

## My Turn

### **Town seeks public comment, ideas, participation for Taos 'Strong at Heart' project**

**Mayor Dan Barrone. Town Councilors Nathaniel Evans, Judi Cantu, Darien Fernandez, Fritz Hahn.**

*The Taos News, 6/8/2017*

Our town is inevitably going to grow and change, and therefore it is critical that the decisions that the town government makes are guided by the people of Taos. The Town of Taos, along with dedicated volunteers, has begun a six-month project that will reach as many local residents as possible in order to gauge our community's priorities and values.

Developing a skilled workforce, encouraging sustainable economic growth and engaging our youth are essential to prosperity. Our future depends on cultivating local talent and giving native-born Taosenos a chance to make a living. Daunting challenges abound, for example the moly mine closure, a decrease in the construction industry, a depressed art market and changing demographics are but a few.

The Town of Taos and volunteers are sponsoring public meetings and numerous other activities and events that bring this dialogue into the community. You will begin seeing these opportunities around town guided by the people

who live and work here. Please visit [downtowntaos.com](http://downtowntaos.com) to learn more, see the schedule of events, or to sign up for notifications. Enhancing community communication and relationship building is critical to this project, Strong at Heart. This is a way Taosenos can be proactive when it comes to the heart of our community.

Now is the time to pursue this project because our downtown is vulnerable. With a community-driven vision for our downtown, we have greater control over changes that will affect the community for the next generation. The downtown represents our economic future; if we don't address the issues that surround the Historic District now, it will continue to deteriorate, and local businesses will continue to struggle.

The town is looking for grassroots engagement, and we will provide a number of avenues through which to get involved. As a first step, we invite everyone out for the launch event at the Sagebrush Inn on June 12 from 5:30-8 p.m. Join us for free food, drink and childcare. Recognizing the challenges working families face in attending meetings, volunteers will be going to churches, community events and other venues in the coming weeks and months to get input from the community. If you would like to host a presentation, let us know on the website.

The goal of this work is to keep the culture of Taos strong and to connect generations. We want to be able to learn from our elders and provide opportunities for young Taosenos to remain right at home. Please bring your parents, grandparents and great aunts and uncles to

these events. It's important to have intergenerational conversations about what Taos was, is and should be. We hope this process will be the beginning of a new way to have challenging, meaningful discussions about how we keep Taos traditions intact while we adapt to the inevitable change and growth in our future.

We come from different backgrounds and have different interests, but our concern about the wellbeing of Taos is common among us all. We will have to come together to make our community resilient. Our town government is committed to this outreach effort and is asking all citizens to participate.

This process has begun and will continue through the end of 2017. These are the questions we are asking you to think about: What do you love about Taos ?

What will make it better?

What will make our downtown a great place for all of us?

How do we work together to move from talk to action?

*Barrone is the mayor of Taos. Evans, Cantu, Fernandez and Hahn are town of Taos councilors.*