

My Turn

Why would anyone bring a business to Taos?

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I am a small business owner in Taos, having moved here in 2005. I love Taos.

I have been approached by an investment group to expand my business. I keep a very low profile for a variety of reasons. My business is in the social services, it saves lives.

Any new venture is the same.

It would not harm the environment. It would not harm the culture or image of Taos.

I would ask the reader to focus on the “investment” aspect of the discussion. This is about the ability to attract investors and business to Taos. Not about what the business is, that argument is for another time. It doesn't matter what you build, someone won't like it ... This investment would be somewhere around \$10 million in infrastructure improvements, bring over 100 new jobs, create millions in tax revenue and even more actual dollars to Taos through business and employee housing and spending.

We are looking at three properties: one in Taos County, one in Santa Fe, and another in Colorado.

Let me be clear that this would be use of a current property, no additional water is needed that wasn't used before, acceptable, and approved. It would be renovation of existing buildings, no “new” impact on land.

Over the past few months we have been doing “due diligence” on all aspects of our new project. I am obviously “pro Taos” seeing as I live here and feel it is an excellent option.

But, I will share my most recent correspondence from one of the potential investors: “why would anyone bring a business to this area? Taos is clearly not business friendly.

You have a lack of employees and housing, the nightmare of special use permits, arbitrary decisions on land use, arbitrary decisions on business licenses are all major obstacles in the way of our being successful.

And, that is even before you START the business. Also, the political climate is very clearly and historically positioned where making profit is evil.”

Please don't take out your anger on me. I must share the realistic viewpoint of "urban" investors if you want large businesses to come to the area. This isn't about box stores or liquor licenses, it just the reality in my world. To attract business and investment to the area, you actually must be attractive. That, I believe, is the issue facing Taos County.

I respect and value the culture in Taos. I watch what happens here. I might not agree, but I understand each decision as being unique and each "party" having solid reasons why decisions are reached. I understand why housing and business permits are denied. If that is what Taos County wants to be that is fine by me, you have my full support!

But, that being said my question is this; why would you risk your career and financial future and bring a business to Taos?

Dave Johnson is a business owner in Taos.