

NEW MEXICO *True* ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Contact: Benjamin Cloutier
505-670-7024

Benjamin.Cloutier@state.nm.us

New Mexico MainStreet Receives Funding from USDA to Support Rural Economic Development

Santa Fe, N.M. - Today, Secretary Geisel announced that New Mexico MainStreet (NMMS), a program of the New Mexico Economic Development Department, has been awarded a \$35,000 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to fund in-depth rural economic development services in the communities of Belen, Las Vegas, Raton and Tucumcari. The four rural municipalities are participants in the Great Blocks on MainStreet initiative.

"This type of innovative public infrastructure program directly impacts local business development in our downtown MainStreet districts and spurs further private investment, leading to revitalization of our local economies," said Economic Development Secretary Matt Geisel. "This new funding opportunity helps us continue our mission to catalyze economic growth in our rural communities."

Great Blocks on MainStreet starts with the design of public infrastructure improvements and the USDA-supported business development work will be conducted to help ensure that the public infrastructure investments catalyze private sector investment in businesses and buildings to revitalize the local economy. The total project budget is more than \$80,000 with \$35,000 in investment from USDA.

"The Great Blocks on MainStreet program has enabled participating communities to undertake intensive planning and design work to improve the public infrastructure of their core commercial blocks," said Rich Williams, Director New Mexico MainStreet. "The USDA funding is the logical next step to support these planning efforts and ensure a strong business climate. MainStreet work is incremental and each step lays a foundation for the economic revitalization of the district."

NMMS will provide a series of *Pláticas* (workshops and discussion) by partnering with local MainStreet leaders and economic development partners to target area businesses to talk about starting, financing, and expanding small businesses. The workshops will highlight conditions for doing business in downtown areas, the creative economy, marketing and promotion opportunities, building rehabilitation methods, financing buildings and businesses, and how to develop action plans for businesses and MainStreet districts. The workshops are anticipated to reach 40 New Mexico Businesses.

Teams of NMMS consultants, local business leaders, and economic development organizations will conduct further technical assistance visits to businesses in each community. The teams will then provide in-depth services to a business in each community to help them refine their goals around strengthening or expanding their businesses. The project hopes to strengthen and protect existing businesses, contribute to business expansions, and create job opportunities in the targeted communities.

Currently Great Blocks has selected core historic Railroad commercial streets, however the program is open to all historic commercial areas in communities committed to community economic redevelopment within MainStreet districts. Participating programs have received services from a team of landscape architects, architects and design professionals to revitalize the targeted area of their district, and participating projects are part of an adopted MainStreet District Master Plan or Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan or municipally adopted Cultural Economic Development Plan.

A program of the New Mexico Economic Development Department, New Mexico MainStreet 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, eight state-authorized Arts & Cultural Districts, more than 20 Frontier Community projects, and eight Historic Theater Initiatives. For more information about New Mexico MainStreet, visit www.goNM.biz or nmmainstreet.org.

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