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Comments: I am extremely opposed to the idea of building a roller coaster in the Sandia Mountains. It's proponents' claim that the construction will not damage the ecology or environment is impossible to support because it will do tremendous damage to what is now mostly a pristine area. So far, the only development on the mountain is the ski area and the recently refurbished restaurant, served by the tram (or roads on the east side). This existing development provides plenty of incentive for those tourists or locals who want to take advantage of the mountain's amenities without having to climb or hike up to them. So far, development in the Sandias has provided this access and incentive without destroying the natural beauty of the place. But I assure you, once the roller coaster is built and being utilized, the Sandias will cease being a natural wonder and become a grotesque commercialized tourist trap.

There is no way the roller coaster can be constructed without heavy equipment and massive vehicles that will cause damage to the natural surroundings. There is no way to lay a roller coaster (even, as its proponents claim, one that will closely hug the mountain) without creating an eyesore. And once the thing is built and operating, the amount of traffic it stimulates will be devastating to the area.

One of the only good things about Albuquerque, with all the crime, poverty, gangs and so on, is the fact that the city abuts a wilderness area that has been wisely preserved from development. Many Western cities lucky enough to have nearby mountains have turned them into private property for housing developers, which denies access to everyone but the lucky owner who was rich enough to invest. Fortunately for us, it hasn't happened that way (so far, at least) in the Sandias. I've often thought that the only thing that has prevented houses from being built up the mountain side or on top of the crest is the fact that much of the land is either owned by Native Americans or protected by the U.S. government as a wilderness area. Creating a mountain roller coaster at the top would eliminate the past successes in keeping the mountain relatively pristine.

Hiking in the Sandias is one of the most exciting opportunities Albuquerque has to offer locals and tourists alike. My friends and relatives from across the country have come to visit me with the chief purpose of hiking La Luz or other amazing trails. I know many people who bring guests here for similar reasons. What is special about the Sandias is their natural beauty, the chance they offer to see wildlife, and the knowledge of what a rare treat it is to find a wilderness area, relatively untouched by human development, so close to the city. Hiking is free (except for parking and minimal usage costs), and so it is accessible to most everyone. Unlike an "amusement theme park" activity such as riding a roller coaster, admission to which would be pretty expensive (it would have to be to pay for the cost of building up there), hiking is accessible to everyone, not just the wealthier people who can afford to pay. And of course, once the "Trojan Horse" of a roller coaster project has been introduced, development will continue to offer more amenities to the tourists and those ABQ natives who can afford to pay, such as gift shops and restaurants.

To destroy all of this just to create a roller coaster that will benefit a relative few, rather than leave the Sandias as they are, for many future generations to use and appreciate, makes absolutely no sense. Please, please, please do not continue with this foolish project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Susan B Tiano