



MULTITUDE OF RICHES

a blueprint for the creative development
of downtown albuquerque | 2015

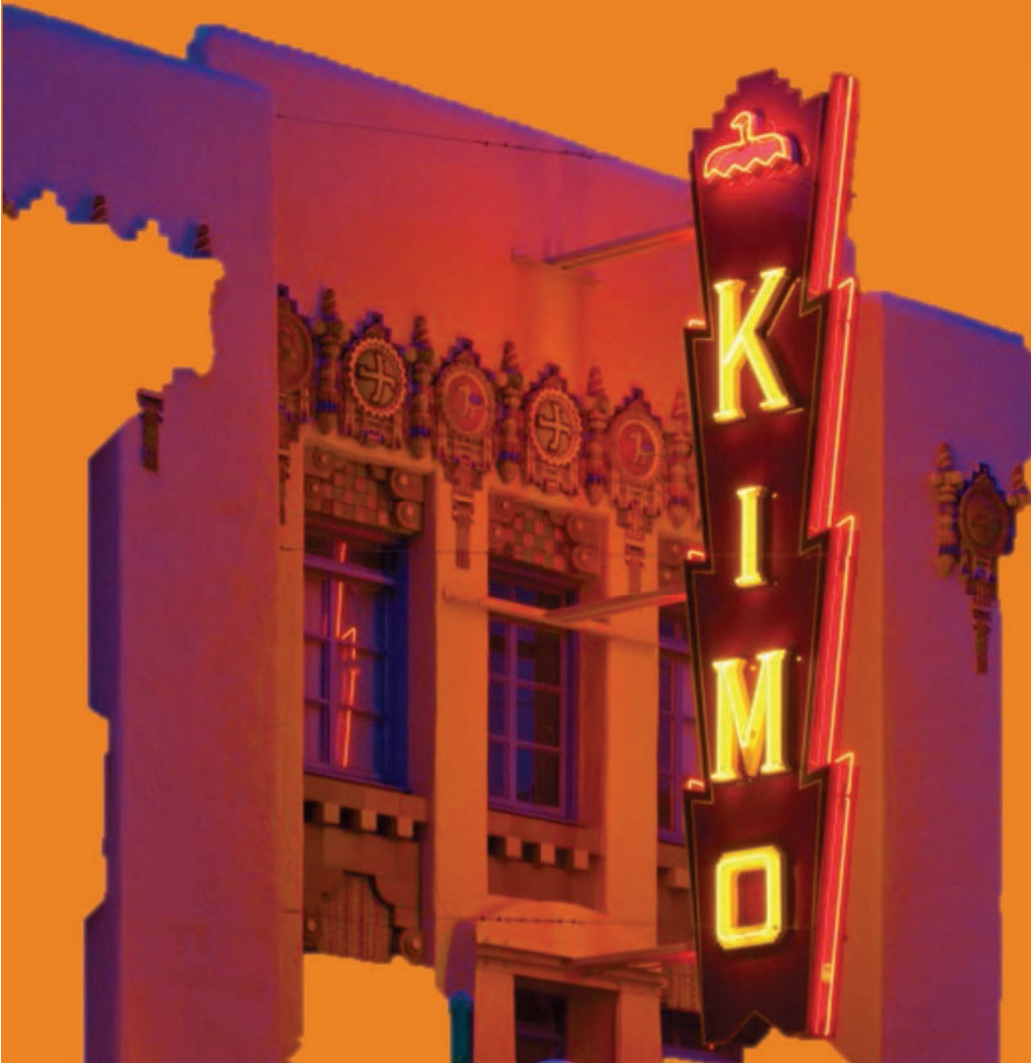





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In every plan there is a vision and course of action on how to achieve it. **Multitude of Riches: A Blueprint for the Creative Development of Downtown Albuquerque** has been an ongoing discussion with the acknowledgment that Downtown Albuquerque had not yet reached its potential for being the culturally vibrant hub so many desired. This Arts & Cultural District Plan seeks to enrich our understanding of the multitude of riches this district offers. A careful process allowed us to create this plan, which we hope will become the blueprint for a vibrant and sustainable Downtown Arts & Cultural District.

The Downtown Albuquerque Arts & Cultural District Steering Committee identified **six disciplines** to focus on as the means for stimulating the District:

- film & digital media,
- visual arts,
- branding & marketing,
- literary arts,
- performing arts & entertainment, and
- culinary arts.

The Committee identified core placemaking experts in each of these disciplines to contribute best practices from their perspectives, and to participate in the process with key stakeholders and the public. *Creative Albuquerque* facilitated and recorded the process, analyzed the findings, formulated strategies, and compiled a meaningful document.

This plan speaks to the **primary desires** raised in focus groups and in “expert conversations”:

- 1) engaging committed leadership to champion Downtown revitalization,
- 2) changing a citywide perception about Downtown,
- 3) creating an attractive and active 24-hour environment,
- 4) providing a diverse range of arts and cultural amenities for a wide range of individuals, and
- 5) stimulating entrepreneurship for the creative sector.

It is the aim of this plan to ensure attendance to all of these motives such that they are compatible with each other. We believe that all are achievable.

What you will find within these pages is a blueprint for change in Albuquerque. This Downtown Arts & Cultural District Plan is comprised of this Executive Summary; an **Introduction**, which includes information about the vision, context and background for the plan; a description of the **Process**; an overview of the **Findings** of the public process; and an **Implementation** Action Plan.

No plan is successful without implementation, regular monitoring, evaluation and revisions to ensure momentum continues and progress is made. Success must be based on a cohesive vision empowered by commitment and strong leadership to drive the critical mass and energy necessary for revitalization. There must also be an overall endorsement by the greater community that a thriving downtown in any community benefits everyone. We believe that this plan is a solid blueprint for achieving success, and believe that Albuquerque is ready to reach its full potential through robust partnerships between the City and its citizens.

SHORT- MID- AND LONG-TERM GOALS

The following matrix summarizes the goals & objectives of the Cultural Plan. In-depth descriptions follow under Implementation starting on page 18.

	Proposed Start-Up Schedule			Proposed Funding Levels		
	Short-Term 1-2 years	Mid-Term 2-4 years	Long-Term 4-6 years	\$0- 100K	\$100- 500K	\$500k- 1M+
Goal 1: Leadership Framework						
Identify, appoint and empower ACD SC	✓			✓		
Determine the fiscal agent that will retain ACD staffing	✓			✓		
Develop a Communication strategy, Timeline & Work Plan, and Financial Plan	✓			✓		
Monitor and evaluate progress of implementation	✓			✓		
Goal 2: Branding and Marketing						
Develop a Branding/Marketing strategy that coincides with state branding	✓				✓	
Implement an education and awareness campaign	✓			✓		
Goal 3: Creative and Economic Activities and Anchors						
Develop interdisciplinary incubator spaces		✓				✓
Create a Downtown Center for the Arts		✓				✓
Promote and maximize use of existing, unused/ underused spaces for new activities	✓	✓	✓			✓
Stimulate investment and other sources of funding	✓	✓	✓			✓
Grow a yearly signature event	✓			✓		
Solicit mix of small businesses, theatres, shopping	✓	✓	✓			✓
Encourage positive, healthy food & drink activities		✓				✓
Goal 4: Physical Improvements and Linkages						
Create vibrant streetscapes			✓			✓
Connect East Downtown to Downtown & Old Town			✓			✓
Create policies for long-term cultural development			✓	✓		
Create cultural corridors to provide meaningful linkages between anchors		✓		✓		

INTRODUCTION

This Arts and Cultural District Plan provides a vision for cultivating the growth of arts, cultural and creative development in downtown Albuquerque. This plan reflects the city's needs and a desire for year-round, 24/7, sustainable activity in downtown.

What is a Cultural Plan?

A Cultural Plan is the result of an extensive process that helps to articulate a shared vision for a community. Importantly, cultural planning is motivated by a desire to **integrate arts and culture into the everyday lives of its citizens**. The cultural planning process considers the *what* and *how* of the benefits of arts and cultural assets to a community's future. These assets are not just products or commodities but are important **building blocks of a healthy and sustainable city**. This plan looks beyond what is deemed "high culture," to supporting and increasing assets as a means of addressing the civic goals of the city.

Cultural plans function as a way to assess and value the arts and cultural assets within a certain area of a city. Identifying these assets and finding ways to boost, retain and invite creative economic capital are the goals of a cultural plan. Globally, large and small communities understand that a solid review and critical look at their assets will help to **retain creatives, boost the local economy and invite tourists and permanent residents** to their cities. By focusing on what their communities excel in and what they lack, cities have been able to begin revitalization processes that will provide an economic, cultural and lifestyle rebirth.

Cultural planning is a powerful planning practice in cities across the county because it empowers communities, raises awareness about the breadth of arts and cultural offerings in a community, improves and develops public-private partnerships, improves communication and cooperation between arts organizations and other groups, and integrates arts and cultural planning into larger community and city planning initiatives.

Examples

In downtown Brooklyn, NY, home to the Brooklyn Academy of Music (one of Brooklyn's largest assets), the decision to focus on this stable institution and the ability to add more artists to the area was a key issue in their plan. By renovating and repurposing old buildings in the area into affordable, spacious living areas for artist and gallery spaces, they used their existing infrastructure to draw more creatives into the area. Due to this revitalization, shops, restaurants and cultural activities abound. The intermingling of creatives into urban areas caused an economic boost and allowed for further development of other key steps in their plan.

In Pima County, AZ, they decided to focus on the natural environment, and their wealth of history and their artists. They have since implemented steps to further their artist population and to retain the ones they have by forming entities like the Tucson Artist Musicians Healthcare Alliance. This program offers healthcare information and resources to the artists and musicians of Tucson and Pima County, further showing their recognition of and commitment to their creative individuals as cultural assets.

Introduction

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New Mexico is home to such cultural plans as Los Alamos, Silver City and, of course, Albuquerque (along with others). All have taken a look at: what makes their city unique, what they have that other cities lack, and what they lack that other cities have. By determining and evaluating their resources, they have established **cultural plans unique to their assets**. In Los Alamos, a focus on their world-changing scientific and technological creativity is the driving force. Los Alamos' emphasis on their cultural district—which is branded as a “Science and Innovation Destination” and anchored by their Historical Museum and Science Museum—is vital to their plan. Silver City, which has been home to creatives for years, is discovering ways to retain and strengthen their already vibrant artist community, while inviting others to join by supporting local artistic and cultural activities.

The reasons for developing a Cultural Plan in Downtown Albuquerque:

- Draws attention to the cultural resources of the community, and through this builds community identity and pride.
- Identifies resources and assets that may have previously gone unnoticed or under-appreciated.
- Brings in new, fresh perspectives from all sectors of the population.
- Acknowledges the importance of individual communities' cultural assets as part of a healthy and vital city.
- Enhances participatory democracy and citizenship through an inclusive and participatory process.
- Identifies strengths and weakness, gaps, and community needs.
- Evaluates existing assets and resources, and identifies problems and solutions.
- Considers the past and present in order to better plan for future urban change.



A Timely Plan.

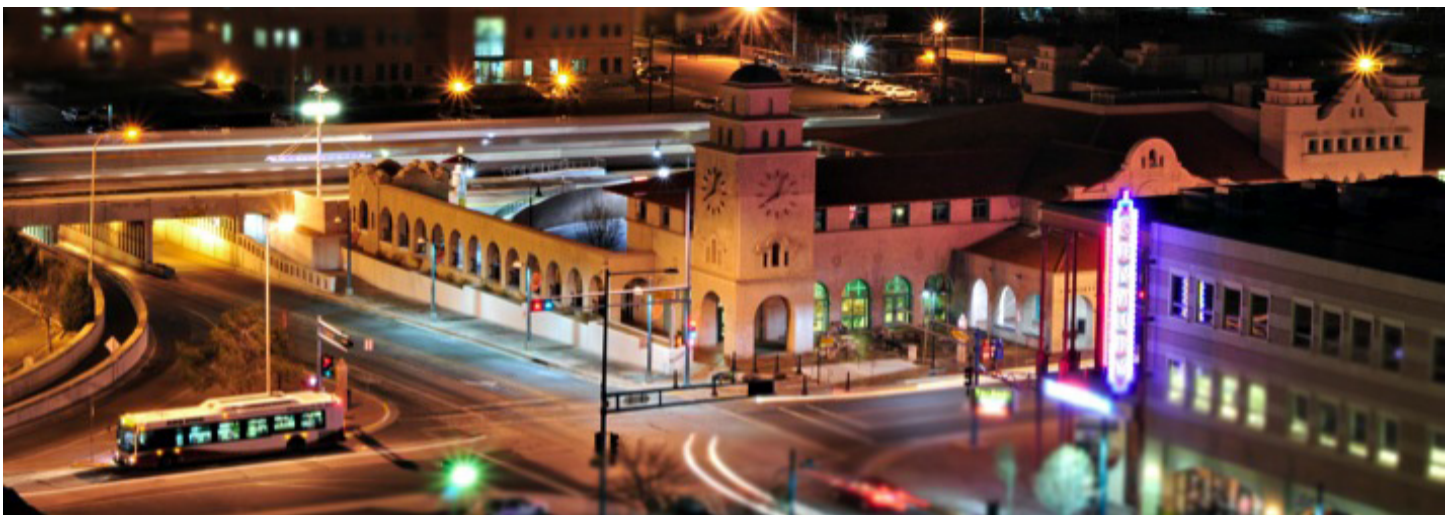
What sets Albuquerque's plan apart is that it is not intended to be implemented some time in the future; rather, it is designed to begin now! In fact, some of the ideas and strategies for improving downtown as an arts and cultural district have already been started. Albuquerque's plan is a strategic roadmap in which specific ideas and strategies have been identified and prioritized, and an implementation plan outlined in order for work to begin. There is much work ahead of us, but with so much in Albuquerque's repertoire and such a *multitude of riches* in our community what we now need to do is start implementing the recommendations herein.

A Vision

The City of Albuquerque recognizes that long-term economic, social, cultural and community benefits accumulate when an arts and cultural district is demarcated and supported by city government. Our vision is to enable this accumulation of benefits so that arts and culture can thrive in downtown, and nurture city-wide growth and pride in the unique riches of the city.

The New Mexico MainStreet Program developed an Arts and Cultural District initiative in 2005. Albuquerque began its arts and cultural district project in January 2008. Albuquerque is a unique city specimen along Route 66 because it is the only place in the United States where the old and new alignments of Route 66 intersect. Rt. 66 is the spine that connects the various districts of the city (from Old Town to Uptown), and around which this district plan is being developed.

Our vision addresses the numerous concerns raised by the various participants in this planning process, which can thus be summarized: Downtown Albuquerque needs a complete downtown experience, one that celebrates the mixture of vintage and midcentury modern buildings, local favorites and new businesses, and popular cultural amenities, and is safe, easily accessible, active 24/7, and pedestrian oriented. Such an experience will attract residents and visitors, daytime and nighttime people, students and workers, and all generations who find themselves in Albuquerque.



The Context

History

Albuquerque is one of the Southwest's oldest cities, embodying and reflecting a strong multicultural arts scene that makes it a unique city in the Southwest and Rocky Mountain West. What Albuquerque is today is the result of hundreds of years of Native American, Hispanic and Mexican-American indigenous peoples, Spanish, and Anglo/cowboy cultural, political and economic activities. As well, the city has been shaped by the late 19th and early 20th century artist movements, the powerful growth boom post World War II, combined with rapid national investment growth in the 1960s, and demographic and cultural expansion (from a wide variety of immigrants, international and domestic) in the 1980s and 1990s.



Today

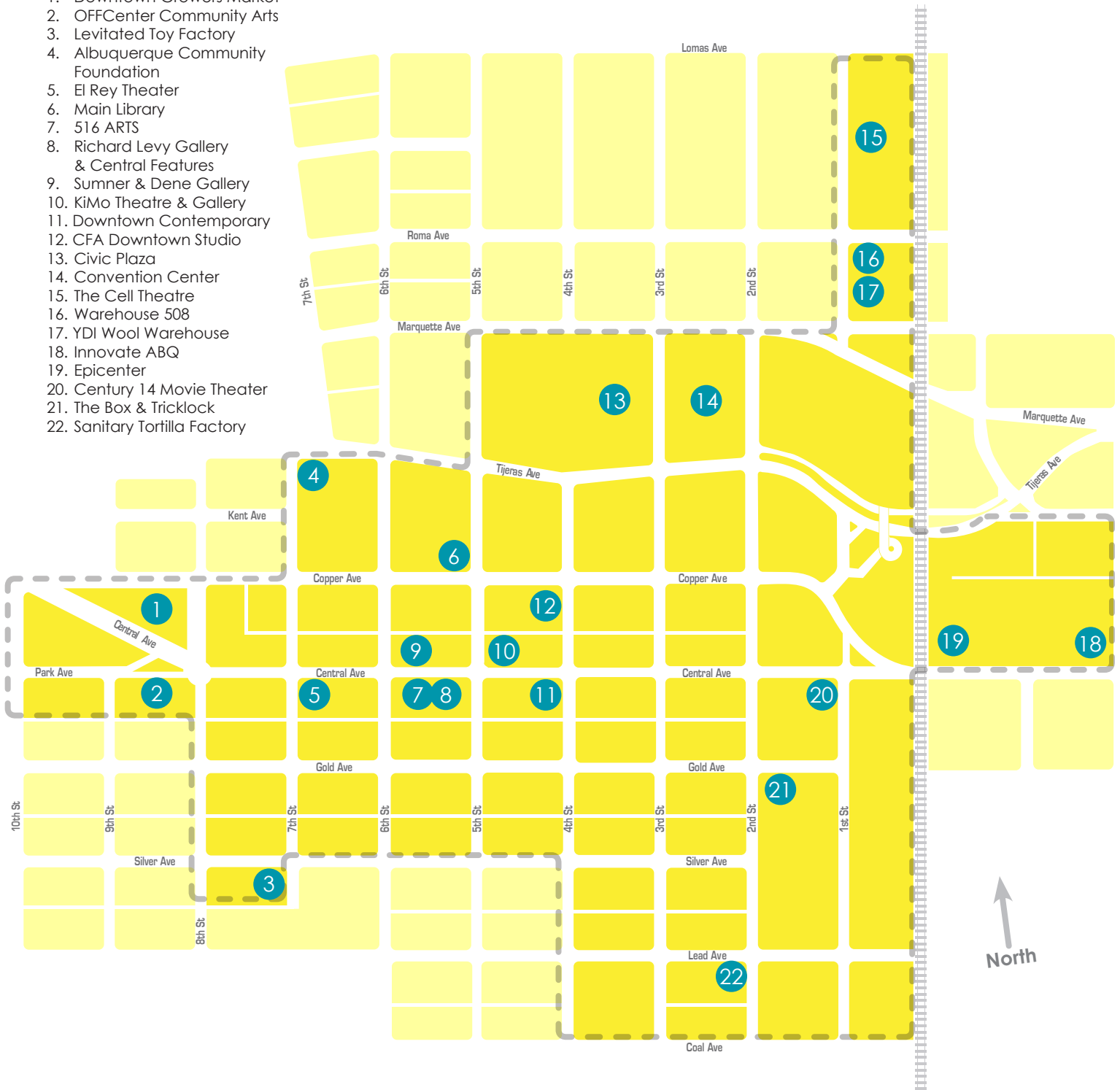
Albuquerque is thus known locally and regionally for its arts and culture scene. The number of arts and cultural spaces and facilities has made Albuquerque a medium-size city that attracts artists, innovators, and creative people of all stripes. Public and private efforts throughout the city are fostering creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Yet downtown is struggling to concretize an identifiable and positive image that appeals to a wide range of people interested in arts and culture. According to the New Mexico Arts & Cultural Districts Resource Team Assessment Report, "Albuquerque's assets are not well sited and connected in a dense urban matrix to create a catalytic synergy to attract new residents and investments ... Downtown Albuquerque could benefit from the creation of new and enhanced cultural and economic anchors within a 'focus' area of twenty or more blocks defined by Central and Gold Avenues, from First Street to Eight Street, a 'walkable' and pedestrian friendly Arts and Cultural District." The Downtown Albuquerque Arts & Cultural District will, therefore, function as a network of individuals, businesses, institutions and government stakeholders that act as quickly and nimbly as possible to take advantage of opportunities to improve the creative economy for all of Albuquerque by encouraging new activities, authentic placemaking, and stimulating underutilized physical and intellectual assets.

Downtown Albuquerque does, indeed, have a great deal to offer its citizens. The map on the following page delineates the Arts & Cultural District boundaries and points out several important **anchors** of arts and culture.

Downtown Albuquerque Arts & Cultural District Boundaries

Arts Venues & Anchors include:

1. Downtown Growers Market
2. OFFCenter Community Arts
3. Levitated Toy Factory
4. Albuquerque Community Foundation
5. El Rey Theater
6. Main Library
7. 516 ARTS
8. Richard Levy Gallery & Central Features
9. Sumner & Dene Gallery
10. KiMo Theatre & Gallery
11. Downtown Contemporary
12. CFA Downtown Studio
13. Civic Plaza
14. Convention Center
15. The Cell Theatre
16. Warehouse 508
17. YDI Wool Warehouse
18. Innovate ABQ
19. Epicenter
20. Century 14 Movie Theater
21. The Box & Tricklock
22. Sanitary Tortilla Factory



Arts & Cultural District Boundary

Developing Albuquerque's Downtown Arts & Cultural District is an opportunity to revitalize downtown, increase awareness of the arts and cultural venues downtown offers and thus attract new users and visitors. The boundaries for the district are based on where there is a high concentration of arts and cultural services, existing strengths of a growing mixed-use area of the city, and proximity to other anchor attractions. As such, we see this arts and cultural district as presenting opportunities for strengthening the downtown core and making stronger connections outwards to other areas of the city. Delineation of the boundary is based on where goals for a downtown arts and cultural district can best be attained: increasing business activity, enhancing tax revenues, providing space for arts activities and organizations, providing employment opportunities for the creative and cultural economy sector, creating safe and clean public areas for leisure-time activities (for daytime and evening times), and encouraging housing development to activate downtown 24/7.

The boundaries of the Downtown Arts & Cultural District were established according to recommendations by the New Mexico Arts & Cultural District State Council, and adopted by the New Mexico Arts Commission in 2012:

- The district size is one that can be managed and enhanced with available funding and resources, and is the area of focus for new projects and future funding requests.
- The majority of the arts and cultural assets (historic buildings, art centers/galleries, libraries, museums, performance venues, creative class entrepreneurs, significant cultural features, restaurants/lodging, etc.) are contained within the district boundaries.
- A critical mass of buildings within the district boundary is dedicated to the creative and/or cultural economy and cultural community.
- Has a "there-there" related to a destination or center, and a distinct district edge.
- The district is a compact and walkable area, generally a 1/4 mile radius, which creates a 5 minute "ped-shed" walking distance (area in which a pedestrian is willing to walk within a district).
- The facilities and venues of partnering organizations may be included within the district provided partners are committing resources (funding, staffing, etc.) that enhance the district's vitality and financial sustainability.

The Downtown Arts & Cultural District lies almost entirely within the Downtown 2010 Sector Development Plan boundaries. The Sector Plan focuses on the entire downtown core, encompassing 5-1/2 square miles (~ 3,550 acres); it covers the Downtown Core. Establishing the arts and cultural district in relation to the boundaries of the Sector Plan allows for a focused physical anchoring to strengthen arts and culture in downtown.

Background

The roots of creativity and culture run deep in New Mexico as seen in its abundant examples of art, cuisine, architecture, and literature. The creative economy, which includes the arts, humanities, entertainment, and design, places an emphasis on knowledge and information over labor, capital or resources. More and more, cities are seeking to attract and retain their creative classes because of the higher wages and problem-solving skill set innovators are known for, plus this sector tends to gravitate towards and thus create more vibrant communities. But vibrant communities don't always happen on their own: Leadership, vision, resources, and strategies are required to overcome community shortcomings that result in sluggish local economies.

To address the economic instability affecting multiple communities across the state, the New Mexico Legislature adopted the National Trust for Historic Preservation's MainStreet program in 1985. Many historic downtowns throughout the state have benefited immensely from the program's fundamental tactics to stimulate local jobs, preserve historic assets, build community capacity, and encourage leadership.

In 2005, the New Mexico MainStreet program developed a statewide Arts & Cultural District initiative to augment the MainStreet activities, but with a strong emphasis on building upon the local arts and cultural industries. As each District has been approved, Resource Teams were sent in to examine the new District and assess its strengths and challenges in terms of: cultural planning, capacity building, marketing/tourism, and physical design. Details on their findings can be found in the Downtown Albuquerque Arts & Cultural District Resource Team Assessment Report. Using these findings as a platform, we have created this document that provides logical and realistic strategies that will result in a more vibrant downtown for Albuquerque.

Eight Guiding Principles In the nearly three decades of Main Street's history in the U.S., the National Trust Main Street Center has identified eight essential guiding principles that local MainStreet organizations must embrace to be successful.

1. **Comprehensive** – For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street's Four Points is essential.
2. **Incremental** – Over time, small successes can lay the groundwork for larger ones, leading to more ambitious projects tackling complex issues.
3. **Self-help** – No one else can save your Main Street. Long-term local commitment is what must sustain revitalization.
4. **Partnerships** – Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the future of downtown and must work together to achieve common goals.
5. **Existing Assets** – Business districts must capitalize upon their unique qualities, like distinctive buildings and anchor businesses.
6. **Quality** – All aspects of a MainStreet project must reflect quality if downtown is to become competitive again; shoe-string budgets and "cookie-cutter" efforts can send a negative image.
7. **Change** – Changes in the physical environment, business practices, and perceptions of downtown are essential to support and sustain the revitalization process.
8. **Implementation** – Frequent, visible projects are a reminder that the revitalization effort is underway and succeeding. Completed projects create confidence in the local MainStreet organization and build greater levels of participation.

<http://www.nmmainstreet.org>

PROCESS

The Downtown Albuquerque Arts & Cultural District Steering Committee determined that a different approach would be needed to encourage input, incite passion and result in meaningful strategies. Therefore, the Steering Committee created a cultural planning process that advanced in a three-pronged manner: Stakeholder Focus Groups, National Creative Placemaking “Expert” Conversations,” and Creative Albuquerque research and plan development.

TIMELINE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

May 2010 – May 2011	PREPARATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACD Steering Committee relationship building • Early discussions about final outcome possibilities
May 2011 – November 2011	PRELIMINARY PLANNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project scope, work plan and timeline developed • ACD boundaries reviewed and established • Project vision statement crafted • 6 core discipline areas identified • National discipline experts identified • Key focus group participants identified
November 2011 – May 2012	CULTURAL ASSESSMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 national discipline experts visit separately for tours and meetings • 6 discipline focus groups meet with experts to provide input • 6 presentations to key City officials • 6 public presentations of observations and recommendations
May 2012 – June 2012	CULTURAL PLANNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes compiled and analyzed • Preliminary draft of cultural plan released to public for comment
August – September 2015	FINALIZING CULTURAL PLAN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create ACD Steering Committee • Input from public, City and State incorporated into final draft • Final plan presented to City and State
September 2015 and Beyond	IMPLEMENTATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Plan accepted by City Council • Launch Cultural Plan at public event • Continue relationship building • Monitor for success, evaluation and feedback

Process

(CONTINUED)

Stakeholder Focus Groups provided a great deal of information and raised important questions and challenges for the Cultural Planning Team. These “Community Needs and Concerns” were organized into themes (See next section: Findings) that provided entrée to the “Expert Conversations.” Considering the many areas of arts and cultural activities that are strong or struggling in the District, six core creative sectors were identified: film & digital media; visual arts; branding & marketing; literary arts; performing arts & entertainment; and culinary arts. With input from many individuals, a national creative placemaking “expert” was identified for each of the six core disciplines, and invited to come participate in the cultural planning process:

- Brian Newman – Film & Digital Media
- Michael Killoren – Visual Arts
- Gary Steuer – Branding & Marketing
- Luis Herrera – Literary Arts
- Heather Hitchens – Performing Arts & Entertainment
- Barbara Fairchild – Culinary Arts

From March 2012 until early May, one-by-one, each expert arrived for an intensive 48 hours with the Steering Committee. During this time they:

- discussed issues with local organizations, business people, community leaders, and city staff
- toured the district (on foot and by car),
- met with stakeholders at various sites,
- participated in a facilitated group conversation (about how to stimulate the District from the perspective of their core discipline),
- met with select City of Albuquerque officials (at a meeting hosted by the Director of the Cultural Services Department), and

After which they presented their list of best practices, shared their observations, and suggested recommendations for promoting positive activity in the District. Summaries of these can be found in the Appendices.



FINDINGS

Recurring themes began to emerge from the discussions amongst the six core discipline stakeholder group. Many of the identified strengths, barriers, and strategies were the same or similar. A few common assets included the KiMo Theatre, cultural diversity, excellent climate, the location of the Alvarado transportation hub, and others. Some chronic challenges included real or perceived lack of parking, and negative perceptions associated with fear and crime. The community input meetings resulted in a clear list of opportunities and tasks that could be accomplished with the help of a variety of individuals, small businesses, non-profit organizations, institutions, large corporations and government. Importantly, what appears to be crucial to the success of this plan is strong and consistent support from the City of Albuquerque, and solid, responsive leadership from a team that will implement the plan.

Furthermore, our guest speakers were quick to point out that Downtown was not wallowing in a dearth of cultural resources; in fact, just the opposite was the case – Downtown Albuquerque can be characterized by “an embarrassment of riches.” While the addition of new amenities (for example, an incubator for cross-disciplinary innovation) is certainly desired, the focus of the plan’s recommendations is really to better promote, utilize and support what is already here. As long as there is a supply of chronically vacant buildings there may be no need to recommend extensive capital outlay. Opportunities for new or enhanced programming can quite reasonably be implemented by coordinating planning and improving (and multiplying) partnerships. Virtually all of the physical improvements recommended can be implemented within five years.

The biggest hurdle will be that of changing a deep-rooted belief that Downtown is not a vibrant, cultural place for all ages and arts and cultural interests. Therefore, we need to convince residents, especially those who don’t frequent the District, that Downtown is changing. Residents need to recognize Downtown’s potential to truly be the heart of the city and not a doughnut in the midst of cultural riches surrounding it (as the Albuquerque Arts & Cultural District Resource Team Assessment described the area).



Community Needs and Desires

Community Needs and Desires identified by the guest speakers and focus group stakeholders have been consolidated, summarized and grouped by category for ease of understanding, and towards developing the implementation plan. For obvious reasons, leadership is listed at the top; otherwise, there is no particular order of importance.

■ LEADERSHIP

- Cultivate and empower downtown stakeholder champions to lead these efforts, as leadership must be a driving force (i.e., there will be no success without clear, consistent leadership).
- Encourage a cohesive community voice to express needs to leaders at every level.
- Shift the community attitude from a belief of scarcity to abundance.

■ PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

- Create vibrant Downtown streetscapes with wide sidewalks to encourage strolling, networking, 24 hour eateries, and positive cultural activities.
- Choose two blocks, and focus on beautification and cleanliness.
- Encourage outdoor cafes.
- Add small green spaces with plants and flowers on sidewalks.
- Light up streets evenings to promote safety and add to aesthetics.
- Improve efforts to keep Central Avenue clean by increasing trash pickup and regularly cleaning sidewalks.
- Increase Clean & Hospitality Ambassadors presence.

■ SAFETY

- Develop positive strategies for a safer Downtown.
- Work with the City Police to create a safe, welcoming environment for law-abiding citizens.
- Encourage law enforcement to be a key part of a safe community, help them be proud of Downtown.

■ INCUBATOR SPACE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY CREATIVITY

- Develop an interdisciplinary incubator space for video game development, digital media, and other arts that will lead to developing sustainable arts businesses.
- Convert empty buildings into one large incubator or several smaller ones.
- Include late night eateries / 24 hour options, to attract different kinds of young audiences.

■ YOUTH

- Actively engage youth in the arts and cultural scene.
- Develop programs, education and training to attract young entrepreneurs to Downtown.
- Provide 24-hour eateries to support their 24-hour creative activities.

■ EATERIES

- Encourage positive food and drink activities.
- Target larger national chains with reputations and funding (e.g., Starbucks, Peets, Coffee Bean; Chipotle, Maestro's, Dean & DeLuca) to invest in and draw other strong, local restaurants.



Community Needs and Desires

(CONTINUED)

- Include Santa Fe eateries like The Compound or Pasqual's.
 - Woo a big name, celebrity restaurant to Downtown.
 - Schedule food truck events on Wednesday evenings with the new growers market at Alvarado Urban Farm.
 - Reduce or remove liquor law restrictions to encourage craft breweries opening.
 - Invite food festivals, craft beer festivals, and outside touring festivals.
 - Offer incentives for restaurants to locate Downtown.
 - Establish partnerships (e.g., between National Hispanic Cultural Center and Central New Mexico Community College) to develop education and training for a culinary arts scene.
- **LINKAGES**
- Connect EDO (East Downtown, East of Railroad Tracks) to Downtown to Old Town (West of 8th Street) with neon, restaurants and culture.
- **INVESTMENT**
- Explore options for stimulating investment and other sources of funding.
 - Revisit the up to one-quarter cent for arts and culture tax (Quality of Life).
- **RETAIL MIX**
- Coordinate with developers and City to encourage an active retail scene that includes a mix of locally-owned small and national anchor stores, movie theaters, and shopping.
- **BRANDING and MARKETING**
- Build a cohesive voice to brand and market Albuquerque and the District as a whole.
 - Build the brand of Downtown as a destination for residents, visitors and talented workforce.
 - Embrace and utilize social media and web channels to promote downtown as an organic, tech savvy, mixed use vibrancy with critical mass of artists, cultural assets and activities.
- **PARKING**
- Improve perception of very limited or unsafe parking: provide parking options like free valet parking located strategically to cover multiple venues; free parking in City garages at night; and free shuttle from parking garages to venues.
- **CITY PLANNING**
- Review and amend policies (City Planning Department) as needed to support long-term development.
 - Create incentives for building owners to address their long-term vacant spaces.
 - Establish incentives to support incubators, mixed-use / work spaces, studios, arts and cultural development.

Community Needs and Desires

(CONTINUED)

■ BUILD ON OUR MULTITUDE OF RICHES

Neon

- Expand our neon signage inventory along Central Avenue / historic Route 66 and Nob Hill as a citywide signature asset by constructing a neon gateway to clearly define the District.
- Conduct a design contest to promote the gateway and Downtown.
- Integrate interdisciplinary events with murals, neon, and street signage.
- Target restaurants for neon signage.
- Build a neon graveyard.
- Build a Route 66 Museum (even if it's tiny).
- Loosen zoning restrictions so businesses can easily use neon signs.



Historic Route 66

- Capitalize on the historic Route 66 identity with cars, food, trolley and walking tours that visit “scenes” in different spots.

Main Library

- Transform the Main Library into a downtown center for the literary arts, community dialogue and engagement.
- Incorporate more efficient community resources to absorb (daytime) homeless population and other social issues.
- Brand the Main Library as a “Downtown Literary Center.”



IMPLEMENTATION

Recommendations

This Plan is a guiding document that is intended to pave the way for establishing ownership and prompting partnerships amongst local government, private and commercial entities, non-profit organizations, and interested citizens and business owners. The Downtown Albuquerque Arts & Cultural District Implementation Action Plan focuses on six priorities that respond to the Focus Group generated “Community Needs and Concerns” and the “Expert Conversations” list of best practices, observations, and suggested recommendations. The priorities are as follows:

- Develop a **Leadership Framework** for implementing the Arts & Cultural District Plan
- Create a **Branding and Marketing** strategy
- Strengthen the capacity of **Creative and Economic Activities and Anchors**
- Attract people downtown through **Physical Planning and Design Projects** to the downtown built environment and **increased and enhanced linkages** within the core and beyond.

GOAL 1: Leadership Framework

Develop a **Leadership Framework** for implementing the Arts & Cultural District Plan.

In order for the Downtown Arts & Cultural District (ACD) to be successful, a leadership framework is being established. As such, during its formation years, a stakeholder network model is the most plausible framework for accommodating the ever-evolving Arts & Cultural District stakeholders downtown. This recommended framework seems the most natural way to further the implementation of the Arts & Cultural Plan, primarily because funds to be allocated to the district will most likely be funneled through the City and onto a 501(c)(3) fiscal agent to fund the Downtown Arts & Cultural District. Upon solidifying its formation, the goal may transition to having the ACD organize into its own 501c3 entity.

OBJECTIVE #1: As a first step in implementing the plan, the City of Albuquerque Economic Development Department shall identify, appoint and empower a Downtown Arts and Cultural District **Steering Committee**. At a minimum, the Steering Committee must have a formal partnership with the local MainStreet organization. Other institutional and organization members representing the district’s arts and culture should also be part of the Steering Committee. Important to identifying steering committee members is the fact that all of the people who participated in this Plan process are potential partners. This Steering Committee shall plan, execute, measure and evaluate the Plan. Since a key goal of this Plan is to better market existing organizations and programming, it is essential that potential partnering agencies and presenters be identified in order to determine marketing, promotion, and funding sources.

GOAL 1: Leadership Framework

(CONTINUED)

Strategy #1A: The Steering Committee will seek funds to implement the Arts & Cultural District Plan. Of particular importance are:

- a) Staffing of the Arts & Cultural District,
 - As part of the early formation of the ACD, the Steering Committee will identify staffing needs with the goal of hiring an Executive Director.
 - The Steering Committee will investigate funding opportunities for the staffing of this position, including City support.
- b) Assessing which fiscal agent/entity retains the ACD staffing.
 - The Steering Committee will investigate the opportunities for “ownership” of the ACD, including its existence as a 5th committee of the Downtown MainStreet organization or as a free standing entity with its own 501c3 designation. If operating as a 5th committee of the Downtown MainStreet organization, funding should be secured to ensure to staff an independent program director.

Strategy #1B: The appointed Steering Committee Members will work as partners, to:

- a) Develop a **Communications strategy** that will allow for transparency and clear, direct communication amongst all plan participants.
- b) Establish a **Timeline** and **Work Plan** for implementation of the Plan.

Strategy #1C: The Steering Committee should develop a plan to regularly monitor and evaluate progress of plan implementation, including the setting of clear and achievable **implementation targets** (based on the priorities listed in this section) and the identification of appropriate and measurable **indicators of success**, and **long-term outcomes** that express the successful implementation of the goals and strategies herein.

OBJECTIVE #2: Develop **Financial/Funding Strategies**. A detailed financial/funding component was not in the scope of this plan, and will be further developed moving forward. However, it is of critical importance that the leadership explore options and opportunities immediately. Therefore, the ADC should explore and advocate for land use and financial tools and incentives that will become the underpinnings of a sustainable financial plan for the district.

Strategy #2A: The ADC working with City Economic Development will and City Council will pursue LEDA funding. In order to pursue LEDA funds, the ADC Steering Committee and City Economic Development will work with City Council to update the Local Economic Development Act to include Cultural Facilities, Metropolitan Redevelopment and a “Claw back” provision, a critical priority for creating new cultural institutions and the support of non-profit arts organizations within the district.

Strategy #2B: The ADC working with City Economic Development and the City Council will pursue TIF implementation for the Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area. An essential component to the development of the Downtown TIF will be the update of the Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan to incorporate the capital projects outlined in this Plan.

GOAL 1: Leadership Framework

(CONTINUED)

Strategy #2C: The ADC working with City Economic Development will assess and pursue if achievable, the following funding streams and development incentives including LOGRT, Quality-of Life tax, City permit fees, City bond and loan guarantees, grant programs, City property tax exemption and Federal tax credits

Strategy #2D: The Steering Committee will work with the City Council to adopt a resolution officially adopting the ACD boundary of the Cultural Plan, to support the doubling of the state historic tax credit for restoration and adaptive reuse of contributing structures or listed structures in the State Register of Cultural Properties.

GOAL 2: Branding & Marketing

Develop a **coherent and legible identity** for the Downtown Arts & Cultural District.

OBJECTIVE #1: Develop a Branding/Marketing strategy to build a cohesive voice to brand and market Albuquerque and the District as a whole.

Strategy #1A: The ACD Steering Committee should immediately engage a Branding strategy that will:

- a) Develop a cohesive vision and brand for all of Albuquerque and Downtown as a destination for residents, visitors and a talented workforce that includes positive 24-hour nightlife and a critical mass of artists, cultural assets and activities.
- b) Develop a branding and marketing strategy for the District.
- c) Create a campaign to educate the public about and raise awareness of the Arts & Cultural District Plan and the changes occurring downtown

OBJECTIVE #2: The ACD Steering Committee will coordinate branding with local businesses and organizations to implement the campaign to make the public aware of the Arts & Cultural District Plan and the improvements taking place in the district.



GOAL 3: Creative & Economic Activities & Anchors

Promote and support creative and cultural economy activities through a range of incentives and partnerships.

OBJECTIVE #1: Develop incubator spaces for game development, digital media, traditional arts, culinary arts, literary arts, and maker spaces that will lead to youth entrepreneurship and sustainable economic activity.

Strategy #1A: Work with the UNM School of Architecture + Planning and the School of Fine Arts to further develop City Lab and ArtsLab as strong presences in downtown.

Strategy #1B: Work with the City's Cultural Services to develop a plan to utilize the Main Library as a thriving literary arts incubator for downtown and Albuquerque.

OBJECTIVE #2: Facilitate the development of a *Downtown Center for the Arts* to be a regional anchor for Arts & Culture in Albuquerque's Innovation District, by offering diverse arts programs of international acclaim, as well as incorporating strong community involvement with local and regional artists and ongoing educational programs for all ages.

OBJECTIVE #3: Promote and maximize the use of existing, unused/underused spaces as quality spaces for new creative and economic activities.

Strategy #3A: Support Cultural Services Department and non-profits' efforts to enhance performance and theater venues in and around the district.

Strategy #3B: Work with the City's Economic Development Department to assess existing unused and underused downtown properties, and explore strategies to encourage new activation and ownership of spaces.

OBJECTIVE #4: Stimulating investment and other sources of funding.

Strategy #4A: Explore a wide range of financial incentive programs, tools, and strategies to stimulate investment and develop sustainable sources of funding for the continued development of the ACD.

Strategy #4B: Promote and encourage local organizations to apply for local, state, and federal funding to develop programs and projects in the ACD.

Strategy #4C: Work with UNM to develop grant writing training/workshops for local organizations to obtain funding for programs and projects in downtown.

OBJECTIVE #5: Grow a yearly signature event to further build on events-based marketing. The 516 Arts Downtown Block Party is an arts and community focused annual event that has successfully developed into a signature arts and cultural event for the downtown area. It has the opportunity to grow to connect and highlight all of the major activities and amenities in the downtown area. The Downtown Summerfest is another existing successful event option which may be nurtured and enhanced to further involve local artists.

OBJECTIVE #6: Actively solicit a mix of locally-owned small businesses, national anchor stores, movie theaters, and shopping.

Strategy #2A: Work with the City and local developers to create incentives and provide support for local businesses (e.g., The Frontier), national anchor stores (e.g., Walgreen's, Barnes & Noble), and other shopping and retail venues (e.g., coffee shop) to move to downtown.

OBJECTIVE #7: Encourage positive and healthy food and drink activities.

Strategy #3A: Work with local healthy food/eating initiatives, the new downtown market, and the Branding/Marketing team to make encourage businesses to provide healthy food and encourage healthy drink activities.

GOAL 4: Physical Planning & Design Projects, Linkages

Create a legible, friendly, and inviting Arts & Cultural District that is connected to public transit options and the rest of the City. Some changes are already in progress; for example, improvements are in the works for the 4th Street Mall. Other improvements, connections, and changes need to be made in order to make downtown easily accessible and an enticing destination.

OBJECTIVE #1: Create vibrant Downtown streetscapes with wide sidewalks to encourage strolling, outdoor eateries, and positive cultural activities.

Strategy #1A: Increase the number of **street trees** to create shading & aesthetic opportunities.

Strategy #1B: Enhance **street lighting** in alleys and other areas to help improve perceptions of safety and create opportunities for evening activity.

Strategy #1C: Implement a program of **street banners** to highlight seasonal and event-based activities.

Strategy #1D: Enhance and expand pedestrian **wayfinding** signage throughout the district, including adding walk and bike times to encourage those forms of transportation.

OBJECTIVE #2: Connect East Downtown (Edo) to Downtown to Old Town by working with the City's Long Range Planning and the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency, and Cultural Services:

Strategy #2A: Expand Historic Route 66 / Nob Hill assets by constructing a neon gateway into Downtown.

Strategy #2B: Integrate interdisciplinary events with murals, neon, and street signage.

Strategy #2C: Capitalize on historic Route 66 identity with car culture, food, trolley and tours.

OBJECTIVE #3: Support policies for long-term cultural development. Coordinate with the City of Albuquerque so that district-wide physical improvements and linkages are integrated with existing and proposed city planning projects and policies.

Strategy #3A: Create incentives for building owners to address long-term vacant spaces.

Strategy #3B: Establish incentives to support incubators / mixed use / studios / work spaces, etc.

Strategy #3C: Loosen zoning restrictions so businesses can easily use neon signs.

Strategy #3D: Develop a network of bus service and bike routes/paths/boulevards to develop safer and more legible linkages between downtown and other parts of the city.
a) Plan for bike stations (as part of the new bike sharing plan) to be an integral part of the district improvements plan

OBJECTIVE #4: Create/enhance cultural corridors to provide meaningful linkages between anchors, both within the Downtown area and also to other anchors in Albuquerque, creating program and marketing collaborations that connect the arts activities. For example:

Central Ave - Connecting Route 66 to the West to Old Town Museums, BioPark, and to the East to the University of New Mexico and Nob Hill activities. Coordinate with Nob Hill Main Street Program.

1st Street - Connecting the Warehouse area, the Alvarado Transportation Center, and the Albuquerque Rail Yards Market and cultural events

Fourth Street - Connecting the National Hispanic Cultural Center to the South, Barelás, the Route 66/Route 66 crossroads of 4th Street and Central Ave, Civic Plaza, and cultural amenities further in the North Valley.

This effort will be developed in partnership with Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau to maximize both in-state and out-of-state visitors to Albuquerque.

Proposed Capital List

The following presents a list of projects that would support the development of the Arts and Cultural district as a vital, pedestrian friendly filled with creativity.

- 1. Streetscape Improvements**, on corridors throughout the District, focusing on the creation of sense of place:
 - a. Street trees
 - b. Street tree irrigation
 - c. Wayfinding
 - d. LED Streetlights
- 2. On-Street Improvements**
 - a. On-street parking additions: restriping curbs to allow more on-street parking
 - b. Bicycle infrastructure including bike sharrows, bike racks, and bike lanes
 - c. Embedded bollards for pedestrian streets events
 - d. Parquitos/Parklets
- 3. Downtown Wayfinding.** Support an overall program of destination finding throughout the ACD.
 - a. Signage that supports wayfinding for pedestrians and bicyclists and highlights arts and culture destinations
- 4. Downtown Contemporary Arts Center (s)**
 - a. Arts hub(s) that act(s) as catalytic arts anchor featuring contemporary visual and performing arts exhibits and programs
- 5. Live/Work Housing for Artists**
 - a. Projects that support repositioning of existing office spaces into artists housing & work spaces
 - b. Projects that support new live/ work housing
- 6. Incubator Work Spaces for Artists**
 - a. Performing Arts: spaces supportive of a variety of performance venues, large and small, including studios for instructional purposes
 - b. Shared studios/Arts incubator/Shared gallery
 - c. Makers Space
- 7. Culinary Food Hub/Commercial Kitchen**
 - a. Downtown Commercial Kitchen: providing access to food entrepreneurs
 - b. Product Development
 - c. Shared showroom
 - d. Test Restaurant
 - e. Group purchasing power
- 8. Cultural Corridor First Street South** of Central
 - a. Preparing properties for redevelopment including 2 historic Railroad buildings (Curio Shop, Freight Building)
 - b. Streetscape and Plaza improvements to support the redevelopment of corridor, including lighting, bike lanes, sidewalk improvements, on street parking additions and wayfinding
- 9. Cultural Corridor First Street North** of the Albuquerque Convention Center
 - a. Projects that support the emerging Theater/Performing Arts Corridor anchored by the Cell Theater, including support the redevelopment of vacant properties into indoor and outdoor performance spaces, studios, workshops, and arts driven co-working spaces
 - b. Streetscape improvements to support the redevelopment of corridor, including lighting, bike lanes, sidewalk improvements, on-street parking additions and wayfinding
- 10. Civic Plaza Iconic Art.** Building on the momentum of reactivating Civic Plaza and the public investments made to the Albuquerque Convention Center, develop an iconic art piece that captures the character of the emerging arts and cultural district.