

DOWNTOWN 2050

ALBUQUERQUE

REDEVELOPMENT
PLAN

May 2025





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Downtown 2050 reflects the dedication and commitment of our Advisory Committee, Stakeholders, Consultants, Staff, and all Albuquerqueans who participated in the process.

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Downtowns make up a small share of their city's land area but have substantial economic importance.

- International Downtown Association

01

SETTING THE STAGE

- INTRODUCTION
- THE DOWNTOWN MR AREA
- THE STATE OF DOWNTOWN
- THE ROLES OF RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL

The Albuquerque Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan, or *Downtown 2050*, is a 25-year framework to revitalize the Downtown Core.

It addresses three key questions:

- What should Downtown Albuquerque look like in 25 years?
- How will a diverse mix of housing strengthen Downtown's economy and community?
- What programs and policies will catalyze investment in a thriving Downtown?

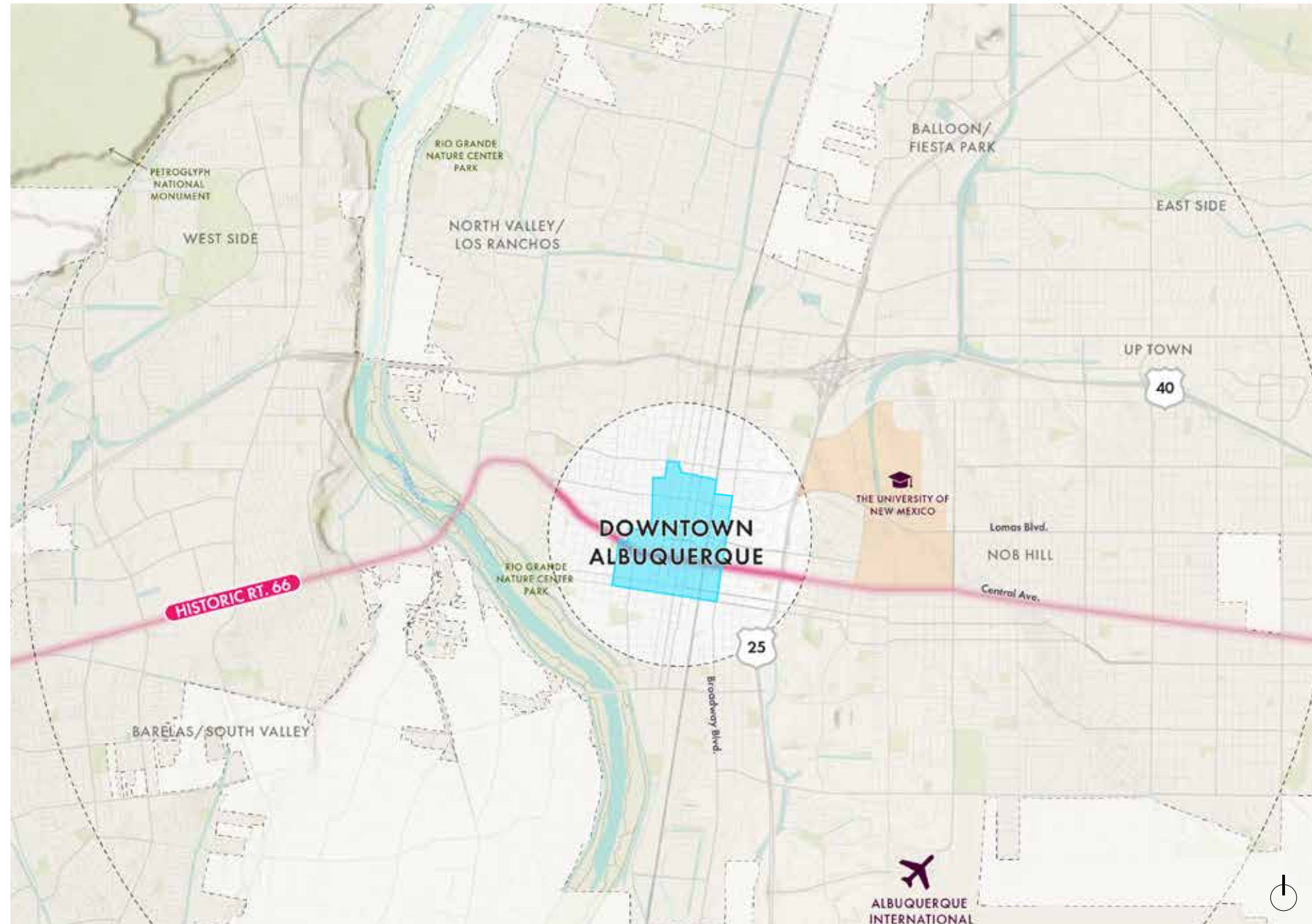


Figure 1: Context Map

INTRODUCTION

Downtown 2050 provides recommendations for land use, transportation, development regulations, and public investment to guide both public and private redevelopment efforts. This comprehensive planning document sets goals for expected outcomes and includes policies, objectives, incentives, and tools to guide development projects while focusing on Downtown Albuquerque’s unique culture. **Downtown 2050** features maps that designate specific primary functions—such as civic/financial, warehouse, and arts & entertainment—while allowing for compatible uses. Illustrative drawings are included to communicate ideas and clarify commitments and actions.

The Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area or “**Downtown MR Area**” is located at the core of Albuquerque and encompasses 404 acres—approximately two-thirds of a square mile (0.631), or 0.03% of the city’s total area. The success of the **Downtown MR Area** is necessary for the entire city, both for its iconic cultural importance and its essential economic activity, which contributes to the economic vitality of the whole city. This area is also rich in history and culture, showcasing some of the most significant neighborhoods in the community. The diversity of residential options is particularly striking, offering historic homes, warehouse apartments, artist studios, townhouses, and live/work spaces. The **Downtown MR Area** provides a promising opportunity to develop a vibrant hub for employment and commerce.

The Downtown MR Area Plan, **Downtown 2050**, is a Rank III planning document as recognized by the Albuquerque and Bernalillo County

Comprehensive Plan. Rank III plans focus on specific geographic areas with unique characteristics and provide detailed strategies to guide redevelopment efforts. The plan is administered by the City’s Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency (MRA), which is supported by the State of NM Metropolitan Redevelopment Code (Chapter 3, Article 60A NMSA 1978) and the City of Albuquerque’s Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency Ordinance (Sections 14-8-4-1). A Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan articulates the intended outcomes and impacts of redevelopment activities, encapsulating the collective aspirations for Downtown Albuquerque while delineating the actions necessary to attain these shared goals. The Plan does not alter or change zoning or land use policies or mandate any future changes in existing zoning or land use policies.

Downtown 2050 applies a “Centers and Corridors” framework to guide future growth, promoting development within existing centers of activity connected by transportation corridors. This approach enhances mobility for residents, workers, and visitors while emphasizing higher residential densities in mixed-use environments. By incorporating diverse transportation options, tall buildings, and smaller block sizes, accessibility can be enhanced. **Downtown 2050** will leverage existing infrastructure to foster cost-effective development, thereby increasing affordability and mobility.

THE DOWNTOWN MR AREA

Original Downtown MRA Boundary

The original Downtown MRA Boundary is defined on the east side along the rail lines from Coal Avenue to Gold Avenue, Broadway Boulevard from Gold to Marquette Ave NW, and the rail lines from Marquette to Slate Street; Coal Avenue on the southern edge; Tenth to Central Avenue, Ninth Street to Tijeras Avenue, and Seventh to Marble Avenue on the west side; and Marble Avenue to 3rd Street, and Slate to the rail lines on the northern edge.

Amended Boundary

As part of the **Downtown 2050** planning process, the boundaries of the Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MR Area) were amended to include two adjacent MR Areas—McClellan Park and Railroad—as well as two additional parcels north of Lomas Boulevard. These areas are functionally part of Downtown, and their inclusion supports a more unified approach to redevelopment. MRA issued public notices about the proposed change in August and September 2024, and the Albuquerque Development Commission (ADC) reviewed it in September 2024. City Council approved the new boundaries on April 21, 2025. MRA believes that merging these areas will create a more coherent downtown strategy in which incentives can be more effectively deployed.

McClellan Park

Originally adopted as a dual Sector Development Plan and Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan in 1984, the Sector Development Plan was repealed in 2017. The remaining McClellan Park Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan was

adopted in 1994, and was amended and adopted most recently in 2002.

The original McClellan Park Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan focused on three primary goals: to allow for limited expansion of the Downtown Core in order to accommodate large-scale development projects; to protect the residential character of the area around Sixth Street and Mountain Road; and to ensure appropriate transitions between existing neighborhoods and areas of more concentrated development.

The plan aimed to strengthen the employment and tax base of the city center and support Downtown Albuquerque in assuming a greater urban role within the metropolitan area. The McClellan Park Metropolitan Redevelopment Area was originally intended to serve and complement the Downtown Core—and potentially become part of it—an approach that aligns with the vision of this new Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan.

Railroad Redevelopment Areas

The Railroad MRA includes two disconnected areas on Downtown’s northeast and southeast edges. Its last plan, completed in 1998, aimed to revitalize the Downtown Core as a regional retail, entertainment, and visitor center. Key strategies included expanding the Convention Center, increasing parking, and creating a connected hub for tourism featuring hotels, retail, entertainment, and cultural amenities.

The goals of both MR Areas align with the current vision for Downtown redevelopment. Their integration will enable a more cohesive and impactful economic development strategy.

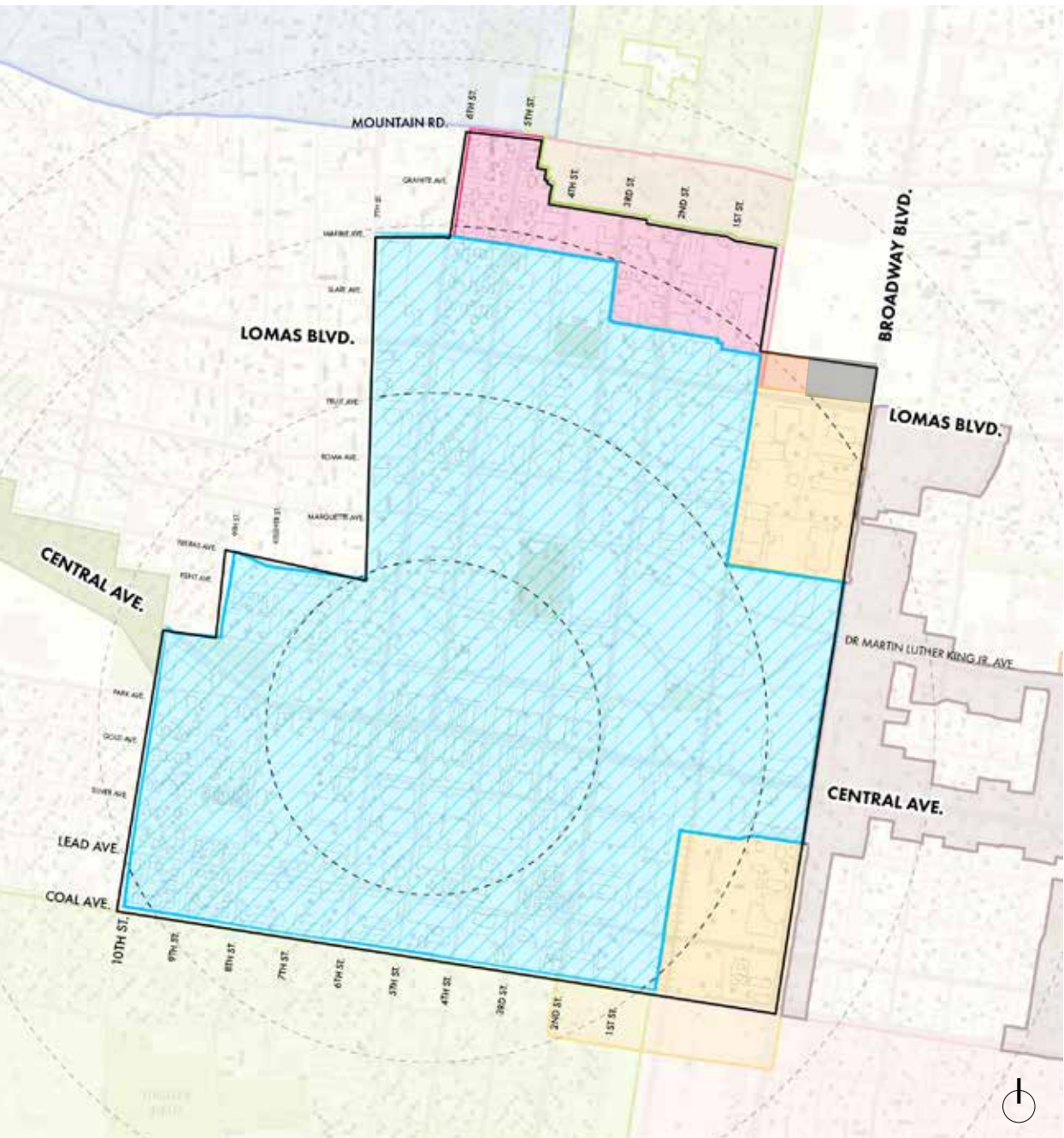


Figure 2: Downtown MRA Boundary

The Downtown 2025 plan, adopted in 2004, was the last time significant effort was made in Downtown revitalization. This study will include adjacent redevelopment areas.

- DOWNTOWN 2025 MRA BOUNDARY
- DOWNTOWN 2050 MRA BOUNDARY
- MCCLELLAN PARK
- RAILROAD
- 101 LOMAS BLVD NE
- 229 BROADWAY BLVD NE

THE STATE OF DOWNTOWN

The **Downtown MR Area** supports an estimated daytime population of 17,000 (as of 2021), which accounts for 4.5% of citywide employment. Approximately 46% of the land within the **Downtown MR Area** is designated for office and commercial purposes. This establishes the area as a traditional Central Business District, representing 22% of the city’s office space and 1% of its retail inventory.

Most retail spaces are concentrated along Central Avenue, where the allure of historic Route 66 and the preservation of the traditional Main Street character within the historic urban fabric create an inviting atmosphere. In contrast, larger buildings situated on expansive blocks, primarily accommodating traditional offices, are located north of Central Avenue and operate during conventional business hours from 9 AM to 5 PM.

The **Downtown MR Area** is home to about 2,000 Albuquerque residents, constituting less than half of one percent (0.5%) of the city’s current population. Residential uses are concentrated mainly in the south and southwestern areas of Downtown and comprise approximately fourteen percent (14%) of the land uses in the MR Area. Housing in the **Downtown MR Area** consists mainly of multi-family, renter-occupied units, with 50% of the population under 35 years old. This demographic trend indicates an appeal to young professionals, including some students from the nearby University of New Mexico. The **Downtown MR Area** exhibits lower income levels, as over 30%



Reflecting Albuquerque’s cultural heritage, Central Avenue is a gathering place for regular lowrider enthusiasts. Source: Hemmings.com

of households earn less than \$ 15,000 annually, underscoring a significant lack of disposable income among existing residents. Despite low income, nearly 55% of residents possess a bachelor’s degree or higher, a trend that contrasts with the typical correlation between education and income. This disconnect may be attributed to the area’s younger-than-average population. Additionally, the **Downtown MR Area** has a predominance of renters and a higher concentration of service workers than surrounding areas.

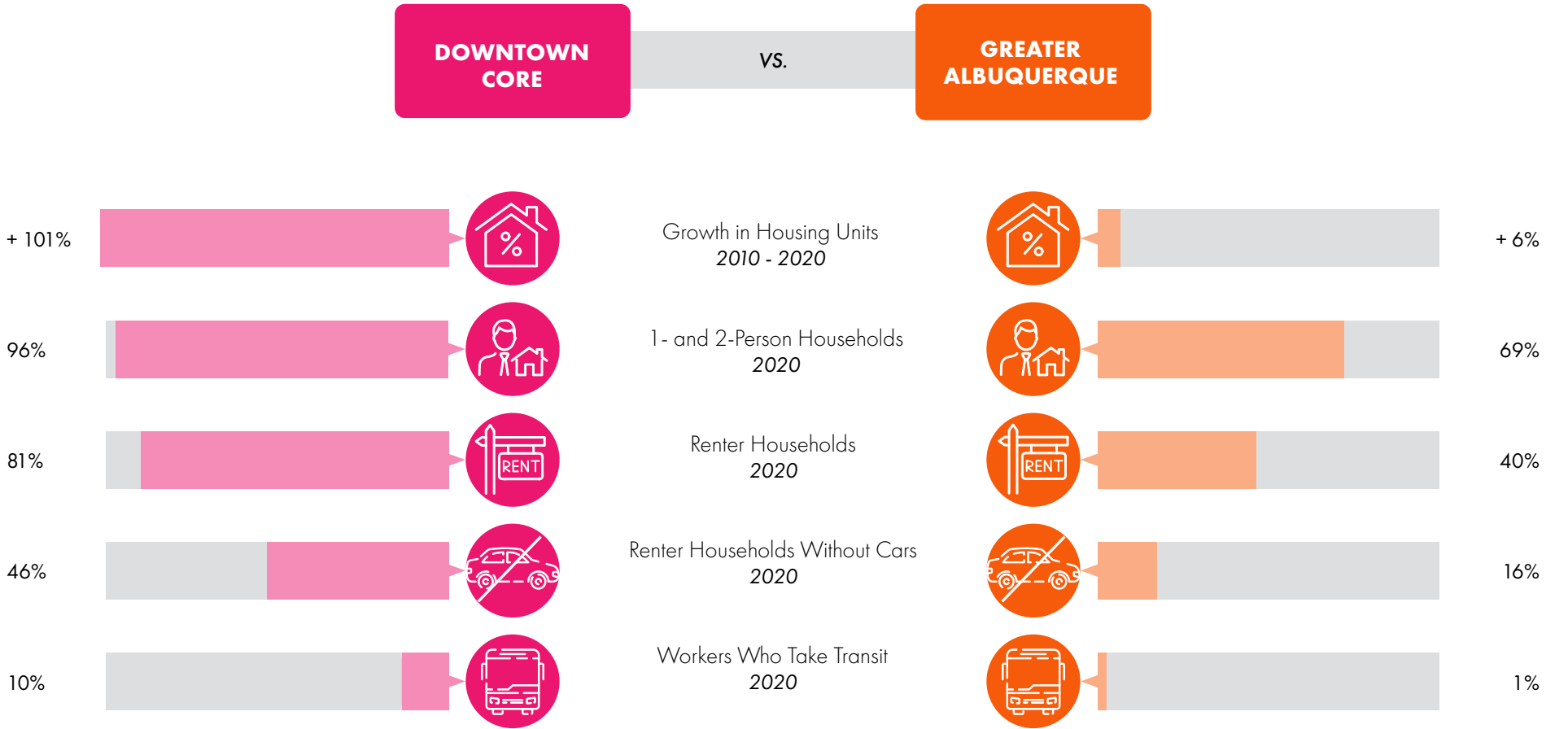


Figure 3: How Downtown Compares



Northern



Southern

Character Zones

The **Downtown MR Area** has evolved into two distinct character zones.

The northern character zone or sector (**Figure 4 - blue**) is the central hub for government and business activities. The results of urban renewal initiatives are particularly evident in this area, as illustrated by the consolidation of blocks into superblocks that accommodate Civic Plaza, the Convention Center, Federal and State Courthouses, and other significant institutions. While these institutions or entities serve as focal points and distinct destinations, because of their design, they inadvertently create barriers within the district by limiting pedestrian activity at ground level and restricting complementary uses that could enhance vibrancy, especially during evenings and weekends. This example highlights the complexities inherent in the northern character zone.

Conversely, the southern character zone or sector (**Figure 4 - orange**) is centered around historic Route 66 along Central Avenue. This area is characterized by smaller-scale buildings and a more engaging atmosphere. This area features a traditional mix of local retail establishments and dining options alongside most of the Downtown MR Area's residential units. This area is comprised of both older and newer commercial and residential structures. Additionally, it accommodates many historic buildings, complemented by cultural offerings such as public art, murals, art galleries, theaters, and some of the city's oldest churches, libraries, and schools.

THE ROLES OF RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL

The **Downtown MR Area** plays a key role in the city's activity and serves as a cultural hub for the region. Retail supports this role, not only through the presence of shops and restaurants, but also by providing everyday services such as quick meals, grooming, and convenience items. A strong understanding of consumer needs and behaviors is essential for effective retail planning and management. Retailers and service providers can generally be categorized as either commodity or specialty businesses, though many fall somewhere in between. Commodity retailers offer essential goods and services, while specialty retailers focus on more unique or experience-based offerings. The built environment plays a significant role in shaping consumer behavior, making it important to examine how shopping patterns align with a retailer's location and surroundings.

Population growth and demographic changes drive the demand for new housing, and housing developers are attracted to areas that support new development through expanding employment options and local attractions and amenities. The Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG), which includes Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque, released the Albuquerque Region Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) in early 2024. While the HNA is a regional study, much of the information released was available by smaller geographic boundaries, such as the Central Community Planning Area (CPA), which includes Albuquerque's **Downtown MR Area** and surrounding neighborhoods. The CPA is one of several planning areas used by the City to organize land use and development strategies at a more localized level.



While Albuquerque has recently been experiencing slow population growth, about 4.4% per year, and an aging population, with a 17% increase in residents ages 65 years old and older, Downtown faces housing demand that far exceeds the rate of new unit construction. This demand is primarily driven by younger residents under 35, many of whom live in small households of one to two people. According to the HNA, the overall population in the Central CPA decreased by 2.6% from 2010 to 2022 but experienced an increase in the number of households, up by 15.1% or approximately 1606 households. The census tract containing the **Downtown MR Area** roughly doubled the number of households between 2010-2020 while the overall population shrunk slightly. This shows a trend towards needing smaller units suited to high-density urban development.

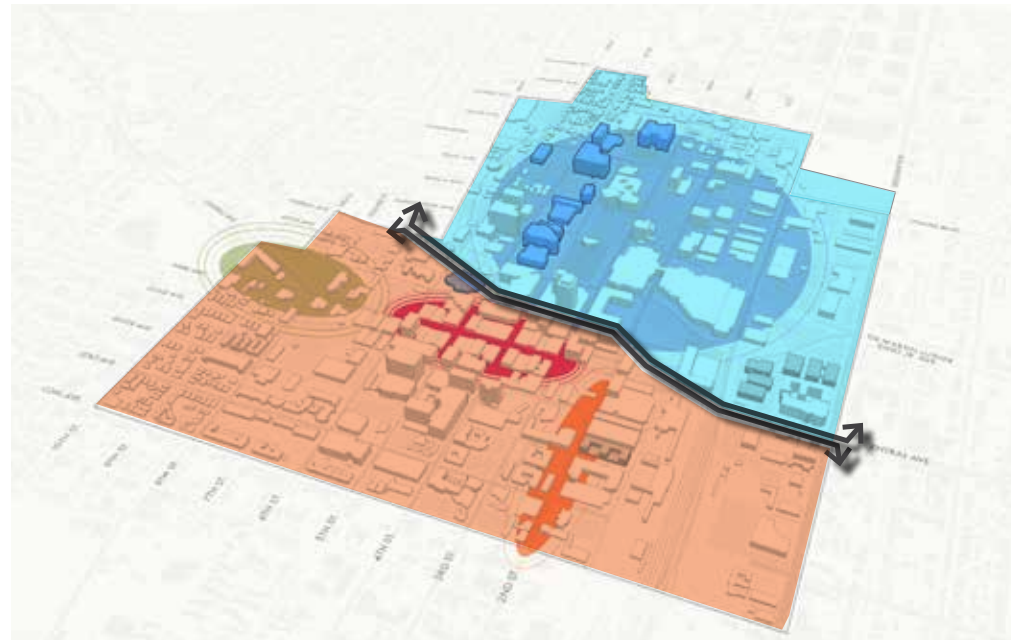


Figure 4: Downtown Albuquerque Character Zones

The 2024 HNA for the four-county Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) projects a need for approximately 12,000 new rental units by 2045 to serve households earning at or below 120% of the area median income. Cost burden rates are the highest among those employed in hospitality industries, including the arts, recreation, and food services industries (57%), all sectors prevalent in Downtown. Maintaining a balance between market-rate and affordable housing is essential for a thriving downtown. To meet the area’s demand and support long-term economic diversity, approximately 60 new housing units will need to be built each year.

Like many cities across the country, Downtown Albuquerque faces a shortage of “missing middle” housing—options like duplexes, and small apartment buildings that offer more attainable choices for a range of residents. While denser housing is typically preferred in a downtown setting, the sections north of Lomas—recently added to the **Downtown MR Area**—could help bridge the housing gap by providing more missing-middle options, primarily for downtown workers. Continued investment in attainable housing of diverse typologies and for diverse income levels is crucial.

Given the limited short-term potential for new housing, the **Downtown Redevelopment Plan** recommends a two-pronged approach: incentivizing residential development to accommodate shrinking household sizes and preserve affordability, and enhancing the retail

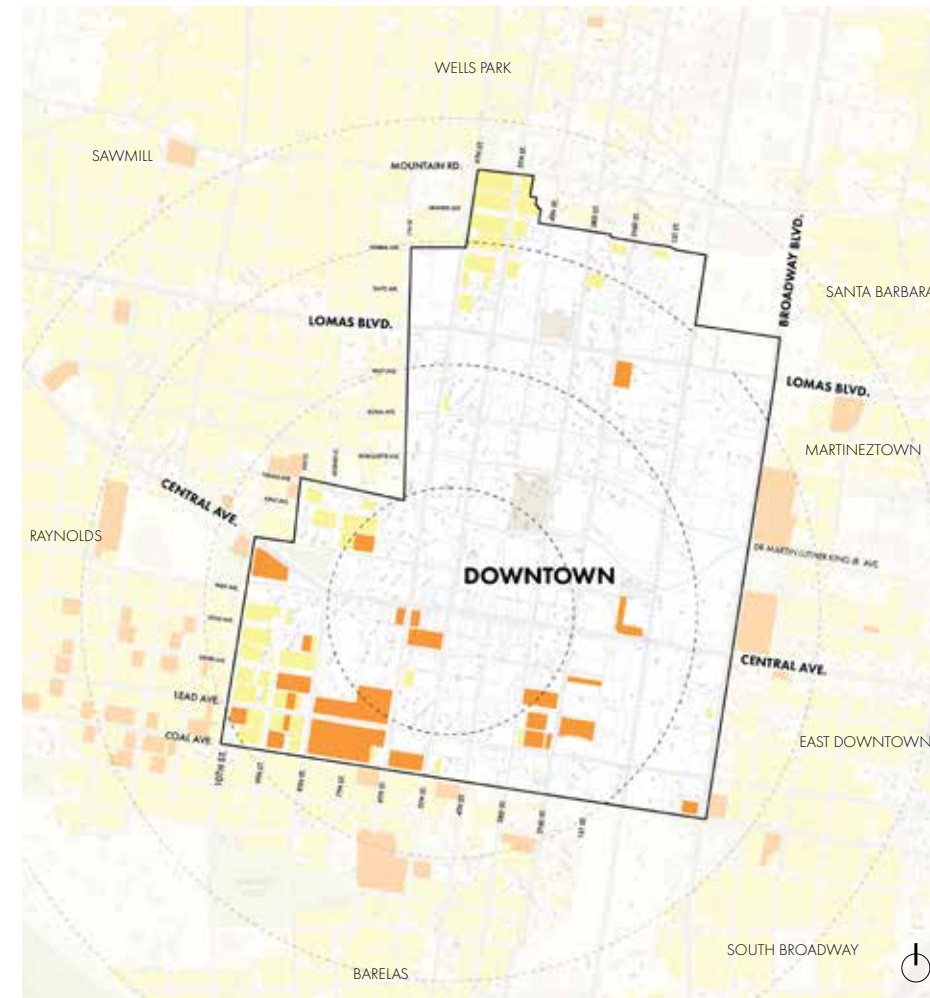


Figure 5: Downtown Residential Neighborhoods

- SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL

environment to attract more visitors and support long-term economic growth. To position Downtown Albuquerque as a destination, **Downtown 2050** calls for a strong mix of retail offerings, including personal care services, clothing, and unique food and beverage experiences not widely found elsewhere. A supportive, welcoming environment for both businesses and customers is essential to realizing this vision.

Downtown’s unique character is anchored by its rich history—particularly along Historic Route 66, where classic neon signs, vibrant street art, and regular lowrider cruises keep the spirit of car culture alive. Central Avenue serves as a gathering place for community events and city-wide celebrations, while the **Downtown MR Area** functions as the city’s commercial core, with a high concentration of offices and cultural activities. With an active arts scene and diverse events that honor Albuquerque’s geography, history, and Indigenous cultures, Downtown offers experiences that cannot be found elsewhere.

However, like many cities nationwide, Downtown Albuquerque faces challenges: obsolete buildings, high vacancy rates, and shifting work patterns that impact small businesses. The **Downtown Redevelopment Plan** recognizes the need to pivot from a traditional, office-centric approach to one that prioritizes place-making—creating people-oriented destinations that attract current and future residents, workers, and visitors alike.

Despite its many strengths, Albuquerque lags behind peer cities in design and redevelopment strategy. **Downtown 2050** addresses this with a clear

framework for public and private investment focused on equity, sustainability, and high-quality urban design. The vision for the future includes a connected network of streets and public spaces that reflect Downtown’s identity, support a mix of residential and commercial uses, and invite all community members to feel welcome—including families, seniors, immigrants, people of color, women, and underrepresented groups.

“*I see a future where Downtown invites you to stick around after work because it feels like a place you want to be.*”
- Community Input

02

VISION AND PROCESS

- THE PLANNING PROCESS
- BACKGROUND REVIEW AND ANALYSIS
- ESTABLISHING AN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
- VISION STATEMENT

The vision presented here is the culmination of research, analysis and stakeholder engagement—asking questions and testing ideas with the Downtown Albuquerque community. This process produced a clear description of what **Downtown 2050** aims to achieve. Serving as a guiding star, the vision encapsulates the collective hopes and ambitions of Downtown Albuquerque, providing direction and motivation as we work towards realizing our shared goals.

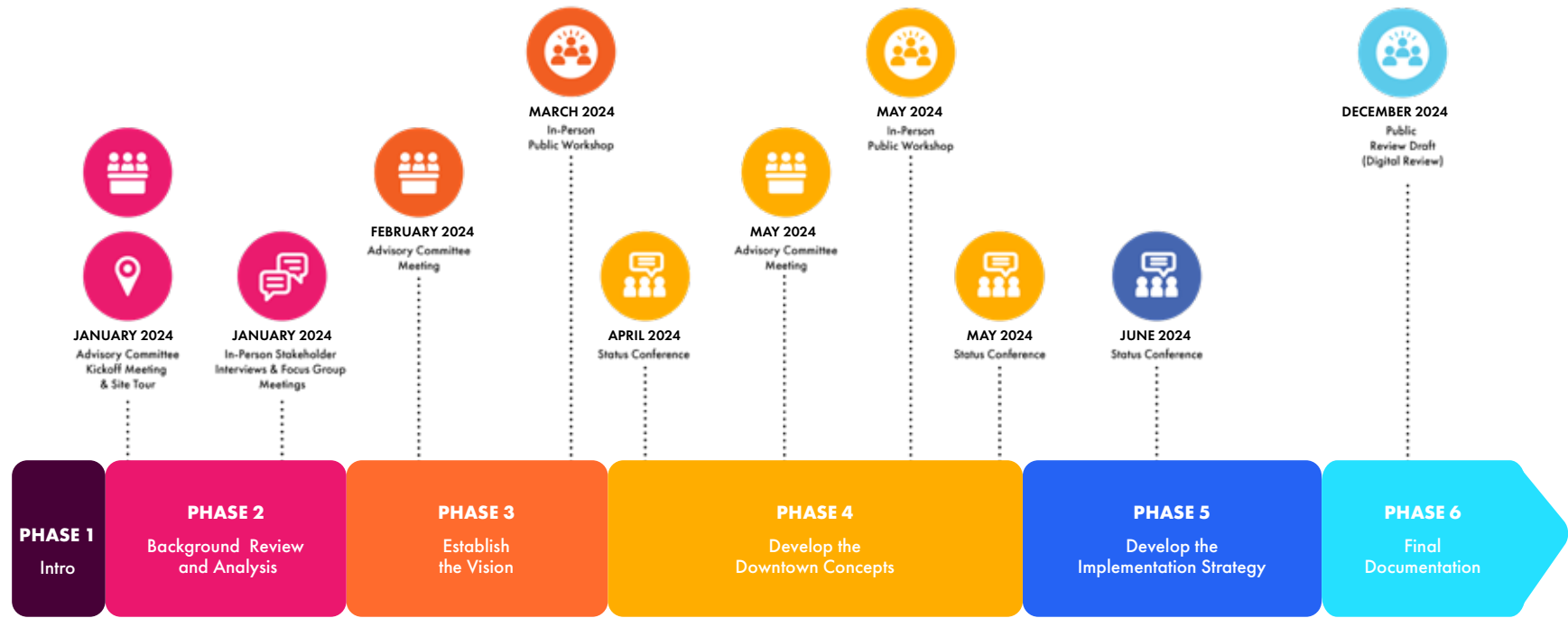


Figure 6: Downtown 2050 Planning Process

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The first step in updating a redevelopment plan involves acknowledging the historical trauma inflicted by racism and discrimination. This systemic inequity has led to enduring disadvantages across various domains, including housing, transportation, education, and employment.

The City of Albuquerque is dedicated to conducting a comprehensive review of current practices and strategically enhancing racial and social equity within the community. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency (MRA) implemented measures to eliminate barriers to participation in the Downtown Redevelopment Plan update by providing diverse avenues for dialogue, feedback, and input.

This engagement included the establishment of an Advisory Committee that contributed to shaping plan recommendations through open discussions, numerous community open houses, extensive feedback gathered from online

platforms, small group meetings with stakeholder organizations, and individual conversations. Over 500 individuals participated in these efforts.

The **Downtown 2050** initiative was launched in January 2024, with Arcadis Inc. designated as the lead consultant. The objective was to revise the redevelopment plan for the **Downtown MR Area** by conducting a thorough analysis and fostering community engagement to identify areas for improvement. This comprehensive and inclusive engagement has informed the plan’s goals and catalyzed projects to guide public and private investment, facilitating ongoing growth in Downtown Albuquerque.

BACKGROUND REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Step two involved evaluating the physical environment, past planning efforts, and current real estate market conditions to identify opportunities and constraints for a vibrant downtown. MRA staff and consultants reviewed relevant local, state, and regional plans, along with Census data, Department of Workforce Solutions datasets, and national best practices. Additionally, stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings were conducted to understand existing conditions better.

Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee was formed to aid the project team during the planning process and included:

Joaquin Baca- City Council Member	David Keleher- Property/Business Owner
Mark Baker- Developer/Property Owner	Damian Lara- County Assessor
Liz Gamboa- Executive Director of New Mexico Community Capital	Doug Majewski- Chamber of Commerce
Ed Garcia- Developer/Property Owner	Jay Rembe- Developer/Property Owner
Marcos Gonzales- Bernalillo County	Gina Riccobono- Business Owner
Dennis Gromelski- Property/Business Owner	Danielle Schlobohm- Downtown MainStreet
Lisa Huval- Developer/Housing Expert	Ken Sears- Business Owner
Jeff Janas- Chamber of Commerce	Carolyn Tobias- Bernalillo County
	Zeus Zamora- Property/Business Owner

“Downtown ABQ **TODAY** is/has...”



Word clouds generated by the Advisory Committee along with input by the community at Open House #1.

The Advisory Committee, comprised of local business owners, government officials, community members, and property owners, helped to develop a vision and provided feedback. The committee conducted a comprehensive **Downtown MR Area** tour, providing valuable insights throughout the data collection process. Utilizing industry best practices and stakeholder input, a clear and actionable vision for the **Downtown MR Area** emerged and was refined through public workshops. The resulting redevelopment scenarios outline pathways to establish an inclusive and sustainable **Downtown MR Area** that supports economic growth and reflects community aspirations.

ESTABLISH AN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The **Downtown 2050** Redevelopment Plan includes an action plan and implementation matrix detailing steps to realize the vision over the next 25 years. These recommendations factor in timing and funding while allowing adaptability to changing economic conditions. Community input has been essential in shaping the objectives of **Downtown 2050**, with diverse voices represented through various engagement strategies.

Community Input

Community input played a pivotal role in creating the shared vision and objectives of **Downtown 2050**. By actively engaging residents, local organizations, and stakeholders, the Consultant Team ensured that diverse voices were heard. To reach a broad audience and engage the community over many months, the Consultant Team utilized a range of strategies and tools to communicate with the public. By integrating community-driven input into the **Downtown 2050** framework, the plan reflects a collective vision for a more vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable future.





A selection of images of various community engagement activities throughout the Downtown 2050 process.

Community Engagement Throughout the Process Included:

- 3** Advisory Committee Meetings
- 7** Stakeholder Focus Groups
- 100+** Key Takeaways
- 1** Team Bus Site Tour
- 2** Open House Workshops
- 141** Attendee Sign-ins
- 160** Active Participants
- 19** Facilitated Activity Stations + Parklet and Safety Stop
- 4+** Hours of Community Open Houses

Themes Identified Through Public Engagement:

<div>DIVERSITY <i>Reinforce the Authentic Local, Creative, and Diverse Culture of the Core</i></div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• A variety of businesses: shops, restaurants, galleries, theaters, bars, services, and office spaces• Daytime, night-time, multi-generational, and multicultural activities and offerings• A variety of housing options, both small- and large-scale, to complement the existing residential market• Support for multiple modes of transportation• Multi-generational activities, offerings, and programming• Equity and accessibility within the public realm, including natural spaces, public restrooms, and American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance• Attractions for visitors from local, regional, and out-of-state areas</div>	<div>SAFETY <i>Create Comfortable and Dynamic Public Spaces</i></div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infuse public space with activity and lighting• Clear visibility with defined travel routes and marked crossings• Address vacancies by limiting unclear or underutilized spaces• Activate ground floor spaces to improve perceptions of safety and comfort• Enhance Downtown’s overall appearance and remove perceived hazards• Foster cooperative communication between community stakeholders to invest in security measures• Host events and programming to bring in critical mass and create an “eyes-on-the-street” effect</div>	<div>PLACEMAKING <i>Encourage Strategic Integrated Economic Growth</i></div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide training to enhance the viability of Downtown businesses• Plant shade trees and design public spaces for comfort• Support multi-modal mobility to keep Downtown connected• Establish cooperative management- such as a Business Improvement District (BID)• Invest in brand identity and place marketing to promote Downtown• Widely advertise events both Downtown and city-wide• Encourage active use of vacant lots</div>
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VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement outlines the future goals of a community and acts as a fundamental guiding principle. Step three in the planning process is creating a unified vision statement. The Advisory Committee created the vision statement for **Downtown 2050** and incorporated feedback from downtown stakeholders.

➤ **Deeply rooted and richly diverse, Downtown Albuquerque is the cultural and commercial *heart of the city*, inviting all visitors, employees, and residents to connect through creative discovery with elevated authenticity.**

VISION STATEMENT



SOURCE: City of Albuquerque

03

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, RECOMMENDATIONS

- REINFORCE THE AUTHENTIC LOCAL, CREATIVE, AND DIVERSE CULTURE OF THE CORE
- CREATE COMFORTABLE AND DYNAMIC PUBLIC SPACES
- ENCOURAGE STRATEGIC INTEGRATED ECONOMIC GROWTH

The analysis and feedback from stakeholders revealed several prominent themes of concern and specific needs that transferred into overarching goals for the future of the *Downtown MR Area*. In light of these insights, strategic objectives were established to facilitate the advancement of the *Downtown 2050* initiative, ensuring that they effectively address the identified goals of the community.

These strategies include recommendations for enhancing public spaces, improving streets and lighting, increasing the diversity and predictability of programming, and creating enriched environments that facilitate new housing

opportunities. The intention is to elevate the quality and complexity of public experiences, thereby attracting renewed interest in the City’s core.

This chapter provides context and detail on why each goal and objective is important for a thriving Downtown Albuquerque, followed by detailed recommendations in Chapter 4 on achieving these objectives through individual, concrete actions.

GOALS

OBJECTIVES

RECOMMENDATIONS



REINFORCE THE
AUTHENTIC LOCAL,
CREATIVE, AND DIVERSE
CULTURE OF THE CORE





CREATE COMFORTABLE
AND DYNAMIC PUBLIC
SPACES





ENCOURAGE STRATEGIC
INTEGRATED ECONOMIC
GROWTH



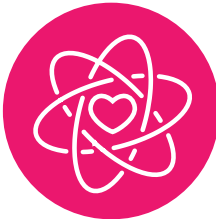
1	Celebrate Downtown’s significance as the cultural and commercial heart of the city.
2	Enhance the public perception of and promote the Downtown Core through a comprehensive placemaking initiative.
3	Foster a sense of unity and identity across all Downtown districts to create distinctly local experiences.
4	Strengthen community connection by weaving Albuquerque’s history, art, and local character into the physical and visual landscape of Downtown.
1	Recognize and embrace the high desert’s unique climate, history, and spirit in public space solutions.
2	Enhance and activate public spaces with dynamic design, lighting, and programming while ensuring Downtown remains clean, safe, and inviting.
3	Develop an efficient, accessible parking system that reduces vehicle dependency, minimizes trips, and supports growth through innovative solutions.
4	Honor the city’s crossroads heritage by implementing innovative mobility solutions that ensure connectivity throughout Albuquerque.
1	Create an 18-hour downtown by activating public spaces, supporting nightlife, and expanding cultural programming, including public art and entertainment.
2	Increase Downtown’s residential population by promoting high-density, mixed-income housing, and diverse housing options to support economic growth.
3	Modernize utilities to enhance connectivity, walkability, and long-term redevelopment.
4	Expand job opportunities and innovation by fostering business growth, supporting entrepreneurs, and attracting higher education institutions.

1	Cultivate a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally-driven Downtown experience through a combination of strategic placemaking, safety enhancements, retail activation, and public realm improvements.
2	Integrate local culture, history, and public space enhancements to create engaging and memorable experiences.
3	Develop and implement a unified branding strategy that authentically reflects Downtown Albuquerque’s rich heritage, cultural vibrancy, and distinct local character.
4	Develop a cohesive wayfinding and design strategy that integrates cultural identity, enhances accessibility, and improves navigation across Downtown Albuquerque.
1	Enhance Downtown’s comfort and vibrancy by expanding shade, seating, public art, amenities, and green spaces with trees, while increasing cooling effects through strategic shade interventions.
2	Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility with targeted streetscape upgrades, including better lighting, wider sidewalks, and active ground floors to create a more vibrant streetscape.
3	Implement a unified Downtown parking strategy that includes advanced technology for efficiency and balanced pricing to ensure a convenient, safe, and sustainable parking experience.
4	Strengthen multi-modal connectivity by improving transit stops, expanding bicycle infrastructure, and advancing the Albuquerque Rail Trail for seamless mobility.
1	Establish local business districts, incentivize ground-floor activation, expand public art initiatives, and coordinate programming for large-scale events and late-night activities.
2	Offer development incentives for high-density, mixed-income housing, prioritize adaptive reuse of existing structures, and ensure diverse housing options are available.
3	Invest in infrastructure upgrades, expand public transit options, improve pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and implement smart city technologies like free public Wi-Fi hubs.
4	Expand co-working spaces and business incubators, enhance partnerships with universities, and create funding programs to support BIPOC-owned businesses and ongoing workforce training efforts.





SOURCE: Visit Albuquerque



GOAL 1

REINFORCE THE AUTHENTIC LOCAL, CREATIVE, AND DIVERSE CULTURE OF THE CORE

- 1 Cultivate a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally-driven downtown experience through a combination of strategic placemaking, safety enhancements, retail activation, and public realm improvements.
- 2 Integrate local culture, history, and public space enhancements to create engaging and memorable experiences.
- 3 Develop and implement a unified branding strategy that authentically reflects Downtown Albuquerque’s rich heritage, cultural vibrancy, and distinct local character.
- 4 Develop a cohesive wayfinding and design strategy that integrates cultural identity, enhances accessibility, and improves navigation across Downtown Albuquerque.



REINFORCE THE AUTHENTIC LOCAL, CREATIVE, AND DIVERSE CULTURE OF THE CORE

Downtown is an iconic location fostering a strong sense of place and enhancing local pride through its culturally authentic offerings that show off its unique character, heritage, and aesthetic appeal—making it difficult to replicate elsewhere in the city. By intertwining community and history, Downtown plays a vital role in preserving and promoting regional identity. Additionally, it acts as a gathering place for residents to engage in civic activities and celebrate their community, strengthening tourism and civic society. The vitality and inclusivity of Downtown are crucial for shaping the city’s collective identity and the sense of belonging for its residents.

The development of Downtown Albuquerque is deeply rooted in its history and culture, starting with the Tiwa people’s settlements in the 1200s and the Spanish estancias along El Camino Real, which were located on the outskirts of what is now the Downtown Core. The arrival of the railroad in 1880 marked a major transition from agriculture to industry, shaping the future of Downtown’s land use. This evolution was further influenced by urban renewal initiatives from the 1950s to the 1970s. Preserving Downtown’s rich heritage not only fosters a strong sense of identity for residents, but also bridges the past and the future, reinforcing the community’s connection to its place.

Today, Downtown is the central hub for both civic institutions and educational, cultural, and historical attractions, with government offices near business centers, and a thriving arts scene. Route 66, an iconic highway central to Albuquerque’s identity, runs through Downtown, providing an ideal route for cruising. This activity, which originated among Mexican and Mexican American communities

in El Paso and Juárez during the 1930s and 1940s, has become an important part of Albuquerque’s cultural heritage. By the 1960s, lowriders had transformed into symbols of the Chicano movement. While some towns in New Mexico imposed restrictions on cruising due to traffic concerns, community members in Albuquerque organized to advocate for their cruise rights. Albuquerque appealed its ban on cruising, reinforcing its connection with the cruising community. Today, lowriders, which embody diverse artistic identities, continue to cruise every Sunday on Central Avenue.

The creative sector in Albuquerque is characterized by its diversity, radical spirit, and vibrancy. It includes many artists, including muralists whose art is visible on walls and buildings throughout Downtown. Other thriving artist scenes include flamenco dancing, film production, music, and the culinary arts.

Enhancing the city as it grows and changes is a complex process. Downtown Albuquerque has made significant progress in increasing its cultural, dining, and lodging offerings for both residents and visitors. The renovation of historic sites such as the KiMo Theatre, 505 Central Food Hall, Ex Novo Brewing Company, and the ARRIVE Hotel exemplify this effort. Additionally, events like the Downtown Growers’ Market and ABQ Artwalk, organized by Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet, highlight the potential for developing vibrant public spaces through collaboration. These advancements suggest that Downtown Albuquerque can overcome its challenges with continued effort and investment in the local culture. The following recommendations will help the **Downtown MR Area** reinforce the Authentic Local, Creative, and Diverse Culture of the Core.

1 REVITALIZING CENTRAL AVENUE

Objective: Celebrate Downtown’s significance as the cultural and commercial heart of the city.
Recommendation: Cultivate a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally-driven downtown experience through a combination of strategic placemaking, safety enhancements, retail activation, and public realm improvements.

Central Avenue, previously a segment of Historic Route 66, represents a crucial aspect of the city’s identity and cultural heritage, encapsulating the essence of the historic Downtown Core. This thoroughfare remains a significant source of pride for the community. Beyond its cultural importance, Central Avenue is a key connectivity point within the broader Albuquerque area, necessitating careful management to preserve physical and emotional connections.

The Central Core currently faces several challenges, including frequent road closures during evenings and weekends, lowrider cruising at various times, and both real and perceived difficulties related to late-night activity. These challenges are especially significant given the area’s high concentration of bars and clubs and the limited daytime activity following the relocation of many major employers and families from Downtown.

To address this, Central Avenue needs a refresh—one that updates, cleans up, and enhances its sense of place through strategies that improve overall conditions while preserving its importance for mobility and community connection.

Revitalization Strategies:

- **Landscaping:** Emphasize green elements such as street trees, ground plantings, and planters to help define the area and cool the sidewalks.

- Street tree selections should include varieties that are hardy to desert extremes, as urban conditions can exacerbate heat and flooding.
- **Simplicity:** Focus on simple, low-maintenance street elements, using time-tested styles rather than trendy or over-designed furniture and materials. Where possible, highlight Downtown’s rich architectural details and character, such as historic buildings and neon signs. Simple paving materials, public realm elements, and additional benches will reduce visual clutter, allowing existing features to stand out.
- **Festivity:** Emphasize the festive atmosphere of Central Avenue’s core blocks with a clearly defined and predictable street closure or activity zone. A curb-less or festival-style street condition (**page 37**) could help define the area and slow traffic during non-festival days. Street closures should take place in consistent locations and use clearly visible barriers, such as large movable planters or retractable bollards.
- **Illumination:** The underpass - where Central Avenue passes beneath the rail lines and the planned Rail Trail - presents a unique opportunity to serve as a placemaking gateway into Downtown. Enhancing this space with neon lighting and a multi-level design would celebrate its historic character, amplify its significance, and support local businesses.



LANDSCAPING

- Emphasize Robinson Park as a key public space
- Extend center median with trees and ground-level plantings
- Enhance the boulevard character
- Highlight the area as an important gateway into Downtown



Figure 7: Central Avenue Park Passage

SIMPLICITY

- Add ramp transition from curbless section
- Use parking lane for semi-permanent parklets, where appropriate
- Prioritize retail, residential, and service-oriented tenants
- Encourage open and active façades
- Allow occasional street wall breaks
- Integrate façades with sidewalks

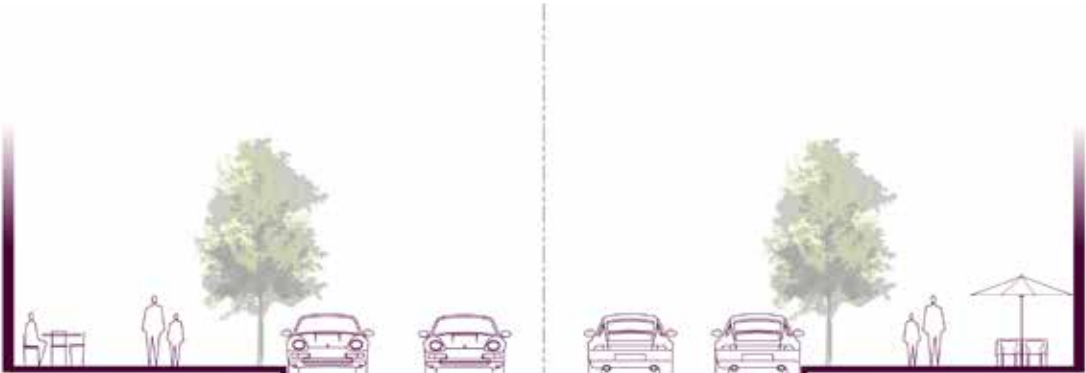
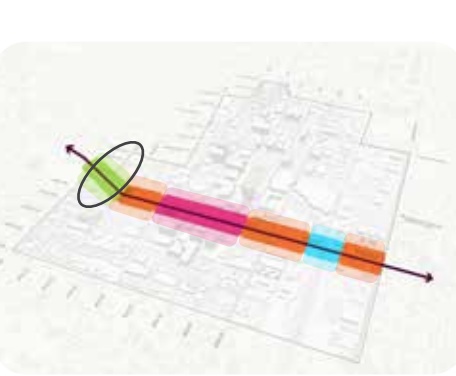
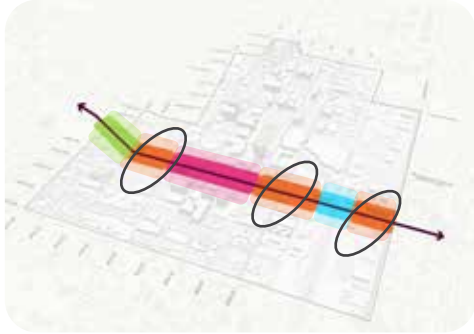


Figure 8: Central Avenue Transition



Clockwise from top left: Project 180 | Oklahoma City, OK; Project 180 | Oklahoma City, OK; Castro Valley Boulevard | Castro Valley, CA



Clockwise from top left: Aspen Heights Residential | Austin, TX; Dairy Block | Denver, CO; Parklet | Austin, TX;





FESTIVITY

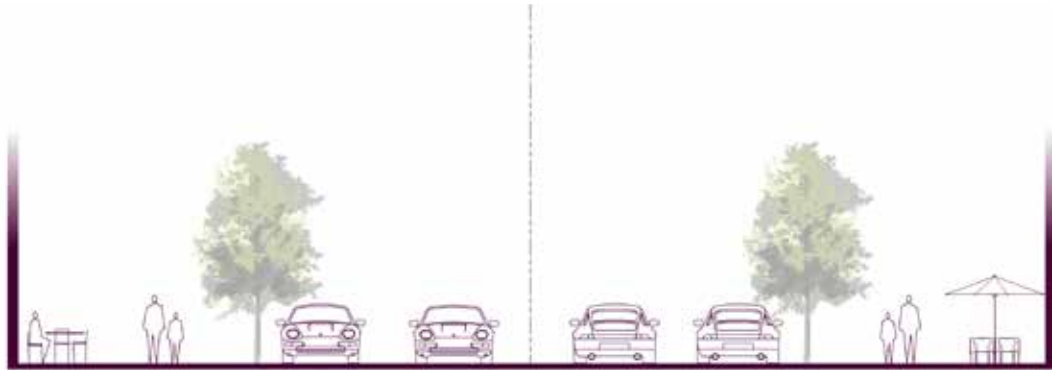


Figure 9: Central Avenue Central Core

- Create a curbless festival street
- Maintain a consistent street wall
- Promote diverse street activity
- Prioritize retail with entertainment
- Ensure fully open and active façades

A FESTIVAL STREET is a portion of public right-of-way that has been designated for recurring temporary closure to vehicle traffic use for the purpose of pedestrian-oriented special activities.

Activities may include:



Clockwise from top left: Downtown Wheaton | Wheaton, IL; Downtown Ennis | Ennis, TX; Downtown Denison | Denison, TX



Clockwise from top right: Clematis Street | West Palm Beach, FL; Downtown at Sundown | Lake Charles, LA; Chalk Art Festival | Denver, CO; Rue St. Catherine | Montreal, CAN; Greer Station | Greer, SC;



“ [Downtown needs] daily and diverse events to give people a reason to be there. ”
-Community Input

- A. Hudson Table | Philadelphia, PA
- B. Brazos Valley Senior Games | College Station, TX
- C. Wildlife on the Move | Ennis, TX
- D. Shakespeare in the Park | St. Louis, MO
- E. 'Til Midnight at the Nasher Museum | Dallas, TX
- F. We Believe in Portland Clean-Up Day | Portland, OR

Figure 10: Examples of diverse programming

- A** STREET BECOMES FLUSH WITH CURB TO REINFORCE FESTIVAL NATURE AND PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY. VERTICAL SPEED CONTROL ELEMENTS ALSO MANAGE TRAFFIC SPEEDS
- B** SIDEWALKS ARE WIDENED FOR INCREASED STREET ACTIVITY, SUCH AS OUTDOOR DINING. SIDEWALKS ARE BOUNDED BY SAFETY BOLLARDS

- C** PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING AND OTHER STREET FURNITURE ARE INTRODUCED TO HELP DEFINE THE SHARED STREET
- D** STREET TREES AND GROUND PLANTINGS ARE INCORPORATED
- E** ON-STREET PARKING PROVIDES A BUFFER TO SIDEWALK ACTIVITY

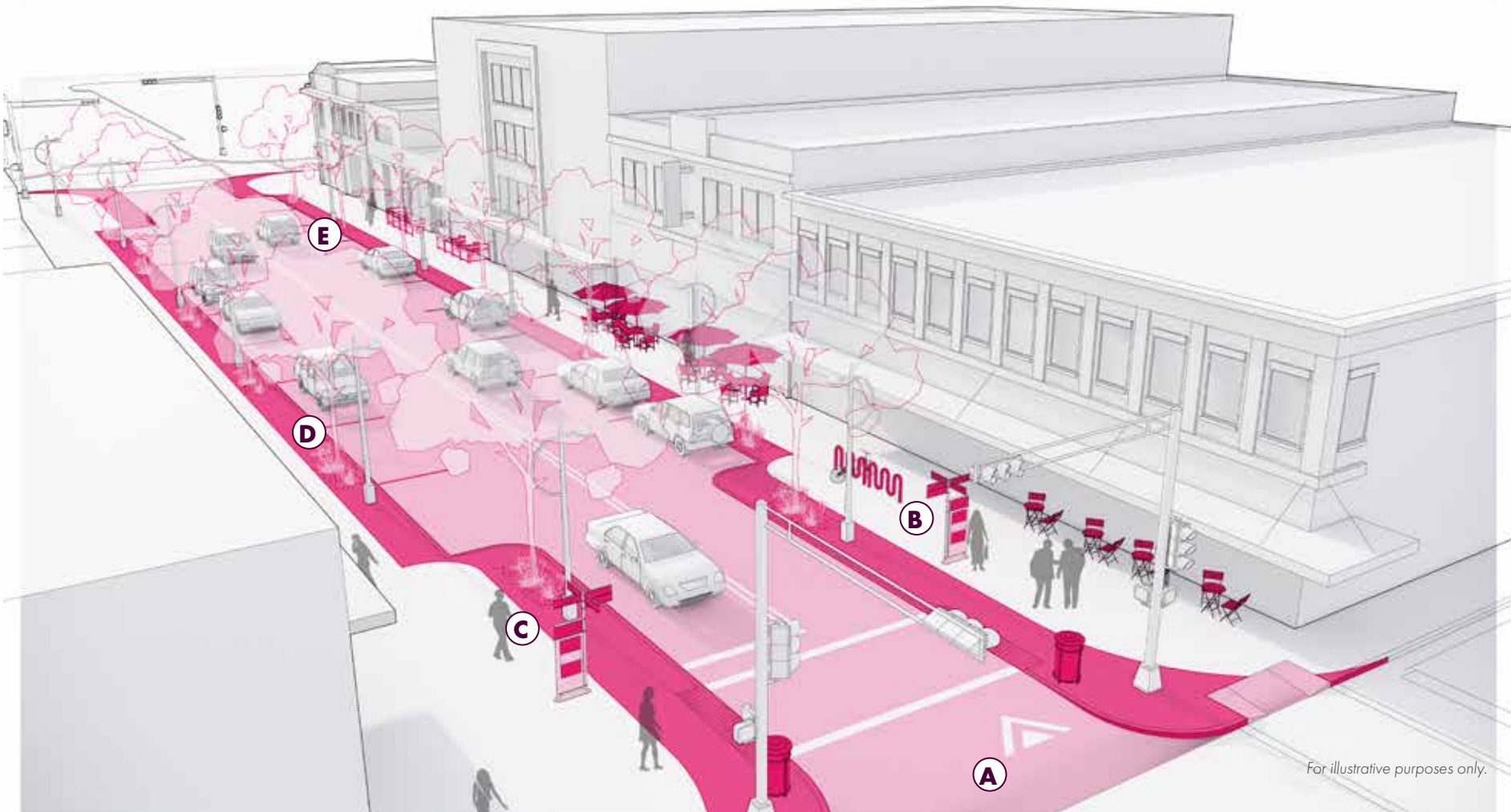


Figure 11: Conceptual view of Central Avenue refresh



ILLUMINATION

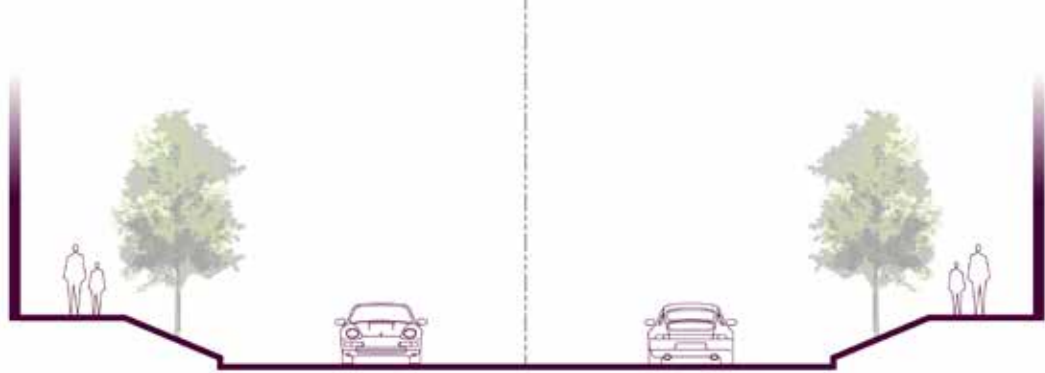


Figure 12: Central Avenue Underpass Gateway

- Illuminate rail corridor and elevated Rail Trail
- Highlight gateway with high-visibility lighting
- Incorporate sculptural lighting elements
- Address façades disconnected from street level

2 PLACEMAKING

Objective: Enhance the public perception of and promote the Downtown Core through a comprehensive placemaking initiative.

Recommendation: Integrate local culture, history, and public space enhancements to create engaging and memorable experiences.

The culture of a community plays a crucial role in shaping the discourse and actions associated with development. A well-defined sense of place fosters belonging and empowers residents to effect meaningful change within their communities. Development projects are more likely to succeed when they integrate local cultural considerations into their design and implementation processes. *Downtown 2050* shifts away from merely replicating the strategies of other communities.

To foster a sense of place, it is necessary to celebrate community character, which should evolve organically rather than be artificially imposed. This process requires a comprehensive understanding of a community’s historical, cultural, economic, and social context, and a forward-looking vision that continuously adapts to embrace new ideas while accommodating the inherent tensions among historical, contemporary, and prospective community values and culture.

A thorough artistic and cultural inventory would help recognize and document artists, residents, and community cultural workers. A community-based participatory strategy would identify a community’s artistic, cultural, and creative attributes. This inventory may include population and demographic

information, local social and architectural history, languages spoken, and unique food customs. The City should make use of the following unique features of Downtown when programming and fostering development: prevailing landscape and scale of existing buildings (including residential, commercial, governmental, and institutional structures); public spaces; transportation infrastructure; temporary markets and fairs; architectural features such as patterns, colors, and materials; natural resources; flora; street and community signage; art forms; significant locales; local educational institutions (e.g., colleges and universities); and art institutions (museums, theaters, historic homes, etc.).

Place-conscious initiatives that prioritize the needs of individuals in underserved communities are well-positioned to tackle challenges as they arise. Key to this effort is providing amenities that improve residents’ quality of life—such as educational institutions, playgrounds, green spaces, walkable neighborhoods, and accessible transit options. Given the high prevalence of multifamily housing with no green space, it is important to identify more locations for public dog runs and parks, and to incorporate the needs of pet owners when designing streets and public areas.



Clockwise from top left: ‘Rain’ M Street Underpass | Washington, DC; Neon Tumbleweed proposed at Central Crossing | Albuquerque, NM; ‘Sensing You’ Santa Clara Street Underpass | San Jose, CA



Placemaking Strategies:

- **A Big Splash:** Introducing a signature artistic or iconic feature—whether permanent or temporary—can spark curiosity and draw people Downtown. Large sculptural elements that light up at night or incorporate sound can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. Water features, recreational spaces, and visual art installations that reflect the area’s rich Indigenous and Hispanic cultures would be powerful additions.
- **Public Pathways:** Sidewalks and streets make up a significant portion of public space in the Downtown Core. Rethinking these areas as vibrant places—by incorporating outdoor dining, signage, public art, shade trees, and creative lighting—can enhance safety, encourage exploration, and add energy to the streetscape.
- **Small Moments:** Unexpected spaces, such as widened sidewalks or intersections, offer opportunities for creative enhancements. These could include flexible seating, outdoor games, or community art installations—bringing uniquely Burqueño experiences to everyday places.
- **Green Impacts:** In a high-desert city, green spaces are essential. Maximizing and expanding green areas—through street trees, planters, and small urban parks—enhances curb appeal, provides a welcome respite, and elevates the downtown experience. Integrating greenery throughout the urban landscape encourages exploration and fosters a more inviting environment.

- **Storefront Activation:** Filling vacant storefronts with pop-up shops, temporary retail, or art installations can breathe life into the area. The City can support these efforts by easing regulatory and permitting barriers, which can also help to attract long-term tenants and revitalize commercial spaces.
- **Public Facilities:** Permanent public restrooms near activity hubs are essential for a thriving downtown. Unlike temporary facilities used for large events, permanent restrooms ensure that families, shoppers, and visitors can comfortably explore, dine, and enjoy Downtown for extended periods.

Unlocking Downtown’s full potential requires input from stakeholders, collaboration with the creative community, and a thoughtful balance between preserving what works and introducing fresh ideas.

“Central Avenue through Downtown is the core identity of Albuquerque.”
- Community Input



A. ICONIC SCULPTURE



D. GREEN PLANTERS



H. POP UP SHOP



B. SHADE TREES



E. OUTDOOR GAME AREAS



G. PUBLIC RESTROOMS



C. OUTDOOR DINING



F. INTERACTIVE PUBLIC ART

- A. Tree of Ténéré LED sculpture | Dallas, TX
- B. Downtown Phoenix | Phoenix, AZ
- C. Roosevelt Row | Phoenix, AZ
- D. Downtown Ennis | Ennis, TX
- E. San Jacinto Plaza | El Paso, TX
- F. Impulse Seesaws | various cities
- G. Moonlight Makers | Asheville, NC
- H. Shutterstock

Figure 13: Examples of placemaking strategies



3 BRANDING THE CORE

Objective: Foster a sense of unity and identity across all Downtown districts to create distinctly local experiences.

Recommendation: Develop and implement a unified branding strategy that authentically reflects Downtown Albuquerque’s rich heritage, cultural vibrancy, and distinct local character.

Addressing changing public perceptions of Downtown poses a multifaceted challenge, and **Downtown 2050** includes strategies to reshape perceptions. The branding recommendations seek to enrich the narrative of the Downtown Albuquerque experience by emphasizing key attributes such as its residents, culture, authenticity, street art, and vibrant colors. Perceptions change incrementally, and a brand can aid in clarifying communications. Maintaining brand consistency is crucial for enhancing recognition and linking the message to a singular source. Positive perceptions will likely arise from consistent branding, which fosters trust and loyalty. Establishing a foundational brand for the **Downtown MR Area** is strongly recommended to ensure consistency across diverse communications and experiences.

The existing brand has evolved through years of in-person and online interactions. It is important to recognize that a brand extends beyond a mere logo; it symbolizes a coordinated community engagement campaign. A brand statement should be forward-looking and aspirational, encapsulating the unique characteristics of Downtown while distinguishing it from other areas within Albuquerque.

Branding Themes:

- **Economy:** Branding possesses significant financial value and is critical in enhancing visibility and distinguishing a community from others. It can also drive revitalization efforts in areas at risk of decline, promoting investment

and development. Furthermore, a strong community brand can significantly increase foot traffic to local establishments, such as restaurants and shops, creating a vibrant economic buzz. A robust branding strategy ultimately enhances community identity and stimulates growth and prosperity within the local economy.

- **Community:** The effectiveness of a brand is fundamentally grounded in the principle of unity, which fosters a cohesive identity. A well-developed brand is designed to authentically embody a community’s core values and beliefs, which can effectively attract diverse groups, including potential residents and businesses. Community branding acts as a mechanism to define neighborhoods by capturing their unique characteristics and cultural heritage.
- **Character:** A distinctive slogan or iconic image could facilitate a transformation of perceptions, creating a lasting brand through an approach that engages multiple senses. The branding strategy for Downtown Albuquerque should celebrate existing strengths while cultivating positive associations and addressing any negative perceptions. Furthermore, it is advisable to pursue individualized branding for distinct sub-districts within Downtown and other city areas, fostering a sense of unique neighborhoods. Promoting the establishment of well-defined retail and entertainment districts, each characterized by its own identity and offerings, is highly encouraged.

- **Unification:** A design playbook should be developed, incorporating complementary colors, fonts, shapes, narratives, and sensory cues across all channels, including street signage, public art, festivals, events, advertising, and digital interactions. These various channels significantly contribute to individual experiences and memories of Downtown. Moreover, the most successful brands necessitate regular updates. A Business Improvement District (BID) or a local MainStreet program could provide capacity and consistency for ongoing brand management, facilitated by appointing a dedicated brand manager and supported periodically by the City and the MRA as needed.

The final part of the branding strategy should include a plan for effectively disseminating positive messages and information about events occurring Downtown, which is essential. This may involve increasing email communications, displaying promotional banners and flyers, consolidating social media messaging, distributing SMS notifications, and fostering word-of-mouth promotion. The City or organizations focused on Downtown should continue to provide workshops, lecture series, small business support classes, open-air theater productions, and other activities designed to enhance communication across various media. Integrating smart technology may serve as a valuable resource in these initiatives.



WHAT OTHER PLACES HAVE DONE: GARLAND, TEXAS

Downtown Garland reopened its square in the fall of 2023 after overcoming the challenges of COVID and more than a year of reconstruction. This process was met with both concern and anticipation by businesses and residents.

To mark this new era, a fresh brand was developed with input from the community through interactive pop-up events designed to generate excitement. The branding initiative included a comprehensive strategy featuring a cohesive visual identity, a communications plan, placemaking efforts, digital marketing, a four-part documentary on the brand’s development, and tools to measure success.

The result is a vibrant, revitalized Downtown Garland—a welcoming hub for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

SOURCE: [CivicBrand](#)



4 WAYFINDING

Objective: Strengthen community connection by weaving Albuquerque’s history, art, and local character into the physical and visual landscape of Downtown.

Recommendation: Develop a cohesive wayfinding and design strategy that integrates cultural identity, enhances accessibility, and improves navigation across Downtown Albuquerque.

A well-designed wayfinding system makes navigation intuitive, helping residents and visitors easily find their destinations. In urban districts like Downtown Albuquerque, clear and consistent signage—featuring recognizable colors, standardized symbols, and uniform fonts—creates a cohesive identity and enhances the user experience.

Currently, Downtown’s outdated and inconsistent wayfinding signs can cause confusion. The City has an opportunity to implement a modern strategy that improves navigation while celebrating the area’s cultural and historical identity.

Strategic design elements—such as locally inspired color palettes, well-placed directional signage, visually appealing banners, and integrated public art—can create a welcoming atmosphere. A thoughtfully designed system not only enhances mobility, but also supports economic growth by attracting visitors and strengthens community engagement. Public art and distinctive signage branding can highlight key landmarks, reinforcing Downtown Albuquerque’s identity and appeal.

Wayfinding Strategies:

- **Identification & Directional Signage:** Clearly marked gateway signs at district entry points—such as along Central Avenue—can welcome visitors, while branded signs at key landmarks reinforce Downtown’s

identity. Vehicle and pedestrian directional signage should be strategically placed along major corridors, intersections, and transit hubs to guide drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians efficiently.

- **Pedestrian Map Kiosks & Active Travel Promotion:** Placing detailed map kiosks along primary streets, transit stations, and bike paths can help pedestrians and cyclists navigate with ease. Highlighting walking and biking routes encourages active transportation and makes Downtown more accessible.
- **Accessibility & Visual Clarity:** Signage must be designed for individuals of all abilities, incorporating large, clear fonts, high-contrast colors, and tactile elements like braille. Simple, universally recognized symbols and maps make navigation intuitive for everyone.
- **Strategic Placement & Readability:** Signs should be located in high-traffic areas—such as transit stops, parks, and public spaces—for maximum visibility. They must be legible from various distances and heights to accommodate different users.
- **Digital Navigation Tools:** In addition to physical signage, digital wayfinding tools—such as interactive maps or online guides—can enhance engagement, drawing more people toward downtown businesses, attractions, and activities.



Types of Wayfinding Signage and Tools:

- **Identification Signage:** Marks entry into a district or destination with gateway signs at neighborhood edges—such as along Central Avenue—and branded signs at key downtown landmarks.
- **Vehicle Directional Signage:** Guides drivers and cyclists from major entry points to key destinations with highly visible signs placed at critical decision points.
- **Pedestrian Directional Signage:** Helps foot traffic navigate to pedestrian-friendly areas, landmarks, and transit connections.
- **Pedestrian Map Kiosks:** Provides maps along primary streets, near transit stations, and along bike paths to help visitors orient themselves.
- **Digital Beacons:** Enhances traditional signage with online strategies that boost visibility and engagement, including:
 1. **User-Generated Content:** Encourage reviews and social media check-ins on platforms like Yelp and Google Maps.
 2. **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** Improve website rankings to increase digital and foot traffic.
 3. **Influencer Partnerships:** Collaborate with local influencers to showcase Downtown on social media.



WHAT OTHER PLACES HAVE DONE: KENT, OHIO

Building upon a recently completed redevelopment in their downtown, the City of Kent Ohio realized they had an opportunity to do more to engage people in everything the city had to offer. The City wanted to instill a sense of ‘you have arrived’ to visitors and residents. A new signage and wayfinding program channelled the Downtown’s brand essence, tying in the area’s unique history and personality through colorful wayfinding assets. Quirky messaging, bright banners, and playful signs set the tone for the personality and atmosphere of the revitalized downtown.

SOURCE: [Guide Studio](#)



SOURCE: City of Albuquerque



GOAL 2

CREATE COMFORTABLE AND DYNAMIC PUBLIC SPACES

- 1 Enhance Downtown’s comfort and vibrancy by expanding shade, seating, public art, amenities, and green spaces with trees, while increasing cooling effects through strategic shade interventions.
- 2 Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility with targeted streetscape upgrades, including better lighting, wider sidewalks, and active ground floors to create a more vibrant streetscape.
- 3 Implement a unified Downtown parking strategy that includes advanced technology for efficiency and balanced pricing to ensure a convenient, safe, and sustainable parking experience.
- 4 Strengthen multi-modal connectivity by improving transit stops, expanding bicycle infrastructure, and advancing the Albuquerque Rail Trail for seamless mobility.



CREATE COMFORTABLE AND DYNAMIC PUBLIC SPACES

The character of Downtown is fundamentally influenced by its streets and public spaces. Infrastructure design should prioritize human interaction to create an appealing and accessible urban environment that emphasizes comfort and inclusivity, while ensuring ease of navigation for individuals of all ages. A “Pedestrian First” approach to infrastructure and transportation improvements will significantly enhance walk-ability throughout the area. Public spaces should offer a variety of seating options to accommodate different preferences and activities.

Downtown is recognized as the most walkable area in the city, with Central Avenue serving as the main thoroughfare and the heart of Albuquerque’s downtown district. This area features the city’s highest level of transit access, and recent planning efforts promise increased options for safe and comfortable bicycle travel. However, there needs to be a focus on enhancing the pedestrian environment to stimulate increased activity.

The Downtown Core consists of compact blocks, whereas the northern segment, which houses government buildings, presents a different scenario. The larger blocks in this area are nearly two and a half times longer than those found in other sections, resulting in psychological barriers for pedestrians and making walking less appealing, particularly during the summer months.

Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure, such as narrow sidewalks without essential amenities, contributes to an uncomfortable walking experience, both day and night. Deficiencies in lighting, shade, street crossings, and signage further exacerbate these conditions. Key priorities for Downtown should include bolstering public safety, implementing targeted streetscape improvements, investing in public infrastructure, and enhancing access and mobility.



Temporary Parklet: Downtown Plan Public Meeting

1 INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY-SCALE DESIGN

Objective: Recognize and embrace the high desert’s unique climate, history, and spirit in public space solutions.

Recommendation: Enhance Downtown’s comfort and vibrancy by expanding shade, seating, public art, amenities, and green spaces with trees, while increasing cooling effects through strategic shade interventions.

The **Downtown 2050** Redevelopment Plan aims to transform public spaces into vibrant, inclusive, and resilient community hubs that foster long-term social, health, and economic benefits. This vision aligns with the goal of creating dynamic and comfortable public spaces through sustainable design strategies that prioritize inclusivity and enhance the urban experience. By recognizing the high-desert climate, Downtown’s unique character, and the importance of sustainability, the plan will help create an environment that attracts investment and fosters community engagement.

Design Strategies:

- **Expand Green Spaces and Shade.** Incorporate shade trees, awnings, and umbrellas to reduce heat, while adding ground-level plantings, green walls, and green roofs to enhance cooling and create inviting public spaces.
- **Enhance Pedestrian Infrastructure and Walk-ability.** Improve sidewalks, seating, public art, and lighting to create a more comfortable and accessible pedestrian environment to encourage walking and exploration throughout Downtown.
- **Cooling and Water Features.** Integrate water features like fountains or mist systems to lower temperatures and enhance the aesthetic appeal to contribute to a more pleasant outdoor experience.

- **Sustainable Surfaces and Materials.** Use reflective materials for rooftops and permeable surfaces for pavements to reduce heat absorption, manage storm water, and support sustainable urban development.
- **Strengthen Multi-Modal Connectivity.** Ensure safe, well-lit connections between parking, transit, and key destinations, enhancing the accessibility of Downtown for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.
- **Promote Public Art and Creative Design.** Use public art installations and creative lighting to enhance the vibrancy and identity of Downtown to make it a more attractive and engaging place for residents and visitors alike.
- **Support Sustainable Practices and Amenities.** Provide recycling and composting stations, while integrating sustainable urban practices across public spaces to promote environmental responsibility and increase community engagement.

These strategies work together to create a downtown that is not only comfortable and inviting but also environmentally sustainable and rich in cultural identity. The focus on green spaces, shade, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and cooling measures will improve the liveability and vibrancy of the area year-round.



COOLING STRATEGIES

Albuquerque’s semi-arid climate is characterized by hot summers with seasonal monsoons and cool, dry winters. In Downtown, the urban heat island effect intensifies these high-desert conditions, particularly during warmer months. To improve the outdoor microclimate and ensure year-round thermal comfort, context-sensitive design strategies are essential.

The dense concentration of buildings and paved surfaces in Downtown contributes to elevated temperatures throughout the year. While abundant sunshine is one of Albuquerque’s strengths, mitigating its impacts during summer is critical to creating a more comfortable environment for residents and visitors.

Incorporating high-desert-specific design tactics and cooling measures should be prioritized in placemaking solutions for Downtown. These strategies work best when integrated and budgeted during the early conceptual stages of project planning.

Cooling Strategies:

- **Shade:** Reduce solar heat islands in pedestrian areas by adding shade trees, umbrellas, awnings, overhangs, canopies, and shade fabrics.
- **Green Surfaces:** Increase vegetation at all levels—ground-level plants, container gardens, green roofs, and green walls. These elements help reduce heat, promote green spaces, manage rainwater, and encourage biodiversity. Green roofs also provide additional building insulation.

- **Permeability:** Use permeable materials for ground surfaces to facilitate rainwater distribution and connect with stormwater management systems. A shared soil system for street trees and planting areas can help manage heavy rainfall.
- **Evaporative Cooling:** Install cooling mist systems or water features like fountains or water walls in heavily used areas. The cooling effect of water helps lower temperatures and enhances the placemaking experience with the soothing sound of flowing water.
- **Cool Roofs:** Use reflective materials and coatings for rooftops to reduce heat absorption. Cool roofs reflect more sunlight and absorb less solar radiation, contributing to lower temperatures overall.
- **Additional Green Space:** Downtown currently lacks adequate green space. Expanding open areas will improve public well-being, support rainwater collection, and offer cooling benefits. Pocket parks and small public spaces can provide pedestrians with recreational opportunities, shaded rest areas, and protection from the sun. These spaces also serve as effective economic development tools by encouraging people to spend more time in the area. The City should prioritize completion of the seven-mile Rail Trail around Downtown, as it will help expand green space and drive economic activity, as demonstrated by successful urban trails like New York’s High Line and Washington, DC’s Metropolitan Branch Trail.



A. SHADE TREES



D. MISTING SCULPTURE



G. PERMEABLE MATERIALS AND PLANTING



B. SHADE STRUCTURE



E. FOUNTAIN/SPLASH PAD



H. COOL ROOF



C. BUILDING AWNING



F. GREEN ROOF

- A. San Jacinto Plaza | El Paso, TX
- B. Downtown Park | Palm Springs, CA
- C. South Congress Ave. | Austin, TX
- D. Discovery Green | Houston, TX
- E. San Jacinto Plaza | El Paso, TX
- F. UTEP | El Paso, TX
- G. 4th Street Corridor | Village of Los Ranchos, NM
- H. CoolRoofs Program | NYC, NY

Figure 14: Examples of cooling strategies



2 ENSURE DOWNTOWN IS SAFE AND BRIGHT

Objective: Enhance and activate public spaces with dynamic design, lighting, and programming while ensuring Downtown remains clean, safe, and inviting.

Recommendation: Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility with targeted streetscape upgrades, including better lighting, wider sidewalks, and active ground floors to create a more vibrant streetscape.

A thriving downtown must feel safe, welcoming, and vibrant at all hours. Achieving this requires a holistic approach that extends beyond traditional policing. Strategic investments in lighting, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and active storefronts can significantly enhance both the perception and reality of safety. Public spaces should be designed to foster engagement with well-lit pathways, attractive storefronts, and inviting streetscapes that encourage activity and social interaction.

Lighting plays a critical role in shaping how people experience Downtown. Properly placed, adequate lighting enhances visibility, deters crime, and creates a more inviting and vibrant atmosphere. In addition to traditional street lamps, creative lighting solutions—such as pole-mounted, ground-level, storefront, and overhead fixtures—should be used to highlight key pedestrian corridors while complying with the State’s dark skies legislation. Priority should be given to pathways connecting parking areas to retail and residential spaces, ensuring safe and accessible routes, especially in the evening.

Pedestrian Safety and Walk-ability are equally important in creating a downtown that feels both accessible and enjoyable. Wide sidewalks, traffic-calming measures, and continuous pedestrian pathways contribute to a comfortable and easy-to-navigate environment. Addressing changes

in elevation and stepped walls that disrupt movement ensures that all public spaces remain easy to access and use.

Active Ground Floors contribute to a sense of safety by keeping streets lively and engaging. Well-maintained storefronts attract both residents and visitors, generating foot traffic that supports local businesses and enhances Downtown’s overall character. Avoiding blank walls and incorporating transparent elements—covering at least 70% of street-facing façades—creates a sense of openness and interaction. Expanding the MRA’s grant programs for signage and storefront improvements will support these efforts, while local organizations like Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet can leverage placemaking grants to further enhance the district’s visual appeal.

Activating Vacant Spaces is a key strategy for fostering a sense of security. Filling empty storefronts with temporary retail, pop-up shops, or art installations boosts economic activity and prevents spaces from feeling abandoned. The City should consider streamlining regulatory processes or offering incentives to encourage property owners to host short-term tenants. For persistent vacancies, temporary window decals, art, and creative installations can help maintain the appearance of active façades, keeping the streetscape visually engaging.

“ Safety at all hours of the day is my priority for Downtown.

-Community Input



A. ILLUMINATED UNDERPASS



D. LIGHTS & SOUNDS AT TRANSIT STOPS



B. LIGHTING AS INTERACTIVE PUBLIC ART



E. PARKLETS ADD PUBLIC SPACE TO THE STREET



C. WELL ILLUMINATED SIDEWALK



F. INTERACTIVE GATHERING SPACES

- A. Raiffeisen Bridge Luminaires | Neuwied, Germany
- B. Passage | various cities
- C. Castro Valley Boulevard | Castro Valley, CA
- D. Station of Being Interactive Bus Stop | Umeå, Sweden
- E. Congress Avenue Parklet | Austin, TX
- F. West End Square swings | Dallas, TX

Figure 15: Examples of placemaking doubling as safe strategies



Inactive



Active



Pleasant

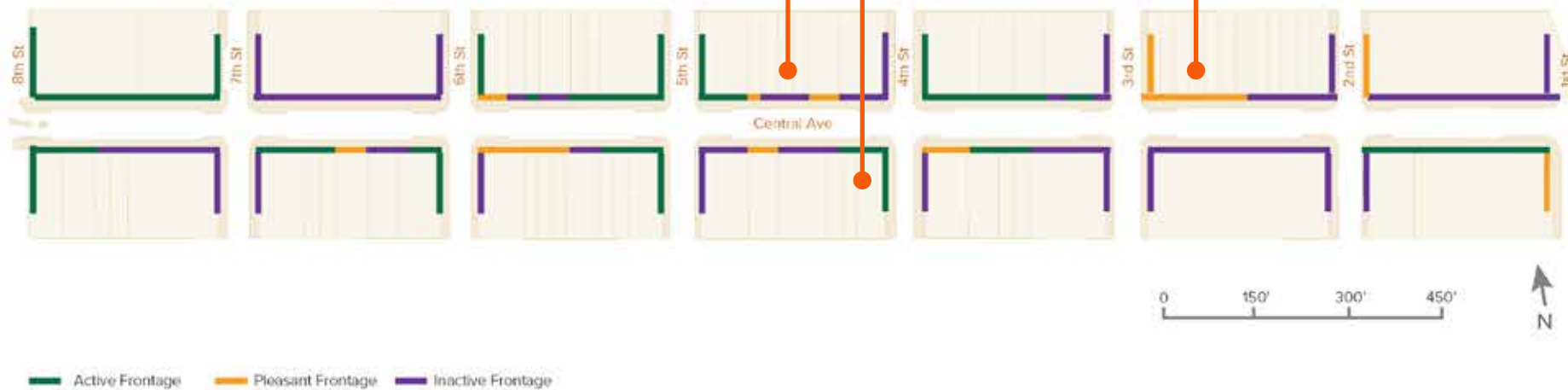
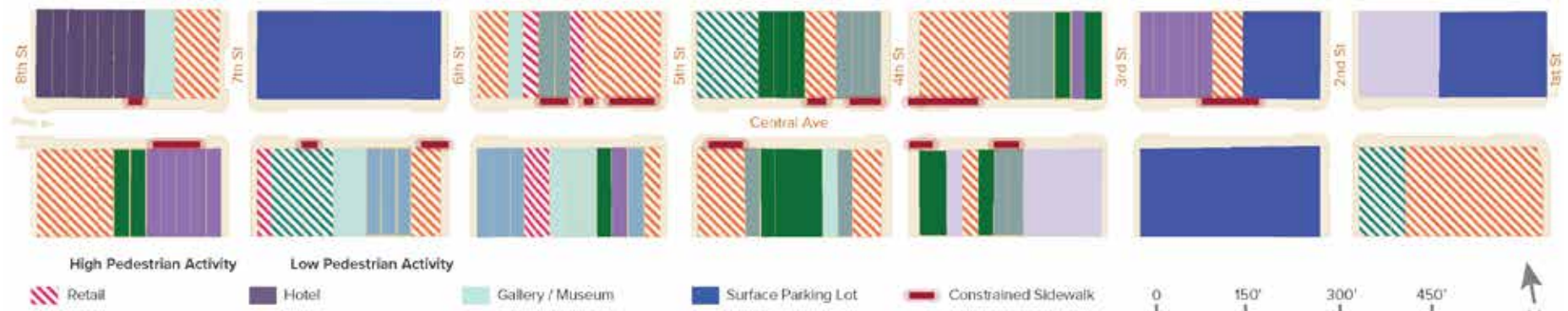


Figure 16: Building Frontages by Classification along Central Av. (Toole Design Group)

Figure 18: Ground Floor Land Uses and Level of Pedestrian Activity (Toole Design Group)



Improvements to storefronts and the public realm can make the street more walkable and inviting.



Figure 17: Storefront Activation

Objective: Develop an efficient, accessible parking system that reduces vehicle dependency, minimizes trips, and supports growth through innovative solutions.

Recommendation: Implement a unified downtown parking strategy that includes advanced technology for efficiency and balanced pricing to ensure a convenient, safe, and sustainable parking experience.

In 2016, the City completed a Downtown Parking Study in response to the Downtown 2025 MR Area Plan, which introduced a “Park-Once Strategy”

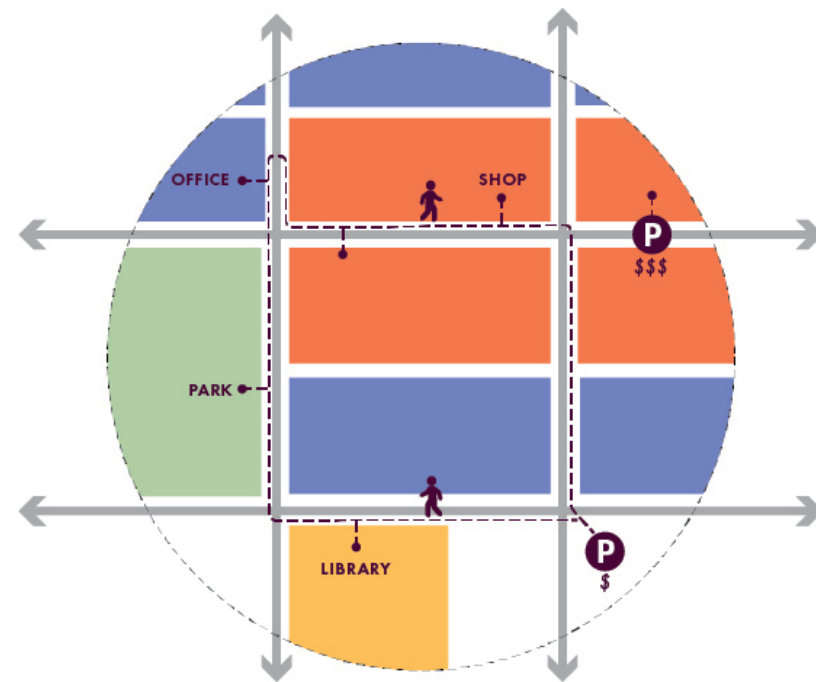


Figure 19: Park Once Strategy Conceptual Diagram

for Downtown. This vision is expected to be realized first in specific subdistricts with a high concentration of destinations, such as along Central Avenue, rather than across the entire district.

In 2025, MRA commissioned a new parking study to accurately assess parking inventory and demand. The study aims to address changes in travel patterns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the growth of downtown housing, shifts in off-street parking requirements, and potential infrastructure and redevelopment projects. This new study will help meet the objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, such as attracting new development, promoting efficient use of parking supply, and encouraging walking, biking, and transit use.

Developers have highlighted the challenges posed by fragmented parking systems, which can deter investment. A unified parking plan for Downtown could enhance the user experience and simultaneously support the City's goals of reducing vehicle dependency. Although off-street parking minimums are not required for downtown development, 33% of downtown land is still designated for parking. Moreover, implementing advanced technology to improve parking efficiency, enhance the pedestrian environment, and facilitate multi-modal connections between significant parking facilities and major destinations should be prioritized.

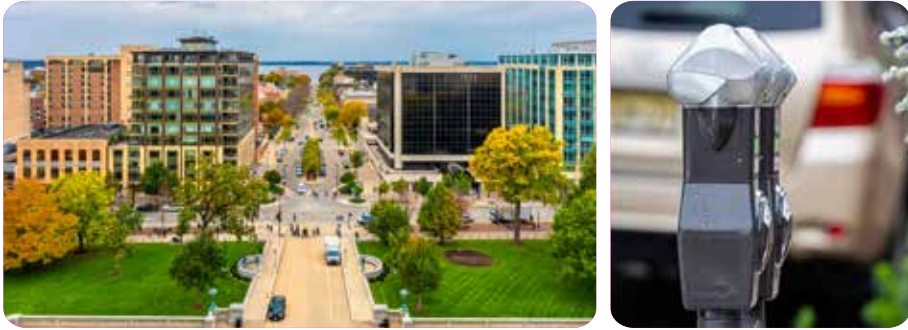
As Downtown experiences growing demand for housing, employment, and visitors, the City will need to effectively manage the available parking supply through:

- **Transportation Demand Management (TDM):** Encourage people to travel Downtown by transit, bike, e-scooter, walking, or riding together. This will reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel and parking demand.
- **Shared Parking:** Establish agreements for sharing parking spaces between tenants during certain times to optimize parking usage and increase development profitability by minimizing dedicated parking space.
- **Parking Connections:** Facilitate connections between developers, businesses, and available parking to ensure efficient use of space and resources.
- **Anchor Parking:** Identify key municipal off-street parking lots or structures to guide driving visitors to walk between downtown destinations. These parking facilities should be visible, well-connected, and well-lit for safety and convenience.
- **Curb Management:** Maximize the use of curbside space for various needs such as placemaking, multi-modal access (e.g., parklets, cafe seating, bike and scooter parking), transit improvements, and pedestrian safety. Curbside space must also accommodate freight, passenger pick-up, loading zones, and emergency access. Adjust pricing, time limits, and permitting based on the context and time of day to maximize effectiveness.

- **Pedestrian Connectivity:** Create a spacious, safe, and inviting pedestrian environment to encourage parking and walking to nearby destinations. Focus on pedestrian connections between anchor parking areas and key downtown destinations to support walk-ability and redevelopment goals.
- **Wayfinding:** Integrate parking strategies with a cohesive communication and wayfinding system, assisting drivers in navigating to available parking and guiding pedestrians to and from their vehicles and destinations.
- **Unified Parking Brand:** Establish a unified parking brand where both public and private parking use the same visual identity and payment system, offering a consistent experience with predictable pricing, availability, and hours of operation.
- **Balanced Pricing:** Set on-street parking prices to ensure availability for short-term use, which is essential for maintaining the perception that parking is adequate Downtown. Parking specialists recommend pricing these spaces to keep occupancy around 80%, optimizing revenue while making it easier for customers to access nearby businesses.

“ There is both too much and not enough parking Downtown... parking is disconnected from all the places you actually want to go.

- Community Input



**WHAT OTHER PLACES HAVE DONE:
MADISON, WISCONSIN**

The city of Madison, WI prices parking in most off-street facilities at lower rates than on-street spaces. This allows more vehicles to park during the day in the most desirable locations and encourages employees and other long-term parkers to use spaces on the periphery that may otherwise sit empty.

This policy is also a “park once” strategy, giving long-term visitors time to spend in a commercial area without concern over moving their vehicle. At the same time, there is more short-term parking capacity in the highest demand areas to make it easier to park in those spaces, increasing the total number of people able to park in front of storefronts.

SOURCE: [Planning.org - 8 Ways to Launch your Parking Strategy](#)

MAPPING VEHICLE VOLUMES (FIGURE 20)

Although Central Avenue experiences heavy traffic during peak hours, it is not a major commuting corridor. As a result, pedestrian-friendly improvements in the Downtown Core will have minimal impact on vehicle traffic and will significantly benefit pedestrians and cyclists.

In 2022, Central Avenue’s Average Weekday Daily Traffic (AWDT) ranged from 7,000 to 9,000 vehicles, well below the 19,000 to 23,000 vehicles on Lomas Boulevard. Traffic volumes on intersecting streets ranged from 2,000 to 6,500 vehicles, with 2nd Street north of Central reaching nearly 10,000 vehicles. During the evening peak hour, only 300 to 350 vehicles traveled in each direction on Central Avenue, substantially below capacity.

Left turns accounted for 5% to 7% of westbound traffic, averaging 14 to 24 left turns per hour. The busiest side streets were 3rd and 6th Streets southbound, with around 260 vehicles per hour, and 2nd and 5th Streets northbound, ranging from 280 to 330 vehicles.

Pedestrian activity was highest at the intersections of 1st and 4th Streets, where 150 to 200 combined crossings per direction were recorded each hour, likely due to the proximity of City Hall and the Bernalillo County complex. In contrast, minimal pedestrian activity was observed at the 8th Street and Central Avenue roundabout, suggesting pedestrians may prefer other access points.

**TOOLE
DESIGN**

Vehicle Volumes

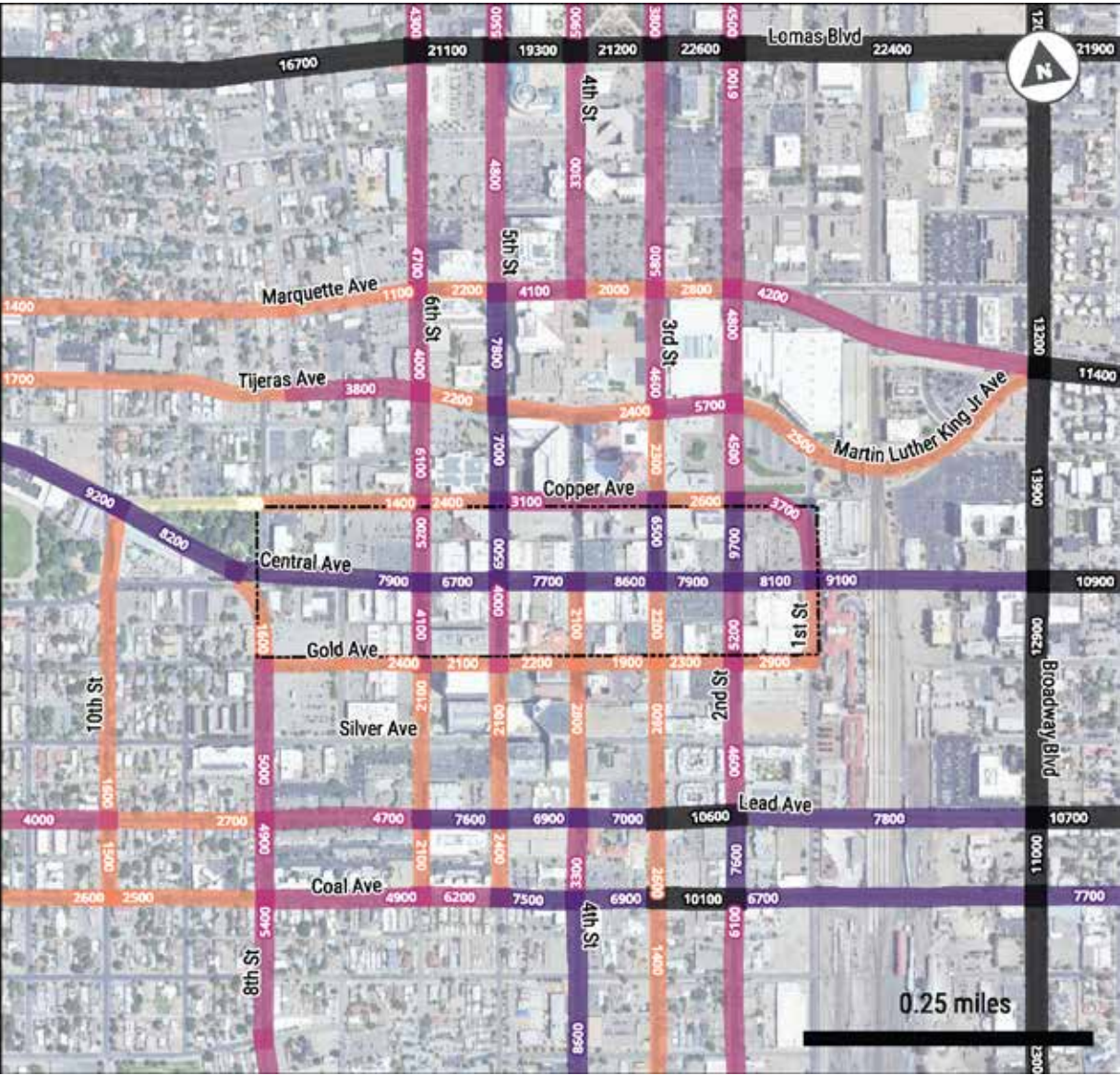
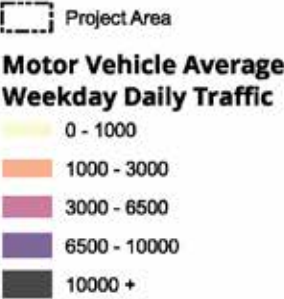


Figure 20: Motor Vehicle Volumes
(Toole Design Group)



4 MULTI-MODAL AND PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY

- Objective:** Honor the city’s crossroads heritage by implementing innovative mobility solutions that ensure connectivity throughout Albuquerque.
- Recommendation:** Strengthen multi-modal connectivity by improving transit stops, expanding bicycle infrastructure, and advancing the Albuquerque Rail Trail for seamless mobility.

Innovative mobility solutions are essential to improving connectivity and creating a welcoming, safe environment in Downtown. The pedestrian experience plays a key role in how long people stay in the area, influencing its overall vibrancy.

The National Walk-ability Index is a tool used to assess how pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods are across the United States. It scores areas from 1 to 20, with higher scores indicating better walk-ability. The index considers factors such as street intersection density, access to transit stops, and diversity of land use, based on data from the Smart Location Database.

In the **Downtown MR Area**, walk-ability scores range from 10.51 to 20, classifying it as “Above Average Walkable.” However, detailed data on pedestrian infrastructure is limited. Many sidewalks are narrow, presenting challenges for individuals using mobility devices and limiting opportunities for outdoor dining or streetscape activity.

Widening sidewalks could improve accessibility and vibrancy, but may reduce available space for development. To address this, strategies like “road diets”—reducing lane widths or the number of lanes—can create space for sidewalk expansion. The National Association of City Transportation Officials



Rendering of the Albuquerque Rail Trail

(NACTO) recommends 10-foot lane widths in urban areas to balance these competing needs.

Stakeholder feedback also highlights safety concerns for both pedestrians and cyclists. In response, the City of Albuquerque adopted a Complete Streets Ordinance in 2015 to improve street design through measures such



Rendering of the Albuquerque Rail Trail

as wider sidewalks, traffic-calming features, and more comprehensive multi-modal planning.

The City’s Vision Zero initiative uses the High Fatal and Injury Network (HFIN) and the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to prioritize streets for safety improvements. In the **Downtown MR Area**, 2nd Street and Mountain are Tier 1 priorities, followed by Central Avenue (Tier 2) and Broadway (Tier 3). This data underscores the need for coordinated planning to improve safety for all users—drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

One key recommendation is to re-evaluate one-way street configurations, which tend to encourage higher vehicle speeds due to the lack of opposing traffic. Converting some of these back to two-way streets could reduce speeds and enhance safety. Such changes would also improve circulation for transit, bikes, and pedestrians, supporting a shift toward a “pedestrian-first, park-once” downtown powered by multi-modal connectivity.

Figure 20 (page 61) illustrates average weekly traffic volumes in the **Downtown MR Area**. Central Avenue and other key Downtown streets see

noticeable increases in traffic during peak hours, which can impact both the safety and usability of bike routes. Since most of the area’s bikeway network runs east-west, it is important to consider traffic patterns when planning for cyclist comfort and safety. Identifying areas with higher vehicle volumes can help guide where to implement protected bike lanes or traffic-calming measures.

Short-term bike parking is typically located in busy areas, offering convenience and some protection from theft, though it lacks full security. The Downtown Central Avenue (2024) report prepared by Toole Design also notes a lack of marked clear zones around bike racks. These zones are essential for allowing cyclists to dismount safely without obstructing pedestrian movement or transit access.

Collectively, these strategies support the City’s broader vision of a multi-modal, pedestrian-oriented downtown.



TRANSIT

The Alvarado Transportation Center (ATC), situated in the southeastern section of the **Downtown MR Area**, serves as a transportation hub for an array of local, regional, and national transit services—including the New Mexico Rail Runner Express, which operates 25 trains per week between Belen and Santa Fe. The ATC also accommodates national services such as Amtrak and Greyhound, while ABQ Ride manages Albuquerque’s local bus and Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) operations.

ART and ABQ Ride’s Route 66 both stop near the ATC, with westbound service running along Copper Avenue and eastbound service along Gold Avenue. Additional local bus routes circulate through Downtown, with stops between 1st Street and 6th Street. Route 66 offers limited westbound service on Central Avenue between 1st and 2nd Streets.



Alvarado Transportation Center (City of Albuquerque)

ABQ Ride operates fare-free services across its network to promote accessibility and equity. Most local routes run from approximately 5:30 AM to 11:30 PM, with average headways of 15 to 30 minutes. The fare-free program also includes SunVan, the City’s paratransit service. The ABQ Ride system provides robust coverage across the city, with rapid transit service along Central Avenue and extensive local and commuter connections throughout Downtown.

Although ABQ Ride service levels declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership has since rebounded to more than 1.7 million riders annually. Continued transit-oriented development near major stations is encouraged, as strong transit access remains a cornerstone of a vibrant and connected downtown.

Despite having a well-integrated bus and rail system, Downtown lacks several essential amenities that support a positive transit experience, such as public restrooms, wayfinding signage, and visitor information centers. Travelers frequently report difficulty navigating the area due to unclear signage and limited access to real-time information or assistance.

Improving the downtown transit experience will require better signage, digital kiosks with real-time transit data, and more direct transit connections to key destinations. The new ABQ Ride Forward Network Plan offers a guide to improving the transit network.



Figure 21: Downtown Mobility

* **Downtown 2050** identifies key “spark areas” (see Chapter 4)—underutilized sites with strong potential to catalyze reinvestment and transformative redevelopment through targeted public and private investment.

- KEY ACTIVITY CENTERS**
- SPARK AREAS*
 - 1 JUDICIAL COMPLEX
 - 2 DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SAFETY CENTER
 - 3 ABQ POLICE DEPARTMENT
 - 4 CONVENTION CENTER
 - 5 CITY HALL & GOVT. CENTER
 - 6 MAIN LIBRARY
 - 7 KIMO THEATRE
- KEY MOBILITY CORRIDORS & INFRASTRUCTURE**
- KEY CORRIDORS
 - CITY PARKING FACILITIES
 - ART STATION
 - ALVARADO TRANSIT CENTER
- PROPOSED TRANSIT NETWORK**
- HIGH FREQUENCY ART ROUTES
 - HIGH FREQUENCY LOCAL ROUTES
 - DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA



Renderings and construction photos of the Albuquerque Rail Trail

THE ALBUQUERQUE RAIL TRAIL

The under-construction Albuquerque Rail Trail is designed to improve connectivity for both bicyclists and pedestrians. For much of its route, the trail will run alongside the existing rail right-of-way, connecting key destinations such as the Convention Center and Alvarado Transportation Center to significant sites in the greater downtown area, including the National Hispanic Cultural Center, Historic Rail Yards, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Sawmill District, Old Town, and BioPark.

Establishing robust physical connections between districts, particularly through pedestrian and bicycle-friendly corridors, can evolve from a patchwork of “5-minute neighborhoods” into a cohesive “15-minute Downtown.” This model enables residents to access diverse housing, employment opportunities, and services without dependence on personal vehicles.

To support this vision, the MRA should pursue strategies that enhance multi-modal connectivity between Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, taking advantage of opportunities that arise through development projects or alternative funding sources. These efforts will help create a vibrant, walkable downtown that supports diverse transportation options and fosters a strong sense of place.

ABQ Rail Trail Recommendations:

- **Upgrade the Central Avenue/Railroad Underpass** to significantly improve pedestrian access, which may include intersection reconfiguration, enhanced lighting, and integrated public art features.
- **Implement traffic-calming measures** on downtown streets to slow vehicle speeds, especially in high pedestrian areas and along routes identified in the High-Injury Network.
- **Enhance streets and transit stops** to improve access and rider experience on local bus routes, with a focus on accessibility upgrades.
- **Reimagine the curb zone** to serve multiple functions—such as bus stops, loading zones, delivery areas, passenger drop-offs, parklets, curb extensions, expanded sidewalks, street vendors, bike and scooter parking, and green infrastructure for stormwater. When reallocating street space for alternative modes of transportation, prioritize the removal of travel lanes over parking or curb uses.
- **Install abundant bicycle racks and facilities** throughout Downtown and the historic district to promote cycling. This includes maintaining and expanding both on-street and off-street bike facilities.



SOURCE: City of Albuquerque



GOAL 3

ENCOURAGE STRATEGIC INTEGRATED ECONOMIC GROWTH

- 1 Establish local business districts, incentivize ground-floor activation, expand public art initiatives, and coordinate programming for large-scale events and late-night activities.
- 2 Offer development incentives for high-density, mixed-income housing, prioritize adaptive reuse of existing structures, and ensure diverse housing options are available.
- 3 Invest in infrastructure upgrades, expand public transit options, improve pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and implement smart city technologies like free public Wi-Fi hubs.
- 4 Expand co-working spaces and business incubators, enhance partnerships with universities, and create funding programs to support BIPOC-owned businesses and ongoing workforce training efforts.



ENCOURAGE STRATEGIC INTEGRATED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Economic development fuels innovation, financial security, business growth, and a more diverse and resilient local economy. Downtown areas play a vital role in driving regional productivity and prosperity. Despite occupying a small share of a city’s land, they support a significant portion of jobs across industries such as commerce, transportation, education, and government. Investing in downtown areas generates substantial returns for both public and private sectors.

A thriving downtown draws visitors and new residents with its distinctive mix of breweries, restaurants, theaters, and cultural events—creating lasting economic and social value for the entire city.

Albuquerque’s **Downtown MR Area** accounts for just 1.3% of the city’s total estimated market value, yet its land is valued at 4.8 times more per square mile than the citywide average. Since 2010, Downtown property values have increased by 26%, closely mirroring the city’s overall increase of 27%.

Despite a higher density of storefronts compared to other parts of the city, the number of retail and restaurant businesses remains relatively low. This is largely due to Downtown’s heavy focus on government-related uses, which limits the presence of other commercial activity.

A vibrant retail and dining scene is critical to Downtown’s long-term success. However, many of Albuquerque’s downtown residents currently spend money outside the area due to limited options, while the relatively small residential base makes it difficult for businesses to thrive. Achieving a critical mass of

amenities and storefronts is essential to attracting more residents, employers, and visitors to the area.

Although Downtown accounts for 6% of the city’s total employment, it has a high worker-to-resident ratio of 13 to 1—reflecting its concentration of office-based jobs, particularly in public administration. The public sector alone provides about 7,900 jobs, nearly half of all downtown positions. While public sector employment has helped offset private sector losses over the past two decades, fostering private sector growth is crucial for economic advancement.

Downtown houses 22% of Albuquerque’s creative occupations and 9% of the city’s knowledge-sector jobs (excluding healthcare), though growth in these jobs has lagged behind other areas. Downtown also accounts for 9% of citywide jobs that pay more than \$40,000 annually, with a notable 61% of downtown workers earning above this threshold, compared to just 41% citywide. While this highlights Downtown’s economic importance, the limited number of high-income residents raises concerns about its ability to attract wealthier households.

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected Downtown, with many office workers shifting to hybrid or fully remote work arrangements. While the long-term future of in-office work remains uncertain, the objectives articulated in this plan are grounded in established principles. Economic development in downtown must enhance the overall environment, design infrastructure that

accommodates all users, expand housing options, create vibrant retail and entertainment districts, develop world-class parks and gathering spaces to foster communal experiences, and ensure seamless connections to neighboring areas.

Economic Strategies:

- **Enhance Vibrancy and Land Use Diversity.** A successful downtown depends on a rich mix of housing, retail, office, civic, and entertainment spaces. Restaurants, nightlife, and cultural attractions activate streets and public spaces, creating dynamic districts that attract residents, workers, and visitors.
- **Expand Housing and Economic Development.** Growing the downtown residential population supports local businesses and strengthens the economy. New housing, along with a diverse mix of retailers, offices, and entertainment spaces, will drive investment and make downtown a more desirable place to live and work.
- **Improve Infrastructure and Public Spaces.** Strong transit connections, pedestrian-friendly streets, and high-quality parks create a more accessible and inviting downtown. Investing in public spaces and mobility improvements will enhance safety, connectivity, and long-term sustainability.
- **Strengthen Workforce and Educational Opportunities.** Expanding higher education and workforce development programs will attract skilled professionals and support business growth. Fostering stronger connections with higher education and workforce training will position downtown as a hub for talent and innovation.



Downtown Albuquerque (City of Albuquerque)



1 ENHANCE VIBRANCY & LAND USE DIVERSITY

Objective: Create an 18-hour downtown by activating public spaces, supporting nightlife, and expanding cultural programming, including public art and entertainment.

Recommendation: Establish local business districts, incentivize ground-floor activation, expand public art initiatives, and coordinate programming for large-scale events and late-night activities.

A thriving downtown requires a dynamic mix of land uses, businesses, and public spaces. Encouraging density through new development and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings will enhance both the character and economic potential of the district. Economic development initiatives should prioritize quality and equity, addressing disparities to harness economic potential and strengthen the city’s tax base. New development efforts must focus on underutilized land within Downtown, while also revitalizing historic buildings to preserve the area’s unique character. Policies should promote density and diversity in land use, building types, and activities, while

leveraging public land and economic development tools to create more investment opportunities in the built environment.

Prioritizing a diverse range of public art downtown—such as performance art, busking, sculptures, murals, and interactive displays from various artists—should be a key focus. It is essential to identify and remove barriers to creating public art in downtown spaces while developing strategies to increase both the variety and quantity of art. Additionally, exploring the feasibility of requiring large developments to allocate a portion of their budgets for public art, similar to a “1%-for-art” program, should be considered.

Establishing local business districts throughout downtown is essential for ensuring that shopping and services remain accessible within a five-minute walking radius. Supporting businesses that serve as “third spaces,” such as coffee shops, can promote community interaction.

The downtown area should offer a multifaceted experience for visitors, employees, and residents. Its sustainability is closely tied to the quality of experiences it provides. To successfully transition to an experiential economy, it is crucial to monitor emerging trends and identify “retail gaps.” This will enable targeted recruitment efforts and improve the retail and entertainment landscape. Addressing these gaps can increase the region’s share of consumer spending.



Burque Live feat. TNT Soundscapes

Additionally, activating nightlife and cultural programming will attract a broader audience and support around-the-clock activity. Improved coordination between nightlife establishments and city departments is needed to enhance safety and the overall experience.

To support the revitalization and sustainable growth of Downtown, the following should be considered:

Maintain an Inventory of Vacant Retail Spaces. Keep a comprehensive inventory of vacant retail spaces, prioritizing occupancy by locally- and diversely-owned businesses. Streamline permitting for temporary pop-up shops in vacant storefronts.

Activate Ground-Floor Spaces and Support Historic Reuse. Offer development incentives to activate ground-floor spaces and support the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

Expand Boutique Grant Programs. Expand boutique grant programs aimed at improving existing private infrastructure, maintaining the viability of commercial spaces, and reintroducing vacant properties to the marketplace.

Continue and Expand Redevelopment Incentives. Continue existing Redevelopment Incentives, such as the Redevelopment Tax Abatement program, and create new funding incentives for redevelopment and mixed-use projects.

Prioritize Land Use for Redevelopment. Create a development strategy that minimizes land designated for new tax-exempt uses (government and non-profit) and prioritizes the redevelopment of surface parking lots to fill gaps in the built environment.

Champion Downtown. Attract local, regional, and out-of-state visitors through increased marketing with a deliberately diverse offering of businesses and attractions.



WHAT OTHER PLACES HAVE DONE: CLEVELAND, OHIO

Strategy: Attract and retain talent by revitalizing downtown living and enhancing urban amenities, focusing on three pillars: Economy, Environment, and Experience.

Key Actions: Cleveland focused on converting old office buildings into residential units, making downtown living more attractive for professionals. The city also invested in lifestyle infrastructure, including green spaces, bike paths, and entertainment venues like the East 4th Street District. To bolster these efforts, the *Cleveland Talent Alliance*, a collaboration of 14 non-profit, public, and private entities, was created to develop a comprehensive system for attracting and retaining talent. This initiative initially targeted sectors like health, technology, and advanced manufacturing. Furthermore, leveraging the city’s tourism brand, *Destination Cleveland*, the effort focused on reshaping perceptions of Cleveland as an attractive place to live and work, retaining college graduates from the region, and associating the city with the burgeoning tech industry.

Results: Downtown Cleveland has become the city’s fastest-growing neighborhood, with a 32% increase in population—largely young professionals—since 2010. This growth has been driven by \$9 billion in investments, a low cost of living, world-class amenities, easy access to nature, and tax incentives aimed at attracting innovative industries to the city’s core.

SOURCE: [Downtown Cleveland](#); [Destination Cleveland](#)



2 EXPAND DOWNTOWN HOUSING

Objective: Increase Downtown’s residential population by promoting high-density, mixed-income housing, and diverse housing options to support economic growth.

Recommendation: Offer development incentives for high-density, mixed-income housing, prioritize adaptive reuse of existing structures, and ensure diverse housing options are available.

Albuquerque’s housing market is experiencing a historic supply shortage, driving up rents and home prices. Simultaneously, rising construction costs and supply chain disruptions are making development more challenging—particularly in redevelopment areas, where added costs often arise. Despite recent rent increases, Downtown Albuquerque remains relatively affordable, with rental rates 17% lower than in other parts of the city. This affordability is enhanced by low transportation costs due to nearby transit options, making Downtown one of the city’s most cost-effective neighborhoods.

A desirable downtown housing market supports regional economic efficiency and labor mobility by helping to attract and retain talent. High housing costs often push workers to live farther from their jobs, increasing commute times and transportation expenses. Meanwhile, many companies seeking to appeal to a younger workforce prioritize locations with a strong urban experience when choosing where to locate.

To strengthen the **Downtown MR Area’s** residential community and support local businesses, diverse housing options must be available. This includes high-density residential development with new amenities to serve a growing population. This plan promotes development on underutilized land and the

adaptive reuse of existing structures, with strategies to ensure housing options across all income levels. Increasing housing Downtown will boost street-level activity, enhance perceptions of safety, and provide a more consistent presence of residents.

While some multi-family projects are in the pipeline, expanding the number and variety of units is essential. Extremely low vacancy rates reflect the clear need for more housing types at various price points. Integrating housing into the Downtown Core will bring more people to the area at all times, contributing to its vibrancy and economic resilience.

Downtown 2050 encourages high-density development—aiming for at least 100 dwelling units per acre—particularly near transit and public amenities. Redevelopment of low-density areas around Civic Plaza is a priority. Recent streamlining of city regulations, including the Fast-Tracking ordinance, has helped reduce permitting barriers, though continued improvements are needed to lower development costs and increase predictability.

Support for adaptive reuse and converting vacant and obsolete buildings into housing is also recommended. Public land should be used for affordable and mixed-income housing, with requirements to include affordable units.

Monitoring displacement risks is key to protecting vulnerable residents. A range of housing types—including high-rises, townhomes, cooperative housing, and models supporting seniors, students, and people with special needs—should be pursued. The MRA should prioritize RFPs and development incentives where housing is most needed.

Incentives for Workforce Housing. Tailor housing development incentives to focus on providing housing for artists, restaurant and retail workers, or the film industry.

Expand Land Disposal Programs for affordable housing and mixed-income housing developments in the Downtown area. MRA should also encourage owners of surface parking lots to develop new infill housing.

Prioritize Housing Conversion and Mixed-Use Projects. Create incentives to convert obsolete buildings into housing through expedited permits, fee waivers, and gap financing.

Encourage Condo and Co-op Developments which are more attainable for younger, first-time buyers.

New Housing Developments must offer options for smaller households to align with trends toward smaller housing sizes. Infill development should involve redeveloping vacant lots for housing.



Palladium Townhomes in Downtown Albuquerque



Villa Agave in Downtown Albuquerque



3 IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC SPACES

Objective: Modernize utilities to enhance connectivity, walkability, and long-term redevelopment.

Recommendation: Invest in infrastructure upgrades, expand public transit options, improve pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and implement smart city technologies like free public Wi-Fi hubs.

Public funding is often directed toward infrastructure improvements, such as utilities, roadways, and sidewalks. These enhancements help create environments that attract private investment in various sectors, including residential options (from single-family homes to higher-density and affordable housing), commercial spaces (offices and retail), and community-focused facilities in healthcare, education, and recreation.

Utilities are essential public services that support development, including water supply, sewage management, stormwater control, natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications. They play a vital role in ensuring the functionality, comfort, and convenience of buildings and infrastructure. Therefore, effective utility planning is critical for any development project. Successful development and redevelopment in project areas require collaboration between public entities and private stakeholders.

Strategic investment in public amenities and comprehensive planning is crucial for promoting community development. Additionally, modernizing infrastructure can reduce maintenance costs while attracting technology-driven businesses, enhancing the overall functionality and appeal of redevelopment initiatives.

Assess Utility Infrastructure Needs. Work with relevant City departments to study the current condition of utility infrastructure in the **Downtown MR Area** to identify urgent areas needing improvement.

Prioritize Infrastructure Modernization. Prioritize modernizing infrastructure, including digital networks, utilities, public transit systems, and roadways, with investments like Free Wi-Fi hubs to improve community connectivity.



Rail Yards Streetscape

4 STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE & EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Objective: Expand job opportunities and innovation by fostering business growth, supporting entrepreneurs, and attracting higher education institutions.

Recommendation: Expand co-working spaces and business incubators, enhance partnerships with universities, and create funding programs to support BIPOC-owned businesses and ongoing workforce training efforts.

A well-connected workforce is key to Downtown’s economic vitality. Expanding the commitment and presence of higher education and harnessing the space and capacity of business incubators and co-working spaces will attract talent and foster innovation. Supporting BIPOC-owned businesses and facilitating access to capital will enhance economic inclusivity and harness untapped economic potential. The MRA should work closely with universities and local businesses to drive strategic growth.

Offer Targeted Incentives such as land or buildings for campus expansion and opportunities for universities to collaborate with local businesses and government.

Create Partnerships for Research Collaborations to foster innovation and drive economic growth. Additionally, establishing academic-focused innovation hubs will provide the infrastructure needed to support research-driven startups and encourage universities to become key players in Downtown’s development.

Expand on Workforce Training Programs in collaboration with universities to ensure that the local workforce is aligned with emerging industries and the needs of the academic sector.



Credit: Adobe Stock Images



University of New Mexico (City of Albuquerque)



SOURCE: City of Albuquerque

04

IMPLEMENTATION

The **Downtown MR Area** is entering a critical phase of development. As the city's central hub and a key economic district in New Mexico, the City must prioritize initiatives to activate and reimagine Downtown as a vibrant destination that attracts new residents, daytime workers, and visitors. This vision is essential for re-establishing the **Downtown MR Area** as a significant commercial and entertainment center for the city and the region. Tangible actions are required to transform negative perceptions of Downtown, turning it into a desirable destination and place to live. Decision-makers must adopt strategic approaches and accumulate the necessary funding to enable substantial investment in revitalization efforts.

Downtown 2050 provides a clear vision, realistic goals, and prioritized steps for short-, medium-, and long-term objectives. Regular reviews and updates are necessary to adapt to changing market trends and community needs. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) will be a critical source of new revenue

- TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)
- DOWNTOWN BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)
- SPARK AREAS (CIVIC PLAZA, EAST RAIL TRAIL, ROBINSON PARK)
- IMPLEMENTATION ACTION MATRIX

to support necessary public investments in Downtown's redevelopment. In parallel, business owners exploring the reformation of a Business Improvement District (BID) can help establish a separate, business-led funding stream and advocacy structure focused on beautification and business support within Downtown—complementing, but distinct from, public financing tools like TIF.

The MRA is the lead agency for implementing the **Downtown 2050** Plan, having the authority to encourage private sector development by investing in both public infrastructure and private development. However, while MRA may be in charge of plan implementation, coordination with and participation from other key stakeholders and city departments will be vital to turning this plan into a new reality for Downtown Albuquerque.

IMPLEMENTATION

Redevelopment encompasses public initiatives designed to stimulate economic activity in areas where private-sector investment has been inadequate. Such initiatives may involve direct financial investment, infrastructure upgrades, enhancements to public services, technical assistance, tax incentives, and entitlements.

The Importance of Partnerships

Downtown 2050 moves beyond the visioning phase and is now poised for significant transformation. The **Downtown MR Area** is ready to build, grow, and seize new opportunities that align with its long-term revitalization goals. This shift marks a pivotal moment in the effort to enhance infrastructure, increase housing, attract businesses, and create vibrant public spaces that benefit both residents and visitors. The focus must now turn to what can be achieved in the next 25 years, with leadership concentrating on coordination to ensure strategic and impactful action.

Downtown 2050 belongs to the community—residents, business owners, and visitors alike. Everyone has a role to play in bringing the plan to life, whether it's through participating in planning efforts, volunteering, or advocating for shared goals. Cultivating a collective sense of ownership is essential to achieving the vision and recommendations laid out in the plan.

Three key elements are critical to successful implementation: clear communication, strong collaboration, and shared ownership. **Downtown 2050** must extend beyond the MRA and serve as a comprehensive

framework that other city departments, community organizations, and the private sector can utilize to foster economic development.

Collaboration must adopt a synergistic approach, with nonprofits, local businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies leveraging each other's strengths and financial resources. This requires establishing clear communication channels—such as regular community meetings, informational newsletters, and dynamic tools for sharing updates, gathering feedback, and fostering commitments.

Strengthening partnerships will address community challenges more effectively and enable the pooling of funding for projects that can significantly improve the local area. Private sector involvement is particularly



Downtown Plan Public Meeting

vital, as it brings innovative ideas, investment opportunities, and potential sponsorships that can accelerate progress.

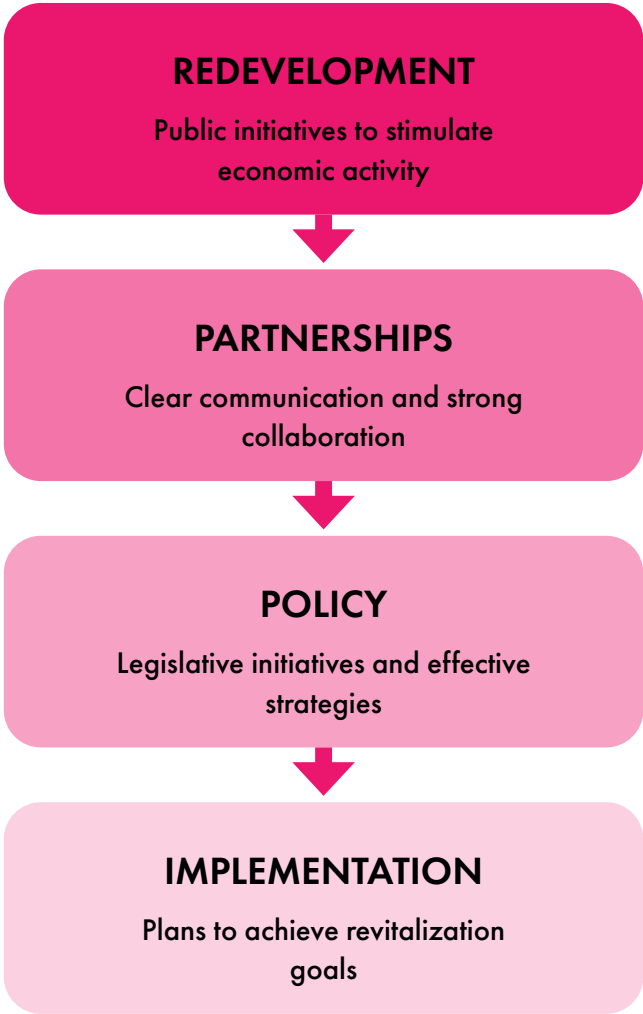
Setting Policy for Effective Implementation

New legislative initiatives have given redevelopment agencies the flexibility to explore creative approaches and tap into new funding sources. However, these changes have also complicated project financing, requiring close coordination between City staff, policymakers, and specialized financial teams and consultants to ensure public funds are used appropriately.

Effective policy formulation utilizes broad language to establish clear objectives, while specific strategies define the methods to achieve those goals. The MRA plays a key role in presenting development policy options and supporting related programs. Well-defined policies ensure consistency, equitable treatment, and decision-making that is based on broader goals and approved budgets, rather than individual interests.

Advocating for place-based policies and strategies that direct investments and interventions to specific locations highlights the importance of evidence-based decision-making and integrated, place-focused development.

Downtown 2050 seeks to leverage the unique potential of local assets, knowledge, and capital while recognizing the need for tailored solutions in diverse settings. These policies are designed to foster collaboration across government agencies and with key partners, helping to reduce conflicts during planning and implementation.



Ensuring Fiscal Responsibility in Redevelopment

Both public and private stakeholders expect redevelopment funds to be used responsibly and guided by a clearly defined plan. City leadership must prioritize transparency to build and maintain public trust. The MRA should remain flexible in securing resources to meet its goals, but must also rely on systematic data collection to inform and educate the public about administrative processes, ongoing projects, programs, and the economic conditions within the **Downtown MR Area**.

Effective collaboration across City departments is crucial for successful data collection and to prevent duplicative efforts. This coordinated approach will help ensure alignment with objectives in economic development, housing improvement, and blight reduction across various programs.

Promoting Social Equity and Inclusion

Redevelopment programs should enhance opportunities for underserved communities by promoting inclusion and equity. This means improving access to housing, essential services, and employment in underserved communities. Integrating and expanding supportive services—such as job training, small business assistance, and community development initiatives—into redevelopment efforts is key to fostering long-term community resilience.

Data can be a powerful tool for addressing structural inequities, especially those affecting BIPOC communities. However, historical misuse of data and legal restrictions on group identifiers have led to mistrust and concerns about surveillance. To rebuild trust, data collection must be transparent, community-informed, and focused on amplifying the voices of underserved populations.



Source: Adobe Stock Images

Recognizing intersectional identities and embedding accountability measures will strengthen these efforts.

Downtown 2050 seeks to redefine data practices through engagement strategies that prioritize racial equity and track measurable improvements—particularly for communities of color. This approach empowers community members to become agents of change, fostering shared values of transparency and accountability in partnerships with researchers and government agencies.

Ideally, an online dashboard should be developed and funded to support equitable data collection and track the progress of **Downtown 2050**. The MRA should manage and maintain the platform to ensure consistency, accuracy, and accountability. This tool would integrate data from a range of sources—comprehensive reports, in-depth analyses, and real-time updates—into a single,

user-friendly platform that could include features like intuitive data visualization tools, customizable views, and filters that allow users to focus on specific demographics or geographic areas.

By making data accessible and easy to interpret, the dashboard could empower stakeholders to better understand redevelopment efforts and outcomes. It would also help strengthen transparency, foster collaboration among community members, policymakers, and researchers, and support informed action throughout the plan's implementation.

Reforming Land Use and Housing Policies

Reviewing development codes and processes to remove barriers to needed housing—while still protecting public health and safety—is essential. These efforts should establish supportive frameworks that include form-based zoning, flexible building codes, and streamlined approval processes to maximize the use of space and resources Downtown. Strategies should align with the existing centers and corridors framework outlined in the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, promoting denser, more affordable, and transit-oriented housing options in priority areas.

Expanding diverse housing opportunities requires a range of financial strategies. This involves using housing incentives like gap financing to support both affordable and market-rate development, as well as applying property redevelopment tools to revitalize deteriorating properties. Residential improvement grants, for example, could help current residents make critical upgrades and remain in their homes, supporting long-term stability and neighborhood revitalization.

Preserving Local Identity and Cultural Resources

To preserve and enhance local identity, uniqueness, and cultural assets, it is crucial that local decision-making, planning processes, policies, and regulations align with and support the community's character. The effective revitalization of heritage buildings strengthens visitors' connections to local culture, fostering a robust sense of place attachment.

Successful preservation initiatives within redevelopment projects that repurpose historic structures yield considerable economic benefits and serve as beacons of culture and pride for a community. Consequently, it is imperative to advocate for federal, state, and local incentives to encourage safeguarding significant historical resources.



KiMo Theatre (City of Albuquerque)

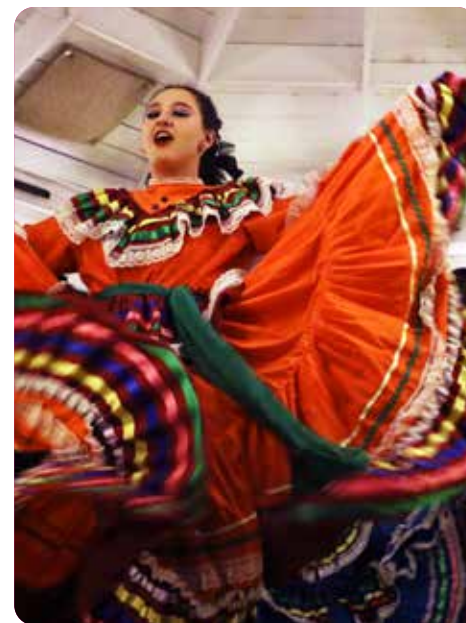
The Role of Place

People form deep connections to places through personal experiences and memories. **Downtown 2050** prioritizes community, revitalization, and cultural engagement to strengthen these connections. Communities thrive when they have access to quality housing, essential amenities, and meaningful opportunities. By promoting a range of housing options—including affordable units, mixed-use developments, and innovative living models—**Downtown 2050** seeks to create spaces where residents, workers, and visitors can engage in creative discovery while preserving the area’s authentic character.

Strategic and integrated economic growth begins with housing. Housing shapes activity, influences perceptions, and impacts how people experience a place. In the **Downtown MR Area**, declining household sizes coupled with a slow-down in new housing construction has contributed to a tight housing market. Redevelopment should prioritize diverse housing options that are appropriately scaled and responsive to market demand. Success will depend on the speed at which new housing can be delivered and made move-in ready. While private partnerships will be essential for construction, subsidies alone will not meet the need.

Comfortable and vibrant public spaces are also key to community-building. Thoughtfully designed, community-scale spaces—guided by “Pedestrian First” and “Park Once” principles—can transform Downtown’s public infrastructure into welcoming, inclusive environments that encourage social interaction and support a broad mix of businesses. These improvements will help attract and retain a skilled, diverse workforce.

Reinforcing the authentic local, creative, and diverse culture of the area will help create an inclusive community where individuals from various backgrounds can thrive and inspire meaningful connections. This approach involves celebrating the distinctive stories, unique individuals, and significant places that define the essence and character of downtown. Comprehensive programming should reflect the area’s historical and cultural narratives while offering accessible opportunities for engagement, expression, and entertainment.



City of Albuquerque



BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

Supporting the Formation of a Downtown BID

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a private-sector-led initiative designed to fund enhanced services and improvements within an established boundary. It is financed through a self-imposed and self-governed assessment that property owners within the district agree to pay. Similar to a common area maintenance charge in shopping malls or office parks, a BID can help boost a district’s appeal and competitiveness. Services provided through a BID (i.e. enhanced cleaning, safety measures, marketing) supplement—but do not replace—City services.

Downtown Albuquerque’s recovery has lagged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, hindered by a lack of established tools and limited engagement from private property owners in shaping its future. Today, there is a movement to establish a Downtown BID as part of a new public-private approach to improve and activate the area.

Keys to Establishing a Successful BID in Downtown Albuquerque:

- **Fair and Equitable Cost Distribution:** The BID must be funded by an assessment formula acknowledging the connection between services and properties, including the potential for different sub-areas (or benefit zones) within the Downtown BID boundary.

Benefits from BIDs, which can stretch well beyond their boundaries, include:

- » *Creating and maintaining a cleaner, safer, and more attractive downtown*
- » *Providing innovative management and programming to improve the downtown experience*
- » *Responding quickly to market changes and community needs*
- » *Promoting downtown to both consumers and investors*
- » *Ensuring stable revenues and leveraging additional resources for improvements*
- » *Helping to increase property values and occupancies*
- » *Maximizing accountability to stakeholders that pay into the district*
- » *Creating a unified voice to increase a downtown’s influence*

- **Private-Sector Leadership:** BIDs are most effective when driven by private-sector champions—particularly property and business owners with a vested interest in Downtown’s success.
- **Public-Sector Partners:** While state law exempts government and nonprofit properties from BID assessments, public participation is critical. The City and other public entities can support the BID by maintaining current service levels, providing financial support for properties within the BID, and collaborating to leverage additional resources for services and improvements.
- **Stakeholder Governance:** BIDs are typically governed by nonprofit organizations led by local stakeholders—including property owners, businesses, and residents. While public partners may participate, the BID is not a City-run initiative and should remain independently managed.
- **Value Proposition:** To succeed, the Downtown BID must be driven by a value proposition defined by its private-sector leaders. In its early years, key objectives may include improving public safety and cleanliness, reducing homelessness, promoting a positive image, attracting new businesses and investment, activating public spaces and events, and strengthening advocacy through a unified voice for Downtown.

The BID should implement high-impact strategies to increase safety and improve public perception. Enforcement efforts should prioritize building collaborative relationships among law enforcement, local businesses, and community organizations. Strategies should include community-oriented approaches, such as bicycle patrols during peak hours when pedestrian and vehicle traffic increases due to entertainment events. These efforts should focus on the area from 1st to 8th Streets, between Lomas and Silver.

PURPOSE

Enhance business areas with extra services like cleaning, security, and lighting.

HOW IT WORKS

Funded by property owners and often managed by a nonprofit board.

KEY BENEFIT

Improves the area for businesses and customers.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

i The information in this section was provided by SB Friedman Development Advisors, LLC (SB Friedman) to the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency (MRA) for informational and illustrative purposes only. The TIF programs highlighted here are examples of how TIF revenues have been used in other jurisdictions across the country and may not reflect actual incentives and programs available in Albuquerque. The projected revenues for the Downtown TIF are based on the best available estimates of current property tax and gross receipts tax revenues but cannot be guaranteed, as current tax baselines were not set by either Bernalillo County or the State of New Mexico by the time of publication. Additionally, the scenario presented assumes that the County and State will participate in the TIF at the maximum rate of 75%. Any variation in participation rates will reduce the potential TIF revenue to be collected.*

What Is TIF?

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a flexible public-private financing tool used by local governments nationwide. It works by allocating future increases in tax revenue from a designated area—known as a TIF District—to fund improvements within that same area. The primary goals of TIF are to eliminate blight, support redevelopment, stimulate economic growth, and expand the local tax base. In New Mexico, TIF Districts can only be established within existing Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas (MR Areas) that have an approved redevelopment plan. **Figure 22** shows the allocation of taxes over time.

How New State Legislation Has Unlocked The Power Of TIF

Historically, TIF in New Mexico was limited to the collection of incremental property taxes from participating cities and counties for individual redevelopment projects. This limitation on government participants and type

of tax available for collection resulted in lower incremental TIF collections, reducing the power of TIF in New Mexico. In 2024, the State of New Mexico approved changes to the State Metropolitan Redevelopment Code to create an enhanced TIF mechanism. The changes now allow for TIF districts to capture a portion of incremental gross receipts tax (GRT) and property tax revenue generated within the district.

With the changes to State law, a TIF could collect up to 75% of incremental property and gross receipts taxes generated from the municipality, county and state within a TIF District for up to 20 years. Participation rates are subject to municipal, county, and state approval, and could be less than 75% depending on taxing jurisdiction needs and redevelopment goals. Over the TIF period, school, flood control, and other special taxing districts continue to collect their regular tax rate and immediately benefit from growth in the tax base.

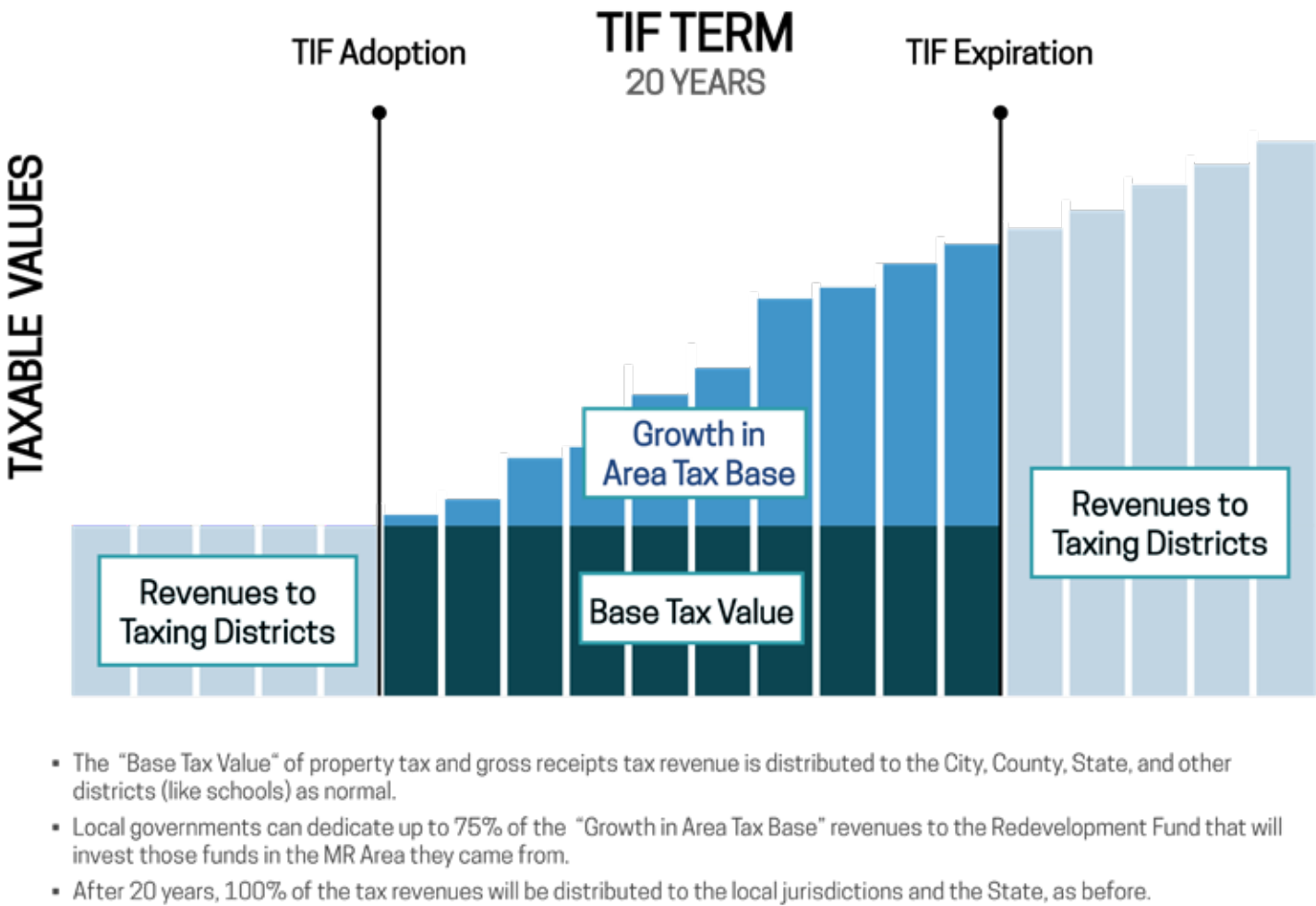


Figure 22: The Basics of Tax Increment Financing

*SB Friedman Development Advisors, LLC ("SBFDA") is not responsible for, and MRA agrees to indemnify and hold harmless SBFDA for any damages or claims by MRA or any third-party with respect to, its independent use of this content.

TIF In Action

Nationwide, 49 out of 50 states use TIF to support local economic development. Cities across the country have implemented TIF in innovative and creative ways—funding public infrastructure projects, improving the curb appeal of commercial areas, supporting small business growth, and enabling public-private partnerships. The following national case studies highlight examples of TIF in action.

Façade Improvement Grants – Waco, TX

The Façade Improvement Grant Program in the City of Waco supports smaller-scale projects that restore, stabilize, and enhance the appearance of

deteriorated buildings within the downtown TIF district. The program provides TIF-funded reimbursement grants of up to \$45,000 for eligible private investments. Qualified expenses include construction or aesthetic improvements to a building’s street-facing side, such as signage, painting, landscaping, and exterior lighting. In downtown Waco, one such grant helped fund the exterior renovation of a historic warehouse, transforming it into the Mary Avenue Market—a retail space now home to six businesses, including four restaurants.

Gap Financing – Boise, ID

The River Myrtle-Old Boise Urban Renewal Area (URA, i.e., TIF District) Plan indicated a growing interest in downtown living, despite limited recent

residential development in downtown Boise. A 2015 proposal requested \$3.2 million in TIF assistance to support the construction of a mixed-use apartment building downtown featuring a public parking garage and ground-floor retail space. The project was approved through the Capital City Development Corporation’s internal review process and was completed in 2018, becoming the first new-construction residential project downtown in over a decade.

Affordable Housing – Chicago, IL

The City of Chicago used approximately \$10.1 million in TIF funding to support the construction of a seven-story, affordable apartment building in Logan Square, a neighborhood facing rapid gentrification. The units are in high demand—the nonprofit developer received almost 700 applications for units in the building. The \$41 million development was funded by a mix of TIF dollars, tax-exempt bonds, and Chicago Housing Authority funding. The building was completed in 2022 and also features approximately 4,300 square feet of retail space.

Small Business Development – Chicago, IL

The City of Chicago’s Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF) is a TIF-funded program that provides grant funding to small businesses for permanent building improvements and repairs. In 2023, the average amount of funding granted per project was approximately \$74,000. Applicants are selected by lottery, and priority is given to applicants located within under-invested commercial corridors specially identified by the local planning department. A \$99,700 SBIF grant supported the installation of new roofing, a new HVAC system and a new sprinkler system at Platt Cases, a professional case manufacturer based in Chicago since 1921.

HOW CAN TIF WORK IN ALBUQUERQUE?

TIF districts can provide communities with the funds necessary to implement the strategic goals outlined in their redevelopment plans. By attracting investment that would not occur without tax increment financing, local jurisdictions can help create a cycle to catalyze economic growth and increase the tax base for all jurisdictions.

Albuquerque is uniquely positioned to leverage the enhanced TIF mechanism to create TIF-funded programs and target public investments that revitalize Downtown.

TIF would benefit and contribute to redevelopment in Downtown Albuquerque by enabling and financing the local government’s engagement in development activities such as:

- » *Strategically acquiring underutilized properties for redevelopment*
- » *Funding catalytic public improvements such as sidewalks, parks, plazas, and enhanced streetscaping*
- » *Developing affordable housing*
- » *Assisting small businesses with property and site improvements*
- » *Funding beautification of the existing building stock*
- » *Providing essential public assistance to enable new or rehabilitated private office, residential and/or commercial development.*



A. The Renovated Mary Avenue Market in Waco, TX
 B. The Fowler, Boise, ID
 C. Lucy Gonzales Parson Apartment, Chicago, IL
 D. Platt Cases Interior, Chicago, IL

TIF In Downtown Albuquerque

In December 2024, Albuquerque City Council approved the use of TIF for the Downtown 2025 MR Area. As part of the broader **Downtown 2050** planning effort, the boundaries of the Downtown 2025 MR Area were expanded to include the adjacent McClellan Park and Railroad MR Areas, as well as two additional parcels north of Lomas Boulevard (see **Figure 23**). This expansion enables a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to economic development throughout Downtown.

For the purposes of this plan, TIF revenues were projected for the larger **Downtown 2050** MR Area boundary. For the entirety of the **Downtown 2050** MR Area to collect TIF revenues, City Council will need to approve an amendment to the existing TIF District. If approved, initial projections indicate that a new **Downtown 2050** TIF District could generate approximately \$375 million in TIF revenue over 20 years for use on eligible costs within the district.

Figure 24 visualizes the growth in **Downtown 2050** MR Area tax revenue. Tax revenue collected by the MRA is projected to range from \$1 - to \$16-million annually in the first ten years of the TIF and up to \$42 million in the final year of the TIF. This 20-year revenue stream would provide the opportunity for significant public investment and economic development programming.

In this scenario, participating taxing districts still receive between \$62 million and \$68 million in tax revenue annually during the first ten years, and up to \$76 million in the final year of the TIF. After the expiration of the TIF, the City, County, and State are together projected to collect \$122 million in tax revenue from the MR Area.

The City of Albuquerque has the potential to leverage this powerful new TIF tool within the Downtown boundary to enhance the local tax base and foster economic development. A TIF district in Downtown Albuquerque can financially support plan objectives like improving public spaces and encouraging a wide range of housing, shops, restaurants and office offerings.



Figure 23: MRA Boundaries

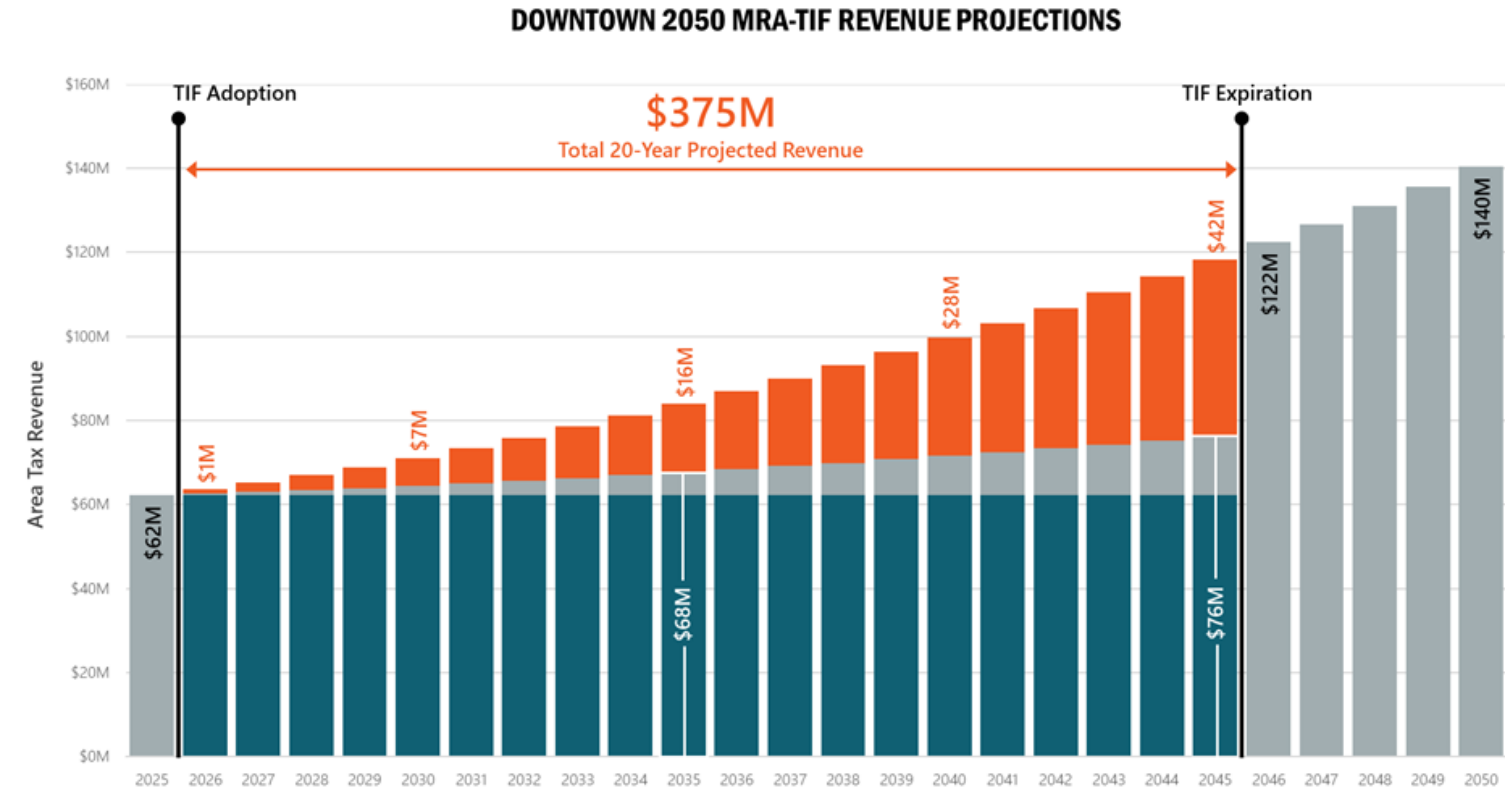


Figure 24: Downtown 2050 MRA - TIF Revenue Projections (SB Friedman)

LEVERAGE INVESTMENT IN SPARK AREAS

CIVIC PLAZA, EAST RAIL TRAIL, ROBINSON PARK

To best support the objectives of *Downtown 2050*, MRA could prioritize and target investments in key activity hubs Downtown, reinforcing their existing strengths. Currently, nearly 30 acres (approximately 11%) of properties in the Downtown study area are classified as either vacant or dedicated to surface parking. These underutilized sites represent significant opportunities for redevelopment into more economically and socially impactful uses.

This section explores three areas of Downtown which, with strategic investments, could “spark” a wave of reinvestment and opportunity for targeted and transformational redevelopment.

① Civic Plaza Area: Civic Plaza is Downtown’s largest public gathering space, spanning four acres, with the capacity to host up to 20,000 people. Surrounded by the Convention Center, City government offices, hotels, and commercial buildings, Civic Plaza hosts conventions, concerts, festivals, and community events throughout the year. Though less active at night and on weekends, its central location and proximity to major institutions make it a high-potential anchor for activating Downtown’s public realm and supporting revitalization.

② East Rail Trail Area: The future Rail Trail will run alongside active rail lines, reconnecting neighborhoods historically divided by the railroad. Planned connections across the railroad have the potential to better connect Downtown to surrounding areas, improve connectivity, mobility and access for residents, and spur economic development and new

housing development. Capitalizing on this momentum, this spark area offers catalytic opportunity to create vibrant public spaces, attract businesses, and foster community interaction along its route.

③ Robinson Park Area: Serving as a western gateway into the Downtown core, the Robinson Park Area is centered around an iconic roundabout and reflects a distinctive, neighborhood-scale character. Tree-lined streets, a mix of building styles, local businesses, and cultural diversity give this area its charm and vitality. Redevelopment momentum is already visible, with projects like a hotel renovation, new brewery, and sandwich shop bringing fresh energy to the neighborhood. Building on these current investments will further elevate the Robinson Park Area’s role as a key gateway to Downtown, while preserving its unique, community-driven character.

Downtown 2050 sets out to redefine the experience of Albuquerque’s urban core—revitalizing it as the city’s premier gathering space and restoring its role as a catalyst for growth, innovation, and community pride. The plan’s recommendations aim to elevate the central city’s value by reinforcing its significance in Albuquerque’s past, present, and future.

The success of private property redevelopment ultimately depends on the interest and willingness of property owners to participate and invest. At the same time, the MRA promotes a collaborative approach—encouraging open dialogue, strategic partnerships, and focused public investment to help bring

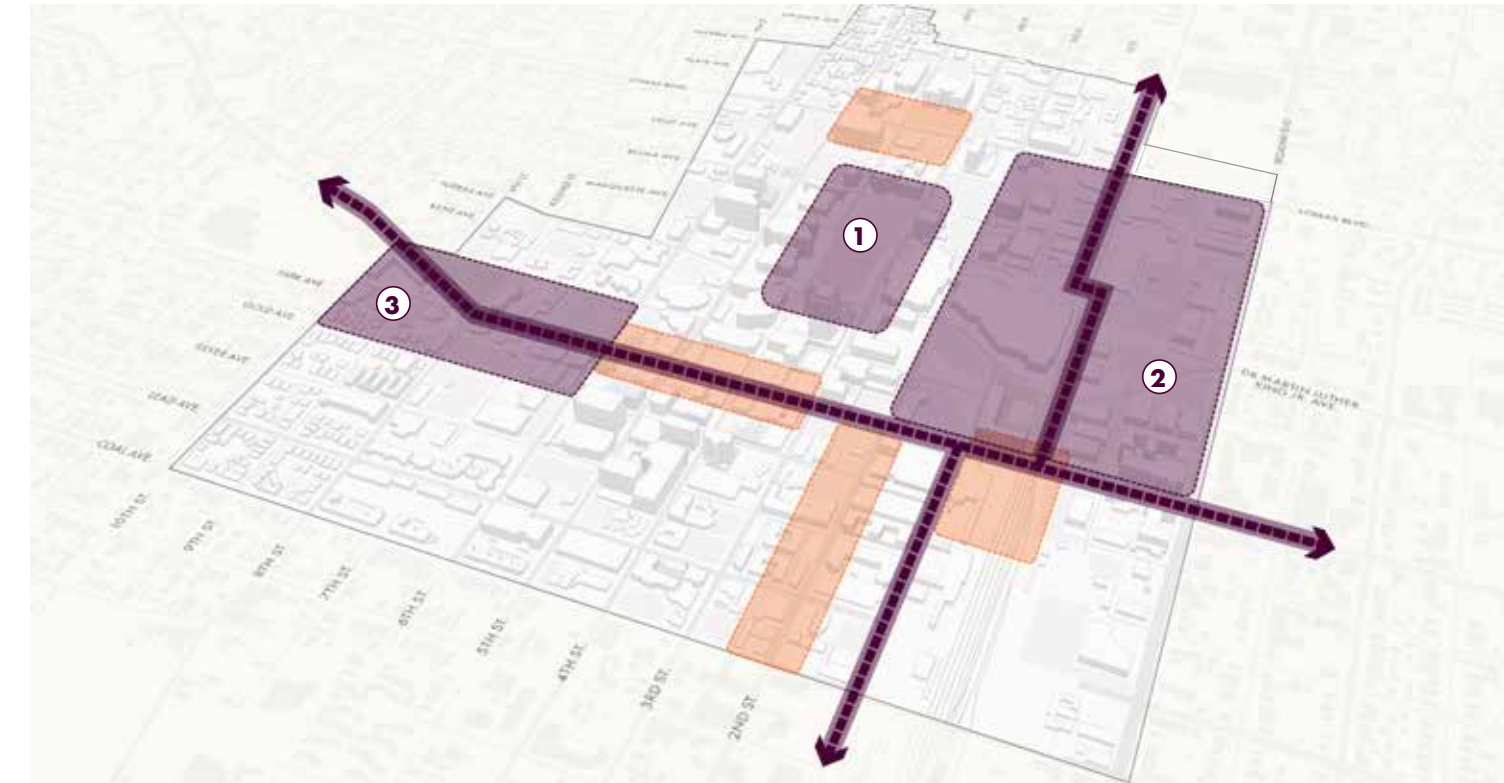


Figure 25: Downtown Albuquerque Spark Areas

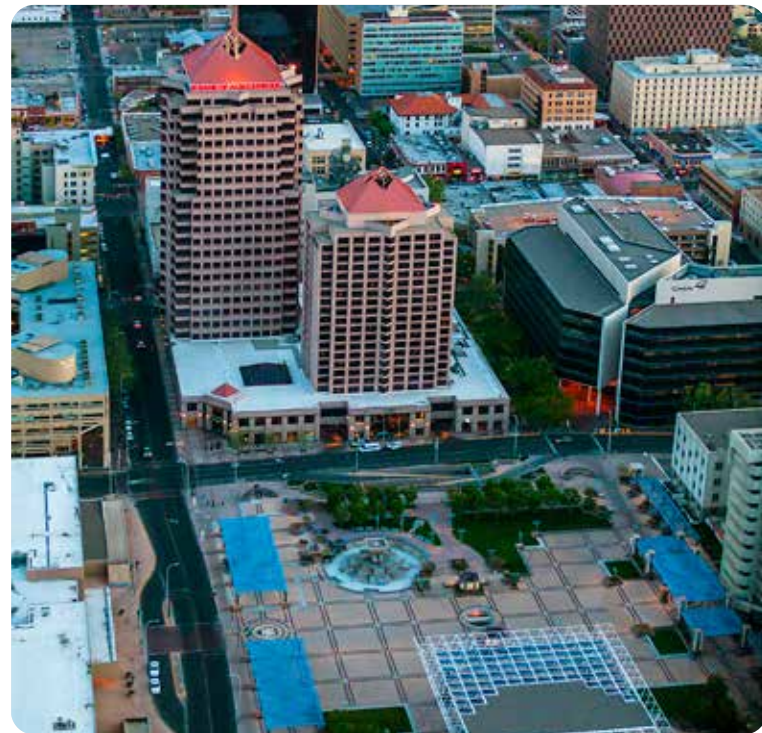
the community’s vision to life. The pace of new development or redevelopment will depend on prevailing market conditions and developer interest.

The Spark Area concepts offer a range of solutions—from near-term, low-cost enhancements to long-term, complex redevelopment projects—to help these areas evolve into vibrant, well-rounded hubs of activity. These hubs were selected for their strong potential to catalyze investment in adjacent areas. Each possesses a unique scale, character, and iconic elements that make it distinct, giving rise to the term “Spark Area.”

The vision for each Spark Area is further detailed on the following pages and illustrated in **Figure 30**. While each project and strategy is tailored to its specific location, many of the approaches can serve as prototypes for other areas Downtown. These concepts are intentionally flexible—not prescriptive—and are intended to support future City policies that enable and guide property owner-initiated redevelopment in alignment with the *Downtown 2050* vision.

CIVIC PLAZA SPARK AREA

Civic Plaza is the largest public gathering space in Downtown Albuquerque, spanning four acres. Strategically located next to the Albuquerque Convention Center, government offices, commercial buildings, and several hotels, the plaza serves as a central venue for a wide range of events throughout the year, including conventions, concerts, community gatherings, regional festivals, and recreational activities.



Aerial View of Civic Plaza (City of Albuquerque)



Playground at Civic Plaza (City of Albuquerque)

The plaza's design features a large performance stage for live entertainment and shaded arbors that provide comfortable seating and spaces for social interaction. It also includes a shaded playground that offers a safe, engaging environment for children, along with a splash pad that adds to its family-friendly appeal during warmer months.

Bordered on three sides by major streets, Civic Plaza benefits from high visibility and convenient access. While activity is currently limited during evenings and weekends, its central location and proximity to key institutions position it as a high-potential asset in the revitalization of Downtown—one that can evolve into a vibrant, inclusive hub for culture and community life.

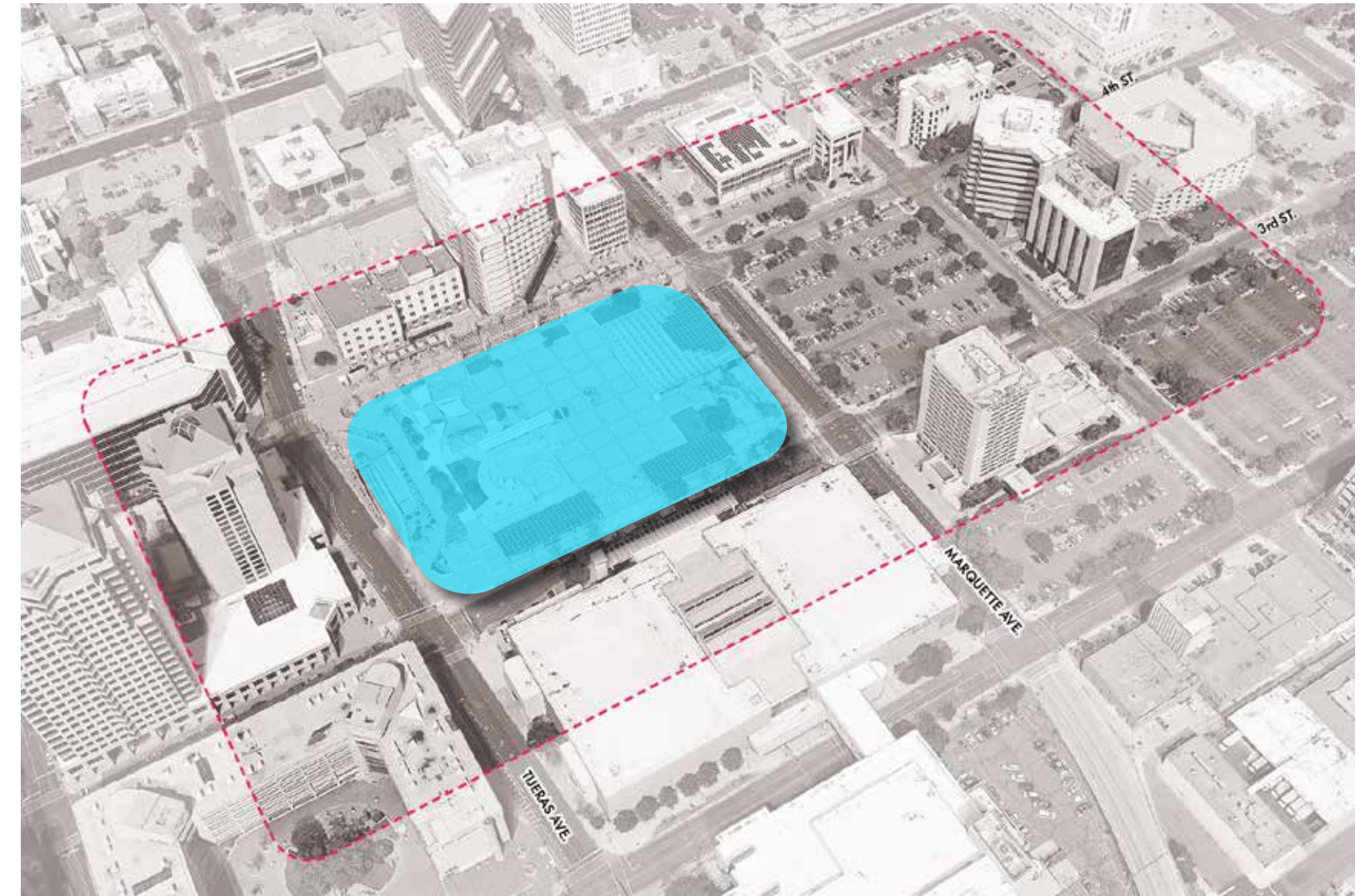


Figure 26: Civic Plaza Spark Area organizing diagram

CIVIC PLAZA SPARK AREA

Recommendations to activate Civic Plaza:

- **4th Street:** Improve the pedestrian connection along the western edge of Civic Plaza by widening crosswalks and using bright, high-visibility paint. This street serves as the main pedestrian link between Central Avenue and the courthouse to the north.
- **Tijeras Avenue:** Emphasize the corners where pedestrians enter and exit the Plaza. Because mid-block access is limited by adjacent parking structures, install well-lit corner beacons visible from all directions to improve wayfinding.
- **Marquette Avenue:** Address the grade changes at the Plaza's northeast corner by improving access and reconnecting this area to future developments north and east of the planned Rail Trail crossing near Marquette Avenue, just west of the Plaza. Accessibility should remain central to any redesign.
- **First-floor Activation:** Encourage active ground-floor uses facing the Plaza. The MRA could provide small grants or incentives to fill vacant storefronts, including support for illuminated signage, to promote new businesses. A partnership with Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet could launch a "Windows of Opportunity" campaign to showcase available spaces.

- **Convention Center:** Target the southwest corner of the Convention Center for incentives that attract an outward-facing quick-serve restaurant or coffee shop. This would help activate the building's edge, provide convenient options for families using the playground, and create a welcoming outdoor space for conference attendees.
- **Consistent Quality Programming:** Maintain Civic Plaza as a vibrant destination through a regular calendar of diverse, high-quality events. Dedicated funding for the Arts and Culture Department would support programming. Visit Albuquerque, which manages the Plaza and Convention Center, should be encouraged to host smaller complementary activities—such as pop-up markets, food trucks, and live music—alongside major events to attract a broader audience.
- **Public Realm Enhancements:** Improve comfort and appeal with more green landscaping, shade structures, and public art. Adding public restrooms and changing facilities would also enhance the visitor experience and encourage longer stays.



Figure 27: Civic Plaza Spark Area Development Opportunities

EAST RAIL TRAIL SPARK AREA

The planned Rail Trail—a pedestrian and bicycle pathway running along the eastern edge of Downtown—offers a major opportunity to reconnect two historically separated neighborhoods: Downtown and East Downtown (EDo). The rail corridor’s distinct character has attracted interest for adaptive reuse, and the Rail Trail is expected to drive further investment and redevelopment in the surrounding area.

The Rail Trail represents an embrace of the area’s historical significance and its ongoing transformation. Until recently, pedestrian access between Downtown and EDo was limited to two below-grade underpasses—one at Central and Tijeras Avenue, and another at Central and 1st Street (known as Central Crossing). The City is now constructing a new at-grade pedestrian ramp at Central Crossing, replacing the unsafe tunnel with a safer, more accessible connection. A monumental sculpture at Central Crossing will enhance the visual identity of the area and create a new destination for residents and visitors.

To the north, large warehouses—such as the Fusion Theatre—highlight the area’s rail-related industrial past. This corridor represents a dynamic urban environment where history and modern development meet. Planned crossings along the Rail Trail will improve connectivity, mobility, and access while supporting economic development and new housing. As a designated spark area, the corridor presents catalytic opportunities for new businesses, public spaces, housing, and community gathering places.



Lobo Rainforest Building (City of Albuquerque)



Neon Signs at Glorieta Station (Arcadis)



Figure 28: Rail Trail Spark Area organizing diagram

EAST RAIL TRAIL SPARK AREA

Recommendations to activate East Rail Trail:

- **University of New Mexico / Innovate ABQ:** Managed by Lobo Development Corporation (an affiliate of UNM), Innovate ABQ owns significant undeveloped land adjacent to the Rail Trail. Concepts like artist housing have been explored to activate the area and support the local creative economy.
- **Alvarado Transportation Center (ATC):** As the city's busiest transit hub, this site experiences heavy daily foot traffic. However, safety concerns and a lack of signage and amenities have impacted its role as a Downtown anchor. After the Central Crossing ramp is completed, the City should pursue a plan to reimagine the Alvarado Center as a vibrant, multi-modal destination.
- **Underutilized Parcels:** As the Rail Trail takes shape, undervalued parcels just east of Downtown are expected to become more desirable. Smaller lots and surface parking areas offer opportunities for infill housing and innovative commercial uses, with direct access to the trail and proximity to key corridors like Central Avenue, City Hall, and Lomas Boulevard. The MRA should identify strategic opportunities for redevelopment.
- **On-Street Connections:** Streets that cross the Rail Trail—such as Marquette Avenue and Lomas Boulevard—should be enhanced with multi-modal infrastructure. Improvements could include widened sidewalks, protected bike lanes for all ages and abilities, and dedicated on-street parking. Incorporating prominent architectural elements at trail entrances

along these streets can create a strong visual identity and make the trail more inviting to passersby.

- **Public Access Points:** To shorten walking distances, create permanent pedestrian and bike access points between intersections. Connections for pedestrians and cyclists can often be developed through existing public right-of-way (e.g., at the end of dead-end streets like Roma Avenue), on publicly-owned land adjacent to the trail, or through partnerships with private property owners and developers.
- **Trailheads:** To develop trailheads regularly, utilize publicly-owned land directly along the trail corridor—such as the parking lot just south of Marquette Avenue, recently acquired by the City. Depending on the size of the available lots, these trailheads could include public spaces and amenities like plazas, parks, restrooms, and off-street parking for visitors driving from other parts of the city to access the trail.
- **Central Avenue Overpass Crossing:** Although long-term upgrades are planned, the existing tunnel remains a major barrier to foot traffic and connectivity. The City should implement short-term safety improvements during construction and ensure proper lighting and maintenance after completion to support long-term use.



Figure 29: Rail Trail Area Spark Area Development Opportunities

ROBINSON PARK SPARK AREA

The five-point intersection of Central Avenue, Park Avenue, and 8th Street serves as a distinctive landmark in Downtown. This prominent roundabout is the western gateway to the **Downtown MR Area**, characterized by its noteworthy scale and ambiance. The surrounding neighborhood features tree-lined streets and diverse housing options, including single-family homes, townhouses, and condominiums. These residential offerings are complemented by a variety of local shops and businesses, enhancing the vibrant atmosphere of the area.

At the heart of this neighborhood lies Robinson Park, home to the popular Growers' Market held on Saturdays from spring through fall, which draws visitors from across the city. A mix of local businesses, restaurants, and coffee shops further enriches the community's welcoming and lively experience.



Ex Novo Brewery on Central Ave. (ABQ Journal)

Robinson Park has been identified as a key opportunity area for new construction and redevelopment, due to nearby underutilized surface parking lots. This neighborhood within the **Downtown MR Area** exudes distinctive charm and is already experiencing significant redevelopment momentum, including the renovation of a historic hotel, the opening of a craft brewery, and the launch of a popular sandwich shop. These projects attract both residents and visitors, contribute to the area's cultural vibrancy, and strengthen community identity.

By strategically building on these investments and encouraging additional development, the **Downtown 2050** vision can position Robinson Park as a vital gateway to Downtown—while preserving its unique character and appeal.



Robinson Park (City of Albuquerque)



Figure 30: Robinson Park Spark Area organizing diagram

ROBINSON PARK SPARK AREA

Recommendations to activate Robinson Park:

- **Highlight the Roundabout:** Explore bold enhancements to the roundabout using painted pavement to establish a dynamic focal point at the intersection. A vertical neon sculpture or similar artistic feature could add visual interest and lighting, encouraging pedestrian activity and improving safety.
- **Green Space Enhancements:** Increase vegetation wherever feasible. Introduce landscaping in areas with gaps between buildings to create a more welcoming streetscape and highlight the importance of Central Avenue. Restore street trees along the north side of Copper Avenue adjacent to Robinson Park.
- **Pedestrian Access:** Enhance walk-ability by introducing mid-block paseos or festival streets where feasible and appropriate. These features can encourage exploration and support active street life.
- **Pop-Up Initiatives:** Activate Robinson Park with a temporary vendor grove to complement the leafy patio across 8th Street. Consider adding trees, string lighting, and food trucks, with potential to evolve into a permanent installation.
- **Infill Development Focus:** Develop a cohesive vision and corresponding incentives to support infill development and enhance the neighborhood's character. Proposed housing options could include mixed-use multifamily rentals and townhomes that promote homeownership and enrich community options.



ARRIVE Hotel



Figure 31: Robinson Park Spark Area Development Opportunities

SPARK AREAS AND POTENTIAL TIF REVENUES

Activating Spark Areas will incentivize new development in Downtown Albuquerque and strengthen long-term Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenues. With support from SB Friedman Advisors, the MRA has outlined potential development concepts for these areas at various stages of the TIF district's lifespan. These concepts illustrate how catalytic projects can boost TIF revenues over time.



Civic Plaza (City of Albuquerque)

5-Year TIF Project:

Large underutilized parking lots north and northeast of Civic Plaza present prime opportunities for residential or mixed-use development. These sites are well positioned to provide retail frontage near Civic Plaza, creating the potential to expand dining and shopping options for residents, workers, and visitors.

If granted access to these lots for disposal, the MRA could apply its development incentives to promote a better balance of retail and commercial space—especially facing Civic Plaza. Potential uses include a new Convention Center hotel, a Convention Center expansion, a Downtown UNM or CNM satellite campus, or new housing.

Future buildings should be designed with explicit ground-floor activation requirements, such as active street façades or ground-level uses that engage pedestrians.

As an example, a proposed 150,000-square-foot mixed-use development could include 100 units of housing and 9,000 square feet of retail space. The total projected development cost is approximately \$51 million. If completed within the first five years of the TIF, this project could serve as a major early revenue generator.

10-Year TIF Project:

Non-profit developers have expressed interest in bringing affordable live-work artist spaces to Downtown, particularly near the future Rail Trail, to capitalize on its enhanced connectivity and creative energy.

A typical development project might include 55 live-work units and 5,000 square feet of commercial space. These developments often provide affordable housing options at a range of income levels—30%, 60%, and 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

15-Year TIF Project:

As the TIF matures and private sector interest in Downtown increases, developers are likely to pursue larger-scale projects on currently vacant or underutilized parcels.

In this scenario, the Robinson Park area presents three conceptual development opportunities that align with the neighborhood's growing residential character: a mixed-use condominium building, residential for-sale townhomes, and a multi-story mixed-use residential/retail development. Together, these projects could build on existing momentum and significantly increase the TIF district's long-term revenue potential.

Spark Areas are catalytic sites designed to jumpstart Downtown Albuquerque's growth and boost long-term TIF revenues.

TIF REVENUE GENERATION POTENTIAL

Downtown 2050 MR Area - Project-Based TIF Revenue Analysis
Assumptions And Summary
March 2025

Assessed Value Assumption

Value/SF Retail	Value/ Market-Rate Unit	Value/ Affordable Unit
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\$50\$100,000\$60,000

Sales Assumptions

Sales/SF Retail

\$315

Civic Plaza Spark Projects -- TIF Revenue Generation Potential

Location	Project Type	Residential Units	Retail Square Feet	Property Taxable Value (2025\$)	Retail Annual Sales (2025\$)	Est. Project Completion	Total Undiscounted TIF Revenue (2031-2045)	Average Annual Undiscounted TIF Revenue from Project
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Lomas Blvd NW & 3rd St NW	Affordable Mixed-Use	100	9,000	\$2.15 M	\$2.84 M	2030	\$3.6 M	\$240,000
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East Rail Trail Spark Projects -- TIF Revenue Generation Potential

Location	Project Type	Residential Units	Retail Square Feet	Property Taxable Value (2025\$)	Retail Annual Sales (2025\$)	Est. Project Completion	Total Undiscounted TIF Revenue (2031-2045)	Average Annual Undiscounted TIF Revenue from Project
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2nd St NW & Central Ave NW	Affordable Mixed-Use	55	5,000	\$1.18 M	\$1.58 M	2035	\$1.45 M	\$145,000
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Robinson Park Spark Projects -- TIF Revenue Generation Potential

Location	Project Type	Residential Units	Retail Square Feet	Property Taxable Value (2025\$)	Retail Annual Sales (2025\$)	Est. Project Completion	Total Undiscounted TIF Revenue (2031-2045)	Average Annual Undiscounted TIF Revenue from Project
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(A) 9th St SW & Park Ave SW	Market-Rate Apartments	32		\$1.07 M	\$0	2037	\$159,000	\$18,000
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(A) 9th St SW & Park Ave SW	Market-Rate Mixed-Use	15	1,100	\$518,000	\$347,000	2037	\$336,000	\$37,000
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(B) 7th St SW & Gold Ave SW		27		\$900,000	\$0	2041	\$76,000	\$15,000
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(C) 8th St NW & Central Ave NW		180	20,000	\$6.33 M	\$6.3 M	2039	\$4.36 M	\$622,000
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Robinson Park Spark Projects Total		254	21,100	\$8.82 M	\$6.65 M		\$4.93 M	
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Figure 32: TIF Revenue Generation Potential (SB Friedman)

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION MATRIX

Turning the Plan Into Action

Each of the three **Downtown 2050** goals includes short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations (see **pp. 28–29**) designed to advance Downtown Albuquerque’s development. This section outlines the specific strategies needed to achieve those goals, highlighting both existing resources and new ones that will require collaboration with City departments and strategic partners.

While the MRA may lead implementation, success depends on broad support from City Council, Bernalillo County, and key stakeholders like Downtown MainStreet, Visit ABQ, the future Downtown BID, and the proposed Friends of the Rail Trail nonprofit. Without full buy-in, the goals of this plan will remain out of reach.

Effective implementation will require coordinated, ongoing efforts. Many actions are interdependent—some must be completed first, while others need sustained commitment over time. The Implementation Action Matrix that follows serves as a call to action, emphasizing that everyone with a stake in Downtown’s future has a role to play. A vibrant downtown benefits all of Albuquerque by attracting businesses, jobs, and investment, strengthening the regional economy.

Funding is equally critical. Without sufficient financial resources—particularly through tools like the proposed Downtown TIF district—many plan objectives

may go unrealized. A well-supported TIF could generate hundreds of millions in reinvestment over the next 20 years, enabling major initiatives in housing, business development, public spaces, and infrastructure.



Figure 33: Implementation Pyramid

Fundamental Actions

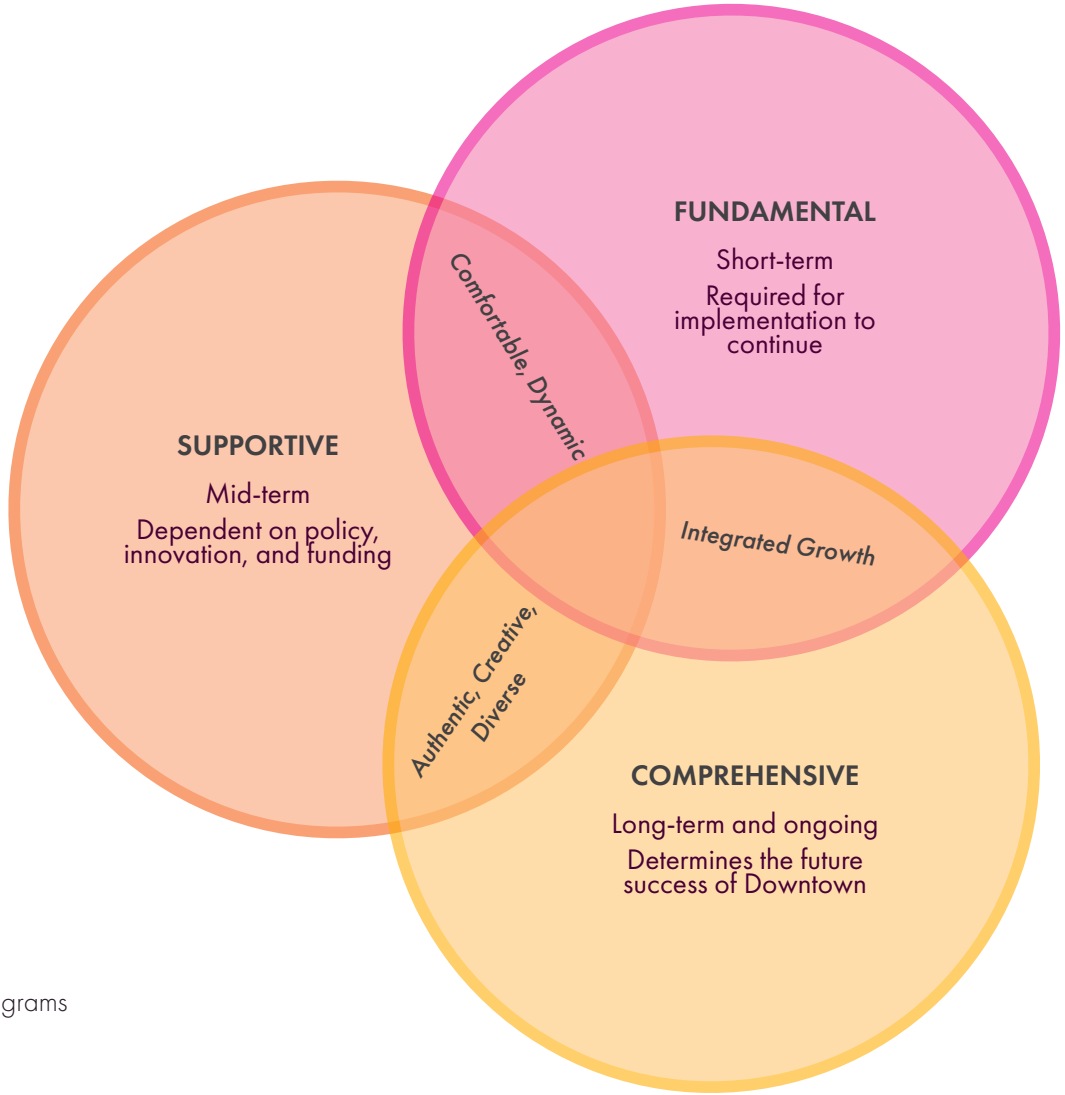
- Communication, Marketing and Branding
- Wayfinding and Signage
- Boutique Grants
- Small Business Development
- Public Space Beautification
- Diversification of Partnerships
- Community Engagement Strategies
- Data Collection and Planning

Supportive Actions

- Safety and Cleanliness Programs
- Reinforcement of Branding and Marketing
- Gap Financing for Catalytic Developments
- Public Infrastructure Projects
- Land Acquisition
- Multi-Modal and Parking Strategies
- Support of Downtown BID
- Support of Downtown TIF









Comprehensive Actions









- Continuation and Maintenance of Beautification Programs
- Entertainment and Arts Programming
- Continued Public Infrastructure
- Improvements and Maintenance
- On-Going Data Collection
- Evaluate and Track Success


















The following matrix illustrates how the plan’s goals, actions, and resources are interconnected. With an “all hands on deck” approach, we can turn this vision into reality—for Downtown Albuquerque and the entire city.











IMPLEMENTATION ACTION MATRIX







Implementation Action	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Required Resources
PHASE 1: FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION TO CONTINUE				
Develop and a downtown brand strategy that celebrates and integrates the community's energy and vibrancy				Strategy: 3rd-party consultant to work with partners and stakeholders Funding: City general fund, General Obligation (GO) bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants Partners: Downtown MainStreet, GACC, AREA, Visit ABQ, City (ACD, MRA, PRD), Downtown Business & Property Owners
Develop and implement a comprehensive wayfinding strategy and parking plan				Strategy: 3rd-party consultant to work with partners and stakeholders Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, competitive grants, federal grants and formula funds Partners: Downtown MainStreet, Visit ABQ, GACC, AREA, City (ACD, DMD, MRA), Downtown Business & Property Owners
City Council approves the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) and commits the City to paying its fair share				Strategy: Support BID members in forming and implementing the BID organization Funding: Fees collected from members of the BID Partners: AREA, GACC, Downtown MainStreet, City (Mayor, MRA), Downtown Property & Business Owners
Fully implement the Downtown MR Area as a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district				Strategy: Coordinate enabling legislation; finalize governance structure and program design; launch programs Funding: City General Fund (revenues from tax collections) Partners: County (Assessor, Treasurer, BCED), State (DFA, DTR), City (DFAS, MRA), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners
Complete a Downtown Parking Study and develop strategies for a parking management plan				Strategy: 3rd-party consultant to work with partners and stakeholders Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants Partners: Downtown MainStreet, Visit ABQ, City (DMD, MRA, PRD), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners

Implementation Action	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Required Resources
Conduct a street study (one-way to two-way conversions, festival streets, and multi-modal streets)				Strategy: Review existing plans and best practices; develop a recommendations priority list Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants, federal formula funds Partners: Downtown MainStreet, City (ABQRide, DMD, MRA, PLN, PRD), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners
Initiate public improvement and safety strategy				Strategy: 3rd-party consultant to work with partners and stakeholders Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants Partners: Downtown BID, Downtown MainStreet, Visit ABQ, AREA, GACC, Block by Block, City (ABQ Ride, ACD, AFR, APD, DMD, MRA, PRD, SWD), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners
Update policies for including universal design in developments				Strategy: Review policies and ordinances related to universal design; create a strategy to encourage development that includes universal design standards and supports the City's Age-Friendly strategies--to include points in MRA's Community Benefit Matrix Funding: City general fund Partners: AREA, GACC, City (Council, DMD, EDD, MRA, Mayor, PLN)
Create a plan for inclusive growth and trail-oriented design best-practice strategies in new developments near the ABQ Rail Trail				Strategy: Develop policies and a plan based on recommendations in existing City planning documents Funding: City general fund, GO bond, capital outlay, competitive grants Partners: City (ACD, DMD, MRA, PLN, PRD), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners
Expand boutique grant programs and develop a plan to sustain them				Strategy: Existing MRA programs and TIF Action Plan will set program priorities; implementation contingent on available funding Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, Downtown TIF Revenues, competitive grants, private investment Partners: Downtown MainStreet, TIF, City (Council, DMD, EDD, Mayor, MRA, PLN), Downtown Business & Property Owners

Implementation Action	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Required Resources
Create an action plan to assess, expand, and implement the recommendations for Central Avenue				Strategy: Consolidate recommendations in existing and future studies to develop a priorities list for Central Avenue improvements Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants, corporate and philanthropic investments Partners: City (ABQ RIDE, Council, DMD, Mayor, MRA, PLN, PRD, SWD), Downtown Business & Property Owners, Downtown MainStreet
Identify locations and funding for new public restrooms				Strategy: Review performance of new public restrooms (Civic Plaza and the Transit Center) and traffic patterns to determine future locations Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants, federal formula funds Partners: City (ABQ RIDE, DMD, MRA, SWD), Downtown MainStreet, Visit ABQ, BID
Develop a plan for activating vacant Downtown spaces				Strategy: Using vacant properties inventory an national best practices, identify tools to incentivize activation of vacant spaces Funding: City general fund, competitive grants Partners: City (EDD, MRA, PLN), AREA, GACC, Downtown MainStreet
Support the creation of a Friends of the Rail Trail non-profit				Strategy: Provide guidance, structure, and financial support to establish the non-profit supporting the Rail Trail Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants, corporate and philanthropic investments, sponsorships Partners: City (ACD, DMD, MRA), Private Businesses and Property Owners
Create and implement the Downtown TIF Action Plan, establishing high-level programming and funding priorities for the district				Strategy: 3rd-party consultant to work with partners and stakeholders on the plan; City Council to approve the plan Funding: City general fund, GO bonds Partners: City (ACD, Council, HHH, Mayor, MRA, PRD), County (BCED), State (DFA, TR), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners

Implementation Action	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Required Resources
PHASE 2: SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS DEPENDENT ON POLICY, INNOVATION, AND FUNDING				
Implement a comprehensive wayfinding system and branding strategy for Downtown				Strategy: MRA to work with partners and stakeholders on implementation priorities and funding Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants, TIF revenues, corporate and philanthropic investments Partners: Downtown MainStreet, BID, Visit ABQ, City (ACD, DMD, MRA, PRD, SWD), Downtown Business & Property Owners
Public improvements and cooling strategies to encourage community gatherings and to make Downtown more comfortable				Strategy: MRA to coordinate with other departments to identify locations and tools (parklets, shade, water features, etc.) Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, competitive grants, philanthropic investments, MainStreet funding, BID, TIF revenues Partners: City (ACD, DMD, MRA, PRD, SWD), BID, Downtown Business & Property Owners
Develop a parking management plan based on the findings of Downtown Parking Study				Strategy: 3rd-party consultant to work with city departments Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, TIF revenues, federal formula funds Partners: City (ABQ RIDE, DMD, MRA, PLN)
Conduct a utilities and infrastructure assessment for economic development, focusing on expanding free Wi-Fi throughout Downtown				Strategy: Review existing strategies; set priorities through policy and collaboration Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, TIF revenues, federal formula funds, utility/broadband provider investment Partners: City (DMD, PLN), Utility Companies, Broadband Providers
Incentivize thoughtful development in Spark Areas through land disposal and construction gap financing, tax abatement, and other public-private partnerships				Strategy: Set an annual priorities for Downtown programs, including timing of release of competitive funds and other instruments Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, TIF revenues Partners: AREA, City (DMD, EDD, MRA), Developers, Property Owners
Attract new housing developments Downtown using a coordinated suite of tools, to include expedited permits, fee waivers, gap financing, and tax abatement				Strategy: Target incentives at areas with underutilized properties through the Vacant Property and Parking Lot inventories; set annual program priorities Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, TIF revenues, federal formula funds, private investment Partners: City (DMD, EDD, HHH, MRA, PLN), Developers, Property Owners

Implementation Action	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Required Resources
PHASE 3 & ON-GOING: COMPREHENSIVE ACTIONS THAT DETERMINE THE FUTURE SUCCESS OF DOWNTOWN				
Aim to activate all entertainment venues by organizing event programming, build partnerships, and collaborative planning				Strategy: Analyze existing programming and funding; reallocate resources/fundraise to fill programming gaps Funding: City general fund, competitive grants, philanthropic investments, sponsorships, TIF revenues Partners: GACC, AREA, Downtown MainStreet, Visit ABQ, City (ABQ RIDE, ACD, MRA, PRD), BID
Implement bus system and bike network improvements (ABQ Ride Forward Network Plan and 2024 Bike Network Plan)				Strategy: Implement phases of the plans as funding allows Funding: City general fund, GO bonds, capital outlay, federal formula funds Partners: City (ABQ RIDE, DMD, MRA, PRD)
Incentivize businesses to locate Downtown				Strategy: Identify mechanisms (grants, loans, sub-market rents) and funding source; develop annual plan Funding: City general fund, competitive grants, BID and TIF revenues Partners: AREA, GACC, Downtown MainStreet, City (EDD, MRA), County (BCED), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners
Develop commitments to Downtown with higher education and workforce training, with a particular focus on supporting locally, women-owned, and BIPOC-owned businesses				Strategy: Identify locations, programs, and funding; development agreements and timelines with partners Funding: City general fund, higher education allocated funding, competitive grants, TIF revenues Partners: AREA, GACC, TIF, Downtown MainStreet, City (EDD, MRA), UNM/CNM/Other Higher Education Partners, State (Workforce Solutions), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners
Develop a Downtown marketing campaign with a deliberately diverse offering of businesses and attractions				Strategy: Develop a Downtown specific marketing campaign, highlighting branding work, TIF, BID, and diverse businesses Funding: City general fund, AREA/BID/GACC/MainStreet/Visit ABQ funds, corporate and philanthropic investments Partners: AREA, GACC, Downtown MainStreet, Visit ABQ, City (ACD, EDD, MRA), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners

Implementation Action	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Required Resources
Complete the Albuquerque Rail Trail				Strategy: Ongoing fundraising and planning; develop contingency plans for each section if funding falls through Funding: City general fund, capital outlay, GO bonds, other state grants, competitive grants, TIF revenues, corporate and philanthropic investments/sponsorships Partners: City (ACD, DMD, EDD, MRA), NMDOT, BNSF Railroad Co., Mid-Region Council of Governments, State of New Mexico, Friends of the Rail Trail, Downtown Businesses and Property Owners
Ongoing updates to policies and procedures that support the BID, including financial and programmatic participation				Strategy: City commits to ongoing financial and programmatic participation in the Downtown BID Funding: City general fund, parking and other revenues Partners: AREA, City (Council, DMD, Mayor, MRA), Downtown MainStreet, BID, Downtown Property Owners & Business Owners
Ongoing updates to policies and procedures that support the Downtown TIF District				Strategy: Continuous evaluation and annual reporting on TIF Action Plan progress and annual goals and benchmarks as required by City Council; collaboration and coordination with stakeholders Funding: City general fund, TIF revenues Partners: City (Council, MRA), County (BCED), State (DFA, TR), TIF, Downtown Businesses & Property Owners
Tracking metrics and ongoing evaluation for the Downtown MR Area Plan				Strategy: Establish policies and procedures for data collection, evaluation, and reporting to gauge progress on Plan goals Funding: City general fund, Downtown TIF revenues Partners: City (Council, EDD, Mayor, MRA, PLN), Downtown Businesses & Property Owners

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION MATRIX **LEGEND**

Business and Industry	
Albuquerque Regional Economic Alliance	AREA
Block-by-Block	
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Co.	BNSF
Downtown Business Improvement District	BID
Downtown Tax Increment Financing Board	TIF
Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce	GACC
Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet	Downtown MainStreet
Visit Albuquerque	Visit ABQ
State	
Department of Finance and Administration	DFA
Department of Taxation and Revenue	DTR
New Mexico Department of Transportation	NMDOT
Bernalillo County	
Treasurer Department	Treasurer
Assessor Department	Assessor
Economic Development	BCED

City Departments	
Albuquerque Fire Rescue	AFR
Albuquerque Police Department	APD
Arts and Culture Department	DAC
City Council	Council
Department of Health, Housing, and Homelessness	HHH
Department of Municipal Development	DMD
Department of Senior Affairs	DSA
Economic Development Department	EDD
Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency	MRA
Parks and Recreation Department	PRD
Solid Waste Department	SWD
Transit Department	ABQ RIDE

