



TRUCKEE ▲ DONNER
LAND TRUST

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Truckee Donner Land Trust Acquires Conservation Easement on McIver Hill

Preserving a great green belt in downtown Truckee

The Truckee Donner Land Trust announced the purchase of a conservation easement on McIver Hill from Sierra College, site of the College's new Truckee/Tahoe campus. The easement permanently protects McIver Hill's scenic qualities, a landmark forested hillside in downtown Truckee. The easement also allows for public access and a network of trails linking downtown to Highway 89.

"The new campus will be located within a saddle, bordered by two small hills, thus keeping it out of view from most locations" said Frank DeCourten, of the Sierra College Truckee Campus. "We researched several other sites, including the former Prosser Creek Charter School and the Commercial Triangle, but selected McIver Hill as the location where we can contribute the most to the local community by virtue of the central location, scenic qualities, and peaceful setting. "

"This proposal provides a unique opportunity to implement General Plan policy direction recently provided by the Town Council for this site," said Truckee Community Development Director Tony Lashbrook. "The College provides a positive alternative to the commercial and residential development that was previously planned."

Zoning would permit up to 87,000 square feet of commercial space on the property and 50 residential units. But because it's a special study area, these limits could be exceeded. Past proposals would have put as many as 750 residences on the property, twice as many as in the Prosser subdivision.

"It's outright scary to think about what might have been developed there, especially in ten to twenty years when land is at an even greater premium in Truckee," the Land Trust's Executive Director, Perry Norris said.

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Truckee Donner Land Trust is working with the College to ensure that the Truckee landmark is protected in perpetuity. The easement stipulates that nearly 50 percent of the hill will be preserved as open space. The easement also establishes design standards ensuring the design of the campus and its architecture are compatible with Truckee's historic character.

“The opportunity to create a campus on McIver Hill, while protecting the scenic qualities that are so important to the Town's character, solves one of Truckee's most daunting and looming land use issues,” said Town Councilman Craig Threshie.

Conservation easements are an important tool used by land trusts to protect open space that is held in private hands. In signing an easement, the landowner agrees to permanent and legally binding restrictions on the use of their property. In this case, Sierra College does have the ability to expand their facilities as needed in the future through mutual agreement between the Truckee Donner Land Trust and the College. The scenic and open space values will continue to be protected through this innovative partnership.

“This is truly a milestone for the community” Norris stated. “The college will add vibrancy to our region while preserving a very critical piece of open space. Sierra College has been exceptional to work with and is remarkably cognizant of making sure this college meets the needs of the community, including preservation.”

“ The development of the campus and the conservation easement to protect McIver Hill's scenic qualities resolves in an absolute win-win for the community; we get a campus, trails and open space,” Nevada County Supervisor Barbara Green said.

The College, Land Trust and Truckee Trails Foundation will partner on the alignment, construction and maintenance of the trails.

“The trails will provide a critical link from downtown to other parts of town including Donner Lake and Gateway,” said Leigh Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of the Truckee Trails Foundation.