

Raton Arts and Cultural District Plan

December, 2011

ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICTS (ACDs)

An arts and cultural district is a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly area of a community in which a high concentration of cultural facilities or activities serves as the anchor of attraction. No two arts and cultural districts are alike. Each district reflects the community's unique environment, history, land use and cultural demographics. Arts and cultural districts can be found in all types of communities from small and rural to large and urban. They increase tax revenues, profitability of surrounding businesses, and in some cases property values. Arts and cultural districts are a catalyst for community revitalization and serve as an incentive for new or relocating businesses.

The social and economic impact of an arts cultural district is measurable. The role arts and cultural districts play in providing a vibrant and appealing environment is a major factor in retaining young citizens and their families, attracting a well-educated and creative workforce, and positioning the community as a cultural tourist destination. Arts and cultural districts bring citizens out from their homes and into a vibrant social space to interact and bond with their families and neighbors. The community's young talent is showcased and recognized as part of the cultural landscape. Community arts centers offer opportunities for young people and adults to experience lifelong learning through the arts. The community's ethnic and cultural diversity contributes to the vitality and global profile of the arts and cultural district. Music and theatre events, artists' studios and galleries, street fairs and festivals, arts spaces and arts classes.. all contribute to high a standard of living for community residents and an appealing attraction for tourists.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NEW MEXICO'S NON-PROFITS ARTS SECTOR

New Mexico's non-profit arts sector makes a significant contribution to the economy by producing arts programming that generates and stimulates economic growth and provides jobs statewide which is especially important to rural New Mexico.

A two-year study by Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) documented the economic impact of New Mexico Arts's statewide grant funding and technical assistance. In 2005, just under \$1 million in New Mexico Arts Funding generated more than \$63 million into New Mexico's economy.

- Employs 852 full-time and 1,484 part-time staff
- Supports the work of more than 2,500 part-time artists and arts service providers
- Attracts more than \$6 million in donated goods and services including reduced rent, rehearsal space, storage facilities, accounting and legal services, computers, lodging, printing support and theater seats.
- 670,936 contributed volunteer hours

- Generates nearly 800,000 paid attendees to cultural events
- Provides no-cost access to arts programs and events to more than 1.1 million, especially is support of arts education for New Mexico youth

Not only does this economic activity benefit New Mexico residents but it also attracts tourism dollars from outside the state.

OVERVIEW OF NEW MEXICO'S ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT PROGRAM

New Mexico's Arts and Cultural District (ACD) Program was adopted in 2007 by the State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Bill Richardson. The program is an inter-agency collaboration between the Economic Development Department, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Tourism Department. It is directed toward place-based economic development focusing on the unique cultural and arts assets of each authorized district.

Program Objectives

- Promote the exceptional art and history of New Mexico.
- Help develop a community's cultural and artistic facilities by providing resources to artists, artisans, and crafts people in both live and work environments.
- Help communities leverage their assets by clustering existing arts and cultural amenities for the common goal of a dynamic and economically vibrant district.

The state statute established the New Mexico MainStreet Director as the Coordinator of the ACD Program and established the New Mexico Arts Commission, staffed by the Executive Director of the New Mexico Arts Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, as the "authorizing" body for each proposed district.

A State Steering Council made up of representatives from the following agencies and organizations works with the ACD Coordinator to set policy and develop resources and technical assistance:

- New Mexico MainStreet Program, Economic Development Department
- New Mexico Arts, Department of Cultural Affairs
- New Mexico Tourism Department
- New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, Department of Cultural Affairs
- McCune Charitable Foundation
- Museum Foundation of New Mexico
- Friends of New Mexico MainStreet, Inc.

Incentives

The state statute currently provides the following incentives to help investors and local municipalities conserve, grow and revitalize their ACD's economy.

- A doubling of state historic district tax credits for eligible properties within the ACD
- Access to municipal gross receipts taxes set aside for economic development projects through the state's Local Economic Development Act (LEDA)
- An ACD infrastructure fund for capital outlay and grant funds for infrastructure
- Technical assistance and Services from cooperating partners in the state ACD Steering Council
- Participation in the Cultural and Heritage Tourism marketing program
- Arts and Cultural District Flowchart of Services and Benefits

Local Requirements

For a community to be considered for authorization as a state ACD, they must make an application to the ACD coordinator for consideration by the New Mexico Arts Commission. New rounds of applications occur about once every two years. New Mexico's ACD Program was created to leverage and partner existing local community economic development organizations with arts and cultural organizations; combining existing assets, skills, finances, services and resources. The program does not intend to develop another local non-profit competing in a fairly limited financial arena of support and limited human resources. In many cases the local ACD Steering Committee is a standing committee of the local MainStreet project.

Application Requirements

- A proposed walkable district that includes historic assets, arts galleries, cultural institutions, cultural amenities, cultural and arts events
- Appropriate lodging and restaurants for cultural and heritage tourists
- Arts and cultural enterprises and institutions open on the weekends
- An ACD Steering Committee composed of official representatives from a local MainStreet Program or a Community Economic Development Organization
- A local or regional Arts Council, and the municipality

THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR RATON'S ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT

Findings from three phases of Raton's Arts and Cultural District planning process are integrated into this cultural plan.

Phase one: From April through August 2009, the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research (UNM-BBER) conducted a three-part investigation of the arts and cultural economy of Raton, with a focus on an inventory and assessment of the community's cultural assets:

1. An extensive inventory of the assets of the creative economy of the Raton area.
2. A community-based survey of artists, historians, supporters, retailers, market representatives and others engaged in creative industries in Raton and neighboring communities.
3. An analysis of the impact and trends of the creative economy of the Raton area.

The findings of the UNM-BBER assessment published August of 2009 presented an analysis of the social assets of the creative economy of Raton including a social network analysis, an evaluation of survey results, and a review of the institutional inventory. The second part of the report included an analysis of the economic impact of the arts and cultural industries in the area, including an analysis of trends from 1989 to 2006, and information about the potential market for arts and cultural industries.

Phase two: In May of 2010, an Arts and Cultural District resource team made up of experts from throughout the state, gathered in Raton to facilitate a four-day, on-site assessment of the community's arts and cultural infrastructure, institutions, organizations and practitioners. Agendas developed by the Resource Team in collaboration with the Raton Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee offered numerous opportunities for local residents to directly voice their questions and concerns to Resource Team members. Members of the Steering Committee were present throughout most of the Resource Team's forums and forays, providing valuable local perspectives in response to questions from Resource Team members, concerned citizens, and local business owners.

The authorization of Raton as a New Mexico Arts and Cultural District opened a vibrant community conversation embracing issues such as local government policies, community tourism development strategies, educational opportunities, signature art festivals, and the potential for an emerging theater and museum cluster downtown.

The Resource Team's public interviews and its concluding presentation provided important opportunities for in-depth conversations on the need for Raton to rebuild a new economy based upon its many cultural assets. Through these sessions both the Resource Team and local citizens were able to identify a range of issues that could potentially be addressed through the design and development of the Raton Arts and Cultural District. Recommendations were categorized into four areas: cultural planning, marketing and promotions, physical planning and design, and capacity building and finance. At the conclusion of the visit, the findings were presented to the community at large and to the Raton Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee.

Phase three: In September 2011, an Arts and Cultural District resource team returned to gather additional input from community citizens regarding the potential benefits and impact of the proposed Arts and Cultural District. Twelve listening sessions were held in which ninety-five citizens participated including representatives from the business sector, citizens 50 plus years of age, artists and arts organizations, young adults and youth, funders and foundations including banks and lodger's tax board, social service representatives, civic leaders, public school representatives, and general public.

FINDINGS

Assets and Opportunities

- Charming downtown
- 2 National Historic Districts
- History of nonprofit and foundation support for cultural development
- Existing cultural attractions including Shuler Theater, El Raton Theater, Old Pass Gallery, Raton Museum
- An arts-supportive public school district: visual art, music, drama, creative writing, culinary arts, Student Enterprise Art Programs, Superintendent Willden serves on the ACD Steering Committee
- New leaders in key organizations and the City of Raton
- Opportunity to identify a sole source for marketing: great resources to market
- Exceptional historic building inventory within the two historic districts
- Numerous arts and cultural assets including artists, musicians, teaching artists
- Close proximity to recreational and outdoor destinations
- Opportunity for Raton MainStreet, Raton Arts and Humanities Council, and other community organizations to create a signature arts event
- Great time for Raton to “reinvent” itself
- Facade Squad: improve downtown’s physical environment
- Opportunity to grow cultural and heritage tourism

Challenges and Needs

- Downtown lodging to attract tourists to the district
- Restaurants and a critical mass of art galleries and cultural institutions open at night and weekends
- Additional retail and small businesses to attract residents and visitors
- No public image: need a branding and marketing plan as well as strong web and social networking presence
- Clarify how Lodger’s Tax funds are used in promotions and marketing
- Design and preservation implementation plan with a funding component
- Outmigration of young adults and families, need more cultural programs and social spaces that appeal to youth and young adults, develop new leaders
- Engaging all members of the community including Hispanic and youth
- More cooperation among organizations, groups, community and civic leaders
- Streamline local building permitting process to enable building renovations
- Multi-use outdoor space for performances, events, farmers’ market, etc.
- Community education regarding historic preservation and design
- Signage and a way-finding system

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

On the northern border of New Mexico and Colorado, Raton bridges geographic and cultural frontiers. At the gateway to the famed Raton Pass, a narrow canyon corridor that enabled the passage of wagons, trains, and later motorcars from the Rocky Mountain ranges of Colorado to the southern Great Plains of New Mexico, Raton has earned a reputation as a traveler's oasis.

During the Santa Fe Trail era of 1821-1879, the area saw few wagons on the northern branch of the wagon route; some were headed to the Maxwell Ranch headquarters near Cimarron. As the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad steamed westward in the late 1870s, Raton Pass loomed as a key strategic port of entry to the New Mexico Territory and ultimately to the golden shores of California. "Uncle Dick" Wooten gained fame and notoriety for negotiating his Raton Pass easement to the Santa Fe railroad, and by 1878 the town's future founding was certain.

First named Willow Springs for a nearby ranch, the fledgling village was renamed Raton in 1880 as the railroad spurred building speculation. Various legends differ slightly on the "raton" or "small rat" place name; however the name seems to have romantic precedents with Hispanic explorers and adventurers.

After the railroad opened up the northeastern quadrant of New Mexico for settlement and development, Raton, Las Vegas and nearby Trinidad, Colorado (seventeen miles north of Raton) grew rapidly as nearly identical, albeit though competitive, towns. On the southern edge of the region, Las Vegas exploited the cattle, sheep and mercantile industries.

Farther north, Raton and Trinidad flourished thanks largely to significant coal mines established in the vicinity in the early 1900s. Bustling mining camps such as Dawson were built nearly overnight. From Raton northward to Pueblo, Colorado, coal and steel industries were the bedrock of the regional economy until the mining industry declined after 1960.

Raton enjoyed its heydays from 1900 to 1990, as mining, ranching, retail trade and tourism held steady. After World War II, New Mexico's first racetrack at La Mesa Park attracted interstate gaming and recreational visitors; and modern motels and restaurants played host to capacity crowds.

Raton's arts and cultural economic infrastructure was largely founded by the construction of the elegant Shuler Theater in 1913. Designed by the Rapp and Rapp architectural firm of Trinidad, the building ingeniously combined the functions of a city hall and municipal auditorium within the same harmonious neo-classical architecture. Rapp and Rapp architects designed many of Raton's outstanding commercial buildings and fine residences a century ago, lending a sense of stability, refinement and tradition to the community. This corpus of impressive architecture is recognized and registered as two National Historic Districts, the Downtown and Raton Residential.

The closing of La Mesa Park in 1992 initiated a period of decline that was exacerbated by the opening of a Wal-Mart department store in Trinidad. The loss of dozens, maybe hundreds of tourism and retail jobs during the past twenty-five years has led to many business closures and out-migration from the community.

Regardless of the aforementioned challenges, downtown Raton is easily accessible to nearby recreational and natural attractions such as the Vermejo Ranch, Sugarite Canyon, Philmont Scout Ranch, and the NRA Whittington. These valuable assets offer a variety of experiences to tourists and contribute to the overall vitality of the region.

Raton successfully applied to the New Mexico MainStreet program as one of the original five communities in 1985-86. The community enjoyed early successes of building rehabilitations on First Street, but internal conflicts caused the community to withdraw from MainStreet by 1990. Recently, Raton civic leaders have once again embraced the MainStreet downtown revitalization program, and has successfully applied for a state designated Arts and Cultural District in 2009.

After its designation as a New Mexico Arts and Cultural District in August 2009, Raton may leverage its historic assets of great downtown architecture, its mining and railroad heritage, excellent natural and recreational resources, and its gateway location to develop an enhanced creative and cultural economy.

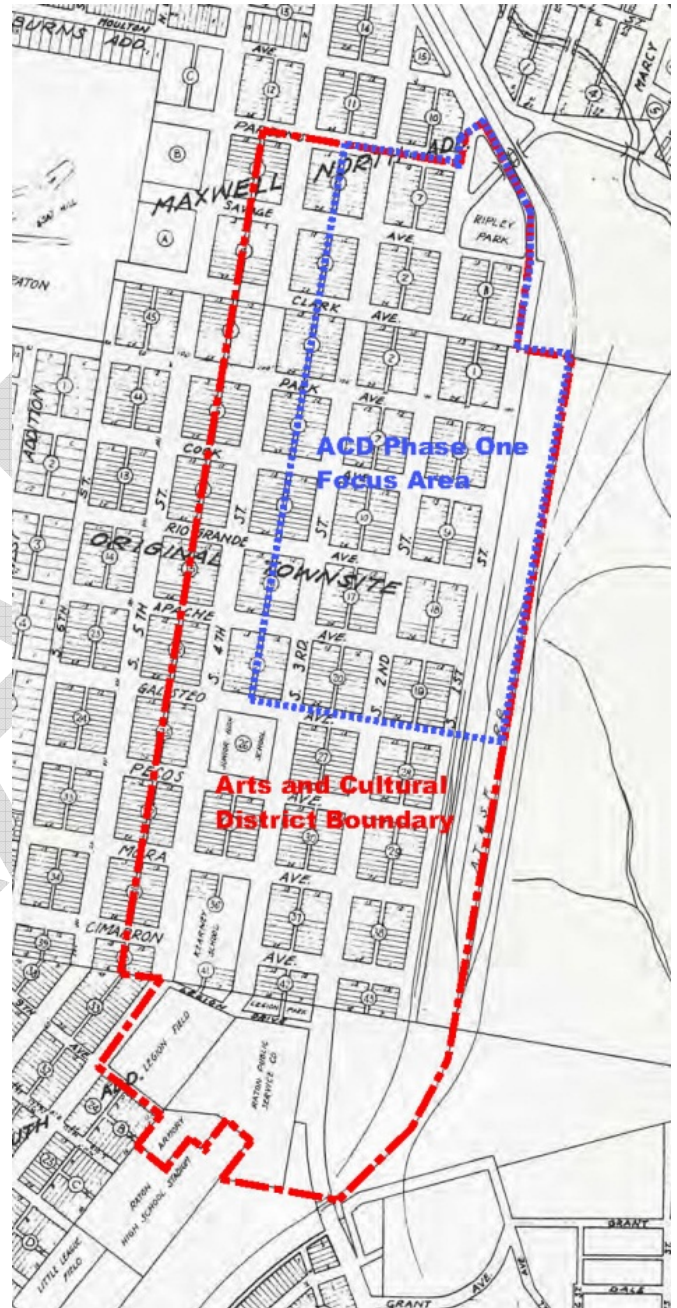
THE PROPOSED ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT

The Raton ACD boundary encompasses the core of what is the “Original Townsite” grid in Raton. This area includes the heart of the arts and cultural institutions and activities within the city. Bounded on the east by the Railroad tracks and Depot, on the north by Ripley Park and the overpass gateway into downtown, the west by the historic residential neighborhood, and the south by the railroad overpass gateway bridge, the district is approximately three-quarters of a mile long and one-half mile wide.

Phase One Focus Area

A Phase One Focus Area is defined within the District as the area that should receive the initial focus of improvements and programming in the District. This Focus Area includes the core of the arts and cultural assets, and is to ensure that in developing the district with the limited resources available such as economic, social and human capital; the District is able to sufficiently generate a critical level of activity to create itself as a destination and successfully sustain itself in the long term.

For the first three to five years of its emerging period as an ACD, all funding requests for improvements, signage, and New Mexico Arts and Cultural District technical assistance should be directed to phase one focus area.



OVERVIEW OF THE PHASE ONE FOCUS AREA

The phase one focus area is a compact and walkable district of about twenty blocks with clear natural boundaries of Ripley Park on the north and the railroad tracks on the east. The commercial district makes a seamless transition to Raton's historic residential neighborhood on the west. This area is a pleasant pedestrian experience, perhaps only slightly hampered by the busy traffic and wide expanse of Second Street. Traffic calming strategies for Second Street are advised.

The historic architecture of the downtown area is a significant strength for the community. In general, the buildings are in good condition; however a few key buildings such as the Palace Hotel and Marchiondo's Department Store have been vacant for decades.

Railroad buildings are also in salvageable or in operating condition. The City has undertaken a long-standing effort to acquire the railroad depot for community purposes. The large vacant lot north of the railroad depot was the site of Veterans Park and still awaits redevelopment.

Raton's two major theaters, the Shuler and the El Raton are in good condition; both operating, and offering the potential for a theater or entertainment district. These uses are complemented by the relocation of the Raton Museum to attractively rehabilitated historic commercial buildings across Second Street. This cultural cluster forms the heart of the ACD and suggests recruitment of complementary businesses.

Downtown Raton is not well signed for interstate motorists, nor are there tourist-friendly businesses in the historic core. Historic preservation is a contentious concept in Raton due to a cumbersome state process for building permits, design review compliance, and code enforcement. There is some interest in rehabilitation projects (perhaps now diminished due to the weak economy), but frustration with bureaucracy and regulation hampers a community preservation program.

Despite the success and aesthetic appeal of Ripley Park, downtown Raton could benefit from additional multi-use outdoor spaces that are more centrally located. Raton's recently completed downtown master plan (2009) has identified some of these central catalytic projects, and well-informed community dialogue about these projects seems timely.

Raton Arts and Cultural District (ACD)

The Cultural Plan

Raton is blessed with numerous assets including arts and cultural amenities, impressive architecture, two National Historic Districts, a unique railroad and mining heritage, an attractive natural setting, recreational opportunities and a gateway location. All of these assets provide fertile ground for expanded cultural and economic development.

Raton's Arts and Cultural District has generated enthusiasm among arts organizations and artists, civic leaders, the business sector, public institutions, and citizens of all ages. The ACD will pave a positive new direction for economic growth and increase the community's standard of living.

Development of the district will require a strong organizational and administrative infrastructure to ensure its sustainability. Essential elements that will contribute to the district's stability are: increased manpower and capacity for arts programming and cultural development, a strategy to identify and maintain funding sources, an aggressive marketing plan, and capacity for fostering creative community partnerships and arts and cultural businesses.

Recruiting and training a new generation of cultural leaders is vital to Raton's future. By providing opportunities for new leadership, the ACD has the unique opportunity to address the challenge of outmigration of Raton's young citizens. The more invested youth and young adults are in the cultural and economic development of their community, the more likely they will remain or return to the community. During the ACD focus group meetings held in September of 2011, a major point of discussion among Raton's younger citizens centered on the need for leadership opportunities and fresh ideas for arts programming.

In spite of economic challenges within the education sector, Raton Public Schools has maintained a commitment to arts education by retaining art, music, drama and creative writing in the curriculum. As a member of Raton's Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee, Superintendent Dave Willden has expressed the school district's commitment to the Arts and Cultural District's development.

By forming a strong alliance with Raton's Public Schools and various social services organizations, the ACD will play a vital role in developing young arts leaders and bridging arts programs and services to youth, the Hispanic community, and elder citizens.

Physical design and development of the Raton Arts and Cultural District presents an opportunity to transform downtown into a magnetic, cohesive, and vibrant small urban area that reflects the unique and extraordinary character of Raton. Physical development addresses the built environment of downtown in its relationship to the

mission of the District. This ranges from way-finding and signage, to improvements in urban design, to potential major developments or redevelopments.

An overall focus will involve enhancements that will support a more pedestrian-friendly environment as well as a more aesthetically ambitious and successful collection of buildings. Related to this are cultural facilities, venues and spaces that support the programming envisioned for the Arts and Cultural District.

Assessment conducted for the Arts and Cultural District identified gaps and development potential in its current conditions. Residents express a desire for more restaurants, evening entertainment opportunities, longer business hours, and a better mix of retail and services. Cultural organizations face limited venues for downtown activities, including mid-sized public meeting, performance, event and exhibition spaces. There is also a lack of cohesive urban design and a clear opportunity for aesthetic improvement. While widely perceived as a safe place, downtown is not uniformly pedestrian-friendly and lacks connections, way-finding, and urban destinations that would encourage exploring and walking among downtown areas. There is plenty of parking but little street life. There is limited affordable housing and no studio or live/work spaces to encourage downtown living.

Adopting an eclectic and dynamic development strategy within the Arts and Cultural District will ensure that the area will serve the needs of community citizens and attract cultural tourists. Downtown lodging such as small inns and bed and breakfasts would provide an inviting atmosphere that would attract overnight visitors. Artists' studios and galleries, informal performance venues, cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating, pubs and retail establishments that stay open evenings and weekends will increase the quality of life for local residents, provide social spaces for youth and young adults, and generate employment and increased tax revenue.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Arts & Cultural District Plan provides the foundation for developing and sustaining a vibrant arts and cultural district that will contribute to Raton's economic growth, impact and enhance the community's standard of living, and promote Raton as a showcase community in Northeastern New Mexico.

GOALS OF THE ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT

1. Build Capacity for Arts and Cultural Development

Build the community's capacity to develop programs, events and creative spaces that will sustain the Arts and Cultural District; and foster positive partnerships that will expand and support Raton's cultural growth.

2. Enhance Raton's Standard of Living

Create a more walkable, pedestrian friendly downtown environment, enliven the experience of being downtown, provide venues for public gatherings, and increase the number of artists living downtown.

3. Impact Economic Growth

Increase economic activity by supporting the development of small businesses that complement the district, facilitate the development of a signature art event in partnership with arts and community organizations, and support development of cultural tourism products that attract visitors to the ACD.

4. Promote Raton's Art and Cultural District

Develop and communicate a compelling image of the Arts and Cultural District centered on Raton's arts and cultural assets, unique heritage, and the built and natural environment.

5. Identify and Develop Funding Sources

Ensure the sustainability of the ACD by identifying funding resources that will help support arts and cultural events and programs, professional development and training, marketing and promotions, and the physical environment of Raton's Arts and Cultural District.

IMPLEMENTATION

Raton's ACD Cultural Plan is designed to span three years and allows for incremental growth of the Arts and Cultural District. The goals of this cultural plan address challenges and opportunities expressed and discussed during the ACD Resource Team Assessment visit in May 2010 and the community-wide focus group meetings in September 2011. This plan presents a creative and ambitious vision of Raton's future, however implementation must be grounded within the reality of the current economic climate and the capacity of ACD and partnering organizations to help carry out the plan.

While the plan articulates goals and strategies to be implemented by Raton's Arts and Cultural District, it does not identify specific roles and responsibilities of the numerous cultural and community organizations that will help implement the plan. Division of tasks will be determined by the Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee and their community partners.

There are two major considerations concerning implementation: manpower and the community's capacity to expand arts programming that will support the Arts and Cultural District. A realistic assessment of the community's capacity to expand arts programming is essential. From a practical standpoint, any expanded programming should either enhance Raton's quality of life or contribute to Raton's economic growth. Expanded arts programming will require additional manpower, planning, oversight, funding and implementation by the ACD and partnering organizations.

Strategies

Listed under the goals are strategies that will accomplish the goals and advance the development of the ACD. Development of the goals and strategies has been based on existing arts and cultural activities and events, input from community citizens concerning needs and opportunities, and recommendations by New Mexico's Arts and Cultural District Resource Team. The strategies in this plan should serve as inspiration and guidance.

Set Strategic Priorities

The goals and strategies span a three year time period so that implementing the plan is manageable. It will be the responsibility of the ACD to prioritize and, if necessary, redirect strategies. Prioritize strategies based on projects that are most immediate and have potential for significant impact. It is not necessary to implement every strategy listed in this plan. Use the plan as a guide.

Create a Three-Year Timeline

It will be the responsibility of the Arts and Cultural District's Steering Committee to create a three-year implementation timeline based on immediate needs, community capacity, and funding. Start the first year by implementing high-impact; low-cost events and development projects, and then expand to the more intensive projects. Some of projects that are placed in the timeline may not be accomplished because of a lack of manpower or funds. If the projects are still viable, they can be considered for future implementation.

Track Progress

The Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee will assess the effectiveness of the district's cultural development by tracking its progress. Federal and state agencies, foundations and community sponsors require annual reporting. Each goal is reviewed annually and the findings compiled into an annual report. It is recommended that an annual progress report include strategies implemented, challenges encountered, any needed revisions of strategies, number of community partners and volunteers involved, number of people served, outreach components employed, economic impact, and

impact on community quality of life. **(A template for an annual progress report is included as an appendix of the cultural plan).**

Celebrate Accomplishments

People thrive on acknowledgment for what they've done. Look for occasions to recognize contributors, volunteers and staff, personally and in front of an audience. Announce accomplishments in emails and newsletters. When it comes to larger successes, celebrate with events such as ribbon cuttings and photo sessions.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1: Build Capacity for Arts and Cultural Development

Build the community's capacity to develop programs, events and creative spaces that will sustain the Arts and Cultural District; and foster positive partnerships that will expand and support Raton's cultural growth.

Strategies

1.1 Capacity Building

Provide opportunities for artists, volunteers, non-profit organizations and businesses to gain expertise in various aspects of cultural and tourism development. Priority should be given to training that improves the earning capacity of artists, enables organizations to maintain stability and expand programs that will enhance the Arts and Cultural District, and helps small businesses attract and maintain a solid customer base.

1.1 a. Raton Arts Leadership Institute

The Arts Leadership Institute deepens participants' knowledge of the value and benefits of arts and cultural development. The training curriculum is designed for adult learners across cultural and educational backgrounds. Participants learn why and how the arts make a significant contribution to the local economy and tourism development, how arts programs and vibrant arts spaces enhance the community's quality of life, and how the arts revitalize downtown areas and improve the overall image of cities and neighborhoods.

1.1 b. Artists' Business Training

Gaining knowledge of "the business of art" is essential to artists and arts related businesses. Basic accounting and tax management, pricing, design and display aesthetics, self-marketing and effective use of technology are among the skills that are crucial to increasing artists' earning power.

1.1 c. Arts Organizations

Arts organizations that stand as major stakeholders in Raton's Arts and Cultural District should keep current with best practices in organizational

management, event planning and implementation; gain capacity for fundraising and effective marketing of their programs and services; and broaden their outreach to the Hispanic community, youth and young adults.

1.1 d. Develop Raton’s Next Generation of Creative Cultural Leaders

Development of the ACD will provide numerous opportunities for growing new and creative cultural leaders, especially among youth and young adults. As the Arts and Cultural District evolves, it will need new ideas, new committees, event organizers and project coordinators. By developing creative and diverse partnerships, the ACD will have the opportunity to grow new leaders that will include youth, young adults, and the Hispanic community.

1.1 f. Hospitality Training for Businesses and Organizations

Effective hospitality training will advance the development of cultural tourism and the Arts and Cultural District. Lodging establishments, restaurants, retail shops, coffee houses, galleries, museum and other arts spaces serve as the heart of activity in an arts district. Staff of these businesses and organizations gain confidence and are more effective if they have the skills to serve as articulate ambassadors for their community and for the Arts and Cultural District. Hospitality training addresses how to create a professional but welcoming environment, promote the community and the ACD, and how to “drive” visitors to additional businesses in the district.

1.2 Programming

Plan on-going arts activities and events that will animate and populate the Arts and Cultural District. Creative and attractive arts events should increase foot traffic in the district, extend open hours for restaurants, pubs and retail establishments, engage local citizens and visitors, showcase local talent and the community’s architectural assets, and generate sales and additional tax revenues. Build upon current assets for short term development and expand arts programming long term to create a critical mass of cultural activity that will enliven the ACD.

1.2 a. Raton’s Arts and Cultural District Art Walk

Monthly evening art walks have become a tradition in arts districts throughout the country. Art walks create a festive atmosphere and are an excellent way to attract local citizens and visitors to the Arts and Cultural District while providing additional opportunities for artists to exhibit and perform. When promoted properly, this type of event generates additional revenue for local businesses, restaurants and pubs; it also provides added opportunities for artists to sell their artwork and perform. An art walk event is a great way to foster collaboration among local businesses, artists, cultural organizations and the City of Raton.

1.2 b. Historic Walking Tours

Historic walking tours not only appeal to residents, they are a valuable tourism draw. Cultural tourists are by nature life-long learners and are drawn to communities that promote national historic districts and art history. Traditional use of brochures and docent lead tours are still in use, however cell phone technology is providing an exciting new way to present walking tours.

- The City has on loan from the federal government one of the country's largest collection of WPA-era paintings and artwork. Although this artwork is currently in several buildings around the downtown, it could be showcased in a brochure as a walking tour, and increase the pedestrian life in the downtown. There are aficionados of WPA era art and architecture that would consider this collection to be an attractive reason for coming to Raton.
- The growth of Raton as a railroad and mining town is reflected in its unique architectural heritage. A walking tour covering five blocks of downtown Raton is the perfect way to take in the structures that were built between the mid-1880s through to mid-1900s. The tour includes the historic Shuler Theater, a gem that has stood on 2nd Street since 1915, the Old Pass Gallery built in 1910 as the Wells Fargo Building, El Raton cinema theater built in 1930, and the beautiful Victorian buildings of historic First Street.

1.2 c. "Cool Factor" Events

By encouraging artists, arts organizations, youth and young adults to collaborate on low cost, high profile creative events, the district earns its "cool factor". By engaging this group in planning the district's "cool factor", the ACD will grow the next generation of arts leaders. Consider hosting "Cool Factor" projects in downtown's empty spaces and promote the events on the ACD website and through web-based social media. Some "Cool Factor" projects might allow for experimentation and provide the opportunity to expand creative capacities. "Cool Factor" ideas:

- "Art Blast" Spontaneous Happenings and On-Going Events
Encourage the creative use of vacant downtown spaces for temporary sculpture installations, art exhibits, and performances.
- "Tonight Live at the District"
Organize music, participatory arts projects, and poetry slams in creative spaces that appeal particularly to youth and young adults.
- "Park(ing) Day in the District"
Participate in the "Park(ing) Day" project that happens annually in 1,200 cities around the world. Residents take over a parking space

and reuse it in a creative way as a mini-park, temporary outdoor exhibit or performance venue. Park(ing) day is an example of a fun low-cost, high- impact event .

- Phantom Galleries and Pop Up Art Installations
Phantom galleries and pop up installations are a great way to provide additional exhibition opportunities for arts students and artists and a creative way to utilize empty storefronts and buildings.

1.2 d. Showcase and Support Regional and Local Talent

Encourage restaurants, pubs, coffee houses and organizations to book local and regional musicians and singer-songwriters to perform on a regular basis. Provide multiple opportunities for artists to exhibit their artwork.

- Expand “Music on Main Street” to a year-round “floating performance series” that will animate indoor and outdoor spaces throughout the district.
- Expand the Farmer’s Market to include local and regional craftsmen and musicians.
- Provide exhibition and performing opportunities throughout the ACD for students of Glee, Santa Fe Trail School for the Performing Arts, Raton High School’s poetry students, and the school district’s art, music and drama students.
- Host downtown events that feature the region’s traditional and folk artists. Celebrations of traditional dance, food and music is a big attraction, especially for the cultural tourist. Examples include Hispanic traditional arts, ranching culture (boot makers, hat makers, saddle makers, chuck wagon cuisine), and Native American cultural arts.
- Employ and showcase Raton Public School’s Culinary Arts Program at events and receptions.

1.2 e. Facilitate Expanded Opportunities for Arts Learning for Youth and Adults

Build upon the success of the Santa Fe Trail School for the Performing Arts, Glee, and Raton’s Public Schools’ arts programs.

- Encourage arts organizations to collaborate with Raton Public Schools to expand arts education in the ACD to include visual arts and electronic media, dance, and creative writing for youth and adults.

- Explore the feasibility of developing a downtown community arts center. The Shuler-Castillo complex could serve as a model in the region for life-long learning by offering classes, exhibits, lectures, performances, and poetry readings.
- Develop a roster of teaching artists.
- Develop a community murals program. Contract a community artist to guide young people through the process of designing and creating murals. An excellent location exists among the several warehouses along 1st Street that face the railroad tracks.

1.3 Develop Dynamic and Creative Partnerships

No single entity can develop a successful arts and cultural district. This ambitious endeavor requires the active participation of dedicated citizens from all sectors of the community. By engaging cultural institutions, educators, social services, youth activists, artists, local businesses, funders, civic leaders and the faith community in the district's planning and programming, the ACD will earn broad-based community support.

1.3 a. Hispanic Serving Organizations

60.4% of Raton's population is Hispanic. It is vitally important to have the support and participation of the Hispanic community throughout the development of the Arts and Cultural District. By partnering with Hispanic serving organizations and the Raton Arts and Humanities Council, the ACD will ensure that traditional and contemporary arts, dance, music and culinary traditions will play a major role in revitalizing downtown Raton and attracting cultural tourists.

- Actively recruit Hispanic representation on advisory and planning committees of the ACD and Raton Arts & Humanities Council.

1.3 b. Cultivate Raton Public Schools as a Cultural Development Partner

The Raton Public School District is a major cultural asset to the city of Raton. Under challenging economic circumstances, the school district has continued to support and retain art, music, theatre, creative writing and culinary arts classes. Provide opportunities for student artists to hone their skills and showcase their talent.

- Teachers of the arts are excellent resources for recruiting students to showcase their talent in the Arts and Cultural District.
- Under Superintendent Dave Willden's guidance, the ACD should formalize a partnership with the school district and local arts

organizations to develop and expand long-term community arts learning programs in multiple disciplines for Raton’s youth.

- Partner with Raton Public Schools to provide “career pathway” opportunities for students in the business of art. Examples: Students would be paired with a mentor to learn the operations of a gallery or how to plan and organize an event.

1.3 c. Engage Social Services and the Faith Community as Cultural Development Partners

Social service organizations and churches are often more aware of the “informal” arts and cultural activities that occur within communities and often host their own festivals and celebrations. Traditional artists and traditional artforms and foodways are often recognized and honored by these institutions than by arts organizations. Their capacity for outreach and working with underserved communities will serve as a valuable asset to the ACD and they will be very helpful in identifying potential cultural workers and artists that might otherwise be overlooked.

1.3 d. Maintain Arts and Cultural Organizations and Artists as Programming and Event Planning Partners

Developing the ACD will require additional manpower to plan and implement expanded arts and cultural programs. Planning should determine which partnering organization will be responsible for overseeing the project, how much time it will take and how it will be funded. Meet with cultural partners often to avoid duplication, scheduling conflicts and competitive fundraising.

Goal 2: Enhance Raton’s Standard of Living

Create a more walkable, pedestrian friendly downtown environment, enliven the experience of being downtown, provide venues for public gatherings, and increase the number of artists living downtown.

“Community” is not just a place but a sense of belonging. In an ever changing world, living in an arts rich environment keeps us grounded, provides a stimulating mental space to create, and nurtures future generations of creative community builders. The arts play a critical role in the personal growth of youth and adults.

Capacity for creative community development occurs when citizens become actively engaged in organizing and participating in arts events and programs that enhances their standard of living. Children who participate in arts learning programs are less likely to drop out of school, and are more likely to become life-long learners and civically engaged adults. Artists are valued for their contribution to the quality of life of their community and their earning power improves with increased opportunities to sell works of art, and to perform and teach. Citizens become more discerning of and responsible for their physical environment by recognizing the value of public works of art, local

architecture, landscaping, clean and attractive public spaces and the natural assets within their geographic region.

Downtown spaces are animated by arts learning centers, galleries and studios, community theaters and cinemas, and artist live/work spaces. Increasingly, businesses are selecting locations based on amenities rather than tax incentives. A high quality of life ranked second just below salary in surveys related to job appeal for technology workers, therefore increasing the attractiveness of a job by 33%. Research indicates that arts active communities provide the amenities and lifestyle that attracts creative businesses and entrepreneurs, a skilled workforce, and young families.

Strategies

2.1 Enhance the Visibility of the Arts and Cultural District

The Arts and Cultural District should take initial steps to enhance its visibility. Visibility can be improved in short-term by actions such as creating gateways using existing assets, developing a program of temporary public art projects with an emphasis on enlivening 1st Street and 2nd Street, providing signage and way-finding improvements that will direct people from the edges of the Arts and Cultural District into 2nd Street.

2.1 a. Overpass Bridge as Public Art Gateway Opportunity

The Railroad overpass bridge at the south end of the District represents a public art opportunity that can also serve as a gateway feature into the District. There can be a Call for Artists to design and install the bridge and buttress features. Funding should also be available from NM DOT through their 1% for Art Program.

2.1 b. Railroad Track Building Murals

There are several warehouses (some empty) along 1st Street that face the railroad tracks. These backsides of the buildings offer an artist's canvas to the passengers on the Amtrak rail service as they enter the Arts and Cultural District on the Train.

2.1 c. Phantom Art Galleries

There are several empty storefront display windows along 1st and 2nd Streets that could be utilized as showcases of local artists. The cities of Santa Fe, Seattle and San Francisco have a program to ask property owners to donate their empty space to create a 90 day installation space. Artists have created non-traditional displays that are interactive such as old bike rim sculptures, looping images of historical footage, and a temporary wall of drums.

2.2 Update and Implement Zoning and Building Codes

To create a friendlier plan review and permitting environment in the Arts and Cultural District, The City should update its zoning and building codes to permit many of the uses that will be supportive of the revitalization of downtown Raton.

The City should adopt a flexible, streamlined and encouraging attitude for new private redevelopment of existing buildings. The pedestrian right-of-way should be developed to allow food and retail carts, street artists, temporary public art, sidewalk cafes and other elements that encourage a lively street scene.

2.3 Identify and Help Develop Outdoor Public Performance and Gathering Places

Outdoor spaces in the Arts and Cultural District could provide a needed venues for small-scale performances and events, including the farmers' market; and could serve as physical anchors for the Arts and Cultural District.

2.3 a. Ripley Park as an Outdoor Performance Site

Ripley Park is currently used at times as an outdoor performance area with some success, but with some earth-contouring and physical improvements such as lighting and passive seating, Ripley Park could become a high quality outdoor performance venue.

2.3 b. Develop Cook Ave as a Shared Street Concept

Cook Avenue is a wide street with diagonal parking on both sides. It is also the entry to the Railroad Depot as its terminus. The street should be redesigned to still accommodate vehicles and on-street parking during regular operations, but also be able to serve as a pedestrian-enhanced outdoor area for events when closed. The City of Las Cruces designed their new Main Street as a narrow two lanes street but without curbs and with wide sidewalks and pedestrian amenities. Even when the street is open, it still has a very strong pedestrian feel that serves to reduce vehicle speeds (it's posted at 15 mph).

2.3 c. Create a Courthouse Square

There is an excellent opportunity to re-create a traditional Courthouse Square in front of the Colfax County Courthouse, which is an excellent WPA-era building. By reducing 3rd Street width to two narrow travel lanes with parallel parking, a very large civic space in front of the Courthouse could be reclaimed for outdoor gathering places and events.

2.4 Plan and Develop a Live/Work Facility for Artists

A live/work facility for artists would provide much-needed space for individual artists, promote downtown residential living, create new affordable housing, and help extend the daily life/work cycle of downtown. Developments focused on artists' live/work are often done at very low cost to local government, handled by a nonprofit organization specializing in such projects that provides access to funding (e.g., ArtSpace USA and PLACE).

2.4 a. Artist Studio/Residences in the Closed Community Center Building

The City owns the Community Center on 3rd Street, which is currently closed due to needed repairs and upgrades. This is a WPA-era building that offers potential for artists' live-work studios. The City could make the building available in its present condition to a developer or an artist, either as a long term lease or property transfer, for a very low cost with conditions that the building is renovated as artists residences/studios. There are several examples of this arrangement, notably in Albuquerque and Paducah, Kentucky.

2.5 Encourage the Development of Social Spaces for Youth and Young Adults

During the focus group meetings in September of 2011, youth and young adults commented on the lack of gathering places, and that there is no nightlife. This is a major "quality of life" issue. There is a need for the types of places that youth and young adults like to meet and socialize, listen to bands and dance. There is also a lack of upscale restaurants, and pubs.

2.6 Explore the Feasibility of a Local Public Art Program

Public works of art enhance livability and vitality of communities. Research other community's public art policies and consult with New Mexico communities that already have a public art program in place.

Goal 3: Impact Economic Growth

Increase economic activity by supporting the development of small businesses that complement the district, facilitate the development of a signature art event in partnership with arts and community organizations, and support development of cultural tourism products that attract visitors to the ACD.

Arts active communities generate income, employment and tax revenues, and are widely recognized for attracting and growing businesses and retaining a creative workforce.

Developing the ACD will require a critical mass of small businesses and arts spaces to generate economic growth and attract visitors to the ACD. In order to generate economic activity there must be a variety of experiences for residents and visitors to engage in. As more arts events and programs occur within the district, pedestrian activity will increase and provide the opportunity for businesses to increased sales and revenues. This critical mass of activity will transform Raton into a more vital, creative and attractive community.

Strategies

3.1 Encourage Small Business Development in the Arts and Cultural District

Increase economic activity by supporting the development of small businesses that complement the district and attract tourists, including galleries and artists' live/works spaces.

During community meetings, Raton residents expressed the need for a lively downtown that offers a variety shopping and restaurant choices, and nighttime activities for young adults including pubs and other social spaces. These types of amenities are necessary for attracting tourists and enhancing Raton's quality of life. Suggestions of businesses that would contribute to the vitality of the ACD and serve the needs of residents and visitors were:

- A bicycle shop
- More upscale restaurants, especially offering outdoor seating
- Pubs/wine bar
- A sportswear shop
- More clothing choices
- "New Mexico Handmade" sales gallery featuring hand-crafted items made by New Mexico artists (pottery, hand-woven goods and clothing, baskets, turned wood, glass, handmade paper, leather goods, etc.)
- Artists' studio/galleries
- An artists' Cooperative Gallery
- A video/game arcade for youth
- A spa

Explore grants to create business incentive programs for artists', including start-up funds for rent or relocation, and small business incubators.

3.2 Facilitate the Development of a Signature Art Event

Strive to plan an event that occurs in multiple venues and offers a variety of activities happening throughout the district.

Currently, there is a discussion around linking the arts to the great outdoors. The art/environment connection is a natural for Raton and has a unique appeal. This seed of an idea has potential to attract tourists and is an excellent image builder.

3.3 Support the Development of Cultural Tourism

Tourism is an excellent way to grow Raton and the Arts and Cultural District. Establish a tourism committee to convene interested stakeholders to initiate the development of tourism products based on Raton's cultural, historical and natural assets.

Develop simple tourism packages that compel visitors to stay overnight by including a variety of activities, places, and experiences:

- Explore the possibility of developing 3-day getaways
- Consider the numerous possibilities of arts and artist based tourism products
- Include the historic walking tours and studio/gallery visits in tour packages
- Encourage creative partnerships for tourism development such as artists and B&Bs or hotels collaborating on arts workshop retreats

Goal 4: Promote Raton's Arts and Cultural District

Develop and communicate a compelling image of the Arts and Cultural District centered on Raton's arts and cultural assets, unique heritage, and the built and natural environment.

The ACD will serve as single-source vendor to manage funds to be used to market and promote Raton and the Arts and Cultural District. This initiative will enable a comprehensive marketing and promotions campaign that will benefit the entire community.

Raton is at an evolutionary crossroads. In spite challenges, Raton still retains an attractive downtown with numerous amenities, and is a community to take pride in. A successful branding and marketing strategy will promote Raton as a community with a high standard of living, a rich cultural life and a destination for cultural tourists. The Arts and Cultural District should be marketed to compel visitors to stay overnight, attend a performance or exhibit, and dine and shop in the district.

Attractive website design, printed materials, signage and media coverage should convey the appeal Raton holds for entrepreneurs, small businesses, artists, residents and visitors. Social networking is timely, reaches a lot of people fast, and is the communication tool of choice among youth and young adults. Signage should be attractive and well placed as to entice travelers to explore the area and Raton's Arts and Cultural District

Strategies

4.1. Develop a Comprehensive Marketing Plan

An effective marketing plan should be on-going and include strategies for promoting Raton's image:

- Designing printed materials and a website
- Social networking
- Developing signage and way-finding systems
- Advertising and promoting entrepreneurial opportunities for small businesses and artists
- Developing a funding budget

4.2 Communicate and Convey a Compelling Sense of Forward Momentum

While it is important to maintain an authentic image of Raton based on its assets, (arts and culture, unique heritage, and the built and natural environment,) now is the perfect opportunity to look toward a new future and communicate a sense of forward momentum. This strategy is especially timely for developing a vibrant arts and cultural district, addressing outmigration of young adults and families, and fostering entrepreneurial enterprises.

4.3 Develop Well Designed Promotional Materials

Mounting a marketing campaign and developing promotional materials requires the expertise of marketing specialists. Printed materials, advertising, web communication, and signage should be well designed, and convey a sense of community pride. Printed materials should drive people to the ACD website for timely information about arts spaces and events, dining, shopping and lodging.

4.4 Develop an Arts and Cultural District Website

The ACD website will be the primary tool used by cultural travelers. It is important that the website be immediately accessible, is visually appealing, provide current information and promote a positive image of the district. The calendar should cover a full year of events so that residents and visitors can plan in advance. Exciting and colorful images say more than words. Include images of citizens enjoying a festival or concert, dining and socializing, young people engaged in arts learning, images of performances, exhibits and arts spaces. Not only is the website an excellent tool to promote Raton and the ACD, it is easily integrated with all forms of social media. Organizations and businesses within the ACD should also keep their websites up to date.

There are website programs available on line. Constant Contact offers nonprofit rates and provides templates for e-newsletters and website frameworks at reasonable rates. The service also includes technical support. Refer to their website at www.constantcontact.com.

4.5 Engage in Creative Use of Web-Based Social Media

Use of social media and networking reaches many people quickly and helps reduce the need for costly advertising and printed materials. Extend the website's promotional capabilities by integrating it with Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, and YouTube.

4.6 Invest in Signage and an Effective Way-finding System

Downtown Raton is not well-signed for interstate motorists. Visitors should be directed to easily locate the ACD. Once inside the Arts and Cultural District, signage should guide visitors to arts spaces, shopping venues, lodging and historic sites.

Goal 5: Identify and Develop Funding Sources

Ensure the sustainability of the ACD by identifying funding resources that will help support arts and cultural events and programs, professional development and training, marketing and promotions, and the physical environment of Raton's Arts and Cultural District.

This goal is accompanied by a Finance and Sustainability Resource Guide to be used as a reference and research tool for fund development. The guide is included as an appendix of the cultural plan.

The current economic climate presents a challenge for fund development. This endeavor will require sincere and dedicated cooperation and collaboration by all community partners to leverage its' resources to attract new outside funds. It is imperative that public partners, such as the City of Raton, Colfax County, Raton Public Schools, and the State of New Mexico be encouraged to be pro-active investors in the revitalization of the Arts and Cultural District.

Close cooperation and collaboration among the ACD's community partners is also essential to the successful development of the district. As the ACD evolves, arts organizations will be relied upon to expand programs and events in the district. Local arts and cultural organizations operate with a limited amount of staff and volunteers. As programs and events expand, provision will have to be made to contract part-time staff or event coordinators and to fund some types of events. Care must be given to avoid competitive fundraising.

Improvements and enhancement of Raton's physical infrastructure will also require new outside sources of funding.

Strategies

5.1 Establish an ACD Fund Development Committee

This committee will develop and oversee a funding and sustainability plan, and research and identify funding sources.

5.2 Research and Identify Funding Sources

Research the potential for funding opportunities for developing downtown and the Arts and Cultural District. (Refer to Finance and Sustainability Guide)

- Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA)
- Tax Increment Finance District (TIF)
- Tax Increment Development District (TIDD)
- Certified Local Government (CLG) Program
- Business Improvement District (BID) in the ACD with the City of Raton
- Local Economic Development Act (LEDA)
- Municipal Quality of Life Gross Receipts Tax Option
- Grant opportunities for capital projects and place-based economic development: including NEA's ArtPlaces program, The United States Department of Agriculture, Community Development Block grants (CDBG), and the Kresge Foundation.
- Lodger's Tax Funds for new cultural programming and signature event development

5.3 Develop a Funding and Sustainability Plan

Based upon projected costs for expanded arts events, training needs, marketing and promotions, and for improving the physical environment of the ACD; develop a funding plan for the first three years of the district's development.

5.4 Become a New Mexico Certified Community with the State Economic Department

This strategy encourages the City of Raton and Colfax County to become active partners in the support of small business development. This approach will require a thorough review of municipal financing and redevelopment tools outlined below. Strengthen partnerships with the state Economic Development Department and New Mexico Main Street to accomplish this goal.

This strategy implies:

- Enacting a Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) ordinance
- Developing a comprehensive economic development plan for Raton
- Establishing a designated local economic development organization to solicit and review proposed LEDA projects from the community
- Working with the City Council to identify revenues to fund public/private economic development projects, especially “creative enterprises” enabled by the Arts and Cultural Districts’ statute.

5.5 Convene Foundations and Organizations to Determine Funding Priorities

The remarkable resource of five community foundations is the nucleus for leveraging private and corporate investments from regional, state and national sources. Together with organizations such as Raton Main Street, the Raton ACD, the City of Raton, Colfax County, and Grow Raton!, the community foundations may join together to submit grant applications for corpus development and place-based community development grants from major foundations such as the Kresge Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, and other funders who may support cultural programs and economic development.

5.5 Facilitate an Information Session with New Mexico Arts for Raton’s Arts and Cultural Organizations

The session could cover resources for technical assistance and funding information for arts programs.

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To the 94 citizens who attended the September, 2011 focus group sessions, a hearty “Thank You” for your commitment to the arts and to your community.

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