

My Turn

What about the padre, veterans, kiosk and the trees?

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When I moved to Taos in June 1967, I marveled at the wonderful sense of history in the community. Prior to my marriage and relocation to Taos, I was raised in Santa Fe, also a community that, for the most part, honored its history. My desire to learn about Taos history led to visits to local museums, the Kit Carson Cemetery, the Mabel Dodge Luhan House, and the place most prominent to history buffs, the Taos Plaza.

I attended a meeting, in which members of the public viewed some options for a remodel of the Taos Plaza.

One of the suggestions was to remove the statue of Padre Martinez. At the meeting, I wrote a statement about the acquisition of the bronze memorial of a local historical figure who contributed much to the area as a clergyman, activist, educator and legislator. The statement included the fact that the state of New Mexico funded the project and the fact that the statue was originally slated for placement in Santa Fe.

As a member of the Padre Martinez Statue Committee, I was granted permission to check into the feasibility of placement on Taos Plaza. My mission was "Taos Plaza or Santa Fe." Father Juan Romero, now retired, led the efforts for the statue and a delegation of citizens to speak to the Town Council. Eventually, we received approval for placement on Taos Plaza. If the powers that be wish to remove the statue of honor, I suggest that several entities that were involved be contacted to determine a new home for the "gift" that was given to our citizens. Those involved include the New Mexico State Legislature, Sen. Carlos Cisneros (who sponsored the bill to erect and fund the project), Rep.

Roberto "Bobby" Gonzales (who assisted in the House of Representatives), the Capital Arts Commission and members of the Padre Martinez family. Care should be taken to check the exact wording of the bill as well.

Another part of Taos history is the strong sense of military participation of all ethnic groups. If one doubts this, then note the participation at veterans' events, the large number of military headstones in local cemeteries, etc. I recall the sense of pride at the dedication of the bronze figures on the Veterans' Memorial on Taos Plaza.

Now, a group of hired consultants has recommended the removal of this monument to many of our Taosenos, some who gave their lives for our freedom. Where will the memorial be housed? Hopefully, in a place of honor for those who sacrificed for us.

I also wish to address the kiosk on the Plaza premises.

I mention this, not to weigh in on the historical side of the issue, but because the recommendations include the subject. At one time, volunteers manned the premises.

Most of the helpers, I noted at the time, were members of the Taos County Women's Chamber, a now-defunct organization. My dear friend, the late Fayne Lutz, shared some of her wonderful experiences with me, including where the visitors reside, how they learned about Taos, etc.

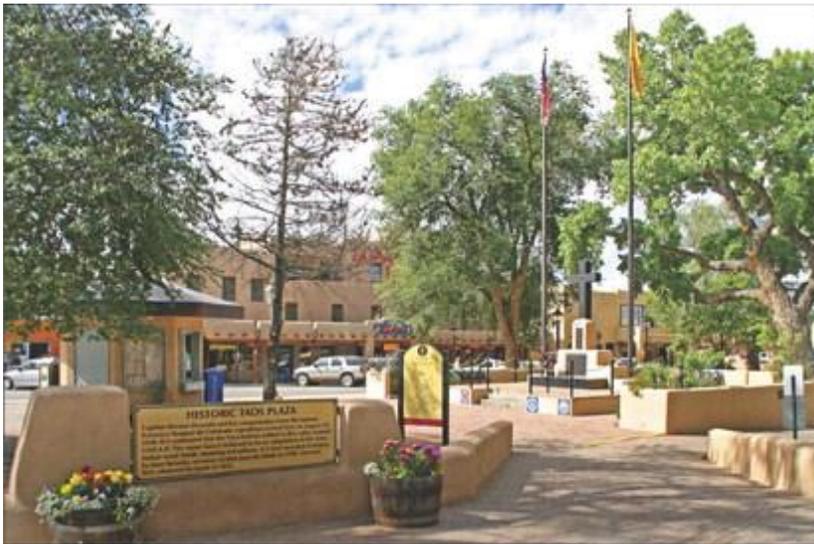
Most of the tourists currently visit the Taos Visitor Center and the kiosk houses informational posters about community events. While some tourists may not know about the Visitor Center, I think the kiosk's future depends on the availability of volunteers in a spot that's handy for everyone but is not utilized at this time.

What about the beautiful trees on the Plaza, some of them commemorating concepts such as veterans and the friendship between Taos Pueblo and the people of Taos? Where do we stop in the plan to remove the obstruction to the "open concept" space? Perhaps I'm too traditional, or I value a sense of history too much, but I am concerned that too much change may detract from the charm that Taos possesses.

I can't help but compare the proposal to make Taos Plaza "open," possibly for big-name-star venues, to the open areas of Boulder, Colorado. The space there is fun, especially if you like juggling acts and other activities that transpire there. I'd like to suggest that Taos adopts a "juggling act" of its own.

The town possesses a large piece of property at the Mary Medina Building. Unfortunately, the building has fallen into serious disrepair and renovation would be too expensive. Why not demolish the building and build a new "open space" Plaza, hence leaving the current one undisturbed? I can't think of a better solution to the battle between new versus traditional and improving local government-owned property. This is at the very least something to contemplate.

Còrdova is a local writer and retired educator.



File photo

