

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: SHOULD PLAZAS BE PRESERVED?
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Plazas have played a central role in the daily lives of the Puebloan, Hispano, and the Anglo cultures. This thesis chronicles the changes in use of the plazas from precontact to present day in New Mexico. The challenging and debatable issues associated with preserving these plazas are addressed.

Plaza is the Spanish word for an open gathering space surrounded by structures. The multi-functional plaza has served, over the centuries, as a place for cooking, eating, manufacturing, trade, festivals or ceremony. In the American Southwest plaza patterns have been evident prior to Spanish contact, and are still found in the pueblos, Hispano villages, and modern American cities. Their patterns and uses have changed over time, with some plazas fading into obscurity, or returning to the earth.

The centuries of change beg the question: should plazas be preserved? What lessons can be learned from the past? Does the preservation of the plaza limit modern uses? Does it disrupt the evolution of contemporary plazas?

"Should" and "preserve" are viewed differently by the three cultures. By examining the changes to plaza patterns the development or demise of the plaza is

chronicled and the findings placed within the context of the present day. By means of photographs, documentation, site visits and interviews abandoned and present day pueblos, Spanish colonial villages, and American squares in New Mexico are examined. The answer is not the same for all three; indeed, within each there are differing values to be considered.