

Taos Council rezones property, cuts housing density allowed

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In an effort to preserve open space in Taos, the town of Taos Council voted unanimously during its Tuesday (May 22) meeting to approve the rezoning application for 14.691 acres on the north side of town.

The plot of land on the northeast corner of Upper Ranchitos Road and Carbajal Road, which was once pegged for a 44-home development, will no longer be in danger of urban development. Owners Appleseed LLC, through the representation of local real estate consultant Mark Yaravitz, applied to rezone the property from R-4 designation, allowing for up to four homes per acre, to RA and RA-10, which significantly reduces the density in the area and allows for more traditional agricultural use of the acreage.

“Appleseed bought the property to remove any development opportunity of the property,” said Yaravitz.

“In order to allow them to allow grazing animals back on the property, I had to change the zoning.”

According to Yaravitz, Appleseed is an organization that has purchased other plots of land in Taos to prevent further development.

Yaravitz requested the rezoning of two plots of land in the property to include a 3-acre residential agriculture zone and an 11-acre RA-10 zone. An RA zone must be no less than 3 acres and will only allow one dwelling per 3-acre plot, according to town codes. In an RA-10 zone, plots of land must be larger than 10 acres and only one dwelling is allowed per 10 acres. In addition, these new zoning areas allow for two hooved animals per acre.

“It feels like what the applicant is requesting really would better reflect the existing conditions of those uses on the property,” said senior town planner John Miller.

“It’s the staff’s opinion that the (previous) zoning was done in error that it should not have been (R4).”

R4 residential zoning does not allow horses, goats or cows. Up to four dwellings per acre are allowed under the zoning. According to Yaravitz, the previous owners of the property had intended to build roughly 44 housing units on the property. Miller said this development would have changed the environmental makeup of the area and feels that the new zoning is more appropriate for the nearly 15 acres of land.

Appleseed is a registered company in Pennsylvania.

The company’s treasurer, Robert Donohue, holds an address in Florida according to town documents.

According to Yaravitz, Appleseed does not intend to build structures or farms on the property and plan to keep it for grazing use. During the meeting, no one spoke out for or against the zoning, and the council voted unanimously to approve the zoning change.

According to Miller, the planning and zoning commission also unanimously approved the zoning change.

The land was originally zoned by the town in 2015 and was previously outside the town limits. The 14.691 acres borders Taos Pueblo open-space land, a small condominium development and La Lomita mobile home park.

Appleseed follows Not Forgotten Outreach in agricultural acreage preservation after NFO purchased the 28-acre Mitchell property across from Cid's Food Market, nicknamed "Corral No.5." NFO also plans to keep the development on their property to a minimum.

"The intent for the downzone is just to allow it to be grazed and irrigated as it once was," Yaravitz said during the meeting. He did not say what kind of livestock would be grazing on the property and did not say who owned the land.



The approximate border of the 14.691 acres zoned RA and RA-10 is highlighted in green on the outer regions of the town of Taos on the corner of Upper Ranchitos Road and Carbajal Road. The town council voted to accept changing the zoning on the property and reducing the housing density allowed. The property is located on the north side of town.
Courtesy Photo

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