

## **EDITORIAL: Developers take heed or pay the price**

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“You are cordially invited to help save the dying working class in Destin.”

So might read an invitation to area developers from the Local Planning Agency, which is trying to solve Destin’s affordable housing quandary.

At last week’s meeting, members wondered if sending an invite to developers might be in order, since they were no shows at the recent planning meetings.

These same absentees showed up en masse at the City Council meetings months ago and screamed the loudest when the city was poised to slap them with an affordable housing impact fee.

While perhaps development fees aren’t the best approach in difficult economic times, it is incumbent on the developers who have helped create the problem to help develop a solution.

The fact is, it shouldn’t require heroics to get developer buy-in.

They ignore the problem at their peril.

Without a local working class, we lose businesses that provide basic services. White collar, high-tech jobs are great, but without basic blue-collar professions, who will want to call Destin home when they can buy in neighboring cities for far less and with many more conveniences close to home?

Building a hotel and want to hire housekeepers, a receptionist and night-time security guard? Good luck.

The prices of homes combined with low wages make it virtually impossible for workers in such professions to realize the Destin dream of homeownership.

This means a lengthy commute at a time when fuel prices are forcing America to reconsider its path as a commuter nation.

So — developers might say — forget Americans, hire student workers! Sorry, but cheap labor from Kazakhstan, Russia and Eastern Europe only reinforces the seasonal economy that so many businessmen and developers in our community bemoan.

So attention developers: The next affordable housing meeting takes place 4 p.m. today at the City Hall Annex.

Consider yourself invited, because this is one invitation you can’t afford to ignore.