



SONORAN NEWS LETTER TO THE EDITOR AUGUST 22, 2017

Zoning for a Promising Future

A recent letter to the editor accused Carefree of using its zoning ordinances to generate additional town revenues rather than fulfilling the desires of our residents. Nothing could be farther from the truth, so let's set the record straight. First of all, this resident was on the Long Range Financial Planning Committee and so was part of the planning process and also should know that nothing has been formally proposed or approved concerning neighborhood density to date.

There are two challenges here: 1. Generate revenues for the Town so that we don't have to institute a property tax and sustain the Town long term for our residents. And, 2. Responding to what demographic trends are telling us.

Over the past year, the Town has been working with a committee of residents to reconcile the adverse impacts which state legislative changes will have on Carefree's future municipal revenue streams. To date, the Town has held four lengthy public workshops dating back to last February to further vet these discussions and help develop sound strategies. And, based upon the Town's fiscally conservative approach, there were not any areas identified by the committee where significant savings could be yielded.

With contracting revenue streams, we felt it was our collective responsibility to ensure that we identified solutions to the community's future financial deficit, yet still provide the services and housing options desired by our residents.

These public dialogues then evolved into a conversation regarding opportunities to generate more revenue. The Town's largest revenue stream originates from local sales tax. Like many rural communities throughout the state, Carefree is now turning its eyes toward ways to generate revenue from many visitors driving through our community. Our street network includes four major arterial streets that connect larger communities around Carefree to schools, employment centers and regional recreational facilities such as Bartlett Lake. Based upon existing and projected future traffic volumes at these intersections, the opportunity to capture revenue from these properties by positioning them to appeal to high quality restaurants, businesses and potential resort hotels seemed like an optimum fit.

An additional primary finding of the committee was that a sizable number of Foothills residents expressed their desire to downsize their living situation yet stay in Carefree. These residents expressed their desire to stay where their friends, church and familiar retailers were present, yet not live in as large of a home.

This need can be met by creating sustainable residential neighborhoods of smaller homes on smaller property sizes. The majority of Carefree contains very low density, semi-rural neighborhoods with large spacious homes and properties. A niche in the marketplace can easily be seen by the market support for the new Almarte and Eastwood communities, with 70% of their sales coming from current area residents.

Recently, one member of the aforementioned committee (who was an active part of the past discussions) has expressed reservations about the Town granting increased density on a 35 acre property south of SkyRanch called Stagecreek Estates. The density that the developer proposed is higher than one which the Town would support. However, a density pattern similar to the surrounding developments could be more amenable. We will continue to work with this developer to cultivate a plan which is more in keeping with the spacious Carefree lifestyle yet meets the expressed desire of many residents to downsize.

Indeed, our collective interest is to create a sustainable community where our residents can obtain the living situation they desire, property values increase, businesses are viable and the Town generates sufficient funding to provide the quality of life services its citizens desire. All of this requires understanding of facts and careful consideration of the options. The Mayor, Council and Staff would be pleased to meet with Carefree residents to discuss the Town's road to sustainability.

Please contact the Mayor at mayor@carefree.org to schedule a neighborhood meeting today.

Mayor Les Peterson, Town of Carefree