

Editorial

It's time to be proactive and plan for sensible growth

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Taosenos got a good scare when the town tried to rezone a large swath of property close to the historic district, including 20 acres of open space. Although town officials were mum as to which business or businesses would benefit, they claimed it would improve the entrance to downtown. Many residents didn't buy the argument. In the end, neither did the three town councilors who quashed the rezoning with a "no" vote.

Now, in the aftermath, we urge Taos officials to see this rejection as an opportunity to talk about what residents and business owners envision for their town now and in the future.

Or, as Councilor Fritz Hahn told a reporter, "I'm challenging the council to keep this discussion going."

Hahn, who was in the minority during that vote, has a point. But we hope that conversation is broad reaching.

In 1999, the town adopted its "Vision 20/20" master plan. Four years before it expires, we believe it is long overdue for residents to decide in this current economic climate what works and what doesn't.

Think back to 1999. The economy was pretty flush in the pre-9/11 era.

Long-range planning is crucial to directing the future of the town. It's also useful when debating the merits of development proposals. Without a modern plan, the town and the community will just keep jumping from crisis to crisis.

Case in point: In the coming months, a proposal will likely go before the council concerning a proposed installation of a 150-foot-tall cell tower near town hall — in the center of the historic district. To put this in perspective, the tower near Kit Carson Electric Co-op is 50 feet tall.

We can hardly wait for the hue and cry over that one.

Also, right now, town planners are considering a 70,000-square-foot assisted living center off Paseo del Canòn East.

It would be handy to have a master plan to give developers and the community a better idea of what projects are appropriate and where.

We want Taos to thrive. We are tired of seeing empty storefronts downtown and pothole-riddled roads. We want good jobs for its people.

We also want sensible growth. Should 20 acres of pastureland downtown be left open? Could that pasture become open space with trails for recreation? Perhaps there could be plots for community gardens. We need to get creative.

Redrafting a master plan isn't easy. It will take more staff and resources at town hall and more community engagement as well. But the community would be better served with proactive instead of reactive growth policies.

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