

Albuquerque's Downtown Arts & Cultural District - FAQs (frequently asked questions)



NEW MEXICO
arts & cultural
DISTRICTS

Be led by creative forces.

With 30-plus blocks of art, music, food, film, theater, coffee, craft beer, and creative entrepreneurship at work, Downtown Albuquerque contains a wealth of creativity, most of it within a few minutes' walk or bike ride.

You can find details on what we're up on our website via the [approved cultural plan](#) and [2017 work plan](#), but we've also included a few answers to questions that people commonly have.

Last updated: July 17, 2017

Q: How was Albuquerque's Downtown Arts & Cultural District created? Who's involved?

Downtown's district is [one of several arts & cultural districts in the state](#), chartered via the New Mexico MainStreet program in partnership with the New Mexico Economic Development Department, New Mexico Arts Commission, NM Department of Cultural Affairs, and the state's tourism and historic preservation programs.

The state program was established by the Legislature in 2007 as a comprehensive economic development strategy designed to capitalize on the expanding "creative economy."

Each district is unique, and spends significant time researching and developing a cultural plan and map in partnership with local stakeholders in arts and culture.

For Downtown's district, the process was led by Creative Albuquerque and the cultural plan written with the help of Dennis Gromelski, Sherri Brueggemann, Regina Chavez Puccetti, Christopher Goblet, and Julia Mandeville.

In February 2016, the district was approved by unanimous city council resolution, and began work in late-2016 as an initiative of [DowntownABQ MainStreet](#), our fiscal nonprofit and adviser.

In addition to a program coordinator (who started in October 2016), the district also has an [advisory council](#) that meets each month.

Q: Why does the district exist?

Welcoming residents, visitors, and a talented workforce to the Downtown area requires consistent communication, and a plan to help grow and showcase creative work, cultural assets + activities, and stimulate critical mass, as outlined in the cultural plan approved in 2016.

Simply put, our job is to work with filmmakers, artists, musicians, actors, food entrepreneurs / craft beverage businesses, designers, illustrators, galleries, theaters, museums, bookstores, and arts and culture-related business owners of all kinds while also inviting visitors to explore the creative forces at work in the district.

Additionally, we are focused on connecting our work to the entrepreneurial efforts from nonprofits and institutions like the University of New Mexico, Central New Mexico Community College, WESST, and Creative Startups, along with private development projects like InnovateABQ.

It's a big job, but one we believe is worth doing.

Q: How is the district funded?

The Downtown Arts & Cultural District has received a mix of public-private money, and we've provided a comprehensive list below that we'll keep updated on a monthly basis.

Because taxpayer money is a part of that mix, and because we believe that transparency is critical for any organization that works in the public interest, we encourage you to contact us with any questions (you can reach Joe Cardillo, the district's director, anytime at joe@abqmainstreet.org or 505.585.4621)

- During the research and planning phase, the Downtown Arts & Cultural District received \$35,000 in funding from the state's New Mexico MainStreet / Arts & Cultural District program to develop a cultural plan, and create a website and basic marketing materials.
- When the district was approved in 2016, the city council set aside \$50,000 for baseline work during year 1, in conjunction with activities required by our state charter, including things like marketing and promotion, hosting an annual signature event, reporting to the state, and developing financial and communications plans.
- In early-2017, the Arts & Cultural District was selected as a recipient of the [Albuquerque Community Foundation's Great Grant Giveaway](#), and in April 2017 received \$30,125 from individual donors, community organizations, and local companies.

The majority of that money is being structured into seed/re-grant opportunities for arts and culture organizations and businesses in the area (more info coming soon!), with \$5,000 going to help with marketing + promotion of free arts programming from ten area organizations that recently received the National Endowment for the Arts' Our Town Grant (see below), and \$5,000 going toward regular programming and work directly with creatives, incl. the [Coffee + Creatives bi-weekly meetup group](#), where artists, musicians, actors, gallery owners, food & beverage entrepreneurs, and other creatives receive feedback on current projects/business challenges as well as alerts about funding and training opportunities.

- In June 2017, the Downtown Arts & Cultural District, City of Albuquerque Cultural Services Department, DowntownABQ MainStreet, and a partnership of 10 local arts and culture organizations [received a notice of award](#) from the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant in the amount of \$100,000 for free arts, theater, and cultural programming in the area.

The Arts & Cultural District / our fiscal sponsor and parent organization DowntownABQ MainStreet are slated to receive \$9,800 for marketing, promotion, and administrative coordination of the grant, pending contract execution later this year, which we have committed to match with an in-kind donation.

Other organizations are receiving between \$2,000 and \$15,000 (which they are also matching) to provide free arts and culture programming over a two-year period, including activities like Shakespeare on Civic Plaza, a creative lecture series, and art exhibitions.

Q: What are you currently working on?

You can find more information in the 2017 work plan (linked at the beginning of this FAQs document), as well as the [resources page](#) on our website.

In general, during the first year we are focused on:

- a) Marketing/promotion, and developing a brand for the district
- b) Identifying and addressing the needs of creatives and creative businesses in the area
- c) Inviting visitors to the district, and creating partnerships with travel and tourism-related organizations

Q: How can I get involved?

Great question! There are many ways to get involved, here are a few to get you started...

- If you're an artist, musician, filmmaker, chef, craft brewer, run a bookstore or gallery, or are a creative business owner of some type, we encourage you to drop by [Coffee + Creatives](#) to meet other folks like yourself and stay in the loop on potential funding and training opportunities
- If you're a property owner and are interested in leasing or selling available space to creatives, or learning about some of the incentives available in the district, feel free to email joe@abqmainstreet.org or call 505.585.4621.
- If you are an Albuquerque resident or if you are a visitor to the area, we encourage you to explore creative forces at work in the area via the interactive map of coffee, beer, food, art, music, galleries, or download/print one of the walking maps available on our website:
<http://www.downtownacd.org/downtown-arts-cultural-district/>