

Town mulls cameras for Taos Plaza

By Andrew Oxford

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Padre Martinez may soon be joined in keeping a watchful eye on Taos Plaza.

The town of Taos will issue a request for proposals this week for the installation of surveillance cameras at the storied public square.

Cameras have been suggested or mentioned during town council meetings as a means of addressing crime on the plaza.

Following the theft of hanging flower baskets earlier this month, Councilor Judi Cantu said during an Aug. 11 meeting "it would have been nice to have a camera."

"I see it as critical and crucial for safety reasons and it's not happening," said Cantu, who owns property near Taos Plaza.

Cameras were also mentioned during a May 26 meeting after the windows of two vehicles were drawn upon with markers. Motorists were erroneously instructed to park in handicap spots during a farmers market and the markers were deployed in what appeared to be an act of vigilante justice.

But law enforcement does not seem to be clamoring for surveillance equipment on the plaza.

Taos Police data indicates crime is relatively low in the area.

No crimes against persons were documented by police during the first two quarters of 2015.

Only two reports regarding crimes against property were filed during that time. Police say both incidents occurred at the same store, which has a surveillance camera.

The most crimes in both categories and in both quarters were reported to have occurred around the Commercial District, immediately southwest of Walmart.

Forty-four crimes against persons and 102 crimes against property were documented by police in the Commercial District during the first two quarters of 2015.

Presenting the data to council members Tuesday, however, Taos Police Chief David Weaver said the district is a statistical anomaly and should be divided in two.

The Historic District, excluding Taos Plaza, and Salazar District were second for the most reported crimes.

Officers filed 48 reports of crimes in those areas during the first two quarters of 2015.

The Historic District extends from Civic Plaza Drive south to McDonalds while Salazar is considered to be the area between Salazar Road and Paseo del Pueblo Sur south to Walmart.

The data is not perfect, Weaver cautioned. The numbers only include reports filed by officers, not calls for service.

