



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer’s name, address, and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond, or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

Selling Sisters out

To the Editor:

In the October 27 paper I read the story about Sisters’ future as a tourist destination. As I read the story and contemplated bringing in outsiders to develop our little city into a tourist trap and a plan to make this city a final destination tourist resort, I quickly decided several things: First off, this city was never designed to be a final tourist destination; we always have been and should always be a jewel in the mountains, but every time a new person or family moves in or stays for a while they bring opinions and different ideas that change Sisters permanently.

The other thing that comes to mind is will the City Council and the people of Sisters actually sell out what we have in exchange for tourism money? And the unfortunate conclusion I have come to is City Council as well as the residents are allowing it to happen. They are selling our amazing little town, its beauty, its sense of small community, and our small-town morals for tourism money. Sisters

will be the next Jackson Hole, Wyoming — a beautiful place ruined by tourism: forests and lakes as well as the mountains overused and destroyed because we allow it.

We invite the outsiders to come and enjoy it, and I’m not against the idea of sharing what we have, but I moved here in 2006 and I see the changes that have occurred in just 15 short years. Use of our forests, lakes, and national lands have spiked — trash everywhere in the forest and a permitting process where we have to ask government permission to take a hike or camp in the forests and lands where we as residents of Sisters Country pay for the right and the privilege to coexist with our neighbors.

The forests are full of homeless people living in tents and RVs illegally in our national forests. I remind everyone federal law is clear: 14 days in the forest camping, not take up full-time residence and not pay rent.

Sisters has made the choice to move towards tourism and bringing more people here to create sustainable income industries

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Wednesday November 3 • Cloudy 57/45 	Thursday November 4 • Showers 50/33 	Friday November 5 • Showers 50/36 	Saturday November 6 • Showers 49/34
Sunday November 7 • AM Rain/Snow 47/33 	Monday November 8 • PM Showers 46/35 	Tuesday November 9 • Showers 43/32 	

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Embracing Sisters’ natural DNA

By **Bill Carmichael**
Guest Columnist

In the October 20 edition of *The Nugget*, there was an article about the tight rental market. I was surprised it did not mention a glaring reason for high rents and home prices in Sisters.

You could call it good old-fashion supply vs. demand. But there’s more to it. Sisters city leaders, while admirably advocating for affordable housing, have made rather bizarre decisions that create the opposite effect.

For example, we have created an industrial park allowing for companies like Laird Superfoods, having a work force of 500, not to mention their families that potentially add a couple thousand people. Now, I have nothing against the nice folks at Laird. But I wonder if city planners thought about how this exacerbates the very issue they are trying to solve.

We know Sisters is landlocked, bordered by EFU and Forest Service land allowing for little room for growth unless the state and federal agencies give permission to expand the urban growth boundary, which is something I’m not sure we want.

Given this fact, did anyone among our city planners think about how a 500-employee company would impact our schools, sewer and water systems, streets and traffic, not to mention the demand for housing and added competition for our workforce? Companies the size of Laird Superfoods might be a nice catch for Redmond, but not here. Who will pay for this needed infrastructure expansion?

Where I live on the west side near the high school, the City allowed crammed-in housing on narrow streets (failing to meet the City’s own building code) in the name of affordable housing. I purchased my house five years ago and it’s nearly tripled in value, based on recent sales. The City also approved tiny rental houses and three-story apartments in the name of affordable housing that investors purchased, asking high rent prices. Sisters needs to stop allowing cheaply constructed housing in the name of affordable housing. It’s not working.

Sisters will never be able to do what larger cities do, having more room for annexation. Given our landlocked space, affordable housing is a myth that cannot be achieved. Supply can never outpace demand.

I am not suggesting we abandon our compassion. I love and support what Habitat for Humanity does. My heart goes out to those workers who are living in our nearby woods in RVs and tents. We

need to continue providing winter warming shelters and food banks. We need people to step up who have a spare bedroom who feel comfortable renting it. And we need to support government plans that offer a hand up.

What might Sisters do different?

First, we need to embrace Sisters’ DNA. Face it, we are becoming a smaller version of places like Jackson Hole, Wyoming, or Bigfork, Montana. Sisters is a tourist destination and a retirement community. We encourage tourists with events like folk and jazz festivals, the quilt and rodeo shows, along with a variety of craft shows. Add to that our breathtaking mountains and natural beauty with abundant recreational opportunities.

And retirees want to move here; they have the disposable income and come from the valley and neighboring states for the natural beauty and small-town feel. The result: housing prices will continue to be out of reach for many.

This is reality. Our DNA will never change due to our breathtaking mountain location and year-round opportunities.

So, how do we embrace our DNA?

Sisters needs to encourage small businesses that fit the genre of Sisters, like arts, crafts, writers, musicians, recreation outfitters, small-tech entrepreneurs, or internet businesses that can utilize freelance people who work from home in far-away places.

We need to stop building high-rise apartment buildings that junk up the landscape and put money in the pockets of investors, under the illusion of affordable housing.

We need to realize that much of our workforce will continue to come from neighboring towns. It means paying higher wages to attract commuting workers.

We need to support the “event” business bringing tourists and their dollars with them. We need to revise building codes in industrial zones, discouraging larger companies from locating here.

The recent *Nugget* reports surveys of tourists indicate traffic, dining, and accommodations are things needing improvement. We need to rethink building codes, allowing for more bed-and-breakfasts or small boutique hotels, more unique restaurants, more unique restaurants, more grandmother apartments. We need to rethink traffic patterns to encourage smoother movement.

Until Sisters embraces its DNA it will continue to struggle with false expectations and unrealistic planning decisions.

Views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.