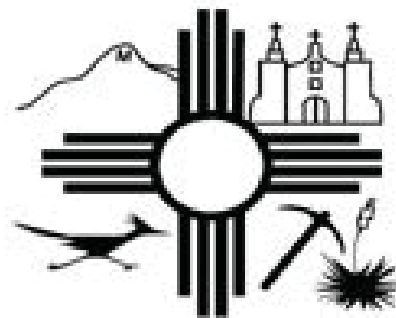


City of Socorro

111 School of Mines Road
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

Phone (575) 835-0240 www.socorronm.gov



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A Thing of Beauty...

In the heat of the summer it's nice to see Socorro blossom. The Plaza, the medians, the pots outside of businesses are full of flowers this time of year, but it hasn't always been so. Twenty-five years ago, along California Street, you would have seen only asphalt and concrete.

A small group of Socorroans noticed, and decided to do something about it. Hannah Lattman, Jim Shaffner and Bob Tacker formed the Socorro Beautification Committee. They started with one median: the one in front of Smith's (Safe-way at that time). The median was much larger then, and oval shaped. The Committee asked Karyn DeBont to share her landscaping and horticulture expertise.

Since California Street is a State Highway, the Committee worked closely with the State Highway Department. It was supportive, but it had rules: no shrubs over 3 feet high and no trees that couldn't be pruned to just a trunk below 6 feet for visibility.

Water also was a problem. "If it didn't have an irrigation system, it wasn't going to survive," DeBont remembers.



City Council

Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez

Gordy Hicks

Donald Monette

Ernest Pargas, Jr.

Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

Nick Fleming

Toby Jaramillo

Michael Olguin, Jr.

Peter D. Romero

Pat Salome, Clerk

Sponsors' names, including punctuation, from the original plaque, found at the Chamber of Commerce:

Mountain Bell, Tripp's, The Houston's, SCTA, KSRC, First State Bank, NRAO, Beta Sigma Phi, NMIMT, Garden Club, Gordy Hicks, S.C.B. of Realtors, Aerojet, Gladys Bacon, Andy's Chevron, Extension Service, Rotary, Lion's, Chamber of Commerce, Dorothy Holmes, Hinkeldey, Old Car Club, Krach Fisher, Robert & Leona Klipsch, Civitan, SWGA, Honeywell, Mr. and Mrs. Petschek, Radio Shack, McDonald's, Hewlett Packard, Les Smith, United New Mexico, Keep NM Beautiful Inc., Ake's, Thunderbird Travel

Earlier attempts at beautification required hand-watering or watering from a fire truck, making it difficult at best. So the City stepped in: anywhere a water pipe ran under a median, they tapped into it.

Landscaping is expensive. That first median cost close to \$2000 for materials, even with donated services and expertise. So local businesses and service organizations bought sponsorships. Other citizens lent a hand, including Danny Trujillo, Mary Gillard, Anita Budding, Barbara Popp, Barbara MacLeod, Lucia Hartwell, George MacLeod and others.

And there was Art. Holly Hughes created sculptures from found materials advertising Socorro events like a bike for Fat Tire Fiesta, a crane for the Festival of the Cranes. The crane even stuck around for Christmas, adorned with a Santa Claus hat and a bag for goodies.

As traffic on California increased, the size of the medians decreased to allow longer turn lanes. The older trees were spared whenever possible and eventually the art work went away and the Committee began to fade. These days you're likely to see City employee Matilde Acosta tending the plants as the Committee hands the reins to the City.

"Matilde's made a major difference around the Plaza," says DeBont, but she gives the Mayor credit, too. "Ravi has always had beautification as a priority," she says.