

Draft recommendations for Gallup Arts & Cultural District

Written by By Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
Friday, 20 November 2015 07:58



Bringing Gallup into the 21st Century is a little like beating a dead horse; all the exertion may release tensions but the horse still can't haul the load. The difference is that if the community works together, the dead horse and the load can both be moved.

The Draft Recommendations for the Gallup Arts & Cultural District and Downtown were presented to the public for viewing on Nov. 12 in the Second Street Event Center. Interested participants were each given five adhesive stickers to place on the projects of their choice that they wanted to see implemented. There was a mixture of ideas: short, medium, and long-range plans that could and would change the landscape and use of this area which stretches from 7th Street to Strong on Historic Route 66, widens at both 5th

Street and Puerco to Hill St., and finishes on Mesa Ave. to the south. The north edge of this district jumps the tracks and includes the land between the now defunct Alpine Lumber and stops on the west at approximately 4th

St. This area would extend further north almost to the banks of the Rio Puerco.

The changes proposed include: more public art – murals and sculpture; alley cleanup and re-design; Interstate embankment Murals; a Multi-Cultural Event Center; a Makerspace/fabrication shop; a raised Rotosphere for Interstate Display; mixed-use areas of development; gateway features for the Arts & Cultural District; and creative incubator spaces.

In addition to all that, there are Adaptive Re-Use plans for the future of the ComCast and Octavia Fellin buildings, a facade improvement program, bike routes, a railroad-themed parking lot with observation deck, and a potential walkway between Coal Ave. and NM 118 between Second and Third Streets.

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Also in the planning stage are a bike and pedestrian railway underpass, and a two-way path along the west side of Second St., which will remain one way northbound. Artist conceptions for a Purky Interpretive Viewing Deck which will front Aztec Dr. just east of Third St., an oasis park in the current midblock walkway that opens onto Coal Ave., an alleyway improvement project for pedestrians behind City Hall, shading for the Courthouse Square, a southern gateway on Second St. that could include open courts and a community gardens and a Food Cart Park, a mural on the old Post Office facade, turning Coal Ave. into an 'Event Street,' a midblock crossing on Coal Ave., and the use of vacant storefronts for a 'Phantom Gallery' temporary and transient art program.

All of that barely touches improvements being planned for the area north of the tracks and makes no mention of the 'jewel' being planned for downtown Gallup over the next several years, a new library.

Focus groups of Gallup citizens, especially the younger generation, revealed that the words 'library' or 'museum' have a negative connotation. To many they implied static repositories, but contemporary curators recognize that these institutions need to be living centers of active learning and community gathering places to make learning and knowledge more alive.

More on this subject in the next issue, and the dreams and reality of what the new structure could mean to the downtown area.