



Silver City MainStreet ARTS and CULTURAL DISTRICT RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT

Conducted March 10 - 13, 2008

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Mexico Main Street began developing an Arts and Cultural District initiative in 2005. Already, a global trend was growing to consider the implications of culture on the economy. With the passage of the New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Act in 2007, the time was ripe for providing communities with a structure and endorsement for broadening economic development through arts and culture. Silver City was selected as one of two pilot program Arts and Cultural Districts for New Mexico because of its established base of cultural amenities and the Silver City MainStreet Project and Mimbres Region Arts Council's long history of supporting a vibrant historic downtown.

Led by an unprecedented partnership of three state departments and community not-for-profits, a resource team made up of professionals with expertise on successful downtown arts and cultural development practices was assigned to the project to provide an on-site assessment. During a three day visit in March 2008, they conducted many interviews with residents and researched a variety of issues to ultimately craft final recommendations 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 Silver City Arts and Cultural District Council at the conclusion of the visit.

Each group begin their reports by pointing out the strengths and accomplishments that Silver City enjoys. For example, residents are blessed with a rich multicultural heritage expressed in their architecture, foods, arts, education, activities and celebrations. Silver City has accomplished much with a "can do" attitude despite limited resources, and there appears to be a community consensus on the importance of the creative economy in Silver City. Some of the comments or findings of the report include the need for more hotel and motel rooms downtown, a lack of downtown performance venues which is surprising given that there are three historic theaters located in close proximity, 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.

Each of the four breakout groups provided short and long term recommendations that could be accomplished in the next 18 to 24 months. A sampling of these include exploring the state and federal incentives available for projects such as rehabilitating the Murray Hotel or providing affordable live/work space downtown, creating a downtown Theater District with the three historic theaters: Silco, Gila and El Sol, relocating the Farmer's Market to downtown, and creating a multicultural center.

Silver City is blessed with leadership, creativity and resourcefulness. Cultural economic development is not intended for one or two sectors of any community. 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 Silver City 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. Silver City is surrounded by the ruins of the Mimbres culture that created astonishing pottery designs over seven centuries ago. 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.

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. Silver City, Las Vegas, Socorro, Raton, and Gallup were selected as the five original

MainStreet cities. Only Silver City has maintained the program for over twenty two years. Las Vegas and Raton have returned as fully certified programs within the past three years, and 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 such as Richard Florida's The Rise of the Creative Class (2002), 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).

SILVER CITY'S TRIUMPH

During 2007, an application process was developed by New Mexico MainStreet in consultation with its partners. The applications were distributed to eligible MainStreet communities at the Fall Quarterly meeting held in Silver City in October. MainStreet managers from across the state had the opportunity to enjoy Silver City's bustling downtown and dynamic arts scene. MainStreet communities also participated in a hands-on workshop to map their respective downtown cultural assets.

The Fall Quarterly meeting was a warm-up for the applications process for the Arts and Cultural Districts designations, which were announced in January 2008. Silver City submitted the top-ranked application and positioned itself for the Resource Team visit in March.

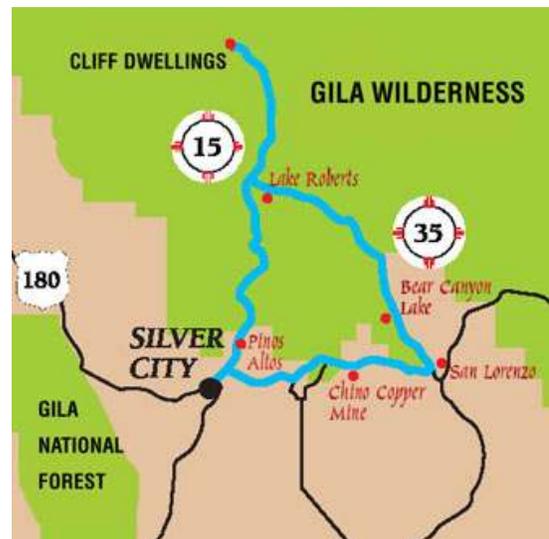
The Fall Quarterly meeting, Arts and Cultural District application and Resource Team visit confirmed Silver City's eminence as a growing center for creative economic

development in the Southwest. Silver City's location and proximity to Mexico, Arizona and California beyond offer unique themes and opportunities for creative enterprises.

OVERVIEW OF SILVER CITY

Located in largely rural Grant County in the southwestern part of New Mexico, Silver City is a thriving community with a population of about 10,000 nestled alongside more than 3 million acres of the Gila Wilderness. With historic ties to mining, ranching and agriculture, the town of Silver City has grown into a community supporting a state university, four historic districts, numerous art galleries, restaurants/coffeehouses, and a variety of retail/service businesses.

Silver City was selected as one of two pilot program Arts and Cultural Districts for New Mexico because of its growing base of cultural amenities. Silver City was one of the 2005 Dozen Distinctive Destinations of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and is consistently named in the top 100 Smart Art Towns of America. The largest higher education institution in southwest New Mexico, Western New Mexico University, boasts arts education facilities, a fine arts center theater and a museum with one of the world's largest collection of Mimbres pottery, basketry and artifacts.



Playing a key role in the newly designated Arts and Cultural District is the Mimbres Region Arts Council, which is considered a top arts council in New Mexico.

The Silver City MainStreet Project is the longest continuously-operating program in the state and was one of the five original MainStreet programs from 1985. MainStreet's revitalization efforts have resulted in a vibrant historic downtown by focusing on revitalization and preservation by promoting the value of historic buildings as assets and by retaining community character.

Historic Downtown Silver City, with its unique and compelling characteristics and history, is marketed as a destination for residents, visitors, businesses, and investors. MainStreet and other organizations sponsor yearly special events that attract people of all ages to the District.

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 Division, Exec. Director
Jeff Mitchell	UNM BBER, Senior Research Scientist
Jesse Rye	The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
Chuck Zimmer	NM Arts Division, Art In Public Places

Marketing and Promotion

John Stafford	Museum of NM Foundation
Maggie Macnab	Macnab Design
Mari Mullen	Port Townsend, WA MainStreet, Manager
Richard Eeds	NM Tourism Dept, Advertising Director

Physical Planning and Design

Charlie Deans	NM MainStreet Urban Planner
Heather Barrett	Cultural Properties Surveyor
Edwar Calderon	DPAC Intern, UNM School of Architecture & Planning
Paige Winslet	Architectural Assistant

Capacity Building and Finance

Rich Williams	NM MainStreet Director, State Arts & Cultural District Coordinator
Elmo Baca	NM MainStreet Special Projects
Jennifer Craig	WESSTCorp

These statewide and national specialists were chosen specific to the needs of Silver City's Arts and Cultural District and were provided with background materials in advance of their on-site visit. They assembled in Silver City the week of March 10 - 13, 2008 to gather a great deal of information and insight about Silver City'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 Council 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 Arts and Cultural District 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 Arts and Cultural District 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 Council and interested community members. This report carries more detail than the public presentation and constitutes the final written assessment report to the Silver City Arts and Cultural District Council.

The Resource Team would like to thank our community hosts, Frank Milan of Silver City MainStreet and Faye McCalmont of the Mimbres Regional Arts Council for their

hard work, gracious hospitality and arrangements that kept us all fed and on schedule. Our experience of Silver City was that much more favorable because of Frank and Faye.

Next Steps

These recommendations should be reviewed by the local Arts and Cultural District Council and become the basis for the community's first two-year work plan. They should lead to planning, 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 Silver City 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.

CULTURAL PLANNING

Observations

The Cultural Planning Team interviewed numerous individuals representing artists, artisans, cultural entrepreneurs, cultural enterprises, theater and film, museums, cultural and civic centers, lodging and restaurants, historic preservationists, cultural leaders, arts council leaders, and social services from the Silver City area. The Team compiled their notes, discussed recurring themes and initiated their public presentation with observed strengths, followed by findings and ending with short term and long term recommendations:

Strengths

- Variety of arts and cultural businesses already exist
- Non-arts and cultural businesses in place to broaden and support the District's economic base
- All constituent groups indicated a desire for inclusion and participation
- Many creative activities are happening despite limited resources
- Alive After Five - the Downtown nightlife is happening at the Buffalo Bar and can be expanded upon
- Positive attitude exists that residents of Silver City make things happen

Findings

- Local cultural events calendar not reaching enough of the community to support events attendance and avoid scheduling conflicts
- Artists/artisans are wanting additional market opportunities beyond the gallery setting
- Artists/artisans are wanting professional development opportunities
- There is a growing interest in contemporary art
- Performing arts has outgrown the limited space availability
- Community is wanting a hub or common area for creation, presentation, education and rehearsal space in the downtown area; like a multicultural center
- Various segments of the population spanning ethnicity, age, gender, established/emerging artists, and socioeconomic status report a disconnect with the greater community
- The arts and cultural connection between WNMU and Downtown could be strengthened and mutually beneficial



- WNMU’s Expressive Arts department could be expanded upon to better attract and support students
- There are creative opportunities for addressing vacant Downtown spaces
- Existing audiences could be expanded by reaching out to younger and more diverse constituents, and to those not usually in attendance
- Broader community raised issues of affordability, identity, territory and cultural appropriateness of the District

From the strengths and findings, the Cultural Planning Team debated the issues and proposed recommendations within their group and with the full Resource Team. Below are their short and long term recommendations that the Silver City Arts and Cultural District should consider as goals:

Short Term Goals

- **Create a regular Downtown closed-street arts & crafts market** - include booths, vendors, food, music, kid/family activities, and entertainment as a tool for expanding weekend galleries events, developing artisan marketing opportunities, and drawing residents and visitors to the District.
- **Relocate Farmer’s Market to the Downtown area** - create more opportunities for residents to frequent Downtown businesses, and reinforce the District as a center for broad cultural activities and commerce.
- **Strengthen the connection between WNMU and Downtown** - form a partnership between the Arts and Cultural District Council and WNMU to explore and collaborate on student and community programming such as:
 - proposed Downtown WNMU satellite museum
 - public art mentorship program
 - enhanced arts education in the K-12 schools
 - community college classes and summer workshops
 - arts educator program with music, theater, and visual arts
 - optimize use of WNMU’s fine performance and multi-use space for community programming

Enhanced programming for WNMU and the District will attract new students to WNMU and appeal to a broader audience for District activities.

- **Optimize use of the Silco and Gila Theaters** - use additional space for local performing artists. The Arts and Cultural District Council may want to forge a dialogue with local performers to better ascertain their artistic needs. Incentives could be created for increasing use of these historic theaters. In

addition, consider purchasing and/or renovating the El Sol Theater to further supplement performance space. Optimizing the use of all three historic theaters could generate enough synergy to create a viable Performing Arts Zone in the District.

Long Term Goals

- **Develop an Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan** - this Arts and Cultural District Assessment Report details observations and recommendations specific to Silver City and are feasible to implement within the first two start-up years of Silver City's Arts and Cultural District program. The Resource Team's recommendations build on the local Arts and Cultural District Application for authorization and should lead to planning, development, municipal adoption and implementation of a downtown Master Plan for infrastructure and capital investments. Tied to the Master Plan is an Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan. The arts are increasingly recognized as a catalyst for community development and regeneration of civic pride. The Cultural Plan will guide the community in creating a confident and creative place in which to live, work and do business.
- **Create "Phantom Galleries" with vacant storefront displays** - take advantage of the vacant downtown storefront windows to partner with property owners, WNMU, K-12 schools, local artists and arts organizations, and the not-for-profit sector to develop temporary exhibitions showcasing art by young and emerging artists, and not-for-profit projects. The result is a positive image to viewers and promotes local arts and cultural activities.

- **Adopt an Art in Public Places Ordinance** - in a typical public art program, a small percentage of municipal construction funds derived from the general obligation bond program and certain revenue bonds is set aside for the purchase or commission of works of art. A public process identifies a work that is in harmony with its surroundings and also supports the community interest through physical, social, cultural, and historical qualities of the community while maintaining a unique and powerful expression of artistic vision.



- **Expand the Expressive Arts Program at WNMU into a regional Arts Education Program** - the Arts and Cultural District Council and WNMU should consider how

to strategically position WNMU as a leader in developing professional artists and art educators. Not only does this provide a student draw for WNMU, but it gives young adults a reason to stay in Silver City following graduation.

- **Open a Multi-Cultural Center in the Arts and Cultural District** - Create a gathering place for residents of all ethnicities, age, gender, artistic ability and socioeconomic status that will serve as a hub for creative learning activities, education, and support for local culture. Develop creative and consistent programming for young and emerging artists/performers/musicians and youth in general. The Downtown area has a supply of built spaces that could be developed into a thriving Multi-Cultural Center. Programming could be coordinated through the Arts and Cultural District Council, WNMU, and the Mimbres Regional Arts Council.



The Cultural Planning Team believes that Silver City has the foundation, resources and energy to develop their Arts and Cultural District into a hub of connections between its cultural resources, community and economic development efforts. The result will be greater participation in and appreciation of all cultures in the District, Silver City and in southwestern New Mexico.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Observations

The Marketing and Promotions Team interviewed many individuals representing downtown Silver City restaurants, lodging, Visitors Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, film, media, e-commerce, local graphic and interior designers, gallery owners, business marketing, and the MainStreet Promotions Committee members. The Team summarized their notes and reviewed them with the full Resource Team. They presented their findings below beginning with the strengths observed:

Strengths

- Productive websites - great work has been done on the Chamber website, Arts

Council page, community group pages; some nice collaborations in place now

- Passionate community with expertise available to make things happen
- Print materials - colorful, welcoming, informative
- Outdoor Gila wilderness area attracts outdoor recreation
- Appealing climate with four “gentle seasons”
- Victorian architecture reinforces community’s authentic history
- Historic sites of interest in District or close proximity
- Silver City’s history is visible as a strong artistic story
- Colorful past - mining and Wild West history enhance character of town
- Vibrant arts scene that has room to grow
- General consensus that an arts and culturally-based community is positive



Short Term Opportunities

- Develop a comprehensive regional **Marketing Plan**
- **Acquire website enhancements** to automate events calendar so that presenting organizations can easily input and update their events listings (List Mgt Etc)
- **Create a Quarterly Arts Walk** to build downtown foot traffic that will grow into a monthly event over time
- **Relocate Farmers’ Market** to Downtown
- **Coupon Book Opportunity** - MainStreet or Valpak coupon book could be mailed to entire county to attract local buyers to Downtown
- **Three Day Weekends** - consider keeping Downtown retail open Saturday

through Monday on holiday weekends as tourists frequently visit and shop on holiday weekends

- Investigate **collaborating** with Deming, T or C, and Las Cruces on regional marketing opportunities
- **Develop fun promotional products** - promo DVD, bumper sticker with marketing message, and mints featuring image of Downtown Silver City
- Work towards **uniform shopping and dining hours**
- **Build a Mining Museum** as part of the Silver City Museum expansion to attract visitors and expand local activities
- Take advantage of mild climate by creating more **patio dining venues**
- Bicycle/mounted **police presence** assures secure atmosphere
- Educate retailers to provide **enhanced customer service**
- Assess current **parking needs** and create accessible parking
- Develop a community coordinated **events calendar** with:
 - Rack card
 - Chamber Website - include login for events calendar so it is coordinated and serves as a community events hub
 - Printed calendar featuring local artwork listing all event dates



Long Term Strategies

- **Special Events** - successful special events/festivals bring fun for locals and visitors from the chocolate fantasia to the bike race and blues festivals; these events are growing and point to the opportunity of developing an additional signature event between 4th of July and Labor Day advertised in major regional metro areas with lodging funds
- Consider **New Event Ideas** - a retail/healing arts fair weekend with world music; add a Father's Day event in June, possibly tie into a Western theme

event

- **Celebrate Silver City’s Hispanic/Native American/Anglo arts and culture** - with ongoing and special events, classes, exhibits, performances for locals and visitors
- **Develop new opportunities** for music, performance, dance, arts, history, theater enactment, and new museum exhibits
- **Review Signage Needs** - billboard locations on I-10 are within drivable distance. Digital billboard in Tucson and Phoenix showing cooler summer temperature in Silver City will be an immediate draw. Signage should be on I-10 before and upon arriving in Silver City.

PHYSICAL PLANNING AND DESIGN

Introduction and Context

Silver City’s urban environment and downtown context features compact and dense development largely determined by economic and geographical forces. The community enjoyed boomtown growth during the 1870’s and 1880’s because of its substantial mineral wealth in silver and copper. Mining remained a major industry for the 19th and 20th centuries and enabled many prosperous citizens to construct impressive residences and commercial buildings in a variety of Victorian and Southwestern architectural styles. Downtown Silver City boasts many significant historic buildings which form attractive street walls and create a pedestrian ambience.

Nestled between hills and the San Vicente Creek, Silver City grew steadily in a grid plan. A series of floods between 1895 and 1906 washed away the original Main Street, leaving in its place a 55 foot deep “Big Ditch” that has become a downtown nature environment. The compact development of downtown Silver City today has implications for open space conservation, infill development and expansion constraints.

Silver City is a well-preserved historic town and has created four historic districts that are listed on local, state and national historic registers. The four historic districts are the Silver City Historic District which includes the downtown commercial district; the North Addition Historic District; Black’s Addition Historic District; and the Chihuahua Hill Historic District.

Common Comments

Several recurrent themes were noted during the Physical Planning and Design Group's research on the ground and their interviews with six different groups. The most significant included:

- **The Big Ditch as a connecting element for downtown from the Waterworks Building to San Vicente Heritage Site** - this unique pedestrian amenity was noted by all as a resource to be celebrated and an opportunity to be a major pedestrian link connecting multiple arts and cultural elements from the Waterworks/Virginia Street Park to the north through town to the San Vicente Heritage District at the southern end of downtown.
- **A&C District Boundary, what's in and what's out** - interviewees debated the extents of the District boundary, prompted by the extent of arts and cultural resources identified on the Town's original application map and individual knowledge of community resources. Concerns were expressed about the resources left out, such as the Waterworks area. Others envisioned a more compact and clearly identifiable arts and cultural district, one which could easily be walked by visitors.
- **Signage/wayfinding/district identification/gateways** - the need to provide wayfinding resources, including signage, gateways and directional kiosks was a recurrent theme in each interview group. Multiple opportunities were identified to help give the District a distinct identity. These included creating a logo or brand for the District, creating gateway features to draw visitors from the highway, providing unique street signs within the District, and locating narrow kiosks per block with directional signage and listing/mapping of businesses in District. Create an active streetscape.
- **Lack of downtown performance venues** - another common concern was the need for a greater diversity of venues for music, performing arts, literature, visual arts, film, cultural & heritage festivals and markets, meetings and other events. Many groups find that the size, location, affordability, acoustics, technology, or layout of current venues does not match their needs. Greater diversity of event venues in the downtown area will add vibrancy to the Historic Downtown and encourage visitation by residents and visitors.



Kudos/Accomplishments

The Town of Silver City has drawn together to envision and execute multiple projects in the recent past which merit recognition. A few of them include:

- **Silco Theater** - the preservation and rehabilitation of the Silco Theater on Bullard Street into a multi-use facility is a significant community-based project. The Silco is a great community asset and a wonderful catalyst for future renovation in the historic downtown.
- **Multiple National and State Registered Historic Districts** - while many communities in New Mexico have only one or none, Silver City has multiple Historic Districts officially registered as cultural resources worthy of preservation.
- **Penny Park** - Penny Park is unique treasure, a community-initiated and community-built park that is managed by a non-profit organization.
- **Bullard Street Improvements** - the recent streetscape improvements create a more attractive and unified downtown.
- **La Capilla** - a significant partnership between Silver City and community groups recreated the small chapel and is planning the surrounding grounds for a cultural heritage park celebrating Native American, Hispanic and Anglo cultures and traditions.
- **Big Ditch River Park** - the Big Ditch is a wonderful amenity turning the tragic flooding of a century ago into a green pedestrian haven through the heart of the city.
- **Passion & Partnerships** - Silver City citizens creatively and actively find common ground and work together to achieve the goals of the community. Examples of this cooperative passion include the Botanical Garden, La Capilla, Penny Park, and the Silco Theater renovation.

Short Term Strategies

Multiple strategies in the creation of an Arts and Cultural District can be accomplished in the next six to eighteen months, including:

- **Implement a Façade Improvement Program** - to assist in identifying and revitalizing commercial properties. The program will aid property or business owners in improving their storefront and building façades through grants and design assistance. Revitalized businesses impart more vitality in the neighborhood and the use of local designers and contractors keeps money in the community. Support in development of the program and examples of

similar programs in other communities are available through New Mexico MainStreet.

- **Organize and implement a Downtown Master Plan** - a Master Plan helps the community define its vision and goals for downtown and creates tools for meeting those goals. The plan will help business and property owners within the plan area to develop an economically active and energetic historic downtown, providing visitors and residents alike with an attractive, appealing downtown. Funding for development of this plan has already been allocated. Some identified needs which the Master Plan can assist with include:
 - Zoning and land use
 - Fire code provisions
 - Parking management plan
 - One way streets
 - Incentives to achieve outcomes
- **Artist live/work zoning provisions** - revise the zoning code to aid the community in attracting and keeping visual and performing artists within the Arts and Cultural District by allowing live/work spaces.
- **Cultural enterprises as a permitted use in the downtown overlay zone** - allows diverse uses, such as visual and performing arts, literature, museums, film, crafts and healing arts, to support a diverse and energetic District. A definition for this use could be: Commercial ventures that connect creators and artists to markets and consumers, and create, produce and market cultural goods and services, generating economic, cultural and social opportunities for artists while adding cultural value for consumers. Cultural enterprises operate in performing arts, artisan manufacturing centers, museums, music, literature, publishing, film, folk art, architecture and creative tourism.
- **Historic preservation educational workshops** - workshops and other historic preservation resources are currently offered through New Mexico MainStreet. The community may also seek technical assistance, educational programs, and funding from the state Historic Preservation Division.
- **Waterworks building emergency stabilization** - the building is currently endangered due to a leaky roof. Coordinate efforts with UNM's School of Architecture & Planning, La Raza Program to identify potential new uses for the



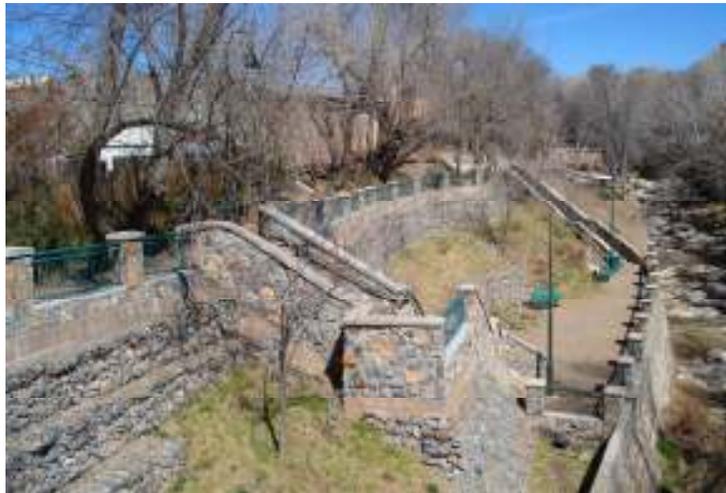
building.

Long Term Strategies

Several long term strategies to address the development of a healthy and vibrant Arts and Cultural District were identified:

- **Signage/wayfinding/districts identity program** - create an Arts and Cultural District active streetscape with signage and wayfinding system. Create a District Identity Program to brand the District, using the same logo/theme on street signs, literature, web pages, kiosks, directional signage, etc.
- **Theater District as performing arts/film venues and cultural center hub** - three historic theaters, the Silco, the Gila, and El Sol, within blocks of each other are community assets which should be taken advantage of. The Silco, currently being rehabilitated, offers a multipurpose space seating 100-150 people. The community has identified a need for a 300-500 seat theater with good acoustics, technology and lighting. The Gila has the capacity, but is in need of extensive rehabilitation. El Sol is a smaller space which might be used as a cultural center once it is rehabilitated. All three theaters should be restored and preserved. The synergy of three historic performing/cultural outlets in close proximity would be unmatched in New Mexico.

- **Extending the Big Ditch as a connective “String of Pearls”** - a major pedestrian opportunity exists to link multiple arts and cultural elements from the Waterworks/Virginia Street Park area north of town extending south along Silva Creek and the Big Ditch through town to the San Vicente Heritage District at the southern end of downtown.



- **Rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Waterworks as a cultural site** - stabilize, rehabilitate and adaptively reuse the Waterworks building. The area, including Virginia Street Park, botanical gardens, Waterworks building, and archeological site, is a cultural amenity which should be recognized.
- **Redevelopment of San Vicente Heritage Site** - build on the San Vicente Heritage Site Conceptual Plan to redevelop this site at the southern end of

Bullard Street and the Big Ditch. Development on this long neglected historic area has great potential to revitalize the south end of downtown.

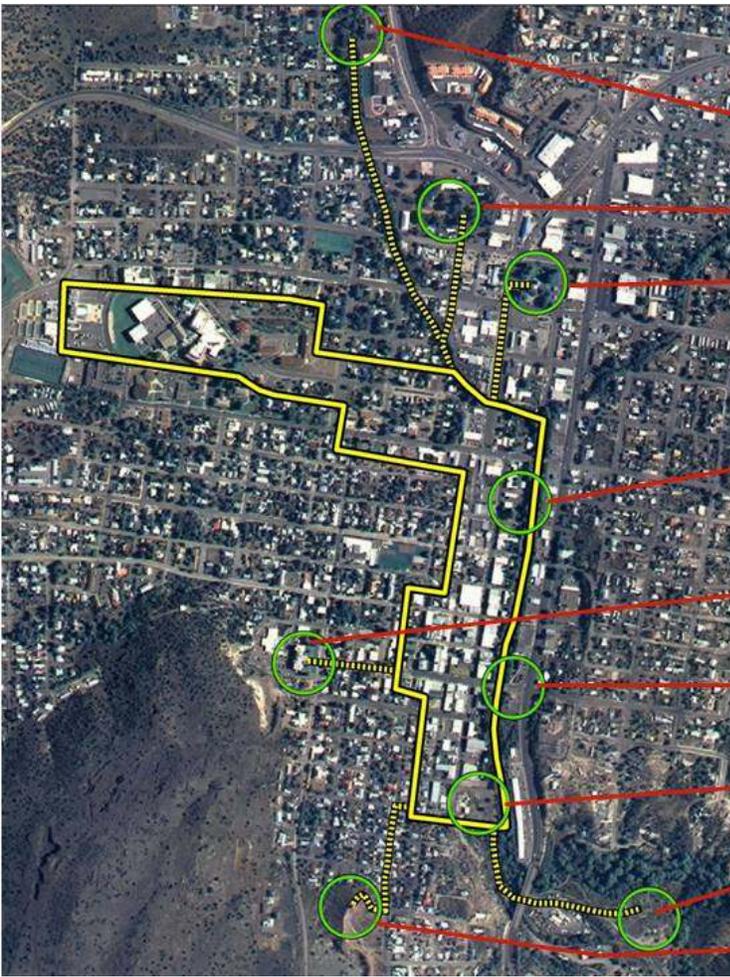
Connectivity

Opportunities to connect multiple significant sites within the town were documented through site visits and interviews with community members. In addition to the arts and cultural sites identified in the original submission, several other sites of significance were identified including the Waterworks building, Virginia Street Park, Botanical Gardens, Silva Creek, and the area around the confluence of Silva Creek and Pinos Altos Creek. Western New Mexico University campus houses many historic structures, a museum, and varied performance spaces. Big Ditch Park connects to the planned Downtown Plaza and Gateway. Grant County Courthouse, San Vicente Heritage District, Boston Hill, and La Capilla were identified as significant cultural resources to be interconnected.



Boundaries

The Town must adopt an ordinance defining the boundaries and the general intent and purposes for the Arts and Cultural District. The Physical Planning and Design Group, by examining the resources and on-the-ground research, created the following concept for the District Boundary. This is presented as one option to the boundary defined in the original application. The final boundary must be determined by the community.



Silver City A&C District

"Make it good for the residents and the tourists will come."

Waterworks Cultural Site

Penny Park

Gough Park

Main Street Plaza

Grant County Courthouse

Gateway

San Vicente Cultural Plaza

San Vicente Cienega

La Capilla

This option offers a multi-nodal approach with a tighter District boundary which can be integrated into a walking tour model with outlying nodes which can be reached through connecting walking routes. The core of this option parallels Bullard and the Big Ditch from Hudson to Texas, where the greatest concentration of arts and cultural resources were identified on the application map. The conceptual boundary extends to the San Vicente Cultural Plaza site to the south, and north to the confluence of Silva and Pinos Altos Creeks. A walkable route along 10th Street extends west to include the cultural core of Western New Mexico University within the boundary. Multiple other significant cultural nodes, many of which are outlying, are identified on this option, along with walkable routes to reach them from the District. These nodes include:

- Waterworks Cultural Site
- Penny Park
- Gough Park
- Main Street Plaza

- Grant County Courthouse
- Gateway to Arts & Cultural District
- San Vicente Cultural Plaza
- San Vicente Cienega
- La Capilla



CAPACITY BUILDING AND FINANCE

Introduction and Context

Silver City has seen its share of booms and busts and natural disasters during its history. The tumultuous mining industry suffered its most recent decline about ten years ago when the copper industry deflated, and many miners in Grant County lost their jobs.

The community has also demonstrated remarkable grit and tenacity in adjusting to misfortunes. After Main Street was swept away by a flood over a century ago, the devastated Big Ditch became a parkway that the community has continuously improved. Following the substantial loss of mining jobs in the 1990's, Silver City began to re-invent itself as an artist's colony, tourism destination and baby boomer retirement oasis.

This strategy has been successful in attracting new and enthusiastic residents to the town, many of them creative entrepreneurs who have opened galleries, studios and businesses in the downtown commercial district. The rise of the Yankie Street arts district is a manifestation of the vibrant cultural economy in Silver City. As a result, the proposed Arts and Cultural District for Silver City has a strong business infrastructure for sustainability and success.

The community has realized many significant projects during the past twenty years, demonstrating creativity and resourcefulness which are a model and inspiration to other cities. A new level of municipal engagement and financial innovation can consolidate recent gains in cultural economic development and accelerate Silver City's eminence as a Southwestern arts center.

Common Comments

- **The local economy is slowing down** - City officials reported a 3% decrease in revenues last year. In a city heavily dependent on the tourism economy, this was a warning flag.
- **Excellent but highly competitive non-profit organizations in Silver City** - Silver City is blessed with many excellent non-profit organizations that have served the community well over the years. Some people expressed concerns about the community's capacity to financially support so many organizations. Other related concerns were some turf battles, duplication of services, and confusion about who does what.
- **There appears to be community consensus on the importance of the creative economy in Silver City** - City government officials and also the Lodgers Tax Board acknowledged the major impact of the creative economy and tourism to the local economy. Over \$1 million in Lodgers Tax funds have been collected since 2002. The City indicated its willingness to entertain creative and long-term financial investments to strengthen creative economic development and tourism.

- **Silver City needs more hotel and motel rooms, especially Downtown** - this deficiency in the lodging industry was widely acknowledged. Several new motel projects in development were mentioned. An observation was made about the difficulty of establishing new bed and breakfast inns in the community because of restrictive zoning requirements.



- **Land use codes and zoning need to be revised to enable new investments in the district** - zoning needs to be updated to encourage more residential uses, specifically live/work housing and also residential use of second story spaces in commercial buildings. This process is underway, and should be accomplished within a year or two.
- **Structural problems in the local economy impact housing, work force development and education** - the perceived lack of suitable and affordable housing impacts young families, college graduates, and service sector workers. Improving the schools, attracting and retaining a skilled and dedicated work

force, and diversifying the housing supply are long-term strategies for creative economic development.

- **Gentrification appears to be a minor concern** - some fear of economic displacement from a growing cultural economy was mentioned, but immigration of new residents to Silver City had already been taking place for several years, and the community has been adjusting to it.

Kudos/Accomplishments

- **Silver City benefits from capable and dedicated leadership** - skilled and seasoned community leaders are serving in key positions at City government, Western New Mexico University, economic development organizations and non-profit service groups.
- **Silver City MainStreet is New Mexico's flagship program** - Silver City Main Street has been operational and effective for twenty-two continuous years, after being selected as one of New Mexico's original five main Street communities, with major accomplishments to its credit.
- **Mimbres Region Arts Council is one of New Mexico's best** - the Mimbres Region Arts Council offers the community diverse and outstanding arts programming. The organization is stable, growing and ready to embrace the Arts and Cultural District program.
- **Impressive record of critical infrastructure improvements through excellent planning, innovative fund-raising, and effective project management** - these projects include the comprehensive sidewalk and curb and gutter improvements, new streetlights, street pavings, the Big Ditch landscaping, a new Visitors Center and a new Skate Park.
- **Community works together through partnerships** - the spirit of effective partnerships was evident in the top-rated application for a pilot Arts and Cultural District, the composition of the proposed Arts and Cultural District Council, and also the impressive support for the Resource Team visit.
- **Regional and national recognition as an emerging arts community** - Silver City is regularly mentioned in national "quality of life" lists as an ideal arts community, tourism destination, or retirement haven.
- **Innovative in municipal and public fund raising** - Silver City has enacted the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) and is also a Certified Local Government (CLG) for Historic Preservation funding. The community has enjoyed strong leadership in the state legislature and Congress, successfully leveraging major public investments for public projects. Lodgers Tax funds have been used in creative ways to build cultural tourism and recreational

tourism in the region. New initiatives include New Mexico SMART funding for the rehabilitation of the Murray Hotel.

Sustainability for the Arts and Cultural Districts Council

In its Arts and Cultural District application, Silver City outlined the membership of the new Council and developed a working budget for three years. The proposed staffing for the Council will be provided by the Grant County Coalition for Economic Development Progress. The Coalition has raised funds for an Economic Development Coordinator, and it is estimated that the new coordinator will devote 20% professional time to staff support the Silver City Arts and Cultural District.



Our observation is that this part-time commitment may be adequate for the start-up phase of the District but that more staff support will be required in future phases of the District's development.

Our recommendation for staff support funds is to contact the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development program for a possible Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) or a Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG). These grants have been used successfully by other New Mexico MainStreet programs (specifically Las Vegas MainStreet) to support planning projects, business and entrepreneurial support services, and infrastructure development (such as a Wi-Fi district). Other USDA funding programs (Farmers

Markets) may also be utilized to support the Council's planning and staff capacity. The USDA has expressed interest in partnering with MainStreet programs for these purposes.

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, Silver City 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 Town of Silver City is currently undertaking an Affordable Housing Plan, and the Resource Team encourages the community to consider opportunities within the designated Arts and Cultural District.
- 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. Silver City has demonstrated success in securing approval of SMART funds for the rehabilitation of the Murray Hotel. Another program administered by the NMFA of interest to Silver City 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 Silver City 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, HUD Hope VI Affordable Housing grants for Main Street communities, and designated funding programs for *colonia* communities. Silver City’s designation as a *colonia* offers interesting opportunities for state and federal funding, especially for affordable housing and economic development programs to support cultural entrepreneurs.
- Federal Scenic Byway grants are available to continue development of the Trail of the Mountain Spirits Scenic Byway, marketed primarily by the Grant County/Silver City Chamber of Commerce.
- 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.

Municipal Engagement in the Arts and Cultural District

The Town of Silver City has unique opportunities to creatively engage in the support of its new Arts and Cultural District. The community has already adopted the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA), and the state’s Arts and Cultural District Act enables the town government to utilize public funds (including state appropriations,

municipal general funds, and Lodgers Tax funds) in public projects and also private building rehabilitations and business development. This flexibility can be utilized to support difficult to finance projects such as the Murray Hotel and the Silco Theater.

The Town of Silver City will also want to consider encouraging more private historic preservation rehabilitation projects within the Arts and Cultural District, since the maximum state historic preservation earned tax credit is doubled from \$25,000 to \$50,000 within the district. New public education programs in historic preservation may be funded through the Certified Local Government (CLG) program administered by the state Historic Preservation Division (HPD).

Other Programs To Consider Include:

- Establishing a TIF/TIDD (Tax Increment Financing/Tax Increment Development District), for the Arts and Cultural District. Increases in both property taxes and gross receipts taxes may be captured by the Town and re-invested in public improvement projects with the TIF district. Establishing a TIF is a sustained process requiring an ordinance adoption and public referendum, but there appears to be substantial support for the new Arts and Cultural District.
- A BID (Business Improvement District) collects contributions from private property owners within the BID to fund organization and management support (for example staffing for MainStreet and/or the Arts and Cultural District Council), and also marketing and promotional activities, such as advertising, banners, street signs, etc. BID funds may also fund public improvements such as sidewalks, trash receptacles, benches, landscaping, and public art. Funds are collected annually by the municipality and redistributed according to a plan.
- The New Mexico Tourism Department's Scenic Byways Program is a potential source for cultural and heritage interpretation funding.

Some Important Next Steps

- Many community members acknowledged the importance of tourism in Silver City, but would like more research and analysis about the local and regional tourism industry. We recommend that the community undertake a Tourism Impact study for Grant County. This study may be funded by state tourism and/or economic development cooperative advertising funds or the Lodgers Tax Fund. A Legislative appropriation is another funding option.
- Cooperative advertising funds from the Tourism Department can be helpful in updating community tourism and arts-related websites and collateral material.
- The Silco Theater is an important community project. Silver City MainStreet may need assistance in securing acquisition funds and long-term rehabilitation

funding. We believe that the Lodgers Tax fund may be used creatively (in terms of investing in a public facility supporting the local tourism industry) to assist Silver City MainStreet achieve ownership of the building. This will help facilitate the creation of a Downtown Theater District.

Financing a Theater District

One of the major recommendations of the Resource Team is that Silver City seriously considers creating a Downtown Theater District. The presence of three significant historic theaters within close proximity to each other makes this an enticing strategy for long-term cultural economic development.

Planning the Theater District

- Planning funds for a theater district may be obtained from a variety of sources, including New Mexico MainStreet Capital Outlay funds, USDA RBOG and RBEG programs, the National Endowment for the Arts, New Mexico Arts, HUD, and local Lodgers Tax funds. Other resources include SW NM Council of Governments, CBDG planning grants, and state legislative appropriations.
- The Town may consider creating a small Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) for the Theater District to plan and attract private developers and investment to the District. New Mexico MainStreet can provide technical assistance in facilitating this strategy.



Financing Tools

A good Theater District plan will identify public and private financing strategies. On the public side, many financing tools mentioned in this report, including the LEDA, Lodgers Tax funding, USDA Community Facilities grants, HUD Rural Economic Development grants, CDBG funds, federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants, New Mexico SMART funding, New Mexico MainStreet Capital Outlay grants, and state legislative grants are a few of the programs available. On the private side, USDA Business Loan guarantees and Rural Economic Development loans, Small Business Administration (SBA) loans, New Market Tax Credits, federal and state historic preservation tax credits, and New Mexico MainStreet architectural design assistance are a few incentives worth consideration.

SUMMARY

Three areas that we should keep in focus as we move forward together are:

1. Authenticity is the Arts & Cultural District's most direct market for new cultural and heritage tourists. They want the real not the faux, re-invented, or mythological experience.
2. The Community is what makes downtown authentic. It is the people who live, work and play that make Silver City unique.
3. The District must continue to be viable to its residents. Business opportunities and housing must remain accessible for this generation and generations to come or it will lose its support from the community and disconnect from both its community roots and its authenticity.



There are Four “C’s” to remember as the Silver City Arts and Cultural District evolves: Creativity, Communication, Connectivity and Coordination. These are the themes that will hold this district together:

Creativity

- Maintaining authenticity
- Dynamic, supportive environment for the creative economy
- Arts
- Architecture
- History, heritage
- Diversity of people
- Nurturing
 - Training
 - Development
- Infrastructure to support the cultural economy (investment and maintenance)

Communication

- Cross cultural
- Cross generational
- Cross class
- Cross geography
- Maintaining multiple networks

- Electronic
- People to people
- Multiple media
- Continuous open and inclusive dialogue

Connectivity

- Linkages
- Historic and scenic trails
- Links between neighborhoods and to Downtown
- Between the University and Downtown
- Regionally
- Through media communications networks
- The A & C District allows for and encourages connection, accessibility for all pursuits and enterprises
 - Honors diversity
 - Honors multiple cultural perspectives and makes a place for them
 - Honors human stories and allows for the sometimes painful and harsh understandings of the experience of different peoples, cultures, and heritage in the same experience

Coordination

- Forging new partnerships
- The new A & C District Council is just the beginning
- Funding, a clear voice for the communities in the process to stay focused as opportunities arise yet with the Council providing direction
- Ties back to communication, solid coordination comes from clear communication
- Clear definitions of roles, responsibilities and timelines within the Council
- Maintaining the diversity in the business mix, stay ever vigilant
 - Maintain balance between the district serving both the community and tourists

Silver City is a town that works. One of its strengths has been the remarkable quality to foster excellent leadership, regenerate itself and recycle its most precious asset - human talent and creativity.

Currently the community is benefiting from a new source of leadership and enthusiasm from an influx of new residents. Integrating new points of view and creative expression will be a critical factor in the success of the new Arts and Cultural District. Being careful to spread the wealth of cultural economic development to all sectors of Silver City is essential.

Silver City is also blessed with the presence of sage old-timers who have served the community tirelessly and with devotion for decades and continue to be engaged in community affairs. Hopefully these community living treasures will continue to guide

and inspire the community as it tackles some long-dreamed-of miracles, including the rehabilitation of the Murray Hotel and the creation of a Theatre District.

Silver City is riding an infectious wave of momentum. The community appears to have assembled a powerful coalition of people and resources to break through to a new level of quality of life and economic opportunity. We hope this report can help guide the way.

* * * * *

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