

My Turn

Act before it's too late on zoning that allows higher hotel heights

Bronwyn Taylor

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I am opposed to the decision made by the town council to allow taller building codes for the coming Holiday Inn Express.

I believe it sets an irreversible precedent that opens the doors to the type of growth that will change this place from a town to a city. I have lived in Taos since I was 4, but to me, more than even the fear of losing our small town culture, is that allowing this type of growth is irresponsible in a high mountain desert in which the concern of water shortages is already an issue.

People come to our town for its uniqueness, they say.

And it is unique. It's more though than just the style of our buildings and the look of our town. It's in the land, in the mountains and the water. But we live in a desert, and all of those are fragile things that we can make disappear if we are not careful. It is a sacred thing that we are not overdeveloped like inevitably happens to so many other beautiful places in this country and around the world. Our town and this land will always be at risk for its beauty and fragility, and it is our responsibility as the residents and lawmakers to act in protection of that beauty, not the name of revenue.

This decision doesn't make sense, because this uniqueness and beauty is the primary cause for our out-of-town income — that which we are trying to increase. But everything about those qualities are put in jeopardy when we start acting only in the name of this kind of growth and commercialism.

It becomes a difficult thing to discuss matters that regard economic growth versus holding on to these ideals and to our culture. It becomes difficult because there are so many of us that live on minimum wage and struggle to make ends meet. We must remember though that the reason most of us are here is because we have more dear priorities than just revenue. And those things are enough for most of us to hold on to and to keep us here.

If growth is inevitable, if we must embrace it, then why don't we be a town that enforces strict building codes?

Building codes that allow for growth but require effort and innovate, intelligent, forward-thinking. Building codes that hold strong for the sake of preserving something more valuable than what a 48-foothigh hotel has to offer us.

The town council says that each future case will be handled individually and that this decision does not set a precedent, but how will it not?

Is a decision like this not a reflection that we are willing to compromise our values under certain circumstances?

This decision was made too quickly and we let it slide by too quietly considering what is at stake here. I am asking the entire town of Taos to recognize all that will be lost if we do not act before it's too late.

Taylor, 22, is a resident of San Cristobal.



John Miller

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