved-over memory of this treasured valley.
6. *Evan Winslow Smith*: I am a resident of Olympic Valley, writing to you regarding Alterra Corporation's development plan for Palisades Tahoe. I am strongly opposed to Alterra's Palisades Tahoe Project as proposed. After studying their plan, it's clear to me that it would be the worst possible development to ever happen here. It would destroy nearly everything that makes Olympic Valley the unique natural mountain community that it is.
7. *James A. Haverkamp*: It is a world class location for skiing, hiking and other outdoor sports! Let's keep it that way so that future generations may continue to enjoy its spectacular charms, rather than killing off a golden goose that is and has been so successful commercially and experientially.
8. *Jennifer Maeder*: My great grandfather built a house on the Truckee River across from the Palisades entrance sometime around 1915. My grandmother and her sisters would walk to what is now the Palisades parking lot to fill their milk

containers with milk from the cows that grazed there. My father and his cousin notoriously stuffed their parents' gas tank with pine needles one summer so they wouldn't have to return to Stockton for the start of the school year. They would all turn over in their graves to hear about the new proposed plan for towering high rises and an indoor waterpark.

9. *Jake Landry*: My name is Jake Landry, and I am 23 years old. For 23 years, I have been able to benefit from the beauty and preserved wildlife of the Tahoe basin and Olympic Valley. The fresh air and untainted wilderness have been a part of my life as long as I can remember. However, all of these things that I cherish are at risk - from fires, pollution, water shortage, and traffic.

That shared commitment provides hope that we can indeed work together to protect this place we love. Or, as commenter *Lucy Demm* puts it: "I am only 19 and I don't know much, but if I know something, it's that I am going to protect my home, always and forever."