

Town mulls several changes to Taos Plaza

By Matthew van Buren

The Taos News, 12/22/11

The town of Taos is looking at taking steps to make the Plaza more aesthetically pleasing and pedestrian friendly.

Planning Director William Morris presented suggested changes to the Town Council at a Dec. 12 meeting, saying proposed improvements had been developed by town staff, as well as those involved with the Arts and Cultural District and the Taos Project. Morris said he was seeking the Town Council's blessing to continue with Phase 2, with some work having been completed earlier this year.

"Over the last year, town staff and the (Arts and Cultural District) have completed a series of upgrades to the Plaza, including cleaning, painting, planting and staining parts of the area, as well as insulating and repainting the kiosk," a report Morris prepared for the council states. "In addition, a horseshoe pit and tuercas (tejas) area have also been completed."

Morris said future work will include removing some of the "hardscape" on the Plaza, referring to certain hard surfaces such as the wing wall below the "Bienvenido" sign at the northeast corner. He suggested replacing circular bricks around storm drainage inlets with porous concrete blocks and planting the area with grass, creating more "greenspace," and removing the northwest and southwest corners around the Veteran's Monument.

"The idea is to open up those two corners so you have flow in and out," he said.

Morris said the large chain around the Veteran's Monument also makes it difficult to read the plaque and suggested removing or altering the "anchor-like" chain. "Our feeling is that it's not very friendly," he said.

Suggestions also include converting the bathrooms beneath the gazebo into storage space, adding an information board to the kiosk, planting trees and adding more bicycle racks and another light pole. Morris also told the council that town staff has also been looking at adding removable tables where visitors to the Plaza could play chess.

All the modifications suggested so far are for the Plaza itself and do not include changes to the surrounding roadway or sidewalk, though Morris said the addition of a walkway around the perimeter of the Plaza could be a "big-ticket item" worth considering for the future.

The council unanimously approved moving ahead with the staff recommendations.

