



# Las Vegas MainStreet ARTS and CULTURAL DISTRICT RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT

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by

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the passage of the New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Act in 2007, the time was right for providing communities with a framework for broadening economic development through arts and culture. A fast growing movement was underway nationally and globally to examine how arts and culture affect rural and urban economies. Recognizing the state's rich cultural heritage, New Mexico MainStreet had been working on developing an Arts and Cultural District initiative since 2005. Las Vegas was selected as one of two pilot program Arts and Cultural Districts for New Mexico for several reasons including its long history of cultivating artists in the traditional arts and because of its uniqueness as a small town to enjoy three exceptional higher education institutions, all of which are supportive of local arts, culture and a thriving historic downtown.

During a three day visit in April 2008, a team made up of professionals from throughout the state and nationally with expertise on successful downtown arts and cultural development practices was assigned to the project to provide an on-site assessment. They conducted numerous interviews with a broad spectrum of residents and researched issues to ultimately develop final recommendations. These recommendations are categorized into four areas: cultural planning, marketing and promotions, physical planning and design, and capacity building and finance. A preliminary public presentation was given to the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee at the conclusion of the visit.

During the presentations, each group highlighted local assets. Some of these included an abundance of historically significant architecture, an established traditional arts community, three higher education institutions, and a growing awareness that Las Vegas has the potential to become a thriving, culturally rich town. Some of the observations of the report include a need for providing business skills to artists to help them become sustainable entrepreneurs; a comprehensive and consistent marketing plan to promote Las Vegas; more hotel and motel rooms downtown; and a question by the Resource Team about the A&C District boundary submitted in the application being too large to maintain walkability, synergy and effectiveness.

Complimenting the findings of each group are a series of recommendations, most categorized as short or long term that could be accomplished in the next 18 to 24 months. For example, the Las Vegas Arts Council should strengthen the role it has in the community by developing a steady stream of income to support paid staff; implement effective website enhancements to help distinguish our Las Vegas from the Nevada city on website browsers; and create a wayfinding system to easily draw visitors from Grand Avenue to the Old Town area.

Cultural economic development is one of many tools for creating jobs and bettering the community as a whole. Cultural economic development is most effective when partnered with a responsive local government, a broad spectrum of committed residents, and a vision for keeping the flavor of what makes Las Vegas special. It's a

reflection of the entire community. The Arts & Cultural District may be located in Downtown, but the success of the new District and the ripple effect to all of Las Vegas will be dependent on the support of all residents.

## **NEW MEXICO AND THE CULTURAL ECONOMY**

Within the past decade, the rapid acceleration of multimedia technology and the global deployment of the internet have enabled the revitalization and transformation of many downtown commercial districts and neighborhoods as cultural districts. While the phenomenon of artists or bohemian enclaves has ancient roots, only recently have public policies and development incentives been crafted to encourage the growth of cultural economic development in local communities worldwide.

New Mexico boasts the longest continuous culture-based economy in the United States. While many people are familiar with the arts and crafts traditions of the Pueblos, Navajos and Apaches, other Hispanic and Anglo creative expressions also maintain rich legacies. Because of New Mexico's geographic isolation, these creative traditions were preserved and maintained high levels of artistic integrity and craftsmanship that continue to influence contemporary artists.

New Mexico began to attract the interest of progressive modern artists beginning with the development of the Taos and Santa Fe artists' colonies over a century ago. The pervasive 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 and also the creation by city ordinance of the Canyon Road arts district, one of the earliest and most successful in America. Taos and Santa Fe also attracted generations of cultural entrepreneurs who created businesses and institutions such as the School of American Research, the Santa Fe Indian Market, and the Harwood Foundation that have flourished over time and become cultural and economic anchors for the region.

Other major developments in New Mexico in the Twentieth Century have contributed to the expansion of the cultural economy. These include the establishment of two National Scientific Laboratories at Los Alamos and Sandia in Albuquerque; the growth of an alpine skiing industry; the emergence of the Santa Fe Opera; a robust movie industry and other achievements.

By 2000, New Mexico was well-positioned to expand its cultural economic development to rural communities.

### **What is the Creative Economy?**

Recently, numerous pundits and economic forecasters have predicted the rise of the Creative Economy in a rapidly interconnecting global marketplace. Among the first to describe the needs and attributes of the new knowledge workers, management guru Peter Drucker, 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 and their particular needs.

Rather than confirming a narrow artist's definition of the creative class, Dr. Florida suggests broad definitions of a super-creative core and also a group of creative professionals that together comprise the creative class. These major occupational categories are listed below.

#### Super-Creative Core Occupations

- Computer and mathematical
- Architecture and engineering
- Life, physical, and social science
- Education, training, and library
- Arts, design, entertainment, sports and media

#### Creative Professional Occupations

- Management
- Business and financial operations
- Legal
- Health care practitioners and technical
- High-end sales and sales management

### **NEW MEXICO'S INTERAGENCY ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT INITIATIVE**

Despite the recent successes and growth of Santa Fe, Taos, Albuquerque and Las Cruces, many communities in New Mexico struggled during the past few decades. The State Legislature adopted the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program in 1985 as a strategy to address the economic decline of rural towns. Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Socorro, Raton, and Gallup were selected as the five original MainStreet cities. Las Vegas joins Silver City as a pilot New Mexico Arts and Cultural District.

New Mexico MainStreet began developing an Arts and Cultural District initiative in 2005. Presentations outlining the concept were made to the MainStreet community and officials of the Economic Development Department. During this time, many popular economic and popular culture books appeared which gave legitimacy to the cultural economic development movement and urged communities to prepare for a paradigm shift. In addition, Santa Fe and Albuquerque commissioned economic analyses of their cultural economies, and the Department of Cultural Affairs assessed the size of New Mexico's creative enterprise industry in 2004.

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 a state designated district approved by the New Mexico Arts Commission. Incentives were offered to municipalities and private property owners. The State MainStreet Director (presently Rich Williams) was designated as the state Arts and Cultural Districts Coordinator. Other state agencies such as New Mexico Arts, the Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Tourism and the Scenic Byways program have joined forces to implement the program. Other important partners in the Arts and Cultural Districts program include the Museum of New Mexico Foundation, the McCune Charitable Foundation, and the Women's Economic Self Sufficiency Team Corporation (WESSTCorp).

## Las Vegas and Silver City Shine

The Fall Quarterly MainStreet meeting was a warm-up for the application process for the Arts and Cultural Districts designations, which were announced in January 2008. Silver City and Las Vegas submitted the highest ranked applications and were designated New Mexico's two pilot Arts and Cultural Districts.

Silver City's eminence as a growing center for creative economic development is enhanced by surging clusters of visual artists, musicians, performing artists and also cultural entrepreneurs. Silver City's location and proximity to Mexico, Arizona and California offer unique themes and opportunities for creative enterprises.

As a counterpoint to Silver City, Las Vegas boasts strong and deep cultural roots which suggest themes of historic and cultural preservation. Las Vegas' geographic proximity to nationally recognized arts communities in Santa Fe and Taos offers heritage tourism and marketing opportunities as well as the challenges of gentrification and economic dislocation.

## OVERVIEW OF LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas' critical location on the eastern Front Range of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northeastern New Mexico determined its rise to power and prosperity in the Nineteenth Century. Founded in 1835, the plaza and tiny Hispanic village grew quickly by exploiting the wagon caravans of the Santa Fe Trail trade (1821-79). In 1879, the Santa Fe Railroad steamed into the flatlands one mile east of the plaza, creating a new town and one of the Southwest's legendary boomtowns. By 1930, the spectacular gilded age of Las Vegas had been eclipsed, as its once vast trade area was sharply diminished by competing rail lines.

The legacy of these historical and economic forces is complex. Las Vegas' population of 15,000 people has been stable but stagnant since 1900. The community boasts New Mexico's greatest inventory of historic Victorian era architecture - over 900 buildings and nine historic districts on the state and national registers. Always known as a

center for education and higher learning, the community's strength and major payrolls are generated by New Mexico Highlands University, Luna Community College, and Armand Hammer United World College of the American West.



Similar to Albuquerque, the railroad economic boom in Las Vegas created a new town alongside an established plaza-based Hispanic community (known in both communities as "Old Town"). Cultural and economic conflicts in both cities are often traced back to the railroad era. More recently, the unifying themes of arts and culture, also known as the creative economy, are perceived as strategies to help unify the diverse population of Las Vegas as well as provide economic opportunities for many.

Las Vegas was selected as one of New Mexico's original five MainStreet cities in 1986. In contrast to Silver City, Las Vegas has struggled to sustain a successful MainStreet program. The current certified Las Vegas MainStreet is the third incarnation, and perhaps the most effective. The challenge of revitalizing three historic commercial districts, including Plaza/Bridge Street, Douglas Avenue/Sixth Street, and the Railroad District, is a daunting task.

Maybe the most compelling factor in the potential success of a new Arts and Cultural District in Las Vegas is the emergence of capable leadership in key community positions, including city government, educational institutions, and financial partners, as well as non-profit developers such as Las Vegas MainStreet, the Las Vegas Arts Council, and the Las Vegas Economic Development Corporation.

A new spirit of cooperation and partnership is emerging in Las Vegas, and the present political and economic climate seems opportune for the new Arts and Cultural district initiative.

## PROCESS

The New Mexico MainStreet Program is the statewide program housed in the New Mexico Economic Development Department for the past 23 years that assists

communities engaged in Downtown revitalization through historic preservation and asset development. The New Mexico Arts and Cultural District Program was established in 2007 by the State Legislature and Governor Bill Richardson to develop a market niche downtown in place-based economic development using the state's rich heritage and cultural entrepreneurs in arts and culture.

The New Mexico MainStreet Program Director was named the State Coordinator of New Mexico's Arts and Cultural Districts with the New Mexico Arts Commission the authorizing body. Based on the State Coordinator's recommendations from each applicant community, and as funds are made available to open enrollment, Districts are authorized by the Commission.

This initiative is both an Inter-Departmental and state-wide organizational effort with initial participants from the New Mexico Department of Tourism, The New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (Divisions of New Mexico Arts and Historic Preservation), and the New Mexico Economic Development Department's MainStreet Program, the McCune Charitable Foundation and the New Mexico Museum Foundation. Other agencies and institutions are being added as expertise from their area of service is identified.

### **Resource Team Visit**

A Resource Team was assembled consisting of approximately fifteen professionals in the fields of MainStreet, arts, culture, tourism, historic preservation, planning, and urban design and were led by the New Mexico MainStreet Director. The Resource Team was divided into four groups with specific focus:

#### **Resource Team and Break-out Groups**

##### **Cultural Planning**

Regina Chavez	NM MainStreet Cultural Planner
Loie Fecteau	NM Arts, Executive Director
Andrew Vick	Allegany Arts Council, Maryland
Ann Weisman	NM Arts

##### **Marketing and Promotion**

John Stafford	Museum of NM Foundation
Maggie Macnab	Macnab Design
Laurie Frantz	NM Tourism Dept, Scenic Byways

##### **Physical Planning and Design**

Charlie Deans	NM MainStreet Urban Planner
William Powell	NM MainStreet Design Architect
Scott Day	Urban Design Services
Harvey Kaplan	NM Tourism Dept, Historic Preservation

## Capacity Building and Finance

Rich Williams	NM MainStreet Director, State Arts & Cultural District Coordinator
Elmo Baca	NM MainStreet Special Projects
Jeff Mitchell	UNM BBER, Senior Research Scientist
Cary Tyson	Arkansas MainStreet Director

These statewide and national specialists were chosen specific to the needs of Las Vegas's Arts and Cultural District and were provided with background materials in advance of their on-site visit. They assembled in Las Vegas the week of April 7 - 10, 2008 to gather information and insight about Las Vegas's strengths and challenges, as well as to inventory resources within the community.

During this brief community visit, the Resource Team was not tasked with developing a plan that addresses all issues within the District. Instead they were directed to focus on suggestions that could be implemented in the next 18-24 months, thus giving the Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee a basis for developing long term and sustainable cultural planning strategies. As noted above, the Resource Team was divided into four break-out groups: Cultural Planning, Marketing and Promotion, Physical Planning and Design, and Capacity Building and Finance.



The Resource Team was tasked with providing the community and the A&CD Steering Council with expertise, experience and insight on successful downtown arts and cultural development practices around the country. Each break-out group met with a variety of community leaders, merchants, artists, artisans, cultural entrepreneurs, educators, the hospitality industry and a wide array of other stakeholders and non-profit organizations to find out what were some of the assets, issues and resources in the newly designated District. Following the group interviews, the break-out groups also met as a full Team to debrief, share common themes, brainstorm and craft final recommendations into a comprehensive vision for the A&CD Steering Council.

On the last day of the site visit, each of the four break-out groups presented their initial findings plus short and long term recommendations to the Arts and Cultural District Steering Council and interested community members. This report carries more detail than the public presentation and constitutes the final written assessment report to the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Steering Council.

The Resource Team would like to thank our community hosts, Cindy Collins of Las Vegas MainStreet, Roy Montibon of the Las Vegas A&CD Steering Council and their team of volunteers for all their efforts, warm hospitality and arrangements that kept

us on track with what we set out to do. The Resource Team would also like to thank the Plaza Hotel for providing meeting rooms and generous hospitality during the visit. Las Vegas is a beautiful community and Cindy, Roy and many volunteers made our experience that much more enjoyable.

## INTRODUCTION

The designation of downtown Las Vegas as one of the two pilot Arts and Cultural Districts is the opening of a conversation in the community. We are partners in this new process but also your guests. Congratulations to your community for growing cross-collaborations between organizations evident in your application for the Arts and Cultural District designation. The application process provided a self assessment; the Resource Team provided an outside perspective. This beginning of a community conversation on Las Vegas' Arts and Cultural District raises questions:

- What does the authorization mean?
- How can it assist the community?
- What role does the community have in shaping the District?
- What does this mean for our artists?
- What are the opportunities for developing the "Creative Economy"?

The Resource Team included some very special guests from out of state (Andy Vick and Cary Tyson) working in their communities to develop and define the role of the Cultural Economy for their districts. Their experiences and professional expertise added to the in-state Team. The Resource Team held back-to-back meetings with over 100 people over two very intense days. The Team heard many concerns, issues, hopes, dreams, and opportunities. Several themes began to emerge from these meetings in the areas we were exploring with you and across the four breakout groups that occurred in Cultural Planning, Marketing and Promotion, Physical Design and Planning, and Capacity Building and Finance.

These themes could be characterized as the four "Cs" and begin to reflect values that are important to the Las Vegas community:

- Communication
- Coordination
- Collaboration
- Community

### Communication

- Community of Las Vegas wants stronger and consistent ways to understand and learn about the efforts under way
- Communication needs to happen between organizations as well as throughout the community

- Communication needs to be transparent, open, clear and inclusive

#### Coordination

- Community of Las Vegas wants to see better leveraging of each other's resources and knowledge, resulting in less redundancy with limited and sometimes scarce resources both in terms of staff and funding
- Organizations need to work more closely together to define roles and responsibilities to achieve successful projects without concern for who gets the credit



#### Collaboration

- All have a role in enhancing the community's wealth, not just money in the cash register but the quality of life in the community
- That efforts be community based and responsive to the community's needs
- Coordinating efforts together can increase the social capital to the benefit of the entire community
- The benefits of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District benefit the entire community of Las Vegas' health and well-being as well as the artists, crafts people and cultural entrepreneurs

#### Community

- The new Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District maintains the integrity of Las Vegas' unique heritage and culture
- The Arts and Cultural District makes sure that space in its cultural institutions provides for a voice for all community members
- Las Vegas' Arts and Cultural District reflects the values of the community and the diversity of expression
- The District continues to serve the diverse needs of the community through its existing retail and services and not become homogenous as it develops the Arts and Cultural aspects of the District

## Next Steps

These recommendations should be reviewed by the Las Vegas A&CD Steering Committee and become the basis for the community's first two-year work plan. They should lead to planning, and development of a municipal ordinance establishing the boundaries and purposes of the District, municipal adoption and implementation of a District Master Plan with the assistance of the MainStreet Program Associate in Urban Design for Infrastructure and Capital Investments. With technical assistance from the MainStreet Program Associates in Cultural Planning, Special Projects and Urban Design as well as staff from the New Mexico Arts Division and the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Tourism Department and the New Mexico Museum Foundation, your community is now ready to create a downtown Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan that ties to the Master Plan, and can be adopted by the municipality by the end of the second year of authorization.

Following are the findings and recommendations of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Resource Team presented in the four break-out group categories: Cultural Planning, Marketing and Promotion, Physical Planning and Design, and Capacity Building and Finance. Although each group varied somewhat in their presentation format, they remained consistent with providing recommendations.

## CULTURAL PLANNING

### Strengths

- Las Vegas is rich in artistic traditions and local artwork reflects a wonderful sense of place.
- There is a long history of arts events with wide community support such as the People's Faire.
- Las Vegas serves as a hub for neighboring villages and artisans.
- The Plaza serves as a natural gathering place for residents and visitors.
- Las Vegasans are friendly and welcoming.
- Natural beauty abounds with clean air, water and lush scenery.



- The local Arts Council continues to survive despite recent challenges.

## Observations

- Community arts events calendar does not consistently reach all audiences and does not contain a comprehensive listing of all arts and cultural events in the area.
- There are misperceptions about the process of developing the Arts & Cultural District (A&CD) that could be due to a lack of or inconsistent communication with the full community.
- Las Vegas and the greater area have enough of a talent base and interest to support additional opportunities for arts and cultural events.
- The Las Vegas Arts Council cannot accomplish all that it has set out to do without continuous paid staff, which they had previously.
- Young adults are not finding enough reasons to remain in town after graduation.
- Artists need business skills training to improve their chances of becoming self sustaining entrepreneurs.
- There are opportunities to enhance local arts education efforts at all levels of the public and private education systems.



## Short Term Goals

1. Develop a comprehensive and centralized calendar of arts activities and events that will:
  - Broaden the composition of local audiences.
  - Attract visitors from throughout the region.
  - Reduce scheduling conflicts between presenting activities.
2. Broaden and deepen the Arts & Culture District process by:

- Communicating to everyone in the community about the structure and benefits of a successful downtown A&C District.
- Cultivating not readily apparent relationships in the community.
- Further developing sensitivity to all community members and traditions.
- Encouraging long time Las Vegasans to join in a leadership role in the A&CD process and in their community.
- Taking steps to ensure that the A&CD process is inclusive and transparent to all, not just those participating at this time.
- Including local government at all levels (city/county/state) in the process.
- Inviting a wider representation of the larger community in the leadership and membership of the Arts & Cultural District Steering Council.

### Long Term Goals

1. Strengthen the role of the Las Vegas Arts Council in the community and address its sustainability by:

- Relocating the Las Vegas Arts Council office and workshop space to downtown in the A&C District.
- Addressing board and staffing issues and developing a plan to include a consistent revenue stream for paid staff.
- Collaborating with the Arts & Cultural District Steering Committee and wider community to create new cultural events such as a western heritage festival.
- Working with local government to develop the riverwalk into a safe and cultural focal point of interest for everyone.

2. Develop creative ways to retain your young adults following graduation by:

- Providing a broad range of artistic and entrepreneurial opportunities for 18-35 year olds.
- Creating a variety of welcoming places in the A&CD for students and young adults to gather.
- Including young adults in the A&CD process and other community planning processes.

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3. Reinforce and expand arts education at all levels by:

- Continuing the Elementary Fine Arts Education Program and encouraging innovative opportunities to enhance arts education overall in the schools.
- Ensuring ongoing arts education for middle and high school students that will prepare them for college level arts curriculum and/or entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Creating a community mentorship program for youth to give them more opportunities to learn and share about the history and heritage of their community.
- Starting a docent training program for students to serve as docents for community exhibitions.



4. Build the community connection with the three local colleges and the A&CD by partnering to:

- Draw upon local and statewide resources to provide entrepreneurial and business skills training for emerging and established artists.
- Collaborate with United World College to develop artistic programs for all ages at the recently acquired Baptist Church building.
- Expand upon current or create new arts and cultural programming such as:
  - phantom galleries (mini exhibits in vacant storefront window displays)
  - "Plaza Performances" (a regular series on the Plaza of dancers, poetry, music, etc)
  - student internships with local arts and cultural entrepreneurs

## MARKETING AND PROMOTION

In our marketing and promotion review of Las Vegas with the community, actionable items were developed in the areas of planning and development, additional event opportunities, and enhancements to Las Vegas' promotional efforts. Our recommendations are detailed below in Planning and Development Action Items.

### Common Comments

- Chamber of Commerce -- Press kit already in place, railway station pamphlets/info, summer arts magazine ads on deck (local/northern NM), website (calendar of events).
- City Council -- New council elected with opportunity for new vision.
- Arts Council -- 30 year history; most recent years not reaching full potential
- Higher Education -- Desire to participate in community:
  - UWC -- donated downtown bldg for arts use
  - Highlands -- Iron Tribe pour; engaged media arts department
  - Luna CC -- performance arts center; arts training developed
- Education system in general - coordination, communication, and collaborations could be improved. Need to see the benefit of working together.
- Old Town Commerce Club
  - Local events; involvement with Hispanic community
- Existing Events—
  - Studio tour, annual June
  - Motorcycle Rally, Annual July
  - People's Fair, Annual August
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturdays gallery walk, monthly
  - Sabor (annual restaurant walk)
  - Lights Parade, Christmas
  - UWC, Highlands, Luna Events (performance, art)
  - Fiestas, July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend
- Physical
  - What about public transportation from train station to downtown?
  - Another use for vacant, boarded up buildings?
  - Is there a "gateway" from first I-25 northbound exit to A&CD?
  - Consider funneling Grand Ave to 2 lanes for traffic slow down
- Financial
  - Lack of clear budget from Lodger's Tax

- Lack of communication about existing funds
- Retail “consciousness” not yet developed; no retail crafts available that could tap into cultural aspect.
- Governmental/Agencies - what about code enforcement?
- Wish List
  - Move Farmer’s Market Downtown
  - Create an Arts Fest modeled on SF Indian Market (or tag onto it)
  - Vibrant Arts Event presence (phantom galleries, etc.)
  - Film Fest - a joint “Romaine Fielding” film festival event with Silver City

### Recommendations - Planning and Development Action Items

1. Quickly improve the community arts and cultural events **calendar** accessibility for the community and visitors so as not to lose any visitors.
  - Designate the Chamber of Commerce website as the central calendar for all arts and cultural activities.
  - Build software capability for the community to add to the calendar easily.
2. Create a **citywide marketing plan** with professional consultant expertise. It will be important to get a plan in place up front to determine what type of marketing Las Vegas needs.
  - Develop the brand - create recognizable imagery and logo. This should be a community wide project.
  - Collaborate with local expertise. In our conversations with the community it became apparent that a conscious effort needs to be made to use local talent in the creation of the marketing plan, both for print and web.
  - Identify areas of marketing need, event support, and initiative. Review the event list for the city and work with organizations to effectively promote events and to prioritize how monies will be allocated from the plan.
3. Leverage the **Lodgers Tax** monies to support marketing for cultural tourism.
  - Pursue historical, architectural, and art travelers. Ratchet up the features of the area to draw specific traveler types.
  - Educate the community about the Lodgers Tax allocation process and its benefits. Keep the process transparent to all.

- The Chamber of Commerce should solicit participation from the Las Vegas Arts Council to best determine how Lodgers Tax monies should be allocated.
4. Build enhancements to the Chamber of Commerce **website**.
- Website needs optimization with heavy graphics so that internet searches select New Mexico and avoid the Nevada confusion. The heavy graphics on the website slow down the speed of navigation. Work with technical web support to develop search engine optimization and determine how to avoid the overlap with the other Las Vegas.
  - Web 2.0 enhancements - consider adding video to use with special community events, and add a visitor comment area to the website.
5. Explore all untapped marketing and promotion **funding opportunities**. Begin working on this immediately and work on it continuously as it takes time to take advantage of grant programs as many funders have strict application schedules. Some additional funding opportunities include:
- Free Calendars (NM Magazine, Tourism website) such as event calendars placed on New Mexico Magazines and the NM Tourism websites.
  - Coop Marketing Program (Tourism \$). Apply for coop funding with New Mexico Tourism and New Mexico Economic Development.
  - Northeast Regional Marketing Board.
  - Clean and Beautiful (tourism grant program).
  - Request the NM Tourism Dept write press releases.
  - NM Tourism Scenic Byways funding opportunities includes state and national grant programs and a variety of types of programs - arts, museums, libraries, etc.

### Events Opportunities

- Develop "Getaway" advertising for Denver, Albuquerque and Colorado Springs markets; build around major events.
- Create a citywide event built around video art. Partner with NM Highlands University Media Dept; incorporate the high schools and utilize space in vacant buildings for exhibit space and installations.
- Increase marketing of the Las Vegas Arts Council People's Fair to audiences in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Taos. Later marketing expansion could include

throughout the state and then to regional tourist markets: Colorado, Texas, California, Oklahoma, and Arizona.



- Create an annual Film Festival with feature films produced in Las Vegas and highlight new film premiers. This creates another event that can draw from other markets in the automobile driving range. The film industry is hot in New Mexico and Las Vegas has a special role in the history of film production in New Mexico. Las Vegas should play up its history with film making. Highlands University also has a great new media arts program which could participate.

### Promotional Enhancements

- Produce visitor surveys and include them in all hotels, restaurants and retail.
- Develop retail space for local crafts.
- Create gallery and studio maps and distribute statewide.
- Collaborate to create “phantom galleries” in which vacant storefront windows are used to display local works of art from students K-12, Luna Community College, United World College, and Highlands University.
- Build “Fam” Tours (familiarization). Journalists and free-lance travel writers are invited to the area (you have to host them, pay their expenses) with the idea that they’ll go home and write articles about your area that will attract tourism. Examples are travel sections of newspapers; regional, national, and international magazines; free-lance travel writers. It costs something up front but is worth it if it generates tourists.
- Post events calendar in Spanish on local Hispanic stations weekly.

- Develop a hospitality training program for local workforce to create a warm and inviting experience for visitors.

- Explore bilingual (English/Spanish) marketing opportunities.

- Create walking tours--ghost/western/architectural. Train docents to run the tours and publish a regular schedule.

- Post wayfinding signage from I-25 and the rail station all leading to Downtown and the A&CD.



- Host film union IATSE (The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts) with the expectation that they will consider Las Vegas a good location to film. Educate the business community about how to deal with and provide effective service and support to the film industry.
- Utilize existing student population in marketing efforts. United World College students are required to participate in community service each semester. They, and other students, could be trained as ambassadors, walking tour leaders, events support, town beautification--trash pick up, planting, beautification for exits, historical buildings, and other promotional activities. These efforts will not only capitalize on a source of light labor, but will also give students opportunities to learn more about Las Vegas and possibly give them an incentive to stay after graduation.
- Longer/more consistent hours for retail are necessary to provide visitors with opportunities to spend their dollars in Las Vegas and boost the local economy.
- Relocate the Farmer's Market to Downtown to reinforce community belief that the "heart" of Las Vegas is the Downtown A&CD.
- Expand shop local programs by encouraging residents and visitors to buy local. Create a colleges and city "buy local" program to launch program and serve as role models in community.

## PHYSICAL PLANNING AND DESIGN

### Introduction and Context

Las Vegas was founded in 1835 as a gateway to the buffalo plains on New Mexico's eastern frontier. Rich and verdant meadowlands (*vega* = meadow) nourished by the Gallinas River attracted colonists from nearby San Miguel del Vado.

The village plaza was founded upon a slight rise just west of the Gallinas River. An *acequia madre* (mother ditch) was dug, and villagers grew staple crops which they traded to Santa Fe Trail travelers. By 1875, the Plaza was ringed with impressive two-story Territorial style adobe buildings. After the railroad arrived in 1879, the Plaza was transformed by grand brick and stone Victorian style commercial buildings. Today the Las Vegas Plaza preserves the gilded age in one of New Mexico's most spectacular historic settings.

The railroad brought boomtown commerce as well as American planning and urban sensibilities. An entire town of East Las Vegas was established next to the old town, featuring a grid plan and classically inspired Carnegie and Lincoln Parks. An electric-powered streetcar line installed in 1903 replaced a horse-drawn trolley.

The Santa Fe Railroad built an imposing resort hotel and spa at Montezuma about five miles north of Las Vegas in the early 1880's. A spur railroad line from Las Vegas transferred wealthy guests to the hotel, locally known as the "castle." The Montezuma Hotel was transformed into the Armand Hammer United World College of the American West after 1983.

The complexity of the Las Vegas city plan and abundance of high quality historic architecture have attracted professional and academic scrutiny over the years. Most recently, the Reconnecting America Foundation (previously known as the Great American Station Foundation) was based in the Railroad District and completed urban design and revitalization conceptual plans for the district, and a new city hall complex on the site of a former Safeway's supermarket at Seventh Street and Douglas Avenue. The plans were completed in 2003-05.

The University of Notre Dame School of Architecture conducted a design studio in Las Vegas' historic commercial corridor in 2006. MainStreet Las Vegas efforts have focused on traffic calming strategies for Grand Avenue and streetscape improvements.

### Common Comments

Several recurrent and overarching themes were identified during the community interview process. The most significant included:

- **Housing shortage downtown** - The traditional downtown housing pattern of shops on the ground floor and housing above was popular in Las Vegas. The mixed commercial and residential use has been ratified in the city's planning and zoning code and is allowable in the MainStreet corridor. Many potential housing units in historic buildings are in poor condition.
- **Lack of affordable artist residences** - Las Vegas suffers from a lack of affordable rental housing. Also, the recent appreciation in housing and real estate property values has affected Las Vegas as listing prices are overly optimistic and inflated. The market is currently in a period of readjustment (as elsewhere), but slow to stabilize at realistic prices. The lack of water has hampered building opportunities.
- **Empty buildings and deteriorating historic buildings** - The sheer abundance of historic commercial buildings located in the three major commercial districts and elsewhere poses a fundamental conundrum for revitalization and historic preservation. In addition, deferred maintenance and demolition by neglect are reaching critical stages. The collapse of the pivotal Center Block building on Lincoln and Grand Avenues two years ago was a symbolic wake-up call.
- **Finding the Old Town Plaza, historic core and the A&CD** - The fascinating and complex city plan of Las Vegas is a blessing and a curse - it's hard for visitors and tourists to find Old Town. Access streets are not well marked by directional signage.
- **Enforcement and building codes** - The City of Las Vegas has been perceived as too lax in code enforcement during the past few decades. Spot zoning, mobile home intrusions, demolition by neglect, and trash abuses are concerns that will require attention.
- **Lack of downtown nightlife/entertainment** - Despite the presence of New Mexico Highlands University in the midst of the downtown districts, there is an absence of nightlife. Venues for music, dancing, live theater and cinema are in short supply.

### Kudos/Accomplishments

Las Vegas has made significant progress to protect its architectural wealth. The community has been creative, resourceful, and tenacious in the face of obstacles such as difficult finances and drought. These efforts include:

- **Historic Preservation Planning and Projects** - Soon after the City of East Las Vegas and the Town of West Las Vegas were consolidated into one city in 1970, community leaders embarked on a historic preservation program. Architectural surveys and register nominations have yielded nine historic districts listed on the state and national registers. Six locally designated districts ensure design

review for building projects. The Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation has been active since 1980 with many projects to its credit. Las Vegas is a Certified Local Government (CLG) recognized by the state Historic Preservation Division and as such is eligible each year for federal funds in support of historic preservation projects benefiting the community.

- **Las Vegas Arts Council** - has maintained a 30 year record of service and programming. The Arts Council sponsors the annual People's Faire in Carnegie Park and also supports the Nat Gold Players theater group. With a new Board of Directors, the Arts Council is embracing an enhanced role in the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District.
- **La Plaza Vieja Partnership (LPVP)** - raised over \$2 million for the rehabilitation of 15 buildings in Old Town in the late 1980's. With a combination of local property owners, investors, City of Las Vegas, and public support from a federal Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG), LPVP was effective in reversing the decline of the Plaza and Bridge Street. The project provides an example and template for community initiated development that remains relevant.
- **Railroad Depot rehabilitation** - The City of Las Vegas realized an impressive rehabilitation of the historic (1899) Santa Fe Railroad depot several years ago at a cost of over \$1 million. The depot is a multi-purpose facility that is the cornerstone of plans to revitalize the railroad district.



- **Plaza Hotel and Ilfeld Building expansion** - The major rehabilitation of the Plaza Hotel in 1980-82 is providing a much needed catalyst for Old Town's revival. Currently the hotel is engaged in a major expansion into the Ilfeld building next door. The proposed ballroom and entertainment facilities in the Ilfeld building will greatly expand the cultural and entertainment venues for Old Town.
- **Baptist Church Acquisition** - The donation of the former First Baptist Church on Seventh Street to the United World College enables the development of an arts and cultural center in the heart of the Douglas Avenue commercial district.

- **Main Street progress** - Reestablishment of the MainStreet Las Vegas program in 2005 has reinvigorated the City's capacity to undertake infrastructure improvements and develop a unified vision for the revitalization of the historic commercial corridor. Las Vegas MainStreet has been proactive in securing funding for major drainage and streetscape improvements on Grand Avenue and also secured the pilot Arts and Cultural District designation.

## Recommendations and Strategies

The Physical Planning and Design team considers priority infrastructure improvements to primarily serve residents' needs above those of visitors. In this spirit, two sayings articulated during the interview process resonated:

"Make it good for the residents and the visitors will come"

"Arts and culture is our story - use art to tell our story"

**Boundary Issues** - The proposed Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District is approximately one square mile and is essentially the historic Nineteenth Century core of the city. The A&C District contains most of the city's nine national historic districts as well as the campus of New Mexico Highlands University. The A&CD Council should consider creating a Phase One core area within this large district that can provide the highest impact for the limited resources that are initially available. Expand the district core or create additional focus areas, as additional resources and program success is achieved.



## Way finding and signage

- Create a sense of arrival into the Old Town area through visual sequences from Grand Avenue that draws a visitor in to the historic core and A&CD.

- Getting from Grand Avenue to Old Town should be a step through time that interprets and highlights the history and cultures of the community.
- Connectivity between the three Las Vegas commercial districts and Highlands University should be strengthened using the Gallinas River walk as the connecting thread. There are opportunities to visually open up and reveal this asset and provide an art walk or “Art in the Park” amenities.

**At Risk Buildings** - Las Vegas’ outstanding inventory of historic building stock is requiring a focused and sustained maintenance program. The City of Las Vegas is a Certified Local Government (CLG), eligible for pass-through funding for historic preservation from the National Park Service and the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division. CLG funds may be utilized for research and public education as well as municipal programs for historic preservation, building rehabilitation, financial incentives and code enforcement policy. The A&CD Resource Team recommends that the A&CD Council consider a partnership with the City Community Development Department, Design Review Board, and the Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation for the purpose of addressing the critical issue of at-risk buildings.

**Appropriate Parking** - What’s the appropriate amount of parking in downtown Las Vegas? Think of all the spaces in downtown as a system:

- Develop a system wide inventory of existing places and their rate of use.
- Consider reducing parking requirements in the zoning code as an incentive for desired uses such as mixed use projects or artists live/work studios.
- Allow on-street or off-site parking to be counted in meeting the parking requirement.

**Retaining the architectural fabric of Las Vegas**

- Update the existing historic district design guidelines.
- Continue and expand façade improvement/incentive program.



**Safeway site design**

The Safeway site at Seventh Street and Douglas Avenue offers an excellent opportunity as a catalytic mixed use project. This site could also serve as the rallying point for the community to engage in a process that represents the multi-cultural

diversity of the community. For example the Talin MarketPlace in Albuquerque is one model for this type of approach.

### **Streetscape**

In selecting the theme and materials for street furniture and planters in the Arts and Cultural District, incorporate the use of local artists in creating these designs.

### **Downtown Master Plan Process**

Develop a Master Plan process that is comprehensive from identifying a vision for the District to prioritizing specific projects and funding sources to implement the vision. It will also be important that the planning process utilizes a creative and extensive community engagement process that brings all the cultural and socio-economic groups of the community together to represent their special interests. The plan should also identify and exploit all possible funding and financing sources including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), revenue bonds, etc.

### **Potential Projects**

Several potential projects were identified that would support the success and viability of the new Arts and Cultural District in Las Vegas:

- Artist housing incentives in and near the District to provide inexpensive residences.
- Farmers Market to support the agricultural traditions of the community.
- Artist Coop/Incubator to promote emerging artists and cultural entrepreneurs, and provide an inexpensive outlet for their work.
- Art Market that portrays the diversity of the art being created in the community.
- International cultural center that celebrates the diversity within the community and their roots from around the globe.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING AND FINANCE**

### **Introduction and Context**

For the first century of its existence, after its founding in 1835, Las Vegas' economic fortunes were nourished by transportation corridors. The Santa Fe Trail (1821-79) and later the Santa Fe Railroad (1879-present) provided critical linkages to markets and

customers in the Midwest and beyond. Competing railroad lines, automobiles, and the Great Depression ended Las Vegas' economic pre-eminence in New Mexico.

Key base agricultural industries have also declined substantially. Sheep, cattle, timber, and other major economic drivers have nearly vanished. Today, major governmental and institutional payrolls sustain the local economy, but in fact Las Vegas and northeastern New Mexico are contending with declining and aging populations and infrastructure deficiencies.

Las Vegas' major assets are its educational institutions, natural beauty, sensational historic architecture, multi-cultural diversity, and entrepreneurial spirit. Las Vegas' location is also an advantage, as it is easily accessible on Interstate 25 between Albuquerque and Denver.

Las Vegas' governmental and organizational capacity has fluctuated over the years, sensitive to difficult and limited financial resources. Today, however, Las Vegas enjoys progressive and visionary leadership and a renewed determination. The timing is opportune for the development of an Arts and Cultural District.

### Common Comments

Several recurrent themes were articulated by community leaders regarding financial concerns for community economic development and the potential of an Arts and Cultural District. The most significant themes are:

- **Las Vegas needs a venture capital fund** for entrepreneurs and small business owners. Many local entrepreneurs have good ideas for a business, but lack the collateral to borrow funds for start-ups and expansions. About \$300-500,000 of venture capital funds would be adequate to start an effective program. Economic development leaders are aware of this need and are working hard to attract funds for a program.
- **There is a need in Las Vegas for entrepreneurial and business skills training.** The local population is talented, with innate genius and the skills to handcraft and manufacture products for the marketplace. There is a need for a business incubator and business skills workshops. Current business training programs are not well publicized. The Las Vegas Economic Development Corporation has started an Enterprise Initiative for entrepreneur development with matching funding provided by the City and Kellogg Foundation. This is a new program and will need to be monitored closely.
- **Inflated real estate values are a disincentive for development.** Like elsewhere, Las Vegas was affected by the dramatic real estate speculation caused by readily available mortgage financing. Residential and commercial sales price listings rose sharply within the past decade. After the subprime mortgage crisis, the decline in property valuation has been slow to reach Las

Vegas. As a result, there is an abundance of real estate for sale at optimistic prices, and the local market is readjusting to a recession.

- **Rental housing and affordable housing are major concerns.** There is an acute shortage of quality affordable rental housing for students, working class people, and artists. Much of the affordable housing stock in Las Vegas is rundown. NMHU is building a new campus dormitory that will help alleviate the problem. The City lacks a Community Development Corporation (CDC) that could be an effective partner in housing development.
- **There is a historical lack of consensus and cooperation between government, institutions, and the private sector.** The divided communities of East and West Las Vegas consolidated in 1970, but the legacy of “patron” politics and political fiefdoms is still prevalent. The community has made progress, but still lacks a unified organizational network and financial teamwork to adequately support local community economic development.
- **Las Vegas suffers from a fragmented and overextended legislative delegation.** Las Vegas’ critical infrastructure needs and its considerable institutional needs, recently dominated by water, place great pressures on its legislative representatives. Often high priority needs are not met or addressed in an efficient process.
- **The City of Las Vegas is financially strapped.** The city government is currently struggling to stabilize its finances. While city officials seem eager to assist and participate in the Arts and Cultural District development, actual financial support may be limited in the short term.
- **There is a perceived lack of sales opportunities for local artists.** There are several excellent galleries and display venues for local artists in the community. However, the community may not have the financial resources, art appreciation, or motivation to purchase art and sustain local artists. Other strategies, such as internet sales, may enhance local artists’ access to markets and sales.

### Kudos/Accomplishments

- **The presence of three higher educational institutions offers dynamic potential and opportunities for development collaboration.** Progressive and community-minded leadership at New Mexico Highlands University, Luna Community College, and Armand Hammer United World College enables new and powerful opportunities for the Arts and Cultural District.
- **The City government has undergone reform and realignment in recent years.** The city is improving its management systems and professional capacity,

and officials are interested in creative financing strategies to support the development of the local economy in Las Vegas.

- **The city owns several key downtown properties and sites in the District** and is interested in creative partnerships. These properties include the railroad depot, former City Hall, Carnegie Library, the City Museum, the former Safeway site, OK Café building on Bridge Street, and the Police station complex on the Plaza.
- **The Las Vegas Economic Development Corporation has secured grant funding from the Kellogg Foundation** for an Enterprise Initiative and entrepreneurial training programs. This major initiative can greatly support the Arts and Cultural District.



- **The city will see a dramatic increase in hotel/motel rooms within two years.** The new Holiday Inn Express and the on-going Plaza Hotel expansion project are symbolic of enhanced potential for tourism development in the city and region.
- **Las Vegas has a significant niche as a film location site.** Last year's Academy Award winner for Best Film, "No Country for Old Men," was substantially filmed in Las Vegas. The community may consider marketing campaigns, film festivals, and local incentives to enhance this opportunity. In addition, the community may explore film industry job training programs and entrepreneurial businesses.

## Recommendations and Strategies

The financing and sustainability team identified six broad thematic strategies for development of the creative economy in Las Vegas. These include:

1. Social Networks and Organizational Capacity
2. Creative Use of Lodger's Tax
3. Catalytic Developer
4. Developing a Historic Building Arts Program

5. Creative Financing
6. Buy Local

## **1. Social Networks and Organizational Capacity**

A major challenge to the success of an Arts and Cultural District in Las Vegas is simply identifying artists and cultural entrepreneurs and organizing them as a key constituency. Sustainability for the long haul will require determined volunteers as well as cash and in-kind resources.

Las Vegas is a commercial and service area for a large area. By utilizing an Asset Mapping process, the Arts and Cultural Districts Council may begin to identify important individuals to participate in the District.

A cultural economy database is a valuable and essential tool for leadership development, collaboration, and programming opportunities for the District. The completion of this effort should be celebrated by a social event and wide distribution of the data base.

Resource team members are available to provide technical assistance and other resources for the Asset Mapping process.

## **2. Creative Use of Lodger's Tax**

The resource team discovered that the current rate of Lodger's Tax collections in Las Vegas is 4%, compared to Raton's rate of 5% and Santa Fe's rate of 7%.

While raising the Lodger's Tax rate is a sensitive issue in any community, the resource team recommends a creative and thoughtful community assessment of increasing the local lodger's rate for the purposes of reinvestment in the A&C District.

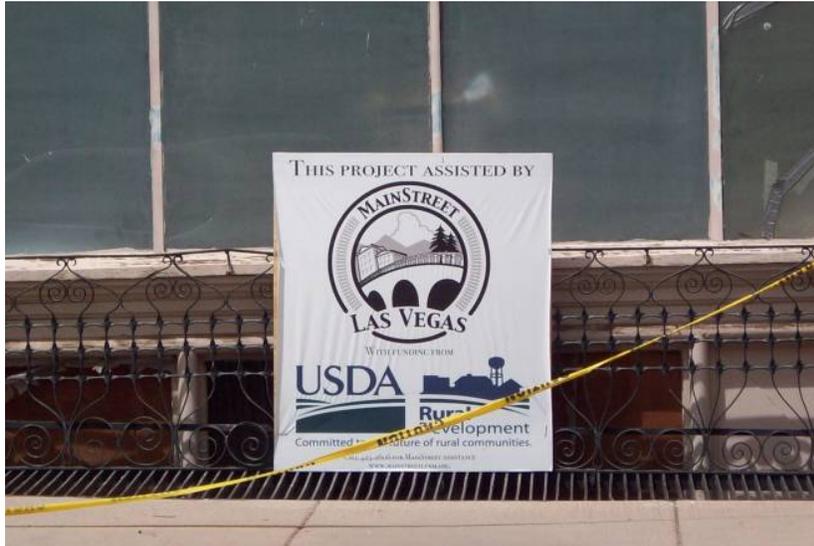
The strategy of utilizing incremental increases in lodger's taxes to support a revenue bonding process for capital projects and cultural institutions within the district, a non-profit arts center for example is strongly encouraged.

## **3. Catalytic Developer**

With many significant historic buildings in Las Vegas at risk due to critical maintenance needs, the community should consider implementing a catalytic development strategy which could raise capital to rehabilitate numerous buildings simultaneously.

Las Vegas has witnessed catalytic development recently in the La Plaza Vieja Partnership. Developed by Slick and Associates in partnership with Plaza and Bridge Street property owners, over 50 limited partner investors, and the City of Las Vegas, the project invested over \$2 million in the rehabilitation of 15 historic buildings in the

late 1980's. La Plaza Vieja Partnership played a key role in arresting the decline of Old Town and contributing to its revival.



While La Plaza Vieja Partnership offered a creative model of for-profit catalytic development, other models may apply. The founding of a local community development corporation (CDC) to enhance housing and mixed-use infill buildings within the Arts and Cultural District seems like a logical and needed next step.

Other types of “legacy” reinvestment projects, whereby local property owners can create long-term investment partnerships for rehabilitation and residency while maintaining ownership of property are worth pursuing.

The New Mexico Finance Authority received a major allotment of New Markets Tax Credits from the U.S. Treasury Department in 2007. New Markets Tax Credits are intended to attract significant capital investment in the nation's most economically distressed census tracts. New Markets Tax Credits may be earned in conjunction with federal and state historic preservation tax credits, offering investors over a 50% return in federal tax credits within seven years. The New Markets Tax Credit program may be appropriate for a catalytic development project in Las Vegas.

#### **4. Developing a Historic Building Arts Program**

The creation of a historic building arts program that could train local craftsmen has been much discussed and a long held dream for many Las Vegans. The need for such a program in Las Vegas and elsewhere in New Mexico (where many Victorian era buildings are in need of maintenance) could be a major opportunity for Luna Community College.

A creative approach might be to combine a historic building arts program with a sustainable green building course that could promote innovative and energy-efficient solutions to rehabilitation of existing buildings.

Such a historic/sustainable building program could attract strong and diverse partners from federal and state agencies, local educational institutions, workforce development advocates, and private contractors.

## 5. City Government and Creative Financing

A change in administration at Las Vegas City Hall within the past six months has coincided with the Arts and Cultural District designation. While the new administration will face difficult administrative and management challenges, it appears open and motivated to establish a partnership with the local Arts and Cultural District Council.

Creating a development consortium with New Mexico Highlands University, the United World College, Luna Community College, and local financial institutions, might work to everyone's benefit. Such a partnership could help clarify the city's legislative agenda as well as community development priorities.



The City's adoption of the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) is a significant advantage in supporting the Arts and Culture District. Other municipal programs such as tax increment financing and the Metropolitan Redevelopment Area could enhance to city's capacity to invest in the District.

These strategies may be addressed in a downtown master plan. Other creative financing programs are listed here below.

### Financing Programs for Enhancing the Cultural Economy

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), working primarily through its state and regional offices, assists rural communities with a variety of grant and loan programs. The USDA also provides loans and guarantees to private business owners. Some of the important financing programs that could support the Arts and Cultural District include Home Financing loans, Community Facilities Loans and Grants, Rural Economic Development loans and grants, the Rural Community Development Initiative, and Guaranteed Loans for Business. Please note the Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG) and Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) mentioned above.
- The passage of New Mexico's Affordable Housing Act in the 2004 Legislature enables municipalities to invest public funds in affordable housing projects and development. By creating an affordable housing plan, Las Vegas may identify housing issues and needs to enhance the cultural economy. The New Mexico

Mortgage Finance Authority also invests public funds in affordable housing projects.

- The New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA) is a primary source for low-interest loans and grants for buildings and infrastructure development. NMFA provides assistance to municipalities and other governmental entities for major projects. Another program administered by the NMFA of interest to Las Vegas is the New Markets Tax credit program, which can combine new markets tax credits with historic preservation tax credits. These combined federal tax credits can offer developers over a 50% return on investment (in tax credits alone) within seven years. A recovering commercial district such as downtown Las Vegas could qualify for New Markets tax credit allocations from NMFA.
- The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development offers a variety of programs that may be useful to the development of Silver City's Arts and Cultural District. These include Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Rural Housing and Economic Development Grants, and HUD Hope VI Affordable Housing grants for Main Street communities.
- Federal Scenic Byway grants are available to continue development of the Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway.
- The New Mexico MainStreet Capital Outlay fund is a source of funding for capital projects. The New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Act will allow and enable the City to invest capital outlay funds in projects located within the Arts and Cultural District. These funds may be used for both public and private projects and businesses. A non-profit developer may also apply for these funds.

## 6. Buy Local

The consortium of three colleges along with city and county governments, and other partners, are encouraged to develop a policy of "buy local." Such a policy may work creatively with local growers, craftsmen, suppliers, tradesmen, and others to reduce cash leakage from Las Vegas and support the local economy.

## LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT - SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Building an Arts and Cultural District in Las Vegas will require intensive grass-roots organizing and human resource development on one hand and thoughtful strategic planning on the other. Factionalism, community politics, and competition for scarce resources have long divided the community, and these hindrances to growth and prosperity need to be transcended to create new economic opportunity. Hard work and sustained vision can ensure the success of an Arts and Cultural District.

The Resource Team recommends several projects for implementation within the next few months and year that can build the foundation for enhanced public and private investments. These action steps are:

- Begin the Asset Mapping process to identify all artists, knowledge workers, and contributors to the local cultural economy and establish a useful data base and network for maximum inclusion and diversification;
- Develop a Fund-raising strategy and process;
- Work closely with the City Council and Administration to craft and enact a municipal Arts and Culture District ordinance;
- Develop measurable benchmarks and performance measures for reporting to the community, NM Arts Commission, and other state and federal agencies;
- Begin the process of developing a Cultural Plan for the District, and
- Work with the City's Community Development Department to create a Master Plan for the greater downtown commercial corridor.

New Mexico MainStreet and its partner agencies stand ready to assist the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Council with the implementation of the critical first projects.

