

My Turn

Holiday Inn debate sends wrong message about our community

Taos Mayor Dan Barrone

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Many of you may not realize that the Town of Taos is in the process of passing its budget for the next fiscal year, and once again, we are projecting “zero growth.” That means that overall, the tax base that supports our roads, public safety, and important public works projects like acequia revitalization, is not going to increase. This is a troubling trend because our needs are great and our wallet is small.

But more importantly, “zero growth” also means that our community is not really adding jobs, and it is not really increasing wages and salaries.

The longer this “zero growth” trend continues, the more we risk losing the vitality and the heart and soul of Taos.

There have been many people opposing the new Holiday Inn proposal. I understand that they want to protect the cultural, natural, and architectural uniqueness of our home. I share their concerns but also believe that now is the time to make responsible compromises to move our community forward.

Attracting more tourists is certainly a great way to jump start our “zero growth” economy. To be successful at this, our visitors must feel welcome, and we have to add hotel rooms that are attractive to travelers at all price points.

Our current situation with quality hotel rooms is nearly deplorable. Also, it should not be up to the Town Council, or a small group of vocal opponents, to dictate the lodging choices for our visitors as if they were the only ones seeking lodging. Choice is always important and while Holiday Inns, Hiltons, Marriotts and Motel 6s may be large corporations and offensive to some, for most travelers, they are well-liked and trusted brands that provide a predictable lodging experience.

This week, local hotel owner Jay Batra asked the Town Council to hold off on a vote on the proposed Holiday Inn. Even though the hotel design already meets our required architectural standards, I’m appreciative of his efforts to continue to work with the community to find common ground. I sincerely hope that those who oppose the project are as willing as he to seek compromise. In the end, I’m extremely concerned that all of the negativity, personal attacks and false information being circulated about this project will cause future investors, or maybe even Mr. Batra himself, to take their business elsewhere.

I can't imagine a more damaging message to send at this critical juncture, than Taos being completely unwilling to work with business owners on important projects such as this. This discussion is no longer about a Holiday Inn, but instead, whether or not Taos can pull itself out of the "zero growth" category. I encourage everyone in Taos to contact their councilmembers and urge them to support a reasonable compromise and solution on this issue.

Barrone is the mayor of

Taos.

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