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CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

Downtown FORWARD

*An Implementation Plan to Create a Safe, Vibrant, and
Inclusive Community*

Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency
and Albuquerque Police Department



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Above: Timothy M. Keller, Mayor, City of Albuquerque.

From the Mayor

A quick message from Mayor Keller.

Downtown Albuquerque is the economic and cultural heartbeat of the state. A safe downtown creates a safe Albuquerque. A vibrant downtown will ignite a vibrant New Mexico. Creating a healthy urban center benefits us all.

I call on all of us to galvanize our collective energy to co-create a safe, inclusive, thriving and fun urban core. This plan outlines a commitment of over \$67 million in City investment, leveraging an additional \$177 million in potential public and private investment in downtown.

Downtown was hit hard by the pandemic. Office, convention center, and hotel closures took their toll. As we pivot and adapt due to COVID, downtown will have a new role and new opportunities will emerge. As work-from-home changes our downtown traffic patterns, we have the opportunity to prioritize safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Underutilized office buildings can be repurposed for housing. Expanded outdoor dining can support and revitalize downtown restaurants.

However, our first priority must be to create a safe downtown. A downtown where everyone feels welcome. A downtown where we are providing compassionate services to those who have fallen on hard times.

This plan outlines concrete steps to visibly and measurably improve downtown safety.

Downtown will also become the launchpad for economic growth in the region. Tapping into our key industries—Film, Bio-Science, and Space—we will implement several catalytic projects that will foster a dynamic innovation community blending both technology and creative industries.

We hope this plan serves as a starting place. We have a lot of work to do—together. We look forward to continued partnerships with the businesses, innovators, residents, and artists who truly are the pulse of downtown.

In partnership,

Mayor Timothy Keller

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Background

Downtown Albuquerque is the intersection of Route 66, the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, Pueblo Indian trade routes, and El Camino Real. It is the cultural crossroads of the southwest. It remains the employment, transportation, and tourism hub for New Mexico.

Like all downtowns across the world, downtown Albuquerque experienced significant challenges over the past two years. As the pandemic recedes, the importance of vibrant urban spaces that invite us to congregate and celebrate is reemerging.

Despite their small geographic size, downtowns punch above their weight when it comes to economic and fiscal impact. Their vitality is also essential to attracting new businesses wanting a vibrant urban center for their workforce.

During the pandemic, the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency (MRA) conducted outreach and stakeholder interviews to determine how the City can assist in elevating downtown to the vision we desire. Public Safety ECHO conducted meetings twice a month with downtown businesses, residents, workers and public safety officials to identify solutions. These seven strategies emerged as the most essential steps to creating a healthy, safe, and vibrant downtown district:

- Make downtown safe;
- Extend compassion and assistance to those who need it most;
- Give people something to do;
- Build more housing;
- Anchor, connect, and catalyze with strategic investments;
- Invest in our climate future by creating a sustainable downtown; and
- Create tools for redevelopment



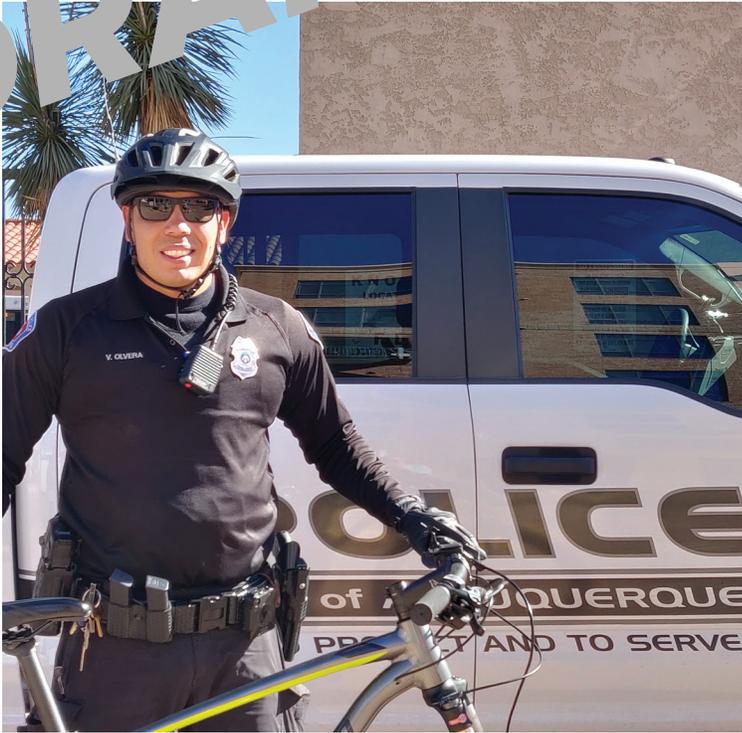
DOWNTOWN'S MAGNIFIED IMPACT

While only one-half square mile, downtown has a disproportionate regional economic and fiscal impact.

- Since 2000, the downtown residential population has increased 60%
- Downtown has 1% of City area but 6% of City's employment
- Downtown taxable property value is three times more per square mile than the city average
- Downtown retail sales per square mile is three times higher (\$163 million compared to \$56 million citywide)
- Downtown households emit 37% less greenhouse gases than households citywide
- Housing-Transportation Index makes downtown very affordable (34% compared to 51% citywide)

Source: The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities; Calculating the Value of Downtown Albuquerque, New Mexico A 2021 IDA Study, International Downtown Association

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Make Downtown Safe

The first step towards revitalizing downtown must be a palpable shift in reducing crime and enhancing how safe residents and visitors feel downtown. This shift must be grounded in tactical changes to downtown safety management. Visible interventions must influence how people feel starting the moment they arrive. Making everyone feel safe is essential to creating an inclusive and equitable downtown.

Open Downtown Public Safety Center

This summer we will celebrate the grand opening of the Downtown Public Safety Center at Central and 4th. This facility will be open to the public Monday–Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The space that the Downtown Public Safety District currently uses at the Alvarado Transit Center will house staff from the City’s Security Division with security personnel working out of the facility into the evening. The Downtown Public Safety Center will also be open on the weekends from 12 a.m.–8 p.m. and will be staffed with a Police Service Aid.

Visible and Accessible Community Policing

With both foot and bike patrols, police officers will provide a consistent street level presence in the downtown core. Officers will be present downtown during work and entertainment hours.

- Day shift officers will be on the streets and in businesses throughout the work day.
- Downtown Swing shift officers and Graveyard officers will be utilized during work departure and bar closures, focused on 1st–8th Street between Lomas and Silver.

Top (from left to right): APD Officer Olvera patrols downtown on bicycle. Block by Block cleans downtown streets. **Previous Page:** An ART Bus.

- Fire Rescue personnel and units will have a visible presence downtown. Fire trucks and personnel will be visible and available to the public during events and high-volume times.
- Celebrating its third anniversary, Public Safety ECHO provides a venue for businesses, residents and workers to learn and share best safety practices and explore concerns specific to downtown.

Increased Coverage for Entertainment Venues

On Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and

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Sunday evenings, the Downtown Public Safety District (DPSD) experiences influxes of pedestrian and vehicle traffic due to entertainment events and activities.

The DPSD Operational Plan includes proactive measures to prevent crime in and around the District during these peak hours with increased staffing and planned traffic barricades.

APD's goal is to augment downtown officers during bar closing hours, with additional personnel to patrol and monitor, absent a response to another incident requiring additional resources.

Deploy Technology to Help Detect, Deter, and Catch Criminals

- Shot Spotter, already installed throughout downtown, helps APD detect and locate gun shots as soon as they are fired and respond quickly.
- Newly installed license plate readers and additional security cameras along Central as well as cameras in all public parking structures will help catch criminals and build strong cases.

A Brighter, Cleaner Downtown is a Safer Downtown

The City has ramped up refuse and cleaning services throughout downtown to include:

- Alleys and sidewalks are inspected daily before 7 a.m. to identify priority areas and crews are dispatched.
- A dedicated downtown graffiti team removes tags within 24 hours of reporting.
- Block by Block crews patrol downtown daily, and address cleaning and reporting concerns quickly to the appropriate city department. Additionally, the Block by Block teams provide a street level presence to assist those in need. Pending City Council approval, the City will be expanding the Block by Block program to provide services into the evening in the downtown core area.
- \$1 million in lighting improvements brighten the alleys on either side of Central Avenue.

Top (from left to right): Downtown views of the First Plaza Galleria building. Downtown alleys. An encampment near downtown. Colin and Renee, two ACS responders.

- Code Enforcement will conduct bi-monthly sweeps to identify zoning and housing code violations. Citations will be swiftly issued and enforced.

Clean City Crew Expansion

The recent Solid Waste rate increase will expand our resources for keeping the city clean.

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Top: Offers on patrol during Downtown’s Art Walk.

Below: The Graduation Ceremony of APD’s 125th Cadet Class.



Downtown TEAM

Targeted Enforcement and Active Monitoring.

APD has recently restructured the ability for big box retailers to contract off-duty police officers and pay for overtime services. We want to ensure that our highly trained public safety personnel are being used for a community-wide benefit. APD is getting ready to launch Downtown TEAM (Targeted Enforcement and Active Monitoring) to increase public safety in the heart of our city.

Downtown TEAM will provide a better use of officer resources for greater community impact. The City seeks to partner with downtown businesses to provide additional police presence during times of greatest call volume and according to data driven approach to crime and traffic safety.

We are working with a group of business leaders to partner with APD to fund additional patrols of proactive policing in the Downtown area. By pooling private and public resources, we will amplify the security presence and reduce crime downtown.

WANT TO DO YOU PART FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

DONATE TO CREATE A SAFER DOWNTOWN

The Albuquerque Police Department, the One Albuquerque Fund, and downtown leaders are teaming up to finance the Downtown TEAM.

This will directly and solely pay for overtime police officers who will actively patrol downtown.

If you would like to support Downtown TEAM, you can make a tax-deductible donation to the One Albuquerque Fund.

Visit OneAlbuquerque.org or email Steve Fitzer at stevefitzer@onealbuquerque.org to contribute.

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Extend Compassion to Those in Need

Across our City, the number of unhoused people living in encampments is increasing. It is essential that we provide these individuals with access to shelter, case management, service referrals, and a pathway to stable housing.

The strategies that the City is implementing to help people experiencing homelessness will reduce the number of unhoused individuals and encampments in the downtown area. With over 9,500 ‘down and out calls’ in FY 2020, the newly formed Albuquerque Community Safety Department (ACS) is providing a holistic, empathetic, and informed response to behavioral, mental health-related and other 911 calls that do not require a police officer, firefighter or paramedic.

Provide Access to Expanded Shelter Capacity

The Gibson Health Hub (GHH) will fill several core service gaps for people experiencing homelessness, including adding more 24-hour centrally located shelter beds, and first responder drop-off and medical sobering beds. The Gateway Center at GHH will open with an initial 50 shelter beds for single women, the plan is to expand capacity to 100 adults and 25 families.

Offer a Humane and Trauma Informed Response

ACS’s trained Behavioral Health Response Teams assist individuals experiencing issues with behavioral health, inebriation, homelessness, addiction, and mental illness. The expanding department now has 61 positions and provides services seven days per week; from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Downtown, an area with a high volume of calls for service,

BY THE NUMBERS

2021 DOWNTOWN STATS

9,150

Graffiti Tags Removed

198

Encampments Cleaned

166

ACS responded to calls for service

(September 2021-March 2022)

Top: Three ACS responders on duty in Albuquerque.

will see ACS in the community as the hours ramp up.

The FY 2023 budget included an increase for the ACS department and they will be expanding their hours and capacity.

Dedicated Transportation to Services

Expanded shuttle service will provide transportation from downtown pick-up locations to area shelters and resources. This will minimize loitering and congregation at pick-up locations.

Boost Support to Community Partners

The City relies on strong community partners to provide a variety of services. This year, we increased funding to key partners who provide services to the unhoused in the downtown area.

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**CABQ
BRIGHT SPOTS**
15

 Businesses assisted in
locating or expanding
Downtown

(Since October 2022)
\$1.5M

 In Storefront Grants and
other CABQ Investments

Top: Artist vending at the Rail Yards Market.

Give People Something to Do

A vibrant and safe downtown must include a wide array of ongoing entertainment options and events that will attract new residents, keep downtown's 9-5 crowd around after work, and draw folks from the broader region. Additionally, the reopening of downtown storefronts will add street-level vitality. By supporting private sector investment into storefronts and expanding cultural offerings, downtown can become an experiential hub of activity for the region.

Open Local Business Storefronts

It has been essential to reopen downtown storefronts. Since October 2021, MRA has deployed over \$500,000 to 15 new or expanding businesses in downtown including bakeries, technology firms, art studios, and restaurants. These businesses are adding to the street level activity and attracting more customers downtown. The City will be expand this program in FY 2023, providing an additional \$500,000 in funding.

Amplify and Augment Programming at Existing Public Cultural Resources

Downtown events such as Summerfest, Opera on the Plaza, and concerts draw thousands of visitors to the area.

We will be ramping up the programming and activation of public spaces such as Main Library, KiMo Theatre, 519 Studio, Kiva Auditorium, and Civic Plaza.

Support Community Art and Cultural Events

This upcoming year, the City plans to deploy \$500,000 for cultural activation including events, markets, fairs, and art installations. By partnering with existing arts and culture organizations we will expand the number of downtown events that draw people downtown.

Time Travel on the Rail Trail

We don't have to wait for the Rail Trail to open! During the design and construction phase, downtown artists will be installing temporary pieces that will celebrate the corridor's history and launch us into the future.

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**CABQ
BRIGHT SPOTS**

60%

Increase in Downtown Residential Population
(Since October 2000)

\$38.4M

In Public and Private Investment (in Pipeline)

Top: Palladium Townhomes by Homewise at 2nd Street and Silver Ave.

Build More Housing

Albuquerque’s housing market is experiencing a historic supply shortage leading to escalating rents and home prices. At the same time, astronomical construction costs and supply chain disruptions have made construction challenging, especially in redevelopment areas that have additional costs.

Adding housing units downtown, where density is appropriate, will increase street-level activity, support downtown restaurants and businesses, and improve the perception of safety.

Encourage Growth with Incentives

The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency recently launched a new streamlined incentive that provides a seven-year property tax exemption to housing and commercial projects investing at least \$2 million in designated Redevelopment Areas. While ensuring standards for sustainability, community benefit, placemaking, and equity; this program will help attract investment in downtown and other MR areas. In addition, the City will issue another RFP for grants and loans to redevelopment projects in 2022.

Partner to Spark Investment

The City is continuing to work on several housing projects that will increase the number of residents downtown, prove up the market, and stimulate investment in

the vicinity. Current projects include:

- Downtowner: 166 apartments by REMBE Designs
- Springer Square: Up to 70 housing units by Zydeco LLC
- Palindrome Townhomes: 14 town homes developed by HomeWise
- Villa Agave: 15 apartments in converted assisted living facility by Baker A&D

Ensure Continued Affordability

Despite recent rent increases, downtown remains relatively affordable. Rental rates are seventeen percent lower than elsewhere in the city. When combined with the lower cost of transportation due to proximity to transit options, downtown is one of the most affordable neighborhoods in the city. We must measure and ensure continued affordability as we invest in downtown.

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Anchor, Connect, and Catalyze with Strategic Investments

Several key catalytic projects will be magnets for economic investment, innovation, and creative synergy. From preserving the city's original economic engine—the AT&SF Rail Yards—to creating the launch site for the next generation of innovation at the Space Valley Center, the amalgamation of creative innovators, technological pioneers, and deep historical tradition will permeate throughout downtown.

Rail Yards

Once, a behemoth of a project, incremental steps have moved this site from potential to reality. Over \$20 million has been

invested into creating public plazas, soil remediation, extension of utilities, new roofs, sidewalks, and streetscape. The property is now positioned for private investment and partnership.

Launch the Space Valley Center

The proposed \$64 million Space Valley Center, will be *the* launch site for space technology in New Mexico. Located at Fourth and Roma, the project will include a 600-person conference facility, as well as lab, office, and incubation space. The Space Valley Coalition includes the City

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Top: Rendering of the Rail Trail.
Below: Rail Running in Downtown ABQ. **Left:** An aerial shot of the Rail Yards.

Economic Development Department, CNM, CNM Ingenuity, New Mexico Trade Alliance, NewSpace New Mexico, and Space Port America. The Coalition recently applied for a \$75 million EDA Build Back Better Grant.

Albuquerque Rail Trail

This one-mile multimodal trail will provide access from the Rail Yards, Alvarado Transit Center, Convention Center, Innovate ABQ and Glorietta Station. The project also includes improved rail track crossings at Central, Tijeras, and Marquette.

The Rail Trail will catalyze up to \$200 million in redevelopment potential, connect underserved neighborhoods to downtown, increase bicycle/pedestrian connectivity, and celebrate the city’s unique culture.

BioScience at Innovate

Innovate ABQ will soon be home to 32,000 sq. ft of life science laboratory spaces. A joint-venture partnership between Los Angeles based,

Hatchspaces and Denver based, NexCore Group is bringing their life science lab concept to New Mexico. The initial development will occupy a currently vacant building on the Innovate ABQ site and will house a life science incubator and flexible expansion space for growing companies in the industry. The partnership will invest approximately \$6 million into the project.

Next Generation Media Academy

This facility will be the cutting-edge epicenter for New Mexicans to gain an industry standard, state-of-the-art, and highly specialized education in a chosen craft. Approximately \$30 million in state funding has been allocated to the establishment of a new film, TV, and digital academy. The proposed academy will provide state-of-the-art sound stages, equipment, technology, and materials and plans to offer bilingual training programs. Building a highly skilled workforce for this industry will result in well-paying careers for New Mexicans.

TOTAL CITY INVESTMENT

\$40.7M

Commitment for Revitalization Projects Downtown

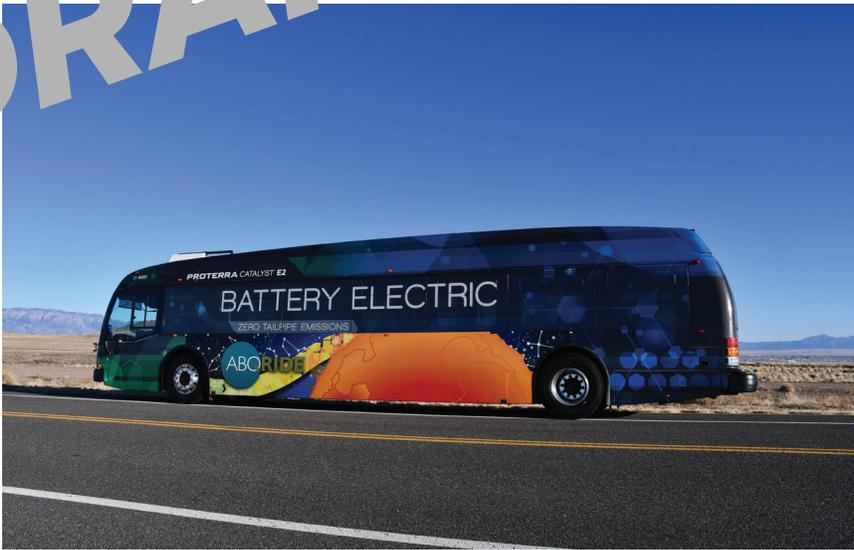
\$15M

In Investments for Rail Trail

\$142M

Total (Committed and Pending) Non-City Public and Private Investment

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Invest in Sustainability

A city's downtown is often considered to be its most sustainable district. Residents can work close by and use the network of public transportation, resulting in fewer vehicle trips and lowering emissions. Utilizing existing infrastructure and adaptive reuse of existing buildings is the most sustainable urban growth pattern. The City is proactively preparing for climate change and transitioning to renewable energy sources.

Leading the Switch to Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

The City has invested \$1.6 million in solar infrastructure at APD Main, Main Library, and Civic Plaza, generating 545kw and reducing the energy load 15-20%. The City upgraded lighting at the KiMo Theatre, resulting in a 75% reduction in energy use. APD Main upgrades have resulted in 83% energy reductions, and all city-owned parking structures have undergone similar upgrades. The Energy & Sustainability Division is currently conducting an investment grade audit of city-owned buildings which will produce recommendations for additional energy efficiency upgrades.

Improve Air Quality Downtown with Electric Buses

There are 25 bus routes that run through downtown (including one operated by Rio Metro); 12 of them pass through the Alvarado Transit Center (ATC). This contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and can create an unpleasant air quality environment for waiting passengers. The City has rolled out five new electric vehicles and will continue to procure additional electric buses as replacements to its existing fleet.

Encourage Transit Ridership for Downtown Workforce

With the Zero Fare Pilot program and routes serving Downtown from all quadrants of the City, the City hopes to encourage more Downtown workers and residents to use public transit as a sustainable transportation alternative. The recent release of "Transit" app encourages ridership by using real-time bus arrival predictions,

Top (from left to right): One of Albuquerque's first electric buses. A solar panel installation on the top of Albuquerque's Main Library.

schedules and trip planning, as well as alerts for service changes or interruptions.

Plant Trees to Reduce Heat Island Effect

Downtown Albuquerque experiences some of the worst impacts of the urban heat island effect. The construction of the Rail Trail will add 180 trees along the Rail Corridor which will shade building surfaces, deflect radiation from the sun, and release moisture into the atmosphere. This coming year, the Parks & Recreation department will conduct a downtown survey and plan for street trees and beautification landscaping in downtown.

Improve Flood Resiliency

Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods have long suffered from flooding during summer monsoons. The City recently completed construction of the Marble-Arno Pump Station and relocation of the former drainage pond at Broadway and Lomas, expanding storm water storage capacity over 800%.

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Create Tools For Redevelopment

Successful downtown redevelopment depends on leadership and funding. We must create the organizational structures and financial tools that exist in thriving downtowns across the Country. Creating these will require intensive and strategic public-private collaboration. Once established, sustained leadership will provide the long-term vision. Dedicated and recurring funding will ensure the resources to implement the vision.

Create a Place Management Organization in Partnership with Downtown Stakeholders

Downtown redevelopment requires sustained leadership focused singularly on the strategies and initiatives to create a vibrant downtown. Working together, private businesses benefit from the enhanced security, maintenance, marketing and programming that downtown management entities can provide.

Most vibrant cities have thriving place management entities to augment the public sector. Over the next year, the City seeks to partner with the downtown business, developers, and property owners to create and enhance downtown focused entities who will champion and lead downtown.

Change State Code to Create Transformational Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas with Increased Funding

Downtown development faces higher costs associated with environmental remediation, historic preservation, unknown utility conditions, and constrained development sites. To ignite redevelopment, it is essential to have a dedicated funding stream to

Top (from left to right): Local artisan selling his wares at the Rail Yards Market. ATC at midday. A shot round downtown.

implement redevelopment projects and strategies.

MRA currently collects less than 10% of revenues compared to redevelopment agencies in peer cities. Redevelopment areas in New Mexico cannot access the same finance tools available to greenfield developers on the fringe of the City.

The proposed Transformational MR would enable downtown redevelopment to garner the same funding streams as greenfield development currently collect through Tax Increment Development Districts.

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Looking Ahead

Downtown redevelopment will require a sustained and multi-prong strategy. It will require continued partnership with our public and private sector stakeholders. Several other strategies that the MRA is committed to exploring include:

- Establishing a parking benefit district to better manage and market the public and private parking supply downtown;
- Providing a safe and clean public restrooms facility for visitors that is staffed with Welcome Ambassadors;
- Updating the Downtown Redevelopment Plan to communicate a shared vision and an updated commitment to effective strategies and development outcomes for the downtown area; and
- Extending the Rail Trail into a seven-mile central city loop connecting downtown to Sawmill, Old Town, the Bosque, the National Hispanic Cultural Center, and the Rail Yards.



Outside Anasazi
in downtown.

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CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

**2022 Downtown
Forward Report**

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