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CHAPTER 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As one of the Southwest's oldest cities, Albuquerque shares cultural and urban themes with Las Vegas, New Mexico, San Diego and Los Angeles, California. All cities share the complexities and challenges of a Hispanic majority population subsumed and marginalized by Anglo-American culture after the Mexican War of 1846–48. Albuquerque's development pattern of the past fifty years has encouraged sprawling suburban growth and shopping center developments that have overshadowed downtown development and a nurturing of "creative economic development."

Albuquerque benefits from world-class assets and amenities that can foster the creative economy, including institutions such as the University of New Mexico, Sandia National Laboratory, along with new studios, workforce and infrastructure to support an emerging film industry. The city's excellent climate and superb recreational opportunities provide a competitive environment to attract the "creative class" of talented and mobile professionals essential to an advanced creative economy.

However, Albuquerque's cultural assets are not well sited and connected in a dense urban matrix to create a catalytic synergy to attract new residents and investments to the newly designated downtown Arts and Cultural District. Downtown Albuquerque could benefit from the creation of new and enhanced cultural and economic anchors within a "focus" area of twenty or more blocks defined by Central and Gold Avenues, from First Street to Eighth Street, a "walkable" and pedestrian friendly Arts and Cultural District.

Nurturing a "cultural ecology" that can support such a development will require enlightened civic leadership that understands and appreciates the complex nature of cultural economic development; specifically that intangible benefits and return on investment are inherent. Also essential will be the critical role of city government to provide a supportive organizational structure and enhanced funding for the new Arts and Cultural District. A city arts commission and a quality of life revenue stream are important to consider if Albuquerque will remain competitive with major cities in the West and globally.

An effective cultural ecology in downtown Albuquerque also suggests a broad-based and intertwined network of assets, talent and cultural consumers that capitalizes on and leverages the cultural resources of the city's historic neighborhoods as well as its growing and highly diverse demographic profile.
CHAPTER 2

NEW MEXICO COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIES OF CREATIVITY

Within the past two decades a rapid acceleration of multimedia technology facilitated by the global deployment of the Internet has enabled the revitalization and transformation of many downtown business districts and inner-city neighborhoods as culture and arts magnets. While the phenomenon of artists’ enclaves is longstanding, only recently have public policies and development incentives been crafted to specifically encourage the growth of cultural economic development in targeted places ranging from rural communities to distressed urban and industrial zones.

New Mexico residents enjoy one of the longest and most influential culture-based economies in North America. While many visitors to the state are familiar with the arts, performance, music and crafts traditions of our Pueblo Tribes, Navajo Nation and Apache Tribes, far fewer are aware of the rich creative legacies established by New Mexico’s non-indigenous cultures. Regardless, New Mexico’s geographic isolation helped preserve and strengthen its residents’ artistic integrity and traditions of fine craftsmanship...a legacy that endures in its influence on today’s generation of artists.

New Mexico began to attract the interest of modern artists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the development of the Taos and Santa Fe artists’ colonies. The influence of these artists yielded significant innovations in architecture and urban design such as the re-interpretation of the state’s architecture as the Pueblo Revival style. It also resulted in the creation by Santa Fe city ordinance of the Canyon Road arts district, still one of the most successful efforts of its kind in the annals of American arts and cultural development history. Albuquerque, Taos and Santa Fe also attracted generations of cultural entrepreneurs who founded groundbreaking institutions such as the School of American Research, KiMo Theatre, Stables Art Center, New Mexico Symphony, Santa Fe Indian Market and the Harwood Museum, to name just a few of the many dozens of cultural and economic anchors important to the state.

Other factors contributing to the development of New Mexico’s cultural economy include the far-reaching impacts emanating from the National Scientific Laboratories in Los Alamos and Albuquerque; the growth of the state’s outdoors recreation industry; the international prominence of organizations such as Santa Fe Opera and Music at Angel Fire, and the emergence of a thriving film production industry. New Mexico is well positioned to expand the positive impacts of its successful cultural economic development to many of its rural communities.
CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIES OF CREATIVITY EXPLAINED

Pundits and economic forecasters anticipated and analyzed the rise of the creative economy as a direct result of trends converging to form an interconnected global marketplace. Among the first to describe the needs and attributes of a new generation of knowledge workers trained to operate within this emerging marketplace was management guru Peter Drucker, who in his 1993 book “Post-Capitalist Society” predicted the fundamental importance of knowledge and information rather than labor, capital or resources, to the creation of wealth and prosperity in a digital age.

Subsequent studies, including Richard Florida’s “The Rise of the Creative Class”, have confirmed the critical importance of knowledge workers in cultural economies while also detailing their particular social, technological and infrastructure needs.

Rather than narrowly define the roles played by artists in this creative class, Richard Florida instead applies broad strokes when describing a cultural economy’s super-creative core as well as its creative professionals drawn from fields as diverse as education, sciences, public policy and health care. In filling out the types of individuals and expertise consistent with the ranks of what comprised the creative class, Florida pointed to the following occupational categories:

Super-Creative Core Occupations:
- Computer and math
- Architecture and engineering
- Life, physical, and social science
- Education, training, and library
- Arts, design, entertainment, sports and media

Creative Professionals’ Occupations
- Management
- Business and financial operations
- Legal
- Health care practitioners and technical
- High-end sales and sales management

Building a Creative Economy and Creative Ecology in Downtown Albuquerque

While Peter Drucker and Richard Florida provided uniquely American insights and analyses of the emerging creative global economy, other scholars and economists have added valuable perspectives as the industry matures. Among these, London based consultant John Howkins, in his new book “Creative
Ecologies: Where Thinking is a Proper Job (2009)," contributed perspectives on the development of a "cultural ecology" in a city, state or region as the newest way to describe the dynamic creative and innovative economic activity that is changing the manner, means and methods of cultural production and consumption.

In Howkins' estimation, a major challenge confronting the development of a creative economy for any location and government is the transition from traditional hierarchical and formal policy and project implementation structures that support traditional economic development to a new model that is more flexible. A particular concern is the lack of quantifiable data measuring creative economy industries, potential economic impacts, production values and net revenues. This lack of hard data has led to the marginalization of creative economic development as a priority policy initiative.

The dynamics of creative economic production and consumption are often intangible and hard for city leaders to identify and therefore justify in funding support programs. Yet the beneficial effects of a dynamic creative economy are tangible, enjoyed and emulated in creative capitals such as San Francisco, Austin and Denver. Of critical importance to success in creative economic development is an understanding by community leaders and creative workers alike of the fluid, interconnected nature of creative populations and assets (and their nurturing) in contrast to more familiar modes of development.

For Albuquerque, the transition from economic development to creative economic development to nourishing a true and vibrant cultural ecology will require new skills, flexibility and patience for the system to take root and grow. City leaders must look beyond traditional "cultural gatekeepers" such as the symphonies, museums, galleries, theaters (although they must be included at the policy table) and attract diverse constituencies. A new city administration, new organization in Creative Albuquerque and a new downtown Arts and Cultural District create an exceptionally fertile environment for a creative ecology to grow.
CHAPTER 4

NEW MEXICO’S INTERAGENCY ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICTS INITIATIVE

In response to the economic uncertainties impacting numerous communities across the state the New Mexico Legislature in 1985 adopted the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s MainStreet program as a strategy to address these economic declines. Las Vegas, Silver City, Socorro, Raton, and Gallup were selected as the state’s five original MainStreet communities.

Albuquerque attracted one of the nation’s first “urban” Main Street programs to the Nob Hill District in 1988-90, and the New Mexico Main Street program has also provided technical support to the Barelas/Fourth Street District, South Broadway District, and the Downtown Action Team since 1990.

New Mexico MainStreet began developing an Arts and Cultural District initiative in 2005. Presentations outlining the initiative were made to MainStreet communities and officials of the Economic Development Department. During the decade’s middle years several nationally recognized authors released books, wrote articles and published reports analyzing the far reaching social and economic impacts being experienced by communities positioned to take advantage of rapidly expanding economies driven by creative sector entrepreneurs, artists and cultural organizations. Communities across the nation took a keen interest in their local opportunities to participate in this shifting development paradigm. In addition, Santa Fe and Albuquerque commissioned economic analyses of their arts and cultural economies from the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) while the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs assessed the impact of the state’s creative economy.

In the 2007 Legislative session the New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Act was passed and signed into law by Governor Bill Richardson. The enabling legislation outlined a process by which communities could
apply for an authorized arts and cultural district designation after receiving approval from the New Mexico Arts Commission. Incentives to be applied within these districts were offered to municipalities and private property owners. The director of New Mexico MainStreet was designated as the Arts and Cultural Districts Coordinator. State agencies including New Mexico Arts, the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Tourism and the New Mexico Scenic Byways program have joined New Mexico MainStreet in its efforts to present the Arts and Cultural Districts program to communities statewide. Other founding partners in the Arts and Cultural Districts program included the Museum of New Mexico Foundation, and the McCune Charitable Foundation.

New Mexico MainStreet's regularly scheduled meeting of MainStreet communities in late 2007 introduced the Arts and Cultural District authorization process to prospective candidate communities. In January 2008 Silver City and Las Vegas, the two communities with the highest rated Arts and Cultural District applications were authorized as New Mexico's pilot communities for the program's implementation.

Silver City's influential group of visual artists, musicians, performing artists and creative economy entrepreneurs provide the core nucleus for expanding the community's wide range of creative enterprises. Las Vegas' emphasis on historic and cultural preservation as well as its proximity to Santa Fe and Taos were factors viewed as offering substantial heritage tourism marketing opportunities.

The Arts and Cultural Districts program unfortunately was unveiled by a coalition of state agencies as a dramatic and severe economic recession dampened community and economic development optimism globally. Nevertheless, New Mexico communities and civic leaders are utilizing this hiatus to reassess economic priorities, and creative economic development remains a viable development strategy. A second round of Arts and Cultural Districts applications was announced in 2009, and four communities including Taos, Los Alamos, Raton and downtown Albuquerque successfully applied for state designation.
CHAPTER 5

RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT
PURPOSE & PROCESS

Informing community residents, organizations, businesses and public officials about local impacts and expectations pursuant to being designated by New Mexico MainStreet for an Arts and Cultural District is one of the primary purposes of the Resource Team Assessment process. As a new program it’s understandable that individuals and businesses, especially those whose residences, studios, performance venues and retail establishments happen to be located within the proposed boundaries of the Arts and Cultural District are anxious to find out whether the program will have a noticeable change on their lives and businesses.

The Resource Team agendas developed in collaboration with the Albuquerque Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee and the Downtown Action Team presented numerous opportunities for local residents to directly voice their questions and concerns to Resource Team members. Members of the Downtown Action Team and the steering committee were on hand throughout most Resource Team forums and forays, providing valuable local perspectives in response to questions from community members and businesses.

As things turned out the authorization of downtown Albuquerque as one of the second round communities approved for the Arts and Cultural District Program opened a vibrant community conversation whose parameters embraced widely ranging issues relating to topics such as local government policies, state tourism development strategies, educational opportunities and the proliferation of downtown nightclubs.

During its hour-long multimedia report to the public on the final day of the Resource Team Assessment the more impassioned discussions concerned issues such as determining the Arts and Cultural District’s boundaries, determining a centralized location for a pedestrian-oriented arts information kiosk or storefront, and the need to more progressively promote the downtown’s contemporary arts sector.

This report suggests a course of actions for the development of downtown Albuquerque’s Arts and Cultural District. It is submitted as an introductory planning document for other more substantial projects such as a Cultural Plan for the Downtown District and other complementary analyses.

RESOURCE TEAM PROCESS

During the third week of October, 2009 a Resource Team of twelve subject matter experts under the direction of New Mexico MainStreet was assembled in Albuquerque for the purpose of conducting a Resource Team Assessment of the downtown’s strongest arts and cultural assets, its most promising potentials, most immediate weaknesses and leading issues requiring long term solutions. The background expertise of the Resource Team members reflected the inter-departmental structure of the Arts and Cultural District Program’s authorizing legislation as signed into law by Governor Bill Richardson. Additional expertise was brought into the Resource Team through local and national consulting authorities.
in fields such as cultural planning, urban planning and economic development.

Throughout its four days of on-site research, community interviews and analysis the Resource Team gathered in a conference room of Hotel Blue for early morning and late evening strategy sessions in which each of the Resource Team’s four focal groups discussed their findings and objectives. The focal groups pursued the four following areas of inquiry: cultural planning, marketing and promotion, physical planning and design, and capacity building and finance.

During its time in Albuquerque the Resource Team was provided with background community information as well as key community contacts by the local leadership of the Albuquerque Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee and the Downtown Action Team. In its efforts to assemble, analyze and evaluate a wide range of information concerning the community’s arts and cultural successes and challenges the Resource Team emphasized strategies and objectives that could be developed and achieved within time frames not exceeding 24 months, though in practical terms most objectives could be realized in less than half that time.

Each of the Resource Team’s four focal groups engaged with numerous members of the community through open public meetings held at the Convention Center and Hyatt Hotel, guided tours of the downtown’s arts and cultural assets led by members of the Downtown Action Team, walking tours of downtown, social events and casual conversations. At each day’s end the Resource Team members met to share their findings with other team members in an intensive effort to uncover common themes and craft a comprehensive vision for recommendation to the Downtown Action Team and the Albuquerque Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee.

The Resource Team concluded its four-day visit with an open to the public presentation at The Box Theatre. During this multi-media presentation, which lasted for one hour including questions from audience members, each of the Resource Team’s four focal groups delivered a brief summary of its findings and recommendations. This report provides an in-depth format for further developing each focal group’s findings.
RESOURCE TEAM MEMBERS

Elmo Baca
Architectural Historian, New Mexico MainStreet

Charlie Deans
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Tom Drake
New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

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CHAPTER 6

ALBUQUERQUE COMMUNITY
OVERVIEW

From Petroglyph National Monument’s hand-drawn treasures recording New Mexico’s Anasazi past to the breathtaking vistas at the 10,378-ft. crest of Sandia Peak, Albuquerque embodies the very best qualities of a Southwest metropolis. What today is a modern urban center with a metropolitan population of nearly 850,000 was founded by Spanish Colonial pioneers in 1706 as a farming community along the Rio Grande, the proud reminders of which are readily on hand in Old Town Albuquerque. “Old” Albuquerque along with other early New Mexico communities and Catholic mission churches were sited along the Spanish Colonial commercial route known as “El Camino Real”.

As the community grew its center of commerce and culture shifted from the modest adobes lining Old Town’s shaded streets to a newly built business district anchored by the Albuquerque terminal of the Santa Fe Railway. Though its busy streets are located just two miles east of Old Town the architecture and social customs of this new center of business were more reflective of the uniquely American vernacular of Denver, El Paso or Tucson than it was of the Mexican commercial centers of Zacatacas, Chihuahua or Guanajuato, which historically had connected to Albuquerque along the Camino Real’s rutted roadway.

In addition to the modernizing impact of the Santa Fe Railway the blacktop roadway of Historic U.S. Route 66 brought Albuquerque directly into the forefront of a fast emerging 1940s and 50s car culture. The availability of reliable and cross-country capable motor vehicles made the passenger car the dominant mode of travel in the nation, leading to the development of motels, hotels, restaurants, automotive services and trading posts along the “Mother Road” connecting Chicago to Santa Monica via the length of Albuquerque’s Central Avenue.

More than a century has passed since locomotives first began hauling a new generation of settlers to Albuquerque, along with occasional clusters of tourists and the merchandise necessary to build a thriving economy. Thankfully, much of downtown Albuquerque’s historic infrastructure remains intact and in use, though in most quadrants of the city’s urban core these historic buildings have been flanked by an
infrastructure tailored to meet the needs of today's downtown Albuquerque businesses, cultural organizations, full time residents, weekend visitors and government employees.

Though it's loaded with an enviable range of urban assets ranging from performing arts venues to pedestrian-friendly streets, live music clubs, cafes and coffee bars, there's also a widely held point of view that downtown Albuquerque should be achieving a higher level of success. Some would point to Denver's Lower Downtown or Tucson's 6th Avenue or Phoenix's Roosevelt Row as shining examples of the downtown Albuquerque that could be. Others say the downtown should be left to determine its own destiny, or that market forces should be allowed to shape the district.

There have been multiple past planning efforts aimed at linking downtown Albuquerque's transportation modalities with its cultural institutions and enterprises. Most notable was the proposed "Cultural Corridor" whose policies guided both public and private sector re-investment in the 1980s and 90s. In more recent years the "String of Pearls" strategy was developed by former administrations to connect major city cultural institutions with related amenities in sectors such as transportation, hospitality and dining.

No matter which perspective is applied to analyzing and evaluating downtown Albuquerque's "strengths, weaknesses and opportunities", one of the district's realities is that it has largely survived redevelopment's onslaught of wrecking balls, placing its blend of historic and contemporary architecture in the same category as much larger cities such as San Diego and San Antonio.

**Downtown Albuquerque - From Plaza to High Performance**

As one of the Southwest's oldest cities, founded in 1706 by Spanish colonists, Albuquerque culturally exhibits the growing pains of small town and also the aspirations of a major dynamic metropolis. Culturally, psychologically and urbanistically, Albuquerque resonates within an urban continuum that includes Las Vegas, New Mexico, San Diego and Los Angeles (and to some degree Tucson).

These cities embody and reflect the cultural and political dynamics of a Hispanic and Mexican-American indigenous majority population that has been overtaken, dominated, minimized and compartmentalized by Anglo-American culture after the Mexican War of 1846-48. In many ways, the small northeastern New Mexico town of Las Vegas (population 15,000) reflects what Albuquerque used to be a century ago. Both cities were initially founded upon a Spanish/Mexican plaza; the Santa Fe Railroad arrived in both communities in 1879-1880 and a "new town," platted on a grid plan according to "Eastern" sensibilities instantly manifested.

In both Las Vegas, NM and Albuquerque, the Old Town/New Town dynamic is vital and critical to considerations of cultural planning. In Las Vegas, where Hispanics have retained the majority status, this dynamic is powerfully expressed in the realms of politics, patronage, finance and cultural development. To some degree, this is also true in contemporary Albuquerque, where "old style" political and cultural patronage occasionally exercises power at municipal levels. After 1900, Albuquerque's downtown
overshadowed its Old Town economically and achieved primacy as a commercial center for the entire state before World War II. Mayor Clyde Tingley is a symbolic icon of Albuquerque's transformation from small town to "City."

As downtown Albuquerque grew and prospered in the 1950's and '60's, it emulated in style, architecture and social organization, the sprawling West Coast cities of San Diego and Los Angeles in contrast to the denser, compact urbanism of Denver. Both San Diego and Los Angeles had also evolved out of an old town plaza/new town grid, but had done so a generation earlier, in the 1920's and '30's, as citrus farming, automobile tourism, the "Dust Bowl" migration, shipping and many other factors dramatically impacted West Coast urbanism. Hispanic culture in Los Angeles and San Diego was quickly subsumed and romanticized, often for marketing of real estate (tile roofed "Spanish" bungalows and lyrical street names), but Hispanic cultural backlash appeared after World War II as "pachuco," "zoot suit," or "cholo" gang culture, sometimes flashing as crime waves and race riots.

This Hispanic resentment and anger is a common cultural denominator in Los Angeles, San Diego, Albuquerque and Las Vegas, and sometimes links the cities in surprising ways, as during the United Farm Workers demonstrations of the 1970's organized by Cesar Chavez, or a pop cultural phenomenon like Cheech and Chong's breakout hit movie "Up in Smoke." Today the proliferation of ethnic gangs and endemic underclass poverty is an ominous specter for the Southwest region.

 Albuquerque's dynamic growth cycle emerged after World War II, as Route 66 commerce, the U.S. Defense industry, Sandia National Laboratory, recreation and tourism and the University of New Mexico fueled steady growth. The new housing developments conformed to grid plan and cul-de-sac subdivisions as the city grew eastward and uphill towards the Sandia Mountains. The "uptown" neighborhoods were characterized by family style cottages and ranch houses served by street side strip shopping centers. Demographically these uptown neighborhoods were overwhelmingly white and Anglo-American, new migrants to the Southwest, in contrast to the predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods which remained nestled around Old Town and downtown.

By 1960, Albuquerque's dynamic growth had attracted national investment interests, most notably New York magnate Winthrop Rockefeller, who developed "Winrock" shopping center in the heart of the booming uptown housing. Winrock symbolizes the "shopping center" cultural, economic and social lifestyle that has dominated Albuquerque's growth and self-image for half a century. Ironically, Winrock shopping center is now outdated and defunct, replaced by a new "Uptown" shopping center across the street designed in a "Main Street" format.

More recently in the 1980's and 1990's, Albuquerque's cultural and ethnic demographics expanded and diversified as Asian and Latin American immigrants, as well as Europeans, complemented significant and growing populations of Native Americans (mostly Pueblo, Navajo and Apache) and African-Americans. The new "Albuquerqueans" represent and offer a resource of talent ranging from the entrepreneurial zeal of Thai and Korean restaurateurs to the retired gentry of the North Valley and Far North Heights. Cultural manifestations such as the Talin World Food market and the International Flamenco Institute were unthinkable a generation ago.

Albuquerque's voracious appetite for shopping centers is perhaps the new downtown Arts and Cultural District's major challenge. Economically, Winrock and Coronado shopping centers impacted downtown Albuquerque before it could fully mature as a metro downtown, which is characterized as the full
flowering of economic and cultural attractions/anchors, that we enjoy in so-called “great” cities such as San Antonio, Seattle, San Francisco and Denver.

Culturally, Albuquerque’s shopping centers have offered a safe haven of homogenized social behavior at the expense of more adventurous cultural experience, expression and innovation offered downtown. For many, it’s easier to shop and hang out at Coronado, Uptown or Cottonwood malls than venture to downtown for the Farmers Market, or an evening of alternative rock music at the Launch Pad, or even a performance of Latino poetry or flamenco at the National Hispanic Cultural Center.

The recent housing boom, as well, impacted the city’s priorities and financial capacity. Mega-developments at Mesa del Sol, steroid neighborhood explosions at Rio Rancho, the far north side, North Valley, and nearby Los Lunas and Bernalillo have tended to obscure and frustrate downtown’s infrastructure needs in favor of housing development. The current economic recession offers the new administration and city leaders an opportunity to reassess the city’s evolution.

A new generation of (both younger and older) Albuquerque residents, however, is hungering for a new type of downtown “urban” experience typified by advanced and interactive retail experience and environments, a digital bohemian spirit, high-tech multi-media street art and commercial displays, inspired culinary fusion and food experiences, edgy public art and much more. Clearly this will require a sophisticated reorganization of priorities at the municipal level and careful attention to inspired design and detail at the street level. Our intention with this report is to assist and inform that dialectic.
CHAPTER 7

VISION NARRATIVE - DOWNTOWN'S VORTEX OF CREATIVITY

Downtown Albuquerque presents a paradox and paradigm shift to an emerging Arts and Cultural District. Downtown is at once a focus of heightened efforts to attract creative economic development yet at the same time a doughnut hole in the midst of cultural riches surrounding it.

Major attractions and creative centers such as the Albuquerque Museum, Biopark, Zoo, National Hispanic Cultural Center, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, and the University of New Mexico are located on the fringes of downtown but not within walking distance of each other; Their access paths criss-cross downtown but not in a direct or convenient route. The far-flung nature of Albuquerque's cultural infrastructure has hindered sustained efforts on downtown revitalization and poses a perplexing challenge to a new Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee and a new City Administration.

It is apparent that downtown Albuquerque needs additional creative and cultural anchors for it to emerge as "the principal hub for the collaboration, coordination, innovation and production of both new and traditional creative expressions." We heartily endorse a vision for downtown Albuquerque's Arts and Cultural District that encourages and facilitates enhanced arts production while offering quality venues for experiencing and enjoying arts and culture.

Preliminary discussions amongst Resource Team members in Albuquerque during our visit in October described an "Innovation Center" or digital arts and cultural economic business incubator located in the heart of downtown. Such an "Innovation Center" could offer a variety of professional arts production spaces, "green rooms," digital design facilities and flexible live/work studios offered at attractive rents. The Center could be integrated within the downtown community and serve as an attraction to visitors by inviting pedestrian traffic with an 'inside look' at art and digital production.

The upper stories of major downtown buildings such as the Sunshine Building or perhaps a storefront location like the historic Kress department store on Central seem like attractive opportunities for an "Innovation Center."

A synergy of music, film, animation, and visual arts is coalescing downtown. New studios and venues for production and expression could provide the needed stimulus for a true cultural vortex on Central Avenue.
CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS ON CULTURAL PLANNING

OVERVIEW

To its daily commuting users, increasing numbers of full time residents and its year-round stream of visitors and conventioneers Albuquerque’s business district embodies an authentic urban experience. From the vantage point of a sidewalk cafe on Central Avenue or along the increasingly vibrant thoroughfare of Gold Street the intersecting streams of art, commerce, culture and entrepreneurship taking place in downtown epitomize the creative and enterprising spirit of America’s Southwest.

A diverse range of locally owned businesses has added important layers of social texture to those parts of downtown slated for inclusion in the Arts and Cultural District. These shining examples of entrepreneurship, which include art galleries, cafes, neighborhood pubs, and nonprofit arts groups should be among the primary beneficiaries of the district’s increasing popularity. Sustaining the financial health of downtown’s consumer-friendly ventures is a vital element of any plans impacting the area.

Measuring the impact an Arts and Cultural District exerts on downtown will require more than an examination of accounting statements. Elevating the metro area’s awareness of downtown’s energetic creativity is a goal that should be paralleled by improvements in the public’s perceptions of downtown’s safety, accessibility, sidewalk cleanliness and affordability. By paying attention to these and other evidences of shifting public opinion the Arts and Cultural district’s leadership will rapidly be perceived as an invaluable partner in regional revitalization initiatives.

STRENGTHS AND CONSTRAINTS

• Distinct identity. Downtown’s inspired balance of historic architecture, visual art galleries, nightlife, and performing arts presentations infuses the Arts and Cultural District with a creative style and purpose. But the combined impacts of persistent panhandlers, soiled sidewalks and tight parking
availability during evening hours present serious obstacles to the enjoyment of downtown’s businesses, by prospective users as well as out-of-town visitors.

- **There’s a lively music and arts scene emerging downtown.** With many of Albuquerque’s performing arts organizations having located their performance, rehearsal or administrative spaces in downtown there is an energetic flow of creative activity underway most evenings. These entities, along with a number of art galleries, cafes, hotels and business backers of downtown’s arts and cultural scene form the backbone of an innovative and supportive creative community whose administrators, owners and artists collaborate on and participate in a broad range of downtown’s events and initiatives.

- **Downtown Albuquerque is trying hard to win new audiences.** Among the many positive qualities reflected in the events, exhibitions, productions and performances offered to the public on a year-round basis by downtown’s arts and cultural entities is a consistent acknowledgement of the ethnic and demographic diversity that exist throughout the metro area. Reflective of the national dialogue, downtown’s honest engagement with diversity as a baseline element in contemporary culture nurtures powerful creative statements notable for their raw, topical edge.

- **The busy weekend club scene is an asset and a public safety challenge.** The proliferation and dominating presence of Central Avenue’s nightclubs and live music venues lends downtown the sense of being a party zone. As a result, patrons of downtown’s arts and cultural events tend to confine their visits to certain time windows and addresses in efforts to avoid overlapping their visits with the nightly influx of club-goers. On a positive note these same nightclubs provide both emerging and established music talents with important performance venues and ways to translate their skills into paychecks.

- **It’s hard to find information on what’s going on downtown.** In the absence of a prominently located, street level downtown Albuquerque visitors’ center the district’s current business owners are by default saddled with information requests from walk-in visitors uncertain of the locations of galleries, restaurants, theaters and movie screens. In addition, the dispersed locations of nearby, prominent arts and cultural assets such as the National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque Museum, and Old Town Albuquerque further complicates the well-intended navigational confusion experienced by many downtown visitors.

- **An arts and cultural clearinghouse would be helpful.** Because there isn’t an umbrella organization overseeing the creation and maintenance of a comprehensive and long-range master calendar of downtown Albuquerque arts and cultural events, performances, exhibitions and festivals there exists a problem in terms of overlapping event schedules.

- **Signature Event.** In order to raise regional awareness of the Arts and Cultural District as a center of creativity and enterprise a signature event inclusive of as many artistic directions and constituency groups should be developed.
NEXT STEPS - SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

Downtown should welcome, orient and inform its year round flow of both metro area residents and out-of-town visitors (especially those attracted downtown by an arts and cultural sector event, production, exhibition or performance) through the services of a highly visible, street level visitor’s center. This facility would serve as a distribution point for printed as well as multimedia materials describing all elements of downtown’s events, businesses, nonprofits and performing arts organizations. In a crowded and competitive marketplace for arts and cultural sector audiences downtown’s identity as the creative core of one of the Southwest’s most lively urban landscapes should be presented in an efficient and informative way.

Arts and cultural organizations have enough to worry about without being burdened with the possibility of having their exhibitions; productions, presentations or events overlap a similar offering from another downtown entity. To reduce scheduling conflicts and increase the impact of efforts promoting arts and cultural activities taking place in downtown Albuquerque there needs to be an umbrella organization tasked with serving as an information coordinating point through which the various arts and cultural entities can both input their relevant data and in turn review the information supplied by other downtown entities. And because it will be constantly surveying downtown’s overall landscape for events and various happenings this same umbrella organization will be in an ideal position to start the ball rolling on identifying the type of signature event that would serve to solidify a particular creative spin for downtown.

NEXT STEPS - LONG RANGE STRATEGIES

In order to reduce consumer concerns regarding event night parking and the need to travel multiple city blocks on foot during evenings when several arts and cultural sector events are underway in downtown a special events shuttle transportation service should be instituted along with the designation of a free and easily accessible primary parking facility for shuttle users. Shuttle funding may come through sponsorship by a downtown business or professional organization.

Elevating the business community’s understanding of contributions being made to downtown by its arts and cultural sector and also the importance of downtown Albuquerque to the city’s overall “creative economy” could result from regularly scheduled discussions among leading representatives and might also enhance the arts and cultural sector’s message impact and consistency.

Creating a sense of momentum throughout downtown will be an important element of any strategy promoting a newly designated Arts and Cultural District. Vacant storefronts detract from efforts and should instead become part of a downtown ‘phantom gallery’ initiative in which landlords accept temporary installations of art in the storefronts of business locations seeking tenants. Another strategy for gaining traction in the Arts and Cultural District would involve a prominent and regularly changing exhibition of public art throughout the district. Increasing the presence of public art as well as developing distinct materials promoting the exhibitions would enhance the district’s attractiveness to visitors and its relevance to the arts community.
CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS ON MARKETING AND PROMOTION

OVERVIEW

The diverse range of arts and cultural offerings in downtown Albuquerque's proposed Arts and Cultural District is impressive to both visitors and local residents. A steady pace of progress in restoring downtown's sidewalk society has resulted in widespread community support for downtown's transformation. This sense of positive change being underway combines with tangible progress such as new restaurants, movie theaters, performance spaces and innovative events to create an environment of steady progress.

Encouraging residents of greater Albuquerque to visit downtown and patronize its restaurants, cafes, cultural offerings and entrepreneurial driven businesses is a challenge based as much on effective promotion as it is on changing longstanding perceptions. The goodwill generated by initiatives such as Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau's solidly funded "Why We Love Albuquerque" campaign can be neutralized by the experience of encountering panhandlers along the Fourth Street pedestrian mall or witnessing mounted police officers' attempts to maintain order along Central Avenue on evenings when local nightclubs are in full swing.

Building on the successes achieved since the beginning of downtown's early renewal campaigns of the mid-1990's remains one of the district's greatest challenges. Innovative concepts from downtown's creative community carry significant potential in efforts to advance perceptions of the district as being a progressive place that's on the move and deserving of prospective visitors' attention. Initiatives aimed at solidifying the tentative connections linking downtown's creative community to the city and county government's many departments with interests in supporting a vibrant downtown should be developed and pursued. A city/county policy discussion regarding the potential of the Quality of Life Tax for enhancing the city and county's creative infrastructure would be most welcome.

Albuquerque's downtown may appear to be comprised of adjoining zones such as the business and government center of Civic Plaza and the nightclub concentrations along Central Avenue, and the Arts and Cultural District along both Central Avenue and Gold Street in the proximity of the Alvarado Transportation Center. But this perception belies the reality of downtown's immediately adjacent residential neighborhoods. Filled with residents and families with generational ties to the city and its downtown these neighborhoods should be included in the creative community's discussions concerning its plans for continuing the process of downtown's revival.
STRENGTHS AND CONSTRAINTS

• Positive examples of the creativity and enterprising spirit characteristic of an urban neighborhood on the upswing abound throughout downtown Albuquerque. On its east boundary the Alvarado Transportation Center buzzes with activity, most especially on weekends when the Rail Runner trains deliver hundreds of New Mexico residents and out-of-state tourists from point north and south onto downtown's sidewalks for a round of sightseeing, cafe lingering, theatre going, and event enjoying. Once they arrive these visitors are met with an array of options such as the new trolley car tours and matinee presentations from movie theaters and performing arts organizations. These same visitors can encounter one of the Downtown Action Team's Ambassadors if they're in need of directions or suggestion, reference a Zipper map for orientation, grab a copy of a free newspaper to consult its event listings, or stroll over to an outdoor cafe to grab a leisurely lunch. On those same weekends an outdoors Growers Market draws downtown residents to the tree shaded setting of Robinson Park, serving as a forum for strengthening community connections while promoting small-scale commerce.

• The Arts and Cultural District is populated with an impressive range of facilities reflecting downtown Albuquerque's status as a lively district dedicated to expressing the city's creative energies. From stage offerings at The Box Theater to Keshet Dance Company's productions at the KiMo Theater, and in the changing exhibitions at visual arts venues such as 516 Arts, Richard Levy Gallery, Trillion Art Space and Java Joe's, there's a decidedly arts-friendly focus to the downtown experience.

• Certain limitations continue to hamper the elevation of downtown's attractiveness to sectors of Albuquerque's populace. Family-focused programs abound through Keshet Dance Company's presentations at the KiMo Theater but are in short supply in other parts of downtown, while the district's small number of retail offerings deters notions of casual shopping (and spending) sojourns. In some parts of downtown the sidewalks themselves are in a substandard condition, be that condition the result of unsightly accumulations of discarded chewing gum and other grime, or simply a crowded feeling from obstructions such as restaurant patios, newspaper boxes and street lamps. Visitors arriving downtown by car often find difficulty in locating the district's parking structures and outdoor parking lots.

• Ongoing concerns that present obstacles to downtown's sense of positive turnaround seem to distill down to two issues. The first of these is the unappealing appearance and persistent presence of panhandlers on the Fourth Street pedestrian mall. The second concern centers on the impacts connected to downtown's lively nightclub scene, which is largely focused along the Central Avenue thoroughfare. From parking to congestion and noise the normal byproducts of a nightclub scene are widely perceived to run contrary to the interests of downtown's creative community.

NEXT STEPS – SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

In an effort to gain the strategically important goodwill of both its public sector advocates and its nearby...
neighbors the downtown creative community should consider instituting forums for developing dialogues between itself and these key constituent entities. Host a forum annually in the district on the health and welfare of the Albuquerque arts community, building both inclusion and awareness. Work with surrounding neighborhoods in developing programming that supports their goals for the arts and cultural district.

Develop a digital master calendar for downtown arts events in and out of the district and build a social networking component that is managed in a timely and effective manner. Let it be the driver in building “friends” for the downtown art and cultural district. This effort should link with siting a city-wide arts advocacy organization to the downtown arts and cultural district.

Strengthen and develop a coordinated marketing plan for the district. With the number of nodes of creative activity inside of the proposed Arts and Cultural District boundary, visitors tourists and folks attending conventions should have a centralized place to find entertainment, dining and cultural pursuits within the District. The new kiosks featured in the recently restored, LEED certified, historic Hotel Andaluz are a welcome innovation that might be replicated in key pedestrian focal points of the district.

Continue efforts to create an arts and cultural production and delivery focus for the proposed Arts and Cultural District, making these efforts inclusive and welcoming of all art forms. Work with surrounding neighborhoods and nearby institutions such as the National Hispanic Cultural Center, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and the University of New Mexico in developing programming that supports their needs and wants for the arts and cultural district. Soliciting arts organizations from throughout the city to utilize space within the district will advance this goal while widening downtown’s arts audience.

Develop arts and culture packages that combine parking, dining and performance. Market to Northeast Heights and other community groups as a “night on the town.” Partner with the Rail Runner to market these packages to Santa Fe and the southern cities on the Rail Runner. Continue upgrading the usefulness of the Downtown Action Team Ambassadors. Develop perhaps a second tier of ambassadors that target visitors with tourist information.
NEXT STEPS – LONG RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

Conduct a utilization review of the KiMo Theatre. Work to increase its level of activity while building the quality and diversity of its events. Partner with UNM artist community to utilize performance and presentation spaces in the arts and cultural district.

Build a more interesting and viable retail environment in the district. Cultivate an anchor store to help create a stronger retail atmosphere. Consider installing traffic calming devices within the proposed Art and Cultural District and especially along Central Ave.

Build relationships with downtown’s nightclubs. Collaborate with them in marketing events beneficial to their interests. Develop opportunities to cross-promote downtown arts events to nightclub audiences.

Develop a literary element to the performance spaces with weekend events devoted to readings, writing seminars, book signings and technical assistance opportunities for writers. Create walls of literary text from Albuquerque writers as visual enhancements to the area.

Develop a year round growers’ market space with increased space for arts and crafts sales. Create a training facility for artists specializing in presenting specific art and craft training as well as management and entrepreneurship skills. Encourage the development of street vendor business focused on selling flowers, New Mexico foods, New Mexico crafts and New Mexico souvenirs.
CHAPTER 11

FINDINGS ON PHYSICAL PLANNING & DESIGN

The demolition of the historic Mission style Alvarado Hotel in downtown Albuquerque on February 13, 1970 marked a turning point in the city's planning and urban design contexts. The sudden and tragic loss of the city's most beloved architectural landmark fostered an immediate public awareness of the value of downtown Albuquerque's historic architecture. New city policies were adopted, including a city landmarks ordinance, designed to promote sensitive and appropriate development in the downtown corridor and adjacent historic neighborhoods such as Fourth Street, Barelas, Old Town and Huning Highland.

However the demise of the Alvarado was symbolic of other factors that were ravaging downtown Albuquerque's primacy. The success of Winrock Shopping Center after 1960 and the decline of historic Route 66 in the 1970's both impacted downtown's anchor businesses such as Kress department store and American Furniture as well as more modest "mom and pop" roadside businesses. By 1980, Albuquerque's famed Central Avenue "Main Street" district just west of the railroad tracks was deteriorating.
Since 1980, the City of Albuquerque and the business community have developed several "catalytic" projects, including a civic plaza, convention center, restoration of the iconic KMo Theater, Hyatt Regency Hotel and office tower, and First National Bank Plaza, just to name a few.

A more recent wave of redevelopment activity roughly coinciding with the mayoral terms of Jim Baca and Martin Chavez (1997-2009) has transformed downtown's skyline and transportation access. The construction of the Pete V. Domenici Federal Courthouse on the downtown’s north side has anchored a busy judicial complex. The manifestation of a new multi-modal transportation center evocative of the Alvarado Hotel occupies the same site at Gold Avenue and First Street. The city has been actively promoting in-fill housing projects until the current recession caused a building downturn, stalling major projects such as the Anasazi condominiums on Central Avenue.

Downtown Albuquerque's dynamic and urban potential was dramatically enhanced by the state's development of the "Rail Runner" commuter train linking the communities of Belen, Los Lunas, Albuquerque, Bernalillo, and Santa Fe. Together with an improved metro bus and bicycling system, downtown Albuquerque is well served by transportation linkages that can facilitate creative economic development.

Downtown Albuquerque is perceived by some emerging creative professionals as too expensive for a

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A RECOMMENDED DOWNTOWN DISTRICT "CORE AREA" IS FOCUSED ON CENTRAL AVENUE AND GOLD STREET AND INCLUDES THE CIVIC PLAZA. THE GREATER ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT CONFORMS TO THE EXISTING BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID).
residence, office or studio, and the abundance of vacant and underutilized upper story space poses a challenge and opportunity for the Arts and Cultural District.

While downtown does not have an overlay historic district, the presence of city historic landmarks such as the KiMo Theater, Sunshine Building, and the newly rehabilitated Hotel Andaluz, greatly contribute to the district's architectural context and visual appeal. They are among six city landmarks within the proposed district; preservation regulations that apply within the city's historic overlays also apply to these buildings. Additionally, within the Business Improvement District (BID) there are approximately 8-10 buildings listed in the State and National registers, although a total of 26 buildings are historically registered within the city's "Downtown 2010 Sector Plan." Downtown Albuquerque includes several significant post-WWII modernist buildings, such as the Simms Building, that should be considered vital to the district.

**Strengths, Assets and Challenges**

From a planning and design perspective, the physical appearance of downtown Albuquerque is positive.
and attractive. Downtown Albuquerque is pedestrian friendly and blessed by outstanding year-round weather. The city has preserved many significant architectural landmarks, and the streetscape is compelling and generally well maintained.

Transportation has been greatly enhanced by the Alvarado multi-modal center, by the D-Ride and easily accessed bus routes. The Rail Runner is a popular and well-received commuter rail service. A new privately operated Trolley tour bus is fun and picturesque, cleverly designed in a Southwestern "adobe" motif.

On the other hand, downtown Albuquerque suffers in public perception of inadequate parking options and also a perceived lack of shade, green space, and places for families to enjoy at leisure.

The proximity of high-speed fiber Internet infrastructure in downtown (though underutilized) is another critical amenity that can facilitate advanced multi-media and other creative endeavors.

**Arts and Cultural District Boundary Issues**

With the district's wealth of cultural attractions, historic architecture, businesses, and institutions, the proposed boundaries of the downtown arts and cultural district have been controversial and contentious. State enabling legislation allows the designation of up to a one-square-mile district, but in a downtown district focused on Central Avenue, this may not include such major cultural facilities as the Indian Pueblo
Additionally, the potential benefit of enhanced state tax credits for historic preservation has influenced larger, more expansive districts rather than smaller, denser and more walkable districts. This dynamic tension is exacerbated in the rich urban fabric of downtown Albuquerque.

The New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Resource Team recommends the adoption of downtown Albuquerque’s Business Improvement District (BID) boundary to coincide as its Arts and Cultural District boundary. Within these boundaries, we recommend concentrating on projects and programs initially focused on a District Core Area defined by Central Avenue and Gold Street, from the railroad tracks on the east to Sixth Street on the west. A northward extension of the Core Area would encompass Civic Plaza and the Albuquerque Convention Center (see map).

**Short Term Recommendations**

- **Enhance Fourth Street Walkway** – The important Fourth Street Walkway is outdated and in need of effective drainage and contemporary, perhaps “edgy” landscape design enhanced by multi-media or digital public art (see Chicago’s Millennium Park). At the heart of the Arts and Cultural District, this urban plaza could perhaps reflect Albuquerque’s emerging status as a film and digital design center.

- **Redesign and “Green Up” the Civic Plaza** – Albuquerque’s Civic Plaza may be enhanced with more trees and lawn areas for people to sit during concerts, promotions, lunch hours and coffee breaks.

- **Extend D-Ride Bus to include “Cultural Cul-de-Sac”** – Exciting leisure and entertainment activity centered around the Marble brewery north and south off of Lomas Avenue and Second Street are creating an emerging “cultural cul-de-sac.” We recommend extending the metro D Route bus to service this destination with enhanced routes during weekends.

- **Expand Pocket Park to Create Art Park node** – A pocket park at Gold Street and Second Avenue provides an excellent opportunity for the City to capitalize on the artistic and pedestrian ambience of Gold Street. Working with the City’s successful Public Art program, the pocket park provides the potential for a “signature” Albuquerque Art Park.

- **Tree-lined shade on Coal Avenue** – A tree canopy on Coal Avenue from the railroad overpass at Second Street and proceeding west for several blocks would add badly needed shade as well as a distinctive urban edge to the Arts and Cultural District’s southern neighborhood.

- **State and National Register nominations** – The Downtown Action Team, the city Landmarks and Urban Conservation Commission or other entity, should encourage nominations of historic buildings to the State Register of Cultural Properties and the National Register of Historic Places within the BID. Not only would such nominations, or perhaps an historic district nomination, make more properties
eligible for the enhanced state tax credit for rehabilitations and the 20-percent federal tax credit, but it would raise awareness through outreach of the historic architecture within the BID or downtown Albuquerque.

Long Term Recommendations

• Develop Live/Work Artist and Studio Space – For all of its strengths and advantages, downtown Albuquerque is not home to many artists and residents. The City and Downtown Action Team are well aware of this deficiency and have been working diligently to attract more residential projects downtown. We heartily endorse this initiative and encourage the City to maintain its positive leadership in providing affordable living space for creative professionals. The City might consider actually acquiring upper story floors in several key buildings for this purpose. Listing eligible buildings in the historic registers would enhance investment opportunities for privately funded loft conversion through the use of state and federal tax credits. The program has been used successfully on several projects including the conversion of Old Albuquerque High School into apartments and condominiums, rehabilitation of the old Hilton Hotel into Hotel Andaluz, and conversion of the Southern Union Gas Building into a Flying Star restaurant. Currently the credits are being used to convert the Memorial Hospital Building into a boutique hotel. The State Historic Preservation Office can provide technical assistance for tax credit projects.

• Promote Street Vendor Business Opportunities – The Downtown Action Team and the City may consider promoting more street vendors in the Phase I Core Area and also nearby to the Alvarado Center. Vendors may be encouraged to sell food, arts, books, flowers, gifts and souvenirs with a New Mexican theme.
**Downtown Albuquerque Buildings**
with Historic Designations as of 2009

**City Landmarks in Downtown 2010 Sector Plan area**
(Each landmark is individually mapped as the Historic Overlay Zone)

- Sunshine Building/Theater
- Skinner Grocery/Capo's Ristorante
- KiMo Theater
- Rosenwald Building
- Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
- Old Hilton Hotel (La Posada/Andaluz)

**City Landmarks just outside the Downtown 2010 Sector Plan area**

- Highland/Hudson Hotel
- Old Albuquerque High School
- Old Albuquerque Public Library (Special Collections)
Listed buildings in Downtown 2010 Sector Plan area (24)

Pacific Co. Building
Hope Building
Old Post Office
1930 Federal Building
First National Bank
SH Kress Company Store
McCanna-Hubbell Building
Puccini Building/El Rey Theater
ER Berry House
NM-AZ Wool Warehouse
Southern Union Gas Co. (Flying Star Café)
Pearce House
Yrisarri Block
Old Post Office (Amy Biehl Charter High School)
1930 Federal Building
Eller Apartments
Champion Grocery
First Methodist Episcopal Church Fez Club
Maisel’s Indian Trading Post
Simms Building
701 Roma NW (Mauger Estate)
Hudson House
Fez Club
CHAPTER 11
FINDINGS ON CAPACITY BUILDING AND FINANCE

Overview

Albuquerque has realized significant progress through downtown and Main Street revitalization programs since 1985 when New Mexico adopted the “Four Point” approach of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program.

The city utilized an urban Main Street partnership with the National Main Street Center to revitalize the Nob Hill business district in 1987-88. As Nob Hill has transitioned from an emerging metro destination to an upscale boutique district being targeted by national franchise retailers, the neighborhood has once again joined the New Mexico Main Street program in 2009 to protect its unique character and integrity.

Other urban neighborhoods, including the Barelas/Fourth Street district and South Broadway, have also employed Main Street strategies for redevelopment campaigns. Both districts succeeded in developing major anchors in the South Broadway Cultural Center and the National Hispanic Cultural Center.

The Downtown Action Team (DAT) was organized in the early 1990’s as downtown Albuquerque continued to lose businesses and investment to other competing metro districts. The organization has been affiliated with New Mexico Main Street “on and off” for the past two decades, and is currently fully engaged in the state’s Arts and Cultural District’s initiative.

Like other rival Southwestern cities, Albuquerque enjoyed boomtown growth from the 1990’s until 2008, as relaxed mortgage lending, high technology jobs and other factors lured thousands of new residents. Many new families relocated to "suburban," "exurban," or "edge cities" such as the West Mesa, Rio Rancho and north side developments.

Incremental downtown redevelopment projects epitomized by the dramatic Albuquerque High School rehabilitation underway ten years ago began to attract new interest to the downtown and also the East Downtown (EDO) district. Since 2000, the City has worked aggressively with private developers to complete major projects such as the Gold Avenue condominium and retail complex, the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce building, the downtown Century 12 movie complex, and other critical investments.

The DAT matured and gained strength as downtown flourished after 2000. The city's support and implementation of a downtown business improvement district (BID) has generated stable financing and staff capacity for DAT. Beautification campaigns, aggressive tenant recruitment, and public safety programs have buoyed DAT's success.

More recently, new developments are once again challenging the status quo. The arrival of Rail Runner commuter train service at the Alvarado Center; the explosion of an after hours nightlife and tavern scene on Central Avenue; the collapse of the real estate market; and the election of Mayor Richard J. Berry pose formidable questions as the new Arts and Cultural District unfolds.
Strengths and Constraints

Downtown Albuquerque sits within a matrix of world-class institutional and cultural assets. The city was ranked as high as #11 by author Richard Florida in 2002 among American cities “Creativity Index” of technology, talent, tolerance and wage equality. The city’s emergence as a film production center is illustrative of Albuquerque’s appeal for the “creative economy.”

These successes and preeminence mask some serious deficiencies to fully engaging creative economic development in the downtown arts and cultural district. Albuquerque lacks a well-organized, well-funded program to sustain many critical arts and cultural organizations operating within the city, and the City has failed to adequately develop and support a major arts umbrella organization (i.e., an Arts Council, Arts Commission, Arts Alliance, etc.).

On December 4, 2009, Arts Alliance Board President Kevin Hagen announced the unveiling of a new organization called Creative Albuquerque. Creative Albuquerque will supersede the Arts Alliance as Albuquerque’s primary arts umbrella organization.

According to Hagen, Creative Albuquerque will become the “go-to” organization to better network a “fantastically rich but desperately fragmented landscape of organizations, artists and supporters and to ensure that we have a seat at the table when funding and policy decisions are being made.”

Creative Albuquerque expects to hire a new Executive Director to head the staff in early 2010. Creative Albuquerque intends to move to a downtown location, a move that bodes well for the emerging Arts and Cultural District. The group will strengthen and broaden its board membership and representation.

Albuquerque also lacks a sustained and dedicated municipal stream of revenue to support major organizational, institutional and programmatic initiatives. Rival cities such as Denver and Salt Lake City have enacted “quality of life” sales tax increments for these purposes, as have other leading cities in America.

The lack of more strong cultural, recreational and entertainment anchors for Albuquerque downtown development has been addressed recently by discussion of a downtown events center. In fact downtown Albuquerque could benefit from the development of several upgraded cultural venues, including a stadium, enhanced library, and perhaps another museum. These could be realized with dedicated municipal financing capacity for the arts and cultural district.

Capacity Building and Finance – Short Term Strategies

- Facilitate the implementation and operation of the downtown Tax Increment Finance District –
  The City of Albuquerque has created a downtown Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district for downtown...
redevelopment but the functioning and financing of the district is stalled due to political differences between the City and Bernalillo County. The new administration of Mayor Richard J. Berry can negotiate an end to the impasse and create a new sustainable funding source for downtown infrastructure improvements.

- **Consider creative financing opportunities provided by the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA)** – State Arts and Cultural District designation enables municipal investments in creative facilities, creative enterprises by private sector, and also non-profit organization projects. The potential investments may be funded by a variety of municipal sources, including the general fund, and lodging tax funds. LEDA enables municipalities to levy up to 1/8% increment for economic development purposes. The City of Albuquerque has not passed a LEDA Gross Receipts Tax Increment and therefore, this may provide another short term financing strategy for creative economic development in the Arts and Cultural District and citywide.

- **Consider the creation of a citywide Arts Commission** – The City of Albuquerque lacks policy directives and financing support for its many arts and cultural non-profit organizations. Over the years, these organizations have been provided sustaining operating funds through political patronage or other informal means. This process has been prone to cause resentment and contention amongst the organizations and also city departments forced to find and provide funds from their operating budgets. We recommend that the City of Albuquerque create an Arts Commission or similar board, appointed by the Mayor and City Council, and given adequate powers, responsibilities, and funding to support arts and creative development in the city. Albuquerque need only look to Santa Fe for an effective model. The Santa Fe Arts Commission operates on a $1.5 million annual budget. Among the Santa Fe Arts Commission’s responsibilities are:

  - Survey and assess the needs of the arts in the community;
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of legislation, policies and programs;

  Encourage the use of local resources for development and support of the arts;

  - Receive grants;
  - Make grants to local organizations and artists;
  - Advise the City on purchasing artworks that will enhance municipal property;
  - Recommend allocation of lodging tax for funding non-profit arts activities;
  - Counsel the city regarding other arts-related activities.

Santa Fe’s Arts Commission is funded from a variety of sources, including Lodgers Tax, Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), General Fund, Quality of Life Fund, and miscellaneous grants.

In light of our finding that Albuquerque lacks a strong network of foundations and private support for the arts and creative enterprises, we strongly encourage the City to consider establishing an effective Arts Commission.

**Capacity Building and Finance – Long Term Strategies**

- **Create a unique arts production anchor, an "Innovation Center"** – One of the major deficiencies in the downtown arts and cultural district is the lack of affordable arts production space, especially for
new media expressions in animation, filmmaking, and video game development. A major public/private center with work/live studios, flexible “green” room production facilities, ultra high-speed Internet connectivity and other amenities could provide the magnet for creative economic development downtown.

- Create a long term sustainable source of funding for creative economic development in Albuquerque - Albuquerque is at a disadvantage in comparison to some regional rivals, notably Salt Lake City and Denver, in terms of financial support for its creative economy. Since 1997, Salt Lake City has effectively utilized its Zoo, Arts and Parks (ZAP) fund to support an impressive roster of projects. The fund collects an additional penny on every ten sales dollars spent in Salt Lake County for the ZAP fund. Please see the Salt Lake County’s ZAP fund website at www.slcozap.org for more information.

Denver has utilized one of the most creative and effective financing strategies in the nation to enable the Mile High City to enhance quality of life and creative economy opportunities. Denver’s Scientific and Cultural Facilities District Tax was enacted in 1989. Similar to Salt Lake City, the SCF tax levies .01%, or one penny per $10 spent, in the greater Denver metro counties of Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties. About $40 million is generated annually, and a sophisticated multi-tiered project and application process has been implemented to disperse and supervise funds. The program has proved extremely popular, and the SCF tax was reauthorized by the voters in 1999 by a three to one margin. Please see the Denver Scientific and Cultural Facilities District website at www.scfd.org for more information.

Other long term financing strategies of interest and worth considering are the New Mexico “Quality of Life” Tax and also an Admissions and Amusements Tax.

The New Mexico Quality of Life Tax option, passed by the Legislature in 2005 and signed by Governor Richardson, has been offered in a referendum to Bernalillo County voters in 2007, but was defeated. With a new city administration, discussion has been revived to reconsider the Quality of Life Tax for long-term sustainable financing. The Quality of Life Tax is worthy of reconsideration to support creative economic development.

Another option for Albuquerque may be an Admissions and Amusements Tax, similar to Maryland’s program to support its Arts and Cultural Districts, especially those in Baltimore. The A & A tax is a local tax imposed on the gross receipts from admissions, the use or rental of recreational sports equipment, and the sale of merchandise, refreshments, or services at a night club or similar place where entertainment is provided. For more information please see www.business.marylandtaxes.com.
CHAPTER 12

SUMMARY

America’s urban centers are experiencing the positive impacts of revitalization driven in large part by growth connected to emerging creative economies. Downtown neighborhoods have become magnets for investments by developers of loft studio apartments, art gallery owners, boutique hotel groups, coffee roasters and theatre companies. An energetic, diverse and inspiring transition has infused once-empty storefronts with entrepreneurial zest, elevating civic pride while reflecting the fast-evolving nature of 21st century society.

Albuquerque’s downtown creative economy is a work in progress. But that’s not to say downtown’s falling short of its potential. It’s instead an assessment of the wealth of opportunities available inside the proposed arts and cultural district boundaries. Elevated levels of entrepreneurial activity inside the district would benefit all existing businesses and arts groups while improving downtown’s attractiveness to visitors and local residents.

Our work in Albuquerque was undertaken as a Resource Team for the New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts program, a task to which the team's individual skills were applied to Albuquerque's downtown. It’s important to note that with the exception of one member the Resource Team was comprised of New Mexico residents, all of who want Albuquerque to realize its incredible potential. What follows are a few of the action points recommended by the Resource Team.

- Establish a street level visitor’s center whose function is connecting visitors with information regarding downtown’s arts, cultural and heritage events.

- Start an organization whose function is to serve as an advocacy and information coordination entity responsible for maintaining and updating an events calendar for downtown’s arts, cultural and heritage groups.

- Develop venue opportunities for small and emerging performing arts groups, musicians and dancers.

- Coordinate a free downtown parking trial program with the most audience-attractive events on downtown’s arts calendar such as theatre productions debuts, art gallery First Fridays and American Indian art fairs.

- Enhance the Fourth Street Walkway.

- Establish an art park in which the City would exhibit work from its substantial collection of sculpture.

- Promote Street Vendor growth opportunities and help diversify their businesses.
• Facilitate the implementation of a downtown “TIF” (Tax Increment Finance District) whose revenues would fund improvements to downtown’s public infrastructure.

• Concentrate resources and focus on an initial ‘core area’ anchored by Central Avenue and Gold Street.

• Establish an “Innovation Center” whose mission would be to provide fledgling arts groups with affordable rehearsal and performance space, promote high standards of creative achievement, and enhance the stability of emerging performance and music organizations.

• Research and identify a potential source of revenues to support long-term infrastructure improvements, cultural facilities development, arts and cultural programming, organizational support and other goals identified in this report.
CHAPTER 13

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Resource Team would like to thank Downtown Action Team Executive Director Brian Morris, and Assistant Executive Director (and Arts and Cultural District Coordinator) Chris Goblet for their extraordinary efforts in organizing the Downtown Albuquerque Resource Team visit on October 12-14, 2009. The Resource Team would like to thank the Board members and staff of the Downtown Action Team for their invaluable assistance. In addition the Resource Team is indebted to Ed Boles, Preservation Planner for the City of Albuquerque for his insightful and expert tour of downtown Albuquerque’s landmarks. The Resource Team enjoyed a city trolley car tour provided by the Albuquerque Trolley Car Company. Suzanne Sbarge and the staff of 516 Arts on Central hosted a memorable reception for the Resource Team attended by participants and community members. The Hotel Blue’s staff supported the team’s logistics and meeting accommodations during our stay. The staff of The Box Theater on Gold Avenue was gracious and helpful during the team’s final presentation preparations. Finally the Resource Team is grateful for the teamwork, camaraderie and enthusiastic assistance of Sherri Brueggemann, City Public Arts Manager for her many contributions to this effort.

Photographs provided by the Downtown Action Team.
APPENDICES

DOWNTOWN ACTION TEAM ARTS
AND CULTURAL DISTRICT STEERING COMMITTEE

Sherri Brueggemann - Steering Committee Chair
Manager, City of Albuquerque Public Art Program

Ed Boles
City of Albuquerque City Landmarks

Neal Copperman
AMP Concerts / Globalquerque

Christopher Goblet
Downtown Action Team

Shira Greenberg
Keshet Dance Company

Colleen Franco
Collectors Guide

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