

Taos starts MainStreet journey, volunteers needed

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With the Strong at Heart effort to collect community ideas for downtown coming to a close, the new MainStreet organization will look at getting some things done around Taos.

The Taos Accelerator Project held meetings last week for the public to get involved in the MainStreet process. MainStreet New Mexico will be helping Taos work on its own MainStreet community, which will mean some potential big changes in the future of the downtown district.

“As part of MainStreet and as part of the effort to generate design projects that represent and support the community, the design committee would need to be thinking about ways to really actively involve the diverse members of the community in the design process,” said MainStreet facilitator Amy Bell during the meeting. “What we’re really talking about is transformation.”

Bell’s presentation Thursday (July 19) focused on landscape architecture including trees, flowers and spaces between buildings. Examples were provided from other cities to see how Taos might go about changing small portions of the downtown.

Taos was chosen out of several New Mexico communities to begin the accelerator program, which will eventually launch Taos as a MainStreet town. MainStreet, a federal and state-supported organization, focuses on economic revitalization of downtown districts. The process is still in the education and information phase, which helps the community designate who will be responsible for doing what.

The recent community meetings have focused on the potentials of a MainStreet town as well as what other cities have done with their downtown areas and buildings. In Deming, for example, MainStreet volunteers helped paint the outside of a historic building. In Raton, funds received through the MainStreet designation helped volunteers plant trees and upgrade sidewalks to make downtown more pedestrian friendly.

New Mexico MainStreet currently serves 27 affiliated MainStreet districts, eight state-authorized arts and cultural districts, 14 frontier community projects and six historic theater initiatives.

The MainStreet board created out of community involvement will decide what areas of town to focus on. Meetings were well attended by over 30 people who asked questions of the MainStreet facilitators.

“We’ve been talking about a lot of things, but when we actually start to do something, people will get excited about this,” said Taos Marketing and Tourism Director Karina Armijo.

Rather than community planning meetings, MainStreet will focus on getting some physical projects completed and is looking for volunteers. The town of Taos has contributed \$15,000 to MainStreet, and more community involvement will be needed as the process moves along.

MainStreet will hold more meetings to allow plenty in the community to gain knowledge and information about the project before the board is formed. Overall, the accelerator process will run until January before a board is designated and a director is selected.



Camino de La Placita near the historic Taos Plaza is among the downtown areas that could be revitalized through a MainStreet program. Volunteers are being sought by the town of Taos to join the MainStreet group.

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