

My Turn

Less downtown Taos parking hurts businesses

By Ranee Malanga

The Taos News, 23 May 2019

A city or town's downtown area has an important and unique role in economic and social development. Downtowns create a critical mass of activities where commercial, cultural and civic activities are concentrated. What is of key importance to this area is that it have a vital parking resource – a well-laid-out amount of parking spaces which will allow the visiting public and community to have easy access to the retail spaces, the museums, the churches and the restaurants in the area. Without parking you have no economy. Without parking you have no core downtown. In the case of Taos, without any careful future parking plan to save what little parking we have, the downtown will not survive.

Bit by bit, the town of Taos has been redirecting parking spaces away from the heart of downtown.

Every Saturday, by taking the parking away with the Farmers Market, a huge amount of shopping customers are directed elsewhere. The market is not the problem. The poor layout of the event does not allow traffic to move through the area. At the full build-out of the market all the east, west and south-side spaces are lost. On regular days, if more spaces are taken away with the removal of parking spaces on the east and south side of the plaza for outdoor restaurants, another 20 spaces will be removed forever. Next there is some rumor that the Guadalupe Plaza parking lot is going to be removed for a pocket park. That must hold a least 50-plus spaces.

There is a strong commercial core between the plaza, John Dunn Shops, Guadalupe Plaza, McCarthy Plaza and the intersecting Kit Carson and Paseo del Pueblo Norte. This area must be nourished and revived with street cleaning and maintenance, street improvements, property improvements, sidewalk improvements, good lighting, good traffic flow and available parking. The town of Taos must look ahead to see what is going to help the local restaurants and merchants survive in such a currently difficult economy. It is not in their best interest to continue to try to harm the very businesses that pay gross receipt taxes and the salaries of all the town of Taos employees.

Ranee Malanga owns Artwares Contemporary Jewelry and has been a Taos Plaza merchant for 40-plus years.