

# NEW MEXICO *True* ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## **New Mexico Arts Commission Approves Requests from Arts & Cultural Districts**

**Santa Fe, N.M.** – The New Mexico Arts Commission considered formal requests from the state's Arts & Cultural Districts Program at its November meeting. The commission voted unanimously to approve the City of Las Cruces as the first ever State-Authorized municipally-designated Arts & Cultural District, the expansion of the Creative District in Los Alamos to encompass two Arts & Cultural Institutions, and the consolidation of the Silver City Arts & Cultural District under Silver City MainStreet.

The Arts & Cultural Districts program creates positive economic impact on districts that identify arts, history, artists, arts entrepreneurs, creative industries, and cultural facilities as key assets of their community revitalization efforts. The Arts Commission considers program recommendations that best serve community needs.

"The Arts & Cultural Districts Program helps our network communities identify strategies to improve the creative economy in our downtowns," said Economic Development Secretary Matthew Geisel. "The MainStreet Program working in partnership with the Department of Cultural Affairs supports creative industries, artists, and cultural facilities to ensure vibrant New Mexico communities."

"The Arts Commission is pleased to authorize Las Cruces as our first state municipally-designed program and to approve the requested changes to the existing Arts and Cultural Districts in Los Alamos and Silver City," said Arts Commission Vice Chair John Rohovec.

"Strong Arts & Cultural Districts are key to growing our creative economy in New Mexico," said Cultural Affairs Secretary Veronica N. Gonzales. "New Mexico needs to continue to find ways to diversify our economy and these districts are helping to lead the way."

The City of Las Cruces requested to be designated as a State-Authorized district. The City Council adopted a municipally-designated Arts & Cultural District Plan in July 2018, after a nine-month process administered by the City's Arts & Cultural Coordinating Council. The Arts & Cultural District Plan meets the statutory requirements of the state program. The District has been hosting cultural events such The Prado in Las Cruces, and a three-month long

exhibit of artwork from the Prado Museum in Spain which was featured in downtown Las Cruces. The district is also looking for strategic funding opportunities to support cultural activities, placemaking initiatives, and increased events and attendance.

Los Alamos Creative District requested expansion sites for their district to include two arts and cultural institutions: the Los Alamos Nature Center and the Real Deal Theater. Both sites are within walking distance of the district and both add significant cultural contributions by their inclusion in the district.

The Silver City MainStreet Project and Silver City Arts & Cultural District petitioned to move State-Authorization to Silver City MainStreet. The Silver City MainStreet and Arts and Cultural District work to make their downtown more vibrant through creative placemaking, streetscape improvements, encouraging artisan live/work spaces, wayfinding, and fostering the creative economy through their monthly Community Coordinating Council Meetings. There is overlap between the two organizations, and moving the Arts & Cultural District under Silver City MainStreet helps support that work.

In addition to heading the Silver City Arts and Culture District, Silver City MainStreet has been asked by the Town of Silver City to manage the Visitor Center.

State-Authorized Arts & Cultural Districts receive incentives such as assistance with developing cultural plans and enhanced historic tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic structures within the district. The first two pilot districts were authorized in 2008 with additional communities added in 2014. New Mexico currently boasts a network of 12 Arts & Cultural Districts. The Arts & Cultural Districts Program is a joint effort of several state agencies and private entities including the Economic Development Department, New Mexico MainStreet, Department of Cultural Affairs divisions: New Mexico Arts and Historic Preservation, and the McCune Charitable Foundation.

New Mexico MainStreet, a program of the New Mexico Economic Development Department, works throughout the state to help affiliated local organizations create an economically viable business environment while preserving cultural and historic resources. New Mexico MainStreet currently serves 28 affiliated MainStreet Districts, 12 Arts & Cultural Districts, more than 20 Frontier Community projects, and eight Historic Theater Initiatives. Learn more: [www.nmmainstreet.org](http://www.nmmainstreet.org).

For more information about the New Mexico Arts & Cultural District Program, contact Rich Williams, State Coordinator, (505) 827-0168 or [rich.williams@state.nm.us](mailto:rich.williams@state.nm.us).

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