



N E W M E X I C O

*arts & cultural*

D I S T R I C T

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**Taos Arts  
and Cultural District**

# NM Arts and Cultural Districts



- Legislation adopted in 2007
- Six communities accepted as State-authorized A&CDs
- 2 yr Start-Up
- Benefits
  - Enhanced State Historic Tax Credits
  - State Branding
  - Technical assistance and resources

# New Mexico Arts and Cultural District Start-Up Development Flow Chart



# Taos Kudos and Character

- Deep rich history and tradition with contemporary arts throughout the region.
- Core historic downtown linked to generations of acequias and agrarian culture.
- Legacy of historic architecture that must be maintained for future generations linking them to land and community
- The valley has a dynamic creative economy (artists, craftspeople, cultural entrepreneurs, institutions) spanning all media and expression.

# What the Taos A&C District Could Be

- A centralized place to ensure expression of the cultural heritage.
- A reconnection of the community to the hub of life.
- Re-bridging commercial activity with the cultural economy and a reinvestment within the district in the creative economy.



## **Cultural Planning**

Anne Weisman, NM Arts

John Villani, Cultural Planner

Chuck Zimmer, NM Arts

# **Taos Arts and Cultural District**

# Assets/Kudos

- The local arts community is large, vibrant and respected. It develops creative statements at a level of quality far exceeding the norm in cities of any size. This makes Taos a must-see arts and creativity center.



# Assets/Kudos

- Today's arts community meets a high standard of quality representative of the Taos' rich art history. The multi-faceted artistic and cultural history of Taos remains the standard against which the creative artistic spirit of today's arts sector is measured. This high standard continues to attract quality artists to Taos... living here in pursuit of excellence.

# Assets/Kudos

- This community retains an above average level of national and international respect in its image as a place of beauty and importance in the art world.

# What we heard...

- The absence of a coordinating entity capable of advancing information across the regional arts sector has resulted in hampered communication between organizations, ineffective communication with visitors, and duplication of organizational efforts, and scheduling conflicts..

# What we heard...

- There exists a serious deficiency of art education programs in public schools. This is an alarming situation in a community populated by so many successful artist families.

# What we heard...

- One of Taos' most powerful assets is its diversity of cultures, creative expressions and expertise. But without a centralized facility for creative expression the community is blocked from accessing its strengths.
- Artists cannot afford to live or work here.

# Recommended Actions

- The ACD Steering Committee should assemble a cultural planning committee.
- \*Community representation on this committee needs to be:
  - Representative of all artistic disciplines.
  - Inclusive of all Taos ethnic communities.
  - Inclusive of Taos' talented youth.
  - Representative of community retail, hospitality and art businesses.

# Recommended Actions

- From its start the cultural planning committee needs to:
  - a. Address the absence of an accessible and readily visible arts and cultural information kiosk or information center on the plaza.
  - b. Convene regular meetings of arts and cultural organizations for the purpose of discussing schedules and facilitating collaborative projects.

# Recommended Actions

- Arts Education
  - Work with UNM-Taos to reinstate the dual credit art classes with the high school.(Visual arts, media arts, and performing arts)
  - Work with parents and students to advocate for a well rounded arts education curriculum in the public schools. This should include addressing the current deficiencies.

# Recommended Actions

- Establish an arts center facility within the district.
  - Community-centric facility which includes workshop spaces, meeting rooms, exhibition walls, and a fewer than 199 seat performance area.
  - One key use of this facility is as a youth arts activity center.



## **Marketing and Promotions**

Laurie Frantz, NM Tourism

John Stafford, Museum of NM Fdn

Robyne Beaubien, NM MainsStreet

# **Taos Arts and Cultural District**

# Assets/Kudos

- Existing cultural, historical and artistic assets: great lodging, food, shopping, natural beauty and scenery of the area. Creative people are doing exciting things in the creative areas: fine arts, craft, music, writing, performance, education, culinary, and healing arts.



# Assets/Kudos

- Town marketing has high points, especially public relations, and is technologically savvy
- Town is providing yearly marketing themes that businesses and organizations can build events around (Summer of Love and Return to Sacred Places)

# What we heard...

- Lots of independent-minded people who are not cooperating on ventures
- No apparent specific, detailed or guest-friendly follow up on requests for visitor information. Everyone receives the same packet regardless of their specific interest. No personal attention to recruit the visitor to particular events or venues of interest.

# What we heard...

- Plaza is not engaging - little bit of a dead zone –with no directional/informational signage to move visitors out of the plaza. Sidewalks are in need of repair, beautification efforts need to be enhanced. Traffic is disruptive around the plaza, difficult paid parking in the center core. Town and downtown merchants at odds on public parking and both sides need to develop a coordinated plan that works for visitors, merchants and the town.

# Recommended Actions

- Establish a certification system for tourism workers before they securing employment in tourism based businesses (hospitality training).
- Build on the Taos Express, which ties to the Rail Runner, to increase visitation from Santa Fe, Albuquerque and south of Albuquerque. Raise awareness with hotel concierges in Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

# Recommended Actions

- Explore more social networking/marketing as part of the overall marketing strategy, shifting funding out of traditional marketing media into social networking. ACD could provide help to non-profits in developing their social networking efforts to reach specific markets.
- ACD needs to coordinate a major annual event as part of their mission. ACD needs to hire a grant writer and event planner to help assist in the planning and execution.

# Recommended Actions

- ACD needs to build on the efforts of Historic Taos in developing art and cultural walking tours. These walking tours need ease of access with good, clear signing and directions.

# Recommended Actions

- Recognize that experiential events can build tourism; build within the marketing of the ACD a strong workshop, training, and educational story. Work with UNM-Taos, SMU, Taos Art School, culinary artists and the local art groups to develop a schedule of educational opportunities for the visitor to Taos that complements recreational, historic, healing, spiritual and other cultural experiences. Sell the idea of “a week of experiences, a lifetime of memories” as a powerful story to build this idea.



# **Planning and Design**

Charlie Deans, NM MainStreet

Sarah Ijadhi, Ijadhi Design

Heather Barrett, Historic Preservation

# **Taos Arts and Cultural District**

# Assets/Kudos



- Appropriate and well-designed directional signage and wayfinding.
- Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, Certified Local Government (CLG) status, and the initiation of three Rural Historic Landscape Districts.

# Assets/Kudos



- Property and business owners who take pride in creating welcoming storefronts, adding benches and landscaping.
- Maintaining civic functions and buildings in the plaza area.

# What we heard...



- The lack of a comprehensive approach to parking
- A lack of vibrancy on the plaza (The plaza no longer functions as a lively public space.)

# What we heard...



- Neglect of the acequias and landscaping elements.
- Implementation of *some* planning efforts.

# Recommended Actions

- Proposed Arts and Cultural District boundary
- Create a Phase 1 Area that is walkable and focuses resources in a Core area.

# Recommended Actions

- Prepare the *Taos Cultural Revitalization Plan*:
  - Restore and re-green the plaza to function as a major public gathering space and a place for increased daily interaction.
  - Enhance the pedestrian environment to connect the plaza to other community assets.
  - Initiate a comprehensive parking study.
  - Restore the acequias and heritage landscape elements.
  - Enable the establishment of a Tax Increment Financing District as a funding source.

# Recommended Actions

- Catalytic projects to expand uses and position the area for the creative economy:
  - Rehabilitate the Taos County Courthouse
  - Develop the opportunity site at the Taos Elementary School
  - Develop the existing Police Station as a Technology and Innovation Center that utilizes the technology offered by the Qwest Switch Station.

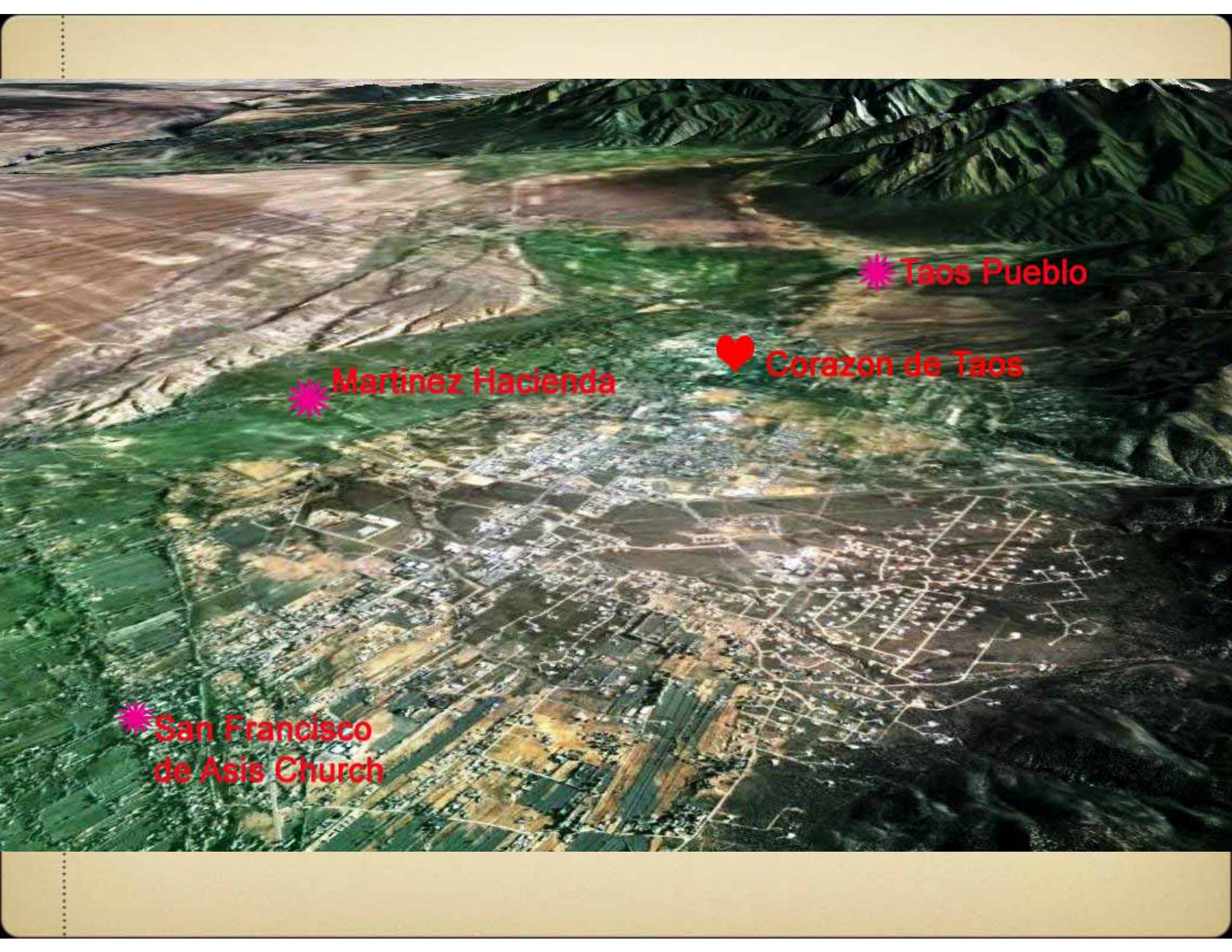
# Recommended Actions

- Host an educational workshop on historic tax credits, low-interest preservation loans, and the New Market Tax Credits.
- Streamline the design review process for the Historic District Overlay Zone.

# Recommended ACD Boundary







Taos Pueblo

Corazon de Taos

Martinez Hacienda

San Francisco de Asis Church



## **Capacity Building and Financial**

Elmo Baca, NM MainStreet  
James Stevens, ConsultEcon  
Molly Bleecker, UNM BBER

# **Taos Arts and Cultural District**

# Assets/Kudos

- Abundance of highly motivated Arts and Cultural organizations and entrepreneurs
- Generous private sector has supported many community organizations including health, social services, arts and cultural groups

# Assets/Kudos

- Rich matrix of institutional partners including foundations, UNM, and museums
- Community leaders recognize importance of creative economic development

# What we heard...

- Dense network of non-profit organizations is difficult to manage, organize and sustain
- Town and County governments not collaborating effectively

# What we heard...

- Downtown merchants and Town government at odds
- Recession economy constrains governmental and philanthropic funding capability.

# Recommended Actions

- An inclusive and supercharged ACD Steering Committee
- A non-profit organizational “Summit”
- Consider a Business Improvement District (BID)
- Research creative operational funding sources such as USDA Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG), and traditional Main Street strategies

# Recommended Actions

- Review and refine Local Economic Development Act policies and enhance access for local developers
- Work collaboratively with other A&C communities and State Legislature to adopt creative municipal finance strategies such as Quality of Life Tax and Lodgers Tax increments

# Taos and Creative Economic Development

- Long time success as an arts colony and tourist destination now at a crossroads
- Evolving artists and consumer needs require innovative community responses such as
- Experiential Tourism, Artspace developments, and Creative Economy business incubators
- Taos' unique creative resources can provide leadership for the state and Southwest



**What's Next:**

**THE TAOS CULTURAL REVITALIZATION PLAN**

**This is an exciting time for Downtown Taos!**

**Thank You!**