



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## Taosenos walk the walk

### Downtown sidewalks come up short

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While many Taosenos are adamant about “keeping Taos, Taos,” sidewalks and pedestrian paths in Taos may be heading into the 21st century.

Community members gathered Monday (May 14) for a walkability assessment of roads and sidewalks in the downtown area of Taos’ historic district to find out what condition the town’s walkways are in. A group of about 30 people gathered and split off into six groups to walk around the Plaza and south of town before reconvening at the Hub on Civic Plaza to discuss their findings. The general consensus of much of the group was that drastic improvements were needed.

“Each of the six sites had significant issues, barriers and lack of mobility-impaired access,” said Maya Anthony, Taos Land Trust programs and outreach coordinator. “A lot of places do not work for someone in a wheelchair or walker, and it often puts them in a dangerous situation.”

As part of the town’s efforts to build a better functioning downtown area, members of the Taos Land Trust teamed up with Strong at Heart facilitators to walk the small groups through the downtown areas as well as down Paseo del Pueblo to get input and feedback about the experience. Many areas were recently improved. However, most groups noticed several areas that were probably not in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. In some cases, people had to walk along streets on narrow-to-no sidewalks.

According to a Department of Transportation document, pedestrian travel paths should not be smaller than six feet wide to allow for two wheelchairs to pass by each other or should not be smaller than 5 feet to allow one to turn around. One group that walked through the intersection of Paseo and Quesnel measured sidewalks that were less than four feet wide in some areas. In addition, the intersection had no wheelchair access ramps, forcing someone in a wheelchair onto the street to cross at the intersection.

“This tour has hit some of the most problematic intersections,” said Taos resident Deborah Larson. “It’s very challenging for someone visiting to figure out what to do (when walking).”

After walking through and surveying their respective areas, groups reconvened and shared their findings with facilitators who recorded them and will begin analyzing the notes. Findings were similar across all groups, according to Anthony.

In some cases, Anthony said a wheelchair path led directly into a set of stairs, stairs led to a dirt floor, and some crosswalks had no paint on the streets to indicate they were intended for pedestrian use. While Taosenos may want to keep Taos as the town they grew up in and love, too narrow sidewalks and poorly designed walkways present obstacles for people who are visually or physically impaired.

Following the collection of data from the groups, three short-term goals were agreed upon to try make the streets safer.

First, the crosswalks at several intersections should be repainted to heighten their visibility. Many intersections and crosswalks have no paint or faded lines, which could present a potential danger to users and motorists.

Second, the shrubbery on some streets needed trimming, so drivers can see pedestrians and vice versa. The final goal of the walkability group was to look for funding to place flashing signals at crosswalks, especially in areas near schools where children walk.

“It was a great conversation with really passionate people,” Anthony said. “People were definitely excited and want to see a more walkable and bikeable town.”

The Taos Land Trust hopes to hold more meetings in collaboration with the town, which is working to improve its master plan. Comments and findings from this meeting will be added to an overall document to be presented in the future. The Taos Land Trust is still seeking input from community members on the walkability of the downtown. Email your suggestions and ideas to [info@taoslandtrust.org](mailto:info@taoslandtrust.org)



**Groups took to the streets Monday (May 14) for a walkability assessment of the downtown area. Streets and sidewalks were inspected by community members to assess their current condition as well as needed improvements for the downtown area.**  
**Jesse Moya**

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