

AnJanette Brush

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My background

I was born and mostly grew up in the Midwest and have a BA from the University of Iowa and my MA in Comparative Literature from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Professionally, I'm a communications consultant handling messaging for organizations large and small around the world, from the Federal Reserve to the National Immigration Forum. My job is to quickly understand my client's business and goals, and then make their information clear and accessible so that it has impact. I'm proud to serve as the board chair of the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and as a co-founder of my community Firewise organization. I also volunteer with the Taos County Democratic Party, especially for voter registration efforts, and in 2019 was elected Vice Chair of the party. Currently I'm also serving my second term on the State Central Committee of the Democratic Party of New Mexico.

My husband and I moved to Arroyo Seco over 9 years ago, so I'm new here. But it took me 20 years to get to New Mexico: I fell in love with it as a student on a cross-country road trip, and tried to change my life to be here. Not that I finally am, I'm grateful to live someplace I love with neighbors I treasure and respect.

My agenda and views

I'm passionate about affordable housing and smart economic development—development that sustains and respects our land, water, traditions, and working families.

To me, it's important to listen to what neighborhoods want, and then act in the interest of the common good. Key to that is having county departments sufficiently staffed, so that employees are well taken care of and community needs can be addressed in a timely and effectively way.

I believe that Taos County needs leaders with fresh thinking, creativity, and compassion – especially now, as we will be recovering from a health and economic crisis. I also believe that to achieve meaningful change, the Taos County Commission needs to closely collaborate with the Town of Taos as well as state government on issues from recycling to taxation to short-term rental regulation.

I'm not an expert in everything. But I believe that the fact I recognize this is an asset. It drives me to listen, ask questions, and always be learning.

My understanding of the issues facing Upper Las Colonias

A. Zoning update

A neighborhood association's role in zoning matters is to work with the county to provide guidance, perspective, and advice. That should fuel helpful decisions on the county's part – decisions that respect the character of a neighborhood and the vision of those who live there.

As I see it, the ULC zoning update represents thoughtful work designed to preserve the neighborhood yet provide for reasonable future development – “an opportunity to designate preferred commercial uses in certain zones.” I also support single family residences with two units (including house and guest house with kitchen), in the hopes it can help add to our long-term rental stock.

Given the number of years of work that went into this, I am certainly open to in-depth discussions and further communication with those who have been closest to the work.

B. Tarleton Eco Ranch PUD

I believe in the right of a property owner to realize value from their land, typically their most significant asset. That includes the right of the Tarletons to develop their land. I also believe in smart economic development, and that having a plan for development is preferable than ad-hoc development – especially in a state that faces serious drought yet does not regulate the drilling of private wells for home use.

In principle, I support the ideas and approach – the inclusion of agriculture, open space, parks, walking trails, and a reasonably diverse supply of housing. These are all really good things. However, I have to question the size and scale of this project. By my understanding of the neighborhood and the proposed development, the plan represents around a 70% increase in housing units for Upper Las Colonias. Population growth in Taos County hasn't supported that kind of development for at least the last decade. And the type of housing we're most in need of is the affordable kind, not second homes.

I would want to know if the development will bring in any jobs that address the consistent drop in income (adjusted for inflation) that afflicts Taos County. Also, I haven't come across specific details about who would run the farming / growing. Who participates in and benefits from the food production? In our community we have a burgeoning effort to connect growers with schools, and growers with markets for their products. This is resulting in healthier school meals, and in students and families learning about and carrying on our area's agricultural traditions. Will this project support and work with that type of effort to strengthen local food production, education, and opportunities? It's one way we can be better prepared for the next crisis.

Finally, in light of the current economic crisis, I would want to know more about the funding of the project, and what the neighborhood might look like if it were started but not finished.

C. Ace Hardware Project

I have no objection to the Ace Hardware Project, and would especially like to see it include a café and small grocery, things I had heard were included in early plans. These options would be a good addition to this particular location in Taos County. However, a couple of questions come to mind: First, why was bank financing not secured? And second: given the current economic situation – a crisis, possibly a recession – what is the viability of the store, and of self-financing?

D. Quail Ridge Major Renovation

As an enhancement to an existing facility, I support the renovation of Quail Ridge. As I understand it, the project would bring updates and improvements to the property. However, to better understand capacity, traffic, and water usage, I would want to know the size of the proposed hotel and if the restaurant would replace or be in addition to the current one (Common Fire).

I'm also curious to know 1) if the planned close on the purchase happened this April as expected, and 2) if there have been or will be any proposed adjustments to the plans given our current economic and financial environment. As a candidate and commissioner, I will follow the project's development closely and support it.