



County seeks grant to check soundness of old courthouse

By J.R. Logan

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Taos County is pursuing a \$7,500 grant to conduct a structural analysis of the old Taos County Courthouse.

The grant, administered by the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, would give the county a base from which it could apply for more money to restore and renovate the historic building.

The courthouse was built in 1932. Taos County vacated the building in 1969, and much of it has sat vacant for the subsequent 40-plus years prompting concerns about its structural soundness.

The old courthouse sits on Taos Plaza and has long been identified as an important landmark. It has also been cited as an excellent catalyst for cultural and economic development downtown. Many residents have suggested making it a heritage center or museum, business incubator, or downtown visitors center.

The application states that the county would use the grant to hire a structural engineer/ architect to identify threats to the building, including damage or deterioration of the foundation, walls and roof. The grant would also fund a report of the findings.

The grant application called the structural analysis a “critical first step.” Though the courthouse revitalization has been stymied for decades, it is attracting the attention of several groups and government entities.

“The [Taos County] Office of Community Development is encouraging the citizens, the town, and the county to form public/private partnerships to preserve local heritage along with promoting economic development within the historic district,” the grant application reads.

The grant application included letters from the Town of Taos’ Historic Preservation Commission as well as the Taos Arts and Cultural District and merchants group Taos Project.

The Taos Arts and Cultural District, which is an arm of the New Mexico MainStreet Program, was recently awarded a \$70,000 grant to put toward its “Downtown Master Plan.” That group has identified the courthouse as one of its top priorities.