



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## Town sets meeting for Chamisa Verde rezoning

By Patricia Chambers

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Questions and objections raised by residents living near the Chamisa Verde subdivision convinced the town of Taos Planning and Zoning Commission members to schedule a special meeting Sept. 17 to accept public comment about rezoning the affordable housing project.

Rezoning the nearly 168 acres surrounding Chamisa Verde, which is located behind the Taos Youth & Family Center, is a test for the proposed SmartCode.

The commission was asked to adopt an ordinance to rezone the land within the Chamisa Verde Neighborhood Plan and to amend the Land Use Development Code (LUDC) to include the Neighborhood Development District.

Despite letters mailed to property owners and notices sent with 3,000 water and utilities bills, only a handful of residents attended the meeting.

Several residents of the Las Haciendas subdivision, which would be included in the Neighborhood Development District, said they opposed the rezoning.

The neighborhood would change from suburban to urban by drastically increasing density, said Anne McNaughton.

“It would change the identity and the nature of the neighborhood” McNaughton said.

Louelle and Cardith Cramer, also Las Haciendas residents, said the proposal would designate a road in their subdivision as the only access from Chamisa Verde.

Fernando Miera objected to the mixed-use aspect of the SmartCode. “It superimposes new zoning over the old zoning,” he said.

Town Planning Director Allen Vigil offered an impassioned plea for the commission to move ahead with the SmartCode project, which has been in the works for more than a year.

Vigil, a former Taos County planner and town planner who returned to the job several months ago, has been involved in plans to rezone Taos for more than 30 years.

“The town first adopted a zoning map in 1963. There were four zoning categories,” he said. “People cried and cried that zoning would destroy the city.”

Changes were made in 1975 and the current Land Use Development Code was adopted in 1980, he said.

Vigil also worked on the Vision 20/20 project, which made recommendations for zoning changes in the Taos area after extensive public meetings on the subject.

The SmartCode would eliminate the sprawl development that is seen on the south end of the town of Taos and is mandated by LUDC.

“The SmartCode is a real good tool for the development of the community,” he said. “We have lost our sense of neighborhood. This concept was brought over from the Spaniards.”

“I’ve been doing this for 29 years and I think it is the best thing for Taos,” Vigil added.

The commissioners, however, said the idea of applying the proposed zoning to Chamisa Verde needs more public discussion.

The 5:30 p.m. meeting Wednesday (Sept. 17) will only address the Chamisa Verde rezoning. The meeting will be held at the town of Taos Council Chambers on Civic Plaza Drive.