

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Ryan Lee** [REDACTED]

Date: Fri, Jul 1, 2022 at 7:05 AM

Subject: restaurant location at the Trees Ranch (old Rositas site)

To: Tom Kenaston <kenaston@springdale.utah.gov>, Kyla Topham <ktopham@springdale.utah.gov>, Pam Inghram <pinghram@springdale.utah.gov>, Pat Campbell <pcampbell@springdale.utah.gov>, Noel Benson <nbenson@springdale.utah.gov>, Ric Rioux <rrioux@springdale.utah.gov>, <ahyatt@springdale.utah.gov>
Cc: Thomas Dansie <tdansie@springdale.utah.gov>, Barbara Bruno <bbruno@springdale.utah.gov>

Dear Planning Commissioners,

After I purchased the Trees Ranch last year I was questioned by virtually every town council member and planning commissioner if I intended to open the restaurant there again. I told them I hadn't given it much thought— to a person they all requested that I re-open that spot with a new restaurant for the town.

I told them I would consider it— and I did. I then made my decision to move forward on finding a new restaurant tenant for that space.

And I should also point out here that I have had numerous other citizens of Springdale request from me that I re-open a restaurant in that space. Virtually everyone has said to me something along these lines about the old Rositas space: the town people loved that site because it was a green space with the grass sitting area, surrounding cottonwood trees, and orchards in the distance. Also they loved that restaurant site on the Ranch because it seemed less “touristy” than the rest of the town.

I am happy report that I have been working on finding a suitable tenant for that restaurant space for the last 8 months. And at the same time I am disappointed to report that it has taken so long to do so, and I still haven't found the right fit.

I have had numerous discussions about my progress on my restaurant search with Darci Carlson— as well as occasionally updating Tom D. and the Mayor by email.

I have talked to at least 15 potential restaurant owners (including James Beard nominated chefs) about doing something on that site. I have also been approached by numerous others to open something there. Everything from bakeries, multiple coffee shops, 2 different Indian restaurants, burgers, pizza, a winery, a French restaurant, a sandwich shop (I heard you folks were looking for another Subway?) — you name the restaurant concept and it seems that someone has talked to me about doing it there.

Yet despite all of this, it hasn't worked out yet. And partially that is my choice: I am being very picky in who I chose as I don't want just any old restaurant there. Or as Adrian Player told me: get another restaurant there— but you'd better not do another Mexican restaurant! What I think he was really saying: please do something new and original (and not just another re-tread of a restaurant that we've already seen in town).

I did line up a potential sushi restaurant there— and it is a high-quality place (I eat there all the time up here in northern Utah and it extremely good). However after numerous discussions with Darci and others, we thought that it was perhaps not the best fit for that site and so we passed. Our preference would be a unique farm-to-table type offering (especially considering the site, as we do sit on the only agriculture zone in town).

I could go on about my search for a restaurant— but please be assured I am working on this and I intend to find something. I just don't want to settle.

Initially there was concern that the non-conforming C.U.P. would expire for this site— so there was an issue of urgency there to get a restaurant going quickly. However upon further examination it was found that a restaurant on this space is in fact conforming.

But (and now this brings me to the point of this letter): I am hearing bits and pieces that there is now consideration of taking away the opportunity for a restaurant for this site. Or at least regulating it in ways that may be undesirable.

I have to say I have mixed feelings on this (and, to be candid: confusion). To repeat: every person I have spoken to in Springdale (without a single exception) has requested that I put a restaurant back on that site. So why would the town be attempting to pull this? I don't know— and I can't understand...

All I can say is this: my time is extremely valuable. And at this point I can't tell you how many hours I have spent looking for a restaurant concept/owner for this space. **I don't need to be doing this.** I have many projects keeping me busy. And this restaurant won't bring in much revenue (other than a little rent money for the space).

However, my reasoning on this matter is that this could be a way that I could “give back” to the town. The tribe has clearly spoken: a restaurant they want— and a restaurant I will give them. It is just a matter of time when it happens.

However I would prefer not to deal with any unnecessary and burdensome regulations on that site (apart from what any other restaurant in town has to deal with).

To be clear; I am not coming to the town asking for a restaurant. Put another way: the town has asked me to provide one (which is indeed my intent). But please don't make this difficult for me. I don't need any additional drama in what is already a difficult process.

And finally: as you all know, I watch what happens in this town. I attend many of the meetings either in person and on zoom. And I have seen the recent push from town to add other businesses other than transient lodging (which I agree with). In fact, (as you all know)— people can't even add more transient lodging without adding mixed-use businesses (such as a new restaurant).

So— to recap: one of the town's stated goals is to add more mixed use. I am attempting to add mixed use (a new restaurant) at the town's request. And most importantly: **I am not asking anything in return** i.e. I am not asking for transient lodging here or another e-bike rental shop, or whatever. So why the town would attempt to block a restaurant here (or to even discuss blocking it) is well, a little confusing to me...

In conclusion, I will tell you what I told the Mayor: I view this restaurant as my gift to the town. I am not going to make very much money off this i.e. I am not going to own the restaurant— I am just going to rent out the space for a nominal amount.

I am mentally invested and concerned that I get a great restaurant in that space (with preferably a new food concept for the town). I am also looking for someone who is a competent businessperson (so they don't go under in a year and then I have to do this whole process all over again).

But I am actively working on it. Please don't make my job any harder by giving me a bunch of regulations that I don't want to deal with— or taking away this opportunity altogether by re-classifying the zoning there.

And if the town did take away the ability to do a restaurant at this site I believe it would be the town's loss (not really mine). I know that if you were to call around or do a poll of Springdale residents you would find that they are overwhelmingly in favor of a quality new restaurant concept for that space.

I also heard that there is concern for doing a restaurant on this site because there is too much overdevelopment for the town. That may be true— but to point out the obvious: *the building is already built and there*. So this isn't a new development. I don't see any purpose of having a building just sit empty that is already built which could be adding mixed use enjoyment for the residents of Springdale. And I think the Mayor would agree with me on this one, as I am aware that she is concerned about blight in the town and buildings that sit unused.

Thanks for listening to me. I do appreciate the work you do for this town. It does not go unnoticed. I realize that your job is a difficult (and often thankless). I don't envy the difficult decisions you have to make.

—Ryan Lee

p.s. I wrote this letter to communicate my thoughts ahead of time, because I won't be able to attend the upcoming work meeting on July 6th. Nor will I be able to attend any upcoming town meetings for next 5 weeks or so (as I will be out of the country on extended travel).

I wanted to write in now and express my feelings in case something is done on this matter while I am away. But I will tell you: I am not going to fight for this restaurant— this letter will be my only communication on this matter. I will let you decide what you want to do regarding this restaurant site, and then I will respect and live with whatever decision you make. Thanks again.