

Where is the beef this time?

My recent letter to the editor regarding indications that our existing zoning protections are under assault drew a response from Carefree's Mayor. His response was, by necessity, a brief outline of a complex situation. I imagine it was intended to explain some things being considered to save Carefree's *promising future*. But like any complex situation, there are varied opinions about the viability of proposals or options under consideration.

I believe the mayor is a sincere, honorable person whom I respect. That does not suggest we agree. My participation in the Long Range Financial Planning Committee (LRFPC) began in April of 2015, not just this past year. I joined two other residents who had been members of the previous committee which produced the prior 10 year plan. About 9 months ago the Mayor changed the mission and focus of the group. He also decided to add one additional Council member, and two additional resident advisors. However, as of August 14th, the committee is now comprised solely of council members and staff.

During our discussions we were in agreement that the town financials were not encouraging. Yes, we have reserves currently in excess of \$7M, but Revenues have been declining and Expenses have continued to increase. We discussed a number of things to draw new and desirable businesses into Carefree. Those discussions included a review of Carefree's land use policies, specifically how the remaining 112 acres, in a few *'remnant'* parcels, could help the financial outlook. There is little doubt that a new quality resort complex could be a major contributor to local sales tax revenue, as would carefully selected commercial business such as restaurants. The real question is, in what locations would such a resort or other commercial enterprises be most appropriate and beneficial for both residents and the town.

High density residential was also discussed, and unlike other topics, this topic did not have unanimous support. The Mayor's attempt at painting me with guilt by association does not hold water here. As the final LRFPC meeting (8/2/17) drew to a close the Mayor asked if we were all in agreement. Though the topic drifted from that question briefly, I specifically responded to the Mayor and said **I was not**

in agreement with the high-density development. It was not the first time that I had made my position abundantly clear over the past 2+ years

The Mayor, in his response to my Zoning for Dollars letter (Sonoran News, 8/16/17), uses statements like *“An additional primary finding of the committee was that a sizeable number of Foothills residents...”* **and** *“the expressed desire of many residents to downsize”*. It was an effort to make high density development more palatable. **It is not.** At no time during our meetings did I hear or see any specific statistics to support those statements, or that it was a “primary” finding. Several times now the Mayor has repeated that 70% of sales coming from the new Almarte and Eastwood developments (both high density) are to Carefree residents. But 70% of what number? Is it 2, 5, 10, or more homes making up that 70%? As of 2015 there were over 2,700 homes in Carefree.

Our focus should be on the preservation of Carefree’s character, charm, and composition as well as preserving the natural desert ecosystem. While we care about other foothills residents, they cannot be the justification for Carefree’s land use policy. The vision of Carefree’s founding fathers, which is frequently cited in certain circles, was to have a small central core for appropriate businesses and shopping with smaller homes having easy access to that nearby core, surrounded by larger semi-rural properties. They were so concerned with Scottsdale’s rampant annexation policies that they incorporated the town as a means to protect Carefree from Scottsdale’s aggressive high density development practices.

On August 29th, the Carefree Town Council approved a tall, 134-unit apartment (rental not condo) complex to be located on the Easy Street South parcel. As presented, 2 parking levels and 4 apartment levels will likely exceed 60 feet in height measured from the high point on that property, not from Easy Street. Once again it is supposed to be a luxury unit complex with lots of amenities. Each time a proposed project fails to materialize at that location it seems that new higher height concessions are allowed by the town for the next owner. We are told “there is demand” for these projects. Residents and neighbors should ask ‘Who is demanding?’ and ‘Why, if there is such demand, has development not commenced over the past 11 years?’ Developers who can’t obtain adequate financing do not help Carefree.

According to 2015 U.S. Census Bureau statistics, Carefree had a population of **3,610**. How many verifiable and documented requests from Carefree residents factually exist? What percentage of those 3,610 residents would support the Mayor's claims? So where is the beef *this* time?

John Traynor, Carefree resident